

CHANGING CITYSCAPES IN CENTRAL JARASH – BETWEEN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE ABBASID PERIOD

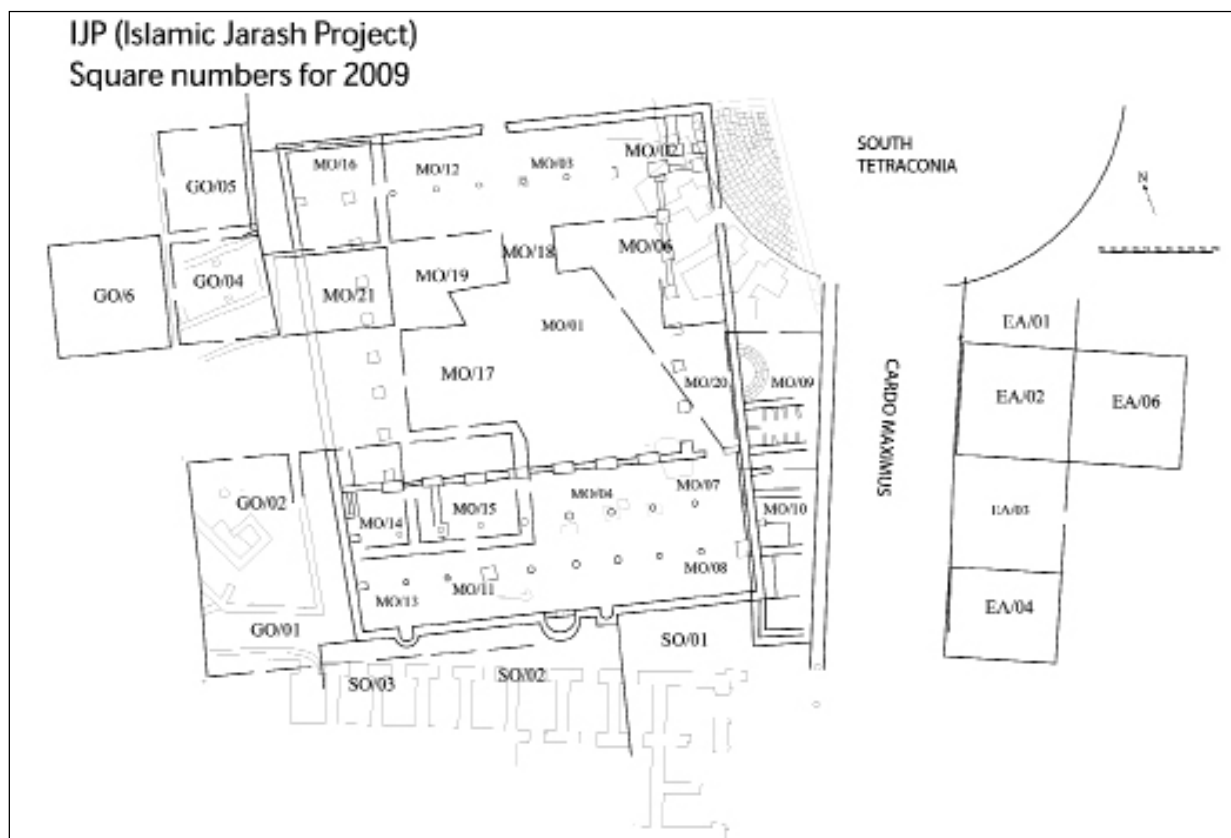
Louise Blanke, Patrick Dan Lorien and Rune Rattenborg

Introduction (LB)

The present article reports on the 2008 and 2009 seasons of excavation of the Islamic Jarash Project (henceforth IJP)¹. IJP commenced in 2002 with the principal objectives of establishing the existence of an Umayyad congregational mosque in the commercial centre of Jarash, along with a bathhouse occupying the area prior to the construction of the mosque. IJP has, through the years, developed to include further

areas of the Early Islamic town centre (Barnes *et al.* 2006; Blanke *et al.* 2007; Walmsley *et al.* 2009). In 2004 IJP expanded west of the overall area of investigation to examine the immediate urban surroundings of the mosque in an area designated GO. Latest excavations across the *cardo* in Area EA have revealed a building of monumental proportions roughly corresponding in size and date to the mosque (**Fig. 1**).

From 2002-2007, IJP uncovered a congrega-



1. Overview of Islamic Jarash Project following excavations in 2009 (by Hugh Barnes).

1. Aspects of the IJP has previously been published in Barnes *et al.* 2006; Blanke *et al.* 2007; Blanke 2007;

Damgaard and Blanke 2004, 2005; Walmsley 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2005 Walmsley *et al.* 2009).

tional mosque framed by the south *decumanus* towards north and the *macellum* to the south. Towards the *cardo*, a series of shops, built against the mosque wall, faced the street. The mosque proper, consisted of an open courtyard (*sahn*) flanked to the north, east and west by a portico, while the prayer hall (*qibla*) occupied the southern third of the building. Although not contemporary, four doorways in turn gave access to the mosque. Similarly, three prayer niches (*mihrab(s)*) were incorporated into the architectural layout, one of which were blocked during the building's use while another was segregated by a partition wall in the western third of the prayer hall (**Fig. 1**).

Careful exploration of especially the *qibla* hall and the portico area has established several consecutive structural phases, along with material continuity following the earthquake in 749 AD. This has long imposed important questions regarding the continuous use of the mosque in particular, and Jarash in general, into the later Islamic dynastic periods. Archaeological data from the mosque has, however, been too few to offer sufficient material for any final conclusions.

Following the conclusion of the excavation of the mosque, the foci of investigation of the Early Islamic town centre has progressed to areas GO and EA. Separated by a laneway leading south from the *decumanus*, area GO borders the western side of the mosque. In 2008 and 2009 the northern half of GO was subject to extensive excavation with a particular focus on a series of structures centred on an open courtyard and dating roughly to the time of the construction of the mosque (see **Fig. 11**). Four architectural phases have been established, with indications of a post 749 earthquake rebuilding supported by substantial ceramic evidence for continuous use well into the Abbasid period.

Comparatively, exploration of the newly begun Area EA is still in its initial phase, while the existence of a building, mirroring the mosque in size and time, has been established (see **Fig. 6**). Although layout and use of the building is still tentative, the architectural phasing is well understood. Similarly to Area GO, the structures in area EA holds an Early Islamic origin with well attested continuous use post dating the 749 earthquake and seemingly flourishing into the

Abbasid period.

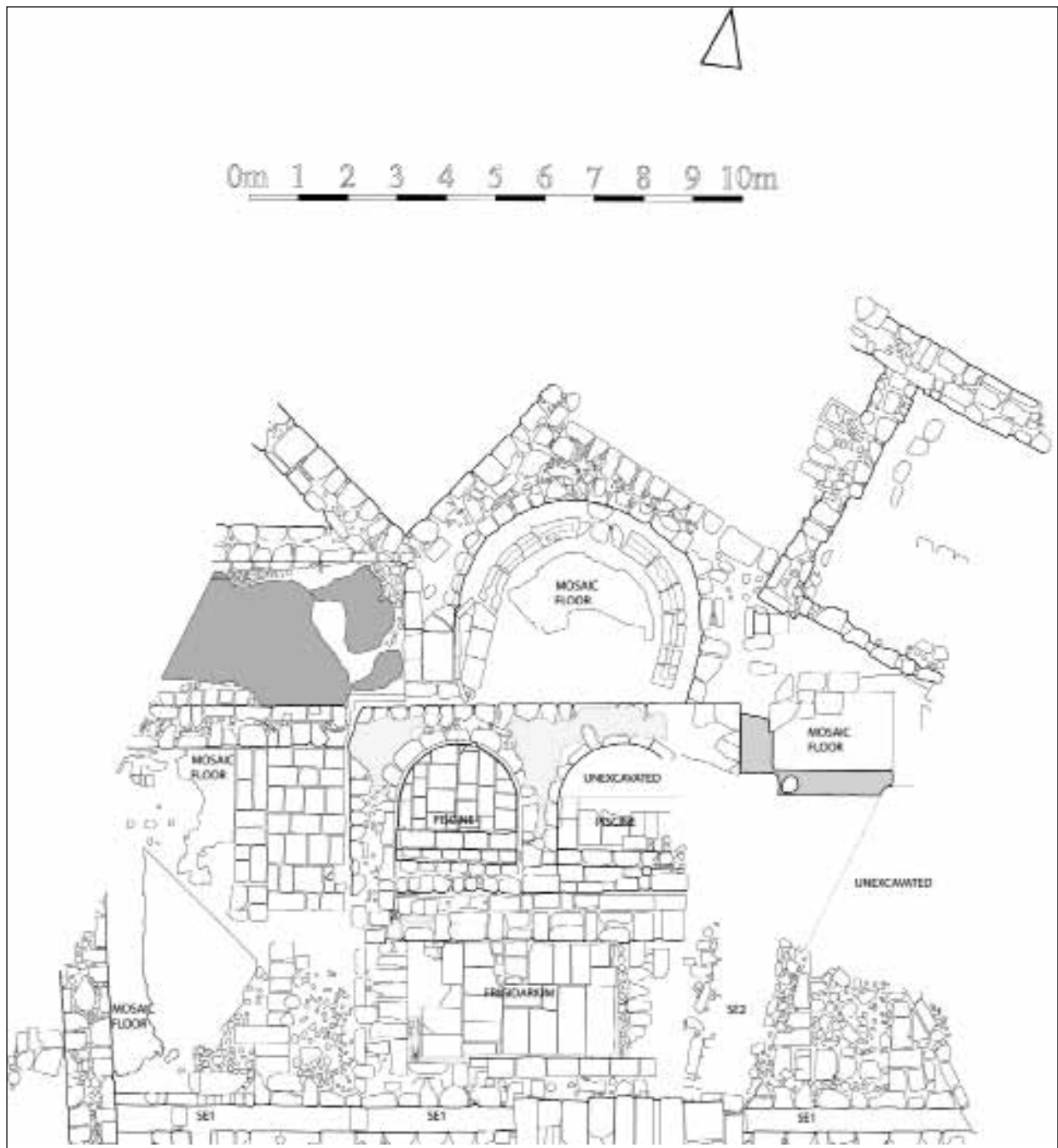
Combining the material evidence from the mosque and areas GO and EA have established a prosperous and developing town centre, lasting well into the Abbasid period, with evidence, across site, of post earthquake rebuilding and occupation.

Continuous exploration of the Central Baths, occupying the area prior to the construction of the mosque, has led to important observations on the social practices of the Late Antique population. Focusing on the entrance area in 2008 and 2009, excavations have uncovered two semicircular basins flanking the northern wall in the *frigidarium*, a semicircular latrine with a separate access from a joint corridor, and an entrance hall giving access from a laneway leading south from the *decumanus* (**Fig. 2**). The latrine in the Central Baths is only the third public toilet that has been identified in Jarash.

Below follow detailed accounts from the excavators of the three areas in question. Firstly, the article explores the continued investigation of the bathhouse followed by discoveries from the newly engaged Area Ea. Lastly; Area Go is addressed in detail.

North of the Bathing Suite – Accessing the Central Baths (LB)

The continuous exploration of the Central Baths in 2008 and 2009 focused on the northern part of the building, an area previously explored to the level of the mosque (Barnes *et al.* 2006; Blanke *et al.* 2007). Excavations of the baths from 2002-2007 have established six phases of architectural use through a complete recording of the heated rooms, part of the unheated section (*frigidarium*) and the remains of a changing room (*apodyterium*). The location of the service area was established below the mosque prayer hall through the excavation of a single furnace in 2005 and a secondary entrance to the *hypocaust*, currently interpreted as associated with cleaning and maintenance of the system (**Fig. 2**). Sealed numismatic and ceramic finds have dated the construction of the bathhouse to the late third to early fourth century and its demise to the early eighth century (Blanke *et al.* 2007: 196). The Central Baths went out of use when the area was redeveloped for the construction of a mosque. At this stage, the baths were highly



2. Unheated section of Central Baths following excavations in 2008 (by L. Blanke).

reduced in size and in a general state of disrepair (Blanke forthcoming).

The principal focus in 2008 and 2009 was to identify the entrance to the baths, suggested to be located in the northern section of the building. Excavations were carried out in an area covering 30 by 17 metres within five excavation units (MO/12, MO/16, MO/18, MO/19 and MO/21)

with the objectives of locating the access point to the Central Bathhouse as well as fully clarify the relationship between the bathhouse and adjacent architectural units (Fig. 1). Results from 2008 and 2009 have brought significant contributions to the interpretation of both the layout and development of the building. Below follows a detailed account of each individual area of fo-

cus starting with the entrance hall and then moving further into the bathhouse.

The Entrance

Excavations commenced in 2008 immediately north of the changing room (*apodyterium*) based on an assumption that this was the location of the entrance to the bathhouse. A single shop flanking the *stylobate* of the south *decumanus* and incorporated into the structural layout of the bath building was uncovered in 2005 (Fig. 2). It was, therefore, believed that the north facade of the bathhouse contained a series of shops lining the thoroughfare, as documented in other bathhouses both locally and in the broader Roman Empire (to mention a few: Fisher 1938a; Nielsen 1990; Yegül 1992). The current hypothesis is thus, that the Central Bathhouse would have been accessed from a laneway leading south from the *decumanus*, rather than from an entrance point on the *decumanus* itself.

Excavations in 2008 and 2009 were successful in locating an entrance hallway giving access to the bathhouse and an adjacent latrine (Figs. 3, 5). Measuring 7.10 EW by 2.80 NS the hallway was accessed by way of two steps leading down from the street level. The entryway was accessed from a laneway of stamped earth, seemingly running south from the *decumanus* to the baths. A sondage dug into the street surface revealed a corpus of Roman period ceramic material dating solely up to the third century. This context has provided a rough *terminus post quem* for the layout of the street, somewhat corresponding to the 3rd century date proposed for the construction of the Central Baths (Blanke *et al.* 2007).



3. Entrance hall to Central Baths with remains of staircase in the western part of the room and doorways to latrine and bathhouse proper in eastern end (by IJP).

A single preserved stone along with a line of plaster in the western end of the room has been interpreted as remains of a bench that spanned the entire west wall (Fig. 3). The eastern end of the room contains the remains of two entry points, one leading south to the bathhouse proper and one providing access to a semicircular communal latrine. Remains of a door post by the latrine and a threshold in the bathhouse entrance demonstrates that both areas could be closed off independently of the other. This architectural arrangement would have enabled the visitor to use the latrine without paying a potential fee to access the bathhouse. Concurrently, the entryway was organised so that it was not possible to peek into neither the latrine nor the changing room from the access giving laneway.

The stepping stone at the entrance to the latrine, polished by the foot steps of users throughout the centuries, witnessed an extended use of the facilities. Similarly, the floor in the entryway demonstrates a prolonged use of the building, as excavations revealed remains of a highly damaged floor with at least two construction phases. A small section of a mosaic floor was uncovered along the north wall immediately west of and below the stairs, while two layers of mortar covered the room east of the stairs. Both layers seem to have served as beddings for the mosaic floor, thus demonstrated that this originally covered the entire entryway. The area south and west of the steps has been subject to major repairs with reused floor tiles and *pilae* (round tiles associated with the *hypocaust*). That repair was probably associated to the later phases of the building, during which, only a limited section of the *hypocaust* system was still in use (Blanke forthcoming).

The Frigidarium

The unheated section of the bathhouse was, prior to 2008, defined by a rectangular room immediately east of the changing room and north of the heated bathing suite (Fig. 2). Previous excavations uncovered a room measuring approximately 6.5 EW by 3.5 NS metres consisting of a marble slab floor with sides plastered with an *opus signinum*. A stepped wall construction with remains of seats along the north and south side of the room resembled benches, and a drain at floor level in the centre of the south wall

allowed water to spill into the bath's east-west running sewer. These features inspired the interpretation that the rectangular room was, in fact, the remains of the bathhouse *piscine* (Barnes et al. 2006: 300-305). The archaeological data retrieved in 2008 firmly established a different scenario as two semicircular basins were uncovered immediately north of the presumed *piscine*. (Figs. 2 and 4)

The western basin measured 2.60 NS by 2.60 EW and 0.87 metre in depth. The bottom of the basin consisted of large stone pavers and the sides were protected from water with a pink *opus signinum* (Fig. 4). A lead drain was excavated in the northern end of the basin, leading waste water into a sewer running below the adjacent latrine. The drain was uncovered with a plug still in situ. Three steps, also functioning as benches, gave access to the basin from the south, allowing an estimate of four persons to comfortably use the basin at the same time.

The layout of the eastern basin was slightly different from its western counterpart. Like the western basin, it took up 2.60 by 2.60 metres and consisted of a paved stone floor and walls plastered with an *opus signinum*. However, the eastern basin was entered by only two rows of steps corresponding to its lesser depth of 0.70 metres.

The two basins were most likely fed by water running through pipes in the north wall of the room via spouts in the wall. This layout corresponded to architectural remains from the adjacent latrine discussed below.

The development of the easternmost basin was somewhat different from the western, as the former went out of use while the remain-



4. Western semicircular basin flanking north side of frigidarium (by IJP).

ing bathhouse was still utilised. This was established as a tile floor was constructed on top of the in-filled basin. Excavation of the fill was carried out through a sectioning in which the southern half was removed to obtain a recordable stratigraphy of the floor construction. The northern half of the basin was not excavated and the drain was not uncovered.

The uniformity of the composition of the fill in the western basin along with the lack of a secondary surface indicates that this basin was filled in as one event and very likely as part of the general dismantling of the bathhouse. A rough estimate of the ceramic material offers an early eight century date.

Re-considerations of the rectangular room immediately south of the two semicircular basins have led to the conclusion that the *frigidarium* was the most prominent room in the Central Baths. This room, along with the basins is by far the largest in the complex, only followed by the original *tepidarium* (Fig. 2). The drain in the southern wall of the room, mentioned above, would have served to remove excess water, inevitable as visiting bathers used the basins. The in-fill of one basin while the other was still in use corresponds well to the general development of the bathhouse. Exploration of the heated section has demonstrated that only one *hypocaust* room continued to function throughout the use of the building, while smaller bathing tubs for individual use replaced the former communal structures (Blanke forthcoming).

The Latrine

Excavations in 2008 saw the surprising identification of a semicircular latrine accessed from the second doorway in the entrance hall. The actual threshold was not found, but remains of a door jamb established that the latrine could be closed off and, thereby as mentioned above, functioning independently of the bathhouse.

The latrine was identified through the combination of a sewer spanning the northern edge of the room along with a ledge in the stone wall for the insertion of seating (Fig. 5). Measurements of the room are 5.10 EW by 4.05 NS with a 0.38 metre wide sewer, which reaches a depth from 1.48 metre in the southeast end to 1.55 metre in the southwest end. A small channel, currently interpreted for the purpose of hygienic cleaning



5. Remains of semicircular latrine. Note ledge for insertion of seating (by IJP).

after using the latrine, was cut into the top of the inner sewer wall with evenly distributed circular holes. The channel was fed from the southwest corner of the room, seemingly from a water outlet in the wall separating the latrine and the *frigidarium*. This channel ran to an outlet in the southwest corner of the room. The clean water that fed the channel seemingly came from a piping system in the bathhouse wall, also feeding the two *figidarium* basins described above. Remains of the seats have not been found in any parts of the excavation, potentially suggesting that they were removed for reuse of a similar purpose elsewhere.

A section of the sewer was excavated in order to examine the construction and depth of the feature. The composition of the fill demonstrated that the sewer went out of use and was filled in at the same time as the general dismantling of the bathhouse. The bottom 0.30 metre was, however, clearly deposited while the sewer was still in use, as demonstrated from the high proportion of finds and the small fragmented size of the finds. A large number of ceramic sherds and glass was retrieved from this context along with a number of bones, coins, jewellery and a single gaming piece. The composition of these finds is currently being examined in depth as the majority of the finds are believed to have been deposited during the use of the bathhouse.

Thereby, these finds can offer a unique insight to the use and social practice associated with a Late Antique period bathhouse in Jarash.

The identification of a latrine in the Central Baths has significant implications for the understanding of, not only the particular bathhouse, but the general understanding of the Late An-

tique town. So far, two other toilet facilities have been excavated within Jarash. A latrine with a rectangular layout is located by the entrance to the Baths of Placcus (Fisher 1938: 265-270) and a second facility was identified in the southeast corner of the *tetrakionia* piazza (Kraeling 1938: 103-116). The location of the latrine in the Central Baths implies that the use of communal toilet facilities should be considered more common than previously conceptions have allowed.

A Note on the General Layout of the Bathhouse

Following the description above, it is clear that the architectural unit, defined as the Central Baths incorporated structures beyond the bathhouse proper. A semicircular latrine as well as a row of shops along the *decumanus stylobate*, were structurally integrated units in the building complex. The diversity of uses of space is also reflected in a peculiar ground plan combining two angles or grids within the same building (Figs. 2, 3). Among other aspects, the Central Baths is noticeable for referring to the *cardo/decumanus* grid, while at the same time accommodating a second angle within the building complex. Following the street layout, the shops would have been accessed directly from the *decumanus*, while the bathhouse proper is turned approximately 20 degrees west from this grid. The latter of the two is currently interpreted as an earlier grid system, predating the construction of the *cardo* and south *decumanus*.

The two grids met in the building through a series of architectural solutions, the most noticeable of these being the latrine. Rather than following a proper semicircular form, the eastern part of the room is shifted slightly towards the centre. The wall shared between the latrine and the northern lying shops is shaped to facilitate the joining of two angles (Figs. 2, 5). The western end of the wall measures 1.80 metre across while the eastern end only takes up 1.20 metre. The combination of a semicircular latrine and its associated back wall served to utilize and camouflage an, otherwise, trapezoidal shaped part of the building. Consequently, the perception of the space by the visiting bather would not have come across as either peculiar or irregular.

Previous preliminary publications of the Central Baths has suggested a redevelopment for industrial use in the northern part of the bath

building proper, towards the end of the building's history (Barnes *et al.* 2006; Blanke *et al.* 2007: 179). Excavations in 2008 and 2009 has firmly cemented that this was not the case. Contrary, the bathhouse maintained its original purpose, though in a diminished form, until the construction of the mosque. Early eighth century ceramic and numismatic material in the fill deposits in both the latrine and the western semi-circular *frigidarium* basin establishes a continuous use of the facilities, while archaeological evidence, previously interpreted for secondary use, has proved part of the later diminished phase of the bathhouse (Blanke forthcoming). Further elaboration on the bathhouse phasing will be included in the final publication of the Central Baths.

Concluding the Excavation of the Central Bathhouse

So far, eight seasons of excavation and recording have produced an extensive corpus of archaeological data. The layout, use and development of the bathhouse have been established given the state of preservation of the building. The excavation of the Central Baths is drawing towards an end but a few questions still remain, some of which will be addressed in the following season of work.

In an article published in 2002 W. Thiel dated the re-modelling of the *tetrakionia* piazza to the reign of the tetrarchs in the early fourth century (Thiel 2002). The relatively contemporary date for the construction of the bathhouse has induced a query regarding the relationship between the two structural events. The layout of the back wall of the shops in the southwest corner of the piazza runs parallel to that of the bathhouse, indicating, at the very least, that the two structures are following an orientation of the general area. It is, however, possible that the construction of the bathhouse and remodelling of the piazza should be perceived as part of a general reorganisation of this part of the Jarash. Re-excavation of the area previously examined by the Yale Joint Mission, with this question in mind, is hoped to produce enough information to establish the relationship between the two events. In continuation of this, the unexcavated stretch of shops along the south *decumanus stylobate* will be fully uncovered, to establish the

relationship between these shops and those of the *tetrakionia* piazza.

As mentioned above, a section was dug into the latrine sewer in 2008 producing a highly informative corpus of material remains. The finds from this context is currently being processed and the 2010 season of work will enlarge the studied material by excavating the remaining part of the latrine sewer. An examination will be carried out of the total corpus of the finds in order to examine the social practice associated with a Late Antique bathhouse in Jarash.

Following the final season of work it is the excavator's intention to backfill the remains of the Central Baths to achieve the best possible preservation of the building.

East of the Cardo (PL)

EA, short for East Area, consists of a levelled plateau, sloping down towards the *cardo*. The levelling appears to have taken place in relation to a more recent use of the site, in order to create a useable surface for public activities. Excavations commenced in 2008 with the immediate objective of locating the suspected Umayyad-Abbasid period shops, previously found running parallel to the *cardo*, next to the mosque. Further examination into the building behind the shops was intended, initially with a focus on the back wall of the shops, just visible above ground, in order to investigate whether it belonged to an additional, hitherto unknown, building.

Excavations in EA have confirmed the existence of shops along with a large building located east of the *cardo*, behind the shops. As such, the excavation area was quickly separated into two distinct areas. One area consists of the shops, the other, of the large building, which in the present article will be referred to as Building A.

So far we have identified 5 overall phases in the EA area. From earliest to latest these are:

1. Construction of Building A (unknown)
2. Shops (Umayyad - Abbasid)
3. Reconstruction of Building A (Abbasid)
4. Reuse of Building A (medieval)
5. The top layers (modern)

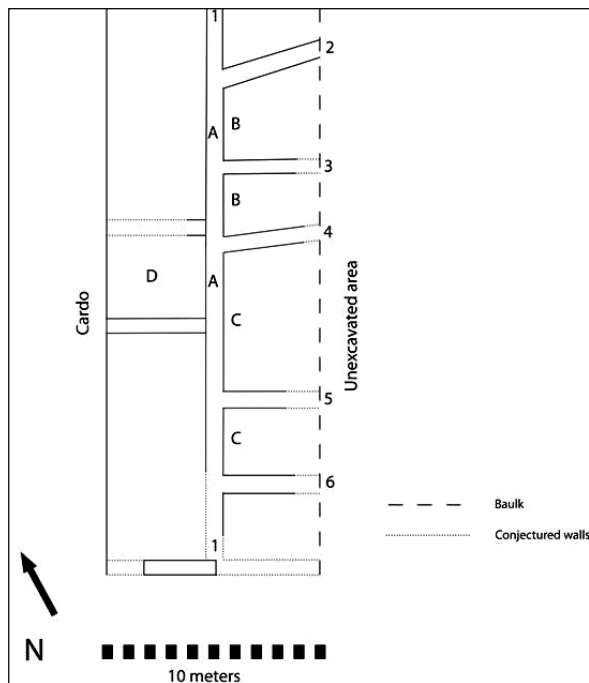
Construction of Building A

The construction and original use of Building

A took place in the, so far, earliest phase (**Fig. 6**). Measuring roughly 30 metres from north to south, the building is surprisingly large, and may well compare to the size of the mosque. Thus far, at least two of the building's outer walls have been exposed. The western wall (Wall 1) runs parallel to the *cardo*. The northern wall has only been partly excavated, and as such we can currently only note its existence. To the south of the building, what appears to be the building's southern exterior wall, has been located. This wall was badly disturbed, possibly as a result of Yale University's excavations in the 1930's, and so, only the very foundation remains.

To date, two distinct rooms have been uncovered within Building A. Each room displays an evenly well-constructed paved floor (**Fig. 7**). However, the pavement of the rooms varies in layout and size and it can therefore be suggested that either their construction is not contemporary or that *spolia* of different origin is responsible for the mixed result. The northern room corresponds to the two paved floors **B**, and the southern to the two paved floors **C**, as visible in Figure 9.

In the southern paved room, what could be the remains of two arch foundations have been located. However, no further evidence supporting the existence of the structure has been found.



6. Area plan of EA (by Patrick Dan Lorien).



7. Overview of EA southern paved rooms C (by IJP).

The building appears to have been emptied and partly reconstructed, making it difficult to determine the date of its original construction. Its origin may well be in the Umayyad period, although the possibility of an earlier date is not dismissed. The high proportion of tumble uncovered throughout the excavation of EA suggests to a potential second storey. However, recent levelling of the plateau could, in part, be responsible for this situation. It looks as though the building's original walls, visible underneath wall 3 and wall 5 (**Fig. 6**), would have been orientated towards the *cardo*, while the later walls follow the orientation of the mosque. At least part of wall 1 and wall 6 can be associated with Building A's original phase.

The Shops

This phase consists of, what could be up to five small shops, whereas only one (**D**) has been fully excavated. The incorporation of Building A's wall 1 as the back wall of the shops would suggest that they postdate the construction of the building. The one shop excavated in EA displays a raised bench towards the shop's back wall. Ceramic evidence from this shop suggests an occupation period ranging from the Umayyad to the Abbasid period.

Cut into the *cardo's stylobate* several door holes, probably corresponding to the placement of each expected shop, have been found (**Fig. 8**).

Reconstruction of Building A

The dating of the reconstruction of Building A is, for now, set to the Abbasid period (about the tenth century), based on a characteristic piece of blue glazed ceramic that was found as-



8. Doorsill in area EA giving access from the *cardo* to shop D (by IJP).

sociated with wall 5's foundation trench, thus providing a *terminus post quem*. The occupation floor layers of phase 3 consist of hard yellow clay, and are located about 0.50 metre above the paved floor mentioned above. At the height of the floor level, a doorway in wall 2 providing access between the two rooms was found. Moreover, at floor level in the room between wall 5 and 6, two fragmented jars from the Abbasid period were found. The floor level and its associated packing are almost sterile and have given very few clues towards the overall function of building A in this phase. Evidence for the reconstruction of the building can, however, seen in several places:

1. The paved floor in room 3 and 4 was partially removed, in order to create a foundation trench for Wall 5 (Fig. 9). Several of these pavers were incorporated in Wall 5 itself. This is easily visible because of the thickness of the pavers (0.30-0.40 metre), as well as they possessing one side that has been worn smooth, and having been cut to fit each other. Also Wall 4 has been constructed by breaking



9. Detail of wall 5 in area EA (by IJP).

up the paved floor, although here, the pavers have not been reused, at least not in what remains visible in the coursing of the wall.

2. Apparently, both wall 2 and 3 have been constructed more or less on top of Building A's original walls, although further examination below the pavement is required before any conclusions can be drawn.
3. Evidence of two blocked doorways has been found in Wall 1 (Fig. 6. A), these doorways, facing the *cardo*, probably mark the original entrance points to the building from the *cardo*. We have yet to locate a large main entrance, if such exists. The blocking of the doorways could be related to a changing function of Building A.

Reuse of Building A

Reuse of Building A is documented within two adjacent areas. The first area could be the remnant of production activity, as it consisted of a stone platform, centred on a hearth (Fig. 10). The platform was roughly 2 by 2 metres, and was built with large uniform rectangular stones. In the soil around the platform a high proportion of glass sherds were found, along with minor pieces of charcoal.

The second area, on level with the first, consisted of another stone platform. The stones used in this platform were of varied size and thickness, but also here, the platform itself measured 2 by 2 metres. The platform was set on a foundation layer of rough stones and clayey sand, which continued for about 0.20-0.30 metre. A similar layer might be found underneath the first platform. The soil above both platforms has been severely disturbed by modern activity, and as such it has been difficult to conclude any-



10. Overview of phase 4 platforms in area EA (by IJP).

thing about the function of the two areas.

Specific Finds in EA

In Building A two lead seal impressions were found. The first carried the stamp of Byzantine official named Andrew, and is dated to the second half of the 6th century. The second appears to carry Arab inscriptions, but due to corrosion it is difficult to determine this with any certainty. Unfortunately both of the seal impressions were not found in secure contexts.

Excavations of the shop revealed a single marble fragment, which may have been used to support a marble tablet, utilized by the shop owner for accounting and keeping track of economic transactions. Such tablets have previously found during the excavation of the shops adjacent to the mosque (Walmsley *et al.* 2009).

General Interpretation of Building A

While only a small proportion of Building A has been excavated, a few tentative suggestions can be made. The building is situated in what was the main commercial centre of ancient Jarash, and is located adjacent to the presumably most important building in town, namely the mosque. Building A is almost the size of the mosque, and contains what appear to be two very large rooms, perhaps with arches supporting a second floor. Each room has a distinct well-constructed paved floor. The building has been in use for a considerable time, as witnessed by at least one phase of major reconstruction. It shares walls with at least five Umayyad-Abbasid period shops, and during excavation two lead seal impressions were retrieved. These facts might suggest a mercantile function of the building.

While Building A's date of construction is still uncertain, there are some aspects that might relate the building with the Late Antique period. This is mostly based on the fact that the original walls seem to be orientated towards the *cardo*. The thickness of the pavers in the two rooms might also hint at a Late Antique origin. Equally thick pavers, seemingly of the same type, was found in the Late Antique period "House of Blues", which is located about 100 metres to the east of Building A.

Through the location and size of Building A

we expect that it would have fulfilled an official purpose, whether administrative, related to trade or the two combined remains to be established.

The GO Complexes (RR)

Area GO designates a roughly rectangular area, some 50 by 40 metres in extent (**Fig. 11**), situated on a relatively even plateau immediately west of the remains of the congregational mosque (MO). The border between GO and MO follows the edge of a laneway running the full length of the western wall of the mosque, from the *decumanus* in the north to a junction of passageways at the northwestern corner of the *macellum*. Area GO is delineated by the *decumanus* to its north, where the plateau drops sharply towards the street, and a surmised street to its west, indicated by a widening in the colonnade opposite the so-called Umayyad House. The southern limit of the area corresponds with the mosque *qibla* wall. Topographically, the area reaches its highest elevation in the northern half, rising approximately two and a half metres over the level of the *decumanus*, and slopes gradually towards the south.

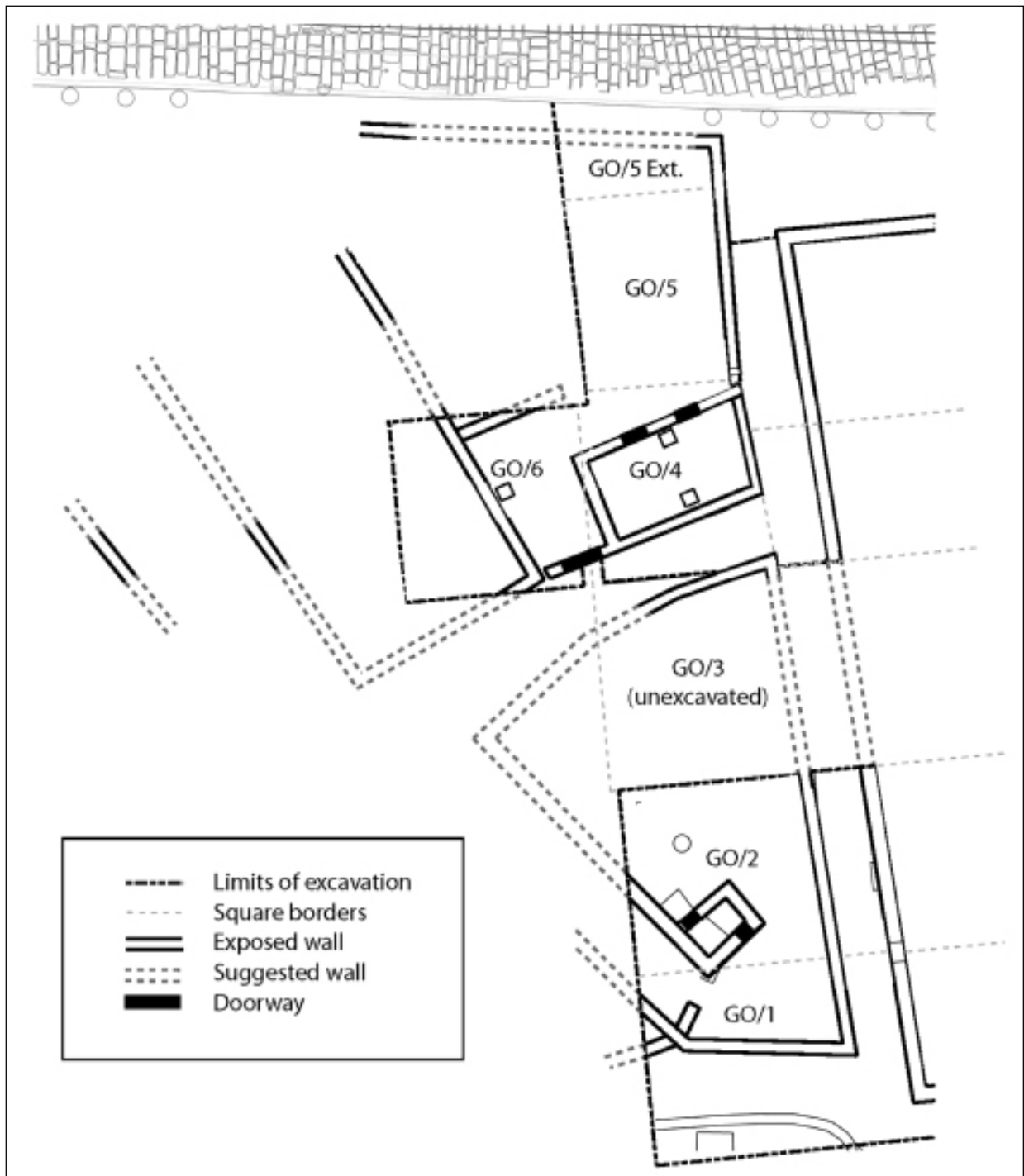
Initial surveying of the area started in 2004, resulting in the tracing of a number of walls in the northern half of the area, while actual excavation began in 2005. Work within GO has primarily aimed at investigating the immediate urban setting of the congregational mosque, and hence all current excavation units within the GO area, except one, are situated along the eastern border of the area, i.e. closest to the mosque.

Currently, excavation within GO numbers six 10 by 10 metres excavation units (GO/1-6) of which all but GO/3 have seen regular excavation over the years. As such, excavations within the GO constitute two separate areas, being GO/1-2 in the southeastern and GO/4-6 in the northeastern quadrant. The former has been excavated from 2005-2007, while investigations in the latter area started in 2007. So far, excavations within GO/4-6 have established a preliminary sequence of four consecutive building phases spanning the Late Umayyad-Early Abbasid periods, which can be summarised as follows:

Phase 4 - Late Umayyad (700-750AD)

Phase 3/I - Early Abbasid (750-800AD)

Phase 3/II - Abbasid (750-800AD)



11. General plan of the GO area, 2009 (by R. Rattenborg).

Phase 2 - Early Abbasid (800-850AD)

Phase 1 - Unknown

Since preliminary reports on excavations in GO/1-2 has been published earlier (Walmsley et al. 2009: 113-115), the following will report

on the investigations carried out during the 2008 and 2009 seasons of excavation, in turn followed by some general suggestions for an understanding of the evidence hitherto retrieved from the GO area as a whole.

GO/4-5: The Late Umayyad House (Phase 4)

The phase 4 structure constitutes a rectangular building, still only partially exposed, but most likely of the same width as the phase 3 building superimposing it. It extends westwards from the laneway separating the complex from the congregational mosque. A blocked doorway in the centre of the eastern wall opening onto the laneway was exposed from the outside in 2009. Furthermore, the exposure of a doorway in the west wall of the mosque, opening onto the laneway junction at the southeastern corner of the rectangular building, indicated that the phase 4 structure and the congregational mosque to be of roughly the same date (**Fig. 12**). The interior surface of the above lying phase 3 house is situated more than a metre above the step of the blocked doorway, paralleled by a roughly similar difference between the level of the associated courtyard surfaces evidenced in a trench dug north of the rectangular house in 2007, in both cases the likely consequence of substantial filling and levelling in the area before the construction of the phase 3 complex. As for the use of the courtyard space north of the building (**Fig. 13**), the presence of a massive ceramic dump extending over most of the eastern half of GO/5 has been established by initial excavations conducted in 2007, and the excavation of two 1x1 metre sondages in 2009. The sondages and studies of the associated section in the trench to the south of them have served to illuminate a continued depositing of broken ceramics along the eastern perimeter wall of the complex, along with finds of a substantial amount of animal bone, small



12. The laneway junction at the southeastern corner of the GO/4-structure seen from the east. Note the top course of the earlier phase 4 wall protruding from below the phase 3 structure (by IJP).



13. GO/5 at the end of the 2009 season, seen from the west, with the two sondages (top left) and the phase 2 pit (top right) next to the kiln excavated in 2007 (by IJP).

copper coins, and occasional pieces of shell and beads. The sondage sections indicate the deposit to have been compiled by a series of well-defined interchanging strata of yellow clay and ashy layers with a very high density of ceramic material. As indicated by the trench in southern GO/5, the extremities of the deposit were later covered by a substantial brownish clay layer in the process of levelling the courtyard following the demise of the phase 4 structures (**Fig. 13**).

Although only limited parts of the phase 4 structures have been exposed so far, it is clear that the eastern wall of the phase 3/I-II house was set at a slightly odd angle to the remainder of the outer walls of the building, otherwise set at right angles (**Fig. 12**). The reorientation indicates a changed layout of the building, in turn likely to mirror an overall reorientation of the urban planning in the area following the destruction of the phase 4 complex. It should be noted that we have yet to properly verify the termination of the phase 4 structures as contemporary with the earthquake of 749, even though this seems a tempting link to draw from present evidence.

GO/4-5-6: The Early Abbasid Levels (Phase 3/I-II)

The phase 3 complex (**Fig. 14**) comprises a rectangular building exposed in GO/4 and adjoining courtyard spaces to the west and north, forming one structural unit covering an area roughly 25 by 15 metres in extent (**Fig. 11**). The building, measuring 9 by 5 metres, is located at the northwestern corner of the laneway junc-



14. Overview of the western laneway and the phase 3 housing from the south (by IJP).

tion and comprised one large, later two smaller rooms following the insertion of a partition wall, the subdivisional phases 3/II and 3/I marking the time before and after the division of the room respectively. The partition wall was set between two square pillars abutting the northern and southern wall probably supporting points for an arch spanning the width of the room. A cornice still in place on top of the northern pillar, reused and of Byzantine origin, along with another cornice piece found in the clay filling next to it, may support this point. The partition wall of phase 3/I inserted between them was made from weathered limestone blocks, some clearly reused, without employing the usual terra rossa soil used in other walls of the structure as filling, indicating that it most likely served to divide the interior space of the building, but did not effectively seal off the two rooms from one another. The smaller rooms created by the partition wall were paved with limestone blocks, judging from the thickness and some markings also to be considered as reused building stones, the floors of the two rooms exhibiting a generally similar layout. In the eastern compartment, Room 1, a rectangular area in the northeastern corner of the room next to the doorway lacked the lime stone paving, and was covered instead by two sizable reused marble slabs, along with pieces of a third. In the southeastern corner, a small stone bench abutting the southern wall was exposed. A somewhat similar pattern was found in the western compartment, Room 2, where a rectangular area in the southeastern corner, next to the southern stone pillar, was partially overlaid with limestone slabs. The northwestern corner of Room 2 was occupied by a stone

platform approximately 1.8 by 1.3 metres in extent and raised some 0.40 metre above the floor level (**Fig. 14**), the surface partly covered with flat rounded stones of which some had clearly been exposed to fire. Though no substantial ash deposits or charcoal remains were found in relation to this feature, the outline may suggest a possible hearth.

The layout of the single phase 3/II room, though still in need of some final investigations, only differs from the phase 3/I rooms in the absence of the partition wall and the possible later addition of the stone bench in Room 1. The limestone pavement of Room 2, on a slightly higher level than that of Room 1, was separated from the latter by a clayey buildup overlying the upper course of a double row of stones, aligned with the square pillars, which were set directly upon it. The double row of stones is assumed to be the top of an earlier phase 4 wall, since it runs parallel to the eastern wall of the building, also most likely phase 4.

The exterior areas adjoining the phase 3 building is delineated by a northward wall extending from the northeastern corner of the building all the way to the southern *stylobate* of the *decumanus*, bordering the interceding laneway between the northern GO-complex and the mosque (**Fig. 11**). Although the full extent of the courtyard has not yet been established, excavations in GO/6 in 2009 suggest the complex to border an earlier structure on the western side.

The lowermost course of two supporting pillars, set at the northwestern corner of the building, may suggest the courtyard to have been partly roofed. The northwestern quarter of the complex still awaits excavation; however, the lack of walls traceable in the surface suggests this area to contain a further extension of the courtyard area to its east, further corroborated by fragments of an oven wall found close to the baulk in northern GO/6, likely to be located in an outdoor context.

Excavations to expose the northern boundaries of the complex were initiated in 2009 along the slope towards the *decumanus*. Since the eastern perimeter wall of the complex seems to join with a column on the southern *stylobate*, a northern wall running west from this point may have enclosed most of the space previously opening onto the *decumanus*, a pattern mirrored

in Abbasid structures found on the northern side of the *decumanus* (Gawlikowski 1986: 114-117). Though no indications of a northern wall were exposed during 2009, future work will hopefully convey a better understanding of the northern outline of the complex.

Regarding the use of the laneways bordering the complex to its east and south, it should be noted that the mosque laneway was filled with large amounts of stone and wall fill collapse, due to a probably quite extensive destruction marking the end of the phase 4 structure. The westward laneway, however, seems to have been partly cleared following the phase 4 collapse, as indicated by a hard packed greyish walking surface overlying scattered building stones of the earlier period (**Fig. 12**). Entrance to the phase 3 complex was made from this laneway by a raised earthen step lined with medium sized stones in front of the doorway, leading into the courtyard west of the rectangular building.

Important finds within this complex were mainly limited to a number of broken ceramic vessels found on the pavement of Room 1. Furthermore, an almost complete broken Abbasid Cream Ware pot was found in Room 2. A curious object, suggested to be a small ink well, neatly carved from a piece of dark bluish stone or steatite, was found in the fill of the partition wall, but may be of a later date due to its proximity to the upper layer postdating phase 2.

The Cream Ware pot mentioned above would suggest a late 8th/early 9th century date for the phase 3/I-II structure. Regarding finds in exterior areas, a substantial amount of ceramic sherds were scattered over most of the courtyard surfaces. A large percentage of these comprised early 8th century material. This is likely due to the partial exposure of the earlier phase 4 ceramic dump situated against the eastern perimeter wall well into phase 3.

GO/6: Abbasid Foundations and Cistern

Excavation in the western part of GO/6 has added some promising areas of investigation worthy of mention. The phase 3 structural unit found within GO/4-5 and eastern GO/6, described above, seems to have bordered a substantial complex to the west (**Fig. 15**). The two walls demarcating the western courtyard space of the former to the north and south abuts the



15. GO/6 at the end of the 2009 season, seen from the west. Note the cistern drain in the bottom of the picture (by IJP).

eastern wall of a structure found in western GO/6, which then naturally must antedate the phase 3 complex found in GO/4-6, though not necessarily by a long period of time. The GO/6 structure, if indeed outlined to the west by traces of a wall in the modern surface, consists of a rectangular building situated on an odd axis compared to the surrounding major streets and adjoining structures. On a general level, however, the structural layout of the buildings and passageways, so far identified within the GO, points to a larger urban re-organisation during phase 3, since the southern walls of the GO/4 and GO/6 structures constitutes a gradual turn of the westward laneway in a southwestern direction (**Fig. 11**). The same phenomenon can be observed more clearly in the wall line found in northern GO/3, which seems to have been constructed with a bend in the western part of the part presently exposed (**Fig. 14**).

No architectural features within the rectangular GO/6 structure were identified, and excavation only encountered a thick and fairly uniform layer of building stones, stemming either from collapse or used as fill. Below this layer, the upper arch of a presumed cistern, with a plastered drain hole for allowing water to run into the cistern still intact (**Fig. 16**), was partially exposed towards the very end of the 2009 season. The drain hole was plugged with a single stone, placed in such a way that it seemed unlikely to have fallen there by accident, and initial measurements upon removing the stone suggested the cistern to be approximately 3 metres deep.



16. Close-up of the cistern drain with plug in situ (by IJP).



17. Remains of phase 2 occupation in GO/4, seen from the east. With oven outline (left) and stone bin (right) (by IJP).

GO/4-5: The Later Phases (1-2)

As already mentioned following the conclusion of work in GO/4 in 2007 (see Walmsley *et al.* 2009: 113-115), traces of structural remains in GO/4 constituted the uppermost courses of the rectangular phase 3 building. A semi-circular stone setting roughly in the centre of GO/4 and partially resting on the partition wall of the Early Abbasid phase 3/I structure constituted the latest indication of occupation in the area. Parts of two Umayyad oil lamps found within this stone setting in 2007 are then quite clearly to be considered as located in a secondary context, and continued work in GO/4 and GO/5 has in general indicated a high degree of contamination in the uppermost strata, partly due to extensive rodent activity in the eastern part of GO/4, and partly to modern dumping and levelling throughout the excavation area. The stone setting, partially resting on the partition wall belonging to phase 3/I, is then the only reliable indication of phase 1 occupation throughout the northern GO area, and furthermore, there is no evidence as to the date of its construction, which may be fairly recent.

The phase 2 remains exposed in eastern GO/4 in 2008 were covered by a dark, ashy layer of sandy silt with a high density of ash and some charcoal remains. This layer covered a small half circular stone bin abutting the phase 3/I partition wall, and the outline of an oven set in the fill of a pit which had been dug into an underlying layer of yellow clay in a small enclosure between the southern phase 3 pillar and a stone bench butting the southern wall (Fig. 17). The ashy layer also contained a substantial amount of charred

animal bone fragments, and a relatively large amount of ceramics. In general, the ashy layer seemed to constitute burned remains dumped in the area, mirroring corresponding layers on the northern side of the structure which held similar bone remains.

The oven and the half circular stone bin extending from the phase 3/I partition wall, can be regarded features of the phase 2 occupation in the area. Shortly after the installation of the stone bin, the doorway in the northern wall was blocked, perhaps in relation to the use of the courtyard space to the north as a waste disposal area, indicated by the filling-in of a pit just north of the doorway (Fig. 13). In all, the phase 2 occupation may then have comprised an enclosure employing the north, south, and perhaps also the eastern wall of the earlier phase 3/I structure, along with the partition wall sealing it off from the remains of the western half of the house, which, although exhibiting a clay packing fully similar to that found in the eastern half, held no indications of phase 2 occupation.

So far, we have found no confirmable features of phase 2 occupation outside GO/4, although a substantial stone platform exposed in GO/5 in 2007 (Walmsley *et al.* 2009: 117) may belong to the same phase, though this connection rests solely on their corresponding elevation and proximity to the modern surface. Preliminary dating of phase 2 suggests mid/late 9th century AD, based on a number of Abbasid *Kerbschnitt* Ware sherds found whilst excavating the contents of the pit located in the northern courtyard, mentioned above.

Concluding Remarks

The last two years of excavation within the GO have offered new perspectives and considerations on the history of Early Islamic Jarash, and particularly served to evidence a continuous series of settlement phases reaching well into the Abbasid period, mirrored on a more well preserved scale in the findings of the excavation of the so-called “Umayyad House” on the northern side of the *decumanus* (Gawlikowski 1986). The realignment of the urban plan following the termination of the phase 4 settlement testifies to a substantial structural refurbishment of the area in the Early Abbasid Period. More detailed study of the Late Umayyad phase 4 structures will then naturally be one of the main objectives of future research in the area, alongside continued investigation of the Early Abbasid levels. Stratification and associated material remains in general seems to indicate a number of transitions of relatively short duration, well evidenced in the exposure of the ceramic deposit dating to phase 4, and parallels in the setting of walls in phase 4 and 3 as found in the architecture of the house of GO/4, again testifying to the presence of multiple settlement phases in a close and continuous sequence.

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Louise Blanke
lblank@hum.ku.dk

Patrick Dan Lorien
opalas@mac.com

Rune Rattenborg
rattenborg@hum.ku.dk

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