THE JERASH CITY WALLS PROJECT (JCWP) 2001-2003: REPORT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS OF THE SECOND SEASON 21st SEPTEMBER – 14th OCTOBER 2002[1]

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Introduction

The main purpose of this JCWP season was to complete the systematic excavation and recording of the stratigraphy and archaeological contexts of the first Jarash City Wall foundations, and their topography. The excavation followed the same procedure as for trenches 2000, 100, 200 and 300 along the SW and N walls (Kehrberg and Manley 2001; 2002; 2003), the soundings had to be large enough in order to: a) to reach down to the foundation level and expose clearly the stratigraphy, and b) to collect enough contextual artifacts from all archaeological levels for reliable dating and contextual interpretation. All trenches have been immediately back-filled at the end of each season, barring the Hellenistic hypogean tomb in trench 100 (N wall, see Kehrberg and Manley 2002 and 2003).

The original City Wall foundations of the centre-east and -west wall side remained to be examined: Trench/Wall 400, was placed along the inner face of the only remaining free standing stretch of the East Wall *not yet* obliterated by the urban sprawl eastward. The second, Trench/Wall 500 was along the inner face of the West Wall north of the South-Decumanus and S-W Gate. The Jarash Office of the Department of Antiquities cleared this area of massive wall tumble in the early 1990s, down to pre-collapse archaeological levels and uncovered still standing intact courses of the city wall. The clearance also exposed and removed ancient remains of occupancy abutting the standing wall, including large dumps of Late Roman and Late Byzantine pottery kiln waste (third to sixth centuries AD) which had accumulated against the City Wall before its final collapse.

East City Wall/Trench 400

Schumacher's town plan of 1898 and aerial photographs of the late 1920s/early 30s show that the central part of the East City Wall was founded on westward sloping terraced rocky outcrops. Our trench was cut westward away from the inner face of the wall and along the wall segment incorporating the northeast corner of a large vault, which had been built as part of the lowest courses of the original city wall. The southward extension of the trench across the vaulted space was to determine the original structural reason for and function of the vaulted space (**Fig. 1**). The stratigraphical sequence was straight forward: the upper layers contained a mix of eroded blocks, residual modern and Late Islamic pottery and glass sherds, modern metal fragments, animal bones and other debris,

1 The Jarash City Walls Project (JCWP) season 2002 (JCWP02) in-field team was: Eman Oweis, curator of the Jarash Archaeological Museum and Representative of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and who collaborates with the authors in the forthcoming publication of the JCWP01 Hellenistic Tomb; grad. student Andrew Card (Univ. of WA- Perth) and graduate Vince Cherubini (Univ. of Liverpool) trench supervisors; Guy Jillings and graduate Anne Poepjes (Univ. of WA-Perth) volunteers; 2 hired workmen Nasser and Musa. The co-directors of the project are Ina Kehrberg/CBRL and John Manley /Sussexpast, and David Kennedy/UWA who, together with R.Bewley, took aerial photographs of the city wall. Gabriel Humbert again volunteered to supervise mending and conservation, and assisted with the registration in continuation of the larger pottery study project (I. Kehrberg/ CBRL and IFAPO). The JCWP was sponsor by the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL). Substantial additional funding for 2002 was provided by Guy Jillings whose generous donation assured that we could achieve our goal for this season. Through its Director-General, Dr Fawwaz al-Khraysheh, the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DoA) again generously provided additional accommodation and in-field equipment. Without this vital help and the unstinting support in general from the DoA and in particular its Director-General, the JCWP 2002 season could not have taken place. Abdel Majeed Mjelly, responsible for the DoA reconstructions of ancient ruins at Jarash, was again helpful in sharing his knowledge of the terrain for locations of trenches along the East Wall. The Jarash Hospital staff not only kindly treated our minor injuries but also allowed us to x-ray pottery objects from the Late Hellenistic tomb group of the JCWP 2001 season! Last but not least we owe many thanks to the CBRL and especially its director Dr Bill Finlayson and his staff for logistical support and for giving us a home away from home. Eman was, as ever, of invaluable help in general and much appreciated as team member.

1. East Wall 400. Trench from topsoil to bedrock foundation. Looking south.

clearly rubbish scattered on top of eroded wall tumble. This was followed by a layer composed of mixed dirt, small stones and small pottery fragments.

The level underneath revealed rows of upper courses of the city wall, which had fallen face downward onto the western slope. The latest pottery and glass sherds under the collapsed courses clearly indicate that the sudden collapse of this wall section occurred in the Late Byzantine period, and can probably be attributed to the earthquake(s) which caused the destruction of other major buildings of Jarash in the sixth century AD.

As for the vault itself, its designed structural function and original use could not be ascertained in our small sounding of the northeast corner. The entire vaulted space has to be excavated to obtain a complete stratigraphical sequence of use and an architectural study of that wall segment done to explain its structural role. From our excavation it is, however, evident that the vault was constructed as an integral part of the first City Wall.

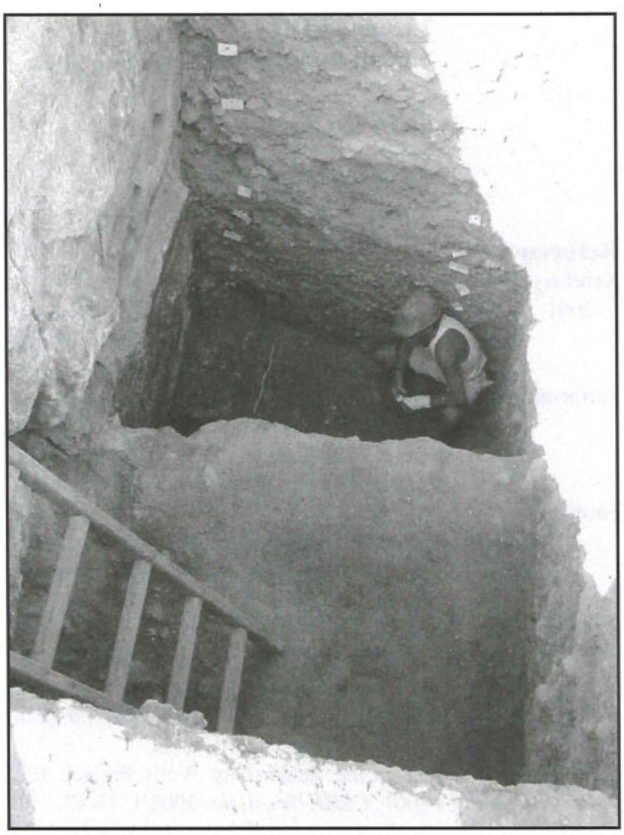
The bedrock foundation, i.e. no foundation trench and - fill and residual debris accumulated on the bedrock and against the wall, prevented quantitatively safe material evidence to ascertain a precise date for the construction of that part of the City Wall. Pottery finds from this bedrock debris mixed with the earliest post-wall rubbish suggest a construction date in the second century AD and that the wall cannot have been completed later than at the beginning of the third century AD. A posited construction date in the second century is strengthened by the first and second century AD pottery finds in the tumbled 'core' or inner wall fill, which covered the collapsed west face. The pottery fragments in the lower core fill (sealed level) retrieved from a deep probe on a still standing intact section of the Wall south of the vault also point at a construction date in the second century AD. This fits in general with the first half of the second century date already established for the north and south-west walls (Kehrberg and Manley 2002; 2003) and, indeed, for West Wall 500.

West City Wall/Trench 500

Our Trench/Wall 500 was situated north of the S-W Decumanus Gate where the 1990s removal of wall tumble (see above) had exposed the remaining upright courses of the wall together with the Late Roman and Late Byzantine pottery kiln dumps. Our excavated top layers below that removed tumble still contained material waste from the Late Roman dumps mixed with some pottery from the overlapping Late Byzantine waste dump.

Two cooking pots with charred bottoms were found propped against fairly high courses of the standing City Wall. These, as glass, plaster remains on wall blocks and joins, many animal bones bearing butchering marks and other pottery types, tell us that this dumping site against the City Wall was used by households as well as potters. The significant information for our project was that these cooking pots and other pottery types belong to the Jarash category of Roman and Late Roman common ware. Their main use/dating covers periods in the second and third century. The pots and rubbish got there after the wall had been built, and were an early indication of a probable date for the construction of the City Wall not later than sometime in the second century AD. Unlike the poor deposit from East Wall 400, trench 500 secured large quantities from all levels.

The deep cut of Trench 500 was necessary to reach the deep foundation built in the soil of the low wadi bed. The stratified layers provided rich deposits abutting against the wall and vital archaeological clues for the history of the terrain were revealed through the artifacts from the sealed contexts. From fragments of architectural décor like molded stucco, wall painting, pottery and worked bone dating to the first century, it appears evident

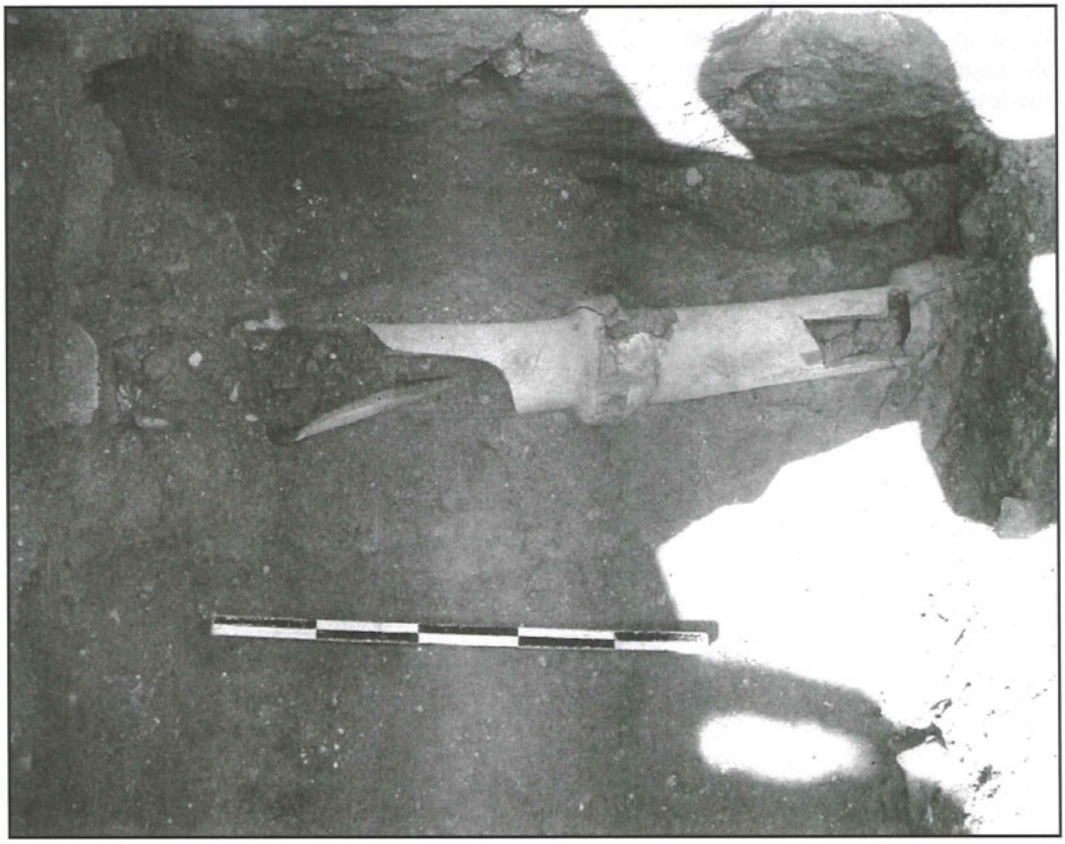


2. West Wall 500. View of deep cut. Top of foundation wall visible.

that there was some edifice, possibly funerary, which made way for Roman urbanization. The date and assemblages of these pre-wall deposits are identical to deposits from Wall/trench 2000 further south of Trench/Wall 500 and which have been associated with a first century necropolis (Kehrberg and Manley 2001). The uppermost course of the large foundation wall of the Roman City Wall appeared finally about 4 metres below the surface of our excavation **(Fig. 2)**.

The most important find of all in this season, however, was the discovery of the clay water pipe *in situ* and running along the foundation wall at an oblique angle towards the east **(Fig. 3)**. The clay pipe extended some 10m before it turned at a pronounced angle towards the east that is the cardo. The pipe was imbedded in a mix of greyish compact dirt mixed with pottery types of the second century AD, at the lowest point of the uppermost course of the foundation wall. The pottery and the ware of the pipe will be examined in a UK archaeological laboratory to ascertain if they could have been made by the same workshop. The smooth calcium deposit lining the inner wall of the pipe is clear evidence that the pipe has indeed supplied running water to the west of the cardo.

The implications are significant: firstly, the pipe



3. Wall 500. Roman clay water pipe along foundation wall.

was obviously put down to feed water to buildings or installations on the west side of the cardo; the calcium built-up is due to periods of running water. Secondly, the wall foundations and the water pipeline were put down together in the second century AD. For the first time there is definite *in situ* evidence that the Roman Decapolis City and City Wall were planned together, that is, that there was a master plan before staged execution.

Conclusion

The preliminary findings from east and west Trenches 400 and 500 have been rewarding and conclude the first wall circuit examination. Their preliminary findings support the results of the previous four City Wall trenches. All six trenches from N, S, E and W segments of the City Wall had different stratigraphy and each foundation varied structurally depending on the situation on the ground. However, the overwhelming and combined material evidence from all trenches and foundation contexts suggests beyond doubt a construction date of the city wall in the first half of the second century AD.

We anticipate one further season of fieldwork to study how best to preserve and present the Walls to the public. This architectural feasibility study, carried out by an architect, will be linked to a photographic and topographical recording of still surviving and visible standing wall sections, linked with aerial photographs taken of the wall circuit by D. Kennedy and B. Bewley during this season.

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