

THE 2001 SEASON OF THE JARASH CITY WALLS PROJECT: PRELIMINARY REPORT

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In October of 2000, the authors examined the foundations of the west Gerasa city wall north of the South Theatre (Braun, Kehrberg and Manley 2001; Kehrberg and Manley 2001). The promising findings, securely dating the wall foundation there to the early second century AD, have led to a CBRL funded project to examine the city wall foundations and their stratigraphy at various points along the circa 3.5km long enclosure wall.

The results of this season in September-October 2001 were far richer than anticipated. Almost immediately, the first major find in trench 100 on the inner face of the north city wall overlooking the modern archaeological camp, was in fact not a foundation trench but a sealed hypogean tomb under the rocky foundation of the city wall (Fig. 1). The doorway of the one-chamber shaft tomb was sealed by irregular blocks wedged in the doorway and held in place by an earth-clay binder. The tomb is oriented north-south and the chamber contained a single burial, it seems of a young person or child, put on its back with the head at the south entrance.² The superficial disturbance and damage of the skeletal remains had been caused by rodents.

The ceramic and other objects in the chamber and the pottery sherds from the dromos fill (Figs. 2-4) place the burial in the Late Hellenistic period

of the late second or at latest at the very beginning of the first century BC, confirmed by the one Hellenistic coin of the late second century BC found at the feet of the deceased.³ The date of the coin fits the pottery and glass finds (four astragals in glass and a large number of games pieces) in the chamber and pottery types from the dromos fill.

A lagynos (see Kehrberg, forthcoming a) was accompanied by four pottery 'models', if such they are, their unusual quality being enhanced by their uniqueness. Preliminary search has so far failed to find parallels in Jordan for this or later periods. Looking beyond her borders, however, similar vases were found and the closest forms come from contemporary Punic Carthage in Tunisia (Gauckler 1915; Cintas 1950).⁴ It is paramount to point out that the wheel-made zoomorphic vases from Carthage were also found in Late Hellenistic tombs of the Punic necropolis underlying the Odeon of the Roman city (Cintas 1976; Ben Younes 1982). Since both Tunisia and Jordan belonged, as their Levantine and African neighbours, to the culturally dominant Ptolemaic Hellenistic World, the discovery of comparable tomb contents (the Carthaginian tombs also contained child burials) is not entirely surprising. The Gerasa/Antioch on the Chrysorhoas vases, including the bull vase, are not 'figurines'.

1. The Jarash City Walls Project (JCWP) season 2001 (JCWP01) team were: Iman Oweis, curator of the Jarash Archaeological Museum and Representative of the Department of Antiquities (DoA); Kate Wolrige, trench supervisor; Andrew Card, assistant trench supervisor; Marita Manley, volunteer helper; four workers from the DoA. The co-directors of the project are Ina Kehrberg, John Manley and David Kennedy. Gabriel Humbert supervised the cleaning of the pottery tomb finds and mended the complete forms. The JCWP project has been affiliated by the CBRL who have also funded the 2001 season; additional support was given by the 'Roman Studies Society', UK. Through its Director-General, Dr. Fawwaz al-Khrayseh, the Department of Antiquities of Jordan generously provided the in-field workforce, housing and equipment. Without this vital help from the DoA, the JCWP 2001 season could not have taken place. Abdel Majeed Mjelly, responsible for the DoA restorations and resources at Jarash, was very helpful in suggesting some areas for excavation where he had already cleared the terrain of modern dirt and ancient city wall tumble.

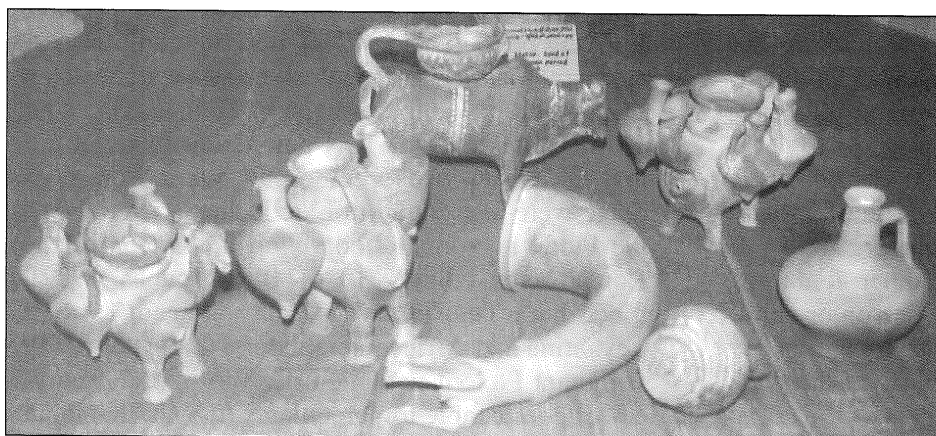
2. The well preserved skeleton is with the 'Institute of Anthropology and Archaeology (IAA)', Yarmouk University, Irbid, for examination and conservation. Iman Oweis plans to re-create exactly the burial chamber with the burial gifts as a permanent exhibit in the Jarash Archaeological Museum. For earlier published notes of JCWP01 findings and the tomb contents see Kehrberg and Manley 2002a-d.

3. The coins of the JCWP 2001 and 2002 seasons are studied by Julian Bowsher; the glass studies, excepting the tomb finds, are done by Daniel Keller; the gold pectoral and other metal finds from the tomb are studied by Iman Oweis.

4. Zoomorphic vases, in particular of bull and horse, are well known from the Iron Age and again especially from the Late Hellenistic period on in the Eastern Mediterranean, often referred to in Jordan as 'Alexandrian' influence. These as our wheel-made pots must be distinguished from the popular mass-produced mould-made askoi (in animal and human forms). A detailed study by the authors of the burial, the contents and their significance is underway and will result in a comprehensive publication.



1. JCW01.104-114 hypogean tomb under city wall 100.



2. JCW01.109 pottery tomb group before cleaning.

A more fitting description appears to be that of toys or models portraying everyday life, or both: they do not belong to the familiar class of mould-made terracottas or moulded figural unguentaria and *ex-voto* which occur regularly and in quite large groups in first century AD tombs (see e.g. Iliffe 1945) throughout the Roman World. The pottery rhyton⁵ and gold pectoral (Fig. 4) are, however, familiar Hellenistic apparel and accoutrement in tombs of well-to-do citizens. The 'ptolemaised' Hellenistic Gerasean family, is no exception in the Levantine culture of the day and the camel vases with their Rhodian amphorae strapped to their backs may indeed represent the actual trading ac-

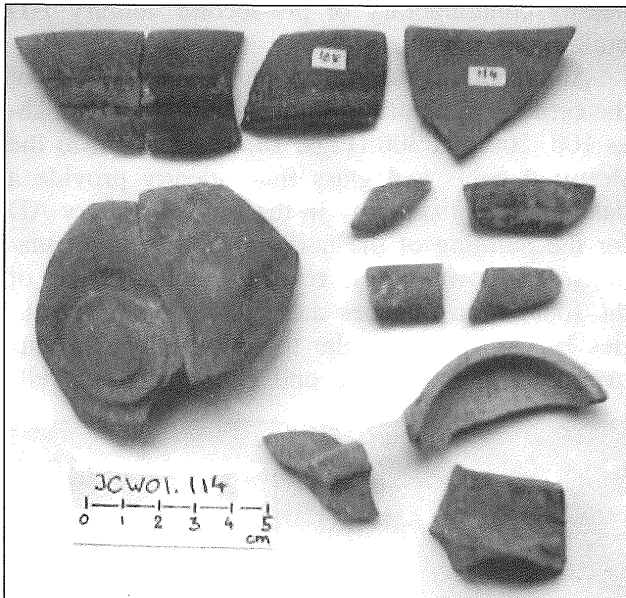
tivity and signify that the family owned a caravan.

This interpretation may be supported by the other most unusual find, the ceramic model of a clepsydra (see Fig. 2), its origin derived from an Egyptian water clock and used by travellers to extract drinking water from shallow and muddied puddles or pools. Phoenician travellers in Spain were known to have carried a bronze clepsydra, very similar to our pottery model, on their belts.⁶ Next to the interred there was an iron strigil, regarded in Antiquity, for both boys and girls, as a symbol of refinement and education. The implications indicated by the lagynos (see Fig. 2) — a ritual vessel introduced by the Ptolemies in their versions of

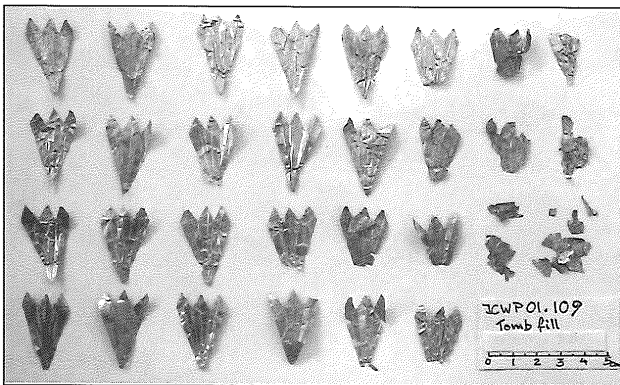
5. Fragments of a seemingly identical pottery rhyton were found in 'contaminated' Iron Age context directly below Hellenistic contexts at the 'Ammān Citadel Temple of Heracles' (see Koutsoukou *et al.* 1997: 130 and fig. 25). As the figurative part of the rhyton was mould-made, both the Ja-

rash and 'Ammān rhytons symbolise a wild cat, it is quite possible that the rhyton had been 'mass-produced' and sold at various Hellenistic markets in Jordan and perhaps elsewhere in the Levant.

6. I owe this information to Martin Almagro.



3. JCW01.114 dromos fill sherds with joins from 105.

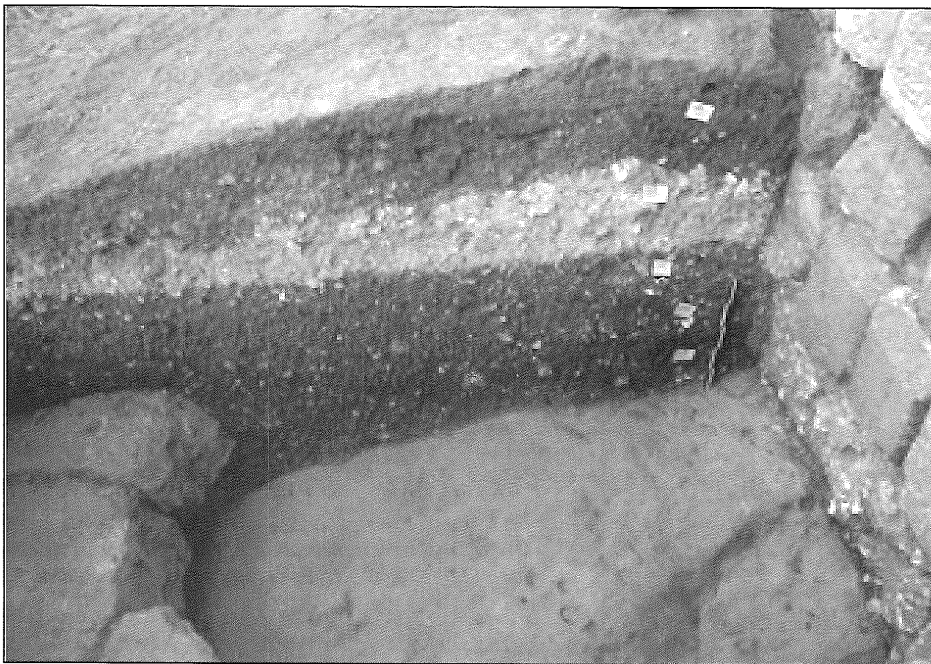


4. JCW01.109 gold pectoral no 29 after cleaning (conservation I. Oweis; photo L. Borel).

Hellenistic Dionysiac funerary rites and symposia — the rhyton, iron strigil, gold pectoral and glass set of astragals with counters show the owner to have been a fully integrated member of the Eastern Mediterranean Hellenistic society.

The objective of the project is, however, to examine the stratification of the city wall foundations at various strategic points. This was done as at the 'tomb trench' (wall/trench 100) westernmost of the North Gate between towers 46 and 47, and at two further soundings nearer the North Gate, walls/trenches 200 and 300 (see the new town plan of Gerasa in Braun *et al.* 2001: 434, fig.1).

All three trenches revealed that the foundations of the city wall were constructed according to the topography of the terrain: trench/wall 100 was founded on top of the rocky outcrop of the tomb; several dirt layers had accumulated above the sealed dromos of the tomb and provided the original Roman surface (the tomb was obviously not known in the Roman period) from which construction of the city wall commenced. The stratified contexts of trench 100 have yielded secure dating material. Trench/wall 200 revealed a shallow Roman foundation trench cut into 'Jarash Soil', the virgin *terra rosa*, down to the sloping bedrock: on it three built courses of foundation wall were level with the upper cut of the foundation trench and literally wedged into the narrow space of the Roman trench (Fig. 5). Trench/wall 300, nearest the North Gate with the Trajanic inscription (Welles 1938: inscriptions 56 and 57) showed that the city wall



5. JCW01.200 S-section, upper edge of foundation trench cut near top of 203.

7. The city wall above trench 100 provided additional pottery evidence for dating when we removed a reused column

drum; the exposed inner core structure of the city wall contained no later sherds than of second century pottery.

was founded on over eight courses of foundation wall 302 (Fig. 6); the cut of the Roman trench is distinct in both the E-W baulks of Trench 300 (Fig. 7). The depth and size of the foundation is due to the steep wadi bed sloping toward the west bank of the Chrysorhoas: we put our trench there for optimum finds. The sections show that construction of the city wall foundations and the upper parts vary for each wall segment under examination (Figs. 8, 9), a fact that cannot be interpreted chronologically and, instead, favours a topographical explanation (including the use of handy spolia from demolished

nearby contemporary or pre-second century AD building sites?).

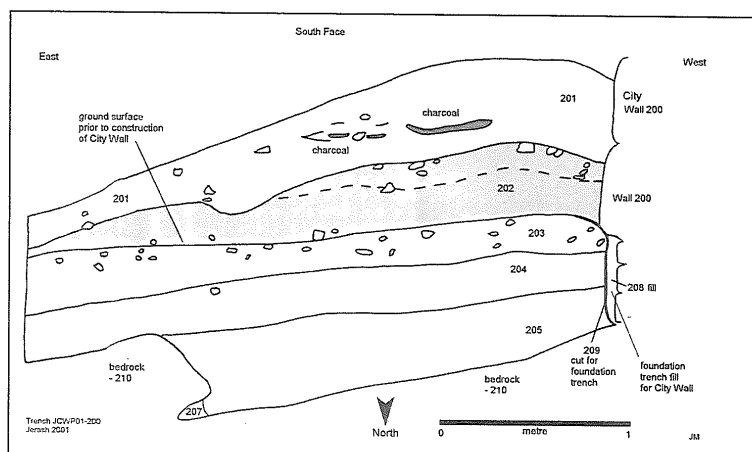
Above all, the diagnostic quantity and variety of the ceramic finds of the Roman levels from trenches 100, 200 and 300 (Figs. 10, 11), as well as the stratified coins and glass finds clearly provide a date not later than early in the second century AD for the building of the northern city wall foundations. The lower levels revealed in the baulks of the foundation trenches date from the first centuries BC to AD, near the top of the Roman cuts overlapping into the second century.⁷ The well-



6. JCW01.300 deep cut and foundation wall 302, west of North Gate.



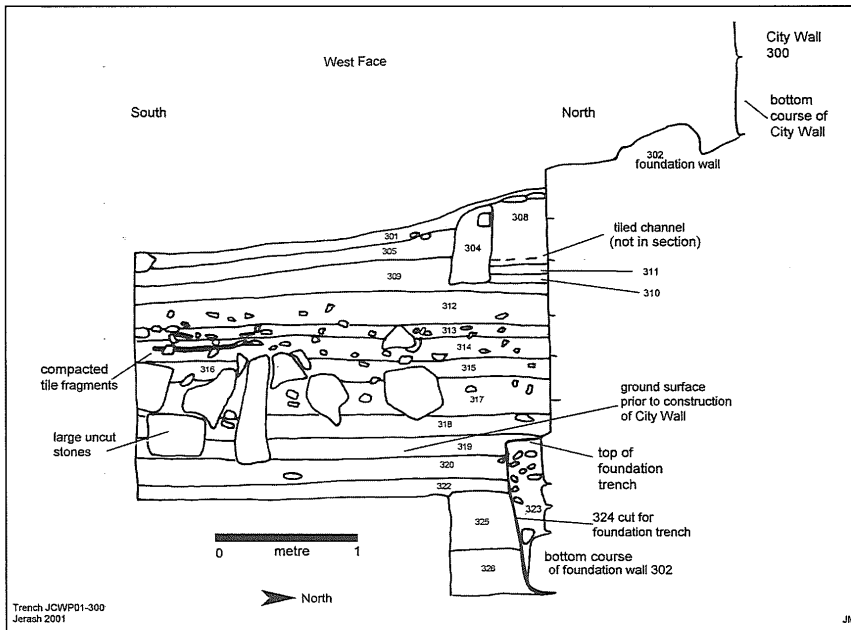
7. JCW01.319-323 W-face of foundation trench, upper edge of cut near top of 319.



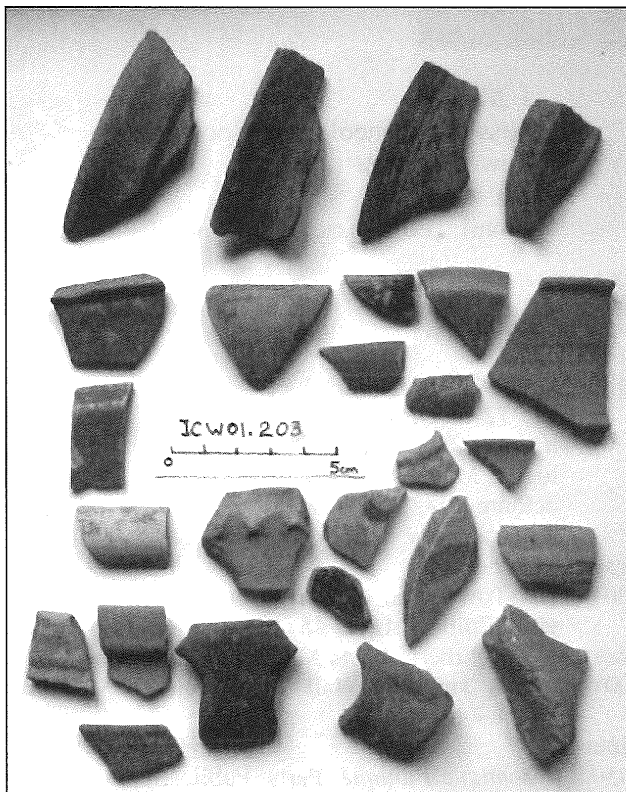
8. JCW01.200 S-section drawing of trench and profile of wall 200 (K.Wolrige, computer image J. Manley).

7. The city wall above trench 100 provided additional pottery evidence for dating when we removed a reused column

drum; the exposed inner core structure of the city wall contained no later sherds than of second century pottery.

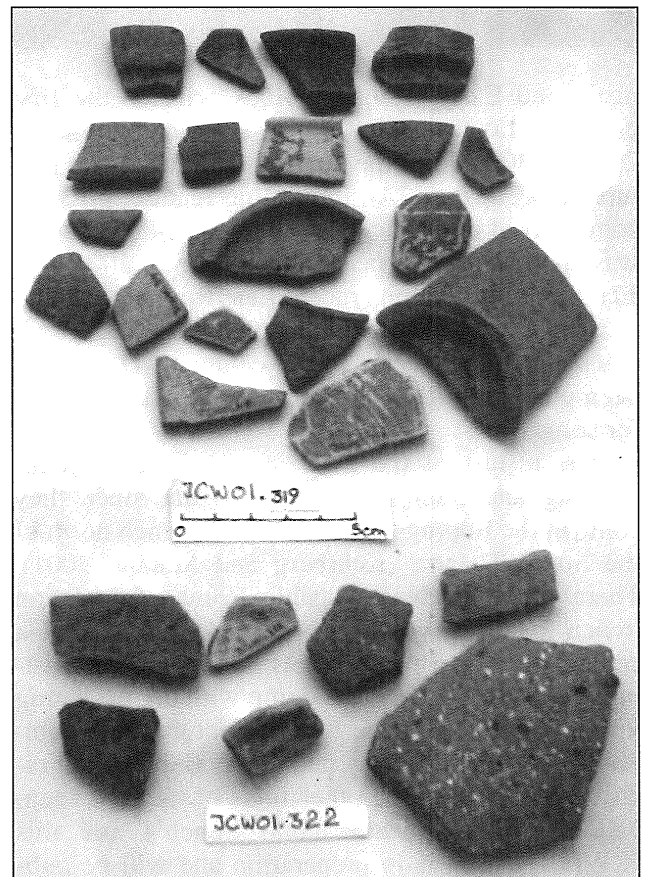


9. JCW01.300 W-section drawing of trench and profile of wall 302 (A. Card, computer image J. Manley)



10. JCW01.203 sherds.

spaced trenches 100-300 provide sufficient material evidence to posit that the northernmost inner-wall terrain shows remarkable homogeneity from Late Hellenistic to Roman. The pottery finds indicate domestic activities, i.e. occupation, from the Late Hellenistic period on. Imported wares are almost entirely missing and most of the pottery consists of common and some coarse household wares. Larger scale excavations further inward from the



11. JCW01.upper 319, lower 322 sherds.

periphery of the north city wall would be necessary to reveal such 'occupations'. However, it seems already clear that the northern picture varies from the excavated southern terrains and although vastly incomplete does seem to suggest different types of occupation or use of the terrain in the Late Helle-



12. JCW01.307-310 'channel'.

nistic and Early Roman periods prior to the first city wall. Lowest strata Iron Age sherds in trenches 200 and 300 add to the already familiar Jarash picture of occupation. An interesting feature, possibly some sort of domestic or production-linked channel was found in the upper strata of trench 300 (Fig. 12): the carefully constructed Late Roman 'installation' (the rest lies still unexplored underground) dates to the third-early fourth century AD and had been put there after the city wall had been standing for some time.

The results of the 2001 season have been rewarding and interesting, in particular since they confirm the findings of the city wall trench north of the South Theatre (Kehrberg and Manley 2001). There also the clearly visible Roman foundation trench for the city wall was cut into layers of first centuries BC and AD deposits, in that case consisting of a pottery kiln waste dump with the fill dating to the beginning of the second century. The comprehensive pottery study and comparative stratigraphy, together with the other finds of the first excavation ('South Theatre 2000 trench') and this JCWP01 season is in preparation and will be published jointly with the final JCWP excavation season of 2002.

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