

Plan 109: V-W, 19-20-21 - Overview

No remains attributable to Stratum 5 were uncovered.

Stratum 4 is likely attested by half a dozen rock-cut installations. No built-up remains can be assigned with certainty to this period.

No remains belonging to Stratum 3 were uncovered. It is likely that the E part of the area was crossed by the 3C casemate-like wall and attached buildings, but these have not survived.

Short sections of walls connected with Building 110.01 of Stratum 2 were uncovered in V21.

The tower-like room found in W20 is probably of Stratum 1. The date of the grape-press may also be of Stratum 1.

Evaluation -

This area was excavated in two different seasons. Squares W19-20-21 were cleared in 1927. These are the W-most squares of a ragged test trench which reaches to W25 on the E. Very little of the area around the tower was investigated because of rubble heaps, so it is not possible to understand its architectural context. V21 was cleared in 1932 as part of the excavation of 4-Room building complex Building 110.01 to the E.

Very few finds were recorded for the 1927 season, and the rock-cut installations uncovered in 1932 evidently contained few remains. A good number of photographs are available for the tower room, and there is one good one of the grape press. Some of the rock-cut installations show up

incidentally in photographs taken of Building 110.01. All installations and the tower have floor elevations, and walls have top levels, though not usually bottom levels.

Building 109.01: Rm 77 -

This is a problematic structure. It is unlike any other building on the tell. It is a single chamber ca. 4.4 by 3.8 m internally, 8.0 by 7.5 externally, with an entrance 1.5 m wide facing toward the N. Its walls are 1.9 m thick, almost as wide as those of the inner gate (Building 145.01) and the two intramural towers (Building 123.01 and Building 73.01) to the W and NW.

Against the inner face of its S wall is another low wall which Badè took as a foundation for a stairway. In the NW corner was a stone basin ca. 1.0 m across and 60 cm deep. The building seems to cut a thinner wall to its E, for there is a narrow gap between the two. Perhaps this latter wall is a remnant from a Stratum 3 structure.

The interior and exterior facing of its walls are coarsely squared stones laid in roughly regular courses. The interior of the wall seems to have been packed earth and smaller field stones (see P 261 and P 262).

Dating of Building 109.01 -

Building 109.01 is oriented to the points of the compass. It does not at all fit the plan of the Stratum 3 town. The Stratum 2 plan is not well-known, but this building does not match any construction attributable to that stratum either. Badè reported finding many "Roman" sherds in its vicinity and was inclined to date the tower to that

period.⁷³⁰ McCown was not inclined to assign it a date.⁷³¹

In his survey of the region of Samaria, Dar recorded 962 towers, of which he excavated 45.⁷³² His "Square" and to a lesser extent his "Very Large" towers are very similar to Building 109.01.⁷³³ His square towers tended to be from ca. 3.0 to 5.0 m on a side externally, with walls 70 to 80 cm thick and a door varying between 60 to 80 cm, and the large towers were usually more than 5.0 m on a side, with some more than 7.0 m.⁷³⁴ The earliest datable material found in association with these towers belonged to the Hellenistic period, with continuation into the Roman period, but not after the 4th century A.D.⁷³⁵ The tower at Tell en-Nasbeh probably has a similar range.

Function of Building 109.01 -

The purpose of the tower is not clear either. It seems best to assign this structure to a late phase of Stratum 1. Badè called it a watch tower, either for agricultural or military purposes. Dar also connected the towers with agriculture, specifically the grape/wine industry, believing that they were used for storage and in the fermentation process.⁷³⁶ If this suggestion is true, it may be possible

⁷³⁰Excavations at Tell en-Nasbeh, 1926 and 1927. A Preliminary Report. Palestine Institute Publications No. 1. (Berkeley, 1928), 52.

⁷³¹I, 201-202.

⁷³²S. Dar, Landscape and Pattern: An Archaeological Survey of Samaria, 800 B.C.E. - 636 C.E. BAR International Series 308(i), 1986, 92-93.

⁷³³Ibid., Figs. 65-69, 131-132.

⁷³⁴Ibid., 93.

⁷³⁵Ibid., 109, 113, 121.

⁷³⁶Ibid., 110, 157-158.

to connect the tower with the grape press discussed below.

Other Features -

The Grape Press (Si? 158) -

This is one of two, possibly five, grape presses found at Tell en-Nasbeh. P 174 shows this installation; on a nearby rock is painted "158." Since Rm 158 is accounted for in Q15 (Plan 73) the press must belong to the non-room number series, although its number is nowhere listed in the 1947 report. A clue that it was likely located in the vicinity of tower Rm 77 is the location of Ci 157a and Ci 157b just to the E. For the purpose of this study it will be numbered Si? 158.

Its pressing basin measures ca. 2.7 m on a side internally and is sunk ca. 40 cm into the bedrock. Traces of a masonry wall were found on its W side, on top of the scarp left by the cutting of the installation. The floor slopes from N to S. In the N end of the floor is a circular depression ca. 60 cm across and 61 cm deep. Possibly this was for collecting the dregs. A narrow channel leads from just S of this depression across the pressing basin to a v-shaped cut in the bedrock. A short secondary channel flows into the main branch from the W near the S wall. The v-shape cut leads into a second tank, probably a settling basin. This tank is ca. 1.0 m on a side internally and 60 cm deep. To the E of the tank is a shallow basin about 1.1 m on a side. Into the W wall of the pressing basin is cut a "cup-mark" ca. 30 cm deep.

On the E of the settling basin is a shallow square depression. Its purpose is unclear. The arrangement of large basin leading into a smaller basin which is flanked by a small higher surface is roughly similar to installation Building 73.06. Though the channel connecting

the two basins in the latter installation is high up in the wall of the larger chamber.

Dating of the Grape Press (Si? 158) -

No material was recorded which can be used to date this press, nor does it clearly relate stratigraphically to any structures in its vicinity, including the tower. Thus its relation to tower Building 109.01 is ambiguous. However, as mentioned above, the two may have been in use together, probably in Stratum 1.

Other Rock-Cut Installations -

Ci 157a and Ci 157b are NE of the grape press, and separated from it by a small collecting basin with a channel leading off to the N. The cisterns are probably connected by a short tunnel, but the plan is not clear on this. When Ci 157b was being dug it cut into an unnumbered circular rock-cut installation similar to another rock-cut installation just to the W. This latter installation is ca. 50 cm deep. To the N of this cistern complex is a drop in the bedrock. Ci 157a and Ci 157b were not likely directly associated with features N of this scarp for their openings are 1.3 to 4.0 m above the installations to the N. The stratum in which they were cut is uncertain. They may be as early as Stratum 4, or as late as 1 (perhaps being used in connection with the press?).

Si 286, Si 287, Si 288, Si 289 and Ci 290 are on the N end of a rock scarp which extends to the S as far as Z23. The scrappy single-stone wall on the E edge of V21 is similar to the W wall of Rm 400 in Building 110.01. It may have served as facing against the rock scarp. To the W of Si 289 is another scrappy wall. These two walls, with the scarp to the SW, may form a small enclosure around Si 289. Why this particular

installation should require an enclosure is not clear.

Here the ground drops ca. 4.0 m over 4.0 m. To the SE, in Plan 110, the drop becomes more of a true cliff. The casemate-like wall of Stratum 3C was not uncovered for its full length. There is a ca. 130 m gap on the NE side of the site. It seems most probable that this wall line should be reconstructed along the top of, or just W of the top of the scarp. This would add extra height to the defenses. If this possibility is accepted, the 3C wall and attached buildings should run along the E side of W21, possibly cutting the mouths of Ci 157a and Ci 157b, skirting the scarp and continuing N just W of Ci 290.

Probably these rock-cut installations were hewn in Stratum 4. When the Stratum 3C wall was erected the installations in V21 were left outside the town, but may still have continued in use, some possibly going out of use over time. Possibly when Building 110.01 was being built Si 289 was still in use or was cleared and enclosed to serve as extra storage attached to Building 110.01.