

Plan 163: AF-AG, 28-29-30-31-32 - Overview

Stratum 5 is represented by the lowest level of deposits in an extramural cave.

No material clearly belonging to Stratum 4 was uncovered. Perhaps this area was outside the settlement of that period.

No architecture belonging to Stratum 3C was traced,; however, since the 3B defenses seem to avoid the cave, it may be that the cave's reuse began in 3C.

The 3B offset-inset wall is on the W edge of the plan. The cave probably continued in use.

Remains belonging to 3A were extensive: a dwelling, possibly sheds connected with agricultural processing, a cistern, and two different pressing installations. The cave was also in use.

It is possible that some of the 3A installations and buildings continued in use in Stratum 2, though there is nothing to confirm this. One stamp impression may provide a final phase for the cave in Stratum 2.

No remains clearly belonging to Stratum 1 were found.

Evaluation -

This is one of the most intriguing areas of the town since it provides a small view on the suburbs of Tell en-Nasbeh. It is a 50 m long, 15 m wide trench which was dug up to the E town wall in 1929.

Actually AF27-30 on Plan 163, AF31-33 on Plan 164, AG28-30 on Plan 180 and AG31-33 on Plan 181; however, the excavators drew one plan only for this large area and called it Plan 163. Few artifacts were saved or recorded from this sounding, except from Ca 193. Many more photographs were taken of this cave than of all the building remains downslope. These latter are poorly documented photographically. Elevations are fairly plentiful, especially for the rock-cut installations.

Building 163.01: Rm 200, Rm 201, Rm 202, Rm 203 -

The full plan of this building was not recovered; it seems that its E and W limits did not survive, and that its S portion is still buried. The surviving remains show a somewhat irregular plan; the structure cannot be characterized as a 3- or 4-Room building. Its walls are double-stone construction throughout. There are no indications of any doorways. **P A555** shows this structure from a distance.

Rm 200 and Rm 203 appear to be long rooms, which may mean that the entrance to the structure was to the E. The wall between these chambers cuts across the mouth of Si 187. The E wall of Rm 200 did not survive. A short section of wall extending from its W wall may indicate a small inner partition. The E wall of Rm 203 is also lost, and its S extension is unexcavated.

Rm 201 and Rm 202 together may be too large to represent the back room to Building 163.01. Perhaps they should be interpreted as storage or work areas. Perhaps the entrance was through Rm 203. Rm 201 seems too small to be even a work space; perhaps tools or a few storage jars were kept here. The W end of Rm 202 is lost, but could not have extended more than another ca. 2.0 m in that direction before a sharp rise in the bedrock.

Dating of Building 163.01 -

Since the building is isolated from all other built-up architecture, either horizontal or vertical, it is difficult to assign it to a stratum. One of its internal walls does cut the mouth of a rock-cut installation, so there was activity in the area before the building was constructed (perhaps 3C or 3B?). It is possible that Si 187 is original to the building, and that the cutting wall is a later addition. The double-stone walls tend to belong to Stratum 3B, and especially 3A. Tentatively the building may be assigned to Stratum 3A. How long it remained in use is uncertain; it could have continued into 2.

Function of Building 163.01 -

To the E and W are rock-cut installations, perhaps grape presses. It seems likely that this building is associated with these presses. Is it the dwelling of the owner of one or both presses, or a processing-storage facility for the grapes and their pressings? So little is known of the suburbs of Iron Age towns that there are no established paradigms on which to base reconstructions and conclusions, especially considering the lack of finds recorded from the area.

Building 163.02: Rm 204, Rm 205 -

Only parts of two rooms of this structure survive. It sits on a roughly 4.0 m wide ledge in the bedrock. The area to the E is ca. 1.4 m lower, while immediately to the W the bedrock is ca. 70 cm to 1.5 m higher, and even farther to the W it reaches ca. 2.0 to 3.0 m higher.<sup>99</sup> No doorways survive in any of the excavated walls, which are a mix of

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<sup>99</sup>See fig. 59 in the 1947 report for a section drawing through this area.

single- and double-stone work.

Rm 204's W wall, if it had one, does not survive, but was not likely any farther W due to the sharp rise in the bedrock. Although the plan is not clear on this, it may be that the SE extension of this room was not excavated. Rm 204's E wall is especially thick, ca. 1.1 m, and the plan gives no indication of a length-wise seam which would indicate a later wall built against an earlier one.

Rm 205 is separated from Rm 204 by a narrow double-stone wall, and its E wall is essentially single-stone work. Its W wall, if it had one, does not survive, but could not have been farther W because of the rise in the bedrock. There is no trace of a N wall. The bedrock to the N has an irregular narrow cutting which would fit the line of a N wall.

Dating of Building 163.02 -

There is little on which to establish the dating of this structure. It is isolated vertically and horizontally from any other structures. Possibly it is associated in some way with Building 163.02, which would place it in Stratum 3A, with a possible extension into Stratum 2.

Function of Building 163.02 -

Rm 205 was probably not more than 2.5 m on a side, and Rm 204 was probably not more than 2.5 m wide, though its length is uncertain. Due to the fairly sharp differences in the bedrock to E and W it does not seem likely that this building extended far in either direction. To the W are rock cut installations, probably presses. These two small rooms are likely associated with these presses, perhaps either as processing

or storage spaces.

Rock-cut Installations in AF-AG32 -

These installations are poorly documented. There are no photographs of them, and the only area marked with elevations is the central unit.

The central unit is ca. 4.0 m on a side. The section through this area in the 1947 report shows the bedrock sloping down from 767.33 in Rm 200 to ca. 766.00 at the W end of the central unit.<sup>910</sup> Since the floor of the central unit is 765.67, the depth of the installation is about 35 cm. A moveable stone basin ca. 60 cm wide is in the SW corner of this unit. In roughly the SE quadrant is Si 186, a not quite square installation, ca. 1.3 m on a side, which descends over 2.5 m in irregular steps. P 388 shows this to be a very irregular rock cutting. It is unclear if it is contemporary with the press or not. How it would have functioned with the press is unclear. The NE corner of the main unit is marked off by a line, probably indicating a change in elevation, but lower or higher than the rest of the unit cannot be determined because of the lack of levels.

The S unit is irregularly shaped, and could be lower or higher than that in the center. It is ca. 3.5 m N to S, and its maximum width E to W is 4.5 m. There is evidently a circular depression near its N edge.

The N unit is ca. 6.2 m long by 4.5 m wide. A slightly curving line is drawn down the length of the unit, probably indicating a change in elevation, probably the area to the W is higher, since that would

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<sup>910</sup>I, fig. 59.

follow the slope here in the bedrock.

Beyond the E edge of the installations are two walls. Since the installations are cut into bedrock these cannot be retaining walls for the installations. The E-most wall could be a retaining wall for the other, which is against the bedrock. The function of the wall against the bedrock is uncertain. Did this wall hold some sort of beam used in connection with the installations?

Presumably this complex is associated with Building 163.01 to the W, and would also date to Stratum 3A (into Stratum 2?). It cannot be determined if it pre-dates the building. Certainly it was used for agricultural processing, possibly as a grape press. Possibly the areas N and S of the central unit were treading floors, while the central unit was the collecting area. The lack of elevations in the side units, or any photographs, makes this suggestion tentative.

Rock-cut Installations in AF-AG29 -

There are photographs of this complex, which give a good idea of these features (P 401a and P 401b) It is situated on a ledge, at an elevation of 771.50, ca. 4.0 m wide at the maximum. The bedrock drops off sharply to the E, to ca. 768.60, almost 3.0 m in a distance of only 6.0 m. To the W is the moat; the drop off here is also sharp, but only ca. 1.5 m.

The complex, as excavated, appears to be three rectangular to square depressions linked on their W sides by short channels. The one on the S is ca. 30 cm deep, the next one N is ca. 20 cm, and the last is apparently ca. 80 cm. The depths of the connecting channels are not given. The bottom course of a stone wall runs along the W side of all

three units; a circular depression marks possibly the S limit of the wall.

The S unit comprises a rectangular depression ca. 2.3 by 1.9 m, with a narrow extension in it its SW corner to the S which is 2.5 m long by 70 cm. The next unit N is 2.1 by 1.4 m. Only the S part of the last unit on the N was excavated; it is ca. 2.0 m on its S side. The connecting channels are ca. 40 cm long and 30 cm wide. To the S is a rectangular block; it is not clear if this is a squared piece of bedrock, or a rough ashlar wall fragment.

Probably this complex is another press, though exactly how it worked is uncertain. The central basin is higher than those to N and S, so the liquid could have flowed in either direction. The reason for the long, finger-like extension in the S unit is also unclear. A final unanswerable question is why this complex was cut adjacent to the moat? From the way this installation follows the line of the Stratum 3B moat it would seem that the complex was cut after the defenses were completed. If so, the complex was likely cut in 3A, and possibly continued into Stratum 2. Or, was the moat cut to follow the line of the pre-existing press?

Ci 188 is a cistern cut in one of the intermediary steps of the area of high bedrock E of the moat. No specific datable remains were recorded from it. Presumably it is connected with the press installations to the E, no doubt providing water for the workers and the processing.

#### The Offset-Inset Wall -

The nature of the 3B defenses is discussed fully in Plan 162 and

Plan 179. The highest preserved section of the offset-inset wall is 779.94; the low point of the moat is 770.13, a drop of 10.0 m in 14.0 m. And in between the moat and the wall is the revetment/glacis, which is ca. 7.0 m thick here.

Ca 193 -

The opening to Ca 193 is 10.0 m E of the 3B offset-inset wall. There is one relatively long treatment of it in the 1947 report.<sup>911</sup> When excavated the mouth of the cave was ca. 5.8 m long, by 3.2 m wide at its widest, although this is a result of a collapse of part of the roof. Two walls, one narrow, the other thicker and built against the first on the W, mark the limit of the cave's opening in antiquity. The revetment/glacis ends just above this opening on the W. P 394 shows the relationship of the revetment, cave and presses.

It is important to note that the moat goes around the opening to the cave, and does not run along the base of the revetment/glacis as it does in N14, S11 and AA27. These two facts: that the revetment ends before the glacis, and that the moat goes around it, show that the cave was known and possibly in use when the 3B town wall was erected. Holladay has suggested on the basis of what he terms "religiously affective artifacts" found in the cave that Ca 193 was a cult area.<sup>912</sup>

The interior of the cave is divided into two large and one small chambers. The entry chamber's maximum dimensions are ca. 5.5 m by 5.5 m. The ceiling is ca. 1.6 m above the floor. There are two circular

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<sup>911</sup>I, 73.

<sup>912</sup>"Religion in Israel and Judah under the Monarchy: An Explicitly Archaeological Approach," in Ancient Israelite Religion, ed. P.D. Miller Jr., P.D. Hanson and S.D. McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 274-275.



installations in this chamber: "A" and "C"; "C" is ca. 2.0 m deep and "A" is ca. 3.5 m. There is also an oval installation labeled "D", and a third unlettered circular installation. The depth for neither is provided. "B" is an L-shaped cutting. There is a N to S line at the point where the angle is formed, which likely indicates a difference in elevation between the two areas. However, the depth of only one area is given, and it is only ca. 16 cm below floor level. The back of this chamber drops downward on the W as indicated by the dashed line between "A" and "D", and also by the difference in elevations: 773.56 to the E and 771.72 on the W.

After passing through a 1.1 m wide opening to the N a small chamber is reached. Its maximum dimensions are ca. 2.5 by 2.5 m. The floor here is 40 cm higher than to the S, and the ceiling is 2.15 m above the floor.

The next chamber to the N is marked "N". It is ca. 6.5 m long by 2.4 m wide. In the short passage which connects "N" with the chamber to the S the floor level drops 83 cm, and 14 cm more to reach the floor of "N". The ceiling here is 2.8 m above floor level.

There are no rock-cut installations in the two N chambers. Nor is there any indication how much debris had accumulated on the cave floors. P 427a shows a pounded limestone floor in Ca 193, which is said to belong to the Iron Age; the material below the floor is EB I.

#### Dating of Ca 193 -

The earliest remains are EB I, relatively similar to CT 5 and CT 6 inside the walls. The 1947 report notes that below the crushed limestone

floor were found an unspecified number of burials.<sup>913</sup> No description is given of these burials. It is also said the evidence of normal occupation was found.<sup>914</sup> Thus Stratum 5 is the earliest phase, followed by abandonment. Since the 3B moat skirts around the cave opening this suggests that the cave was known about, and possibly in use, when the defenses were constructed. The excavators found nothing in the cave which they would date before the 10th century B.C., which falls within Stratum 3C. One YHD stamp impression suggests a final possible use in late Stratum 2, or even 1.

Function of Ca 193 -

In EB I it served as both a dwelling, and, as attested by human remains, as a burial place. In the Iron Age it occupied an area in the middle of the defense system. If this had been a normal dwelling presumably the revetment might have covered it, or the moat run through it. Perhaps its unusual setting supports Holladay's suggestion that it was a cult area.

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<sup>913</sup>I, 73.

<sup>914</sup>I, 60.