

Plan 196: AK-AL-AM(-AN), 25-26-27- Overview

Stratum 5 is represented by three rock-cut cave tombs in the intramural bedrock.

Stratum 4 may be attested by some of the eight rock-cut installations found inside the presumed line of the casemate-like wall.

No clear remains of Stratum 3C could be discerned, though an intramural cistern probably belongs to this phase. It is possible that some of the rock-cut installations continued in use during this period.

Stratum 3B is attested by four intramural storage bins and a section of the offset-inset wall.

An odd tower-like room in the intramural area and several double-stone walls probably belong to Stratum 3A.

No certain remains belonging to either Stratum 2 or 1 were uncovered.

Evaluation -

This area was excavated in the 1926 season; in fact it was the first area cleared in the first part of the first season. Ironically it is the last area to be treated in this study. There are no elevations for any part of the plan. Photographic coverage is haphazard. Several features were photographed repeatedly, others not at all. Some of the features are discussed in the 1947 report, especially the cave tombs. Two rather schematic sections were drawn through this area: one E-W, the other NW-SE. These help somewhat in describing the area. The cave tombs

are also treated in Badè's preliminary report on the 1926-27 seasons. Very few finds were recorded, except for the cave tombs.

Building 196.07: Rm 1, Rm 3, Rm 7 -

This is the only structure in the area whose plan can be reconstructed at all. The photographs of this building are not good (see P 08 and P 010), and there is no sign of a threshold in any of the walls. It is built out into the intramural area. Note that in this area there is no sign of the casemate-like wall on the plan. To the NE sections of a double-stone wall are built over the outer wall of the casemate-like wall. However, in this area either the casemate-like wall was robbed out or excavation did not reach low enough to uncover it.

The W wall of Rm 3 and Rm 7 should lie in the area where the 3C wall ran. The NW corner of Rm 3 is formed by slightly overlapping portions of this wall. A similar overlap was noted in Plan 179 above. The reason for these overlaps is not clear. The construction technique is essentially the same for these sections. Unfortunately remains to the NE are so fragmentary that they are of no use in evaluating the overlaps.

The wall separating Rm 3 and Rm 7 is similar to the wall between these two rooms and Rm 1. The section of this wall between Rm 1 and Rm 3 seems to be built over an earlier wall. The S wall of Rm 7 is especially thick, ca. 2.0 m. For what reason it need to be so thick is uncertain. Rm 1 is ill-defined; what appears to be its E wall forms such an acute angle with the S wall that if it were extended to the N beyond its extant course Rm 1 would be only half a meter wide at that point.

Dating of Building 196.01 -

Since it is built into the intramural area, and does not appear to be connected with the casemate-like wall (as were towers Building 123.01 and Building 73.01), and in fact is built either partially over that wall or replaces it, the building can be no earlier than 3B. It interrupts the string of intramural storage bins. This might be interpreted to mean that such bins once existed in the area of this building but were destroyed when the building was constructed, which would make the building 3B. Or the building could have been put in at the same time as the bins and belong to 3B. Because along the rest of the S intramural area a large amount of space was left for foot traffic it seems best to put this building in 3A. Perhaps the wall below the wall between Rm 1 and Rm 3 may have been one of the walls connecting two bins such as were found in Plan 162 and Plan 179.

Function of Building 196.01 -

It is difficult to imagine the role of this building. It is not clear whether it was part of a larger building W of the original 3C town wall, or a separate structure of its own. Its position in the intramural area is similar to the towers in Plan 73 (Building 73.01) and Plan 123 (Building 123.01), though its construction is less massive and it is stratigraphically later. Perhaps its proximity to the 3B offset-inset wall indicates a connection with the town's defenses.

Storage Bins: Bn 3, Bn 4, Bn 8, Bn 9, Ci 31 -

These four bins are part of the line of storage units found all around the S intramural area of the town. They are constructed in the debris poured into the intramural area to level it up, and so the bins belong to Stratum 3B. Bn 3 and Bn 4 are in an ill-defined space marked Rm 2, and Bn 8 and Bn 9 are in another ill-defined space marked Rm 4

(see P 09); Bn 3 is built over the chambers of CT 5 and CT 6, but is not over the entrance to either. The average diameter of these four bins is ca. 1.3 m. On the W side of the town two bins were preserved to a height of ca. 2.0 m. If all such bins were originally at least that deep then the average capacity of a bin in this area was 2.7 cubic meters, and the total capacity of the area was 10.8 cubic meters.

Bn 9 is the most interesting for it was built over the mouth of Ci 31. The cistern mouth was carefully covered by stones (P 015). It was described in detail by Badè.⁹⁸⁰ Although his initial attempt to link the cistern with the one into which the bodies of Gedaliah and his followers were dumped after their murder was later discarded, other of his observations are worth noting.⁹⁸¹ It is one of only three cisterns found in the intramural area, and it was sealed with care so that grain from the bin would not trickle into it. Also, relatively little debris was found to have seeped in. To Badè this suggested that the cistern was still in use when the bin was constructed, i.e. he expected that the cistern would have been filled with debris had it been left open. If this is correct one must wonder why the builder of the bin chose to construct it over a cistern, rather than on regular bedrock. Perhaps the cistern was used for additional storage space or as a hiding place. A repercussion of this suggestion is that the bins, at least in the immediate vicinity, were constructed first, and that debris was piled up around them. Alternatively, the bin builder may have chanced upon the cistern, while digging the bin into the intramural area, cleared it out and reused it.

Ci 31, being outside the presumed line of the casemate-like wall,

⁹⁸⁰Excavations at Tell en-Nasbeh, 1926 and 1927. A Preliminary Report. Palestine Institute Publications No. 1 (Berkeley, 1928), 25-26.

⁹⁸¹I, 217.

is another indication that Tell en-Nasbeh had suburbs very early on, at least by 3C.

The Cave Tombs: CT 5, CT 6, CT 7 -

These three EB I rock-cut installations are all within ca. 3.0 m of each other in AK26. The plans published in the final report are only schematic representations of where the objects were found. CT 5 and CT 6 are treated extensively in the 1947 report and in a preliminary report (see P 023 for a view of these two tombs with their roofs removed).⁹⁸²

CT 7 is a problem. No detailed plans or sections were made of it, and no record cards for it could be found in the Badè Institute, though there is one photograph of its mouth, P A117. Yet in the 1947 report there is a photograph of a copper dagger said to come from CT 7; further, the artifact was subjected to chemical/metallurgical analysis in Berkeley.⁹⁸³ It seems as though all record of this object, and any other objects found in this tomb, has been lost, as well as the objects themselves. There are no other references to this tomb in any of the preliminary reports or the 1947 report.

CT 5 was discovered when fragmentary human bones began to surface at the bottom of Bn 3.⁹⁸⁴ The builders of this bin evidently broke through the roof of the tomb by accident. The entrance way was a shaft ca. 1.5 long by ca. 1.1 m to 60 cm wide; it was only 70 cm deep. The

⁹⁸²Mainly I, 68-72; W.F. Badè, Some Tombs of Tell en-Nasbeh Discovered in 1929. Palestine Institute Publications No. 2. (Berkeley, 1931). There is also an unpublished paper, "Location, Condition, and General Features of the Tombs," on file in the Badè Institute of Biblical Archaeology. Portions of this short paper were incorporated into the published reports.

⁹⁸³I, pl. 104.1 and Appendix E.

⁹⁸⁴I, 68.

opening to the tomb was blocked by a thin stone wall. Some bones (human femurs and tibias) and pottery were found in the entrance chamber. The stones used to wall off the entrance to the tomb were preserved to only half the height of the mouth; this and the bones in the shaft show that the tomb had been broken into from this direction. The tomb chamber was irregularly shaped; its maximum length was ca. 4.5 m, with a maximum width of ca. 2.5 m.

CT 6's entrance was in a depression before a low rock scarp which left possibly a ca. 30 cm high gap in to the tomb (see P 024). The shaft was filled by a layer of small stones about half way down; a small cup was found inverted on one of the stones and 4 small bowls were found on the floor of the shaft beneath the stones. It was also a low shaft, ca. 1.2 m long, varying in width from 1.1 m to 20 cm, with a maximum depth of 90 cm. The interior was divided into two chambers connected by a short tunnel. The outer chamber was ca. 3.7 m long by 2.5 m wide at its widest. Its height was only ca. 1.1 m. The tunnel was ca. 50 cm long, 70 cm wide and 60 cm high. The rear chamber was ca. 2.3 m long, 1.5 m wide and 1.5 m high.

Both tombs were found filled with earth, the remains scattered about. The robbers came in through the mouth of CT 5. Since no Iron Age material was found within, the robbing probably took place during Stratum 5, the EB I period. Later, the roofs in part collapsed allowing debris to enter. Although the tombs were excavated in 6" spits the excavators could determine no apparent stratigraphy. No plans were made as the spits were removed. Photographs show the tombs in various stages of excavation and it might be possible through close scrutiny of these images to reconstruct the spits and what artifacts were visible at each stage of the clearance.

Remains of at least seventy-five individuals came from CT 6, though the position of only one skeleton could be determined. It was lying supine, on its right side, extended, facing SW, possibly with its hand raised to its face. An over-turned bowl was found near the head, possibly in its original position. There were no traces of fire on any of the bones. Because the tombs had been disturbed it was impossible to determine the original disposition of the bones and scanty artifacts.

The plan indicates the probable line of the partition wall between the tombs though none was found in the excavation. Such plans as there are show CT 5 with a most irregular plan, extremely trapezoidal, almost as though CT 6 was dug later than CT 5 and partially cutting it. The wall also may have crumbled while the tombs were still in use.

Other Features -

Of the rock-cut installations found in AK-AL25 little can be said. They are generally found in isolation or adjacent to walls too fragmentary to establish any stratigraphic relations. Usually there are no records of artifacts from any of these features.

Si 14 seems to be covered in part by a fragment of a two stone wide wall. Ci 33 contained an ostrakon inscribed L H in a script dated to ca. 1000 B.C.; it also had a floral design in the plaster of its wall (P A70).⁹⁸⁵ Its mouth was a rectangular stone slab on which was set a smaller stone ring (P A67) Ci 34 still retained the wall which encircled its opening, reminiscent of Ci 370. The 1947 report suggests that Ci 33 and Ci 34 were of the bottle-shaped variety.⁹⁸⁶ Si 12 is in the path of a

⁹⁸⁵I, pp. 167, 171.

⁹⁸⁶I, 129 n. 1.

thick wall stub projecting from the W wall of Rm 3 which would have covered it if it continued to the W. Si 13 is very near Si 14 and Ci 33; it is uncertain if they were all in use at the same time. Si 17 and Si 18 might have been enclosed by a building with double-stone walls partially preserved in AK24, though this is most uncertain.

A thick section of wall is built across the rear chamber of CT 6. It is too close to the rebuild over the casemate-like wall, which is to the E, to be contemporary with it. Its date is uncertain. Another section of masonry, somewhat similar to this, was found a little farther SW in AL25 and covers two additional openings of Ci 34

The Offset-Inset Wall -

The 3B offset-inset wall contains parts of three insets, two offsets and a tower. It varies in width from 4.5 to 5.4 m. There is no sign of any revetment/glacis or moat protecting the wall. However, a trench dug against the outer face of the wall showed that it was covered with plaster from its base upwards to 5.0 or 6.0 m. The tower in AM26 is an addition built against the wall. It is ca. 2.5 m wide and has a revetment/glacis ca. 2.9 m thick; together these give the wall a thickness of 9.9 m at that point. The length of the tower is ca. 9.0 m. Save for the tower itself there are no seams in the wall to indicate different construction phases.

The section across the tower shows that the rear part of the wall is here founded partially on debris, and partially on bedrock. The section also shows the relatively swift drop in bedrock just outside the double-stone wall which presumably follows the course of the casemate-like wall.

A trench ca. 4.0 m wide and cut from some 65.0 m downslope up to the wall revealed Iron Age debris below that of EB I. The excavators took this as evidence that debris from inside the town was dumped over the wall here creating a reverse stratigraphy. The trench also uncovered a short wall 4.5 m long just below the tower. Its purpose is unknown.