

Plan 75: N-P-Q, 19-20-21 - Overview

No remains of Stratum 5 could be traced.

Stratum 4 is represented by a continuation of the series of rock-cut installations, used for agricultural processing and storage, found in Plan 74 to the W. Most of these went out of use at the beginning of Stratum 3, though a few continued on.

Stratum 3C is attested by what appears to be the outer wall of the casemate-like wall, and possibly a few wall fragments.

The offset-inset wall is the only certain evidence of Stratum 3B, though some of the rebuilds of Stratum 3C may be of this period.

Stratum 3A is represented by a probable water installation built against the 3B town wall and by most of the rebuilds and modifications to the 3C plan.

Part of a large public building, most of which is on Plan 74, represents the only certain remains of Stratum 2. A few ill-defined walls over the line of the 3C casemate-like wall extending into the intramural area, may also be Stratum 2. The offset-inset wall continues into this period.

Stratum 1 is attested by a small section of wall built over the stump of the 3B offset-inset wall.

Evaluation -

This area was excavated in 1929. No clearance was undertaken in

Q20-21. There are only a few photographs, and these do not cover the entire area. Elevations are moderately plentiful, but seldom occur where most needed. As there are not many top and bottom levels, it is especially difficult to gain an impression of the heights of the walls. Like all the areas cleared in 1929, it was divided into two levels, which appear on different plans. It is the upper level (Level I) which appears on the published Survey Map. The lower level (Level II) only appears in figure 41 of the 1947 report.

Bedrock was reached in P19-20 and Q19. In the space adjacent to the offset-inset wall the depth reached was only ca. 1.2 m below the top of the town wall. Because a part of the area was left untouched and because bedrock is quite high here (which led to much erosion, and explains why so few walls survived in the center of the area) it is not possible to offer a complete plan for any building, and even some of the relations suggested here are open to doubt.

Building 74.01: Rm 194, Rm 195, Rm 198 -

The description and general evaluation of this large structure were begun in Plan 74. The rooms described here may be seen in P 392 and P 393. None of these rooms shows any sign of a doorway.

Rm 194 is a space to the N of Rm 195. It is bounded on the W and S by double-stone walls, but no walls are preserved to the N and E. It is possible that walls enclosed this space following the lines of the N wall of Rm 193 to the W and the E wall of Rm 195 to the S. If such walls existed, they have not survived. P 392 shows what may be a section of an earlier wall what would be below the floor level of this space.

Rm 195 is bounded by double-stone walls on all sides. Its S wall

does not appear on the 1947 Survey Map, but does appear on Plan 75 and Plan 92 and in P 392. Presumably entrance to this room was by way of the courtyard to the W which includes Rm 198.

Rm 198's borders are ill-defined. It would seem that Rm 198 is the area of the patch of stone-paving W of Rm 195, the small spaces empty of stones N, E and W of Rm 195, and all the area S of the pavement to the limit of the excavation. On the basis on the photographs, the paving seems a little rougher than that to the W.

Dating of Building 74.01 -

As discussed above in Plan 74, the plan of this building disrupts all the earlier walls to the W which belong to Stratum 3. Note also that the walls of this structure are all double-stone work. For these reasons the building's foundation is ascribed to Stratum 2, with a possibility of use into Stratum 1.

Function -

At least one, possibly two side rooms off a paved central court. This is as monumental a structure as will ever be found at Tell en-Nasbeh; perhaps it is a palace.

Rock-Cut Installations Below Building 74.01: Si 266, Si 267, Si 271, Si 272, Si 273, Si 274 -

Like the equivalent area of Plan 74 to the W, this area is dotted with rock-cut installations from ca. 1.0 to 2.0 m deep. These appear on the Level II plan. Si 266 is in line with the W wall of Rm 194 and may originally have been cut by such a wall. Si 267 is isolated from all

other features; it is not cut by any wall. Si 271 is cut by the wall between Rm 198 and Rm 199, and is partially covered by the stone paving of Rm 199. This wall belongs to a Stratum 3 building below the Stratum 2 public building and is strong evidence for a date for this installation in Stratum 4. Si 272 is cut by the W wall of Rm 194. Si 273 is cut by the N wall of Rm 195, and the same room's E wall cuts Si 274.

Dating of the Rock-Cut Installations -

An absolute dating for these features is difficult, as was discussed in Plan 74 above. Clearly they have nothing to do with the great Stratum 2 building (Building 74.01) above them. One is even cut by a wall of the Stratum 2 building, and another is cut by a wall of a building earlier than the Stratum 2 building, i.e. Stratum 3. Since most walls in Stratum 3 were rebuilds and modification to the original 3C plan, it is likely that virtually all of these rock-cut installations were cut in Stratum 4, though with final use phases varying. Some came to an end before Stratum 3C, others continued on into that stratum.

Function -

None of these installations are "classic" cistern shapes. They may have been used for storage, as their designation "si(lo)" by the excavators suggests, or perhaps were used for food processing at that time.

Other Features -

It is not possible to group the remaining rooms into recognizable buildings. The following discussion treats together rooms which probably were related, but cannot now be reconstructed into larger wholes.

Rm 253 is a long chamber bounded on the SW by a double-stone wall, and on the NE by a very thick, but fragmentary (or perhaps only partially excavated?) wall, which has a maximum width of 2.6 m. Though there are no partition walls within Rm 253, the thick wall may be part of the 3C casemate-like wall, or perhaps a later rebuild over it. Note that in N18-19 this wide wall appears to be founded on an earlier, lower wall which may be part of the 3C casemate-like wall. In the NW a short section of masonry is preserved adjacent to the SW wall of the room. This wall is preserved at a lower elevation, and may therefore be earlier. There is no continuation of Rm 253 to the NW; instead there are the N and E walls of Rm 262. It may be that Rm 262 and related features to the W cut and interrupt such a continuation. It may be that a continuation of the wall between Rm 255 and Rm 263 ran from SW to NE across Rm 253. This would make Rm 253 a more reasonable size. To the SE Rm 253 narrows considerably and ends at a thin double-stone wall, which is discussed in connection with Rm 254. The gap in the SW wall is probably an accident of preservation, rather than a doorway, for the bedrock is high in this area. The gap in the NE wall may be more apparent than real. It may be that the wall in this area was not well-preserved.

Rm 255 is SW of Rm 253. Only one other wall survives for this room, a single-stone wall with Rm 263. Built against this was is an installation numbered Rm 261. It should probably have been numbered in the non-room number series, but for some reason was not. Rm 261 looks like a storage unit, or "bin", which may mean that Rm 255 was at least partially a courtyard. At the S limit of the excavated area of Rm 255 is Si 281. Isolated as it is, it cannot be related to any feature in its vicinity.

It seems likely that the SE part of Rm 253, Rm 255 and Rm 261 are

part of the same structure. Single-stone walls tend to indicate an early phase, but no other walls of this type are preserved anywhere in this area. The NW wall of Rm 255 may be a late flimsy partition wall. These rooms may have been founded in Stratum 3C, and continued into 3A.

Rm 254 is an empty space. It is not clear why it received a number, when the room fragments NE of it did not. The 1947 report placed it in the late part of Stratum I, but without explanation.⁶⁸⁸ Also, on the plan the N and NE wall of Rm 254 are shaded as belonging to the "Maccabean" period. Note that P 675 and P A632b show the N and NE walls of Rm 254 to be only one course high and floating above the walls of Rm 253. It is these unnumbered rooms which will be discussed here.

Built over the SE end of the massive wall in P20 is the end of a chamber which continued NE, but which now is lost. The walls of the room are all double-stone work. It may be that the top of the earlier thick wall served in part as a floor for this room.

Immediately SW of this small room is a line of diagonal hatching over the wide wall. This may indicate a wall built over the wide wall, but which was not indicated in a stone by stone plan. As mentioned above, at the SE end of Rm 253 is a thin double-stone wall. This wall stops at one end of the diagonal hatching, while the other end seems to be built against the SW wall of Rm 253. This thin wall turns SE, and on the plan comes to an end at the edge of the excavated area; it may continue in that direction in the unexcavated area.

Running NE, and serving as the NW border for Rm 254 is a double-stone wall. This wall may have continued SW, as suggested by a few

⁶⁸⁸I, 183 n. 15.

stones, but the bedrock is high there, and such a continuation is not preserved. The small patch of stones N of this wall, but S of the chamber built over the wide wall, may actually be a portion of the wide wall. The NE boundary of Rm 254 is a jagged double-stone wall. The NE and NW walls of Rm 254 are preserved to about the same height, but are not aligned so that their possible meeting forms a right angle corner.

It seems that all of these walls are later than Rm 253, Rm 255 and Rm 266, or at least a later addition to that complex. This means probably Stratum 3A or more likely 2 since it is at a different orientation than most Stratum 3 remains. The function of these rooms cannot even be guessed at. It should only be noted that the intramural area seems to have been a service-storage area, and it may be that these rooms served in such a capacity.

Rm 259 is not a room per se, but some sort of an installation (see P 666). On the plan it is shaded as belonging to the "Maccabean" period. It seems to be built-up against the offset-inset wall on the NE, though shading on the plan suggests that the excavators may have thought that it extended over part of the town wall. In P 666 the angle of the view of where Rm 259 reaches the offset-inset wall is bad, but it looks like the installation is lower than the offset-inset wall. Unfortunately the wall of this installation, and the masonry connecting it to the town wall is partially robbed out.

The walls of the installation are double- or triple-stone work, and its floor is cobbled. There are no indications whether it was plastered. Its internal dimensions, ca. 1.9 m on a side, match those of Rm 172 of installation Building 74.06, which is also a cobble-paved installation. Possibly Rm 259 has a similar function. Note that the hatched areas NE of Rm 259 may have been basins such as Rm 171 and Ci

176 were for installation Building 74.06. Perhaps Rm 259 was a water installation of sorts. Water may have been channeled off the adjacent town wall, or brought up from a nearby cistern, such as Ci 285 to the SE. The function of the installation is less clear. Perhaps it was a trough for watering animals. If so, some of the amorphous or irregular features in the area (Rm 257 or Rm 254) might be construed as animal pens. Since it is built against the 3B town wall, it is likely Stratum 3A or later.

Rm 257's connection to the offset-inset wall is on Plan 58, it is discussed there.

Rm 262 and Rm 264 seem to be part of the same constructional phase as Rm 197, possibly 3A. The N wall of these rooms is built over a continuation of the short wall segment on the SW side of Rm 253 (this lower wall is the hatched area N of the two rooms). Yet the way that it is drawn also makes it appear to be lower than the continuation of the wide wall N of Rm 253. Is the hatched wall part of a foundation for the wide wall, or perhaps a later wall built against the inner face of the wide wall?

All the walls of Rm 262 and Rm 264 are double stone construction throughout. What is puzzling is that the S wall of Rm 264 overlaps the S wall of Rm 262, and they seem to be preserved at about the height. It is not clear if this is evidence of different construction phases, or the same. If they are of the same phase, the reason why such thick walls were needed here is not obvious. As mentioned above, these rooms may be late, 3A, modifications to whatever was the original, 3C, configuration of the building to which Rm 169 in P18 belonged.

Rm 265 was constructed at the same time as Rm 262. One of its

stones dovetails into the S wall of Rm 262. Also, the W wall of Rm 265 is double-stone work, like the rest of the area. The S wall is not preserved. It is trapezoidal and rather small; perhaps it was a storage area. Its connection with Rm 262 suggests that it too may belong to 3A and later.

Rm 263 is an irregular space between Rm 265 and Rm 255. Its NE and NW limits are double-stone wall, while its SE wall is single-stone; its SW wall is not preserved. It is not at all clear if Rm 263 was a closed space, it seems too wide for that. It may have been an open work area. Alternatively, some internal walls may have not survived and this may have originally been a small dwelling or other roofed structure. The mixed construction suggests a use from 3C to 3A, with possible use beyond that.

Ci 178 this rock-cut installation sits isolated from the other features in its vicinity, though it may have been connected with the Rm 262-Rm 264 complex. It is probably bottle-shaped.⁶⁸⁹ It is likely near the front of some building. Given the dimensions of most Stratum 3 buildings at Tell en-Nasbeh, the front of the building should be within a meter of the mouth of the cistern on the S. It is one of five large cisterns in this area of the town, the others are to the W in Plan 74. Whether it was cut in Stratum 3C, or in 4, cannot be determined.

The Offset-Inset Wall -

Only a small section of the wall and a corner of a tower appear on this plan. The wall here is ca. 3.9 m thick, and the tower is ca. 6.1 m thick. As mentioned above, the installation Rm 259 was built against it,

⁶⁸⁹I, 129 n. 1.

as well as a meter long stretch of wall. The short wall could be part of a larger enclosure, or just a "fence" for Rm 259. The diagonal hatching on the NW part of the town wall indicates that it is a late feature built over the stump of the 3B town wall. The excavators called it "Maccabean". It probably belong to Stratum 1.