

2013 Grid Report

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Introduction:

In recent years, one of the major foci of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon's excavations in Grid 38 has been uncovering and understanding the earliest phases of Philistine settlement. In 2009 building 572 was uncovered in square 38.75. Building 572 was a house from the earliest phase of Philistine occupation (20), featuring a number of interesting finds for understanding the Philistines, most notably a plastered 4 horned altar (Master and Aja 2011). This prompted an endeavor over the next 4 seasons to uncover the rest of this important building, both to the south, in square 38.85, and to the east in square 38.76, with the end goal of restoring the building for display as a model of a Philistine house. The 2013 season represents the final year of this process, and includes the excavation of the earliest iron I material from these squares. This is thus the last scheduled season for excavation in grid 38, and we have no intention of doing any further work in this area.

As always thanks is due first and foremost to our generous sponsor Shelby White, but also to the hard work of our staff and student volunteers. I am especially indebted to the excellent work of square supervisor Jonathan Wylie, who directed both 38.85 and 38.76, and his assistants Joel Jackson and Meghan Gegner. Special thanks is also due to Ben Felker, our architect and the creator of all our top plans and Melissa Aja for her photography. Without these people we would not have been able to meet our season goals to close the area.

Phase 22

During the last week of excavation a small portion of a phase 22 building (photo A13_25510) was excavated in 38.85. The western and northern walls of the building were preserved, with the rest of the building extending to the east outside of our excavation area. This only the northwest corner and a small strip extending to the south were preserved. Nothing from phase 22 was excavated in square 38.76

Following the removal of phase 20B floor (38.85 U404) we immediately uncovered a mudbrick wall with three courses of cobble foundations (38.85 U410) running N-S across the length of square 38.85, cornering with E-W wall (38.85.U434) at the northern end of the square, and continuing to the southern baulk. The wall is interrupted in the south by a burnt brickly feature (38.85 U431) which possibly marks a threshold or entrance-way into the building. It is also

possibly that U431 represents another abutting wall that was largely robbed out in phase 19, along with the phase 20 walls (robber trench 38.85.U393).

This building was originally thought to be Iron I despite its low depth, because wall 85.410 runs along the same line as wall 75.U401, which is the eastern closing wall of room 572 in square 75 in phase 20B. It was later confirmed that this was not the case, and that the wall belongs to a phase 22 building.

In the North-West corner of the room a cache of artifacts and vessels was uncovered in the fill (38.85.U433) above floor 85.U435. This cache included a faience lidded pyxis (without the lid, photo A13_24889, MC 68078), an incised ivory pin (MC 68103), and a gold pendant (MC 68105) as well as two restorable bowls (RP 12914, 12915), and numerous other artifacts. This fill was sealed by another surface (85.U430), which was identified as a later phase 22 floor. On this floor a bricky feature (85.U436) was constructed, consisting of two vertical E-W bricks with a brickish fill in between. A scarab was discovered in this feature (MC 68117). This feature continues into the eastern baulk and is not fully understood, but may have been a bin. An additional mudbrick feature (85.U437) is built against the exterior (western edge) of U410, and resembles a bench (which one would not expect against an exterior wall). Both of these features are consistent of what we would expect of Philistine style houses, and are as of yet unattested in the LB buildings at Ashkelon. That being said both are only partially exposed and not fully understood. They may belong to brick debris from wall collapse.

The area to the west of this building seems to have been an outdoor open area, with many layers of natural accumulation (extending into phase 21 and 20). These include wind-blown sand layers (38.85 U387) which lipped up to the phase 22 walls. Part of the area was robbed out by a massive phase 21 pit (38.85.U428). It appears that this space is a continuation of the open area excavated in 38.84. During phase 22 this area was primarily an outdoor space, with no discernible surfaces.

It is possible that the corner room we uncovered is the edge of another courtyard building, similar to the one excavated in 38.74 in 2010, however this is impossible to determine due to the limited extent excavated this season.

Phase 21

Phase 21 is poorly preserved in 38.85. The main feature of this phase, the Egyptian Garrison wall (38.85.U414=38.84.F1080=83.F618) continues about one meter into the western edge of the square where it corners and heads into the southern baulk. Continuing eastward from the edge of the wall is a dense bricky fill layer (85.U384). This fill is preserved to the same height as the U414 (directly beneath the 20A surfaces) and continues along generally the same line about 5 meters to the east. The revetment wall (38.85.U389 = 84.1061 = 84.F1038 = 83.F566) continues eastward as a northern border to this fill. The fill ends in the middle of the square, around the place where the revetment wall ends. Our original interpretation, that this feature was part of the

garrison wall, proved incorrect as we were unable to identify any bricklines east of U414 (see photo A13_25147). This suggests that this brickly fill belongs to phase 20, contained by the revetment wall, and serves as a leveling fill for the phase 20A surface. However, there is no Iron I or Philistine pottery excavated from this fill. Beneath fill U384 in the east was a layer of beach sand (U440). In the west, on top of the sand and underneath the brickly fill, we excavated a clayish layer (U427) that contained exclusively phase 21 pottery. This demonstrates that fill U384 was deposited over a phase 21 layer. The fill is clearly contained by the revetment wall (U389), which we understand as phase 20 and will discuss more in depth later.

In the rest of the square phase 21 is represented by a large shallow cut filled with dense clay-like material (38.85 U439/428). This material is cut into a natural accumulation of sand that likely began in phase 22, but continues into phase 21 (U440). This build-up continues even after the construction of the phase 20 walls and surfaces (U387, covering U390=395, U394, U438 and lipping up against U389 and U291). In 38.83, 84 a similar fill was excavated in 2004(38.84.L 1032, 84.L1104 38.83.560, 83.624). At the time this was termed a “gully” fill, caused by natural depositions caught between the revetment wall and the southern walls of the phase 20b buildings.

The characterization of phase 21 as an open area cut by large pits and silos is in keeping with our established understanding of phase 21 from previous excavation is 38.84 and 38.74. Phase 21 is not preserved on the eastern side of the square where Phase 22 building 435 lies directly beneath phase 20B floor 85.U404.

Nothing from phase 21 was excavated in square 38.76.

Phase 20B

In phase 20B square 38.85 contains 2 partial rooms, as well as some exterior features and surfaces. In square 38.76 we have parts of multiple interior and courtyard rooms.

The western half of 38.85 in 20B appears to have been exterior space extending to the south of building 572, which was bounded on the south by Wall 291, which runs between squares 75 and 85.¹ South of this there is a large open area that the gully (U387) ran through in between 20B and 20A.

Just south of wall 291 a large silo (U396/397), over 1.5 meters deep, was excavated, reaching beach sand at the bottom (at 15.7 m). This feature was back-filled in 20A, and contains much Philistine Monochrome pottery, mostly Mycenaean IIIC early, but with a few sherds of Mycenaean IIIC middle.

¹Note that U291 DOES NOT extend all the way to the eastern balk, but stops cornering with 75.U401 (see photo A13_25513).

A patchy wall constructed of large field stones and mudbrick (U389, photo A13_25121) runs east-west across the south portion of the square and is dated to this phase. This feature, a continuation of the so-called revetment wall in squares 84 (F1061=1038) and 83 (F566), which was built up against the face of the phase 21 Egyptian Garrison wall (85.U414 = 84.U1080). For this reason it was originally associated with the garrison wall. Later it was assumed that 85.U389 was built in phase 20 to prevent erosion of the Egyptian garrison wall by the natural water laid accumulation of the gully (85.U387 = 84.L1032=84.L1104). This season we determined that the garrison wall (85.U414) ends about one meter into square 85 and then turns south into the baulk, however, the revetment wall continues to the east abutting a brickly fill (U384). The wall ends in the middle of the square, approximately in line with the western extent of a triangular shaped surface constructed of approximately fist sized field-stones (U390 = U395). Thus to the east of this feature we posited a robbed closing wall (no trench was ever identified, 85.U441), separating interior floors (U404) from exterior space, and presumably cornering with wall 389.

Beneath the proposed corner we found the disarticulated remains of a donkey skull and multiple vertebrae. This is consistent with other equid skull deposits attested in Philistine constructions at Ashkelon in phase 20 (38.74.L1077) and 19 (38.84.959, 972) (see Aja 2009, 392, table 4.7). The working surface (U390/U395) was covered with hard packed mud clay (U394), both of which are phased to 20B, and are covered up by the later gully accumulation (U387), which was deposited between phases 20B and 20A. This natural accumulation (U387), however, is not found on the eastern half of the square beyond U390/U395, which led us to propose 85.U441, a N-S robbed wall along this line (a line where a wall had stood throughout the rest of the iron age occupation), although no trench was ever identified. No closing wall was identified on the west, nor was there any other identifiable surface west of U394, further suggesting that this was open space in phase 20b.

On the eastern half of the square there was one major 20B floor (85.U404), although no walls were identified. We suggest that all three closing walls were robbed, one on the west (85.U441), bordering 85.U390/U395, one on the south, running close to the line of the revetment wall (85.U393), and one on the north, just south of W 291 (U399). Of these three we only successfully identified a trench for U393 (right on top of phase 22 wall or threshold U431). The locations of the other walls were reconstructed based on the extent of floor U404 and the position of multiple bins built on that surface. In the areas of these proposed trenches multiple pieces of Bichrome pottery were excavated at lower levels, leading us to believe that the walls continued in use through 20B and into 20A, before they were finally robbed out in phase 19. The phase 20B room, floor 404, appears to be a separate construction from building 572 in 38.75. Room 404 appears to be a large MPV, featuring a number of pits and ash patches (85.U418/419, 422/423, 405, 406, 415/416), as well as 2 bins, U400 and U402, built in the southwest and northwest corners of the proposed room. These bins were essential to our interpretation of the wall lines of the room. The floor itself was characterized by a thick phytolith layer, covered in multiple places by a lime plaster. Next to one of the bins a potential keyhole

hearth was identified. This unit (U405) was poorly preserved, and may in fact be nothing more than a brickly deposit on top the floor.

On this floor numerous metal artifacts were identified including a blade (MC 67534, A13_25112) and an awl with a bone handle (MC 67607, A13_25109). A faience Egyptian plaque (MC 67831) was found in the buildup of this floor.

South of robber trench U393 we excavated another room with an ashy grey floor (U417). This room contained very little material remains, but featured a few clear sherds of Mycenaean IIC early pottery. The rest of this building seems to have extended to the south and east, with at least one set of backrooms bordering the MPV to the east, and possibly a street beyond them to the east. The 38.85 building would thus be of the simple style as described in Aja 2009 (fig.4.5:A-C).

This overall building plan coincides well with what we excavated in 38.76. In 38.76 we excavated the eastern extent of building 572, particularly the continuation of room 648. 38.75 floor 648 continues east into 38.76 (U143) approximately 2 meters before running into N-S wall 38.76.U148. This wall does not partition the entire space, creating instead a back room to the NE, and a continuation of the MPV, room 648, to the SE. This parallels what Aja has categorized as an elaborate style house (2009, fig.4.5:E-F). Both back rooms presumably extend to the same street as building 404 in 38.85. Thus wall 76.U148 is an interior wall. A mudbrick bench (76.U145, one course high and two bricks long) is built on the western side of wall 148, and a stone bin (76.U147) is built in the presumed north-east corner of room 648. Unfortunately the northern wall (75.U492) of this building has been robbed out by later by phase 14 and 15 pits (76.U124/125, U102/103), but is assumed to have continued across the square. 76.U148 would have abutted 75.U492 in the north, with an opening/doorway leading into the southernmost back room (76.U149).

In 20A N-S wall 76.U130 abutts wall 76.148, but 20B floor 76.U149 goes under this wall, suggesting that the area was open in 20B, possibly for a doorway along the lines of an Aja type G construction (2009, fig.4.5). Wall 75.572 does not continue into square 76, suggesting that this is also a pier wall. The floor (76.U143) is an ashy sticky build-up of occupational accumulation up until the 20A surface, but contains very little in the way of material remains.

Phase 20A

At some point early in the constructional process of 20A or as a terminal act of 20B, silo 85.396 was back-filled. Slightly afterwards a set of stones (85.U438) was set against the foundation of wall 85.U291 to help protect from the erosion from the gully (see photo A13_25509). After this the natural accumulation (85.U387) covered over the silo as well as 85.U394, sloping up against the revetment wall 85.U389 and wall U291, covering U438. All of this natural accumulation was covered, to the level of the top of the Egyptian Garrison wall and brickly fill U384 by

constructional fill U378. The 20A floor, 85.U368 runs over the top of these fills from the south baulk to 85.291, just over the top of U389, U384, and U414.

During this phase a rough curbing of mudbrick (85.U377) separates U368 from the street (85.U301) in the west, which was constructed in this phase. The curbing is patchy, and in places the surface material spills out mixing with the street. Much of the curbing is cut out by the foundation trench (85.U381) for the 19-18 street wall 85.U284.

The primary phase 20A surface (85.U368), is a patchy courtyard surface featuring multiple pits and postholes (U382,383). One large pit (85.370/371) was about a half meter deep containing multiple phytolith covered layers. Next to this pit was another one filled with beach sand (85.U369/372,). A hearth (85.U329) is located in the south center of the room, constructed with a sherd foundation with shells topping the mudbrick cap. Samples sent to analysis showed heavy burning of the sediments in the area.

A row of mudbricks (85.U350) runs E-W just north of the south baulk, abutting the curbing (85.U377) in the west and extending approximately 2.5 meters to the east, but does not seem to corner or interact with any other features. A large rock lay to the east of this wall segment (85.U375) and was identified as a possible pillar base, but its location in relation to wall U350 makes this unlikely.

On the eastern part of the square 20A surface (U392) is located ca. 40 cm lower than the contemporary floor in the western half, which is consistent with what we found in phases 19-17 in previous seasons, and supports our idea that the Iron Age buildings are terraced into the eastern slope of the tel. Due to this difference, the 20A floors in the east are much closer in height to the 20B floors, separated by only a few centimeters, and share the same walls, which as we mentioned previously were robbed out in phase 19.

It is also worth consideration that the Egyptian garrison wall and associated features played a role in the terracing to the east. While the garrison wall (U414) stops approximately one meter into the square, a bricky fill (U384) continues along its line, behind wall U389. This wall and fill stop half way through the square, in line with our proposed N-S wall just east of U390. In phase 20B the east and west side are approximately level, but in 20A the surface in the western half of the square (U368) is built over the natural accumulation from the gully (U387), the Egyptian garrison wall (U414), the revetment wall (U389), and its associated bricky fill (U384). This was also the case with the 20A surfaces in 38.84. Thus the need to build over the existing feature of the garrison wall in 20A may have shaped the layout and terracing of the Philistine buildings from phase 20A through at least phase 17.

We propose that the phase 20A surface in the west (U392), was bordered by E-W walls robbed out by robber trenches U393 and 399, originally constructed in phase 20b, as well as an additional N-S wall (85.U441), all robbed out in phase 19. South of robber trench 393 a plastered surface (U388), with multiple Mycenaean IIC early sherds resting on it ran into the southern and

eastern baulks and sloped up towards the proposed line of 85.U441. A few postholes were cut into surfaces U392 and U388, suggesting that they are MPVs, consistent with the use of the space in 20B as well as 19.

In square 76 the general floor plan of 20B remains the same. Wall 148 remains in use, as do bin 147 and bench 145. E-W wall 130 is built over the 20B floor (U143 and U149), and new surfaces 76.U140 (the continuation of floor 600 from 38.75) and U146 (over U149 in the NE room) were laid running up to all these features. The surfaces were thick and ashy, with a thin layer of sand separating them from the brickly fill on top. South of wall 130 a circular stone feature (potentially a hearth) was constructed on top of U140, but was subsequently cut by a phase 19 pit (132/133). The area around U139 was very ashy with large charcoal deposits. Samples were sent for micro-morphological analysis. This reaffirms the identification of U600/U140 as an MPV. Only a small section of interior room 146 was excavated, but that segment yielded a large ivory blank (MC 68126), a Bes figurine (MC 68143), a large stone weight (MC 68155), a bronze tack (MC 68157), a few beads (MCs 68138, 68141), a copper pin (MC 68159) and a piece of iron (MC 68127). This was likely an interior “back room.”

Phase 19/18:

Our interpretation of phase 19 in 38.85 from last season has remained largely unchanged from this season’s excavations. It was determined that hearth 85.329 is a hearth, and not a pit. It was constructed beneath the phase 19 floor, and is part of the 20A courtyard. When removing the floor in room 351 we came across an ovicaprid forelimb deposit in a pit (U362/363) next to street wall U284. These deposits are attested across Philistia, with the ovicaprid forelimb as one of the more common types (Aja 2009: 391-392, see table 4.7). Additionally a foundation deposit was found underneath wall 304, (U366/367). In this pit a small bell-Shaped bowl was discovered (RP 12582). In the eastern half of the square as part of the 19 courtyard a pit was discovered (U360/361) with the bottom half of a cooking jug in it, which contained a small, burnt puppy. This may go with a pit discovered last season (85.U296/297) in the same area containing the top half of a cooking jug and a bowl, possibly as a lid (Photo A12_2100, 21001). Cooking pots in pit deposits are attested frequently at Ashkelon, with multiple examples containing puppies, including 38.83.479, 38.74.823, and 38.75.629.

In square 76 we uncovered the eastern continuation of the large courtyard area excavated last year as 38.85.U342, surface 76.U137, beneath occupational buildup U129. The line of this ashy surface and its accumulation can be traced clearly in section running north from 38.85, through the baulk into 75 (U550), and also into square 76 (U129/U137). Whereas 85.291 = 75.343 seems to be dividing two separate buildings (Building 550 in the North and a separate building to the south), there is no separation between the two areas east of wall 75.401. This suggests that 76.137 = 85.342 = 75.550 is a connected (possibly shared) external courtyard space. Surface 85.U342 = 75.U550, was an ashy surface featuring numerous installations. Excavation of 76.137 this season reaffirmed this characterization, with a large ash filled pit (U132/133) cut into the

surface. A bin (U127/128) was excavated against the western baulk, approximately in line with bin 75.445 in the south, although the northern extents do not quite match. Oddly this feature is not clearly built against a wall as one would expect from bins, the closest associated wall U131, laying a few meters to the east. The position of U131 also calls into question bin 75.U445, which was presumed to sit against a N-S wall in 38.76 during its initial excavation in 2009, however no wall was uncovered west of U131, leaving bin 445 without a clear closing wall.

During phase 19, wall 148 was reconstructed, with a new set of foundation stones and mudbrick superstructure laid on top of it (U131). Wall U130 continued in use, maintaining the general floorplan of the phase 20A building. Floor 76.U135 was excavated to the north of bin 76.U128/129 and floor 76.U136 was excavated in the northeast interior room, lipping up to wall 76.U130 in the south and 76.U131 in the west. These floors were mostly clean, with very few artifacts and covered by a deep bricky fill (76.U120=75.U329) with much pottery. In particular one area against the western baulk approximately in line with the edge of 76.U131, contained 3 broken, but restorable vessels. No pit lines were evidenced and they seem to have been in fill. It is however, possible, that their position reflects the location of the phase 18 surface. In 38.76, as elsewhere on the eastern side of the street, phase 18 is very thin and eroded, and generally indistinguishable from phase 19. U120 is a very deep fill, but relatively homogenous with much brick debris. We maintain, however, the possibility that a thin surface once existed, but was worn off by the filling processes in phase 17 (similar to what appears to have happened in 38.85).

Phase 17B:

Phase 17 was only excavated this season in 38.76. Phase 17 is poorly preserved due to many intrusive features from the Iron II and Persian periods, which have robbed out most of the architecture. What remain are numerous wall fragments and surfaces that do not integrate clearly with each other. Two wall stubbs were excavated. One, 76.U123, is the eastern continuation of wall 75.U309. This wall would presumably corner somewhere on the eastern edge of the excavation area, however the full extent of the wall, as well as any cornering N-S wall, were robbed out by later pits. In fact these pits ran right up to the square 75 eastern section and thus none of the eastern extent of the phase 17 northeast building from square 75 was preserved. Another wall stubb, 76.U126, was preserved in the center of the square. It appears to be a fragment of a N-S pier wall, featuring at least 2 courses of stone foundation and 3 courses of bricks. The northern continuation was robbed out by phase 16 pit U106/107, and phase 14 pits 102/103 and 108/109. It does not appear to continue to the south, where we found natural sand accumulation against the southern face. Both to the east and west no continuation was found, leading to the conclusion that it is a N-S pier wall, possibly cornering with 76.U123. If this were the case, this wall would potentially be a slightly offset rebuild of 76.U131, which was also a N-S pier wall terminating around the same area from phase 19/18. This would suggest possible continuity of the general architectural layout from phase 20 through phase 17. Two mudbricks were identified running N-S away from the proposed continuation of wall 76.U123. Although no

secure connection was identified these most likely belong to contemporary feature, perhaps a bench, associated with this wall or perhaps the robbed out continuation on 76.U126.

Multiple courtyard surfaces have been identified from this phase. The phase 17 courtyard included very thick occupational accumulation, including multiple different surfaces and laminations. Two of these laminations were traced out, 76.U119 and 76.U112. These are contemporary with the occupational debris layers U207/U223/U227 in square 75. Multiple pits (U115/116) and postholes (U121) were cut into these surfaces, and various ash deposits (U117/118) were identified on top of it.

Phase 17A:

The phase 17A courtyard surface (76.94, occupational debris layer 76.U93 = 75.LF191) covers over wall 76.U126, putting it out of use. This surface does associate clearly with any architecture. This makes sense given the floor plan of 38.75. The only E-W wall identified runs across the north edge of the square, and would have been robbed out by phase 14 pit U102/103 in 38.76. The N-S walls in 38.75 are so close to the baulk that one would not expect another closing wall in our excavated area, especially given that the material on the surfaces resembles those of a large courtyard. Built into this surface is a large square pebble feature, possibly a hearth (76.U100, cf.A13_24586).

Phase 16:

As in much of grid 38, very little of phase 16 is preserved. In square 76 the main feature is a large pit (U106/107) cut through phase 17 wall 76.U126. No fill layer or surface was identified through which this pit was cut. It appeared slightly before we began tracing out the phase 17A occupational debris 76.U93. This would suggest that it is cut from 76.U85, although this fill contained mostly 8th c. pottery. It is also possible that 76.U106/107 is a phase 17A pit, filled in during phase 16 or as part of a terminal event of phase 17A, but not an event associated with occupation of the area. Pit 124/125 also seems to have been cut in phase 16. It cuts wall 76.U123, just as U106/107 cuts 76.U126. This pit is filled in the 8th c. (phase 15 constructional activity) as part of the leveling for the construction of wall 76.U104.

Phase 15:

Phase 15 in 38.76 is characterized mostly by pits a silos, although no clear surface was ever identified. 76.U85 in the north is best associated with this phase. U85 is a brickish fill that contained mostly 8th c. pottery, making it suitable for this phase. U85 also represents the fill into which U91/92 was cut. U91/92 was a square bin/pit, filled with sand a kurkar chunks, containing 3 restorable vessels, a decanter (RP 12587), a cooking pot (RP 12590), and a store jar (RP 12589) Large silo U96/97 = U84/95 was also cut from this approximate layer. This silo is almost 2 meters deep, and was full of 8th c. pottery, including large amounts of Phoenician fine ware. This silo is reminiscent of 84.LF407

In the north fills U89 and U90, were both cut by 7th c. features (pits and foundation trenches) and also contained 8th c. pottery. Phase 16 pit cut 124/125 seems to have been filled in during the constructional part of phase 15, hence the silo contains 8th c. pottery. However, this filled in silo is then built over by wall U104, which also contained 8th c. pottery in its construction. No floor was identified as associated with this wall, but fills U89 and U90 ran up against it and also contained mostly 8th c. pottery. For this reason U104, U89 and U90 are all best associated with phase 15, although the context is very disturbed by later building activities, especially in phase 14.

Phase 14:

Phase 14 in 38.76 is heavily disturbed by later intrusions, most notably robber trench U86, which ran N-S across most of the square, and a giant Persian pit (U75) which cut through much of the northern half of the square. What remains are two large silos, one, U102-103, which contained early 7th c. pottery cut out most of the northern part of the square. This pit was filled in, and then cut by a later, ashier pit (U108/109), which also contained 7th c. pottery, but this closer to the 604 BCE horizon. In this later pit a faience baboon amulet was discovered (MC 67277). N-S wall U110 seems to be best associated with this phase, but only a few stones remain, and we hypothesize, given its orientation that this was the wall robbed out by U86. Persian robbing of 7th c. walls is well attested in grid 38 from previous excavations (see for example Ashkelon 3, fig.2.3,4). A few other wall fragments also seem to be from this phase: Walls 76.U74 = 75.F128 = 75.290 and 76.U88 = 75.F100 = 75.F102 both have foundation trenches (U76.U98 = 75.U404) that cut into the phase 15 fills (U89, U90), and contain mostly late Iron IIC pottery. 76.U88 is built on top of U104, which we have attributed to phase 15. There appears to have been a doorway here in phase 14A, with a threshold (76.U99) that was later filled in as part of 14B (76.U87), although how this room functioned in relation to the giant pits to the east is unclear. Presumably U88 would have corned with U110, however the heights do not match up well. We do not find this problematic given that most of U110 was robbed out, and that U88 is a rebuild of phase 15 wall U104.

Wall 76.U110 lines up nicely with the general plan of the winery from grid 38 phase 14. If U110 is a closing wall on the east, and 75.RT9, RT35 on the west, then this would make a room approximately the same size as rooms 57 and 104 from the winery. U88 seems to be an E-W dividing wall similar to 75.W31, slightly further to the south, and U74 fits in nicely as the southern continuation of W65.U24. Therefore, although no floors were discovered, nor was there any real destruction debris due to later disturbances it seems that the general plan of the area fits with the reconstruction of the winery published in Ashkelon 3. The only real problem is that the heights are slightly lower in 38.76, although this may be due to the slope of the tell, as features tend to be considerably lower in the east.

Phase 13:

Phase 13 was mostly excavated last season. This year more work was done to finish removing robber trench U86 = U75. This unit is a thick bricky orange fill with sand laminations. At the bottom we came down on some stones of wall 76.U110, which we have interpreted as a 7th c. wall, and the target of the robbing activity.

Conclusions:

This season we accomplished our primary goal of understanding as much as possible the phase 20 building 572. We discovered that to the south of this building there is empty space leading up to the ruins of the Egyptian garrison wall, and that to the east the building extends at least through the excavated portion of 38.76. The eastern closing wall of building 572 was not discovered as is presumably contained within the eastern baulk.

We are comfortable that we can close the excavation of grid 38 without leaving substantial unanswered questions as relates to the material we have excavated. In the future one could potentially try to explore the phase 22 building just recently exposed in 38.85, but it seems that much of this building extends east and lies beneath 3 + meters of unexcavated material. Without expanding east, which would be a major time and resource commitment there is little to be gained from further excavation in grid 38.

As a secondary objective we have succeeded in stepping back the eastern section of the grid by stepping in the baulk line of 38.76. The result is a safer vertical section, better equipped to withstand erosional forces for the long term preservation of the site and the potential restoration of building 572.

2013 Final Report for Grid 38, Square 76

Jonathon Wylie

Since building 572 was discovered in 38.75 in 2009, the main goal in grid 38 has been to uncover the remaining floors and architecture associated with that phase 20 building. To that end, squares 76 and 85 were (re-)opened to the east and south (respectively) of 38.75 in 2010. This year, thanks to the hard work of two assistant supervisors and several volunteers, we finally uncovered the rest of building 572. In what follows, I will summarize our work in 38.76 this season, with the intent of explaining the interpretations and conclusions we have drawn from our recently unearthed data.

Phase 20b

The Iron I remains in 38.76 were few, mainly because of later pits and silos. The only 20b wall preserved in the square was U148, which had three rows and two courses of stone. U148 was rebuilt with U131 in phase 19 (see below), which removed all of U148's superstructure. Mudbrick bench U145 sat along the western face of U148, on that feature's southern end. At the northern end, and also along U148's west face, was stone bin U147. U147 was presumably in the corner between U148 and another E-W wall, but that wall was removed by pit U124/U125 in phase 16. There may have been a doorway at the southern end of U148, since that wall terminates without cornering with another wall.

Multi-purpose vestibule (MPV) 38.75 U648 continued eastward into 38.76 as U143. It ran to and was contemporary with U145, U147 and U148. To the east of U148 was floor U149. This floor ran below U130 (a 20a construction), so there may have been another doorway below U130 in phase 20b (cf., Aja 2009: 261, especially fig. 4.5f-g).

Phase 20a

The major change in phase 20a was the construction of wall U130, which blocked a (presumed) 20b doorway. U130 had 3 rows and 4 courses of foundation stones. North of U130 and east of U148 was floor U146, which was laid directly on top of the phase 20 floor U149.

Immediately above and later than the phase 20b floor U143 was the 20a floor U140. Like its 20b predecessor, U140 ran to wall U148, bench U140 and bin U147, all of which were re-used from 20a. In the eastern part of the square, a stone hearth U139 sat on U140. U139 had one course of stones, and a quite a bit of ash and charcoal between them.

Phase 19/18¹

At the beginning of phase 19 construction, fill U144 was poured over U146. This was a soft, brown, silty fill layer that yielded a handful of special artifacts. Most noteworthy among them were a Bes figurine (MC 68143), an ivory bead (MC 69126), a bone bead (MC 68141), and a copper tac (MC 68157). Immediately above and later than this fill was floor U136, which ran to walls U130 and U131. Other architecture associated with floor U136 was either east of the baulk or cut away by pit U102 in phase 14b.

On the other side of walls U130 and U148, the 20a MPV surface U140 was covered by fill U138, which was also soft, brown and silty.² Before proceeding with the phase 19/18 construction, the occupants of this building made a sub-floor deposit, U141/U142. The pit

1 Like 38.75, phases 19 and 18 were indistinguishable in 38.76.

2 U144 and U138 were probably part of the same filling activity.

appeared to be cut from U138. The contents of the deposit were rather unimpressive: broken potsherds sitting below a large stone. This pit was found below bin fill U128 (see below).

Beaten earth floor U137 was laid on top of fill U138. During its use, occupational debris U129 accumulated above floor U137. Ashy pit U132/U133 was cut into floor U137, but most of that pit was cut by the large phase 15 pit U96.

North of floor U137 and occupational debris U129 were wall U130 (re-used from phase 20a) and bin U127 (bricks) / U128 (fill). The bin fill had phytolith remains. It is not clear what wall this bin was built against. Wall U131, a rebuild of the phase 20 wall U148, is probably the best candidate, but the closing bin wall to the west is not certain. It may have been 38.75 U445.

North of bin U127 was floor U135. U135 ran to wall U131. The northern wall of floor U135 was cut by U124 in phase 16. Wall U492 in 38.75 may be a western continuation of that removed wall.

Phase 17b

The phase 19/18 building was covered by fill U120 at the beginning of phase 17, above which were a series of courtyard / multi-purpose vestibule surfaces. Immediately later than U120, multi-purpose vestibule U119 was laid, and posthole U121 was cut from it. Immediately above U119 was a thin fill layer, U113.

Surface U112 ran immediately above fill U113.³ Two pits, U115/U116 and U117/U118 were cut from surface U112. U115/U116 was a shallow pit with a lot of ash. It was cut in phase 15 by U97, and in phase 13 by robber trench U86, with the result that we had only a small portion of it remaining. U117/U118 was a deep (5 cm) ash patch.

The phase 17b architecture in 38.76 was sparse, having been cut away in antiquity by numerous pits and robber trenches. The only walls we had were U123 and U126, and neither of them had straightforward associations to floors. U123 ran east-west, but was cut by pit U124. It may have been equivalent to 38.75 U146 or 38.75 U309. We had a very small area near the west baulk in which to establish relationships between this wall and surfaces U119 and U112, and it was consistently difficult to trace surfaces in that area.

U126 was a stack of four mudbricks, which sat atop a stone foundation. The wall was cut to the north by pit U105/U106, and to the east by robber trench U75=U86. The bricks of this feature appeared to be in header-stretcher style, but we did not have enough of them to be certain of that. The wall was oriented north-south, and may have originally cornered with U123. That relationship was severed by pit U105/U106 in phase 17a. We seem to have the original southern end of U126, since we have no reason to think that it was cut there. It is therefore possible that U126 was a pier wall. As with U123, we had a difficult time tracing floors to this feature. Floors U119 and U112 seemed to go to this wall, but that relationship was hard to demonstrate. We call U123 and U126 phase 17b largely because their elevations are appropriate for that phase.

In phase 17a, surface U94 was laid immediately on top of the 17b surface U112. Stone hearth U100 sat on top of this surface, as did ash patch U111. During the course of U94's use, occupational debris U93 accumulated on top of it. Posthole U101 and a large pit U105/U106 were cut from U93. We had no architecture to associate with floor U94; all of it was removed by later pits and trenches (see below).

3 U119 and U112 could be considered phase 17c and 17b, respectively. We are inclined to attribute both of them phase 19b because there is no change in the architecture associated with surface U119 and the immediately later one, U112.

Phases 16-15

The Iron II phases were poorly preserved due to pitting and trenching activities. Unfortunately, we did not have well-preserved surfaces from which these pits were cut, so our phasing is largely based on ceramic and stratigraphic considerations.

Immediately later than occupational debris U93 was phase 15 fill layer U85. We entertained the possibility that U85 was a surface, but its hard bricky composition ruled against that identification. Phase 15 had three large pits: U124/U125 (=U107; see below on U124) in the north, U91/U92 in the west-central part of the square, and U96/U97 = U95/U84 in the south. Pit U91/U92 may actually have been a bin, since it had a rectangular shape and was not very deep. Unfortunately, we had no architecture associated with it. Contained in fill U92 were three complete vessels: a storage jar (RP 12589), a red-slipped and burnished decanter (RP 12587) and a cooking pot (12590).

In the transition between phases 15 and 14, pit U96/U97 was covered by fill layer U83. Pit U124/U125=U107 was put out of use by fill U90. U91/U92 appeared to be immediately below and earlier than U80, a mudbricky platform.

The only architectural element we had from phase 15 was wall U104. This wall was cut by pit 102/U103 and by walls U74 and 88 in phase 14. Wall U104 ran east-west. It had just one course of mudbrick, and five rows and one course of stone foundation. Wall U104 sat atop wall U123, which was cut by pit U124/U125, which is a phase 15 pit. This would seem to require wall U104 to be later than phase 15. We suggest that pit U124 was dug in phase 16, and filled in phase 15 as part of the constructional preparation for phase 15. Thus, wall U123 was built in phase 17 and cut by pit U124 in phase 16. U124 was fill with U125 in phase 15, immediately before U104 was built.

Phase 14b

In phase 14b, U74, a north-south wall in foundation trench U98 was erected. U98 seems to have been cut from U89 (or at least through that layer). The trench was dug deeper at the southern end than at the northern (see daily notes for a possible explanation). Placed just below U74's lowest course of foundations, at the northern end of that wall, was a nearly complete, upside down lamp.

Running east-west, about .75 m south of the southern end of U74 was wall U88. This wall was cut to the east by the robber trench U75 = U86. Between walls U74 and U88 was a stone threshold, U99. The threshold appeared to be tightly integrated with both walls, especially with U74.

U110 was a north-south wall that was mostly robbed in phase 13 by robber trench U75 = U86. Due to the trench, we were unable to establish any good relationships between U110 and other floors or architecture. We date this wall to phase 14 mainly because we find the remnant of it in the bottom of a phase 13 robber trench. In reality, U110 could belong to any period between phases 17 and 14.

Unfortunately, we had no floors to go with this 14b architecture. The only deposition we had from 14b is pit U102/U103. This was a very large pit, which cut the earlier large pit U124/U125. U102/U103 yielded evidence of multiple filling activities. Staggered with layers of ash and junk were striated layers of wind-blown sand. This suggests that this pit must have remained open for a fairly lengthy period of time. U122, which we originally thought was an Iron Age wall, was determined to be nothing more than stones used in the filling of this pit.

Phase 14a

The only architectural adjustment in phase 14a was that threshold U99 was plugged by U87, a pile of stones between U74 and U88. We do not have any more of this building

preserved, so we are unable to say how plugging the doorway affected the overall layout of the building.

Also dating to phase 14a was pit U108/U109. This large pit cut the two earlier large pits U124/U124 and U102/U103. U108/U109 contained a lot of ash and burnt brick material. We also found a baboon amulet near the northwest edge of it.

Phase 13

The only phase 13 element we had this year was the robber trench U75 = U86. This robber trench was opened in the 2012 season, but was not fully excavated. It is likely that the trench robbed a phase 14 wall, which may have been the upper courses of U110.

Conclusion

Our work in 38.76 this season was fruitful in a number of ways. Perhaps most importantly, we were finally able to unearth the phase 20b floors and architecture associated with 38.75 building 572, a goal we set four years ago. In achieving that goal, we have also added to our knowledge of life in Ashkelon during the 8th through 12th centuries. Our contributions to the 8th-century data century data is particularly important, since that century is otherwise sparsely attested at Ashkelon.

2013 Final Report for Grid 38, Square 85

Jonathon Wylie

Since building 572 was discovered in 38.75 in 2009, the main goal in grid 38 has been to uncover the remaining floors and architecture associated with that phase 20 building. To that end, squares 76 and 85 were (re-)opened to the east and south (respectively) of 38.75 in 2010. This year, thanks to the hard work of two assistant supervisors and several volunteers, we finally uncovered the remnant of the phase 20 Philistine building. In what follows, I will summarize our work in 38.85 this season, with the intent of explaining the interpretations and conclusions we have drawn from our recently unearthed data.

Phase 22

In the last week of the season, after excavating phase 20a, we came down on three walls. In the north, running east-west, we had wall U434. Wall U410 ran north-south about a meter west of our east baulk. There appears to have been a bench, U437, along the western face of U410.¹ The southern east-west wall was U431. We only had about a meter of walls U434 and U431; they continue toward the east under our baulk. Each of these walls has a stone foundation (two-three courses that I have seen, possibly more below) with mudbrick superstructure. Most of their superstructure was cut off in phase 20b. U410 and U434 have fairly typical brown brick, but U431's brick is a cream-colored, very compact over-baked material. This material is the very bottom of that wall's superstructure (a few foundation stones are popping from it), the higher portions having been removed by robber trench U393. It is likely that the higher bricks were brown like the other walls'.

These walls were just under the phase 20b material (surface U404 and robber trench U393), which led to the initial hypothesis that these walls may be part of the phase 20 city.² The main piece of evidence suggesting this architecture belonged to phase 20b was that U410's orientation was the same as 38.75 U401, which is the wall behind the four-horned altar in room 572. We were also aware that the elevations of these two walls were quite different, so we also recognized the possibility that U410 and U434 could be part of the Late Bronze Age city.

To investigate the date of these walls, we excavated the small portion of the room we had between walls U410, U431, U434 and the east baulk. In the corner between U410 and U431, we had a compact beaten earth surface U430. We had difficulty tracing this surface farther north (it was interrupted by U426, see below), but it certainly ran to and was contemporary with walls U410, U431 and U434. Below U430 was U433, a brown silty fill layer. U433 was the richest layer we excavated this year. In the northernmost part of this unit, in the corner between U410 and U434, we found several exquisite artifacts, including: MC 68078, a small, two-handle pyxis-type vessel (but open), made of frit or faience; MC 68103, a 17.5 cm ivory pin, incised with criss-crosses and chevrons, and a pomegranate or poppy on the top; MC 68105, a gold (electrum) pendant, possibly depicting a goddess; MC 68117, a frit scarab; MC 68073, a bone disk; and one Cyma bowl and one shallow simple bowl (RP 12914 and RP 12915). We also found flint and red ochre. These artifacts were all located in the corner between U410 and U434. Farther south in U433 we found nothing out of the norm.

Immediately below and earlier than U433 was surface U435. As with U430, we had difficulty tracing this surface, but we were confident that we noticed a change in the material

1 This bench is somewhat circumspect, since benches are not typical of Late Bronze Age architecture.

2 That is, we entertained the possibility that U404 was in fact not phase 20b, but rather 20a. If that had been the case, walls U410, U431 and U434 could have been phase 20b.

we were excavating. We call it a floor because this layer seems to slope toward U434, as a floor would. It is dark brown, compact, hard, silty and sticky.

Our excavation of these layers did not yield a single piece of Iron Age pottery. The logical conclusion is that walls U410, U431, U434 and associated layers are elements of the Late Bronze city. We date these units to phase 22, since that is the last LB stratum with substantial architecture.

At the end of the end of phase 22, a thin layer of fill was deposited over this area. Only enough to fill in the rooms was deposited, since U410, U431 and U434 were visible immediately below the phase 20b floor U404.

Phase 21

Excavation elsewhere in grid 38 found that the phase 21 contributions to ancient Ashkelon were mainly limited to the Egyptian garrison wall and many large pits and silos. This year's excavation in 38.85 showed the same. The E-W garrison wall 38.84 U1080 = 38.85 U414 continued about a meter into 38.85. We have no evidence that the garrison wall turned north, so U414 presumably corners with a wall that goes south, beyond our southern baulk. Another possibility is that only one wall of the garrison was built, and the project was never completed. The idea that the garrison was never finished was first proposed by Manfred Bietak several years ago, who pointed to the lack of collapsed mudbrick in the vicinity around the wall. We had previously assumed that the foundations of all four walls of the garrison were laid, and then not completed from there. But it is equally possible that the building was abandoned after just one wall was built. The eastern terminus of U414 appears to have just one course of gray mudbrick, which adds to the evidence that the garrison was not completed. Farther to the west, in 38.84, three to four courses were typical.

For three weeks or so, we thought U384 was the garrison wall, and many daily notes speak of U384 as such. U384 ran to just a meter shy of our eastern baulk, which would have made for a garrison wall that was more than 20 meters long (extending from 38.83, through 38.84, to almost the east baulk of 38.85). There were three main reasons why we believed U384 was the garrison wall. First, it was on about the same line as 38.84 U1080. Second, we interpreted U389 to be a continuation of the revetment wall on the north face of 38.84 U1080. U389 was a poorly constructed stone and mudbrick wall, a lot like the revetment wall known from 38.84 (see below on phase 20b for more on U389). Since U389 continued along most of U384, and had a similar construction to the revetment wall in 38.84, we assumed that the material to the south of it must be the garrison wall. Third, we had a distinct line, about 7 cms thick, between U389 and U384, which we took to be a lens of fill between the revetment and the garrison (we later learned it was merely a root line). Nevertheless, we never saw believable bricklines in U384, which made us wonder whether U384 was in fact the garrison wall. In the fifth week of excavation we realized that it was not. Instead, U384 is a gray-brown bricky fill. We learned this in two ways.³ First, we sectioned half way through the garrison wall in the eastern part of 38.84, and saw bricks all three sections (three courses in the west, two in the east). This confirmed that the Egyptian wall did indeed go as far east as square 85. Second, we excavated the western end of U389, and found that we could see the interface between U384 and the true garrison wall U414 (see the differences between DwgID 21707 and DwgID 21272). The interface between these two units was about a meter from our west baulk. U414 dates to phase 21, and U384 was most likely deposited at the beginning of phase 20a, prior to laying down the phase 20a courtyard surface U368 (see below). U384 was laid immediately above a layer of sand U440, WHICH MAY BE PART OF THE GULLY????

3 In addition to the daily written notes, there are several videos that document our process of determining the relationships between U384, U389 and U414. See there for more detail and a visual aid.

To the northeast of U414 we came down on U439/U428, which seems to be a very large pit. The fill is a dense muddy substance, with a lot of pottery and bone. When we first encountered it, we thought it was simply the layer below the gully silt-sand U387. In the final days of the season, we excavated a lengthy probe, extending from the west face of U410 all the way to the east baulk, about 30 cms down. This probe revealed tip lines containing U428, indicating that U428 is a pit. These lines do not appear to be very steep, so it is possible that U428 only fills a large dip. We have not excavated any of U428 other than what we dug in the probe just mentioned.

Excavation in 38.84 showed that the area immediately north of the Egyptian garrison wall was a gully. The gully began to accumulate late in phase 21 or early in 20, and continued to accumulate through 20b. U387 represents the silt and sand natural accumulation of the gully in 38.85. It represents nearly a half meter of this material, which accumulated during the span of a few decades between the end of the 13th century and the middle of the 12th. U387 is replete with broken pottery and bone.

Phase 20b

The Philistines began their occupation of Ashkelon in phase 20b, not long after the garrison wall U414 = 38.84 U1080 was laid (if there is any chronological gap between them at all). The phase 20b material in 38.85 was limited to working platforms and multi-purpose activity surfaces.

In the eastern part of the square, we had surface U404, a compact, ashy, beaten earth surface with numerous patches of phytolith and plaster (the latter mainly in the NE corner of the room). We did not have walls for U404, since all of them seem to have been removed by robber trenches U399 in the north (robbing an E-W wall) and U393 in the south (robbing another E-W wall). In the east, U404 continued under the baulk, and it was bound by bins U400/U401 (south) and U402/U403 (north). U400/U401 was a junky bin with lots of pottery and bone, in which we found a Cypro Minoan incised handle (MC 67549). The northern bin (U402/U403) was much cleaner, and had a phytolith layer at the bottom. We did not have a wall to the west of these two bins. We considered the possibility that they ran to U390 (see below), but we were never able to establish that relationship (U390 was not likely a wall). It is possible that there was a robbed wall between the bins and U390, but we never saw believable cut lines.

U404 seems to have been an industrial surface. This is shown by the presence of a mudbrick hearth (U405),⁴ an ashy ring (U406), and numerous pits (U415/U416, U418/U419, U421/U422) and postholes (U423, U424).

In the east baulk, we saw a vertical mudbrick just to the south of robber trench U393, and interpreted it as a bin, U411/U412. The bin would have been along the southern face of U393. The phase 20a surface U388 went over this bin, so U411/U412 belongs to phase 20b. Unfortunately, we did not have a surface that went with this bin, which could be taken as evidence that the brick we saw in section did not constitute a bin, but part of a fill. Indeed, other than U411/U412, all we had south of U393 was a series of fill layers. U427 was laid first, apparently with the intent of covering and leveling off earlier architecture (e.g., U410). Above U427 was U425, a brown silty fill with occasional mudbrick fragments. It is possible that bin U411/U412 was part of U425.

To the west of room U404, the gully U387 continued to accumulate throughout phase 20b. U389, long thought to be a revetment against the Egyptian garrison wall, was determined to be a phase 20b construction, the function of which was to bound the gully.

4 We were not certain that this feature was a hearth. It was a fairly circular area of mudbrick, which did not appear to be burnt. The ash patch U406 just to the south of it tilted the balance in favor of calling it a keystone hearth.

U389 was a poorly constructed wall. It had several very large stones at the bottom, but there were large gaps between them, which were filled by mudbrick.

Just north of U389, and pressed up against it, was U390 = U395. This was either a cobblestone surface / working platform, or a mechanism for managing the gully. U426, a clay / bricky constructional fill was deposited on top of gully sand prior to the laying down of U390 = U395. The cobbles were covered over by a thin layer of mud plaster, U394. U390 = U395 rose in elevation toward the SE. The SE corner of the cobbles had three courses of stones, which gradually reduced to just one in the NW. Such a construction may suggest that this feature functioned as a gully flow control. The fact that a lot of broken pottery and bone were found in these cobbles could also be adduced as evidence supporting that interpretation. Alternatively, U390 may have been a working surface or platform. Cobble piles elsewhere in grid 38 were interpreted as such.⁵

U291 was founded in 20b as the southern wall of building 572 in 38.75. It runs E-W through the baulk between 38.75 and 38.85. Large stones, U438, were placed along the bottom of the southern face of U291. When we first encountered them, we assumed they were the foundations of U291. We now see that they do not go all the way through U291. Instead, they probably protected U291 from erosion by the naturally accumulating sand and silt of U387. Similar stones were not found on the north face of this wall in 38.75. Silo U396 was dug into U387 in phase 20b, and filled in 20a. This explains why the stones of U438 are missing in the area of U291 behind the pit.

Phase 20a

In the eastern part of the square, phase 20a ran almost immediately on top of 20b. Directly above the 20b surface U404 was the 20a surface U392. Like U404, U392 was contemporary with the walls robbed by U393 and U399, but it ran over the bins U400/U401 and U402/U403. The ashy nature of the surface, and the presence of ashy rings (U398) and postholes (U407), indicate that this area remained a multi-purpose space throughout phase 20.

South of U393 we had U417, a constructional build-up in preparation for laying surface U388. We only had a little bit of U388, since it ran only in the meter or so between U393 and the south baulk. It had a dense layer of phytolith. It ran below U384, which, when we thought U384 was the garrison wall (see above), led us to consider the possibility that this floor was either part of a foundation layer under the Egyptian wall, or otherwise a floor that ran up to or under it (see notes and videos).

The phase 20a surface in the west was U368. It was laid on a thin lens of sub-surface sand U378, which was immediately later than the gully sand of U387. U368 was a large beaten earth courtyard area, with ash and phytolith striations in the surface. Sitting on U368 was the possible pillar base U375. I have doubts about this identification because of its proximity to wall U327 = U350. Also resting on U368 was hearth U329, which had a three-layer construction: potsherds at the bottom, seashell in the middle, and burnt mudbrick on top.⁶ In the NE corner of the courtyard, bin U385 and U386 sat along the south face of wall U291.

U368 was cut by a number of pits and postholes. U370/U371 was a large pit or silo in the SW corner of the courtyard. U372/U369 was cut just to the east of U370, and was backfilled with pure sand. When we first uncovered this area of sand, I called it leveling fill

⁵ We considered the possibility that U390 = U395 was a collapsed wall, but that does not appear to be the case. We found no mudbrick debris in the vicinity. There is also no evidence that U390 cornered with U291, though it is possible that there could have been a doorway there.

⁶ This is a revision of the 2012 phasing, in which U329 was considered a phase 19a feature.

for a divot. When we began to excavate it, and found that it was fairly deep, it became clear that we were dealing with an intentional cut. Three postholes were also cut into U368: U376, U382 and U383.

U368 was bound to the south by U327 = U350, a row of five thin mudbricks; to the west by U377, a poorly preserved street curbing; and to the north by U291. We did not have a N-S wall enclosing U368 in the east. U327 and U377 were used only in phase 20a, U291 was re-used from 20b. U377 was poorly preserved, having suffered the effects of, first, exposure to the street, and second, being cut by foundation trench U381 (FT for U284, see below). To the south of U327 = U350 we had a tiny bit of fill, U365, which extends southward into the baulk.

Phase 19b⁷

At the end of phase 20a, a series of fills were deposited over the square. In the west, over U368, was fill layer U357 (equals U351, U352, U353, U356 and U358; see below). U357 was a gray, silty layer, deposited in preparation for the construction of the phase 19b building, four rooms of which were in 38.85.

In the northwest corner of the square was room 339. It was bound to the west by the street wall U284, to the north by wall U291 (re-used from phase 20b), to the east by U304, and to the south by U270. In the southeast corner of that room was bin U340 and its fill U341. Another bin, U349, had been proposed at the end of 2012 because of the discovery of a vertical brick. We found no other bricks to associate with that one, and conclude that U349 was not a bin (cf., U334 below). A caprid forelimb, U362/U363, was deposited in the southeast corner of the room. The deposit was made prior to the laying of floor U339, (i.e., it was deposited into fill U351 = U357). This deposit was similar to other caprid deposits in that the forelimb was packed in dense, clumpy mud clay (see Aja 2009: 394, 396).

The southeast room had floor U332, bound by U284 to the west, by U270 to the north, by U315 to the east and by the south baulk. At the end of the 2012 season, U347/U348 was opened as a pit cut into U332. When we returned this season, we determined that this was not a pit, but rather a large divot. U332 sloped downward considerably toward the center of the room. Similarly, U334 was opened at the end of 2012 to represent a possible bin. It was just a single brick, oriented N-S. We were unable to find any other bricks to complete the bin, and determined that U334 was merely a misplaced brick between the 19b and 19a floors (U332 and U317, respectively).

In the south-central part of the square, to the east of room 332, was room 335. Floor U335 was bound by wall U315 to the west, wall U270 and threshold U364 to the north, wall U316 to the east, and by the south baulk. Benches U283 and U323 sat on floor U335, but were phased last season to phase 20a. It is equally possible that these benches were built immediately after floor U335 was laid, and were in use with both the 19b and 19a floors (U335 and U321, respectively). A possible pit, U345/U346, was identified at the end of the 2012 season. It was suspected to be a bowl-lamp-bowl deposit, but that did not turn out to be the case. It seems that the pit was shallow, and fully excavated by the 2012 team.

The north-central room was U336. The room was contained by wall U291 to the north, wall U304 to the west, wall U270 and threshold U364 to the north, and by a wall removed by robber trench U230 (probably a continuation of wall U316). A set of bin walls divided this room into three different parts. Bin wall U331 ran east-west about a meter south of U291. Bin U328 went north-south between U291 and U331, creating two separate bin fills,

7 Most of the phase 19b items in 38.85 were uncovered in 2012. The interested reader should refer to Simeon Erlich's square report for a thorough analysis. I will summarize phase 19b, and suggest a few minor additions and adjustments to the interpretations of the 2012 season.

U333 to the east of U328, and U338 to the west of it. Floor U336 was south of bin wall U331. In phase 19a, U331 went out of use, and was replaced by U325 slightly to the south. The main evidence in favor of this reconstruction is that U325 was preserved about 15 cms higher than U331, indicating that U331 was shaved down in 19a when U325 was built. U337 was the surface to the south of U331 and to the north of U325, and may be equal to U336. (See the 2012 report on 38.85 by Simeon Erhlich for a slightly different reconstruction.)

The 19b walls of the western part of the square were generally well-preserved and fairly substantial. U291 was re-used from phase 20. U284 was a large street wall, erected in phase 19b. It was laid in foundation trench U381, which cut into the phase 20a street curbing U377. At the northern end of U284, cut into U381, was a possible foundation deposit, U370/U380. The contents of this pit / deposit were rather unimpressive: some broken sherds and a large storage jar base. U284 had three courses and two-three rows of stone in its foundation. Another possible deposit, U366/U367, was found below the southern terminus of wall U304. This deposit contained a small bowl (RP 12582) packed in mud. Wall U316 was partially cut out by the phase 17 robber trench U230. In the south, only the eastern face of U316 was removed; in the north, all of it was. Wall U270 had two-three courses and two-three rows of stone foundation, and one-two courses of mudbrick. Near its eastern end was a threshold, U381. This is the only certain doorway in this building. Passage into the northeastern room U336 may have been through the robbed wall (U316). U381 would have allowed entrance into room U335. The doorway between U335 and U332 was perhaps south of the baulk. It is unclear how room U339 was accessed. The linear house pattern (Aja 2009: 254-63, 502-03 and passim) would seem to require entrance from room U332 through wall U270, but there was no indication of a doorway there. If there were, it would have been through the western part of wall U270, since traffic would have been unlikely to walk over bin U340/U341.

The phase 19b elements of the eastern half of the square were the fill layers U355 = U391. Cut into U355 was U373/U374, which may have been either a pit or a trench, or otherwise a fill deposition distinct from U355. The fact that we assigned it both a cut and fill number shows that we interpreted it as the former. Above fill U355 was the phase 19b courtyard surface U342. It was cut by three postholes (U342, U343 and U344), as well as a shell-lined pit (U324).

Conclusion

By unearthing phase 20b in 38.76 and 85, the 2013 season has achieved a four-year goal. The new data we gained this year allows us to revise some previous hypotheses and to reinforce others. Apart from the stratigraphic and ceramic contributions, the greatest contribution we have made is to preserve the legacy of the Philistines. With the closing of grid 38, we mark the end of an era of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon. But if grid 38 comes to an end, it does so by giving life to the memory of the early Philistines and their material culture.

Grid 44 Squares 2 and 3
Final Report
2013

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Introduction

This season we opened two 5 x 10 meter squares for excavation on the summit of the South Tell. Situated on the northwest corner of the tell, west of Grid 38 and north of Grid 51, Grid 44 offered the expedition with the opportunity to excavate in a previously unexplored area of the site. It was anticipated that excavation this season would encounter the “late periods,” as was the pattern in most excavated grids on site, and that any material uncovered would likely date to the Roman – Crusader periods which have come into sharper focus recently with the recent and on-going excavation of Grids 47 and 51. The specific area of Grid 44 was of particular interest for a number of reasons:

1. The opportunity to investigate not only an area of the site never previously excavated but one also so centrally located.
2. The potential for clarifying the relationship between the city center, the area of Grid 47, and surrounding areas; for assessing developments in the city's overall urban plan from the Roman – Crusader periods.
3. The opportunity to investigate distinctions in settlement patterns between Grids 37 and 38 and those further to the south Grids 50 and 51.

While the opportunity to dig on top of the South Tell was welcomed, the expedition appreciated the challenges this posed to the national park within which the ancient city of Ashkelon is housed. Grid 44 was located in the midst of the park's most popular camping area. In other words, prime real estate. Recognizing the importance of this area to the park and residents of Ashkelon, the expedition decided to locate the 10 x 10 meter excavation area on the very northwestern edge of the South Tell, a location which would allow us to conduct valuable research while minimizing disruptions to campers and park visitors.

Notes on Methodology

An initial GPR survey was done in the winter of 2013 to help determine the best place to excavate. When the exact location was selected, the GIS team determined the selected area actually fell under two grids. While the majority of the area fell into Grid 37, the Grid 44 designation was chosen in anticipation of the grid expanding to the south, if it was to do so.

Grid 44 was dug as two 5 x 10 meter squares, Squares 2 and 3, which were slightly offset from the standard Ashkelon grid. This season supervisors drew three baulks. In Square 2, the north and east baulks were drawn while in Square 3 the north baulk was drawn. Phase plans included both the

architecture built in each phase as well as that architecture which remained in use from previous phases. Grid 44 did a true Harris Matrix, not an Ashkleon matrix, and the major constructional elements of each phase was highlighted in red. Finally, please see the individual square reports, 44.2 written by Hannah Buckingham and 44.3 written by Shimi Ehrlich, for a complete summary of each unit excavated over the course of the season.

Overview

On the first day of excavation a meter of near sterile agricultural fill was removed with the aid of mechanical equipment supervised by myself and Shimi Ehrlich. Immediately under the agricultural fill, several walls were uncovered. At that point we finished with the mechanical equipment and commenced excavating by hand. Excavation was led by Square Supervisors Shimi Ehrlich, a graduate student at Stanford University, and Hannah Buckingham, a graduate student at Cardiff University. The grid was staffed by a wonderful group of highly motivated volunteers, ranging from those studying Early Christian History, a theology major and several archaeology majors to a doctor who had just finished his residency, all of whom did excellent work in helping us achieve our goals. Through their hard work we uncovered four phases of occupation over the course of the six week season. A word of caution. Much of the material described below was exposed but not excavated and the conclusions should be regarded as preliminary until further excavated.

The earliest material reached was Hellenistic at the bottom of a small probe which allowed us to do little more than identify the material as being present in Grid 44. The earliest coherent architectural phase proved to be Byzantine in date, 4th - 5th c. most probably, and the architecture of that period was maintained, reused and expanded in subsequent occupational phases dated to the Fatimid, 11th/12th centuries and Crusader, 1153-1187, periods. The Byzantine phase, and all subsequent occupation in the area, was anchored by two buildings, the NE Building located in Square 3 and the SW Building in Square 2. In between those two buildings was a courtyard/outdoor space. Over time the area was built up and outdoor space was sacrificed as new structures were added and the area increasingly dedicated to craft production. At present, the evidence has pointed towards this area being a mixed residential-commercial neighborhood occupied from the Byzantine – Crusader periods with the main phases of construction and renovation occurring in the Byzantine, Fatimid and Crusader periods. Identification of the Early Islamic period, the Umayyad and Abbasid 7th - 10th centuries, remained problematic though excavators thought, although it is not yet proven, there was most likely occupation of this area in those periods.

There are clear distinctions in construction methods from one period to the next. The Byzantine period, Phase 2, architecture had large, deeply founded walls, constructed of cut ashlar covered in cement with either mosaic or plaster floors. In the Fatimid period, Phase 1A, the inhabitants took ready advantage of the present building materials and the earlier buildings were partially dismantled for their stones which were then used in the construction of new buildings and interior spaces. The NE Building had much of its interior space converted into an outdoor space in this period. The formerly open area between the NE and SW Buildings was shrunk through the addition of several new water management features and, as mentioned, the construction of new structures. The process which started in Phase 1A intensified in Phase 1B, the Crusader period, as the water/drain systems were rebuilt and expanded, a large plaster basin was constructed, interior spaces were modified, and craft production increased. The architecture of Phase 1A and 1B was generally well built and characterized by ashlar faced-rubble core walls, marble flagstone pavements with stone-lined/plaster drains, and plastered basins. Great care was even taken to shore up the NE Building when its walls started to lean, Photo# 13-24439, and the life of

the NE Building was extended well into the medieval period.

As rich and complex as the architecture of Grid 44 was, the small finds proved to be even more so especially in Phases 1A and 1B. In the latest period we collected large amounts of pottery (including several types for which there are few parallels in Israel), glass, bone, coins (two of which were readable and dated to the Crusader occupation), lead and copper alloy weights, ceramic slag, worked bone (including a complete doll, several ligula, combs and a spindle whirl), beads and many metal implements. In fact, so much worked bone, both offcuts and finished products, was collected that Paula Hesse suggested the area probably contained a workshop. The large amount of ceramic slag and wasters collected from all over the grid further suggested that a kiln was located somewhere nearby. After the Phase 1 levelling fills were cleared there was a noticeable drop off in the amount of material culture collected in subsequent contexts though this was not entirely surprising as only the architecture of the earlier phases, and not occupational levels, were uncovered.

As was the case all over the site, the end of occupation in the area of Grid 44 was marked by deep cuts which provided vivid evidence of the systematic robbing of the site for stone in the late 12th c. and then on through to the modern era. Once the area was abandoned, it was again mined for stone, a process which significantly damaged the architecture while simultaneously obscuring much of the latest settlement processes. That being said, the Phase 1A and 1B Fatimid and Crusader period occupation was remarkably well preserved and continued to be so in spite of its proximity to surface levels and the material has added considerably to our understanding of the last century of Ashkelon's history. And, while the earlier material was heavily disturbed by the Phase 1 activity, the Byzantine period buildings yielded interesting sequences and though elusive, the material recovered from the Hellenistic period offered hints at lies underneath.

Phasing

This season four phases were identified:

Phase 1A: Crusader, late 12th c. C.E.

Phase 1B: Fatimid, 11th-early 12th c. C.E.

Phase 2: Byzantine, 4th-5th c. C.E.

Phase 3: Hellenistic, 2nd/1st c. B.C.E

The Results

Phase 3: Hellenistic, 1st c. B.C.E.

This phase was represented by two walls uncovered in a probe dug in Square 3.3.U58 and 3.U59 were two parallel east-west oriented walls near the southern baulk of Square 3. They were both constructed of medium to large uncut fieldstones and stood several courses high. Pottery recovered in fill layers between and immediately above them, 3.U60 and 3.U54, returned a Hellenistic date. The nature of these layers, an orange silt-clay mixture which was largely devoid of pottery and other material culture, was suggestive of an area that was not in active use which allowed material to accumulate over time. This pattern was markedly different from the Phase 1A and 1B levelling and robber trench fills which were full of material culture as well as a large range of pottery types.

Phase 2: Byzantine, 4th - 5th century

The Byzantine period was well represented by two buildings, one in the northeast corner of Square 3, the “NE Building” for the purpose of this report, and the “SW Building” in Square 2, as well as an open space perhaps best understood as a courtyard, between them which shaped the use and occupation of the area for more than 500 years

The NE Building

The NE Building, as currently revealed, centered on 3.U53, a long east-west ashlar constructed wall, and 3.U52, a similarly constructed wall. These walls were the basis for two distinct occupational sequences within this building during the Byzantine period. In the first, these walls bordered several chambers; three to the north of 3.U53, one room to the west and then one to the east of 3.U52. Along its north face, 3.U53 served as the closing wall for three small chambers bounded by it and three cross walls, 3.U41, 3.U75 and 3.U73. All of these walls were constructed out of ashlar. Both 3.U53 and 3.U73 were plastered on their faces with a thick white plaster distinct from the traces of cement used in their construction. An enigmatic layer of scored plaster, 3.U72 was found in the north-east most corner but was insufficiently exposed to understand its purpose. The chambers north of 3.U52 were similar to one found in the east room of the building where a large plastered vat, 3.U67 (Photo# 13-25355) was uncovered. The vat measured approximately 1.1 x .75 meters and reached a depth of 1.35 meters which would allow it to hold an estimated 1200 liters. The walls of the vat were made of plaster on stone while the floor was a marble paved surface which bore traces of plaster. The purpose of these vats and the function of the NE Building during this period remained unidentified. One proposed theory was that the vats were used for wine production or storage or, perhaps, some other enterprise that required the processing of large amount of liquids.

Later in the Byzantine period, the NE Building was renovated and the chambers to the north of 3.U52 filled in and put out of use. In the east room the vat 3.U67 was put out of use by the construction of a new mosaic floor, 3.U40 (Photo #13-25355). The centerpiece of 3.U40, a white industrial mosaic floor, was a multi-coloured mosaic roundel with a five line Greek inscription. The tesserae in this central piece were much finer, measuring .1 cm on a side, the colors more vivid than those in the remainder of the floor which measured .2 cm a side. The white mosaic section though plain was not without some patterning. The white mosaic tiles ran on a diagonal line until they approached the roundel at which point the white industrial tiles were laid to form two circles around the central roundel. Inside the two circles of white stones were three circles of coloured tile: purple, yellow and red. That circle held the inscription. The background of the inscription used white tiles while the letters were done in coloured tiles. There were five lines of text placed within horizontal registers delineated by white tiles and the coloured tile border. Staff members Shimi Ehrlich and Ryan Boehm translated the inscription roughly, as “God the helper who does not in any way strengthen the wicked man.” Comperanda for the language used in the inscription as well as the style of the mosaic indicated a 3rd - 5th century date. Such inscriptions have been found in many different contexts including public, private and secular buildings as well as in Christian, Jewish and pagan contexts. The inscription offered, therefore, little insight into the function of this building of which only a small fragment was exposed.

Several other additions were made to the east room of the NE Building. 3.U40, was contemporary with several other fragments of white industrial mosaic floor including 3.U35, 3.U90 and 3.U100 (Photo# 13-25286) all located further to the south of 3.U40 and east of the projected but not visible extension of wall 3.U52. Several features of these floors stood out and pointed towards ideas for future excavation.

3.U40 encroached on walls 3.U53 and 3.U52 which were repurposed as the foundations for rebuilt (but missing and unidentified) walls put down for use with the mosaic floor. 3.U40 also extended under the east baulk indicating the full extent of the east room was not revealed. 3.U35 was poorly preserved and .20 cm higher than 3.U40. 3.U90 and 3.U100 were found at that same higher elevation which indicated those other floor fragments may have belonged to a second room distinct from the one housing 3.U40. Floor 3.U100, just as 3.U40 did, extended under the east baulk. During excavation in the last week it was discovered that 3.U90 (Photo# 13-25287) held a second roundel similar to the one in 3.U40. Though poorly preserved, the arc of two rows of white industrial tile was clearly visible. The presence of two roundels as well as the different floor levels further supported the theory there were originally two rooms east of 3.U52 instead of one, that the NE Building was even larger than suspected. The likely location for a dividing east-west cross wall would be inbetween 3.U40 and 3.U35 precisely where a later Phase 1B robber trench was discovered.

Another room associated with the NE Building was discovered to the south-west of walls 3.U53 and 3.U52 late in the season. In the corner formed by the two walls a small circle of stones, a possible door socket, 3.U97, was discovered. Just to the south of the stones 3.U98, a poorly preserved plaster surface, was found. The floor was not well understood, it was discovered largely in section under floated Phase 1B architecture, but its presence indicated 3.U52 was not an exterior wall in Phase 2 but rather a dividing wall between two rooms. 3.U98 furthermore, extended over the 3.U52 wall line which supported the theory that the wall held a doorway on its northern end. That theory was first postulated when the location of the Greek inscription revealed it stood in close proximity to a wall, a location that didn't make a great deal of sense without a doorway present. Late Phase 1B wall 3.U7 was partially dismantled toward the end of the season in an effort to better understand these relationships. Excavation showed the later wall was founded deeply on the earlier wall 3.U52 and any conclusive evidence for a doorway was missing beyond the hints offered by the plaster surface 3.U98 and the location of the Greek inscription.

The date for Phase 2 was initially established by the preliminary analysis of the mosaic. Fortunately, excavation uncovered stratigraphic data to support the 3rd - 5th century date. A small probe was dug through the plaster, 3.U100, and cobble bedding, 3.U103, for the mosaic floor fragments, 3.U90 and 3.U100. The pottery collected under the mosaic floor, all undiagnostic except for one cp rim, returned a generic Byzantine date which confirmed the date suggested by the mosaic inscription.

SW Building

There was an equally intriguing, though less well preserved, Phase 2 building in the south-west corner of Square 2, the SW Building. 2.U3 and 2.U4=U64 were both cemented ashlar walls that stood almost two meters high. A probe dug inside the walls, which measured approximately 1 x 1.5 meters, on the last day of excavation hit a layer of material, 2.U67, which produced 2nd/3rd century Roman pottery including 14 partially restorable vessels. In addition, a bone spoon (MC# 68130) and ceramic horse head figurine (MC# 68131) was discovered. It was impossible to identify the nature of the deposit but its discovery suggested that expansion of the excavation area to the south would potentially uncover more Roman material. 2.U67, it is worth reiterating, provided the first good evidence for Roman material in the grid, something that was entirely missing from Square 3.

Exterior Spaces

Two additional features in this phase should be mentioned, one to the south of the NE Building and one in the north baulk of Square 2. An intriguing floor bedding, 3.U28, was discovered in the southeast

corner of Square 3. It consisted of plain body sherds (red fabric) packed together vertically above a thin line of plaster with a thin layer of shells above it. Its construction was similar to a herringbone patterned ceramic floor found in Grid 23 in 1999 (Photo# 99-12348) where the floor was interpreted as having some type of function associated with drainage. 3.U28 perhaps served as bedding for a robbed mosaic or paved floor but this unit, unfortunately, was divorced from everything else in the grid and it remained poorly understood.

Finally, during the last week of excavation, a drain, 2.U80, was discovered in the north baulk of Square 2. How it related to the two buildings in the grid could not be determined. The once open space inbetween the NE Building and SW Building was heavily built over in the following Phase 1B and 1A building programs. While much of the Phase 1A architecture was excavated and removed, much of the earlier 1B material was left in place and which also left the relationship between the Byzantine period buildings and drains quite obscured.

Phase 1:

The latest phase of occupation in Grid 44 dated to the Fatimid-Crusader periods and was divided into two sub-phases, 1A and 1B. Throughout the grid, the earlier Phase 2 architecture was reused, primarily as foundations for newly constructed walls or beddings for surfaces, and repurposed. In addition, a number of new features were added as the formerly open area between the NE Building and the SW Building was built up. That process started in Phase 1B when significant renovations were made to the NE Building, a process which involved converting part of the interior space into outdoor space. In Square 2, several new features were constructed and the area showed evidence for craft production. More significant changes came in Phase 1A when, during the Crusader period, the existing structures and installations were renovated and expanded while the outdoor space continued to be subdivided into smaller spaces to accommodate, again, increased levels of workshop activity.

This phase also saw the construction of a new structure, the “South Building.”

Phase 1B:

NE Building

During this phase the NE Building was robbed, renovated and reused. The only evidence for the initial robbing of the building was 3.U93.82/92, a trench that cut through the earlier vat 3.U67 and mosaic floor 3.U40. After the necessary stone was taken, the area was leveled and significant alterations were made to the building. Several new walls were built directly on top of the earlier Phase 2 walls. 3.U22 and 3.U20 were ashlar rebuilds on the earlier wall 3.U53, 3.U38=2.U12. 3.U7, constructed of cut ashlar from the Phase 2 walls and fieldstones, was a rebuild on 3.U52. The construction of the latter wall blocked the postulated Phase 2 doorway and closed off the room holding mosaic floor 3.U40. The construction of 3.U7 was more or less simultaneous with the construction of a large fieldstone platform or buttress, 3.U71 (Photo# 13-25016), which was built over the earlier Phase 2 plaster surface, 3.U98, and up against the west face of 3.U7. The addition of that buttress marked the conversion of the area west of 3.U52, and now 3.U7, into exterior space. 3.U7 bonded with 3.U6, a similarly constructed wall that ran east into the baulk. The corner where the two walls were bonded was constructed out of large ashlar while the extents of the walls utilized both reused ashlar and fieldstones as previously mentioned.

3.U6 was put down directly on the earlier Phase 2 mosaic floor, 3.U90, thereby further changing the dimensions of the earlier room. Inside the room bounded by 3.U7 and 3.U6 a new plaster surface, 3.U64 was put down in the southern portion of the room perhaps to repair the mosaic floor, 3.U35, while in the northern portion, it seems the Phase 2 mosaic floor 3.U40 may have continued in use for a time. That 3.U40 continued to be used was suggested by two relationships. The first was a three tile wide border on the north edge of 3.U40 which ran alongside walls 3.U20 and 3.U22, Phase 1B rebuilds on the earlier 3.U53 Byzantine period wall which the mosaic floor extended over minutely. While there was no such border on the west side of the floor along 3.U7, the wall was carefully constructed so that it did not damage the tiles of the mosaic which approached within a few centimeters of the new wall, suggesting the floor did remain in use with the wall. What exactly those relationships and the continued use of the floor meant in an Islamic period context will require further investigation.

Exterior Spaces in Square 3

The construction of new walls and the creation of new outdoor space west of the NE Building resulted in significant changes to the open area between the Byzantine period buildings. Mosaic floors 3.90 and 3.100 went out of use and the area in which they were found became outdoor space as did the space west of 3.U7. The conversion of that space started with the construction of a stone-lined sump, 3.U42. This sump served as the end point for a newly constructed open air drain which had stone side walls, 3.U71 and 3.U81, and a shell bottom, 3.U78. This drain ran more or less from south to north just west of 3.U7.

South Building

In addition to the modification of the existing Phase 2 NE Building and the creation of new exterior space, a new building was constructed along the south baulk of Squares 2 and 3. 3.U57 and 3.U61 were two poorly preserved fieldstone constructed walls heavily robbed in Phase 1B and then buried under later fills including 3.U50 and 3.U19. That later activity obscured their relationships to 2.U45 and 2.U44, a pair of fieldstone constructed walls located in Square 2 (Photo# 13-25284). 2.U45, robbed in Phase 1B by 2.U75, potentially cornered with 3.U57 (the connection was severed, however). Those two walls would have provided the east and north wall of this new building. The west wall was formed by 2.U44, which was bonded with 2.U45, which was built off the existing Phase 2 walls 2.U4 sitting directly on top of 2.U64 and 2.U3 which cornered with 2.U4. The majority of the South Building, delineated by these walls, extended under the baulk and, therefore, little can be said about its function. The only possible clue was a poorly understood construction, 2.U47, housed within the walls for which no function could be determined.

Exterior Spaces in Square 2

The construction of the South Building encroached on the formerly open space between the NE and SW Buildings. That was not the only change, however, as a number of new installations were constructed north of the building. Those installations included 2.72, 2.U71, 2.U73, 2.U60, and plaster surface 2.U70. Their exact function was not determined though it was thought they were part of a large plaster basin or, possibly, a drainage system associated with a newly built stone sewer manhole, 2.U38, just to the north. The shaft of this sewer was of similar construction to the one found just to the east in Square 2, 3.U42, though it was larger in size. It also had an underground channel, 2.U53 running to the north. It appeared the construction of this sewer manhole involved the blocking, 2.U81, and reorientation of the earlier Phase 2 drain 2.U80.

By the end of Phase 1B, the Fatimid period reorganization of this area had completely redefined the space. The NE Building was rebuilt, new walls put down in a reorganization of the interior space and the creation of new exterior space. The exterior space between that building and the SW Building was also reworked in a process that saw the construction of a drain, a sump, a new sewer and a possible basin or some other type of installation. Finally a new building was constructed to the south utilizing the northeast corner of the SW Building and the construction of several new walls. The function of that new building, the motivation for the reorganization of the space, remained unclear but may be deciphered after further excavation.

Phase 1A:

In the latest phase of occupation, Phase 1A, the process of the renovation and reuse of the earlier Phase 2 Byzantine architecture, which started in Phase 1B, continued on an even larger, more systematic scale.

Exterior Spaces

Evidence for a deliberate building program came from the discovery of pieces of the same Lustre ware closed form vessel found in 3.U43, fill inside the stone sump 3.U42, in levelling fill 3.U27 and one of the newly constructed Phase 1A walls in Square 2, 2.U41. The process began with the shoring up of the 3.U6 and 3.U7 corner which had started to tilt. 3.U5, which replicated the construction methods of the existing walls, buttressed the corner and allowed for the continued use of the building. Repairs were also made to the features outside the building. A new flagstone surface, 3.U70 was constructed. It was associated with a pit, 3.U94, which held a largely complete amphora on which phosphates had collected. These features were used for a time, perhaps with the earlier shell drain, before being put out of use by a more systematic building program. A new flagstone surface, 3.U32 and drain, 3.U16, were constructed which necessitated the addition of several courses to 3.U42 which continued to be used. That the modification of the exterior space occurred more or less contemporaneously with the repairs to the NE Building could be seen in the construction of the buttress, 3.U5 and the proximity of the drain 3.U16, which ran roughly east-west to the south of 3.U6 before turning to the south where it drained into 3.U42 which was capped with a basalt millstone in this phase. Opposite 3.U42, a small plastered basin, 3.U9, 3.U31, 3.U29, 3.U30 and 3.U12, was constructed alongside the west face of 3.U7 and on top of 3.U71. Flagstone surface 3.U32 actually sloped down from the basin towards 3.U42 and, in the absence of evidence for an alternative, might be how the basin was drained. When the work was completed, the result was a space very similar to a courtyard discovered in Grid 37 (Photo 87-????). A little further to the west in Square 2, the water management system constructed in Phase 1A which centered on 2.U38 continued in use though the sewer's underground channel 2.U53, perhaps because it had collapsed, was replaced by a stone-lined above ground drain, 2.U28 that was rather crudely built. Water seemingly cascaded down over the collapsed roof, 2.U85 of 2.U53, through the channel of 2.U28, over cobble surface 2.U66 and into the sewer manhole 2.U38. Just east of 2.U28, along the north wall of the courtyard, a second drain was cut through the earlier Phase 2 Byzantine wall 2.U12=3.U38. This new drain, 2.U19 and 2.U17, flowed directly into a small stone-lined pit, 2.U26. The construction of these new features necessitated the construction of new surfaces including cobble surfaces 2.U14 and 2.U34 and a marble flagstone surface only preserved in small sections, 2.U16 and 2.U11 along with their beddings, 2.U23 and 2.U44 (Photo# 13-25113, 13-25114 and 13-25282).

These features were also associated with the construction of a series of walls to support a new plastered basin as well as continuing activity in the South Building. First, a group of bonded walls, of which 2.U41 was the central piece, were built. A plastered basin, walls 2.U8 and 2.U7, plastered bottom 2.U10 was built up against the south face of 2.U41 on top of a deep leveling fill, 2.U56, which put the

earlier Phase 1A features, 2.U70, 2.U71, 2.U72 and 2.U60 out of use and significantly raised the ground level in the area. An imported sherd of Byzantine Fine Sgraffiato discovered in the levelling fill clearly dated the construction of the basin, walls, and courtyard surface to the late 12th century. The south wall of the basin was founded on a rebuild, 2.U62 on the earlier wall 2.U45 though it was later robbed by 2.U75 and not preserved. The floor of the basin, 2.U10, plaster on a cobble bedding, included a square opening for 2.U46=U18, a stone drain, incorporated into the construction of walls 2.U8 and 2.U41 as it sloped down from the south to the north. (A nearly complete FFS bowl was found at the top of the drain, 2.U46, while other pieces were found at the bottom of the drain and even in the fill, 2.U39, inside 2.U38 which the drain flowed into). Once it passed under the two walls 2.U46=2.U18 reappeared as a stone covered installation at surface level (very similar to a construction found in 9.38 in 1993, Photo# 93-5636 and 93-5635) that drained into the same cobble surface, 2.U66, that drain 2.U28 flowed into. Both these drains reused the earlier Phase 1A manhole, 2.U38. That central space with the cobble constructions and drains, was set off by 2.U41 to the south and another wall, 2.U15 a north-south wall fully bonded with 2.U41 to the west. Cobble surface 2.U34 actually ran up to the west face of 2.U15. At some point, perhaps during the construction of the walls or shortly afterwards, repairs were necessary and 2.U65 was put down over the area where 2.U41 and 2.U15 bonded. This central part of the courtyard was accessed via 2.U14, a cobble threshold in the north-west corner of the grid.

The basin's west wall, 2.U7 and wall 2.U41 formed the corner of a small room to the west of the basin where a clay surface, 2.U25, was discovered. The surface was quite uneven and sloped down from the east to the west, away from the basin whose walls were covered by a clay like residue. One theory was that the basin was part of a workshop for ceramic production and that the basin was a settling tank.

The construction of the new basin necessitated, as previously mentioned, the construction of a new surface, 2.U11 and 2.U16, which was contemporary with surfaces found to the east, 3.U66, U70 and U32. The construction of two new walls, 2.U36 a narrow one row fieldstone wall oriented north-south, and 2.U21, which was preserved only one course high, perhaps demarcated different activity zones in this space though their exact purpose was unclear.

The large basin also incorporated the South building into its construction and in so doing marked a significant functional change to the area. A rebuild on 2.U45, 2.U62, though heavily robbed, probably served as the south wall of the basin as already mentioned. It also demarcated a completely different activity zone to the south which continued to be contained within the dimensions of the South Building. 3.U39 was a large flat stone surrounded by deep layers of burned material including 2.U29, a bright orange, sandy layer that contained a great deal of ceramic slag as well as numerous ceramic wasters. 2.U29 was above 2.U33, perhaps the original surface for the Phase 1A use of this space, which was full of charcoal and heavy burning. The heavy burning, there were a number of ashy pits in the area including 2.U37, 2.U35, in conjunction with the extensive drainage systems, the industrial size of the basin in Square 2, as well as the slag and ceramic wasters found in the grid suggested that sometime in Phase 1 ceramic production started in the area. There was, however, no direct evidence for this in the grid, perhaps because of the extensive disturbances later as the area was abandoned, and such a conclusion is necessarily hypothetical.

More certain was the extent and importance of the modifications and changes made to the exterior space in this phase as construction became even more dense. Change was not limited, however, to the exterior space. Both the SW and NE Buildings showed continued use.

NE Building

The interior room of this building, the modification of which began in Phase 1B, continued in this later phase (Photo# 13-24605). The mosaic room was subdivided into three smaller spaces. In the south, once the area was prepared by the placement of small leveling fill, 3.U62, two stone-lined pits, 3.U10 and 3.U11 were constructed in the corner formed by 3.U6 and 3.U7 and then set off from the remainder of the room by a narrow dividing wall, 3.U8. In the northern part of the room, the mosaic inscription was carefully covered by a wall, 3.U23, which used three column drums in its construction. There was little question the drums were placed deliberately over the inscription though whether to protect it or because the residents no longer wanted to view it was unclear. A second narrow wall 3.U24 stood in line with the wider 3.U23 where there was no need to cover the white industrial tile mosaic in the same way. Unfortunately, no surfaces were found associated with these constructions. Clearly though, their addition changed the function of the room into an area that was perhaps used for storage or some type of workshop activity. Indeed, 3.U25 was a particularly rich fill held within the confines of this interior room and it was suggested by Paula Hesse that its contents provided evidence for a bone workshop in the area. 3.U25 contained numerous bone tools (MC#s 66633, 66649, 66668), bone inlay (MC#s 66681 and 66741), a bone doll (MC# 66657), an iron blade (MC#66638), and an inscribed worked lapis lazuli inlay (MC# 66636).

SW Building

In this latest period, the interior faces of walls 2.U3 and 2.U4 were lined with a thick plaster and broken roof tiles and they seemingly served as a furnace or fire pit. A large amount of burned pottery and a cluster of metal and nails, MC# 67526 were collected from 2.U5, a thick, ashy fill at the top of the preserved sections of these walls. The odd way in which the interior faces of these walls were reworked offered another possible location for a furnace or kiln.

The End of Use

At some point the sumps started to silt up, an ongoing process that may have started even earlier in Phase 1B. 3.U43, the fill inside 3.U42 was quite productive and contained a number of coins, nails, two iron blades (MC#67822 and MC#67847) as well as a bone tool (MC# 67852). The buildings eventually went out of use and several layers of collapse, typified by 3.U18=21 and 2.U6, marked the area's abandonment. 2.U6 was a thick collapse of burned tiles, ash and stone fragments in the Southern Building, 3.U18=20, a rubble collapse on 3.U9 and 3.U32. As the area passed out of use the buildings were robbed as the inhabitants searched for stones with which to maintain the city's fortifications. That process, best seen in 2.U75, was obscured by much larger cuts such as 2.22 and 3.U19, just under topsoil layers such as 2.U1, 2.U2=U9 and 3. U1=U2= U3=U4 which all lay just under the agricultural fill of the modern era, which did significant damage to the earlier material and which mark the end of the area's use.

Conclusion

The promise of excavation on top of the South Tell was fully realized this summer. Over the course of the six week season, excavation in Grid 44 uncovered an occupational sequence extending from the Hellenistic period through the Crusader era and the end of settlement in ancient Ashkelon. There were several surprising, though not wholly unexpected, aspects of the material record that did offer

insight into developments in the city plan. First, the Roman period was largely missing from the sequence though a layer of fill, 2.U67, excavated on the last day, did produce a number of restorable vessels dated to that period. This same gap was found in other grids but it was, perhaps, more surprising to find in such a prominent area on the site. Second, the nature of occupation in the area, an apparent residential-commercial mix was not what was expected. Before excavation started, it was assumed that such a prominent location within the site would hold a monumental public building or luxurious villa belonging to an important resident which clearly did not prove to be the case.

Little could be said about the earliest Phase 3 Hellenistic material exposed at the bottom of a probe, unfortunately. In the Byzantine period, a building, the NE Building, housing one, possibly more, plaster-lined vats was exposed and it seems possible it had something of a commercial purpose as a wine press or some other endeavor involving the processing of liquids. The vat(s) was put out of use by the construction of a mosaic floor that held a five line Greek inscription. Such inscriptions have been found in commercial, residential and religious contexts and in the absence of further material, the inscription was found in a building the substantial portion of which was under the grid's east baulk, it was impossible to know which context was appropriate for our building. A second building, the SW Building, proved to be even more enigmatic as only its northeast corner extended into the grid.

The “industrialization” of this area continued in the Islamic and Crusader period when the Byzantine buildings in the area were renovated and reused and new structures built providing evidence for increased craft production in the area. Such production was visible in the quantities of two materials collected this summer: worked bone and ceramic slag/ceramic wasters. Where exactly this work was performed remains unclear. No floor with worked bone detritus on it was uncovered though much of the worked bone collected this summer came from the east room of the NE Building in Square 3. In the case of a kiln for ceramic production, the drainage, basin and heavy burning localized in or near the South Building and the SW Building hint strongly at production in their vicinity.

The apparent mix of domestic use and craft production on the summit of the South Tell overlooking the Mediterranean was not expected, as mentioned, but Director Daniel Master has postulated that this area was in fact, the Old City of Ashkelon. He has argued the South Tell was so built up from continual occupation that it was not home to the city's monumental architecture or even luxurious villas but rather well established, dense residential neighborhoods that clustered around the city center. Excavation in Grid 44 lent credence to that theory with the evidence for mixed use and while the extent of settlement in the late periods found in Grid 44 was greater than that found in Grids 50 and 51, it didn't belong to an area of prestige but rather one of concentrated urban living where existing buildings continued to be inhabited and reused as needed.

Many of our goals were met this this season's work. We learned of the presence of a mixed commercial-residential area in a neighborhood located in between the split branches of the city's decumanus. The area showed greater occupational density in the Byzantine, Fatimid and Crusader periods than did areas further to the south, Grids 50, 57 and 51, but did not produce the same type of public buildings seen in Grids 37 and 38. Clearly, however, the area's proximity to the city center, the easy access to that part of the city, and its situation on the summit of the South Tell where cooling breezes and magnificent views of the Mediterranean were on hand, made it a desirable place to reside.

As always, the interesting material was “in the baulk.” This year several buildings were found right along the baulks, separated within the grid by a large open space that was built over and subdivided though multiple phases of use. To fully understand these buildings, future excavation would need to expand the grid to the north, east and south. Go to the east and/or north and more of the NE Building, the Byzantine building holding the mosaic, would be revealed. Go to the south and it would potentially

reveal more about the Roman material discovered late in the season. Even going west would be revealing since entry into the grid was over walls just peeking out of the soil. Whether or not that will happen remains to be seen as discussions take place on how to proceed. Regardless of what happens in the future, a great deal was learned about settlement on the South Tell in the Byzantine-Crusader periods and Grid 44 has added greatly to our understanding of ancient Ashkelon.

Square Report – 44.2
Hannah Buckingham, Square Supervisor
Ashkelon 2013

Season Objectives and Overview

This year marked the first season of excavation in Grid 44, an area situated in a prime site on the summit of the south tell. The initial excavation area was identified by a Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey earlier in 2013, and avoiding areas previously excavated by John Garstang in the 1920s. This report will give an initial overview of the key findings from the season, followed by a more detailed description of the phasing and features in the square.

The main objectives for this season were to gain a preliminary understanding of the activities in this area, and establish whether further excavations in this location would be possible or desirable. The stratigraphical sequence in the grid has been divided into four phases (Phase 1a, 1b, 2 and 3), dating from the Hellenistic period in the 4th Century BC through to the Crusader period in the mid 12th Century AD. The phases are detailed below:

- Phase 1a is broadly characterised by Crusader period re-modeling and re-use of Phase 1b structures and occupation post 1153.
- Phase 1b represents the constructions of the Fatimid period, running from the early 11th Century until Crusader occupation in 1153.
- Phase 2 dates to the Byzantine period (4th - 5th Centuries AD)
- Phase 3 dates to the Hellenistic and Roman era.

In square 2 evidence was uncovered for occupation Phases 1a, 1b and 2, and this season included some intriguing architecture and very rich deliberate fills. The latest activity in the square (Phase 1a) is associated with a system of drains and pits. A total of 6 (possibly 7) drains and drainage channels were identified, along with at least two drainage pits. Some of these features were re-used after their initial construction in Phase 1b. In other cases, such as in the southern plaster-lined basin (U10), the Phase 1b construction was built upon and expanded. A frequent inclusion in Phase 1a was ceramic slag, and although no architectural evidence for a kiln was uncovered, the frequency of the material (often found in conjunction with ceramic wasters) strongly indicates the presence of a kiln in the near vicinity. This can be linked to the presence of *at least* one plaster lined basin, which could have been used as part of the industrial process of preparing clay for use in the making of ceramics.¹

In addition to the industrial evidence for ceramics, fragments and offcuts of worked bone were found throughout this later phase. The frequency and nature of the worked bone is indicative of a workshop, if not within the square itself then in the near vicinity.

Further evidence for domestic workshop or industrial activities was seen in the presence of two small fire pits (U35 and 37), and one larger and very intense layer of burning (U5) contained within two Phase 2 walls (U3 and 4). The latter area of burning was particularly interesting, as the internal faces of the walls had been built out with concrete, before being covered with a layer of plaster to affix several large roof tiles to the concrete.

The Roman period was visible only in infrequent ceramic evidence from across the square until the last

¹ The basins could be part of the 'settling' process in clay production, whereby the raw clay was soaked in water to remove impurities. The clay would then 'settle' on the base of the tank or pit.

day of excavation, when a level containing almost all Roman ceramics was encountered in U67.

Two key events which shaped the architecture of the square were the cutting of two robber trenches in the South half of the square in Phase 1a. The larger, and earlier, trench (U22) cut through the southern edge of the plaster-lined basin and wall U7. After this cut the area in the South-East of the square saw the deposition of a series of layers containing concentrated burning and inclusions of bright orange sand. These layers were then cut by the later robber trench (U75), which removed the top section of an earlier Phase 1b wall U62.

The absence of most floor surfaces in this square, and the heavy disturbance of the remaining pieces, presented some stratigraphic challenges. However, the first year of excavations in this grid have produced some very interesting installations. Further excavation would be needed to better characterise these activities. Suggestions for future work are discussed at the end of the report.

None of the work reported here would have been possible without the efforts of the fantastic summer school students working in square two. My thanks go to Alex Wein, Laura Ottinger, Jeff Sabo, Brady Swilley, Hannah Nunez, Julia Moloney and Kevin Burkett

Phasing:

Phase 1a – Crusader, late 12th Century (post 1153).

As previously stated Phase 1a is characterised by the construction of an extensive drainage system, possibly associated with industrial activities in the area. Removal of the topsoil exposed an extensive rubble layer covering the entire square. For ease of initial excavation this was divided into two areas; the northern half of the square recorded as U2 and the southern half as U1=U9. As expected, both units produced a large amount of mixed period pottery. Under these initial, rubble fills the layer above and around the features became darker and contained far fewer stones. The lower fill (U31=54) was also characterised by fairly frequent charcoal inclusions.

The main components of the drainage system from this phase were a plaster-lined basin and an associated drain, which ran from the basin into a large stone-lined pit (U38). This pit was constructed in Phase 1b with regular courses of worked stones, 'belling' out slightly after 50 cm, and then re-used in the Crusader period. Also draining into U38 was a connecting underground channel from Phase 1b (U53), and an above ground open drain (from Phase 1a), both of which ran on a North – South axis (U28). After the removal of U28 a probe was dug in this area (U84), to investigate whether there was any direct relationship between the underground channel and the above ground open drain. The excavations revealed the top part of the roof (partly collapsed) of a lower drain channel (U85). It is not clear if this is the roof of channel U53 draining into Unit 38, or possibly an earlier covered drain over which U28 was built.

The cobbled surface at the base of the open drain (U66=68) seems likely to be the remains of bedding for a surface which directly connected the drain to the pit.

The plaster-lined basin was located in the Southern half of the square, with the Northern face formed by the Southern edge of wall U8. The Southern edge of the drain was lost when robber trench U22 was cut, but U10 represents the remains of the bottom surface of the basin. The surface was constructed by laying cobbled bedding on a leveling fill (U56), on which a plaster surface was laid. Remains of the plaster sides could be seen on the walls forming the North (U8) and East (U7) faces of the basin. The removal of U10 provided the drainage system with a key piece of dating evidence, and with the discovery of a fragment of Crusader period Byzantine slip-ware. The leveling fill below the basin (U56) also contained large quantities of Crusader period ceramics. The leveling fill on the West side of wall U7 (U52), was similar in consistency and inclusions to U56. Above U52 was a layer of compacted

clay that probably formed either a surface itself, or the bedding for a surface now lost which would have been on the same level as U10.

Associated with the plaster basin was the drain (U46=18) which ran from the basin, through the walls U8 and U41 and emerged as a capped channel before draining into the pit U38. The upper end of the drain in the basin incorporated an ashlar incised with a cross above the entrance (probably taken from an earlier construction). The capped section lead almost directly into the stone lined pit U38.

The fills from drain U46=18 and pit U38 was a clean silt, with few inclusions. The only find of note was half of a pale yellow and blue Fustat Fatamid Sgraffiato bowl, which was found in the fill of the drain (fill U42=47) sitting near the entrance. Several further pieces of this bowl were found in the fill of the stone-lined pit (fill U39).

In addition to these drains and the central pit, a sewer pit (U26) and associated drain (U30) were uncovered in the North-East corner of the square. The fill from the pit (U27) contained frequent organic inclusions demonstrating that it was used as a sewer. The pottery from the unit indicated it was in use into the Crusader period.

The capping of the sewer drain was U19, a stone and cement blocking section between the large Phase 2 block U12, smaller Phase 1b block U20 and the latest Phase 1a section U17. The fill contained in the North-East corner of the square between U12 and U17 was U40, a dark-brown layer with few inclusions. This Northern edge of the square contained a lot of architectural features which were largely covered by the baulk, so conclusions for purpose and phasing in this area are not conclusive at this stage. Further excavation would be needed to clarify these features.

As previously mentioned, across the square very few traces of floor surfaces were excavated, the vast majority were heavily disrupted by later activity (associated with disuse and abandonment). Traces of the floor surface associated with the drain system can be seen in the small areas of marble tiles U11 and U16, both bedded on a layer of compacted earth – U24. A small section of plaster was also uncovered in the North half of the square (U23), which most likely formed the bedding for a now destroyed surface. The floor surfaces associated with Phase 1a gradually slope from the South-East to the North-West, a feature also seen in square 3. Even though the surfaces themselves have not survived, the floor level can be discerned through examining the wall courses. On the North faces of walls U15 and U41 there is a clear distinction between the stones in the foundation courses, and those which would have been above the floor level. These levels are consistent with the surviving floor units. An additional surviving floor level includes the cobbled threshold (U14) in the North-West of the square.

Aside from the drainage system, the main architectural elements in Phase 1a were the walls – U41, U7, U8 and U15. Walls U41, U8 and U15 were of similar construction, using two ashlar faces to contain a rubble fill. All of the walls began to float after 4 to 7 courses, and of those walls deconstructed the levelling fills underneath were of very similar consistency. Wall U41 was associated with fill U78 and wall U15 with fill U79. The fill under the capped drain U18=46 (U82) contained similar inclusions of 12th Century pottery. As part of the final goals for this season almost all Phase 1a architecture was removed (apart from U8 and the bottom course of U7). During the deconstruction of walls U15 and 41 it was clearly seen that they were thoroughly integrated in construction with U7 and U8. There was also a section of rubble 'blocking' in U41 covering U15 (U65). This may have been part of the construction process. Adjacent to wall U15 to the West was a cobbled surface (U34) which ran into the West baulk. The level of the cobbles is consistent with the surfaces across Phase 1a in this area, and they were constructed on levelling fill U69.

A short disturbed section of wall protruded from the East baulk, immediately West of wall Unit 8

(U21), and seems most likely to have been part of a construction which has now been lost. Another short section of disturbed wall was uncovered partly in the East baulk (U36). It was not clearly connected with any other units, but was sitting on a clay bedding and pottery dated its construction to the Crusader period. Another disturbed feature was U32, circular unit which cut the wall U15. Upon initial excavation it was characterised as a small stone-lined pit. However, the dismantling of the feature to further investigate proved inconclusive.

The latest activity of this phase is seen in the robber trench cut U75 and fill U76, which removed the top courses of wall U62. The trench stopped at the thin clay layer U77 (dated to Phase 1b), which would have originally covered the surface of wall U62. This latter unit represented the two remaining courses of a later Phase 1b re-build on earlier 1b wall U45. It is possible that before the robber trench U75, the U62 rebuild was re-used to form the southern face of the plaster-lined basin in this area. A second, earlier robber trench cut this area, putting the plaster-lined basin out of use by removing the Southern edge of U10 and cutting wall U7. This second robber trench then saw the build-up of several fill layers associated with heavy burning and bright orange sandy inclusions. The top (latest) layer is U6, a 30cm deep collapse layer consisting of large pieces of plaster and marble and ceramic tiles and slab fragments. Below U6 was the layer U29, a bright orange sandy layer with frequent inclusions of ceramic slag and wasters. In the East baulk it can clearly be seen how U29 was cut by the later robber trench, U75. The final layer in this area associated with Phase 1a is U33, which lay underneath U29. U33 was characterised by a greater concentration of charcoal than U29, and extended to wall unit 4 and was cut by a small fire pit (U37).

In addition to the fire pits mentioned above, a layer of extremely concentrated burning was seen in U5. This unit was the top layer underneath the rubble fill U1, and was contained within the area formed by the Phase 2 walls U3 and U4. The layer consisted of extremely ashy and charcoal filled silt. There was a very large amount of burned pottery and metal (nails in particular) within the layer. The burnt material lay up against several sections of roof tile (1 whole and a few fragments). The roof tiles were attached by a thick layer of plaster to a large build-up of concrete on the South side of wall Unit 3 and the West side of wall unit 4. When the concrete was removed it was possible to see the original face of the wall, with cleanly cut ashlar. Underneath U5 was U61, a layer of compact silt with far fewer inclusions than the former, and no evidence of burning.

Phase 1b - Fatamid

As this report has already detailed, Phase 1a can be seen largely as the continuation and expansion of the activities of Phase 1b. Although all Phase 1a fills, and most of the 1a architecture, were removed as part of the end of season activities, it is clear that not all of the Phase 1b material has been uncovered. This was seen in the probe (U84) dug in the last days of excavation and revealed the presence of a possible earlier drainage channel. Therefore, the conclusions presented here are not as firm as those for Phase 1a, and further excavation would be needed in the future to clarify the activities in this earlier phase.

The earliest drainage system which was expanded upon in Phase 1a was uncovered after the removal of the plaster basin surface U10, and its associated leveling fill U56. Under these units, at the base of wall U7, part of an earlier plaster surface was found – U70. This surface extended up the lowest course on the East side of U7 and was cut by the construction of walls U44 and U45, whilst another patch of plaster appears on the West edge of a line of roughly cemented blocks (U60). The plaster section on this latter unit begins to curve to the North, and is consistent with the theory that this section of plaster

is associated with a disturbed plaster lined channel. This channel seems to drain into an area contained within the other installations articulated under U56 at the same level. These installations, (U71, U72, U73), were most likely the top courses of a curved wall forming the edge of a drainage pit, into which the plaster channel (U60) was draining.

The plaster section cut by wall U7 may have formed part of a separate plaster lined feature – possibly an early 1b basin which was cut by the construction of walls U44 and U45 towards the end of the phase. This plaster-lined feature was then filled in and then the level raised in Phase 1a to form another basin (U10).

As previously mentioned, the stone-lined drainage pit (U38) and the connecting underground channel (U53) were constructed in Phase 1b.

After the construction of walls U44 and U45 in late 1b, a series of features and fills were deposited within the area created in the South-East corner of the square. The last layer of 1b to be deposited in this area is U43, characterised by dark-brown silt and ceramic inclusions dating to the Fatamid period at the latest. Within layer U43 was installation U51 - a short and poor quality stone feature (possibly an extremely disturbed wall) appearing on a North-South axis. The feature was only four roughly cut stones in length and one course. It was not connected to wall U45 to the North and did not appear to divide the space in any useful way. The construction was poor and it does not sit on a clear surface. Below U43, a layer of much more compact clay was excavated U55, before uncovering installation U57. This latter unit was a rough installation on an East-West axis, thought to be a very rough wall, consisting of two lines of vertically placed stones filled with rubble. It is possible it was intended to divide the space contained within wall units 44 and 45, but the unit was not excavated this season so no further information can be gathered at this point. The clay-like and compact fills to the North and South of U57 were U58 and U59 respectively. The ceramic inclusions for the latter units were cleanly Islamic.

An examination of the North baulk showed the presence of an arched drain channel (U80), thought to date from Phase 2, which had been blocked with rubble (U81) in Phase 1b. The blocking of this drain is associated with the two sections of plaster surfaces in front of the drain mouth (U48 and U50). The later fill between these two surfaces (U49) is dated to Phase 1a, with Crusader period pottery excavated.

The sections of the line of blocks in the North of the square dated to this phase are U13 and U20, which form the edges of the gap into which the open air drain U28 was inserted in Phase 1a.

The last activities of Phase 1b were the re-building and raising of wall units 44 and 45 - seen in remaining courses of U62. As previously noted in Phase 1a, these re-build courses were heavily robbed in the very latest phase of occupation (U74/U75), but not before the top surface was covered with the thin clay layer U77.

The layer U83 is underneath fill units U31 and U54 after the removal of most Phase 1a constructions. It was not excavated this season apart from the small probe (U84) between U28 and U39. As previously noted, the probe U84 uncovered the top of the roof of a lower drain channel (U85).

Phase 2 - Byzantine

In this square Phase 2 was only identified in a few units, mostly centering on the large walls (U3 and U4) forming a corner in the South-West of the square. U3 is the East-West section, and U4 the North-South. During the course of excavation the bottom of these walls was not reached. Construction was of large roughly cut blocks bonded with cement. U3 appears to be built up to U4, rather than an integrated construction as seen in later walls U8, 7, 15 and 41. The same cement covers the top section of U3 and 4, and also the later rebuild from phase 1a (U63).

As noted earlier in the report for U5, the South side of U3 was artificially built out with concrete, before being covered with a layer of plaster and several roof tiles (1 whole, a few fragments) were affixed. When the layer of concrete was removed it was possible to see a well cut ashlar face on the top half of the south side of U3 and U4.

The lowest layer reached in the area contained by U3 and U4 was U67. This layer was characterised by a more compact, clay-like consistency than the previous layer dating to Phase 1a (U61). The buckets from the last day of excavation produced almost clean Roman pottery with a few intrusive Byzantine piece and one possible Islamic. This suggests that this unit had begun to move into an earlier phase at its lowest levels.

As previously mentioned in the report, drain U80 was identified in the baulk as being a stone constructed drain roof from Phase 2, later blocked by a rubble fill from Phase 1b (U81). The drain was not excavated this season.

The final unit from Phase 2 identified this season is U12, consisting of a large worked block in the North – West of the square. The East edge is covered by the baulk between squares 2 and 3, and it appears to be associated with Unit 38 in square 3. It is thought to date to Phase 2, and was later extended in Phase 1b and 1a when other sections were added.

Future Directions

The starting point for any future work would be the further excavation and investigation of the Phase 1b drainage systems which were only beginning to be articulated this season. Particularly, further excavation in the area opened by the probe at the end of this season, and further articulation of the installations uncovered under the plaster-lined basin U10. Expansion of the square to the North would be an exciting prospect for uncovering more of the drainage system associated with the latest phase in the area. In the South-West of the square the last day of excavation was tantalizing in turning up an almost clean Roman fill, a period which was seen so little across the rest of the grid. Units 3 and 4 appear to form the corner of a much larger building, and the units contained within this corner have provided some of the most interesting features and layers this season.

44.3 – Final Report 2013

Simeon David Ehrlich

Overview; Goals

Excavation began in Grid 44, Square 3 this season with the intention of furthering understanding of late-period Ashkelon. Previous work that had demonstrated that significant architectural features were preserved in the vicinity: John Garstang noted that he passed through a substantial stone construction while digging a probe down to Philistine layers; a construction project by the park in the winter of 2011/2012 had uncovered what may be the remains of a Roman bathhouse; and ground-penetrating radar survey undertaken in the winter and spring of 2013 had indicated that stone architectural features were present. As well, this area was chosen based on its location at the high point of the south tell overlooking the sea – one of the most desirable plots of land on the tell.

Thanks is due to the volunteers of 44.3 for their tireless efforts in opening this square: Chris Thompson, Grant _____, Jung Kim, Sammy Lundgren, Aaron Moos, Kayla Reish, Madeline Holland, Alex Wein, Lara Ottinger, Kevin Burkett, Jeff Sabo, and Elizabeth Movius; to Emily Bitely for her surveying; and to Tracy Hoffmann for supervising the grid, for repeatedly using OCHRE in the field, and for running the entire grid on her own when illness kept her square supervisor from the field for a week. Those in 44.3 were also had the honor of the assistance of Shelby White and Lady Quinton, as well as half an hour of the diligent trowelling and brushing of Lucy Master.

N.B. all references to cardinal directions herein are to be taken with respect to the grid-plan which runs roughly parallel to the coast. Thus, N is closer to NE, etc. As well, only the W half of 44.3 was excavated this year, as all references to the E section of the square and the NE and SE corners should be understood in reference to the excavated area, rather than to the square's full expanse.

Phase 3 (Hellenistic)

South Probe

Hellenistic features were only encountered at the bottom of a probe dug in the S of the square where no later architecture was preserved. Two fieldstone constructions running E-W were found, U58 to the N and U59 to the S. The stones of each traced down for four courses but they were not floated. As well, one face of each was found but the probe did not expose the full width of either feature. The fill between the two, U60, was reddish-brown, moist, and clayey. It yielded ceramics confirmed as Hellenistic by the readings of Kate Birney. The function of U58 and U59 is difficult to interpret with such limited exposure – perhaps the walls of a channel, perhaps the walls of buildings, perhaps working platforms.

Phase 2 (Late Roman/Byzantine)

Though earlier and later material was identified, no fills excavated in 44.3 could be dated to the Roman period. While a large deposit of Roman ceramics was excavated from 44.2.U67, nothing comparable was found in 44.3. Moreover, removal of phase 2 architecture was not a goal this season, meaning the fills/occ. deb. beneath went unexcavated. Several phase 2 features were discovered and these have been classified either as early phase 2 (north compartments, vat) or late phase 2 (building with mosaics, west room and doorway, tessellated surface). At present there is not enough evidence to separate them into distinct phases or even subphases.

North Compartments

E-W ashlar and plaster wall U53 is the backbone of the phase 2 architecture. It runs E-W across the square, though the E extent is obscured by later rebuilds. Of similar construction to U53 and abutting it to the S is N-S wall U52. Though this wall is also obscured by later rebuilds, it is presumed to trace for at least several meters to the S. Three walls abut U53 on its N side and run into the N baulk: (from W to E) U41, U75, and U73. U41 is a large ashlar construction more similar in composition to U53. U75 is a narrow wall, one block wide (c.20cm). Only its top, which appears covered in a dark grey mortar is visible, but its edges have been defined. U73 is also one row wide, though here a couple courses of ashlar are preserved. The corner of U53/U73 is faced with pinkish-white plaster, possibly indicating the function of the compartment bounded by U73, U53, U75, and the N baulk as a vat for the storage of liquids (and perhaps implying similar functions for the other compartments). The fill of this compartment is U74; the fill of the compartment bounded by U75, U53, U41, and the N baulk is U76. Neither U74, nor U76 were excavated this season. E of U73, a grooved ashlar surface (U72) is present, however the narrow extent of exposure resulting from the proximity to the N baulk has made interpretation difficult at this stage. Whether U72 functioned as a floor or a surface bedding or for some other purpose cannot be determined based on the paucity of evidence.

Vat

Similar in composition to the corner of U53/U73 is vat U67, which features ashlar walls faced with pinkish-white plaster set on grey mortar and a base of pinkish-white plaster set over marble flagstones. The full N wall of the vat is preserved, as are most of its W wall and half of its E wall. The entire south wall has been robbed out. The NE and NW corners of the base are preserved, and the SE and SW corners are evident from where the plaster lips out at the S ends of the E and W walls. The dimensions of the vat are 1.1-1.2m wide (E-W), 0.75m across (N-S), and 1.35m tall (NW corner; best preservation). This gives a capacity of roughly 1200 liters. No inlets to or outlets from the vat were discovered. The base appeared to break off after the flagstones in the corners and was not traced in its entirety. There was much collapse from the vat walls in the center and this may either have destroyed the base of the vat or pushed it down below its original level. Several possibilities have been proposed for the function of the vat, most notably wine production/storage, however, no evidence has been found to support this or any other theories.

Mosaic

In the latter part of phase 2 vat U67 is covered by a mosaic, U40, of white industrial tile with an inscribed and colored roundel. U40 also extends a couple of inches over U52 and U53, indicating the use of these walls as foundations for the building. There is a border at the N extent of U40 of three parallel rows of tesserae running E-W. The body of the mosaic runs at 45 degrees to this border. These two components and the outer two concentric circles of the roundel are made of roughly hewn off-white tesserae of c.2cm/side. The inner four concentric circles are of finer tesserae (c.1cm/side) in blue, yellow, purple, and off-white. Within the roundel are six horizontal rules, sectioning the space into five lines with blank spaces above the top and below the bottom rules. When facing to the E, the text reads as follows: ΘΕ[| ΒΟΗΘ[| ΟCΟΥ[| ΚΑ[| ΙC[with some additional letter fragments preserved along the breaks. One possible reconstruction is ΘΕ[ΟC] | ΒΟΗΘ[ΟC] | ΟCΟΥΔ[Ε] | ΚΑΚΟΝ | ΙCΧΥ[Υ]Ε[Ι] or Θεος | βοηθος | ός ουδε | κακον | ισχυει (God the helper who in no way strengthens an evil man). The reconstruction of the last three lines aside, the opening is almost certainly an invocation of Θεος βοηθος (God the helper), though it may have been written in an oblique case rather than in the nominative. This phrase is common from the mid-fourth century CE onwards¹ and appears primarily in Christian, but also in pagan and Jewish contexts.² Likewise, the phrase offers few clues as to the

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function of the building containing this mosaic, as inscriptions invoking Θεος βοηθος are found in all manner of public, private, religious, and secular settings.³

Three other patches of mosaic were found in relatively close proximity, U35, U90, and U100. These three are all at roughly the same elevation (U35=24.40m; U90=24.35m; U100=24.35m), whereas U40 is lower (24.23m in the roundel). Thus U35/U90/U100 are likely all fragments of one mosaic from a second room to the south of the room containing U40. Of note is the fact that U90 preserves the two outer concentric circles of a roundel that would have extended to the S. Between U90 and U100 is a patchy white plaster layer, U99, which likely functioned as bedding for the tesserae of the mosaics. A probe was cut through here and into the orange-brown silt over cobbles (U103) sealed beneath – also part of the bedding. Ceramics from U99/U103 confirmed hypotheses that these were sealed Byzantine contexts.

West Room and Doorway

On the W side of U52 several patches of white plaster (U98) were found or seen beneath floating architecture from later phases. These are set several cm beneath the level of U40 and the largest patch runs right to a gap in U52 opposite U40. This may be indicative of a missing threshold separating the room of U98 from that of U40. The roundel of U40 is best read from this patch of U98, possibly indicating that it would be read as one entered the room. Further supporting the function of this area as a doorway is the presence of a ring of stones (U97) abutting U53 to the N and U52 to the E. This is thought to be a door socket. Finally, there is a narrower superstructure (U38) built upon U53, which would have functioned as the N wall of this W room. The laying of U40 over U53 and the construction of U38 above U53 indicate the use of U53 as a foundation wall at the end of phase 2, rather than as a wall in its own right.

Tessellated Surface

In the SE corner of the square, a feature, U28, was found divorced from any associated architecture. This feature was composed of rows of closely-laid, vertically-oriented potsherds set into a grey-white plaster and covered with a thin striation of very fine shells and shell fragments in a mud plaster. Adam Aja was able to track down a photo (99_12348) of a feature of similar composition (23.11.L73.F73). This was interpreted at the time of excavation as a tessellated (*sic*) surface and phased as an Islamic period construction within a reused Byzantine structure. Immediately above 23.11.L73.F73 was a surface of compacted shell set in mud plaster (23.11.L72.F72). Jonathan Waybright, in his grid report, posits the use of 23.11.L73.F73 as spillage for the channel it abuts. U28 likely functioned similarly as a surface with good drainage properties associated with an (unexcavated/robbed out) water feature of some sort.

South Probe

U54, the fill in the S probe immediately above the ph.3 architecture, was not much different in composition from U60 below, however, it yielded Byzantine ceramics. No Roman fill was discerned between U54 and U60 in the course of excavation, nor was any such layer evident in the sections of the probe.

Phase 1b (Fatimid)

The area of 44.3 is thought to have been in continuous use throughout the Islamic period however no major change in function is discernible until the Fatimid period. Here, the earlier structure with the two mosaic rooms is damaged, repurposed, and reorganized. Walls are robbed and rebuilt,

large rooms are subdivided, and interior spaces become exterior spaces.

Major Architectural Reuse

The damage to the phase 2 structure is evident in the lack of a W border to mosaic U40 to match the preserved N border. U55 represents the fill beneath where the NE corner of U40 should have sat over the edges of U52 and U53. U93 represents the cut through vat U67 to rob out its S wall, which would have served as the foundations for the diving wall of the room of U40 and the room of mosaic U35/U90/U100.

Wall U7 is built on the line of wall U53. U7 runs N-S and it bonded at its S end to U6 which runs E-W towards the E section. Both walls are composed of large ashlar at their corner and smaller semi-worked stones elsewhere. U7 sits upon foundations of small cobbles set in loose sand (U104), which in turn rests upon U52. The corner of U6/U7 rests upon the fieldstone foundations of U86. U6 is not seated upon an earlier wall, as evidenced by mosaic U90 (with the edge of a roundel) running beneath it, as well as pit U101 with soft, black ash fill U102 extending in below its footprint (see photo A13_25286). The lower section of a filled-in arched opening may be visible in the section of U6 immediately above U101/U102.

Pieces of the phase 2 architecture are repaired and reused. U53 serves as the foundation upon which rebuild ashlar wall U20 is set. This wall may have been damaged at some point and ashlar wall U22 built as a secondary repair. Likewise, U64 (sealing unexcavated fill U65) is a layer of white plaster laid to repair a damaged section of mosaic surface. There is one patch at the NE extent of U64 which appears to preserve a diagonal strip of tesserae from the phase 2 mosaic it mended. U64 cornered with the plastered faces of U6/U7, though the state of preservation here was lower in quality than other portions of U64.

Abutting U7 on its W side are two stone constructions, both built above plaster surface U98. The larger (U71) is a cobble platform of five courses and six rows. U7 is deeper than U71 at its S end, but not at its N. There appears to be a vault running roughly E-W across the lower three courses of U71. The five courses of U71 were easily articulated S of this vault; only the upper two courses are well defined to the N of this area. The function of U71 is difficult to determine, as is its time of deposition relative to U7. The most likely possibilities seem to be an earlier phase 1b construction or a buttress of U7. U89, the second stone construction abutting U7 on the W, abuts U71 on the N. Its semi-worked stones were less regularly laid than those of U71. It may be the foundation for a wall running to the W from U71, but this is a difficult claim to substantiate.

Water Installations

The Islamic period use of 44.3 is characterized by an abundance of water features. The two major features of phase 1b are a drainage channel of shells set cusp-side up in mud plaster (U78) and a stone-lined drainage pit (U42). The channel ran between U71 to the E and vertical stone line U81 to the W. A second vertical stone line (U77) runs on axis with U81 and slightly to the S, however U78 was found to trace beneath U77. Thus, U77 may divide the channel into two sections or it may in fact be nothing. To the W of U77, U78 appeared to corner around some stones that had formed a right angle beside them. U79 designated the fill beneath these. The compact fill beneath U78 itself was U91 and the softer, darker fill beneath this was U96. The small patch of fill above U78 sealed by a later surface (U70) was U83.

North Compartments

No reuse of the N compartments of phase 2 is evident based on the small strip exposed. However, later fills do seal the earlier architecture. U56 is a thin fill of similar composition to the two unexcavated fills beneath it (U74/U76). U48 was a thick sand/kurkar layer that appeared cut into U56 beneath it.

South Probe

The S probe was cut through a phase 1b fill in the hopes of finding architectural features beneath. This upper layer of fill was U44. Ceramics here were more plentiful than in the lower strata of the probe. The unexcavated fill to the E (U51) is likely equal to U44.

Construction in SW

In the SW corner of the square is a fragmentary construction of unknown function. Two walls are preserved. U57 is made of semi-worked stones and cobbles. It runs N from the S baulk. U61 is of like composition but inferior preservation. It may corner with U57 or it may be a lower terrace running parallel. U61 is located to the N of the S probe. The S baulk across the probe shows a similar stone construction, however U61 did not appear to trace across the probe. In the S baulk there is a sandy striation running over the top of U57 and one that runs over what may be the continuation of U61. The fill in and around this area is U50.

Fills

The W room is likely converted to exterior space in this period on the basis of the water features in the W area of the square in this period. No surface is preserved however and the fill here (U49) continues beneath the level of the phase 2 surface (U98).

SW of walls U6/U7 and wrapping around their foundation (U86) is fill U87. To the E of this was fill U88 which contained ashy flecks. It was located above ash pit and fill U101/U102 and beneath a later slag deposit. A small patch of fill above U88 (U84) was sealed by a later flagstone surface (U66).

Within vat U67 cut by robber trench U93 was a thick silt deposit (U92) with fragments of collapse from the facing of U67. Above U92 was a thinner sandy deposit (U82). Few tesserae were found within U82/U92, indicating that mosaic U40 did not collapse within, but was already removed when the E-W wall was robbed out by U93. U92 is likely the fill contemporary with that robbing and U82 a later deposit overtop.

Phase 1a (Crusader)

In Phase 1a 44.3 again undergoes significant changes both in its interior and exterior space. While not as drastic as the changes from interior to exterior space brought about by the phase 1b architecture, there are indications of substantial changes in the function of certain areas.

Major Renovation of Interior Space

In the E room of mosaics U40 and U35 and plaster repair U64 several installations are added. Wall U8 (one row wide and faced only on its N side) is built over U35 and sections off the S third of the space, within which two stone lined pits (U10, U11) are built up against U6/U7. The thin fill beneath these pits and above the plaster surface (U64) is U62. The northern third of the E room is also sectioned off. In this case a wall of similar composition to U8 (U24) is used for part of this division. The faced sides of U8 and U24 are opposite one another and line the middle third of the E room. U24 is built up against U23 which traces from the termination of U24 to the E face of U7. U23 is far sturdier construction, featuring three cut column sections (MC67091, MC67092, MC67093) of c.50-100cm in length set transversely in the bottom course. Notable is the fact that these three sections are laid above the inscribed roundel of mosaic U40 and jut out several inches S over the filled in vat (U67). This may be indicative of the intentional covering of the mosaic text, possibly out of respect for the religious content therein, rather than destroying the mosaic. Between U8 and U23/U24 was fill U25, notable for the high concentration of bone, both worked and unworked, found within. In this fill a lapis lazuli inlay with a mirrored inscription in Arabic (MC66636) and a bone doll affectionately dubbed "Gumby" (MC 66657) were both found. In the same area as U25 but beneath the level of the mosaics the fill was U45.

The fill between U23/U24 and U20/U22 was U26. The circular gap (possibly a pit) in U40 was designated U46 but was not excavated.

Major Renovation of Exterior Space

The renovations of the exterior space in phase 1a can be divided into earlier and later additions. At the start of phase 1a, a basin is built upon cobble surface U71. U29 represents the foundation course of the basin, consisting of a one course worked stone face and rubble fill. The northern third of U29 was covered with a thick layer of white plaster (U9). A wall (U31) was built along the W edge of U29, as was one along the N edge (U33). The plaster of U9 lips up at its S end, showing that another wall or divider would have been present there. Four rows of cobbles (U30) were laid at the S end of U29 forming part of a wall or platform. U30 abuts wall U12 which is laid over the S edge of U29. U12 was composed of two ashlar. It may have functioned as a doorpost.

To the N of the basin, U34, a preserved stub of wall abutting U33 and U7 was founded upon U89. To the E of the basin, a flagstone surface composed primarily of fragments of white veneers and moldings from earlier structures was laid over the earlier shell-lined drain (U78) and abutting the cobbles (U71) upon which the basin was built.

At the corner of U6/U7, an ashlar buttress with rubble core (U5) was founded upon fill U80. To the S of U6 a patch of flagstone surface similar in composition to U70 was found around a sunken vessel (RP12762). The vessel was set into pit U94 (filled with U95). It is unknown whether the pit cut the surface or whether the surface was built to accommodate the pit. In either case the pit line was not detected until lower down and the vessel was excavated as part of fill U37 through which the pit cut.

Later in phase 1a, flagstone surface U70 was covered with a surface of similar composition (U32; above fill U68) which sloped up at an angle of c.30 degrees to abut U29 rather than U71. A drain (U16; filled with U36) was also built. U16 was first detected in the area directly above the sunken vessel in pit U94 and it ran right around the corner of U5 and down to U42, which is presumed to have been heightened in this period. A complete basalt millstone (MC65999) was found capping U42 and sealing the fill within (U43). Half of a second millstone (MC66600) was found nearby. The hard packed fill to the N of U16 and S of wall U6 was excavated as U63. To the S and W of drain U16, patches of a plaster surface (U17) were traced. This surface was founded upon U37, which had been opened as a plaster and rubble bedding for U17, however it was found to thin out and transition to soil fill. No clear distinction was detected, rather a more gradual petering out was observed. U85 was opened for two stones abutting U71 that were originally thought the remnants of a wall of phase 1b shell-lined drain U78, however it became clear that U78 traced beneath these and so U85 was determined to be rubble from within U37.

Construction in SW

Jutting out from the W baulk in the SW corner of the square U39, a construction of plaster set on cobbles over an ashy striation, was found. Its function remains indeterminate. This area was left partially unexcavated to allow for the construction of a sandbag staircase. The stratigraphy is better defined in the E section of 44.2.

Fills not Sealed by Architecture

Being the latest phase of occupation, a number of fills of phase 1a were not sealed by any architecture. To the N of walls U20/U22 and above U72 was U47, a fill of rubble in loose silt. A narrow probe through fill (U69) was cut to the N of U42 between the W extent of U32 and the W baulk. This was equated with fill U68, originally intended as the sealed fill beneath U32, but ultimately excavated to include some unsealed areas as well. A large swath in the NW of the square was covered with a field of rubble (U18=U21; see photo A13_24215). The less rubbly fill beneath U18 was U27.

Fills U1=U2=U3=U4=U13=U14=U15=U19 represent the areas between the level to which the bulldozer excavated (the top of the corner of U6/U7 and just above U38) and much of the phase 1a

architecture. U19 and U4 above it were the fills S and W of U16 and S of U6. U15 was the fill above the E room. U13 and U14 filled pits U10 and U11, respectively. U3 covered U18. U1 and U2 were the uppermost excavated fills N and S of U6, respectively.

Conclusions

The inaugural season in 44.3 has uncovered several phases of architecture in less than ideal states of preservation. For the later phases the material culture and architectural features give some clues as to the nature of occupation. U19 and U37 yielded a high quantity of slag and in particular, the bottom of U37 along the E section featured a large smear of slag spreading over FG85 and FG95. pXRF analysis undertaken by Adam Aja revealed the slag to be associated with ceramic production, rather than with metal production. This is substantiated both by the numerous sherds of wasters found throughout the square and the fragments of what appear to be drop of glazes intended for ceramics on rock chips. As well, the various water installations may have been associated with such an industry. The high concentration and variety of worked bone implements and blanks has been taken by Paula Wapnish as indicative of a bone workshop in the immediate vicinity. The E room would seem a likely candidate for such activity.

About phase 3 not much more can be said than that there was some form of occupation. In early phase 2 there was a structure with at least one and possibly multiple compartments for liquid storage. In late phase 2 there was a building with at least two rooms featuring decorated mosaics, one of which featured an inscription with what is almost certainly religious content. Whether the building itself was religious in nature and, if so, which religion are both open to debate. The opening invocation, $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ $\beta\omicron\eta\theta\omicron\varsigma$, appears in all manner of contexts and offers few clues in and of itself. In phase 1b the Byzantine structure is repurposed and some formerly interior spaces are converted to courtyard areas. In early phase 1a the interior space is further subdivided and the stone-lined pits are installed, while the exterior space gains the basin and the drain.

Recommendations

The goals for continued excavation in 44.3 are contingent upon the nature of future work. If the square is expanded to its full extent, then the first priority will be to bring the E half in phase with the remainder of the square. In either case, removal of phase 1b architecture will need to be completed, starting with U71 and U6/U7. Inscribed mosaic U40 will be lifted for conservation after the completion of the 2013 field season. Full exposure of the late phase 2 architecture must be completed to further the understanding of that structure. With the mosaic removed, exposure of the earlier phase 2 architecture may become a possibility. At that point it may be advisable to dig another probe in a sealed context to check for evidence of Roman occupation. If none is found then work in the square will be at its end.

LEON LEVY EXPEDITION TO ASHKELON
GRID 51 FINAL REPORT 2013

K. Birney



Fig. 1 Grid 51 Overview at the conclusion of the 2013 Season (Photo # A13_26129)

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Introduction

Grid 51 began as a 100 m² excavation area spanning the eastern half of Square 73 and the western half of Square 74. In 2010, the Grid was expanded 10m to the east and 5m south to create a field of 300 square meters, and the newly opened areas were the focus of our work in the three subsequent seasons. The goal for the 2013 season was finally to bring the upper and lower areas of Grid 51 fully into phase with one another and to excavate the earliest Persian period occupation within the neighborhood (Phase VII Early). These objectives were largely met, as both buildings and the dividing street are now fully in Phase VII. Due to something of an embarrassment of riches in Phase VI and Phase VII Late occupational material we did not fully remove the earliest Phase VII horizon, but sit poised to do so within the first two weeks of 2014. Six weeks of excavation also clarified the relationship between the Early and Middle Persian buildings and suggest a change in the character and quality of the neighborhood between Phases VII and VI.

The 2013 Season results are presented below in chronological order, from earliest to latest. There are at present nine known phases within Grid 51, each corresponding to the general chronology below:

Phase I: Islamic (Fatimid-Crusader, 10th-12th c. A.D., 2 subphases)

Phase II*: Byzantine (4th-7th c. A.D.)

Phase III*: Early Roman (late 2nd B.C. – 1st A.D.)

Phase IV: Late Hellenistic (ca. 3rd-early 2nd c. B.C.)

Phase V: Early Hellenistic (ca. 350-305/290 B.C.)

Phase VI A & B: Late Persian (ca. 400-350 B.C.)

Phase VII A & B: Persian (ca. 500 B.C – ca. 400 B.C.)

Phase VIII*: Iron IIC (7th century)

Phase IX*: Pre-7th century

** Phases I-III, VIII-IX were not excavated in 2012. Phase VIII will be the focus of the 2014 season*

With the exception of the transition between Phases V-IV (tied to coin readings in Grid 57) chronological breaks are based on rough ceramic readings. The Persian and Hellenistic ceramic corpus will be subject to close readings by specialists over the next two years (Persian by Josh Walton; Hellenistic by myself) in preparation for the production of Persian and Hellenistic volumes.

As a complement to the report which follows, readers are encouraged to consult the 2013 Reports for Squares 83-84, 75-85 and 74, and also the Grid final reports from 2010-2011. The latter describes the Phase VI-VII rooms and surfaces from the western half of the building, not excavated in 2013.

Neighborhood Overview

The block plan provided for reference below is composite representation of the Persian – Hellenistic occupation in Insula 1, based on existing walls and robber trenches. While most rooms are consistently structured, it should be noted that there are rooms which were subdivided on occasion, and others which were merged. (The wall between Rooms 10 and 15 was removed for a subphase of VI, etc.



Fig. 2 Room Designations in Insula 1 (walls not to scale)
Doorways shown are those functional in Phase VI.

PHASE 7: ca 500-400 B.C. The Earliest Persian Insula

The 2010 excavation of the probe in Room 8 made clear that Phase VII had two subphases, the earliest associated with a yet lower series of walls. Only a portion of the Phase VII early surfaces have thus far been excavated - Phase VII Early surfaces were excavated in Room 8 (**74.U510**) and exposed in Room 12 (**74.505**) - nonetheless the removal of the VII Late horizon has begun to illuminate the architectural plan associated with the earliest Phase VII building. As anticipated, the VII Early plan is in keeping with the later phases of the insula. It is clear that several of the mudbrick walls which have functioned throughout Phases VI-V were originally established at the beginning of Phase VII: the large east-west wall **73.134=74.201=211**; the equally wide north-south wall **73.U225**. These two walls have formed the basic structure off of which all subsequent interior walls of the west half of the building were built. With the exception of **73.124=74.201/211**, the well-founded mudbrick walls do not appear in the eastern half of the building, where stone and ashlar construction seems to have been preferred. For example, there appear to be some breaks in the northern and eastern walls of Room 13 (**U442** and **U404**) showing lower Phase VII walls, slightly offline, with large fieldstone construction; these will be assessed in 2014. In Building 2 there is similarly no sign of lower mudbrick walls. At least two areas of the impressive ashlar façade visible in Phase VII Late (for detailed discussion see below) clearly continue down into VII Early: the ashlar wall **75.U163** and the northern corner formed by the lower courses of **75.U52** and **75.U85**.

In Room 8, Phase VII Early beaten earth surface **74. U. 510 (=2010 74.U287)** touched the foundation courses of **74.200=211** but ran under the Phase VII Late walls **74.466** to the east; this closing wall is not yet known. TO the south, the surfaces run underneath **74.189=215** and appear to function with a new wall rising just underneath it along the same line. In the southeastern corner of the room was a pit holding an intact Persian cooking pot. **RP# 12894**. Shell material was dumped in great profusion into a pit in the northern corner of the room¹. Of particular note from this surface was a partial scarab **MC # 67942**.

Phase VII Late

The Phase VII Late neighborhood, fully excavated this season, was of a substantially different nature than the Phase VI neighborhood which followed. It is here that we first see the quality inherent in the original construction of the neighborhood, and the finds are indicative not only of a higher standard of living in this early Persian period, but reflect also the Mediterranean connections typical of a Phoenician coastal city.

The quality of construction is most evident in Building 2, the impressive façade of which was constructed from cut stone ashlar which spanned the length of the wall (rather



Fig. 3 Exterior walls of Building 2 in Phases VII Late (Photo # A13_26130, view to E)

than being restricted to the doorjambs, as in later Phases). Three doorways, 1.4m in width, were set into these walls and paved with cobblestone thresholds (from north to south: **75.U140, U137, U155**)

The earliest Phase VII street **75.U115** was rather narrow in the 5th century, its center spanning only ca. 1.5 m. It was, however, flanked on both sides by curbing of substantial rough-cut fieldstones, at least 2 courses deep. These were set roughly 80cm away from the building edge (**75. U153** and **75.U132** on the west side of the street; **75. U143=152=85.U80**) on the east, cut into the lowest levels of the street. A small patch of small cobblestones in between the curbing and the edge of Building 1 was all that remained of what had likely been a cobblestone paved sidewalk; apart from these few stones street material accumulated in the gap between the curbing and the buildings on both sides of the street. A slight jog of the curbing on the west side of the street may mark the vestiges of a

¹ Excavation of this surface in 2010 had noted shells in the northern edge of the room and attributed them to a shell-lined mudplaster covering the foundation stones. This plastering did indeed continue to the east into the area excavated in 2013, but the profusion of shells in the adjacent pit is clearly a different feature.

step down; the shift aligns with the east-west wall line separating Rooms 9 and 13 in Building 1, and likewise with wall **75.U 131** which separates two rooms in Building 2.



Fig. 4 Grid Overview showing North-South Phase VII street (75.115) and sidewalks 75.154, 75.132 west, 75.143=152 on the east. (Photo # A13_26131, view to N)

This type of irregular paving of roads and sidewalks with compact street material or cobbles is known from Phoenician colonies in the western Mediterranean. Isserlin and du Plat Taylor describe similar features at Sulcis in Sardinia and note other Persian period parallels at Shiqmonah and Tell Abu Hawam.² The sidewalks at Tell Abu Hawam are described as “indifferently paved with stone or compressed mud laid on a rubble bedding” (Hamilton 1935: 3). At Ashkelon, these sidewalks would have been quite narrow and convenient only for single-file travel, but prevented pedestrians from stepping into the gully of sandy sewage and street accumulation which ran between the curbs.

Building 1

Excavations in 2011 had already uncovered the Phase VII Late occupation in Rooms in the western half of Building 1. This season the occupational material from this subphase was excavated in the remaining rooms (Rooms 8-9, 12-13, 14-17) with the exception of Rooms 1 and 4³, and in Building 2 across the street. Phase VII walls maintained the same general wall lines as those in Phase VI (and indeed in several cases served as the immediate foundations for Phase VI walls). They were, however, generally oriented a few degrees slightly northwest-southeast to the Phase VI wall lines. That such a shift is noticeable not only on the exterior building walls but also the interior/partition walls of the eastern half indicates an overarching building design, rather than half-hazard adjustments made by its occupants. The exterior eastern wall of Building 1 lining the street was constructed using a mix of larger fieldstones with ashlar at intersections and doorjambs.

Phase VII Late surfaces were excavated in the western half of Building 1 in 2011.⁴ In 2013 Phase VII Late surfaces were excavated in Rooms 8, 9, 12-14 and the courtyard 15-17.

² Sardinia: Barreca 1961:38-39; Tell Abu Hawam: Hamilton 1935:3; Shiqmonah Elgavish 1968:13

³ With the exception of Rooms 1, 4 and 18, to be completed in 2014.

⁴ Room 2: 73.U241=74.U268; Room 3: 74.279; Room 5: 73.U267; Room 7: 73.266 (technical horizon); Room 10: 73.U259, Room 11: 73.255=74.277

Throughout the building all surfaces – whether interior or exterior - were characterized by shell deposits and debris.

In Room 8, **74.451(=2010 74.284)** was excavated along the rooms eastern edge. While a single ashlar on the north side of **74.U282**, the western closing wall of the room, indicates a doorway connecting Rooms 7-8, it is unclear whether the doorway to Room 9 was present at this stage. While a number of significant small finds were recovered from this space in 2010 (Scarab MC # 63239, Bastet amulet **MC#63252**, and two weights **MC# 63219, 63262**) there were few of note from this eastern end of the room.

In Room 9, sizeable quantities of bronze was recovered from **74.U483**, primarily in the form of small fragmented hooks, pins and needles, including a cluster of 14 fused bronze nails (**MC # 67588**). So copious were the amounts that the greenish tinge from the material leached into the surrounding soil and dyed all faunal material a bright green.⁵ It is almost as though the material was a waste dump for metal processing, or a place where scraps were gathered for re-melting. Iron slag **MC # 67615** and a whole lamp **RP # 12896** were also noted.

Fig. 5 Lekythos RP# 12758



In Room 13, occupational debris **74.U474** above floor U.498, partially paved with glycymeris shells (distinct from other floors in this phase which were marked by substantial quantities of shell debris, these appear to have been deliberately laid with the concave side up, perhaps serving as paving for an installation associated with nearby the pit **74.U481/482** immediately to its north.⁶ In the north east corner, a stone bin built up against walls **U442** and **74.404=75.123**, in which was found an Attic Patterned lekythos and an amphoriskos, both popular vessels for the transport of scented oils (from **U.496**). The lekythos is of the white-ground cylindrical type. On mainland Greece the lekythos is a container for scented oils, and often used in votive or most especially burial rites. Their ritual use is not documented in the Levant (with the exception of a single grave

fact that the vessel is painted only on its front side, with the at Mishmar ha'Emeq (Martin (diss) 320), and they appear instead in domestic contexts. The back was left a blank white ground, suggesting that it is a mass-produced piece purchased for its contents rather than its artistic value (cf Kurtz 1975:131). There are numerous parallels which mirror exactly the same lattice framing and ivy pattern, including one from an Agora deposit⁷; in the southern Levant the pattern lekythos form has been attested in Persian contexts at Gezer, Apollonia, and Tell el-Hesi. The type is stylistically placed in the first half of the 5th century.⁸

Few traces of occupational material were recovered from beaten earth surfaces in Rooms 12 (**U.469**) and Room 14 (**U.148.**)

⁵ The green is distinctively unlike that associated with organic deposits.

⁶ A comparable installation was discovered during this horizon in the courtyard to the (Room 17, **84.U262**), where shell paving surrounded a pit holding a complete sunken storage jar. Both pits were 45cm in depth.

⁷ S.R.. Martin, "Hellenization' and Southern Phoenicia: Reconsidering the Impact of Greece Before Alexander" (Berkeley Ph.D. Diss 2007), 321.

⁸ Rotroff et al (eds.) *Debris from a Public Dining Space in the Athenian Agora*; cf. also Martin p.322 n. 81

Outdoor Space: The Courtyard

The Phase VII courtyard spanned Rooms 15 and 16, extending nearly 10m in length from **84.U209** in the east to **84.U114** in the west, and was bounded to the north by walls **83.U99** and **84.U192=193**. With the exception of the western wall, all other boundaries were heavily and inconsistently robbed with large gaps remaining. As a result, access points to the courtyard cannot be clearly defined. Although a western doorway existed in Phase VI (built using the southern visible extent of wall **83.U114** as a threshold), there is no sign that such a doorway existed during Phase VII. An area of mudbrick curbing **84.U279** adjacent to the southern face of **84.U192** may indicate a poorly constructed threshold connecting the courtyard with Room 12 to the north. Excavation in the eastern half of Square 84 will clarify in particular how this space was accessed from the street. (The position of the staircase and exit from the grid has prevented excavation in this area thus far, but will be addressed in 2014.) This larger industrial area showed a substantial accumulation of ashy surfaces associated with a series of superimposed installations, and both the layout of this Phase VII courtyard and its industrial nature continued uninterrupted until the later part Phase VI, when the construction of the mudbrick building repurposed Rooms 16 and 17 into interior domestic space.

The courtyard occupation was marked by continuous construction and use of installations and piles of attendant debris. In the eastern end of the courtyard **83.U137=84.254=84.248** was a broad cut or depression **84.U274** paved with pottery sherds, an installation totally by Phase VI construction above it. Above the sherds were a pile of loomweights (**MC #s 67980-1, 67926, 68009, 67926, 67933**) and a thin bronze implement, perhaps a shuttle? with an eyehole on one end and a bent flattened tang at the other. (**MC # 67894**). Although a clear mark of weaving activities, it seems unlikely that this assemblage would have been directly associated with the pottery-paved installation, which seems better suited to facilitate drainage.

In the center of the courtyard were two sunken vessels, **84.233**, a store jar on the south and **84.272** a cooking vessel? (unexcavated 2013) to the north. The two appear to have been separated by some sort of east-west curbing later robbed out by trench **84.U267/8**. The southern vessel was surrounded by a heavy area of white ash and burning in excess of 450 degrees F; phytolith and flotation samples were likewise taken but results not yet delivered. On the west side of the courtyard a single square bin or fire pit **83.U144** was cut down through the shelly courtyard **83.134**, abutting wall **83.99**. Its interior and base was thickly lined with orange hamra (in places up to 10-13 cm thick), and additional lenses of hamra had been smeared up and out of the northern edge of its cut onto the adjacent floor which sloped away to the south. This hamra appears to have been repeatedly re-applied, as courtyard laminations were visible between successive layers of hamra. The coloration of the clay – bright orange – is not characteristic of the more reddish hamra known from Phase VI and VII beaten earth floors elsewhere in the grid, and indicates that it may have been burnt. FTIR of sediment samples from the installation (**Sample #s 1287, 1288**), however, show that any burning must have been lower than 300 degrees Celsius. No additional material was recovered that might indicate function.

Building 2

While the excavatable portions of two rooms in Building 2 (separated by wall **75.131** only span some total area of 2 square meters, they nonetheless produced some of the season's most interesting finds. The well-preserved assemblage below came from floor



Fig. 6 Finds from Phase VII Late Floors in Building 2 (southern room 75.150; northern room 75.147) Credit: M. Aja.

(the northern room), and each speaks to Ashkelon's relationships to the broader world during this period.

Item 1: Fibula MC # 67789 (Fig 6, left)
From 75.150. This well-preserved fibula belongs to a class of well-known "arm fibulae", a type is triangular form with some ribbing on the arc of the pin and the clasp fashioned like a fingered hand. Although some have attempted to connect these shapes to Phrygian and Anatolian styles of dress, Muscarella has demonstrated that these arm fibulae are an eastern form beginning in Iron II, from Medean or South Caucasian regions (though the precise date is a matter of some slight disagreement. - provenanced examples are attested at least by the eighth century B.C. in Nippur. The appearance of such a fibula in Phase VII

may indicate a preference for Eastern styles of dress, at least among occupants of Building 2.

Item 2: Greco-Phoenician Scarab MC # 67584 (Fig. 6, Top right)

This delicately carved scaraboid has a an intricate scarab beetle on one side, with a hoplite on the other. The hoplite thrusts his spear and shield at an invisible enemy while running in the opposite direction, looking over his shoulder. The exceptional detail on this scarab, including a delicately corded border, marked musculature on the thighs and abdomen, betrays a high level of craftsmanship more consistent with eastern gemworking, a style and skill which is re-introduced into the Greek world only later in the 6th century. (It is in the 6th century that Greek schools of gem cutting start using agate, carnelian, jasper, borrowing from Phoenician types and tools (bow drill, which they had to relearn since the Bronze Age). The development of these new cut gem types is seen in the Greek islands and Cyprus).⁹

This green jasper scarab is of a type known as 'Greco-Phoenician'; a most unsatisfying description for a class of carved gems known predominantly from Phoenician sites on all sides of the Mediterranean, and some of which reflect Greek themes. These Greek themes appear to copy scenes already popular on copied Archaizing Greek scarabs; It is interesting to note that, according to J. Spiers, *Ancient Gems and Finger Rings: Catalogue of Collections* (Getty Museum) "there seems to be no discernable differences in iconography, style or manufacture between Eastern and Western examples". The hoplite pose, for example, can be seen on a Late Archaic Greek scaraboid in the Getty (Boardman, *Intaglios and Rings*, no. 23 – Getty 81.An.76.23); it likewise appears on 4th century Phoenician examples from the west.

The running hoplite on Greco-Phoenician gems falls into the category of warriors recognized by J. Boardman in his recent study of Hellenizing motifs on Phoenician scarabs. His Category 28 includes examples depicting warriors wioth variety of weapons (clubs,

⁹ Boardman "Greek Gem Engraving: Archaic to Classical" in Coulter (Ed) *Greek Art Into Classical*, 85-6.

spears, bows) , and these appear on either scaraboid forms or signet rings. While the earliest examples date to the late 6th century B.C., most fall within the range of 5th-4th century B.C. - though it should be noted that ours is one of the few examples which can be clearly provenanced. The closest parallels to our figure are from Western Mediterranean contexts: two from Ibiza¹⁰ (Barcelona 9382), and one from Tharros (BM ANE 127214)¹¹. The Ashkelon example may be the only provenance example of such a scaraboid in the Eastern Mediterranean. A single damaged example is attested from Ras Shamra (Louvre AO 17389), from uncertain context attributed generally to the 4th century B.C.¹² The size of the scarab (ca 16mm) is also consistent with 6th-early 5th century examples (Archaic scarabs are nearly 15mm long; the Classical gems are over 20mm long.)

Item 3: Copper alloy cuboid weights MC#67706, 67707 (Fig. 6 Bottom right)

These two bronze cuboids were recovered from floor levels in the northern room of Building 2. They are but two among a total grouping of 9 weights thus far recovered from the early and middle Persian levels in the neighborhood, yet are of interest due not only to their excellent state of preservation but also in the consistency of mass: both weigh precisely 17.0g. While a 17g unit may reflect either an adaptation to the a Persian standard shekel of 8.6g, the it (Elayi REF), it is perhaps more significant that it precisely equals the weight of the Athenian tetradrachma. The weight of the original (Solonian) Athenian drachma is generally reconstructed at ca 4.366g, based on a blend of both textual evidence (Polybius *Peace of Apamea*; Aristotle *Ath. Pol.* Bossert suggests that in contemporary (Persian) textual evidence for the term *sheqel* probably applies to the tetradrachma (the sole contradictory piece being from Elephantine, where a late 5th century papyrus suggest an equivalency of a single stater to a tetradrachma which would make the sheqel a didrachm).¹³ During the second half of the fifth century, Athenian tetradrachma fall rather neatly into a range between 17-17.28g. (Elsen 2002 presents the highest end of the range.) We see this even in the Athenian-styled tetradrachma from the Ashkelon hoard dating to the late 4th c which weighs 16.86g (Gitler and Tal Catalogue III.1T, 2D). A didrachma from the same group comes in at 7.81g suggesting the same standard, and coinage from the region of Philistia mimicking the Athenian style (those showing the Athenian owl, or an image of Athen with frontal eye) tend to fall within a similar range. ¹⁴ Ashkelon was not officially given license by the Persians to mint coinage until considerably later in the Persian period. Once it began to produce coinage, it - and neighboring cities - did so on the Athenian standard. As such, these cuboid weights may reflect a local pre-coinage adaptation to an Attic standard. This new westward link would mark a departure from the Iron II economic systems, as the assemblage of weights recovered from the 604 B.C.

¹⁰ J. Boardman, *Escarabeos de piedra procedentes de Ibiza* (1984), no. 226;

¹¹ P. Zazoff, *Die Antike Gemmen*. Handbuch der Archäologie(1983), pl. 22.4

¹² J. Boardman, *Classical Phoenician Scarabs: A Catalogue and Study* (Studies in Gems and Jewellery vol II) Beazley Archive and Archaeopress: 2003 (web version at <http://www.beazley.ox.ac.uk/gems/scarab/default.htm>)

¹³ Bossert, "Notes on the Coinages of the Philistian Cities" in M. Huth and P. van Algen (eds.) *Coinage of the Caravan Kingdoms. Studies in the Monetization of Ancient Arabia* (2010) p.150 of 133-196.

¹⁴ H. Nicolet-Pierre, "Metrologie des monnaies grecques. La Grèce Central et l'Egée aux époques achaique et classique (Vie -IVe s.) *Annali* 47 (2000):41; see also O. Tal "Some Remarks on the Coastal Plain of Palestine under Achaemenid Rule - An Archaeological Synopsis. *Persika* 6 (2005): 21-22

destruction levels in the warehouses in nearby Grid 50 showed morphological, textual and metrological affinities to Judahite and Egyptian systems.¹⁵

Phase VII Conclusions

Phase VII surfaces preserve more evidence of activities than in any of the subsequent Phases. Whether this is due to greater intensity of use or an artifact, an accident of preservation from the mudbrick flooring in the rooms above, is unclear. And while the materials may be evident, their interpretation is likewise far from clear. The pervasiveness of shell in and on the floors of every room, coupled with copious amounts of fish material throughout – whole fins visibly pressed into the floors of the courtyard – suggest that fishing and perhaps secondary processing of fish (garum?) may have played a role. We are hopeful that sediment and phytolith samples taken from installations throughout Building 1 will clarify the nature of these activities. One category of evidence which awaits further analysis is the bone material, vast quantities of which have been recovered from the street. Phase VII material was apparently characterized by large numbers of long bones, each of which had been cut in such a way as to remove any and all gristle. It is unclear as of yet whether this is indicative of a hungrier population scrabbling for meat, or whether it may suggest an active bone-working industry which might have warranted the specialized treatment of these bones. The material dumped in the street **U.155** is apparently fairly uniform, in that it is a dump from a single place, exposed to similar environmental conditions, rather than reflecting the dumping activities of a larger neighborhood which would have showed more variety in storage and treatment.

The diverse finds from the Phase VII floors attest to stronger connections between Egypt (scarabs and amulets) Greece (lekkythoi and increasing quantities of Attic black Glaze pottery, weight systems) at this time. Phase VII appears to have been somewhat wealthier and better-connected than Phase VI which followed.

PHASE VI: Middle Persian (400-350 B.C.)

Phase VI has thus far been characterized by the uniform arrangement of mudbrick floors throughout Building 1 (with the exception of those rooms immediately adjacent to the street, Rooms 9 and 13) and in the visible spaces of Building 2. This season's work demonstrated that there was far greater depth in the Phase VI occupation than had previously been supposed, and that a coherent earlier horizon of occupation – consisting of beaten earth floors – occurred with the initial construction of the Phase VI walls. These beaten earth surfaces are treated as Phase VI early; the mudbrick horizon as Phase VI late.

In most rooms, the Phase VI early floors were thin horizons, perhaps technical or even construction surfaces. In Rooms 4, 9, 13 and the courtyard areas, however (those with proximity to outdoor space and which had not had mudbrick floors), the density of occupation in Phase VI was generally greater, and it was difficult to precisely divide material between Phase VI early and Phase VI given the greater continuity of occupation in these spaces.

Phase VI began with significant construction in the rooms along the eastern edge of Building 1 and the western edge of Building 2. In Building 2, the Phase VII wall lines were retained and new ashlar and fieldstone superstructures were added atop them (**75.U85 and 52** in the north, **75.U41, 75.U61** in the south.) The three Phase VII entrances into Building 2 appear to have continued in use, although with reconstructed thresholds

¹⁵ Birney and Levine, "Scale Weights", *Final Reports of the Leon Levy Expedition to Ashkelon, vol. III.: The 604 B.C.E. Destruction*. (2007): 480-3.

75.U127 (of mudbrick) and a cobblestone threshold allowing access to the southernmost room **75.U149**.

In Building 1, eastern side was rebuilt while the western and southern rooms continued to use Phase VII walls. Room 9 was rebuilt with wall **74.402** as a closing wall to the west and **74.U404** to the east. In the rooms to the north of Building 1, Room 4 was reconstructed with wall **74.U342** to the south and a cobblestone threshold **74.U448** connecting it with Room 3 to its east. Room 9 was similarly revamped with the construction of wall **74.U323** to the west, wall **74.403** to the south and **74.341** (with foundation **74.U476**) to the east. Unlike the exterior walls of Building 2 which preserved the Phase VII use of ashlar throughout the wall, these walls were a mixture of ashlar and fieldstone, with ashlar stacked 3-4 courses deep at the end to form doorjambs. Cobblestone thresholds in each wall (**74.U486** in the western wall, **74.442** in the southern wall, and **74.U427** to the east, respectively) connected Room 9 to Rooms 8 and 13, and allowed also for exit out onto the street (**75.U86**) to the east. A resident exiting to the street and turning left would step out onto constructed paving of **75.107**, essentially large fieldstones piled in a row to replace the much nicer Phase VII sidewalk as the street accumulated. To the right of this doorway, the sidewalk **75.U103** continued along the same line to the south, although this reused the line and ashlar construction of its Phase VII predecessor.¹⁶

In Room 4, a Phase V pit cut through virtually the entire excavatable area, such that the Phase VI floor in the room remained only in the thinnest of patches on the eastern and western edges. No material was recovered from this space. The greatest density of occupational material was recovered from Room 9, where a some 25 cm of occupational debris **74.464** accumulated above beaten earth floor **74.U450**. A door socket **MC# 67271** was found in the southern half of the room, out of place but likely functioned with southern or eastern doorway. The southern end room likewise held a single column base to support a narrow post. Despite the depth of occupation signs of room use were few: a few pieces of copper alloy slag, a fragment of worked marble, and a delicately rouletted Attic sherd **RP # 12807** were all that were recovered.

In Rooms 12 and 13, the early VI horizon was quite thinly preserved with no appreciable accumulation. Despite this, an intact cooking pot was recovered from the southern edge of Room 12 on a technical surface under **74.U298 (RP# 12620)**. In Room 13, only a patchy surface **74.U465** was preserved in the northeastern corner of the room, sloping up to the doorway **74.442**. One section of a Middle Corinthian aryballos was found on floor this floor (**RP # 12660**), showing a single incised rosette and the wing of a sphinx or harpy.

In the south, the vast courtyard of Building 7 remained in use spanning Rooms 15-17, though with a new series of installations cut into the courtyard surfaces **84.134=230 = (216?)**. A sunken jar **84.U246** was set at the lowest point of a wide rectangular 2x2.5m depression cut down into the eastern half of the courtyard, just above the Phase VII Late pottery-paved installation **84.274**. The depression was paved with glycymeris shells set concave side up in order to facilitate drainage into the jar. The jar itself was a Phoenician store jar, and had a small hole in the side of its toe. The pit into which it was set closed

¹⁶ It is significant that the eastern closing wall of Building 1 was not constructed along a single north-south line. The break in wall lines between Rooms 9 and 13, which aligns precisely with the East-West walls **75.U131** and **U162** across the street and also matches the shift in sidewalk between **75.U107** and **75.103** suggests that there may have been a slight step down along a terrace edge from north to south in this area. North-south sections along the street (in **75.U86**, **U89** and **U115**) during excavation showed only slight tiplines, however, rather than any sizeable or sudden drop.

entirely around the base of the jar, so it is unclear how well or where the contents might have drained.

Phase VI Late: The Mudbrick-Floor Building

With the construction of mudbrick flooring came a slight shift in building plan. While the room divisions and wall lines of Phase VII Buildings 1 and 2 were generally maintained, the southern half of Building 1 was restructured. A north-south wall **84.U18** now limited Room 15 to the east. Room 15 continued in use as a courtyard but was now shrunk by half. A new east-west wall (robbed by Fatimid trench **84#=85#**) was constructed across the northern half of Rooms 16 and 17. This new wall ran parallel to a second wall (built above wall **84.192** and robbed by the Fatimid trench **74.U265**, creating an E-W alleyway of 1m in width connecting the street with the courtyard Room 15 in the back of the building. Two thresholds were set in on either end of the alley (**84.U217** on the west and **75.U161=85.85** on the east). The eastern threshold was constructed with a slight step up, to allow access to the higher elevations of the Phase VI street (**85.U79 = 75.89**).

Within the courtyard Room 15, the early Phase VI tabun was put out of use with the creation of a crudely constructed mudbrick and stone platform (**84.162**, functioning with **84.175** and **84.214**), which separated off the southeastern corner of the room. The remainder of the courtyard appears to have been fairly sterile, with only accumulating sand and silt layers and occasional pits, and lacks the density of industrial activity which characterized its Phase V and Phase VII avatars.

This season the last of the Phase VI Late floors were excavated in five rooms: Rooms 14, 16, 17 and 18 in Building 1 (**83.107**, **84.168**, **169**, **84.273**, respectively and the interior of Building 2 (**75.U90**). As was typical of the Phase VI mudbrick floors elsewhere throughout the building, occupational debris tended to be slight and we are left with little indication of room function. The most significant find within the phase, in fact, came from the alleyway **84. U 195** connecting the street with the courtyard. This was a beautiful piece



Fig. 7 Attic Red Figure (RP # 12694)

of an Attic Red-figure vase, showing a youthful or Dionysian figure partially reclining, holding a lyre. In the background, a winged figure awards him a garland, presumably for his success in musical competition.

Preliminary study of the rendering of the facial features, the musculature of the winged companion, and experimentation with foreshortening (note the fingers threaded through the lyre) suggest a connection to the Dinos painter and his school. The staged composition too, of a

Central Dionysian figure in symposium receiving garlands from an ethereal figure is paralleled in a krater by the Dinos painter from the Beazley collection [CAT ##] and such scenes seem to have been popular among his school, and the painters most closely associated with him (i.e. Meidias.) The Dinos painter (and presumably his followers) were active in the second half of the fifth century.

PHASE 5 Late Persian – Early Hellenistic (ca. 350-305/290 B.C.)

Phase V in Grid 51 is characterized by the reoccupation of the mudbrick floor building after a short lapse in occupation. The nature of this transition was discussed

extensively in the 2012 Grid report and readers are referred there for further details regarding the nature and extent of Phase occupation. In 2013 the last of Phase V material was excavated in the exterior spaces: in the street of Squares 75 and 85, and the earliest laminations of the courtyard in Squares 83 and 84, which spanned the area of Room 15. Work in the courtyard (Room 15) and the alleyway connecting it to the street has now allowed us to distinguish between an earlier and later horizon of Phase V which should eventually allow for a more refined ceramic chronology. As noted in the 2012 Grid Report, the end of Phase V has been dated on the basis of comparative stratigraphy and coin readings from other grids (in particular, the coin hoard in Grid 57). While such concrete markers are absent from Grid 51, the presence in the courtyard of a Southeast mushroom-lipped Aegean amphora of a type appearing earliest at 350 B.C. is a good benchmark. To this can be added a stamped amphora handle excavated from a Phase V surface, **84.187**, which was impressed upon a near-complete Knidian amphora **RP # 12614**.



Fig 8. Knidian Stamped Handle RP # 12614 (left); Early Hellenistic stamped handle from Naukratis, BM 1955, 0920.145 (right).

The stamp shows a very worn ship's prow and reads ΩΡΙΓΕΝΗΣ ("Origenes"). Both the form, with its high neck and rolled rim, and stamps showing such prora have been tied to the Knidian peninsula.¹⁷ Parallels recovered from Hellenistic Naukratis were placed within the range or 325-275 B.C. (cf the British Museum example above right.)

At the outset of Phase V a series of new walls were constructed throughout Building 1, following precisely along the Phase VI wall lines. In certain cases the Phase VI walls were sufficiently stable, in whole or in part, for the simple addition of fieldstone and ashlar superstructure (using ashlar particularly at the joins and at the doorjambs). In Building 2, a large fieldstone and ashlar superstructure **75.U41** was set over the top of the Phase 7 and 6 ashlar wall **75.U163**. A new cobblestone threshold **75.U126** was constructed in the southernmost doorway over the Phase VI threshold **75.149** to accommodate the rise in street level.

The earlier and later horizon of Phase V noted this season occurred only in the southern half of building one. Where elsewhere throughout building 1 new walls were constructed along the Phase VI wall lines, in Room 15 the E-W wall **83.U99** was knocked down, and for a short period Rooms 10 and 15 were connected into a single L-shaped space. A pottery-rich surface **83.U 106 = 73.U236** – built up together with courtyard accumulation **84.U88=84.174**. In later Phase V, Rooms 10 and 15 were separated **83.U82** was rebuilt

¹⁷ N. Tuna, J. Empereur et al "Rapport preliminaire de la prospection archeologique turco-française des ateliers d'amphores de Resadiye-Kiliseyani, sur la peninsula de Datca" *Anatolia Antiqua* 2 (1987), 48.

along the original line of the Phase VI wall **83.99**, and while Room 15 continued as exterior/courtyard space, Room 10 appears to have reverted to being interior space.

The end of Phase V was marked by collapse, abandonment and disruption, as noted in the excavation of late Phase V surfaces throughout the Grid in preceding seasons. While the nature or cause of the disruption cannot be identified, some startling evidence recovered from Room 16 makes clear that the neighborhood was definitely on a downward trend.

PHASE IV: (early 3rd – mid 2nd c. B.C.)

The only Phase 4 material excavated during the 2013 season were remnants of street material in Square 85 (**85.U59=54**) which had been closed early in 2012 and as such was not in phase with the street Square 75 to its north.

2014 Season Goals and New Questions

Next season we look forward to the excavation of the earliest Phase VII surfaces and architecture in the remainder of the Grid, thus completing the arc of the Persian period in Grid 51, and moving on to address the compelling question of the Babylonian gap and the existence of a squatter phase.

Thanks are due to square supervisors Laura Wright, Sara Hoffman and Sarah van der Vorst for their efforts throughout the season. And as always, thanks to directors Larry Stager and Daniel Master for the continuing opportunity to participate in the new phase of the Ashkelon Expedition.

51.74 - 2013 Final Report
Sara Hoffman

During the 2013 season in 51.74, we focused on clarifying the nature of the Persian Period occupation preceding the mudbrick floor building (Late Phase 6). Initially, we planned to bring 74 Upper and Lower into phase and to excavate the earliest Persian floors across the square in preparation for the excavation of late Iron Age material during the 2014 season. However, the earliest Persian Period material we reached this season reflected a slightly different architectural plan than the late Phase 7 and the Phase 6 buildings. In particular, this change in the division of space became apparent when we uncovered N-S cobble wall **U512**, which bisected an area later used as one large room (Room 12/SE). However, the full extent of this architectural shift is unknown because we only reached this early material in two places in Square 74: surfaces U458/U510 and U505/U517. As result, the latest Phase 7 walls were left in place to be photographed at the conclusion of the season. Nevertheless, our work this season represented an important step not only toward clarifying the nature of the earliest Persian occupation in Grid 51 but also toward the long-term goal of broad exposure of the late Iron Age strata.

Grid supervisor Kate Birney provide generous assistance throughout this process. Thanks are also due to volunteers Jennifer Bradley, Trent Dutton, Alec Jolicoeur, Jasper, Rosie Kelly, Nichole Moos, and Miranda Peebles for their hard work and enthusiasm this season.

Phase 7 (Early)

Pre-Room 8/CEE

In the space later designated Room 8/CEE, the earliest surface excavated this season was **U510**, a compact, dark grey layer covered with thick occupational debris (**U458**) whose laminations included many hamra patches. The full extents of U458 and U510 were not identified during the 2013 season. However, because this surface material had already been partially uncovered, we excavated it during the last week of the season in finegrids 36, 46, 56, and 66 to prevent it from remaining exposed over the winter.

On the north, U458 and U510 meet **U375**, the stone foundation of the E-W mudbrick wall U211. On the west, they are bounded by the expanded well probe. On the east, they extend into the section below N-S wall U446. On the south, they also extend below the E-W stone wall U189.

At the northern end of the room, **U458** was cut by a shallow pit (**U513**). The fill of this pit (**U514**) consisted almost entirely of large shells. The eastern extent of U513/U514 also runs into the section underneath the N-S wall U446 and remains to be excavated next season.

A nearly complete scarab (**MC 67942**) was found sitting on the U510 surface. Just north of U189

and west of U446, U510 was also cut by a large pit (**U515**). Inside the fill of this pit (**U516**), we found a complete cooking pot (**RP 12894**). Hamra was smeared over the entire mouth of the vessel, and the pot was sitting upright against a large stone. Although we initially assumed that this fieldstone was inside the fill of the pit, it was associated with other stones covered by the **U511** sub-floor fill. These stones should be investigated at the beginning of next season to determine whether or not they are part of a coherent feature.

Pre-Room 12/CE

In the space later occupied by Room 12/CE, we also identified two early Phase 7 surfaces: U505 and U517. During the 2013 season, these surfaces were uncovered between N-S walls U512 and U504 and south of E-W wall U189. Although their full northern and eastern extents require further clarification, we excavated them in this space during the last week of the 2013 season to prevent U505 from remaining exposed over the winter.

The lower floor, **U517**, is a white, ashy surface. Finds sitting on U517 include a nearly complete juglet (**RP 12906**), a complete chert pounding stone (**MC 11202**), a large metal object (**MC 68060**), and a pile of metal pins or nails (**MC 68097**). In the southern half of the room, we traced U517 immediately below U505. However, the northern edge of the room along the U189 wall was problematic because we uncovered brown fill immediately below U505 in this space and were not able to trace U517 with the exception of FG 67 in the northeast corner. It is possible that, along the northern edge of the room only, we may have reached a thin layer of intermediate fill between U505 and U517. (We observed a similar issue in Room 13/SFE with the U474 occ deb, the U498 shell surface, and the intermediate U499 fill present only in the northern end of that room). However, because it was decided that U505 should be fine-gridded on the last day of excavation, we did not have time to adequately address this issue this season.

In addition, the eastern extent of this surface requires further clarification. Only a single course of the N-S wall stub **U504** was preserved, and U517 is visible beneath it in section. It is also possible that U517 may be traced further east beneath the U400 trench, which robbed out most of the southern extent of the superimposed N-S walls U400 and U504. However, any surface material that extended through this space has likely been damaged by the overcutting of the trench fill. An eastern closing wall for this surface was not identified this season, although it is possible that this the closing wall robbed by trench **U473**, just east of U504.

Along the western edge of the room, U517 meets the N-S cobble wall U512. In the southwest corner of the room, U517 was cut by pit **U521**, which was filled with black ash (**U522**). All of this pit was removed this season. The southern edge of the of this surface was cut by the U265 robber trench. However, segments of an E-W wall (**U468**) have begun to come up as we near the bottom of this trench and are likely contemporary with U517.

U517 was covered by **U505**, a dark grey layer of occ deb. As noted above, in the southern part of

the room, these two layers were superimposed. However, along the northern edge of the room, they may, in fact, be separated by a thin layer of intermediate fill (not separately named this season).

On the north, U505 runs underneath the U189 wall. We assume that it was contemporary with two features identified in section beneath U189: **U519**, a massive stone block and **U520**, a row of fieldstones just west of U504. However, these features will be better understood after U189 is dismantled and they are fully articulated.

On the east, the extent of U505 is unclear. In the northeast corner of the room, U505 sloped up to the N-S wall stub **U504**. However, in the southeast corner, U505 ran underneath the lowest courses of U402, just north of U468. There were no signs of stones from U504 below U402 at the southern end of the wall, so it is possible that this space functioned as a doorway.

On the west, U505's relationship to N-S cobble wall **U512** was problematic. In section, we could see U505 running just over the top of the southern end of the wall. However, further north, we traced U505 into the eastern edge of U512, and there were no indications that higher laminations of occ deb had originally covered over the northern end of the wall.

On the south, this surface was cut by the E-W robber trench U265. However, like U517, it is likely that this surface was contemporary with E-W U468, which has been partially exposed beneath U265.

Pre-Room 13/SFE

In the area of Room 13/SFE, we ended the season without reaching a surface contemporary with U505/U517. However, bin **U470** appears to be sitting on this unidentified lower surface. The bin wall was constructed with small cobbles, and the interior of the cobbles was lined shells pressed into mud plaster. On the exterior of the bin wall, an orange bricky plaster was preserved in patches. Substantial stone blocks or paving stones (**U508**) served as the earliest floor of the bin. This bin was constructed in the northeast corner of the room at the intersection of U442 and U404 so that these walls functioned as its northern and eastern walls respectively.

Phase 7 Late

Room 8/CEE

In Room 8, the U510 was covered by U454, the sub-floor fill for surface **U451**. A thick layer of occ deb (**U447**), which was ashy and full of shells, covered over the U451 surface. On the north, U447 and U451 were contemporary with E-W mudbrick wall U211. On the east, N-S wall U446 served as a closing wall for this room, and, on the south, they met E-W stone wall U189. (On the west, these layers were bounded by the expanded well probe).

Room 9/CFE

In Room 9, we ended the season in the sub-floor fill (**U501**) of the latest Phase 7 floor. U501 is an extremely loose, sandy fill. It contained a very high shell content as well as many brown sandy lenses. **U483**, a dark brown, clay-like surface cover over this fill. On the north, U483 is contemporary with the E-W fieldstone wall **U495**. On the east, it touched the N-S wall **U476 (=U523?)**. On the south, it should, stratigraphically, be contemporary with the E-W wall **U442**, although the actual connection was severed by the deep **U383** pit/trench along the northern edge of this wall. On the west, **U483** functioned with N-S wall **U446**, although this connection was severed by a shallow, narrow foundation trench (**U487**) for the later N-S wall **U323**. In addition to being cut by the bottom of the deep U383 pit/trench, an additional pit (**U502/U503**) was also cut from the U483 surface in the northern end of the room, intersecting with the **U223** robber trench in the northeast corner of this space. **U497** was a small posthole cut into the northwest corner of U483.

Room 12/SE

In Room 12, a clean, brown fill (**U280**) covered over the **U505** occ deb, the **U512** N-S wall, and **U492**. Although we excavated all of the eastern half of U280 in 2013, the western half of U280 still covers over the western side of the N-S wall U512. We initially assumed that U492 was a N-S mudbrick wall. However, uncovering U512 has made this interpretation unlikely.

Immediately above the **U280** sub-flooring, we excavated the eastern half of a thin, shelly surface (**U469**). (The western half of this surface was excavated in a previous seasons as **74.U277** and **73.U255**). U469 sloped up to E-W stone wall **U189** on the north and the E-W cobble/ashlar wall stub **U475** in the south. We also assume that it was contemporary with N-S wall U402, but this surface proved extremely difficult to trace along the eastern edge of the room. Apart from its connection with U475, its southern edge was cut by the **U265** E-W Islamic robber trench.

Room 13/SFE

In Room 13, we ended the season in the brown, silty fill (**U500**) that covered the surface on which U470 was built. Immediately above this sub-flooring, we exposed a thin grey surface, whose southern extent was covered by a single layer of large shells (**U498**). On the south, these shells was covered over by laminations of dark grey, ashy occ deb (**U474**). On the north, the U498 surface was separate from U474 by a few centimeters of light brown fill (**U499**).

On the north, the **U498** surface met the wall of the **U470** cobble bin in reuse. Although the connection was severed by U473, we also assume that U498 was contemporary with U442 because U442 was integrated into the bin's construction. On the east, U498 sloped up to N-S wall U404. On the east, its full extent is unknown because the surface was cut by the **U473** robber trench. On the south, it was also cut by E-W Islamic robber trench **U265**.

Inside the bin, the earliest bin floor (U508) was covered by a few centimeters of fill (**U506**). Immediately above this fill, we exposed a thin layer of clay (**U496**) that served as a bin floor contemporary with the U498 surface. Collapsed cobbles and several mudbricks were sitting on this surface, along with two nearly complete vessels - **RP 12758** (a lekythos) and **RP 12759** (an amphoriskos).

Phase 6 (Pre-Mudbrick Building Phase) - Persian

Room 4/NFE

In Room 4, the earliest surface identified this season is U467, a thin, ashy layer. This surface runs into the northern baulk and was contemporary with N-S wall U448 on the west and E-W U342 on the south. Its eastern extent was cut by the U223 robber trench. However, very little of this surface remain to be excavated. The western side of the room was disturbed by a very deep pit (U479/U480) cut from Phase 5 surface U440. The fill of this pit (U480) contained large ashlar blocks and mudbrick chunks, initially assumed to be collapse on this surface. In addition, the eastern end of this surface was cut by smaller pit U489/U490.

Room 9/CFE

In Room CFE, a dark brown, clay-like surface (U450) covered over the U483 surface and the U518 foundation trench on the western side of the room. In the southeastern corner of the room, we found **MC 67271**, a large socket stone that had been flipped upside down, sitting on U483. Although it seems awkwardly placed, this reused socket may have functioned as a column base. In the occ/deb (**U464**), which was immediately above U450, we found a shallow pit (**U471**) adjacent to the lower socket stone, whose fill (**U472**) consisted only of an enormous fieldstone, which possibly served as the column base for this later surface material.

On the north, the **U450** surface was contemporary with E-W wall **U342**. On the south, it was contemporary with E-W wall **U403**, although this connection was severed by the deep **U383** Hellenistic pit, which extended across the entire southern end of the room. On the east, it sloped up to the **U427** cobble threshold constructed immediately about wall **U476**. North of this threshold, the ashlar block wall **U341** was constructed over U476 and functioned as the western closing wall for this space. On the west, **U450** also sloped up to a stone threshold (**U486**) in the northwest corner of the room. This threshold was constructed on top of earlier wall N-S wall **U446**. On the northern side of this threshold, the stones of **U486** were integrated with a stone door jamb **U438**, and **U438** was partially integrated into the construction of the E-W wall **U342**. South of this doorway, U450 sloped up to N-S wall **U323** was constructed over the U418 foundation trench and lower N-S wall U446. Although U323 was constructed mostly of large fieldstones, ashlar blocks were integrated into the wall to form the edge of a doorway at its northern end.

Above U450, U464 was contemporary with the same walls. However, it extended through the doorway in the northwest corner of the room, covering over the U486 stone threshold. In addition to the U471/U42 pit that contained the large fieldstone/column base, U464 was cut by pits **U484/U485** and **U477/478**.

Room 12/SE

In this space, we noticed some indications of an intermediate horizon between the mudbrick surface **U420** and the **U469** shell surface. These included a line of kurkar visible in section, which we were not able to trace, and a compressed, ashy patch on the southern side room on which we found half of a cooking pot (**RP 12620** - 17.19 m). We could not identify any pit lines around this cooking pot, and, if such a pit existed, it was cut from below the late Phase 6 mudbrick floor building because the fill in which it was found was covered over by the mudbricks of U420. However, we did not assign separate numbers to this horizon because we never identified a traceable surface.

Room 13/SFE

Sandy fill layer **U466** backfilled the **U470** bin, putting it out of use, and also covered over the **U474** occ deb. Immediately above U466, we reached **U465**. U465 was traced only in a small patch in the NE corner of the room, but we found Corinthian pottery (**RP 12660**) sitting on this part of the surface. On the eastern side of the room, shelly surface material at this elevation also sloped up to N-S fieldstone wall **U404**. Based on the elevations, we also assume this surface was contemporary with the reuse of the top of **U442** as a threshold in the northeast corner of the room and **U403** as the northern closing wall. Although the U403 doorway was later backfilled with cobbles (**U439**) to create a solid wall line, its presence of a doorway in this space was marked by ashlar blocks that defined the western edge for a doorway through this wall. We were not able to trace the full western extent of U465. However, we assume that U465 was contemporary with N-S wall stub **U402**, which formed a fully integrated corner with walls **U189**, **U323**, and **U403**. Most of the western edge of this room was cut by the **U400** robber trench and possibly also the adjacent robber trench, **U473**. The southern edge of the room was cut by the **U265** robber trench.

Phase 6 (Late) - Persian

Room 4/NFE

In Room 4, there were no indications of mudbrick flooring, and only a small part of occ deb/surface **U441/U444** were exposed. On the north, they extend into the baulk. On the east, they were cut by the **U223** Islamic robber trench. On the south, they sloped up to the E-W fieldstone wall **U342**. On the west they sloped up to **U448** and **U429**. **U429** is N-S ashlar block wall built on top of **U448**. In the southwest corner of Room 4/NFE, the top course of **U448** was

reused as a threshold between Room 4/NFE and Room 3/NE.

Although U441/U444 occ deb and surfaces were clearly visible in the northern baulk, most of what is preserved of this room in square 74 was disturbed by the **U479/U480** pit cut from U440. Because the upper portion of this pit encompassed so much of NFE, we did not identify it while excavating these surfaces, and the buckets from U441/U444 were unknowingly contaminated with Hellenistic pottery from the fill of U480.

Room 8/CEE

In Room 8, a sandy fill layer (**U443**) covered over the U447 occ deb and the top course of U446. Mudbrick floor **U417** was constructed over this fill. On the north, this surface met E-W mudbrick wall U211. On the east, it was contemporary with N-S cobble/ashlar wall U323, and on the south, it was contemporary with the E-W stone wall U189.

A doorway through E-W mudbrick wall **U211** provided access between Room 3 and Room 8 U294, which was not removed this season, is a vertical mudbrick that marked western edge of this door. The eastern edge of the door was marked by a row of stones integrated into the construction of the upper courses of U211. (This doorjamb was not given a separate number because it was initially assumed to have been the northern end of the E-W stone wall U342. It was not clear until after U342 had been dismantled that it was a separate feature integrated into U211 but actually abutting the northern end of U342. Mudbrick threshold **U295** served as a step through this doorway connection the U417 surface with the U205/206 mudbrick surface in Room 3/NE.

Room 9/CFE

Room 9 proved to be the most problematic of the rooms we excavated. In addition to many superimposed layers of occ deb/surfaces, both the northern and southern ends of the rooms were extremely disturbed, with extensive pitting

Lower surface U464 was covered over by fill layer U463. Immediately above this fill, we began the season with surface **U423** (previously understood as sub-floor fill at the end of 2012). Although it was initially assumed that **U422**, a rocky, sandy layer along the northern end of the room was a pit or disturbance that was cut through U423, it was very shallow and U423 traced beneath it. U422/428 seems to have been either occ deb or some type of natural accumulation over U423. In the doorway between Room 9 and Room 8, U422 is equivalent to **U428**. In the NW corner of the room, U423 was cut by pit and fill **U459/U460**.

U423 functioned with the same walls as **U450** and **U464**. On the north, it was contemporary with E-W wall **U342**. Although the lower stone threshold (**U468**) between Room 9/CFE and Room 8/CEE had been covered over by U464, the door jamb (**U438**), which had been integrated into the western end of U342, remained in use. On the west, it sloped up to N-S wall **U323**. On the

east, it sloped up to the U427 threshold stones and the N-S ashlar block wall U341. The northeast corner of the room was cut by Islamic robber trench 223. On the south, it was contemporary with **U403**. Although this connection was severed by the deep Hellenistic pit **U383**.

At some point in Phase 5 or 6, the doorway through U403 was also blocked by cobbles (**U439**). (Both U439 and U403 were later covered over by later E-W wall U330, which was removed last season). However, it was difficult to determine at exactly what stage this doorway was blocked, since connections between the surfaces in Room 9/CFE and Room 13/SFE and U439 were severed by the **U383** on the north and by the **U396** foundation trench on its southern side.

Room 12 (Formerly Room SE)

In Room 12, the U398 subfloor fill was covered over the mudbrick floor **U420**. All of the occ deb (**U419**) had already been removed during 2012, and only a small posthole (**U426**) that was cut into the mudbricks remained to be excavated. (The western half end of this surface was excavated in a previous season as **U190**). The E-W cobble wall **U189** provided the northern closing wall. The southern closing wall was robbed by the extremely deep Islamic trench **U265**, and the bricks of U420 extend south as far as this trench. The eastern wall of Room 12 was only partially preserved as a ashlar/cobble wall stub (**U402**) that formed an integrated corner with walls **U189/403/423**. However, most of the U402 wall was robbed by the **U400** robber trench.

F131 is an extremely poorly preserved mudbrick wall that apparently functioned as the western closing wall for this space in Phase 6. Only a short segment of **F131** remained to be excavated in the southwest corner of the square during the 2013 season. The southern baulk showed a very clear break in the fill (**U408**) pushed up against the western face of U131 and the fill immediately below it (**U445**). However, as was the case in past seasons, we found no indications that U131 was sitting on any type of foundation or lower surface.

Room 13/SFE

In Room 13, the latest Persian floor (**U412**) was excavated in 2012. That floor functioned with E-W wall **403** on the north, N-S wall **402** on the west, and N-S wall **U328 (=75.U82)** on the east. Most of U402 was robbed out by the **U400** trench, and the southern closing wall for this space was also robbed by the Islamic trench **U265**.

Street

In the northeast corner of the square, **U507** is a layer of ashy, sandy street material (**=75.U89**). Prior to opening U507 this season, all of the fill between the baulk and the eastern edge of the deep U223 robber trench had been excavated as a single unit (**U232**) in the process of overcutting this trench.

Phase 5 - Hellenistic

Room 4/NFE

In Room 4/NFE, surface **U440** (and a small margin of unnamed sub-floor fill) covered over the U441 occ deb. On the north this, surface runs in the baulk. On the east, it is cut by the robber trench U223. On the south, it sloped up to E-W stone rebuild **U462**. U462 covered over part of the lower wall U342 but extended further north and was oriented slightly more to the northwest than U342. (It may also be part of the lowest courses of E-W wall U222, which was removed following final photos after the 2012 season. No bottom height is recorded for this unit). On the west, the N-S ashlar wall **U429** was reused. However, **U436**, a large ashlar block covered over U441 on the southern side of the doorway, narrowing its width. When we began this season, U440 was covered over by shallow lenses of clay (**U424**) sand (**U525**), which were interpreted as ancient wash.

In addition, U437, U438, and U462 were partially covered by abutting wall stubs U431 and U432. Because they are single courses U432 and U462 should probably be equated with the lowest course of E-W U222, which was removed at the end of last season. U431 may be part of a doorjamb construction associated with the U222 wall.

Room 8/CEE

In Phase 5, the doorway in E-W mudbrick wall **U211** between Room 8/CEE and Room 3/NE through the E-W mudbrick wall U211, was backfilled. **U291** is the brown, bricky fill over the **U295** mudbrick threshold in this doorway.

Room 12/SE

In the southwest corner of the square, just north of the U411 ashlar wall stub, the mudbricks from U420 surface were covered over with a mudbrick threshold (**U461**) between the ashlar wall along the southern baulk **U411**, which was reused in Phase 5 and N-S wall **U187** (removed in a previous season).

Phase 4 - Late Hellenistic

Along the eastern baulk, the U427 threshold marked a Phase 5/Phase 6 doorway from Room 9/CFE into the Square 75 street. During Phase 4, this doorway was blocked up with hard-packed, brown fill, which was designated **74.U377 (=75.U76)**. **U377** was then covered over by the ashlar blocks of **U241** and the cobbles of **U240** to form a N-S wall along the baulk.

Along the northern end of our eastern baulk, **U435** was created to correspond to fill layer 75.U76. We excavated part of U435 at the beginning of this season when we lowered the baulk between

squares 74 and 75 to prepare to excavate the Phase 7 building.

Phase 3 - Roman

No material from the Roman period was excavated in 51.74 during the 2013 season.

Phase 2 - Byzantine

We created two units from Phase 2 this season. Both were identified only in section, prior to the lowering of the eastern baulk at the beginning of the season. **U433** is a possible gully or side channel associated with Square 75/85 drain. If it continued further west, it was cut by the U223 robber trench. It was not identified or given a separate unit number in square 75. **U433** was filled by natural accumulation (**U434**).

Phase 1 - Islamic

Islamic period material remains in two places in Square 74: **U223**, a deep trench in the northeast corner of the square and **U265**, a long E-W trench along our southern baulk. In both cases, these trenches are extremely deep and could not safely be fully excavated at the time they were identified. Instead, we have continued excavating them incrementally.

Priorities for the 2014 Season

Room 4/NFE

In Room NFE, the extent of the room should be re-addressed at the beginning of the 2014 season. First, in **U223**, the northern baulk suggests that we may finally be nearing the bottom of this trench. However, at least one of the last buckets excavated in this trench this season (**B 10891**) still contained Islamic pottery. The remaining extent of U223 should be re-evaluated at the beginning of next season. Second, on the last day of excavation, the eastern baulk between squares 74 and 75 was lowered, and the sliver of Phase 6 street material (U507) that extended into the Square 74 was removed along with the baulk. A new stone feature (**U524=75.120**) is now exposed, and associated fill layers should be named at the beginning of next season.

Room 9/CFE

In Room 9, the nature of the rebuilds should be readdressed. On the eastern side of the room, the top course of lower wall U509 (not yet associated with any surface) was uncovered beneath the U501 fill. On the northern side of the room, it appears that the U495 may only be a single course and that a dense, brown fill separates the bottom of this course from an unnamed lower wall. In addition, a break between U446 and a lower wall not yet visible should be anticipated since the U458/U510 occ deb and surfaces run underneath U446 on the western side of this wall. Finally, on the southern side end of the room, it appears that we are reaching the bottom of

the deep Hellenistic pit **U383**. However, this issue should be reevaluated in 2013 before the pit is closed.

Room SFE/13

The question of rebuilds should also be addressed in Room 13/SFE. Although the uppermost courses of the U470 bin wall were constructed against E-W wall U442. A unnamed lower wall constructed of rough rectangular blocks is now visible in section beneath U442. An unnamed lower wall is also visible beneath N-S wall U404 at 16.65 m. Although its construction is similar to that of U404, the lower wall is oriented slightly differently and extends slightly further east.

Pre-Room 12/SE

In this space, the N-S wall U512 the western side of U512 was not fully articulated because we did not want to expose any additional surfaces at the end of the season. When the western half of this wall is exposed, attention should be paid to the southern end of the wall where U505 occ deb appeared to run just over the top of the wall. On the eastern side of the room, the extent of the U505/U517 surfaces also needs to be addressed. This season, it appears that U504 served as the eastern closing wall for 505. However, along the U265 robber trench in the southwest corner of the room, the lowest stones from U402 were set directly on top of the U505 surface. The possibility of a doorway in this space should be considered after U402 is removed. In addition, the lower surface U517 runs underneath U504, and it unclear how far east it extends. One possibility is that U473 robbed out the closing wall associated with surface. If so, it may be possible for additional U517 surface material to be traced underneath the fill into which U400 was cut. In addition, within the room itself, most of the U517 surface was exposed but not excavated in 2013. However, it may be possible to trace the rest of 517 below a thin layer of intermediate fill in FG 66 and 65. Finally, after upper walls U215/U189 are dismantled, the relationships between U505 and U517 and the stone features visible in section beneath U189 should be re-evaluated.

51.75-85 Final Report

Sarah Vander Vorst

In the 2013 excavation season, the goals for 51.75-85 were two-fold:

- 1) To bring this area into phase with the rest of Grid 51, as 51.75-85 has lagged behind the other excavation areas for the past two seasons.
- 2) To expose the earliest Phase 7 architecture in preparation for excavation of the 604 BCE destruction layer at the beginning of the 2014 season.

In the 2013 season, squares 51.75 and 51.85 (which contain the edges of an eastern and a western building separated by a N-S street) began in Phases 5 and 4/3 respectively, and, through the herculean efforts of magically dilligent volunteers Annika Bouwsma, Christian Nicholson, Shlomit Heering, Stephen Sharpe, Hannah Roughton, and Emily Erickson, ended in Phases 7 and 6 respectively. With a push at the beginning of the 2014 season, 51.75-85 will be right on schedule with Grid 51's 2014 season goals.

Phase 7 late (Early Persian)

In Phase 7 late, the architectural plan of 51.75/85 is dominated by substantial stone sidewalks running parallel to the N-S walls on either side of street U115 (which contains a narrow central sand-channel), with substantial stone walls on the both sides of the street, particularly the east, in the form of fieldstone walls built in relation to the reused, massive N-S ashlar wall U163 (7 early) of Building 2. Phase 7 late is currently defined by two contemporary surfaces in Building 2, both of which have produced exceptionally lovely MCs.

In the northwestern corner of the street, a group of integrated ashlar (75.U120) was set down. Only the southern portion of these are visible, with the northern extent being lost in the 51.75N section. It is possible they are either a) a threshold leading to a doorway functioning with contemporary wall 74.U435 just to the south or b) the southernmost extent of another substantial, multi-course sidewalk. Immediately to the south of U120's stones are the large rectangular stones of an at-least two course sidewalk (U154) which create a sidewalk parallel to wall 74.U435, with the intervening area being filled fill contemporary reddish-brown, shell-rich street accumulation (75.U115) and small cobbles. Just to the south of U154's stones is a gap, filled with street U115, from which RP 12680 was excavated. Just south of this narrow gap are the northernmost stones of U132, a sidewalk of corresponding composition and orientation (parallel to wall 75.U123 with 75.U136[=U115] filling in between U123 and U132 with a cobble capping) to sidewalk U154. U132 extends beyond the southernmost extent of wall U123, although U34/U49 Phase 1 robber trench may have removed the southernmost extent of U123, severing this relationship. The southernmost stones of U132 abut the stones of 75.U135=85.U84, which with our current exposure, seems to be either the northernmost edge of a new southern sidewalk or a threshold contemporary with abutting N-S stone wall stub U75.U161/85.U85, which based on elevations and relations to the street, could possibly be contemporary with wall 75.U123. In the northeastern corner of the street, stone sidewalk U143, also composed of at least two courses of large ashlar, functions in a manner analagous to western sidewalks U154 and U132 in that it runs parallel to walls U52, U140, U163, with the space between its stones and the walls being filled with U115 street accumulation and topped with tiny cobbles. Just to the south of U143's southernmost stone, there are a series of three substantial pits (U157/U158, U159/U160, U138/U139) cut into U115. These pits all contain a similar sandy, medium-sized stone debris fill. Immediately to the south of these pits is a fourth, two course sidewalk (U152) with the same orientation and contemporary street accumulation/cobble

lining on both sides as U154, U132, and U143.

Considering that pits U157/U158, U159/U160, U138/U139 represent a break in the otherwise on-line stones of sidewalks U143 and U152, these pits may represent a late Phase 7 robbing of the substantial stones which possibly would have connected U143S and U152N, originally one contiguous sidewalk paving on the eastern side of street U115.

The interior space of Building 2 in the eastern sliver of 51.75 is divided into two rooms ("north room" and "south room") in late Phase 7.

The surfaces of the northern room all slope up to the E-W 7 late foundation stones of walls U85 and U52, N-S fieldstone wall U140, the reused upper ashlar of 7 early N-S ashlar wall U163, and E-W fieldstone wall U131 which define this space. In the 7 late construction of this room, walls U140 and U131 are constructed to abut and provide contemporary walls for the reuse of the still-standing ashlar of wall U163. The earliest exposed surface (shell-topped U156) has not been exposed enough to confirm its assumed relationship to Phase 7 late walls. The overlying reddish silt-to-sand subfloor (U147) is immediately below the latest Phase 7 late floor in this room, U145. U145's grey, ashy surface was home to hoplite scarab seal MC 67584 and copper cuboid weights MC 67706 and MC 67707. Immediately above the U145 surface is a fine, reddish sandy layer (U142) which sloped up to the very top of the uppermost course of walls U131 and U140. U142 likely indicates a period of abandonment after the latest Phase 7 occupation (floor U145) of this northern room.

The southern room's surfaces are defined by and slope up to E-W wall U131, N-S wall U137, and the Phase 7 foundations of E-W wall U61. The earliest exposed layer in the southern room is a pebbly, compact subfloor fill (U151) immediately below floor U150 (home to copper fibula MC 67789), which is the latest substantial Phase 7 occupation in this space (corresponding to U145 in the northern room). U150 is put out of use by a very thin, reddish, sandy leveling fill (U144) upon which an extremely thin, paltry technical surface was laid (U141) which slopes up to the tops of walls U131(N) and U137(W). In this sense, the southern room seems to mirror the occupational pattern of the northern room in featuring a sort of abandonment and/or squatting occupation at the very end of Phase 7. The presence of N-S fieldstone wall U155 and its abutment of wall U137 suggests an interior room just within the 51.75E section, but we have no exposure of these possible surfaces, simply their western boundary in wall U155 which abuts wall U137 and is touched by street U115.

Phase 6 early (Middle Persian)

In Phase 6 early, the architecture of 51.75/85 is dominated by substantial rebuilds of stone street pavings upon the Phase 7 lines to accommodate the rising U89 street levels (which features a thick, pottery-rich sand layer). Building 2 also receives multiple ashlar superstructures/rebuilds (U52, U85, U41, and U61) and surfaces U134/U130 and mudbrick partition wall U162 which puts out of use Phase 7 E-W interior wall U131. It is also from this U89 street horizon that ivory handle MC 66895 (middle of the street), incised Attic ware base MC 66969, basalt vessel MC 67999, and frit scarab MC 68087 (western street during baulk removal) were excavated along with copious amounts of black Attic ware.

The western street of Phase 6 early begins with the deposition of the lowest layers of street 75.U89(=85.U79). These layers (composed mostly of sand and some light-brown silt) slope up over and put out of use the Phase 7 stone street sidewalks (U154/75.U135=85.U84/U152/U143), possible-threshold U120 and street U115. In an effort to maintain the Phase 7 walkways, the large, lowest cobbles of sidewalk paving U107 begin to be deposited on top of the rectangular stones and cobbles of Phase 7 sidewalk U154. Just to the south of U154, exactly on top of and on line with the

stones of Phase 7 U132, the two bottom ashlar courses of street sidewalk paving U103 are founded, with the northernmost ashlar abutting the northernmost edge of contemporary wall 75.U82(=74.U328=85.U83, a cobble rebuild of 7 late 75.U123/74.U404). Like its Phase 7 sidewalk predecessors, U103's ashlar were connected to its contemporary wall by a layer of cobbles laid atop out-of-use street U115 material. Just to the south along the 51.75S section, N-S wall stub 75.U161=85.U85 is potentially a Phase 7 wall re-used in 6-early (possibly=74.U404, currently no 6-early surfaces have been connected to this wall). In the NE corner of the U89 street, a small cobblestone feature is built atop U89 street, abutting the eastern ashlar facing of wall U52. This unit is currently understood as either a) a drain side-channel directing liquids into the sandy middle of street U89 due to the appearance of a small cobble lining, bounded by a larger southern boundary stone, or b) the possible southern extent of a stone sidewalk extending into the 51.75N section, based on the similarities in U114's stone composition to contemporary stone sidewalks U103/85.U80. To the south in the street, U89 covers the southernmost stones of 7 sidewalk U143, and above 7 late pits U157/U158, U159/U160, street paving stones U148 are laid. U148's cobblestones curve around the SW corner of the lowest ashlar of ashlar superstructure U41 into the doorway, integrating with the cobble edging of a mudbrick/cobble threshold (U127) and with the stones of U146. U146 is the southern equivalent of U148, and is a cobblestone street paving atop the earliest U89 layer which puts 7 sidewalk U152 out of use. U146's medium cobbles extend south from their point of integration with threshold U127/paving U148, curving around the bottom of the NW corner of superstructure U61's lowest ashlar. U146 continues south, running parallel to and abutting 6 early ashlar superstructure U61, threshold U149, 6 early superstructure U61, and into the 51.75S section.

Interestingly, U146/U148 curve to the north of the depression created by pit U138/U139 cut into the lower U115 street. The orientation of U146/U148 may show an early-6 adaptation to the settling caused by possible robbing of sidewalk stones (of U152/U143) that had been in this space and backfilling with a sandy, stony fill, which resulted in later settling of the overlying U89 street, necessitating the orientation of the U146/U148 paving stones around this depression.

Across the baulk is 85.U80=75.U113, a sidewalk feature consisting of at least two courses rectangular ashlar with a cobble lining extending into the 51.75E baulk, with the southern extent being composed entirely of cobbles (very similar in composition to the 75.U103/75.U107 stones perhaps suggesting that 85.U80 will prove to be two separate stone constructions after future excavation). Along the 51.85S section, dog burial pit U81/U82 (known affectionately as "Baulk Puppy" or "Baulk-o") is cut, resting upon the lowest sand lamination of 85.U79(=75.U89).

Building 2 in 6 early is again composed of two divided interior spaces, but oriented on different lines than in 7 late.

The northern room of 6 early is defined by the 6 early construction of N-S ashlar-faced fieldstone superstructure U52, 6 early E-W fieldstone superstructure U85 (both U52/U85 are built atop 7 late foundations), reuse of N-S ashlar wall U163 and 6 early E-W mudbrick partition wall U162 (which abuts the southern end of U163, off-line with 7 late U131). The floor in this room is U130 and covers/puts out of use 7 late wall U140 and sandy abandonment layer U142. U130 is immediately below occupational debris layer U128. Both U130 and U128 trace up to walls U52, U85, and U163. However, they were unable to be traced to determine the exact nature of their interface with (i.e. Under or sloping up to) contemporary partition wall U162.

The southern room is defined by partition wall U162, U41, (a 6 early ashlar superstructure upon the northern end of 7 late N-S wall U137, abutting ashlar wall U163), and U61 (another 6 early ashlar superstructure-rebuild on Phase 7 foundations). The 6 early floor in this space is U134, which slopes up to U61, U41, over the top of 7 late E-W wall U131 (putting it out of use, indicating a

slight architectural shift between 7 late and 6 early) and presumably also sloping up to/running under contemporary partition wall U162 (this relationship was unable to be traced/explicitly delineated). In the southern room, between ashlar superstructures U41/U61, mudbrick/cobble threshold U127 is built upon 7 late N-S wall U155, putting it out of use and marking a doorway. Both floor U134 and its overlying occupational debris U134 touch U127.

To the south of the southern room, 6 early ashlar superstructures U61 and U69 form another doorway, marked by stone threshold U149 (all three of which put out of use underlying 7 late N-S wall U155), but with the surfaces being lost in the 51.75E section. The only relationships visible in this southern doorway are the integration of U148's paving cobbles with threshold U149 and buildup of contemporary U89 street against U149/U69 in the 51.75S section.

Phase 6 late (Middle Persian)

In Phase 6 late, the architecture of 51.75/85 is dominated by re-use of most of the stone street features, all of the 6 early walls/ashlar superstructures, with mudbrick floor U90 replacing the beaten earth surfaces U130/U134. Also, this U89 horizon contained a substantial amount of black Attic ware.

In the NW corner of the street, as levels of U89(=85.U79) street continue to rise and fill the former space between the stone architecture on either side of the street, the large, uppermost cobblestones of U107 are laid. To the south, the street architecture/wall lines remain the same and are reused (U103, U82, 85.U80=75.U113). However, U103 receives a makeover. The second course of U103's ashlar is topped with another ashlar course which now integrates one row of E-W oriented ashlar which abut wall U82 and create two distinct compartments (N=U104, S=U112) against this wall face. These two compartments (U104/U112) consist of equivalent burned-mudbrick, red silt, ash, and cobble fills composition set atop the cobbles which were part of the 6 early lower ashlar of U103. Just to the south of U103, surface 51.84.U195 slopes up to the very top stones of wall 75.U161=85.U85 (Phase 7 re-used into Phase 6). In the middle of the street, U89 sand accumulation builds up, surpassing the top level of the Phase 7 stone features and building up against the top ashlar of U103, eventually depositing sand and fill all the way up against the western faces of walls U52, U163, and U41. Along the east side of the street, U89 covers the stones of paving U148, most of paving U146, and eventually slopes up over the top of the entire threshold U127, with dog burial pit U121/U122 being cut in right against the junction of U61/U127's cobbles in late-6 after U127 has gone out of use. It is also in this phase, when U89's levels are the highest, that dog burials 75.U108/U109, 75.U110/U111, 75.U116/U117, 75.U118/U119, 75.U121/U122 are cut into street U89 between the stones of U114 and U148 along the western face of walls U163/U41.

In this phase, the Phase 6-early partition wall U162, floors U130/U134, occupational debris layers U128/U133, and mudbrick/cobble threshold U127 are put out of use by the substantial subfloor fill layer U101 (from which came copper ring MC 67276), which is immediately below mudbrick floor U90 which touches walls U52, U85, U163, and U41 and is cut by pits U95/U96 and U97/U98. Mudbrick floor U90's southern extent behind the doorway formed by walls U41/U61 was almost non-existent except for a messy layer of chunky mudbrick in the 51.75E section atop a level of subfloor fill equivalent to northern subfloor fill U101. This mudbrick mash and the associated subfloor material was excavated as one layer (U102), functionally equated with both mudbrick floor U90/subfloor fill U101. U102 touches walls U61 and U41. Immediately to the south, threshold U149 continues to be in use between walls U61 and U69, but with no associated surfaces (all contained in the 51.75E section).

Phase 5 (Late Persian)

At the end of last season, half of 51.75 was considered to have exposure of Phase 6 street U89, but the first week of this year's excavation proved that we actually had a full exposure of Phase 5 street U86 (=75.U100=85.U77) across the the entire street of 51.75. Street layer U86 dominates the whole of the street during Phase 5, with its lowest sand lamination being deposited on top of U89 and sloping up over the top of the Phase 6 stone street architecture (U103, U107, U114, U146), effectively putting it all out of use. As the sand characterizing U86 is deposited and accumulates in relation to the relatively high elevations of the now-defunct Phase 6 architecture in the street, the middle portion of the street becomes an effective "sand gully," where U86 fills the middle of the street until it builds up to the top of the Phase 6 stones, creating, for the first time, a level plane in the street with no visible stone architecture. At this time, dog burial pit U105/U106 is cut into street U86 along the western face of wall U41. In the southern street, this pattern of accumulation is also consistent, with 85.U80 being covered over by 85.U77. It is from this Phase 5 street horizon from which alabaster vessel MCs 66363/66373/66399, metal vessel MC 66963, and ivory handle MC 66934 (lower U77 horizon) were excavated, along with a notable amount of black Attic ware.

In the interior of Building 2, we excavated minimal Phase 5 material. The stone substructure of mudbrick threshold U93 and the subfloor fill (U92) (which were contemporary with the Phase 5 floor U94) were excavated. Between walls U61 and U69, stone threshold U126 functioned as a rebuild of the Phase 6 threshold U149 and street U86 sloped up to it. Due to the cramped nature of the fill/possible surfaces contained between walls U61 and U69, the Phase 5-6 horizon was removed under one unit (U153). U153 was a mostly clean fill layer, but possibly contained the very westernmost hints of surfaces that may have corresponded to U126/U149/U61/U69 during Phases 5 and 6, but the story of the 5-6 occupation behind this U61-U69 doorway remains hidden in the 51.75E section.

Phase 4 (Hellenistic)

In 51.75, two Phase 4 units were excavated. The first was U125, which consisted of a series of ashlar superimposed upon/putting out of use Phase 5 threshold U126 to block the doorway between walls U61 and U69 in order to create a solid foundation for Phase 4 rebuild-wall U87 which used this newly created wall line. Surface U124 sloped up to wall U87 and utilized a dense, thick subfloor fill (U129) which put out of use the possible Phase 5 occupational horizon represented by U153.

In 51.85, Phase 4 consisted of a thick, compact, greenish layer of street (U59=U54) into which a well (U23, foundation trench U78) was cut, which featured an ashlar platform (U6) and a stone threshold (U18) on the east side, superimposed on the street U59=U54. U59=U54 also was paved with flagstones (U62) on both the east and west sides. Drain fill layer U41, despite remaining on our top plans at the beginning of the 2013 season, was fully excavated last season and was closed midway through this season once our excavation of U59=U54 indicated that there was no intrusive drain fill U41 material present.

Phase 3 (Roman)

The Phase 3 material excavated this season consisted of drainage channel linings (85.U47/85.U48/75.U66/75.U81), the cut for these stones (85.U53), and the fills into which they were cut (85.U52/75). The other Phase 3 material removed from 51.85 this season were a cobblestone feature (85.U49) of ambiguous function and the street into which it was cut (85.U76=85.U40) along the 51.85E section.

In the notes from this season, 85.U47/85.U48/75.U66/75.U81 describes this season's excavations as wanting to interpret these stones as part of the Phase 4 well platform. However, after their removal and revisiting elevations, photos, top plans, and previous seasons' notes, it was decided that these units were, in fact, part of the Phase 3 E-W stone drain construction and not part of the Phase 4 well.

Phase 1 (Islamic, Fatimid/Crusader)

Phase 1 excavation was limited to the removal of a drain channel (U51) and its associated fill layer (U56) along with what might have been stone capping to the drain (U68) during the removal of the 51.85N baulk.

Priorities for the 2014 Season

Currently, the most outstanding priority is to bring 51.85 into phase. This southern extent of the street is entirely in Phase 6, with only a few stones (paving 85.U84=75.U135) in the NW corner representing solid Phase 7 exposure. This motion should float the stones of 85.U80 and hopefully reveal more substantial Phase 7 stone street sidewalk architecture, as seen in 51.75. In 51.75, walls U69, U61, and rebuild-wall U41 are floating and should be removed to get full exposure of the Phase 7-late wall lines/interactions. This goal is particularly important and intriguing in the case of walls U52 and U85 in the northwest corner of 51.75. The bottom courses of these walls were touched by the 6-early surface U130=U134, but the latest Phase 7 surface (U145) also sloped up to stones below U52 and U85 that were slightly inset from the upper courses of walls U52 and U85. Either U145 corresponds to lower foundations of U52/U85 which are Phase 7 reused in 6, or U145 touches a Phase 7-late E-W wall that abuts N-S wall U140 upon which the ashlar-faced fieldstone walls U52 and U85 are superimposed rebuilds (like U41, U61, and U69). However, the street-side ashlar-facing of wall U52 seems to continue down, with the bottom course not yet floated with exposure of Phase 7 street paving U152. In this sense, U52 may be equivalent to U163, a Phase 7 ashlar wall (N-S) abutting which a Phase 6 wall-rebuild (U85) is constructed. In order to answer the question about the depth of wall U52's ashlar founding and its proper phasing/reuses, they must be attempted to be floated from the exterior. This requires full excavation of Phase 7 street U115 to float the street paving U152, after which it can be removed and the true story of U52/U85's foundings revealed.

Grid 51, Squares 83 and 51.84

Preliminary Report

This season's excavations in Squares 83 and 84 expanded our understanding of phases six and seven in Grid 51 and clarified phases four and five. As in earlier phases, the architectural layout of the building remained generally the same. We finished the season with incipient signs of a shift in the architectural layout of the building in Phase 7A.

We were able to accomplish these discoveries through the skill and good humor of my assistant supervisor, Benjamin Conner, and volunteers Ax Dillingham, Alaa Qasasfa, Marina Rothberg, Eliot Schwam, Emily Shames, Kayte Steely, and Kasandra Williams. As always, a warm thanks is extended to grid supervisor, Kate Birney, for her skill and keen eye.

Phase 1A: The Later Fatamid/Crusader Period

As in previous seasons, excavation of the Fatamid/Crusader robber trenches (83.L15/83.F16, 83.L89/83.F90=84.L14/84.F17, 84.L34, 84.L26/84.F29, 84.L20/84.F21, 84.L9/84.F39, 84.L62/84.F57, 84.L63=84.L11/84.F47, 84.L50/84.F51, 84.L126/84.F127) occurred at a pace that exceeded the excavation of contiguous phases to maintain safe working conditions for students and avoid contamination of earlier phases which were cut by the robber trenches. Fortunately, the excavation of a number of robber trenches has ended this season (83.L15/84.F16, 84.L34, 84.L63=84.L11/84.F47). Architecture and occupation from Phases 6 and 7 have been uncovered at the bottom of these robber trenches. As in previous years, this year's excavation of the robber trenches unearthed a number of small finds: metal shafts (MC66398), small glass fragments (MC 66390, MC 66807, MC 66933, and MC 66936), red-figure ware (RP 12623), a fragment of a travertine vessel (MC 67631) and a coin (MC 67116).

Phase 2: The Byzantine Period

As in earlier seasons, excavation of the well (83.F10), its foundation trench (83.L35/83.F36) and fill (83.L11) continued at a pace that exceeded the excavation of contiguous phases with no change in interpretation.

Phase 4: The Hellenistic Period

Only remnants of Phase 4 were excavated this season. There were no changes in the broader understanding of architectural layout of the phase. As noted before, the building plan must be reconstructed in the eastern half of Square 84 due to the robbing of the walls in the Fatamid/Crusader period. The walls of Square 83 and the western half of Square 84 are often extant. In the westernmost room of Square 83, we finished excavating the sub-floor fill 83.L84, which was beneath the floor 84.F80 excavated last season. This fill is bounded on the east by the north-south wall 84.F25 and a very small portion of 84.F103, over which multiple courses of 84.F25 were built.

In the northeastern quadrant of Square 84, we finished excavating the eroded, mudbrick wall 84.F134, into which was cut the pit 84.L179/84.F180. This east-west wall was likely constructed against the northern face of a stone, spine wall which was robbed out (84.L62/84.F57). The wall 84.F134 was constructed over a fill 84.L183. Like the eroded mudbrick wall 84.F164, Wall 84.F134 had no visible foundation trench.

In the southeastern quadrant of Square 84, we excavated portions of two rooms west of the street where no exterior wall was extant due to Fatamid/ Crusader robbing. These rooms remained unexcavated in Phase Four due to last year's staircase out of Grid 51. In the room immediately to the west of the street, we finished excavating the remnants of a kurkar floor 84.F167, which is similar to the Phase Four kurkar surface 84.F90, excavated last year.

To the west of this room, we excavated another room where no exterior wall was extant. One interior, north-south mudbrick wall 84.F133, founded in Phase Five, subdivided the room. In this room, we excavated the subfloor fill 84.F138, east of the interior wall 84.F133. Three pits were cut into this fill: 84.L177/84.F178, 84.L142/84.F143, and 84.L184/84.F185.

Phase 5: Late Hellenistic / Early Persian Period

Last season, we confirmed that Phase 5 was characterized by occasional dense occupation followed by abandonment. The central courtyard showed the densest occupation while the two rooms to the east of the courtyard had only beaten earth surfaces. The two rooms north of the courtyard also did not show extensive occupation.

This season, we excavated one certain point of entry into the building from the street. The stone threshold 85.F83=75.F82 permitted the occupants to step down from the street onto the alleyway's floor 84.F187, which was laid over sub-floor fill 84.L194. A stamped handle (RP 12614), slag (MC 66458), and a gold bead (MC 66771) were found on this floor 84.F187. This alleyway was presumably bounded by northern and southern closing walls, which are no longer extant due to Fatamid/Crusader robbing (84.L62/84.F57 and 84.L63/84.L11=84.F47).

This alleyway led into the courtyard 83.F85=84.F161, excavated last season. Here, the tabun 84.F152 was in use. Below this floor, four postholes in a line—83.L/F93, 83.L/F94, 83.L/F110 and 84.L/F186—were cut into an exterior horizon 83.L88=84.L174 flanking a pit 83.L96/83.F97. These postholes may have been used to construct a shelter over the pit. This horizon was bounded by the northern closing wall 83.F82=84.F100, western closing wall 83.F25 and eastern closing wall 84.F18 which was largely robbed out. The southern closing wall was entirely robbed out (83.L89/83.F90= 84.L14/ 84.F17). Due to this same robbing action during the Fatamid/Crusader period, it is unclear whether there is a constructed threshold, creating an access point between this courtyard and the three rooms to the west of the street and south of the alley (84.F270, 84.F148 and 84.F151).

From the courtyard, the threshold 83.F83 led to the westernmost room of Square 84 where we excavated the beaten earth floor 83.F98 running up to the curbing 83.F92 built along the western face of the threshold 83.F83. This beaten earth surface 84.F98 was laid over the subfloor fill 83.L102 where a worked astragalus was found (MC 66791). As in Phase four, this floor 83.F98 was bounded on the east by walls 83.F25 and 83.F103.

In the northwestern room of Square 83, we excavated one limited patch of the sandy striations of 83.F62 and subfloor fill 83.L81=73.235. This floor and sub-floor fill were bounded by the western closing wall 83.F44=73.F137, the southern closing wall 83.F82, the eastern closing wall 83.F54=73.F165 and the northern closing wall 73.F157. Unless there was a doorway constructed in the portion of the wall cut by the Byzantine well 83.F11, this northwestern room may have been part of a building to the north.

The northeastern room of Square 84 is similarly understood as possibly part of a northern building. Beneath the Phase 4 kurkar surface 84.F90 and cut from this surface in Phase Four, there is a large pit (84.L116), which removed any Phase 5 surface(s) in the southern half of this room. This fill 84.L116 was bounded by the heavily eroded, eastern closing wall 84.F164=74.131, eastern closing wall 84.F163=74.F411, the southern closing wall 84.F100 and the western closing wall 83.F54=73.F165.

There are two additional rooms to the west of the street, which remained unexcavated due to last year's stairway into Grid 51. No exterior wall is extant for these two rooms due to the Fatamid/Crusader robbing. Only surface 84.F270 over subfloor fill 84.L271 remained. In the next room to the west, an interior wall 84.F133 sat on a floor 84.F148 and a pit 84.L188/84.F189 was cut from the floor 84.F148.

In the next room to the west, a remarkable intramural burial was unearthed.¹ In the pit 84.L158/84.F159=84.L170/84.F171, a male² was found in a tightly flexed position with the body and face pointed roughly west. The arms were not folded in the typical fashion across the chest but were between the legs with wrists at the ankles. No grave goods were found.

¹ Intramural burial is a highly unusual occurrence in the Late Hellenistic/Early Persian period. While intramural burial may occur in vaulted or slab-roofed chambers in the Bronze Age, they are atypical for this period. One Iron I intramural interment was noted by Ephraim Stern and Ilan Sharon, but unusual circumstances surround this interment ("Tel Dor, 1992: Preliminary Report," *IEJ* 43 2/3 (1993): 126-150: 146-149).

² An initial assessment of the gender of the victim was offered by Benjamin Conner based upon the angle of the pubic symphysis and the cranium. All long bones were also fused, indicating that the male was at least 18-years-old. Conner estimated the age of the male to be middle-aged based upon the wear of the teeth, but noted that increased amounts of sand in the diet might invalidate this assessment. We look forward to the analysis of the skeletal remains by Patricia Smith.

The unusual location of the interment within the city walls, the unusual position of the wrists at the ankles, and the absence of grave goods led us to take samples of the sediment around the wrists to look for fibers of a rope which might confirm that a criminal act occurred here. I await the microfaunal report on this sediment sample prior to concluding the criminal nature of the interment.

Phase 6: Late Persian

Occupation during Phase 6 was dense in Squares 83 and 84. Three sub-phases were noted in the central courtyard and adjacent rooms to the east and west of the courtyard. Distinct installations were associated with each sub-phase. Only two sub-phases were noted in the alleyway and the room to the northwest of the courtyard. During this phase, the layout of the exterior walls of the building do not change with one exception (83.F82), though the exterior walls are rebuilt between sub-phases. The sub-division of the interior space was altered only once when two interior walls (84.F175 and 84.F214) were added in sub-phase 6B to demarcate the area around the tabun (84.F176).

Phase 6C

Distinctive mudbrick floors characterize the building's construction during Phase 6C. There is one certain entrance from the street into this building complex, though another may have been removed by Fatamid/Crusader robber trenches (85.L33 and 85.L63) and the Phase Four well 85.F23. The occupant enters the building from the street over the threshold 85.F85=75.F161 and steps down onto the laminations of the alleyway floor 84.F195 into which the pit 84.L224/84.F225 was cut. The floor 84.F195 slopes up gently to the north where it presumably met with a wall that was robbed out by the robber trench 84.L62/84.F57. The floor 84.F195 was laid over sub-floor fill 84.L206. A copper needle (MC 67216) and a remarkable sherd of red-figure ware (RP 12694) depicting a man playing a lyre with a cherub were found in the floor and sub-floor fill. Kate Birney astutely noted that this sherd is an early attempt to foreshorten the fingers of the left hand as the man strums a lyre.

From the alleyway 84.F195, the occupant enters the central courtyard onto floor 84.F213 where the interior wall 84.F175 abuts 84.F214. Though these interior walls were built for the earlier tabun 84.F176, they remain in use even as the floor 84.F213 put the tabun 84.F176 out of use. A bench 84.F162 of mudbricks and stone was set upon the floor 84.F213. A pit 84.L228/84.F229 was cut from the floor 84.F213 through the southwestern portion of the earlier tabun 84.F176. A spindle whorl was located on the floor 84.F213 (MC 67105).

With one exception, the closing walls for the central courtyard remained the same as Phase 5: 84.F18 with its southern extent robbed out by 84.L26/84.F29 and 84.L9/84.F39, 84.F100, 83.F25 with foundation trench 83.L104/83.F105, and the southern closing wall robbed out by the Fatamid/Crusader robber trench 83.L89/83.F90= 84.L14/84.F17. The primary change occurred in the western half of the northern closing wall which was not rebuilt after 83.F99 went out of use. Instead, floor 83.F106=73.F236 covered over the earlier wall 83.F99 and connected the northwestern room with the courtyard to form an *L*-shaped courtyard. This floor was filled with large pottery sherds & one copper nail (MC 66532). The floor 84.F106 was laid over sub-floor fill 84.L108 on which was found one loomweight (MC 67130). The northern extension of the *L*-shaped courtyard was bounded by a western closing wall 83.F44=73.F137, a northern closing wall 73.F157 and an eastern closing wall 83.F54=73.F165.

To the west, east and northeast of the central courtyard, four rooms with mudbrick floors were excavated. To the west, the occupant stepped over the threshold 83.F83, which was still in use from Phase 5 and stepped onto the mudbrick floor 83.F107, which was cut by the pit 83.L115/83.F116. This pit contained a loomweight (MC 66798), a worked astragalus (MC 66799) and a copper shaft (MC 66800). The mudbrick floor 83.F107 was laid over sub-floor fill 83.L117. This floor was bounded by the eastern closing walls 83.F103 and 83.F25, with foundation trench 83.L104/83.F105.

In the room northeast of the courtyard, the mudbrick floor 84.F196 was laid over sub-floor fill 84.L264. This mudbrick floor was bounded on the west by 83.F54=73.F165, on the south by 84.F100, and on the east by a heavily eroded mudbrick wall 84.F164=74.131 that

blocked the threshold between an ashlar and fieldstone wall 84.F163=74.F411 and 74.F187. This mudbrick floor, 84.F196, did not extend into the northern half of the room but, instead, was cut by a pit with fill 74.L445. A hollow, copper, domed object was found on the floor 84.F196 (MC 68104).

Two rooms to the east of the courtyard also had mudbrick floors: 84.F168 and 84.F169. Neither room had exterior walls due to the Fatamid/Crusader robbing. The smaller room immediately to the east of the courtyard consisted of a mudbrick floor 84.F169 with occupational debris 84.L166 above and a pit 84.L197/84.F198 cut into this floor. On this floor, an amulet with the eye of Horus was found during flotation (MC 67139). This floor was laid over sub-floor fill 84.L204.

Immediately to the east of this smaller room was another larger room with mudbrick floor 84.F168, also, with an accumulation of occupational debris 84.L165 above. This larger mudbrick floor was cut by three pits—84.L199/84.F200, 84.L201/84.F202, and 84.L207/84.F208—and laid over a sub-floor fill 84.L203.

In the room immediately to the west of the street, a Phase 6 floor 84.F273 was laid over sub-floor fill 84.L277. Because no walls remain to connect this easternmost room with the alleyway or the two rooms to its west, heights and ceramic chronology must be used to connect these spaces stratigraphically. Unfortunately, the ceramic indicators only point to a broad Persian date. Heights must be used, despite the inherent uncertainties. In Phase 6, the mudbrick floors occurred within a tight range (top heights ranging between 17.13-17.15). The top height of 84.F273 fits squarely with this range.

Phase 6B

While the central courtyard shows dense occupation with multiple installations that require two sub-phases below the mudbrick building, other areas within this same building do not show the same density of occupation. The alleyway is one such area. It has only one sub-phase below the sub-phase associated with the mudbrick building of 6C. The floor of the alleyway, 84.F216, leads to the threshold 84.F217 set within a foundation trench

84.L235/84.F236. The floor of the central courtyard, 84.F181=83.F109, lipped up the western face of the threshold 84.F217. On this floor, a number of red-figure sherds were found (RP 12737, RP 12826 and RP 12837).

During this sub-phase, interior walls were constructed within the central courtyard to subdivide the area around the tabun 84.F176. The opening to the tabun was no longer extant due to the pit 84.L228/84.F229 cut from the floor above. This tabun was constructed with two thick, concentric ceramic walls with a dense packing between. The tabun was set into a pit 84.L231/84.F232 which was cut from the lowest lamination of 84.F181. Flotation and microfaunal analysis will be performed on the ashy matrix from the interior of the tabun to determine the food items produced and fuel. In addition to the tabun, an array of pits and postholes were cut into the floor 83.F109=84.F181: 83.L111/83.F112, 83.L120/83.F121, 83.L132/83.F133, 83.L130/83.F131, 83.L128/83.F129, 83.L/F123, 84.L237/84.F238, and 84.L/F215.

This central courtyard is bound by the western closing wall 84.F114, the northern closing walls 83.F99 and 84.F100, the eastern closing wall 84.F18 robbed out in the Fatamid/Crusader period and the southern closing wall which also was robbed out in the Fatamid/Crusader period (83.L89/83.F90= 84.L14/84.F17).

Using the uppermost courses of the Phase 6A wall 84.F114 as a threshold, the occupant may step from the central courtyard (83.F109) onto the floor 83.F122 of the westernmost room where two loomweights were found (MC 67223 and MC 67225). The floor 83.F122 is bounded by eastern closing walls 83.F114 and 83.F103. The floor 83.F122 was laid over subfloor fill 83.L126.

The two rooms to the east of the central courtyard 83.F109=84.F181 also showed thick striations of floors in which separate installations formed the basis for two sub-phases. Again, no walls were extant for these two rooms due to the robbing of the Fatamid/Crusader period.

The first room to the east of the central courtyard had occupational debris 84.L205 over the floor 84.F210. On this floor, there were loomweights (MC 67189) and a pin (MC 67219). The second room's floor 84.F211 had three postholes—84.L/F226, 84.L/F221, 84.L/F219=84.L/F269—cut into the floor around a hearth 84.F218. This hearth was set into a pit 84.L222/F223 cut from the floor 84.F211. A concentrated white sediment 84.L212 was concentrated on the floor 84.F211.³ A partial travertine vessel (MC 67173) and a ceramic figurine head (MC 67279) were found on this floor. A leveling fill 84.L227 was laid into the Phase 6A depression 84.F220 for the floor 84.F211.

The remaining two rooms from this sub-phase show no similar density of occupation. These two rooms had only one Phase 6 floor prior to the mudbrick building. In the room immediately to the west of the street, the floor 84.F278 was laid over the sub-floor fill 84.L282. The pit 84.L280/84.F281 was cut into 84.F278. The floor 84.F278 had two lead weights sitting upon it (MC 68115 and MC 68116). The floor 84.F278 was laid over sub-floor fill 84.L182. There were no extant walls for this room due to robbing in the Fatamid/Crusader period. In the room to the northwest of the courtyard, there was an earlier mudbrick floor 83.F124=73.F247⁴ laid over a fill 83.L127=73.254, containing three metal objects (MC 67288, MC 67289 and MC 67290). This floor is bounded by the western closing wall 83.F44=73.F137, southern closing wall 83.F99 and eastern closing wall 83.F125=73.F251, and northern closing wall 73.F260. Within the eastern wall 83.F125, a coin was found (MC 68110).

Phase 6A

The density of occupation was greatest in the westernmost room and the central courtyard, permitting the subdivision between sub-phases 6B and 6A in these two areas. Superimposed installations and a shift in the architectural layout of the courtyard mark sub-phase 6A.

³ We await the micromorphological report to describe more fully this sediment.

⁴ The mudbrick floors need no be limited to the sub-phase 6C. Excavation in earlier years showed that mudbrick floors were present in two sub-phases of 6.

In the earliest iteration of the courtyard, there was no alleyway. The interior north-south wall 84.F18 and the east-west wall, robbed out in the Fatamid/Crusader period (84.L63=84.L11/84.F47), were not extant. Exterior working surface 83.F134=84.F230 extended across this broad space. The southern extent of this surface was cut into by a shell- and clay-lined drain, 84.F247, constructed with fieldstones. A shell-lined depression 84.F220 was also cut into the eastern half of the floor 83.F134=84.F230. At the bottom of this shell-installation 84.F220, a sunken vessel 84.F246 was placed in a pit 84.L262/84.F263 and a large amount of slag was found (MC 67829). On the floor 83.F134=84.F230, there were a number of remarkable attic pieces (e.g., RP 12808), two rims of an Attic lekythos (RP 12812 and RP 12820) and a number of metal shafts (MC 67417, MC 67491, MC 67491). Five pits and one posthole were also cut into this floor 83.F134=84.F230: 83.L138/83.F139, 84.L239/84.F240, 84.L241/84.F242, 84.L243/84.F244, 84.L/F245, and 84.L249/84.F250. A sub-floor fill 83.L136=84.L253 was laid prior to the floor, containing large amounts of slag (MC 67446 and MC 67691) and a copper coin (MC 67448). Another pit, 84.L141/84.F142, was cut from this sub-floor fill.

This broad courtyard is bounded by the northern closing walls 83.F99, 84.F100, and 83.F193, western closing wall 83.F114=83.F113, a robbed out southern closing wall (83.L89/83.F90= 84.L14/84.F17, 84.L9/84.F39, 84.L20/84.F20, 84.L50/84.F51, 84.L126/84.F126) and an eastern closing wall 84.F209. This sub-phase of the central courtyard is characterized by both a shift in architecture and installations.

The westernmost room also has denser occupation with a thin beaten earth surface 83.F143 laid over sub-floor fill 83.L145, which is bounded on the east by 83.F114 and 83.F103. In this sub-phase there is no clear point of access between the westernmost room and the central courtyard as occurred in the subsequent sub-phases.

Phase 7B

Portions of Phase 7B were excavated at the end of this season in the westernmost room, northwest room and the central courtyard.

The courtyard consisted of exposed, exterior surfaces 83.F137=84.F254= 84.F248 into which were cut two sunken vessels—84.F233 and 84.F272—on either side of an interior wall that had been robbed out (84.L267/84.F268). Within the fill of the robber trench 84.L167, a small ostrakon was found that read *n'br* ['] (MC 67998). Sediment around one sunken vessel, 84.F233, showed burning above 400 degrees Fahrenheit. In the eastern half of the courtyard, there is a cut 84.F274 that resembles the later depression 84.F220 which was filled with 84.L275=84.L261, containing large storage jar fragments, a needle with a flattened end for weaving (MC 67894), multiple loomweights (MC 67890=MC67933, MC 67891, MC 67906, MC 67926, MC 67926, and MC 68009), and a basalt fragment. In the western half of the room, the laminations became increasingly jumbled as they reached a homra-lined installation 83.F144 cut into the floor 83.F137. This installation 83.F144 was cut by the pit 83.L146/83.F147. Micromorphological analysis showed that the homra sediment had never been heated to a temperature above 400 degrees. This floor sloped up to a bench 84.F276 built against the wall 84.F192=83.F99 and curbing 84.F279, which was used as a threshold between the east-west walls 84.F192=83.F99 and 83.F193. Three postholes and three pits were also cut into this courtyard: 84.L/F256, 84.L/F234, 84.L257/84.F258, 84.L259/F260, 84.L/F266, 84.L267/84.F268. The floor 83.F137 contained a copper ring-shaped item (MC 67787). Sub-floor fill 84.255 was laid prior to the construction of the northeastern portion of the working surfaces 83.F137=84.F254=84.F248. We will await the analysis of the flotation and sediment samples to describe more fully what was manufactured in this courtyard.

In the northwest room, an ashy surface 83.F135=73.F259 was uncovered from Phase 7. It was laid over a sub-floor fill 83.L140=73.L269 where a spindle whorl was found (MC 68004). The floor is bounded by the western closing wall 83.F44=73.F137, northern closing wall 73.260 and southern closing wall 83.F99. The eastern closing wall has not yet been found due to the architectural shift that occurs in Phase 7.

In the westernmost room a beaten earth floor 83.F148 was laid over sub-floor fill 83.L149. This floor contained a hammer stone (MC 67888) and a partial copper ring (MC 67915), and slag (MC 67908). It was bounded on the east by both 83.F114 and 83.F103.

Phase 7A

Incipient signs of Phase 7A architecture are appearing. We likely have the first signs of a north-south wall 83.F150 appearing below the subfloor fill 83.L149. At approximately the same height, the east-west wall 83.F99 and the north-south wall 84.F125=74.F251 end within the section created by the Byzantine well's foundation trench (83.L35/83.F36). The wall 83.F99 is likely founded in Phase 7B, and a blank scarab (MC 67969) was found within this wall. At approximately the same height, the north-south wall 84.F283=74.F512 was found. We are poised to move into the earlier architecture of Phase 7.

Goals for 2014

Next season, the first goal is the full exposure of the 7B building in the northeastern room. Also, the room immediately to the west of the street must be brought into phase by excavating the remnants of 84.F167 where the sandbag staircase once stood. Once this is complete, the Phase 7A architecture must be uncovered. If this courtyard follows the pattern established in adjacent areas, the excavator should anticipate beautiful finds of a higher quality.