Overview

In the summer of 2006, CB2.6 was selected for excavation in the hopes that it would shed light on the features uncovered in the 2000 season due north in CB3.6. Both CB3.6 and CB2.6 are located just west of the center of the big building, along the east side of the courtyard. The presence of plastered walls and basin, as well as its situation vis-à-vis the courtyard led excavators to believe that the features of CB3.6 comprised a bath complex and based on a comparison to Tel Anafa it was believed that this complex continued to the south.² In the course of the season, we uncovered extensions of some of the architectural loci of CB3.6, gained clarification of some of the features and uncovered several new features. These features include a mosaic floor and three plaster-faced walls which work together to create 2 discrete rooms which were very richly decorated as attested not only by the mosaic floor but the plethora of painted and molded stucco that was in the overlying fill. However, we did not discover any bathing accoutrements, nor any sign of a drainage system. The lack of drainage was troubling and while we still believed the complex to be a bath, the decision was made to move to the west and excavate the northwest quadrant of CB2.6 in hopes of finding some sort of drainage channel.³ There was an additional reason for wanting to expand excavation to the west: the presence of two large ashlar steps in the west wall of the complex, CB26001/CB36018. We hoped that one or both of these issues would be clarified by this westward expansion.

What we discovered in the northwest quadrant of CB2.6 was more of the Hellenistic period courtyard floor and the eastern face of CB26001. The floor had sustained robbing at some point in its history as evidenced by a large cut running the entire east-west length of the floor. The floor was picked up again in the south but in significantly worse condition. Upon removal of this southern section of floor, three Persian period walls were uncovered before excavation was stopped.

Phases of Occupation

The architectural features of CB2.6 attest to at least 2 periods of occupation: Hellenistic and Persian. Walls CB26001, CB26002, CB26003, mosaic floor CB26004, and courtyard floor CB26006 can all be dated to the Hellenistic period based upon the related soil loci. Underneath CB26006, three Persian period walls were found: CB26007, CB26008, and CB26009.

¹ Note that throughout this report, architectural loci will be placed in bold to distinguish them from the soil loci.
² The bath complex at Tel Anafa consisted of a series of three rooms, the southernmost of which is the "work" room where the sweat was being shed. It was thought that by excavating in CB2.6 we would discover a similar type of room and early heating equipment would be uncovered.
³ CB36018 was discovered to extend to the south an additional 5m before disappearing into the bedrock and the basin feature CB36019 and the plaster floor CB36021 were discovered to be part of the same open signum floor that covered most of CB2.6.
⁴ Again, we used Tel Anafa as a point of comparison: the drainage channel is located outside of the bathing rooms, just to the west of the building.
CB26008, and CB26009. The soil loci identify three additional phases of occupation: modern, Byzantine and early Roman.

The modern phase is comprised of a topsoil locus, CB27010, and two subsoil loci, CB26011, and CB26012. The opening elevations of CB2.6 showed that the square is on a slight slope; the western portion of the square is approximately 62cm higher than the eastern half. The depth of the topsoil locus reflects this slope; it is significantly shallower in the northeast quadrant where the topsoil locus was 19-25cm below surface level and is only comprised of one unit whereas the northwest quadrant contributed six units to the topsoil locus to a depth of almost 60cm. The LDM for this locus is Ras al-Fuqra ware and three Ottoman clay pipe fragments, which were inventoried. The subsoil loci were divided into two discrete loci, one for the northeast quadrant, CB26011 and one for the northwest, CB26012 based mainly on the soil matrix. While both soil loci were distinguished from the overlying topsoil on the basis of color, the soil of CB26011 contained significant amounts of plaster and lime chunks unlike CB26012, which had none; this is likely due to the fact that CB26011 was fill over an interior space while CB26012 was overlying an exterior space. Both have the same LDM: Ras al-Fuqra ware.

The Byzantine phase is difficult to quantify because there is not a critical mass of Byzantine pottery in any of the soil loci. Byzantine period sherds do show up in some of the lower soil loci indicating that the site was inhabited and the soil worked in that period. The following soil loci have LDM's from the Byzantine period: CB26014, and CB26021. Soil locus CB26014 contained a baby burial, itself locus CB26005, and is most likely the reason for the presence of material later than Hellenistic/early Roman. The average depth of CB26014 was approximately 50cm; the stones delineating the burial were uncovered 25cm into the fill. The burial was oriented on an east-west axis and was marked by a ring of 9 stones forming a rectangle ca. 60cm wide and 80cm long. The stones were placed vertically in order to form a sort of shallow container. The skeleton was uncovered at an elevation of 464.55m and sloped down towards the west with the head on the east side and the whole thing was concentrated to the northern half of the burial. The skull seemed to have been crushed due to the presence a 4cm chunk of decayed brick within the skull cavity and seemed to be oriented north-south and thus not attached to the rest of the body. No grave good were recovered and the LDM for this locus is early Roman.

Although the burial itself contained no material later than early Roman the presence of the Byzantine and early Islamic material within CB26014 indicates that this fill deposit experienced some sort of disturbance such as a burial. Furthermore in the neighboring square CB3.6 a similar baby burial was found with Byzantine context sherds as the LDM of the burial. The other soil loci with Byzantine LDM is material excavated from the disturbance in the courtyard floor. However it should be noted that in 53kg of pottery, only a single Byzantine sherd was found. Despite the paucity of material, the fact that later material was found in several discrete loci of fill is a clear indication that there was Byzantine activity in this area.

The Roman phase is most clearly represented by soil loci CB26013 and CB26017. CB26013 is a rubble layer that extended across the entire northern half of CB2.6 under the early modern topsoil and subsoil loci. The LDM for this locus are Kfar Harasya ware forms 3a and 4b. CB26017 is a robbing trench for wall CB26000 and its LDM is also
Khir Henaya ware form 1a. This provides a *terminus post quem* for the first robbing of wall CB26003.

Roman material is also present in two other loci and in both cases the LDM is evidence for a continuous cycle of robbing and churning of the earth. CB26015 is the fill deposit directly on top of the mosaic floor and its LDM is an Arretine body sherds dating to the Flavian period. As mentioned above, the burial CB26005 also has early Roman material as its LDM, a version of ESA Hayes form 4.

The haunt of the material in CB2.6 is datable to the Hellenistic phase; this includes soil loci and architectural loci. CB26001 is the extension of CB36018, uncovered in the 2000 season. It runs north-south and forms the western wall of two rooms, one bounded by CB36020 on the north, CB26002 on the south and presumably CB26003 before it was robbed and another bounded by CB26002 on the north with the southern extent not yet excavated. CB26001 runs the full 5m of the excavated portion of CB2.6 before disappearing into the baulk and forms a division between the exterior courtyard area in the northwest quadrant and the adjacent interior space in the northeast quadrant.

The wall is constructed basketweave-sized rubble along the exterior edges of the wall with smaller rubble packing in the middle and measures 80cm across. The eastern face of the CB26001 has a smooth plaster coating along its entire extent. Approximately 70cm south of the northern edge of CB2.6, there are two large slablar slabs in the wall, the bottom of which preserves traces of plaster facing as well. At a point 2.5m south of the northern edge of CB2.6, another wall CB26002 begins with CB26001 to create a corner. CB26002 does not extend to the edge of the mosaic floor and measures 2.10m long (east-west) and 75cm wide. CB26002 is built with a combination of rubble construction and pier-and-rubble construction. Both sides of CB26002 have a plaster facing but the northern face has a moulded orthostate façade whereas the southern plaster face is plain. The easternmost block of the exposed course of CB26002 has been robbed out showing that the wall extended beneath the floor and was not rotten on top of the mosaic floor. CB26002 also forms the division between two rooms, one to its north and one to its south. The northern room was likely the more important of the two rooms because of the presence of the moulded orthostate plaster walls on the north face of CB26002 and the south face of CB36020. CB26003 most likely would have formed the eastern edge of these room but was completely robbed out to Persian levels. What is preserved is a 1m stub of wall with preserved plaster facing on both east and west sides and built of a similar rubble core construction as CB26001.

The *opus signinum* mosaic floor, CB26004 is extremely well preserved except for a small east-west break near to CB26002 and three round disturbances each measuring approximately 20cm in diameter. Two of these are on either side of the bottommost slablar step of CB26001 and the other is located to the west of CB26003. The bond between CB26001 and CB26002, the similarity of construction of CB26001 and CB26003 and the almost seamless join between the plaster facings of the walls to CB26004 that these features were all construction at the same time to form a lavish interior space.

CB26016. CB26014 was light brown-yellow soil which contained significant amounts of moulded and painted plaster (most likely plaster from the upper reaches of the walls) as well as lesser amounts of rubble and cobbles. Although this locus was already assigned to

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1 The elevation on top of the step stair is 464.79m asl and the courtyard floor is at an elevation of 464.86m asl
the Byzantine fill, the vast majority of pottery from this locus was Hellenistic in date. This layer of fill, overlies locus CB36015 which was comprised of a very similar soil matrix but without any rubble and provides the Flavian period as the terminus ante quem for the construction of the floor. CB26016 was a very small locus comprised of a single unit that explored the break in the mosaic floor. Little dateable material was recovered from this sondage (only 0.4 kg of pottery) and its LDM is non-descript Hellenistic cookware.

The last feature dateable to the Hellenistic period is CB26006, the courtyard floor which was preserved in two sections in CB2.6: a northern swath and a poorly preserved southern swath. The removal of the southern swath of floor produced Hellenistic wheel-rigged cookware as the LDM. CB26020 was initially identified as a rubble patch and thus isolated from the overlying fill and the courtyard floor and removed as its own unit. Upon its removal, it was decided that his was likely more of the courtyard floor and its LDM is consistent with the Hellenistic period, a BSP inlaid rim bowl.

Soil loci CB26019 and CB26021 are the fills associated with the plaster courtyard floor. CB26019 is the material that was covering the floor and thus its LDM, which is an earlier Islamic sherd, provides a terminus ante quem for the floor. However, it should be noted that in 65 kg of pottery, there was only a single late sherd; other than that, nothing need be later than the early Roman period. CB26021 is the fill excavated from the robbed section of the floor CB26006. Again in this locus, later material seems to have filtered down as the LDM is late Byzantine/early Islamic. However, other than that material, nothing need be later than the late Hellenistic period and this serves as a terminus post quem for the robbing of the courtyard floor. The robbing episode most likely took place at the same time as the robbing of CB26001, CB26002, and CB26003 but the absence of early Roman pottery is odd. The position of the robbing cut in the floor is also odd because it begs the question why remove a section of the courtyard floor when there is no obvious wall to rob?

Although the loci CB26019 and CB26021 covering the courtyard floor both contain LDM from the Byzantine and early Islamic periods, the majority of the material pulled from these loci is Hellenistic and thus bears mentioning here because there is a similar phenomenon happening in the northeast quadrant with loci CB26014 and CB26015. The fills deposits in CB2.6 show quite clearly that the soil was being constantly tamped over causing late material to be deposited in relatively low stress and also causing fragments of a single vessel to be found at various elevations. The Persian period is represented by three architectural loci and 1 soil loci. Three walls CB26007, CB26008, and CB26009 were uncovered in the area under the courtyard floor in the northwestern quadrant of CB2.6. CB26007 extends 1.7m out of the west bank and abruptly stops. It is an east-west wall constructed with basketball-sized field stones along the exterior and filled in with smaller rubble; two courses are preserved. We did excavate to the foundling level and it is likely that what is preserved is the stone socle for a masonry superstructure and it seems to be on the same axis as the Hellenistic building complex. CB26008 is constructed in a similar technique as CB26007.

Four inventoried vessels demonstrate this phenomenon: K06P014, a Hellenistic mortarium, had mendable sherds come from two different loci and a burnished trim; K06P066, another mortarium, also had mendable sherds come from two different loci; K06P023 and P034, two HSP platters, which were melded with sherds from two different loci.
but is completely off the axis of the big building. It runs NW-SE and is 2.63m long from its NW corner until it out by CB26001. Three courses are preserved but the uppermost is only preserved for the southern 90cm. At its northern end, the wall creates a bonded corner with CB26009 with 2 large roughly squared blocks. CB26009 extends northeast from the corner and the its highest exposed course bonds with the bottom visible course of CB26001, thus clearly indicating that both CB26008 and CB26009 predate the Hellenistic period. The fill over these features, soil locus CB26022 is also datable to the Persian period and has as its LDM various Persian folded lamps and bowl fragments.

In the northeast quadrant the Persian material came from the area of the robbing trench for CB26003, soil locus CB26018. This robbing trench was excavated to an elevation of 462.87mshl, approximately 2.4m below the surface level. We dug to such a low elevation in order to find the bottom of CB26003. What we discovered was that this wall had two separate robbing episodes. The first, mentioned above, was the robbing of the Hellenistic wall at some point in the Roman period; the second was the robbing of a Persian wall for the construction of the Hellenistic wall CB26003. These robbing episodes were extremely thorough; no rubble was this soil locus.

While the Iron and Bronze age phases are not formally represented by any loci, it bears mentioning that much of the material excavated from the robbing trench of CB26003 was early material and it was pulled out in large sherds, including fragments of several large storage jars. The presence of these larger fragments in the fill implies that the vessels are not far from their original deposits. Furthermore, the material from the Persian loci are in need of further analysis.\(^a\)

Conclusions

The excavation of the northern half of CB2.6 did meet the goals set out at the beginning of the season. There was some clarification and further understanding of the features of CB2.6 in that we learned that the basins CB26019 and the floor CB26020 were all part of the same large mosaic floor. Furthermore, we can see that, as expected, CB2.6 and CB2.6 are indeed part of a larger complex of rooms but the hypothesis that this complex served as a bathing complex is still unclear. If they are indeed meant for bathing, where is the evidence of water and the structures to pump it and heat it? In order to clarify these questions further excavation is need to the east and south.

\(^a\) Also the Groot looked at the pre-Hellenistic pottery from some of the units that comprise locus CB26022 and for the Iron age material noted nothing later than Hazor 5.