KEDESH 2006
FINAL REPORT FOR CB 3.8 SE
Martin Wells

INTRODUCTION

During the 2006 season, the southeast quadrant of CB 3.8 was opened in order to excavate what was assumed to be a room with plastered walls located along the western wall of the Hellenistic Administrative Building. A large room was found here, measuring approx. 6.5 m x 4.5 m, which originally had plaster on all four walls. A number of complete vessels were found on the floor level, including at least four Rhodian amphorae, a Koan amphora, and at least three large storage jars, all smashed in the corners and along the walls. The original function of this room is unclear at this point, but the complete vessels found here and the storage nature of the nearby rooms points to a similar role for the plastered room.

CB 3.8 SE was excavated under the supervision of Martin Wells with the help of Nicholas Hudson and the four Druze workmen Hani, Israel, Nasser, and Yusuf. All or part of each wall of the plastered room was found during excavation, as well as the fragmented remains of the original crushed limestone floor. This is the extent of the Hellenistic architecture found in this square. The north wall (CB38006) of this room has the only doorway, leading directly into the room which contained the bullae. We still do not know how access was gained into the inner rooms of the HAB from this northwest area. Excavation stopped when we had removed the preserved floor patches and had come down on several large boulders lying in an east-west line across the room. The pottery coming from the lowest loci was all pre-Hellenistic.

PHASES OF OCCUPATION

Excavation of CB 3.8 revealed four phases of occupation or activity, from the Hellenistic period to the modern. Phase IV, the earliest, is represented by the four walls (north-CB38006, south-CB38026, east-CB38025, west-CB38004) and the crushed limestone floor. We presume these walls are Hellenistic, given their continuations in the squares to the north, but we did not indisputably reach the founding courses for any of them. Phase III is represented by the wall robbing and floor disturbance. Phase II is represented by the large rubble deposition. Phase I is represented by the topsoil deposition along with the modern small rubble layer partially covering the western plastered wall.

Phase IV

Locii: walls CB38004, CB38006, CB38025, CB38026, floor CD38031, and fill loci CB38031.1

Phase IV is the earliest occupational horizon encountered this season in CB 3.8 SE. This is the building phase of the floor CB38031, whose floor make-up LDM was one Campana A fragment of the first half of the second century BCE, but the entirety of the
rest of the pottery need not date later than the Persian period. Similarly, the LDM of the 1 below the floor and the fragmented floor areas, CB38031.1, was a fragment of a local fine drooping rim saucer of the 3rd century BCE, with the rest of the pottery not needing a date later than Persian.

This floor was originally a ~15 cm thick crushed limestone floor that reached all four walls. Where the floor met the wall, the wall plaster came out from the wall indicating that both the floor and the walls were contemporary, or at least the plastering stage was. It may have originally had a solid surface, but even in the patches we found that were reaching the walls and substantially well preserved, the surface was crumbly, and there was no evidence of the surface itself ever having been plastered.

The walls were all covered with a 3 cm thick coating of plaster which did not stop at the corners but continued around each and onto the (presumably) dovetailing wall. For the most part the plaster is preserved to the height of the wall, but there are some spots on the western wall (CB38004) where the plaster extends above the stones. There is no way to determine the original height of these walls. Given that it did not conclusively reach the bottom of any wall of this room, we cannot say for sure that they were built in this phase. However, we may certainly say that they were in use at the same time as the floor.

Phase III

Locii: fill loci CD38021.1, CB38030, CB38032, CB38033, and CB38034

Phase III is considered the disturbance phase, or what A. Berlin had called the "robber phase." During this period of activity, the crushed limestone floor CB38031 was almost completely destroyed and either the vessels (CB38030) that were either once lying on the floor (likely), the amphora, the storage jars, and other smaller vessels, or were brought from another location (unlikely), were smashed in the corners and along the walls.1 The LDM for CB38030 is ESA and early Roman cookware. The amphora need not date later than 146 BCE.2

The main disturbance (CB38032) runs north-south through the middle of the room, although we did not really notice this until the mini-basins was established and the floor was clearly shown to be cut. We then excavated the southern half of the room with this disturbance clearly in mind. The disturbance is characterized by an absence of intact floor material, the presence of large rubble fieldstones and ashlars, and an LDM of early Roman cookware. Along with this central disturbance, there were some areas near the walls in the southern half of the room where the floor was fragmented, but not cut so deeply (CB38033). The disturbed nature of the floor in these areas points to its association with the main disturbance event. The LDM of CB38030 is the Rhodian amphora.

CB38021.1 was the locus assigned to material that was in the doorway of the northern wall CB38006. In 2000, the excavator of the room north of the plastered room

---

1 The material finds from this locus were as follows: SAH: K66SA1086, K66SA1099-01; textiles: K68M010, K68M021, K68M023, K68M025, K68M027, K68M029, K68M031; pottery: K60P035-P94, K60P099; lamps: K60L014, K60L015, K60L018; coins: K60C021, K60C024, K60C039.

2 This date of 146 BCE fits fine with the theory that the building was abandoned shortly after the middle of the 2nd century BCE, a date established in previous seasons based on SAH and better readings.
observed what he thought was an ashlar blocking the doorway and gave that ashlar a
locus number, but he did not remove the ashlar nor excavate below it. In the course of
our excavation this season, we saw that the ashlar was not really a door block, but was
part of the rubble fill that extended over the entire square (CB38029). This was not fully
realized until focusing and while excavating this season, the material below this ashlar
was dug separately and given the .1 for sealed fill. Upon reflection and realization that
the ashlar was just part of the architectural rubble (CB38029-Phase II), locus CB38021.1
should be included in this phase.

It is likely that during this phase, the eastern wall CB38025 (= CB37001) was
extensively robbed out. Most of the plaster courses have disappeared, leaving only a
small stretch near the southern bank. Locus CB38034 is located at the northern limit of
this robbing activity, between the southern bank in CB337 NW and the preserved portion
of wall CB37001 in that square. This locus was excavated after CB 3.7 was closed and
so received a 3.8 number. It should be included with locus CB37009 as it is the small unit
of fill just below the last unit of that locus and above the foundation course of wall
CB37001. Since it lies mostly in the buildings, more excavation to the east is required before
much more can be said about this wall.

**Phase II**

**Locii. CB38029**

CB38029 is the large rubble deposition over the entire square. The rubble here
ranges in size from fist-sized cobbles to very large ashlar. This deposition happened
sometimes after the disturbance in Phase III and completely covered those Phase III levels.
The LDM of CB38029 and Phase II is Byzantine, but some of the rubble deposition
should date to the late Roman period, since there was found an intact (except for the
handle) 3rd or 4th century juglet amidst the ashlar (inv. K064031).

**Phase I**

**Locii: Topsoil locus CB38027 and rubble deposition CB38028**

Phase I represents the modern depositional activity of the square. CB38028 is a
fist-sized rubble layer located a few centimeters under the present-day surface and
extending down to the top of the western wall (CB38004). The LDM of this locus is Ras
al-Fagra. This LDM is matched by the LDM, also Ras al-Fagra, of locus CB38027, the
topsoil locus.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The conclusions reached for the excavation of CB3.8 SE are straightforward. The
plastered room was part of the storage/high level administrative area of the HAD, located
in the northwest part of the building. This room most likely held amphorae and other
storage vessels, and there was some activity that required the use of what appear to be
pruning knives. Later in the Roman period, this room was re-marked, and the floor with whatever vessels might have been still lying on it was ripped up and the vessels smashed. Also during this period, the eastern wall of the room (CB38025) appears to have been robbed down to what might have been its foundation level. Nothing can really be said about the southern wall, CB38026, since almost all of it lies unexcavated to the south. During the later Roman or Byzantine periods, this room served as a spot for dumping architectural rubble. Finally, in the modern period, partially in this square but mostly to the west, there was some sort of a small rubble dump.

1 Yizhar Hirschfeld, *Ein Gedi, “A Very Large Village of the Jews,”* Hecht Museum, University of Haifa, 2006, p. 20 (Hebrew), fig. 26. This illustration shows a knife that looks similar to the one found in CB 3.8. He calls them palm pruning knives.