

End of Season 2006 Area D2 Supervisor's Report

Preliminary Information/Credits

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Locus bank: L06D2-001 through L06D2-135

Photo bank: p06D2-9100 -

Basket, and Image banks: 06D2-

ESI Report

There were two main objectives this season for Area D2: dismantling the Persian through Roman maze of walls left in an isolated square (Squares AO/12-11; supervised by Janling Fu) and explicating the sequence of fills apparently associated with a massive ashlar construction evocative of a pier (Squares AO/12-14, AN/14-13; supervised by Willem Boshoff and Brita Lorentzen).

A maze of walls from Phases 2-5 (Roman – Persian) remain in the “penthouse” squares AO/12-11. They are being dismantled in order to date their construction and subsequent use and to complete phase plans for the area (p06D2-9169). Removing a Phase 3 Hellenistic wall and further excavation prompted re-phasing some walls and also revealed two new, unanticipated Phase 5 Persian period walls.

The second objective was to excavate the extensive constructional fills dating from the transitional IrI/II through Iron Age IIB and to determine (and explain) their association with the monumental ashlar pier(?). After two years of digging these constructional fills with intermittent kurkar layers, a tentative interpretation may now be offered. Based on their composition, the relatively homogeneous layers measuring .10 - .15m thick of a light brown sandy matrix or a dark brown clay-like matrix are interpreted as constructional fills. The intervening kurkar “surfaces,” with no *visible* evidence of occupational activity, are likewise interpreted as constructional layers. Many of these fill layers, particularly noticeable among the kurkar layers, slope dramatically and in varying directions. However, the later kurkar layers sit relatively flat as do the preserved extents of stone paving bedded on kurkar. Perhaps these layers served to level the area in preparation for buildings or activities not yet identified or both. Given the time these constructional layers span, transitional IrI/II through IrIIB, if laid in preparation for building a structure they may well have continued during the period of

functioning of that structure. Perhaps the ashlar served as a standing foundation for the postulated monumental structure.

Overview

There were two main objectives this season for Area D2. Janling Fu supervised dismantling the maze of walls in the Phases 2-5 (Roman – Persian) mesa of D2, the “penthouse” squares AO/12-11, in order to date their construction and to complete phase plans for the area (p06D2-9169). Removing the Phase 3 Hellenistic wall W17546 and further excavation prompted re-phasing some of the walls but also revealed two additional, unanticipated Phase 5 walls (p06D2-9324, 9326). The 3-D, maze-like character of this isolated area continues. Yiftah Shalev, John Berg, and Ilan Sharon struggled with the phasing of the walls in this area.

The second objective was to excavate the extensive Phase 7/8? “could be transitional IrI/II” through Iron Age IIB fills, relieved only by pits, and to determine their association with the monumental ashlar W04D2-065 in AO/13. The earliest fills associated with the ashlar date to “could be transitional IrI/II” (L06D2-031, L06D2-049, L06D2-063, L06D2-068, L06D2-072, L06D2-095, L06D2-099, L06D2-109, L06D2-118). The latest date for this activity is less clear as the deposits above the uppermost kurkar surfaces might be associated with the filling activity or may represent a subsequent deposition on the uppermost kurkar surface. In Square AN/14, with as yet no stratigraphic connection to the ashlar (preliminary indications in Square AN/13), removing remnants of the 7th c. “Assyrian Pit” exposed underlying patches and stretches of kurkar layers spanning “could be transitional” IrI/II / IrIIA (L06D2-099, L06D2-109, L06D2-113?) through IrIIB? (L06D2-093, L06D2-094, L06D2-113?). Non-Assyrian Pit pottery dated to IrIIC 8th or 7th c. BC [AG] on the uppermost kurkar surface L06D2-066 suggests that the filling process may have continued into early IrIIC or this pottery may represent a subsequent deposition. IrIIB?C? pottery on F04D2-056, a comparable kurkar surface in AO/14, increases the likelihood that this filling and leveling process continued through IrIIB.

After two years of digging these constructional fills with intermittent kurkar layers, a tentative interpretation may now be offered. Based on their composition, the relatively homogeneous layers measuring .10 - .15m thick of a light brown sandy matrix or a dark brown clay-like matrix are interpreted as constructional fills. The intervening kurkar “surfaces,” with no *visible* evidence of occupational activity, are likewise interpreted as constructional layers. Kurkar surfaces were preserved throughout the excavation area, sometimes in extended stretches but often in isolated islands. As many as four different superimposed kurkar surfaces have been excavated thus far in AN/14. Attempting to correlate successive surfaces based on elevation or pottery reading proved frustrating. In the best preserved sequence, the top and bottommost surfaces (F06D2-046 and F06D2-110) appear to converge at their highest point with two intervening kurkar surfaces (F06D2-096 and F06D2-099) interpreted as interim filling surfaces. Many of these fill layers, particularly noticeable among the kurkar layers, slope dramatically and in varying directions. However, the latest kurkar layers, F04D2-056 and F06D2-066, sit relatively flat as do the preserved portions of stone paving F04D2-057 (stones L04D2-066), F04D2-039 bedded on kurkar. Perhaps these layers served to level the area in preparation for buildings or activities not yet identified or both. Given the time these constructional layers span, transitional IrI/II through IrIIB, if laid in preparation for building a structure they may well have continued during the period of functioning of that structure.

The block of ashlar still begs an explanation. These ashlar appear to be floating but are not neatly aligned and so may have slipped out of place concealing additional blocks below. If the bastion wall continues underneath these ashlar, as appears to be the case based on the visible portion of the wall, then the ashlar may have shifted due to subsidence. They sit in a header-stretcher configuration matching the alignment of the perpendicular wall of ashlar W10606 “Benny’s Office” (which also lack an architectural context). While an architectural association appears likely, even though the ashlar of W04D2-065 are significantly larger, preliminary indications are to the contrary. A small line of stones and a kurkar surface appear to run under W04D2-065 and above the exposed top of W10606.

If not a wall of Benny’s Office Building then what function do the ashlar play? The earliest kurkar surface currently visible in section in AN/13 appears to run under the block of ashlar (W04D2-065). Subsequent kurkar layers meet the ashlar and the uppermost kurkar surface preserved reached the very top of the ashlar. In fact, when first exposed, the ashlar appeared to be a stone paving comparable to the proximate L04D2-066. During the protracted period of filling D2 the ashlar would have protruded above the surface, but by the time of the final layers, which included stone paving to the south (but not found to the north), the ashlar were flush with the ground surface. Ilan Sharon suggests that the ashlar served as a standing foundation for an unidentified monumental structure, in which case the prolonged filling period needs to be explained. It is true that for the filling layers that physically reach the ashlar on the south (the relationship having been largely severed by pits to the north) the fills span “could be transitional” IrI/II through Ir IIA. Phytolith layers (L06D2-063, L06D2-074, L06D2-088), a wind-blown sand accumulation (L06D2-117), plus erosion and wash (L06D2-017, L06D2-081, L06D2-107, L06D2-124) attest to periods of exposure during the IrI/II filling process. Only to the north of the ashlar were kurkar surfaces with intervening fills preserved dating from IrIIB (and IrIIB?C?).

Based on John Berg and Ilan Sharon’s recollections and available plans, this sequence of fills with intermittent kurkar layers subsequently cut by pits stretched through the central portion of D2 “Lower.” Individual large ashlar may also have been found.

Phasing is problematic. In D2 “Lower,” “Benny’s Office” and the underlying IrIIA kurkar floors (including “Liz’s floor” – the other Liz) that covered “Benny’s Building” constituted Phase 7. The IrI/II “Benny’s Building” defined Phase 8. We have fills seemingly stratigraphically above the IrIIA Phase 7 architecture that date to transitional IrI/II. Perhaps the Bastion Wall functioned as a terrace wall creating a stepped landscape with IrI/II remains meeting the side of the Bastion Wall as well as perched above. Until this is resolved, we’ll continue to attribute our kurkar surfaces with accompanying ashlar to Phase 7. A subdivision within Phase 7 may prove necessary to distinguish between W04D2-065 with accompanying constructional fills (Phase 7a) and W10606 “Benny’s Office” (Phase 7b).

By the end of the season we reached below the fills in the eastern half of Squares AO/13-12. Mudbrick detritus(?) on and in cobbles spilling down from east to west (L06D2-078, L06D2-108, L06D2-118) stretch in a north-south swatch across the two squares (p06D2-9499, final photos). Preliminary pottery readings date this emerging feature to “probably transitional” IrI/II (IrIIA “probably transitional” [L-118]; IrIB?IIA? [L-078]; not later than IrIIA [L-108]). It is provisionally attributed to Phase 8.

Phases

Phase 3 (Late Hellenistic Period)

In the “penthouse” squares AO/12-11, dismantling W17546 provided a Hellenistic date of construction. Removing the uppermost courses of W17522, a wall continuing the line of W17546 but to the eastern side of the perpendicular W17540, demonstrated the two walls were built with a similar foundation construction at comparable elevations – an argument for contemporaneity. Dismantling W17546 (runs E-W) also exposed the southern continuation of the perpendicular W17540 (runs N-S), which appears to abut the perpendicular W5207 (runs E-W) (p06D2-9255, final photos).

End-of-the-season deliberations attributed the following slightly oblique walls to Phase 3: W17546 (dismantled this season) and W17522 (superstructure removed this season to reveal foundation courses) which run slightly obliquely to W5207a.

Cleaning the sump L05D2-031 yielded a complete Hellenistic Type XII lamp.

Key locus: W17546 for a possible/probable Hellenistic construction

Phase 4 (Hellenistic Period)

Phase 4 in Squares AO/12-11 currently consists of walls and fills but no floors. W5207c, running east-west and fronting onto the street, predates all the other walls. W17530-W17594, with a possible doorway/threshold in W17530, runs parallel to W5207 approximately 1.4 meters to the north. North-south walls W17534 (in the western baulk) and W17540 divide the corridor into one complete (1.4 x 2.0m) and one open-ended room. W17540 dovetails with the northern W17530 and abuts the earlier W5207 to the south (p06D2-9255). [What is the relationship of W17534 and W5207?].

Down below in Square AN/14, the last of the Hellenistic walls were dismantled. W17588, constructed of ashlar oriented with a row of headers backed by a row of stretchers, abutted the Hellenistic period “Big Mama,” W17562. As was the case with W17562, a pit was sealed beneath the wall (L06D2-035) but this pit yielded only Persian period pottery. Fortunately, the sealed dirt immediately beneath the wall stones (L06D2-013) held a single Hellenistic sherd.

Key locus: W17588 with foundation trench L06D2-013.

Phase 5 (Persian and early Hellenistic Periods)

Up in the “penthouse” squares AO/12-11, the tops of two new, north-south, ashlar walls were exposed (W06D2-075, W06D2-076, p06D2-9324, 9326, final photos). These two parallel walls, built with comparably-sized ashlar (roughly .4 x .2 x .2) oriented as headers, perhaps with a rubble fill, in conjunction with the ashlar “foundation” course of W17534 (in the western baulk) create a series of rooms lacking a northern closing wall. W5207d, with a threshold, remains the earliest wall in the area fronting onto the shell-strewn street (L06D2-005, p06D29258). Further excavation will demonstrate the relationships of the north-south

walls W17534, W06D2-075, and W06D2-076, each of which is constructed somewhat differently, to the only partially uncovered lower courses of the east-west W5207. The fill L06D2-052, L06D2-058, L06D2-059, L06D2-060, with the standing bottoms of two, large, early Persian storejars (L06D2-060), is attributed to this phase.

Down below in Square AN/14, dismantling the ashlar pier W04D2-517=W04D2-525 demonstrated that it sat on an IrII kurkar surface and apparently continued the line of the earlier fieldstone wall W04D2-517 (p06D2-9395, 9405). A rodent hole along the face of the wall combined with ambiguous evidence may it difficult to determine if W525 cut or is contemporary with the kurkar surface F04D2-092. Kurkar reaches within 2-3 cm of the stones, which might be interpreted as wall builders cutting through the earlier kurkar surface or kurkar meeting the now disintegrated mud and plaster(?) facing covering the stones (p06D2-9479). If contemporary, this would be the only wall (other than the ashlar construction W04D2-065 not conclusively a wall) contemporaneous with the kurkar and fill layers. Ordinarily the ashlar pier is bedded deeper than the rubble fill, but in the case of this wall the fieldstone stretch (likely an earlier wall, perhaps co-terminus with the perpendicular wall visible in AM/14) continues down to a lower elevation than did the ashlar pier. The pier contained predominantly Persian period pottery.

Also in AN/14, pit L06D2-054, filled with pottery including a large body piece of a straight-shouldered jar, cut the underlying IrII kurkar surfaces (p06D2-9395, 9434). The cut kurkar clearly showed a rounded corner and straight side contour to the pit, suggesting a stone had been removed to create the unusual shape.

Phase 6 (Iron IIB-C, late 8th and 7th c. BC, pre- and post-Assyrian destruction)

This phase should now be further subdivided into Phases 6a and 6b if the large “Assyrian Pit” post-dates 734 BC and the remaining smaller pits pre-date the Assyrian conquest. If the smaller pits also post-date 734 BC then no meaningful inferences regarding Assyrian impact may be drawn. If warranted, it behooves us to make the distinction to better understand changes in the site’s function before and during Assyrian control of the region and this site in particular [Should we posit distinct phases for pre- and post-Assyrian control?]

Phase 6a (7th c., post- 734 BC Assyrian control of the region)

In the eastern 2/3 of Square AN/14, Assyrian and Assyrianizing pottery, typical of the “Assyrian Pit” pottery excavated over the years, covered patches and stretches of IrIIA and B kurkar surfaces and filled depressions/pits in the kurkar and intervening fills. Pits, dumps, and splays match the deposition of those portions of the “Assyrian Pit” previously excavated. Consistent with previous excavation, the “Assyrian Pit” pottery consisted primarily of 7th c. Phoenician commercial jars and small coarse-ware jugs. Localized deposits featured distinctive pottery, such as the locus rich in eroded handles (L06D2-040). Loci L06D2-024, L06D2-026, L06D2-040, L06D2-046, L06D2-056, and L06D2-098 all contained the distinctive pit pottery.

Key loci: “Assyrian Pit” fills L06D2-040 (except bucket for 06.07.06), L06D2-056

Phase 6b (IrIIC, 8th -7th c., if thought to be pre-Assyrian conquest otherwise no subdivision within Phase 6 is warranted)

In contrast to the 7th c. “Assyrian Pit” pottery of Phase 6a, the pottery of Phase 6b includes a wider range of forms classified by Ayelet Gilboa as 8th or 7th c. but “looks 8th –ish.” Pottery from both the latest Phase 7 constructional fills with kurkar and a subsequent Phase 6 pits that cut those fills display pottery that looks more 8th than 7th c. Phase 6b is here defined as the pits that cut the constructional fills of Phase 7.

Most Phase 6 remains came from baulk removal. The sole addition to the previous picture is the slag pit L06D2-120 with slags measuring nearly 10cm in diameter shaped with rounded bottoms created by the crucible. Fortunately, Adi Behar visited the dig during excavation of this locus and so sampled the relevant matrices and took slags for analysis.

Excavation of the basin “Sheol” (L05D2-517) continued this season with fill layers (L06D2-006, L06D2-089, L06D2-102) and a portion of the basin construction (L06D2-055). Overzealous excavation combined with a convergence of phytolith layers led a volunteer to overcut the basin revealing an underlying wall utilized by the basin builders to create the basin contour to the south. On two of the exposed three sides of the pit, to the south and east, the builders incorporated earlier large-monumental stones to form the basin side and added fieldstones embedded in the characteristic dark-brown clay-like matrix to form a raised rim (p06D2-9145). The entire basin appears to be lined with the dark-brown clay-like matrix as its constructional layer.

Phase 6:

Stage i: phytolith surface and ashy layers L06D2-091, L06D2-105, L06D2-115 (baulk removal)

Stage ii: slag pit L06D2-120 (baulk removal)

Stage iii: pit L04D2-517

Stage iv: pit L05D2-544

Phase 7:

Stage v: constructional fills and kurkar surfaces: L06D2-093, L06D2-094, L06D2-113 (baulk removal)

Key Locus: slag pit L06D2-120

Phase 7 (Iron I/II - IrIIB)

The vast majority of loci and finds excavated this year - successive fills contemporary with the ashlar construction W04D2-065 - are attributed to Phase 7 (chronological complications acknowledged above). The homogeneous nature of individual fills - a light brown sandy matrix, or a dark brown clay-like matrix, or kurkar - each approximately 10-15cm deep (except the kurkar which ranged from 3cm to 15 cm “ugly kurkar”) suggests each layer functioned as an intentionally-laid constructional fill rather than a haphazard dump or collapse. Throughout the excavated area, in periods ranging from IrI/II through the Hellenistic period, the dark-brown clay-like matrix was employed as constructional material - wall make-up, to level above stones in preparation for the mudbrick superstructure, “platforms,” and foundational(?) bedding for stones (L06D2-061, L06D2-062). Whereas some fills sat relatively flat and could be easily followed over 2 meters (e.g. L06D2-049, L06D2-084), most had been carved by erosion or cut by later pits reducing them to a swatch (e.g. L06D2-063, L06D2-088, L06D2-095) or an island (e.g. L06D2-048, L06D2-080, L06D2-096, L06D2-099).

Kurkar often functions as an occupational surface make-up, but in this case the dramatic slopes of some of the “surfaces,” such as F06D2-072, coupled with the lack of visible occupational remains on any of the surfaces, and their consistent placement between constructional fills suggest otherwise. As is the case with the sandwiching fills, the kurkar appears to have functioned as a constructional fill. In Square AO/14, F06D2-072, F06D2-808, F06D2-100, F06D2-115, F06D2-117, F06D2-119, and F05D2-563 form a continuous surface (**designated F06D2-072**). For Square AN/14, we have united kurkar stretches, swatches, and patches into continuous “surfaces” based on elevation and overlying material but in many cases the correlations are tentative. Additionally, surfaces converged so some loci may be counted in multiple “surfaces.” Given the nature of the overall deposit, little information is compromised even if some correlations are erroneous. In Square AN/14, the uppermost/latest kurkar surface F06D2-026 (p06D2-9133) was preceded by **F06D2-092** (p06D2-9479). F06D2-094, F06D2-093 and F06D2-112 may have formed an earlier continuous surface. F06D2-096 overlying F06D2-099 also fit into this intermediate period. The earliest continuous “surface” exposed this season in AN/14 incorporates F06D2-040, F06D2-046, F06D2-056, F06D2-066 (p06D2-9368), F06D2-109, F06D2-110, F06D2-112, and F06D2-113 (**designated F06D2-109**). F06D2-040 and F06D2-046 (p06D2-9434) sit on high points and likely functioned continuously from the time of the lowermost/earliest kurkar fill and subsequent intermediary fills through the uppermost/latest kurkar layer. In fact, “ugly kurkar,” an unusually thick deposit, typically occurs at high rather than low points and may be the residue of just such a surface that functioned continuously through the filling period. Kurkar layers reached the ashlar of **W04D2-065** to the south in Squares AN/13 and AO/13 (e.g. F06D2-015, F06D2-125, F06D2-132, p06D2-9113, 9121) and to the north in the baulk AO/14-13 (F06D2-115, p06D2-9113, 9121) but also may pre-date the ashlar (preliminary indication based on two sections visible in AN/13).

Multiple loci attest to lags in the IrI/II filling process when the deposits lay exposed to the elements and perhaps even grazing animals (phytolith layers). Sufficient time need have elapsed for phytolith layers to achieve their depth and extent (L06D2-063, L06D2-074, L06D2-088), wind-blown and water washed sand layers to accumulate in a depression (L06D2-117), and water with sand to wash through cutting the fills (L06D2-017, L06D2-081, L06D2-107, L06D2-124). No such deposits were identified in the IrIIB fills.

Both to the north and south of the ashlar W04D2-065 fills dated from IrI/II through Iron IIB. In Squares AO/13-12, south of the ashlar, pottery on the stone pavements bedded on the uppermost kurkar fills and level with the tops of the W04D2-065 ashlar dated to IrIIA (F04D2-057) and Iron IIB (F04D2-039). North and northeast of the ashlar, no stone pavements remained but fill and kurkar layers dated as late as IrIIB? (L06D2-093, L06D2-094) and perhaps even IrIIC “8th or 7th c.” [AG] (L06D2-066).

A robber trench (L06D2-037, L06D2-129) runs above the projected line of the bastion wall in Square AO/12 (p06D2-9499, trench number not indicated on photo). Pottery found in this trench dates to IrIIA/IrIIA “could be transitional.”

Overzealous cleaning of the IrIIC pit L04D2-517 unearthed a burned(?) clay node imprinted with impressions of leaves (L06D2-130). Unfortunately situated below the surface of loci of uncertain context (though of established IrIIA? date), this locus is tentatively assigned to Phase 7.

Localized stages of successive kurkar “surfaces”:
Square AN/14

Stage i: F06D2-098, F06D2-024, F06D2-026
Stage ii: F06D2-092
Stage iii: L06D2-111
Stage iv: L06D2-113

Stage i: F06D2-046 = F06D2-066
Stage ii: F06D2-096
Stage iii: F06D2-099
Stage iv: F06D2-110

Stage i: F05D2-034
Stage ii: F06D2-066 = F06D2-046
Stage iii: F06D2-093 = F06D2-094

Stage i: F06D2-056
Stage ii: F06D2-109

Square AO/14

Stage i: F05D2-512
Stage ii: F06D2-072 = F06D2-080 = F06D2-100 = F06D2-117 = F06D2-119 = F05D2-563

Stage i: F05D2-553
Stage ii: F06D2-048
Stage iii: F06D2-080 = F06D2-072

Square AN/13

Stage i: F05D2-042 = F06D2-015
Stage ii: F06D2-125
Stage iii: F06D2-132

Stage i: F06D2-097
Stage ii: F06D2-104

Key loci: IrIIB? L06D2-093 and L06D2-094; “IrIIB-ish” L06D2-113
“Could be transitional” IrI/II: L06D2-107 and L06D2-118
Leaf impression L06D2-130

Phase 8

By the end of the season we reached below the constructional fills and ashlar W04D2-065 in the eastern half of Squares AO/13-12. Mudbrick detritus(?) on and in cobbles spilling down from east to west (L06D2-078, L06D2-108, L06D2-118) stretch in a north-south swatch across the two squares (p06D2-9499, final photos). We suspect that these medium-sized fieldstones in mudbrick material are either related to or sit just above the Bastion Wall. Preliminary pottery readings date this emerging stone feature to “probably” transitional IrI/II (IrIIA “probably transitional” [L-118]; IrIB?IIA? [L-078]; not later than IrIIA [L-108]).

Key loci: L06D2-078 (predominantly boring bowls)

Appendices

All submitted by the unit supervisors and the recorder.