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Chhîm Explorations 2004

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CHHÎM

EXPLORATIONS 2004

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The ninth field season at Chhîm, conducted jointly by the Direction Générale des Antiquités and the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of Warsaw University (PCMA), took place between August 16 and October 1, 2004.¹ Archaeological work was a continuation of previous activities in the two sectors: temenos A (courtyard in front of the Roman temple) and the towers in the northern part, north and northeast of said temple. The chief objectives included completing the exploration of the temenos (new data on layout and chronology) and furthering knowledge of the village plan and its development. Studies on the material were also continued during the season.

1 The joint Polish-Lebanese team was directed by Dr. Tomasz Waliszewski, assisted by Mr. Bahija Traboulsi and Mr. As'ad Seif from the Direction Générale des Antiquités. The team comprised: Dr. Mahmoud El-Tayeb, archaeologist, in charge of the work at Jiyeh and a regional survey; Dr. Ingrid Périssé, archaeologist, in charge of the work at Chhîm; Ms Karolina Cichočka, Ms Sophie Garreau, Mr. Paweł Tchorek and Mr. Jakub Prager, archaeologists; Ms Urszula Wicenciak and Mr. Krzysztof Domżański, ceramologists; Ms Beata Capik, registrar, Mr. Marcin Kisielewicz, metrologist; Mr. Marek Puzzkarski, documentalist; Dr. Krzysztof Chmielewski. Mrs. Izabela Uchman-Laskowska, art restorers. Students of archaeology, art conservation and engineering from Warsaw and Poznań included Mr. Tomasz Góra, Mr. Karol Juchniewicz, Mr. Marcin Klebba, Ms Dorota Kołodziej, Ms Maria Kozarzewska, Ms Jolanta Krajewska, Mr. Wojciech Król, Mr. Karol Ochnio, Ms Florentyna Pozdniak, Ms Justyna Radzik, Ms Agnieszka Szulc, Ms Joanna Wapniarz, Ms Anna Zakrzewska, Mr. Krzysztof Napiórkowski, Ms Małgorzata Żukowska, Ms Marta Banaś, Ms Agnieszka Wielocha, Ms Jolanta Górniak.

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TEMENOS A

Work was carried out inside the temenos of the Roman-period sanctuary with the purpose of: 1) tracing the extent of cult space to the south; 2) determining the nature of earlier foundations from the 2nd century AD; 3) précising the chronological sequence of structures; and 4) understanding the function of the cistern situated by the north temple wall.

UNITS IN SECTOR A.XI

The south wall of the temenos had been cleared in its western end partly in the course of the previous campaign. It now



Fig. 1. Units discovered in Sector A.XI of the temenos, view from the west (Photo T. Waliszewski)

remained to explore an area of 8.80 m to the east and 3.50 m to the south. As elsewhere, there was a deep layer of modern deposits, reaching 1 m in thickness where the ground fell away to the south.

Two units, A and B, had been cleared in 2003. This year's work revealed the east wall of unit B, unit C and perhaps yet a fourth unit, D [Fig. 1]. Partition walls, surviving by the north wall to a height of 0.60-0.90 m, were no more than foundation-high at the southern ends.

The stratigraphic sequence in these four units contrasted substantially. The lowest layer in unit A (2.60 by 1.70 m, inside the walls) was a thick (c. 0.90 m) and hard deposit, possibly man-made, containing mixed pottery from the Bronze Age through the 1st century AD. Despite finding potential flagstones on different levels, no trace of any kind of floor was observed. Unit B (2.90 by 2.50 m, inside the walls) was the room with *tannour*, or bread oven, excavated in 1999² and dated on the grounds of 1st-century AD pottery. A stone-paved floor survived in good condition in the northern part of the unit. Resting on it was a layer of broken plaster, most likely collapsed from the walls.

An entirely different stratigraphy was observed in unit C (3.85 by 2.90 m, inside the walls), with stone blocks tumbled from the north wall directly underlying the thick modern layer. The floor, on which the blocks rested, was covered with a tamped yellowish-white surface, sloping downward to the south. The south wall of units A-C continues eastward for another 4.50 m, where it broke off sharply. This could have constituted yet another unit (D), to be explored in the next season.

2 Cf. PAM XI, Reports 1999 (2000), 241.

Assuming the material from unit B is representative for the whole complex (as is apparently the architecture), it will date it to the 1st century AD. Reused architectural elements observed in the walls (column drum, fragment of a threshold and stone cylinder for roof repairs) came from the dismantling of an earlier, presumably Hellenistic structure.

TEMENOS STAIRS

Testing the slope below the threshold of the south entry into the temenos revealed a flight of stone steps directly under a thin layer of rubble. There were six steps in all, their line of symmetry decidedly askew with regard to the axis of the temenos

threshold from the 2nd century AD [Fig. 2]. They should be interpreted as related to the earlier threshold, found c. 0.60 m below the first. The last visible step of this staircase was cut off by a wall belonging to the 2nd-century phase.

Open stratigraphy in this area precluded contextual dating, leaving us to consider the results of previous excavation and testing conducted in the southern part of the temenos. It is possible that in the 1st century AD a series of three or four rooms was built on the natural slope, all facing south and founded on bedrock. These units were in use at the same time as the local sanctuary, underlying the later temple of the 2nd century AD and other village



Fig. 2. Steps leading up into the temenos on the south side
(Photo T. Waliszewski)

structures (undoubtedly E.V, E.XII and E.XIII). The difference between the two levels was navigated by a set of steps, leading to a doorway in the wall which was a continuation of the north wall of the units. This wall and doorway could have still been in use during the building of the naos in the middle of the 2nd century AD, but when the pronaos was erected (probably in the course of the 3rd century AD), this part of the sanctuary was reorganized. The operation entailed building a continuation of the south cella wall and eliminating the space between it and the older wall of units A-D with a short section of transversal wall. The rooms A-D must have been abandoned at this time (as confirmed for unit B), and the old wall taken advantage of as the back wall of the south temenos portico.

TESTING IN AREA A.IX

Testing in the portico and on the "*via sacra*" connecting the temple with tower D had the general purpose of determining the presence of earlier architecture, if any, in the area. Two trial pits were dug in the north portico, one by the back wall and another slightly further to the east, where a wall partitioned off a Byzantine floor in the portico from the temenos area.³

In the former, bedrock, which was reached already at 0.60 m below ground surface, proved to have been leveled to receive the portico. A thin layer of clayey soil with an insignificant amount of sherds lay directly on top of the bedrock, this followed by the *radius* and *nucleus* of the Roman-period floor. The Roman floor in the second of the trial pits was very poorly preserved and bedrock appeared practically

on the same level with the *radius*. Thus, the door permitting passage from the Byzantine level to the still used Roman floor should be dated to Byzantine times. The third trial pit, excavated in the "*via sacra*", between the end of the north portico and the wall of the south portico, revealed a wall perpendicular to the portico wall and disappearing under the temenos floor. The related layer of clayey earth, very much like the one in the first trial pit, could be dated by associated pottery to the Bronze Age. The context also yielded an arrowhead. The stratigraphy is not unlike what was recorded in the first of the trial pits: clayey earth and a Roman floor superimposed on it, the sole difference being that bedrock here was found at a depth of 1.20 m. Quite clearly, the "*via sacra*" with its porticoes was erected on no-man's ground, lying abandoned undoubtedly from the Bronze Age.

'TOWER' D – AREA D.I TO D.IV

In the course of the present campaign, the eastern part of the 'tower' interior was cleared. Bedrock had been observed coming up to the surface in several places here even before the beginning of excavations. A wall was uncovered (1.20-1.30 m wide, c. 6.00 m long), cut into bedrock and running parallel to the east wall of the 'tower', c. 0.50 m away from it. Restoration works in the 1970s had disturbed the context, making any dating of the feature more than difficult. A test pit dug west of the wall did not yield datable pottery.

The trial pit by the southwestern corner of the 'tower' was continued from last year, bringing no new data.⁴

3 For a plan of the temenos and portico, see T. Waliszewski's previous report in *PAM XV, Reports 2003* (2004), Fig. 1 on p. 304.

4 Cf. *PAM XV*, op. cit., 306.

BASILICA (AREA B.II)

Taking advantage of the fact that the mosaic pavements had been removed from the basilica, the Roman structures under the church bema were investigated once again. The temenos floor runs right up to an N-S wall there, and to a base or podium that closely resembles the structure uncovered in 2000 in room E.VI next to the temple itself.⁵ Building technique is the same in this case: big blocks of stone, c. 0.50 m

long, receiving plaster at the same time with the wall.

Hypothetically, this could be a room or at least roofed space, situated on the opposite side of the terrace with regard to the temple. While the pottery assemblage from the trial pit under the floor is too fragmentary to support any dating, the resemblance to the substructure from E.VI admits a date in the 1st century AD.

CISTERN UNDER THE TEMPLE (AREA C.VI)

Clearing of the cistern under the north wall of the temple began this year. The first layer was a dark brown humid soil with abundant Byzantine pottery material, animal bones, glass lamp shards and waterproof mortar (the plastering of the cistern), going down

to a depth of 1.20 m. At 2.50 m below the mouth, the cistern proved to have a diameter of 2.70 m. It seems apparent that in later times the function of the cistern was as a refuse dump rather than as a place for storing water.

VILLAGE E

ROOMS E.XVIII-XIX

The two chambers lining street E.XXII on the east continued to be explored this season.⁶ The north wall, which threatened to collapse, had to be preserved on the spot before progressing with the excavation. No new data on the stratigraphy was recorded, the layers including light brown soil directly on the floor (possibly from the terrace roof), large dressed blocks tumbled from the walls and earth fill covering the rubble. The floor was reached in chamber E.XIX, near the door opening into street E.XXII.

Another water cistern, E.IV, was located north of the above rooms, level with the chamber E.XVIII. It was explored last year

and this season its roof was uncovered, It was made of small and medium-size stones bonded in mortar. There were two walls encasing the mouth of this cistern on the west and north. It is difficult to ascertain whether this was a public cistern or whether it was connected with one of the houses. The pottery assemblage in the rubble fill above the cistern was of mixed Roman and Byzantine date, raising suspicions that H. Kalayan's restoration works in the 1970s and 1980s had disturbed the context here as well.

ROOM E.XXVI

The irregular quadrangle of room E.XXVI (c. 6.50 by 4.90 m), attached to the west

5 Cf. *PAM XII, Reports 2000* (2001), 299-303 and Figs. 1, 2.

6 Cf. *PAM XV*, op. cit., 308 and Fig. 1, 5.

wall of oil press E.II, was explored in its entirety this year [Fig. 3]. The lime-mortar floor, 0.08-0.10 m thick on average, was well preserved all over the room. A fragment of stone column found in the middle of the chamber was undoubtedly the base of a wooden post supporting a traditional terrace roof, a solution repeated in other houses excavated in the village.

The floor in the northwestern part of the room revealed a small depression, c. 0.25 m in diameter, and a small basin, which appeared to be in connection with a largely ruined channel running alongside the northwest wall of the room. This channel, once obviously covered with a masonry bench of some kind, ran across the width of the

chamber. A small section in the north corner has been preserved, revealing flat slabs forming a rectangular passage, plastered inside [Fig. 4]. It pierced the wall separating the chamber from oil press E.II and ran through the southwest wall of the room on the other side. This covered channel, perhaps making up part of the water-supply system, clearly ran downslope. It seems to be earlier than room E.XXVI and apparently went into disuse when the chamber was erected. An architectural analysis of the structure indicates that the room was attached to the building of the oil press, taking advantage of two already standing walls.

In the southeastern part of the room, a stone bench, c. 0.60 m wide, stood against



Fig. 3. General view of room E.XXVI
(Photo T. Waliszewski)

the wall. It seems to be a late element in the houses at Chhim, becoming a regular part of the house furnishings in Byzantine times (cf. finds from room E.VII). Upon partial dismantling, the bench proved to be standing over an earlier fireplace made

in a large storage jar, still containing a large amount of ashes. Bedrock, reached directly underneath the floor in a trial pit dug next to the bench, indicated beyond doubt that no earlier architectural structures had existed in this spot.

OIL PRESS E.III

The ruins of this oil press, standing on the slope at the northern edge of the village ruins and covered with a thick layer of rubble, had been known from the beginning of work at Chhîm. The visible half was of a rectangular layout and contained the standard oil-pressing facilities, including a great

quern located in the middle, used for grinding olives during the first phase of the process. A pressing stone, on which bags with olive pulp were placed for pressing, was discovered in the southeastern part. Along the same wall, there was a basin for catching the flow of oil and a stone used to



Fig. 4. Channel in room E.XXVI
(Photo T. Waliszewski)

mount the wooden screw that lowered the beam, which itself was mounted most likely in the wall of the building itself and pressed directly on the bags with olive pulp. Below the stone for mounting the screw, there were two enormous weights, which must have been used to weigh down the beam before the screw system was installed. Similar

technological advancement had already been observed in the nearby oil press E.II.

Further investigations will concern a small water cistern lying west of the press and presumably functionally connected with the building. Future testing in the area should provide chronological indications for the facility.