CHAPTER 5

THE PERSIAN PERIOD STRATUM II

Remains of two different phases (IIA and IIB) were uncovered in the excavations of Area M. The nature of each of the two phases differs greatly from each other since they represent a total change of the function and character of the area.

Area M, located on both sides of the Iron Age City Wall, and extends in the Persian period also to the northern slope. As a result, construction in the area was placed on terraces, and the levelling of the adjacent areas. As a result, there are considerable differences in heights between the remains in each of the terraces; consequently the following description will be divided into two: the uppermost area (the south) and the northern area (the slope).

Phase IIA

Phase IIA evidence a complete change of the nature of the northern area, both the upper southern terrace (squares J-O/9-12) and the northern slopes (J-O/15-17). On top of the remains of the domestic units, courtyards and open spaces characteristic of the occupation of stratum IV (chapter 4 in this volume,) a group of pits (garbage???) located in the southern terrace (plan 5.1) while a cemetery (plan .5.2) covered the area in the northern slopes of the Tel.

THE SOUTHERN TERRACE

*The Pits* (Plan 5.1)

The pits were defined throughout the excavation area, mainly in squares M-O/10-12 where they cut through the earlier remains (L.5063, L.5184, L.5139+L.5158+L.5172, L.5034, L.5015, L.5016, L.5013, L.5036, L.5081, L.5045+L.5071, L.5184; Photo**)**. Most of the pits, in different sizes, are filled by dark gray ash material, bones and pottery sherds (Figs. And Photos)**.** A stone-lined pit – L5020 – is to be also attributed to this phase despite its different nature.

In the western squares, K-L/11, concentrations of gray-black material were found above the earlier remains (Stratum IV), maybe as a part of the same phenomenon (L.5017+ L.5024, L.5059; photo).

THE NORTHERN TERRACE

*The Cemetery* (Plan 5.2)

Already in the seasons conducted at the site in the 50s' a cemetery dated to the fourth century BCE was uncovered south and west to the Solomonic Gate (Hazor III-IV:49, Plan VII; Hazor V:156–161). The renewed excavations add one burial field in the lower part of the northern slope (squares J-O/15-17; Plan 5.2).

All the tombs are of the pit-tomb type. They are dug 2-3 m deep into the earlier remains and shared a rectangular shape. The tombs are covered with large slabs encircled by a row of small stones and sometimes small stones were used to fill the spaces between the slabs (Photo). All the tombs are oriented east-west with a few exceptions (see detail below). In general, the buried lied on the back and the head is turned north-east. Skeletons of women, men and children were buried. Votive offerings such as jewelry, jars, juglets, perfume-alabastra were deposited near the dead person; sometimes, storage jars were found on the exterior nearby the top of the graves (Photo).

The burial field included 25 tombs arranged densely in an east–west direction. The tombs located in the western part of the area western part of the area are placed closer to one another than those in the eastern part. (Plan 5.2). Tomb 5906 is set to the south of the rest of the tombs and is higher by about 1 m.

Most of the tombs are poorly preserved, with broken slabs collapsed into the tomb (e.g. T.5909, T.5911). Some exceptional tombs were lined by stone slabs (T.5843, T.5864, T.5579, T.5932; photo). Storage jars were fixed on top of three tombs (T.5376, T.5909 and T.5932).

Another remarkable feature of the cemetery is the bad preservation of the skeletons (few bones and a few skulls survived, see below in table). Based on the skulls which survived it appears that the heads turned east, a well-known characteristic of the Persian graves in Hazor (Reference). It was more difficult to determine the manner in which the body was placed in the tomb, yet it seems that most of the skeletons were lying on the back. DNA analysis was performed on three human remains (marked with an \* in the table) by Na’ama Ya’alon and the results will be published in the near future.

While in some of the tombs a rich number of finds were uncovered (see table and chapter 14), in others the finds were extremely meagre.

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| **Tomb no.** | **Tomb Preservation** | **Orientation of the Tombs** | **Skeleton preservation** | **Votive Offerings** |
| 5367 | Large stones | East-west | No Human bones | Complete SJ |
| 5376\* | Large stones lined by small stones | East-west | All the skeleton | In the head area: Fibula, 11 metal beads and 1 corneal bead and Pottery |
| 5436 | Broken slabs | East-west |  |  |
| 5567 | Exceptional. No slabs but big flat stones lined by small stones | North-south |  | A Persian storage jar is lying above. |
| 5570 | Broken | East-west |  | Empty |
| 5576 | Bad preservation | East-west |  | Empty |
| 5579 | Covering slabs lined by small stones | East-west |  |  |
| 5581 | Big stones lined by small stones | East-west |  | Pottery |
| 5585 | Big stones lined by small stones | East-west |  | Rich |
| 5602 | Big stones lined by small stones | East-west |  |  |
| 5603 | Slabs and small stones in between | East-west |  | Complete storage jar |
| 5608 | Large stones lined by small stones | East-west |  | Pottery and Jewelry |
| 5788 | Broken | East-west |  | Empty |
| 5799 | Large stones and small ones surround the tomb. Slabs covered the tomb. Broken | East-west | Bad. Harmed bones | Bronze bowl |
| 5809 | The slab is set on top of an orthostat. Slabs broken into the grave | East-west | Bad. Just a few bones | Bronze ring, bone container with a bronze brush מכחול כוהל |
| 5822 | Large stones and small ones surround the tomb. Slabs covered the tomb | East-west | Limbs bones |  |
| 5836 | Big stones | East-west |  | Metal lamp with two nozzles, metal bowl, fibula, iron sword and metal tongs; glass bottle bone container with a metal brush and beads |
| 5843\* | The grave is lined with big stones and slabs inside | East-west | Small skeleton well preserved and few other bones (leg and kneecap) | Glass alabastron, bronze ring and ear ring broken made of silver |
| 5864 | The grave is lined with stones inside | East-west | Leg bone | Bracelet |
| 5906 | Broken slabs collapsed inside the grave | East-west |  |  |
| 5907 | Lined by small stones | East-west |  | Few finds |
| 5908 | Lined by small stones | East-west |  |  |
| 5909 | Lined by small stones | East-west | Few bones | SJ above the tomb |
| 5911 | Broken slabs collapsed inside the grave |  |  |  |
| 5913 |  | East-west |  |  |
| 5914 |  | East-west |  |  |
| 5924\* | Badly preserved. Large broken stones | East-west |  | Flint, beads, ear-ring, small shells |
| 5925 |  | East-west |  |  |
| 5926 | Large stones | East-west |  | Alabastron |
| 5932 | Disturbed already in the past | East-west |  | SJ above the tomb |

Phase IIB

Phase IIB is characterized by domestic structures, paved open spaces, courtyards and agricultural installations spread all over the excavated area. As in the previous phase, here too, the remains are located in two main areas: the southern - squares K-O/6-13 spread over two terraces ,with a difference in height of one meter of height from one another (Plan 5.3), and the area located on the northern slope (squares K-L/15-16; Plan 5.4). There is no physical connection between these two areas and their association to the same single stratum is conjectural. However, since both are dated to the Persian period, and post-date the pits and the tombs of phase IIA the remnants on both terraces are attributed to the same phase.

THE SOUTHERN AREA

*The Southern Terrace - Building L06-011* (Plan 5.3)

The nature of the stratum resembles that of the “Persian farm” uncovered by Yadin’s excavations in area G (reference). The state of preservation of the remains is poor and fragmentary. The most impressive feature is a massive wall W07-307 oriented west-east, built in the slope acting as a terrace wall. At some point, the wall was incorporated into the layout of a domestic unit (Photo).

The walls were built of two rows of mid to large field stones filled with small ones. Only part of the building was so far uncovered. However, the evidence points to a house with a paved courtyard (L.07-314) surrounded by two elongated spaces to the east (L.07-309 and L07-318) and two rooms to the north (L.06-011 and L07-317).

Stone installations are placed over a packed earth layer in the courtyard (L07-315) laid on a paved make-up (L07-314). The eastern space (07-309) was, probably roofed, since a stone pillar-base was set in the middle of the room, which probably held a wooden column (photo). To the north of the complex, a vast paved open space (L06-005 + L06-012) with installations of various kinds spread all over: tabuns (L06-021, L06-025), half storage jars incorporated into the floor, a stone slab surrounded by small stones (L07-305) used probably as a working surface set close to a basalt carved rectangular installation (photo) lined by small stones. Two rooms separated by an alley attached on the north to W07-307. The rooms are rectangular, almost square. The western room, had a packed earth floor (L06-011) covered with a thick layer of crashed vessels (Pl.). The eastern room, was separated by a partition wall into two small units (L07-311 and L07-312), both pebble paved. A small circular stone with a depression carved into its surface, may have served as a miniature olive press (Photo).

*The Northern Terrace* (Plan 5.3)

The nature of this phase in the northern terrace (squares J-O/10-14) is not entirely clear, In this phase, the main part of the area, especially squares M-N/10-12, is filled by different layers of stones (L.5004, L.5027, L.5014, L.5030, L.5021, L.5022, L.5018).

A few free-standing walls are integrated into these stone layers, and probably belong to this phase (W.3008, W.3019, W.3100 - *photo* *60383? 1990*). A special feature is W.3016 (in square K-10) and pavement L.5077 which probably abutted it, though no physical connection between the two was preserved (*photo 58616 - 1990*).

Remains of another architectural unit were uncovered in square J-12/13, whare a corner between walls W3252 and W3251 was found. A pavement (L5635) runs up against the northern face of W3252. These two walls are set on top of a constructive fill of 2.00 m. situated above the Late Bronze Age remains. Although it seems that W3251 is attached to W.3250, which belongs to the Iron Age Tower, the pottery retrieved below the make-up of the floor L. 5635 yields Persian pottery (photo). The entire corner of walls was covered by fallen stones that probably rolled down the slope from the higher part of the Tel.

Remains of another wall W3107 oriented east-west were found in the northernmost part of the excavated area and a revetment of stones was found to its north (L5291). Walls W3107 and W3100 may have functioned as terrace or retainment walls.

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THE NORTHER SLOPE

*Remains post cemetery*

Remains of walls built of a narrow row large field stones, sealing some of the Persian graves, were found in squares K-L/15 (Plan 5.4).. Some of the walls were built in a north-south direction (W.3311 and W.3321(, and others in a west-east direction (W.3322 and W3326). One architectural unit can be reconstructed to the north of W.3322. It seems that at a later phase the wall was canceled by the construction of W.3321, whose southern edge rests on top of the W.3322. A tabun **L.5837** was set close to it. (PHOTOGRAPH 9792 with wall and tabun). Remains of a paved floor (L.5790+L5829) were attached to wall W3326, sealing the storage jar set at the head of grave 5932 of the previous phase (photo).