



### **Khirbat al Batrawi**

**Project Name:** Pilot Project of Archaeological Investigations on the Bronze Age Urban Development at Khirbat al-Batrawi in the Upper Wadi az-Zarqa Basin

**Duration:** five-year project; May 28th - June 19th 2007 third season

**Sponsor:** Rome “La Sapienza” University, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**Director:** Prof. Lorenzo Nigro

**Representative:** Romel Ghrayib



Fig. 1: General view from north of the site of Khirbat al-Batrawi with the restored stretch of the main EB II-III inner city wall and the EB II city-gate.

The third season of excavations at Khirbat al-Batrawi (Lat. 32°05',218" N, Long. 36°04',237" E), an Early Bronze Age fortified town in the Upper Wadi az-Zarqa, was carried out under the auspices of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan between May 28th and June 19th 2007, and was focused, for this year, on extensive and systematic restorations of the EB II-III city-wall and city-gate, and on a survey of Early Bronze Age sites in the Upper Wadi az-Zarqa, with special reference to the modern urbanized areas of Zarqa and ar-Rusayfa.



Fig. 2: The restored EB II city-gate, from north.

#### **Work at the site:**

Work on the site of Khirbat al-Batrawi was concentrated in Area B, where a 30 m long stretch of the main inner city-wall had been excavated in previous seasons (Nigro 2006: 240-246; Nigro ed. 2006: 175-196, plans III-IV), and where restorations with antique-like mortar were carried out (Fig. 1). Restorations also allowed the better identification of the different constructive phases and building techniques of the wall itself. The city-wall is preserved up to 2.3 m to the west, and around 1.8-2.0 in the area of the gate. The gate was restored (Fig. 2), with special attention to its jambs, which show the cracks of the earthquake which destroyed the EB II city (Fig. 3). At the same time a large amount of collapsed and erratic stones were removed from the site, in order to enhance the readability of the urban topography and to facilitate the widening of excavations in the next season.

Thanks to the restoration work, the Batrawy city-wall stands as one of the best preserved monuments of this kind in the region, and hints at the resources and capabilities of the local community during the Early Bronze Age.





### Survey of the site surroundings:

A systematic survey of the hills and the quarters of the modern city surrounding Khirbat al-Batrawi was carried out with the specific aim of identifying the ancient paths connecting the Early Bronze Age town to the underlying river and to locate the ford in the river banks. This was individuated just north of a rocky spur which narrowed the river banks and contained the site of Jneneh (JADIS nr. 2516.016; Nigro ed. 2006: 50-51, figs. 1.4, 2.16, maps 4-5). A fresh examination of pottery on the surface of the latter site demonstrated that it was occupied not only in the Iron Age II-III, but also in the Early Bronze I. The discovery of a series of “cup-marks” and rock-cut mortars on the rocky spur dominating the river in correspondence of this site corroborated this hypothesis, suggesting that the EB I settlement was abandoned when the people moved to the top-hill site in the Early Bronze II, founding the fortified town of Khirbat al-Batrawi.

### Survey of the Upper Wadi az-Zarqa (north-west sector):

The sites examined were all already known, and were selected among those of sure or possible Bronze Age occupation within a radius of 25 km from Khirbat al-Batrawi (major EB I sites on the right bank of the river and north of the junction with Wadi adh-Dhulayl, like Jabal al Mutawwaq and Marajim, have been omitted).

Khirbat ar-Rusayfa (JADIS nr. 2415.076) – the site, in spite of a drastic cut which reduced its dimensions to almost one fifth of its original extension (probably up to 10 ha.), has already been thoroughly excavated by Romil Ghayib (Nigro ed. 2006: 5, note 4). It had substantial occupations in the Early Bronze Age II-III and Middle Bronze III: a 2 m thick wall is deemed by the excavator to be a fortification line of the Early Bronze (EB III according to our survey); while a MB III/LB IA monumental building (possibly a governor’s residency), which provided a rich set of materials (big pithoi, jars, jugs and painted vessels), hints at the role of central place for this town in the Zarqa ar- Rusayfa district during the pre-classical periods. The site shows also substantial Roman and Byzantine occupations.

Tall as-Sukhna South (JADIS nr. 2517.002) – the



Fig. 3 : Particular of the eastern jamb of the restored EB II city-gate with the cracks of the earthquake which brought to the end the EB II city.



Fig. 4 : View of the Upper Wadi az-Zarqa Valley from the top of the site of Tall al-Bira.





site has a major MB II-III occupation (around 1 ha.) followed by an Iron Age I-III one and a Roman-Byzantine small farm along the eastern bank of the river.

Tall as-Sukhna North (JADIS nr. 2517.027) – the site lies on the east bank of the river around 1 km from the join with Wadi adh-Dhulayl. It was already surveyed in the 1990s (Chesson et al. 1995; Palumbo et al. 1996: 385-386, 401-403, tab. 6; Palumbo et al. 1997: 14; Nigro ed. 2006: 4, note 2). The new visit to the site produced a complete plan of it for the Rome “La Sapienza” Expedition to Jordan - Upper Wadi az-Zarqa – GIS, and collected some C14 samples from a burnt EB IIIA house visible in a section on the southern cut of the north-east sector of the site.

al-Bira (JADIS nr. 2417.021) – One of the main sites visited along the western bank of the river was al-Bira (Nigro ed. 2006: 4, note 2), arising upon a basalt spur overlooking a turn of the river (Fig. 4). The site was occupied in later periods, mainly Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Umayyad and Mamluk (Iron Age II-III is also possibly present), hosting a fortress in the Roman and Byzantine periods. EB II pottery sherds hint at the presence of a rural village underneath later more massive occupations and fortifications, possibly integrated in the Khirbet al-Batrawi territorial system as like as Tall as-Sukhna North.

Masarra (JADIS nr. 2317.021) – this Roman and Byzantine site, also excavated by Romil Ghraiyyb, has provided some sparse EB remains, which suggest that it supplied, with its olive trees, oaks and pines, one of the basic resources (olive oil and wood) for the major urban sites of ar-Rusayifa and Khirbat al-Batrawi.

at-Tall (JADIS nr. 2317.032) – the site occupies a panoramic hill in an impregnable location and shows a EB I occupation (cup-marks and a rock-cut circular cistern), followed by scanty remains of an EB II settlement, almost completely destroyed by a Byzantine tower and its annexed devices. Scattered MB, LB and Iron Ages fragments are also present.

Al-Qihati/Khaldiya (JADIS nr. 2717.006) – the site is on top of a major hill dominating the easternmost branches of Wadi adh-Dhulayl overlooking the tracks through the desert towards Azraq and Qasr al Hallabat. Sparse EB materials hint at the presence of an outpost, while the major spur is occupied by a square Byzantine fort.

### Conclusions:

The third season of excavations at Khirbat al-Batrawi was devoted to the protection and the consolidation of the major monument at the site, its magnificent city-wall and the gate with an inner staircase, dating back from the Early Bronze II-III (2900-2300 BC). In the meantime, Rome “La Sapienza” Expedition carried out a survey of the area specially focused on Early Bronze Age remains in order to settle the site in its regional and historical context.

### References:

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