



Fig. 37. Blocked gateway L.860 and related features at Khirbet al-Batrawy

Archaeological investigations and restorations undertaken by the Rome La Sapienza University Expedition to Jordan at the site of Khirbet al-Batrawy, a rocky hill dominating the ford through Wadi az-Zarqa, continued in 2016 and 2017.

## **KHIRBET AL-BATRAWY**

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The site was discovered in 2004 in the northern periphery of the city of Zarqa, and was systematically excavated and restored under the aegis of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. Thirteen seasons (2005–2017) revealed an Early Bronze II–III (ca. 3000–2300 B.C.) major fortified center, characterized by impressive city defenses, domestic quarters, a temple and a palace, followed by an extensive Early Bronze IVB (ca. 2300–2000 B.C.) rural village.

The 12th and 13th seasons (2016–2017) of excavations and restorations at Khirbet al-Batrawy were devoted to the exploration of the northern fortifications, displaced on four roughly parallel lines on the slope of the khirbat (Nigro 2012) and investigated in Areas B North and B South (Fig. 36). Batrawy's multiple city-walls represent a unique summary of the city's history, from its foundation at the eve of the 3rd millennium B.C. (EB II), to its first destruction due to a tremendous earthquake towards 2700 B.C., the following reconstruction (EB IIIA), then another destruction and final fire which destroyed the city around 2300 B.C. (EB IIIB). After an occupational hiatus, in the last two centuries of the 3rd millennium B.C. (EB IVB) a small rural village occupied the ruins of what was once a flourishing city.

In seasons 2016 and 2017, archaeological activities were focused on the investigation of the northwestern stretch of the Main Inner City-Wall (MIW), where the huge Northern Bastion (T.830) spanned it for more than 20 m. Inside the bastion, a blocked gateway (L.860) was identified in 2016, originally opened through the MIW, some 26 m west of Gate L.160 (Fig. 37). The eastern and

western jambs of Gate L.860 were buttressed by squared limestone blocks laid as headers and stretchers in the MIW. The gateway width (3 m) made it impossible to roof the passageway with a sole capstone, and this suggests that a wooden ceiling or a mudbrick vault was used. When the gate went out of use, apparently after the earthquake which hit the city towards the end of EB II, it was carefully closed by a massive wall (W.867), like Gate L.160, possibly to strengthen the MIW. A street, running inside the city-wall, was excavated in the 2017 season for a length of 14 m from the "Palace of the Copper Axes" westwards up to the area of Gate L.860.

The 13th season (2017) has revealed that a limited but substantial occupation in the Late Iron Age was also present on the westernmost spur of the site. A massive building, very badly preserved due to pillaging of blocks and erosion, was uncovered. This was possibly a tower or a keep, cutting through the MIW and Bastion T.830 at the western edge of the excavation area.

In the light of the results of 2016 and 2017, five major occupational periods have been distinguished on the basis of stratigraphy and associated architecture and finds, especially pottery seriation, as well as thanks to radiocarbon and physicochemical analyses on pottery and organic materials. Batrawy periods I–IV correspond to the major occupational phases of the Early Bronze Age (EBI–EBIV), while, a very limited occupation is represented by Batrawy period V with the keep in use in the Late Iron Age (586–333 B.C.). The chronological timeline, the monumental architecture and its extraordinary state of preservation, and the almost unique finds from the "Palace of the Copper Axes", make Batrawy an important reference site for the rise of urbanism in the Early Bronze Age of the southern Levant.

#### **REFERENCE:**

Nigro, L., 2012. *Khirbet al-Batrawy III. The EB II–III triple fortification line and the EB IIIB quarter inside the city. Preliminary report of the fourth (2008) and fifth (2009) seasons of excavations.* ROSAPAT 8. Rome (La Sapienza).