



Fig. 57. Overhead composite image of Tawahin as-Sukkar (composite image by Q. Dasuqi)

## GHAWR AS-SAFI

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A main focus of the 2016 and 2017 seasons at Ghawr as-Sāfi was revealing more of the functioning of the sugar factory, the Masna' as-Sukkar (formerly called Tawāhīn as-Sukkar) on the northern and eastern sides. Excavations were made in a new trench (XXII) measuring 11 x 27 m encompassing a large northeastern part of the sugar factory (refining areas) as well as walls from the early 20th century Ottoman fort. The few finds recovered in these upper layers were primarily datable inscribed cartridge shells from the 1918 skirmishes between the Ottoman army and the Arab Revolt forces.

An arched bridge from the pressing chambers carried sugar juices in covered plastered channels with lead piping leading to Trench XXII where boiling and curing took place. Here, a series of collapsed arches were found with four sets of arch springers forming part of an arcade which were matched by another set of north-south running arches (Fig. 57). Much of this area had remnants of plastered flooring and in places what look like plastered benches, perhaps for placing sugar pots or vessels related to the sugar refining process. Many sugar and molasses pots were recovered during excavations of the area. Several fragments of copper vessels, probably from disused cauldrons were also found. Otherwise, few other finds were discovered. In a corner of a room was a disarticulated female burial with beads and a multi-colored glass bangle dating to the 15th

century A.D. This was similar to burials found in other parts of the sugar factory and gives it a terminus post quem. Further east, two fired brick-lined circular concave structures with their tops measuring 1.4 m and 1.1 m diameter respectively, and approximately 1.5 m deep were found, and these were evidently where the copper cauldrons (*dusut*) were placed to boil the pressed sugar juice. Immediately east of these were the stoke rooms, and east of these were dense dumps of ash marking the outer limit of the sugar processing area.

The main objective of Trenches X and XI at neighboring Khirbat ash-Shaykh 'Īsā was to try and locate the pottery kiln, for which there is ample evidence in the forms of pottery wasters and many kiln wall fragments.

Trench IX was excavated from Ayyubid-Mamluk and Abbasid levels down to the remnants of the mosaic floor of the church of Byzantine Zoara. Unfortunately, the pavement was not in very good condition as much had been disturbed during the Abbasid-period occupation. A door opening was revealed and some geometric patterns on mosaic, though the dedicatory inscription was damaged. Stabilization and conservation were carried out following excavations which unexpectedly revealed a cruciform baptistery in Trench VIII (Fig. 58).

Following previous surveys at Umm Tawabin, archaeological excavations were conducted for the first time in 2017. This large fortified hilltop site is strategically positioned above Ghawr as-Sāfi. At least four interior buildings (Forts A–D) and over one hundred stone circles and other associated features all enclosed by a ca. 2.5 km long wall were identified. Five trenches were made which confirmed a ca. 1st century B.C. to 1st century A.D. date for the hilltop citadel, though the stones circles and casemate walls below were more elusive.



Fig. 58. Plan of Byzantine-period Khirbat ash-Shaykh Issa