



Fig. 1. General view of the northern multiple fortifications of area B north at the end of the 14th season (2018) of excavations and restorations, seen from the northeast.

The 14th (2018) and 15th (2019) seasons of excavations and restorations at the Early Bronze Age site of Khirbet al-Batrawy (north-central Jordan) were devoted to the exploration of the impressive fortification system on the northern slope of the site (area B north) and a re-appraisal of excavations in the “Palace of the Copper Axes” (area B south), revealing the continuation of the palace towards west with a monumental entrance hall.

The northern fortifications were placed as four roughly parallel lines on the slope of the *khirbat* in order to protect this spur of the site, which overlooked the underlying valley and the path approaching the city. Fifteen seasons of systematic investigations brought to light a complex system with juxtaposed walls progressively built on terraces, bridging an overall width of 16 m. The multiple city walls summarize the history of the EBA city. The top and earliest structure was the EB II (3000–2800 BC) main inner city wall (MIW), with the main gate (L.860) and a postern 25 m

Khirbet al-Batrawy

Lorenzo Nigro
Sapienza University of Rome
lorenzo.nigro@uniroma1.it



to the east (L.160). When this massive structure collapsed due to a strong earthquake, the whole fortification system had to be re-planned and reconstructed in EB IIIA (2800–2500 BC). The MIW was reconstructed by raising its stone basement, inserting wooden chains, and rebuilding the mud-brick superstructure, while two battering walls (outer wall W.155 and scarp wall W.165) and northern bastion T.830 were added to strengthen the defensive system. The two gates were blocked, and another entrance was opened to the east. Just during the 15th season of excavations, a 1.6 m wide gate (L.1550) was identified in the northern battering face of the outer wall in its easternmost stretch, where the outer wall joins with the MIW leaning on its outer face. Finally, in the EB IIIB (2500–2300 BC), the fourth and last fortification line was added to the bottom of the system, including transversal wall W.177 and exterior wall W.827, which progressively turned up southwards to end against the abutting face of the outer wall (Fig. 1).

Excavations in area B south revealed the continuation of the palace toward the west, underneath the remains of the two occupational phases of the EB IVB village. A monumental entrance hall (L.1100) divided two symmetrical wings. The eastern wing has been almost fully excavated and was previously subdivided into an eastern and a western pavilion. Entrance hall L.1100 had a roughly square plan (7.20 x 8.20 m) with four limestone pillar bases set into it, each one in front of a door connecting the entrance hall with the other spaces of the palace (Fig. 2). The northernmost hall of the western wing (L.1340) was excavated in the 2019 season. Even though it was rather damaged by the earliest EB IVB structures, the plan of the hall is quite clear, with a rectangular layout and two pillar bases on the main east–west axis. As in the other portions of the palace, remarkable finds have been brought to light from the destruction layers. In entrance hall L.1100, an Egyptian green schist palette (KB.18.B.30), an unfinished amazonite gemstone (KB.18.B.50), and a bead (KB.18.B.63) of fluorapatite were found. In hall L.1340, a set of at least 50 complete vessels, still neatly aligned along the eastern wall of the room, was found.

The monumental architecture of the fortification system and the discovery of luxury and symbolic goods from long-distance trade in the palace testify to the central role of Batrawy in the general framework of the Early Bronze Age southern Levantine urbanization.

Reference

Nigro, L. 2016. “Khirbat al-Batrawi 2010–2013: The City Defenses and the Palace of Copper Axes.” In *Studies on the History and Archaeology of Jordan XII: Transparent Borders*, 135–154. Amman: Department of Antiquities.



Fig. 2. General view of the west wing and entrance hall L.1100 of the “Palace of the Copper Axes” at the end of the 15th (2019) season of excavations and restorations, from the northwest; in the boxes, the Egyptian palette, the amazonite gemstone, and a bead from the entrance hall.