

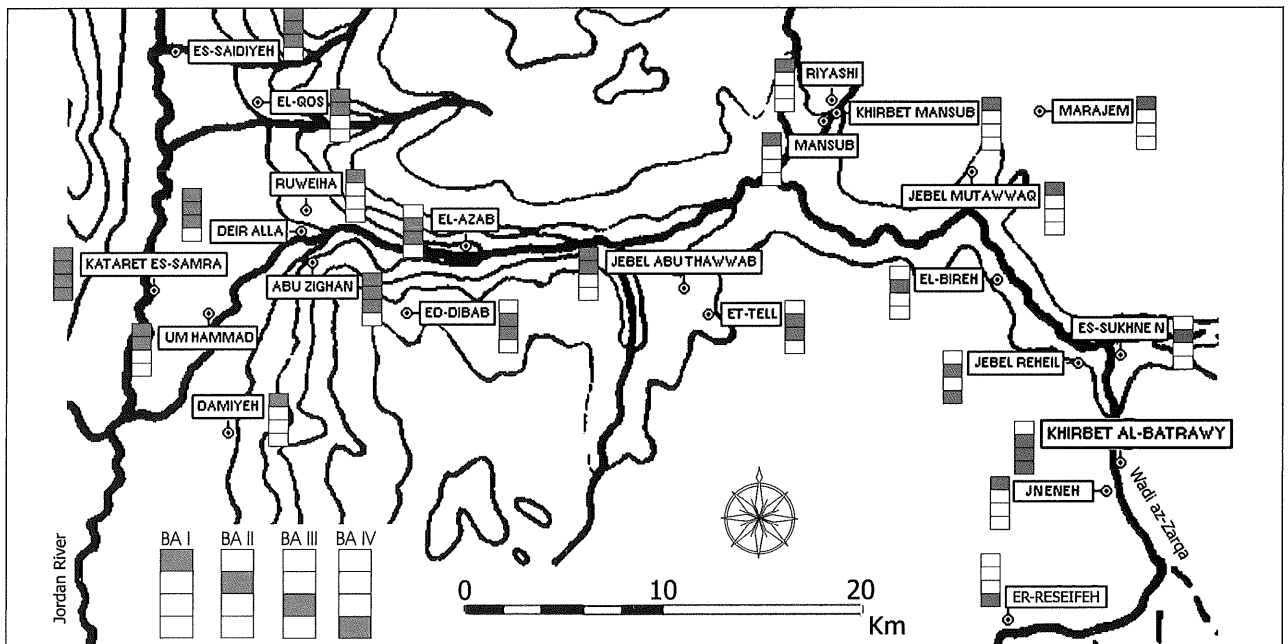
PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE FIRST SEASON OF EXCAVATIONS BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ROME "LA SAPIENZA" AT KHIRBAT AL-BATRĀWĪ (UPPER WĀDĪ AZ-ZARQĀ')

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Introduction

The expedition carried by the University of Rome "La Sapienza" in Jordan¹ resumed its archaeological activities in the Upper Wādī az-Zarqā' after a five-year hiatus² with a system-

atic excavation conducted under the auspices of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan at the Early Bronze Age site of Khirbat al-Batrāwī, in the northern district of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Fig. 1)³. Excavation expenses were



1. The main EBA sites in the Wādī az-Zarqā' Basin and the middle Jordan Valley.

1. The Rome "La Sapienza" team during the first season included: L. Nigro, Director; A. Berti, Architect; A. Polcaro, Area B Supervisor; M. Sala, Area A Supervisor; G. Marinelli, Area B; M. D'Andrea, E. Gallo, D. Montanari, V. Tumolo. The representative of the Department of Antiquities, who gave invaluable support to the expedition, was Inspector Romel Ghayib.
2. The University of Rome "La Sapienza" worked in Jordan from 1987 to 1999 on a series of archaeological surveys and soundings focused on Wādī al-Yābis, Wādī az-Zarqā' and Wādī aḍ-Ḍulayl under the scientific coordination of P. Matthiae, and the field direction of G. Palumbo, which identified more than 300 previously unknown sites with a chronological span ranging from prehistory to the Islamic period. A major aim of the expedition in the 1990s was the safeguarding of archaeological heritage, which was epitomized in the catalogue of archaeological sites of Jordan called

JADIS (Jordan Archaeological Databank & Information System: Palumbo ed. 1994), which remains a fundamental tool in the management and protection of the country's archaeological heritage. On the Wādī al-Yābis survey see: Palumbo and Mabry 1988; Palumbo *et al.* 1990, 1993; on the Wādī az-Zarqā' and Wādī aḍ-Ḍulayl surveys see: Palumbo *et al.* 1996, 1997; Caneva *et al.* 2001.

3. The expedition wishes to express deep thanks to Dr. Fawwaz al-Khraysheh, Director General of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, for his support, as well as to the Academic Authorities of the University of Rome "La Sapienza", the Vice Rector Prof. Paolo Matthiae, the Dean of the Faculty of Humanistic Sciences Prof. Roberto Antonelli, the Director of the Department of Historical, Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences of Antiquity Prof. Clementina Panella, who strongly sustained the expedition.

covered the University of Rome “La Sapienza”, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Italian Ministry of Education – University and Scientific Research⁴, with the cooperation of the Queen Rania Institute of Tourism and Heritage of the Hashemite University of Zarqa⁵.

Renewed excavations were conceived as a deepening of previous research activities in the Wādī az-Zarqā’ basin, for which the site of Khirbat al-Batrāwī, a fortified town of the Early Bronze Age with almost no successive superimpositions or interventions, was chosen as the key site of the upper valley for the study of the origins, development and trends of early urbanisation in this region of Jordan⁶.

The first season of excavations took place in May-June 2005 and was aimed at investigating the main topographical and chronological features of the site. The survey carried out in the 1990s by the University of Rome “La Sapienza” in Wādī az-Zarqā’ and Wādī aḍ-Ḍulayl identified a series of Early Bronze Age sites all along the valleys up to the Jordan River (Fig. 4)⁷. Computer-aided examination of satellite and aerial photos, as well as a preliminary survey of the site in December 2004, led to the identification of Khirbat al-Batrāwī as a fortified town of the Early Bronze Age, lying almost completely untouched on the top of a cliff dominating the Upper Wādī az-Zarqā’. The presence of a massive fortification system all around the site as well as its prominent location and the fact that the whole hill was densely inhabited in the Early Bronze Age, with nearly negligible overlaps and recent interventions (such as shepherd en-

closures and some modern pits), make Khirbat al-Batrāwī one of the more promising sites of the region for the study of Early Bronze Age urbanisation in Jordan.

The site was also chosen because it was deemed to yield high archaeological potential, due to the monumentality of its defensive structures and its location in the north-western periphery of the city of az-Zarqā’. As it lies within a modern urban area but on an isolated hill, this made feasible its valorisation with the creation of an archaeological park⁸.

Aims and Methodology

The excavation at Khirbat al-Batrāwī was planned as a holistic project, aimed at both uncovering archaeological features and enhancing tourism through the restoration of the most prominent monument at the site as well as rehabilitation of the khirbat area, which offers a wide panorama of the modern city of az-Zarqā’ and the Zarqā’ River valley.

The scientific aims of the project are:

- Study of the process of formation, flourishing and collapse of a major urban centre at the time of early Jordanian urbanisation during the 3rd millennium BC, situating it in the general framework of the dawn of ancient Near Eastern urban civilization; archaeological periodisation of the site and reconstruction of its occupational history;
- Study of the topographical, spatial and architectural organization of the town with respect to the social structure of the inhabiting community;

4. The author would also like to thank the Italian Embassy in Amman, in the persons of H.E. Gianfranco Giorgolo, Ambassador of Italy, and Dr. Marco Canaparo for their cooperation, and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs – General Directorate for Cultural Promotion and Cooperation, Office V.

5. Students and scholars of Queen Rania Institute of Tourism and Heritage of the Hashemite University participated in the dig under the direction of Dr. Khaled Douglas, with the support of the Dean of Faculty Prof. Sultan Maani. The Queen Rania Institute of Tourism and Cultural Heritage team also included Dr. Fardus Ajlouni and Dr. Bilal R. Khrisat.

6. Due to its climatic and geographic characteristics, this area is highly promising for studying the origins and diffusion of the earliest urban civilization in the Southern Levant. Indeed, it lies at the fringes of three different ecological systems: the central Transjordanian hills, crossed north-south and east-west by Wādī az-

Zarqā’; the semi-arid steppe; and the basalt desert, at the south-western edge of the great volcanic plateau. It offers a favourable context for the study of urban development, adaptive strategies of local communities, and relationships between natural resources and urban features during the pre-classical periods.

7. Khirbat al-Batrāwī was surveyed and identified as an Early Bronze Age site, but was not investigated; it was noted in *JADIS* by the place-name “Jreyyeh” (site n. 2516.011, p. 2.172).

8. The north-eastern flank of the hill of Khirbat al-Batrāwī is cut by a large abandoned limestone quarry. Much of the nearby hill to the north was in fact removed around 15 years ago by the same quarry, which has modified the landscape in the proximities of the site, but still represent a suitable area for the future development of an archaeological park. Moreover, the site itself is heavily threatened by modern building activities.

- Study of the material culture from a socio-economic perspective, exemplifying the strategies of adaptation developed for the sake of urban life, and the relationships between natural resources and socio-economic features;
- Comparison and correlation between means of production, lifestyle and subsistence resources (also on the basis of paleobotanic and zooarchaeological data);
- Examination of cultural and commercial interactions through the - Study of finds related to craft production and trade;
- Study of the ideological framework within which the social and economic structure of the al-Batrāwī urban community was embraced. The preliminary approach to the stated scientific aims and operational goals⁹ during the first season of excavation consisted of the following:
 - Archaeological survey of the site with the identification of periods of occupation and of the main topographical, archaeological and structural features (including topographic grid and mapping of the site);
 - Excavations at two selected areas of the site for the establishment of stratigraphic sequence and the investigation of a dwelling quarter (Area A) and of fortifications (Area B).

With regard to stratigraphy and documentation, the expedition adopted the following criteria.

Stratigraphic units (*loci*) were numbered in sequence; numbers 1-99 and 201-299 were attributed to Area A and 100-199 to Area B. *Loci* were preceded by capital letters, indicating in a highly schematic way the nature of the archaeological feature¹⁰. Each locus was documented horizontally by its overlay and vertically in sections, and recorded in a CAD system. Stratigraphic sequences were formed by grouping co-

herent *loci* (such as a wall and the floor linked to it) into activities, each illustrating a macro-event (e.g. for a building: foundation, utilization, destruction/collapse), and classifying activities together in order to illustrate main historical phases (such as the entire life of a building). *Loci* are usually placed in squares¹¹, while activities and phases are established for areas and ultimately linked to the site periods (see below)¹².

Stratigraphy and Preliminary Periodisation

Ceramic materials recovered from the surface of the *khirbat* appeared basically related to three periods: Early Bronze II, III and IV (Fig. 2). While EB II and III (with a remarkable prevalence of the latter period), were present everywhere on the site, EB IV pottery was mainly concentrated on the uppermost terrace, probably reflecting the last occupation of the mound. These initial observations were confirmed by systematic excavations, which involved EB III and IV occupational layers on the Acropolis and on the northern side of the *khirbat*, without yet reaching underlying deposits of the Early Bronze II.

Two stratigraphic sequences were established in Areas A and B, which have been matched with the results of the survey in order to illustrate the following preliminary archaeological periodisation of al-Batrāwī (Table 1).

The chronological definition of stratified cultural horizons (= periods) cannot, at the present moment, be corroborated by means of radiocarbon dating, and the proposed periodisation (Table 1) has been set preliminarily based on the examination of material culture remains. It will therefore be checked further in subsequent seasons¹³.

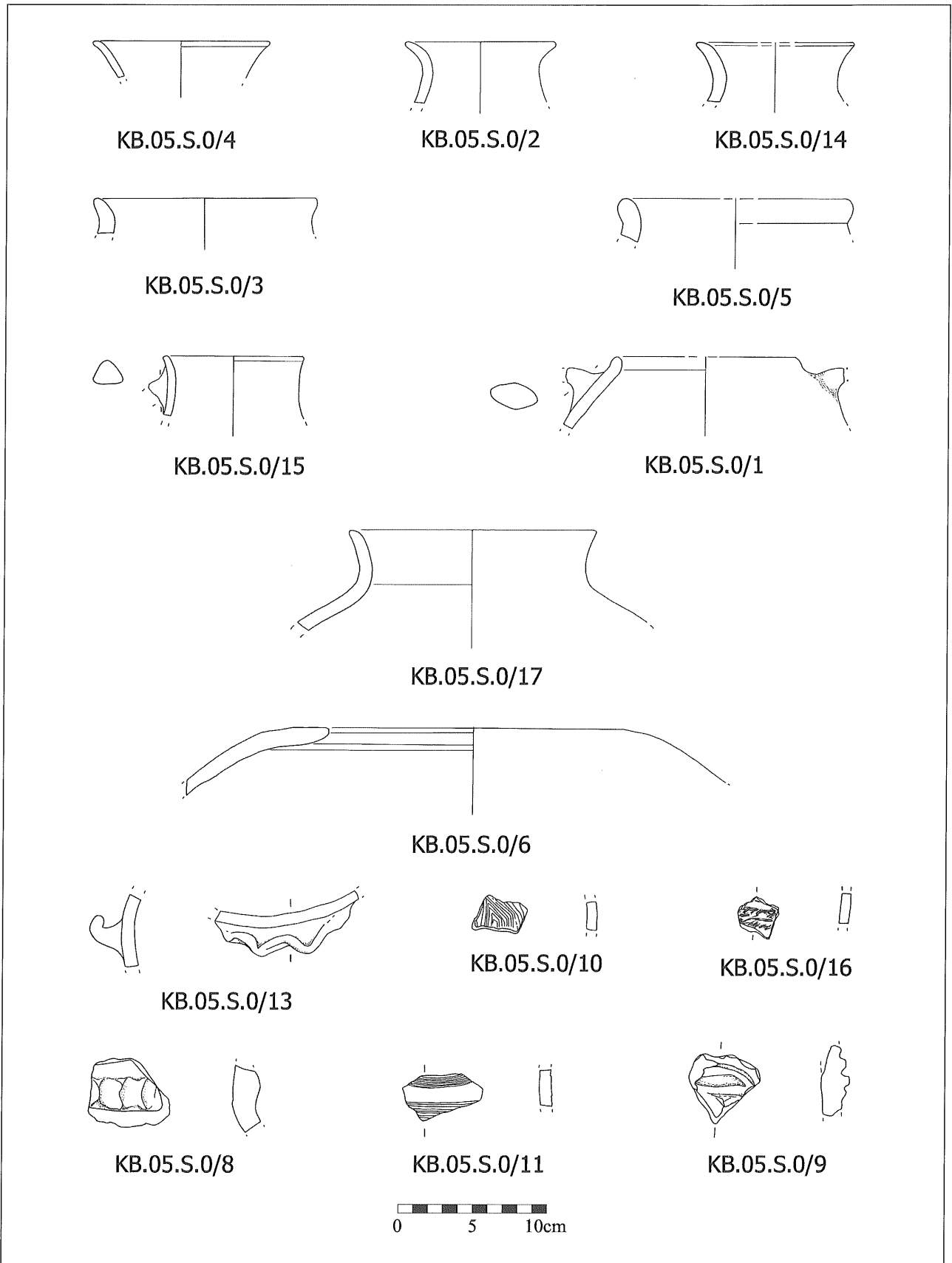
9. The scientific aims of the project were drawn from the following operational goals of the expedition: a) legal and physical delimitation of the site and inscription in the department catalogue; b) establishment of a databank for the finds and archaeological documentation produced by the expedition; c) development of a website (www.lasapienzatojordan.it) to make the expedition results available to a wide public; d) initiation of the first restoration interventions both on the site (path for easier access) and on finds, in view of the creation of an antiquarium.

10. The following letters are used to categorize *loci*: W = wall; B = bench; T = tannur; P = pit; F = filling, layer, deposit; D = deposition, burial; C = drain, cistern, well; L = floor, paving, but also the name of a room/space.

11. Note that named structures maintain the same name in different squares where physical continuity is evident.

12. Documentation and study of pottery, objects, organic samples and other archaeological materials were carried out through interactive databases which collect and correlate all information concerning finds and their archaeological context (comprising graphic, photographic and tri-dimensional documentation).

13. In particular, the duration of each suggested *Batraway* period is therefore to be considered highly tentative and conventional, also based on the chronology commonly adopted in the region (Stager 1992, Volume I, 28-39, Volume II, fig. 16; Mazar 1992, 108-109, tab. 3; Philip 2001, 168-169).



2. Sporadic pottery sherds from the surface of the khirbat.

Table 1: Preliminary periodisation of occupational phases at Khirbat al-Batrāwī.

Archaeological Period	Absolute Chronology	Site Period	Area A Phases	Area B Phases
Early Bronze I ¹⁴	3400-3000 BC	Batrawy I	-	-
Early Bronze II	3000-2700/2650 BC	Batrawy II	-	-
Early Bronze IIIA	2700/2650-2450 BC	Batrawy IIIa	-	Phase 4
Early Bronze IIIB	2450-2300 BC	Batrawy IIIb	Phase 4b-d	Phase 3b-c
Early Bronze IVA	2300-2200 BC	Batrawy IVa	Phase 4a	Phase 3a
Early Bronze IVB	2200-2000 BC	Batrawy IVb	Phase 3	Phase 2
Later periods	2000 BC-1900 AD	Batrawy V	Phase 2	-
Modern frequentation	1900-2005 AD	Batrawy VI	Phase 1	Phase 1

Early Bronze Age III (Batrawy III) structures and materials were recovered in Area B, where a 20m stretch of the fortification wall was brought to light (see § 6), and from certain points on the Acropolis (Area A) underneath the final EB IV occupation. The Early Bronze Age IV (Batrawy IV) settlement has been investigated mainly on the summit (Area A), where houses and domestic installations were uncovered, and has also been identified to some extent in the area of the northern city wall (Area B) as well as in certain other places¹⁵. Nonetheless, the interest of Khirbat al-Batrāwī lies mainly in the fact that the site was exclusively occupied during the Early

Bronze Age for a chronological span ranging approximately from the beginning to the end of the 3rd millennium BC.

Survey and Topography of the Site

The site of Khirbat al-Batrāwī (Lat. 32°05' N, Long. 36°04' E) measures four hectares and has a roughly triangular shape, with its base along the western side where it overlooks Wādī az-Zarqā'. Khirbat al-Batrāwī lies on the top of a rocky hill¹⁶ at an average elevation of 660 a.s.l.¹⁷, from which it dominated a large part of the Upper Wādī az-Zarqā' (Fig. 3). A series of Bronze Age sites were, in fact, identified in the



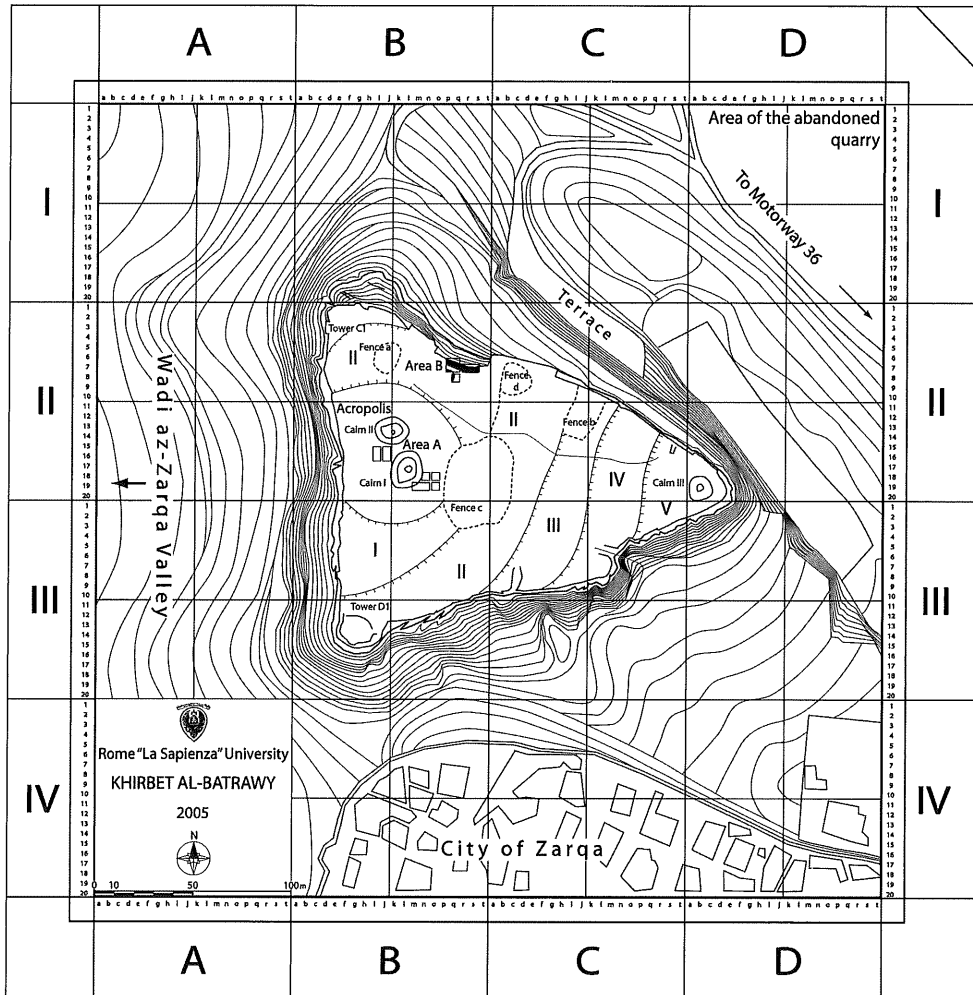
3. General view of the site of Khirbat al-Batrāwī from north. To be noted the characteristic triangular shape of the khirbat, isolated and protected on the top of the natural rocky hill.

14. Neither structures nor materials of this period were found on the site, though possible occupation of the Khirbat during the Early Bronze I must be tested.
 15. This is perhaps the case of jar-burial D.200, sunk into the ruins of the south-western tower.

16. Khirbat al-Batrāwī is the southernmost of a series of rocky hills bordering to the east Wādī az-Zarqā', beginning at the point where the wādī crosses more sharply the mountains of the Jordan highlands.
 17. The highest point of the site is 676 a.s.l.

valley (Fig. 4)¹⁸, which was one of the main ancient routes connecting the Jordan Valley to the desert; this indicates that this district offered a favourable geo-economic environment for the development of an early town.

The topography of Khirbat al-Batrāwī was mapped and the ancient fortification wall emerging at its edges was detected and documented all around the rocky hill (Fig. 5). A topographic grid based on 5x5m squares was established¹⁹,

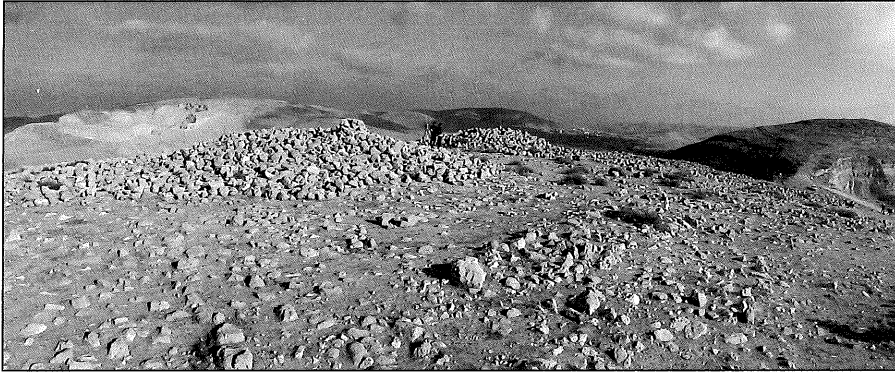


4. Topographical plan of Khirbat al-Batrāwī at the end of the 2005 season of excavations.

18. Wādī az-Zarqā' is a permanent water course that, with its 96km of length, represents the second tributary of the Jordan river, after Wādī Yarmouk, and constitutes the natural border of the central Jordan highlands controlled by Amman (Rabbat Ammon in the Iron Age, Philadelphia in the Hellenistic and Roman times). The river rises near Amman and runs at first north-east for around 30km, while in the Zarqā' plain it bends north-west and crosses the mountains, connecting with Wādī ad-Ḍulayl. Correspondence to this connection, the valley was large and well irrigated, and the rural village of Tall as-Sukhna North (Palumbo ed. 1994, site nr. 2517.027; Chesson *et al.* 1995; Palumbo *et al.* 1996: 385-386, 401-403, tab. 6; Palumbo *et al.* 1997: 14) exploited this extremely favourable environment. The river proceeds 5km north-west, a stretch controlled by the centre of Tall al-Bira (Palumbo ed. 1994: site nr. 2417.021; Glueck 1939: 213-214), possibly a fortified settlement; the river then descends steeply westwards, flowing into

the Jordan south of Dayr 'Allā (the last 10km turning towards southwest), describing an overall arc of around 270°. Today the river is dry for most of the year south of the confluence with Wādī ad-Ḍulayl, but this is a recent phenomenon brought about by use of the springs in the area between the cities of Amman and Zarqā'; until a few years ago, it was possible to fish in Wādī az-Zarqā', even in summer.

19. The grid is divided into 100x100m squares, indicated by capital letters on the west-east axis (A-D) and by Roman numeral (I-IV) on the north-south; each 100x100m square is further subdivided into 400 5x5 squares, indicated by lower case letters on the west-east axis and Arabic numerals on the north-south axis. Each square takes the name of the north-east peg; this method allows for a distinct name for each square in the grid, maintaining the indication of the larger sector provided by the capital letter and the Roman numeral.



5. Cairns I and II on the top of the Acropolis of Khirbat al-Batrāwī, and general view of the eastern sector of Area A (squares BnII18 and BoII18) before the beginning of the excavations, from south-east.

and detailed documentation of some of the utmost visible architectural features of the site was made, including the towers in its north-western (Tower C1) and south-western corners (Tower D1; see below), and the emerging structures in the north-east (L.330).

The ancient town was structured on five sloping terraces from west to east, delimited by battering walls, which regularized the natural crests of the hill from the Acropolis on the summit of Terrace I, to the eastern edges of the khirbat. Nowadays, the surface of the site is entirely covered by rocks and erratic stones deriving from the collapse and destruction of Early Bronze Age buildings and, especially, fortifications, and by the remains of these terrace walls²⁰.

Terrace I occupied the central part of the western top of the site, where the Acropolis of the Early Bronze Age town was located and where two cairns (I-II) were built successively over the ruins of the latter. The second terrace has a crescentic plan and encircled Terrace I to the north, east and south, incorporating the south-western corner of the hill. Terrace III has a relatively limited average width (around 20m) and crosses the site north-south in the middle²¹. The walls separating terraces II, III and IV were clearly visible on the surface on the northern side of the site. Terrace IV is twice as wide as the previous one, and has apparently preserved archaeological remains in a fairly good state. The fifth and lowest terrace occupies the eastern corner of the hill; in the middle a large building was recognized on

the surface, with at least three walls delimiting a courtyard with a major installation in its south-eastern corner; a third cairn (III) was erected at the eastern end of the same terrace.

Fortifications and the Entrances to the Town

The defensive system of the town of al-Batrāwī was built all around the rocky hill by exploiting any cliff and spur. The main fortification work was a solid stone wall from which bastions and towers projected at irregular intervals, depending on the natural conformation of the edge of the khirbat. Due to the triangular shape of the mound, the main pinpoints of the defence were, of course, the corners, where huge tower-fortresses were located. The line of fortifications is illustrated clockwise starting from the north-western corner.

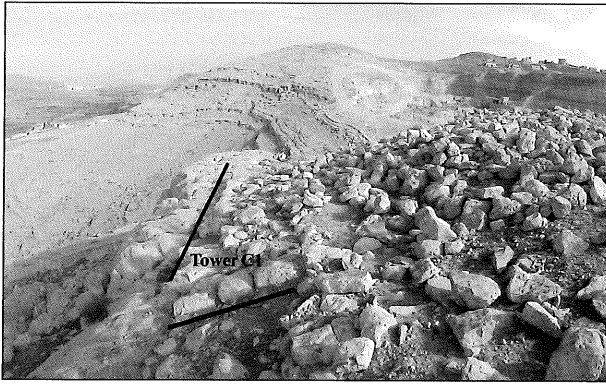
The north-western corner (Area C) hosted a rectangular tower (Tower C1; **Fig. 6**) with two protruding bastions, one abutting towards the west (W.301)²² and the other towards north (W.303), built directly on a rock terrace with large unworked limestone blocks. Further to the east, a major wall (W.305) projected north-west from the line of fortifications up to the very edge of the spur (**Fig. 7**), possibly in order to protect an entrance to the city, not far from the saddle, which represented the easiest access to the site (**Fig. 3**). An advanced line of fortification was also indicated by wall W.307, a NW-SE structure detected on the lowest step of the north-western spur towards the northern saddle.

20. Four modern stone enclosures are present on top of the hill: one to the north-west (a); a second (c), which is the largest, between Terraces I and II; a smaller third one (d) just east of Area B; and a fourth further to the east (b).

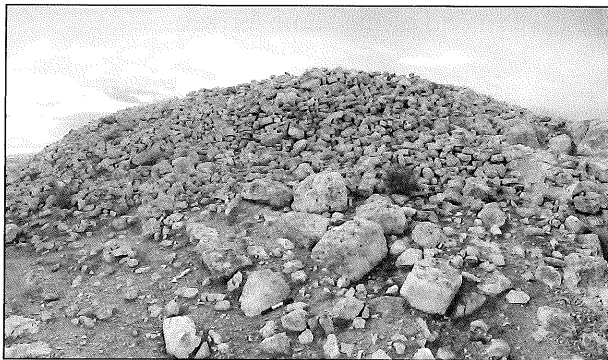
21. Some walls emerge visibly from the ground on the

ground on Terrace III, which, based on preliminary observation of their building technique may be tentatively attributed to the period Batrawy III (Early Bronze Age IIIB).

22. The western bastion offsets 1.9m and was 6.3m long on the north-south axis.



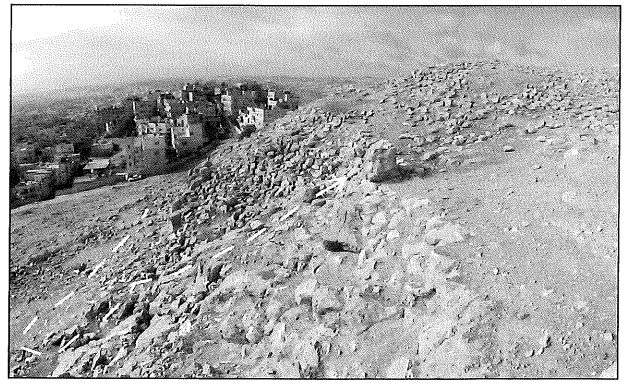
6. The stone basement of the rectangular tower erected in the north-western corner of the site (Tower C1), from south.



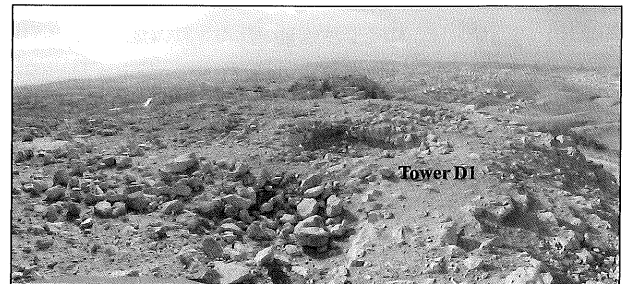
7. The advanced defensive wall W.305 nearby the north-western corner of the site, from north-west.

Roughly at the middle of the northern side, a recess in the outer face of the city wall corresponds to a shallow depression where Area B was opened (see below). Just to the east of Area B, the city wall again projects, presumably due to the presence of a huge rectangular bastion, protecting the eastern half of the northern side. In the eastern corner, the city wall followed the circular line of the spur.

Roughly 45m west of the eastern corner on the southern side, a ravine in the edge of the hill indicated the location of a gateway, of which only some large pier blocks were preserved, and which was approached through a passageway running south-west/north-east at the foot of the cliff and turning left to the north-west into the city (Fig. 8)²³. This entrance in particular was defended by the structures built over the spur to the west, which was distinctly higher than the



8. The entrance placed across the southern side of the city, from east.



9. The semicircular tower (Tower D1) erected in the south-western corner of the site, from north.

ramp of the passage itself. From that point onwards the city rose again up to the south-western corner. Here (Area D), a huge round tower (Tower D1; Fig. 9) was detected on the ground, controlling the Wādī az-Zarqā' Valley at a strategic turn, which offered a wide panoramic view²⁴.

The western side was best protected by virtue of the steep cliff and at least two projecting terraces which hosted offsets or protruding towers built with large boulders set directly over the bedrock, aimed at allowing alert lookout over the edge of the hill towards the valley. The town of Batrāwī during the Early Bronze III thus featured a highly articulated defensive system, which attests to its urban status.

Area A: Early Bronze IV village on the Acropolis

Area A was opened on the summit of the Acropolis, where alignments of stones on the surface suggested substantial occupation. Two

23. It seems reasonable that from this entrance a street climbed the side towards the Acropolis.

24. The collapsed remains of the tower were used for jar burials during the Ancient Bronze IVB, when the in-

habited area of Khirbat al-Batrāwī was reduced to the only acropolis; one of these burials, a simple burial in jar (D.200) was identified and excavated.

separate sectors were investigated to the south-east (Area A East)²⁵ and to the north-west (Area A West)²⁶ of Cairn I (Fig. 5) respectively.

Stratigraphy of Area A

Four stratigraphic phases have been provisionally distinguished in Area A. Phase 1 includes modern ephemeral frequentation of the hill (see Table 1), illustrated by various features such as shepherd fences, fireplaces and modern burials and pits²⁸. Phase 2 covers the time span from the definitive desertion of the Early Bronze Age settlement up to the Islamic and modern periods, alternating with long periods of abandonment; the two cairns were erected during this phase.

Phase 3 represents the final sedentary occupation of the khirbat in antiquity, when a rural village stood on the summit of the Acropolis and several domestic units were grouped around open areas with various devices and installations. The ruins of this village were filled with an overall stratum of collapsed stones (Activity 3a) and flimsy sandy soil resulting from prolonged abandonment. After its removal, various architectural features emerged (Activity 3c, see below).

Phase 4 groups archaeological deposits and a few substantial structures belonging to Early Bronze III buildings, to date reached only in limited points of the Area²⁹.

The Village of Period Batrawy IV (Early Bronze IV)

Two separate quarters of the Period Batrawy IV (Early Bronze Age IV) village were uncovered in Area A East and West, respectively. In Area A East (Fig. 10) a distinctive feature was wall W.23+W.5³⁰, a boundary wall which de-

limited the village to the east in squares BoII18 and BoII19 by terracing the collapsed remains of the underlying town (Figs. 11 and 12)³¹. The dwellings consisted of domestic units with main living rooms and several annexed spaces which hosted installations for food preparation and storage such as silos, working platforms, benches and other devices (Fig. 13). Distinctive features of these structures were their irregular arrangement around courtyards and lanes, the curvilinear layout of annexes in relation to the main rooms, and the use of single line walls built from irregular fieldstones patched together with mud mortar and limestone chops. In squares BmII19+BnII19 a main domestic unit (L.74b+L.76b) had the entrance opening south-west with a threshold consisting of two juxtaposed slabs (L.43); this was characterized by the presence of a raised flat stone platform to the right of the entrance (B.63). To the east, a series of circular subsidiary rooms, possibly used as storerooms and pens, were grouped between the main domestic unit (L.57) and a courtyard (L.54b+L.78b), where a circular silo (S.37) with a diameter of 86cm, made of stone slabs and dug into the underlying layers, was revealed (Fig. 14). The silo opening consisted of two vertical limestone slabs, preceded by a third flat stone embedded in the floor in order to facilitate the filling and emptying of the installation. S.37 leaned on a demarcation wall (W.3), stretching west-east up to W.23. Pottery retrieved in these units (Fig. 15) included cooking and preservation wares (hole-mouth jars), distinguished by characteristic enveloped ledge-handles, plastic rope decorations, irregular combed and band-combed decorations, as well as domestic tools (two basalt and flint blades, two spindle whorls

25. Excavations began in Area A East in squares BoII18, BnII18 e BoII19, and were successively extended in squares BnIII19+BmII19.

26. Excavations in A West included the southern half of squares BiII15 and BjIII15, and squares Bi II16 and BjII16; the east-west baulks BiII15/16 and BjII15/16 were removed at the end of the season.

27. For a more detailed presentation of the 2005 excavation results see Nigro 2006.

28. In the last quarter of the 20th century the city of az-Zarqā' expanded to encircle the site on the southern and eastern sides, while a vast limestone quarry was excavated on the hill to the north.

29. The Early Bronze Age III structures were exposed in

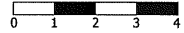
squares BoII18 and BoII19.

30. In square BoII19, the remains of another sustaining wall (W.19) were uncovered, which was shifted 1m inwards to the west and exhibited the same north-south orientation of wall W.23, though preserved mainly just in the cobble preparation for the foundation of the wall itself. This wall retained a filling (F.18) which provided Early Bronze IIIB and IV pottery materials.

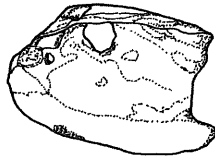
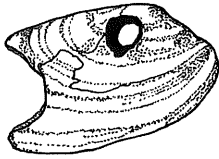
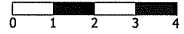
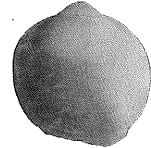
31. Inside this terrace wall there was a filling (F.26) in which Early Bronze Age III and IV pottery materials were found (see e.g. amphoriskos: KB.05.A.26/1) as well as three pierced seashells (inventory numbers: KB.05.A.29, KB.05.A.30, KB.05.A.36; Fig. 12).



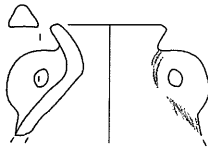
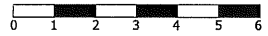
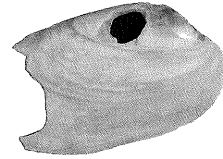
KB.05.A.29 (1:2)



KB.05.A.30 (1:2)



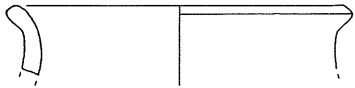
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KB.05.A.26/1



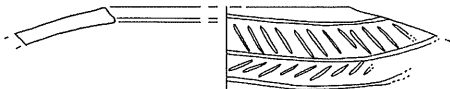
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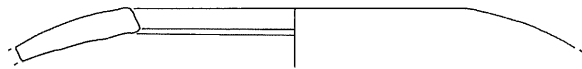
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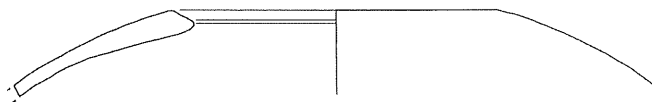
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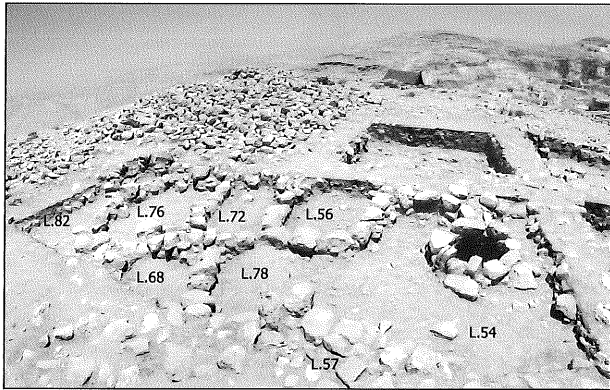
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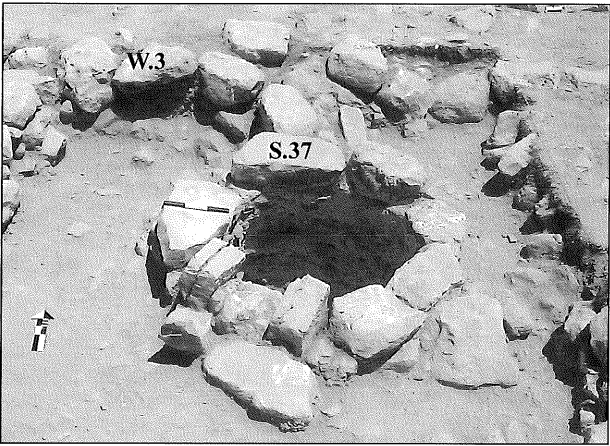
KB.05.A.26/10



12. The EB III-IV materials retrieved in filling F.26 inside the terrace wall W.23 (Phase 3d).



13. General view from south of the domestic structures and circular devices in the eastern sector of the Batrawy IV (EB IV) village on the Acropolis of Khirbat al-Batrāwī (squares BmII19+BnII19; Phase 3).



14. Silos S.37 in the courtyard L.78b+54b, from south.

into the floor (Fig. 19); the third was presumably used to host a vat or other vessel, thus suggesting a tripartite food transformation activity. The western part of L.20 was raised due to the presence of a platform (B.214) introduced by a stone-lined step, with a large big jar smashed over it³⁴. In front of the entrance to L.20, a small yard (L.30) introduced the door of another possible unit (L.50). Roughly at the middle of L.30, in front of L.226, a mortar³⁵ was embedded into the floor. Nearby in the same courtyard a basalt grinding stone and grinder were found³⁶ along with fragmentary pots and jars with combed

decoration. A third house (L.60)³⁷ was entered through a lane (L.40)³⁸ and apparently had the same orientation of L.20; the entrance was marked by a stone paved threshold (L.208). Two other rooms were identified to the west: L.70, which was delimited by a major wall (W.213) to the south and by a stone alignment (W.211) which leaned on W.81; and L.80, a curvilinear structure, flanking the rear wall of L.20.

The overall picture provided by Area A is that of a relatively small village with rectangular houses flanked by courtyards and subsidiary structures (many of which are curvilinear in plan) in use for a single constructive phase.

The investigation of lower layers (Phase 4) was carried out in very limited spots of Area A East and revealed the presence of substantial structures of Early Bronze III (Batrawy III), which will be further explored in the next season.

Area B: the Early Bronze III City Wall

Area B was opened on the shallow depression at the centre of the northern edge of the site (Fig. 5), where the gentle slope of the bedrock facilitated access to the town and where the city wall seemed preserved at a higher elevation, due to deep accumulation. One trench was excavated across the city wall in squares in BpII6+BqII6 and BpII7+BqII7³⁹; a square (BqII8) was investigated to the south inside the city wall, and another couple of squares (BrII7+BsII7) were opened to the east on the outer face of the latter (Fig. 20).

Stratigraphy of Area B

Four stratigraphic phases have been distinguished preliminarily in Area B. Phase 1 illustrates a long period of abandonment during which erosion and windblown activities accumulated a soft stratum of dust (topsoil). Phase 2 includes the foundation, use and collapse of a major Early Bronze IV structure, identified in

34. In L.20 a basalt pestle (KB.05.A.78) has been retrieved, as well as cooking and preservation wares, with plastic rope decorations and enveloped ledge-handles.

35. KB.05.A.69.

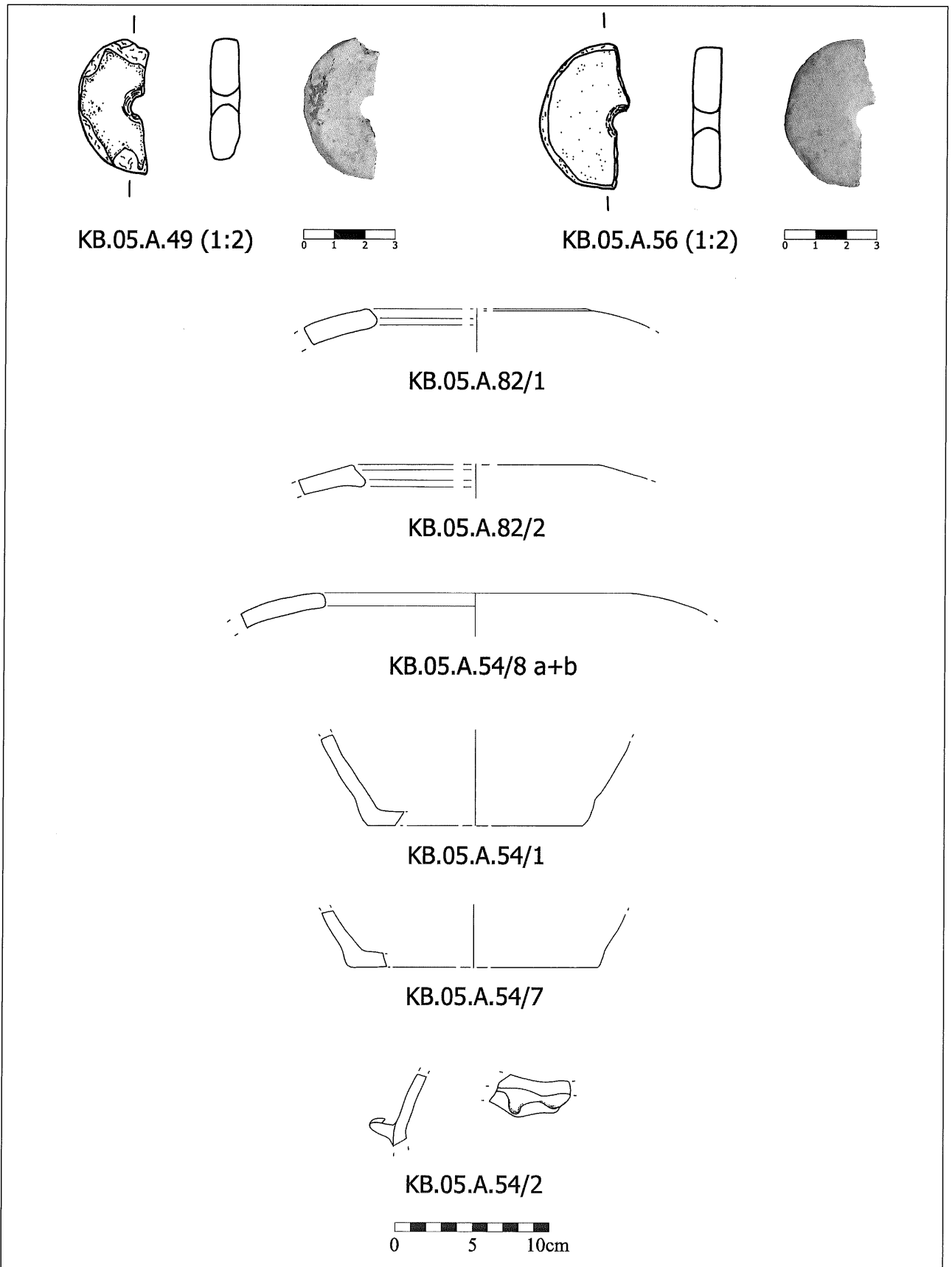
36. KB.05.A.57 and KB.05.A.63.

37. A basalt grinding stone (KB.05.A.68) was retrieved in room L.60.

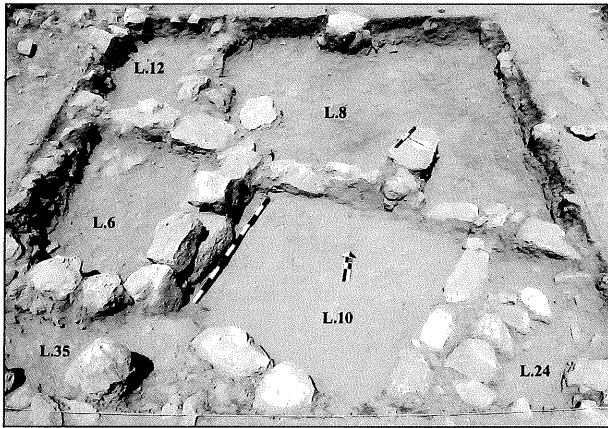
38. A stone pestle (KB.05.A.61) and two combed pottery

sherds were found in lane L.40.

39. Due to the thickness of the city wall, the areas actually excavated resulted to be the south-eastern quarter of square BpII6 and the southern half of BqII6 to the north of the wall, and the eastern half of BpII7 and square BqII7 to the south of it. The baulks in between these squares were removed at the end of the season for the sake of a better reading of the major structure.



15. EB IV materials retrieved in rooms L.54b+L.78b, L.56b, L.74b+L.76b and L.82b, squares BmII19+BnII19 (Phase 3b).



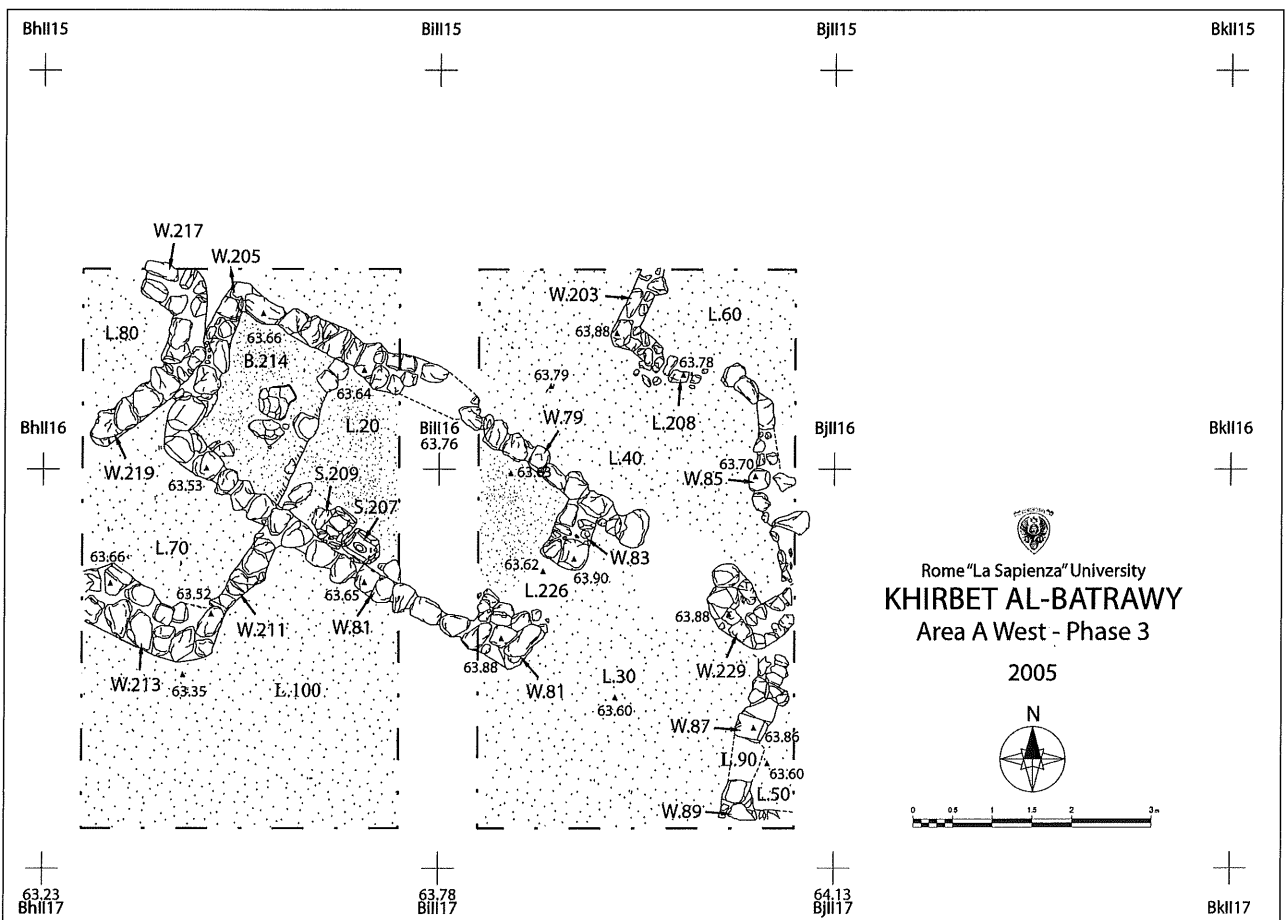
16. The small rectangular rooms of the Batrawy IV village in BqII8, from south (Phase 3).

BqII8, as well as two somewhat earlier pits dug against the inner face of the city wall in BqII7. Phase 3 corresponds to the latest reconstruction (Activity 3c) and use (Activity 3b) of the city wall before the definitive abandonment of the EB

III town (Activity 3a). Finally, Phase 4 illustrates the earliest use so far identified of the city wall (Activity 4c), as well as its demise, indicated by a violent destruction (Activity 4b) of which visible signs were detected inside the city.

Fringes of the Period Batrawy IV Village (Early Bronze IV)

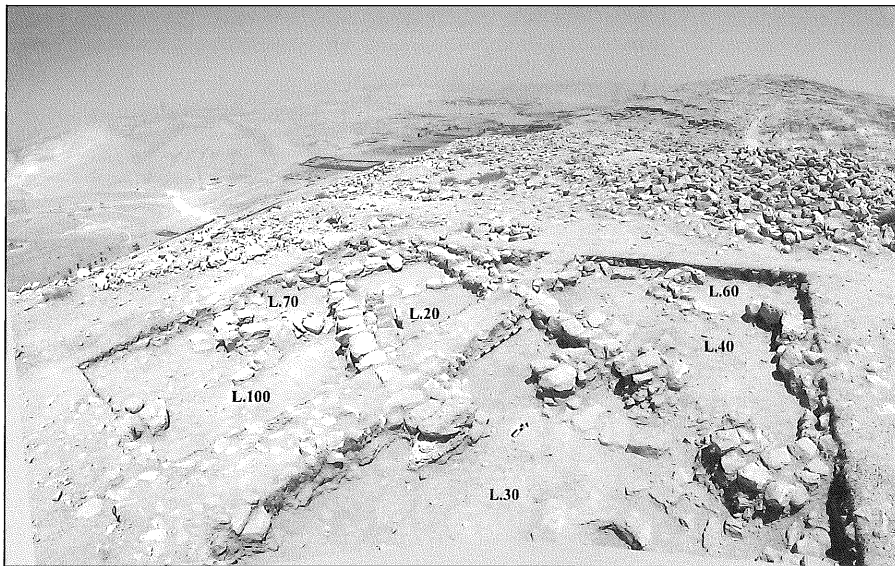
The uppermost layer of occupation in Area B was represented by the corner of a building built just inside the previous collapsed city wall in square BqII8 (Fig. 21), which showed relatively solid field-stone masonry (W.117), and a rectangular stone-paved installation (S.127) within. While inside the building, which extended towards the east, a floor of beaten earth was identified (L.122), and an open area outside to the west with only partially preserved stone-flagged pavement (L.152) had been badly ravaged by later pillage activities⁴⁰. Further to



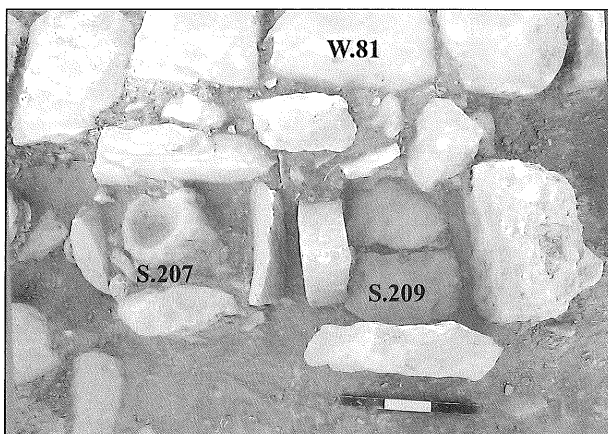
17. Plan of domestic structures of the Batrawy IV village excavated on the Acropolis of Khirbat al-Batrāwī in Area A West (Phase 3).

40. In the south-western corner of the square a curvilinear structure (W.123) may belong to a fence or subsidiary

room similar to those excavated in Area A.



18. General view from south-east of the western sector of the Batrawy IV village; at the center, house L.20 and courtyard L.30; on the right, lane L.40 and room L.60 (Phase 3).



19. The two square cist-installations S.207 and S.209, built against the southern wall W.81 of house L.20.

the north-west in square BqII7, two pits (P.129, P.130) were cut against the inner face of the collapsed city wall, probably for use as refuse pits⁴¹; one was eventually sealed with a pile of stones (F.113; **Fig. 22**).

The City Wall of Period Batrawy III (Early Bronze III)

The main feature so far identified in Area B is the massive stone-built city wall, which has been brought to light in two stretches. The city wall was WNW-ESE oriented in the westernmost stretch in BpII6+BqII6+BpII7+BqII7, and turned straight to the east in BrII7+BsII7. The wall was built with slightly battering outer

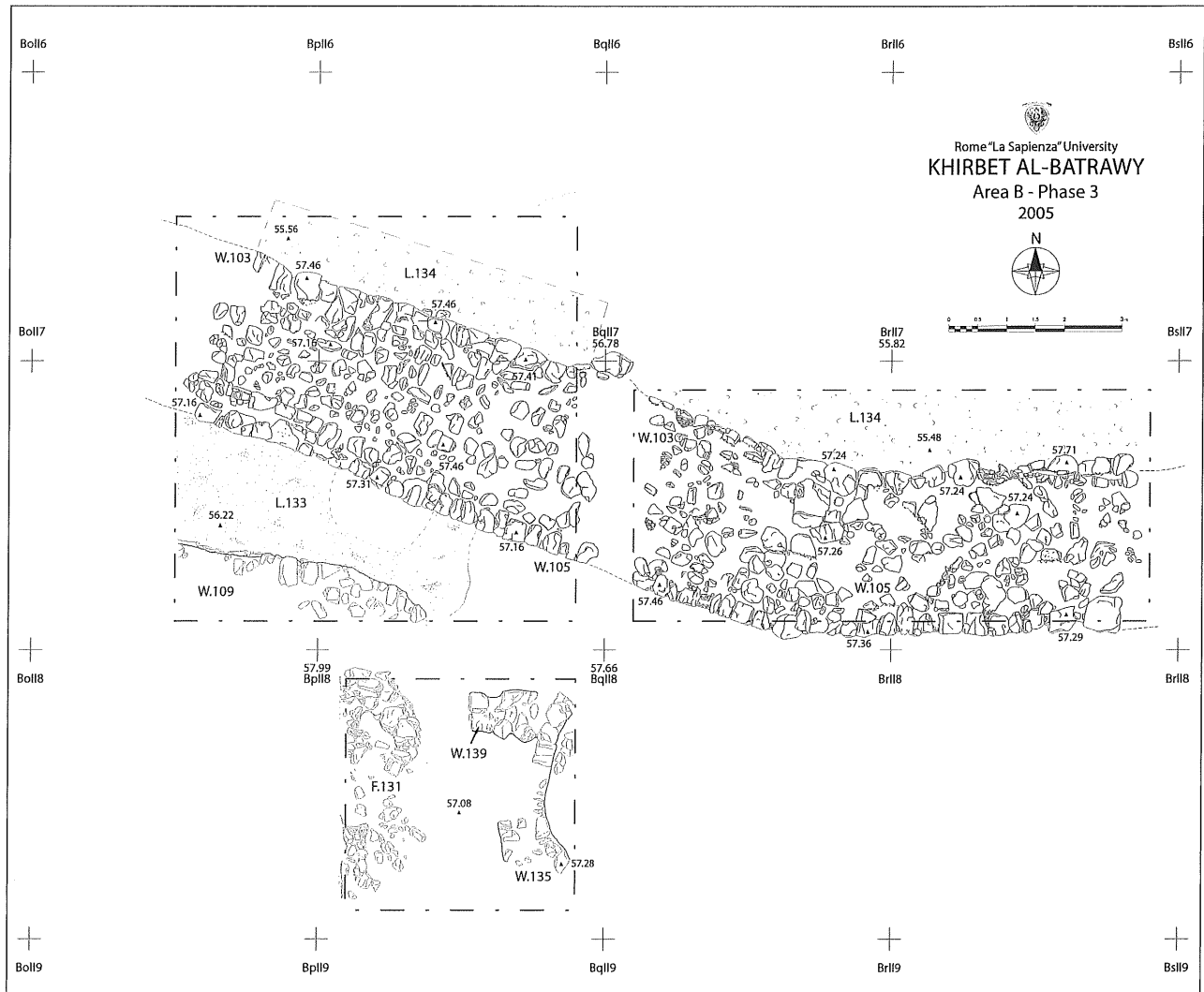
faces made of large boulders in the lower courses, and large stones in the upper ones, blocked with limestone chops and cobbles. The core of the wall was filled in with layers of middle-size stones set in mud mortar. Both on the inner and outer face of the city wall vertical partitions are visible, indicating that it consisted of juxtaposed blocks — typical of defensive architecture of Early Bronze Age Southern Levant in order to withstand earthquake effects. The width of the wall varies from 2.90 to 3.20m, and its preserved height reaches 2.0m. It shows at least one major reconstruction of the elevation, when the inner partition in separated blocks was abandoned (**Fig. 23**).

In BpII7+BqII7 another massive structure (W.109) was revealed and preliminarily interpreted as a wall parallel to the city wall, turning south (inside the city)⁴²; the corridor between the two walls was filled in with layers of compacted earth and collapsed stones (F.106, F.118) from the superstructures of both the city wall and wall W.109 (the latter collapsed northwards). Under this stratum of stones, a layer of destruction (F.124) covered an earthen floor (L.133), illustrating the later use of these structures (Phase 3; **Fig. 20**).

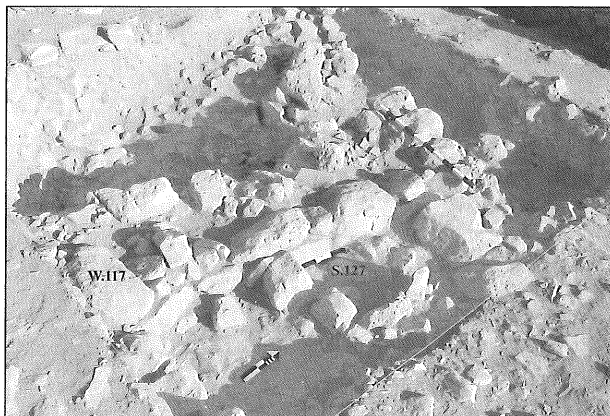
The removal of floor L.133 led to identification of a destruction layer (F.136, F.146) which was basically composed of sandy soil with ash

41. Ceramic materials from these pits resulted from the underlying earlier layers of Batrawy III; pottery sherds were highly fragmentary.

42. The collapsed prosecution of W.109 in BqII8 shows very clearly that the wall turned decisively southwards.



20. Plan of the fortifications and structures of Phase 3 (Batrawy IIIb) excavated in Area B.



21. The fringes of the Batrawy IV (EB IV) village in Area B, with building W.117 and the stone-paved installation S.127 in BqII8 (Phase 2), from south-east.

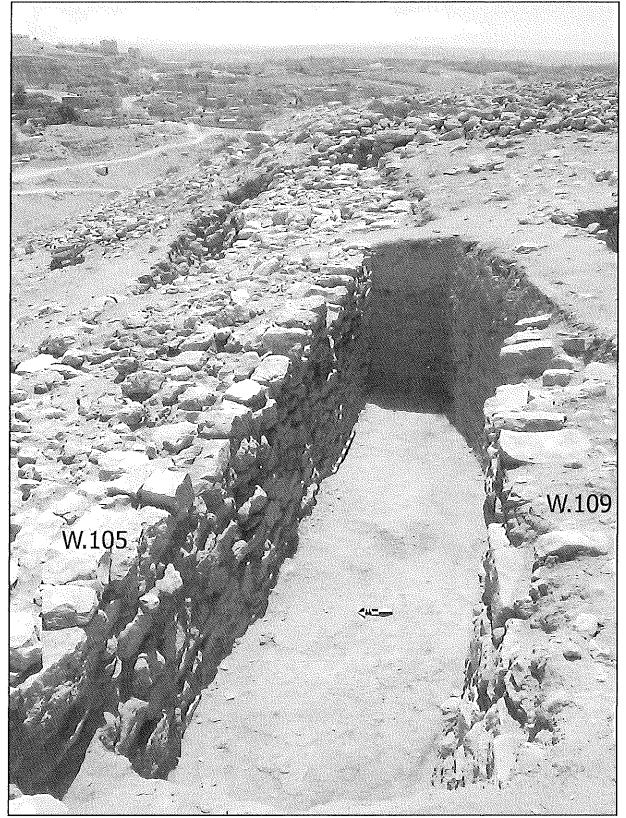
and charcoal, thus attesting to the fierce fire which brought to a violent end the life of Phase

4 city. The layer of destruction covered a fine plastered floor (L.148) which at the present state of investigations is the earliest floor brought to light inside the city (Phase 4, Fig. 24).

Archaeological deposits outside the city wall were investigated in BpII6+BqII6 (west) and in BrII7+BsII7 (east). In the former trench the heap of collapsed stones (F.111) was higher and thicker than inside the city wall, thus demonstrating that the latter collapsed northwards; the largest boulders, fallen from the outer face of the wall, were found at the bottom of the heap, while small and medium size stones were on top. A thin layer of soil (F.112) was accumulated below the stones, corroborating the observation that the city wall fell abruptly northwards; beneath F.111 and F.112 there was a floor of beaten earth (L.134) laid upon a preparation of



22. The two pits (P.129, P.130) cut against the inner face of the collapsed EB III city-wall in BqII7 (Phase 2), from east.



24. The earliest fine plastered floor (L. 148) excavated inside the EB III city-wall in BpII7+BqII7 (Phase 4), from west.



23. General view of Area B from west with the EB III fortifications and the structures of Phase 3 excavated in BqII8.

limestone chops (F.140; **Fig. 25**)⁴³, which presumably represents a major constructive phase (the last?) of Batrawy III defences. Underneath the layer of fragmentary stones there was a grey sandy filling (F.138) which covered a packed stratum of reddish clayish soil (F.142), including scattered pottery sherds. This stratum was laid upon a gritty chalk plastered floor (L.144) resting directly on the bedrock (**Fig. 26**).

In BrII7+BsII7 the same stratigraphy was encountered. The uppermost heap of collapsed

stones (F.107, F.110) covered the eastern prosecution of floor L.134, resting on the preparation of limestone chops F.140. Excavation along the outer face of the city wall revealed the lowest courses of boulders of this imposing structure founded on the bedrock and slightly abutting off in order to strengthen its outer foot.

The overall plan and elevation of the city wall in Area B exhibit a massive stone structure with an articulated layout, including changes in orientation and offsets, depending both on the orography of the khirbat and on defensive purpose, which can be compared with the fortification of a series of hilly urban centres of Southern Levant such as Khirbat az-Zayraqūn and Tall al-Ḥuṣn (Pella) in Transjordan, or Khirbat al-Makhruq, Tall ('Ayy), Tall Ta'annek, and Khirbat Yarmouk in Palestine.

Structures Inside the City Wall of Period Batrawy III (Early Bronze III)

In BqII8, Period Batrawy III was represented

43. The layer of small limestone fragments was exposed for a too restricted area to establish if they actually

represent a regularization of collapsed stones, or a real preparation for floor L.134.



25. The preparation of limestone chops F.140 of the floor of beaten earth L.134, excavated outside the city-wall W.103 in BpII6+BqII6 (Phase 3), from west.



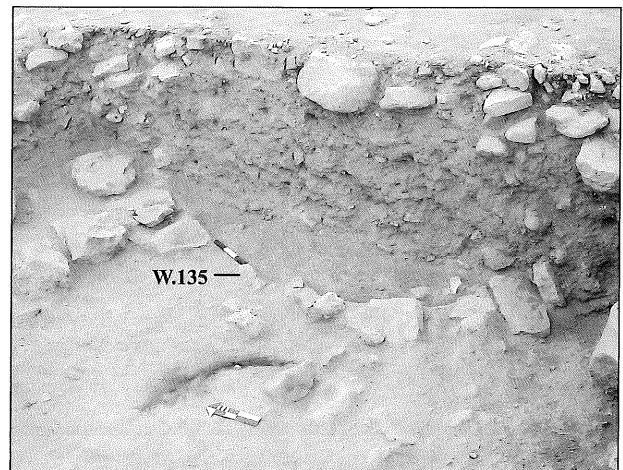
26. The chalk gritty plastered floor L.144 excavated outside the city-wall W.103 in BpII6+BqII6 (Phase 4), from north-west. To be noted the lowest courses of boulders of the city-wall founded on the bedrock and slightly projecting off.

by the southern collapsed prosecution of W.109, and by a round structure W.135 (Fig. 27) discovered in the eastern half of the square, which was characterized by an 8cm thick, well-refined plaster inside (a silo?). No floor has yet been reached in this square, and various ceramic materials were found in the filling (F.132; Fig. 28).

Conclusions

The first season of excavation at Khirbat al-Batrāwī confirmed that this site was a major Early Bronze Age centre of the Upper Wādī az-Zarqā' basin, occupied by a fortified town in the Early Bronze III and reoccupied by a village in the Early Bronze IV with almost no successive superimpositions or occupations⁴⁴.

Located on the roadway connecting the Black Desert of basalt stone (and the caravan tracks

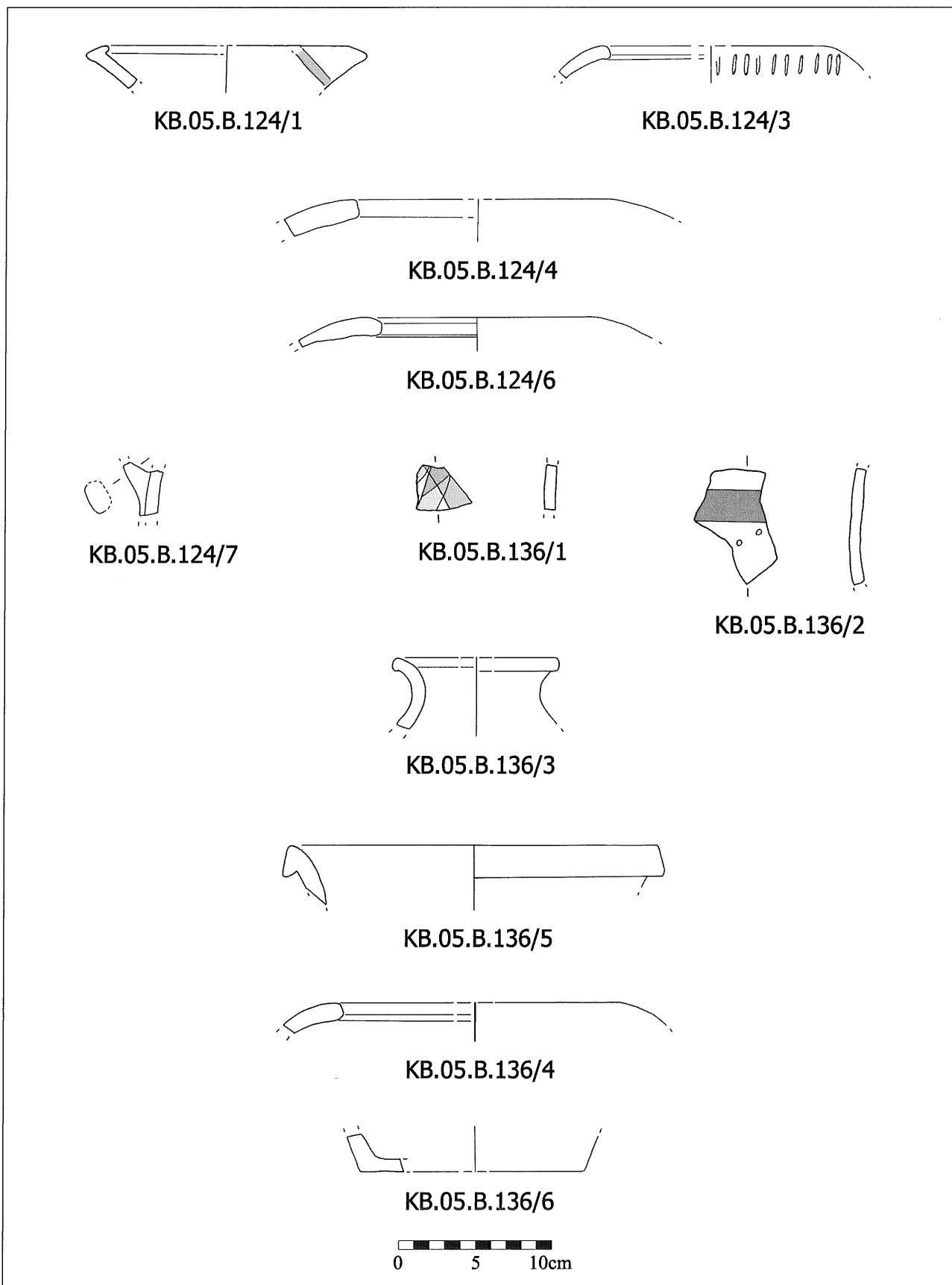


27. The semicircular structure W.135 in BqIII8 (Phase 3), from west.

crossing it north-south towards Arabia and Syria, and west-east towards Mesopotamia) of

44. It is to be noted that of all the EB II sites of the az-Zarqā' Valley (Jabal Ruhayl, Tall as-Sukhna North, Tall al-Bṭra), Khirbat al-Batrāwī is at the moment the only one which shows the presence of EB III materi-

als and structures, very rare in the surrounding area (Jabal Ruhayl, for instance, was occupied in the EB II, and then abandoned and re-occupied in the EB IV; Palumbo *et al.* 1996: 385-386, 393-401).



28. EB III ceramic materials retrieved in the filling F.132 in BqII8 (Phase 3).

north-eastern Jordan to the trails of the az-Zarqā' and Jordan Valleys, al-Batrāwī controlled a strategic junction at the time of the earliest urban development of this region, while at the same time being centrally situated with respect to the Upper Wādī az-Zarqā' basin, a fertile ecological niche at the fringes of the semi-arid steppe. The site thus seems highly promising, especially since it flourished fully during the Early Bronze III, thereby filling a certain gap in the archaeological information so far available from the region. Deeper and wider investigations are of course needed to confirm the preliminary data illustrated in the present contribution. In any case, the systematic excavations begun the University of Rome "La Sapienza" in cooperation with the Queen Rania Institute of the Hashemite University of Zarqa, under the aegis of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, will hopefully not only contribute to thorough knowledge of its history and material culture, but also offer the opportunity to rehabilitate it for tourism valorisation of the area.

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