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The Ceremonial Precinct of Canaanite Hazor

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EARLY BRONZE AGE IV FOOD TRANSFORMATION  
AND STORAGE INSTALLATIONS  
AT KHIRBET AL-BATRAWY, JORDAN

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ABSTRACT

*Recent excavations at the Early Bronze Age site of Khirbet al-Batrawy by Rome “La Sapienza” University brought to light in several spots of the site domestic units and related devices belonged to an EB IV rural village, which hosted a variety of installations for food preparation and storage. Their examination and study provide interesting insights into subsistence economy and social organization of rural communities in this period.*

EB IV dwellings at Khirbet al-Batrawy illustrated a variety of food processing and storage installations (Fig. 1) linked to the household economy of the rural village, which have been preliminary studied recognizing the following types of devices:

- stone-paved platform: this was intended as a working device, apparently where liquid or semi-liquid stuff (olive oil or wine) had to be processed; for this reason the platform usually was lined by upright small slabs. An outstanding example is represented by unit L.450 in Area B South, where the whole room was paved (Fig. 2);<sup>1</sup>
- triple installation for food processing: it usually leans on an inner wall of the house, and consists of two arrayed square cists, made of small vertical limestone slabs, one simply paved by flat stones, and the other usually containing a stone mortar (Fig. 3); a third stone or cist possibly supported a jar which either contained the food processed and pulped in the cists or water to be mixed with the smashed stuff. Remarkable examples of such an installation were found in Area A West, in House L.20 (S.207+S.209)<sup>2</sup> and House L.240 (S.249+B.251).<sup>3</sup>
- stone slab: this kind of installation usually abuts on a wall and it is flanked by a bench (sometimes refined by chalk plaster); the slab was normally used as cutting table, as the retrieval of flint blades on it testifies to. A notable example is represented by the stone slab inserted in installation

1 Nigro 2007: 353; Nigro (ed.) 2008: 168-169, Figs 4.73-4.75.

2 Nigro 2006: 238-240, Figs 17-19; Nigro (ed.) 2006: 90, Figs 3.35-3.36.

3 Nigro 2007: 348, Fig. 3; Nigro (ed.) 2008: 29-32, Fig. 2.31.

- B.374 in House L.354 in Area B South (Fig. 4);<sup>4</sup>
- angular trough: temporary storage devices are present in each dwelling unit; the commonest arrangement is in a corner of the house; troughs were lined by upright stones and adobe walls around 0.5 m high. Such installations have been found in several houses of the Batrawy IV village, such as House L.240 in Area A West with trough S.245 (Fig. 1)<sup>5</sup> and House L.530 in Area F with trough S.523;<sup>6</sup>
  - silos: seasonal storage of food was assured by underground silos, made of large vertical slabs or stones and cut into the bed-rock; the opening of the silos was small, consisting of a channel flanked by two vertical limestone slabs and preceded by a third flat stone, in order to facilitate the filling up and emptying of the installation. An outstanding instance of this kind of storage devices has been found in Area A East and it is represented by silos S.37 in courtyard L.54 (Fig. 5).<sup>7</sup>

The analysis of the above mentioned installations allows to identify the following food as usually processed in the Batrawy IV houses: beans, lentils, chick peas, olives, grapes, and meat; and it also provides interesting insights into the subsistence strategies and rural based economical organisation of the Batrawy IV village.

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4 Nigro 2007: 353; Nigro (ed.) 2008: 170-171, Figs 4.76-4.77.

5 Nigro 2007: 348, Fig. 3, Nigro (ed.) 2008: 31, Figs. 2.29-2.30, 2.32..

6 Nigro 2007: 358; Nigro (ed.) 2008: 298, Fig. 7.42.

7 Nigro 2006: 237, Figs 13-14; Nigro (ed.) 2006: 84-85, Figs 3.15, 3.17, 3.25-3.26.

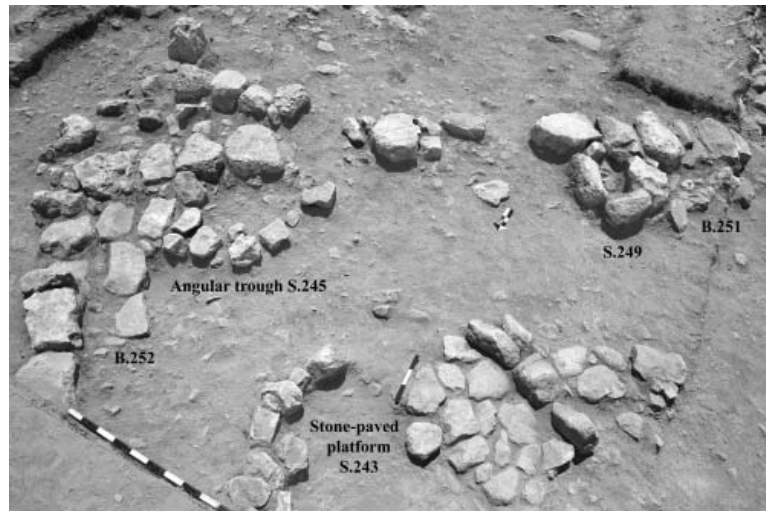


Fig. 1: General view of food processing and storage installations of a Batrawy IV domestic unit, House L.240: to the left (in the south-east-ern corner), bench B.252 and semi-circular trough S.245 with a reused mortar inside; to the right, double installation consisting of a rectangular box built of three upright stones (S.249) and a joint pebble-paved platform (B.251) abutting on the east wall of the house; in the centre, circular device S.243 paved with limestone slabs (Batrawy IVb, Early Bronze IVB, 2200-2000 BC).



Fig. 2: Area B South: stone-paved double installation in unit L.450 (Batrawy IVb, Early Bronze IVB, 2200-2000 BC).



Fig. 3: Area A West: the two square cists made of vertical limestone slabs, one hosting a mortar (S.207), the other one paved with two flat stones (S.209), abutting on the southern wall of House L.20 (Batrawy IVb, Early Bronze IVB, 2200-2000 BC).



Fig. 4: Area B South: circular plastered cist B.374 with a flanking slab probably used for butchering, with a Cananean blade on it, in House L.354, from north-east (Batrawy IVb, Early Bronze IVB, 2200-2000 BC).



Fig. 5: Area A East: silos S.37 and circular storage device L.54 in courtyard L.56 (Batrawy IVb, Early Bronze IVB, 2200-2000 BC).