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## THE EARLY BRONZE AGE II CITY-GATE AT KHIRBET AL-BATRAWY, JORDAN

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### ABSTRACT

*Recent excavations carried on by Rome "La Sapienza" University at the site of Khirbet al-Batrawy, an EB II-III fortified town in north-central Jordan, brought to light a long stretch of the fortification wall around the site and especially on the northern side in Area B North, where the earliest (Batrawy II, Early Bronze II, 2900-2700 BC) city-gate was uncovered. This gate, its structure and location, represents a perspicuous example of defensive architecture in Southern Levant during the Early Bronze Age.*

The identification of the earliest gate in the city-wall of Batrawy allowed to reconstruct a basic point of the urban layout of the Jordanian city. Khirbet al-Batrawy arose as a fortified town encircled by a continuous city-wall running all around the edge of the hill during the Early Bronze II, around 2900 BC. The fortification line was strengthened at the corners and in other strategic spots by abutting towers and bastions,<sup>1</sup> and it had only one main opening at the middle of its northern side, where a shallow saddle made easier the access to the city (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> Here, a street climbed the hill flank and approached the gate, which was a simple passage, 1.6 m wide,<sup>3</sup> as it was presumably used only by pedestrians and donkeys (onagers) of caravans entering the city (Fig. 2). There were no door sockets, since there was no wooden gate; the passage was blocked by a wall at the beginning of the Early Bronze IIIA after the earthquake destruction which caused the end of the EB II city (Figs 3-4).<sup>4</sup> Large limestone boulders supported the city-wall at its outer base, slightly protruding on the street. The door jambs were also reinforced by big stones and supported on the outer side by a monolithic capstone, apparently set in the wall at 2 m height. On the inner side of the gate, since the passage through the wall was 4 m deep, the superstructure of the walls was supported by wooden beams. The door jambs show big cracks possibly caused by the earthquake which brought to a sudden end the life of the city. A step marked the entrance to the gate on the outer side, while inside a series of beaten earth floorings illustrated the

1 Nigro 2006a: 235-236; Nigro (ed.) 2006: 25-37.

2 Nigro (ed.) 2006: 16, Fig. 1.18.

3 Nigro 2006b: 57-58, Figs 1-2; 2007: 352, Figs 10-11; Nigro (ed.) 2008: 83-88.

4 Nigro 2007: 349-350, Fig. 8; Nigro (ed.) 2008: 89-90, figs 3.38, 3.40.

uses of the gate (from around 2900 to 2700 BC). The simple layout of the gate (Fig. 2) finds several comparison in contemporary EB II defensive architecture of the region, such as at Khirbet Kerak,<sup>5</sup> 'Ai,<sup>6</sup> Arad<sup>7</sup> and, later on, also at EB III Bab edh-Dhra'.<sup>8</sup>

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2008 *Khirbet al-Batrāwī II. The EB II City-Gate, the EB II-III Fortifications, the EB II-III Temple. Preliminary Report of the Second (2006) and RThird (2007) Seasons of Excavations* (= Rome «La Sapienza» Studies on the Archaeology of Palestine & Transjordan, 6), Rome.
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- 5 The south-east gate in Wall A, possibly also blocked at the beginning of the Early Bronze III (Greenberg, Paz 2005: 84, 86-89, Figs 8, 10-14).  
6 The Citadel Gate at Site A (Callaway 1980: 63-65, Figs 38, 41); the Postern Gate (Callaway 1980: 72-73, Figs 48-49, 51) and the Lower City Gate (Callaway 1980: 114-115, Figs 74-75) at Site L.  
7 Amiran, Ilan 1996: 20-22.  
8 The EB III West Gate in Fields IV and XIII, also blocked during the Early Bronze III (Rast, Schaub 2003: 272-280).

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Fig. 1: General view from north of Area B North at the end of 2006 excavations, with the articulated EB II-III fortification system; from back to front: the EB II-III main city-wall W.103+W.163 with EB II city-gate L.160; the EB IIIA-B outer wall W.155; and the EB IIIB reinforcing scarp-wall W.165. In the right foreground, the EB IIIA round defensive outwork W.185.

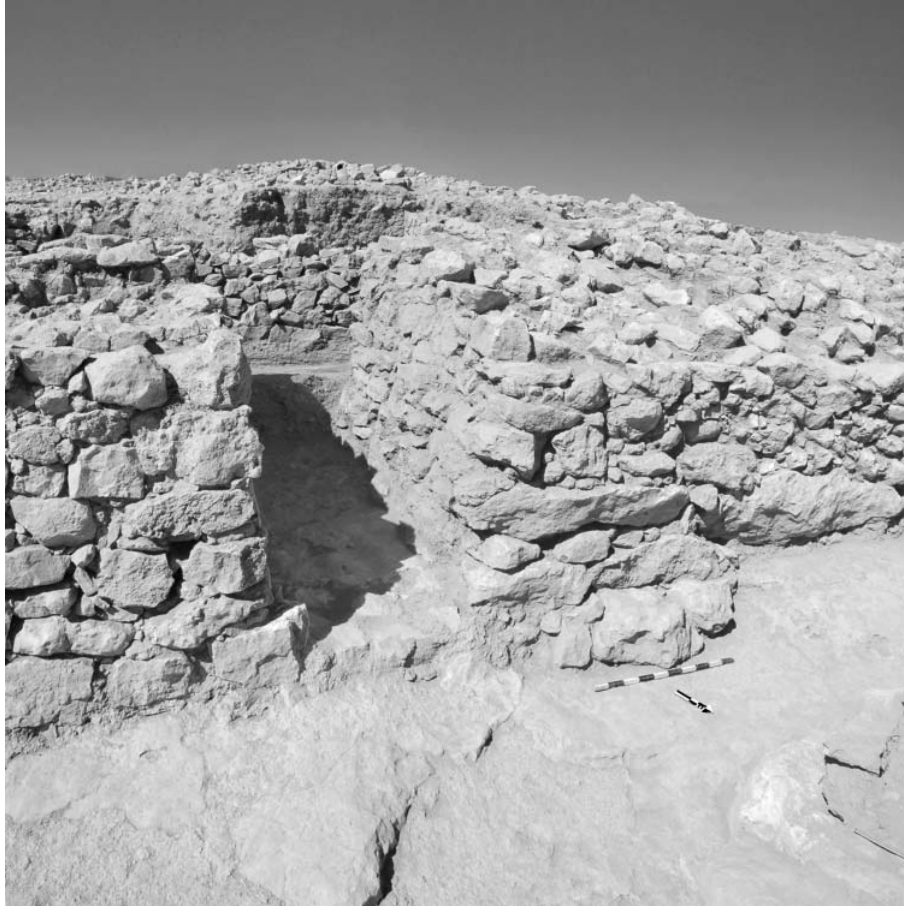


Fig. 2: Area B North. General view of city-gate L.160; note the step marking the entrance, the plastered floor over the bedrock inside the passage and the battering boulders at the foot of the city-wall, from north-west (Batrawy II, Early Bronze II, 2900-2700 BC).



Fig. 3; Area B North: city-gate L.160 after the blockage at the beginning of the Early Bronze IIIA, from north (Batrawy IIIa, 2700-2500 BC).

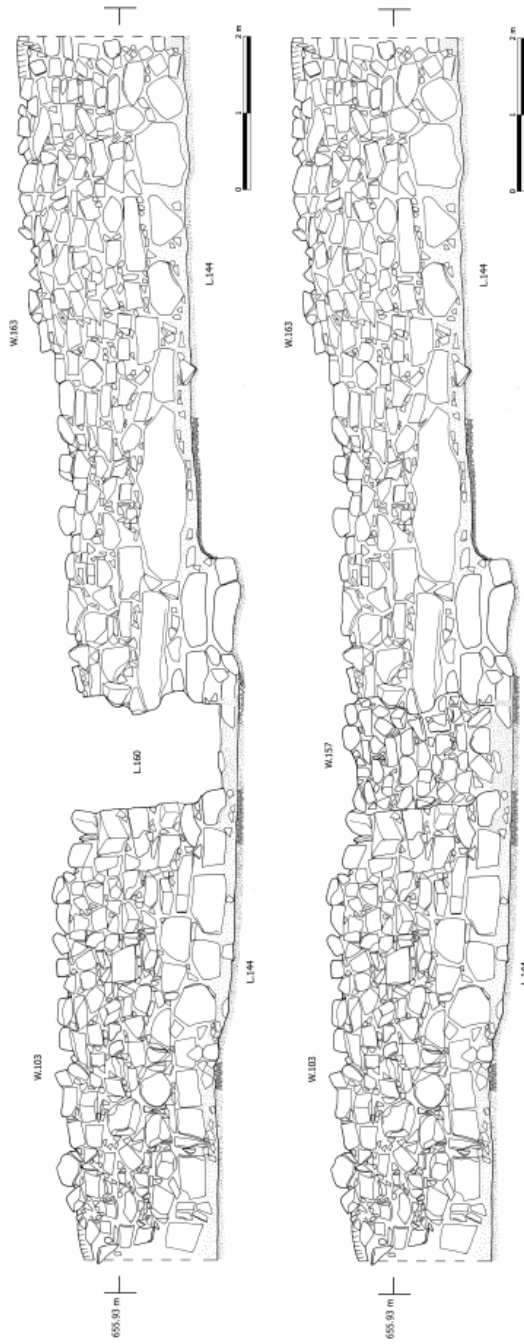


Fig. 4: Area B North. Northern prospect of city-wall W.103+W.163 with city-gate L.160 (Batrawy II, Early Bronze II, 2900-2700 BC.), before (top) and after (bottom) the blocking at the beginning of the Early Bronze IIIa (Batrawy IIIa, 2700-2500 BC).