

## Barqa Landscape Project

Russell Adams  
University of Waterloo, Canada  
[rbadams@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:rbadams@uwaterloo.ca)

Alexis Dolphin  
University of Waterloo, Canada  
[adolphin@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:adolphin@uwaterloo.ca)

The fifth field season of the Barqa Landscape Project completed research undertaken in our last season (2014) and started a new phase of research to recover Bronze Age human remains in order to establish what effect the smelting and processing of copper had upon the ancient population.

The conclusion of work at the site of Wadi Fidan 51, the only known Chalcolithic site in the Faynan region, required the establishment of the temporal phases of the site. We also needed to collect subsurface pollution samples from across the site, since previously only surface analysis with a hand-held p-XRF was undertaken. Excavation of a trench down to sterile allowed us to determine the phasing of the site and the collection of radiometric samples. Analysis of the subsurface samples will provide evidence to establish the degree of copper exploitation. All analysis is ongoing, including chipped stone and ceramics, and we expect to publish a major paper on the site in early 2021, once we have radiocarbon dates established.

Investigation of Bronze Age cemeteries and burials is complicated at Faynan due to extensive robbing activities over the last 30 years that have left many sites badly disturbed. One area which is promising, however, is the site of Faynan 100, briefly investigated by Katherine Wright in 1996 and 1997. Wright's trenches determined the site was "domestic" in nature and no further work was then undertaken. This site was deemed important enough that the Department of Antiquities has protected it from farming activity, and its nearness to the main road to Khirbat Faynan and the ecolodge has protected it to some degree from extensive robbing.

This season our team prepared a detailed topographic site map of Faynan 100 in preparation for future work. We also began salvage work on several Bronze Age tombs that had been partially pitted by robbers. In total we excavated five of these graves, which had been described by previous surveys as cairn burials likely dating to the Early Bronze Age IV period. Surprisingly, our excavation revealed that in fact these were stone and mudbrick built charnel houses. Those salvaged this season were in various states of destruction due to both robbing and long-term erosion but contained enough material cultural remains to assign a clear relative date to the EBA Ib. As our primary goal was the collection and analysis of the human remains for elemental analysis, this was plentiful. Although bones recovered were mostly "secondary burials" and fragmentary, they were reasonably well preserved.

This style of grave has until now not been recorded at Faynan. The charnel houses were constructed by shallow excavation of bedrock and the building of a rectilinear structure with several courses of stones around the







Fig. 1. Aerial view of grave 3.



perimeter. Based on excavation data, these walls were likely topped with mudbrick/pise, but we have been unable to establish roofing material. The entrance is on a short side of the rectilinear structure with obvious door posts and a door sill that allowed for a step down into the tomb (Fig. 1). There is no direct comparison to these tombs, but they are reminiscent of the *nawamis* of Sinai or possibly two large built tombs at Safi Nage. Some tombs have attached a second “structure” that has a surrounding wall and flat-lying stones covering the floor. At present it is unclear if these are also tombs or were in some way associated with funerary rites for offerings or as excarnation platforms. Perhaps the most surprising of all is the finding of EBA Ib pottery of a non-local variety, much of which appears to be from the Southern Ghors region (Fig. 2). This marks the first time this EBA pottery has been found in over 30 years of research at Faynan.



Fig. 2. Early Bronze Age Ib juglet from tomb 3 at Faynan 100. This juglet has direct comparisons to pottery from the Southern Ghors region in both form and fabric.