

East of Jerash/Jebel Muttawaq

To the east-southeast of Jerash there are a few dolmens scattered in the landscape. The ones that I saw, in particular those east of the Nebi Hud Mountain (not south, as Schumacher stated), were Zohar's type F dolmens, well-cut tombs hewn out of the rock, with or without a cover slab. One of these has one slab covering two parallel tombs, therefore constituting a combination of types D and F. These 'demi-dolmens' occur next to similar looking graves completely cut out of the rock and perhaps form a link between a proper dolmen and a rock-cut tomb.

East of Jerash, the Mediterranean zone meets the desert, creating a wonderful semi-arid landscape with patches of golden cornfields in late summer, which must have been first cultivated by Early Bronze Age man. Here lie the dolmen fields of Jebel Muttawaq, which actually seem to be linked to more fields both to the north and across the Zerqa river. They include some of the most impressive and best preserved dolmens. They stretch out over many hills up to Badirah Umm Bteimeh in the north. The limestone dolmens are of an imposing character. They are usually trilithons with a closing stone at one end, built on a platform which is often more rectangular than round and can be up to 6 by 4 m. Some variations do exist, however, including the rare 'double dolmen' Type D. An archaeological team, lead by Fernández-Tresguerres, has been working on the important EB I site on top of Jebel Muttawaq and had already surveyed the dolmen fields back in the late 1980s. The direct surroundings of the site account for 234 dolmens, mostly oriented to the north. Unfortunately, so far only a little has been published by his team on the dolmens.

The excavations of a few dolmens that Fernández-Tresguerres undertook did not yield very much material but apparently enough to date them to the transition from Chalcolithic to Early Bronze. However, the dolmens were still in use during the Middle Bronze Age, and some Byzantine pottery was also found.

Jebel Muttawaq is but one EB site in the area; there is a larger one for instance at Marajen to the north. Here again dolmens, standing stones and other archaeological features abound, although too many dolmens have been destroyed recently (ironically, sometimes to create stone agricultural walls, financed by the European Commission!). In 1986, Hanbury-Tenison counted about 1000 dolmens in the whole area. In an unpublished survey, Sapin cited 202 dolmens



Stone circle northeast of Jebel Muttawaq

on Jebel Dhalma, 117 in Wadi Suweinat-Makhad and Jebel Makhad, 52 east of Ain Qneyah, 161 in Wadi Hmeid and 26 on Jebel Majnuna. Other sites in the area were not counted.

On a spur south of the village of Hmeid, dolmens and cairns with trails of stone alignments intermingle. Unfortunately, again, this site has been partially destroyed by a road. The corbelled cairns in question are still megalithic in character and may constitute the development from the dolmen proper into the usual cairn/tumulus.

Father J.-B. Humbert from the École Biblique in Jerusalem told me that he had seen the biggest dolmens of Jordan in the area, and I have seen some of the slabs, now bulldozed for road construction, and they were indeed gigantic.

How to get there

Jebel Muttawaq

N 32°12'46.6"

E 035°59'40.5"

Kreisan

N 32°12'06.9"

E 036°00'49.5"

Northeast of J. Muttawaq
N 32°13'14.1"
E 036°00'50.2"

Wadi south of Hmeid
N 32°14'35.4"
E 036°01'01.4"

From the town of Zerqa, take the road to the north adjoining the Zerqa valley. Keep to the right (east) side of the valley. Where the river (which is fed by the Khirbet al-Samrah sewage plant) turns to the west around the Jebel Nebi Haddad group, the Jebel Muttawaq towers above the valley to the northeast. The Bronze Age village is on top of that mountain, accessible from the northeast. The dolmen fields are scattered over this mountain and the adjoining mountain slopes, as well as further north.

References:

Hanbury-Tenison, J. W. 1987. Jebel Muttawaq 1986. *ADAJ* 33: 137–44.

Fernández-Tresguerres, V. J., and Q. F. Junceda. 1991. Jebel Mutawwaq (Jordanian), Campanas 1989–1991. *Estudios Biblicos* 49: 523–42.

Sapin, J. 1999. Les 'champs' de dolmens du Djebel Muttawaq. *Les Dossiers d'Archéologie* 244: 18–19.



Dolmens northeast of Jebel Muttawaq