

Dhra' standing stone

In 1992 a standing stone, close to the Wadi al-Dhra' in the southern Ghor, was investigated and partially excavated by Carsten Körber of the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in Amman.

The monolith overlooks the Southern Ghor in a westerly direction, and the Chalcolithic cult sites of Ain Jedi and Wadi Mahras (Israel) can actually be seen in the distance.

The standing stone is on a platform adjacent to a 400 meter-long wall that runs down the slope of the mountain. The purpose and function of the rubble wall, which seems to start and end rather suddenly, is not clear; a city fortification has been suggested. The platform on which the stone is standing seems to be younger than the oldest Chalcolithic layer which was found at the base of the stone. The long wall was built later, probably during the Early Bronze Age. Later, the stone monument was enclosed by terrace walls that connected to the main wall. The orientation of the place was then to the east (facing the mountain). There appears to have been an entrance or passageway from the north through the wall into the place. Another installation—possibly a standing stone—was built against the western wall of the enclosure. The excavators concluded that the stone was probably originally erected in an open cult area, and used again in Early Bronze Age IV, when connected to the main wall. Later again, it was probably used as a tomb monument.

As late as the 1990s, a group of fallen megaliths could be seen in the flatter area down below, about 500 m east of the well-known Bronze Age site of Bab al-Dhra'. According to Mallon, in 1924 they consisted of seven rectangular stones, the biggest one being 2 m tall and about 1 m square. Apparently, they were well worked and brought there from quite a long distance away. Unfortunately they now seem to have vanished.

Still according to Mallon, there were also similar stones at Tell al-Safy, which may have been the Ghor Safy somewhat further to the south.

How to get there

N 31°14'19.9"

E 035°34'35.6"

Driving southwards along the Dead Sea, turn left at the junction of the Kerak road. Passing the Early Bronze Age site of Bab al-Dhra' and its plundered cemetery, the road continues eastwards and starts to climb just after crossing the Wadi Dhra'. Just before the bridge there is a small building on the right with a pond, and just before that place, again, a dirt road heads south along the mountain slope. It passes through the PPNA site of Dhra' on the other side of the small hill directly adjacent to the main road and continues to climb, and it has to be accessed on foot. The standing stone is about 100 m further up the road, just beneath it (on its right side).

References:

- Körber, C. 1994. Monolithic Pillars in Jordan and the 1992 Excavations at Dhra'. In *The Near East in Antiquity. Archaeological Work of National and International Institutions in Jordan*, 4, ed. S. Kerner, 65–75. Amman: German Protestant Institute of Archaeology.
- Albright, W. F. 1924. The Archaeological Results of an Expedition to Moab and the Dead Sea. *BASOR* 14: 5–7.
- Mallon, A. 1924. Voyage d'exploration au sud-est de la mer Morte, Nuntia rerum et personarum, Chronique palestinienne. *Biblica* 5: 445–55.



Large standing stone at Dhra', with the wall below