

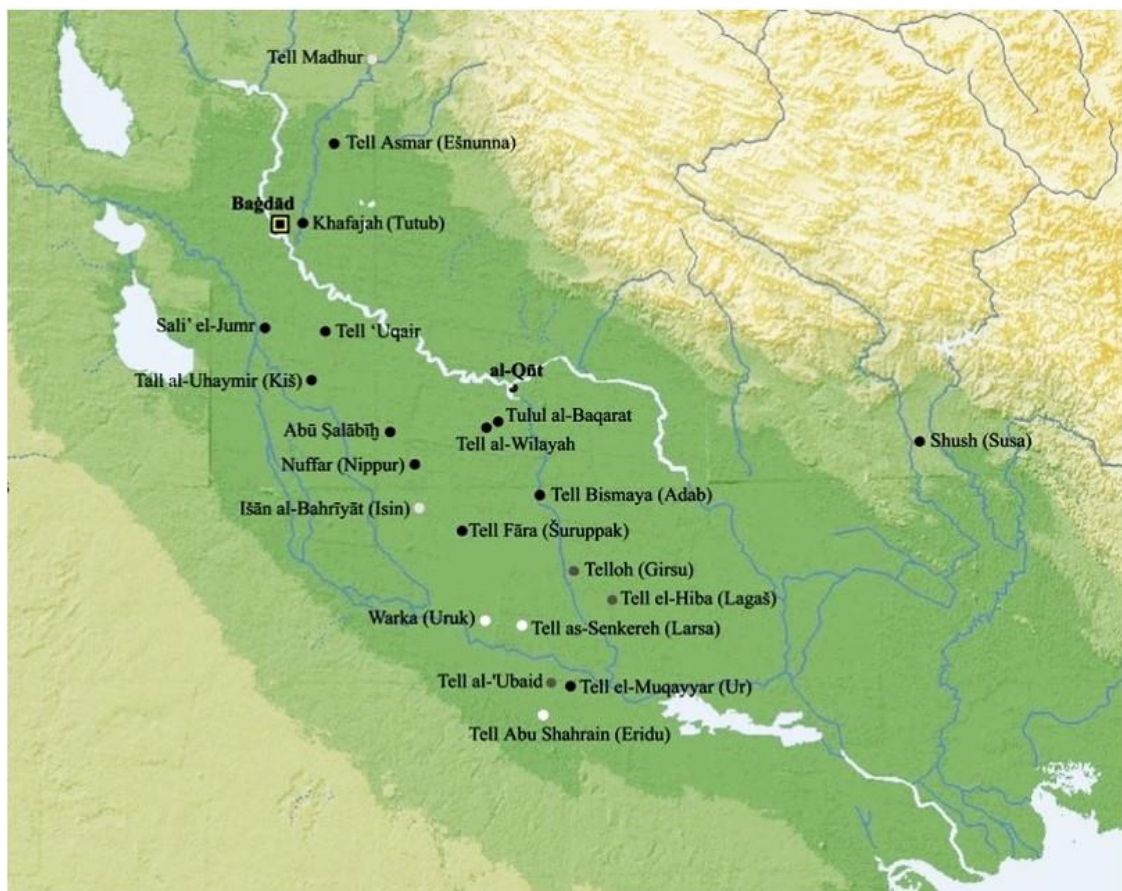
EDUU FIELDWORK IN WASIT

EDUU fieldwork in Wasit (precisely in the site of Tulul al Baqarat) will be carried out under the supervision of University of Turin (UNITO) between September 15th and November 15th 2017. UNITO will work in close collaboration with the University of Baghdad.

The team will be based in a building in the town of Kut (28 km to the N of the site), or alternatively (we are still considering the local logistic conditions) in the smaller town of Noumaniya (about 35 km to the NW of the site). From the logistical point of view, this project will of course require adequate accommodation for trainees (an expedition house able to accommodate more than 15 people should be selected and prepared) and other means of transportation in order, every day, to reach the site.

The expedition team will consist of 6 Italians from University of Turin (2 archaeologists, 1 ceramist, 1 topographer, 2 archeology students), 4 members from the Iraqi side (SBAH representatives) and 4 students from the University of Baghdad. To these ones they will be added SBAH trainees from Baghdad and Kut, and local community leaders who will participate in training activities on the site.

The site of Tulul al Baqarat



Map showing the position of Tulul al-Baqarat in relation to the main archaeological sites in southern Iraq.

The modern toponym 'Tulul al Baqarat' indicates a series of tells of different size and chronology scattered on an area around 5 kilometres wide. Apart from the nearby Iraqi excavations at Tell al-Wilaya (located about 7 kilometers to the south-west) the area is still little known from the archaeological point of view. Baqarat is located (but not reported) on the far northeast edge of the survey maps drawn up by Robert McC. Adams in his seminal 1981 report *Heartland of Cities*. The main tell of the Baqarat area was partially excavated by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in 2008-2011, in order to stop illicit excavations that seriously damaged the site. The results of these excavations, unfortunately still unpublished, were significant and revealed the presence of a religious complex on the top of the hill, dated to the Neo-Babylonian period (626-539 BC) in its latest phase but with levels that reach the Early Dynastic period (ca. 2900-2300 BC) if not earlier phases.



Architectural remains belonging to the temple precinct excavated by the SBAH between 2008 and 2010.

Aims and Goals of EDUU archaeological work at Tulul al-Baqarat

The EDUU archaeological work on the site and in the area around Tulul al-Baqarat will focus on two main sets of operations: extensive excavation activities, and a regional survey around the site. Excavation activities will focus on two main areas of the site where previous investigations produced evidence of a major cultic area – in use between the 3rd and the 1st millennia BC – and one which is seemingly occupied by a small-scale settlement, perhaps a village, dating to the late 4th millennium BC. These areas will be investigated through stratigraphic excavations and documented through ground and airborne topographic techniques. Furthermore, a regional survey will be carried out in the area around the site to better understand the settlement patterns in the region. These operations will be combined with study of material culture, cataloging and consolidation of mud-brick architecture.

The end-point of these activities is that of understanding the process of formation of the settlement of Baqarat – possibly to be identified with the ancient city of Kesh, a powerful city-state during the 3rd millennium BC – and its changes over time, also in relation to the environmental and occupational changes of the surrounding region.

Program

The work program foresees several interventions. First of all, excavations will be concentrated on the two main mounds of the area (TB1 and TB7), that due to previous small-scale investigations produced evidence respectively dating to the 3rd – 1st millennia and 4th millennium BC. Of

particular interest for EDUU project is the presence of architectural remains on TB 7 that may be interpreted as part of a farm located inside a small settlement, possibly a village, dating from the late 4th millennium BC.

A second set of activities will be the documentation and study of archaeological materials, also the ones accumulated during the previous SBAH excavations and still not processed. The documentation will include drawing, cataloging and processing the collected diagnostic fragments.

A third field activity will be a regional survey focusing on the sites located in the immediate surroundings of Tulul al Baqarat (within a radius of about 10-15 km). The aim is to collect chronological and archeological data for the study and reconstruction of the settlement patterns in the area, especially between the 4th the 1st millennium BC, and to study the relationship between the main urban site – Baqarat – and its surrounding territory through time.

Finally, topographic surveys of the two mounds under excavation completed. For mound TB1, total stations and GPSs will be used to in combination with laser scanning of the entire mound to obtain a complete topographic record of the mound. On mound TB7, where late 4th and early 3rd millennium architectural remains have been previously brought to light, total stations and drones will be used to obtain a high-resolution ortophotographic record.



Excavations activities on mound TB 7.

All these works will be carried out together with the on-site training courses. The latter will take place both on the site and in the camp of the expedition (with lessons, practical exercises, seminars), so that participants can follow the different phases of archaeological activity, from the excavation to the documentation and the post-processing.

The post-processing of excavation data will be started in Iraq towards the end of the excavation campaign. In particular, our expedition had already elaborated a digital database for pottery, US forms, small finds, graves, etc., that will be used to record the excavation process and the finds. Data from topography and the survey will require a longer and more accurate post-processing, to

be completed once back in Italy. Preliminary reports, produced on the basis of the data gathered will be sent to the SBAH and preliminary articles are expected to be produced and published during second half of 2018.

The data gathered through fieldwork at Baqarat will provide the means to reconstruct the history of the human communities that inhabited the area in the millennia before the Islamic period. Main underpinnings of this data collection are the reconstruction of economic systems and religious identities in connection to the process of state and urban formation (late 4th – 3rd millennia BC) in a core area of southern Mesopotamia.