Origins of Doha Project - Season 4 Archive Report: Zarqa Survey

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1. Introduction

The *Origins of Doha Project* is a University College London Qatar based research project funded by [NPRP grant no. 5-421-6-010](https://www.qf.org.qa/en/research/programs/nprp-grants) from the Qatar National Research Fund (a member of Qatar Foundation). Our project aims include exploring the foundations and historic growth of Doha, setting the city in its regional and global historical context, and studying the transformation of the country resulting from the transition to an oil economy. With the support of the Qatar Museums the *Origins of Doha Project* carried out a survey of archaeological remains near a modern farm at Zarqa in February 2016. This work was undertaken as part of a wider archaeological investigation of the site of Fuwairit and its hinterland, which include standing building recording and excavation.

The site of Zarqa is located c.1.5km inland of Fuwairit and consists of a ruined fort, mosque and a number of other buildings, as well as agricultural areas and wells (Figure 1). Zarqa was clearly a fortified site that would have provided the water and agricultural areas utilised by the inhabitants of Fuwairit. Despite being an important coastal settlement in the centuries preceding Qatar’s unification the details of Fuwairit’s history remain poorly understood as there are few early written references to the site. There are no known references to the associated site of Zarqa, and it was unknown until a survey of the area in 2009 (Eddisford 2009).

In order to record the site all the features visible on the surface were mapped using a total station and Differential GPS. In addition a detailed photographic, written and drawn record of the site was undertaken. The work was undertaken in accordance with Qatar Museums survey guidelines and all the data collected has been entered into the Qatar Cultural Heritage Information Management System (QCHIMS).

![Figure 1: Location of Zarqa archaeological site.](image-url)
2. Acknowledgements

This report was made possible by NPRP grant no. 5-421-6-010 from the Qatar National Research Fund (a member of Qatar Foundation). The project is directed by Dr. Robert Carter, Professor at UCL Qatar. All building recording was undertaken with the permission and support of Qatar Museums, whose goal is to develop, promote and sustain museums, art and heritage at the highest global standards for community engagement, education, and enjoyment in Qatar and beyond. All fieldwork was conducted by a professional team of archaeologists consisting of Tracy Cian, Cordelia Hall, David Mackie, Grieg Parker and Ben Sharp and directed by Daniel Eddisford. The statements made within this report are solely the responsibility of the authors.

3. Site Location and Background

Inland from Fuwairit c.1.5km, the site of Zarqa is centred on QNG 213843 474412. Adjacent to a small, fenced-in farm are a number of ruined buildings, representing a fortified site that would have provided the water and agricultural areas utilised by the contemporary inhabitants of Fuwairit. The QCHIMS lists several of the structures at the site, but does not contain a complete record of the site (see Table 1 below).

There are currently no known historical references to a settlement at Zarqa. However the site is located near the coastal settlement of Fuwairit and would have been closely associated with it. This paring of coastal settlements, which would have lacked drinking water, and contemporaneous fortified inland settlements with wells and agricultural areas is seen repeatedly along the northern coast of Qatar. Fuwairit appears on British naval maps of the 1820s, and by the middle of the 19th century was occupied by the Al Maadid and Al Bin Ali families, among others, under the leadership of the Al Thani family. Mohammed bin Thani moved south to Doha in 1849 or 1850, soon after the defeat of Isa bin Tarif (the powerful ruler of the Al Bin Ali tribe and the nearby town of Huwailah, and a leading opponent of Bahraini rule in Qatar) by a Bahraini force, at the Battle of Umm Suwayya in 1847 (Althani 2012).

Fuwairit continued to be occupied (or was re-occupied), and around 1905 had a population of 100 families of Al Bu Kuwarah and 50 of Al Kibisa. The Persian Gulf Pilot indicates that Fuwairit was still occupied in 1932 but by the mid 20th century the archaeological site of Fuwairit appears to have been deserted. Aerial images of the site support this, however the earliest aerial photograph of the site in 1947 shows a small settlement had developed to the south of the abandoned earlier village. Many of the settlements in the north of the country were abandoned in the middle of the 20th century, in part due to the salination of the upper aquifer caused by excessive water extraction with diesel pumps (Macumber 2009: 90-101). However the agricultural area at Zarqa continues in use to this day.
Figure 2: Location of features recorded at Zarqa.
Figure 3: Topographic plan of features recorded at Zarqa.
4. Methodology

The aims of the Zarqa survey project were to undertake a detailed topographic survey of the ruins visible on the surface at the site, to describe the remains, and to locate each of the features to assist Qatar Museums in ensuring the site is adequately protected. A ground survey, as opposed to relying on satellite or aerial imagery, allows a more detailed plan of the site to be produced with a greater degree of interpretation of the features observed. The site survey was undertaken by a team of four experienced archaeologists and surveyors, over a period of roughly two weeks in February 2016.

The survey was undertaken with a Leica total station and a Leica Differential GPS (DGPS). A series of control points were established across the survey area, and located to the Qatar national grid using a GPS system. The site was recorded by planning the top and bottom of break of slope of any topography visible. In addition to the topography of the site other details were recorded where relevant. All wall lines visible on the surface or as clear lines of tumbled rock representing a buried wall line were recorded. Spot heights were also taken at c. five metre intervals in the area surrounding each archaeological feature.

Each feature was assigned a temporary site code (Figure 2, Table 1) and recorded on a Qatar Museum’s pro-forma survey sheet. A description, sketch plan, and a detailed photographic record of each feature were made. All the information collected during the survey was added to the Qatar Cultural Heritage Information Management System (QCHIMS).
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<tr>
<th>Temporary Code</th>
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<tr>
<td>ZAQ-02</td>
<td>3736</td>
<td>Islamic graves - series of low burial cairns</td>
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<td>ZAQ-31</td>
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<td>Possible structure</td>
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</table>

Table 1: Features recorded at Zarqa and their associated Heritage Area Numbers
5. Results

Structure ZAQ01 (Fort)
All the structures at Zarqa were built of unworked sub-angular pieces of limestone, a building material abundant on the surface close to the site. The remains of a fort ZAQ01 survive as large mound of stone, measuring 26.00m across and 1.80m high. Although in ruins the walls of the fort are visible on the surface in places. The fort is rectangular in plan, with a tower on some or all of its four corners. The southeast tower of the fort has already been largely destroyed by a mechanical excavator, as has part of the northern wall. In addition the western side of the fort is partially covered by modern dumps of building rubble.

Figure 5: Fort ZAQ01 looking east (IMG_6645).

Figure 6: Fort ZAQ01 looking west (IMG_6643).
Figure 7: Fort ZAQ01 and surrounding structures showing contour lines (brown), break of slope (pink and blue lines) and visible walls (red and yellow lines)

**Burial Cairns ZAQ02**
A number of poorly preserved burial cairns, ZAQ02, are located directly to the west of the Fort (ZAQ01). There are at least six cairns visible, although there may have originally been more. The cairns are oval in plan and consist of low mounds of sub-angular limestone measuring up to 2.7m long and 1.5m wide. They are orientated east-west. These cairns are almost certainly Islamic burials. It is not clear if they are contemporary with the fort (ZAQ01) or if they are later in date, reusing some of the stone from the abandoned fort.
Structure ZAQ03

Structure ZAQ03 is a rectangular building measuring 13.5m east-west by 5.5m north-south. The structure is located directly to the southwest of the fort (ZAQ01) and has a similar alignment, possibly suggesting the two structures were in use together.

This structure is one of a number of ruined rectangular stone buildings on the site, all survive as very low mounds of stone, under 0.5m high, with wall lines occasionally visible. It seems likely the walls of these buildings may survive to a height of two or three courses, although this would have to be confirmed through excavation. It is unclear if these buildings were constructed entirely in stone, or if they consisted of stone foundations with a packed mud or wooden superstructure. The limited amount of stone tumble covering the buildings suggests that maybe they were not built completely out of stone and that the superstructure may indeed have consisted of less durable materials.
Structure ZAQ04
Structure ZAQ04 is a small, poorly defined possible structure located to the south of the fort ZAQ01. The structure measures 3.0m by 3.0m in plan and survives only as a low spread of stones that indicate where the walls were.

Figure 10: Possible building ZAQ04 looking southeast (IMG_6695).

Structure ZAQ05
Structure ZAQ05 is a fairly well defined rectangular building measuring 4.9m east-west by 3.5m north-south. Located to the east of the fort ZAQ01 this building is on a similar alignment to the fort and ZAQ 03.

Figure 11: Building ZAQ05 looking east (IMG_6689).
Structure ZAQ06
Structure ZAQ06 is a rectangular building located just to the east of ZAQ05 and is on a similar alignment to this structure. A wall extends to the southwest of the building, possibly sheltering an external yard area.

![Image: Building ZAQ06 looking west with the possible yard wall behind the building (IMG_6694).](image)

Well ZAQ07
Well ZAQ07 consists of a large sub-circular depression, measuring 5m in diameter and c. 0.70m deep. This is the remains of a now largely infilled well.

![Image: Well ZAQ07 looking east (IMG_6697).](image)
**Structure ZAQ08**

ZAQ08 is the poorly preserved foundations of several stone structure ranged around a central yard. The area has been disturbed by a bulldozer and parts of the building have been disturbed or destroyed.

![Building ZAQ08 looking southeast (IMG_6679).](image-url)

*Figure 14: Building ZAQ08 looking southeast (IMG_6679).*
Structure ZAQ09
ZAQ09 is a stone structure, measuring 4.40m by 10.90m in plan. It is not clear from the surface whether this building consisted of two separate rooms, or if it consisted of a single, relatively small rectangular structure at the western side, with a wall extending to the east and enclosing a yard. This building plan, with a sheltering or enclosing wall extending from the building is present elsewhere on the site, for example structures ZAQ06 and ZAQ20.
Figure 16: Building ZAQ09 looking northeast (IMG_6677).

Structure ZAQ10
Structure ZAQ10 is a relatively well preserved rectangular building measuring 6.5m by 4.3m in plan and orientated northeast-southwest. The building consists of a single room that has been truncated at its southern end by modern activity.

Figure 17: Building ZAQ10 looking southwest (IMG_6680).

Structure ZAQ11
Structure 11 is a severely deflated rectangular building measuring 9.8m by 2.0m. The poorly defined stone walls measure 0.4m thick.
Structure ZAQ12
Structure 12 is a rectangular building measuring 1.4m by 3.7m, oriented northeast-southwest. The structure consists of three separate rooms, a larger central space is c.5m long and two small spaces at each end of the building measure 2.25m and 3.00m long respectively. The structure survives as low ruined walls that may have supported a more ephemeral superstructure.
Figure 20: Structure ZAQ12 showing contour lines (brown), break of slope (pink and blue lines) and visible walls (red and yellow lines).

Mosque ZAQ13

Mosque ZAQ13 measures 13.0m by 15.0m in plan. This structure is the only building on the site that utilises beach stone as well as limestone in its construction. The building is divided roughly in half, and consists of an open yard to the east and a slightly smaller rectangular room to the west. The orientation and layout of this structure strongly suggest it is a mosque, and a qibbla wall is visible on the western side. Similar to the fort this mosque is unprotected and is highly vulnerable to further disturbance.

Figure 21: Mosque ZAQ13 looking north (IMG_6649).
Well ZAQ14
Structure 14 is a hand dug traditional well with a gypsum or concrete lining. The shaft of the well is surrounded by a shallow trough that drains into a circular basin located directly to the southeast of the well. This type of well is a common type of traditional well in Qatar. Stone features to the northwest (Structure ZAQ15) and southwest (Structure ZAQ30) may be associated with this well.
Structure ZAQ15

Structure 15 is a poorly defined semicircular, or possibly sub-rectangular stone feature measuring 3.5m by 2.7m. The function of the feature is unclear. It is apparently too small to be a building. Its location close to well ZAQ14 suggests it may be associated with this feature. It is possible that ZAQ15 is a shelter wall or associated with a water lifting mechanism.

Temporary Mosque ZAQ16

Feature ZAQ16 is a temporary *qibbla* wall made of desert limestone. This type of temporary mosque is common in the north of Qatar and would have been used by Bedouin as well as by visitors to the desert; identical temporary mosques are still currently in use.
Figure 25: Structure ZAQ16 looking southwest (IMG_6653).

**Structure ZAQ17**
Structure 17 is a building consisting of four separate rooms ranged around a possible open yard. The northern side of the structure consists of two adjoining rooms, orientated northeast-southwest and measuring 9.2m by 3.6m wide. To the south of these a third adjoining room measured 4.5m by 3.2m. A fourth room was located directly to the south and was separated from the other rooms by a short distance. This arrangement would have created a sheltered yard area in the centre of the structure. A midden area containing glass and ceramic is located directly to the north east of building.

Figure 26: Building ZAQ17 looking northeast (IMG_6658).

**Possible Structure ZAQ18**
Structures ZAQ18 and ZAQ19 were both similar rectangular arrangements of stones that may represent buildings. Possible structure ZAQ18 measured 4.0m by 4.0m in plan. It is likely that this feature is a small, deflated structure, located to the northeast of ZAQ17.
Figure 27: Building ZAQ18 looking east (IMG_6665).

Possible Structure ZAQ19
Feature ZAQ19 is a sub rectangular area of stones measuring 4.0m by 3.6m that may represent a poorly preserved building. No clear evidence of walls were visible on the surface, and it is possible that this feature is in fact only an area of disturbance associated with the farm located directly to the east. A concrete setting for a fence post in the southern side of ZAQ19 is a later intrusion, associated with the farm.

Figure 28: Possible building ZAQ19 looking north (IMG_6663).
**Structure ZAQ20**

Structure ZAQ20 consists of a single rectangular building, measuring 4.2m by 3.1m with a curved wall extending to the east. This layout has similarities to other structures on the site such as ZAQ 23.

![Figure 29: Building ZAQ20 looking northeast (IMG_6670).](image)

**Artefact scatter ZAQ21**

Artefact scatter ZAQ21 is a relatively high concentration of ceramics and occasional bone artefacts distributed across a raised area of lithosol directly to the north of the modern farm. The presence of manganese painted alkaline glazed pottery and glass bangles suggest a late historic date. The artefacts were not retained as we did not have permission at the time to collect artefacts. We hope to make a systematic collection of artefacts in future seasons.

![Figure 30: Artefact scatter ZAQ21 looking northeast (IMG_6672).](image)
Structure ZAQ22
Structure ZAQ22 and structure ZAQ23 appear to form a single building, possibly a house with a sheltered yard on the southern side of the two rooms. ZAQ22 is the larger of the two rooms, located to the east of ZAQ23. ZAQ22 consists of a low sub-rectangular mound of stone measuring 7.0m by 4.0m.

Figure 31: Artefacts found but not retained from ZAQ21 (IMG_0958).

Figure 32: Building ZAQ22 looking northeast, ZAQ23 is visible in the right of the photo (IMG_6638).
Structure ZAQ23
Structure ZAQ23 is a small ruined structure, surviving as a low mound of stones, measuring 4.0m by 4.0m in plan. A wall appears to extend to the east, in the direction of ZAQ22, and a second curved wall extends to the south of the building. These walls probably define a partially enclosed yard, possibly used to pen animals or provide shelter from the wind.

Figure 33: Building ZAQ23 looking north (IMG_6639).

Enclosure ZAQ24
Structure ZAQ24 is a rectangular enclosure measuring 42m by 18m with a well, ZAQ26, located on its northern side. The enclosure is defined by a partially buried stone wall, two stones wide and possibly only surviving to a single course. Similar enclosures and associated wells are known from other sites on the north coast of Qatar such as Jumail. At Jumail a large number of wells and associated enclosures directly inland of the abandoned village clearly related to an abandoned agricultural area.
Graveyard ZAQ25
A sub circular bulldozed bank encloses an Islamic cemetery directly to the southeast of the modern farm. The protective enclosure measures 43.0m by 30m and contains a number of graves marked by stone headstones.
**Well ZAQ26**

ZAQ26 is a large, shallow, infilled well measuring 8.0m by 7.0m and c. 0.60m deep. There is no evidence of a stone lining in the well, but as the feature is almost entirely infilled it is possible this would not be visible. The well is located on the northern side of enclosure ZAQ24, and it is likely that the well provided water to a small agricultural area defined by this enclosure.

![Figure 35: Well ZAQ26 looking south (IMG_6641).](image)

**Possible Structure ZAQ27**

ZAQ27 is a small building measuring 4.0m by 3.0m. There were walls visible as two parallel rows of stones. The structure is adjacent to infilled well ZAQ07.

![Figure 36: Building ZAQ27 looking south (IMG_6723).](image)
Structure ZAQ28
ZAQ28 is a structure consisting of two small rectangular rooms connected by a wall, creating, a small yard. This building has a similar arrangement to structures ZAQ22 and ZAQ23.

Figure 37: Building ZAQ28 looking southwest (IMG_6726).

Possible Well ZAQ29
ZAQ19 consists of a sub-circular depression representing an infilled well or shallow feature intended to collect rainwater. The depression measures 16.5m by 10.0m. There is no evidence of a stone lining to the feature, or any other associated structure.

Figure 38: Possible well ZAQ29 looking southwest (IMG_6725).
Possible Structure ZAQ30
A possible structure, ZAQ30, consists of a semicircular poorly defined wall, located directly to the south of well ZAQ14. The function of this feature was not clear, but it is likely associated with the well.

Figure 39: Possible structure ZAQ30 looking west (IMG_6728).

Possible Structure ZAQ31
A very poorly defined low rectangular area of stones, ZAQ31, is possibly a ruined structure. The feature measures 3.0m by 3.0m and is close to and possibly associated with ZAQ 18 and ZAQ19.

Figure 40: Possible structure ZAQ31 looking northwest (IMG_1249).
6. Conclusions and Potential

The site of Zarqa is not documented in the historical record and this survey of the site provides an important archaeological record of the features present. This record will allow a better understanding of the site and will hopefully assist in its protection. The information collected during the survey is available through the Qatar Cultural Heritage Information Management System (QCHIMS).

The site of Zarqa consists of a series of buildings, wells and agricultural enclosures located around a modern farm that is irrigated by water pumped from boreholes. No survey was undertaken inside the farm, and it is possible that further archaeological remains survive in the fenced area of the farm. The recorded features consist of a series of small stone built structures, most measuring between 5.00m and 10.00m long. These buildings are all constructed of unworked limestone collected from nearby the site. Significant structures include a relatively large fort, a nearby mosque and a small cemetery. Other buildings include larger structures with several rooms ranged around a yard as well as smaller single cell structures with and without external screening walls. Without any surface collection of artefacts or excavation at the site it is hard to be confident about when it was occupied, however it seems likely it is broadly contemporary with the occupation at Fuwairit, ie dating to the 18th and 19th centuries. However it is possible that there are other periods of occupation at Zarqa, and it is not necessarily the case that all the buildings were occupied at the same time.

The primary function of the Zarqa site would have been to provide water and agricultural land for the coastal settlement of Fuwairit. This pattern of dual, complementary coastal and inland sites is seen repeatedly along the northern coast of Qatar. Several backfilled wells were identified at Zarqa. Some survived as shallow depressions, but at least one had an ephemeral enclosure around it, representing an agricultural area. One of the wells appears to have been in use more recently, and was lined with stone and rendered. Identical traditional well were still used until relatively recently (eg. Montigny 1980: 139, Fig 68).

The site of Zarqa represents an import archaeological area, associated with the better-known archaeological site at Fuwairit. Unlike Fuwairit, which is largely covered in sand, the remains at Zarqa are mostly exposed making it possible to record the layout of the site on the surface. This also means the structure at Zarqa are completely unprotected and there is obvious damage to many of them, including extensive damage to the fort, by vehicles, mechanical excavators and bulldozing.

7. Bibliography


Macumber, P.G. 2009 Preliminary report on the Geomorphology and hydrology of the al Zubarah region Northern Qatar: QIAH End of season report, 2009 Volume II. University of Coppenhagen / Qatar Museums Authority