

# The Archaeological Park

## Emar – Balis (Syria)



A project of the Universities of  
Tübingen and Princeton

### Presenting the Archaeological Park

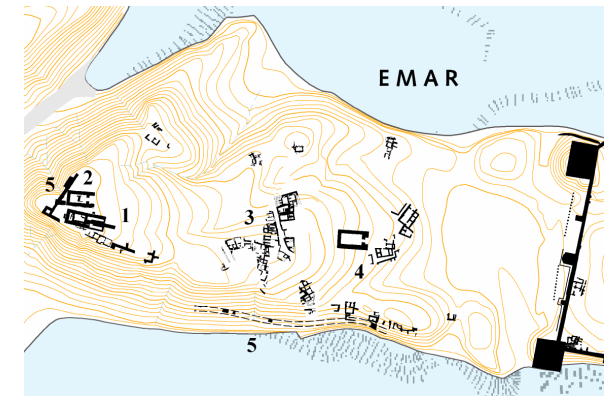
Since 1996, the Universities of Tübingen and Princeton, in cooperation with the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, have undertaken successful excavations in Emar, an important Bronze Age town, and in the town of Barbalissos – Balis, which succeeded Emar. An Umayyad palace and a Shiite sanctuary dating to the 11th century were exposed in the immediate vicinity so that, on an area of less than two square kilometres, a unique panorama of Syrian history is now displayed.



View from the Umayyad palace to Emar and Balis.

Offering a grandiose view the steep banks of Lake Assad add to the attractions of the site.

But the first look goes to the architectural remains that have been excavated and partly restored by the teams from Tübingen and Princeton over the last years and that are now open to the interested public.

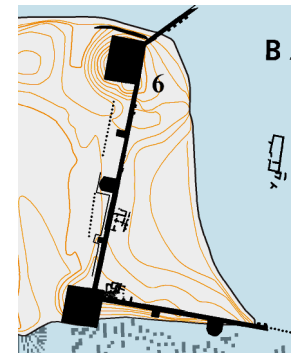


Plan of the extant ruins of Emar

(1 Temple of Ba'al - 2 Temple of Ashtarte - 3 Upper Town  
4 Lower Town - 5 Town wall of the Middle Bronze Age)

**Emar:** The ruins of Emar consist of temples and houses from the Late Bronze Age (14th and 13th centuries) and remains of the town wall from the Middle Bronze Age (beginning of the 2nd millennium BC). Several small soundings have already yielded building remains and finds dating to the Early Bronze Age, which are still awaiting a more extensive excavation.

**Barbalissos / Balis:** Some parts of the ruins of Emar were resettled. We see remains of the Byzantine town wall with the restored corner towers (*Praetorium* No.6). Inside the town wall the ground plans of some Islamic houses could be ascertained, remains of the commercial town of Balis, that was deserted by the inhabitants around the middle of the 13th c., when the Mongol hordes were approaching from the east.



**Qasr:** With its beautiful wall paintings, the palace above the Lake takes us to the glorious epoch of the Umayyad caliphs at the beginning of the 8th century.



Qasr. Wall paintings in the audience hall (partial view)

Owner of the palace was probably Maslama ibn Abdalmalik, a son of the caliph, who fought as general against the Byzantines.

**Minaret:** In a spectacular action, the French mission in Balis saved the richly decorated Ayyubid minaret of the Great Mosque in Balis, now swallowed by the Lake. The minaret was sawed into blocks, transported up onto the hills and re-erected in the surroundings of the *Qasr*.



**Mashhad:** Back at the banks of the Lake we visit the important Shiite sanctuary dating to the 11th century, that has recently been excavated.



Mashhad. Excavations until 2007.

**The rock chamber tombs:** Between Emar and the Islamic ruins a great number of tombs have been hewn into the rocks; they date to Late Antiquity and so far only part of them have been investigated and documented.

**The Visitors' and Excavation Centre:** The spacious house that was finished in the summer of 2008 will serve the teams from Tübingen and Princeton as expedition house and will also be open to the interested public. It was financed by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, mainly, by Princeton University. Since autumn 2008, one room is equipped with information for tourist groups. Two persons are engaged all the year round to look after and take care of the house.

## Further Planning

A start has been made; now it depends very much on the initiators whether the Park will develop. Further means are needed in order to improve the infrastructure and to go on with the securing and restoration work.

A series of large-sized information boards is put up in the new Visitors' Centre, illustrating a guided path through the ruins, which is envisaged for 2009. The boards were financed by the foundation of the Studiosus travel company, who have already incorporated the Archaeological Park *Emar-Balis* in their programme.

More undertakings are to follow. A board of honorary curators is to decide about new measures; they will meet annually and will include, besides representatives of the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums, the excavators Uwe Finkbeiner and Thomas Leisten.

This flyer is addressed to all who take an interest in the preservation of and care for the relics of Syrian history or/and are associated with the excavations. We should be very happy if the flyer were understood as a call for support. The *Universitaetsbund e.V. Tuebingen* has opened an account at [Kreissparkasse Tuebingen, Germany](#), IBAN: DE13 64150020 0000 110 608, re: sub-account 3780, key-word "Emar-Balis". (Please do not forget to give your full address so that the donation certificate may be forwarded to you..)

*Uwe Finkbeiner and Thomas Leisten*