

INTERIM REPORT ON THE EXCAVATIONS AT TELL ES-SULTAN, ANCIENT JERICHO (2019-2023): THE BRONZE AND IRON AGE CITIES

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This paper is a preliminary report of the last five seasons (15th-19th, 2019-2023) of archaeological investigations and restoration interventions at Tell es-Sultan, in Areas A, B, E, F, G and Trenches I, II and III, carried out by the joint Italian-Palestinian Expedition of the University of Rome «La Sapienza» and the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA-DACH). Works were supported by the University of Rome «La Sapienza» and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, for the sake of the protection and valorization of Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, enlisted among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites in September 2023.

Keywords: Tell es-Sultan/ancient Jericho; Neolithic; Bronze Age; Iron Age; archaeology

0. PREMISE

During the last five seasons (15th-19th, 2019-2023) of archaeological excavations and restorations carried on at Tell es-Sultan, ancient Jericho, by the joint Italian-Palestinian Expedition of Rome «La Sapienza» University and the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities (MoTA-DACH)¹, work was focused on Areas A and E at the southern foot of the mound, Area B and Trench III on the south-western edge of the tell, Area G on the Spring Hill and in Area F and Trench II on the northern plateaux (fig. 1).² A photogrammetric survey of Trench I and the PPNA Round Tower was also accomplished in order to prepare for its full restoration.

Excavations explored the many features of the superimposed cities of Jericho, from the Early to the Middle and Late Bronze Age until the Iron Age, and in some spots reached and documented the prominent Neolithic remains. Preliminary results are hereby illustrated in

¹ The Expedition wishes to thank the former Minister of Tourism & Antiquities of the State of Palestine, H.E. Rula Maya; the present Minister H.E. Hani Hayek, the Deputy Minister Dr Salah Tawasweh, the responsible of the MoTA office at Ariha, Dr Iyad Hamdan, the authorities of the Municipality of Ariha, the Mayor, Mr Abdul Karim Seder, and all the workers and the other stakeholders which worked at the site valorisation and maintenance. In the five seasons 2019-2023 the team included Italian and Palestinian researchers, archaeologists, technicians and students (the complete list is available in the Expedition web-site: <https://sites.google.com/uniroma1.it/sapienzatojericho>). During the last years a project of valorisation of the site has been carried on thanks to the support of the Italian Agency of Development Cooperation (AICS), under the guidance of Dr Guglielmo Giordano and Arch. Dario Piatelli; the UNESCO - Ramallah Office, overlooked by Dr Giovanni Scepi and Mr. Mohammad Abu Hammad; the MoTA under the aegis of Dr Ahmed Rjoob and Mrs Marwa Adwan. To all of them, as well as to the other officials of the MoTA involved, we address our deepest gratitude. The joint work, of which the present article is a scientific piece, has achieved the inclusion of Tell es-Sultan in the World's Heritage List of UNESCO on September 17th 2023. §§ 0, 8 are by J. Yasmine and L. Nigro; §§ 2-7 are by L. Nigro.

² For a detailed study of these areas in previous excavations, see Marchetti - Nigro eds. 1998; 2000; Marchetti 2003; Nigro 2006a; 2006b; 2007-2008; 2009a; 2009b; 2010a; 2010b; 2014a; 2014c; 2016; 2017a; 2019a; 2019b; 2020a; 2020b; 2023a; 2023b; 2023d; 2024; Nigro - Taha 2009; Nigro *et al.* 2011; Fiaccavento - Gallo 2020.

approximate chronological order (tab. 1),³ leaving apart the PPNA Tower and related Neolithic finds for a forthcoming dedicated study.

TELL ES-SULTAN PERIODS	ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIODS	ABSOLUTE CHRONOLOGY
Sultan Ia	Epipaleolithic (Late Natufian)	10500-8800 BC
Sultan Ib	Pre-Pottery Neolithic A	8800-7500 BC
Sultan Ic	Pre-Pottery Neolithic B	7500-6300/6000 BC
Sultan IIa	Pottery Neolithic A	6300/6000-5300 BC
Sultan IIb	Pottery Neolithic B	5300-4300 BC
Sultan IIc	Chalcolithic	4300-3500 BC
Sultan IIIa1	Early Bronze Age IA	3500-3300 BC
Sultan IIIa2	Early Bronze Age IB	3300-3050 BC
Sultan IIIb1	Early Bronze Age IIA	3050-2850 BC
Sultan IIIb2	Early Bronze Age IIB	2850-2700 BC
Sultan IIIc1	Early Bronze Age IIIA	2700-2500 BC
Sultan IIIc2	Early Bronze Age IIIB	2500-2300 BC
Sultan IIId1	Early Bronze Age IVA	2300-2200 BC
Sultan IIId2	Early Bronze Age IVB	2200-2000 BC
Sultan IVa1	Middle Bronze Age IA	2000-1900 BC
Sultan IVa2	Middle Bronze Age IB	1900-1800 BC
Sultan IVb1	Middle Bronze Age IIA	1800-1700 BC
Sultan IVb2	Middle Bronze Age IIB	1700-1650 BC
Sultan IVc	Middle Bronze Age III	1650-1550 BC
Sultan Va	Late Bronze Age IA	1550-1470 BC
	Late Bronze Age IB	1470-1400 BC
Sultan Vb	Late Bronze Age IIA	1400-1300 BC
	Late Bronze Age IIB	1300-1200/1190 BC
Sultan VIa	Iron Age IA	1200/1190-1136 BC
	Iron Age IB	1136-960 BC
Sultan VIb	Iron Age IIA	960-840 BC
	Iron Age IIB	840-732/772/701 BC
Sultan VIc	Iron Age IIC	732/772/701-585/535 BC
Sultan VIIa	Iron Age III/Persian Period	585/535-333 BC
Sultan VIIb	Hellenistic Period	332-64 BC
Sultan VIII	Roman Period	64 BC - 324 AD
Sultan IX	Byzantine Period	324-636 AD
Sultan X	Early Islamic Period	636-1000 AD
	Crusader Period & Middle Islamic	1000-1250 AD
	Late Islamic (Mamluk) Period	1250-1516 AD
Sultan XI	Ottoman Period	1516-1918 AD
Sultan XII	After I World's War	1919-today

Tab. 1 - Archaeological periodization and stratigraphic phases of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan/ancient Jericho.

³ Tab. 1 shows the updated overall archaeological periodization of Tell es-Sultan produced by the Italian-Palestinian Expedition by matching basically stratigraphic data produced by Kenyon's Expedition and new ones, tuned also by means of new radiocarbon dating of several sequences (Nigro *et al.* 2019).

1. THE EARLY BRONZE AGE II-III CITY-WALLS

The Early Bronze Age II-III city-walls are the works which testify to the achievement of the urban status of Tell es-Sultan in the 3rd millennium BC.⁴ The study of their constructional sequence, building techniques and layout has illuminated the history of the earliest city of Jericho⁵.

The exploration and restoration of the monumental Early Bronze Age city-wall continued also during the 15th-19th seasons (2019-2023). In Areas B, B West, B North and Trench III the original foundation wall of the Main Inner Wall⁶ of Sultan IIIC (EB III) was exposed and restored (fig. 2) to let the structure be seen in its full width (3.8-4.2 m).⁷

As already documented, the Main Inner Wall (MIW W.2) underwent two major reconstructions during the Early Bronze Age, one immediately after the earthquake which brought to an end the Sultan IIIB period (EB II), at the beginning of Sultan IIIC1 (EB IIIA, c. 2700 BC), and another marking the beginning of Sultan IIIC2 (EB IIIB, c. 2500 BC).⁸ The earlier Sultan IIIC1 structure was excavated in Area B, in correspondence of Kenyon's Trench III (fig. 3), where several structural observations were made,⁹ and in Area B North (Garstang's Trench *e-e'*),¹⁰ where mudbricks' laying method and the effects of the big fire which destroyed the city at the end of EB IIIA were clearly appreciable.¹¹

In Area B West, the Sultan IIIC1 double city-wall was further explored sampling wooden beams across the MIW, which resulted to be of local tamarisk (*Tamarix palaestina*),¹² and the white sandy filling within the blind rooms in between the MIW and the Outer Wall. It turned out to be made of crushed limestone (calcium carbonate), marl and small grey flint inclusions, a material often labelled *hawwara*.¹³ This fill is a very distinguishing feature,

⁴ For a recent overview of urbanisation at Tell es-Sultan and in the Levant in general, see Nigro 2019a; 2020a, 184; 2023c, 186-187; 2023d; de Miroschedji 2018, 112-113.

⁵ Nigro 2023d.

⁶ The city walls of EB III were first investigated by the Austro-German expedition of 1907-1909 who named them *Hauptmauer* (Inner Wall) and *Vormauer* (Outer Wall) (Sellin - Watzinger 1913, 20-33). The presence of the double city-wall was confirmed by the two British expeditions (Garstang 1930, 128-129; 1931, 191-192; Kenyon 1981, 161-163, 210-213, pl. 269b) and previously investigated by the Italian-Palestinian mission also in areas B and B west (Marchetti - Nigro eds. 1998, 81-94, 129-130; Nigro 2006b, 361-375, tab. 2; 2009a, 182-183; Nigro - Taha 2009, 738-739; Nigro *et al.* 2011, 580-581; Nigro 2016, 9-10; 2019a, 85-90, figs. 6-11; 2020b, fig. 10.3).

⁷ Kenyon 1957, 174-176; Nigro 2006a, 9; 2006b, 370-371; Nigro - Taha 2009, 738, fig. 15; Nigro 2019a, 85, fig. 7; 2020b, 198-199.

⁸ For a comprehensive stratigraphy and chronology of Tell es-Sultan during the Early Bronze Age see Nigro *et al.* 2019.

⁹ During the 2010 season it was possible to locate the Southern Gate (L.1800). This gate, which was 2 m wide and 4.5 m long, created a bent axis passageway between the inner and outer walls (Nigro *et al.* 2011, 580-581, figs. 10-11; Nigro 2016, fig. 7; 2019a, 89-90, figs. 9-10; 2020a, 190, fig. 11; 2020b, 200, fig. 10.6).

¹⁰ Garstang 1931, pls. I, IV.

¹¹ Traces of the fire that destroyed the city walls can also be seen in the collapsed filling of the Southern Gate L. 1800 (Nigro 2020a, 190; 2020b, 210).

¹² Identified by both British and Italian-Palestinian Expeditions (Hopf 1983, 577; Western 1983; Nigro 2014a, 75).

¹³ Kenyon 1957, 173-175, 180-182; 1981, 98-103, 161-165, 209-213, 261-265; Marchetti - Nigro eds. 1998, 32-36, 81-94; Nigro 2006a, 8-9; 2006b, 361-372; Nigro - Taha 2009, 738-739; Nigro 2016, fig. 7; 2019a, 87, figs. 8-9; 2020a, fig. 11. In the past, this filling was misinterpreted, first by J. Garstang (Garstang 1931, pl. I; Garstang - Droop - Crowfoot 1935, 162; Garstang - Garstang 1948, pl. XVIII) and later by Kenyon (Kenyon 1955, pl.

which characterizes Sultan IIIc1 blind rooms in between the double city-walls along the western and southern flanks of the tell¹⁴ and shows the ability of the Jericho constructors in exploiting local building material.¹⁵

In Area B North, the southern section of Garstang's Trench *e-e'* was cleaned and drawn (fig. 4) to provide other information on the city-walls. The visible structures are, of course, the Sultan IIIc1 Main Inner Wall at the bottom (here named W.2102), and, on top, its Sultan IIIc2 reconstruction (W.2109). The collapse layer inside the blind room west of these structures, intermingled with *hawwara* fillings F.2101 and F.2106, is characterized by a heap of reddish mudbricks (F.2108) slid down from the western face of the Sultan IIIc2 Main Inner Wall. Just upon these strata, a stone foundation lined with big stones, supports another ordinary wall made of beige bricks (W.2105), which is nearly later than the Early Bronze Age structures underlying, and, on the ground of scattered pottery finds,¹⁶ might be tentatively attributed to the Late Bronze Age or to the early Iron Age. These scattered materials may have been what led Garstang to erroneously attribute the massive structures below to the Late Bronze Age.

2. THE EARLY BRONZE AGE III PALACE G ON THE SPRING HILL

Works in Areas G and H (including Kenyon's Squares H) on the eastern flank of the Spring Hill were resumed in the 15th-19th seasons (2019-2023) in order to expand the exploration of the superimposed palaces of periods Sultan IIIc (EB III, "Palace G"), IVb-c (MB II-III, "Palace of the Shepherds Kings"-"Hyksos Palace") and the "Middle Building" of Sultan V (LB I), as well as overlying structures of Sultan VIa (IA IB, , c. 1130-960 BC). The excavation was extended to the north in squares Bc-e/III4-6, between the tourists shelter and Kenyon's Square H-II and H-IV,¹⁷ gradually unifying areas G and H (fig. 5).

2.1. *Sultan IIIc1-2 (EB III) "Palace G"*

Early Bronze Age III "Palace G" was a huge structure built on three terraces on the eastern flank of the Spring Hill; its original plan has been reconstructed after the excavations of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition by matching data of the previous Austro-German and British ones (fig. 6).¹⁸ A major feature was north/east-south/west terrace-wall W.637 which also supported the upper floor, where the main apartments overlooking the spring and the oasis were presumably located.¹⁹ In the middle terrace, the Italian-Palestinian Expedition identified

XIX, 1; 1957, 176-177, pl. 37b; 1981, 211, pls. 122a-b, 273), as an accumulation of ash in connection with the destruction of the city (Nigro 2006a, 9, fig. 8; 2006b, 369-371).

¹⁴ Analyses of such fill were carried out several times with samples taken in different spots of Area B and Trench III, and all of them confirmed that it is crumbled limestone, as previously assumed (Marchetti - Nigro eds. 1998, 36-39, 81-94; Nigro 2006a, 9; 2006b, 369-371; 2014a, 76; 2020b, 198-199).

¹⁵ Huge natural deposits of such *hawwara* are available on the hills surrounding the tell, to the west and the north.

¹⁶ Some pottery sherds including the cylindrical neck of jug (TS.23.BN.2105/4).

¹⁷ Kenyon 1981, 339-371.

¹⁸ Sellin - Watzinger 1913, 39-42, figs. 18-20; Garstang 1932, 17-18; Kenyon 1981, 344-346; Nigro *et al.* 2011, 586-592, figs. 16, 20; Nigro 2016, 10, figs. 1, 9; 2017a, 159-162; 2019b, 142-144; 2020a, 190-193; 2020b, 203-204.

¹⁹ Nigro *et al.* 2011, 592.

the southern façade of the palace, with a porch, a reception Hall (L.644), with two wooden columns, a raised platform for a canopy for a stool or a chair (fig. 7).²⁰

Behind Hall L.644, there was a slab-paved chamber, L.1160 (fig. 8), devoted to rituals involving waters, where the fruit of a rare dwarf palm was found.²¹

In the last seasons, the excavation continued northwards, where a series of rectangular rooms were arrayed: a staircase (L.1212), a L-shaped corridor (L.1210) and a rectangular room (L.1224). Room L.1224 was characterized by the presence of thick wall to the west (W.1235) flanked by an installation (B.1238) with a basis made of two big stones and two vertical bricks. In the collapse layer a wooden beam (0.25 m thick at least 2.5 m long) and several (at least 12) small beams (between 0.15 and 0.10 m of thickness) (fig. 9) were uncovered; due to the conflagration which ended the life of the building, it was not clear whether the beams were part of a wooden staircase or of the room ceilings.

Pottery from the rear rooms of Hall L.644 illustrate palatial dinner services for communal consumption, including red-polished jugs and juglets (a double-handed specimen has a colander mouth; fig. 10:1), bowls, and plates. A red-polished pitcher (fig. 10:2) belongs to a distinguished ware, characterized by a lustrous red-shining revetment imitating copper prototypes, attested to also in other coeval palaces of Khirbet al-Batraway and Megiddo,²² while another jar bears an incised mark depicting a heron, which reminds the Egyptian *benu* bird (or “phoenix”) (fig. 10:3).²³ Whether it is a potter’s mark or a palatial mark (as those found in Batrawy) it is not clear.²⁴

Other similar finds from the palace testify to its functions and status (fig. 11:3): six different jars with potter’s marks and jar fragments with cylinder seals impressions (fig. 11:8-9);²⁵ a marble mace-head (fig. 11:2);²⁶ a carved and inlaid ivory bull’s head belonging to a

²⁰ Nigro *et al.* 2011, 587-590; Nigro 2019a, 92; 2019b, 142-143. Along the west side of the hall, six jars were arrayed. They illustrate most common types in the palatial assemblage: a pattern combed jar for olive oil (this was suggested by the analysis of burnt traces of its content), a hole-mouth jar for water, a pithos with wheel made neck for cereals; a metallic ware jar for wine (Nigro 2017a, fig. 8:13; 2019a, figs. 14, 16; 2019b, fig. 5; 2020a, 192; 2020b, fig. 10.11). The pattern-combed olive oil jar exhibited an incised potter’s mark at the bottom of the neck, a quite common feature in this class of vessels found in palatial contexts (Mazzoni 1987; Esse 1991; Thalmann - Sowada 2014; Badreshany - Philip - Kennedy 2019; Sabatini 2019; de Miroschedji 2021).

²¹ Moricca *et al.* 2020.

²² Fiaccavento 2014; Medeghini *et al.* 2016; Nigro 2020a, 193; 2020b, 204.

²³ Van den Broek 1972, 14-23.

²⁴ Nigro - Sala 2013, 227, fig.14.

²⁵ A group of jar sealings was also found in the palace, three by the Austro-German Expedition (Sellin - Watzinger 1913, 97-98, fig. 66; Prausnitz 1955, 192; Ben-Tor 1978, 8, 89, figs. 6:34, 6:37, pls. 6:34, 6:36; 1995, figs. 21-22), by Kenyon’s Expedition (Holland 1982, 558, fig. 226:6, pl. VIIb.A, Reg. 1901; Lapp 1989, 7-9; Flender 2000, 298), and one by the Italian-Palestinian Expedition (Nigro 2020a, fig. 15; here fig. 11:8-9). The recurrent subject is the lion catching the gazelle, a quite common pictorial image in Jericho. The glyptic tradition to which the Jericho examples belong is known from the Levantine coast at Byblos (Dunand 1937-1939, 340-341, 383, pl. CXXXIII; 1950-1958, pl. CXCVI; Saghieh 1983, 42, 76-79) and Sidon (Doumet-Serhal 2006, 259-260; Thalmann 2013), pointing to a connection with the coast and the north during EB III (Hennessy 1967, 64, pls. LI-LIII; Ben-Tor 1978, 8-9, 71-75; 1995, 72; Mazzoni 1992, 196-205; Nigro 2010a, 270; 2010b, 467-468; 2016; 2020a, 192-193, fig. 15). A microscopic analysis of the impression suggests that the cylinder was made of hardwood (presumably olive tree timber): 2020b, 203-204, fig. 10.12.

²⁶ Holland 1983, 804-805, fig. 365:5; Sala 2012, 286, fig. 9:4; Nigro 2019a, fig. 17. The elongated pear-shaped maceheads dominate in EB III Jericho (Sala 2010, fig. 9:1-5) as well as in the examples from Bab edh-Dhra’ (Wilkison 1989, 459-460, fig. 263:4).

piece of furniture (fig. 11:1),²⁷ a similar bull-head belonged to a cult vessel found in L.1160 (fig. 11:4);²⁸ a basalt stone potter's wheel (fig. 11:7),²⁹ which recalls those found in the coeval palaces of Khirbet al-Batrawy and Yarmuth;³⁰ a copper axe (fig. 11:5) and a copper dagger (fig. 11:6) with leather-covered wooden handle,³¹ hinting at the role of metals in palatial economy.³² All such finds show concentration of precious goods and specialization of functions ruled by the palace.

3. THE EARLY BRONZE II AND III HOUSES IN AREA F

The excavations in Area F were resumed in 2021 and 2022 in order to face erosion and in preparation for a restoration intervention. Several units were investigated in Sultan IIb (EB II) strata: L.445 and L.904 east, and L.444 west of street L.437, in the lowest northern terrace of the area (fig. 12a-b).³³ Cleaning and excavation in all units produced a deep stratigraphy down to EB II floors (L.2222, L.2216, L.2218), and a great number of finds, objects and tools of *instrumentum domesticum* (fig. 13), as well as pottery (fig. 14) depicting ordinary life in Early Bronze II-III Jericho. The houses were refurbished many times from Sultan IIb to IIc1 and IIc2, carefully plastered, and were not devoid of relatively valuable objects, such as a copper awl, a carnelian bead and a nacreous shell (fig. 15) of the species used as container of eyes make-up.³⁴

²⁷ Garstang 1932, 17-18, pl. XX:a; Garstang 1948, 77-78, pl. XIV:b; Cleveland 1961; de Miroschedji 1993, 34, fig. 4; 2009; Sala 2010. Other two bull's heads come from earlier EB II tombs in Jericho (Kenyon 1960, 125, fig. 40:2, pl. 7:2; Nigro *et al.* 2011, 591-592; Sala 2010). Up to now eight bull's heads have been published from EB II-III Palestine: three from Jericho, one from Khirbet Kerak (Bar-Adon 1962; Greenberg *et al.* 2006, fig. 5.33), one from Khirbet Yarmouk (de Miroschedji *et al.* 1988, 86-87, pl. 48:1, XXIV:1; de Miroschedji 1993, 29-30, fig. 1), two from et-Tell/'Ai, respectively from Sanctuary A (Marquet-Krause 1949, 20-21, pl. XCIV; Ben-Tor 1972, 24-27, figs. 1-2) and from Area L (Callaway 1974, 57-59, fig. 1; 1980, 123-125, fig. 83), one from Arad (Amiran *et al.* 1978, 57, pl. 120:9), and one from Bab edh-Dhra' (Rast - Schaub 1989, 456-459, fig. 262:2). The specimens from Khirbet Kerak, et-Tell (Sanctuary A), Bab edh-Dhra' and the "Spring Hill" at Tell es-Sultan date to the Early Bronze III, while the others can be ascribed to the Early Bronze II (de Miroschedji 1993, tab. 1; Sala 2010, 226).

²⁸ Nigro *et al.* 2011, 591-592, fig. 21. This find is almost identical to another ceramic bull's head found by Sellin and Watzinger (1913, fig. 171). Such ritual vessels, spouted *askoi* and *keranoi*, are sporadically attested to in Southern Levant during the late 4th-3rd millennium BC. Two notable EB III specimens were found at Khirbet Kerak: a ring *keranos* bearing two clay bull's heads, and a zoomorphic libation vessel, modelled in the shape of a bull's or lion's head (Mazar 2001, 452-454, fig. 23.5-6).

²⁹ Dorrell 1983, 559-560, fig. 231:2, pl. 21:b; Nigro 2019a, fig. 15; 2019b, fig. 6:6; 2020b, fig. 10.10:6.

³⁰ Fiaccavento 2013.

³¹ Kenyon 1981, fig. 15:4; Nigro 2016, fig. 11; 2017a, fig. 8.12; 2019a, fig. 15; 2019b, fig. 6:4-5; 2020a, 190; 2020b, fig. 10.10:4-5.

³² Nigro 2019a, 97-98. Moreover, other copper weapons were found in the necropolis: a crescentic axe with two knobs from Tomb A114 (Kenyon 1955; 1960, 179, fig. 66:1; Montanari 2015, 68; Nigro 2017a, fig. 15; 2020a, 192, fig. 14), and a dagger from Tomb F5 (Kenyon 1960, 174, fig. 66:3). Together with the dagger found in the palace, they indicate both that copper import was a business of the city, and that a military class was emerging within the élite ruling over the city (Nigro *et al.* 2011, 592; Nigro 2014b, 41-42; 2020b, 203).

³³ Nigro 2006a, 9-11; 2010a, 88-97; Gallo 2019, 119-124, fig. 9.

³⁴ The discovery of a set of five Nilotic shells (*Chambardia rubens*=*Aspatharia Nilotica*) reflect the interests of an urban elite that viewed privileged access to Egyptian luxury goods as a symbol of high status and used eye makeup as a distinctive element (Nigro 2017b; Nigro *et al.* 2018, 120; Nigro 2024). On the relations between Egypt and the Levant at Jericho: Hennessy 1967; Oren 1973; Ben-Tor 1981; 1986; Davies 1981; Wright 1988; Ward 1991; Bar-Yosef Mayer 2002; de Miroschedji 2002; 2012; Braun - van Den Brink 2008; Sowada 2009; Kafafi 2011; Braun 2011; Müller 2014; Nigro 2014b.

The whole stratigraphy of the area ranges from MB I wall W.431, flanked by EB IVB floor L.2236, on the top (elev. 15.29 m) to the south, to F.2237 in EB II unit L.445 (elev. 11.55 m) to the north.

4. EARLY BRONZE AGE IV FINDS IN AREA B WEST AND TRENCH III

During cleaning activities in Trench III and Area B West, due to the severe erosion of sections of previous excavations, Sultan IIId material came out from a floor (L.2701) preserved in the east section of Trench III, where two complete spouted vessels, a “tea-pot” and a juglet, were found (fig. 16). Both vases, with the distinguished wavy combed decoration on the shoulders, were buried in a dense collapse layer (F.2702) with ashes and charcoals, dating from Sultan IIId2 (EB IVB, 2200-2000 BC). Analyses suggested that the squat “tea-pot” or “milk-pot” was used to serve karkadé (*Hibiscus sabdariffa* tea), even though in the spout traces of olive oil and salt were also found;³⁵ a similar function might have been that of the associated juglet, which is more distinguishably a pitcher, with an elongated upright spout, used for pouring a cold beverage (wine, beer?).³⁶ A 14C determined lentil (*lens culinaris*) from the burnt layer provided the date 2498-2296 BC³⁷.

5. MIDDLE BRONZE AGE FORTIFICATIONS, LATE BRONZE AND IRON AGE REMAINS IN AREAS A, E AND T

Excavations all around the southern foot of the tell involved, from the east to the west, Areas T, A and E. In Area A, excavations were carried out in front of Tower A1, to check its stratigraphy and chronology (Sultan IVa, MB I) and in the sector between the Curvilinear Stone Structure (CSS) to the north-east and Cyclopean Wall W.4 to the south-west, following the two curving structures (fig. 17) supporting respectively the Sultan IVb (MB II) and the Sultan IVc (MB III) ramparts, as well as in Area E inside the CSS and the rampart filling in order to investigate earlier strata concealed under the overlaid fillings of the two ramparts.³⁸

5.1. *Sultan IVa-b (MB IB-II) Tower A1 and the nearby houses in Area A*

Excavations east and west of Tower A1 collected new pottery materials and C14 samples which confirmed the stratigraphy already illustrated with MB IB and MB II floors alternated to destruction layers.³⁹ However, making a difference in what previously thought, some of the most recent floors of the houses erected during MB II⁴⁰ to the east of the Tower (e.g. L.193, F.1954) were in use also during MB III (fig. 18). The latest 14C samples from House A3⁴¹ allow to date the final destruction of the Middle Bronze city in the third quarter of the 16th century BC (1550-1525 BC).

³⁵ Nigro *et al.* 2021, 288.

³⁶ Rossberger 2020.

³⁷ Sample TS.19.TrIII.PR.4, measured by CEDAD Lab n. LTL19569A.

³⁸ For an overview on Middle Bronze Age fortifications at Tell es-Sultan see also Fiaccavento - Gallo 2020 with previous bibliography.

³⁹ Nigro 2006a, 26; Nigro - Taha 2009, 731-734; Nigro *et al.* 2011, 573-577.

⁴⁰ Marchetti - Nigro eds. 2000, 194-195, 207-2016; Nigro 2006a, 33; Nigro - Taha 2009, 743; Nigro *et al.* 2011, 577; Fiaccavento - Gallo 2020, 237, fig. 6.

⁴¹ Marchetti - Nigro eds. 2000, 214-216, fig. 5:9.

5.2. Sultan IVb (MB II) Curvilinear Stone Structure (Rampart I), and Sultan IVc (MB III) Cyclopean Wall (Rampart II) in Areas A and E

During the 2021-2023 seasons new segments of the CSS have been exposed,⁴² investigating strata overlaying it to the east, and leaning on it to the west. West of Buttress W.270, the CSS consists of a solid wall made of limestone boulders (0.7-0.9 m in length and 0.4-0.5 m high) with a slightly battering outer face, which, in the first stretch (W.274, 4.7 m long) has a preserved height of 1.5 m. The following stretch (wall W.1824, 10.15 m long) turns distinctly northwards and climbs slightly one course of blocks (fig. 19).⁴³ Inside (east of) the CSS a collapsed stone wall (W.1813), possibly a late (Sultan V, LB, 1550-1200 BC) repair or the upper part of the original structure, was brought to light in the northern section of the area at 5.95 m of elevation just upon the head of the preserved blocks of W.1824. One meter to the west, another heap of big stones (F.1822) possibly represented the remains of a fallen down structure (fig. 20). South of these remains, and partly buried underneath the eroded filling of the Sultan IVb rampart (R I, MB II), a Sultan IIId (EB IVB) house was uncovered (L.1740), characterized by thin walls (W.1747, W.1749) made by a single line of stones (one with a cup-mark).⁴⁴

South and west of the CSS, in the space between it and the Cyclopean Wall (Area E), several other installations had been uncovered, such as wall W.1703,⁴⁵ the bordering structure flanking street L.1725 running all around the foot of the Sultan IVb (MB II) fortification.⁴⁶ The destruction filling (F.1728) over street L.1725 was cut by pit P.1729, the foundation trench of the Cyclopean Wall (W.4), and overlaid by a successive mudbrick wall, W.1714 (fig. 21), while north of W.1703 a small dwelling was built (L.1706).⁴⁷

Some meters to the west, in front of the protruding Buttress W.270, a destruction layer (F.1727) was excavated under an Islamic period pit, with dense ashy lenses and discharged material dating from the end of Sultan IVb (MB II) and from Pottery Neolithic.

In seasons 2021-2022, a sounding was excavated in the northern half of Square AnIV11 behind the Cyclopean Wall, uncovering a stone filling (W.2004) built on the back of this structure to fill up an inner subsiding and to support another mudbrick structure (W.2154=W.1714), apparently forming the Sultan V city-wall (fig. 22).

On the opposite side of Buttress W.270 and inside it, in square AnIV9, traces of a heavy destruction (F.1826) with fallen down bricks and charcoals were excavated and documented in section. In this stratum, the date of which again falls within an early stage of the Middle

⁴² The CSS has been also investigated in previous season: Marchetti - Nigro eds. 2000, 181-192; Nigro 2006a, 29-30, figs. 44-45; Nigro - Taha 2009, 735-737; Nigro *et al.* 2011, 581-584, fig. 12; Fiaccavento - Gallo 2020, 238-239, figs. 7-8.

⁴³ Nigro - Taha 2009, 735; Nigro *et al.* 2011, 582-583, fig. 13; Fiaccavento - Gallo 2020, 238.

⁴⁴ Nigro *et al.* 2011, fig. 13.

⁴⁵ In the space between the CSS east of W.270 (Wall 5+ W.569), and Wall W.1703, several superimposed structures were uncovered: a Sultan IVb wall (W.1715), overlaying the remains of Sultan IIId (EB IV) house (L.1706+L.1710), which had been built over a Sultan IIId (EB III) house (W.1734), built upon a Sultan IIId (EB II) wall (W.1739), flanked by a bench (B.1744), covering a Sultan IIId (EB IB) collapse filling, where a Line-painted hemispherical bowl was found (TS.11.1743/1) (Nigro *et al.* 2011, 583-584, figs. 14-15). By the way, such finds seem to indicate that the Early Bronze Age town extended to the south beyond the limits of the Sultan IIId (EB III) double city-walls.

⁴⁶ This structure was already partly excavated by K.M. Kenyon, i.e. Wall NFV (Kenyon 1981, pls. 271a, 272a).

⁴⁷ Nigro *et al.* 2011, 583-584.

Bronze Age (late Sultan IVa, MB IB, 1900-1800 BC), the terracotta figurine of a lioness was found in 1999 (fig. 23).⁴⁸

West of Buttress W.270, in front of CSS Wall W.274, a stone platform (W.1716) was uncovered, while further north, between CSS Wall W.1824 and the crest of the Cyclopean Wall, a quite interesting stratigraphy was excavated. From the top, under a heap of collapsed stones (F.1822), there was the rubble fill (F.1745, F.1815) of the Sultan IVc (MB III) rampart (R II). Just west of the CSS, the latest Sultan IVb (MB II) floor was preserved (L.1810), possibly a surface, like platform W.1716, in use during the construction of the Sultan IVc rampart (R II). It was laid upon a compacted collapse layer (F.1818) including big pieces of mudbrick walls (W.1819). The lowest part (F.1823) of this destruction layer consisted of small stones, charcoal, reddish-brown sandy clayey soil with broken mudbricks and scattered ashy lenses. Here, an almost complete jar and a cooking pot were found⁴⁹.

Finally, in 2022-2023, the rubble layer of Sultan IVc (MB III) Rampart II (F.2162) were excavated extending Area E eastwards and northwards upon the CSS in the southern half of squares AnIV8, AoIV9, ApIV9. The filling proved to incorporate stabilizing transversal walls, as well stone materials such as basalt and other tools (including flints) from previous periods.

The crest of the Cyclopean Wall was exposed in Area E from square AiIV10 to AhIV5 for a length of more than 45 m further north. It was beheaded in a long stretch from Area A to E, apparently by plunderers in search of limestone blocks. Further north, except for a superimposition (§ 5.5.), the top of the wall is well preserved, and some emerging stones suggest that it continues along the western side of the tell with roughly the same alignment (fig. 19).

5.3. *Sultan IVa-b (MB I-II) Tower-Gate Jamb W.1340 in Area T*

Another important information concerning the Middle Bronze Age fortification system was obtained in Area T, on the south-eastern flank of the tell,⁵⁰ where, during rehabilitation works carried out in 2023, a massive mud-brick structure appeared (after the fall down of the north section of square T1). An imposing structure in adobe (W.1340; fig. 24a), clamped to an offset built of large blocks of limestone (W.1341) protruding from a defensive line (not visible, under the tourist path). This structure is founded on a stone base (W.1344; fig. 24b) and its building technique is quite similar to that of Tower A1, even though the section shows clearly that it underwent a reconstruction, and the upper part was replaced. Regular bricks of the original wall W.1340 are about 0.52 cm long and have a reddish-brown colour interspersed with a light grey mortar, at least a couple of centimetres thick. The upper part of the structure, on the other hand, is made of bricks of a yellowish-brown colour (W.1342), like those recognized in 1998 on Wall 7 of Area D.⁵¹ Both structures should be provisionally ascribed to Sultan IVa-b (Middle Bronze I-II, 2000-1800-1650 BC), apparently a jamb of the

⁴⁸ Nigro 2006a, 29-30, fig. 46.

⁴⁹ TS.19.E.1823/1; TS.23.E.1823/1.

⁵⁰ Nigro 2020a, fig. 3.

⁵¹ Kenyon 1981, 357-358, pls. 331, 339-340; Marchetti - Nigro eds. 1998, 95-96, figs. 2:1-2:3; 2000, 167-171, figs. 3:1-3:7; Nigro 2006a, 25, fig. 37; Fiaccavento - Gallo 2020, 234.

gate giving access to the spring, as the location seems to suggest, still hidden under the modern road.

5.4. *Sultan V (Late Bronze I) collapsed fortification wall in Areas A and E*

Scanty Sultan V (Late Bronze) remains were identified along the head of the Cyclopean Wall in a layer of *in situ* and fallen down orange mudbricks (W.2154/F.2154a), which apparently belonged to a wall erected on top of Wall 4 in Sultan Va (LB I, 1550-1400 BC) after the final destruction of Sultan IVc.⁵² The same Sultan Va structure (W.1714/F.1714a) was identified on top of the Cyclopean Wall to the east in square AoIV11 (fig. 21). Other parts of this wall made of orange bricks were found collapsed south of the Cyclopean Wall in square AmIV11-12 (F.1787, F.2001), cut through by Sellin and Watzinger's trench (P.1669/P.1779) dug all around the Cyclopean Wall.⁵³

5.5. *Sultan VI (Iron Age IB and IIC) installations in Areas A and E*

Equally interesting is what was uncovered unearthing the head of the Cyclopean Wall 4 at the western edge of Area E. In square AhIV6 a structure was built on the top of Wall 4 in period Sultan VIa (Iron Age IB, c. 1130-960 BC), cutting through Sultan IVb-c (MB II-III) strata. It is a rectangular unit, with the western wall (W.2160) found on the preserved top of Wall 4, made of medium and small size riverbed stones, with a heavy plaster, and two transversal walls, W.2161 and W.2158 (fig. 25). The pottery material from the associated layer of use (F.2156), supports a date in Iron Age IB.

Sultan VIb materials were not found in Area A, while a Sultan VIc (Iron Age IIC)⁵⁴ productive installation with three round silos inside (L.1770) and an underlying chamber (L.1924), was uncovered at the south-westernmost square of the Area (fig. 26).⁵⁵

6. THE MIDDLE BRONZE AGE II-III PALACES AND LATE BRONZE I-II "MIDDLE BUILDING" ON THE SPRING HILL

On the Spring Hill, the widening of the excavations towards the north-east up to Kenyon's Square H II-H IV allowed to continue the exploration of the so-called "Palace of the Shepherds Kings" of Sultan IVb (1800-1650 BC), and of its reconstruction of Sultan IVc (1650-1550 BC), named "Hyksos Palace" (fig. 27).

6.1. *Sultan IVa (MB I) burials*

Sparse remains of simple pottery assemblages belonged to Sultan IVa (MB I) burials were found along the western edge of the excavations in Area G, with diagnostic types such as

⁵² As it was suggested by pottery finds (e.g. TS.23.2001/1).

⁵³ Sellin and Watzinger identified the Late Bronze Age mudbrick city-wall in the northern sectors of the excavation area and east of the Spring of 'Ain es-Sultan (Sellin - Watzinger 1913, pl. 10). Subsequently, J. Garstang identified it at the foot of the western and southern slopes of the site Trench d-d, Square C6, D6, E6 (Garstang 1930, pl. VI; 1931, pl. II; Garstang - Garstang 1948, 112). K.M. Kenyon also identified the wall in some spots inside Trench I, II and III (Kenyon 1981, 110, 169, 219, pls. 109a-110a, 125b, 255b, 272c); Nigro 2023a, 602-605.

⁵⁴ Nigro *et al.* 2011, 578-580, figs. 7-9; Nigro 2020a, 206.

⁵⁵ Iron Age IIB-C (c. 732-680 BC).

Gublite carinated bowls (fig. 28).⁵⁶ The summit of the Spring Hill, in its central sector, was in fact used as burial place in the central decades of the 20th century before the erection of the “Palace of the Shepherds Kings”.⁵⁷

6.2. *Sultan IVb Palace (the “Palace of the Shepherds Kings”)*

The Sultan IVb (MB II) palace had an overall rectangular layout with two main courtyards and rectangular rooms all around.⁵⁸ Its remains were excavated on top of the regularized ruins of the Sultan IIIc (EB III) palace (“Palace G”). One main structure of the palace was terrace wall W.633⁵⁹ which supported to the north the superstructure wall W.1231, with entrance L.1230 preceded by a 2.08 m wide slab-paved step (4 cubits × 0.46 cm, fig. 29), opening towards the cobble paved ramp (street L.1240), also excavated by Kenyon in Square H II, flanking the palace storerooms and stables (east of Kenyon’s HER and north walls HDR-HEN).⁶⁰ Perpendicular to this wall (W.1231) is wall W.1241 which is the westward continuation of the structure that preceded HER of Kenyon’s excavations, named wall W.1239.

Further west and upwards, wall W.1241 joins a major north-south structure built exactly upon Sultan IIIc main “Palace G” wall W.637, called W.1221 (fig. 30), which will remain in use also in Sultan V and VI buildings. The stone foundations of three more walls of the Sultan IVb Palace were identified on the opposite western side of the excavated area, called W.1201, W.1215 and W.1217 (fig. 31).

In Square H II, the erosion of the northern section revealed an array of storage jars containing grain (fig. 32), buried in destruction layer F.2331/F.2332 in room L.2338, between Kenyon’s walls HDR (W.2333) and HED (W.2337). Samples (charred seeds) from the jars (fig. 33) smashed in the collapse layer provided a radiocarbon date for the final destruction of the Sultan IVb (MB II) Palace to 1635 BC.

6.3. *Sultan IVc Palace (the “Hyksos Palace”)*

The overlying reconstructed palace, the so-called “Hyksos Palace”,⁶¹ was explored to the north following wall W.1221a, the Sultan IVc reconstruction of this wall, which connected with a block abutting towards the Spring to the east, made of well-cut stones outlining three

⁵⁶ Respectively jug TS.19.G.2318/1 and Gublite bowl TS.19.G.2318/2.

⁵⁷ Marchetti 2003, 304-310; Nigro 2007-2008; 2009b.

⁵⁸ Nigro 2019b, 147. The plan of the Palace recalls contemporary buildings of Syria-Palestine, the so-called “Courtyard Palaces” (Nigro 1994, 417-419), like Palace II at Ras el-‘Ain/Aphek (Kochavi - Beck 1976; Kochavi 1980; 1981; Nigro 1994, 35-37, pl. 5), the ‘Courtyard Temples’ of Tell el-Balatah/Shechem (Sellin 1926a; 1926b; 1927a; 1927b; Sellin - Steckweh 1941; Toombs - Wright 1961; 1963; Wright 1965; Nigro 1994, 71-89, pls. 12-15) as well as the MB III “Palace I” of Tell el-‘Ajjul (Petrie 1932, 2-3, pls. XLIII-XLV; 1933, 1-3, pls. II, XLVI; Nigro 1994, 112-118, fig. 32, pl. 21) and Palace P at Tell ed-Duweir/Biblical Lachish (Inge 1938, 251; Ussishkin 1974, 272; 1975, 166-168; 1976, 261-263; 1978, 7-10, pls. 2-3; 1983, 105-109, figs. 2-3; Nigro 1994, 107-111, fig. 30, pl. 20); Nigro 2009b, 361.

⁵⁹ Marchetti 2003, 299, 312-316, fig. 7; Nigro 2006a, 25, 27; 2009b, 361-362, figs. 6-7, 9; Nigro *et al.* 2011, 585-586.

⁶⁰ Kenyon 1981, 335-336, 366-369, pls. 195, 197; Nigro 2019b, 147.

⁶¹ This building was partially excavated by J. Garstang who named it the “Hyksos Palace” (Garstang 1933, 41; 1934, 100-101, pl. XV, ns. 80-81; Garstang - Garstang 1948, 99-101; Marchetti 2003, 306; Nigro *et al.* 2011, 585-586), while the north-eastern wing was excavated by K.M. Kenyon (1981, 367-370, pls. 195-197, 336a).

progressive offsets: W.2335, interrupted by staircase L.2327, W.2305 with a length of 3.75 m, wall W.2373 1.15 m long, wall W.2307 2.1 m long, W.2375, abutting again eastwards of 1.15 m (fig. 34). This feature recalls that of Megiddo Palace 2134 of Stratum IX.⁶²

The “Hyksos Palace” also suffered from a violent fire, which combusted mudbricks in spine wall W.1221. The destruction layers sealing the palace (F.2341) provided several 14C samples which suggest that this event occurred about 1530 BC.⁶³

6.4. Remains associated with Sultan V (Late Bronze) “Middle Building”

Despite the violent destruction, the structures of the “Hyksos Palace” were partially reused in the Late Bronze Age, when a new building was erected and to which walls W.2303, W.2333 and floor L.2312 belong. Here, two rooms (L.2334 and L.2336, fig. 32) were excavated, probably annexed to John Garstang’s “Middle Building”.⁶⁴ Ceramic finds (fig. 35) point to a date in the 15th century BC: a fragment of a Cypriot White Slip II milk bowl,⁶⁵ two carinated bowls,⁶⁶ and the pointed handle of a bowl.⁶⁷ The same chronological setting is suggested by the cuneiform tablet found by Garstang and by the majority of his pottery finds.⁶⁸

7. IRON AGE REMAINS ON THE SPRING HILL

Renewed Italian-Palestinian excavations uncovered Iron Age strata in Areas A, B North, G, P, and in Trench I (see tab. 2 for a comprehensive archeological periodization of the Iron Age at Tell es-Sultan). In the last seasons, preserved stratigraphies of Iron I and II were excavated in Area A (§ 5.5.), at the southernmost foot of the tell, and in Area G, on the summit of the Spring Hill.

7.1. Sultan VIa houses in Area G

Sultan VIa (Iron Age I) remains on the summit of the Spring Hill were already uncovered by E. Sellin and C. Wazinger⁶⁹ and thoroughly reconstructed by Helga and Manfred Weippert.⁷⁰ The walls of a house in the same array and orientation already exposed by the German Expedition were excavated in seasons 2019, 2021 and 2022 (fig. 36): four rooms (L.2312, L.2322, L.2324, L.2326), a small chamber (L.2368), and an inner court (L.2360) were delimited by brown mudbricks walls, among which the main north-south wall W.2301,

⁶² Loud 1948, 16, fig. 381; Kenyon 1969, 58; Fritz 1983, 12-13, fig. 6; Kempinski 1989, 62-64, 157-158, figs. 26, 42:7; Nigro 1994, 67-71, fig. 21, pl. 11.

⁶³ In line with the radiocarbon evidence previously presented by Buins - Van der Plicht (1995, 213-220; Nigro 2019b, 149).

⁶⁴ Garstang 1934, 100-102, 108-116, pls. XIII, XIV, XXXI-XXXVII; Garstang - Garstang 1948, 118-120, 147-148; Bienkowski 1986, 71, 90, 101-102, 112-122, figs. 55-56, 59-60; Nigro 1994, 52-55, fig. 8:2; Marchetti 2003, 316-317.

⁶⁵ TS.19.G.2308/1 suggests a date in the second half of the 15th century BC (Popham 1972; Eriksson 2007; Maguire 2012).

⁶⁶ TS.19.G.2302/2; TS.19.G.2302/9.

⁶⁷ TS.19.G.2302/1; Nigro 2023a, 612.

⁶⁸ Garstang 1934, 116, pl. XLIII:1; Marchetti 2003, 316-317; Horowitz - Oshima 2006, 96-97, 231; Nigro 2020a, fig. 27; 2023a, 606-607, fig. 6.

⁶⁹ Sellin - Wazinger 1913, 67-70, figs. 26, 42, pls. 6, 15-16, I-IV.

⁷⁰ Weippert - Weippert 1976, 131-139, fig. 5.

which was built upon the northernmost stretch of Sultan Vb (LB II) W.2333, reusing burnt Middle and Late Bronze bricks.

East of W.2301 there was an open court (L.2320) where a limestone mortar with the basalt pestle inside,⁷¹ was found *in situ* (fig. 37).

In L.2326, against the northern (W.2313) and western (W.2356) walls of the room, an L-shaped bench (B.2329), 0.35 m high, possibly served as seat (fig. 38). An extraordinarily preserved rectangular (28 × 34 cm) reed-mat was found on it (fig. 39). Two radiocarbon samples associated with the filling inside the room (F.2316) provide the date 977± 45 BC,⁷² towards the end of Sultan VIa2 (Iron IB).⁷³ In the same filling a bronze ring and a bronze arrowhead were found (fig. 40).⁷⁴

TELL ES-SULTAN PERIOD		ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERIOD	ABSOLUTE DATES BC
VIa	VIa1	Iron IA	1200/1190-1136
	VIa2	Iron IB <i>Early</i> <i>Late</i>	1136-960
			1136-1077 1077-960
VIb	VIb1	Iron IIA <i>Early</i> <i>Late</i>	960-840
			960-925 925-840
	VIb2	Iron IIB	840-732/722/ 701
	VIb3	Iron IIC	732/722/ 701 -586
VIc	VIc	Iron III	586-535

Tab. 2 - Iron Age archaeological periodization of Tell es-Sultan and chronology.

7.2. *Sultan VIb-c finds in Area P*

During Sultan VIb1 (Iron Age IIA, 960-840 BC), Jericho was in all likelihood a city of the Kingdom of Moab (and it might even be identified with the *Qeriho*⁷⁵ [in Moabite dialect] mentioned in the Mesha Stele,⁷⁶ which had city-walls, gardens and a water reservoir).⁷⁷ As

⁷¹ TS.19.G.53; TS.19.G.55.

⁷² Two charred seeds: LTL19581A: 2857 ± 45=1130-906 BC (91.1 %), and GrM-21280: 2785 ± 45=1044-830 BC (95.4%).

⁷³ Nigro *et al.* 2011, tab 1.

⁷⁴ TS.22.G.150 and TS.22.G.151.

⁷⁵ Nicacci 1994, 227, l.3.

⁷⁶ For a new interpretation of the stele text, see the recent discussions by A. Lemaire and J.P. Delorme (Lemaire 1994; Lemaire - Delorme 2022), and the response of M. Richelle and A. Burlingame (Richelle 2021; Richelle - Burlingame 2023).

⁷⁷ The site is also represented as a Moabite stronghold in the Bible (Judg. 3:12-26) (Nigro 2020a, 202).

already stated, remains of this stage - extensively excavated by the German Expedition at the beginning of the last century - are nowadays sparse, with scanty remains of houses in Area G (§ 7.1.), and other installations in Areas A (§ 5.5.) and B North (on top of EB III city-walls, including a stone staircase to climb the steep flanks of the site).⁷⁸

In Area P, on the highest south-western peak of the Spring Hill, were the Middle Bronze III temple used to be,⁷⁹ in a late Sultan VIb2 (IA IIB) layer (F.1404), a remarkable ostrakon was found, published in the attached note of Rev. P. prof. Émile Puech o.p. (on pp. 97-99).⁸⁰ In the same layer, the incised and impressed handle of a cooking pot was also retrieved (fig. 41). Both elements apparently date back to the 9th-8th century BC, when Jericho was a flourishing city apparently under Moabite control.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Archaeological investigations and restorations interventions at Tell es-Sultan were conducted by the joint Italian-Palestinian Expedition in the past five years during a hard time, interrupted by the corona pandemic in 2020 and 2021 and in a progressively deteriorating political situation in the West Bank (in 2022 the city of Ariha elected a new mayor) and in the World.

Excavations were carried out in 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023 respectively, while restorations in 2021, 2022 and 2023, in four different Areas: Palace G, Area B, Area E and the EB III city-wall at the top of Kenyon Trench II. Restorations were made with traditional techniques and selected antique-like mortars, plasters, and mudbricks were employed in sacrifice layers and walls topping (figs. 2, 7). The aim of this work was to protect the monuments until they are protected by durable shelters, which the rehabilitation project conducted by the MoTA in cooperation with the UNESCO Office of Ramallah will realize. In the meantime, explanatory panels in English and Arabic were updated and renovated.

On September 17th, 2023, Tell es-Sultan/ancient Jericho was inscribed in the World's Heritage List of UNESCO. This was a major achievement of the 26-years long Italian-Palestinian joint project, strongly supported by Rome «La Sapienza» University and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation.

In bringing this preliminary report of seasons 2019-2023 to print, we hold high the hope that the study of the Past, the protection of monuments, and their enjoyment by all in the respect of the Aja Convention and in the spirit of the European Council Nicosia Convention, might be a bold contribution to the building of that right, supportive, culturally honest and law-abiding World that Palestine deserves.

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⁷⁸ Like in Tell es-Sa'idiyeh (Tubb - Dorrell - Cobbing 1996, 35-36, figs. 29-30; Nigro 2019b, 150).

⁷⁹ Nigro 2016, 15; 2019b, 146; 2020a, 201, fig. 22.

⁸⁰ The ostrakon was a body of an Early Bronze Age IVB small jar, reused to inscribe 6 letters. I wish to thank Prof. Puech for having accepted to publish this inscription.

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Fig. 2 - Tell es-Sultan, Areas B and Area B-West with the restored Building B1 (Sultan IIIc2, EB IIIB, 2500-2300 BC) and Main Inner Wall (MIW W.2), from south (Sultan IIIc1, EB IIIA, 2700-2500 BC).

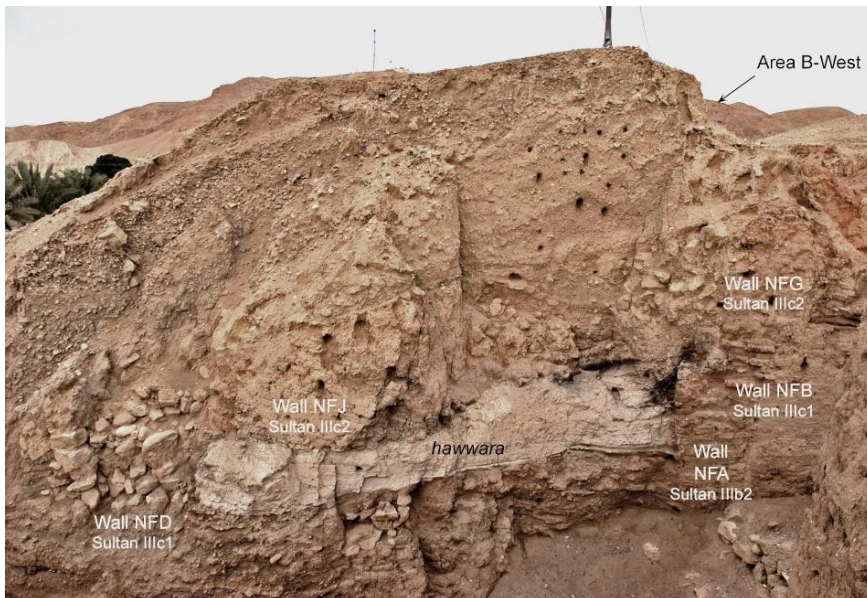


Fig. 3 - Tell es-Sultan, Area B and Trench III: the two phases of the Main Inner Wall (NFB and NFG), of the Outer Wall (NFD and NFJ), and the *hawwara*, from south (Sultan IIIc, EB III, 2700-2300 BC).

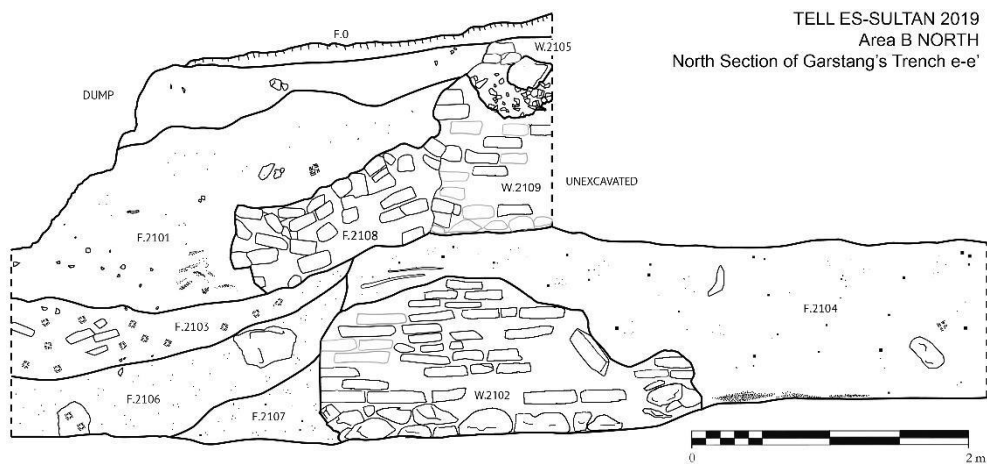
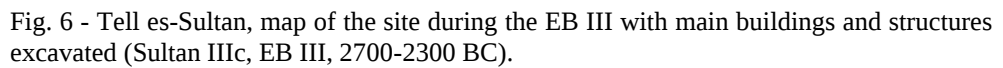


Fig. 4 - Tell es-Sultan, Area B North, north section of Garstang's Trench e-e' (Sultan IIIc, EB III, 2700-2300 BC).



Fig. 5 - Tell es-Sultan, Areas G and H, general view of the palaces area from south.



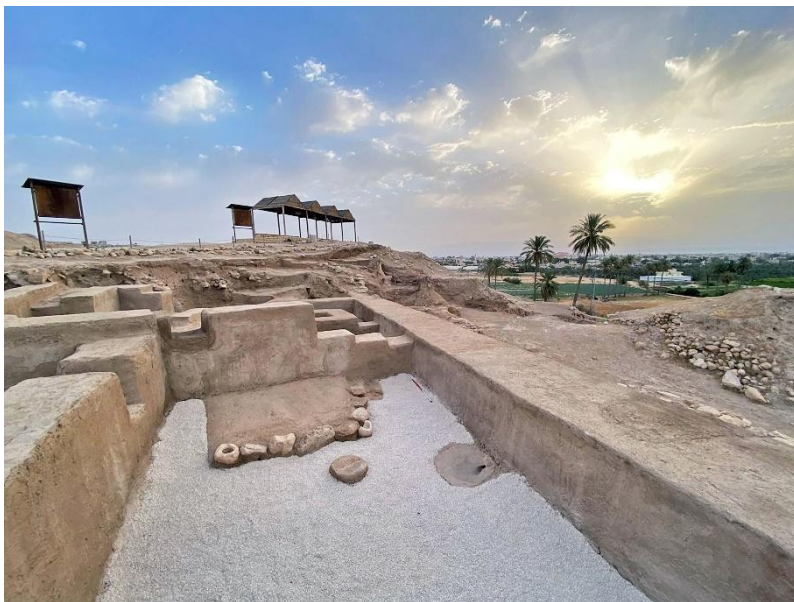


Fig. 7 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, room L.644 and B.645 of Palace G (Sultan IIIc, EB III, 2700-2300 BC).



Fig. 8 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, view of room L.1160 (in the foreground) and L.621 (in the background) of Palace G (Sultan IIIc, EB III, 2700-2300 BC).



Fig. 9 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, view of W.1235 flanked by B.1238 in room L.1224 of Palace G (Sultan IIIc, EB III, 2700-2300 BC).



Fig. 10 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, pottery from Palace G (Sultan IIIc, EB III, 2700-2300 BC): 1) TS.21.G.1224/1; 2) TS.99.G.341/2+4; 3) TS.99.G.334/3.

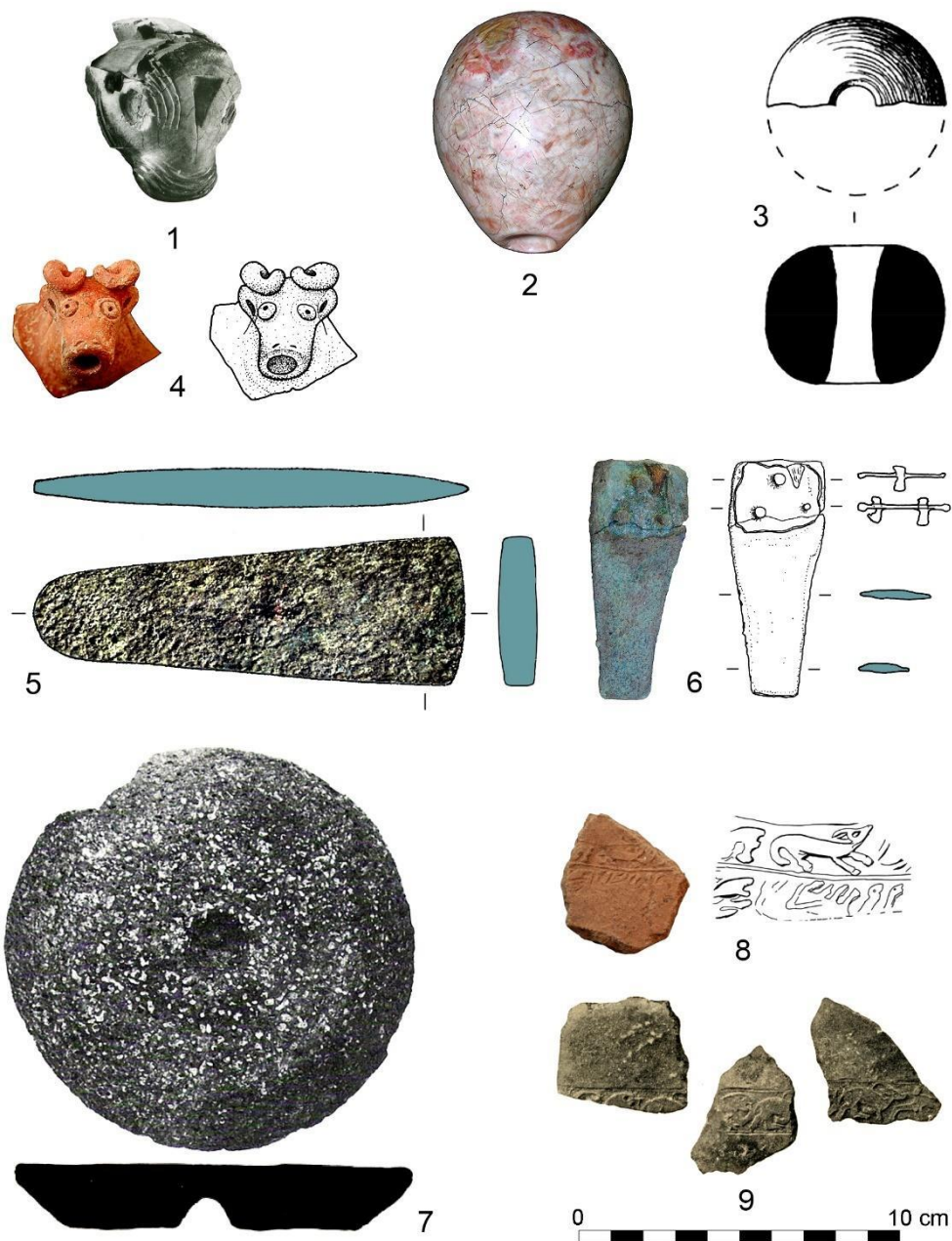


Fig. 11 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, miscellaneous finds from Palace G (Sultan IIIc, EB III, 2700-2300 BC).



Fig. 12a - Tell es-Sultan, Area F, view of street L.437 and of room L.444 from House M in the EBII northern domestic quarter (Sultan IIIb, EB II, 3050-2700 BC).



Fig. 12b - Tell es-Sultan, Area F, room L.444, from south-west (Sultan IIIb, EB II, 3050-2700 BC).

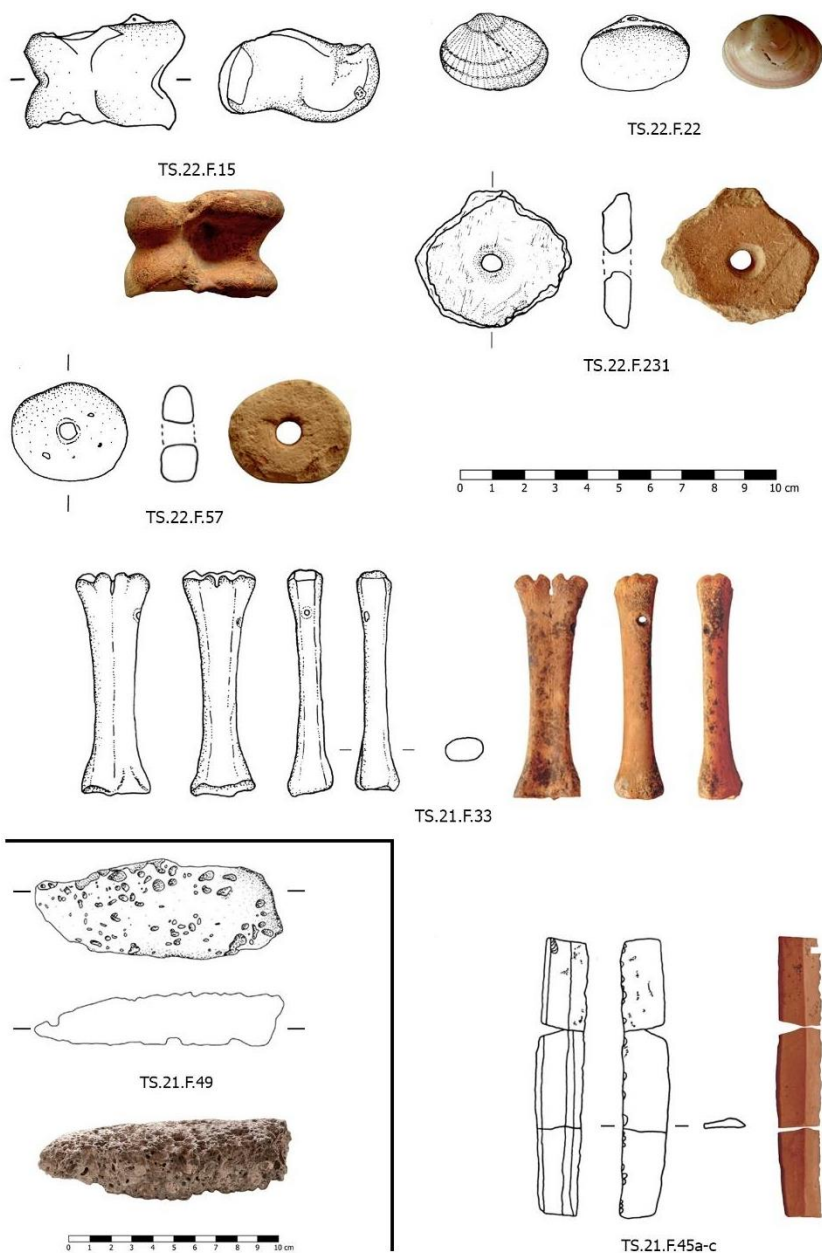


Fig. 13 - Tell es-Sultan, Area F, miscellaneous finds from domestic units (Sultan IIb, EB II, 3050-2700 BC).

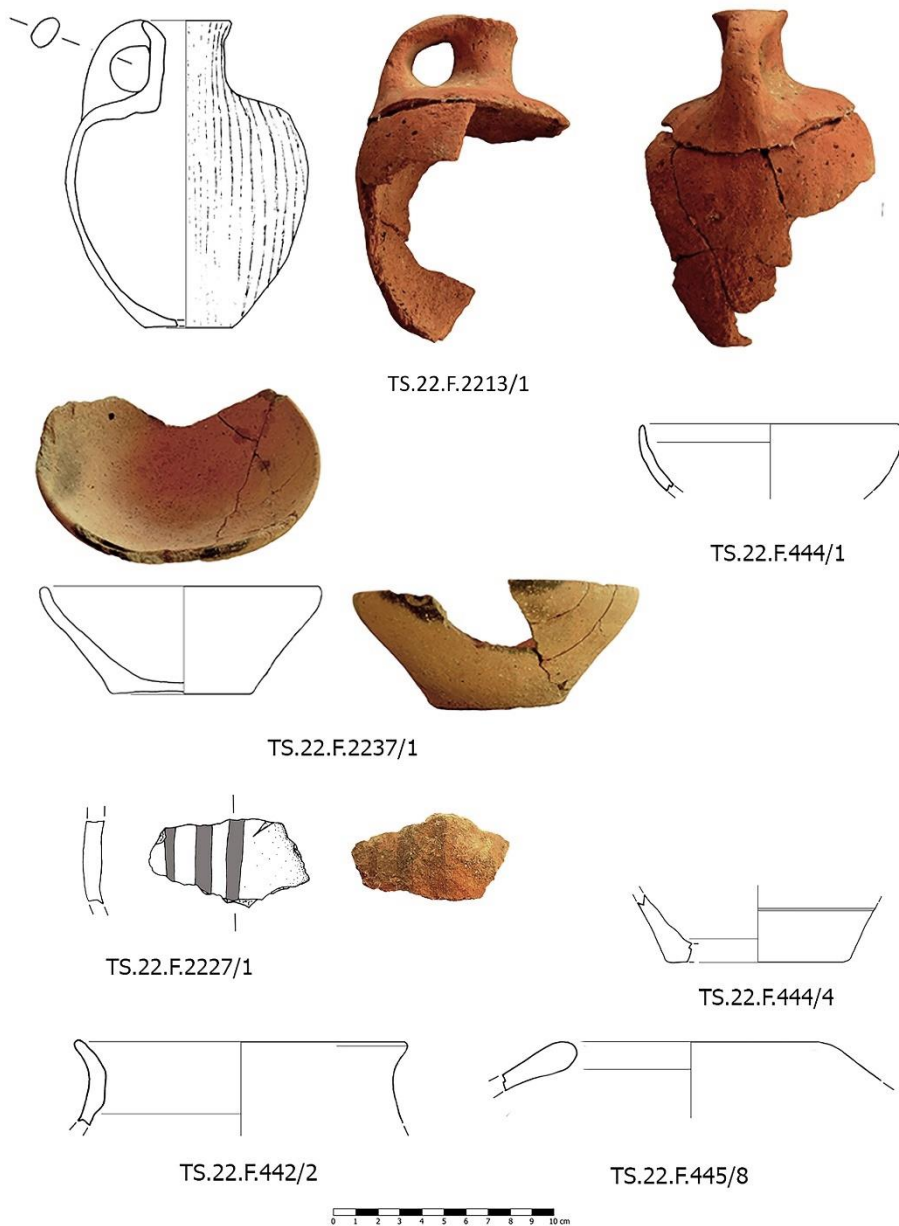


Fig. 14 - Tell es-Sultan, Area F, pottery from the EBII-III northern domestic quarter (Sultan IIIb-c, EB II-III, 3050-2300 BC).

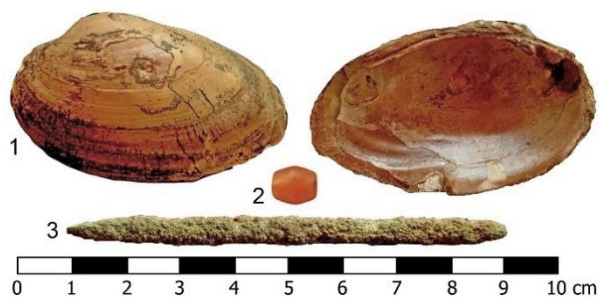


Fig. 15 - Tell es-Sultan, Area F, finds from the EBII-III northern domestic quarter (Sultan IIIb-c, EB II-III, 3050-2300 BC).

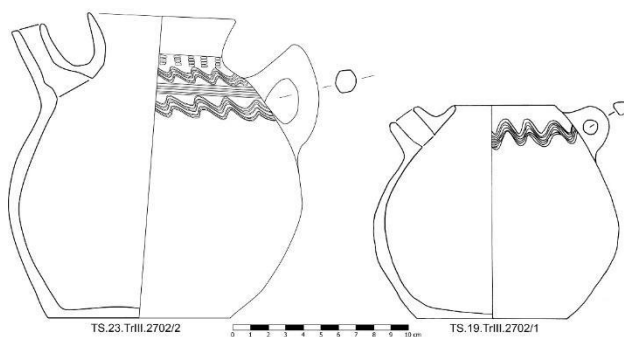


Fig. 16 - Tell es-Sultan, Trench III, tea-pot and juglet with wavy combed decoration found in F.2702 (Sultan IIId2, EB IVB, 2200-2000 BC).



Fig. 17 - Tell es-Sultan, Areas A and E, general view (Sultan IV, MB, 2000-1550 BC).



Fig. 18 - Tell es-Sultan, Area A, view of rooms L.185, L.197, L.186, L.191 and L.20 of House A2 (Sultan IVb, MB II, 1800-1650 BC), and of room L.193 of House A3 (Sultan IVc, MB III, 1650-1550 BC), in the background Tower A1 (Sultan IVa2-IVb, MB IB-II, 1900-1650 BC).



Fig. 19 - Tell es-Sultan, Area E, wall W.1824 of Curvilinear Stone Structure (Sultan IVb, MB II, 1800-1650 BC) and newly exposed top of Cyclopean Wall (Sultan IVc, MB III, 1650-1550 BC), from south.



Fig. 20 - Tell es-Sultan, Area E, view of F.1822, from south (Sultan IVb, MB II, 1800-1650 BC).



Fig. 21 - Tell es-Sultan, Area E, W.1714, from west (Sultan Va, LB I, 1550-1400 BC).



Fig. 22 - Tell es-Sultan, Area E, stone filling W.2004 built against the Cyclopean Wall, from east (Sultan Va, LB I, 1550-1400 BC).



Fig. 23 - Tell es-Sultan, Area E, section inside Butress W.270 with the destruction layer F.1826 from west (Sultan IVa, MBI, 2000-1800 BC), above the terracotta figure of a lioness founded in it.



Fig. 24a - Tell es-Sultan, Area T, Tower-Gate Jamb W.1340 with its stone base (W.1344), offset (W.1341) and upper reconstruction (W.1342), from south (Sultan IVa-b, MB I-II, 2000-1650 BC).



Fig. 24b - Tell es-Sultan, Area T, Tower-Gate W.1340: the stone base W.1344.



Fig. 25 - Tell es-Sultan, Area E, view of the rectangular unit formed by W.2160, W.2161 and W.2158 (Sultan VIa, Iron Age IB, 1136-960 BC).



Fig. 26 - Tell es-Sultan, Area A, room L.1770 with circular bins (T.1775, T.1777, T.1783) and room L.1924, from west (Sultan VIc, IA IIC, 732-535 BC).



Fig. 27 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, general view of the “Hyksos Palace”, from east (Sultan IVc, MB III, 1650-1550 BC).



Fig. 28 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, jug and Gublite carinated bowl from burial T.2318 (Sultan IVa, MB I, 2000-1800 BC).



Fig. 29 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G: entrance L.1230 preceded by the step B.1232 and the cobbler-paved ramp L.1240, and the surrounding walls of the “Palace of the Shepherds King”, from south-east (Sultan IVb, MB II, 1800-1650 BC).



Fig. 30 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, view of W.1221 of the “Palace of the Shepherds King”, from south-west (Sultan IVb, MB II, 1800-1650 BC).

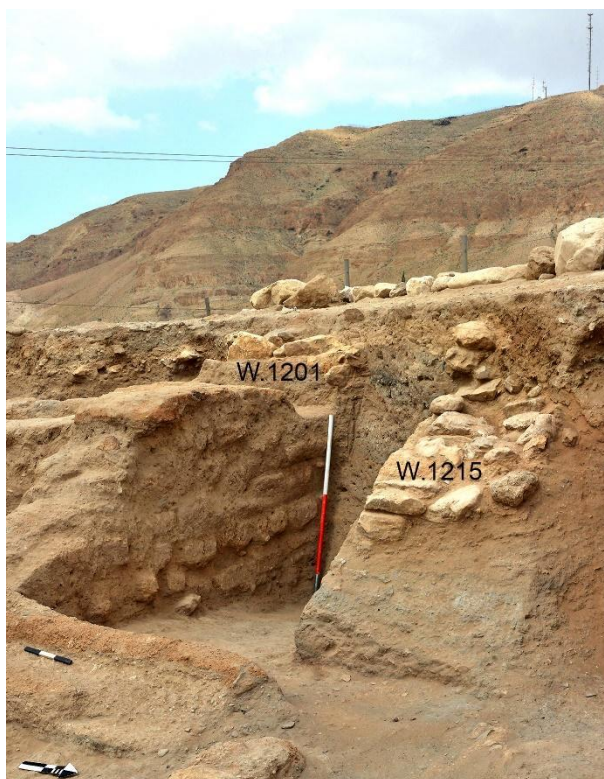


Fig. 31 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, view of W.1201 and W.1215 of the “Palace of the Shepherds King” from north-east (Sultan IVb, MB II, 1800-1650 BC).



Fig. 32 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, northern section of Kenyon's Square H II revealing an array of storage jars in the destruction layer F.2331/F.2332 of the "Palace of the Shepherds King" (Sultan IVb, MB II, 1800-1650 BC).

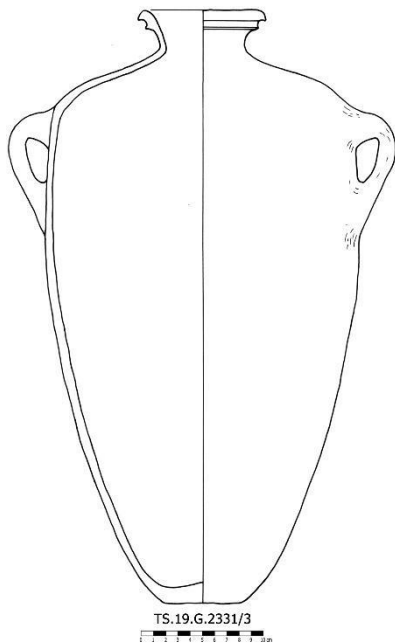


Fig. 33 - Tell es-Sultan, drawing of the storage jars found in the destruction layer F.2331/F.2332 of the "Palace of the Shepherds King" (Sultan IVb, MB II, 1800-1650 BC).



Fig. 34 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, view of stone walls of the “Hyksos Palace” from south (Sultan IVc, MB III, 1650-1550 BC).

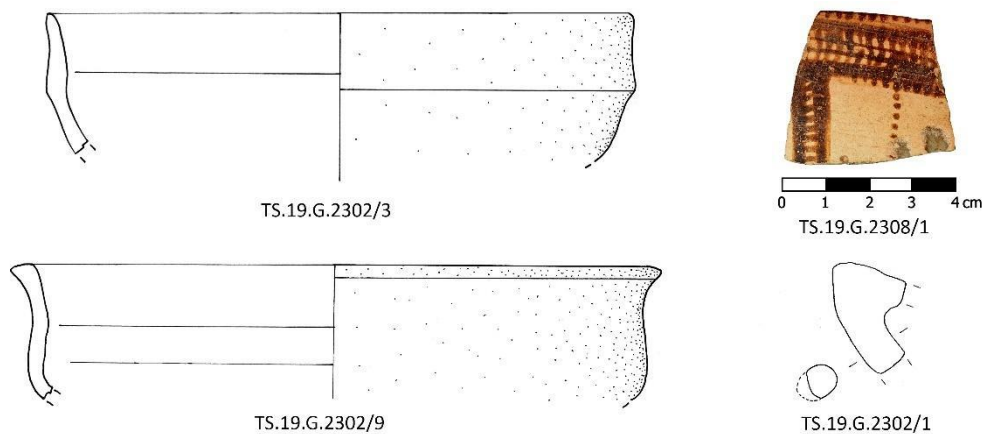


Fig. 35 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, LB pottery found in the palace area probably associated with the “Middle Building” (Sultan Va, LB I, 1550-1400 BC).

Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, Area G

Sultan Vla (Iron Age IB) houses
Italian-Palestinian Expedition
2019-2023

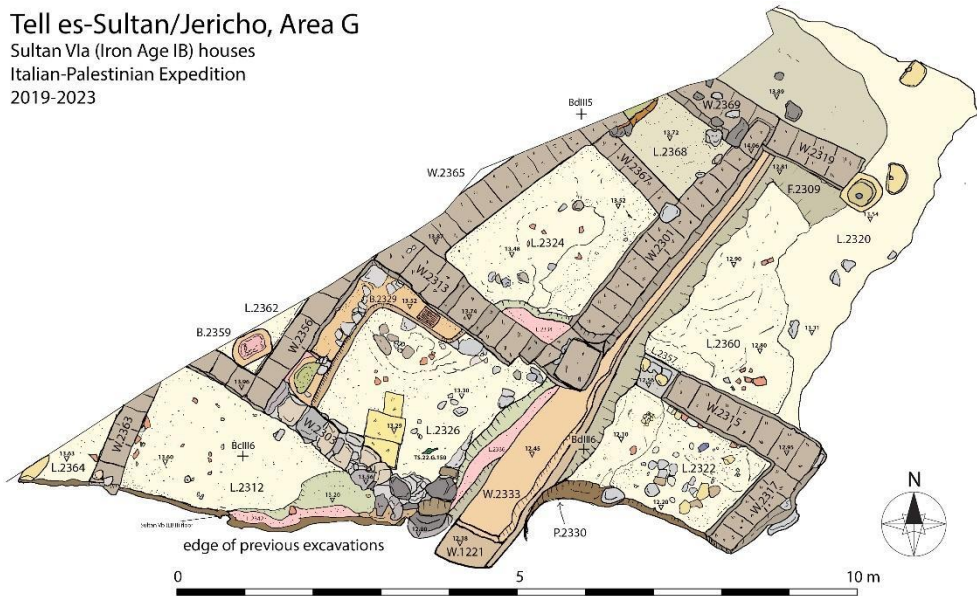


Fig. 36 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, plan of IA IB houses L.2324 and L.2326 (Sultan VIa2, IA IB, 1136-960 BC).



Fig. 37 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, limestone mortar found in situ in L.2320 from south (Sultan VIa2, IA IB, 1136-960 BC).



Fig. 38 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, L.2326 with the L-shaped bench B.2329 and the reed-mat (Sultan VIa2, IA IB, 1136-960 BC).



Fig. 39 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, detail photo of the rectangular reed-mat found on B.2329 (Sultan VIa2, IA IB, 1136-960 BC).

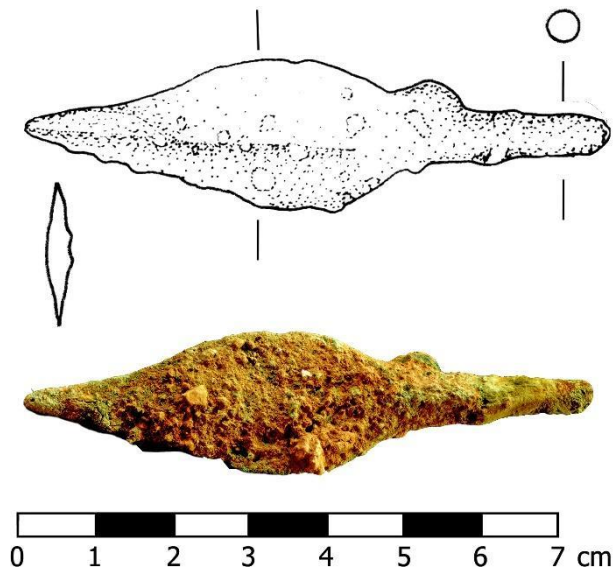


Fig. 40 - Tell es-Sultan, Area G, bronze arrowhead from F.2316 inside L.2326 (Sultan VIa2, IA IB, 1136-960 BC).

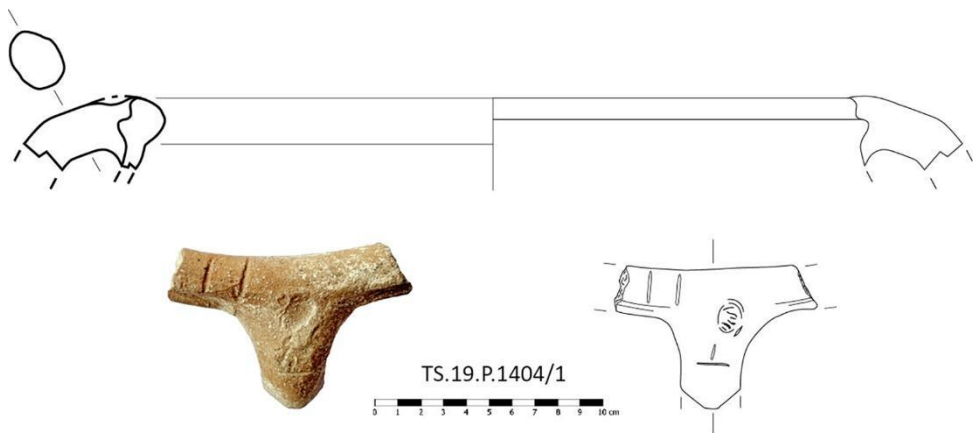


Fig. 41 - Tell es-Sultan, Area P, incised and impressed handle of a cooking pot found in layer F.1404 (Sultan VIb2, IA IIB, 840-701 BC).

الملخص

ما بين الاعوام 2019-2023 استمرت البعثة الأثرية المشتركة لجامعة لسابينزا روما ووزارة السياحة والآثار الفلسطينية بأعمالها في تل السلطان (الشكل 1) على الرغم من جائحة كورونا والأوضاع السياسية الصعبة. كان الهدف من أعمال البحث الأثري والترميم هو إدراج تل السلطان على قائمة التراث العالمي والذي تحقق في أيلول 2023.

استمرت أعمال البحث في الجزء المركزي من التل، في الخندق الأول تم إجراء مسح ضوئي لبرج يعود إلى العصر الحجري الحديث وتم وضع خطة لحالة الحفاظ عليه، وفي منطقة "تل النبع" تم إجراء حفريات أثرية في الموقع بالإضافة إلى ترميم قصور العصر البرونزي المبكر الثالث (سلطان الثالث ج، 2700-2300 قبل الميلاد) والعصر البرونزي الأوسط الثاني والثالث (سلطان الرابع ب-ج، 1800-1650-1550 قبل الميلاد). في القصر G (الشكل 5-11) من العصر البرونزي المبكر الثالث، تم عمل حفريات أثرية للعديد من الغرف الجديدة مع بقايا من المواد والأسقف المنهارة بسبب الحريق الذي أنهى حياة المدينة في الألفية الثالثة قبل الميلاد.

في قصور العصر البرونزي الأوسط الثاني والثالث (الفقرة 6) تم التنقيب عن بقايا جدران المبنى السابق وتم تمييز المرحلتين " قصر الملوك الرعاة" (الفقرات 6.2؛ الأشكال 27، 34) و " قصر الهكسوس" (الفقرات 603؛ الصور 29-33). ربما كان الأخير موقعاً لجسم حجري بارز تم اكتشافه في المربع HIV مع درجات السلم الداخلي. كانت جميع المباني في الواقع متعددة الطوابق وتطل على النبع والواحة.

وشملت أعمال الحفر والترميم أيضاً جدران العصر البرونزي المبكر الثالث (2700-2300 قبل الميلاد) في المناطق B، B الغربي، B الشمالي وفي الخندق الثالث (الفقرة 4؛ الشكل 4-2)، حيث تمت دراسة أنظمة البناء مرة أخرى باستخدام غرف عمياء مملوءة بالحجر الجيري المسحوق، وتم ترميم قسم الجدار المقابل للمبنى 1B من الأساسات الحجرية.

تم استكشاف مستوطنة العصر البرونزي المبكر في المنطقة (F) (الفقرة 3)، حيث تم عرض بعض منازل العصر البرونزي المبكر الثاني (3000-2700) (الشكل 12) وتم جمع العديد من الاكتشافات المثيرة للاهتمام (الأشكال 13-15). استمر استكشاف مدينة العصر البرونزي الأوسط الأول-الثالث (1550-2000 قبل الميلاد) في القطاع الجنوبي من التل، من الشرق إلى الغرب في المناطق T و A و E، مما ألقى الضوء على الهياكل الحصينة المهيبة (الفقرة 5). كان الاكتشاف الأكثر أهمية، في المنطقة T (الفقرات 5.3)، هو جدار من الطوب اللين يبرز من خط الدفاع وربما كان ينتمي إلى بوابة المدينة التي كانت تتيج الوصول إلى النبع (الشكل 24). إلى الشرق، في المنطقة A (الفقرات 5.2؛ الشكل 17)، استمر

البحث في الهيكل الحجري المنحني من العصر البرونزي الأوسط الثاني (1800-1650 قبل الميلاد) وعلى بقايا جدار محفوظ فوق رأس الجدار العملاق من العصر البرونزي الأوسط الثالث (1650-1550 قبل الميلاد) والذي ربما أعيد بناؤه في العصر البرونزي المتأخر (سلطان السادس، 1550-1450 قبل الميلاد؛ الشكل 22).

في المنطقة (E)، تم تتبع رأس الجدار العملاق (الفقرات 5.2؛ الشكل 19) باتجاه الشمال لمسافة 45 مترًا تقريبًا، بينما تم تحديد طبقات الاحتلال السابقة واللاحقة خارج وداخل الهيكل (الفقرات 5.4-5.5؛ الأشكال 20-23، 25-26)، بمواد من العصر البرونزي الأوسط الأول والثاني والثالث وأيضاً العصر الحديدي الأول والثاني ج. كان الجانب الجنوبي الغربي من التل مشغولاً بالفعل طوال حياة مدينة أريحا، سواء في وقت الثقافات السورية الفلسطينية في الألفية الثانية قبل الميلاد، أو في العصر الحديدي، عندما كانت المدينة تحت سيطرة ملوك موآب.

إن أحد التحف الأثرية التي تحمل نقشاً من ستة أحرف، والذي نُشر في المذكرة المرفقة التي كتبها البروفيسور بوتش، يشهد على هذه المرحلة جيداً ويروي تعبيراً شائعاً في الثقافات السامية "الرجل والمرأة" والذي يعني "الكل". إن التحف الأثرية عبارة عن ترميز كتابي: اللغة هي الكنعانية، وربما الموآبية.

كما تنتمي إلى العصر الحديدي الأول (السلطان السادس أ، 1136-960 قبل الميلاد) والعصر الحديدي الثاني (السلطان السادس ب، 840-701 قبل الميلاد) بعض بقايا المساكن التي تم اكتشافها في أعلى تل النبع بالقرب من نقطة مراقبة السياح (الفقرة 7؛ الشكل 36). وتوضح هذه البيانات، المدمجة مع تلك التي تم جمعها سابقاً، أيضاً حياة المدينة عبر القرون، من منظور مستقل عن التفسيرات التوراتية.

إن نتائج الحفريات، التي تم وصفها بالتفصيل في المقال، تقدم غذاءً مهماً للفكر والفهم لتاريخ تل السلطان بين الألفية الثالثة والألفية الأولى قبل الميلاد.

إيمان الطيطي
مدير متاحف فلسطين