

# ARCHÉOLOGIE DANS L'EMPIRE OTTOMAN AUTOUR DE 1900 : ENTRE POLITIQUE, ÉCONOMIE ET SCIENCE

sous la direction de

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In the Shadow of the Bible  
Archaeological Investigations by the *Deutsche Palästina  
Verein* before the First World War :  
Taannek, Megiddo, Jericho, Shechem

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, from an archaeological point of view, Palestine was a British colony<sup>1</sup>. Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie had already directed the first systematic excavation at Tell el-Hesi (1890), reaching the awareness that the *tell* was an artificial hill made by a sequence of superimposed cities. His assistant, Frederick Jones Bliss continued the excavations while Petrie went back to Egypt, a country much more satisfying in terms of findings. In 1894-1897 for the *Palestine Exploration Fund*, Bliss together with the architect Archibald Campbell Dickie resumed the excavations on the Ophel in Jerusalem, started by a German scholar, Hermann Guthe, on behalf of the *Deutsche Palästina Verein* in 1881. A few years later, R.A.S. Macalister excavated at Tell el-Jazari (Biblical Gezer) by cutting it in slices like a ham, dumping in the trenches he had just excavated, and thus losing the vast majority of contextual data.

Perhaps stimulated by the British success in Jerusalem, as well as by the fierce debate among scholars about the historicity of Biblical narratives (the so-called *Bibel und Babel Querelle* in Germany), the *Deutsche Palästina Verein*, one of the earliest cultural institution operating in Palestine, in the year 1900 started a program of archaeological investigations on famous Old Testament sites. The DPV was strongly supported by the Prussian government, not only as a natural outcome of the Lutheran concern towards the land of the Bible, but, of course, with specific political aims : 1. to be visibly present in Jerusalem, where all of the major countries of the time had their influent representatives; 2. to strengthen the German links with the Ottoman Empire, by setting another stronghold in

<sup>1</sup> On the birth and growth of Palestinian Archaeology in these years see MOOREY 1991.

an area which was strategic for communications and trade and where the conflict with the United Kingdom was already evident.

It is, perhaps, not by chance that one of the two personages we will deal with, Gottlieb Schumacher, was an engineer working to the construction of the great railway connecting Arabia to Anatolia, a kind of German response to the Suez Isthmus.

This page of Palestinian archaeology is vividly illustrated by the abovementioned personage, Schumacher, and by an Austrian Biblical scholar, Ernst Sellin, who taught theology in Vienna, and was one of the most eminent members of the DPV, since its foundation. The personalities of these two pioneer archaeologists are reflected in the first two sites chosen for their investigations, Tell Tannek and Tell el-Mutesellim. Both were meaningfully located in the Esdraelon Valley, not far away from Haifa, where Schumacher lived, in an area interested by the construction of the railway, at two important crossroads of the Palestinian network of communication of all times (fig. 1).

Moreover, and perhaps, more important, both were famous Biblical sites. Tell Tannek which has preserved in its modern Arab name the echoes of its Biblical name, Taanach, and Tell el-Mutesellim, already identified by Robinson with Biblical Armageddon. The Biblical appeal of both sites was thus decisive not only because of the ideologically and religiously oriented perspective of the excavators, but, more substantially, for a more trivial reason. These were the only sites suitable to be funded by the Ministry of Cult, the major German institution supporting the DPV. As regards private funding, the Biblical relevance of the sites was all the same the only chance for getting money, as explicitly and honestly admitted by Sellin<sup>2</sup>.

#### Tell Tannek/Taanach (1902-1904)

The project of the systematic excavation of a "Biblical" tell by the DPV is due to Ernst Sellin. Schumacher had already spent a decade surveying Transjordan and excavating at Jerash, however, without a real interest in digging. When Sellin arrived in Palestine in 1899, instead, he had in mind to dig an outstanding Biblical site. He traveled the country with the eyes of a Biblical scholar and on April 11<sup>th</sup>, while he was midway between Jenin and Tell el-Mutesellim, he saw Tell Tannek (fig. 2). He was struck by the dimensions and shape of the site, at that time more isolated than today (nowadays the Carmel range is cov-

<sup>2</sup> See the introduction to the first report on the excavations at Tell Tannek (SELLIN 1904a).

ered by a pine-tree forest planted by Israeli authorities), and a visit on its summit confirmed his impressions, since the ruins of an Islamic fortress were clearly visible. Many archaeologists have experimented today that to start a new expedition is a terrible task, and it is indeed, but not more difficult that it was at that time. Sellin had first to raise funds. It took one year to obtain a sum of 50,000 *Krones* by the Ministry of Cult. In the meantime, he also asked some mecenates, gaining extra funding. Then the excavation permit had to be asked to the Ottoman authorities. The Austro-German Foreign Minister sent the request to the Sublime Porte on January 1901. It was first examined by the Director of the Ottoman Museum, H. E. Hamdy Bey. He needed data from Beirut, which was the seat of the Vali in charge of Palestine. The latter had to ask the Kaimmakam of Jenin, who ruled over Tell Tannek. As it often happens in the Near East, eventually Sellin was compelled to travel to Beirut and even to Jenin to obtain all permissions. After three years, on January 1902, the Firman was ready and he could leave to the Holy Land. He arrived in Haifa and set up his staff (including an Italian treasurer, Nicola Datodi), bought some railway barracks and recruited 150 workers (50 men and 100 women)<sup>3</sup>. The dig eventually started on march 10<sup>th</sup>, roughly three years after Sellin visited Tell Tannek for the first time, and lasted three months.

The strategy adopted in this early archaeological enterprise is very interesting, because it influenced many Palestinian excavations in following years. A general survey of the site and its surroundings was completed in the first days. Then, with a plan in his hands, Sellin decided to investigate the northern, western and central areas of the site. Two major trenches crossing the summit of the tell (in the area of the *Arab Burg*) were excavated, oriented according to the north. Exact limits of excavation were not fixed, depending upon monuments found and ramps excavated by workers for carrying out the earth. The investigation of the northern part of the tell was prosecuted with two more north-south 60 m long trenches, cut at regular intervals of 25 m on the east-west axis (fig. 3).

Important buildings uncovered during the first season were : 1. The *Nordost-burg*, a kind of advanced fortification built on a lower terrace in the corner of the site, possibly where a gate was located during Iron II<sup>4</sup>. 2. The *Westburg*, a residency erected on top of the western ramparts at the beginning of the Late

<sup>3</sup> A detailed account of his preparation works is given by SELLIN (1904a). It is noteworthy the employ of technical equipment from mine companies engaged in the railway construction.

<sup>4</sup> For a re-evaluation of this building see NIGRO 1994a.

Bronze Age<sup>5</sup>. 3. A cult area south of the summit, which was re-explored by Paul W. Lapp in the 60ies<sup>6</sup>.

In the second season, during Spring 1903, Sellin cut the site with east-west trenches, in order to connect the north-south trenches of 1902. In the southern half of the tell, he continued the main north-south cut. The most interesting find was from the northern area, where an underground "cistern" was explored, without understanding its real function: it was a monumental hypogeum, with a *dromos* roofed with huge limestone slabs, surely belonged to the palace of the local king (fig. 4). Not far from this tomb, a group of twelve cuneiform tablets was found in a clay chest (in the same room an Egyptian alabaster vessel was retrieved). These tablets still represent the largest *corpus* of cuneiform documents ever found in Palestine<sup>7</sup>. The total number of cuneiform texts discovered in Palestine over more than a century of excavations is, in fact, around fifty (including the recent retrievals of Aphek and Hazor).

The Tell Taannek texts are written in Babylonian with some West-Semitic forms, and shed an intense light on a very short time span, i.e. the years following the battle of Megiddo in 1468 BC, when Thutmose III defeated a confederation of Syro-Palestinian states, previously under Mitanni control. At that time Taannach was ruled by a king with a Khurrian name, Talwashur, who received letters from his vassal, the king of Hazor, Ekhli-Teshup (this is quite unexpected, since the latter previously was the major city-state of the region), the king of the nearby Megiddo, but also by Amenhotep II, the son of Thutmose III, resident in Gaza, who visited the conquered Megiddo, as the Crown Prince.

In the last season, which took place in August 1904 (since in the meantime excavations at Tell el-Mutesellim had started and the *Deutsche Palästina Verein* had focused its interests on the latter site), a major wall of the palace of the ruler of Taannach was discovered, in the area just east of the hypogeum<sup>8</sup>. Although carried out with imprecise techniques, the excavations of Tell Taannek were an undisputed success, testified to by the fact that the datings of the *Westburg* and of the palace were rightly established, as well as those of the *Ostburg* and other Iron Age monuments, among which the terracotta incense-burner found in a cult installation to the south. Sellin missed, however, the Early Bronze Age stratum, which the following American expedition of the 60ies demonstrated to be relevant<sup>9</sup>, but he could not know that material culture horizon at his time.

<sup>5</sup> NIGRO 1995, 163-166, pl. 28; NIGRO 1996, 46-48, fig. 8:1.

<sup>6</sup> LAPP 1967a, 17-21.

<sup>7</sup> GLOCK 1983.

<sup>8</sup> SELLIN 1906.

<sup>9</sup> LAPP 1964; 1969.

In spite of these amazing findings, after two seasons Sellin considered completed the exploration of Tell Taannek. This probably depended, from the one side, on Gottlieb Schumacher's involvement at Tell el-Mutesellim, where the latter was director of the excavations (instead of overseer of workers on behalf of Sellin as he was in Tell Taannek), from the other, on the fact that the main goal of the DPV was to dig Israelite remains, and, from this point of view, Tell Taannek had been relatively scanty<sup>10</sup>.

Though interrupted after only three seasons, the exploration of Tell Taannek should not be underestimated in the history of the archaeology of Palestine, because Sellin promptly published his results in the *Denkschriften der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften*<sup>11</sup>. This publication, with plans, drawings, and accurate descriptions, would have set a standard for the rapidity and the precision of archaeological reports in the following years. For example, in comparison, the book by F. J. Bliss on Petrie's excavations at Tell el-Hesi, *A Mound of Many Cities*<sup>12</sup>, is not a scholarly work. The scientific approach of Sellin was mainly due to his training as a classical archaeologist, but also to the importance attributed to architectural remains by the German school. The presence of an architect as professional surveyor on the site was a basic achievement of these pioneer excavators.

#### Tell el-Mutesellim/Megiddo (1903-1906)

Although "Taannach by the waters of Megiddo" was the site of the battle celebrated in the Song of Deborah (Judges 5:19), when Barak defeated the coalition of Iabim king of Hazor, according to the Bible, Megiddo was a city fortified by Salomon, and this did make a difference<sup>13</sup>. In a single year, Schumacher was able to forward the DPV to Megiddo, leaving Sellin the time of studying the exceptional finds of Taannach, as it is shown by the second report *Eine Nachlese auf dem Tell Ta'annek in Palästina*, published in 1906. Schumacher, thanks to his personal knowledge of the Esdraelon Valley, knew very well that Tell el-Mutesellim was an extremely promising site. This huge and dominant mound was to achieve again in Palestinian archaeology the central role it had had in

<sup>10</sup> In this perspective, major results were obtained by the following American Expedition: LAPP 1967b.

<sup>11</sup> SELLIN 1904a; the complete series of preliminary reports of Sellin's excavations at Tell Ta'annek is the following: SELLIN 1902a; 1902b; 1903; 1904a; 1904b; 1906.

<sup>12</sup> BLISS 1894.

<sup>13</sup> See WIGHTMAN 1984; 1985; and especially 1990.



antiquity. For digging Megiddo, he had obtained the support not only of the DPV, but also of the *Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft* and of the *Kaiser* himself.

The exploration started on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1903 with 50 to 200 workers employed and continued until the end of May. A topographic map of the tell surroundings was ready in a few weeks (fig. 5). Then a 20 m wide trench was dug through the tell from north to south, uncovering many impressive remains, which may be summarized as follows:

1. A shrine, thirty years later re-excavated by the archaeologists of the Oriental Institute of Chicago, who didn't recognize its religious function and called it Building 338<sup>14</sup>;

2. A huge palace, called *Nordburg*, which thanks to the half excavated by the Chicago Oriental Institute Expedition, can be dated to the Middle Bronze II (fig. 6)<sup>15</sup>, and is the earliest MB palace of Area BB, after the "non urban" interval of EB IV;

3. Another public building, called *Mittelburg*, possibly a palace, where two vaulted tombs were discovered, surely belonging to a princely necropolis. The latter is an outstanding discovery, especially because one of these underground chambers was found with the burials and their funerary assemblages still *in situ*<sup>16</sup>. Their belonging to a palatial compound is demonstrated not only by the monumental masonry of the vaults, but also by the comparisons with the vaulted tombs in the Royal Palace of Ugarit, as well as that just described above, discovered by Sellin at Tell Taannek. The assemblages of these tombs thus deserve a special examination.

In the area of the *Mittelburg* the excavation was enlarged to 30 meters. Just south part of a large enclosure was brought to light, which was called "Palace" and actually was the precinct of Building 1723, a monumental residency dating back from the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>17</sup>. The most striking feature of this building were the dressed blocks employed in its walls, which recalled the ashlar masonry known from the Bible as a distinguished technique introduced by Salomon thanks to the Phoenician craftsmen and architects he borrowed from the king of Tyre Hiram. This interpretation and dating was put forward by Schumacher

<sup>14</sup> On Building 338 see: SCHUMACHER 1908, 110-124; USSISHKIN 1989; NIGRO 1995, 229-238.

<sup>15</sup> Discovered in 1904 by SCHUMACHER (1905a; 1905b; 1906a; 1906b; 1906c; 1908: 37-50, tav. XIA-B; 1908: 37-50, tav. XIA-B; BENZINGER 1904), this palace was successively excavated by the American archaeologists of the Oriental Institute of Chicago FISHER (1929, fig. 11), GUY (1931, figs. 14, 17) and LOUD (1948, 87-92, fig. 398). See also KEMPINSKI 1989a, fig. 42:3, who called it "Palace 5001a", NIGRO 1992; NIGRO 1995, 43-48.

<sup>16</sup> SCHUMACHER 1908, 75-77.

<sup>17</sup> LAMON - SHIPTON 1939, 10-27, figs. 12, 21-30, 35; NIGRO 1995, 219-229.

clearly under the Biblical influx, in spite of the discovery, in the layer of use of a monumental entrance to this enclosure of a stamp seals with a lion and the inscription of "Shema servant of Jeroboam", to be identified with the second bearing this name, who reigned over Israel at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>18</sup>. This seals remained one of the better example of Israelite glyptic and was chosen for the cover page of the final report.

While the method of excavation was for many extents more rapid and thus more inaccurate than Sellin's one, Schumacher had the same rapidity in publishing his results. In 1908, only two years after the end of his huge excavation, a volume was published, which included the architectural remains and some of the finds.

Preliminary reports were also systematically published during the dig on *Mitteilungen und Nachrichten des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, with contributions of his assistants J. Benzinger and C. Watzinger. The latter, who was a skilled classical archaeologist published the finds twenty years later, in 1929<sup>19</sup>, correcting several erroneous attributions in the light of the discoveries made in Palestine in the 20ies and of his own experience, gained on sites such as Tell es-Sultan. He, however, could not avoid some mistakes, because he did not recognize the EB strata in the sequence of the site.

From a less apologetic and more up to date point of view, the excavations at Megiddo were an example of systematic removal of strata with scanty documentation except for architecture. The perfect German organization of the engineer Schumacher provoked a too fast and wide removal of earthen layers and finds, without and adequate control by archaeologists.

Excavations were carried out for three months in Spring and Autumn, producing a mass of materials, which was preserved only in part. The documentation was careful and is roughly reliable, but limited to those monuments, which were made on stone foundations or basements, because almost all of the mud-brick superstructures were lost. Plans accurately reproduce arbitrary strata, often with buildings belonging to different periods plotted together.

### Tell es-Sultan/Jericho (1907-1909)

As soon as he finished the publication of Taanach, Sellin was ready to face the challenge of Schumacher, by starting a new systematic exploration on a

<sup>18</sup> Contra USSISHKIN 1994, who attributes it to Jeroboam I.

<sup>19</sup> WATZINGER 1929.

worldwide renown Biblical site, carefully planned in the light of his previous experience. He again obtained the support of the DPV for the expedition to Tell es-Sultan, a major site in the Lower Jordan Valley, identified with ancient Jericho, a city without rivals after Jerusalem as regards Biblical fascination.

Sellin had visited 'Ain es-Sultan – the perennial spring which the Pilgrim of Bordeaux in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and other following sources identify with the Spring of Prophet Elisha – during his first trip to Palestine in 1899. He had noticed the tell, but he knew that it had been explored in 1868 by Chaptain Charles Warren on behalf of PEF, who concluded that there were no archaeological remains on the hill.

Actually, at the end of the Tell Taannek excavations, Sellin had first made some soundings at Tell Dothan, with the help of the major of Jenin, Hafis Pacha, and then he had been informed that during the construction of the 70 m long pool at 'Ain es-Sultan, the major of Ariha had removed earth and stones from the nearby tell, and impressive mudbrick walls had appeared. These walls, still visible today, belong to the earliest Middle Bronze Age fortification of the site, excavated by the British John Garstang in 1932, and re-explored by the Italian-Palestinian Expedition in 1998<sup>20</sup>. Garstang there uncovered a huge tower, opening in front of the Spring during Middle Bronze I. A wall protruding from the tower was part of the site fortification; later on in the Middle Bronze Age a new defensive system was built and the spring was included into the urban area.

The discovery of this mudbrick wall was the proof that the tell was an archaeological site, and gave Sellin the impulse to pursue his project of excavating it. He quickly obtained the excavation permit, thanks to the help of the Director of the Ottoman Museum in Istanbul, who credit him of great esteem due to the results obtained in Tell Taannek (Sellin had sent all of the Taannek finds to Istanbul. This is of the greatest interest, as these pioneer excavations were not oriented to gather precious finds, as those carried out in Mesopotamia : Biblical archaeology was aimed at ideological results more than at collecting treasures).

When he got the Firman, Sellin was still waiting for an official support to the expedition. He did not want to loose time, so he started a preliminary survey of three weeks (5<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> April 1907) with private funding, donated by rich industrial family of Germany and Austria (I just mention Mr. Krupp and Mr. Dreher, respectively). With the help of an architect, Niemann, he made a detailed topographic map, which was ready in January 1908. In the meantime, he had obtained the support of the *Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft*, which appointed to Tell

<sup>20</sup> GARSTANG 1932, 15-17; MARCHETTI – NIGRO 2000, 165-171.

es-Sultan another architect, F. Langenegger from Dresden, and his skilled classical archaeologist, the already mentioned Carl Watzinger from Rostock.

The excavations at Tell es-Sultan started on January the 2<sup>nd</sup> lasting until April the 8<sup>th</sup>, with only four days of interruption due to rain. Two-hundred workers (men and women from Ariha) were employed. The removal of the earth was made faster by a small railway, 100 m long, with two wagons, bought by Sellin in Haifa, to be joint with 200 m and 4 wagons that he borrowed from the DOG archaeological expedition to Baalbek in Lebanon.

The main focus of the excavations was the exploration of the city-walls, which were uncovered all around the site. On top of the tell there were the crests of the Early Bronze II-III mudbrick city-wall (fig. 7), while at the bottom the Austro-German expedition brought to light a cyclopean stone wall (fig. 8) supporting the Middle Bronze III rampart, in use between 1650 and 1550 BC. Although they thought that it was a freestanding structure, their documentation was so precise that today it is possible to confirm data recently obtained in Area A by the Italian-Palestinian Expedition, where it was proved that this supporting wall was concealed within the rampart filling at its foot<sup>21</sup>.

A second season took place from January 15<sup>th</sup> to April 2<sup>nd</sup> in the following year 1909, during which two main trenches cutting the site east-west were excavated south and north of the Spring Hill. Also the western slope of the Spring hill was dug, bringing to light a group of rooms (fig. 9) possibly belonging to the Early Bronze Palace, a building identified in Area G in 1999<sup>22</sup>.

The exploration of the city-walls allowed to plot all of the preserved rectangular fortification of Early Bronze III, and led to the discovery of an abutting tower in the northwestern corner of the city (fig. 10).

At Tell es-Sultan Sellin faced a new challenge : large architectural remains were made of mudbricks, and they cannot be removed as it happened in Tell Taannek. The workers of Ariha were able in digging bricks made of straw and mud, since their traditional architecture was still completely based upon this building material, the archaeologists and their workers were thus able not only to uncover almost all of the city-wall encircling the summit of the tell, but also to bring to light a domestic quarter to the north (fig. 11), the exploration of which was completed by the Italian-Palestinian Expedition (Area F, fig. 12)<sup>23</sup>.

Noteworthy is the periodization of the site put forward by Sellin and Watzinger, which was carefully established basing upon macro-stratigraphic

<sup>21</sup> USSISHKIN 1989b; MARCHETTI – NIGRO 1998, 141-145; MARCHETTI – NIGRO 2000a, 217-221.

<sup>22</sup> MARCHETTI – NIGRO 2000b, 84.

<sup>23</sup> MARCHETTI – NIGRO 2000a, 15-82.

observations. The earliest period was called "Prehistorische Epoche"<sup>24</sup>, to which are attributed structural remains dating from the Early Bronze II. Quite interesting is a 5 m thick mudbrick structure brought to light in the north-western corner of the site below the double Early Bronze III city-wall, called "Massiv", belonging to the earliest urban fortification at Tell es-Sultan (Fig. 13)<sup>25</sup>.

The second historical period was called, with a Biblical loan, "kaananitische", including structures and materials from the Early Bronze Age.

With amazing sensitivity Sellin and Watzinger were also able to distinguish the material culture remains of a late Canaanite phase, called "spätkanaanitische", namely our Early Bronze IV, which attests to the occupation of the site in this not-urban phase of the history of Palestine. Their findings are now of basic importance, since both the second British Expedition and the Italian-Palestinian Expedition have recognized the Early Bronze IV occupation of the tell, offering a stratified sequence to compare with the extraordinary findings made by K. M. Kenyon in the contemporary necropolis<sup>26</sup>. It has to be stressed that the German archaeologists had no doubt – without any preconceiving although this material culture was completely unknown – in considering it a later *facies* of the "Canaanite"/Early Bronze Age culture. The problems concerning EB IV interpretation arose later, with the introduction by W. M. F. Albright of the denomination "MB I" and by Kenyon of "Intermediate Early – Middle Bronze Age". Nowadays, the term Early Bronze IV has gained an almost general consensus, because it better fits the evidence of the cultural development of the whole Syro-Palestinian region.

The following period, called "Israelitische" by Sellin, actually corresponded to the mature Middle Bronze culture. In this case the misunderstanding sounds quite incomprehensible, because the Austrian scholar had already rightly identified this cultural phase at Tell Taannek, with the help of cuneiform tablets. There was, however, a problem, and this was the concordance with the Bible. Being Jericho a Biblical site, one should not expect to exploit only the positive outcome of this status, and Sellin had to cope with Joshua and his trumpets. The monumental mudbrick Early Bronze city-wall, clearly destroyed by a violent fire, were obviously deemed Canaanite because of the Bible [they should be the ones tumbled down for the trumpets], consequently the cyclopean stone wall, which was rightly attributed to the following period (and this was not self-

<sup>24</sup> Many flint tools and blades were found, thus hinting at a substantial prehistoric occupation of the site, which was, however, not understood by the Austro-German excavators, which were not fully aware of the Neolithic occupation of the site.

<sup>25</sup> SELLIN – WATZINGER 1913, plan II.

<sup>26</sup> NIGRO in press.

evident, because the EB mudbrick wall are at a higher elevation than the MB III stone wall supporting the rampart), should be the Israelite fortification.

For the same reason, the following "jüdische" stratum, actually represents the real Iron Age occupation. According to Sellin, who in the second part of the archaeological reports proposed the correct Biblical interpretation of the sequence, the Israelite city-walls were made by Hiel, king of Bethel, basing upon 1 King 16:34. To fill the gap in the sequence created by the wrong periodization it was necessary to introduce a "spätjüdische" period, which in reality covers the Hellenistic and Roman occupation of the tell. Thus, notwithstanding the "black shadow" of the Bible, what deserves our maximum appreciation concerning DPV excavations at Jericho is that Carl Watzinger<sup>27</sup>, when in the following years the inconsistency of the sequence was clear, did not hesitate in emending openly the chronology fixed in the final report, published, as it was a remarkable scholarly habit of Sellin, only a few years after the end of the excavations, in 1913.

The volume, printed for the *Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft*, was the first archaeological report on a Palestinian site, where finds were presented by periods, according to architecture ("die Bauwerke"), finds, and, separately, historical interpretation. Plans, architectural sections and precious photos completed the book, thus making available a baulk of data, which were of primary importance for the development of archaeological researches in the region. Therefore, before passing to the last and less fortunate enterprise of Sellin and the DPV, it seems not redundant to stress again that he did not move to another site before having completed the publication of the previous one.

#### Tell Balatah/Shechem (1913-1914, 1926-1927, 1934)

In the same year in which the Jericho final report appeared (1913), Ernst Sellin, started a new ambitious project at Tell Balatah, the site of Biblical Shechem, one of the major Middle Bronze Age cities of the hilly country of Samaria. Again he was attracted by an occasional retrieval: a treasure of bronzes, among which a inlaid sword (*harpé*), reported to the kaimmakam of Jenin to have been found by a peasant (fig. 14).

The expedition to Shechem was fully successful in terms of discoveries, but was suddenly interrupted in 1914 because of the First World War<sup>28</sup>. When it

<sup>27</sup> WATZINGER 1936.

<sup>28</sup> SELLIN 1914.

was resumed in 1926 and 1927<sup>29</sup>, it instead suffered of several troubles<sup>30</sup>. Nevertheless, archaeological results were again extraordinary. Sellin had, however, to stop again, and the dig was resumed for a single season in 1934<sup>31</sup>, leaving a series of unique discoveries only preliminary published.

Sellin succeeded in uncovering a monumental gateway, a long-room temple, called according to Biblical terminology a "Migdol" Temple (fig. 15)<sup>32</sup>, with amazing architectural decorations (fluted columns and capitals) recalling Egyptian architecture (fig. 16), a public building, with a series of pilasters<sup>33</sup>, as well as another gate (fig. 17), with large slabs flanking the main passage (fig. 17), and even two fragmentary tablets. These finds were unfortunately only preliminary published, and they became famous only after the second Expedition at the site, conducted by the American G. E. Wright in the '60ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

However, if we look the original plans by Sellin and Steckweh, his architect at the time, we have the proof that all the above-mentioned monuments were discovered by the DPV Expedition (fig. 18).

The Second World War and the destruction of Berlin marked the end of the life of the *Deutsche Palästina Verein*. The contribution that this institution gave to the research cannot be underestimated and the names of the sites Sellin and Schumacher investigated for the first time are still at the core of Palestinian Archaeology. However, a black shadow was projected on the ground of Archaeology, that was the Bible, when it was improperly used in what should be an autonomous field of study. It seems thus wholly true that a Light, if standing on the ground, cannot enlighten (Matthews 5:16).

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<sup>29</sup> SELLIN 1926a; 1926b; 1927a; 1927b.

<sup>30</sup> SELLIN 1932.

<sup>31</sup> SELLIN – STECKWEH 1941.

<sup>32</sup> SELLIN 1928; STAGER 1999.

<sup>33</sup> The Northwest Gate and the adjacent buildings discovered by Sellin were fully re-excavated by W.G. DEVER (1974).

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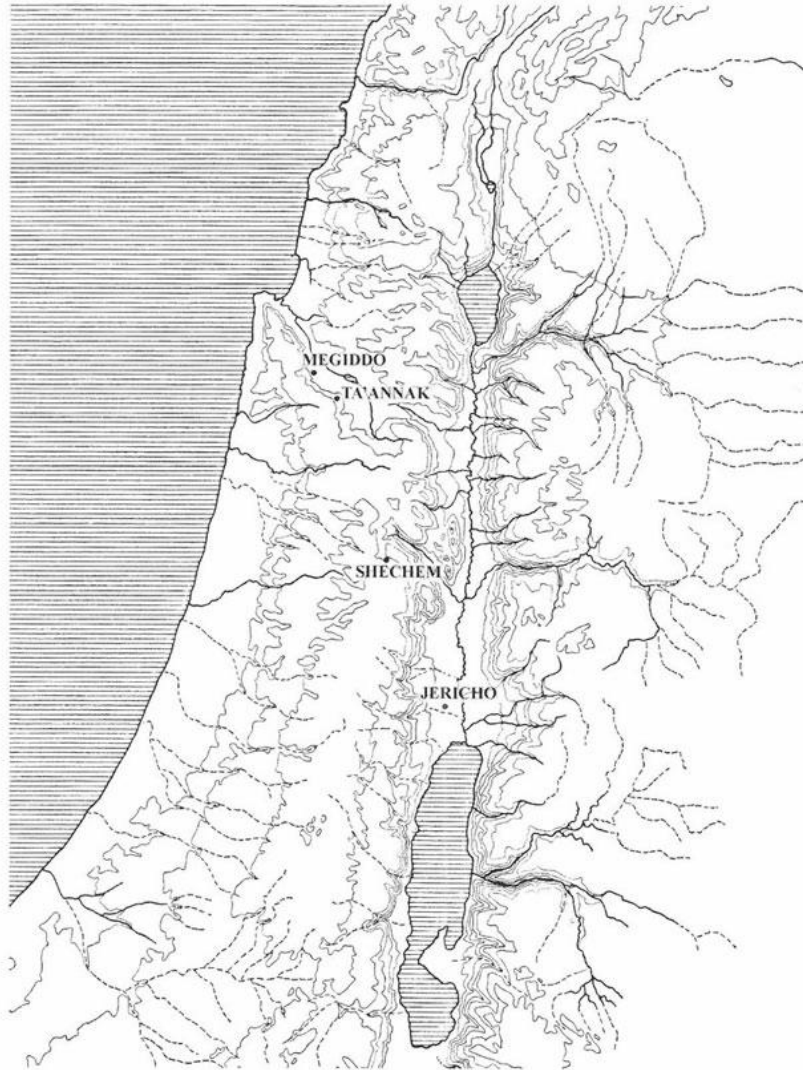


Fig. 1. Map of pre-classical Palestine with highlighted sites excavated by E. Sellin and G. Schumacher on behalf of the *Deutsche Palästina Verein*.



Fig. 2. General view of Tell Taannak.

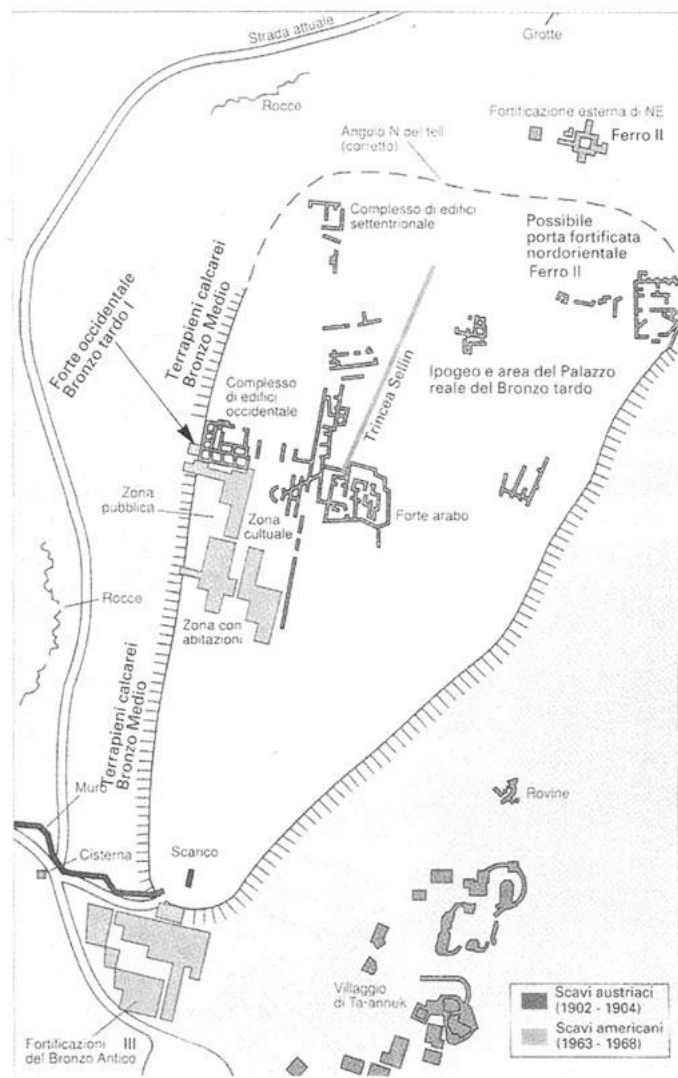


Fig. 3. Plan of Tell Taannak with indicated the areas excavated by Sellin in each excavation campaign.



Fig. 4. The hypogeum, later reemployed as a cistern, possibly belonged to the Late Bronze Palace of Tell Taannak.

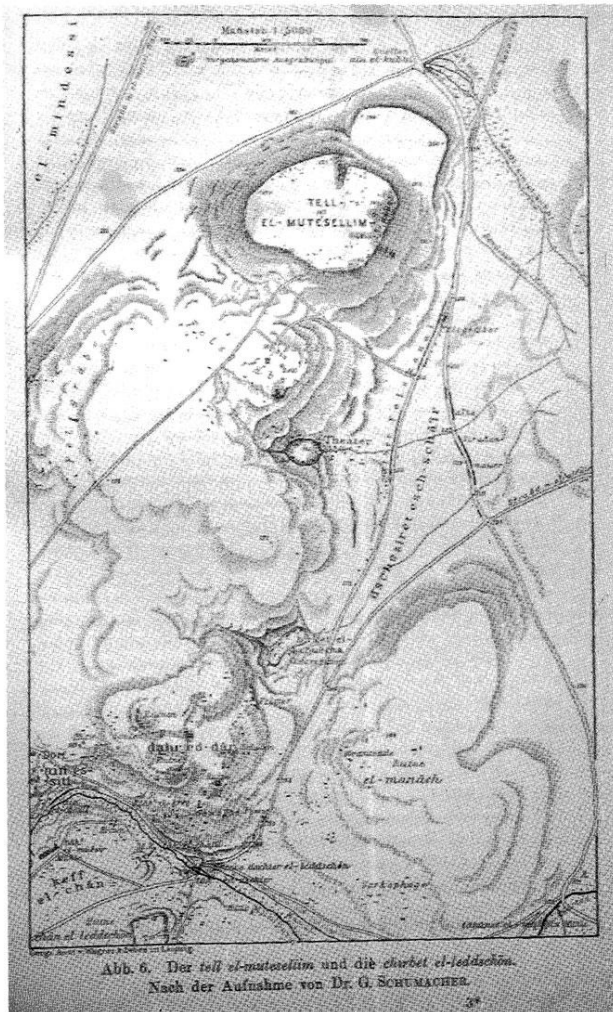


Fig. 5. Topographic map of Tell el-Mutesellim before archaeological excavation

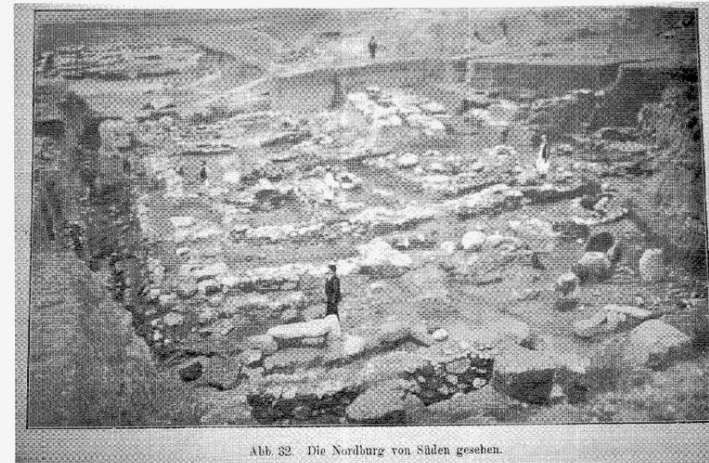


Fig. 6. General view of the Nordburg at Megiddo stratum XII, a MB II palace discovered by G. Schumacher (Schumacher 1908, fig. 32).





Fig. 7. EB III mud-brick double city-walls excavated by E. Sellin at Tell es-Sultan in 1907-1909 (Sellin and Watzinger 1913, pl. IVa).



Fig. 8. Cyclopean stone wall excavated or traced by Sellin all around Tell es-Sultan supporting the MB III (1650-1550 BC) rampart (Sellin and Watzinger 1913, pl. XIa).



Fig. 9. Rooms of a building excavated in 1909 by Sellin on the western slope of the Spring Hill at Tell es-Sultan, possibly belonging to Palace G, excavated by the Italian-Palestinian Expedition in 1999.

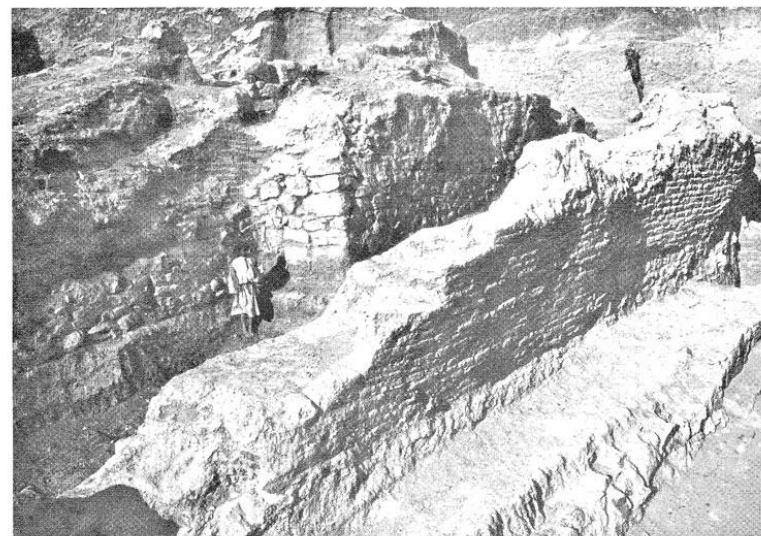


Fig. 10. The North-West Tower excavated by Sellin at the corner of the EB III city-walls of Tell es-Sultan (Sellin and Watzinger 1913, pl. VIa).



Fig. 11. EB III dwelling quarter on the northern plateau at Tell es-Sultan excavated by the Austro-German Expedition (1908-1909) (Sellin and Watzinger 1913, pl. VIII).



Fig. 12. The EB III dwelling quarter on the northern plateau further brought to light by the Italian-Palestinian Expedition (1998-2000).



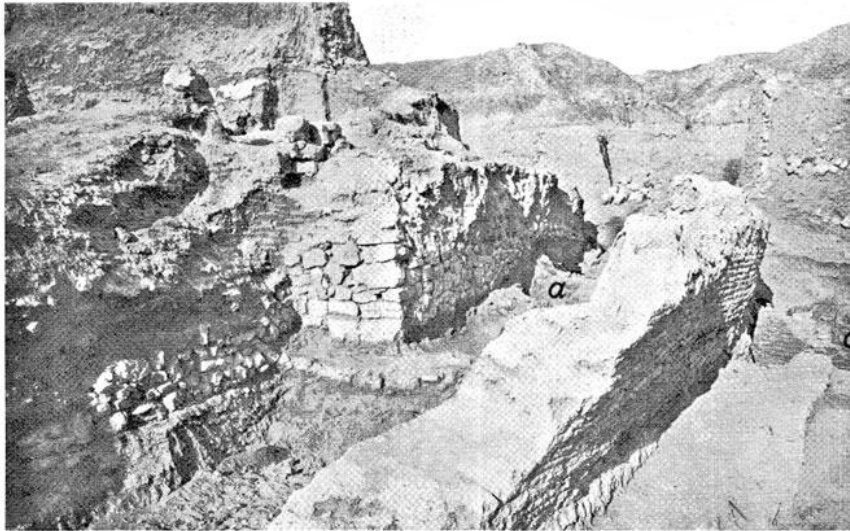


Fig. 13. The so-called "Massiv"(α): an impressive mudbrick structure excavated by Sellin, possibly belonging to the EB II fortification of Tell es-Sultan.

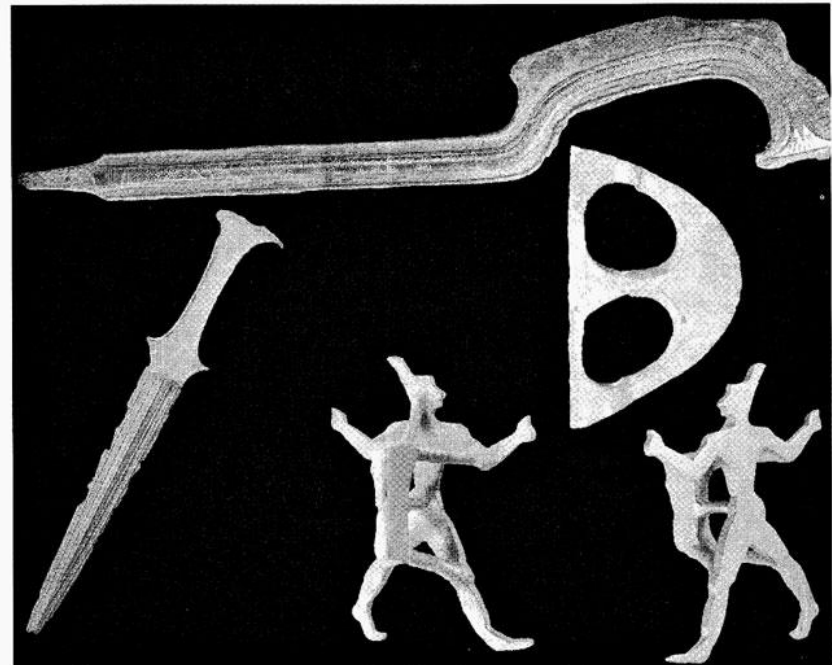


Fig. 14. Bronze *harpe* and figurines found at Tell Balatah dating from MB III.

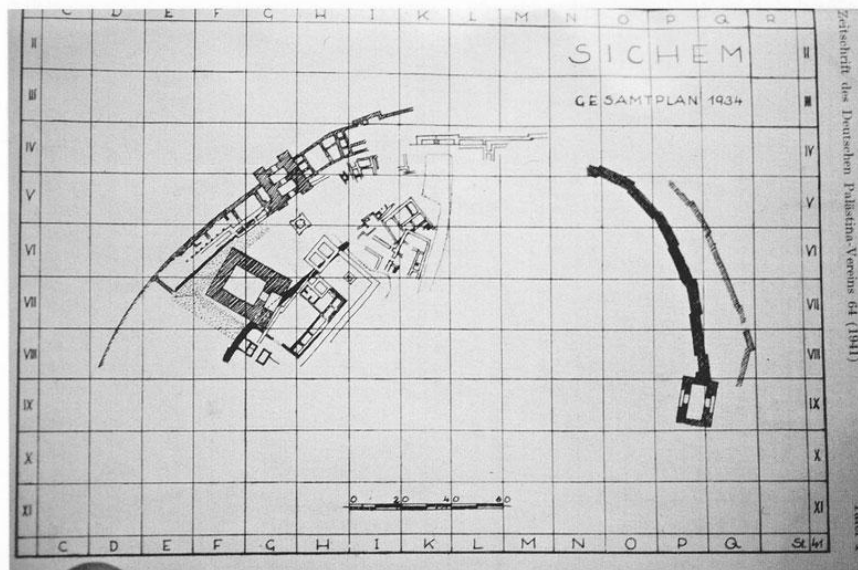


Fig. 15. Plan of the DPV excavations at Shechem with the MB III gateway and "Migdol Temple".

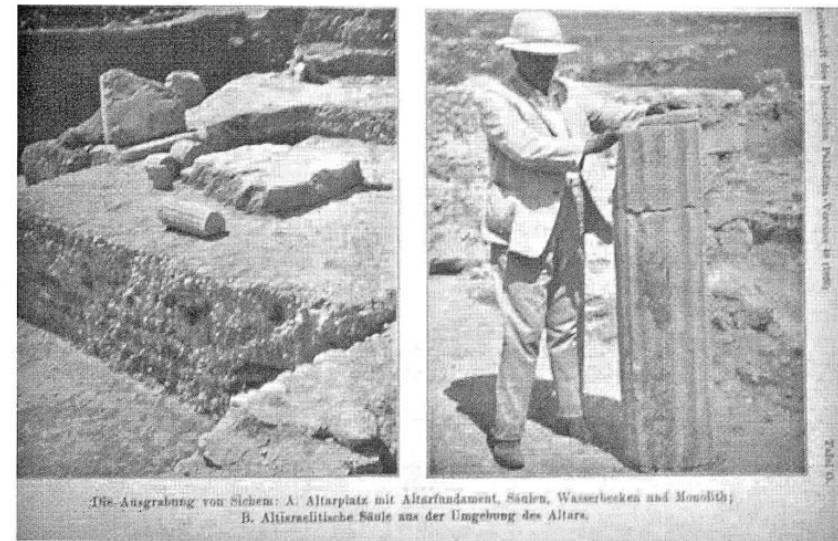


Fig. 16. Fragments of fluted columns belonged to the "Migdol Temple", discovered by Sellin.

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Fig. 17. The North-East Gate at Shechem, also discovered by E. Sellin.

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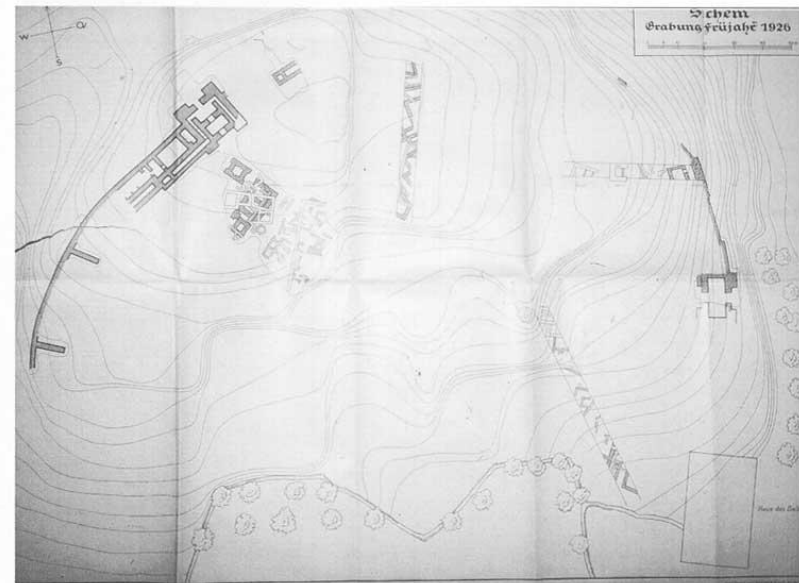


Fig. 18. General plan of the German Expedition to Shechem : note that the majority of monumental building successively published by the American Expedition are already present.