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Sheikh Hamad and the lower city of Tell Afis.

⁸ Although BERNBECK R., "Don't pick up these sherds!", *Orient-Express* 1995, 89-92, gives cogent arguments on the dangers of maximal retrieval, in the present case the imminent inundation of the site presented different conditions.

⁹ Cf. DITTMANN R. *et al.*, "Untersuchungen in Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (Tulul al-'Aqr) 1986", *MDOG* 120 (1988) 97-138 (especially p. 101, Fig. 3) for a comparative methodology.

Third Season of Excavations of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan / Jericho, October – November 1999

The third season of excavations of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan / Jericho took place in October – November 1999 on behalf of the Department of Antiquities of the National Authority of Palestine, the University of Rome "La Sapienza", and the Italian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of the University and Scientific and Technological Research. Six areas have been opened (A, B, E, F, G, H), four as a prosecution of the previous seasons, and two as new fields of research on the ground (fig. 1).

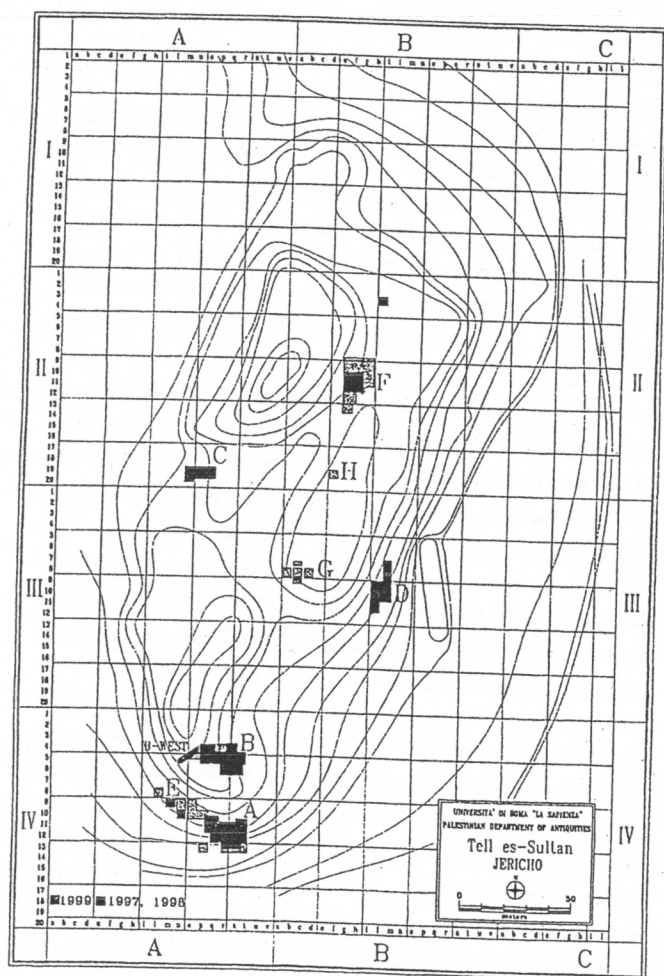


Fig. 1 : Schematic plan of the site with excavated areas.

Area F

In Area F, the second campaign has given new information concerning the domestic occupation of the northern half of the town (NIGRO, 2000, 198-204), especially as regards the stratigraphic sequence of the houses during Early Bronze II-III (2900 – 2300 BC). Five new domestic units (L. 403 – L. 405, L. 323, L. 444, L. 445) in a fairly good state of preservation have been brought to light. The houses flank a paved street lined with the foundation walls of the houses (fig. 2). This street proved to have been in use through the entire urban period at EB Tell es-Sultan and represents a major urban axis, having been also excavated, more to the north, by Sellin, Garstang and, partly, Kenyon (MARCHETTI & NIGRO, 2000, 22-24). It sloped north-eastwards like the city-walls, thus confirming that the town was built on terraces sloping to the east towards the spring of 'Ain es-Sultan. Each house was provided with a hearth and various working installations, such as benches, cutting and grinding slabs, pulping holes. Architectural devices and finds, among which flint blades and sickles, loom weights, spindle whorls, stone pestles, grinding stones, pierced sea-shells, bone and copper pins, animal bones resulting from food production, give important insights on the daily life of the inhabitants of Jericho during the second quarter of the 3rd millennium BC. The stratigraphic sequence obtained within the houses, in the street, and in the northern side of the excavation area, covers a time span from EB II (2900 – 2600 BC) to EB IIIA (2600 – 2450 BC) and EB IIIB (2450 – 2300 BC). Two major building phases have been distinguished during EB IIIA, upon the first urban dwelling of the EB II. The retrieval of a large amount of pottery has provided a comparative material for the chronological setting and functional studies, as well as the finding of the so-called Khirbet Kerak Ware, confirm that Jericho was a major exchange centre in the Jordan Valley during the 3rd millennium BC.

Area B and B West

In Area B, the complete restoration of Building B1 has been carried out, together with the excavation of another room of Building B1 to the west, still erected against the inner city-wall of Period IIIc (EB III, 2600-2300 BC ; MARCHETTI & NIGRO, 1998, 23-80, fig. 1:1 ; MARCHETTI & NIGRO, 2000, 121-163 ; NIGRO, 2000, 204-207). Building B1 seems to have been a public building erected against the defensive line of the town, housing productive activities. A further addition to the dig has been the cleaning of the SE section of Area B West, where a thick layer of *hawwara* has been identified as the filling between the two mudbrick city-walls. This stratum, which had



Fig. 2 : Area F, street L. 307 and the adjacent houses seen from north-east.

been previously interpreted by Kenyon as ash (e.g. in the west section of Trench III : KENYON, 1981, pl. 273, phase lxxiv-lxxv), has proved to be an intentional filling aiming at strengthening the massive defensive structure, which was divided into blind rooms (a kind of casemates). This suggests that the double line of city walls formed a single fortification with an overall width of c. 15 m. The discovery allows to re-evaluate the entire fortification system of this period on the southern site of the tell (NIGRO, 2000, 208). Area B was also extended to the east down to an early Byzantine installation which has been re-excavated (it was already brought to light by the Austro-German expedition in 1909) and restored, since it lies exactly on the flank of the main touristic path entering the site.

Area G

Several important stratigraphic problems were left open by the excavations of the three previous expeditions at Tell es-Sultan in the area overlooking the spring of 'Ain es-Sultan, which identified the longest MBA sequence on the site in Squares H II – III – VI and large MB III residential quarters, a LBA building and an Iron II public building (the so-called *Hilani*)¹. A new area was planned on the fringe of such excavations. A large mudbrick building, dating from EB IIIB (c. 2450 – 2300 BC), was discovered, after the removal of extensive pits (F. 601 and F. 603) from the Byzantine period, which were already noted by Kenyon on the central plateau, e.g. in Trench I (KENYON, 1981, pl. 236, phase lxxvii). Two rooms of Building G1 were completely cleared (L. 644 and L. 631). In room L. 631, which had two building phases, a basin was built along the north wall for working with liquid substances (B.

618). The room to the east (L. 644) was destroyed by a fierce fire : the collapsed beams of the roof were sampled for dendrochronological analysis. A whole set of storage jars was found on the floor proving that the room was a storeroom in which several working activities were carried on, as attested at by several stone tools and installations. The scale of the building and the richness of the archaeological finds seem to indicate that the building had a public function.

A MBA mudbrick built tomb (D. 641) was built towards 1800 BC on top of the ruins of the III millennium building, a situation similar to that discovered by Kenyon downslope in Squares H

II – III (KENYON, 1981 : pls. 187b, 188-189, 328a). In the tomb were buried two flexed bodies, among which a female c. 12-14 years old, with two sacrificed animals and six complete vessels containing food offerings. The female wore bronze earrings, a necklace of carnelian and rock crystal beads, a bronze pin for closing the tunic on the left shoulder, three chains of frit beads and a digital bronze ring with a scarab, while another scarab was placed under the head.

Area A

The excavations in Area A were continued and the large tower of Building A1 was completely excavated : wall W. 19 continues to the south, suggesting that the tower and W. 19 were actually part of a large fort (dating from late MB I-II, c. 1850-1650 BC) extending to the west, perhaps directly connected with the fortifications exposed in Area E. Outside of the fort, to the east, some other remains of the MB II residential quarter excavated in 1998 (MARCHETTI & NIGRO, 2000 : figs 5 : 7-8, 23-30) were brought to light.

Area E

The stone structure first identified in 1998 (MARCHETTI & NIGRO, 2000 : figs. 4 : 6-8) proved to be a rectangular fortification tower (E1) connected to a curving wall (W. 274 and W 5), which represents an earlier retaining device at the foot of the late MB I – II (c. 1850 – 1650 BC) rampart, similar to the great wall W. 4 at the base of the MB III rampart (c. 1650 – 1550 BC).

Area H

A new sounding was opened on the summit of the tell, north of the touristic shelter. Here burnt remains of a building were clearly visible on the surface suffering erosion. The sounding was limited to a single square

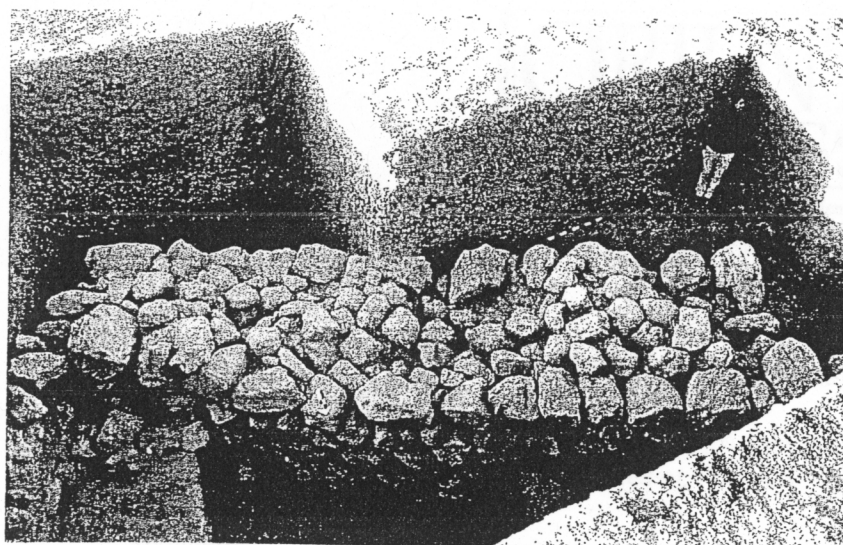


Fig. 3 : General view of Area E.

(BeII19), where a Byzantine mid 6th century house was discovered. A well representative set of materials (pottery, glasses and objects), including many fragmentary " Gaza Ware " amphoras, has been retrieved. Stray finds suggests that a Bronze Age layer underlies the Byzantine building.

Valorization of the site and historical perspectives

The restoration of the excavated mudbrick structures was continued in 1999 through the collaboration with MAPEI (Milan) : its analysis laboratory was fundamental for comprehending the physico-chemical composition of the materials and verifying the consolidation effect of ethyl-silicate, generously supplied in the necessary large quantities (see also MARCHETTI & NIGRO, 2000, 287-295, 349-354).

Area B has been chosen as a pilot area for the touristic rehabilitation of Tell es-Sultan. Thus, a new path has been opened, a viewpoint has been realized to the east of the EB III city-wall, which is here visible for a length of more than 50 m. Ancient mudbrick structures have been restored and protected by means of a cap of new mudbricks, plastering the faces of the walls with a special mortar provided by MAPEI.

New illustrative panels of the excavation areas were set on the ground. All information (textual and graphic) concerning the ancient monuments of Tell es-Sultan is contained therein, thus ensuring a rich and correct information for tourists (c. 300.000 every year). New touristic paths were also realized on the site. The program of scientific cooperation begun in 1999 was continued in the spring 2000 for contributing to the aim of the Palestinian Department of Antiquities in forming the Palestinian School of Archaeology.

The excavation results obtained in 1999 by the joint Italian-Palestinian at Tell es-Sultan have provided new insights into the urban structure of the Bronze Age

town, focusing not only on the fortification systems, but also on the detailed urban history throughout the III and II millennia BC and on the changes in material culture, in order to get a closer historical understanding of the archaeology of Jericho and the southern Jordan Valley.

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¹ Three squares and two half squares were opened on the ground : BaII8, BbIII7, BbIII8, BcIII8, BbIII9.

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