

# TELL ES-SULTAN 2015

## A Pilot Project for Archaeology in Palestine



Tell es-Sultan, the eastern flank of Spring Hill. In the foreground is the restored Early Bronze Age III (2700–2350 B.C.E.) Palace G. In the background is the Spring of 'Ain es-Sultan. Photograph by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome "La Sapienza" ROSAPAJ.

*Lorenzo Nigro*

**T**he eleventh season (April–June 2015) of the archaeological investigation and site protection as well as valorization of the site of Tell es-Sultan was carried out by the University of Rome “La Sapienza” (under the direction of the present writer) and the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities – Department of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage (directed by Jehad Yasine) with the aims to: (1) re-examine several of the historical archaeological highlights of this long-standing site and (2) make the site accessible and appealing to the public through restorations and a large set of illustrative and explanatory devices set up with the help of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Jericho Municipality, and to make the site an inclusive part of the Jericho Oasis Archaeological Park (JOAP: [www.lasapienzatojericho.it/JOAP](http://www.lasapienzatojericho.it/JOAP)).

Tell es-Sultan (fig. 1), identified since late antiquity with Biblical Jericho and the Canaanite city-state of *Ruha*, is the most visited archaeological site in the Palestinian Territories, attracting up to 380,000 visitors per year. The city witnessed some of the most significant advances by humankind in the Fertile Crescent, which were achieved due to the courage, innovation, and resilience of its community.

### **The Italian-Palestinian Pilot Project and the Cultural Heritage of Palestine**

In 1997 the University of Rome “La Sapienza” was chosen to partner with the Department of Archaeology and Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Palestine (MoTA-DACH) on a joint project to restore the site of Tell es-Sultan as a field school for young Italian and Palestinian archaeologists and a tourist attraction. The site had been neglected for almost 40 years, since Kathleen M. Kenyon’s last season there in 1958. The joint Italian-Palestinian Jericho Expedition inaugurated a new model of archaeological cooperation. Unlike expeditions during the colonial period when an ‘excavation permit’ was issued, the two institutions signed an ‘Agreement on Cooperation’ under which they would play an equally responsible role. The expedition aimed to preserve, study, and promote, via tourism, this world-renowned site, thus safeguarding cultural heritage. This mission promotes respect for all antiquities without discrimination of their cultural, religious and chronological attribution; the publication and maximum dissemination of archaeological data; and the protection and preservation of

## The Archaeological Exploration of Tell es-Sultan (1868–2015)

The earliest explorer of Tell es-Sultan was Chieftain Charles Warren of the British Royal Engineering Corps, who cut E–W trenches through the tell edges, missing the Neolithic Tower by less than 1 m, and concluding that the site was devoid of any interest (Warren 1869, 14–16).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Tell es-Sultan was the first site in Palestine to be dedicated a scientific report volume by its excavators (Sellin and Watzinger 1913). The Austro-German Expedition extensively excavated the tell in 1907–1909, producing a multilayer history of the site, though adopting a wrong chronological sequence: they labelled the Early Bronze Age “Canaanite,” the Middle Bronze Age “Israelite,” and the Iron Age “Judean.” Nonetheless, the prompt publication of architecture, stratigraphy and finds established a milestone in the archaeology of Palestine.

The second major expedition to Tell es-Sultan (the Marston-Melchett’s Expedition) was led by the distinguished British archaeologist John Garstang from 1930 to 1936, with the explicit aim of demonstrating the reliability of the Biblical account of Joshua (Garstang 1927). In spite of this inappropriate perspective, Garstang’s Expedition revealed for the first time Mesolithic and especially Neolithic layers. He discovered the huge necropolis west and north of the site, excavating a series of large familiar tombs from the Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age (Garstang 1930; 1931; 1935; 1936).

After the Second World War, Dame Kathleen M. Kenyon organized an international expedition at Tell es-Sultan, which set a new standard in archaeology by launching the stratigraphic digging method developed by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, based upon square probes 4 x 4 m, with vertical sections readable on unexcavated baulks. Kenyon’s Expedition (1952–1958), produced a comprehensive re-evaluation of the archaeology of Tell es-Sultan. She cut three main trenches, expanding previous soundings, on the western (Trench I), northern (Trench II) and southern (Trench III) flanks of the tell. Moreover, she systematically excavated the vast necropolis extending north and west of it (Kenyon 1960; 1965). Stratigraphy and architecture were published in 1981 in a thorough report (Kenyon 1981). Kenyon’s work was completed by Thomas A. Holland, who edited the last two volumes (Kenyon and Holland 1982; 1983).

In 1997, after the Oslo and Madrid agreements, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of the Palestinian National Authority started a new project of exploration and re-evaluation of Tell es-Sultan in cooperation with the University of Rome “La Sapienza.” Excavations were resumed in twelve areas of the site, mainly focusing on the Bronze and Iron Age cities (Marchetti and Nigro 1998; 2000). The Italian-Palestinian Expedition identified the Bronze Age Lower City including the spring of ‘Ain es-Sultan, and continued the exploration of the Early Bronze Age quarter on the northern plateau and of the Early Bronze Age III double fortification wall at the southwest corner of the site. It excavated the MB I–II Tower A1 and a stretch of the MB III Cyclopean Wall at the southern foot of the tell (Area A), identifying a previously unknown MB II fortification work, called Curvilinear Stone Structure, as well as the Royal Palaces and a built up tomb underneath it on the Spring Hill (Area G). The basic contribution of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition was to put forward an overall periodization of the site (Table I), reexamining and matching data produced by all the previous expeditions.

the landscape as cultural heritage from disorderly building activities and illegal plundering.

Bearing in mind our mission and aims, the restoration of Tell es-Sultan was a real challenge. This site is a symbol of Biblical Archaeology, as Jericho played a central role in the Conquest Narrative of the Book of Joshua (chapters 2 and 6). The project, however, gave us an opportunity to investigate the site through a new approach in which the Bible is considered a historical source through textual hermeneutics and historical analysis, setting aside any other modern political implications. The past deserves admiration and respect as something with its own *raison d’être*, and deserves reinvestigation time and again.

Jericho is a living monument representing the history of modern archaeology. It is the place where Dame Kathleen Mary Kenyon systematically experimented with various stratigraphic excavation methods, cutting her long and deep trenches into the history of humankind. One of the goals of the project is to exhibit for the benefit of visitors the horizontal and vertical stratigraphic layers Kenyon exposed. Disentangling Kenyon’s sections was as hard a task as separating the biblical view of the site from its history.

### The Italian-Palestinian Expedition 1997–2015

The joint expedition began in 1997 and continued for four seasons until 2000. The completion of this first stage of the project (co-directed by Nicolò Marchetti and Hamdan Taha under the aegis of Paolo Matthiae), including the restoration of the Early and Middle Bronze Age fortifications, made the site ready to be opened to the public. The expedition produced two books and a series of articles on some of the major features of the Bronze Age city: the identification of the Lower City and the recognition that the spring of ‘Ain es-Sultan was situated within the city walls.

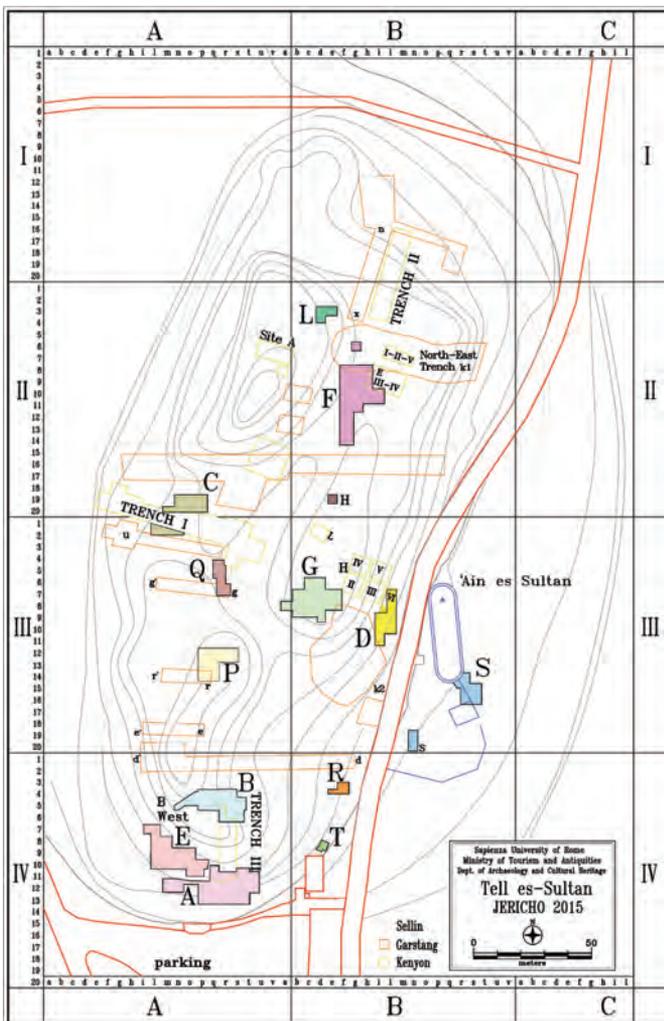
After a long hiatus in excavation due to political troubles, which never affected off-site academic cooperation and publishing, work at the site resumed in 2009 and focused on two main areas of interest: the southern foot of the tell (Areas A and E) where a major Middle Bronze I–II building was discovered (Tower A1), and the so-called Spring Hill (Area G) overlooking ‘Ain es-Sultan, where the Early Bronze Age palace (Palace G) was identified and progressively excavated. Beginning with these two areas, up to twelve different specific locales were excavated (fig. 2), restored, and reconstructed for tourists, illustrating the ten millennia-long life of Jericho, from the Epipaleolithic to the Islamic Period.



Figure 1 General view of the site of Tell es-Sultan, from the south.

Figure 2. Map of Tell es-Sultan/ancient Jericho with excavated areas.

Photograph and Image by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome "La Sapienza" ROSAPAJ.



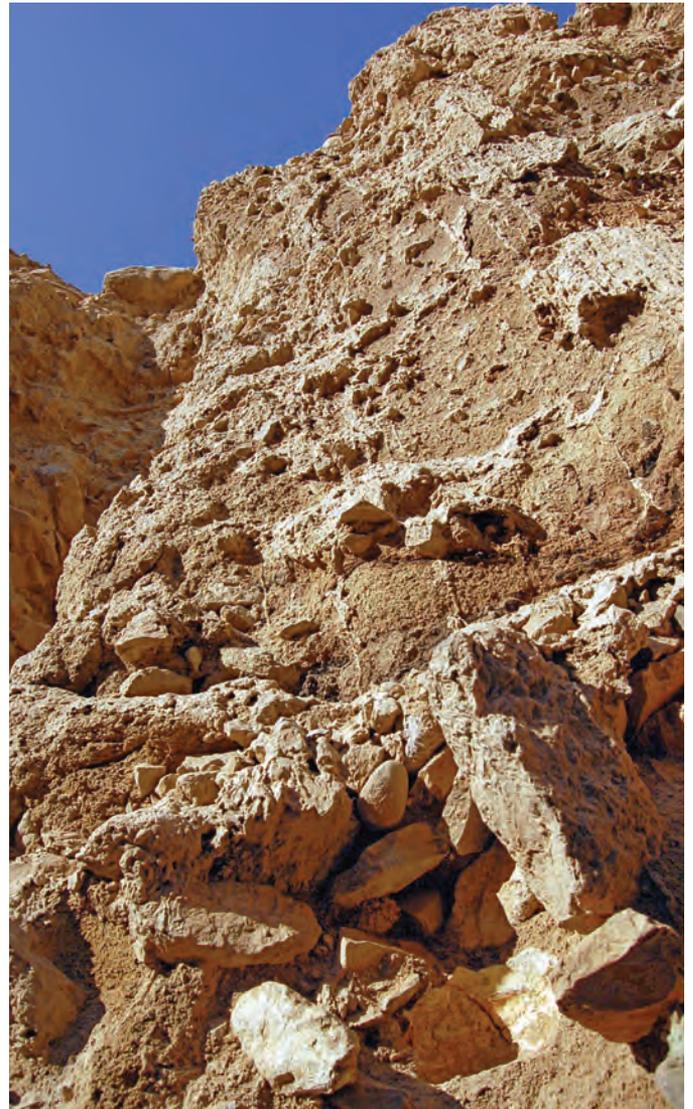
## The Neolithic Period: Earliest Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Pottery, Family, Religion, and Mudbrick

The Italian-Palestinian excavations reached the Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) Period in Kenyon's Trench I and in Area A. In Trench I, the Round Tower of PPNA was re-examined. This extraordinary monument epitomizes the socio-economic success of the earliest Neolithic settlement, which also initiated animal and plant domestication, and later established a flourishing, stable agricultural community. The Round Tower and the connected Town Wall, in use for at least one millennium,

protected a series of silos in which the town's agricultural surplus was stored. The Round Tower was also a symbol of community unity as the earliest building the community erected together. The tower overlooked the spring (which was located westward of where it is today), the pulsating heart of the town, and may represent the beginning of a tradition of watchtowers which characterized Palestinian towns until the last century.

The building technique of the tower involved the use of large stone slabs, riverbed stones, limestone boulders, and thick mud and lime plaster. Internal architectural support strengthened the tower structure: a carefully built staircase reaching the top of the tower was accessed from the east, and a massive battering wall supported the tower on the western side. Intermingled human bones were discovered on the lowest steps of the inner staircase and attributed to at least twelve individuals. Kenyon interpreted these remains as testimony of a violent event, the result of a riot or an encounter with foreign enemies, which brought to a tragic end the life of the PPNA community.

The tower was encircled by deep silos for the storage of agricultural products, the very wealth of the PPN Jericho community. A wall made of loaf-shaped mudbricks held together by ash-tempered mud mortar was excavated (fig. 3); it is a very good example of this novel building technique which would have revolutionized architecture in Neolithic Jericho. The dramatic end of the PPNA town did not interrupt the continuous growth of the community, which soon recovered in the following PPNB. The town-wall and the tower were rebuilt, while other installations were constructed based on new models. The PPNB community continued to show innovation, as had PPNA, by introducing a new construction method using rectangular (or "cigar-shaped") bricks. The use of bricks permitted the development of modular architecture, with rectangular houses sharing walls and



**Figure 3** (top left). Trench I: detail of PPNA mudbrick wall excavated north of the Round Tower.  
**Figure 4a–b** (top right and below). PPNB cist burial of separated skull with a microlith serving as obolus Charontis.  
 Photographs by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome “La Sapienza” ROSAPAJ.

capable of being progressively enlarged and juxtaposed.

In an upper PPNB layer not far away from the tower, a slab-lined cist was discovered, containing a human skull buried with a flint microlith (fig. 4a–b). This skull burial is not a singular occurrence but should be included in the large group of symbolic skull burials typical of the PPN Jericho community. The burials imply the beginning of an ancestor cult and the ideology of family as the basic nucleus of agricultural society. The



earliest such skull burials were found by Kenyon inside PPNA houses, and showed burials in groups, placed at the corners of houses, or in special niches. In the following PPNB, this funerary custom further progressed, and the skulls were modeled with gypsum and clay, and decorated with inlaid shells and paint. The development of an ideology of family, a refining of previous clan ideology, became a distinguishing feature of the Jericho PPN community. The ideology is based on



**Figure 5.** Head, legs, and a foot of one of the PPNB clay statues found by J. Garstang in NE Trench. Photograph by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome "La Sapienza" ROSAPAJ.

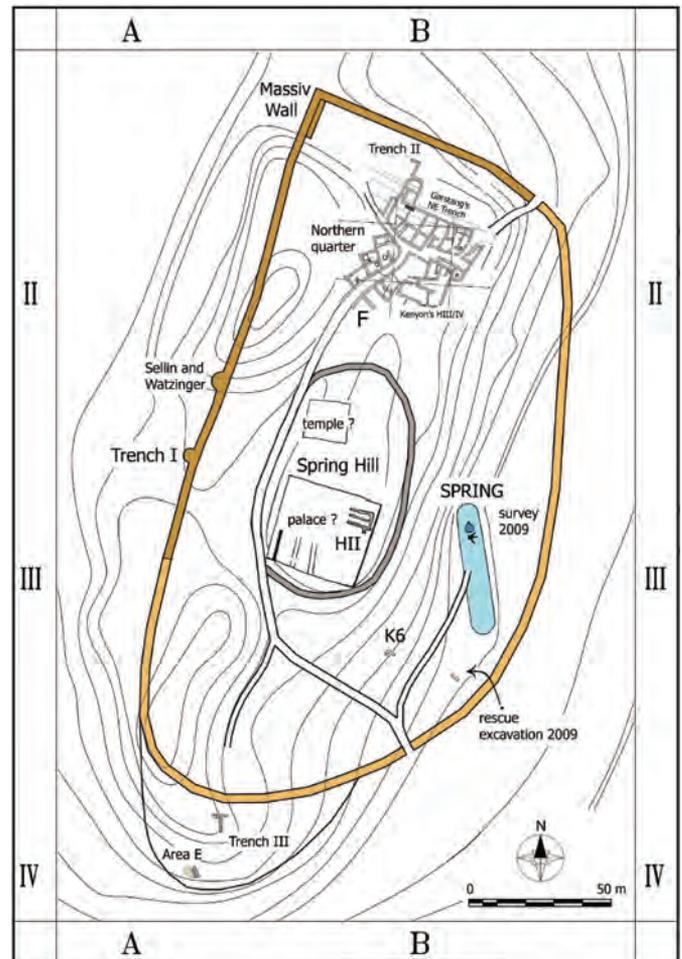
the elders' cult and on the physical relationship established by beheading the corpses of parents and burying their skulls inside or nearby the family home to enhance their guidance and protection. Religious complexity is perhaps also indicated by the clay statues retrieved by John Garstang in his northeastern trench; the statues were dispersed in pieces to various museums and institutions, and relocated by the Italian-Palestinian Expedition. The renowned clay head in the Rockefeller Museum of Jerusalem (Palestine Archaeological Museum) actually belonged to a complete statue buried in a votive pit with two other similar statues. The statue's legs were rediscovered in the *Réserve* of the Musée du Louvre in Paris (fig. 5). These statues show high quality modeling and had painted decorations, which remained visible on the famous and coeval statues of 'Ain Ghazal, thus allowing us to reconstruct the complete figure. Garstang found two groups of three statues, each group including the images of a male, a female, and a child personage representing a family, i.e. the basic unit of the PPN novel agricultural society at Jericho. The six clay statues were found in connection to a shrine, where one of the earliest agricultural communities performed the cult of what seems among the earliest divine hypostases of Southern Levant.

A major earthquake and the consequent shift or interruption of the main spring probably caused the end of Neolithic Jericho around 6000 B.C.E. In the following Chalcolithic Period, the settlement moved to the eastern bank of Wadi Nueima, around 1.5 km east of Tell es-Sultan, by the site of Tell el-Mafjar.

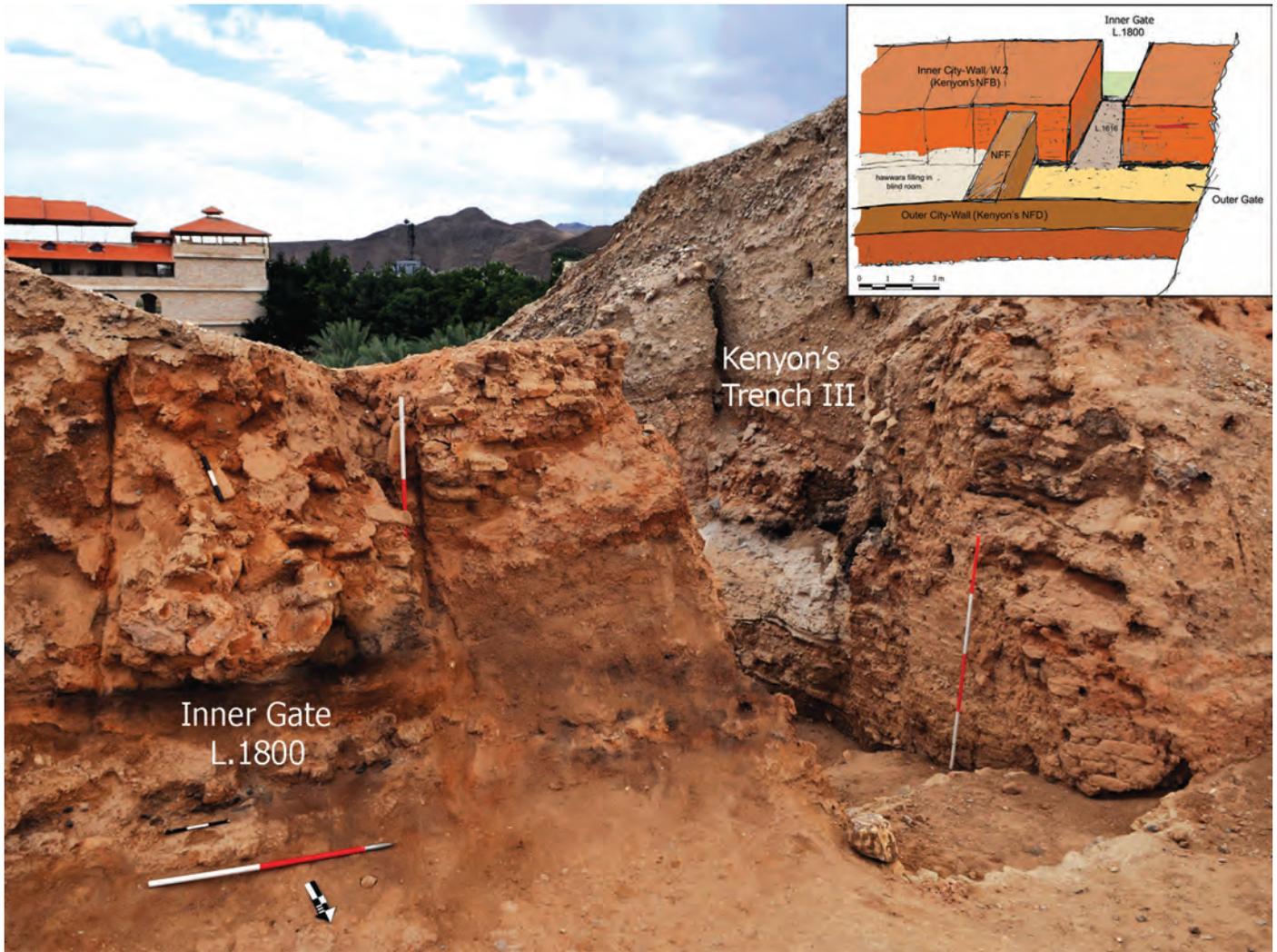
## Early Bronze Age: Rise, Flourish, and Collapse of the Earliest City

The expedition documented the rise of the Early Bronze Age city, its continuous development from the initial Early Bronze I rural village to the fortified city of Early Bronze II, as well as change in the socio-economic organization of the Jericho community as indicated through the analyses of funerary evidence in the necropolis. The study of Garstang's Tomb A identified an EB IB chief who was posed in a peculiar posture with raised arms and buried with a mace-head, suggesting his social rank. The village layout through the last centuries of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C.E. also shows the incipient character of the emerging town (what Kenyon properly labelled as "Proto-Urban").

Investigation of the earliest Early Bronze II city, established around 3000 B.C.E., began with its fortification wall, which was detected all around the tell. Recent work in the area of the spring, moreover, showed that the spring had been included within the urban boundaries from this period onwards (fig. 6). The north-eastern dwelling quarter, which included a number of storage installations (silos, mudbrick-lined cists, storerooms) for agricultural surplus, was re-examined.



**Figure 6.** Plan of EB II (3000–2700 B.C.E.) city of Jericho. Image by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome "La Sapienza" ROSAPAJ.



**Figure 7.** Area B: EB IIIA (2700–2500 B.C.E.) South Gate L.1800, filled up with collapsed mudbricks and burnt beams, from the northeast. Photograph by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome “La Sapienza” ROSAPA.J.

Tell es-Sultan is a vivid example of a Southern Levantine city of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.E. The urban status of a settlement can be determined through ten archaeological parameters:

1. Dimension (in comparison with surrounding coeval sites);
2. Presence of an articulated fortification system;
3. Inner spatial distinction and hierarchical organization by means of a network of streets and landmarks (Spring Hill, southern hills, northern plateau, spring area hosting the temple and the palace, oasis);
4. Wealth accumulation (basically in form of food, but also metals and other precious materials found in storage devices, warehouses, storerooms, public buildings, and private houses);
5. Evidence of a counting or tallying system for the exchange of valuables (e.g. tokens, seals, and sealings);
6. Evidence of trade and exchange of precious metals (e.g. balance weights);
7. Rank differentiation (as evidenced by grave goods and burial methods) and social classes (e.g. warriors, merchants, peasants, administrators);
8. Labor organization (for the cultivation of the oasis, as well as animal husbandry and communitarian building activities);
9. Craftsmanship;

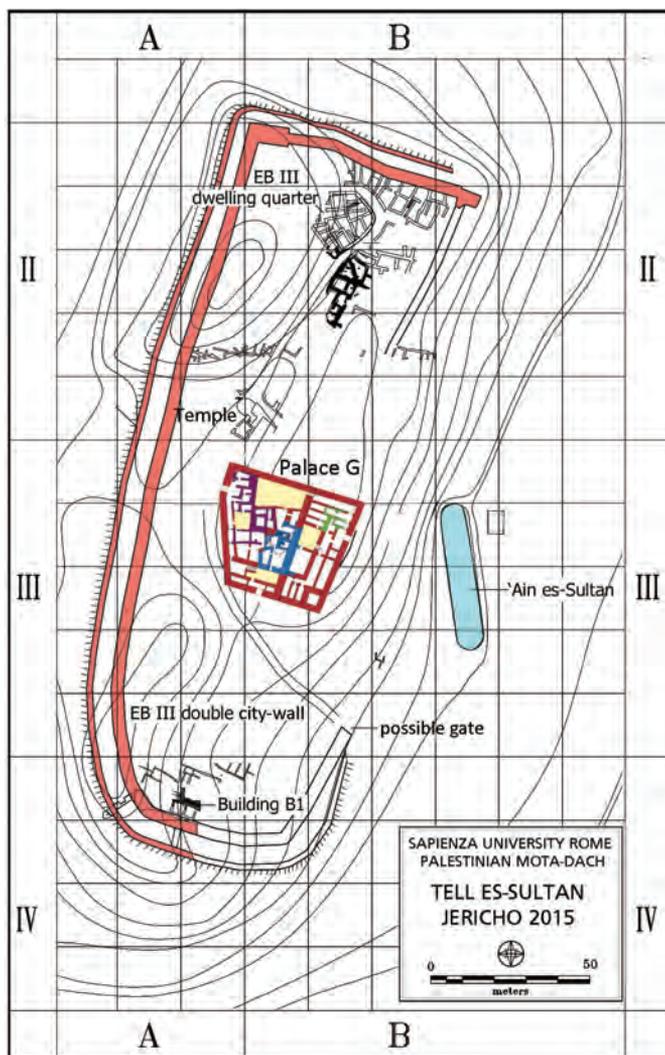
10. Importation and trade of precious raw materials (e.g. wood, stone, copper, precious stones, bitumen, salt, sulphur, etc.).

The urban layout, architectural remains, and material culture of Tell es-Sultan in the EB II fit such parameters, and thus can be characterized as urban. Its connection with the early Egyptian state as evidenced through several finds further indicates its status as a city (Sala 2012; Nigro 2014). The ceramic repertoire of the EBII phase shows specialization of shapes and wares. The effects of the violent earthquake which struck and brought a sudden end to the EBII city were identified in several spots, and this catastrophic event was studied as a factor prompting further development of building techniques and social organization.

The Early Bronze Age III city was vigorously reconstructed with widened and strengthened city walls. An outer wall surrounded the original city wall and the space between the two walls was filled with material. The EB III double-lined fortification system was investigated in several spots: a postern gate was identified in Area Q leading to rooms between the inner and outer walls; and a proper gate in Area B (L.1800) was found collapsed as a result of a fierce fire at the end of EBIII. Inside this passage, the carbonized collapsed ceiling beams

of Palestinian tamarisk were found (fig. 7).

The main excavated monument of this period is Palace G, a huge building erected on three terraces on the eastern flank of Spring Hill (figs. 8–9). The palace had a central wing with a hall, characterized by a raised podium and a central pillar (fig. 10), and several subsidiary rooms with courtyards, staircases, and installations. In the lower terraces, storerooms were connected to a major entrance facing towards the spring, while on the upper terrace there were workshops and installations. Several items found in the palace illustrate its multiple functions: a marble mace-head and a copper dagger (with the wooden and leather handle partly preserved, fig. 11) are symbols of power; a basalt potter's wheel is an innovative tool for palatial pottery production (this type of wheel is also found at Khirbet al-Batrawy and Tell Yarmuth). A carved ivory bull's head (decoration from



a piece of furniture) and a cult vessel decorated with the same motif – its spout is in the form of a bull's head (fig. 12), as well as cylinder seal impressions on storage jars were also found within the palace area (fig. 13). The city temple, flanked by a round, raised platform, probably stood on the opposite, western side of Spring Hill.

Early Bronze III private houses have been excavated in Area F. The urban layout of the northeastern quarter of the city, with the main street running SW–NE (fig. 14), was fully reconstructed. Small finds from these houses illustrate daily life in the city: basalt grinding stones and grinders, copper and stone tools, pierced seashells, pottery discs, and especially balance weights hint at trade and tallying activities. The pottery is characterized by functionally standardized wares and shapes, and by the attestation of Khirbet Kerak Ware, both imported and locally produced, the presence of which

**Figure 8** (above). Reconstructive plan of the EB III city at Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, with Palace G and the nearby temple.

**Figure 9** (below). General view of EB IIIB (2500–2350 B.C.E.) Palace G, from the west. Image and photograph by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome "La Sapienza" ROSAPAJ.



**Table 1. Correlation between Archaeological Periodization and the Stratigraphic Phases of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan/Ancient Jericho**

<i>Archaeological Period</i>	<i>Dating</i>	<i>Tell es-Sultan Phase</i>
Epipaleolithic (Late Natufian)	10500–8500 B.C.E.	Sultan Ia
Pre-Pottery Neolithic A	8500/8300–7500 B.C.E.	Sultan Ib
Pre-Pottery Neolithic B	7500–6000 B.C.E.	Sultan Ic
Pottery Neolithic A	6000–5000 B.C.E.	Sultan IIa
Pottery Neolithic B	5000–4600 B.C.E.	Sultan IIb
Early Chalcolithic	4600–4200 B.C.E.	Sultan IIc
Middle Chalcolithic	4200–3800 B.C.E.	
Late Chalcolithic	3800–3400 B.C.E.	
Early Bronze Age IA	3400–3200 B.C.E.	Sultan IIIa1
Early Bronze Age IB	3200–3000 B.C.E.	Sultan IIIa2
Early Bronze Age IIA	3000–2850 B.C.E.	Sultan IIIb1
Early Bronze Age IIB	2850–2700 B.C.E.	Sultan IIIb2
Early Bronze Age IIIA	2700–2500 B.C.E.	Sultan IIIc1
Early Bronze Age IIIB	2500–2350/2300 B.C.E.	Sultan IIIc2
Early Bronze Age IVA	2350/2300–2200 B.C.E.	Sultan III d1
Early Bronze Age IVB	2200–2000 B.C.E.	Sultan III d2
Middle Bronze Age IA	2000/1950–1900 B.C.E.	Sultan IVa1
Middle Bronze Age IB	1900–1800 B.C.E.	Sultan IVa2
Middle Bronze Age IIA	1800–1700 B.C.E.	Sultan IVb1
Middle Bronze Age IIB	1700–1650 B.C.E.	Sultan IVb2
Middle Bronze Age III	1650–1550 B.C.E.	Sultan IVc
Late Bronze Age I	1550–1400 B.C.E.	Sultan V
Late Bronze Age II	1400–1200 B.C.E.	
Iron Age I	1200–1000 B.C.E.	Sultan VIa
Iron Age IIA	1000–925 B.C.E.	Sultan VIb
Iron Age IIB	925–732 B.C.E.	
Iron Age IIC	732–535 B.C.E.	
Persian Period	535–333 B.C.E.	Sultan VIIa
Hellenistic Period	332–64 B.C.E.	Sultan VIIb
Roman Period	64 B.C.E.–324 C.E.	Sultan VIII
Byzantine Period	324–636 C.E.	Sultan IX
Early Islamic Period	636–1000 C.E.	Sultan X
Crusader Period & Middle Islamic	1000–1250 C.E.	
Late Islamic (Mamluk) Period	1250–1516 C.E.	
Ottoman Period	1516–1918 C.E.	Sultan XI



**Figure 10.** Palace G: Hall L.644 with podium (B.645), the central pillar (S.1159), and restored EB III B (2500–2350 B.C.E.) storage jars in situ, from the southeast. Photograph by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome “La Sapienza” ROSAPAJ.

diminished in the mature phase of the period (Early Bronze IIIB). Material culture of this EBIII period demonstrates the apogee of the Early Bronze Age city, and include Egyptian items (marble mace-heads, schist palettes, and ceramic lotus vases) and metal objects (a marvelous crescent-shaped copper axe from Tomb A114 may epitomize the presence of a warrior class: fig. 15).

The Early Bronze III city was destroyed during the 24<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. and abandoned after this dramatic conflagration. Evidence of such an event was uncovered in all of the

excavated areas of the site and was presumably deeply impressed in the collective memory of Levantine peoples, perhaps to the point of being echoed in the Biblical narrative of Joshua.

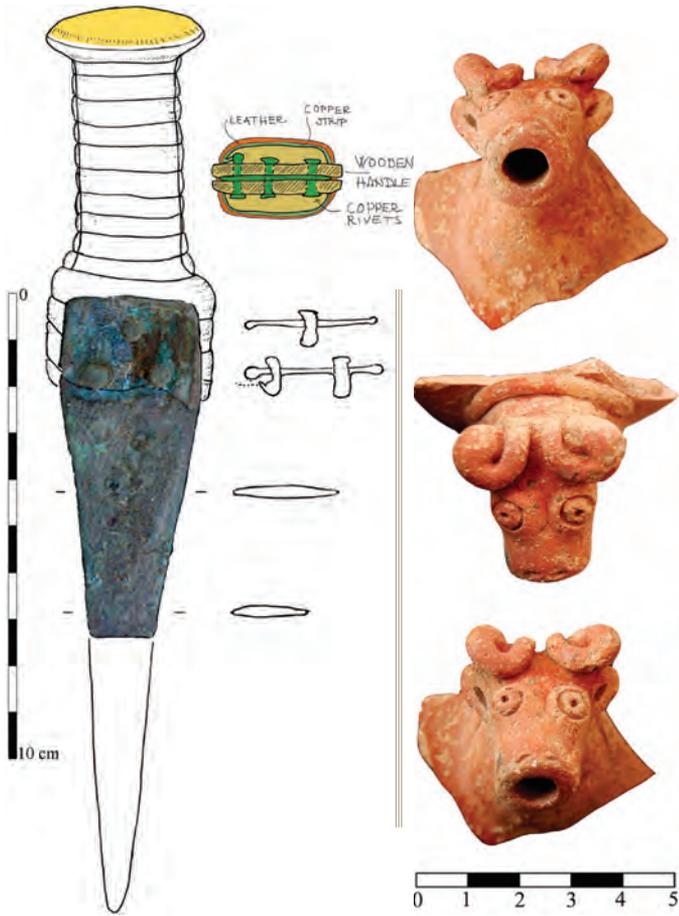
### **The Non-Urban Interval: The Intermediate Bronze Age (or EB IV; 2300–2000 B.C.E.)**

Our excavations also provided new data on the non-urban Early Bronze IV interval. The site was reoccupied in the Early



**Figure 14** (top right). Area F: general view of the EB II-III (3000-2350 B.C.E.) dwelling quarter excavated and restored on the northern plateau of the site, from the north.

**Figure 15** (bottom right). Crescent-shaped copper axe found in Kenyon's Tomb A114. Photographs by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome "La Sapienza" ROSAPAJ.



**Figure 11** (top left). Palace G: EB IIIB copper dagger TS.11.G.63, with a preserved part of the wooden handle, from destruction layer F.1196.

**Figure 12** (top center). Palace G: EB IIIB spout TS.10.G.1162/1 from room L.1160, decorated with a bull's head, belonged to a red slipped cult vessel.

**Figure 13** (bottom left). Palace G: EB III jar sealings. Photographs and drawings by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome "La Sapienza" ROSAPAJ.



Bronze IVA, initially at the summit of Spring Hill. During the Early Bronze IVB, the occupation expanded into a large village on the lower terraces which covered the collapsed ruins of earlier fortifications. The expedition investigated the relationship between the occupation site and the necropolis. Cultural, economic, and social features of the interred show both local and new elements. A relevant point was the study of metal items which for the first time were made of bronze alloy (fig. 16), and the study of pottery and architecture characterized by thin walls made of a single row of bricks and stones.

### The Canaanite City-State of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium B.C.E.: Ruha

At the end the 20<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E., at the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age, the city of Jericho was rebuilt, beginning with its massive fortifications. These initially consisted of a solid mudbrick wall with rectangular towers and was soon reinforced around the summit of the mound by an earthen rampart. The Italian-Palestinian Expedition explored both the earliest city wall and three successive ramparts (fig. 17), and identified a solidly built structure made of limestone boulders

supporting the Middle Bronze II rampart on the southwestern side of the site, called Curvilinear Stone Structure (fig. 18). A major monument of the Middle Bronze I–II city was Tower A1, a defensive building connected to a fortress or a gate structure (fig. 19). The tower was preserved to a height of more than 2 m and was carefully built with uniformly sized mudbricks laid on a monumental foundation made of orthostatic blocks. This structure was rebuilt several times following enemy attacks and at least one major earthquake.

A main stratigraphic and chronological turning point may have been an Egyptian campaign which apparently involved Jericho. At that time the site bore the Canaanite name of “Ruha,” as indicated on a scarab found in a tomb discovered on Spring Hill underneath the Middle Bronze Age

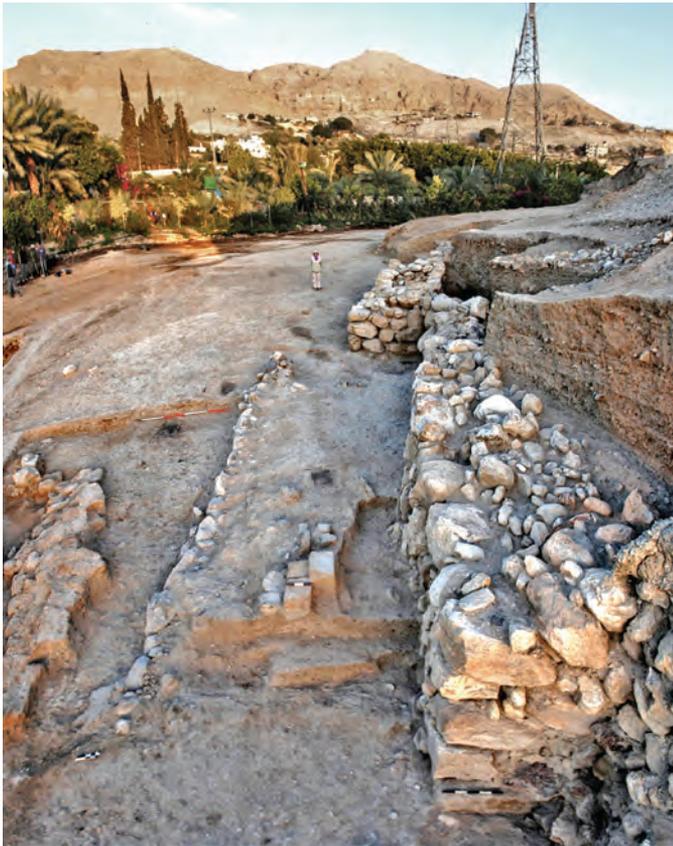
Palace (called the “Hyksos Palace” by John Garstang) (fig. 20). The site’s main fortification was a steep rampart coated with a fine lime and clay revetment, excavated in Area C and visible in all of Kenyon’s major trenches. The third and last renovation of the Middle Bronze Age city is characterized by the erection of a huge rubble rampart supported by terrace



Figure 16. Metal weapons and tools, including a fenestrated axe, from a hoard in an EB IVB (2200–2000 B.C.E.) house. Photographs by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome “La Sapienza” ROSAPAJ.



Figure 17. MB ramparts as visible in Areas A and E, from the southwest. In the foreground, MB III (1650–1550 B.C.E.) Cyclopean Wall W.4 and B I–II (1900–1650 B.C.E.) Tower A1 (to the right); in the background, MB II (1800–1650 B.C.E.) Curvilinear Stone Structure. Photograph by Lorenzo Nigro, © Sapienza University of Rome ROSAPAJ.



**Figure 18** (top left). Area E: aerial view of MB II (1800–1650 B.C.E.) Curvilinear Stone Structure supporting the MB II rampart.

**Figure 19** (below). Area A: MB I–II (1900–1650 B.C.E.) Tower A1, from southeast.

**Figure 20** (top right). Area G, “Hyksos Palace”: plan, photograph, and funerary equipment of MB II (1800–1650 B.C.E.) Tomb D.641. Photographs and drawings by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome “La Sapienza” ROSAPAJ.

walls and, at its bottom, by a battering Cyclopean Wall (fig. 21). All that remains of this wall is a collapsed mud-brick superstructure (possibly reused during the Iron Age II) around the southern base of the tell.

During the Middle Bronze Age, Spring Hill was the city center. On the eastern flank of it stood the palace of the Canaanite rulers, while just southwest, on the highest point, was a monumental tower temple (Area P). The scanty remains of this religious building, excavated in 2012, showed it adopted the simple elongated layout typical of MB Palestinian temples. Middle Bronze II houses were excavated by the expedition in Areas A and T, at the southwestern corner



of the tell. A full reexamination of the Middle Bronze Age necropolis was also accomplished and included the cataloging of items that were spread worldwide in many institutions. A distinct Middle Bronze II structure was excavated in Area E, called the Curvilinear Stone Structure. It represents a long stretch of the wall supporting the MB rampart. Inside it, an earlier destruction layer preserved interesting items, including the clay figurine of a lioness that could be related to the cult of Ishtar.

The Middle Bronze III city at one point underwent violent military destruction and was left in ruins. The result of the destruction diminished the role of Jericho in the area, marking it as an



**Figure 21** (above). Area A: the MB III (1650–1550 B.C.E.) battering Cyclopean Wall W.4, from the southwest.  
**Figure 22** (below). Area A: Iron Age IIC (late 8<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.) installations (unit L.1770 with circular bins T.1775, T.1777, and T.1783), from the southwest.  
 Photographs by Lorenzo Nigro, © University of Rome “La Sapienza” ROSAPAJ.



emblematic ruin in collective imaginary.

### Jericho in the Late Bronze Age

The site was occupied in the Late Bronze Age (Bienkowski 1986) even though the scanty remains of this period, laying on top of the ruins of the previous cities, were almost fully removed by successive settlements and archaeological excavations (mainly the Austro-German Expedition). On the eastern flank of the tell, Garstang retrieved a LB clay tablet preserving an administrative text, which suggests that the city still had a political role, a palace, a ruler, and even an archive.

### Jericho in the Iron Age

Iron Age remains were excavated on the tell summit and also at its southern base, where an Iron Age IIC installation was brought to light in 2011 (fig. 22). Remains are too sparse for a coherent picture to be easily reconstructed. The main building, the so-called “Hilani” of the German excavations from 1907 to 1909, was on the eastern flank of Spring Hill, its deep foundation walls set into previous Early and Middle Bronze Age palaces.

Long staircases on the northern and southwestern sides of the tell allowed access up to the city, which stood on top of an impressive heap of ruins formed by the superimposed settlements and cities from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age. It would seem that Jericho was still an important city, especially for the political powers controlling Transjordan (namely, Moab, but also Ammon and Edom) providing access to Palestine, as well as for nomadic tribes inhabiting the region from the Wadi ‘Arabah to the Jordan Valley and beyond. Material evidence from this period reflects the many cultures interacting in the Jordan Valley. There are at least six major Biblical Narratives relating to Jericho, including Prophet Elijah’s healing of the spring waters, which had become bitter and caused disease and death, by throwing into it a pot of salt (2 Kings 2:19–22). These narratives account for the importance of the site in antiquity and in the historical reconstruction of

the Bible. The site was used as a symbol of the Canaanites' defeat (Joshua 6), as a Moabite stronghold (Judg. 3:12–26), and as a conquest of King Hiel of Bethel (1 Kings 16:34). Jericho's impressive ruins were exploited by Biblical authors in an attempt to validate the historicity of their narration.

### The Joint Expedition for the Establishment of the Jericho Oasis Archeological Park

The pilot project took place over 17 years with difficulties and successes shared by Italian and Palestinian students and archaeologists. Our goal was to work in equal partnership,

to restore Tell es-Sultan with its invaluable record of human heritage and protect the site, making it easily accessible and understandable for visitors. The accomplishment of these goals has led, beginning in 2014, to a second stage of the joint project: the implementation of the Jericho Oasis Archaeological Park which will include other sites in the Jericho Oasis, beginning with the spring of 'Ain es-Sultan. The creation of this archaeological park will help preserve the 103 archaeological sites in the oasis catalogued by the expedition and enhance the tourism and the economy of the modern city of Ariha. ♀

## Bibliographic Guide to Jericho

More than a century of excavations have resulted in a significant number of publications. Excavation reports were published by the Austro-German Expedition (E. Sellin and C. Watzinger, *Jericho. Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen*, Leipzig 1913), the first British Expedition (Garstang actually published a series of articles in the journal *Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology*, and a popular book: J. Garstang and J. B. E. Garstang, *The Story of Jericho*, London 1948). K. M. Kenyon produced a series of monumental reports published by the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem: *Excavations at Jericho*, vol. I (London 1960) and II (1965) dedicated to the necropolis, vol. III, with stratigraphy and architecture [edited by Th. Holland] (1981), while pottery and finds and their typological assessment followed in the postume volumes *vol. IV* (1982) and *V* (1983) edited by Holland. A synthesis of her view is presented in the book *Digging Up Jericho* (1957), while other detailed information was made available in a series of articles mainly in the journal *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*.

The Italian-Palestinian Expedition has published five volumes on Jericho in the series *Quaderni di Gerico* and *ROSAPAT* (available online at the website: [www.lasapienzatojericho.it](http://www.lasapienzatojericho.it)): vol. 1 – on the Proto-Urban village; vol. 2 – proceedings of a conference dedicated to the site rehabilitation and tourist valorization; vol. 4 – comparing Jericho and Byblos in the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium B.C.E.; 5 – matching all available data on the earliest city of the Early Bronze II and describing the rise of the “oldest city of the world;” vol. 7 – a catalogue of 103 archaeological sites in the Jericho Oasis, with bibliographic references for each of them. Interim reports have been published in the journals: *Scienze dell'Antichità* and *Vicino Oriente* which are also available online. A comprehensive book was edited by H. Taha and A. Qleibo (*Jericho, a Living History. Ten Thousand Years of Civilization*, Jerusalem: Studio Alpha 2010).

A useful archaeological synthesis with a thorough presentation of the Biblical material can be found in John Bartlett's *Jericho* of 1982, published at Guilford by Lutterworth Press.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Lorenzo Nigro**, Ph.D., is Professor of Near Eastern and Phoenician Archaeology in the Department of Oriental Studies at the University of Rome “La Sapienza.” He is an archaeologist with 25 years of field experience (starting from Ebla) and he is the director of the University of Rome *La Sapienza's* Archaeological Expedition to Palestine and Jordan, carrying out projects at Tell es-Sultan, ancient Jericho, Tell Abu Zarad, Biblical Tappuah (Salfet), and Bethlehem in Palestine; and Khirbet al-Batrawy, a 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium B.C.E. city in Jordan, and Motya, a Phoenician colony in Western Sicily (2002–2015). He is also the Director of the Museum of the Ancient Near East of the University of Rome “La Sapienza.” His studies address pre-classical societies in the Levant and the Mediterranean, ranging from architecture to metallurgy, from pottery to art, with a major focus on contextual archaeology, as well as on historical and cultural synchronization and conceptualization of the Levantine and Mediterranean civilizations.