



SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

**SAPIENZA IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
REGION**

Agreements on Cultural and Scientific
Cooperation: Programs and Projects

SAPIENZA IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION
Agreements on Cultural and Scientific
Cooperation: programs and projects

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TELL ES-SULTAN/ANCIENT JERICHO: ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH, RESTORATIONS AND TRAINING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK

Lorenzo Nigro, Department of Ancient World Studies, Sapienza

Hamdan Taha, Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage

Pilot project. Excavations, restorations, evaluation and training of local staff (2010-2012)

Tell Es-Sultan at the core of the Archaeological Park of the Jericho Oasis

The Sapienza Expedition to Jericho, carried out in cooperation with the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage, has undertaken systematic work at the site of Tell es-Sultan/ancient Jericho for the realization of the Archaeological Park, and the training of local staff in the field of archeology, restoration and enhancement of archaeological heritage. The main aim of the project is the investigation and full rehabilitation of the Tell es-Sultan site, a unique heritage of humankind, where evidence of ancient civilizations is preserved (from the earliest human presence near the Spring of 'Ain es-Sultan, the biblical Elisha's Spring, around 10,500 BC, to the progressive development of the Jerichoan community, one of the first to rely on agriculture for subsistence); and its development as the core of the Jericho Oasis National Archaeological Park.

Archaeological Investigations

The pivotal spot of the site, and of archaeological activities, is the "Spring Hill" (Area G), a raised mound overlooking the Spring of 'Ain es-Sultan, the core of the Jericho Oasis, where systematic works of exploration and restoration of the Royal Palace of the 3rd millennium BC city are being carried out.

The second area of investigation is the lower southern city (Areas A and E), with the extensive excavation of the impressive Middle Bronze Age fortifications: the Middle Bronze I-II (1900-1650 BC) Tower A1, the Middle Bronze II (1800-1650 BC) Curvilinear Stone Structure, and the Middle Bronze III (1650-1550 BC) Cyclopean Wall; and the stratigraphic investigation of the destroyed layers associated with these structures, which marked the life of the Middle Bronze Age Canaanite city, until its final destruction around 1550 BC.

A third area of investigation is the south-western corner of the Acropolis (Areas B and B-West), with the Early Bronze III (2700-2350 BC) mudbrick city-wall and the city-gate, destroyed by the fierce fire which brought to an end the city of the 3rd millennium BC around 2350 BC.

Finally, probes are being carried out in the area of the Spring (Areas S and T), along with the building activities for the upgrading of this sector.

The Expedition includes the systematic sampling of findings for chemical and physical analyses, which the particularly favorable context of the following destructions of the ancient city of Jericho allows (from C-14 dating, to the isotope analysis for metal artifacts, to pollen analyses and analyses of paleobotanical remains, to thermoluminescence).

Restoration and Valorization Activities

Restoration activities at the site focus on the major monuments brought to light by the Italian-Palestinian Expedition, including the Royal Palace of the 3rd millennium

BC (Area G), the mudbrick city-walls of the same period in Areas B and Q, the 2nd millennium BC Tower in Area A, and the massive stone fortifications of the same period in Area E. Restorations are carried out using different methods, with training of skilled workers: compensation of mudbricks made according to ancient techniques; protection through the application of coagulants of clay (ethyl silicate); coating with traditional plaster mixed with primal. Activities for the creation of collections of objects for the future museum of the site (under planning in cooperation with the local Department of Antiquities) are also implemented.

The Padis and Pairr Projects

The Project PADIS (Palestine Archaeological Databank & Information System), is related to the activities of the Expedition, is devoted to the registration and monitoring of the archaeological and historical-cultural sites in the Jericho Oasis and in the West Bank, and it has been activated with the main aim to ensure a complete safeguard of all sites and monuments against the strong modern urban development and political fragmentation of the territory. At the same time, the Project PAIRR (Palestine Archaeological Rescue and Recovering Items) is aimed at creating a website of Virtual Museum which collects all the Jerichoan items scattered outside of Palestine.

PROJECT PHASES

The project is carried on with annual campaigns of four weeks during the months of March-April.

RESULTS

The archaeological investigations aimed at the musealization were pursued in seven areas, with the systematic excavation and restoration of monuments:

- Area A: the massive defense system of the 2nd millennium BC (2000-1550 BC), when Jericho was the capital of the Canaanites, and whose name has been revealed by a scarab written in hieroglyphics (Ruha), was excavated in the southern lower city. Tower A1 was investigated, and its architectural structure, function and chronology were précised; as well as the houses arisen to the south and east of the Tower itself, and the later Cyclopean Wall;

- Areas B and B-West: the complex system of double mudbrick city-wall of the 3rd millennium BC (2700-2350 BC), which represents the most challenging public work realized at the time of the rise of the first city, was investigated at the south-western corner of the Early Bronze Age city, by clarifying its building technique and major structural issues. Here, the Early Bronze IIIA (2700-2500 BC) city-gate was also brought to light;

- Area G: the Royal Palace of the 3rd millennium BC was discovered and extensively explored on the Spring Hill. It stood on at least three terraces sloping down from west to east. Inside it, precious items, including a copper dagger, a seal impression and a cult vessel configured in a bull's head, and various storage jars were found;

- Area E: west of Kenyon's Trench III, an imposing stone defense structure dating back to the Middle Bronze II (1800-1650 BC), built with large irregular blocks in separate stretches 4-6 m length, and gradually deviating following the contour of the tell, was discovered and investigated. It was called Curvilinear Stone Structure;

- Area F: the resume of archaeological investigation on the northern plateau of the

tell was aimed at the study of the Early Bronze Age dwelling quarter, from the earliest Early Bronze I (3300-3000 BC) village with circular huts, to the gradual transformation of the urban layout on both sides of a main road which crossed the city during the Early Bronze II-III (3000-2350 BC). A series of installations for the food preparation and storage were brought to light inside the dwellings, along with various finds illustrating typical domestic activities;

- Area Q: south of Kenyon's Trench I, a further stretch of the complex system of double city-wall of the 3rd millennium BC city was exposed.

The Expedition have carried out systematic restorations on the monuments brought to light, implementing the creation of the Archaeological Park. A detailed tourist path with illustrative panels, including sixteen major monuments, each representing an era featuring the history of the city, was also studied and realized. Finally, the creation of the Interpretation Centre at the entrance of the site was started, with a projection room where groups of visitors can view an introductory film on the antiquities of Jericho, and where archaeological items from "La Sapienza" excavations are set on exhibit.

The Project PADIS (Palestine Archaeological Databank & Information System) achieved its first result with the publication of the catalog of the archaeological sites of the Jericho Oasis in the volume ROSAPAT 07; the on-line version of the catalogue is available at the link www.lasapienzatojericho.it/Padis

CONFERENCES, SEMINARS AND SYMPOSIUMS

- International Congress 7ICAANE (London, 12 to 17 April 2010)
- International Congress "Water systems and urbanization in Africa and beyond", Uppsala Universitet, Sweden, 1-2 March 2012
- International Conference "Reading Catastrophes" (Rome, 3-4 December 2012)

SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS (2010-2012)

L. Nigro, *Tell es-Sultan/Jericho in the Early Bronze II (3000-2700 BC): the rise of an early Palestinian city. A synthesis of the results of four archaeological expeditions* (Rome «La Sapienza» Studies on the Archaeology of Palestine & Transjordan, 5), Rome 2010.

L. Nigro, "Tell es-Sultan/Jericho and the Origins of Urbanization in the Lower Jordan Valley: Results of Recent Archaeological Researches", in P. Matthiae et al. (eds.), 6 ICAANE. Proceedings of the 6th International Congress of the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East. 5 May – 10 May 2008, "Sapienza", Università di Roma, Roma 2010, Vol. 2, pp. 459-481.

L. Nigro, M. Sala, H. Taha, *Archaeological Heritage in the Jericho Oasis. A systematic catalogue of archaeological sites for the sake of their protection and cultural valorization* (Rome «La Sapienza» Studies on the Archaeology of Palestine & Transjordan, 7), Rome 2011.

L. Nigro, M. Sala, H. Taha, J. Yassine, "The Early Bronze Age Palace and Fortifications at Tell es-Sultan/Jericho. The 6th - 7th seasons (2010-2011) by Rome "La Sapienza" University and the Palestinian MOTA-DACH", in *Scienze dell' Antichità* 17 (2011), pp. 571-597.

Websites: <http://www.lasapienzatojericho.it/padis/>



Fig. 1 – Tell es-Sultan/Jericho: the Canaanite scarab (1850-1800 BC) bearing the hieroglyphic inscription “administrator of Jericho”.



Fig. 2 – Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, Area A: general view of MB I-II (1900-1650 BC) Tower A1, from the south-east; in the background, the MB III (1650-1550 BC) Cyclopean Wall.



Fig. 3 – Tell es-Sultan/Jericho: general view of EB III B (2500-2350 BC) Palace G on Spring Hill, from the east.