"courage
Aurelios, nul n'est immortel
(par les soins de XX ?)"

Il s'agirait donc d'une inscription funéraire, assez soignée, d'un personnage nommé Aurelios; la date a de fortes chances de se situer après 212 ap. J.-C.. Au même endroit, on a trouvé la partie supérieure d'une stèle monolithique, dont le fronton est orné en son centre d'une rosette et flanquée de deux volets en acrotères. Dessous, dans une niche à couverture en cul de four, est sculptée une figure masculine, de face, imberbe, aux cheveux courts. De part et d'autre de la niche, se trouvent des pilastres. Ce petit monument est vraisemblablement une stèle funéraire d'époque romaine du troisième siècle (fig. 4)[5]. On n'est pas sûr que les fragments inscrits de l'inscription et la stèle funéraire fassent partie d'un même ensemble car la texture de la pierre semble très différente.

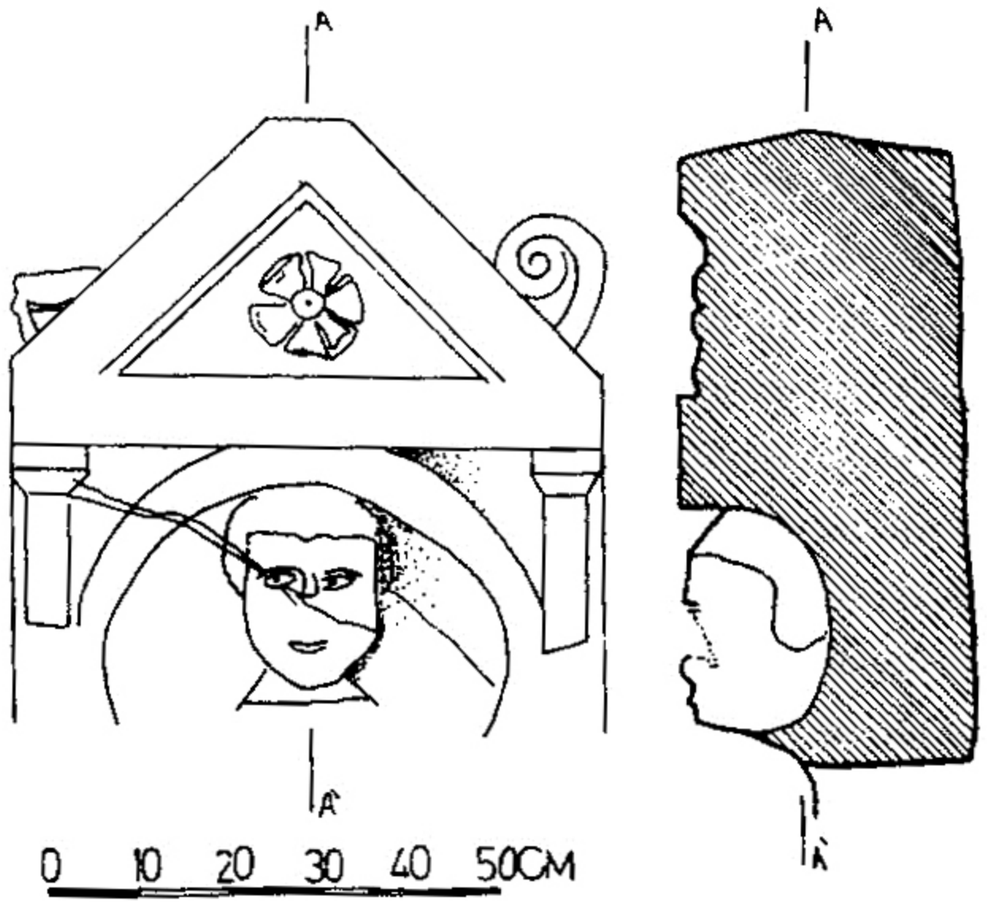

Fig. 4 : Stèle funéraire.

Haytham Hasan
Service des fouilles, Direction générale des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie, Damas.

[1] Nous remercions ici Monsieur le Prof. Sultan Muheisen, directeur général des Antiquités et des Musées de Syrie et le Dr. Adnan Bounni, le directeur de Service des fouilles de DGAMS de leur aide précieuse pour lancer ce projet de fouille dans cette région.

[2] Cf. Jacques-Claude Courtois, "Prospection archéologique dans la Moyenne Vallée de l'Oronte", Syria 50 (1973), p. 53-99.

[3] Olivier Callot, Huileries antiques de Syrie du Nord (BAH 118), Paris 1984.

[4] Nous prenons le risque de faire ici une présentation préliminaire de l'inscription, avant sa publication par un spécialiste d'épigraphie grecque. Nous présentons nos remerciements à Monsieur François Villeneuve, ancien directeur de l'IFAPO à Damas, qui a bien voulu nous aider.

[5] Voir Jean Marie Dentzer, Hauran. Recherches archéologiques sur la Syrie de Sud à l'époque hellénistique et romaine (BAH 124), Paris 1986, Tome 2, p. 281-291 et 292 (traduction en arabe); au musée d'Apamée, il y a une collection de stèles funéraires n'est pas encore publiée, à laquelle, on peut, sans risque, rattacher notre stèle.

Second Season of Excavations of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, October-November 1998

The second season of excavations of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan/Jericho took place in October-November 1998 on behalf of the Department of Antiquities of the National Authority of Palestine, the University of Rome La Sapienza[1], and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Four Areas have been opened (A, B, E, F), two as a prosecution of the 1997 discoveries, and two as new fields of research on the ground. A limited rescue sounding in Area D has also been carried out. The preliminary results are illustrated in chronological order (fig. 1).

Excavations in Area F were started with three main goals: 1. investigating in extension an EB domestic quarter; 2. clarifying the urban planning of the EB town inside the northern city-wall; 3. getting a suitable sequence for the Early Bronze Age in what appears a quite favourable spot of the site. Four squares (BfII10, BfII11, BgII10, BgII11) have thus been opened on the southern flank of Garstang's main trench (fig. 1), where emerging substantial mudbrick structures had been identified, which turned out to be a very well preserved dwelling area. A thick layer of collapsed materials was present over the whole area. Below a thick stratum of broken mudbricks, ashes, carbonized wooden beams, clearly representing the collapsed superstructures of the buildings under excavations, three main domestic units have been brought to light. The western limit of these structures

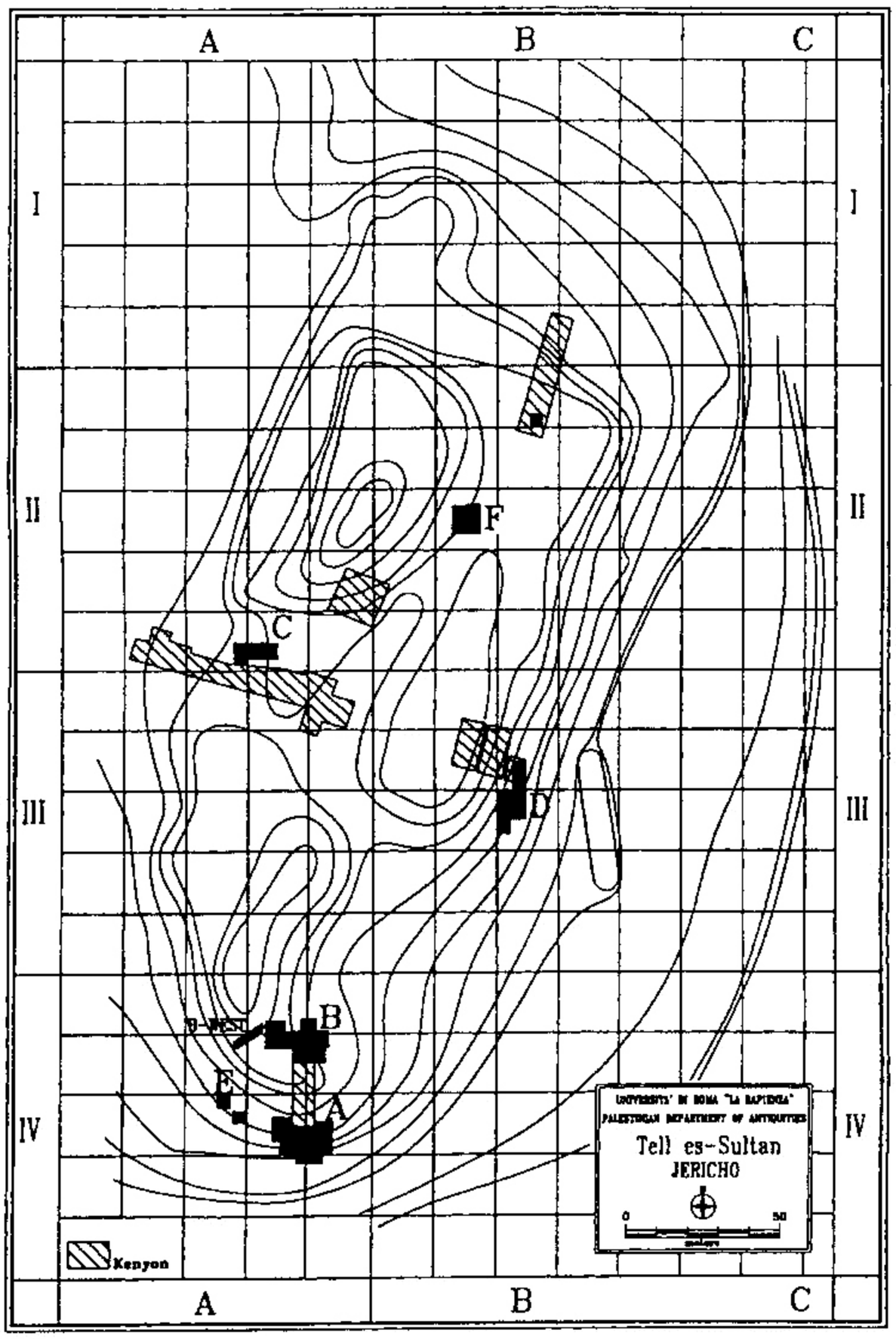

Fig. 1 : schematic plan of Tell es-Sultan, with the excavation areas in solid black.

was marked by a street, exposed in BfII10 with a surface paved with small sherds and stones. The central unit, which extends east-west all over the area, is composed of two rooms. The entrance room (L.327) was entered through a door located in the south-east corner (which still had its socket *in situ*), and had several installations, such as a bench along the north and west walls and a storage jar sunk into the floor in the middle of the room. A second door, opened in the south-western corner of L.327, aligned with the entrance, gives access to the main room of the house, L.305. This is an almost square space (3,90 x 3,55 m), where a large set of ceramic materials and objects was retrieved, illustrating a mature Sultan IIIc1 horizon (EB IIIA, 2600-2450 B.C.). Among pottery sherds, several complete fragments of Khirbet Kerak Ware vessels were found. Two stone slabs and various stone tools were associated with big animal bones, possibly indicating that the preparation of meat for consumption took place in the room. The northern unit is a large triangular room (L.303) with a hearth in the south-west corner, which was unroofed, as two offsets in the west and south walls of the room and a hole encircled by stones for the wooden post sustaining the roof testify to. Burnt grains, seeds and animal bones were retrieved in the area of the hearth (T.312), where thick layers of ashes and charcoal were dug. In the other part of the room several objects, a complete set of jar stoppers, sea-shell pendants, spindle whorls, grinding stones, loom weights, and flint blades illustrate everyday life of the inhabitants of this house. Two small stone weights belong to the same ponderal system of similar specimens known from EB III Syrian sites (Byblos, Ebla), based on a shekel of 7.8 gr.. They thus provide an important insight about the exchange system of the time. Two more rooms (L.319; L.323) have been partially identified on the southern limit of the excavated area, they are also rich in finds, though their precise relation in plan has not yet been clearly established. Due to the extraordinary good state of preservation of the structures, Area F has provided an enlightening insight on the urban plan and the life of a domestic quarter of EB IIIA Tell es-Sultan with a huge set of stratified materials.

In Area B, the excavation of Building B1, located inside of the southern line of Period IIIc2 city-wall (EB IIIB, 2450-2300 B.C.), has been prosecuted including the squares AsIV4 and ArIV4 (Marchetti, Nigro 1998: pp. 23-80, fig. 1:1). The excavation of L.39 in Building B1 was completed this year, exposing its various superimposed floors of beaten earth with two large limestone mortar lying on the upper one. A highly representative set of EB IIIB ceramic vessels was retrieved on this floor, sealed by a layer of collapsed mudbricks from W.34. In the new squares, two large refuse pits (P.203, P.207) had cut two other rooms of Building B1, separated by a huge north-south mudbrick wall (W.204), which has the same alignment of a wall excavated by E. Sellin in 1908. The 1998 season enlargement has thus provided

important data for the reconstruction of the plan of Building B1, and the investigation of its function.

Area D is represented by an extension of the rescue excavations on the eastern side of the tell, in front of the ᶜAin es-Sultan, where the modern road has cut a large mudbrick wall on stone foundation (W.7). The western face of W.7 has been identified, while its eastern limit has been detected until it gets lost for the modern cut (fig. 2). The excavation of a stratified deposit in stratigraphic relation with W.7, at the eastern end of an area already explored by K.M. Kenyon (Square H VI; Kenyon 1981: pl. 340), has provided ceramic materials dating from Period IVa (MB I, 1950-1800 B.C.), which cannot however provide a sure dating for W.7. The attribution of the latter structure to Period IIIc (Marchetti, Nigro 1998: 95-102, fig. 2: 1, where the squares are B and not A) is thus difficult to be definitely ascertained and, since there are no associated deposits available, the dating of this impressive structure remains open.

The excavations in Area A were extended by three new squares to the east and south of the area excavated in 1997 (Marchetti, Nigro 1998: 117-197), with the goal of prosecuting the exploration of Building A1 and investigating the occupational phases of the Lower Town. A very thick stratigraphical sequence was uncovered, with three phases of occupation from Sultan IVb (MB II, 1800-1650 B.C.), cut by the Period IVc rampart (MB III, 1650-1550 B.C.), which is represented by a massive stone retaining wall 5 m high (W.4) and a sloping rampart (F.13a-c). The second occupational phase of the period Sultan IVb is represented by a large domestic building (called Building A2), of which four rooms have been explored (L.185, L.186, L.191, L.197). In room L.186, the walls of which are preserved up to 2 m of height, several stone tools (grinding stones and pestles) and a bronze axe were found. Building A1, already partially explored in 1997, was further exposed: the walls are preserved up to 2,2 m and their regular layout and scale (W.19 is 1,7 m large by 12 m long) attest to that they belong to a public structure, possibly a palace or a fortress. Thus far, Building A1 consists of the long boundary wall W.19 and of an adjoining tower. In this latter structure, a rectangular room (L.198) was completely excavated : since it has no doorway, it seems that it was entered by means of a ladder from the ceiling, a system also attested to at Ebla during the same period, in Fortresses M and V. In L.198 the collapse of the upper floor was excavated, consisting of carbonized wooden beams, belonging to the collapsed ceiling burnt in the fire which destroyed Building A1, several storage jars and stone tools, indicating that grinding and storage activities were carried out on the upper floor. Buildings A1 and A2 were in use at the same time, although Building A1 was built earlier than A2. Thus, the results of the 1998 season in Area A have furnished substantial informations on the occupational history of the Lower Town during MB II.

Area E is located on the southwestern slope of the site. After the discovery in 1997 of the corner of a stone structure (W.5; Marchetti, Nigro 1998: 120-124, fig. 4:8) at the northwestern edge of Area A, it was decided to open a new area to the west in order to check the nature of such a massive structure connected to the foot of the MB I-II (1850-1650 B.C.)

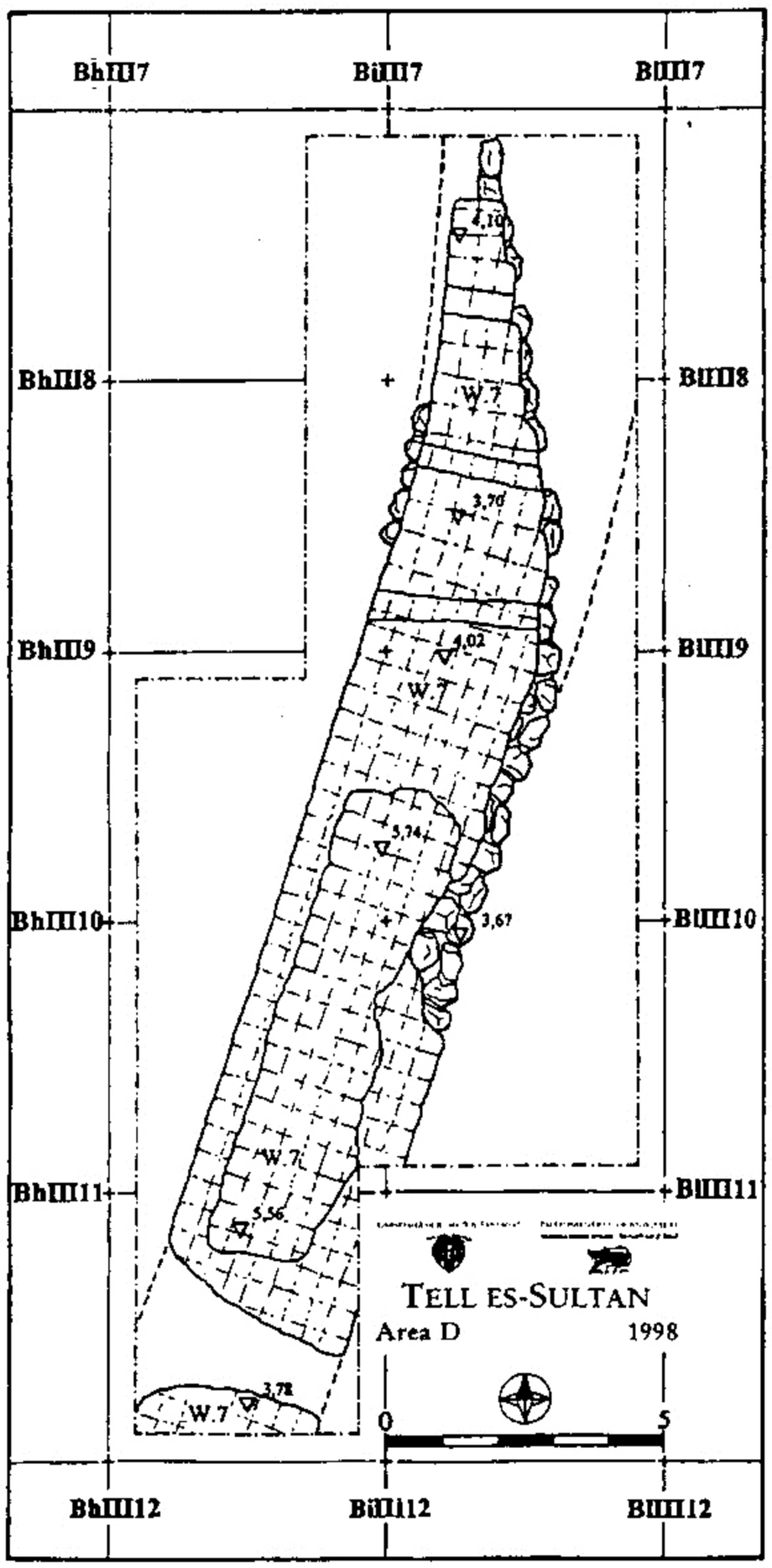

Fig. 2 : area D, plan of W.7.

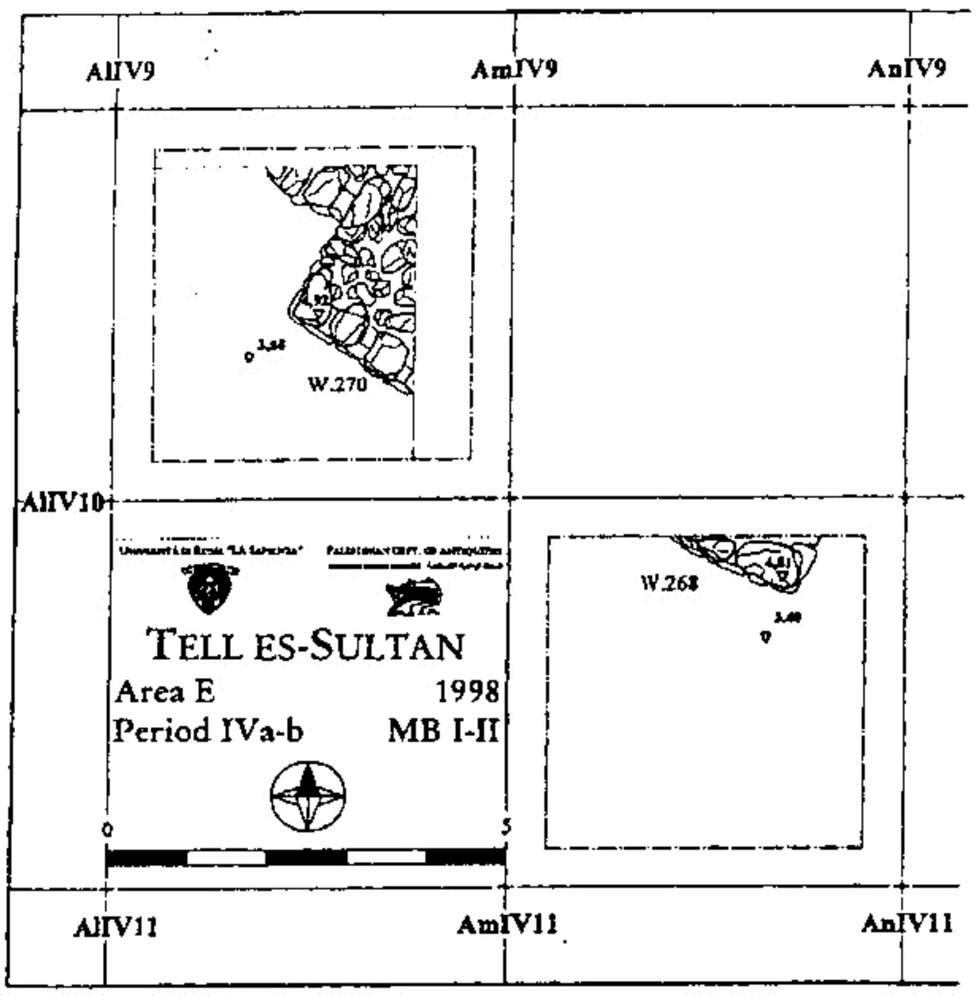

Fig. 3 : area E, city-gate or fortress of .Period IVa-b

rampart. Two squares (AmIV9, AnIV10) were thus opened on the line of W.5, 10 m to the northwest. The area was occupied by a massive dump accumulated by Garstang while digging one of his trenches across the EB III fortification wall (the trench was cleared in 1997 in Area B West). After that the surface of the tell was reached, a flimsy stone wall with associated floor (W.265 and L.271) was exposed immediately below, dating from the Early Islamic period (Sultan Xa). The underlying stratum is represented by a massive MB II stone fortification structure, formed by a rectangular tower (W.270+W.268) 7 m long, to which a stone revetment wall (W.274) is adjoined to the northwest (fig. 3); the latter is similar in function to W.3 in Trench III of Kenyon. Since the eastern edge of W.268 is a corner to the north, the existence of a central passage 3,5 m wide might be presumed, if a tower similar to W.270+W.268 is reconstructed also for W.5, as the alignment of the structures and the similarity of their building technique suggest. The interpretation of these findings is not yet certain: that it is a city gate is suggested by its location on the slope and the general layout of the stone structures, although in such case the path uphill was not straight, since it would have been too steep to overcome the EB III city walls. The 1998 excavations at Tell es-Sultan have thus provided important new insights on the urban topography of the ancient site, either for the EBA and the MBA periods.

In the newly excavated areas test restorations have been carried out, within the framework of an extensive touristic rehabilitation and conservation of the site. Mudbrick walls have been consolidated with ethyl-silicate, supplied by MAPEI (Milan): two major tests have been carried out on W.19 in Area A, the main mudbrick structure of Building A1, and on W.304 in Area F, a solid structure encompassing to the east L.303. Further, a new touristic path has been opened leading from the Neolithic Tower area to Areas B and A on the southern slope of the site. The scientific cooperation between Italian and Palestinian Institutions is continuing also in a scholarship program set up by the Italian Ministry of the University and Scientific Research and the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities.

Nicolo Marchetti - Lorenzo Nigro - Jihad Yassin
Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan/Jericho
Via Palestro 63, I-00185 Roma
e-mail: gerico@uniroma1.it

[1] For the preliminary reports on the first season, see Marchetti, Nigro, Sarie' 1997; 1998; Marchetti, Nigro 1998.

Bibliography

K.M. KENYON, Excavations at Jericho III. The Architecture and Stratigraphy of the Tell, British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, London 1981.

N. MARCHETTI, L. NIGRO (eds.), Scavi a Gerico, 1997. Relazione preliminare sulla prima campagna di scavi e prospezioni archeologiche a Tell es-Sultan, Palestina (Quaderni di Gerico 1), Università di Roma «La Sapienza»-Palestinian Department of Antiquities, Roma 1998.

N. MARCHETTI, L. NIGRO, I. SARIE', «First Season of Excavations of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, April-May 1997», in OE 1997/2, pp. 1-4.

N. MARCHETTI, L. NIGRO, I. SARIE', «Preliminary Report on the First Season of Excavations of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan/Jericho, April-May 1997», in PEQ 130 (1998), pp. 121-144.