0. Introduction

The ninth season of archaeological activities at Tell es-Sultan/ancient Jericho (fig. 1), in Palestine, carried out by Rome “La Sapienza” University and the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage (MOTA - DACH), took place in March 2013 and was supported by the former Institutions and by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The ninth season (2013) at Tell es-Sultan was basically aimed at site maintenance, monuments protection, and further study of the site in all periods. Major interventions were carried out as illustrated below:

1. Monitoring of mudbrick superstructure of Tower A1 and sampling on MB II layers (§ 1);
2. Survey of EB III Palace G on the Spring Hill (in Areas G, P, Q and Kenyon’s Square HIII), aimed at a complete reconstruction of the building (§ 2);
3. Study of the building technique of the EB IIIA Inner City-Wall in Area B & B-West (§ 3), in the light of the discovery of the South Gate;
4. Salvage interventions on EB IV layers in Kenyon’s Trench I (§ 4);
5. Ashes and floor sampling in Area F, EB IIIA House L.403 (§ 5);
6. Further documentation work in the Spring area (Area S) (§ 6);
7. Tourist enhancement of the site through implementation of visitors’ paths and setting of explanatory panels with updated information (§ 7).

Fig. 1. General view of the site of Tell es-Sultan/ancient Jericho at the sunset, from west (2013).

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3 A deep thank is addressed to the Palestinian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, H.E. Rula Maayah, to the Deputy Minister, Dr. Hamdan Taha, and to all the staff of the Palestinian MOTA-DACH. Members of the Italian-Palestinian Expedition at Tell es-Sultan in the ninth season (2013) were: Directors: Lorenzo Nigro - Hamdan Taha; Field Directors: Maura Sala - Jehad Yassine; Iyad Hamdan (MOTA-DACH site responsible); Area A and Trench I: Gaia Ripepi - Wael Hamamreh (supervisors), Chiara Fiaccavento; Area B and B-West: Elisabetta Gallo (supervisor), Michele De Marco; Areas G and F: Maura Sala (supervisor); Basem Shqair (restorer), Moammed Dyiab (restorer - consultant), Stefano Ferrari (restorer, Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione e il Restauro, Rome).

4 Sincere thanks are addressed to the General Consul of Italy in Jerusalem, Minister Davide Laccelia, and to the Italian Cooperation Office in Jerusalem (Mr. Vincenzo Racalbuto), and to the General Directorate for the Promotion of System Country - Office VI (Counsellor S. Lippi; Prof. E. Janulardo) of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
One of the main goals of the ninth season (2013) was the establishment of a permanent system of monitoring of the preservation state of monuments built of earthen architecture, for the sake of their full restoration and touristic enhancement, and the planning of interventions both in Tell es-Sultan and in the nearby Spring of ‘Ain es-Sultan for the implementation of the Jericho Oasis Archaeological Park (= JOAP).

1. Area A: MB II (Sultan IVb, 1750-1650 BC) houses and stratigraphy; reconstruction of Tower A1 architecture

Works in Area A, at the southern foot of the tell, were focused on further investigation of MB II (Sultan IVb) layers west and east of Tower A1, and on a renewed examination of houses grown up against the eastern and northern sides of this defensive structure during Middle Bronze II.

In Square AqIV13, samples of ashes and charcoals were taken from destruction layer F.1688, a up to 0.6 m thick stratum accumulated over courtyard floors L.1680 + L.1660⁵ west of Tower A1 (fig. 2). This layer, including rubble heaps, resulted from a major destructive event, which took place towards the end of the 18ᵗʰ century BC (around the mid of the Egyptian 13ᵗʰ Dynasty) and might be attributed to a violent earthquake struck. This event might be the reason for the addition of wall W.22 to the north side of the Tower, at the junction between walls W.19 and W.15, which was convincingly ascribed to a structural subsidence⁶. This structure let the space east of the main building to be exploited for private dwellings: Houses A2 (L.185 + L.186 + L.191; Sultan IVb1) and A3 (L.173 + L.193; Sultan IVb2) grew one upon the other with several refurbishing until the final destruction of the dwelling area, around 1650 BC⁷. The last MB II (Sultan IVb2) destruction layer, F.166 (inside House A3), was also re-examined in square AtIV11. Burnt fallen down bricks, ashes, charcoal, and human remains in Tower A1 (F.162)⁸, and micro-stratigraphy suggest that the uppermost dwell area underneath the MB III rampart (cut through by Cyclopean Wall W.4) was destroyed by an enemy attack towards the mid of the 17ᵗʰ century BC. There are no data available to identify the provenance of this attack, which represents a turning point in the history of the Canaanite city: its defensive system was completely reconstructed with massive fortification works, including the Cyclopean Wall, a new rubble rampart and an upper city wall⁹. This might hint at a persisting threat to the city which made it necessary to strengthen its defenses, such as that brought about by nomadic tribes living in the wilderness north and south of Jericho.

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Fig. 2. General view of Area A (2013): sampling destruction layer F.1688 west of Tower A1, from south.

⁵ Nigro et al. 2011, 577.
⁷ Marchetti - Nigro eds. 2000, 195, fig. 5:1 (fillings F.165a-b/F.166 and F.171).
⁸ Marchetti - Nigro eds. 2000, 195, fig. 5:12.
The monumental architecture of Tower A1 has been reconstructed on the basis of the analysis of its structure. It had at least four storeys. The ground floor, a basement entered from above through a ladder, was 2.5 m high, while the main floor was 3.2 m high, with at least two more storeys 2.2 m each up to a reconstructed height of around 10 m. Wooden (poplar) beams 0.26 m thick and 3 m long were inserted into the mudbrick masonry of the tower to support the ceilings of each storey. The walls widths were reduced of a two lines of bricks (0.72 m) on each storey.
2. **Area G: the EB III (Sultan IIIc, 2700-2300 BC) Palace G**

Further survey work in Area G and in the nearby Areas P, Q and H allowed to draw out the overall plan of the Palace erected on the eastern flank of the Spring Hill in the 3rd millennium BC, matching the stratigraphic and architectural data provided by three previous expeditions with those achieved by the Italian-Palestinian excavations in years 1999-2013. This large building was standing up on three terraces, stretching east-west around 35 m and spanning a difference in elevation of around 5 m. On the upper terrace there was a series of rooms, devoted to production and storage, presumably administrative structures directly opened to the city (north-west of the palace there was the city temple); on the middle terrace there were a courtyard, a reception room with a raised podium, and some subsidiary rooms (one hosting a staircase to the upper storey); in the lower terrace there was a large hall, and, on the rear side, a series of parallel elongated rooms, possibly the palace storerooms.

Further examination of the lower terrace during the 2013 season, in the area in between the Italian-Palestinian excavations and Kenyon’s Square HIII, led to the possible identification of passage which connected the Palace with the underlying Spring.

![Fig. 5. Schematic plan of Palace G.](image)

The Palace has at least three entrances: one main façade to the south opened towards the main street climbing the Spring Hill from south-east, which introduced to a courtyard (L.1200); a bent axis passageway (including a staircase) giving access to the Spring area; and a possible third entrance to the north-west, towards the reconstructed sacred area of the Early Bronze Age.

Architecture, dimensions and finds from Palace G testify to the public function of this building, which was characterized by the imposing volumes of its walls, supporting at least two or three stories, as a series of staircases and several wooden beams retrieved carbonized in the destruction fillings demonstrate.

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3. Area B & B-West: the EB IIIA (Sultan IIIc1, 2700-2500 BC) double line fortification and South Gate L.1800

Works in Area B & B-West were again concentrated on the documentation of the Main Inner Wall (W.2) of the double line of the EB IIIA (Sultan IIIc1, 2700-2500 BC) fortification system. This major structure, up to 4.2 m wide, had a preserved elevation of 2.5 m. Its outer face was exposed in square AoIV5 in 2009, while its inner face was not preserved due to erosion followed to the Austro-German tracing of the crest of the structure done at the beginning of the last century. This main structure had a very interesting building technique: it was made of reddish-brown bricks upon a stone foundation. At around 1 m above the foundation a layer of reeds and wooden posts was embedded into the mudbrick masonry apparently in order to absorb humidity and expel it outside; the reeds mat edge was bordered by a line of small limestone blocks cut in the dimensions of bricks (fig. 6).

In this stretch, the original whitish lime plaster on the western face of the Main City-Wall was still preserved. If the whole volume of the city-wall exhibited this white revetment, this monumental structure looked like a shining prominent line standing out in the surrounding verdant landscape of the oasis: a visible symbol of the ruling institution, the city.

In between the Main Inner Wall (W.2) and the Outer Wall (W.56), lying at a lower elevation, there was a blind room (L.54), filled up with pulverized sandy gypsum.

On the opposite inner side of the Main City-Wall, its eastern face was not preserved, and the body of the massive structure was visible crossed by a series of small beams (0.13 m thick) placed as headers through the wall width at regular intervals of 0.36 m. These small beams probably worked as supporters for an abutting balcony running inside the wall edge on its inner side. Such devices allowed to walk on top of the city-wall for defensive purposes.

In Area B, the South Gate allowed to get into the city through a passageway in between the inner and the outer city-wall. It was possibly connected with another entrance located to the east, or with the main gate, facing the Spring.

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11 Marchetti - Nigro eds. 1998, 23-24, 32-33, figs. 1:1, 1:15. On the EB III (Sultan IIIc) double city-wall at Tell es-Sultan see Nigro 2006b, 361-375.
13 Marchetti - Nigro eds. 1998, 81-94; Nigro 2006a, 9, 18. The Inner Wall was here identified with Wall W.2 (prosecution of Kenyon’s wall NFB in Trench III: Kenyon 1981, 209-210, pl. 269b), and the Outer Wall with Wall W.56 (prosecution of Kenyon’s wall NFD in Trench III: Kenyon 1981, 210-211, pl. 269b, c).
4. Trench I: the MB II (Sultan IVb) rampart and underlying EB IV (Sultan IIId) strata

Kenyon’s Trench I was again monitored recording the progressive deterioration of its sections and the falling down of structures and strata. With its length of 70 m and its depth of maximum 18 m it is still a great preservation challenge at the site of Tell es-Sultan.

Extending the western limit of Area C, excavated in the first season (1997)\(^1\), the MB II (Sultan IVb) rampart was re-examined during the ninth season (2013), documenting on both sides of Trench I the filling up techniques of this structure and its hard and steep revetment of clayish limestone marl(fig. 7). Moreover, the examination of the rampart led to the underlying EB IV strata\(^2\).

In this spot, on an artificial terrace created by filling up the ditch (VI) at the bottom of the Early Bronze III fortification, the EB IVB (Sultan IIId2) inhabitants of Jericho erected a bipartite structure characterized by two benches or altars built up in pisé\(^3\), and interpreted by the excavator, K.M. Kenyon, as a cult place\(^4\). The walls of this building were made of single-lined bricks of a grayish-olive green colour. According to Kenyon the occupation of the lower terrace (starting in Stage XLI) antedated that of the summit of the tell (Stage XLII). Actually, a renewed examination suggested that the earliest occupation was that on the top of the collapsed EB III city-walls; the village arisen upon the ruins of the prominent EB III city gradually expanded from the Spring Hill down on the flanks of the tell\(^5\).

An essay of micro-stratigraphical analysis was carried in a selected essay of the southern section of the Trench I (fig. 9). Here, broken and collapsed bricks were embedded into an ashy layer with small gravel, flint scales, a pebble and plaster fragments, deriving from collapsed and burnt structures. Some typical Sultan IIId2 pottery sherds, and a Canaanite blade were collected from the essay (fig. 8).

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\(^{15}\) Marchetti - Nigro eds. 1998, 103-115.

\(^{16}\) Kenyon 1954, 56, 58, pl. XIII; 1981, 106-108, pls. 86-87, pl. 231a, 236.

\(^{17}\) Nigro 2003, 126-128.

\(^{18}\) Kenyon 1981, 106.

\(^{19}\) Nigro 2003, 130-133.
5. **Area F: EB IIIA domestic quarters: stratigraphy of the main street and House L.403**

During the nine season (2013) one of the domestic units excavated in 2009 east of the main street (L.307), House L.403, was newly examined. Here, the upper EB IIIA floor (elev. 13.60) was removed and the earliest EB IIIA floor was exposed (elev. 13.05) by removing superimposed floorings and fillings of use (F.1101); it was named L.1106. In fact, several thin and compacted layers of ashes and marl had been laid as floorings during the life of the house, sometime they incorporated architectural debris (broken mudbricks and plasters) after collapse and razing activities. Within these layers charcoals, carbonized seeds, pottery sherds were collected. This house had a riverbed-stones built installation (silos) in the south-western corner (S.1114) and a huge pillar base in the middle, consisting of a roughly rectangular limestone block (fig. 11). A basalt grinding stone had been buried at the bottom of wall W.304 to strengthen it during one of many refurbishing of the house. It is the standard grinder of this period (fig. 12).

The Main Street L.307 was also investigated, providing a 1 m high stratigraphic sequence of continuous utilization during the Early Bronze III.

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6. **Salvage works in the Spring Area**

The Spring of ‘Ain es-Sultan, renowned as Biblical prophet Elisha’s Spring (2 Kings 2:19–22), was separated from the site itself, of which it was the centre for millennia, by the modern road (fig. 13).

In the last two years, the area of the Spring has been involved in a drastic refurbishing intervention carried out by the Ariha Municipality, which involved the Ottoman Pool and the nearby mills. In a wide area north-east of the Roman aqueduct several monuments connect with the Spring were brought to light, including a Roman vaulted channel, built with carefully hewn blocks; a massive Herodian Tower, successively transformed during the Byzantine times with the typical building technique with bricks courses; and several reconstructions of the aqueduct during the Mameluk and Ottoman periods (fig. 14).

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21 Nigro - Sala - Taha (eds.) 2011, 110-113, sites cat. 21-22.
7. Restoration and tourist enhancement of Tell es-Sultan: the PADIS and the Virtual Museum Projects

The Archaeological Park of Tell es-Sultan has been further implemented during the nine season (2013) by planning its inclusion within the Archaeological Park of the Jericho Oasis (JOAP), through the PADIS (Palestine Archaeological Databank and Information System: www.lasapienzatojericho.it/padis) and the Jericho Master Plan (JMP) made by the Italian Cooperation, and by refurbishing explanatory panels and paths on the site (fig. 15).

A new tourist path has been studied for Area A, including the roofing of Tower A1 with a removable tent in order to preserve its massive mudbrick structures.

Restoration test and projects for musealization were performed in Areas B, G and F, where major monuments made of earthen architecture were exposed.

Moreover, the protection of the Jericho cultural heritage was also pursued by filing ancient items from archaeological contexts spread over collections in Museums (fig. 16) and other institutions all over the world. Information are gathered in the Jericho Virtual Museum site, which will be a tool also for people visiting Tell es-Sultan.

Fig. 15. Tourist groups visiting Tell es-Sultan standing under the shelter and looking at the explanatory panels.

Fig. 16. Reconstruction of a MB II tomb excavated by John Garstang in the Jericho Necropolis on exhibit in the Palestine Archaeological Museum (Rockefeller Museum, Jerusalem).
8. Conclusions: Jericho, 10,000 years of History of Humankind

The 2013 season was basically devoted to the protection of Tell es-Sultan and to the plan of future interventions in its major areas for the restoration and musealization of its major monuments. Archaeological data were collected through sampling, soundings and micro-stratigraphy, in Areas A, B & B-West, F, G, and in Kenyon’s Trench I, which allow to improve our knowledge on the Early and Middle Bronze Age city, while, in the Spring area, important monuments of the following periods were documented and recorded. The layout of the Early Bronze Age Palace on the Spring Hill was reconstructed thanks to data collected in four different adjacent areas of excavations.

An overall project of tourist rehabilitation of Area A was drawn out and it will be one of the main goals of the next seasons.

Tell es-Sultan, now inscribed by UNESCO in the “Tentative List” of Palestine for the World Humankind Heritage, is still a tourist destination for more than two hundred thousand people a year, and it deserves the joint commitment of Rome “La Sapienza” University and the Palestinian MoTA-DACH for its continuous and progressive implementation as an exemplary Archaeological Park.

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