



THE JAFFA EXCAVATIONS: THE 2016 STUDY SEASON

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In July and early August of 2016, the Jaffa Cultural Heritage Project (JCHP), directed by Aaron A. Burke (University of California, Los Angeles) and Martin Peilstöcker (Johannes-Gutenberg Universität, Mainz), undertook a study season of previously excavated materials from Area A in Jaffa. The materials analyzed included those unearthed during excavations in the Ramesses Gate area by the JCHP from 2011 to 2014 and by Jacob Kaplan, the site's former excavator, from 1955 to 1974.¹ These excavations exposed remains of the New Kingdom fortress of *Yapu* (anc. Jaffa) that functioned from the mid-15th to early 12th centuries BCE.² The principal objective of the season was to obtain necessary photographs, drawings, and measurements of all artifacts to be published from these excavations in a forthcoming volume on the excavations of Bronze and Iron Age remains from Tel Yafo. The season was the third funded as part of a multi-year collaborative research grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.³

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE REMAINS

A significant contribution of the 2016 season was the assessment of Jaffa's pre-Egyptian settlement, namely, remains from the end of the Middle Bronze Age. Two primary contexts, reached by Kaplan during the 1970s, permit some reconstruction of that settlement with the caveat, however, that all finds were encountered within separate, deep soundings that do not provide a wide exposure of these early contexts. These included, first, a probe through Persian and Iron Age remains to a late Middle Bronze Age context in which a tabun and large pithos were encountered on a floor. Seed fragments from

this context, presumably belonging to the abandonment of the context and not the construction fill above, were isolated by Kaplan and will be analyzed by Brian Damiata at the Keck AMS Laboratory at UC Irvine in fall 2016. The probe was continued slightly deeper and an additional context was encountered, but a dearth of finds does not permit a clarification of this locus. The second identifiable context consists of a late Middle Bronze Age burial featuring a store jar, small jar, bowl, and dipper juglet, and the skeletal remains of a child accompanied by a scarab, also excavated by Kaplan just north of the Lion Temple. This appears to have been a typical intramural burial below a building, as was common during the period, but it has not been possible to associate this burial with the remains of a particular structure.

NEW KINGDOM REMAINS

The primary focus of the 2016 season was, however, an assessment of finds from Phase RG-4a, the destruction of Kaplan's Level IVB gate complex built, if not refurbished, by Ramesses II. This destruction is now dated by radiocarbon remains, which were recovered by the JCHP, to the second half of the 12th century BCE.⁴ Finds from this context included a large collection of arrowheads (Fig. 1), a lead weight, various imported and locally produced Egyptian ceramics (Fig. 2), a Cypriot pithos, "Canaanite" store jars, ivory box fragments (Fig. 3), scarabs of Amenhotep III, more than 800 beads, and kilos of carbonized seeds from 13 distinct species. Analysis of faunal remains from the gate by Ed Maher also revealed the worked and unworked antler remains from no fewer than 32 deer. All of these remains lay buried below the



FIGURE 1: Metal finds (JCHP 300, 325, 327, and 361) from the Phase RG-4a gate destruction (photograph by the JCHP).

FIGURE 2: Imported Egyptian two-handled meat jar (JCHP 262) from the Phase RG-4a gate destruction (photograph by the JCHP).



FIGURE 3: Ivory box fragments from the Phase RG-4a gate destruction (JCHP 307) (photograph by the JCHP).

collapsed superstructure of the gate complex, which included more than two dozen fragments of beams and planks of cedar (*Cedrus libani*), oak, and olivewood. The location of the finds, almost entirely derived from the floor of the passageway, indicate that the 4-m-wide passage functioned as part of a market that was likely centered on the gate in a fashion typical of Canaanite and later Israelite markets.

Remains from within the fortress in the area known as the Lion Temple, which was previously excavated by Kaplan, reveal a stratigraphic sequence spanning much of the Late Bronze Age. While only the latest building, the so-called Lion Temple, has yielded the near-complete lines of a building, the stratified sequence from probes within the structure exposed several layers that can now be dated by short-lived radiocarbon samples and permit a linking of the sequence within the Lion Temple with the sequence from the gate. Closer analysis of the assemblages associated with this sequence of floors and their occupational debris may provide insights into the role played by this area within the fortress. In addition to the well-known lioness remains found by Kaplan, Maher has identified hyena remains and a wide variety of other animals within the stratigraphy of this area associated with the Late Bronze Age Egyptian presence. A number of

ceramic samples from the Lion Temple as well as the Ramesses Gate will be tested for petrography and residue during the winter 2017. This work is part of ongoing PhD research by Jacob Damm at UCLA, which seeks to explore the nature of Egyptian identity and social interactions at the Egyptian fortress in Jaffa.

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- ¹ Jacob Kaplan and Haya Ritter-Kaplan, "Jaffa," in Ephraim Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, vol. 2, 1791–1792 (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993).
 - ² Burke, Aaron A., et al., "Excavations of the New Kingdom Egyptian Fortress in Jaffa, 2011–2014: Traces of Resistance to Egyptian Rule in Canaan," *American Journal of Archaeology* 121.1 (2017): 85–133.
 - ³ NEH Collaborative Research Grant, 2013–2016 (RZ-51445-12). *Insurgency, Resistance, and Interaction: Archaeological Inquiry into New Kingdom Egyptian Rule in Jaffa*.
 - ⁴ Burke et al. 2017.