THE SOUTHERN PLAIN OF AKKO' PROJECT:
EXCAVATION AT TEL REGEV

Saint Louis University, Madrid Campus
The University of Haifa
Universidad SEK-Ecuador
Instituto Bíblico y Arqueológico Español (‘Casa de Santiago’)
Facultad de Literatura Cristiana y Clásica ‘San Justino’
Universidad CEU-San Pablo

The ‘Southern Plain of Akko’ Project is a research project of St. Louis University (Madrid Campus) and the University of Haifa, in collaboration with the Universidad SEK-Ecuador, the Instituto Bíblico y Arqueológico Español en Jerusalén (‘Casa de Santiago’), the Facultad de Literatura Cristiana y Clásica ‘San Justino’, and the Universidad CEU-San Pablo which aims at improving our understanding of the Cananites (in the Late Bronze Age) and the Phoenicians and the Israelites (in the Iron Age) in the area around the Kishon River in Israel. The project includes a survey of the southern plain of Akko, an excavation at the site of Tel Regev, and a ceramic provenience study, as well as a field school for the participants.

A) RESEARCH

I. Research goals

The southern plain of Akko, near the modern city of Haifa (Israel), controls the western entrance to the Jezreel valley, also known as the Esdraelon valley, which is a very fertile area and the main east-west passageway in the southern Levant. This location always made the southern plain of Akko an important area for exchanges, particularly for exchanges between inland and maritime peoples. With this project we aim at improving our understanding of the economic and social exchanges that took place in the region between the Cananites during the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1500-1200 BCE) and between the Phoenicians and the Israelites during the Iron Age I (ca. 1200-1000 BCE) and II (ca. 1000-586 BCE). We plan to do this by means of a five-summer-season research project which includes a regional survey (which took place in Summer 2010), an excavation at the site of Tel Regev (Tell al-Harbaj in Arabic)—which started in Summer 2011 and will continue through Summer 2014, and a petrographic analysis of a sample of pottery vessels dating to the period between the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age II.

II. Research team

Directors:
- Dr. Carolina A. Aznar, Profesora at the Division of Humanities and the Arts/Business and Social Sciences at St. Louis University, Campus de Madrid.
- Mr. Shalom Yankelevitz, Ph.D. Candidate at the Recanati Center of Maritime Studies, the University of Haifa
- Prof. Michal Artzy, Professor at the Recanati Center of Maritime Studies, the University of Haifa

Scientific collaborators:
- Dr. C. Alfonso Molina, Profesor at the Facultad de Ciencias Ambientales, Universidad Internacional SEK-Ecuador.
- Mr. Hipólito Sanchiz, Profesor at the Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de la Información, Universidad CEU-San Pablo
III. Research description

Although several surveys have dealt with the archaeological sites in the southern plain of Akko\textsuperscript{1} and with the sites in the nearby hill country\textsuperscript{2}, and although an early study gathered the information on the southern plain available at the time when the study was made\textsuperscript{3}, no research had yet been conducted with the goal of understanding the integration of the area around the Kishon River and its subsidiaries in the plain, the Zippori and the Gedora Rivers, during the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age I and II.

Previous studies suggested that in the Late Bronze Age the main settlement in the southern plain seemed to be Tell Abu Hawam\textsuperscript{4}, but also that this site only was an island and that it seems to have served a larger site still to be identified\textsuperscript{5}. According to the Papyrus Anastasi I, ancient *Achshaph* (*Akshapa*), was an independent city located south of Akko,\textsuperscript{6} the site after which the plain is named. It is possible Tell Abu Hawam could have been the port of *Achshaph*. In the past, two sites in the southern plain were proposed as *Achshaph*: Tel Regev\textsuperscript{7} and Tel Nahal\textsuperscript{8}. Recent petrographic analysis point to Tell Keisan, close to Akko, as a more likely candidate\textsuperscript{9}. It should be pointed out, however, that although these analyses are well founded, they were not conducted on pottery coming from Tel Regev or Tel Nahal themselves. The petrographic analysis of a sample of Late Bronze Age vessels found in our regional survey at those two sites will help clarify the identification of *Achshaph* and provide us with a ceramic database for the area. The unearthing of remains at Tel Regev will also help us understand the role of this particular site in the region\textsuperscript{10}. Tel Regev (Tell al-Harbaj in Arabic) is located in the western access to the Jezreel Valley, at the foot of the southwestern hills of the Lower Galilee and very close to Mt. Carmel.

Earlier surveys in the region have showed that in the Iron Age I (ca. 1,200-1,000 BCE) the sites in the plain decreased in size while a number of new small settlements appeared in the nearby hill country, precisely in the area where the Bible locates the tribe of Asher\textsuperscript{11}. The finding of monochrome and bichrome pottery in the plain of Akko was linked to the Sea Peoples (sometimes in relation to the ‘Sikils,’ sometimes in relation to the ‘Sherdani’) and it is believed that a mixture of Canaanites-Israelites and Sea Peoples lived there at the time\textsuperscript{12}. But no studies have been conducted on the distribution of those populations yet. Although this is a very complex topic for which there are no easy solutions (the ‘pots and people’ debate, see Jones 1996 e.g.), petrographic analysis will make at least possible to discern regional exchange patterns.

Previous studies showed that in the Iron Age II (ca. 1,000-586 BCE) many of the Iron Age I settlements in the hill country lost their population while many new settlements appeared in the plain\textsuperscript{13}. Petrographic analysis conducted by Dr. Aznar on three storage jars from Tell Qasile Stratum X, dated to the 10th century and found together with dozens of other similar jars\textsuperscript{14}, showed that the three jars had been made in the area of the plain of Akko\textsuperscript{15}. This means that there was a large shipment of foodstuffs, probably olive oil, from the area of the plain of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Balensi 1972.
\item Lehmann 2001:84-87.
\item Aznar et al. 2005.
\item Fischer-Elfert 1986:177.
\item Mazar 1950 and Aharoni 1979.
\item Lipinski 1979:158-159.
\item Goren et al. 2004.
\item For the early exploration of these two sites see Garstang and Phythian-Adams 1922a and b.
\item Lehmann 2001:87-90.
\item Lehmann 2001:89, Raban 1991.
\item Lehmann 2001:90-96.
\item Mazar 1985:54.
\item Aznar 2005.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Akko to the Philistine settlement of Tell Qasile. That jar type is also the main type at Tyre Stratum XII, dated from ca. 81000 to 7925 BCE. Could these jars be evidence of large scale shipments (as those in 1 Re 5:11)? If they were, is it possible to identify the production place of these jars? At present, it is not. But with the petrographic analysis of the proposed sample of Iron Age II storage jars retrieved in our survey the situation will improve.

In principle we do not expect our research to provide many arguments on the current debate on the chronology of the Iron Age IIA period, but we believe it will be helpful to cast light on the regional peculiarities of the pottery sequence in the area. Although scholars debate how large Israel was in the 10th and the 9th centuries BCE, most of them agree that it must have reached at least the Jezreel Valley. The regional survey and the excavation of the Iron Age II levels at Tel Regev in particular will help us understand better the Israelite and the Phoenician spheres of influence in the area.

Regarding the 8th-7th centuries BCE, the excavations of Stratum III at Tell Abu Hawam suggested that the site was destroyed at either ca. 760 BCE because of an earthquake or ca. 732 because of the destruction of Tiglath-Pileser III, and that it was unoccupied during the 7th century BCE. The fate of the rest of the plain of Akko during those years remained unknown. The survey of the southern plain and the excavation of Tel Regev will help us understand the history of the region during this period. This new knowledge of the Iron Age II period in the region will be very useful to improve our understanding and to refine the chronology of the Phoenician settlement in the western Mediterranean basin.

IV. Method of the Summer 2013 Season

The third season of the archaeological excavation at Tel Regev will take place in Summer 2013. For this campaign we expect to have a twenty-people team and to work in six 4x4 m squares in the eastern side of the tell, where we started working two summers ago.

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17 Gómez Toscano 2007.
B) VOLUNTEERING

I. Dates

The Summer 2012 season will last from June 27 till August 2. Volunteers need to arrive on June 27 (Thursday) and leave on August 2 (Friday). Shorter stays are not possible for undergraduate or graduate students (professors and older volunteers, please check with Dr. Aznar).

II. Volunteering characteristics

This is a great opportunity for students interested in archaeological, historical and/or biblical research as they will obtain first-hand experience in all those areas by working in a fascinating project in a small team and in the frame of an educational program. Candidates must take into account, however, that archaeological research is intensive and tiring, that the rooming and working conditions may be similar to those in a camp, and that they will be working in an international team together with people from other cultures and religions. To join the project it is a must being interested in research, a will to learn from the start, hard-work capacity, an easy-going attitude in relation to comfort (or lack of), the capacity to live and travel together with other people in a small group during a whole month, sensitivity and respect towards other cultures and religions, and enthusiasm for the project. Although not required, understanding some Spanish is a plus as a part of the team comes from Spain and Ecuador (this is a great opportunity to learn and/or practice Spanish!)—The official communication language, in any event, will be English. All instructions, explanations, and lectures will be given in English.

Regarding physical conditions, excavating an archaeological site requires various types of physical work using a number of different tools, from a pâtis (a little pick) and a trowel to a big pick or a hoe. In general, to be able to participate in the excavation it is important to be able to carry buckets full of dirt and to pick with a big pick—it is not necessary to have experience on it or to be extremely strong, but it is a must to have the wish to learn to do it and to do it when it is required. It is also necessary to be able to work at high temperatures—we will work with shade clothes, but nonetheless it will be hot (the average temperature at Tel Regev in July is around 81º F – it is humid heat). In addition, it is necessary to be able to get in and out of excavation squares and to walk on uneven surfaces during the weekends, as well as to move at a good walking speed on the weekends when we tour sites. Regarding allergies, volunteers who have them must evaluate whether the allergies they have will prevent them from participating normally in the excavation or not. In general, if someone has light allergies (which only provoke irritation, itching, etc.) to food, plants, animals, medicines or circumstances which he/she already knows and which are easy to control, the volunteer could participate. But if he/she suffers from serious allergies (which may provoke suffocation or other serious effects) to food, plants, animals, medicines or circumstances which are not easy to control, participation is discouraged. All interested students should contact Dr. Aznar for further information and application (see contact information below).
III. Accommodations and meals

It is expected, but not confirmed yet, that the team will stay at Reut Megiddo (“Reut” = “Fraternity”), a beautiful community located next to kibbutz Ein Ha-Shofet, on a mountain next to the town of Yokneam, east of the city of Haifa. By car, Reut Megiddo is 40-45 min. from Haifa, 10-15 min. from Yokneam, and 20-25 min. from Tel Regev.

The accommodations at the Reut are austere. Each 2-3 personas will share a room, with toilet seats and showers at the end of the corridor. Each team member will participate in the cleaning of his/her bedroom and the bathroom.

An early morning light breakfast (consisting of coffee/tea, some cookies), lunch and dinner will be served at the “Reut”. A half-morning stronger breakfast will be served at the site where we are working. Vegetarian food will be available for those who ask for it when they register in the project (before the season begins). If we stay at Reut Megiddo, lunch and dinner will be served in the dining room of kibbutz Ein Ha-Shofet.

IV. Schedule

We will work Mondays through Fridays. The usual schedule will be approximately as follows:

4:00 am: Wake-up call
4:15 am: Light breakfast
4:30 am: Departure from the “Reut”
5:00 am: Fieldwork starts
7:30 am: 10 minute pause for tea
9:30 am: Strong breakfast (in the field)
10:00 am: Fieldwork resumes
1:00 pm: Fieldwork ends
1:30 pm: Lunch at the “Reut”. Free time
4:30 pm: Pottery washing and reading
6:00 pm: Fieldschool lecture
7:00 pm: Dinner. Free time

The field school will include five guided trips: a trip to Jerusalem (a Thursday, a Friday, and a Saturday, three nights out); a trip to Tel Dan, Capernaum, and the Sea of Galilee (a Saturday, no need to sleep out); a trip to the Dead Sea, Bethlehem, the Herodium and Tel Aviv (a Saturday, a Sunday and a Monday, two nights out), a trip to Nazareth and Cesarea by the Sea (a Saturday, no need to sleep out), and a trip to the Crusader city of Saint John of Acre/ancient Akko (a Saturday, no need to sleep out). The field visits are a part of the field school, because of it the visits are compulsory for all participants (but for repeating volunteers who are not staff members). During the weekend days when there is no trip scheduled volunteers may stay resting at the “Reut,” but if they want they can go elsewhere—at their own expense (there are buses from the “Reut” to Yoqneam and Haifa).
V. Transportation

The project will facilitate transportation from Tel Aviv airport to Jerusalem on June 27 (and from there to Reut Megiddo, our ‘camp base,’ on July 2nd) and from Reut Megiddo to Tel Aviv airport on the afternoon of August 2. The project will also facilitate transportation from Reut Megiddo to Tel Regev. Likewise, the project will facilitate transportation for the weekend field school trips scheduled. The transportation will consist of three vehicles rented and driven by team members.

Transportation for trips other than those mentioned will be at the volunteer’s expense (there are public buses from Reut Megiddo to Yokneam and Haifa).

VI. The Field School

The Summer 2013 Season volunteers will participate in the Field School organized by Saint Louis University, Madrid Campus. The Field School will include:

- Participation in the excavations at Tel Regev
- Participation in pottery washing and reading in the afternoons
- Class attendance and participation in the evenings. Classes will include a survey of the local geography and history, principles of archaeological methodology, topics related to the project, etc.
- The visit to local historical and archaeological sites during the weekends

The students who wish to do so may make their participation in the field school count towards two or three credits in one of the following undergraduate courses offered by the Madrid Campus of Saint Louis University:

- SOC-293 – Archaeological Field Work,
- SOC-393 – Archaeological Field Work,
- THEO-293 – The Bible and the Holy Land, and
- THEO-393 – The Bible in Its Context.

In addition, it may also be possible (not for sure yet) to make participation in the field school count towards two or three credits in one of the following undergraduate courses:

- ARTH-293 – Special Topics,
- and ARTH – Special topics,

and towards two or three credits in one of the following graduate courses:

- SOC-593 – Special Topics, and
- THEO-593 – Special Topics

also offered by the Madrid Campus of Saint Louis University (students interested in the Art History courses and/or in the graduate courses, please check with Dr. Aznar). Students who wish to take the field school for credit will have to fulfill the requirements specified in the syllabus of the course of their election (see syllabi).
VII. Cost

To calculate a volunteer’s participation cost, the following costs must be taken into account:

**PROJECT FEE**
- Fixed project participation fee (includes room, board, and all transportation in Israel, as well as all the entrance tickets for the sites we will visit during the weekends) 1,675 €

**OTHER EXPENSES**
- Air ticket from the volunteer’s point of departure to Tel Aviv and back (Iberia air tickets from Madrid to Tel Aviv are selling at ca. 550 €)
- Medical insurance—compulsory, to include medical treatment in Israel during the excavation in case of need (ca. 50 €)
- Pocket and emergency money

**TUITION (OPTIONAL, NEEDED ONLY FOR THOSE WHO WANT ACADEMIC CREDIT)**
- Summer school tuition prices for those who want to earn credits (440 € per undergraduate credit, 475 € per graduate credit)
  - e.g. 3 undergraduate credits (3 x 440 € ) = 1,320 €

VIII. Application process and payment

Persons interested in volunteering need to apply to be admitted in the project by February 28 (see contact information below). They will be told if they have been accepted by March 15. If they have been admitted they will need to:

- Confirm their participation by March 22
- Submit a scanned copy of the information page of their passports by March 27
- Make a first payment of 200 € with their credit card by March 28
- Purchase their airtickets to Israel by April 30 at the latest (to get a cheap rate, the sooner the better)
- Submit the medical insurance information for their stay in Israel by April 30
- Make a second payment of 1,475 € with their credit card by May 30

Interested prospective volunteers can apply for a fellowship to join the dig. At present there are three main fellowships to participate in archaeological excavations:

- The Heritage and Platt Fellowships of the American Schools of Oriental Research ([http://www.asor.org/fellowships/excavation.html](http://www.asor.org/fellowships/excavation.html)). To apply for these two fellowships one should become a member of ASOR (student membership costs $90). When applying take into account that our project is a CAP-affiliated project. The deadline to apply is February 20.
- The Jane C. Waldbaum Archaeological Field School Scholarship of the American Institute of Archaeology ([http://www.archaeological.org/grants/708](http://www.archaeological.org/grants/708)). It provides up to $1,000 to junior, senior or first year graduate students who have never participated in archaeological excavations before. The deadline to apply is March 1.

If someone cannot confirm his/her participation until knowing whether he/she has got a fellowship or not, that person should indicate this circumstance in the application form. Volunteers who can confirm their participation by March 22 will be given the priority, but up to two positions will be reserved until April 22 for worthy students who cannot confirm their participation until they know whether they have got a fellowship or not.
IX. Contact

For information and/or for an application to participate in the project, please contact Dr. Aznar.

E-mail address: caznarsa@slu.edu.
Mail address: Saint Louis University, Madrid Campus
Avda. Del Valle 34
28003 Madrid, Spain

DEADLINE TO APPLY FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE SUMMER 2013 SEASON:
FEBRUARY 28, 2013