Digging up the Bible?

THE EXCAVATIONS AT TELL DEIR ALLA (1960-1967)

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Photograph cover: Front: Excavation of the late Bronze Age temple in 1964. Back: Tell Deir Alla in 1960. Courtesy Tell Deir Alla Project.

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Contents

Expedition

Not for the gold of Ophir
or for Balaam's voice
not even for the adventure
it is that I go

but for the land
as it silently whispers, waiting
for the first cry of the birds
while we walk slowly uphill
over the sherds of a path long gone

motionless the tell receives us
the soil grey and damp
everything is silent but for the sound

of the tools
in the valley the lemon trees light green, their scent
seductively sweet
but not yet, the road just a grey line, the village a handful of pale squares
in this hour of expectation that makes us hungry like the smell of freshly baked bread

Tentatively the sun weaves colour under my hands

she is generous now, the tell
walls spring from her sides
a clay floor grows at her feet
opulence she gives to us, her lovers,
who caress her
softly scratching her warm skin

deeper, deeper, she demands
and deeper I wander with bated breath
deeper
feeling my way into hidden depths

She never wholly surrenders
vast and dark she remains
filled with secrets
that whisper silently in my dream

restlessly drawing me
to the land
as it waits dusk-grey
for the first cry of the birds

Margreet Steiner

Recent aerial photograph of Tell Deir Alla.
(Photo David Kennedy, with thanks to APAAME)

Prologue

This is the account of a remarkable excavation. It started with a modest dig on an unremarkable tell in a small country that never played any significant role on the world stage. The name of the tell does not occur in the Bible, and no ancient town of any importance was to be expected under the rubble. The excavator was someone who had not yet made a name for himself within the archaeological community, and the excavation team mostly consisted of young, inexperienced students.

And yet, from 1960 onwards history was being (re)written at Tell Deir Alla, an efficient yet meticulous excavation method was introduced, the already tenuous relationship between Bible and archaeology was further exacerbated, and the study of excavated pottery was given a scientific basis. The name Deir Alla became an international benchmark for modern, efficient scientific research, for prompt publication of the remarkable finds and for independent interpretation of the excavation results. Later on Henk Franken, the director of the expedition, became professor of archaeology at Leiden university, advisor of (then) crown princess Beatrix and her husband prince Claus, and was awarded several foreign distinctions.

The Deir Alla project was the first Dutch excavation in Jordan, and it became the longest continuous Dutch archaeological project outside the Netherlands. In 1959 Franken applied for funds with the Netherlands Organisation for Pure Scientific Research (ZWO), and in January 1960 the first pick axe hit the soil of the tell. The results of the first three excavation seasons were published in a monograph in 1969, and it was not before 2009 that the project came to an end. Seventeen seasons of excavation, all lasting two or three months, had taken place in those fifty years.

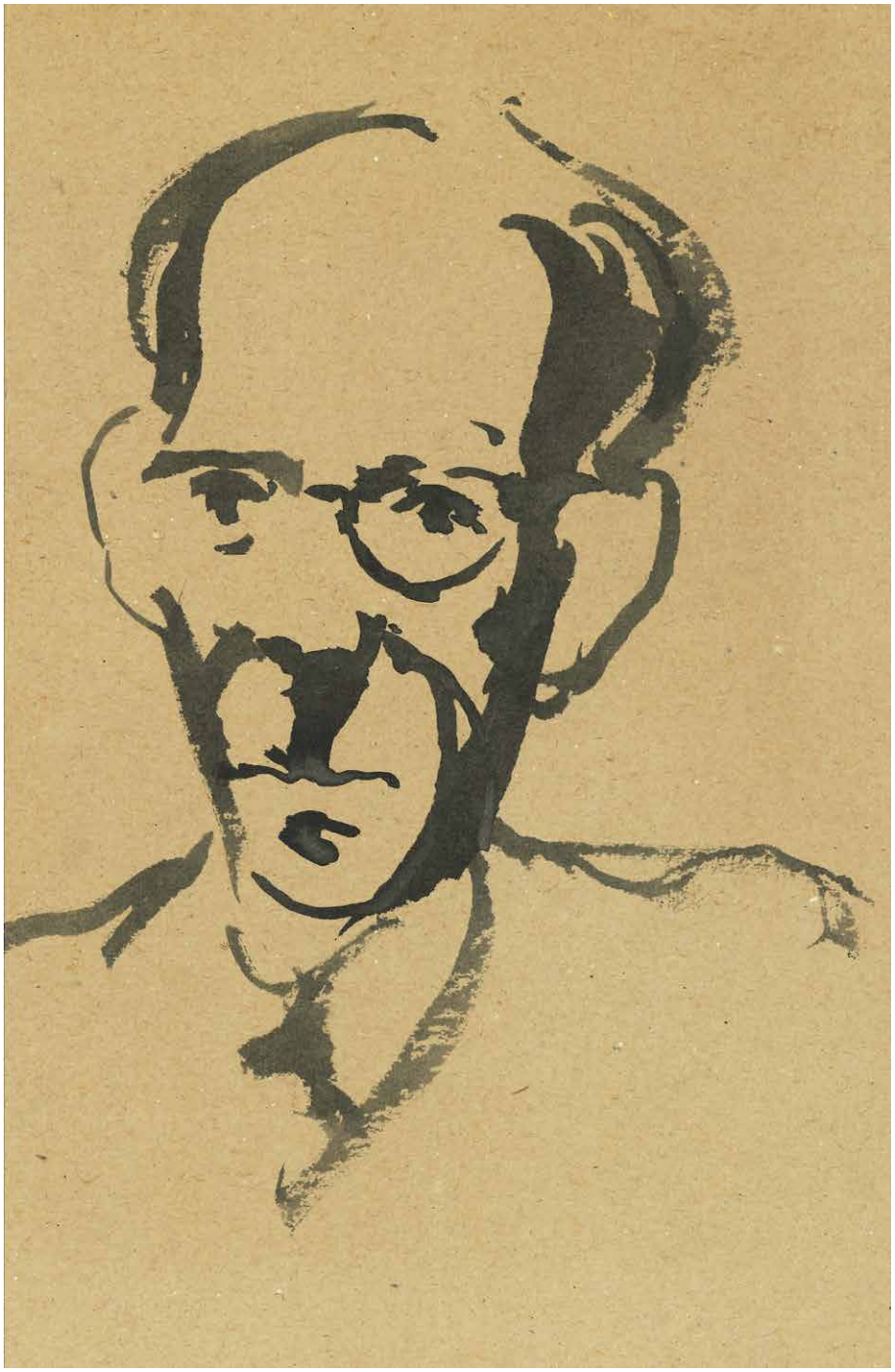
Never before has the story of the excavations of Tell Deir Alla in the 1960s been told in any detail, and the excavation results have mostly been published in scholarly books and journals which are difficult to access. This book means to remedy all that. It tells the story of the first ten years of the project, from 1959 until 1969. This was the decade in which the project took shape, Franken's excavation methods were developed and tested, and the most spectacular finds were discovered. It was also the decade which saw a fierce debate on research methods, the relationship between archaeology and Biblical traditions, and archaeology and politics.

This book is made up of two sections, which can be read independently. The first section – *How it all began* – describes what happens in the background, all aspects that shape an archaeological expedition before the actual digging starts. It takes account of the regional context (chapter 1), describes Henk Franken's transformation from

theologian to archaeologist, as well as the research goals of the project (chapter 2); and looks at the people and institutes that were involved in the organisation of the excavation (chapter 3). The second part – *The tell* – focuses on the actual field work during the first five excavation seasons between 1960 and 1967 (chapter 4), and describes the occupation history of the tell as reconstructed on the basis of all seventeen field seasons till 2009 (chapter 5).

The primary source of information for this account was Henk Franken's personal archive, which he bequeathed to one of the authors after his demise. Other sources consisted of documents, letters, notes, photos and slides of, and interviews with, third parties. We heartily thank the following persons and institutions for making these sources available to us, and for their help in general: Jan Albert Bakker and Geertje Bakker-Hänisch ten Cate, Todd Bolen, Adriana Buurman-Brunsting, Miriam Davis, Christiaan Franken, Jan Kalsbeek, Gerrit van der Kooij, Lucas Petit, Bert Veenendaal, Riet Versteeg, Tjalling Waterbolk, Erfgoedcentrum Nederlands Kloosterleven, Historische Vereniging Havelte e.o., the Non-Professional Archaeological Photographs project (NPAPH) and the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. Eveline van der Steen expertly made new excavation plans and translated the Dutch text. And finally, without the enthusiasm, the stories and the photos of Cees Franken-Burggraaff this book would not have been written.

Margreet Steiner
Bart Wagemakers



Drawing of Henk Franken by Terry Ball. (Courtesy Christiaan Franken)

PART 1

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

1

Excavating in Jordan

The members of the Deir Alla expedition encountered a world that differed profoundly from their own quiet, traditional Dutch society. It differed in everything, from climate to food, and from the landscape to social interaction. It was also a world in political turmoil. When the first pick axe hit the soil of the tell in 1960, political, religious and social relations in the Middle East were tense, and the region witnessed regular outbursts of violence.

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

The two world wars had wreaked havoc in the Middle East. The Ottoman empire was obliterated, and several new (semi) independent states had been created: Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. In 1923 the British Mandate of Palestine, created after World War I by the League of Nations, was split into two administrative units: the Emirate of Transjordan east of the Jordan, and Palestine to the west of the river. Both were formally subjected to Great Britain until 1946, when the Emirate of Transjordan became an independent kingdom. Two years later the State of Israel was created. During the following Arab – Israeli war, Transjordan conquered parts of the west bank of the Jordan as well as East Jerusalem. In 1950, it officially annexed these territories and changed its name to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The first years of the young Kingdom of Jordan were harsh. In addition to its original population of 700,000 inhabitants, it absorbed some 500,000 Palestinian refugees fleeing the territory of the newly established State of Israel. There were also major internal tensions between the territories east and west of the Jordan, and the country struggled with intense poverty.

From 1921 onwards Amman served as the capital, first of the Emirate of Transjordan, and later of the Hashemite Kingdom. Amman was a small town, only founded in the second half of the 19th century. In 1960 it housed some 100.000 people, many of them Palestinian refugees. In 2015 the number of citizens had grown to 4 million.

The Department of Antiquities of Jordan, first point of call for every archaeologist working in the country, had its headquarters in Amman. In 1951 a Museum of Antiquities was established in which important objects representing the history of Transjordan were exhibited. The Jordan Archaeological Museum was to be the counterpart of the Palestinian Archaeological Museum in East Jerusalem, better known as the Rockefeller Museum.

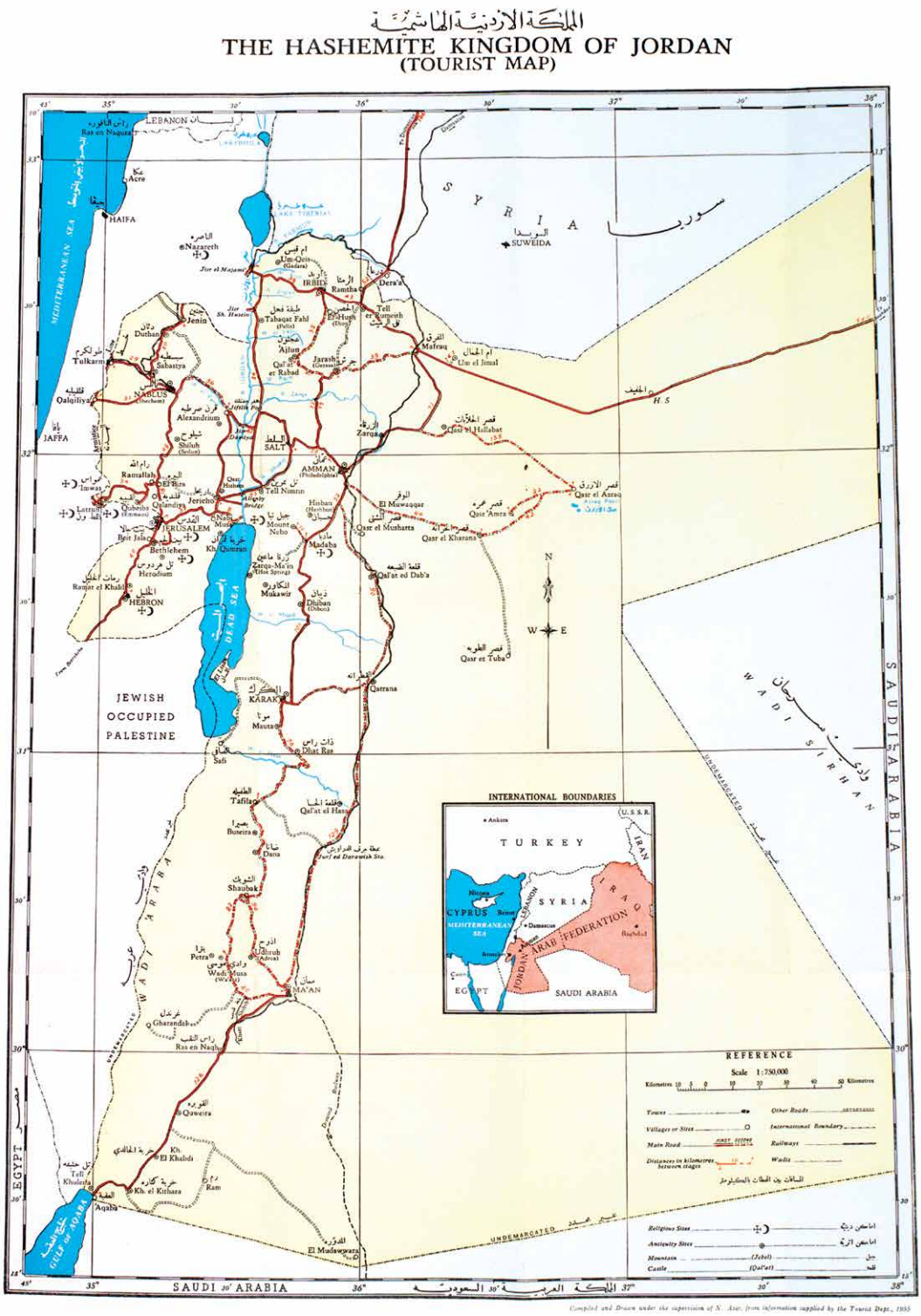


Fig. 1.1: Map of Jordan in 1955.

Fig. 1.2: Amman around 1950. View of the town and the Roman theatre, as seen from the Citadel. (Photo David Bivin)

Jerusalem

Perhaps the tension between the new nations was nowhere felt as strongly as in Jerusalem. During the 1948 Arab – Israeli war, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan conquered East Jerusalem, while Israel took the rest of the city. In doing this they defied a United Nations resolution from November 1947, which had stipulated that Jerusalem was to be placed under a Special International Regime. On April 3rd 1949, Israel and Jordan signed a truce, and in 1950 the Westbank and East Jerusalem were officially annexed by Transjordan. Against international agreements, Israel pronounced Jerusalem as its capital. Until today there are few countries that accept Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and therefore most embassies and consulates are located in Tel Aviv.

The division of Jerusalem in an eastern and a western part was symbolised by a narrow strip of no-man's land, cordoned off with barbed wire on both sides. Remnants of houses and buildings in this desolate buffer zone reminded the inhabitants of Jerusalem of the devastating war that had raged here in 1948. Both countries kept a close guard on this border area, and it could only legally be crossed at one point: Mandelbaum Gate.

Mandelbaum Gate was situated several hundred meters northwest of the Old City, and it was not so much a 'gate' as a set of two roadblocks, guarded by armed soldiers, seeking cover behind walls of sand bags. Traffic across the 'gate' started at 8.00 o'clock in the morning and usually consisted of diplomats and tourists only. Travellers from one side of the city had their *laisser passer* stamped at the first checkpoint, then walked to the second checkpoint. Here their bags were checked again and forms had to be filled in, before they could continue their journey.

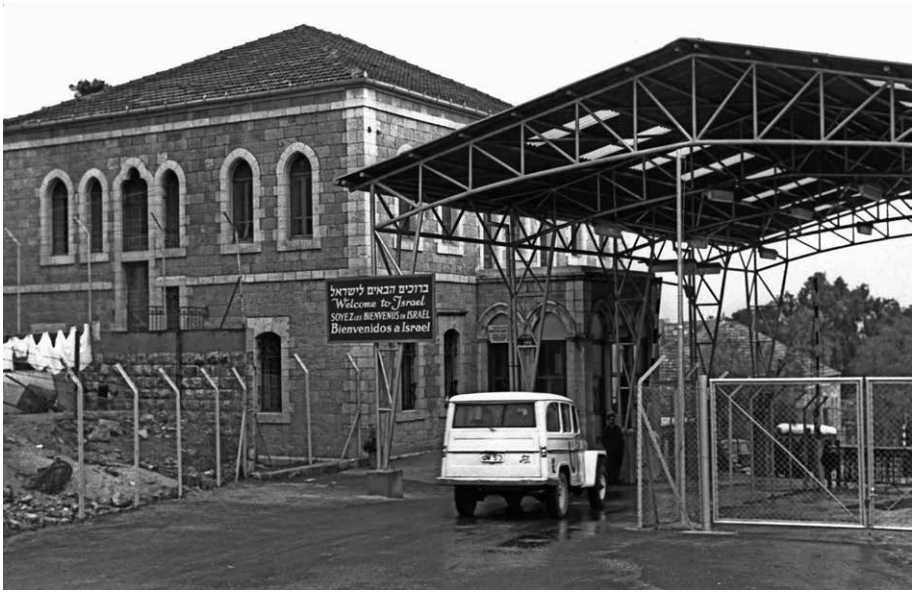


Fig. 1.3: A United Nations vehicle is driving from the Old City of Jerusalem through Mandelbaum Gate to the Israeli side. This photo dates from 1964. (Photo Moshe Pridan, Government Press Office)

Of course people without permits also tried to cross the border, and therefore the atmosphere at the checkpoints was always tense. The historian Benny Morris calculated that between 1949 and 1954 there were some 10,000 – 15,000 incidents every year. From 1956 onwards this number decreased to 6,000 – 7,000 each year.

In the mid-twentieth century East Jerusalem was home to three foreign institutions that conducted archaeological research. The American Institute, directed by well-known archaeologists such as James Pritchard, Ernest Wright and Paul Lapp, was housed in the American School of Oriental Research. Père Roland de Vaux, of the École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem represented the French, and directed excavations in Tell el-Far'ah (North) and Khirbet Qumran. The British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem was the base from which Kathleen Kenyon organised her expeditions to Tell es-Sultan (ancient Jericho) in the 1950s and in Jerusalem itself in the 1960s.

This is the city where Henk Franken stayed, first during his participation in the British excavations at Tell es-Sultan, and later when he was preparing his own dig at Tell Deir Alla. In the first years he took a train from the Netherlands to Marseille, where he boarded a ship to Beirut, and from Beirut took a taxi to East Jerusalem. There he met his fellow archaeologists from the various international institutions and heard the latest news and gossip, borrowed equipment, sorted out his finances, rented a car and hired workers. With all that done he was ready for the one-hour trip to Deir Alla in the Jordan Valley where the excavation awaited him…

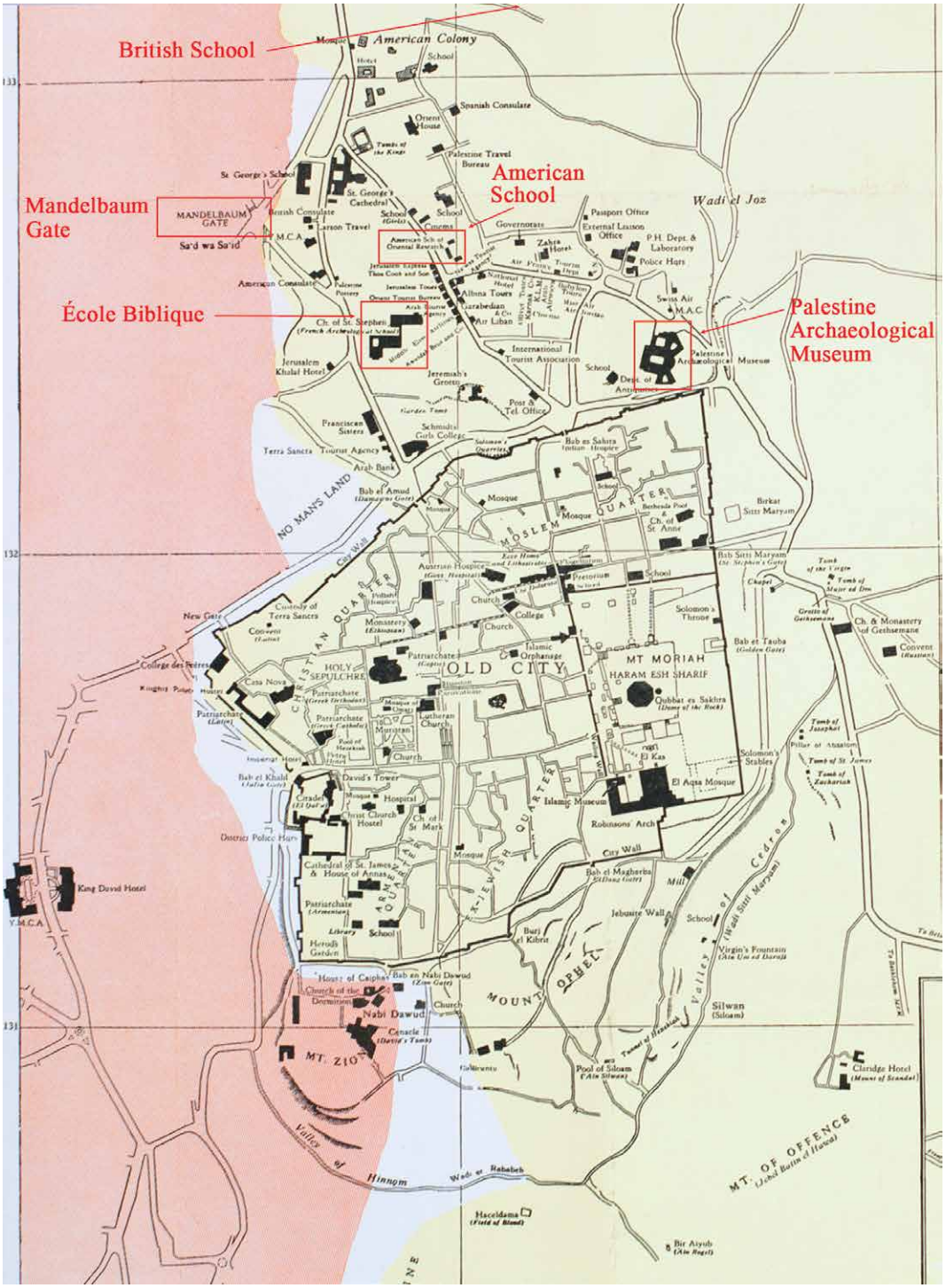


Fig. 1.4: Plan of Jerusalem in the 1950s with foreign institutions marked.

The East Jordan Valley

In the 1960s, during the first years of the Deir Alla expedition, the East Jordan Valley was sparsely inhabited. There were a few small villages in which farmers lived who worked the land for absentee landlords. Most farmers and shopkeepers were Palestinian refugees, who had crossed the border during the war of 1948, and had been settled in the 'empty' Jordan Valley by the Jordanian Government. The same process was to be repeated after the 1967 war. During the winter months Bedouin with their flocks camped in the valley, as they had done for centuries.

In the 1950s the government of Jordan had begun to implement a development plan for the Jordan Valley. Along the length of the Valley an irrigation channel was constructed, fed mainly by the Yarmouk river, as well as an asphalt road alongside it. Lands belonging to absentee landlords were expropriated and offered to local farmers at reasonable rates. The development plan also included the erection of an Agricultural Research Station, where agricultural crops were developed and tested, and a large vegetable auction. The Valley became a veritable agricultural paradise, overflowing with citrus, tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, aubergines and potatoes. These days most of the citrus trees have gone, and the valley bottom now resembles a sea of plastic-covered polytunnels, producing at least two harvests of tomatoes, cucumbers and courgettes each year.

Tell Deir Alla

The landscape of the Middle East is dotted with literally thousands of tells. The Arab word 'tell' stands for an artificial mount, an accumulation of sometimes dozens of occupation layers on top of each other. A tell can easily reach a height of 50 meters, and its occupation surface can vary from one to 150 hectares. Nowadays most tells are uninhabited, but occasionally a modern village can be found on top of it, or local farmers use it to grow wheat.

Tell Deir Alla is a relatively modest tell, about 30 meter high, and with a surface of two hectares. It is situated in the East Jordan Valley. Today this area is part of the modern Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, but in the distant past it has been ruled by Egypt, ancient Israel, the kingdom of Ammon, Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, the kingdom of Herod the Great, the Roman empire and Byzantium. In more recent times it was governed from Damascus, Baghdad, Egypt again, Istanbul during the Ottoman era, and finally the British, to mention the most important ones. The area has never really been independent, unless

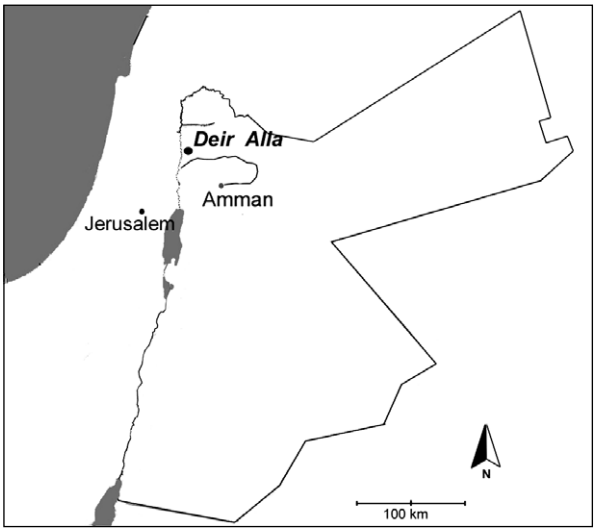


Fig. 1.5: The location of Deir Alla.

Fig. 1.6: The Jordan Valley in the 1960s as seen from Tell Deir Alla. To the left is the three-room house that was built for the expedition. The buildings to the right belong to the Agricultural Research Station. (Photo David Bivin)

Fig. 1.7: The Jordan Valley, looking southwest. The arrow indicates Tell Deir Alla. (Photo Margreet Steiner)

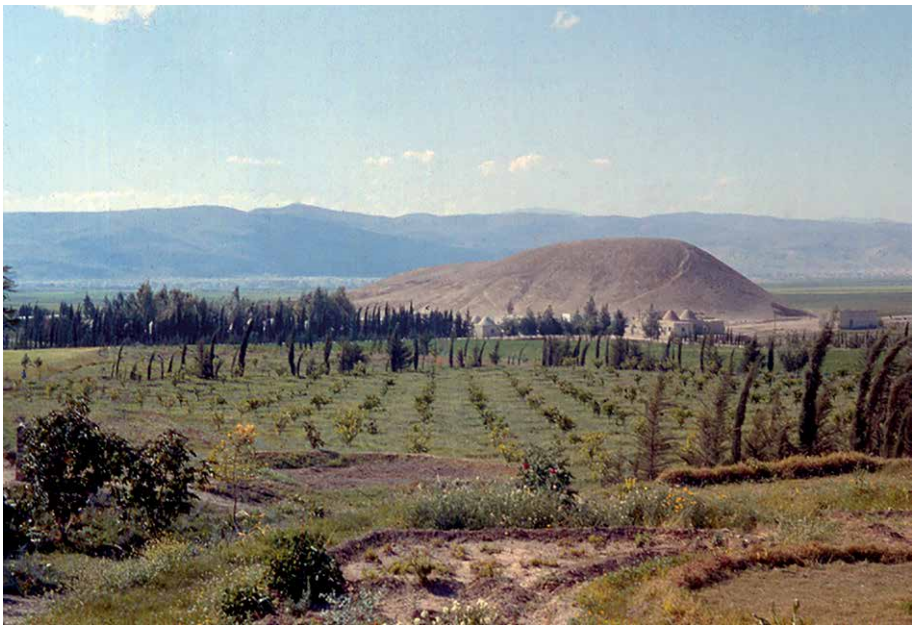


Fig. 1.8: Deir Alla in 1960, just before the start of the excavations. (Photo Lucas Grollenberg)

Fig. 1.9: The village of Deir Alla in 1962 as seen from the tell. In the background the Agricultural Research Station and its dwellings with domed rooftops. (Photo Riet Versteeg)

perhaps in the mists of time, before textual sources throw light on the political structures of the day.

The meaning of the name 'Deir Alla' is not entirely clear. Many place names in the Arab world start with the word Der, Deir or Dayr, which is usually translated as 'monastery'. The assumption is that at these places a Coptic or Byzantine monastery had once been located. This assumption is not always justified, and in the case of Deir Alla it certainly is not. There has never been a monastery at Deir Alla. The word 'Deir' itself is derived from a more ancient Aramaic word meaning 'farm' or 'shepherd's dwelling', a place where people used to live who were involved in sheep farming or agriculture. 'Alla' means 'high', 'elevated'. So the name Deir Alla can be interpreted as a sheep farm or agricultural dwelling, situated up-high, as in 'on top of the hill'. The question remains why the name was chosen for this particular tell, since almost every other tell in the region could just as easily answer that description.

The name Deir Alla does not appear in any written sources before the 19th century AD. Towards the end of the 19th century several western explorers visited the area. Because of the dangers of such expeditions – attacks by local Bedouin were not uncommon – they usually disguised themselves as Arabs, which meant that they could not display too much interest in the local tells. No Arab would ever give these tells a second look. In any case, in the view of most explorers these artificial hills were tumuli – ancient burial mounts. This is understandable, as burial mounts are a common phenomenon in the West, whereas artificial occupation mounts (tells) are not.

In the years 1874-1877, the American explorer Selah Merrill, commissioned by the American Palestine Exploration Society, made several journeys east of the Jordan, during which he visited Tell Deir Alla. The name of the tell appears for the first time in his archaeological report *East of the Jordan,* the result of his researches which he published in 1881. He writes: '*There is every evidence that the mound is artificial; indeed, so far as it has been examined below the surface, it is a mass of debris. The Arabs living in that region have a tradition that this mound was once occupied by a city.*'

After Merrill several other explorers visited the area, but they described the tells they encountered rather summarily. The first thorough investigation of the region did not take place until the 1930s and 1940s. Between 1932 and 1947 (with a break during the war), the American archaeologist Nelson Glueck organised several expeditions in Transjordan in order to study its antiquities. He published his findings in a series of books called *Explorations in Eastern Palestine,* which appeared between 1934 and 1951. In these volumes he described not only the tells themselves, but he also published the pottery he had collected there. Because of this, his publication became the first port of call for future archaeologists who were looking for a site from a particular period for their research. Henk Franken was in search of a site with Bronze and Iron Age occupation (see chapter 2), and his choice of Deir Alla was guided primarily by Glueck's description of the site and its pottery.

These days the tell is surrounded by the village of Deir Alla. In 1960 this village consisted of no more than a few cottages along the unpaved track that ran through the Jordan Valley. There was no electricity, and drinking water was drawn from the irrigation channel that ran through the village, and which was rather heavily polluted. On the other hand, the village had a petrol station, a cafe and a shop – cum – post office, guaranteeing a smooth and fast contact with the homeland. Letters, photos, and even

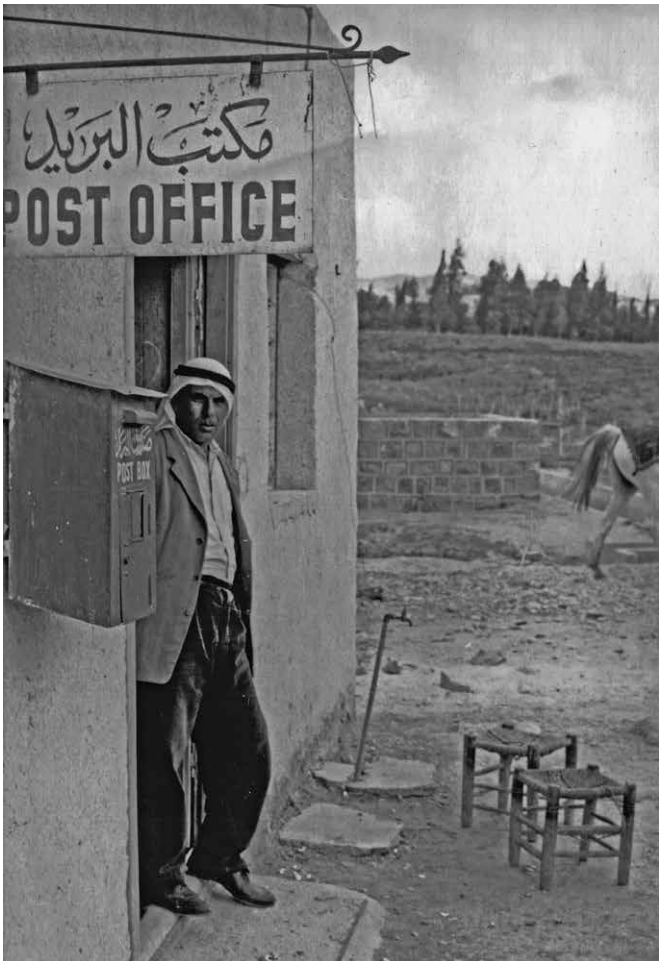


Fig. 1.10: The post office of Deir Alla.

airplane and boat tickets travelled quickly and safely between the Netherlands and the Deir Alla post office.

The tell itself was the personal property of Salih Muasher Bey, absentee landlord and ex-minister, a man of substance who had much influence in the village and the wider region. The negotiations between Henk Franken, the expedition's director, and the powerful landowner about the rent of the tell became a yearly recurring ritual, which did not always go smoothly (see chapter 3). During the negotiations for the first excavation season, one of the conditions demanded by Salih Muasher was the building of a water filter paid for by the expedition, that could also be freely used by the villagers. The director of the Netherlands Organisation for Pure Scientific Research (ZWO), which funded the excavation, persuaded the Dutch Railway Company to sponsor the building of this water filter, at a cost of 500 guilders. The water filter itself was nothing more than a large square brick-built container. Inside it a layer of finely crushed lime was laid, with on top of it a layer of pebbles, and a layer of boulders above that. Water was pumped into the top of the tank, and then filtered through these layers. At the bottom was a tap from which water flowed that was relatively free of impurities, although it still needed boiling to make

Fig. 1.11: The water carrier and his donkey. (Photo Geertje Bakker-Hänisch ten Cate)

it safe for consumption. A man with a donkey and a load of jerrycans then brought this water from the filter to the excavation camp.

The camp used a lot of water; not only for drinking and cooking, but also for the makeshift showers, and to wash the excavated pottery. Whenever the irrigation channel ran dry, on average twice a month, the water filter emptied out quickly because it was also used by the whole village. In those emergencies the camp was provided with clean water from the Agricultural Research Station, which could pump up clean ground water.

The tent camp

The expedition was housed in a tent camp, erected at the foot of the tell, next to the Agricultural Research Station. In most years it consisted of several large tents – in use as dining room, work area and kitchen – and a number of smaller sleeping tents. Some of these tents, the expedition had brought from the Netherlands, others were borrowed locally.

At the end of 1959, just before the start of the first excavation season, Henk Franken wrote to a member of the expedition who was in Jordan at the time:

> *'Tents: confiscate every tent you can find. I'll write to Peter Parr of the British School[1] to see if he can lend me some. Can you get in touch with him too? Also confer with Awni[2] and approach the Arab Legion[3], they often have tents available, they provided the Jericho dig with tents. We need them in the last week of December. I'll collect every tent I can find over here.'*

1 Peter Parr was the then director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem.
2 Awni Dajani was the director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.
3 'Arab Legion' was the name of the Jordanian Army.

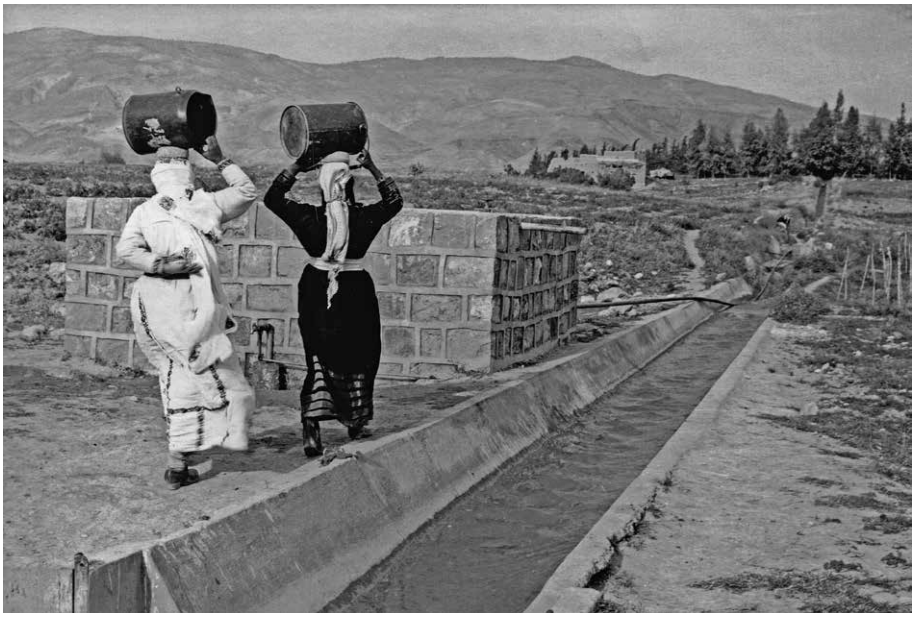


Fig. 1.12: The water filter contraption.

Most of the time, the tents were comfortable enough. However, bouts of strong winds – not uncommon in the Valley at that time of year – could seriously disturb the sleep of the team members several nights in a row because of the flapping tent cloth. Rain – another common phenomenon of Jordanian winters – could transform the camp into a mud plain, forcing people out of bed in the middle of the night to fasten the tent pegs that had become dislocated in the soft mud. That problem was easily solved: the tent pegs were replaced with the wooden handles of large pick axes, hammered into the ground to a depth of at least 50 cm. No more floating tents after that.

The toilet and the improvised shower (a tin can over a hole in the ground) were located in a small room built of mudbricks, the common local building material. Mudbricks were also used to build a wall between the camp and the tell, not only to keep the dirt and runoff soil from the tell out of the camp, but also the local livestock. Franken wrote to a colleague at the Faculty of Theology of Leiden University in February 1960:

> *'From time to time a herd of twelve baby goats comes darting into the camp. They have developed an interest in the nutritious value of tent cloth. We live next to a refugee village. The people are unobtrusive enough, but the livestock has no respect for boundaries whatsoever. Apart from cats and dogs, we have had horses, cows, donkeys and a camel. Since a minimum of archaeological materials, when treated somewhat carelessly, is by itself enough to turn any room into a stable, we try to keep the animals out.'*

Fig. 1.13: The tent camp in 1960. (Photo Lucas Grollenberg)

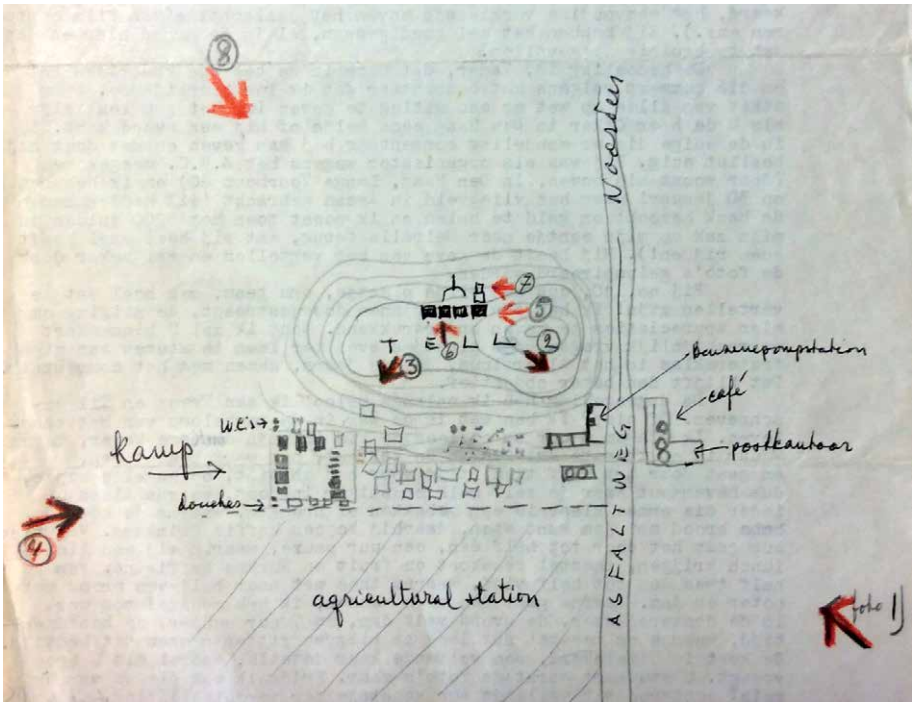


Fig. 1.14: Plan of the tent camp in 1960, drawn up by Lucas Grollenberg. The red arrows and numbers indicate locations from where he took photographs.

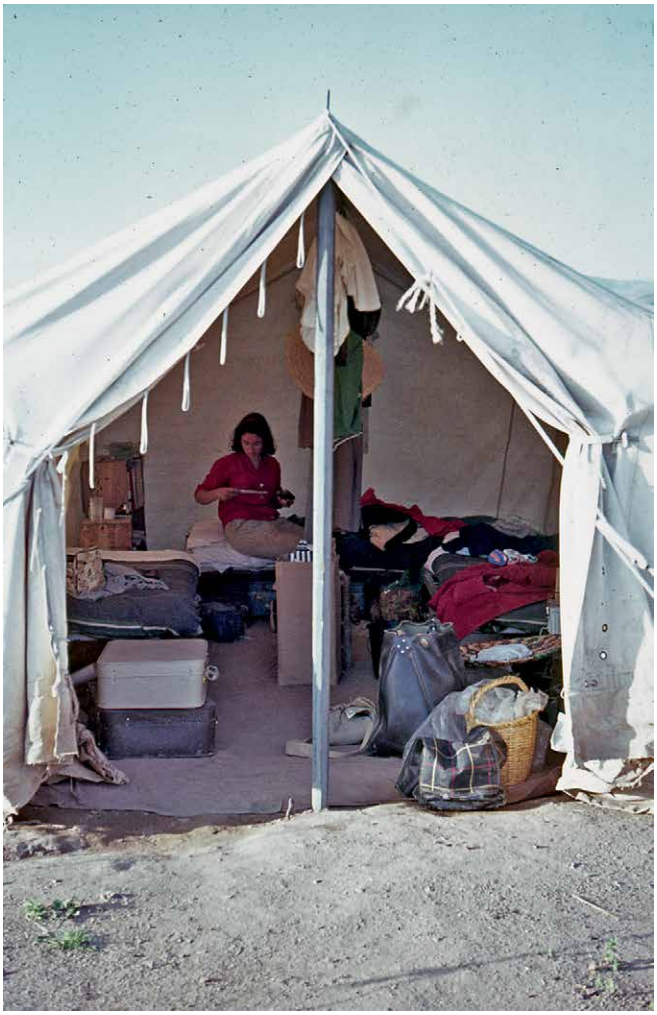


Fig. 1.15: Inside one of the sleeping tents. (Photo Riet Versteeg)

Several tents housed the so-called 'Jericho men'. These were experienced diggers, who had been trained by archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon herself and whom Franken had met when he worked at the Jericho excavations in the 1950s (see chapter 2). They formed a group of six or seven men who after the end of the Jericho excavations were in high demand all over Jordan because of their expertise and skills, and who travelled from one archaeological site to another, offering their services in return for payment. In turn, they trained new technical men during the excavations. They formed a separate group within the camp: they slept in expedition tents but looked after their own food. The other workers were local men and did normally not enter the camp. The cook was the only expedition member who came from elsewhere. He had to live in the camp, as he was the first to start work in the morning, and often the last to finish.

Franken had decided to dig in the winter months, from January to the end of March. The rainy season in the Jordan Valley is mostly in late fall and early winter, while the month of May is already quite hot. He reasoned that this left him only a few months in which to make good progress. Unfortunately, Jordanian weather gods could

Fig. 1.16: The tent camp is flooded!

Fig. 1.17: A donkey seeks shelter in a tent. (Photo Terry Ball)

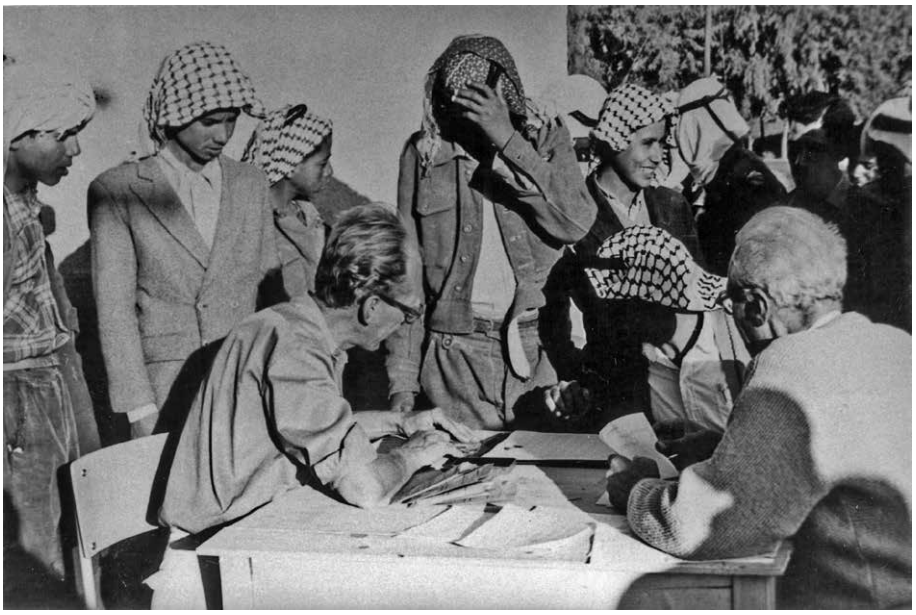


Fig. 1.18: Thursday afternoon is pay day. Those who cannot write their name, put a thumb print with ink.

be fickle. Regularly strong storms and heavy rainfall occurred in January and February, with temperatures sometimes close to freezing. But the expedition took all that in its stride. Anything was better than the stifling heat of late spring.

Daily schedule

The expedition's daily schedule followed that of the Jericho expedition, which Franken had become used to. Work started at dawn, which in winter was not until 7.30 o'clock. Before that, at around 7.00, the cook offered the team members tea and bread in the dinner tent. At the first break, at 9.30 o'clock, a proper English breakfast was provided, with porridge, fried eggs, bread and jam. And of course lots of coffee! Then, back to work. At 12.30 an hour lunch break was taken, with salads, fruit and Turkish coffee, after which work continued until 16.30. Then an 'English tea' was served, with lots of tea, and bread with butter and jam. Expedition members used what was left of the afternoon to freshen up, work on reports, etc. Dinner was served at 19.00 o'clock and usually consisted of a traditional Arab meal of rice and meat. The evenings were for socializing by the light of petroleum lamps.

There were times when the heavy winds and rain made fieldwork impossible. The team used those days to catch up on drawings, reports, photographic documentation, as well as the cleaning and registration of finds.

Friday was the day off – for the expedition members a day to sleep in, explore the area, pay visits in the village, or take the car to visit other tells. Franken and his wife usually stayed in the camp, catching up on administration and reporting. Halfway in the season there was a week's holiday, and expedition members were expected to leave the camp during that week. They could visit Jerusalem or the rose-red city of Petra, or

Fig. 1.19: Tea and coffee for the 1960 expedition team.

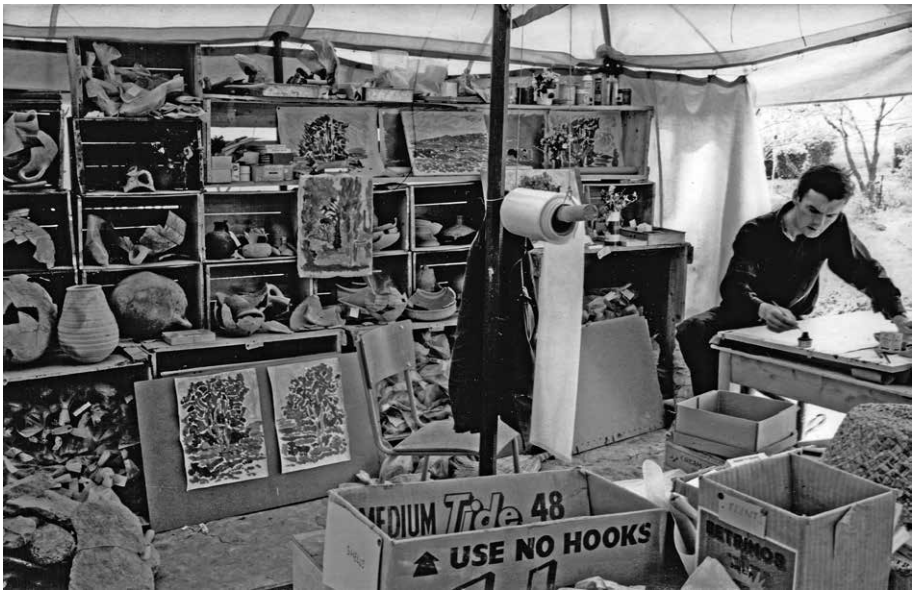


Fig. 1.20: Draughtsman Terry Ball in the work tent.

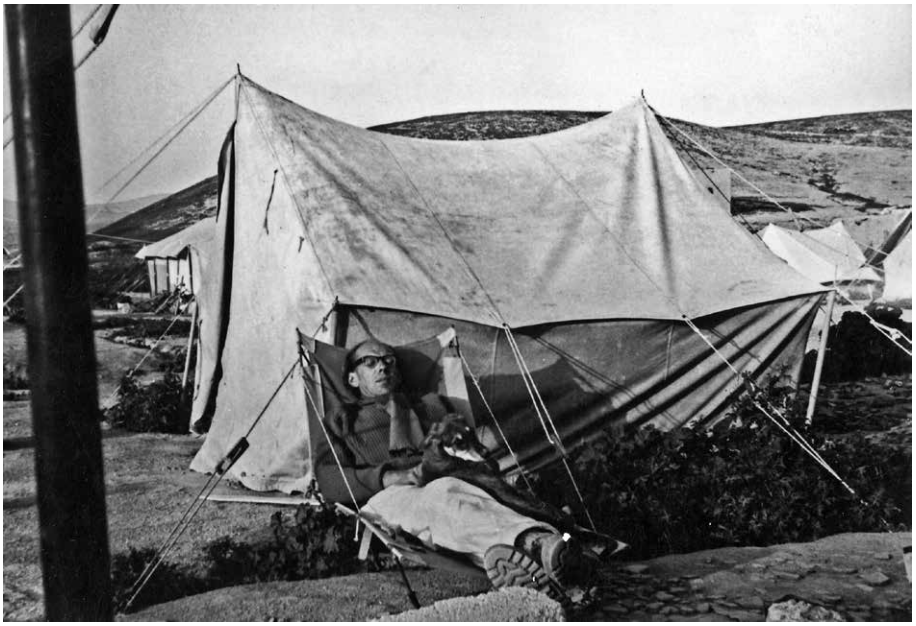


Fig. 1.21: Peace and quiet at last. (Photo Terry Ball)

go snorkelling in Aqaba. Franken had introduced this break in order to relieve the tension that inevitable occurred when many people lived so close together for a long period of time. And while the expedition members were enjoying themselves somewhere else, Franken and his wife stayed behind for a much-needed chance to be alone and catch up on outstanding jobs.

2

From theologian to archaeologist[4]

Dutch scholars have been involved in Near Eastern excavations for almost a century. Henri Frankfort was one of the first: between 1922 and 1929 he was active in Egypt for the Egypt Exploration Society, and in 1930 he initiated the Diyala Excavation Project in Iraq, on behalf of the Oriental Institute of Chicago.

At the same time Franz de Liagre Böhl, since 1913 professor of Hebrew and Hebrew Antiquities at the University of Groningen, participated in the archaeological expedition at Tell Balata in Palestine, which was directed by Ernst Sellin. De Liagre Böhl combined data from archaeological excavations with textual sources, such as the Bible or excavated inscriptions. This would become the standard approach in 'biblical archaeology' in the following decennia: the merging of archaeological and Biblical data. In the best-case scenario, both sources carried equal weight, but more often the archaeological data were just tacked on to the Biblical narrative, resulting in the conclusion that archaeology supported the Bible.

In the 1960s this approach was heavily critized by another Dutch scholar: Hendricus Jacobus Franken (1917-2005). Franken studied theology at the University of Amsterdam, after which he became a church minister in Blokzijl (in the east of the Netherlands) during World War II. He was active in the Resistance and closely involved in hiding Jews from the Nazi's. After the war, he moved to Bali in Indonesia, where he worked as a missionary until 1951. During this period he developed a fascination for local traditions. He made a study of the Djajaprana Festival in Kalianget, and the ethnographic knowledge he acquired may well have inspired him to stress the importance of anthropology for the interpretation of archaeological data.

After his return to the Netherlands, Franken finished his PhD studies with a thesis entitled *The Mystical Communion with JHWH in the Book of Psalms*. He was given a position as researcher at the Department of Theology of Leiden University, specialising in the research and teaching of Palestinian Antiquities. In 1962 he became Lecturer in the Archaeology of Palestine and its Adjoining Regions. This position was eventually transformed into a Professorship, which he held until his retirement in 1984. The title of his inaugural lecture was *Heilig Land of heilige huisjes?* (*Sacred soil*

4 This chapter is based on a study by Bart Wagemakers that will be published in Sparks and others (forthcoming).

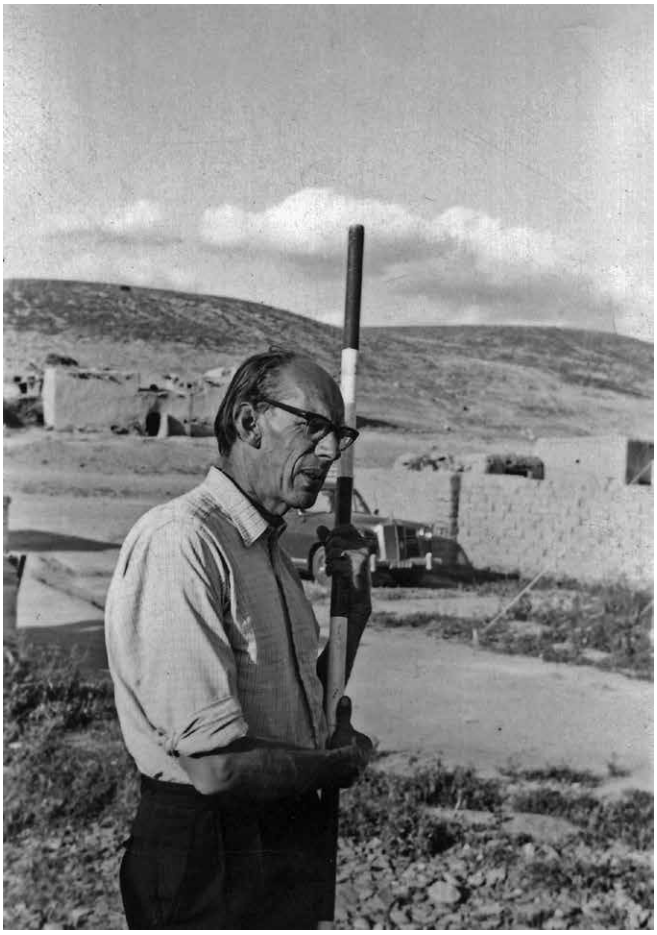


Fig. 2.1: Henk Franken in Deir Alla. (Photo Terry Ball)

or sacred cows?). The lecture described the latest developments in Palestinian archaeology while heavily criticizing the traditional excavation methods of some of his more renowned colleagues, which did not exactly increase his popularity among his peers.

From theologian to archaeologist

In 1989, Henk Franken was awarded the Jordanian *Order of Independence (Wisam al-Istiqial),* in recognition of the importance of his pioneering archaeological work in Jordan. The decoration was pinned to his lapel by princess Sarvath al-Hassan at a ceremony in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden.

It may seem strange for a theologian to receive a prestigious award for archaeological pursuits, but ever since the 1950s Franken had moved more and more into the field of archaeology, both practically and theoretically.

His appointment as researcher in 1954, focusing on the research and teaching of the Antiquities of Palestine, required a thorough knowledge of the Middle East and its latest archaeological developments. To prepare himself for his appointment, in 1953 Franken spent three months travelling in the Levant, together with Old Testament Professor

Fig. 2.2: In the course of their journey, De Boer and Franken visited the excavations of Khirbet al-Mafjar (Hisham's Palace).

P.A.H. De Boer. Together they explored the region, visited numerous archaeological sites and museums and met several archaeologists.

Franken was not satisfied with just travelling. He decided he also needed practical archaeological experience. Gerald Lankester Harding, the then director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, advised him to go to Tell es-Sultan (ancient Jericho) to join the archaeological excavations directed by British archaeologist Kathleen Kenyon. There he spent three seasons excavating, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Pure Scientific Research (ZWO), precursor of the present Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO). Their reason for funding Franken's travels was twofold: they considered it essential that '*Dutch scholars acquired practical experience in archaeological excavations*', and they hoped that '*Mr Franken might, in the future, himself work in the region, independently*'. Franken received a total sum of 8,250 guilders, equalling about 28,000 euro today.

Tell es-Sultan: a source of archaeological inspiration

Lankester Harding's suggestion that Franken should join the expedition at Tell es-Sultan made a lot of sense. Kathleen Kenyon was introducing new techniques and innovative methods to archaeology, which made it a perfect site for Franken to gain archaeological experience. In fact, he was not the only archaeological trainee there. In the field diary which he kept in his first season, he writes that most of the field assistants at Tell es-Sultan – most of whom were either Kenyon's own students, or students from the American School of Oriental Research – had no previous field experience.

Fig. 2.3: Tell es-Sultan (in the centre), with the refugee camp to the left of it. (Photo Leo Boer)

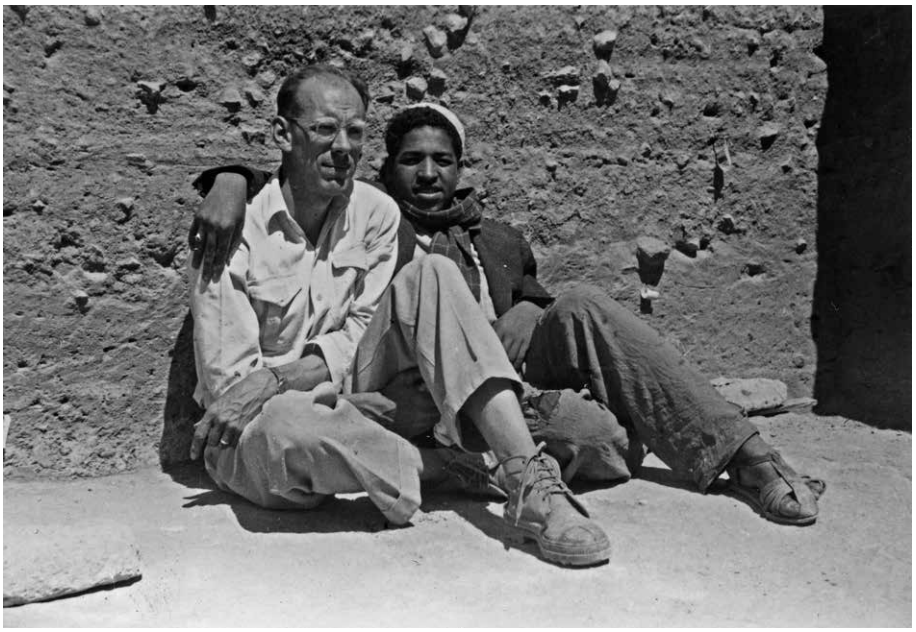


Fig. 2.4: Franken and a local worker in Jericho. (Photo: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden)

Fig. 2.5: Franken at work in his Square E in Jericho. (Photo National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden)

Archaeological skills

Franken was fully aware of the added value of his Tell es-Sultan experience. When he was appointed Lecturer in the Archaeology of Palestine and its Adjoining Regions, he expressed his gratitude to Kathleen Kenyon in his inaugural lecture, on November 20, 1962:

> *'Working in Square E, 'Deep Neo', at Tell es-Sultan on icy cold mornings, in hot afternoons, in clouds of dust, falling baskets and stones, and between noisy workmen, often until the sun had long set behind the Mount of Temptation, you taught us, your supervisors, how to dig. Long hours of section drawing with you became lectures in sheer logic, trained the eyes to see and taught me the patience needed to extract the history of the site from the soil. I expect to learn more from you in the future.'*

In this quote Franken elucidates the archaeological skills he had acquired at Tell es-Sultan. Kenyon had taught him '*how to dig*'. She had introduced him to the so-called Wheeler-Kenyon method, which was developed by famous archaeologist Mortimer Wheeler during his excavations at Verulamium in England between 1930 and 1935. Using this method, the archaeological site is divided into equal squares, usually of five by five meters, making it possible to accurately plot architectural remains and objects horizontally. Kenyon introduced this technique to Palestinian archaeology. Leaving vertical baulks between the squares made it possible to study the vertical build-up of the tell as well, and ascribe finds and structures to a specific occupation layer – a *stratum*.

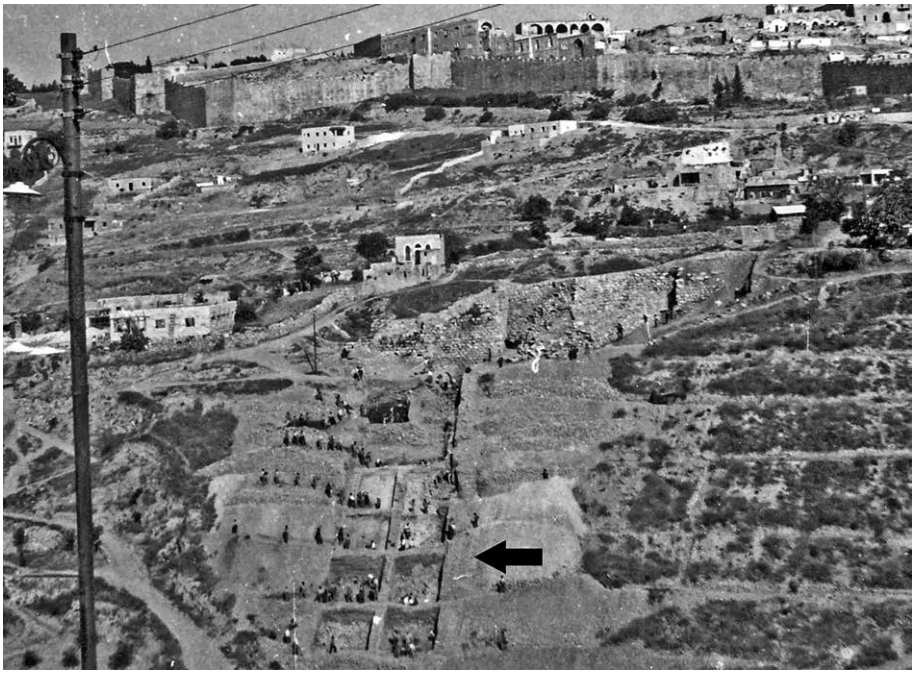


Fig. 2.6: Kenyon's excavation in Jerusalem, using the Wheeler-Kenyon method. The five by five-meter squares are clearly visible in the lower half of the photo. (Photo Terry Ball)

The 1950s saw a lively discussion about excavation methods and techniques in Palestinian archaeology. Not everybody was happy with Kenyon's introduction of the new method. Critics saw it as extremely time consuming and completely unnecessary. American archaeologists in particular remained unconvinced about the way Kenyon excavated at Tell es-Sultan. According to Franken they went so far as to advise their students against joining Kenyon's excavations. Franken, on the other hand, fully embraced what he called Kenyon's *'standards of modern archaeological research'*, and he chided the Americans for their antiquated views on archaeological excavation techniques.

Back to Franken's inaugural lecture, in which he expands on how much he has learned on Kenyon's dig. Central to his praise is the phrase '*to extract the history of the site from the soil*', which summarizes the essence of the Wheeler-Kenyon method: one does not reconstruct the history of an archaeological site through Biblical stories, embellished with some archaeological details; one reconstructs it solely by excavating the layers of occupation – the soil itself. Afterwards one can add information from inscriptions and other textual sources. Ultimately the history of the site is then reconstructed by comparing archaeological finds and (Biblical) texts. Franken stated that archaeologists should focus on interpreting the material remains they had excavated independently, and not use archaeology as a 'helpmate' to illustrate the Biblical narrative.

Another skill Franken acquired at Tell es-Sultan was the drawing of sections. The baulks that remain standing between the excavated squares, usually 50 centimeter or a meter wide, provide a vertical section through the layers that have been dug away in the squares themselves. Scaled drawings of these sections will document how these layers

have accumulated, which walls and floors belong together, and when a new occupation phase starts. Franken spent long hours trying to master the art of section-drawing. His excavation diary reveals that in his first season, in 1955, this took up much of his time. In a letter to Piet de Boer, dated 26 March 1955, he writes:

> *'I am, by now, totally fed up. Recording the layers on the section baulks is strenuous work. Every line, often almost invisible, needs to be determined and meticulously measured and drawn. I spend whole days doing this, and have the satisfaction that M.K. [Miss Kenyon] changes little in it, but uses it as it is for her reports. However, it takes days before this jumble of coloured lines starts to make any sense. Your eyes need to get accustomed to it to be able to see it.'*

Pottery

What Franken did not specifically mention in his lecture, was that Kenyon also inspired his passion for pottery. During the day he would focus on floors, layers and walls in the square he was digging, but in the afternoon he would accompany Kenyon when she studied and selected the sherds that had been excavated the previous day. Kenyon used these sessions to explain which types of pottery were found, and how to recognise and date them.

Franken was well aware of the importance of his practical training in Tell es-Sultan, as his notes and correspondence make clear. At the end of the first season he felt he had mastered the subject, and he hoped that Kenyon would permit him to come back the next year. Fortunately, his teacher was happy with her student's progress, and he joined the expedition for several more seasons.

Over the years this 'teacher-student' relationship was transformed into a professional relationship between colleagues. When Franken started his Deir Alla excavations, two years after the end of the Jericho expedition, Kenyon showed an interest, visiting the site several times. Franken, in his turn, continued to discuss his perspective on archaeology with her. In 1961, he wrote a critical review of an American excavation report for the journal *Vetus Testamentum*, which he sent to Kenyon first, to check whether he was not too harsh in his criticism. Although she explained she had not read the original report, she thought the criticism was strong, but certainly not unjustified.

In spite of the fact that, over the years, Franken became increasingly critical of Kenyon's methods, he continued to admire her expertise. Towards the end of his life he wrote, in a letter to Kenyon's biographer Miriam Davis:

> *'She was the last of a generation of pioneers in the field of Near Eastern archaeology and without doubt she was far more capable than many newcomers in the field, better educated, better informed and had more stamina.'*

From Tell es-Sultan to Tell Deir Alla

In 1960, after having worked three seasons at Tell es-Sultan, Franken was offered the opportunity – thanks, again, to a generous grant from ZWO (see chapter 3) – to start his own excavation at Tell Deir Alla. During his travels in the region in the previous

Fig. 2.7: Pottery reading. Top: Kenyon at Tell es-Sultan; bottom: Franken at Tell Deir Alla. (Photo top Institute of Archaeology, University College London)

years, Franken had visited Deir Alla several times, and had come to the conclusion that this was a very suitable tell for the kind of archaeological research he had in mind. It will come as no surprise that he adopted the Wheeler-Kenyon method to organise his excavation. For this method to work, the tell needed to be fairly large, so it would yield enough representative material from each occupation layer. On the other hand, it should not be so enormous that it became impossible to reach the lowest occupation layers within a reasonable time frame. Tell Deir Alla seemed to be just the right size for his purposes. Apart from that, it was a virgin tell – nobody had ever excavated it. Based on the surface finds, Franken dated the upper layers to between the eighth and seventh centuries BC, and the layers below it to the Early Iron Age (1200 – 1000 BC). He also found evidence for Late Bronze Age occupation (1600 – 1200 BC). These dates were confirmed by several colleagues, such as Kathleen Kenyon, Père de Vaux, Awni Dajani (Lancester Harding's successor as director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan), and Yusuf Sa'ad (director of the Palestine Archaeological Museum in Jerusalem).

Franken was well aware that he was not the only archaeologist with an eye on the site. During one of his preliminary visits to the tell in 1959, he noticed that all the Late Bronze Age sherds which had been lying on the surface in previous years, had disappeared. His suspicion, that other archaeologists had surveyed the tell and were interested in digging there, was confirmed by Dajani. According to him several archae-

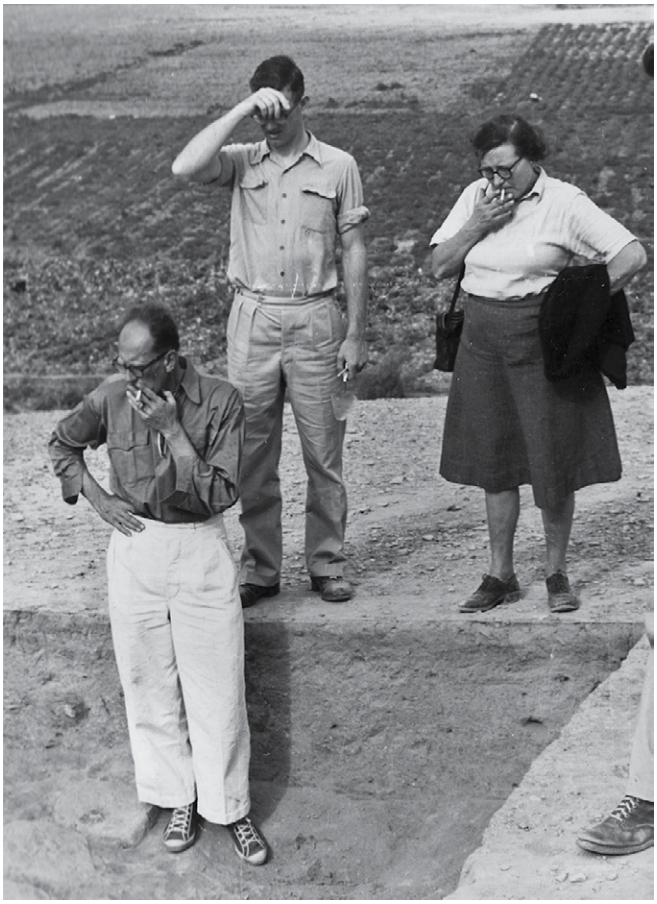


Fig. 2.8: Kenyon visits Deir Alla. Next to her one of the Dutch students.

ological institutions had expressed an interest in starting an expedition on Tell Deir Alla. Dajani, who like Franken was one of Kenyon's ex-students, urged him to apply for an excavation permit immediately. Franken did so, and got his permit.

Aims and purposes of the Tell Deir Alla excavations

The general aims of the Deir Alla expedition, as formulated by Franken in his application for ZWO funding, were the same as those of Kenyon's archaeological campaigns at Tell es-Sultan. Both projects had been organised in order to generate a reliable chronology of the site, to reconstruct the history of the periods that were represented, and to study the material remains. Apart from that, the Deir Alla expedition was expected to acquire an extensive study and research collection of Palestinian artefacts, both for Leiden University and for the National Museum of Antiquities.

The periods which the expedition would focus on, were chosen with the results of the Tell es-Sultan expedition in mind. Tell es-Sultan had provided lots of information on earlier periods, so Franken decided to concentrate on the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. This meant that if the Deir Alla excavators would encounter earlier occupation layers, they would stop digging at that level.

Franken was particularly interested in the transition from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age. According to many Biblical scholars, that period coincided with the Entry of

the Israelites into the Promised Land. The book of Joshua recounts how the Israelites crossed the river Jordan, and continued west into Palestine by way of Jericho. Jericho, however, had not yielded any corroborative evidence for this narrative; hardly any material remains from the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages had been found there. Franken's aim was to investigate whether Tell Deir Alla could throw light on the historical reliability of this story, by studying the excavated pottery. Was the pottery in Jordan closely related, typologically and technologically, to the pottery found in Palestine, or were there major differences? Had people indeed crossed the river, bringing their pottery with them, or had each side of the river experienced its own development, without extensive contacts between them?

Methodology

In order to try and answer these questions, Franken initially applied the excavation methods he had learned from Kenyon at Tell es-Sultan. Thus the expedition would not expose large areas of the site, but would concentrate on the stratigraphy (the sequence of the layers) of the tell.

There were also differences with the Tell es-Sultan excavations. Franken wanted to dig much faster than Kenyon, concentrating on the main layers, without getting lost in minute stratigraphic details. By employing the 'Jericho men' he hoped to be able to make some speed.

A second difference with Tell es-Sultan was in the role of the excavated pottery. Franken wanted to collect just sufficient pottery from each layer to be able to analyse the repertoire of that layer. Once he had enough pottery, he stopped digging that layer, however interesting it might be. The aim of the expedition was not to explore the occupation history of the tell as a whole, but rather the developments in the pottery repertoire, which would enable him to determine the relationship of the site with other regions, particularly in Palestine.

A virtual grid of reference points and lines was laid out on the tell, and a large north-south trench excavated down the northern slope (Trench D). Next to this trench three ten by ten-meter squares, A – C, were opened up, each square subdivided into four squares of five by five meters. During the following years the excavated area was extended westwards, adding some more ten by ten-meter squares and test trenches to the initial area (see chapter 4).

Each square was supervised by a field assistant, responsible for the documentation: every excavated feature, be it architecture or occupation layers, and every find was documented in a journal. After the stratigraphic relationship between features had been determined, the vertical sections were drawn. Back in the camp the finds were cleaned, registered, given a number and where necessary wrapped up temporarily in order to prevent (further) damage. The next step was to determine which objects had to be restored and/or conserved. Franken then also decided whether an object was interesting enough to keep and if so, whether it had to be drawn and photographed. Finally the finds were stored in the registration room for the duration of the excavation.

Fig. 2.9: Aerial photograph of Tell Deir Alla in 1962, showing the grid pattern.

Sailing his own course...

At the start of his excavations at Tell Deir Alla Franken was heavily influenced by Kenyon's archaeological ideas. However, over time his methods diverged more and more from hers. He was convinced, for example, that Kenyon should have employed trained archaeologists in Jericho to draw plans and sections, rather than inexperienced assistants. Therefore the *plan de campagne* for Deir Alla stressed the need to add four archaeologists to the team, or at least people with a wide archaeological experience, who could apply his archaeological methodology.

Apart from Franken himself, participants were professor Hendrik Brunsting, *'an experienced archaeologist with a broad interest in the Near East',* Lucas Grollenberg, '*someone who knew the region and had worked on several excavations',* and the British archaeologist Diana Kirkbride.[5]

Students wanting to take part in the expedition were required to have previous field experience. Franken insisted they should have followed '*a course in prehistoric archaeology at an institution in the US, London, the Netherlands, Germany or Denmark, and taken part in several excavations, so that they had practical experience of accepted modern methods.'*[6] Franken saw the Deir Alla expedition as a field school for students, just like Jericho had been a field school for him.

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5 Even though Franken, in his reports to ZWO, stated that these team members supported his archaeological methods, Grollenberg wrote in a letter, dated January 11 1960, shortly after the start of the excavation, that he still did not like Franken's chosen methods. Unfortunately, he does not specify his objections, although it may have had to do with his previous archaeological experience at Khirbet Qumran and Tell el-Farah (N), directed by Père de Vaux, who excavated according to more traditional methods.

6 Ironically, in the Netherlands Franken was criticised for not having had a thorough *Dutch* field training, and for being a theologian rather than an archaeologist.

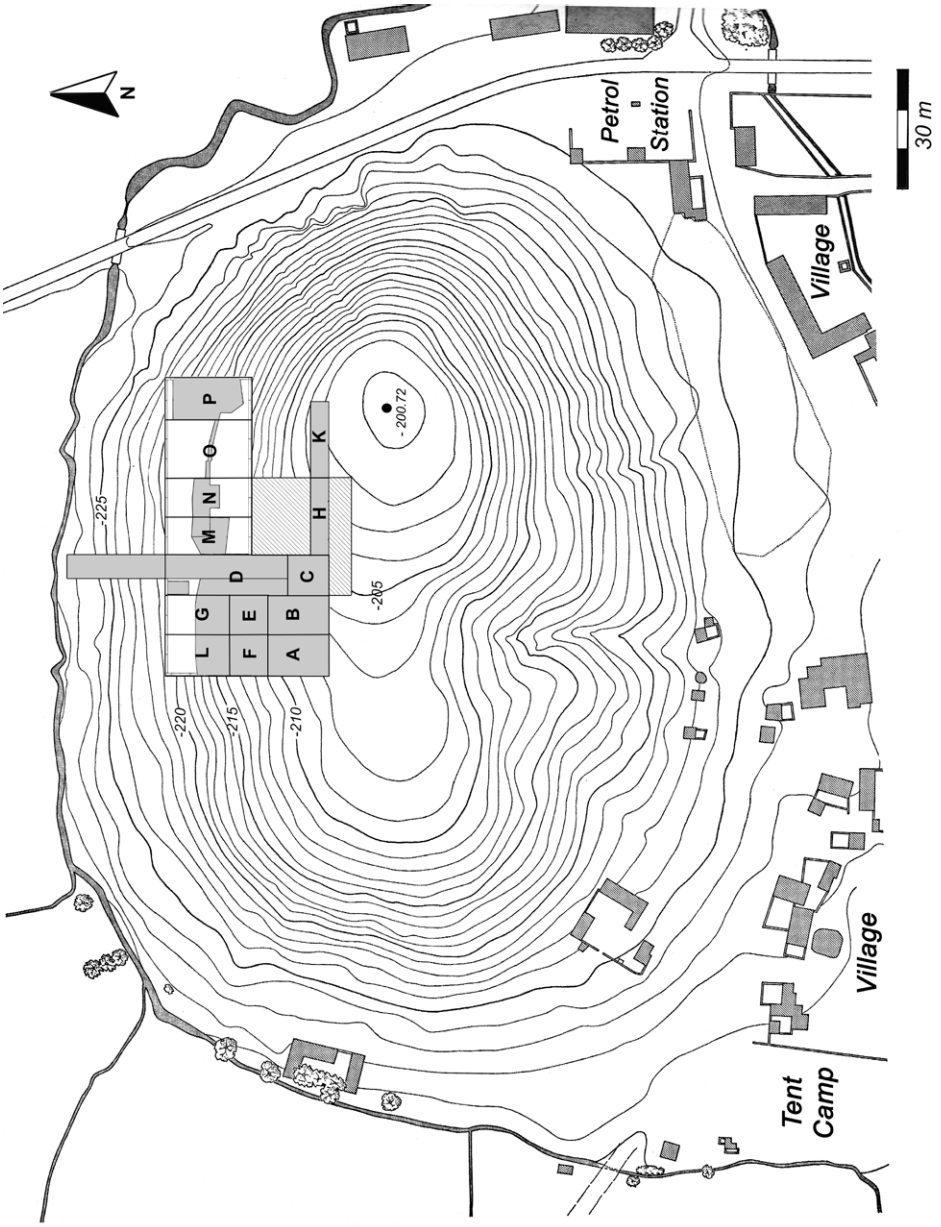

Fig. 2.10: Plan of the tell showing all the areas excavated from 1960 to 1967.

Pottery studies

Franken also became more and more convinced that

> *'archaeology focused too much on reconstructing the chronology of historical events and the material aspects of cultures. The idea that a culture is a human creation was of course not neglected, but in the interpretation of ruins its only role was to provide the names of nations or peoples, their locations and the accompanying dates. Most notable was the fact that pottery studies served no other purpose than the dating of strata.'*

At the Jericho excavation Franken had been struck by Kenyon's assumption that pottery shapes changed rapidly, in a matter of decennia. Detailed analysis of these changes would enable one to date the pottery – and with it the layers in which it was found – within a narrow time frame, say between 720 and 700 BC.

It is indeed true that in consecutive occupation layers the pottery sherds showed differences. However, according to Franken this observation was partly a result of Kenyon's handling of the pottery. Every day she made a selection of the sherds she wanted to keep, and threw out the rest. In her selection she looked for differences in type, which meant that her method, while stressing the differences, overlooked the similarities.

The purpose behind this method was to create a sequence of sherd types based on the sequence of the occupation layers. Ultimately that would reveal a development in pottery production over a longer period, say two or three centuries, showing the appearance of new types, and the disappearance of older ones. Thus a system of dating pottery shapes could be developed: this shape belongs in the first half of the eighteenth century BC, that shape in the second half.

Unfortunately, things are not that simple. Certain types of pottery can have a long period of use, and therefore appear in a sequence of layers; only the frequency may differ in each period. For example, at a certain moment in time a new type of cooking pot may be produced in small numbers, next to an older type. Over time the new type becomes the dominant one, and eventually it gradually disappears again. This process can easily take two or three centuries. Should you find a single sherd of this type of cooking pot, there is no way you can date it very precisely.

Franken's explanation for these long periods of use of certain pottery types was simple: as long as potters made their vessels according to certain traditions and using the same procedures, their end product would always have a number of identical traits. Potters, he thought, were traditionally-minded and averse to change. So Franken wanted to learn more about potters and their methods.

When he shared his ideas with Kenyon, she found them interesting, although no way she was going to change her own methodology. Therefore Franken decided to test his ideas by studying the Iron Age pottery of Jericho himself. The monograph he published in 1974 has the unsurprising title *In search of the Jericho Potters.*

Biblical archaeology

Another field in which Franken steered his own course was in the relationship between Biblical traditions and archaeology. He was very critical of scholars who, although they might be qualified and skilled historians or linguists, were unfamiliar with modern

methods in archaeological research. They interpreted archaeological data using written sources. According to Franken this was the wrong way around: it implied that the main purpose of archaeology was to illustrate the content of the written sources. So it comes as no surprise that he utterly rejected the viewpoints of giants like Nelson Glueck and William Foxwell Albright, who propagated a connection between the Biblical traditions and archaeological evidence. Franken maintained that ruins should tell their own story, which could not simply be pasted onto the Biblical narrative. He stated that: '*a ruin made up of mudbricks cannot simply be identified just by associating the region in which it is found with a region that is mentioned in the Bible, without knowledge of the ruins themselves.*'

But he himself was struggling with these associations too. The 1940s saw a debate on the Biblical site of Succoth and its possible identification. It is a place name that is mentioned several times in the Bible. In Genesis 33,7, Jacob builds himself a house and huts or booths for his cattle there. This explains the name: succoth is the plural of succa (booth or hut). The Biblical references indicate that Succoth is located in Transjordan, close to the river Jordan and close to the river Jabbok (known today as the Zerqa), where Jacob battled with the angel. According to I Kings 7,46, King Solomon had the bronze vessels used in the temple in Jerusalem cast in the plain between Succoth and Zarethan. Tell Deir Alla was the preferred candidate for Succoth, particularly since Nelson Glueck, during his survey of the tell, had found a piece of copper slag.

The question whether Tell Deir Alla could be identified with Biblical Succoth was certainly not the purpose of Franken's excavation, but there was no avoiding it; he had to address the issue. In his first monograph on the excavation, published in 1969, he does indeed treat this question extensively. Interestingly, he takes the Biblical texts at face value – as if they can be used as a reliable historical source without problem. Which is ironic in light of his scathing criticism about blending Bible and archaeology. His conclusion is that Tell Deir Alla cannot be identified with Succoth, simply because it was not occupied during the time in which these Biblical stories are set. In 1960 Franken had found a large bronze melting furnace (see chapter 4), but even that could not convince him. According to the Bible, the bronze vessels were made in the plain between Succoth and Zarethan, not in Succoth itself. Franken suggested a different identification for Tell Deir Alla: Biblical Gilgal. According to 1 Samuel 11,15, this was the place of Saul's investiture as king of Israel. Franken had excavated a large Late Bronze Age temple at the tell, and he thought that the place might still be considered sacred in the days of king Saul, well after the Late Bronze Age.

It is only fair to say that Franken later distanced himself from these ideas, and from the Biblical place-name 'identification game'. The story of Deir Alla as told by the archaeological finds was interesting enough, without having to resort to tenuous Biblical quotes.

At the same time Franken was well aware of the importance of cooperation between archaeologists and Biblical scholars when it came to the interpretation of archaeological material. Therefore, he suggested, archaeological digs should be co-directed by an archaeologist and a Biblical scholar, and not, as had been more common in the past, by a Biblical scholar alone, who usually had little archaeological field experience. The presence of an archaeologist could prevent Biblical scholars from misinterpreting archaeological data through lack of archaeological experience.

Franken was convinced that both the Biblical and archaeological disciplines in Leiden would benefit from a close cooperation. Palestinian archaeology needed the specialist linguistic and cultural knowledge of the region which could only be provided by Biblical studies. On the other hand, theological studies were depended on the discipline of Palestinian archaeology when it came to answering questions about the history of the Israelites, and to understanding the material culture of the Biblical periods.

Franken's final ideas about scientific archaeological research are probably best articulated in an article he wrote in 1976 on the identification of Biblical place names. He refers to the discovery of the so-called Balaam text[7] which had been discovered at Deir Alla in 1967:

> *'Excavating the Holy Land does not mean excavating the Bible. Archaeology is able to provide background information to stories told in the Bible. However, the nature of these excavated data differs fundamentally from the Biblical information – it has no message. The Bible describes historical events from a very specific religious viewpoint, something that is absent in archaeological situations. These 'frozen' situations reflect realities taken from daily life events in the past. Texts such as found in Deir Alla show that, in favourable circumstances, archaeology can provide information that cannot be found in the Bible, that was seen as irrelevant or left out on purpose. In order to understand these intentions, we need uncensured archaeological evidence. If archaeological information is not allowed to tell its own story in its own language, as understood by modern archaeology, it will become disappointingly sterile.'*

The excavations at Tell Deir Alla were only the beginning. During his long career, Franken further developed his ideas on modern archaeology and the importance of technological pottery studies. However, he never ignored the importance of anthropology and Biblical studies for the interpretation of his archaeological data.

7 The text, written on wall plaster, mentions the name 'Balaam son of Beor'. This name appears in the Bible as that of the famous prophet who was asked by the king of Moab to curse the Israelites, when they were about to traverse the land of Moab (Numbers 22-24). See also chapters 4 and 5.

3

This is how you organise a dig!

In the Netherlands of the 1960s organising an archaeological expedition abroad was a real challenge. As expedition leader Franken had to enlist the cooperation of numerous persons and organisations which the expedition depended on, both at home and abroad, taking into account their terms and conditions. Apart from that, political, economic and cultural developments in the region played a role in the practical execution of the dig. Therefore it was vital that the 'chef de mission' was endowed with tactical skills and a sound understanding of human nature.

Start of the organisation in the homeland

Several institutions and organisations in the Netherlands were directly involved in the organisation of the campaign. Administrative documents and correspondence show that the Faculty of Theology of Leiden University, the National Museum of Antiquities (NMA) and the Netherlands Organisation for Pure Scientific Research (ZWO) all had a say in the matter.

Faculty of Theology

In 1954 Franken was appointed researcher at the Leiden University to study and teach Palestinian Antiquity. Professor in Old Testament Studies Piet de Boer and Franken himself were both convinced that archaeological experience in the region was essential for studying and teaching the discipline of Palestinian antiquities. An archaeological project could fill that gap, but that was still a long way off.

In 1953 De Boer and Franken had already made a three-month study trip through Jordan and Lebanon, in preparation of Franken's appointment. Subsequently Franken participated in several seasons of field training at the Tell es-Sultan excavations between 1955 and 1957 (see chapter 2), while in 1957, prior to the excavation, he made another trip (on horseback!) visiting sites and museums in Jordan, among which Tell Deir Alla.

In August 1959 Franken travelled to Jordan again, where he revisited Tell Deir Alla, to decide where exactly he wanted to excavate, and to make an inventory of the tools and materials he would need and of the number of local workers he would have to employ. He also consulted with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and with the owner of the tell, drank tea with the tribal chiefs in Deir Alla (very important!) and discussed his plans with colleagues in the French, British and American Institutes of Archaeology in Jerusalem. In that same year he handed in his official application for funding from ZWO, meant for one season of excavation at Deir Alla, from January to the end of March 1960.

Fig. 3.1: Franken and De Boer visiting Baalbek, the monumental temple complex in Lebanon.

De Boer would act as the official director of the Deir Alla project, and Franken as scientific and field director. According to him that involved:

> *'the responsibility for the proper organisation of the expedition, its preparation, choice of participants (staff members), the employment of workers and the organisation of the camp, etcetera, and for the scientific process, including the excavation, study and publication of the results.'*

While excavating in Deir Alla, Franken corresponded extensively with De Boer, who was too busy to join the dig, about the organisation as well as the daily routine. How well they cooperated can be seen when Franken informed De Boer that the ZWO funding fell short, and he needed more money. De Boer immediately approached the Trustees of Leiden University with a request for additional funding.[7]

7 In the end it was ZWO, rather than the University, who came to the rescue.

Atmosphere at the Faculty

De Boer kept his protegé informed about the developments and the atmosphere at the Faculty of Theology.[8] This was essential, particularly in the early years of the project. While Franken assumed that the Deir Alla expedition was conducted under the umbrella of the Faculty, not everybody in the Faculty was convinced of the scientific relevance of the expedition, and of Franken's archaeological expertise. During the first campaign Franken, therefore, felt the need to respond in writing to the negative atmosphere in Leiden. His letter to the Faculty met with success, as De Boer informed him on March 28:

> *'Your "letter to the Faculty" has been well received. I have distributed it in a wider circle (trustees, Klasens, Stricker, Gerda Kramers etc). Hoenderdaal wants me to ask for your permission to publish parts of it in the Remonstrants Weekly, and possibly also in the magazine of the Dutch Protestant Bond. Next time you write to me, please give me a "yes" (or "no") about it, and I'll pass it on. The president asks if he can distribute the letter among the trustees. He is enthusiastic about the interesting news and the lively style.'*

In the meantime Franken struggled to make sense of the annoyance his colleagues at the Faculty of Theology displayed over the financial support he received from ZWO. In his correspondence with Jan Hendrik Bannier, director-general of ZWO, he suggested that it was envy and suspicion that lay at the root of it. In a letter dated November 12, 1959 he wrote to Bannier:

> *'I suspect that this strategy[9] will make it easier to explain whose interests are served with this, namely not just those of a lucky person "getting a foothold in ZWO" (as the expression goes), but that it is about a responsible policy for Dutch archaeology. I suspect that certain presently existing plans will disappear without a trace once this policy has become clear. I hope you will excuse this effort of mine to consolidate my position in the archaeological world. Therefore I want to stress again that I shall only start if I know that I have your confidence. For me this is also particularly important with regard to the world of "Biblical archaeology".*

He acknowledged the need to justify the support of the national research organisation, which he did in a Memorandum addressed to the Faculty on November 26, 1959. In it he emphasised the scientific nature of the expedition, and his own qualifications to adequately conduct the expedition. He stated that ZWO had influenced the formation of the underlying plans, and had approved the final project purely on the basis of its clear archaeological objectives. ZWO did certainly require the project to meet high scientific standards. Franken further clarified that his cooperation with ZWO had been

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8 This, in its turn, annoyed ZWO, who felt they were funding a *Dutch* expedition, rather than a Leiden University one.

9 Here Franken refers to his suggestion to conduct the first season as a test season, to see if the experience of Deir Alla would also benefit Dutch prehistorians. If it turned out that the older, prehistoric layers also had to be studied, he would cooperate with Professor Glasbergen, of Amsterdam University, in a co-project. The definitive status of the project would be determined after that.

ongoing since the time that organisation had funded some of his Jordanian journeys, several years earlier. His latest visit, in 1959, had been in preparation for the Deir Alla expedition. In other words, funding had not been granted based on personal bias, but for purely scientific reasons.

In a memorandum dated the same year and addressed to the curators of the University, he explained why he believed that the project had added value for the University without any costs. The project was funded by ZWO, and part of the tools and equipment for the expedition could be borrowed in Jordan itself. The only contribution he asked of the curators was to pay for registration materials (notebooks, pens, pencils and drawing paper). In return for this minimal contribution the University would get a project that was of major importance for the University and for the town of Leiden. The expedition would give students of the University the opportunity to take part in an archaeological excavation in the Middle East, and it would provide both the University and the National Museum of Antiquities with a wealth of special objects for their collections, which, in its turn, would attract foreign students and archaeologists and thus strengthen Leiden's international profile.

Franken's pleas fell on deaf ears: he did not receive the financial support from the University and Faculty that he had hoped for. In the 1950s, when he was taking part in the Jericho excavations, the University had paid for the acquisition of objects for its teaching collection, but in 1960 a similar request from the Deir Alla expedition was rejected by the curators.[10]

Workspace

In the first years of the expedition lack of workspace was a recurring problem. After the first successful season it became clear that the expedition would need a permanent and spacious workspace to process the results. Therefore already in 1960 De Boer started talks with the university. The university staff informed him that they recognised the need for work and storage space, and that negotiations were ongoing about renting space near the Central Station. These negotiations apparently took time, because nine months later Franken repeated his request for workspace at the University.

All these financial and workspace-related issues were part of the larger problem: how to embed the discipline of Palestinian Archaeology at Leiden University. Until that time there existed only a 'study room for the Archaeology of Palestine'. This was exactly what the name implied: a room in which Franken could process the finds, all by himself. He had made several requests to the Faculty to be allowed to extend the study room into an Institute, in order to better secure the future of Palestinian Archaeology, but the Faculty never gave him a satisfactory response. This can be deduced from the correspondence between Franken and Bannier (ZWO) in 1965, at the end of the first series of excavations. They were writing each other about the question whether the equipment of the Deir Alla expedition, such as tents and excavation tools, should be sold. At the time Franken was not sure whether the expedition would continue. That decision, he wrote, also depended on whether or not the Faculty and the University '*deemed the development of Palestinian Archaeology into a proper archaeological institute desirable*'.

10 De Boer applied for fl 1,000 of funding. The curators' rejection sprang from the fear that ZWO would claim that sum because they had already invested much in the expedition.

Fig. 3.2: The Leiden work rooms in 1965.

Finally, at the suggestion of De Boer, in October 19 1965 Franken decided to approach the curators of the University directly. He sent a letter to let them know that ZWO considered financing a new research project for Deir Alla, on the condition that the follow-up, that is the processing of results and finds, was guaranteed.

> *'I have tried for many months to find a solution for the problem of creating a basis in Leiden, and have put the case to the Faculty and to the Director of ZWO. At the moment I cannot see any other solution than transforming the Study Room for Palestinian Archaeology into an Institute.'*

It was only in 1980 that this Institute was realised, with the creation of the Institute for Pottery Technology. Nowadays this is part of the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University.

National Museum of Antiquities

The Deir Alla expedition was in close contact with the National Museum of Antiquities (NMA) in Leiden. Franken, in his correspondence, told the curators of the University that he believed that not only the university teaching collection, but the museum collection too, would benefit from the excavations. In the 1950s, thanks to Franken, the museum collection had already been expanded with finds from Jericho. Now his idea was to create a special Palestinian collection, which would include the finds from Deir Alla.

The expedition and the museum also collaborated in other ways. When it became clear that De Boer, because of his busy schedule, could not take part in the first excavation season, he was replaced by Hendrik Brunsting, professor of Archaeology at the Free University of Amsterdam and curator at the National Museum of Antiquities.

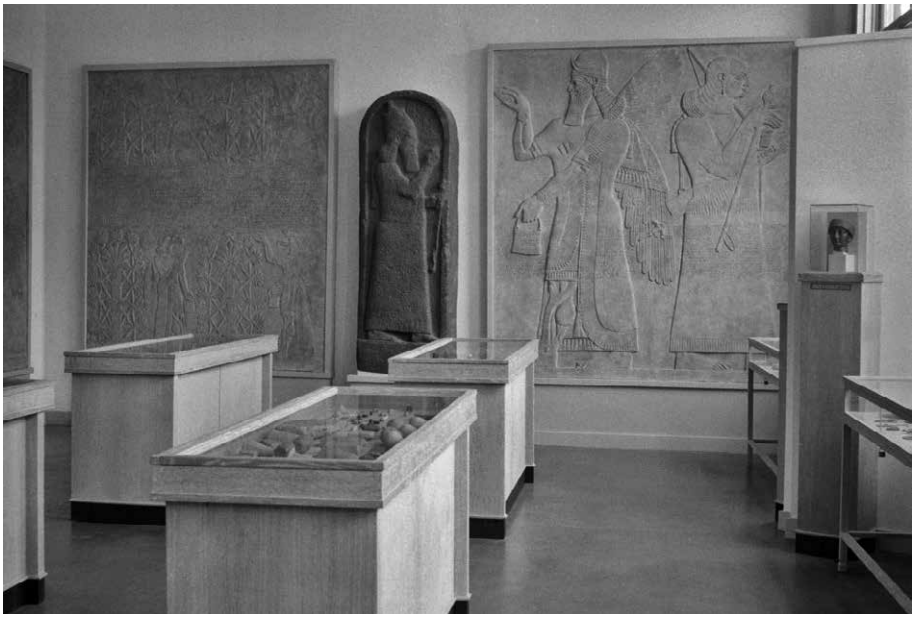

Fig. 3.3: The Middle Eastern collection in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, 1959. (Photo National Museum of Antiquities)

De Boer broached the subject of storage space for excavated finds with both the museum, and the University. Adolf Klasens, the new director of the museum, was willing to provide the Deir Alla project with study and storage space, but after he had thoroughly considered all options, he had to conclude that he could not provide these at short notice. Nevertheless, Franken was delighted with this intensive cooperation with the museum, which strengthened the expedition's base in the Netherlands. This, after all, was one of the conditions ZWO had set for funding the expedition.

The Dutch Organisation for Pure Scientific Research (ZWO)

The cooperation between De Boer and Franken on the one hand and ZWO on the other hand dated from several years earlier. In 1953, the research organisation had funded their Middle Eastern trip to investigate Palestinian archaeology. During this three-month journey they visited numerous archaeological sites, had discussions with archaeologists and viewed museum collections. Also in the 1950s, ZWO had sponsored Franken's participation in the Tell es-Sultan excavations during three seasons, and in 1959 Franken visited the Jordan Valley and Deir Alla, again funded by ZWO. Altogether a strong foundation for the ensuing years of cooperation between Franken and ZWO.

What were the reasons for ZWO to keep investing in Franken's archaeological escapades in the Middle East? What were the strategic aims they hoped to achieve? ZWO itself clarified this when it granted Franken's request for funding for his participation in the Tell es-Sultan excavations. The funding committee explained that they thought it was expedient for a Dutch scholar to gain practical archaeological training abroad. They also expressed the hope that this would, in the long term, allow Franken to organise his own expedition in the region.

Fig. 3.4: Professor Brunsting (far right) at Deir Alla. (Photo Bert Veenendaal)

It comes as no surprise then that the initiative for a Dutch archaeological expedition in Jordan was welcomed by the research organisation. The excavation itself would function as a permanent field school for students who wanted to acquire archaeological experience abroad, and to train archaeologists to fully participate in foreign expeditions.

Therefore, one of the conditions which ZWO proposed for the funding, was the participation of students in the field. Franken was well aware of this, as he explained in a Memorandum for the Faculty of Theology, dated November 26, 1959. Students wanting to participate in the excavations were requested to follow a short, theoretical course in Palestinian Archaeology, as well as several weeks of field training in the Netherlands. Franken also opined that theology students could only participate if they had finished their Bachelors exam, and had worked on archaeological projects during their Masters study. On the other hand, participation was not restricted to students of Old Testament studies, but was also open to students of New Testament or Early Christian periods. Franken's expectation was that in the future students of European prehistory might also participate.

Another one of ZWO's conditions was that this would become a Dutch, rather than a Leiden project. Therefore, the research organisation objected to several of Franken's statements in various publications that *'the expedition stood under auspices of the Leiden Faculty of Theology'*. However, as Franken made clear, the research unit was not only based in Leiden, the funding had been officially awarded to the Leiden Faculty of Theology, and the subject of Palestinian Archaeology was taught only in Leiden.

Two professors of prehistoric archaeology, Willem Glasbergen in Amsterdam and Harm Tjalling Waterbolk in Groningen, expressed grave concerns on whether the research project would be conducted *'according to modern requirements'*. Consequently, ZWO asked Franken discuss this problem with them, and at the same time explore the

possibilities of cooperation with Amsterdam and Groningen. In the end it was decided that Franken would submit the excavation report of the first season to Glasbergen and Waterbolk for review. In addition, their staff and students would be offered the opportunity to participate in the excavation.[11]

In order to minimise negative publicity on the Deir Alla expedition within the Dutch archaeological community, and to prevent it from becoming an exclusively Leiden project, ZWO demanded the last say on the composition of the excavation team. In his yearly funding application Franken would have to outline exactly who was participating and why, and ZWO had to be notified of any changes in the expedition staff. In a few cases Franken had some difficulty to convince the board of ZWO of a candidate's suitability, and sometimes the research organisation proposed its own candidates.

During the first few years the cooperation between the various universities may have seemed somewhat artificial and orchestrated, but later on the cooperation became more natural and positive. In 1964 professor Waterbolk joined the expedition for two weeks, which seems to have boosted the professional relationship between him and Franken (see chapter 4).[12]

In those two weeks Waterbolk gained a profound insight in the excavation with all its specific challenges, and he started to realise that a dig in the Middle East differed from a Northwest European dig in many ways. To Franken's great relief, Waterbolk generally endorsed the way the project was organised and executed. In his 1964 excavation report Franken wrote:

> *'For me the significance of this visit lies primarily in the fact that for the first time I have a discussion partner in the Netherlands who has a clear insight in the expedition and in the way in which I try to solve all sorts of problems, particularly archaeological ones* […] *The somewhat irritating talk about "Franken's English methods" has now moved on to a frank exchange, and hopefully been clarified completely.'*

Here was a partner with whom Franken would and could discuss archaeological issues in the future. He would like to cooperate closer with Groningen, because '*they have a clear view of what the future of archaeology should be*'. In his notes of 1964, he wrote that he had given up the intention to develop Palestinian Archaeology in Leiden into an institute. He either wanted to remain in the Faculty of Theology as lecturer

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11 During the first season no students from Groningen or Amsterdam were available, but the following year three students from Amsterdam joined the expedition. In 1961 Waterbolk's main assistant took part in the excavation, and in 1964 another of his assistants acted as field director of part of the excavation. In consultation with Jan Hemelrijk, professor of Statistics at Amsterdam University, one of his staff members was employed to process the statistical data. When Franken decided that the drawing of the objects, done by a draughtsperson from the Leiden Institute of Prehistory, got behind schedule, he got permission from ZWO to hire one of Waterbolk's former staff members.

12 Originally professor van Es, since 1965 director of the Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek ROB (National Institute for Archaeological Research), planned to go to Deir Alla to do detailed research into Early Iron Age semi-nomadism. When it turned out that he could not participate, Franken invited Waterbolk to discuss '*several issues of general importance*' in situ.

Fig. 3.5: Tjalling Waterbolk in 1967. (Archief Gemeente Westerveld / Historische Vereniging Havelte e.o.)

'*with a large study collection for Biblical archaeology',* or he wanted to join '*a general archaeological institute with adequate staffing for modern research.*'[13]

Franken had no high expectations of cooperating with Amsterdam. He doubted whether the 'rigid system' of the University of Amsterdam could cope with an excavation of Deir Alla's complexity, and believed that he set much higher standards for the quality of the work of the technical staff than were the norm in Amsterdam.

Groningen, however, had already gone a long way in establishing an institute with an extensive staff. Franken, in his notes, therefore concluded that as long as there was no adequate institute in Leiden, he much preferred to send his material to Groningen, and would be happy to welcome participants from Groningen on the dig for shorter or longer periods.

Waterbolk, in his turn, expressed the hope that the Deir Alla expedition could continue in 1965.[14] In his report to ZWO, written in February 1964, he wrote: '*If Dutch prehistorians would draw the possibilities offered by the Middle East into the scope of their studies, there would be a treasure trove of experience in the Deir Alla project.'*

13 At the time Leiden University did not have such a 'general archaeological institute'. Eventually Palestinian Archaeology would move from the Faculty of Theology to the Faculty of Humanities, which housed several archaeological institutes, such as Classical Archaeology and Assyriology. When the Faculty of Archaeology was created at Leiden University, every archaeological section in the Faculty of Humanities joined this new Faculty.

14 ZWO had already indicated that they were prepared to fund the expedition until and including the season of 1964.

Publications

ZWO demanded a full and extensive publication of the results of the Deir Alla excavations. The deal was that the manuscript would be submitted publication-ready by the end of October 1965. In July 1965, Franken received an extra contribution of fl. 2,500 to support the processing of the excavation results. The publication was of great importance, since the director of ZWO, Bannier, was hoping to submit the manuscript to the board of ZWO in support of Franken's application for funding to continue the project. They did not quite make the deadline: the manuscript of the first volume on the excavation results was ready in August 1966, except for the drawings, and the final publication, *Excavations at Tell Deir Alla Volume I, A Stratigraphical and Analytical Study of the Early Iron Age Pottery,* finally appeared in 1969.

By then it had already been decided to postpone the second volume about the Late Bronze Age temple until a decision had been made on whether or not to continue the project. There was, after all, no point in working on a new publication when the expedition would continue. The second volume, *Excavations at Tell Deir Alla; The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary,* was finally published in 1992.

Financial support

ZWO funded more than just the basic budget of the project; when needed, they also helped out with the logistical 'challenges' that kept cropping up during the preparations and during the excavations themselves, as the correspondence between ZWO and the expedition leader indicates.

Their financial support was quite substantial. The application for the first season was for fl. 40,000, equivalent to about € 122,000 today. To Franken's delight, on December 3, 1959 he received a notice from ZWO saying that *'the board of the Netherlands Organisation for Pure Scientific Research has decided to honour your application for funding of an excavation in Palestine*'. And it got even better: ZWO suggested that Franken's budget was not entirely realistic:

> *'In its review of the sum applied for by you, the board has considered that the submitted budget seems too low; you need to consider various unforeseen expenses such as a visit to the excavation by a Dutch archaeologist to discuss the planning for the coming years, visits of one or more experts in situ to study the excavated finds, as well as the possibility that a staff member of ZWO joins the excavation for a limited time period. In addition, the board is of the opinion that you should not be too dependent on borrowed material, especially where that concerns equipment that can be used in subsequent campaigns or by other expeditions. In light of this the board has determined that the grant will be fl. 50,000.'*

Although the funding was thus increased by fl. 10,000 for the first season, it soon turned out not to be enough. Four weeks after the start of the season, Franken wrote to ZWO that because of various mishaps they would be short of money. First of all, the camp and excavation equipment that had been sent over from the Netherlands, had arrived in Beirut a week late. That meant extra costs for hotels, while Ben Otker, a staff member from ZWO who had joined the start of the project, had to make an extra journey to Beirut to speed up the transfer of the equipment. Otker needed to use

the expedition Land Rover, and as a result the five expedition members who arrived in Beirut by boat on January 3 had to hire a taxi to take them to Deir Alla. That trip included extra hotel costs for two nights for the whole group.

Then, although Franken had been promised that sending the equipment from Beirut to Deir Alla would take five days, Otker now discovered that transport by lorry required special permission from the Syrian government. The application for the permit itself usually took ten days. He decided to speed things up and send the goods by train. That would take only seven days, but it meant that the expedition would have to hire a whole wagon, with a capacity of 6.5 tonnes, while the equipment only weighed 3.5 tonnes.

Another consequence of these delays was that the expedition did not have enough equipment to start the dig, so Franken decided to borrow equipment and extra tents from the foreign archaeological institutes in Jerusalem. Other materials had to be bought. Of course, the organisation of all this trouble-shooting racked up the costs of telephone calls and telegrams. Things got so bad that the research goals of the expedition would be jeopardised, unless ZWO stepped in with extra funding. The research organisation came to the rescue and transferred extra money – a sum of fl. 17,000 is mentioned in a letter from De Boer to Franken. The excavation season could run its course.

After the first season ZWO continued to fund the project, with more or less similar grants: in 1961 the expedition received fl. 50,000, in 1962 fl. 45,000 and in 1964 fl. 48,000. There was no field season in 1963; that year the team worked on the publication of the Iron Age layers.

In 1964 ZWO had already made clear that this was to be their last year of funding for the expedition. The next year therefore Franken submitted a request to ZWO *'to subsidize a research project with a new research goal on the artificial mound of Deir Alla in Jordan.'* He estimated that the budget required for this project – which would take at least five excavation seasons – would be well over fl. 900,000! He would spend the 1966 season recruiting and training technical staff, in order to make sure that he could call on a team of well-trained expedition members to start fieldwork in 1967. The estimated budget for those first two years alone was fl. 55,810 and fl. 116,492 respectively. These very considerable sums explain why in 1973 Franken could claim that up to that year ZWO had invested 1.5 million guilders in Palestinian archaeology, equivalent to almost 2.5 million euros in today's currency.

A large part of the budget that he applied for was earmarked for salaries. A third of the fl. 900,000 which Franken had requested for his new Deir Alla expedition, was meant to pay the technical staff. In the 1967 budget, fl. 40,000 (34% of the budget) was earmarked for the pay of four *'technical staff in permanent service',* namely a field draughtsman, an object draughtsman, a photographer and a restorer. Nine '*no-salaried technical staff*' (students) each received fl. 67 '*pocket money*'. On top of that every staff member was entitled to fl. 14 as a holiday allowance.

The salaries of the local work force, such as the workers on the tell and in the camp, depended on the responsibility and expertise required for each job.[15] The wage of the

15 The budget earmarked for salaries was of course determined not only by quality, but also by quantity. In 1964 the expedition hired 52 workmen, which in 1967 had increased to 85 men. Regarding this number Franken commented drily that this was actually 25 workers more than originally planned.

Fig. 3.6: The camp equipment and Landrover bought by ZWO have finally arrived. (Photo Bert Veenendaal)

representative of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan in 1960 was (converted) fl. 6 per day, increasing to fl. 10 per day in 1967. The foreman on the tell also earned fl. 10 per day, and the experienced 'Jericho technicians' received fl. 7.50 per day. The pay for the other 'diggers' varied: pickmen (who worked with pick axes to loosen the soil) received fl. 4 per day, adult men who filled the baskets got fl. 3.50, and boys who carried the baskets fl. 3. In the camp itself the head cook received fl. 10 per day while his assistant got fl. 6. The person who ironed the laundry received fl. 5.33, the camp servant fl. 5, the laundry woman and the night watchman each got fl. 4, and the water carrier fl. 3.

ZWO not only paid the salaries, but also financed the material costs of the expedition. First of all there were travel and accommodation costs for the staff. Most staff members travelled to Italy or Greece by train, then by boat to Beirut and from there by taxi to Deir Alla. Franken and his wife usually travelled over land with the Land Rover that ZWO had put at their disposal. In 1961 travel expenses totalled fl. 17,520 (21% of the total budget) and in 1967 it was 19,960 (17% of the budget). Daily expenses in the camp (food mostly) were budgeted to fl. 6 per day for the whole team in 1961; in 1967 this had increased to fl. 8 per day, a moderate 14% of the total budget.

The Department of Antiquities of Jordan demanded a deposit of JD 300 to ensure publication of the excavation results.[16] On top of that, there were the yearly returning negotiations over the rent of the tell with the owner of the land. Of course there were also the costs of establishing and maintaining the camp itself. For the first season these

16 In the 1950s one Jordanian Dinar equalled about ten Dutch guilders.

Fig. 3.7: Local staff members. From left to right: Ibrahim (head servant), Mohammed (cook), the daughter of Umm Sami (she is picking up the laudry for her mother who did the washing), and Suchri, the night watch. (Photos Geertje Bakker-Hänisch ten Cate)

costs were considerable, because all the equipment – tents, excavation tools, cameras, etcetera – had to be purchased. ZWO's decision to have all these materials bought in the Netherlands and then shipped to Jordan, turned out to be a very expensive one, and Franken had to stifle his anger when the expedition ran out of money right at the beginning of the first season. In a letter to De Boer dated January 24, 1960 he wrote in confidence:

> *'You know that much money has been spent in the Netherlands. ZWO insisted on an entirely Dutch outfit for the whole expedition. Otker has worked very hard to arrange this. Top of the range for everything. It would have been much more economical to have bought most things here [in Jordan], but for reasons that are understandable this was against ZWO's purposes and feasibilities.'*

The camp equipment provided by ZWO consisted of several large tents that functioned as sleeping tents and work rooms. It was a temporary solution, because Franken was planning to build a dig house with various workspaces. The idea was to build it with sun-dried mudbricks in beehive style: a series of rooms with domed roofs. The estimated cost was fl. 150 per room with a cement floor. ZWO planned to transfer money to Jordan before the start of the expedition, to give the mudbrick maker a head start. However, as the negotiations with the land owner were fraught with difficulties, the start of the building was postponed time after time. In the end the house was not built until 1982! The ZWO tents turned out to be a life saver.

ZWO not only provided the tents, but also put a Land Rover at the expedition's disposal, and bought digging equipment (pick axes, shovels and trowels), measuring equipment and a Linhoff camera for photographic plates and 5x7 inch flat filming. They also included an estimate for repair and replacement of equipment of fl. 3,450 in 1961, increasing this sum to fl. 7,000 in 1967.

Some unforeseen expenses were also paid by the research organisation. A good example of that is what happened on Tuesday, March 28, 1967, when a telegram from

Fig. 3.8: Setting up the tent camp in 1960, with the ZWO-funded tents, the Land Rover and the equipment. The Volkswagen Beetle belongs to Lucas Grollenberg. (Photo Lucas Grollenberg)

Deir Alla arrived at the office of ZWO saying: '*Send 300 sheet infrared 13x18 film with mrs Van der Waals travelling with KL507 this Friday. Franken*.'

What had happened was that fragments of lime plaster had been found on the tell, with writing in red and black: this turned out to be the famous Balaam text (see further chapter 4). Franken had not been able to find enough infrared film locally, hence the emergency telegram to Den Haag where the office of ZWO was located. But even in the Netherlands this was easier said than done. Not only was it difficult to find such large stocks of infrared film, there were other problems. Infrared film is heat-sensitive, so it needed to be stored in a fridge, which also had to be bought. However, the haphazard state of power supply in Jordan could throw a spanner in the works, so a fridge that worked on bottled gas was called for. But airline companies would not transport bottled gas. So in the end an electrical fridge was bought, but an absorption type model, that refrigerated using electrical elements.

Fig. 3.9: The new dig house in 1982. It is located where the tent camp used to be. Compare Fig. 1.13. (Photo Cees Franken-Burggraaff)

Fig. 3.10: The courtyard of the dig house in 2009. (Photo Margreet Steiner)

In spite of all these setbacks, and thanks to a flurry of 164 telephone, telegram and telex messages sent in less than three days, the infrared film arrived safely and timely in Deir Alla.

So no expense or effort was spared to solve this particular issue. In an article in the Leiden University Magazine dated May 18, 1967, Ben Otker explained why ZWO had gone to such lengths.

> *'The budget of the sixth[17] Deir Alla expedition exceeded fl. 60,000 in direct expenses. Tardiness or meanness from the side of ZWO could have risked the loss of the unique result of the expedition, and ultimately also the loss of those fl. 60,000. But the most important of all: it is unacceptable – also internationally – to desert a scientific shock troop at the moment suprême.'*

The organisation in Jordan

The organisation of an expedition of this size was a complex undertaking, not only in the Netherlands. In Jordan much had to be to organised and arranged with various institutions and individuals as well. On November 20, 1959, Franken wrote to team member Lucas Grollenberg, who was in Jerusalem at the time, with instruction of what to do if ZWO would approve the application.[18] Grollenberg was to travel to Amman as soon as possible and pay the 300 Jordanian dinar deposit. *'Ask Awni Dajani*[19] *for a receipt for the money and a preliminary confirmation of the concession. The contract will be signed when I am in Jordan.'* He also asked Grollenberg to go with Dajani to Deir Alla to discuss the possibilities for accommodation for the expedition team with the landowner.

> *'If it looks likely that the land for our house will soon be available, negotiate with the man whom Awni knows, and who lives in D.A. about the building of the house, and let him start making the mudbricks. Before those are dry we can discuss the building process further. I don't expect anything to be ready when we come, but in that case we will have to be able to set things up somewhere in the area.'*

Because Franken already foresaw that the accommodation for the team would not be ready when the dig started, he also asked Grollenberg to collect as many tents as he could find from friendly institutes, such as the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, but also from the Arab Legion (as the Jordanian Army was called until 1960).

The Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

It was essential for any foreign expedition to maintain good relationships with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. The Department granted the excavation permits and set the conditions for these permits. The relationship between Franken and Awni Dajani, director of the Department since 1959, was excellent. They had met for the

17 Otker is mistaken here: 1967 was the fifth field season.

18 Lucas Grollenberg was a Dominican priest, affiliated to the École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem.

19 Director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

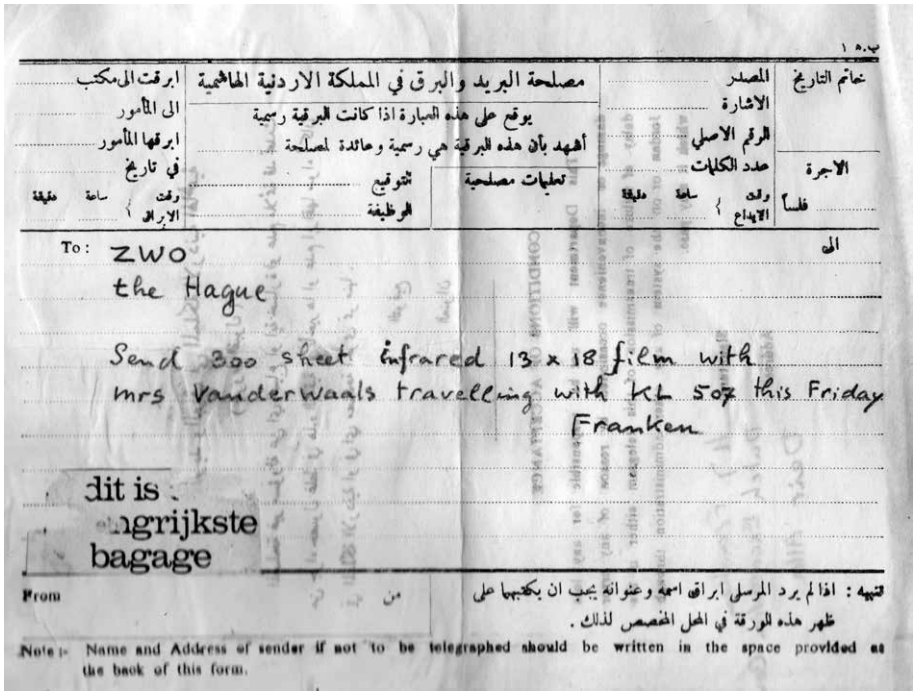


Fig. 3.11: The telegram in question.

first time in 1957 when Franken made his study tour in the Jordan Valley and stayed in Dajani's house in Jericho for a few weeks. Franken was quite pleased when Dajani became director of the Department, as he makes clear in a letter to ZWO:

> *'Two days after my arrival in Jerusalem Dr. Awni Dajani was appointed Director of this Department. In the present circumstances this is the best possible situation. Dr. Dajani is a student of Miss K.M. Kenyon, is well versed in modern excavation techniques,[20] is a good organiser, and friendly towards foreign expeditions.'*

Dajani was enthusiastic about cooperating with the Dutch expedition, and it was at his suggestion that Franken applied for an excavation permit with the Department – on the condition of funding by ZWO. In a letter to Franken dated December 8, 1959, Grollenberg confirmed that Dajani *'was indeed very friendly and helpful'.*

The Department also mediated between foreign expeditions on the one hand and local institutes and individuals on the other.[21] In the case of the Deir Alla expedition this concerned the owner of the land on which the tell was located. This was the

20 Here Franken refers to the stratigraphical method as dictated by the Wheeler-Kenyon-method. This archaeological methodology had been introduced by Kathleen Kenyon in Palestine (see chapter 2), but in the 1950s it was still viewed with suspicion in the world of archaeology. However, since both Franken and Dajani were Kenyon's students, they were on the same wavelength.

21 Another mediator that Franken could count on was Raouf Sa'd Abujaber, who had been appointed honorary consul for the Netherlands in Amman in 1960. Money transfers from ZWO to landowner Salih Muasher Bey usually went through him.

main reason why Franken had visited Dajani in August 1959 to discuss the building of a house or the pitching of a tent camp next to the tell. Dajani promised his full cooperation and offered to let the negotiations with the landowner run through his department. Several months later Grollenberg and Dajani visited land owner Saleh Muasher Bey to negotiate the accommodation of the expedition team.

Conditions

In order to qualify for an excavation permit in Jordan, every foreign expedition had to conform to three conditions laid down in Jordanian law. First of all, the director had to be a trained field archaeologist. Next, guarantees had to be given that funding was adequate to fulfil the research aims of the project. And finally, a security deposit of 300 Jordanian Dinars had to be made into the account of the Department. If the excavation results were published in a monograph within two years of the end of the projects, this sum would be refunded.

Apart from these three conditions, the Department also retained the right to appoint one of its officers as its representative to the team, which it did for the Deir Alla project. During the first year the representative joined the team led by Diana Kirkbride, investigating the burial fields. In the next year, however, Franken decided that this team needed to be reinforced with a Dutch assistant. The representative then became the assistant of Hendrik Brunsting. The expedition was not always happy with the representative that was added to the team. In 1964 Franken went to Amman to personally complain about the attitude and (non-)functioning of that year's representative. To Franken's relief the man was replaced immediately.

Every foreign expedition had to submit a complete list of finds to the Department at the end of each season. According to the Jordanian Law on Antiquities of the 1960s, the Department had the right to claim the most important finds of any excavation for its own museums. The expedition was allocated a proportion of the finds, usually about half. The director of the project could share the project's half with whomever he wanted. In the case of Deir Alla the finds were divided between Leiden University and the National Museum of Antiquities.

Over time, and while the Deir Alla Project was ongoing, several changes were introduced in the Department's policies. In 1965 a new law was created, with vast implications for foreign expeditions. This law introduced charges for archaeological expeditions, payable to the Department of Antiquities. The amount to be paid depended on the historical period that was excavated. Prehistoric and Islamic excavations cost £500; from the end of the Iron Age to the Crusader period the rate was £2000; and Bronze and Iron Age digs were charged more than £2000. The law also improved the position of the local workers. The minimum wage was increased with 25%, and workers should have one day off each week, as well as on public and religious holidays, all fully paid. All of this, of course, had a major impact on the Deir Alla budget.

Landowner Salih Muasher Bey

A good relationship with the owner of the land on which the tell was located was of course vital for the expedition. Major landowner and former government minister Salih Muasher Bey was a man of substance in the Deir Alla region. But the project's relationship with him was troublesome, and negotiations did rarely go smoothly. The

Fig. 3.12: Awni Dajani (far left) had invited the Jericho expedition team for a picnic to his property at Ain Duke in 1952. (Courtesy Linda Hennessy)

correspondence between Franken and ZWO reveals irritation on the side of the Dutch negotiators, because the landowner repeatedly changed what had already been agreed, or claimed that arrangements were different from how the Dutch negotiators had understood them.

During the first negotiations with Dajani and Grollenberg in 1959, Muasher proposed a generous deal. He did not ask for payment to rent or buy the tell, and the excavators were free to excavate wherever they wanted. They did not have to pay to put up their tent camp, and Muasher would take care of the storage of the camp materials. He even offered the use of three rooms with no charge, while the expedition could use the toilets in the school opposite the rooms.

In return the expedition was required to build a water filter that could be used for free by the villagers. Furthermore the dig house that was to be put up by the expedition had to be built along the main road and would become Muasher's property after the end of the expedition. He stipulated that this house has to be built with concrete blocks rather than the more usual mudbricks. And finally he demanded a share of the excavation's finds. With the exception of the water filter, in the end none of his demands were ever honoured.

In 1965, when Franken was exploring possibilities for a continuation of the Deir Alla project, Muasher came with a similar set of conditions. He demanded that the excavated soil would be dumped at a place of his choice, using his lorries. He also requested that seven large rooms would be built along the main road, for use by the expedition, but which would be handed over to him after the end of the project. And finally he again demanded a share of the finds, claiming that the Antiquities Law allotted 25% of the finds to the landowner.

Franken again refused to give in to Muasher's demands. He agreed to pay for transport of the excavated soil, but maintained the right to hire people of his own choice for the job. The location for the dump would have to be agreed consensually. Franken also rejected Muasher's suggested location for the new dig house. He thought a location close to the road would be too noisy, that passing tourists would interfere with the work, and that there would not be enough space to store finds and equipment. He put forward a counter proposal: the expedition would continue to use the location of the tent camp as well as the three-room building that had been built by Muasher in 1962, and Muasher could use the £1000 which he had already received from ZWO, to build five rooms along the main road, which would not be used by the expedition.

As to the final condition, Muasher's claim to a share of the finds, Franken rejected this one categorically. He reminded Muasher that the Jordanian Antiquities Law only mentioned the Department and the excavation directors; there was no mention at all of landowners. Nevertheless he was prepared to donate some of the finds to Muasher, on the condition that these would be exhibited in the Muasher Hospital in Amman (which belonged to Muasher's brother), and that they would not be sold or otherwise disposed of without permission from the Department of Antiquities.

All these sticky negotiations had to be handled sensitively because the whole expedition was dependent on the permission of the landowner. Muasher's position became even stronger when Dajani moderated his vision of the Law in the mid-1960s. In 1962 Dajani was still dead against any financial concession towards landowners in return for permission to excavate on their land, because that could inhibit excavators from working in Jordan. In 1965, however, he recognised that the tell stood on private land, and therefore the excavator would have to sign a contract with the landowner if he wanted to dig there. The landowner, in his turn, had the right to demand financial compensation. And so the expedition remained dependent on Muasher's goodwill.

Foreign archaeological students.

As stated in chapter 1, in the middle of the 20th century three major foreign institutes located in East Jerusalem were involved in Palestinian archaeology. These were the American School of Oriental Research, under directorship of archaeologist Paul W. Lapp; the École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem, headed by Dominican priest and archaeologist Père Roland de Vaux, who conducted excavations in Tell el-Farah (N) and Khirbet Qumran; and finally the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, headed by Kathleen Kenyon. Because of his travels in the region and his participation in the Jericho excavations, Franken was well-known to the staffs of these institutes. He continued his visits to his colleagues while excavating in Jordan, and they in their turn came to visit Deir Alla.

Père de Vaux was a regular visitor to the excavations at Deir Alla. Franken liked to use him as a sounding board for his opinions, and drew on his expertise when necessary. When the Balaam text was found in 1967 (see chapter 4), Père de Vaux was one of the first people to be informed: the ZWO Land Rover was dispatched to Jerusalem to bring him back to see this spectacular find, and give his expert opinion.

With his former mentor in Jericho, Kathleen Kenyon, Franken had maintained a good relationship, and she visited Deir Alla a number of times. Other scholars stopping by the project were Gerald Lankester Harding (director of the Department of

Fig. 3.13: The British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem in the 1960s. (Photo Riet Versteeg)

Antiquities of Jordan between 1936 and 1956), Martin Noth, Paul W. Lapp and James Pritchard. Franken, in his turn, returned their visits, often accompanied by other members of the expedition. But not only visits were exchanged; personnel were also shared. Wherever possible experienced staff was going from one expedition to another. For his first season Franken hired a number of experienced people from the Jericho excavations, such as Diane Kirkbride, draughtsman Terry Ball, and student Renée Lahr, as well as several 'Jericho-technicians'. Terry Ball, in his turn, was employed by American archaeologist James Pritchard for his excavation at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh, and Kenyon hired draughtsman Bert Jonk for her dig in Jerusalem. The same happened to student Riet Versteeg, who not only worked at Tell Deir Alla but also in Jerusalem with Kenyon, and then moved on to the excavations in Beidha, which were directed by Diane Kirkbride.

This network of contacts also encouraged exchanges and mutual borrowing of camp and photographic equipment and other technical tools. Before the start of his first excavation season, Franken explored the possibilities of borrowing materials for the Deir Alla dig:

> *'I don't think we should borrow digging materials (picks, shovels, trowels) or baskets. All these materials are in a very bad state, and a continuing source of irritation. Camera and developing tank, printing machine and other accessories we can almost certainly borrow from the British School. I also hope to be able to borrow a theodolite and measuring rods. Measuring tapes we will have to get ourselves, because such intensively used tools tend to be in very bad condition, and inaccurate.'*

Unfortunately for Franken, in the months before the start of the Deir Alla dig the British and American Schools had held a combined excavation in Petra, while at the same time the École biblique had a dig in Tell el-Farah (N). In his project notes

Fig. 3.14: De Vaux (with cigarette) on a visit to Franken (far left).

from 1959, Franken complains: '*Even though everybody is willing to lend us materials, nobody knows how much of these intensively used tools will still be in a fit state to borrow after the campaigns.'*

As stated above, ZWO decided to buy as much equipment as possible in the Netherlands, and have it shipped to the Middle East, even though they realised that this would create the problem of what to do with the materials after the end of the project. After the last season of the first series of excavations, in 1964, ZWO considered the project finished and decided to put the materials up for sale, with an asking price of £250. The British School was willing to buy the equipment for use in the excavations of Kenyon and Kirkbride. Franken, although he understood ZWO's motivation, objected because there was no guarantee that the equipment could be borrowed back from the British School, should it be necessary for future Dutch expeditions. So he suggested an alternative.

> '*All this induces me to request that you leave all the excavation equipment (with the exception of photographic equipment) here in Deir Alla, comply with a possible request from the British School to borrow materials, on the condition that it will be returned undamaged or properly repaired, and therefore keep hold of the equipment until it is clear that no more use will be made of it by any Dutch excavation. Even if I do not have my own excavation in the future, I will have to return here yearly, for orientation, or to take part in other expeditions, if I want to do my job properly. This means that not only will I be able to keep an eye on things, but I can also fulfil your instructions regarding the eventual sale.'*

However, it would never come to a sale of equipment: the expedition continued in 1967.

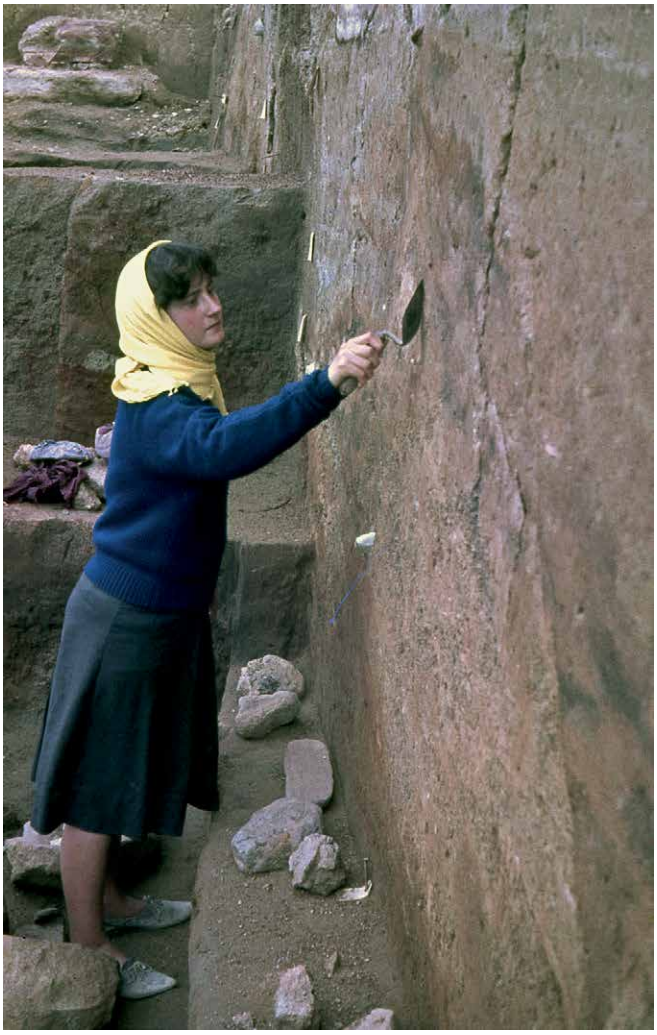


Fig. 3.15: Riet Versteeg working at Tell Deir Alla. (Photo Riet Versteeg)

Local workers

Of major importance were the men who did the actual digging: the local workers. On every Middle Eastern dig the local workers form a strict hierarchy. At the top are the technical men, who loosen the soil with their picks and trowels, and expose the traces of human occupation such as walls, floors, bread ovens and storage pits. Because tells are built up of layers of effectively the same soil, with differences between those layers difficult to discern, this is a specialist's job. For this work Franken hired the 'Jericho-technicians', men he had got to know in the Tell es-Sultan excavations as skilled excavators. They stood in high regard with foreign archaeologists as well as with the local workforce. One of them, Ali Abdul Rasul, acted as foreman on Tell Deir Alla, and as Franken's right hand on the tell.

Next come the 'pick men', who loosen the soil layers with fewer finds with a pick axe or hoe; then the adult basket fillers, and finally the basket boys, who carry the full baskets to the dump.

Fig. 3.16: Foreman Ali Abdul Rasul.

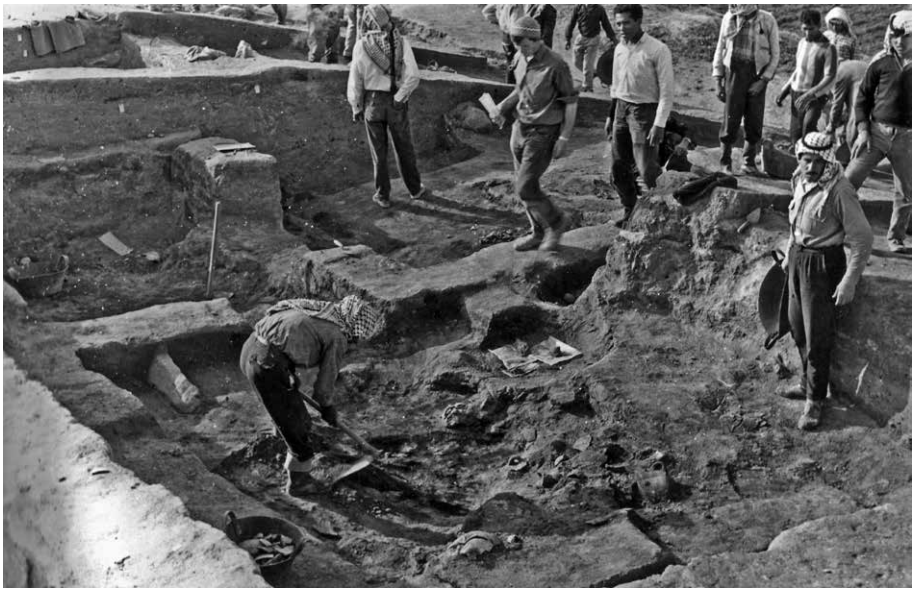


Fig. 3.17: The first vessels appear.

PALESTINA - BULLETIN

نشرة فلسطين

REDACTIE EN UITGAVE: HENK FRANKEN & BEN OTKER - VERSCHIJNT ÉÉNMAAL PER VEERTIEN DAGEN
TGM/CABLES: PALBUL - POSTBUS 2311 DEN HAAG - GIRO: 1623077 T.N.V. ADMIN. PALESTINA-BULLETIN

Jrg. II, Nr. 20 28 februari 1970

Bertrand Russell:

De jongste fase van de niet-verklaardel oorlog in hett Midden-Oosten is gebaseerd op een ernstige misrekening. De bombardementsvluchten diep in Egyptisch gebied zullen de burgerbevolking niet tot overgave brengen, maar haar stijven in het besluit weerstand te bieden. Dit is de les van alle andere luchtbombardementen. De Vietnamezen die jarenlang zware Amerikaanse bombardementen hebben moeten verduren, hebben niet geantwoord met
capitulatie, maar door het neerschieten van meer vijandelijke toestellen.

voorgaande agressie.

Litho van de Palestijnse schilder-beeldhouwer Mustapht Al-Hallag (copyright Eduard,Bonsel).

In 1940 weerstonden mijn eigen landgenoten Hitler's bombardementen met ongekende eenheid en vastberadenheid. Om dezelfde reden zullen de huidige Israëlische aanvallen tekortschieten wat hun essentieel doel betreft, maar tezelfdertijd moeten zij krachtig veroordeeld worden door de gehele wereld.

De ontwikkeling van de crisis in het Midden-Oosten is zowel gevaarlijk als instructief. Gedurende meer dan twintig jaren heeft Israël zich uitgebreid met geweld van wapenen. Na elke stap in deze expansie heeft Israël een beroep gedaan op de "rede" en heeft het "onderhandelingen" voorgesteld. Dit is de traditionele rol van de imperialistische macht, omdat hij met de geringste moeilijkheid wil consolideren wat hij met geweld reeds genomen heeft. Elke nieuwe verovering wordt tot nieuwe grondslag voor de voorgestelde onderhandelingen, vanuit een machtspositie, die voorbij

ziet aan het onrecht van de

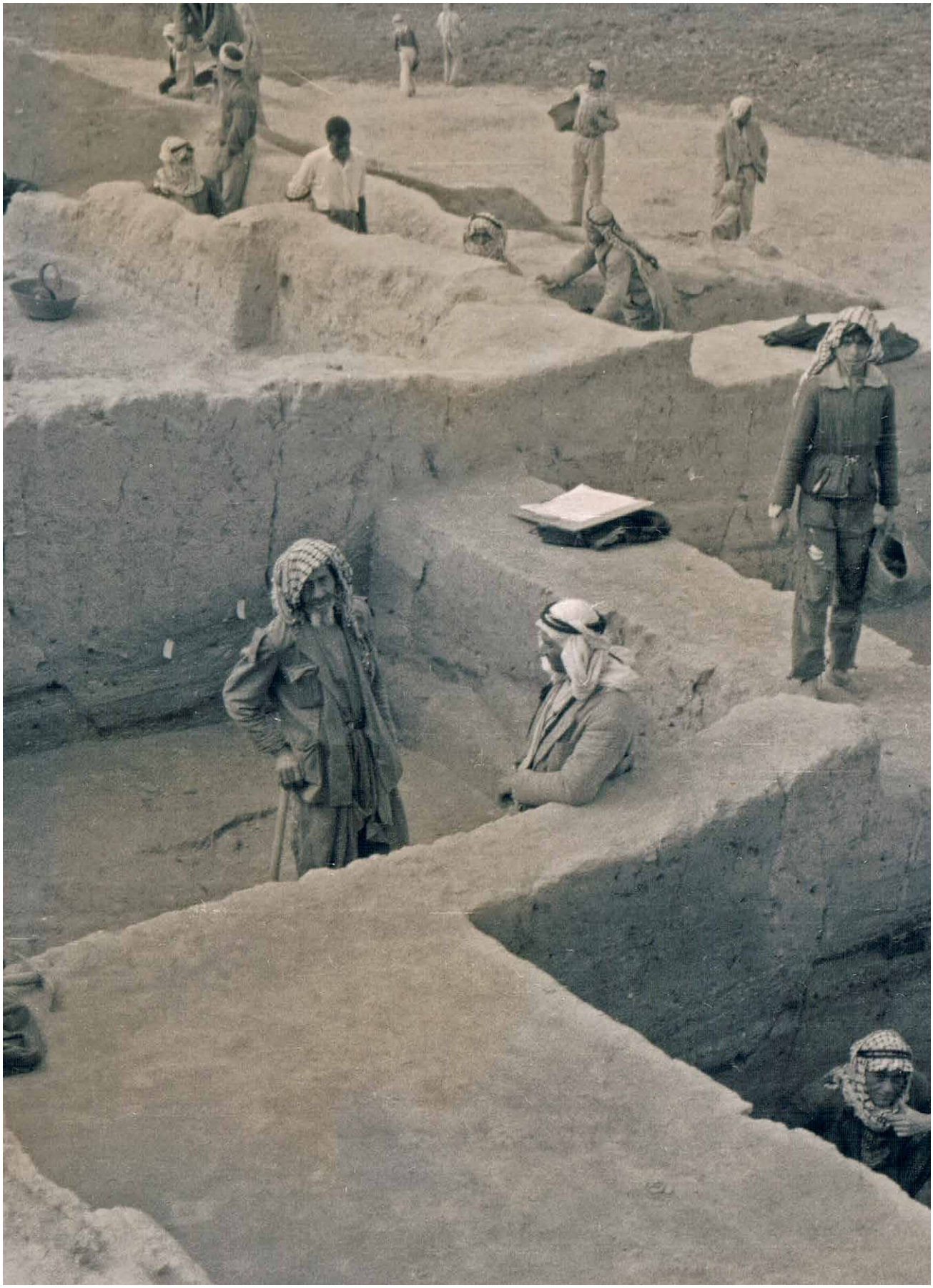
De agressie, door Israël begaan, moet veroordeeld worden, niet slechts omdat geen enkele staat het recht

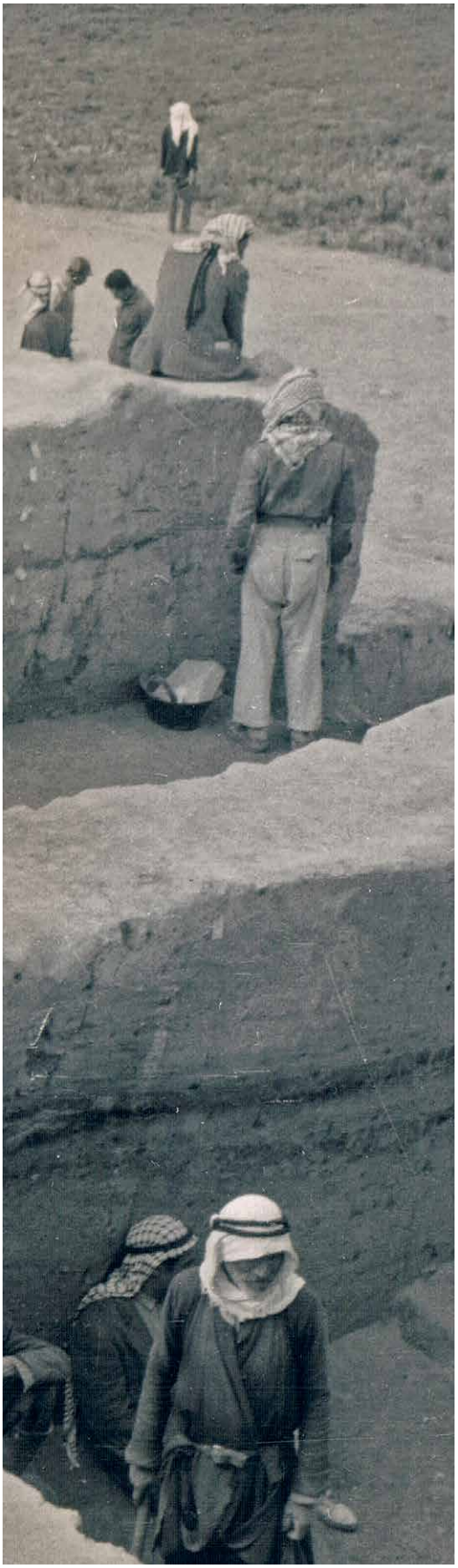
Fig. 3.18: The Palestina Bulletin of February 28, 1970.

In Jericho, Franken had got to know the local Arab people, both the original population of the village of Jericho, who worked on the tell, and the inhabitants of the large Palestinian refugee camp next to the tell, where several thousand people lived. The letters he wrote to De Boer during his stint at the Jericho excavations reveal that he became fascinated by the people and their history. He learned to speak a little Arabic, and went to visit them. On hot days he also provided the workers in his excavation square with drinks – against Kenyon's instructions. On those days he had tea ordered from the 'cafe' by the side of the road, and they drank it hiding down in his square, invisible to the other archaeologists. One of the workers would stand guard, to warn Franken when the big boss, 'sitt' Kenyon, approached.

His fascination for Arab culture and the fate of the Palestinians got a boost during the Six Day War in 1967, when Israel conquered the West Bank, generating a stream of refugees flooding into Jordan. Together with Ben Otker, the ZWO officer who had worked on Deir Alla for several weeks in 1960, he created the 'Palestina Bulletin'. This was a biweekly journal with news of the situation in Palestine, which they wrote together, and financed privately. It was published during several years.

It will be clear that organising the archaeological campaigns to Deir Alla was a complex process. Maintaining good relationships with the Faculty of Theology, ZWO, the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, landowner Muasher as well as with the archaeological colleagues at home and abroad demanded expertise, energy, creativity, patience and tact. It was a role that was tailor-made for Henk Franken.





PART 2

THE TELL

4

The pick axe hits the soil

Once the fieldwork finally starts, Franken has a clear idea of how to proceed. Carefully he has selected a tell with no large buildings and no remains of town walls or monumental gates. No palaces for him, no temples, and certainly no inscriptions or fancy imported showpieces. What he searched for, and what he believes to have found in Deir Alla, is a simple, unassuming village. A village in which generations of farmers and artisans plied their trade, living in simple dwellings and using basic locally produced pottery vessels, the kind of pots that Franken wants to study. What he aims for is a limited excavation, one in which he can excavate the layers that provide the answers to his research questions. Unfortunately for him, things were going to turn out very differently…

1960 – Start of the expedition

January 4 is D-day: the day the pick axe will hit the soil for the first time. A tent camp has been set up, the team members have arrived and the local workers have been hired. It's been a long haul for this day to arrive.

Preparations

Most of the year 1959 has been spent in preparations for the excavation, both in the Netherlands and in Jordan itself. Franken has had to justify the aims and purposes of the project, the location and the scientific methods he intended to apply; he has had to stake his position within the Faculty of Theology of Leiden University, as well as within the Dutch archaeological community; and he has drawn up a budget – all of which took hours and hours of talking and writing (see chapter 3).

In August 1959 Franken has travelled to Jordan to prepare the expedition on the spot, and on November 22, 1959, ZWO has awarded him a fl. 50,000 grant.

With the money, as it were, in his pocket, Franken can now go ahead with the final preparations before the dig actually starts. The journey itself has to be planned, train, boat and plane tickets bought, the 300 JD security payment transferred to Jordan, a plot must be hired for the tent camp, tents and digging equipment bought or borrowed, and local workers employed. Some of these preparations can be organised from the Netherlands, but quite a lot has to be arranged in Jordan itself. On November 20, 1959, Franken writes a long letter to the Dominican Father Lucas Grollenberg, who happens to be studying in Jerusalem. The most important issue he wants Grollenberg to deal with is that of the living and working space for the expedition, either a tent camp, or a new-to-build house, or perhaps a house that can be rented for the time being.

Fig. 4.1: Henk Franken and Diana Kirkbride in the Deir Alla region. In the background the Land Rover with a Dutch and a Jordanian flag. (Photo Lucas Grollenberg)

In the end the whole expedition bivouacs in tents. These have been bought in the Netherlands – a ZWO requirement – and shipped to Jordan, much to Franken's annoyance. He would have much preferred to buy the excavation materials in Jordan. In an interview with Theo Toebosch, in Archeologie Magazine 2005, he says: *'They were probably afraid they had to sleep in Bedouin tents. And oh yes, we also had to bring a Dutch flag which was to be ceremonially hoisted and lowered each day. We quickly put a stop to that idiocy.'*

In a letter dated to the end of February, 1960, Franken relates another anecdote which perfectly illustrates the bizarre tent situation.

> *'Some visitors can put you in strange situations. A man who accompanied our landowner looked at our tents critically, and asked where they came from. When I explained that these were tents borrowed from ZWO, he said: "Why don't you buy your tents from my factory? I use imported Dutch canvas." That obviously asked for coffee.'*

Fig. 4.2: Franken supervises the installation of the tent camp.

The landowner put three rooms at the disposal of the expedition '*at the foot of the tell, next to the petrol station alongside the tarmac road',* according to Grollenberg in a letter to his parents. Only one of these rooms has electricity, which has been diverted from the Agricultural Research Station.

Expedition team

During the first season, the expedition team consists of eleven people: Franken and his wife Ann Battershill, who is an archaeologist and responsible for the registration and conservation of finds, as well as four field assistants, a photographer, a draughtsman, a surveyor and a housekeeper. English archaeologist Diana Kirkbride is going to investigate the possible burial fields around the tell.

The final composition of the excavation team has been a bit of a battle. Dutch archaeologists, particularly professors Willem Glasbergen (Amsterdam) and Tjalling Waterbolk (Groningen), both European prehistorians, strongly object to having a theologican – and one without much archaeological experience – direct an expedition abroad, particularly with ZWO funding. They demand to be involved, keep control, even be co-directors. Franken has several conversations with the two archaeologists, and he sympathises with their worries. In an informal letter addressed to ZWO director Bannier, dated November 12, 1959, he writes:

> *'After our conversations this week I have a much clearer impression of how the excavation is seen in the Netherlands. On the one hand there are 'armchair scholars' who have to do archaeology as part of their remit, and on the other hand specialist*

Fig. 4.3: The expedition at lunch. On the left Henk Franken, Ann Battershill, Diana Kirkbride and Nick Schmidt. On the right two students. The two women in the foreground could not be identified.

> *archaeologists, while I am somewhere in the middle. There are all sorts of vague plans for excavations in the East, such as Mr Kampman, among others, announced at the Institute in Istanbul. Dutch archaeologists have good reason to be worried.*'

As explained in chapter 3, Franken suggests that professor Glasbergen will visit the expedition as an *'inspector of the expedition on behalf of ZWO',* in March 1960. He hopes that it will take the sting out of the situation. It means that the Dutch archaeologists will be involved in the project, and that they can see with their own eyes how Franken works in the field. Students from Amsterdam and Groningen (with a thorough training in field archaeology) are welcome to take part as field assistants, and in the future as assistant field directors – something that is denied to students of theology or classical archaeology from Leiden.[22] '*I have arranged with Glasbergen that I will only take students from Leiden if they have done the* [field archaeology] *course in Amsterdam.'*

After all this sabre-rattling it is somewhat ironic that no students from Amsterdam or Groningen join the first season of the expedition, and that professor Glasbergen never visits the excavation. Hendrik Brunsting, professor of Archaeology at the Free University of Amsterdam and curator of the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, joins the expedition as field assistant, as do three students from Leiden in Theology and Arab Languages, one of whom has previously excavated with Franken in Jericho.

22 At the time Leiden did not have an Institute for Prehistory, which was only founded in 1962.

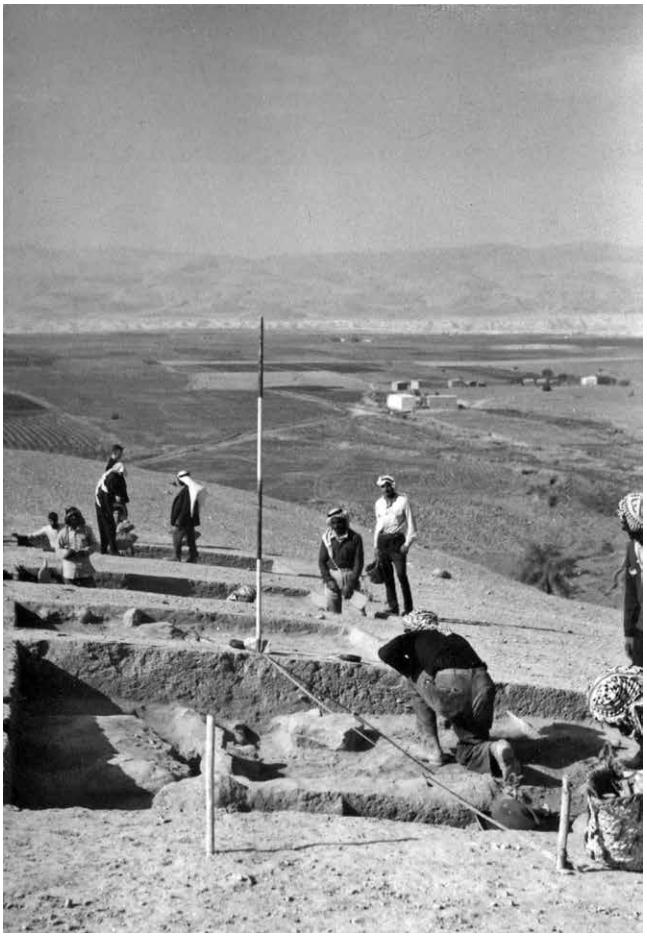


Fig. 4.4: At work on the tell. (Photo Bert Veenendaal)

For his technical staff Franken has found a colourful selection of people. Nick Schmidt, '*retired employee of Shell Netherlands',* who knows the Middle East, has been approached for the double role of surveyor-cum-administrator, while his wife, C.A. Schmidt-Flürschein, '*a remarkably strong and resolute personality'* according to Franken, acts as housekeeper. Father Grollenberg, who has had his archaeological training at the excavations of Khirbet Qumran and Tell el-Farah (N), will be responsible for the photography, and as draughtsman the Brit Terry Ball is hired, who has also worked at Jericho.

Finally, the excavation

On January 4, 1960, the pick axe hits the ground for the first time. The soil of Deir Alla consists of hard and dense clay, which can only be tamed by the brute force of a pick axe – a spade, as used in Dutch soil, would be useless. Amazingly, in this first season every important layer and period that will be further excavated in the following seasons, is touched upon. Most excavations start at the top, and then work down, gradually exposing deeper and earlier occupation layers. Franken's method, however, is very different.

He starts on the northern slope of the tell, with an east-west row of three ten by ten-meter squares: A, B and C. To the north of square C he opens up a trench, trench

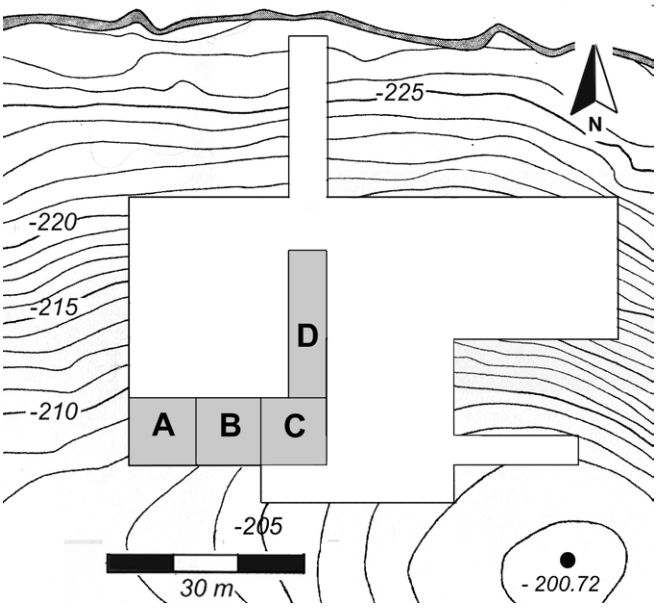


Fig. 4.5: The excavated squares in 1960. For exact locations see fig. 2.10.

D, which runs down the slope all the way to the foot of the tell. In the northeast corner of each square a smaller square, of five by five meters, is excavated first. In this smaller square the sequence of layers can be determined fairly quickly: floors, walls, a path of trampled earth, a rubbish pit or a burial. Then this square is expanded to the west and south, with squares of equal sizes. Because the sequence of layers is known from the sections of the first square, work can proceed here much faster.

Franken's strategy also illustrates the difference between his research aims and those of other excavators. Unlike most archaeologists, in these first four seasons he does not look to unravel the occupation history of the tell. His aim is to study the pottery from the transition periode of the Late Bronze (1500-1200 BC) to the Early Iron Age (1200-1000 BC). So he focuses on collecting just enough pottery from those periods for his research purposes, but not more.

What Franken needs is pottery from reliable contexts. It must be absolutely clear from which layers the sherds have come, in order to be able to build a typological sequence. Should he, during the excavation, accidentally come across any interesting buildings, he will have to leave those alone, and only excavate them in the later stages of the project, when he can focus on the occupation history of the tell. As a consequence, whenever he decides that he has collected enough pottery from a certain layer, that layer is not exposed any further, and work moves on to a new square, lower down in the trench. Here layers from earlier periods are being exposed, and he can collect pottery from those layers. The square higher up the hill remains further untouched for the time being. As a result the tell begins to look a bit like a rabbit warren, with holes everywhere, but it is a fast, efficient and cost-saving method of digging.

Of course, in real life things never work out as planned. In the second season, Franken encounters a Late Bronze Age temple, once destroyed by an earthquake, and which is packed full with temple-related objects: from complete vessels to human and animal figurines, and from cylinder seals to alabaster bowls. There is no way he can

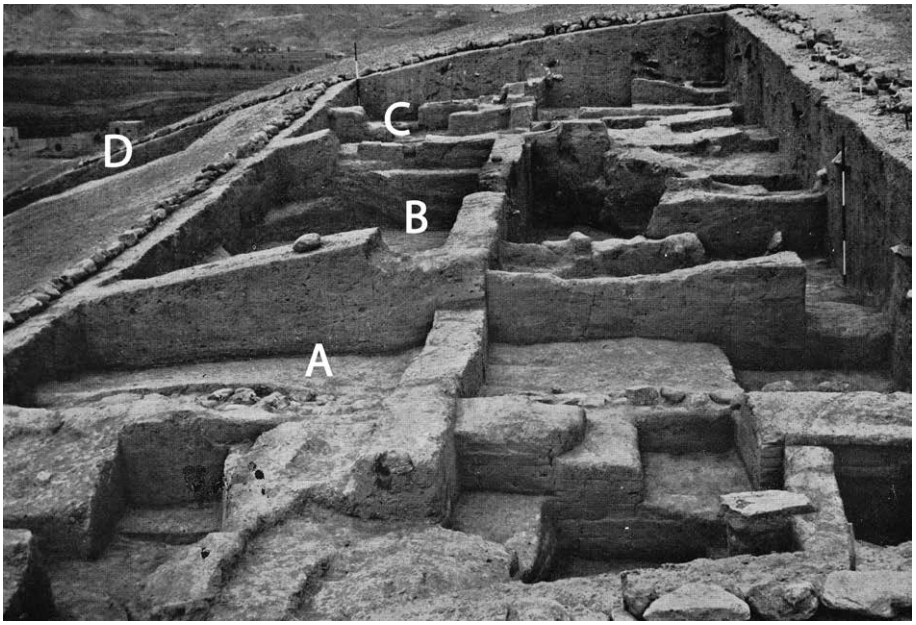


Fig. 4.6: Squares A, B and C. Trench D is visible to the left of square C.

Fig. 4.7: Franken and Brunsting selecting the excavated pottery in the camp. (Photo Bert Veenendaal)

Fig. 4.8: Searching for burials. In the background Tell Deir Alla.

leave this building for a later stage in the project, and so, very reluctantly, the third excavation season in 1964 is fully dedicated to the excavation of the temple.

While the majority of the archaeologists are working on the tell, Diana Kirkbride with a small team goes searching for the cemetery of the ancient inhabitants of Tell Deir Alla. As a rule, burials tend to contain lots of objects, among which complete pottery vessels. After all, however gratifying it may be to find lots of sherds, the shape the pots had before they were broken, remains a matter of conjecture. Complete pots can act as a useful guide to classify the sherds. But however hard and far Kirkbride searches, she finds no Bronze or Iron Age burials. What she does find, is a Roman cemetery, but because the research aims of the project do not include that period, the place is left alone.

Results

The first excavation season happens to touch on all the layers that Franken needs for his analysis. The lowest exposed layer dates from the Late Bronze Age. On top of that are Iron Age layers with lots of pottery, just what the expedition was hoping for. The uppermost meter of soil consists of houses and streets dating to the Late Iron Age, the seventh and sixth centuries BC. Underneath it are earlier layers, down to the eleventh century BC. Halfway down the slope Franken finds the remains of a heavy wall which was built against a round building. He interprets this as a town wall with a tower, and publishes it as such in his excavation report in the journal *Vetus Testamentum*. Later he changes his mind; it turns out that the heavy wall is built against some dwellings and therefore cannot be a town wall, which would go *around* the buildings, and that the

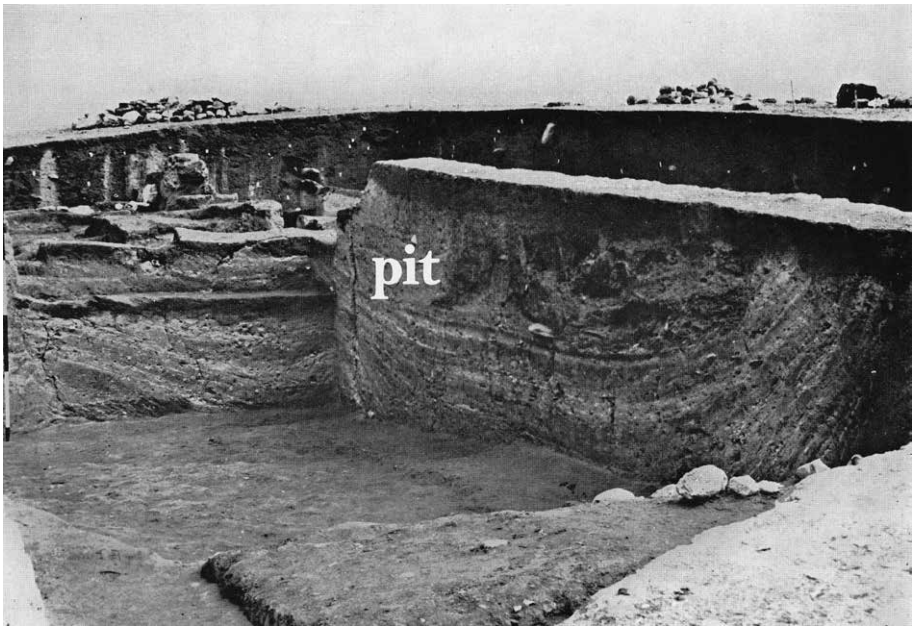


Fig. 4.9: The section of the trench D, showing the large pit on the right.

'tower' stems for an earlier phase and is more likely to have been a silo, a pit to store grain. Unfortunately, the idea that Deir Alla was surrounded by a town wall – and therefore was an important town – had gained a foothold by then, and this interpretation can still be found in various encyclopaedias and historical overviews.

Low down in trench D, a melting furnace for bronze is excavated, that had been rebuilt several times. This discovery came not unexpectedly, because from the layers above it many bronze drops had been retrieved.

The uppermost occupation layers have been cut by an enormous pit, which Franken first interprets as a cistern to collect water. However, in the following seasons it becomes clear that the plaster that lined the pit, was only applied at the top and not lower down, and therefore the pit cannot have been used to contain water. Subsequent excavation seasons at the tell in the 1980s have uncovered several more very large rubbish pits, but for Franken, digging his first season in 1960, this is a new phenomenon. Some of the pottery found in the pit is Hellenistic in date (fourth – second centuries BC). It is not clear how that later ware ended up in the pit, since no other traces of Hellenistic occupation have ever been found at tell Deir Alla. But it is possible that a small Hellenistic village or a lone building once stood on the top of the tell, which has been eroded away completely.

The youngest occupation phase encountered that first season, is a Medieval cemetery. Excavating burial fields, and particularly Islamic ones, is a sensitive issue in Jordan. So the expedition is visited by the Imam of the local mosque, who comes to check the situation. As it happens, one of the graves contains an Iron Age figurine of a naked woman. It must have got there by accident; the graves have been dug into the Iron Age layers on the tell, and refilled with the same soil. But the Imam and the local workers conclude that these are Iron Age graves, and why would the excavators contradict

Fig. 4.10: Burial with skeleton. The deceased lies on his/her side, with the head to the west and the face to the south.

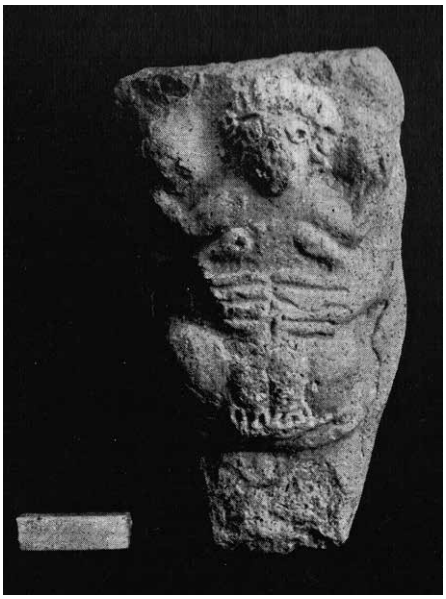


Fig. 4.11: Figurine of a seated woman with a child (?) in her lap.

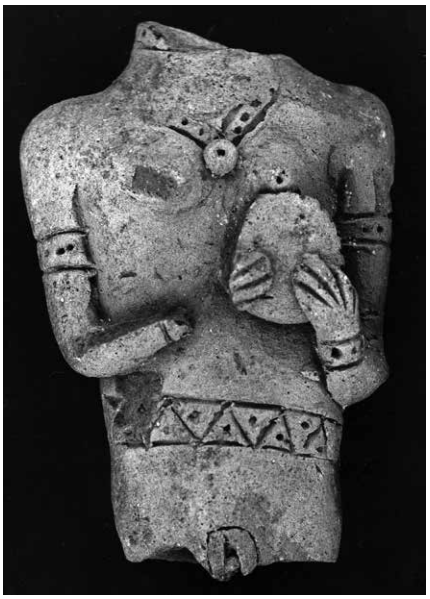


Fig. 4.12: The figurine wears a bead around her neck, and holds a round object (possibly a loaf of bread or a musical instrument).

them? So the graves can be excavated, and the human remains are reburied at the foot of the tell.

The first campaign yields a wealth of interesting objects such as painted pottery vessels and horsehead, and female figurines. One is a figurine of a seated woman with a small figure in her lap.

Like most of the figurines, it is made of a rather coarse clay pushed into a mould, so the features of the small figure on the woman's lap are vague. Franken invariably interprets it as a monkey, but judging from the photos it may well have been a child. Figurines of women with children are not unusual in antiquity.

Another figurine depicts a naked woman with a very explicitly exposed vulva. She wears a large bead around her neck, and holds a round object in her hands, possibly a loaf of bread or a musical instrument. This type of figurine is often interpreted as priestesses making music, for example in processions.

The Arab cemetery yields a lot of jewellery, particularly bracelets made of glass, bronze or iron, bronze rings and earrings, and necklaces made with all kinds of beads.

Pottery studies

In Franken's view the main purpose of the project is the creation of a sequence of pottery shapes from the transition period from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age. According to many Biblical scholars and archaeologists, this period corresponds with the time of the Exodus of the Tribes of Israel out of Egypt, and their Entry into the Promised Land. Franken wants to search for traces of these Tribes through the study of the pottery. In other words, as very few traces of this crucial period in the Biblical narrative have been found in other excavations, perhaps changes in the pottery sequence can give further clues about it.

It turns out soon enough that the pottery found in Deir Alla differs considerably from pottery from the same period found in Israel. Some similarities in shape and decoration can be observed, but the Deir Alla pottery also displays shapes and decorations that are unknown in Israel. So now it is clear that the potters in Jordan had their own pottery traditions, independent of their powerful neighbours across the river.

Satisfied

The first season ends on March 26, 1960, just before the end of Ramadan. The team goes home: with a taxi to Beirut, and from there by boat to Greece or Italy. Henk Franken, his wife Ann Battershill, draughtsman Terry Ball and photographer Lucas Grollenberg stay behind for another two weeks, to finish the registration, drawing and photographing of the finds. These finds are then stored in the country house of landowner Salih Muasher Bey. From 13 to 20 April, Henk Franken, Ann Battershill and Terry Ball go on a trip through Jordan, to study the various landscapes and visit the latest excavations, before they travel back to the Netherlands in the Land Rover. Grollenberg returns to Jerusalem in his Volkswagen.

Franken is highly content with the results of his first excavation season. The team has worked well and fast, and the finds are promising. A pity that he did not have a decent camera, that the equipment arrived too late and the budget was too small, but those were all minor irritations. There are no signs of what awaits him in the following season.

1961 – A difficult but successful excavation season

The second season of the project runs from January 2 to March 30, 1961. Mid-December Franken and several team members depart for Jordan in the Land Rover, with a budget of, again, fl. 50,000.

The expedition team

To Franken's annoyance many of last year's team members cannot take part in the second season, which means that the majority of the staff this year is new and inexperienced. The core team now consists of fourteen people. Apart from Franken and Ann Battershill, responsible for the registration and conservation of the finds, there are four field assistants. Sipco Scholten, who works for the Stichting Nederlandse Onderwijsfilm (Dutch Organisation for Educational Film), acts as this year's photographer, while Jan Kalsbeek, a professional potter, joins the team as pottery draughtsman and ceramic specialist. In the years to follow, he and Franken will work closely together, innovating the technological study of pottery. Additional new staff members are Piet Koetsier, surveyor at the Technical University Delft, and Lucie Schouten, who will act as housekeeper. Prof. Hendrik Brunsting of the National Museum of Antiquities returns for a second season, as does Diana Kirkbride, who will continue her search for possible cemeteries around the tell, and is now assisted by a geology student. Terry Ball returns as well and will take on much of the draughting of the finds. Two American archaeologists join the expedition for part of the season as field assistants: Dr. Paul Lapp, director of the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, and Prof. Alfred von Rohr Sauer of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Dr. van der Sleen, a Dutch specialist, comes over for a few weeks to study the beads that have been found in the medieval Islamic cemetery.

Challenges

At the end of the first season, the 'Dutch' tents had been stored in Jordan, but this year the team is bigger, which means that there are not enough tents. To make things worse, the landowner has only made one room available for the expedition, instead of the three they had the first year. In short, there is a shortage of working and sleeping space. Therefore Franken has to start hunting for tents again. For the first half of the campaign, the Jordanian Army is prepared to lend some tents. For the remaining period, the expedition is dependent on the foreign institutes in Jerusalem.

The next obstacle is the weather. During the first weeks the rain hardly stops, and when it does not rain, it storms. The soil in the camp turns to mud, in which the tent pegs just float. The tents keep collapsing and need constant attention, and an old tentmaker is fully employed fixing ropes and repairing holes in the tent canvas. In stormy nights someone has to be on guard, to prevent the tents from blowing away, which would be particularly disastrous in the case of the large work tent where all the finds are stored. The noises of rain, storm and flapping canvas interfere with the team's sleep. The road is blocked by large river boulders that have been washed up by the rain, sometimes creating piles half a meter high.

And it is cold, very, very cold. Franken even talks about night frost. People fall ill. One team member catches dysentery and has to return home halfway through the season.

The abundance of water causes another problem as well: during long and heavy rains – as occurring in the first six weeks of the excavation – the irrigation channels surrounding the village are blocked by the local farmers to prevent the fields from flooding. As a result the water filter, which the expedition has built in the previous year (see chapter 1), also runs dry, which means that drinking water needs to be transported from elsewhere.

Fieldwork

A new team means much instructing of the people, which is time consuming. It usually takes a few weeks for a fresh student to master the excavation methods and techniques. Everything is new and must be learned: to see and interpret the subtle differences in the colour of the soil, how to distinguish the various loci (floors, walls, rubble, pits), speaking a bit of Arabic to communicate with the workers, interpreting sections, and the use of a trowel. Some students learn fast, others slow or not at all.

Three 'real' archaeology students have been added to the team this year, all students at the Institute for Prehistory in Amsterdam. One of them is expected to act as Franken's right hand. These students have been trained and have worked at several excavations – in the Netherlands. They have no experience at all in Middle Eastern archaeology. Their correspondence reveals that, influenced by Professor Glasbergen, they start out with a negative attitude towards Franken. They consider him incompetent as an archaeologist, and his work at Deir Alla as amateurish. So they have decided to show him how things should be done on a 'real excavation'.

First of all they demand spades. On Dutch excavations, the time-honoured technique is to remove the topsoil and then shave the surface with a spade, to expose traces of occupation – an art which is one of the first things Dutch students of archaeology learn in their field training. These traces are then drawn in a top plan and the levels taken. The traces can be postholes, floors, remains of walls, ditches or pit fills. After the top level is removed, the following surface is shaved again, and the whole process repeated.

In the sand and löss soils of the Low Lands this technique works well to expose traces of occupation in the soil. But on a Middle Eastern tell, which is built up of clay, and full of stones, sherds and other materials, it simply does not work. The clay is dry and hard, and cannot be shaved like the Dutch soil. Apart from that, a tell is an artificial hill, which consists of nothing but 'traces', created by occupation, from bottom to top. There is no 'natural soil' with occupation traces that can be exposed. Shaving, drawing and measuring horizontal planes every few centimeters take lots of time and – more importantly – it does not tell you how the 'traces' relate to each other. To get that information you need to study and draw the vertical sections.

Not only are the Dutch students determined to use the Dutch shaving technique on Tell Deir Alla, they also introduce another curiosity of Dutch archaeology: colouring in the plans and sections. It may make some sense in the Netherlands to give the traces the colours they have in the field, but on a Middle Eastern tell the colour of the soil is changing fast: exposed to the sun everything turns from a fresh yellowish to a light grey in a few hours, while rain turns it in a dark grey. Considering that all traces are made of the same clay and that the differences in colour are quite subtle to start with, trying to colour in the plans and sections becomes a futile exercise.

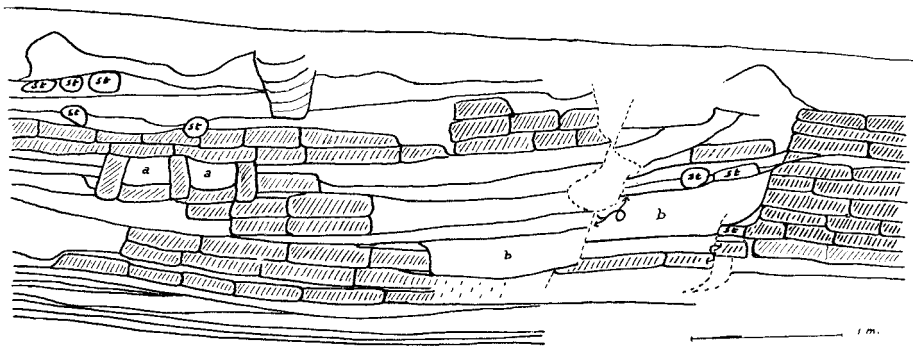


Fig. 4.13: Example of a section drawing. This shows a section through the large bronze furnace that was found in 1960. It had been rebuilt several times. The shaded blocks are mudbricks. a = venthole of the latest (top) furnace, b = the earliest (bottom) furnace, sagging as a result of an earthquake; st = stones.

Franken, in spite of the fact that he finds their attitude irritating, decides to let the students go ahead with their spades and coloured pencils. He assumes that they will learn soon enough that shaving and colouring does not work well on the tell. But he underestimates their determination. The students may despair of the slow progress of their efforts, and of the fact that they cannot make sense of the traces they try to distinguish, they are holding on to their Dutch Method.

Consequently, Franken becomes equally desperate. Their stubbornness slows down the dig, and he has to keep fighting and arguing with his staff. In spite of that the atmosphere in the camp remains good, largely because neither party attacks the other openly; the battle is fought in silence.

Franken, in a private letter to Bannier at the end of January, writes: '*Don't think we were at war. We were fighting without a declaration of war…*[…]. *There were no harsh words, it was even amicable. But the battle was harder than I had expected.'*

In an official report to ZWO and in a letter to professor Glasbergen, both in January, and in a report that Franken writes about the dig in June, he keeps repeating the same message: you cannot dig a mudbrick tell like you would a Dutch site. It is more like digging a stone site, rather than digging in sand. To Franken's further irritation, a divergence creeps into the research purpose of the project: the excavation of buildings and the analysis of the occupation history of Deir Alla, rather than the original purpose of collecting enough pottery to analyse the chronology of the occupation. Franken is dead against it: it takes up too much time, and it is not the purpose of the project. For his aims it is essential to dig down as fast as possible in small squares. Exposing larger areas with complete buildings is something that can be done in a later stage of the project. And that is exactly what happens from 1964 onwards.

After a few weeks the situation improves. The students from Amsterdam finally realise that using the Dutch techniques on a Middle Eastern tell is not going to work. The dig begins to speed up, but much time has already been lost.

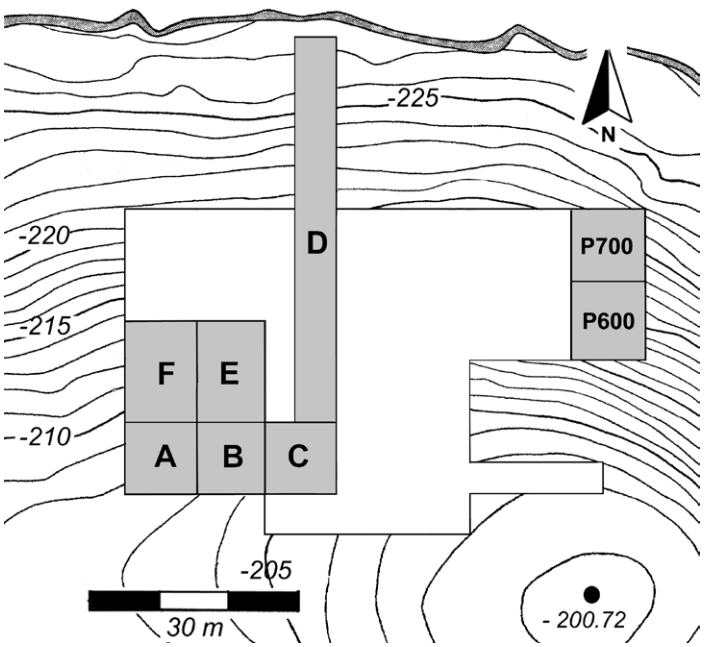


Fig. 4.14: Plan of the excavated squares in 1961. For exact locations see fig. 2.10.

Result

In spite of all the misfortunes, such as the 'secret war', the slow progression and the lost time, and in spite of sickness, rain and wind, the results of this field season are quite astonishing. The preliminary report of the season in the journal *Vetus Testamentum* of 1961 consists of twelve pages of text, and 23 pages of illustrations. Compare that with the following year, when five pages of text suffice to report a full three months of fieldwork. The season of 1961 is a treasure trove of finds.

The excavation starts with an extension of trench D, which in the previous season had revealed Late Bronze Age occupation at its base. The extension consists of two squares (E and F), each of ten by fifteen meters.

To everyone's surprise, a series of temples turns up. In the centre of the trench a sequence of large stones is excavated, laying on top of each other. First Franken interprets this as an altar, but in 1964 an identical sequence of stones is found, and it becomes clear that these must have been bases for wooden pillars. They had to be raised several times because the occupation surfaces surrounding the sanctuary accumulated over time, which meant that the floor of the temple had to be raised twenty to thirty centimetres each time.

In his report, Franken writes that the temple was built against a heavy stone structure – comparable to the stone town wall and gate from Tell Balata (identified with Biblical Shechem) across the Jordan. On that comparison he identifies the stone structure at Deir Alla as a casemate wall, or perhaps a town gate. However, when a larger area is exposed in 1964, he changes his mind and interprets the stone structure as part of the temple building. Perhaps it functioned as a support for the temple, which was built on the slope. But again, the first interpretation holds its ground: the excavator

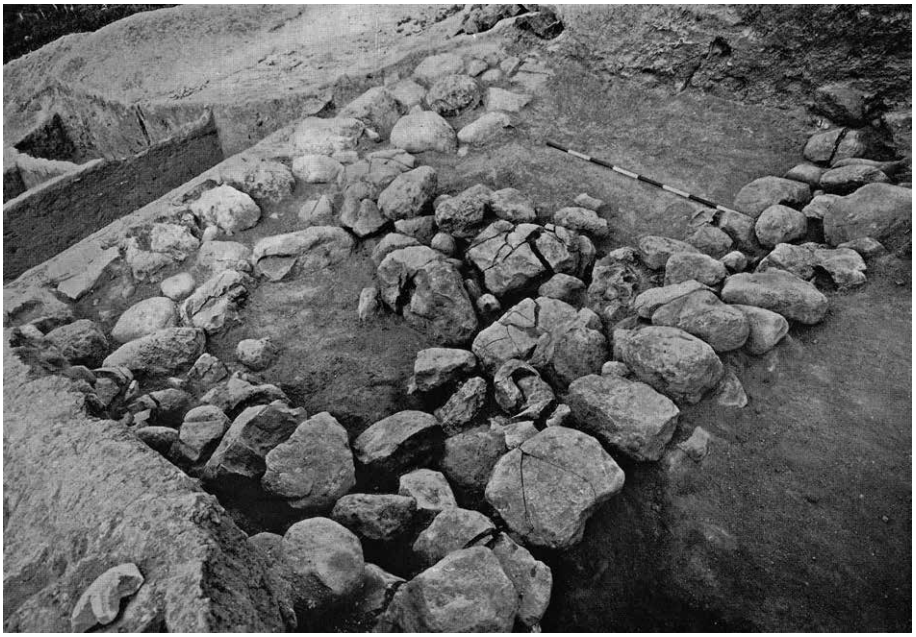


Fig. 4.15: The stone structure, running from west (on the left of the photo) to east.

once said that Deir Alla had been a walled city in the Late Bronze Age, and not everybody has noticed that he later unsaid it.[23]

The temple had been destroyed by an earthquake and a succeeding conflagration. The heat must have been intense, because the mudbrick walls had melted together before they collapsed. The earthquake itself had scattered the contents of the temple in all directions. The faience beads of a necklace were dispersed on the temple floor, in the rubble outside the temple, and down the slope of the tell. Very distinctive vessels are found inside the temple as well as outside: painted vases and so-called 'shrine pots', rounded closed bowls with an opening at the side with a lid (see chapter 5 for further details). The most spectacular find is an Egyptian vase made of faience, bearing a cartouche of the female pharaoh Taousert or Tausret, who reigned for only two years from 1188 to 1186 BC. This vase provides a clear dating of the earthquake that ended the Late Bronze Age occupation of Deir Alla. The earthquake must have taken place not too long after the reign of this pharaoh, in the first half of the twelfth century BC.

Other finds are Mesopotamian cylinder seals, Egyptian scarabs, and Mycenaean juglets. Even though only a small part of the temple can be excavated this season, its international character is obvious. The regular raising of the 'altar' in antiquity shows that the temple must have been in use over a long period of time. But unfortunately, time and space are too limited to find out more. So it is decided to dedicate the whole field season of 1964 to the further excavation of the temple expanding the excavated area.

Dozens of meters east of trench D more Late Bronze Age occupation is found: walls, floors and many objects, scattered around as result of the same earthquake that

23 It is possible that the stone structure was part of a town wall after all, but one belonging to the Middle Bronze Age town (see chapter 5).

Fig. 4.16: The faience vase with the cartouche of queen Taousert. Originally its colour was bright blue, but it was heavily damaged in the fire that succeeded the earthquake.

destroyed the temple. This pottery lies close to the surface of the tell, which makes it attractive for illegal 'excavations' for the antiquities market, and therefore Franken decides to expand the excavated area here with squares P600 and P700.

Three rooms are uncovered. Room 1 has a mudbrick wall with niches in it, and the finds resemble those of the temple: a 'shrine pot', painted pottery and several Mycenaean juglets. Franken interprets this room as a house shrine. Room 2 reveals a harrowing scene: someone got stuck during the earthquake; his or her skeleton is found underneath a collapsed wall. The ferocious fire has largely consumed the bones, and the skeleton cannot be lifted as a whole. Room 3 seems to have been a half-underground storage space, filled with jars and bowls.

In squares A, B and C work on the Iron Age layers continues. Some remarkable finds are discovered in a building that adjoins a street: a sucking bowl for a small child, with a little moulded fox inside, and a mould for the production of figurines.

At the base of the tell a couple of deep trenches are dug, to find out how deep the occupation layers continue (indicated on plan 5.1). Uncovered here is the artificial hill

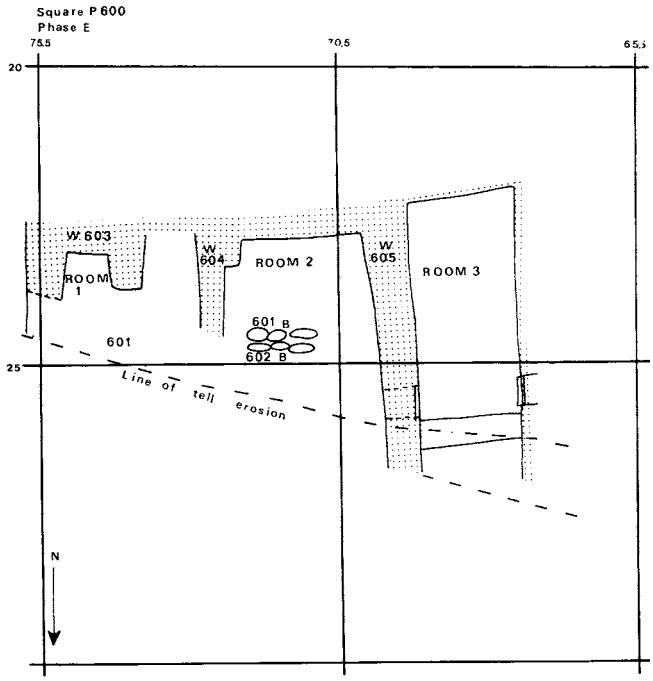


Fig. 4.17: Plan of rooms 1-3 as they have been published in Franken 1992 (fig. 4.1). See Fig. 4.30 for the location of the rooms.

on which the temple was built. It consists of an accumulation of layers of clay, about seven meters high. Below this hill the first Chalcolithic pottery is excavated, dating to the fifth millennium BC, but no walls or floors are found. Perhaps the original Chalcolithic settlement on this spot was destroyed when the Late Bronze Age inhabitants levelled the area before raising the hill as a base for the temple.

In the beginning of the season, Diana Kirkbride and her team continue to search for the cemetery of Deir Alla's inhabitants. She is assisted by a geology student from Delft, who does soundings to analyse the soil beneath the surface. His results show that the Zerqa river, which now runs south of the tell, originally ran just to the north of it. Over time the river has deposited slip layer of several meters thick, covering the original Late Bronze and Iron Age landscape around the tell, including any possible burials from that time. This discovery marks the end of the search for burials.

The study of the pottery

In this season a professional potter, Jan Kalsbeek, has joined the dig, to draw the pottery finds. This proves to be a very fortunate move. Kalsbeek not only looks at the visual details of the pots he draws, he also asks how they were made. Were they turned on the fast wheel, or shaped by hand? How was the base attached to the pot, how were the rims finished? Was the pot slipped on the outside, and how was this slip applied? Why were some rims everted, and others straight? For Franken these are completely new questions, and he becomes fascinated with the craft of the ancient potters. He realises that the characteristics of the pottery, normally only used to classify the shapes of pots as a means to date them, are the results of different techniques used by the ancient potters. So it becomes important to analyse the potters' craft, in order to explain the observed traits.

Fig. 4.18: The skeleton in room 2. Some vertebrae are visible on the stones in the foreground.

Fig. 4.19: Mould for the production of figurines.

Fig. 4.20: Sucking bowl with a little fox inside. As a child sucked the liquid from the spout on the right, eventually the fox would appear.

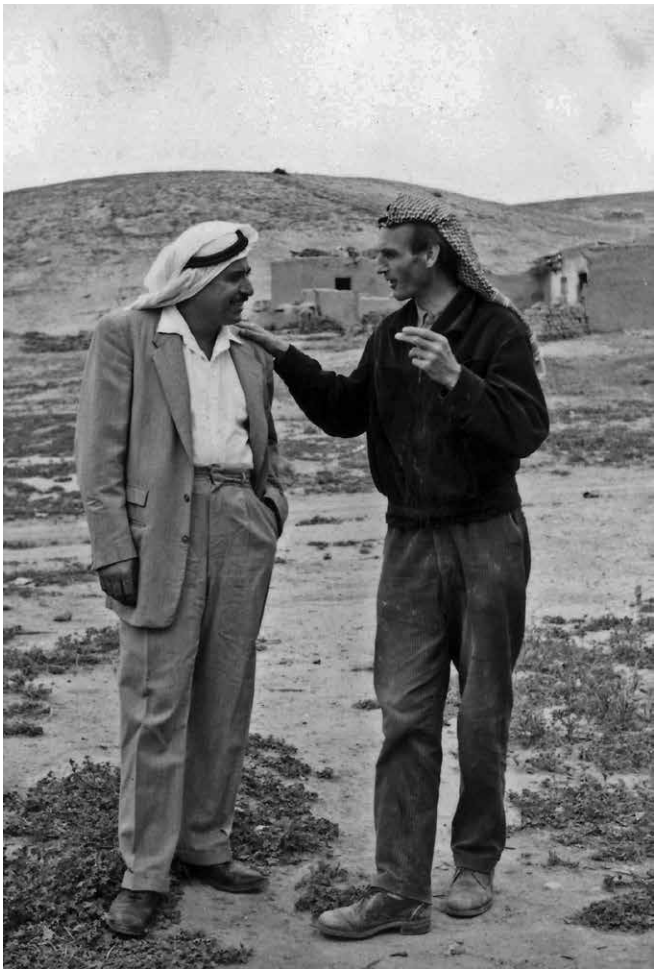


Fig. 4.21: Jan Kalsbeek in Deir Alla. (Photo Jan Kalsbeek)

Kalsbeek pursues the subject. He visits several local potters in the Deir Alla region, who still use traditional methods, hoping to gain a better understanding of their techniques. He also collects clay samples in the region which he wants to take home to experiment with. One of the things that soon become clear to him, is that not all Iron Age pottery is produced using a fast potter's wheel, something that has always been taken for granted. Much of the pottery found is made by hand. The time has come to rewrite the manuals.

1962 – Intermediate season

Preparations

In 1962 the grant from ZWO is a bit lower than in the previous years: fl. 45,000. On the other hand, fl. 10,000 is added to build a dig house, or at least some rooms. The shortage of living and working space in the previous year was caused by the fact that the landowner had only made one room available for the expedition. This year he has promised to build a three-room house on the location of the tent camp. One problem though: the house takes more time than foreseen and will only finished halfway through the excavation season.

When the house is finally built, it turns out that the landowner has not stuck to the plans: there are no windows in any of the rooms, which makes them useless as working space. Instead they will now house the kitchen, a storage cum sick room, and a registration room. This house will remain in use by the expedition until the 1990s.

This year the expedition runs from January 4 to April 7. The director with several staff members drive to Jordan with the Land Rover. Franken writes in his travel diary: '*On Saturday December 16, 1961 (one day later than planned) the expedition leader and his wife, together with the gentlemen Scholten and Pfeiffer, departed from the Netherlands with the Land Rover. The journey lasted until December 29, four days longer than planned.*' The reason for the delay is the bad weather. Almost all of Europe suffers a deep cold spell, with heavy snowfall everywhere. The Land Rover regularly needs to warm up in the sun for several hours, before it will start. Often the road is blocked because of overturned lorries: '*We counted more than 100 crashed lorries.*' Because of these delays there are only a few days left to finish the preparations for the dig in Jordan. In record time the excavation permit is acquired, tents are collected and major shopping done in Amman and Jerusalem. On the evening of January 1, the team finally arrives at Deir Alla. The other team members come by boat via Beirut, and arrive the next evening, January 2. By then Franken and his scouts have managed to erect the tents and make the beds, all in one day. The actual digging starts two days later.

Expedition team

Despite the problems they had caused, Franken would have preferred to take the 'old' field assistants from the 1961 season with him to Jordan, because they were familiar with his methods. But it is not to be. One after the other, they withdraw. So in this third season again no archaeology students from Amsterdam join the team. The field assistants are students from other disciplines in Leiden, Utrecht and Wageningen, all of whom have a fascination for the archaeology of the Middle East. Apart from Franken

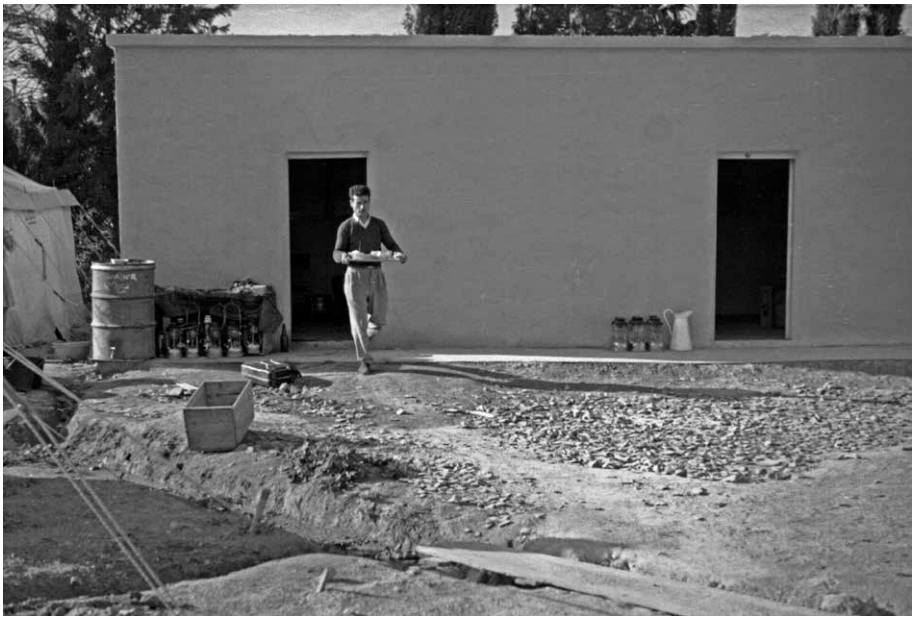


Fig. 4.22: The three-room house is finally finished.

Fig. 4.23: Sipco Scholten, the photographer of the 1962 season. (Photo Geertje Bakker-Hänisch ten Cate)

and Battershill, the team this year consists of photographer Sipco Scholten, draughtsmen Terry Ball and Bert Jonk, four field assistants and a housekeeper. At the request of Paul Lapp an American student is added to the team for a while. Nick Pfeiffer has joined the group to make a film about water use in antiquity for the Dutch School Television Foundation.

Recognition

The Deir Alla excavations, and the innovative methods that are used with their focus on sections and stratigraphy, are beginning to attract attention in the world of archaeology. In a letter to Bannier, dated March 27, Franken mentions that he receives many visits from other archaeologists who are interested in his way of working and contemplate using it on their own digs. Among the visitors are Paul Lapp and his students, Roland de Vaux from the École Biblique, and James Swauger, the assistant director of the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburg, who is planning to map a dolmen field[24] in the Jordan Valley.

Through a colleague, Franken even receives an invitation from the Israeli Department of Antiquities to organise a demonstration dig in Israel. After consulting '*several western experts on the situation in Jordan, the commander of the UN forces among them',* he realises that accepting that invitation would reduce to zero his chances to ever excavate in Jordan again. He has to reject the invitation.

By now the antiquities market has also discovered Deir Alla and sets out to profit from its good name. In the same letter to Bannier, Franken writes: '*Dajani has told so much about our dig that antiquities dealers in Amman have begun to sell pottery "originating in Deir Alla", but which has never been here.*'

Results

In terms of fieldwork, 1962 is seen as an 'intermediate season'. The decision to skip season 1963 has already been made, in order to have enough time to publish the Iron Age pottery. The following season (1964) will then be taken up completely by the excavation of the Late Bronze Age temple. As a consequence, in the 1962 season the Late Bronze Age will not be further excavated. In fact, whenever anything is found from the Late Bronze, it is immediately covered up again, to prevent erosion.

On the other hand, the excavation areal is expanded again, in order to have a larger surface from which to dig the temple in 1964. The Iron Age layers on top of the temple are being excavated carefully, to collect as much material as possible. To the west of the large bronze furnace that was found in trench D in 1960, a new area, measuring 10 x 24 meters, is opened up, forming the squares L and G.

This extension of the excavation reveals that the furnace was not part of a village or town, but was associated with nomadic occupation. In the excavated area no traces are found of houses or streets, let alone of a protection wall. The pottery, dating to the Early Iron Age (1200-1000 BC) is very different from that of the village in the later occupation layers. The whole area consists of floors of trampled mud alternating with layers of straw, possible remains of reed mats.

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24 Dolmens are megalithic burial chambers consisting of two or more standing stones with a capstone on top, forming a chamber inside. They are common in Europe as well as in the Middle East. The dolmens in Jordan are generally dated to the third millennium BC.

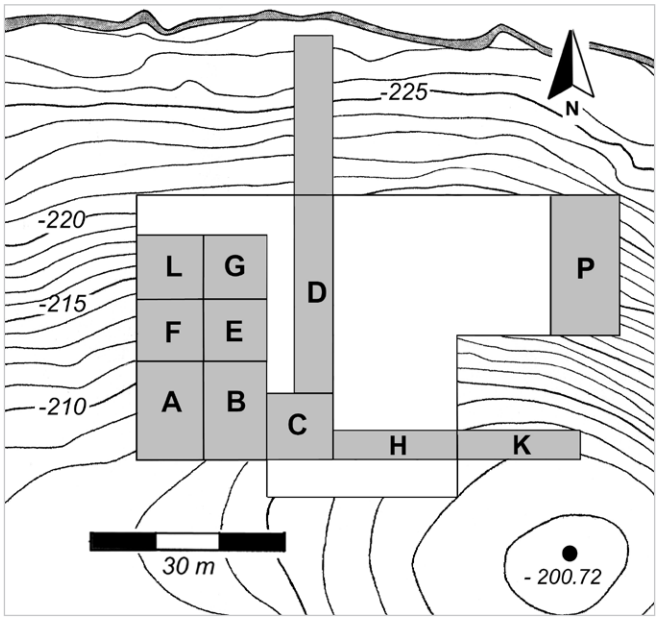

Fig. 4.24: Plan of the excavation squares in 1962. For the exact location see fig. 2.10. Franken has renamed parts of squares E and F, into A and B, which is more convenient for the documentation of the excavated buildings.

Franken's interpretation for this is as follows: the first inhabitants of the tell after the major earthquake that destroyed the Late Bronze Age temple, were transitory rather than permanent settlers. They were pastoral nomads or transhumant farmers, who came to the relatively warm Jordan Valley in winter to pasture their herds and sow in some fields. In early spring, when the harvest was in and the weather became too hot, they moved away again, probably eastwards to the plateau. These farmers did not build permanent houses, but lived in temporary shelters. It is striking that these occupation layers produced large amounts of pottery sherds – more even than the later village occupation layers – but hardly any other finds, such as loomweights or figurines.

These farmers were also skilled metal workers, and they built one or several furnaces on Deir Alla, to melt copper and tin, and produce bronze objects. But why at Tell Deir Alla? According to Franken, this is because the tell is located in the middle of the intersection of the Zerqa Valley and the Jordan Valley. Anybody who has ever been in that area in winter or early spring, has encountered the *sharqiya,* the strong eastern wind that comes storming down through the 'wind tunnel' of the Zerqa Valley, making life at and around the tell difficult. Travel three miles to the north or south of this point and the wind is hardly noticeable. Therefore it is no coincidence that the metalworkers chose this particular spot. The furnaces must have made use of the strong wind. Later in the Iron Age metal furnaces, for iron melting this time, were built further into the Zerqa Valley, at Tell el-Hammeh. These also benefitted from the strong eastern winds.

The pattern of seasonal agriculture used to be common in the Jordan Valley. In the summer the Valley is hot like a oven, but its gentle and humid winters make it the perfect spot to grow grain and pasture cattle. It was mostly in periods in which irrigation was practiced, such as in the Late Iron Age and the Roman period, that large permanent settlements can be found in the Valley.

The metal workers' presence on the tell may well have ended with another earthquake. A large crack ran through the highest occupation layers, and in it, among the broken pots, were parts of another human skeleton. After this earthquake the tell was

Pakistani in the Jordan Valley

A good example of seasonal occupation occurred in the 1980s and 1990s, when several Pakistani families settled in the Valley, seeking employment as agricultural labourers, while also herding large numbers of sheep and goats. When the animals had lambed in early spring, they were sold to the local butchers and the families moved away to the plateau, to work in the fields and in construction. Come winter, they returned to the Valley. In Jordan they lived in tents, but in Pakistan they owned houses, and they flew back- and forwards on a regular basis. Tell Abu Sarbut, close to Deir Alla, was one of their favourite spots. A Dutch expedition that started excavating on Tell Abu Sarbut in 1988 employed several of them, next to the local Jordanian workers. It turned the tell into a veritable Tower of Babel: Dutch, English, Arabic and Urdu were all heard simultaneously.

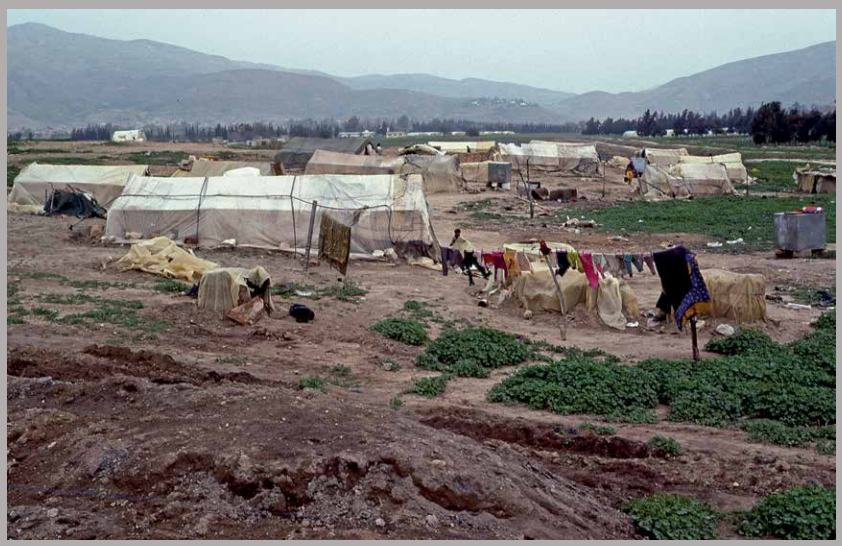

Fig. 4.25: The Pakistani tent camp at Tell Abu Sarbut in 1990. (Photo Margreet Steiner)

deserted for some time. Then, still in the Early Iron Age, a new group of people settled on the tell, and built a village.

The expedition wants to know more about this later phase. The excavation area is extended again, this time with a strip of twenty meters long and three meters wide, to the east of square C, forming squares H and K. This area reveals much Late Iron Age material, from the eighth and seventh centuries BC. Franken notices that this pottery differs significantly from that of the same period in Palestine and Israel, which does not really come as a surprise.

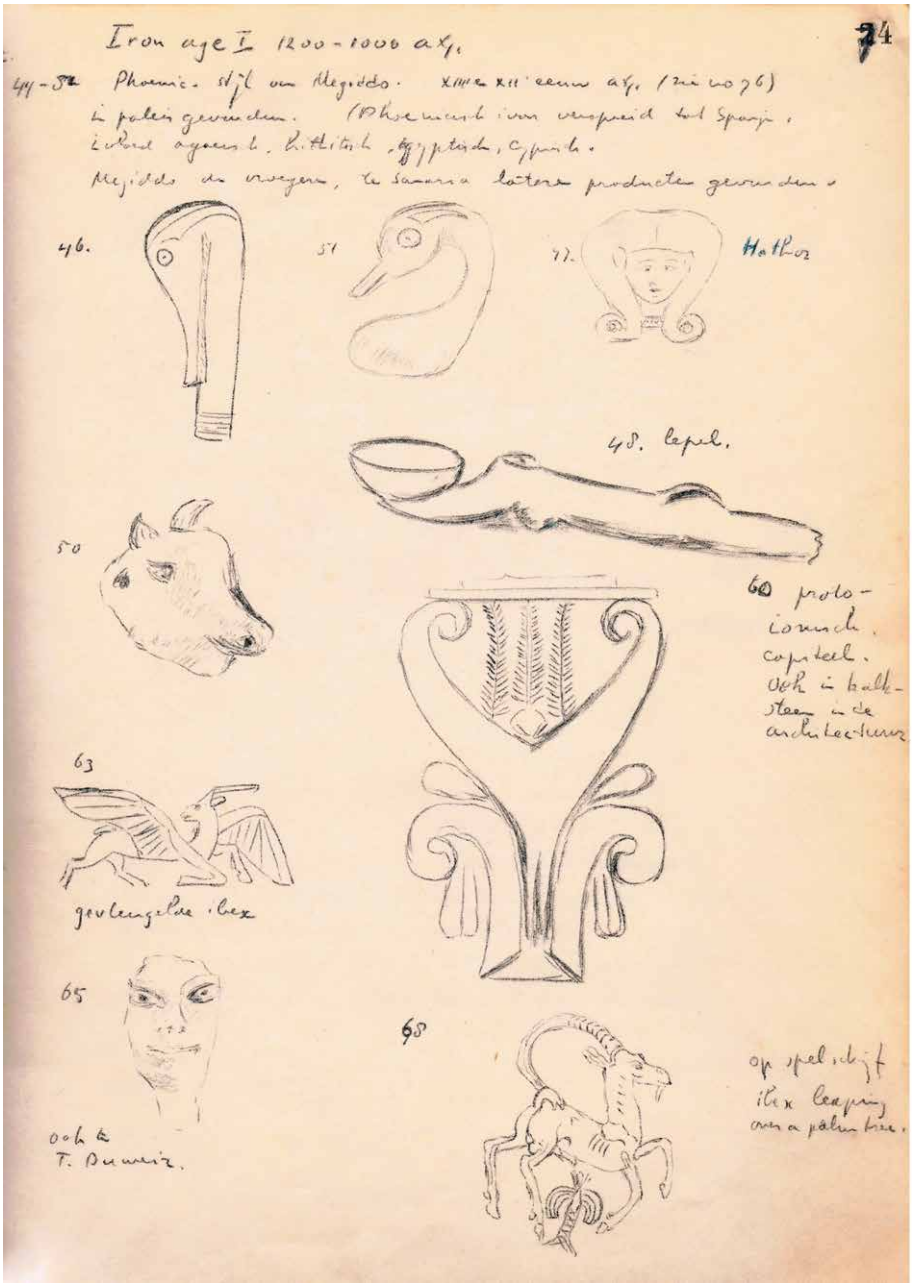

Fig. 4.26: A page from Franken's notebook. These are some of his object drawings from the showcases in the Rockefeller museum in Jerusalem.

Study trip

Later in the same year, Franken and his wife receive a ZWO grant to go on a study trip to Jerusalem, where they spend the months of July and August to study the pottery from other sites, as preparation for the publication of the three first seasons at Deir Alla. They are accompanied by a trainee photographer and by Franken's eldest son, who is 15 years old at the time. In the 'Palestine Archaeological Museum' (Rockefeller Museum) Franken studies the pottery in his own, typical Franken-manner: thoroughly, comprehensively, and ceaselessly. Sitting on a stool in front of the glass showcases he draws every object, and copies the labels word for word. Digital photography does not exist yet, and there are only a few publications, but in this way he acquires a thorough overview of the pottery of the most important excavations in Palestine in a relatively short time.

1964 – Excavation of the temple

This is the last excavation season of the first Deir Alla Project that was financed by the ZWO grant. A sum of fl. 48,000 has been granted, and the season will run from December 28, 1963 until March 18, 1964. Franken, Battershill and two students depart two weeks before the start of the fieldwork, to set up the tent camp and deal with the formalities.

This promises to be a special season. Against Franken's original planning, he will now have to spend a whole season excavating the remains of the destroyed Late Bronze Age temple. Already in 1961, he had noticed the heavy layer of burnt rubble in the temple, which was caused by the earthquake and the ensuing conflagration. All the temple furniture, the religious paraphernalia and the sacred gifts that had been donated to the sanctuary, had been left behind in the cella (the actual temple building) and the surrounding rooms. Franken expects dozens, perhaps hundreds of broken vessels, a heavy burden for the technical staff of the excavation. All these fragile burnt fragments will have to be cleaned carefully, restored and conservated, and then described, drawn and photographed.

On the other hand, the actual digging should be relatively simple, compared to the previous seasons. There is little stratigraphy, and the team will mostly be emptying rooms. That has to be done very carefully, something the 'Jericho technicians' are very good at. Therefore Franken decides to personally supervise the excavation of the temple rooms. He will take only a few field assistants with him to Deir Alla, who will focus on digging the rest of the Iron Age layers.

Expedition team

This year the team consists of nine people only. Two students function as field assistants: a prehistorian from Amsterdam, and a historian from Leiden, who already took part in an earlier excavation season. Ann Battershill again takes charge of restoration and conservation of the finds, together with another recidivist, a student from Leiden. Draughtsman this year is Onno Cosijn, and he will work together with Terry Ball, who will leave halfway through the season to work at Tell es-Sa'idiyeh – a tell located

about twenty kilometer north of Deir Alla. Sipco Scholten returns as photographer, potter Jan Kalsbeek will analyse the pottery, and an experienced student is in charge of housekeeping. Henk Franken keeps overall charge and does the finances.

Challenges

All the expedition members arrive on time, so the work starts as planned. There are other problems though: bad weather, again: there is a fierce wind from the east, and the days are freezing cold. In spite of the agreement, the landowner will not give them a room with electricity for the photographer to use. So extra space must be rented for him and for Jan Kalsbeek.

Fortunately, the weather improves after a few weeks. It is less cold, and the wind abates. On the other hand, it starts to rain a lot, although fortunately mostly at night: work can continue during the day. But because of the high humidity the sherds take longer to dry, which in turn slows down the pottery restauration. It is time for emergency measures. The cleaned sherds are laid out in a room in which primus stoves burn all day long, to warm the air. Even the oven in the kitchen tent is chartered to dry sherds. Another primus stove is burning under the draughtsman's drawing board, to keep the paper dry.

More problems: some of the older sleeping tents have started to leak, so two of the work tents have to be used as sleeping tents. Which means less storage and less work space. On February 13, Franken writes in a letter to ZWO's Ben Otker:

'We have had about 40 centimeters of rain, and the sky on this first day of our holiday is as black as soot. Everything is wet, even your cigaret doesn't keep burning of itself. Keep pulling. What I need is waterproof paper to draw sections, otherwise I'll still be here at the end of May. […]. *The tell is a clump of mud, I feel like a pig in the shit.'*

The digging of an irrigation channel through the Valley, a project which had started in 1962, creates much work for the people in the village. As a result the wages for local workers are higher than before, as is the price of food, which is a factor the expedition had not reckoned with. This means that fewer workers can be hired. Another problem is that the water filter, built in 1960, is situated right in the course of the new irrigation channel, with dire consequences. *'Our filter has disappeared into the channel. Now we sieve the worst mud out of it, and boil all the water that is used in food preparation, while drinking water is boiled and decontaminated. That proves to work all right.'*

A special challenge is created by the visit of Pope Paul VI to Jordan in the beginning of January. Roads are blocked, the archaeological museum in Jerusalem is closed for a week, postal services slow down or stop working altogether, and many VIPs are out of bounds because of the papal visit.

An important visitor

For Franken, one of the main events of the season is the visit from Harm Tjalling Waterbolk, the archaeology professor from Groningen. This visit had been made a condition in the first negotiations with ZWO in 1959, but it never took place. So now one of the main critics of the project is descending on Deir Alla to witness in person what is happening at the dig. Waterbolk is warmly welcomed. Franken's new excavation strategy has been positively received in Jordan and Israel, and he can hardly wait to demonstrate it to a Dutch colleague.

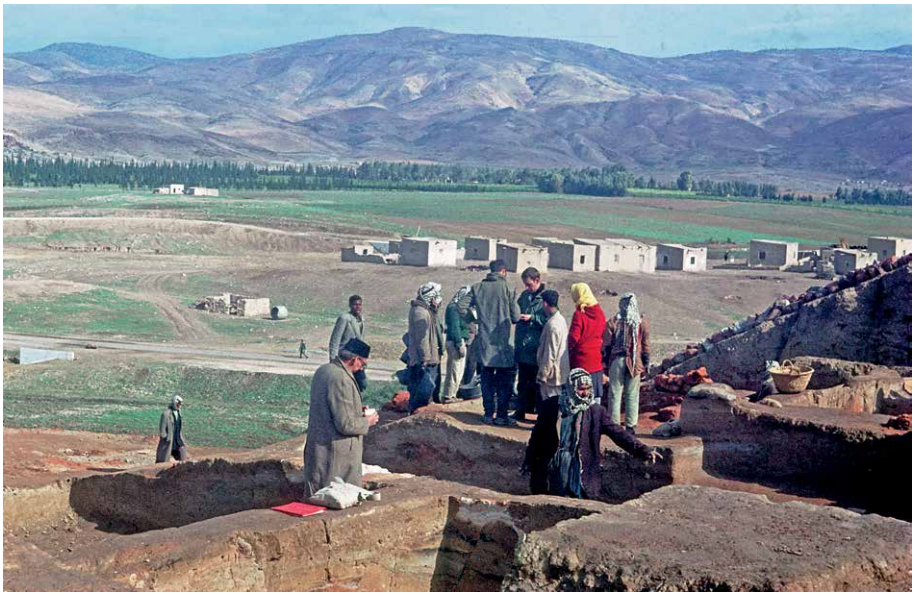

Fig. 4.27: Working on the tell. In the foreground left (with cap) Henk Franken. To the right of the group of people, the heavily burnt red rubble of the temple is visible. (Photo Tjalling Waterbolk)

Waterbolk is duly impressed. He had already written to Franken that he would come to *'roll up his sleeves',* and so he does. Franken puts him in charge of Trench D, where the situation of the semi-nomadic bronze workers still poses riddles. Waterbolk almost literally buries himself in this square, trying to clarify the stratigraphy. Are there houses and courtyards, or did these people live in tents? How many floor layers can be distinguished on top of each other? To which floor layers do the furnaces belong? Because he is so involved in unravelling the complex stratigraphy, Waterbolk gains a good insight into the 'Franken-method', and he begins to appreciate its value. Evenings are spent in discussions. The two men amicably discuss the ins and outs of the dig, as well as future possibilities – more excavations in Jordan and Syria, and possible cooperation between Leiden and Groningen.

When after two weeks Waterbolk leaves Deir Alla, he confesses to Franken that he had come as a 'spy', commissioned by ZWO to report on the quality of Franken's work. And so he does on his return. On February 21, 1964, he writes a letter to Franken: *'Amice, I have postponed writing to you until after my conversation with Bannier (ZWO), which took place last Thursday. He was very pleased, actually relieved by my positive reaction – your merit rather than mine actually.'*

Franken is also relieved. Now he can return to the Netherlands with his head held high, and nobody has the right to question his archaeological credentials. Almost every report he writes on that season, and every letter he sends to the faculty and to ZWO, extensively mentions Waterbolk's visit and the perspectives it has opened up for the future. What he does not know, is that none of these interesting plans will ever come to fruition.

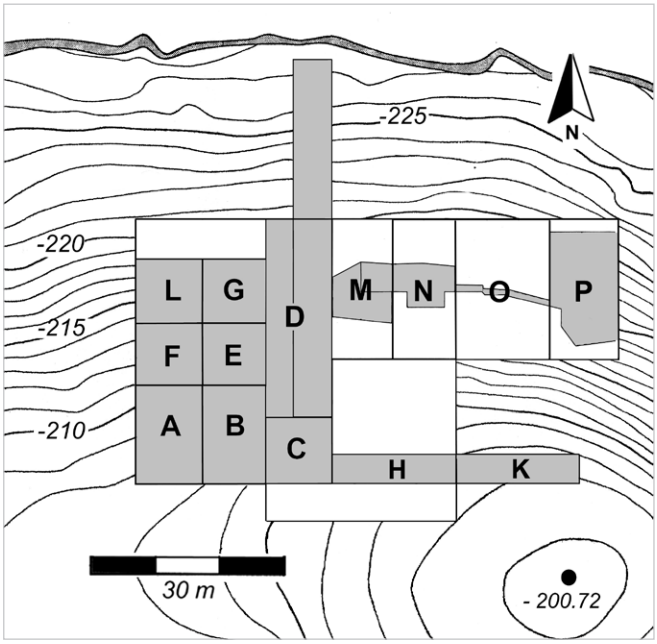

Fig. 4.28: Plan of the squares excavated in 1964. See fig. 2.10 for location on the tell.

Results

In the previous season, whenever the diggers encountered the layer of burnt rubble from the Late Bronze Age, they stopped. It was important not to excavate that layer, to prevent exposing the pots that laid buried in it. For if even a single complete pot would be exposed, then the whole layer had to be excavated, to prevent robbers from illegally digging up the finds. However, now that the excavation of the burnt layer begins in earnest, the situation proves more complicated than foreseen. It becomes evident that the cella was built on a podium, and that the floors of the adjoining rooms are between one and two meters lower. That means that the floors of those rooms are covered with a burnt layer that is much thicker than expected. And that means much more work to empty those rooms.

The temple turns out to have had a long history. The end came after 1186 BC, as explained above. A test trench dug through the cella floor in 1961 had already revealed a series of rebuilding phases. Because of rain, wind and erosion, the level of the streets and buildings surrounding the cella rose steadily over time. So in order for the cella to rise above the surrounding buildings, it had to be raised regularly as well. These regular elevations were clearly visible in the sections of the test trench; the cella had been raised 3.5 meters in total. The first building phase could be dated in the sixteenth century BC, so the temple had been in use for more than 350 years.

One research question for this season is: what exactly was it that destroyed the temple? Did a conflagration break out which caused the temple and its service buildings to collapse? Or was the fire caused by the destruction of the temple? The second theory turns out to be correct: there are traces of an earthquake, although it takes several experts to confirm that theory. Already in 1961, a skeleton had been found in the Late Bronze Age layers on the east side of the tell, trapped underneath fallen walls, but at the time those layers could not be connected stratigraphically to the destruction of the temple. They can now. The earthquake caused the complex to collapse, then a fire

Fig. 4.29: The tell looks like a Swiss cheese, but in this way Franken can keep control of the stratigraphy.

broke out and continued to burn until there was nothing left to consume. The walls were burnt to a red powdery consistency, which makes it very hard to expose them. All the treasures in the temple and the service buildings have been buried under a big pile of rubble or have tumbled down the slope.

Because of his meticulous way of digging, Franken is able to determine that there have been efforts to re-erect the temple and surrounding buildings after the earthquake. But a second fire, possibly caused by a second earthquake, put a stop to these efforts. It seems likely that the inhabitants of the tell believed this second fire was a warning from the gods to keep away from the temple, and therefore left the place alone. The tell then remained uninhabited for a long time, and the buildings eroded even further.

The temple turns out to be much larger than previously thought. Buildings that in 1961 were thought to be domestic in nature and surrounding the temple, now prove to be part of the temple complex itself. The finds in the rooms show that they were storage rooms and rooms used for certain rituals. The buildings at the east side of the tell in square P, excavated in 1961, are also part of the temple complex, according to Franken. The whole complex can be followed in an east-west direction over a distance of more than seventy meters. It remains unclear how wide it was, because the southern side has never been excavated. No dwellings for the temple personnel are found; these are only discovered much later, in the 1990s, on the southern side of the tell.

This was not a *'local village sanctuary'*, Franken writes in his report, but '*according to Palestinian standards a large sanctuary',* that has been in use for almost four centuries, and was important enough for pharaoh Taousert to present it with gifts. Franken is most puzzled by the fact that this sanctuary is not mentioned in the Bible, even though it was located so close to Israel.

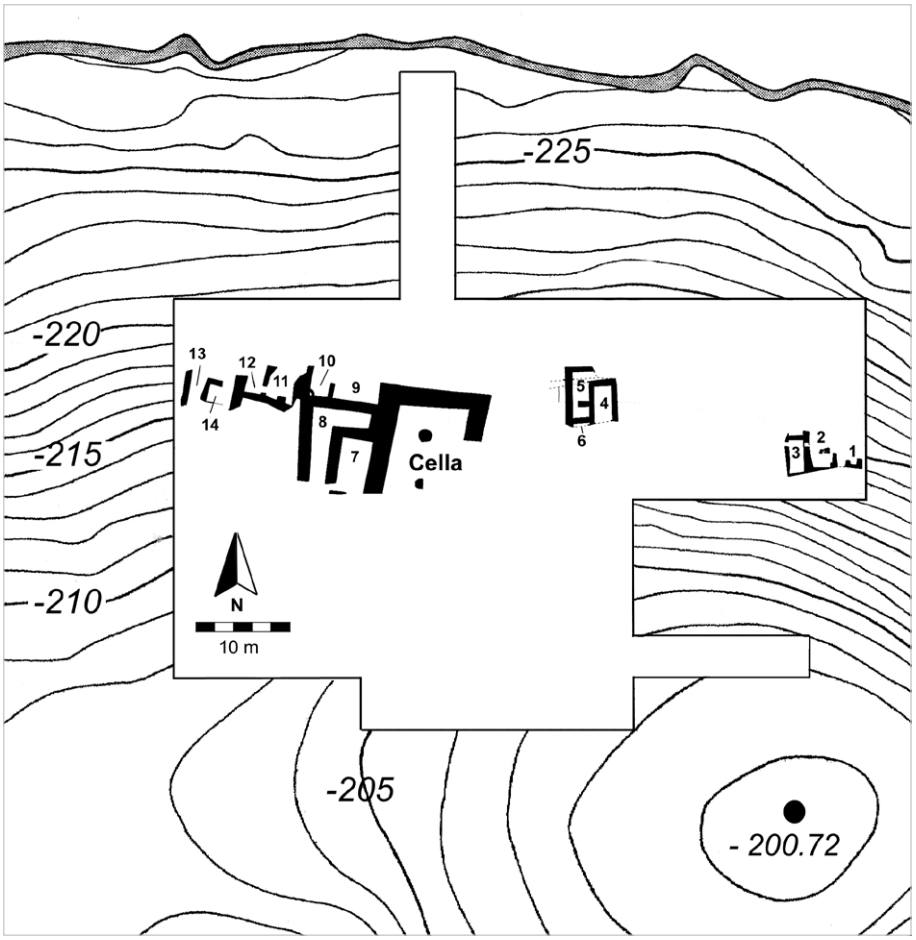

Fig. 4.30: Plan of the temple complex.

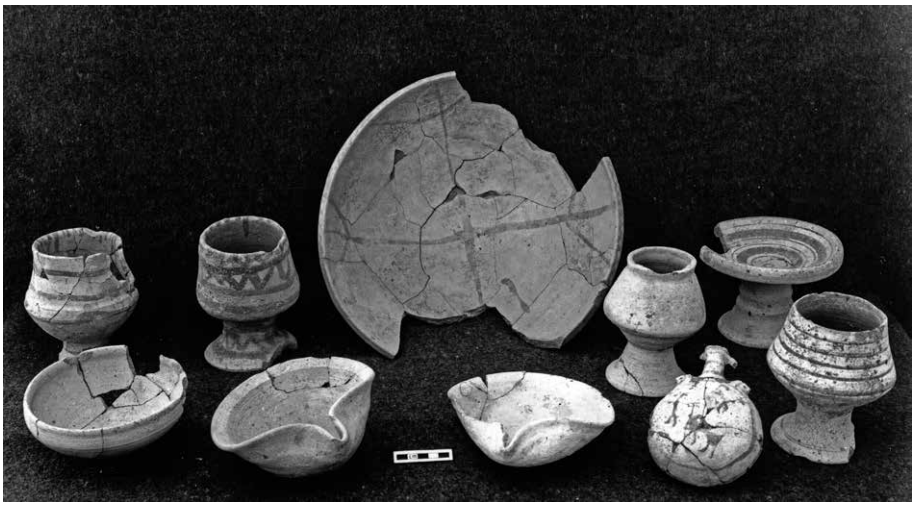

Fig. 4.31: Ceremonial vessels from the temple complex.

Fig. 4.32: Dig humour. The large jar has a red painted decoration.

As stated before, the enormous number of finds presents a major problem for the expedition, particularly now that the complex turns out to be much larger than originally thought, and every room is filled with objects. Including the cella, the expedition clears a total of fifteen rooms, lifting 345 vessels that need restoring. Apart from that, hundreds of sherds are found, as well as about 250 beads, several amulets, cylinder seals, hammer stones and other objects. All these need to be cleaned, conservated, carefully restored, drawn, photographed, described and registered.

Franken supervises the clearing of the Late Bronze rooms himself, while his assistants work in the Iron Age layers. Then a strange phenomenon happens: they seem to be excavating alternating Bronze and Iron Age layers. An Iron Age floor layer sits on top of a red burnt Late Bronze Age layer, as expected, but underneath that is an Iron Age wall. It takes Franken a while to clarify this remarkable stratigraphical order, but then he understands what is going on. In his report to ZWO he writes on January 14:

Fig. 4.33: One of the clay tablets with unknown script.

> *'It turns out that the group of nomads, who regularly stayed on the tell in the Early Iron Age, lived among the red burnt wall remains, and even worked underneath the still intact roofs. Later these walls were destroyed, or collapsed of themselves, which is why we have alternating Bronze and Iron Age layers.'*

The most spectacular find surfaces when the excavation is actually over, and most of the team members are already on their way home. Ann Battershill, several students from Jerusalem who have volunteered, and draughtsman Terry Ball, who had joined the Tell es-Sa'idiyeh excavations and returned to Deir Alla, stay in the camp to process the large amount of finds. Franken himself is still digging on the tell with a group of workers. He excavates a small trench (trench O) laid out to connect the cella and the rooms to the west of it, with the rooms on the east part of the tell in square P, which had been found in 1962 and which were full of beautiful vessels. Based on the analysis of the trench he concludes that these rooms were also part of the temple complex and have been destroyed by the same earthquake. In this trench, on the last day of digging, he makes a spectacular discovery: four clay tablets. Two have been inscribed – not with cuneiform characters, but with characters of an unknown script. The other two tablets show only a number of dots. This find makes it necessary to completely excavate the two rooms (rooms 4 and 5) in which they have been found. As a result, another inscribed tablet turns up, and four more tablets with dots.

This find not only postpones the end of the excavation with several weeks, it also causes all sorts of other 'challenges'. First of all, the tablets need to be conservated, drawn and photographed. Next, Franken wants to take them to the Netherlands to have them analysed by experts, but the Department of Antiquities of Jordan will not give permission for the export of this spectacular find just like that. It takes until June 9 before Franken can send the following telegram to ZWO: '*Permission for loan of tablets granted on condition they are insured here through Lloyds at a premium of 500 pounds sterling. Do you agree?* ZWO does agree, and the tablets can be taken to the Netherlands.

The enormous amount of excavated material causes other problems as well. In the previous years, at the end of the season the finds were divided between the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the expedition. This division worked as follows: all the registered objects were laid out on tables, the representative of the Department walked

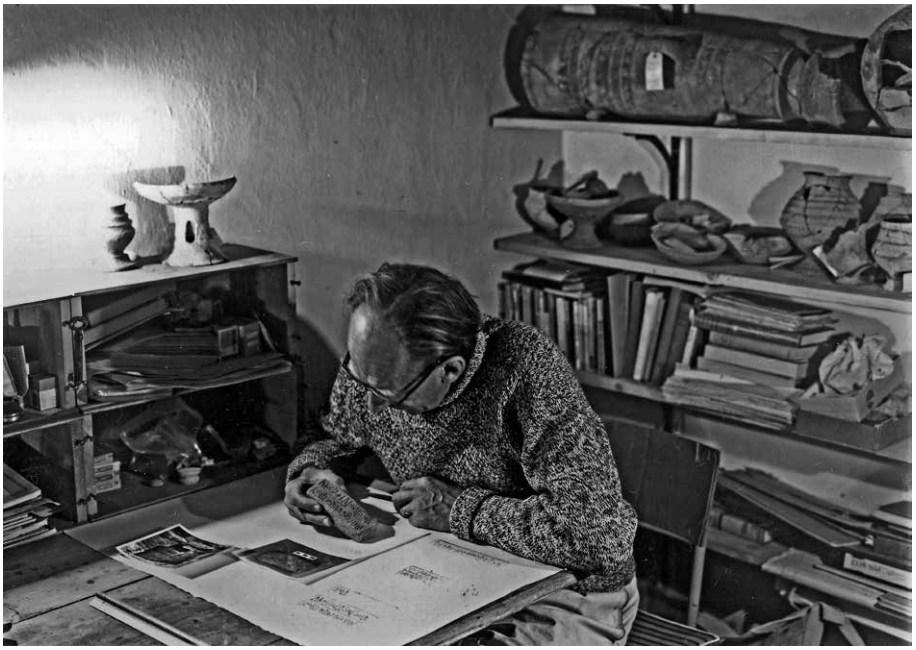

Fig. 4.34: Franken studying the clay tablet in his office in Deir Alla.

past them, and had first choice. Exceptional finds stayed in Jordan, but on the whole the objects were divided equally. Franken could take about half of the finds to Leiden in order to study them at his own university. He was also permitted to take all of the sherds and other incomplete finds with him to the Netherlands.

In 1964, however, this division procedure runs into practical difficulties: it is simply impossible to display 345 fragile pots on a couple of tables in a windy tent camp, even apart from the hundreds of smaller finds. Immediately after registration, the finds have been put in boxes. Franken suggests making the division based on the photos and descriptions of the objects. Eventually, the Department agrees and the selection takes place. Franken can now pack and seal his 35 boxes of material to send them to the Netherlands.

Then another bureaucratic hurdle looms. A restriction order is received stating that no more than twenty boxes may be exported to the Netherlands. Everything will have to be repacked in larger boxes, that have to be made to order. But as Franken has already been in Jordan a month longer than planned, he decides to take only the Iron Age material with him that is needed for the planned publication. He adds a small selection of Bronze Age objects which will be displayed at the forthcoming exhibition about the Deir Alla excavations in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden in 1965. The other fifteen boxes with finds will stay in Jordan.

All this means that the processing of the finds takes until May 24, and the negotiations with the Department about the division of the finds and the export of the clay tablets last until the end of June. By then the Valley is unbearably hot, and Franken and Battershill have moved to Jerusalem. It is not until July 10 that they find themselves back in the Netherlands, seven months after they left.

1967 – A new start

At the end of December 1966, Franken and Battershill make the journey to Jordan in the Land Rover, to start a new season of excavation. But getting to this stage has been a bit of an uphill struggle. The first campaign, from 1960 to 1964, had all gone according to plan. The main purpose was to make a detailed study of the stratigraphy of the tell, and collecting enough pottery from each layer to be able to determine the development of the pottery types. This development was supposed to answer questions such as: who lived in the Eastern Jordan Valley? When and why were they in that region? And most importantly of all: where did they come from? Had they come from Israel and crossed the Jordan to the east, or, alternatively, had they descended from the eastern mountains, on their way to the west? Did close connections exist between the peoples east and west of the Jordan? Was the pottery from Jordan comparable to that from Israel, or did it have unique traits?

These were the questions that Franken had asked, and partially answered in 1965 and 1966. No excavation had been planned in those years, because they were spent on finishing the publication of the Iron Age pottery that had been excavated during the previous years. The monograph was finished in the summer of 1966, bar the drawings of the sherds. Because Franken did not have his own institute and staff, he was dependent on the draughtsman of the Institute of Prehistory of Leiden University, who could only spend limited time on this extra job. The book, entitled *Excavations at Tell Deir Alla Volume I, A Stratigraphical and Analytical Study of the Early Iron Age Pottery,* saw the light of day in 1969.

The Late Bronze Age temple was a different matter altogether. Franken was convinced that it needed a separate, extensive publication, not only covering the pottery, but all other objects as well. But that meant that he would have to excavate more of the temple itself. Therefore the publication of the temple was postponed, and in the end the temple monograph, *Excavations at Tell Deir Alla; The Late Bronze Age Sanctuary,* would not be published until 1992.

Another project that took up a lot of time was the exhibition of the Deir Alla excavations in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, which opened on April 3, 1965. Its title was: *Excavations in Biblical Soil: does it fit or not?*

After the finishing of the first campaign in 1964, a lot of time was spent thinking about whether there should be a new excavation campaign on Tell Deir Alla. Franken wanted to continue the project. After all, the tell had proven to be much more complex than he had originally thought. He had searched for a site with no large buildings, no town walls or gates; a place that could elucidate how the common people lived. To be fair, he had found his common people. But he had also found semi-nomadic bronze smiths, as well as a large Late Bronze Age sanctuary. And those two unexpected finds were important enough to merit further research.

So he came up with a new proposal: a project that would focus on the occupation history of the tell as a whole, rather than on the development of the pottery in the region. The project would start with five excavation seasons. Franken made an additional condition: the appointment of a permanent staff, for both field work and the processing of the finds in Leiden. ZWO agreed to fund a permanent staff during the excavations: a photographer, a draughtsperson and a field director to replace Franken

Fig. 4.35: Whenever someone falls ill on the tell, Cees Burggraaff receives one of these labels.

as field director on the tell, so he himself was free to focus on studying the pottery and other finds, and on the overall project organisation.

Unfortunately, the volatile political situation in the region threw a major spanner in the works. In June 1967, the Six Day War broke out and work in the East Jordan Valley became impossible. Franken moved his field of interest to Syria, working with UNESCO to rescue the large number of sites that were threatened by the building of a dam in the Euphrates.

Team and tent camp

However, all of these events are still in the future when Franken, Battershill and his youngest son get into the Land Rover in December 1966. Before descending to Deir Alla, they will spend some time in Jerusalem to organise the expedition: getting the permits, negotiate with the land owner, buying equipment, checking the tents, etcetera. Apart from that Franken wants to organise the shipment to the Netherlands of the fifteen boxes that had remained in Jordan in 1964. The dig will start in early February, and continue until the end of March.

The other team members travel by plane. Diederik van der Waals, a prehistorian from Groningen, will be the field director. As photographer acts Dirk Schouten, while Jan Albert Cool, who has worked for the Institute of Prehistory in Groningen and had joined Kathleen Kenyon's excavations in Jerusalem, joins the team as draughtsman. Cees Burggraaff, a nurse with an adventurous streak, will be the housekeeper. There are six field assistants, a mix of veterans and new students from Groningen and Leiden.

The tent camp is again erected at the foot of the tell. The tents themselves are arranged in an oval, and the three rooms that were built in 1962 are used again. Outside the circle of tents, the toilets are located: small mudbrick rooms with a deep hole in the ground. Next to the hole is a tin to deposit the toilet paper in, and a box of matches on a string, to burn the paper.

In the centre of the camp stands a large barrel which is filled with water from the irrigation channel. In the top half is a cotton sheet to filter out the stones and sand, and at the bottom is a tap. Drinking water is permanently being boiled in the kitchen.

There are no showers this year, it is too cold to shower anyway. The team washes with water from the irrigation channel. And every morning Zuhri, the night watch, brings jugs of hot water to the staff in their tents for morning ablutions, with the immortal words: '*Good evening, hot wotter'.*

Fieldwork

Fieldwork starts on February 8, 1967, and will last six weeks. A new excavation area is plotted to the east of the old trench D and square C from the first campaign. The aim is to expose a larger areal of the village occupation from the Early and Late Iron Ages, the semi-nomadic smiths and eventually also the temple. Franken is convinced that the entrance to the temple was in the south part of the complex. He therefore decides to excavate an additional five-meter trench to the south of trench D. Problem is that on top of the temple at least nine meters of later occupation is deposited. So it is not surprising that he thinks he will need at least five field seasons, and an even faster excavation strategy than the one he used before. He has abandoned the 'slicing technique' of the first campaign, whereby only just enough was excavated from each layer to produce sufficient pottery for technological pottery studies. Now he has a different goal: the occupation history must be exposed, which means both the lay-out of the villages and the function of the buildings must be clarified. The parole is: work as fast as you can, over a larger area than before.

A complication is the presence of numerous graves in the upper layers. More than 400 skeletons have been excavated in the first campaign between 1960 and 1964, some of which were accompanied by burial gifts, such as jewellery and pottery vessels.[25] In order to determine the context of these – most likely Islamic – burials (who were these people, and where did they live?), Franken decides to open three more five by five meter squares on a small tell opposite Deir Alla, on the other side of the road. This tell has no name, but Franken refers to it as Tell Abu Gourdan.

It was already clear from the surface pottery found at Tell Abu Gourdan that it had been inhabited in the Byzantine and Islamic periods. It is possible, therefore, that the Deir Alla burials belonged to this village. A small team is set to work on Abu Gourdan, unearthing large amounts of pottery sherds and other finds.[26]

For Deir Alla itself the planning is to excavate the uppermost village (phase M) completely, and then publish it immediately. Not surprisingly, however, the situation proves more complicated than foreseen. The phase M village turns out to have been destroyed by an earthquake, and rooms with complete inventories have been covered in rubble. Just as with the Late Bronze Age temple, vast amounts of pottery are excavated, which need to be restored, described, drawn and photographed. Franken concludes in his daily excavation report that he will not be able to excavate the whole layer. This has consequences for the publication of Phase M, which was planned for later that year. He has as yet no inkling of the unique discovery that will soon overthrow his planning completely.

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25 These burials were eventually published by Cees Burggraaff in 2008 (see Sources and literature).

26 The Tell Abu Gourdan excavation has been published by Franken in 1975 (see Sources and literature).

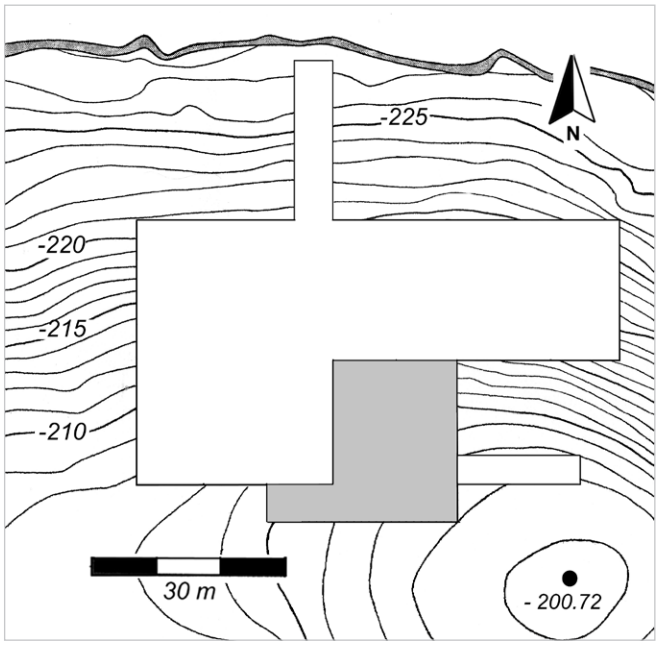

Fig. 4.36: Plan of the excavated squares in 1967 (grey area). See Fig. 2.10 for location.

Fig. 4.37: Tell Deir Alla with Tell Abu Gourdan in the foreground (arrow). The photo is taken looking northeast.

Balaam surfaces

The story of the discovery of the Balaam inscription has been told many times, by Franken and by others. In his daily notes, Franken gives an extensive description of the discovery of this unique inscription.

> *'Thursday, March 16. Ali [the Arab foreman] was urging everybody and everything on. The layer must be finished before next Monday. We keep track daily. It had to go down until the pottery layer [of Phase M]. Stop there, and after the* [Sugar] *feast we will empty the rooms, with a small group of people. I had my heart in my mouth. You can't really do that, when you're already so close to it, and there are also non-burned parts, which may not be recognised as such in time. I had the strong feeling I shouldn't go to Jerusalem that evening [where he had been invited for a dinner party and would stay overnight].'*

> *'Friday 17 at half past seven Ali came into the camp, very excited, with pieces of wall plaster. Asked if that was something. Full of text. I ran up the tell, had difficulty stopping the men. Thank God we had started a new dump the previous day. About an hour later some rain, and I immediately stopped work for the day. In between showers searched the dump. It must have got there all through Thursday, and nobody saw anything. Lots of little pieces with fragments of letters. A long white line in the section. Ali dug a large fragment out of the east room. The other* [room], *where most of the dump came from, is now covered with plastic against the rain.'*

> *'I have sent Burggraaff to Jerusalem to Harding [director of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem] for advice, and Jamra [representative of the Department of Antiquities] called the [Palestine Archaeological] museum [in Jerusalem]. Kirkbride and Harding in the afternoon* [visiting], *four fathers from the École Biblique with Benoit following [all of them scholars from Jerusalem]. Have written to Bannier* [ZWO] *and De Boer [Faculty of Theology]. Discussed problems of conservation with Ann and Harding. Also decided not to hire any more workers after Eid* [Sugarfeast]. *A useful confirmation of what I wrote the previous day, that everything would grind to a halt in this way. Everything now revolves around this find.'*

> *'Saturday March 18. Started to excavate some of the visible fragments in east room (Ali). De Vaux and Prigneaux arrived with Diana and Mrs Black [all archaeologists]. De V. and P. are copying a bit to see whether it is Aramaic or Biblical* [Hebrew]. *During the evening we have lifted the visible fragments in the east room, using wax. Wrote a letter to the curators [of the university] about the situation.'*

> *'Sunday 19. Searched through all of the dump using trowels twice. Boxes full of fragments. Will have to sieve everything next year.'*

Fig. 4.38: A Bedouin tent is being erected over the room with the Balaam fragments.

Fig. 4.39: Underneath the Bedouin tent work can continue, even when it rains.

'Thursday March 23. Downpours are starting. Erected a Bedouin tent over the room so we can continue work. Works against small showers. Still lifting fragments of plaster in the section and also made a start entering the room from the south. Loose fragments of wall everywhere. Two workmen to remove the soil. Lifting the fragments with text upwards is very problematic. Other fragments [with the text at the downside] are set in wax to preserve the context.'

'On April 1 the consternation of the arrival of the infra-red equipment. Because 13 x 18 material is nowhere available in all of Western Europe, film material with another format has been brought, with a Linhof + accessories+ fridge to keep everything cold. Mrs v.d.Waals flew first class with it. Scores of telegrams. Collected everything from Amman with the Land Rover. The exposing of plaster fragments is still going on. On April 3 with Schouten to Jerusalem. Appointment with the museum director [of the Palestine Archaeological Museum] for infra-red photographing and storing in the museum afterwards. Minute reporting of the procedure sent to ZWO.'

The discovery causes a lot of excitement in the archaeological communities of Jerusalem, Amman and the Netherlands. Everybody drops whatever they are doing, in order to see with their own eyes the rare phenomenon of a large plaster text from the Iron Age. And that is even before it becomes known that this text is about Balaam, son of Beor, the prophet who is mentioned in the Bible (see further chapter 5). When the rest of the team returns home after six weeks, Franken and Battershill stay behind for a few more weeks to excavate the text completely and study its stratigraphic context.

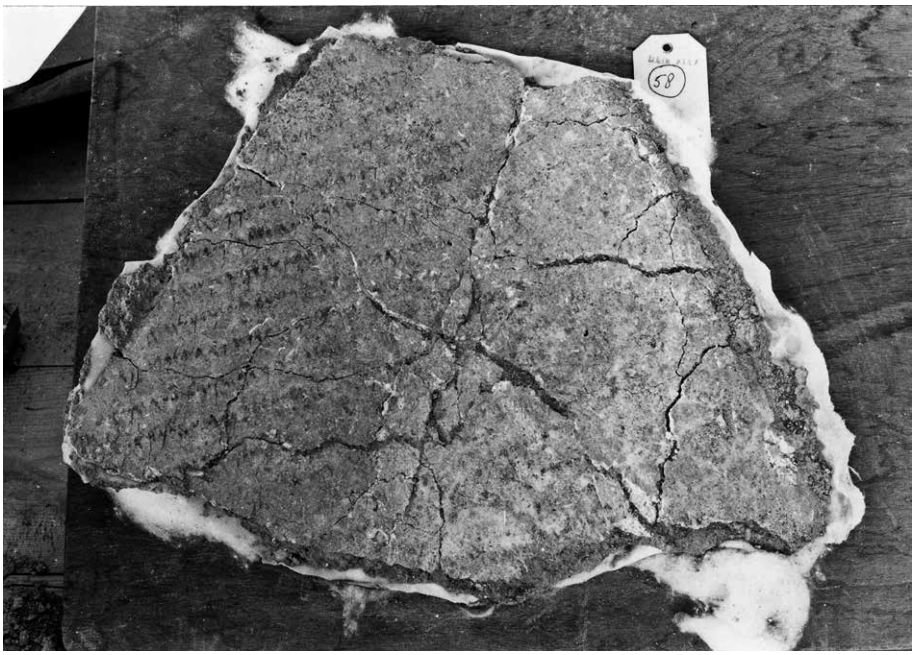

Fig. 4.40: Fragment of the Balaam text, just lifted from the soil.

At the end of 1967, the text is being shipped to the Netherlands, to be restored and conservated in the laboratories of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. That done, it is being sent back to Amman, where it receives a celebratory welcome and is exhibited in the Archaeological Museum. Four years later the complete text is published by Hoftijzer and van der Kooij (see Sources and literature).

Other results

At the same time, the cleaning of the old squares M, N and O on the east side of the Late Bronze Age temple produces two more clay tablet fragments, one with characters, one with dots. And for the first time inscriptions surface also in the Late Iron Age village layers, four in total. They have been scratched on respectively a potter's rib (a tool potters use to shape bowls), a bowl, a jar and a stone. The last three are written in Aramaic script, as was usual in that period. On the bowl is scratched part of an alphabet. The jar shows the words '(belonging) to Shar'a', and the stone says 'stone of Shar'a'. Shar'a is a name, but it is unclear whether this is the name of a place, a region, a river, a person or a deity. The potter's rib has several characters in an unknown script – another unknown script…

Last excavation season – for now

June 1967 sees the outbreak of the Six Day War between Israel and its Arab neighbours, among which is Jordan. The Jordan Valley becomes a border area and remains under Jordanian military authority for a long time. Archaeological expeditions are not allowed anymore. The Deir Alla expedition will not return until 1976. Fairly soon Franken hands over the directorship of the excavation to his successor Gerrit van der Kooij, and focuses on the research and publication of his many other projects.

5

The story of the inhabitants

Who were the people who resided at Deir Alla, who came to the site and made it their home, who shaped it and put their mark on it? When and why did they arrive there, and why did they leave again? How did they live, did they prosper, what difficulties did they encounter? So many questions, so few answers. Archaeology is a suitable tool to determine when the tell was inhabited, and how. However, figuring out who the inhabitants were, and why they settled here, is much more difficult, let alone what they thought, what their dreams were, what problems they had.

This story of the people of Deir Alla is based on seventeen seasons of excavation at the tell, between 1960 and 2009. Information from regional studies and other excavations in the area have also been used to add depth to the story of this particular place. However, the most important ingredients are historical knowledge and imagination. An archaeologist needs a rich imagination; without it, the story becomes a dry summing up of facts, and does not bring to life the people who created it. Of course the imagination needs to be controlled by scientific rigor and common sense. This chapter will not present Biblical kings, or elevated theories on religion or economy. It is the story of the people of Deir Alla, the farmers, the smiths, the weavers, bakers, and the growers of sugar cane and indigo. Of merchants, priests of the local sanctuary, and nomadic pastoralists. Of peoples who were frightened by earthquakes and fires, who fled, and returned with fear in their hearts. Relatives in mourning, gathering around an open grave on the tell. And of people who finally gave up, could not cope and decided to leave because they could not make a living anymore. Too many enemies? Too little rain? No market for their produce perhaps? We have to guess. One thing is certain, though: the tell continued to attract people again and again, up until today.

Fig. 5.1: Plan of the tell with all the excavated squares up until 2009. Compare to Fig. 2.10.

Farmers in the Chalcolithic Period

About six thousand years ago. An old woman sits on a stone looking out over her small plot of land. Wheat and barley are standing high in the field, almost ready for harvesting; the olive trees are heavy with fruit, and all the pigs, sheep, goats and cows have had many young ones. It has been a good year. Not every year is like this, life can be hard in the valley. Winters are mild, with enough rain to fill the wadis and water the fields. But summers are long, hot and dry. And when the heat comes early, the crops in the fields wither and die.

It is a small village in which the woman lives. A couple of dwellings made with local building materials: walls from sun-dried mudbricks and a flat roof of wooden beams and reeds, covered with clay. The houses are small but comfortable: cool in the summer, warm in the winter. And everything one can possibly need is near at hand: water, trees, clay, reeds. Clay is dug next to the wadis, and from the same clay she makes her pots. Reeds grow by the big river, a few miles walk towards the sunset. Trees grow in the foothills along the valley. There is game that can be hunted, and flint to be knapped for knives and daggers.

Further to the north are a couple of larger villages, where others of the tribe live. Sometimes, at religious feasts, all the tribe members come together. That is the time for gossip and exchange of news, for marriages and the election of chiefs. Chiefs are not wealthier than the other tribe members, they do not have a larger house, or any special privileges. There are no temples. The old woman has heard that there is a great sanctuary across the big river, but she has never been there. There is no need, the gods are everywhere, in the soil, in the caves, in the water and in the wind. You occasionally make them a sacrifice to bring them in a good mood, and sometimes it works, sometimes it does not.

The woman straightens her long woollen gown, and gets up. Time to grind the wheat and bake the bread. The clay bread oven will be hot by now.

The Jordan Valley was relatively densely settled in the Chalcolithic, the period between 4500 and 3000 BC. Several large settlements have been excavated, such as Abu Hamid, some twelve miles north of Deir Alla, and Teleilat Ghassul on the Dead Sea shore. These were agricultural settlements. Agriculture was the main occupation of the villagers, next to copper smithing, weaving, and making flint tools and earthenware vessels.

Close to Deir Alla several small settlements have been found, but they have never been excavated. There may also have been a Chalcolithic settlement on the tell itself: in 1961 Chalcolithic sherds were found at the foot of the hill on which the Late Bronze Age temple was built. Some sherds have also been found in later occupation levels, perhaps brought in with the clay that was used to elevate parts of the tell in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. What the Chalcolithic village of Deir Alla looked like, and exactly when it was occupied, cannot be established, due to lack of information.

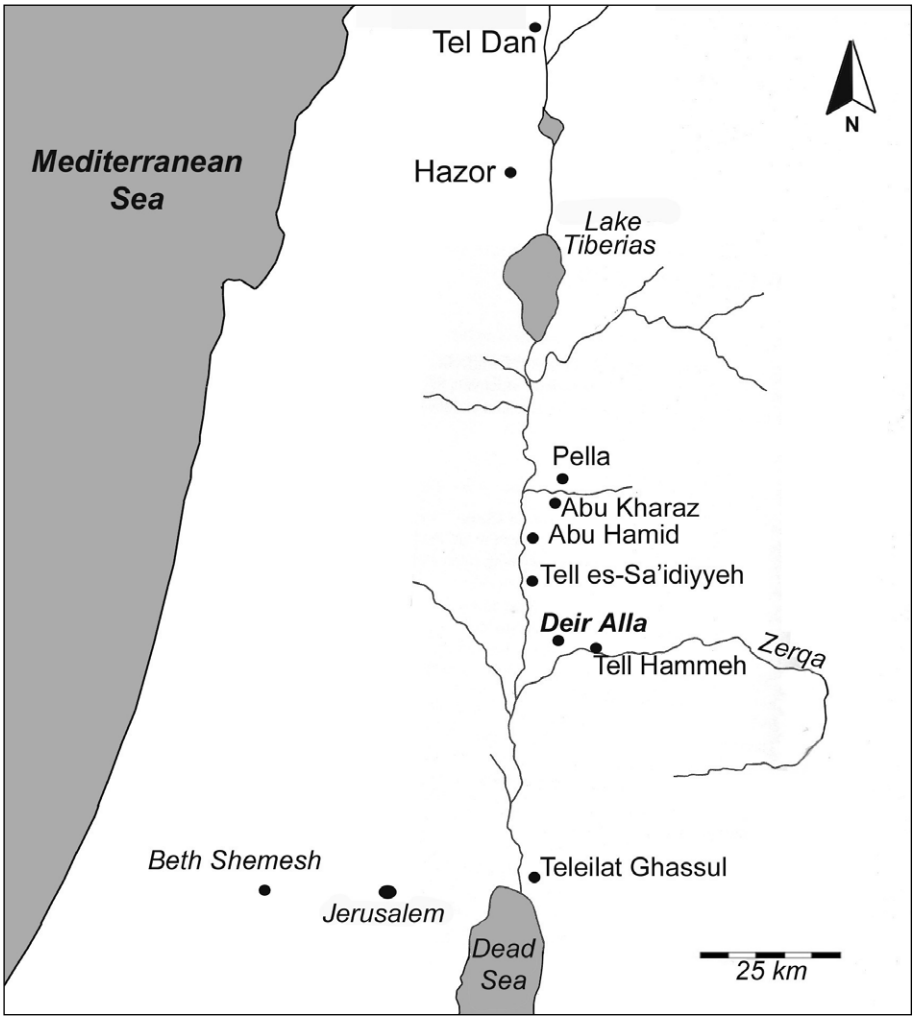

Fig. 5.2: Map of the region with sites mentioned in this chapter.

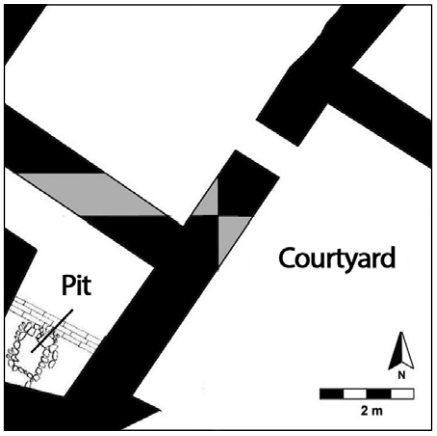

Fig. 5.3: Plan of a Middle Bronze Age building. The pit contained the trident and the spear point.

Trade in the Middle Bronze Age

About 3700 years ago. A man stands on the large earthen rampart that surrounds the town, and looks out over the fields. The bulwark makes him feel safe against potential aggressors that are all around. Farmers from elsewhere who have not been so prosperous, roving tribes and bands, the rulers of the larger city states in the mountains and across the river — all have their greedy eyes on the riches of his small town. He looks around. It is a good town, with spacious dwellings made of mudbrick. The farmers prosper, growing wheat and peas and keeping pigs, cows, sheep and goats. Their fields are surrounded by small streams that flood and irrigate the fields, so they can grow food even when there is no rain.

The traders and artisans of the town are equally doing well. Look, a trade caravan arrives, the goods piled high on the donkeys' backs. The town has regular contact with other towns, and many goods are exchanged: metal objects are traded for wheat and fruits, and gifts are sent from one ruler to another. He knows the bronze skewers and rakes are popular. These are not household utensils, but rather sacred objects that function in temple rituals. After a while they go out of use, and have to be broken to terminate their power. The temple has a pit in which those objects are then thrown, or rather, carefully stored.

The caravan has reached the town and the man walks down to the gate. Time to do business.

In the Middle Bronze Age, between 2000 and 1600 BC, city states started to develop in the Levant: large towns surrounded by a territory that was under their control, and on which they depended for their food. These towns were protected by an earthen rampart with a town wall on top. Smaller towns and villages rarely had bulwarks. Several towns dominated the East Jordan Valley in this period: Pella, Abu Kharaz and Tell es-Sa'idiyeh. It is not clear who ruled over whom, but there is little doubt that competition and power struggles between the rulers of these settlements were common.

Deir Alla in those days was a small town, with a surface of about two hectares. Remains from this period have only been found in a couple of trenches on the southern slope and at the foot of the tell. These remains give an impression of the occupation of the town in 1700 BC. The settlement was built on top of a natural hill, which was about six metres high on the south side, and about nine metres on the north side. In 1978, a large building with one metre wide mudbrick walls has been partly excavated on the south-eastern slope of the tell. The walls still stood to two metres high, and were built on a stone foundation. Inside the building three rooms, surrounding an open courtyard, were partially uncovered. One of these rooms had a separate niche, closed off by a narrow wall, in which a pit was dug which had a stone edge. The pit contained two bronze objects: a decorated trident and a large spear point. Both had been bent to make them unusable. These were ornamental objects, too fine to have been used as weapons. They may have been sacrificial gifts to the local sanctuary, which must have be located close to the pit. Gifts like these have also been found at other sites in the Levant. Elsewhere on the tell other buildings from the Middle Bronze Age were

found, but too little of these has been excavated to get an impression of the layout of the settlement in that period.

It is uncertain whether this town was surrounded by a wall or rampart. It has been suggested that the artificial hill on which the first temple from the Late Bronze Age was built, originally belonged to the town defences. The stone structure that was situated against the temple (see chapter 4) would then have been part of this Middle Bronze town wall. But without further research this presumption is uncertain.

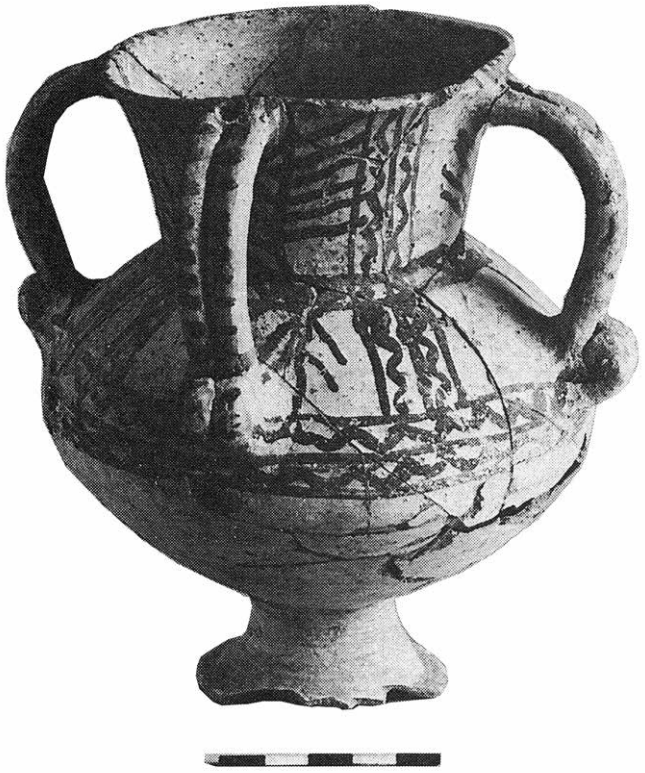

Fig. 5.4: A decorated goblet from the Middle Bronze Age.

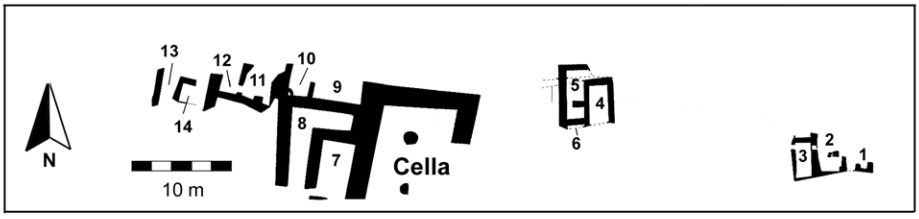

Fig. 5.5: Plan of the temple complex.

Life around the Late Bronze Age temple

About 3200 years ago. Panic. The earth is moving. Villagers run up the hill, to the temple. But the temple itself is shaking too. The building next to it catches fire, and then other buildings do. Another tremor, a house collapses, someone gets trapped under the rubble. People flee the village, to the open plain, devoid of buildings that can catch fire or collapse. Others try to save their belongings and get stuck. A priestess runs into the temple and grabs some of the sacred objects: a votive chalice, the statue of the deity, the copper snake. But it is too dangerous, she has to go back.

The temple, towering over the village, now also catches fire and collapses. The conflagration rages so violently that everybody flees: the priests serving in the temple, traders who have come to seal their contracts, Egyptian officials making sacrifices, farmers who have come to sell their produce in the village, the bronze smiths and potters working in the artisans quarter, and the bakers and weavers in the annexes of the temple.

The fire rages for days, and when it finally dies down there is little left of the once so magnificent temple and the village. Shortly afterwards several of the more courageous villagers return to try and recover some of their valuables from under the rubble. A little later they try to rebuild at least the annexes of the temple. Perhaps in time they may also resurrect the temple itself. But then another earthquake puts a stop to their dreams. The gods have spoken, the people leave. The great temple of Deir Alla will never be restored.

In the course of the Late Bronze Age, between 1600 and 1200 BC, the system of independent city states gradually collapsed. Some cities became very large, such as Hazor in the north of present-day Israel, others lost their town walls and became much smaller. In this period the Middle Kingdom of Egypt was a major power whose influence reached well into the southern Levant. Many of the city states had become subjected to Egypt, and were forced to pay tribute in the form of slaves, gold, silver and local produce. Egypt's influence in the region can also be noticed by other aspects – scarabs, objects made of ivory, gold, silver or faience, building techniques and figurines all show Egyptian features.

This development can also be observed in the East Jordan Valley. The cities of Pella and Abu Kharaz shrunk significantly. Towards the end of the Bronze Age Pella was little more than a village. Tell es-Sa'idiyeh, on the other hand, became more important. It was the Egyptian-style residence of the local governor, who was responsible for the safety of the trade routes. Agrarian produce and aromatics were exported to Egypt; particularly wheat was important for Egypt. Linen and luxury goods, such as stone vessels and scarabs, were imported into the region.

For a while Deir Alla was deserted. Then a new group of people came and settled on the site, on top of the levelled remains from the Middle Bronze Age town. Around 1550 BC they built a temple on the north side of the tell, on an artificial hill, or perhaps on the remains of the Middle Bronze Age rampart. This temple towered over the surrounding buildings, and it was rebuilt a number of times. Somewhere between

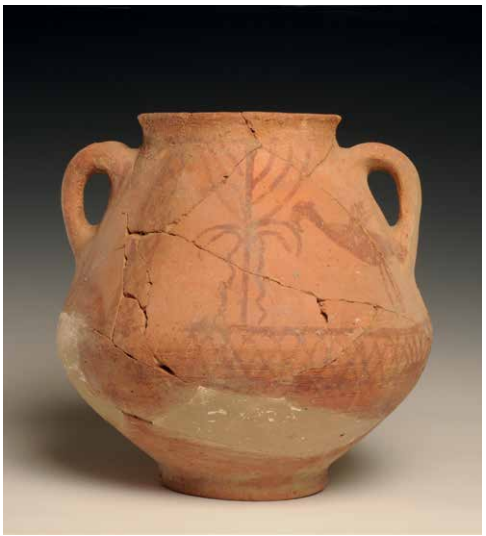

Fig. 5.6: Decorated vessel from room 8. (Photo National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden)

Fig. 5.7: Shrine pot with lid.

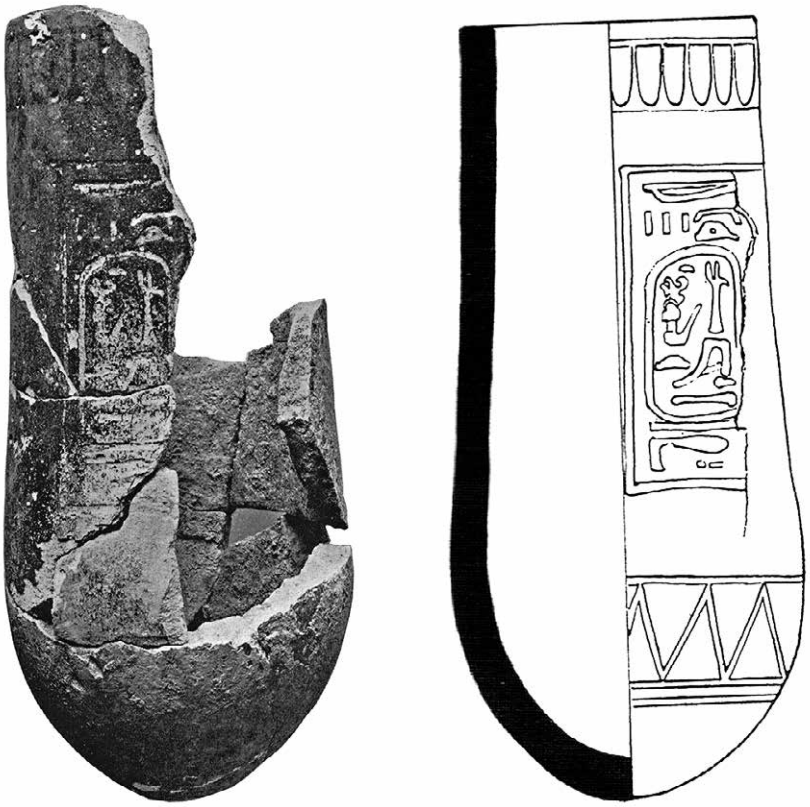

Fig. 5.8: The vase with the cartouche of queen Taousert.

1200 and 1150 BC the last temple was destroyed by an earthquake, which caused a conflagration so fierce that the mudbrick walls were burnt to powder. Remains of the earliest temples (phase A to D) have only been found in two test trenches. Below the first floor of phase A a cache of pottery was found buried there intentionally. Of the latest phase E much more has been excavated: the cella of the temple itself, an open courtyard on the east side, and several annexes both east and west of the cella.

The cella measured eleven by fifteen metres. Because the fire had reduced the mudbrick walls to a red powder, tracing the walls themselves was difficult. Only by following the lines of the powder in the soil it was possible to reconstruct the course of the walls. The entrance of the cella, however, could not be identified with any certainty. According to Franken it must have been on the south side, towards the tell; he assumed that the north side was too steep for an access road. However, the entrance may well have been on the east or west side of the cella, because various annexes were uncovered there. Those on the east side were used to store the ritual paraphernalia used in the temple service, as well as the numerous gifts that were donated to the sanctuary. The rooms on the west side seem to have been mainly in use as domestic quarters, perhaps for the priests and priestesses, or for pilgrims. Particular vessels have been found in all rooms: high-footed chalices, nicely painted jars, and so-called 'shrine pots': closed jars with a 'door' or lid on the side that could be fastened. Jars like these have been found in other sanctuaries as well, particularly in the Jordan Valley. Today their function is still unclear.

Franken assumed that the temple complex was so large that there was no space left on the tell for a settlement. He interpreted the complex as an isolated sanctuary, not connected to a town or village, and used by nomadic tribes who exchanged goods with the Egyptians. It was a trade sanctuary; he pictured caravans loaded with goods meeting in the Deir Alla plains. The merchants sealed their transactions in the temple, which was important enough to attract luxury gifts from far-away lands. The Egyptian queen Taousert, who reigned between 1188 and 1186 BC, consolidated her special bond with the temple by sending a vase with her name on it.

The merchants – and perhaps the rulers from large cities farther away as well – brought gifts which they themselves had acquired from other places: Mycenaean juglets, Syrian cylinder seals, Egyptian scarabs, as well as vessels of stone or faience produced in various places, and hundreds of beads made of faience and semi-precious stones.

When it comes to the quantity of excavated objects, the Deir Alla temple can compete with other large temples in the Levant. Apart from the dozens of luxury gifts to the sanctuary, the cella and the annexes yielded a total of seventy decorated ceremonial vessels, used in the temple rituals. A total of 275 domestic vessels was excavated: bowls, jars and jugs, as well as 265 incomplete pots and large fragments. Altogether 600 vessels were retrieved from the latest phase of the temple alone – and remember that only part of the building has been excavated so far.

To which deity the temple was dedicated, and what rituals were performed, is a matter of speculation. The large number of bowls and cups are suggestive of libation rituals involving wine or water. These libations would have been performed by priests and priestesses. The masses of domestic bowls may have contained offerings of local produce of the land, donated by the local population to appease the deity. Wealthier people brought luxury gifts to the temple. The burning of incense and other aromatic substances will also have played a role in the service.

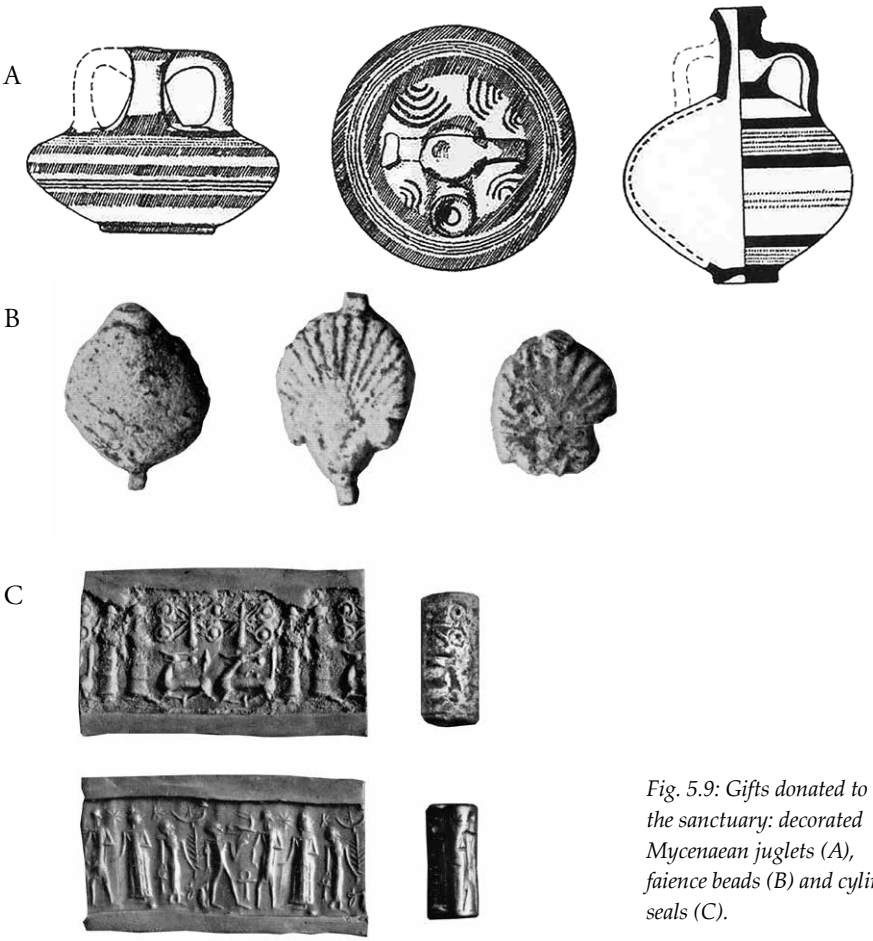

Fig. 5.9: Gifts donated to the sanctuary: decorated Mycenaean juglets (A), faience beads (B) and cylinder seals (C).

When in the 1990s the excavation was extended towards the southern, south-eastern and south-western slopes of the tell, it turned out that Franken's theory could not be right. On the slopes several buildings were found, destroyed by the same earthquake that had destroyed the temple. Therefore the temple was not an isolated building, as Franken had assumed. It was part of a settlement of about three hectares in size in its latest phase. Indications of bronze production and trade have been uncovered in this village. The inhabitants were mostly farmers, working the land adjacent to the village and growing wheat, barley and peas. Bitter vetch was grown for animal fodder. They also kept pigs, cattle, sheep and goats.

A special discovery was made in 1964: three clay tablets inscribed with an unknown script, found in one of the annexes of the temple. In 1967 another fragment of an inscribed tablet was found in another annex. In the later excavations three more inscribed tablets were found in the village on the south slope of the tell. Thus a total of seven inscribed tablets have been excavated, as well as six tablets or parts of tablets with dots, possibly representing an accounting system.

The script has not yet been deciphered; there are not enough characters and lines of characters to make that possible. Experts have suggested similarities with the Phoenician script, as well as with the North Arabian and Cypro-Minoan scripts. It is not clear if the

Fig. 5.10: Inscribed clay tablets (left) and tablets with dots (top right). Bottom right a squashed tablet.

tablets were actually made in Deir Alla. In order to ascertain their origins, it is necessary to analyse the clay from which they were made, and that has not yet been done. One argument in favour of production in Deir Alla itself is the fact that tablets with this script have not been found anywhere else. Two squashed tablets have been found which, according to Franken, must have been compressed when they were made or inscribe. This is another argument for local production of the tablets.

After the earthquake the villagers returned to the tell, in order to try and recover their precious belongings – several deep pits have been found dug through the rubble. Shortly after that, they started to restore some of the buildings west of the collapsed temple, building new walls on top of the destroyed old ones. In some cases villagers simply moved into a ruined building, only repairing the roof. But then a new earthquake put a stop to all these efforts.

The collapse of the economic and social system of the Late Bronze Age, when the Jordan Valley was controlled by the Egyptian Empire, was followed by a period of turmoil. Several groups of people traversed the Jordan Valley, looking for a place to settle down. One of those groups settled at Deir Alla. Where these people came from is not clear. They may have come from the eastern plateau, another area that saw its economic system collapse. Some of the people fleeing the plateau may have found a temporary refuge in the Jordan Valley, at Deir Alla amongst other places. Another possibility is that the new settlers were local nomadic pastoralists looking to settle down. The pottery that they used does not differ much from the vessels that were used in the period of the temple, although the highly decorated pottery is absent. That means that the potters in the region were still plying their trade, making the same pots of the same clay. So the Valley was not deserted; it was just the temple and the village of Deir Alla that were not rebuilt.

Several buildings from this period (which Franken designated the Late Bronze Age phases G and H) have been excavated: buildings with thick walls, possibly a square tower, erected among the ruins of the temple buildings. The new inhabitants barely bothered to level the site, so it is likely they only lived there for a short time. They may have lost the territorial struggle with other groups and moved on.

Bronze smiths in the Early Iron Age

About 3000 years ago. A girl is tending her flock in the valley. The crops have just been harvested from the fields, and now the sheep and goats are feeding on the stubble. Her days tend to be long and lonely, but she does not mind. There are always things to see and do. Her family has erected their tents on the top of the hill. Next to the tents are small sheds, made of mudbrick, mostly used for storage and for cooking. Everybody prefers to sleep in the tents. The village is always busy. The sheep and goats need to be milked daily, and the milk is turned into cheese the same day. Vegetables are preserved, wheat winnowed and ground, clothing and blankets woven. Look, two women are walking down the hill to fetch water from the river that runs next to the hill.

She notices a column of smoke hanging over the top of the hill. The men will be stoking the furnace. It is a large furnace, used to make bronze vessels. Large vessels. After the recent rains they have collected brushwood and dried it, until they had enough to light the fire in the furnace. This morning she has seen the copper and tin bars lying ready. Tonight, when the flock is safely inside, she will go up and look; as always it will be a spectacular sight. Every year her family celebrates the lighting of the furnace with a sacrifice to the gods and a feast. Something to look forward to…

In the Early Iron Age, the period from 1200 to 1000 BC, once again a group of new settlers arrived on the tell. This time it is clear that they came from the eastern plateau: their pottery resembles pottery from that region. They did not build large dwellings or fortifications, but lived in small houses and possibly in tents; postholes from heavy tent poles have been found on various locations on the tell. Franken was convinced these were Bedouin tribes who came to the Jordan Valley in the winter to grow grain on small plots, and to graze their flocks of sheep, goats and cattle. Apart from wheat and barley they also grew peas, flax for its linseed, and bitter vetch for fodder. In summer,

Fig. 5.11: A clay tuyère found next to the bronze furnace.

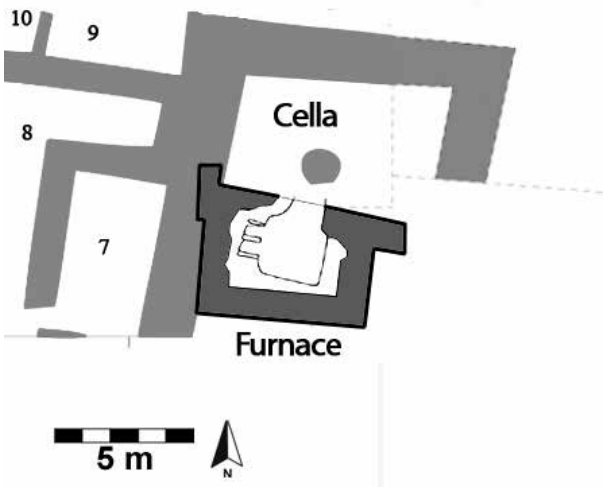

Fig. 5.12: The bronze furnace stood on top of the remains of the Late Bronze Age temple.

when the heat became unbearable, they moved back to the plateau. In excavation squares A to C thin walls and floors have been found, re-laid and rebuilt many times. Reconstructing a plan of these buildings is wrought with difficulties, because the area is cut by many later pits. Altogether a series of occupation layers of some 2.5 metres thick has been assigned to this period (Iron Age phases A-D).

The new settlers may also have made bronze objects on the tell. A very large furnace has been found, which was rebuilt several times. It had a width of between three and four metres, which is enormous when compared to bronze ovens found at other sites from the same period, such as Beth Shemesh and Tel Dan. To the east of the furnace a double mudbrick wall was built. This has been interpreted as part of a (not further excavated) fortification, but it could also have been a protective wall for the furnace. After all, why would a hamlet of huts and tents need fortifications? The furnace could have been used to produce large bronze vessels, such as have been described for the Jerusalem temple: the 'molten sea' from 1 Kings 7 is said to have been five metres in diameter. Keep in mind, though, that in the days of the Deir Alla bronze smiths the Jerusalem temple did not yet exist. It is possible that there have been more furnaces on the tell, which have not been excavated. Close to the furnace a clay tuyère was found, which is a blowpipe for a bellows, used to stoke up the fire. Lower on the hillside Franken found many tiny droplets of bronze.

The furnace was built on top of the old temple complex of the Late Bronze Age. That could mean one of two things. It is possible that even the memory of the temple had been lost by that time, and the sanctity of the place was forgotten. The bronze smiths only saw it as a high spot with remnants of walls, an ideal location to build their furnace. It is also possible that they deliberately chose the location of the old temple; metal production often had a ritual component and has been found regularly near or in temple complexes. If that was the case, the sanctity of the place was still remembered and cherished, even though the temple itself had gone out of use.

It makes a good story, Bedouin wandering into the Valley in winter to tend their flocks, and at the same time working as bronze smiths. It is not impossible; research has shown that Bedouin tribes were involved in copper production in the Negev and the Wadi Arabah. On the other hand, this theory poses several problems. One expert has pointed out that bronze casting cannot be done in winter, because it is too wet in that season. Franken's diaries already make clear that at Deir Alla winters are cold and wet, with lots of rain and strong winds. It is certainly not a good time of year to construct an open-air clay furnace and build a large fire. In more recent times potters and smiths in the Valley made their products in spring or autumn, when it is not too wet, but not yet too hot. If the bronze smiths of Deir Alla used their furnaces in the early spring, after the winter rains and before they moved back into the hills, they only had a short period to ply their trade.

A second problem concerns the market for their enormous bronze vessels. Who bought these special products, in a period in which there were no large city states ruled by powerful kings, and no rich temples? Local farmers will have had their small share of bronze juglets and jewellery, but a bronze bowl of several meters in diameter…

It is a pity that so few remains have been found in connection with the furnaces, which could have enlightened us of what was really going on. A tuyère and some droplets of bronze – it is a bit meagre for such a large undertaking. Compare this to the iron production that took place at Tell el-Hammeh in the Zerqa Valley, a few miles away from Deir Alla, and also excavated by Leiden University. During that excavation several smaller iron furnaces have been uncovered, which were surrounded by about three hundred fragments of tuyères and hundreds of lumps of iron slag. It is possible that the furnaces of Deir Alla were not used for bronze production at all, but no traces have been found to indicate what other function these ovens might have had. It was arguably not a potter's kiln, because these are usually surrounded by heaps of wasters and stores of clay.

The period of the bronze smiths was possibly terminated by another earthquake. A giant crack ran through the highest occupation layers of the tell, inside which were found parts of a human skeleton. After this earthquake the tell was again deserted for a short period of time.

A village on the crossroads

About 2800 years ago. A weary traveller lets himself down on a stone after a long journey. He is close to his destination. For days he has been walking, and now he can see the hill towering in the distance, with mudbrick houses on top. He has heard of the sanctuary on that hill, a small room with the dreams of a prophet written on the walls. Whoever spends the night in that room is in the presence of the gods. Of El, of Ashtar, and of the great goddess Shagar. And like the prophet, he will receive dreams of great importance. The gods will tell him about their plans, their expectations – at least, according to the stories that circulate in the region.

Now that the man has almost reached the end of his life, he wants to know what the gods have in store for him, and for the world in general. So he made a long journey to this place of dreams. He looks around him. It is a fertile region; fields with wheat and pulses, a river full of fish, orchards with fig and pomegranate trees, vineyards. In the distance a flock of goats.

He is not the only one going to the village. He has met merchants, their donkeys loaded with basalt mill stones, woven cloth of wool, linen and flax, and the produce of the land. People pass the village on their way to the big river in the west, to the ford where it can be crossed. And they travel a steep road through the mountains to the high plateau in the east, where the large cities are.

He gets up. It will be evening soon, and it is time to find his sleeping place: the small sanctuary that carries the name of that great seer: Balaam, son of Beor.

The Late Iron Age, the period from 1000 to 400 BC, saw the rise of new states. Apart from Israel and Judah there were the kingdoms of Ammon, Moab and Edom in present day Jordan, several Aramaic kingdoms in present-day Syria, as well as the Phoenician and Philistine city states along the coast. New towns and villages sprang up everywhere, in the Jordan Valley too. Gilead, the region in which Deir Alla lies, was part of the kingdom of Israel for a long time.

At Deir Alla, the huts of the bronze smiths were succeeded by a very different kind of settlement. Deir Alla became a village again, with a settled population living there all year round. The dwellings were sturdier, and built along a different alignment than those of their predecessors. There were differences in the way pottery was produced as well. A thick series of occupation layers has been found at the north side of the tell, in the large trench D that was dug between 1960 and 1964. In later years, a large area to the east of this trench has been excavated, in which mainly Iron Age occupation was found. Franken numbered his occupation layers from the Late Iron Age from bottom to top, from phases E (bottom) to phase M (top). However, later expeditions, working higher up the tell, started numbering the layers from top to bottom, starting with phase II (top) down to phase IX. Phase IX coincides with Franken's Phase M.

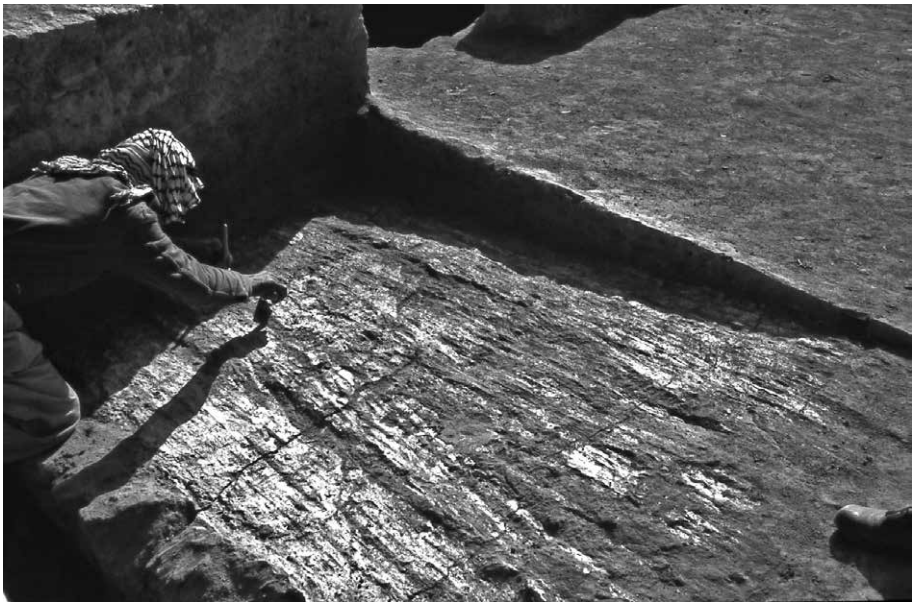

Fig. 5.13: Reed mats found in the streets.

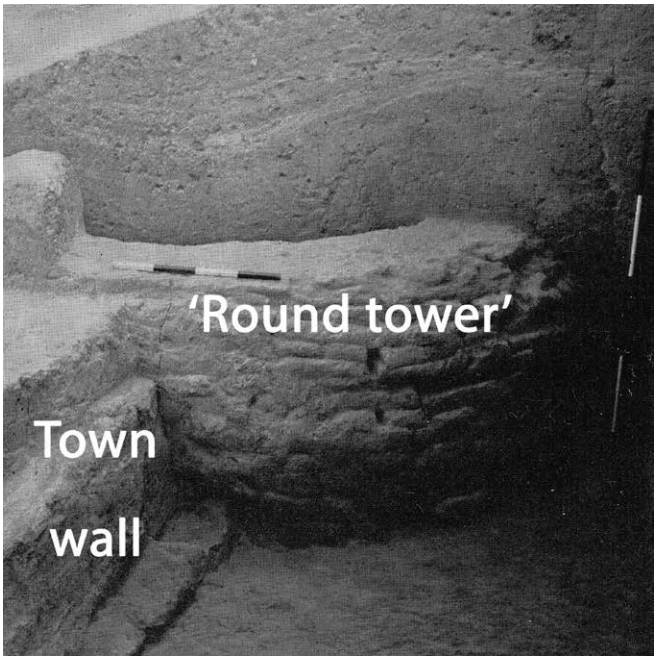

Fig. 5.14: the 'town wall' and 'round tower' of Phase K.

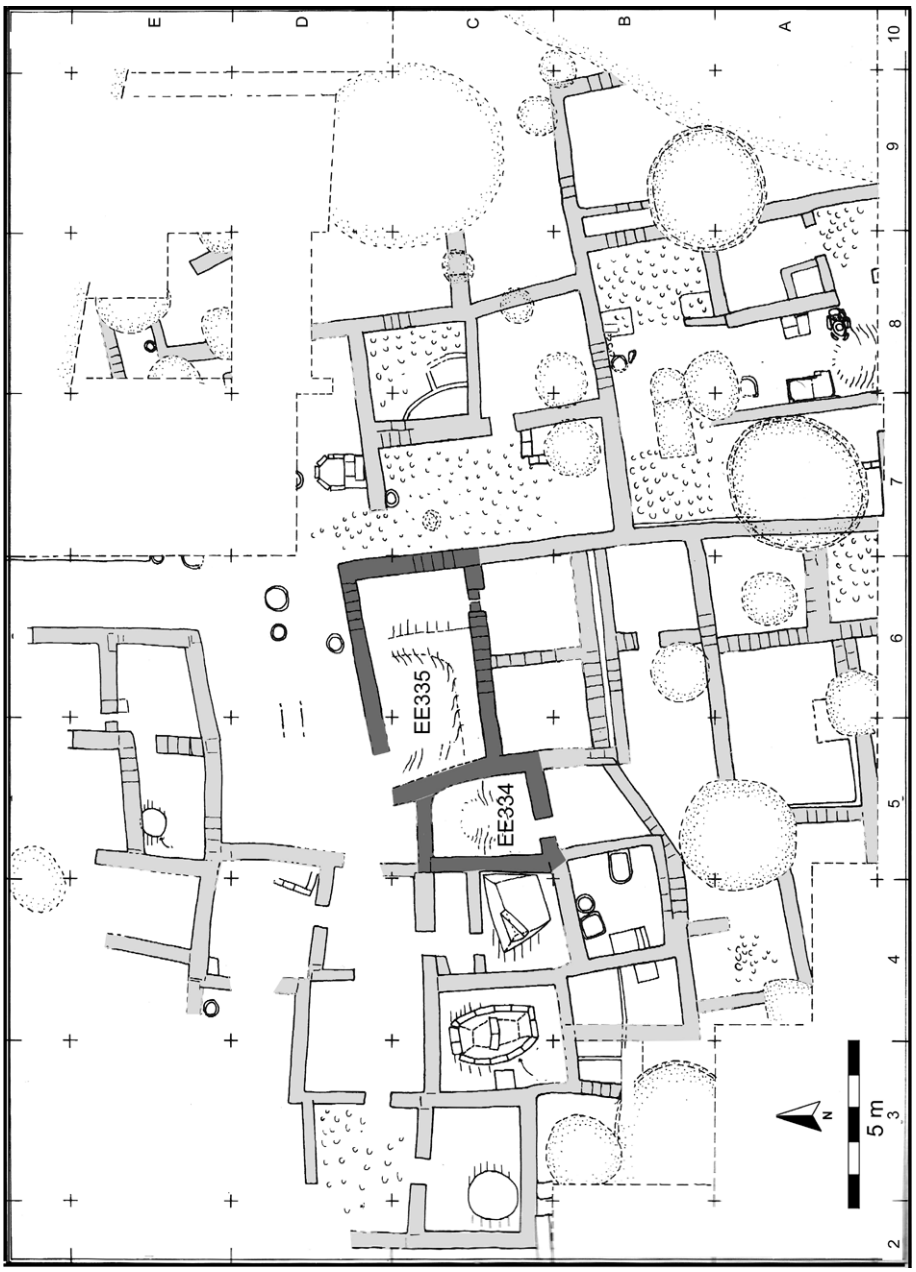

Fig. 5.15: Plan of the buildings of phase M / IX. The Balaam text was found in rooms EE334 and EE335.

Phase E to L

The beginning of phase E can be dated to ca 1100 BC, and the end of Phase L to ca 900 BC. That means that this village existed for about two centuries. A six-metre-high series of occupation layers has been found belonging to these phases. This layer is so thick because the villagers had to rebuild their homes regularly. The most important reason for this was erosion by rain and wind. Dwellings made of sun-dried mudbrick are vulnerable. The walls and the flat roofs need to be covered with clay plaster time and again to prevent the clay from washing off or being eroded by the wind. And however meticulous you keep up the walls, a heavy shower can still cause your house to collapse. On top of that people used to sweep the dirt from their houses onto the streets, which thus rose higher and higher over time. Then rainwater flowing through the streets would enter the houses or undermine the foundations. The houses had to be constantly maintained, the floors raised, and walls rebuilt. As a result, the tell rose higher and higher very quickly. Evidence of how serious this situation could be can be seen in the efforts of the villagers to keep the streets usable. In many streets layers of reed have been found, possibly the remains of reed mats, that were supposed to absorb the mud and keep the streets walkable.

In phase K a 'tower' was found. In his preliminary report of 1960, Franken interpreted this structure as part of the town wall (chapter 4). In a later stage he rejected the idea of there being a town wall, but not the notion of the tower, and he assumed that this building was part of the town gate. The prevailing literature had already adopted the idea of a town wall in phase K with a tower as part of the fortifications. However, the wall of this 'tower' was no thicker than those of the surrounding houses, and its base was dug deep into the older layers, as deep as phase F, some 3.5 metres below phase K. On the other hand, in Phase L, just above phase K, the tower had disappeared. So it was deep, but obviously not very high, and it was certainly not massive. It is far more likely that this was a silo, dug into the ground, rather than a tower. This silo would have had a diameter of about five metres, and an edge strengthened with mudbricks. This is not an unusual construction for Iron Age silos.

Phase M (IX)

Much more is known of phase M than of the previous phases, because phase M was destroyed by an earthquake, around 800 BC. Because of that large amounts of material have been preserved. Much of the excavation seasons since 1976 has been dedicated to excavating this village. This makes it possible to give an overview of the life of the villagers, and their relations to the rest of the world.

The most spectacular find of this phase was discovered in 1967, when parts of the Balaam inscription were excavated (chapter 4). The fragments consisted of white lime plaster inscribed with black ink, with red lines framing the text. They have been found in rooms EE334 and EE335, both of which formed part of a larger complex. It is likely that the text was written on the west wall of room EE335. When the building collapsed as a result of the earthquake, the top of this wall fell to the west, into room EE334. The fragments of text found here form the beginning of the inscription, known as Combination I. The bottom part fell to the other side, into room EE335 (Combination II).

Fig. 5.16: Combination I, the beginning of the text. (Photo Deir Alla Project)

Fig. 5.17: The writer had forgotten a word in the first line of the text, a mistake he corrected by writing it above the line. (Photo Deir Alla Project)

The discussion on the function of this building is far from over. Was it a small temple, or rather a sacred space where one received dreams from the gods? Was it a classroom for the teaching of writing, as some scholars think? It has even been suggested (seriously, and by renowned experts) that it was a meeting place for local prophets.

The challenge to organise over a hundred fragments of text in the correct order was enormous, but in the end most of the text could be reconstructed. The two combinations I and II both contain a coherent story. There still are quite a few isolated fragments with parts of sentences and separate words. The text is written in black ink, with a frame of red lines. Some words have been written in red ink as well, and one fragment has an image of a sphinx.

According to professor Jacob Hoftijzer, who has published the text together with Gerrit van der Kooij, the text has been written in what can best be described as a local dialect of Aramaic, the language that was commonly spoken in the Aramaic states to the north of Deir Alla. However, Deir Alla itself was located in Gilead, the region that was part of Israel according to the biblical texts, and where, it has always been assumed, people spoke Hebrew. That is why some scholars still insist that the text has been written in Old Hebrew. Or Canaanite. Or Ammonite.

As stated above, two major combinations have been reconstructed. Combination I tells the story of Balaam's dream. The goddess Shagar wants to punish the people (it is not clear what for) and asks permission from the 'assembly of the Shadday-gods', presided over by the god El. The gods allow certain punishments; Shagar is allowed to break the bolts of heaven (unleash storm, thunder and rain), but not for too long. She is also allowed to disrupt the world order: the swift will mock the eagle, the deaf will hear from afar, a poor woman will prepare a costly myrrh ointment for herself, and pupils will mock the wise. There will also be a drought: where now the sheep are grazing, hares will eat the grass. The world order will be reversed, chaos will rule.

Combination II consists of less coherent fragments, and mainly contains curses. *'You will be on your death bed…'* and '*no one will counsel you when you need advice'.* It talks about '*a house where no traveller will enter'* and about death snatching a baby.[27]

Apart from the building complex in which the Balaam text was found, the village included also several other houses, perhaps better described as farmsteads. These dwellings consisted of several rooms around a courtyard. So many loom weights used in weaving looms (more than 650) have been found that certainly there must have been some form of commercial weaving activities. Grinding stones, cooking pots, storage jars and bread ovens were among the other finds.

All in all about fifteen dwellings have been uncovered, but there must have been more, as only part of the tell has been excavated. It was a prosperous village, situated on the intersection of several trade routes. Imported were grinding stones from north Jordan or south Syria, while textiles woven in the village were sold on the local markets and beyond. These textiles were made of wool and (coarse) linen; interestingly enough threads and snippets of cloth made of hemp have been found as well, which crop was probably cultivated nearby.

27 More about the importance of this text in Steiner 2019.

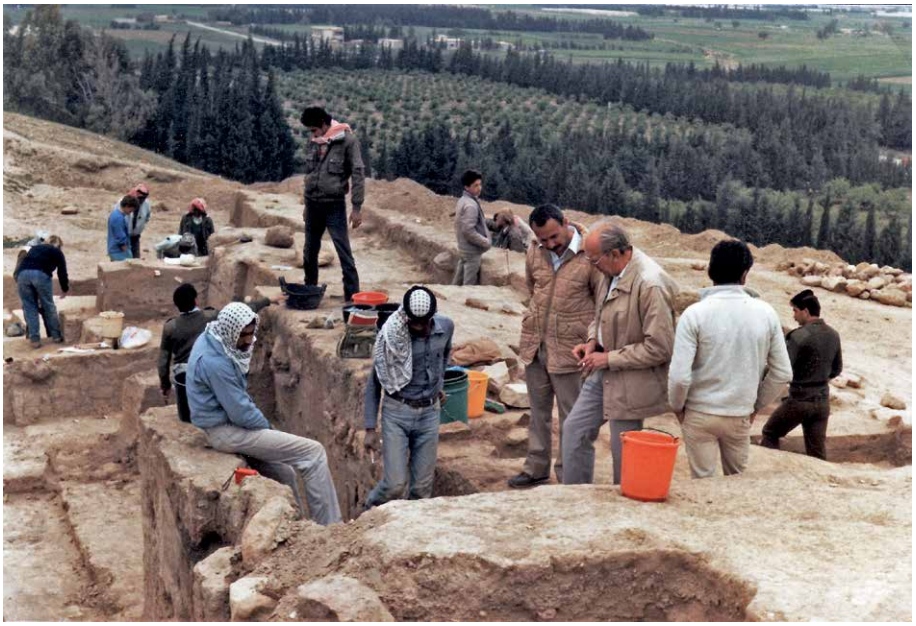

Fig. 5.18: Henk Franken visits the excavation in 1987. (Photo Margreet Steiner)

The farmers, just like their predecessors, cultivated wheat and barley, peas and bitter vetch, as well as lentils, flax, figs, grapes and pomegranates. They also had cattle, sheep and goats, but no pig bones have been found.

Phase VIII – II

After the Phase IX village had been destroyed by an earthquake, people rebuilt their village. Unfortunately, little has been found from these later phases VIII and VII, largely due to the building activities of new villagers in phase VI, who came to live on the tell around 650 BC. They levelled the ruins from the previous occupation phases, and built a new village with houses made of sturdy mudbrick walls on stone foundations. On the north side of the tell a large mudbrick wall was found of almost 1.5 metres wide. Some 2.5 metres north of it another wall was built, with a stone foundation, but this wall had been eroded away until only the foundations remained. These walls may have been part of a defence system (a casemate wall), that has only been traced over a length of about twenty metres. The village or small town was destroyed by a conflagration.

In the centuries that followed the tell remained settled. The excavated area shows an alternation of dwellings and open spaces in which cattle was kept. The end of the occupation can be dated to about 400 BC, the end of the Persian period. It is possible that the tell was still occupied after this, but due to the heavy erosion of the top layers nothing survived of these later occupation layers.

Mourning on the tell

About 500 years ago. A group of people stands together on the tell, silently. They have just buried a woman. She is somebody's daughter, mother, sister, neighbour, and lived in the village next to the tell. This morning she passed away, after a long illness; in the afternoon her family members and neighbours have enshrouded her in a sheet, carried her body to the tell and put her in a grave. Then they filled up the grave and put a stone at she side where her head was lying. The woman is wearing her best jewellery: bracelets, earrings and finger rings of bronze, silver, iron and glass. Slowly the mourners walk back. The deceased stays behind, surrounded by the other dead from the village, and from the villages nearby. The tell has become a cemetery.

The period from circa AD 1200 to 1550 (the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods) was a time of economic prosperity in the Jordan Valley. The Crusaders had left the area, and the region had a stable government with its seat first in Damascus, later in Cairo. The Jordan Valley was in the hands of a few major landowners who were ready to invest in the region, the Sultan of Cairo among them. They built roads, villages, irrigation channels and water mills. And they brought people in to work the land. New crops were introduced: indigo, dates, bananas, radishes, but above all sugar cane. Sugar was a popular product, which made a good price. It was exported to Egypt, to southern Europe, even to Britain.

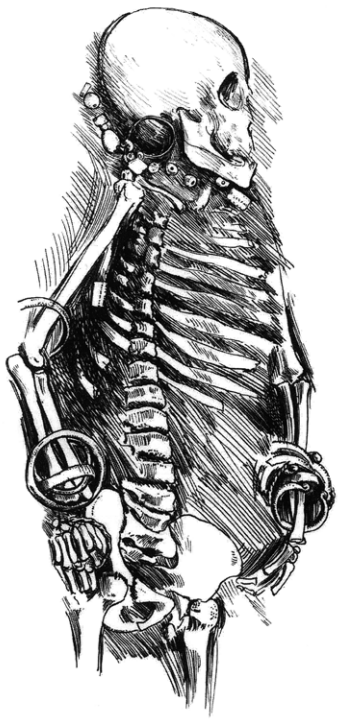

Fig. 5.19: Drawing of a burial, made by Terry Ball.

The region in which Tell Deir Alla was located, was one of its production centres; everywhere villages sprang up that lived from agriculture. The farmers grew the new crops, either commissioned by the landowners, or on their own initiative. The tell itself was not inhabited, the villages stood on lower hills, perhaps because it was closer to the fields and made it easier to guard them. The tell had become a cemetery. During the first five excavation seasons of the Dutch expedition, in the years 1960-1967, 453 burials have been excavated, particularly in squares A-C, but also on the northern slope, in trench D. After 1976, several dozens of graves have been found during the excavations on the top of the tell. The grave goods found in the burials have been collected for study, while the bones have been reburied at the foot of the tell. The dead did not carry much: most of the finds are items of jewellery. The graves themselves were oriented east-west, and the bodies were lying on their side, their head towards the west, facing south. This is typical of Islamic burials.

In the fifteenth or sixteenth century the prosperity of the Jordan Valley came to an end. Large landowners neglected their lands, innovations

stalled, roads and irrigation channels were not kept up. On top of that, sugar from the New World became popular, which was cheaper because it was produced by slaves. The sugar production in the Levant deteriorated and eventually stopped, and the Valley became depopulated. Only Bedouin could still be found roaming the Valley in winter with their flocks.
All in all, Tell Deir Alla knows an occupation history lasting for about 1300 years, from around 1700 BC to 400 BC. Alternately the site was a village, a small town, a temple complex, a base for nomads, and a village again. Later it became a cemetery, which was in use for several hundred years.

It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that new groups of people came to the East Jordan Valley: Palestinian refugees, from the other side of the Jordan. Again the area was being cultivated, this time by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Roads, villages, irrigation channels, bridges, new crops; it was a modern repetition of what had happened in the thirteenth century. A new village sprang up at the foot of Deir Alla, and the dead were again buried on the tell, this time on its south slope, next to the mosque.

Finally, the excavations that took place between 1960 and 2009 brought new visitors to the tell: scholars and tourists. One may conclude that this special place has been attracting and inspiring people for almost four thousand years.

Afb. 5.20: Tell Deir Alla in 1990. (Photo Margreet Steiner)

Epilogue

The first large publication of the Deir Alla project appeared in 1969. It contained an extensive analysis of all the Iron Age pottery that had been excavated between 1960 and 1963. The report, written by Franken and Kalsbeek, focused on the technological development of the material: how was it made, what clays were used, what were the activities of the potter, and why were the vessels made in this way, and not differently? Not only did the authors describe the pottery, they also tried to explain the shapes made and techniques used, by looking at the potter's trade.

The book immediately attracted a lot of attention. It was a totally new approach: a publication that did not focus on the history of the excavated site and its possible relationship with the Bible, but that was concerned with the humble sherds found there. Its reception was mixed, however. While some archaeologists were full of praise and saw this new method as the way forward, others criticised the time consuming methods of excavation and pottery research, and the lack of comparative studies: how can you place a site in its regional context if you do not compare it to the other sites in the region? How can you date occupation layers if you do not compare the pottery with that of other sites nearby? Franken had indeed spent few words on the dating of Deir Alla and on its function in the region, which is still seen as a weakness of his approach. In his later publications he paid more attention to these aspects.

Even though Franken was not directly involved with the excavation of Deir Alla after 1979, he retained a major influence on the archaeology of Palestine. In 1981, the Institute of Pottery Technology was set up at Leiden University. Here he developed the methods for pottery analysis which he had started in Deir Alla, and researched excavated collections from Europe, the Middle East and South and Middle America. This approach is now known as the 'Leiden school' or 'Leiden method' and is recognised all over the archaeological world.

When his tutor Kathleen Kenyon died in 1979, much of her archaeological projects had not or only partly been published. Franken received a proposal by the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem to publish the pottery of her excavations in Jerusalem. He gladly accepted this flattering request, but only if he could also study the stratigraphy and phasing, because he knew that pottery should not be separated from the occupation layers in which it was found. His experience with the Wheeler-Kenyon method came him in good stead. Together with Margreet Steiner, he spent much of his time from 1980 onwards on this Jerusalem-research, which resulted in several publications. His latest book on the pottery of this city appeared shortly after his

The burial from Jericho on display in the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. (Photo National Museum of Antiquities)

death in 2005. Franken's legacy does not only consist of creative visions and innovating methods. During his fieldwork in Jericho as well as at Tell Deir Alla, Franken purchased important archaeological collections for Leiden University and for the National Museum of Antiquities, such as a burial from Jericho in 1958, for which he paid £700 including transport.

For many years, students from Dutch universities were given the opportunity to do field work at Tell Deir Alla, and many (foreign) students, archaeologists and the interested public may admire the study and museum collections for which Franken laid the foundations.

In short, Henk Franken was right when he predicted, in a Memorandum to the curators of the University in 1959, that the Deir Alla expedition would greatly benefit Leiden.

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Digging up the Bible?

THE EXCAVATIONS AT TELL DEIR ALLA (1960-1967)

This is the account of a remarkable excavation. It started with a modest dig on an unremarkable tell in Jordan. The name of the tell does not occur in the Bible, and no ancient town of any importance was to be expected under the rubble. The excavator Henk Franken had not yet made a name for himself within the archaeological community.

And yet, from 1960 onwards history was being (re)written at Tell Deir Alla. To discover the secrets of the tell, the expedition team defied cold, rain and stormy winds for months on end, sleeping in rattling tents and working long days on the tell and in the camp. And with success! A meticulous yet efficient excavation method was introduced, the already tenuous relationship between Bible and archaeology was further exacerbated, and the study of excavated pottery was given a scientific basis. The name Deir Alla became an international benchmark for modern scientific research, for prompt publication of the remarkable finds and for independent interpretation of the excavation results.

The story of the excavations at Tell Deir Alla in the 1960s have never been told in any detail, and the excavation results have mostly been published in scholarly books and journals which are difficult to access. This book hopes to remedy that. It recounts the story of the first ten years of the project, from 1959 when funding for the project was sought, until 1969 when the first report was published. The first section describes the organization of the project before the expedition team went out into the field. The second part takes the reader to the actual field work and describes the occupation history of the tell. The story is illustrated by numerous photographs and plans, many of which are being published for the first time.

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