

EXCAVATIONS AT TELL DEIR 'ALLA, SEASON 1982

by
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and
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Introduction

The fieldwork at Deir 'Alla continued in 1982 after a break of more than three years. The excavations were carried out by the joint expedition of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, the Leiden University (Holland) and, for the first time, the Yarmouk University, from 15 November till 20 December. For the more recent previous work at Deir 'Alla, refer to the preliminary reports in *ADAJ*, XXII, (1977/78) p. 57-80, and *ADAJ*, XXIII (1979) p. 41-50. The short, intermediate, season was necessary in order to finish the work on the top phases in the digging area, and to prepare the excavation of phase M (IX), see below, in the following major seasons.

For this season's and future work at Deir 'Alla, we are in the fortunate position of having a "dighouse", or, more appropriately an "Archaeological Research Station" at our disposal. The building is placed at the S.W. foot of the *tell* and has all the necessary lodging facilities as well as space for much of the work associated with fieldwork. Apart from that, a small permanent exhibition concerning the archaeology at Deir 'Alla and its surroundings will be organised for the interested visitor. The architecture of the house — originally sketched by Mrs. Susan Balderstone — was fully designed by the building department of the Yarmouk University, headed by Mr. R. Nijim. The contractor, Mr. M. Halbony, had a hard job, but the result is excellent (pl. CXXXIV, 1; the white building more to the right). The finances for the building as well as for furnishing the station came from the three parties co-operating in the archaeological work at Deir 'Alla. In this respect it is important for us to express here our deep gratitude to Dr. Adnan Hadidi, Director-General of

the Department of Antiquities, to Dr. Adnan Badran, the President of the Yarmouk University, and to Dr. Dick P. den Os, Director General of the University of Leiden with Mr. Wim F. H. Verver, Director of the Faculty of Arts and Literature. Several other people have to be gratefully mentioned because of their importance during the different stages of preparation for the foundation, especially Mr. Raouf S. Abujaber, Hon. Consul General of the Netherlands in Amman, and Mr. Sami Habayeb. December 15, 1982 the building was officially opened. This was done by H. R. H. Crown Prince Hassan, accompanied by H. R. H. Princess Alia. We are very thankful to him for this, and for his stimulating interest in the work at Deir 'Alla. The building received the official name "Deir 'Alla Station for Archaeological Study" and during this season it has already proved to be of invaluable importance for our work at the site.

The finances for the expedition came from the three parties involved. Apart from that some equipment was again put at our disposal by the Netherlands Organization for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.).

The team consisted of Jordanian and Dutch members, and two British citizens on a voluntary basis. Dr. Moawiyah Ibrahim and Dr. Gerrit van der Kooij were the directors. Field supervisors were: Mr. Tom Deas (London, square B/A5), Mr. Mohammed Derwish (DAJ sq. B/A9), Mr. Ibrahim Haj Hassan (DAJ, sq. B/A7, 8), Mr. Mohammed Jamarah (DAJ, sq. B/B9 and C9), Dr. Zaidan Kafafi (Yarmouk U., sq. B/C8), Mr. Edward LaGro (Leiden U., sq. B/6), Mr. Steven Moors (L.U., sq. B/A6), Mr. Nabil Qadi (Y.U., sq. B/B7, 8), Miss Margreet Steiner

(L.U., B/C7). Housekeeping and administration: Miss Karin Braanker (L.U.), Mr. Faez Tarawneh (Y.U.) for surveying and restoration. Photography and drawing was taken care of by Mr. Hubert de Haas (Y.U.) and also by the two volunteers from London Mr. Tom Deas (drawing) and Mrs. Rita Deas-Wüthrich (photography). Chief cook was Abu Aref. Driver Rasras (Y.U.) was permanently available. Specialised foremen were: Ali Abdulrasul, Khamis Mohammad, Sadik Abdullah and Hassan et-Tayyib all from Amman — as well as Amin Kanaan, Gemil Kanaan and Ahmed Hawamdeh from Deir ʿAlla. All the other people involved in the dig came from Deir ʿAlla. Gratitude should be expressed here to all the people mentioned, and especially to many of them for their willingness to help in preparing the furniture of the house during the beginning of our stay. The co-operation between the different parties and different nationalities again was felt as a good and stimulating working principle. This was also due to the interest and support we got from Dr. Adnan Hadidi, Dr. Adnan Badran, and Dr. Henk Franken, the Director of the Institute for Archaeology of Palestine and surroundings at the Leiden University.

The Archaeological Work

Rescue Work

Apart from the excavation some rescue work was done. Weather erosion, but also some bulldozer work had done some damage to the site. On the other hand, in this way something new was seen as well. So it became clear that at the E.N.E. foot of the *tell* a high terrace (at least 3.00 m.) was built, apparently in order to extend the natural hill, by dumping clay.¹ This happened according to pottery indications at the beginning of the LB period.

At the S.S.W. foot of the *tell* cross sections of two or three fire chambers of ovens were visible. Their precise function

and period of use are still undetermined.

At a few places water erosion had excavated some complete or almost complete pots. They were saved and their contents recorded. See (Pl. CXXXIV, 2) for a nice example, a cooking pot, supposedly from the end of the MB period (reg. nr. 2764).

Excavations

The excavations were limited to the top of the *tell* and included three aims, which were more or less accomplished:

- 1) The almost complete removal of the partly or almost completely standing baulks (often with steps) between most of the squares. The baulks are part of the squares which were to their E. or N. side. This work was done in squares B/A5, 6, 7, 8, 9, B/B6, 7, 8, 9, B/C7, 9. (For the locations of the squares see previous reports in *ADAJ*, XXII & XXIII.) The baulks varied in width: most were 0.50 to 1.00 m. some 1.50 m. They, of course, had to be excavated in a careful way — The last check of the stratigraphy being removed. No important changes in the previous reconstructions of the phasing was necessary, but some details in the sections had to be redrawn.
- 2) Excavating deeper in some squares, so as to be as close to phase IX (M) as in other squares. This was done especially in squares B/A5, 6 and B/C9. For a description of the results see the phase description below.
- 3) In three squares (B/B6, B/C7, 8) the excavations went deeper. There the top of the burnt and well-preserved phase IX had to be touched and some of this phase had to be unearthed. The squares were bordering at the S. and E. sides of B/C6 where the phase was already largely excavated. In this way it became clear how phase IX continues to the S. and E. Its level, for example, was higher to the E. than elsewhere. (For further results, see below).

¹ Cf. the results of the previous excavations (1962, 1964) at the LB sanctuary area (see e.g., H. J.

Franken, *Excavations at Tell Deir ʿAlla I*, 1969, p. 19).

Results

The results of the excavations are perhaps best referred to by a preliminary description of some of the new data according to the phases distinguished. For the phasing system see *ADAJ*, XXII, p. 64; for descriptions of the phases see *ibid.* p. 71-73 and *ADAJ*, XXIII, p. 42-50. The phasing still is a complicated matter since the stratigraphy has a complex character because of the extensive digging which took place on the site, in this area, after phase VIII. Here preliminary reconstructions of the successive use of the site are maintained. Some changes concerning phase attributions of deposits are given, but definitive conclusions have to await the final publication of the top phases.

From the top the following phases were identified:

Phase I

The early Islamic graveyard at the top of the tell was hardly touched. Small parts of burial pits had been left in the baulks and excavated.

Phase II

Some parts of the characteristic pits of this phase had been left in the baulks. They were excavated. In several cases it did not become clear whether a pit had to be attributed to phase II or the preceding phase III. There the top-soil was too disturbed to give a stratigraphical clue. Some more digging was done in the very large pit B/A10.2,6. At a depth of 3.00 m. its bottom has not yet been reached. A very interesting find in it is a damaged chart model of clay (reg. nr. 2752, see Pl. CXXXIV, 3), recognisable from the remnants of the holes for two axes at the bottom.

Phase III

The scanty stone remains of some walls as described in previous reports are the clearest remnants of this phase, but some refuse pits and wash layers can also be attributed to it. In one of them (B/

A7.8) an unusual type of figurine, a man's head (reg. nr. 2742, see Pl. CXXV, 1 and Fig. 1:1), was found. It was pierced at the back of the head, apparently in order to keep separate hair or a hat separate. Pit B/B6.98, 99 in the N. E. corner of B/B6, belongs to phase II or III. It measured 2.00 m. deep and 1.50 m. wide (in the middle), and especially important from its contents is a wide variety of small bones, which will be studied together with all the other faunal remains and with the floral remains at the Biological-Archaeological Institute at Groningen.

Phase IV

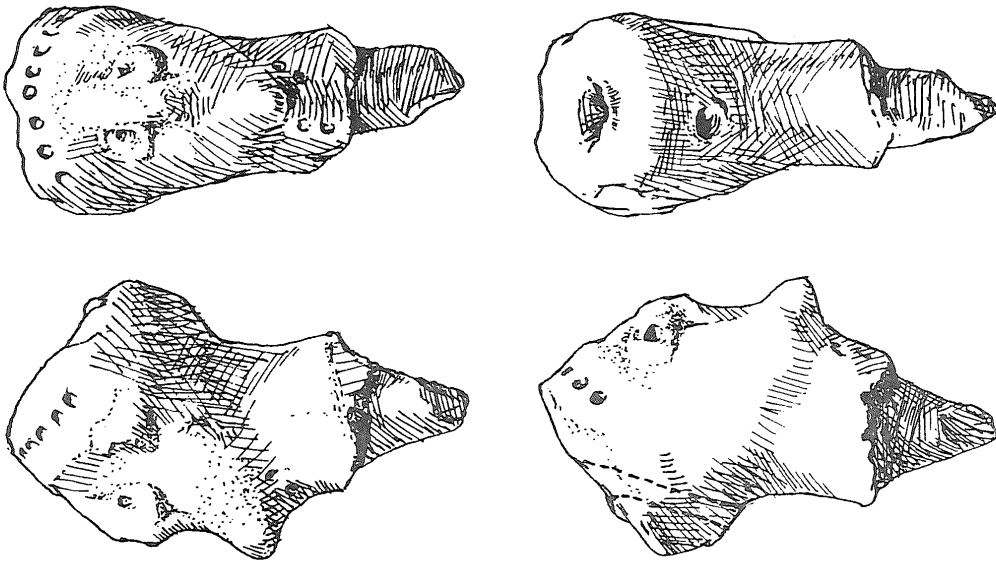
Some more removing was done of the "courtyard layers" of this phase, especially in the baulks of B/A8 and 9. Especially noteworthy is the small bronze Osiris statue (nr. 2777, see Pl. CXXV, 2 and Fig. 1: 2) from B/A9.3 which is the earlier part of the accumulation. The type is known, also from Palestine (Askelon collection, *QDAP*, V 1936 p. 61-68, but the two loops are rare — one at the back and one at the side of the right foot — especially in combination with the foot pin).²

Phase V

It became clear this season that the following features may be taken as the beginning of phase V, or as a separate phase. On top of the wash layers of phase V/VI some accumulation of courtyard layers had occurred before the building of phase V walls had started. Apart from that several silo pits were dug during the same time. They were often found filled with some kind of plant material. The existence of those pits was unknown to the builders of the phase V walls, because they placed their walls over several of them and the destruction of the walls was clearly due to sinking into the pits filled with "soft" (uncompressed) soil. One of the pits concerned was B/A5.71, and a very elongated narrow bottle (reg. nr. 2735, see Pl. CXXV, 3) was found in it. The same type of bottle, which had been found quite often in Transjordan, had come from two

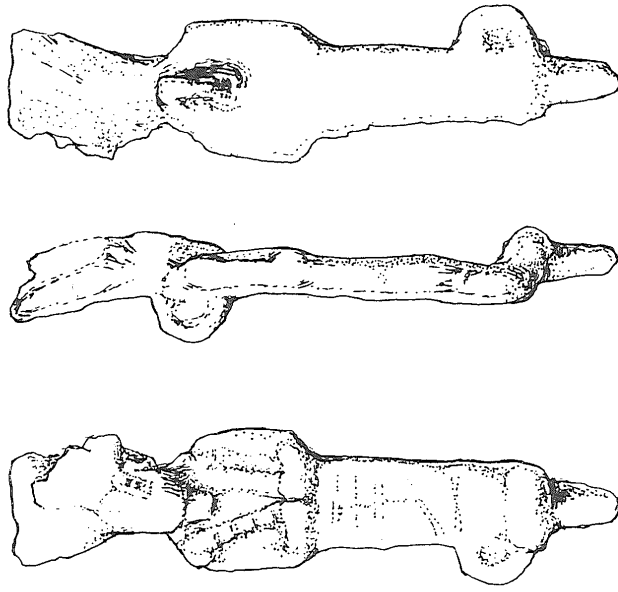
² Mr. Guido van den Boorn (State Museum of Antiquities, Leiden) was so kind as to give a preliminary description of the bronze figurine, in

an uncleaned state, with some literature, e.g., G. Roeder, *Ägyptische Bronze figuren*, Berlin, 1956.



DA82 / Z742 Fig. 1:1

Pottery figurine: man's head phase III - drawing Mr. Tom Deas



DA82 / Z777

Fig. 1: 2.

Bronze figurine: Osiris phase IV - drawing Mr. Tom Deas

other pits of this phase as well as from a deposit of the beginning of phase IV (see *ADAJ*, XXII, Pl. XXXIII). Pit B/A5. 87, clock shaped, had, apart from a large number of bones and pottery, several finds of special interest (see Pl. CXXVI, 1) e.g., a black fired bowl fragment with an incised 'alef on the base (reg. nr. 2747, see Pl. CXXVI, 2). Also two animal figurines were found in it, one (reg. nr. 2766) of a cow (part of mouth, horns, ears, and three legs broken off), with the body and legs painted white and neck and head dark red (see Pl. CXXVI, 3 and Fig. 2). Worth mentioning also is a "purple shell" found in pit B/A5.83.

Parts of the walls of phase V had been preserved in some baulks. They were removed. The collapse and rebuilding of some of the walls (in squares B/A-B. 5-6) may have happened still during phase V, or during phase IV or even III. From the beginning of phase V comes a complete ostrakon (reg. nr. 2768, B/C9.36) with five lines of text in Aramaic writing, suggesting a date in the early fifth century B.C.

Phase V/VI

As indicated in previous reports phase V/VI, which had to be put in between phases V and VI, mainly consists of wash and courtyard levels. Some walls connected with it were excavated in square B/A6. They had heavy stone foundations. Elsewhere in the excavation area the deposits of this phase were excavated in the baulks only. Among the artefacts found, two sherds may be mentioned here, namely a fragment of a Cypriot milk bowl from B/B8.38 (reg. nr. 2745, see Pl. CXXVII, 1), and a sherd of a jar with a painted decoration, including camels (see Pl. CXXVII, 2). Both sherds probably originate from the LB settlements, and are an indication of how, especially through pit making, artefacts can travel through the strata.

Phase VI

Several buildings existed during this

phase, but they all are fragmentarily preserved. See the previous report for a plan drawing (*ADAJ*, XXIII, p. 47).

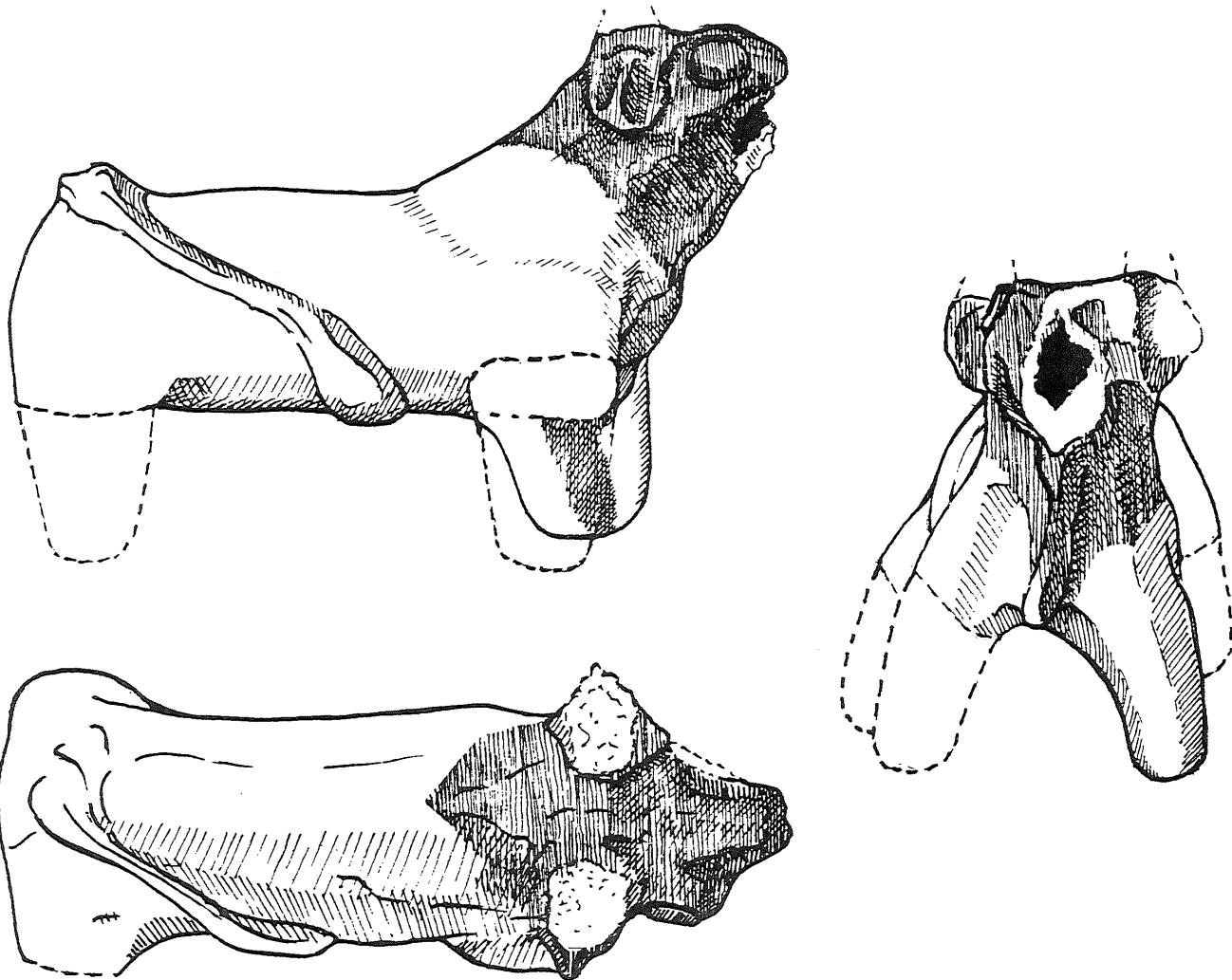
Newly discovered are parts of two N.-S. walls in B/A6. One of them (B/A6.77) was interestingly protected with stones standing up against the W. side of its mudbrick base, with clay plaster in between. A nearby hearth had blackened the sides of several of these stones (see Pl. CXXVII, 3) the cracked hearthstone is visible to the lower right; the mudbricks of the wall are partly excavated). Wall B/A6.70 is interesting because of the selective use of small rocks of its foundation.

The other digging in phase VI was done in B/A9 (courtyards), B/B9 (Clearing the stone foundations of wall 21), B/C9 (debris layers), but mainly the baulks. Concerning the artefacts found it may be interesting to add another small juglet to the collection found so far in this phase: reg. nr. 2771 in B/B5.34 (see Pl. CXXVIII, 1).

From parts of the debris of this phase's buildings (B/B7.31) came an ostrakon (reg. nr. 2755, apparently almost complete). Curiously enough for its period the sherd is written on both sides (for the convex side of this small sherd, see Pl. CXXVIII, 2). The Aramaic script suggests a date in the seventh century B.C. This ostrakon has a list of names and is the oldest one found at Tell Deir 'Alla so far.

Dating phase VI is helped by two C14 dates produced by the laboratory for Applied Physics in Groningen from samples taken from deposits D/C7.20 and B/C7.15 during the 1978 season. B/C7.15 is a wash layer of unburnt grey soil with many carbonized grains of wheat, presumably originating from phase VI. The C14 age of the first sample was 2520 ± 25 BP, of the second 2540 ± 25 BP (i.e., with the new half life *ca.* 650 B.C., according to Masca correction *ca.* 750 B.C.)

³ The results were given by Prof. Mook of the Laboratory in Groningen. We are grateful for his co-operation.



DA.82/2766.

Fig. 2: Pottery figurine cow phase V - drawing Mr. Hubert de Haas

Phases VII and VIII

The supposed phase VII can be taken as the upper part of phase VIII, as suggested already in the previous report. In B/A-B.5-6 it can be taken as phase VI. Phase VIII appears most clearly in the mudbrick construction discovered during the previous season in squares B/C6-8 (see *ADAJ*, XXIII, p. 48f.).

This season much of this phase was excavated in B/C7. The mudbricks are made of a solid yellow clay and they have a size of about 0.35 x 0.55 m. At places the remnants of the walls are only two courses high, elsewhere up to six or seven. The main wall, 1.10 m. wide, goes E.-W. through B/C7 and has a crosswall at both ends excavated (partly) in B/C6 and B/C8. For building the wall some of the burnt debris of phase IX (at the E. part) was removed in order to level the building surface after the destruction of phase IX. The feature is clearly visible at the N.W. corner of B/C8 (see Pl. CXXVIII, 3) and at the N.E. part of B/C7 (see Pl. CXXIX, 1). The debris and "courtyard" layers in between the three walls are not yet completely understood. The debris may be roof and/or wall tumble but it has many sherds and apparently also vegetable material. This type of debris also appeared in B/B6 as a phase VIII deposit.

As a special find a fragment of an alabaster vase may be mentioned (reg. nr. 2762, from B/C7.36, see (Pl. CXXIX,2). Interesting also is a horsehead figurine with fairly detailed indications of the harness (nr. 2783, B/B7.43, Pl. CXXIX,3, Fig. 3) Previous digging has shown remnants of VIII more to the W., e.g., pits with mudbrick lining, but no remnants of this phase were discovered nor expected now more to the S.E. of the walls mentioned. There the remnants of phase IX are, expectedly everywhere, at a higher level then more to the S.W.

Phase IX

Phase IX is identical with the heavily burnt phase M., much of which was excavated in 1967 (cf. also *ADAJ*, XXIII, p. 48f.). Further excavations and study of this phase is a major aim of the Deir 'Alla research project. This season only a little

digging was done in IX — just to see the character of its continuation to the S. (B/B6) and E. (B/C7-8) of the previously cleared parts of it. Next season excavation of a great deal of this phase is planned to be accomplished.

In B/B6 phase IX was just touched: a small part of the debris in presumably a room was excavated. Surprisingly no fire had occurred there, but the collapse apparently was as sudden there as in the fire destroyed rooms. (It may be useful to remember that an earthquake was the first cause of destruction to the buildings of this phase. Cf. p. 48.)

Two complete jars were laying together with a complete, about 0.65 m. long, antler of the Mesopotamian Fallow Deer (see Pls. CXXX,1; CXXX, 2). Interestingly the same type of antler was found, burnt, in a bordering room last season (Pl. XXI, 2). In square B/C7 the top of phase IX was uncovered in the N.E. part. The top of a N.-S. wall and of the burnt rubble inside a room became visible (see Pl. CXXIX, 1), which is part of the room excavated in B/C8. The E. wall of this room (B/C8.72) became visible up to square B/8 where part of the top of a cross wall was uncovered. A thin E.-W. wall forms the S. end of the room. The N. side is N. of square B/C8 and unexcavated. The mudbricks of the walls have the size common to the IX walls of the previous excavations (ca. 0.33 x 0.50 m.), many of them made of the yellow clay, others of grey soil. The walls still stand 1.00-1.50 m. high and, like elsewhere, had little width (one brick wide lying side by side, or even head to head). Mixed with the burnt roof and wall debris (see Pls. CXXXI, 12; CXXXII, 1); with to the right two of the complete bricks, with marks on the surface) were the contents of the room: several jars and more than thirty loomweights. The position of the loomweights suggests that they were in use in the room. Unexpectedly seven different types of weights were used together (see Pl. CXXXII, 2). It is noteworthy that one loomweight had clear remnants of thread (twisted vegetable fibres) inside the hole, others had different seeds. More interesting information may be added: an example

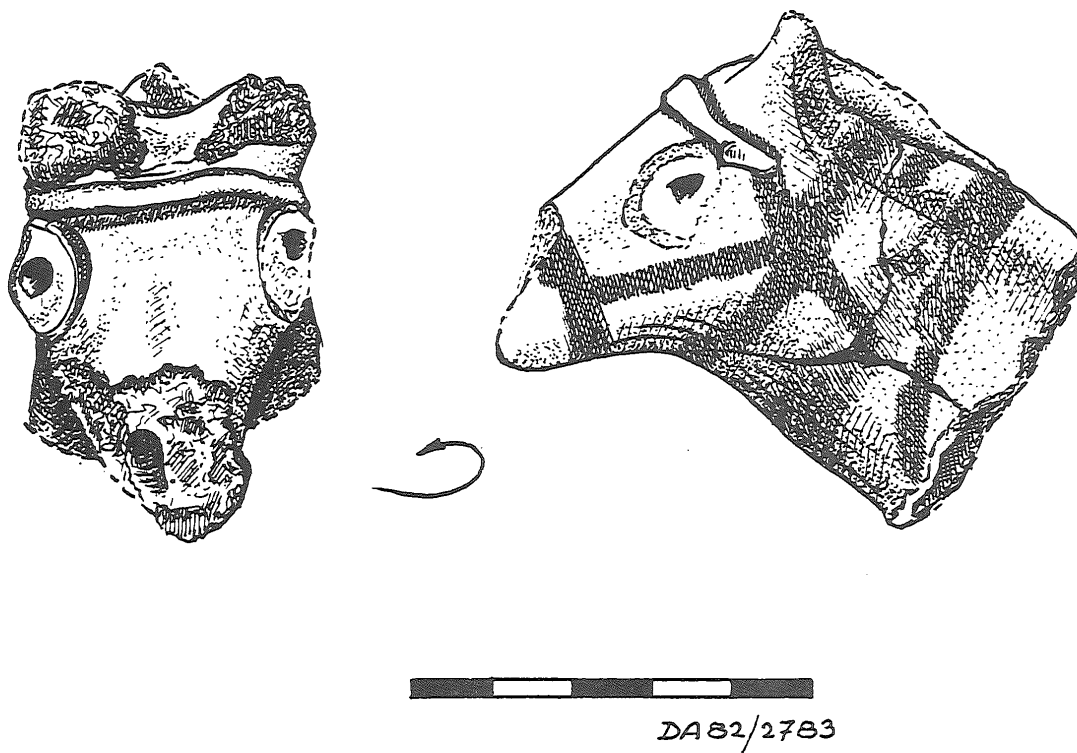


Fig. 3: Pottery figurine: horse head phase VIII - drawing Mr. Hubert de Haas

of the commonly known pointed and polished flat bone tool (see Pl. CXXXIII, 1; two more examples were found this season) was found inside one of the pots lying among the debris and loomweights. This is another indication of the often suggested function of weaving.

General Remarks

As stated above the reconstruction of the phasing is still in a preliminary stage, so is the chronology. Some C14 dating results are known, other samples still have to be analysed at the Laboratory in Groningen mentioned above. The study of the biological remains are being done at the mentioned Archaeological-Biological Institute by Prof. W. van Zeist and Dr. A. T. Clason. The Central Laboratory for Objects of Science and Arts in Amsterdam (Mssrs Mol, Mosk and Stambolov) are taking care of the analyses and conservation of the metal objects and samples. In this connection it may be mentioned that the important bronze objects discovered in 1976 (see *ADAJ*, XXII, p. 76, 78 and Pl. XLI, 2) are brought back in a new, treated, state to the Archaeological

Museum in Amman. (Pl. CXXXIII, 2) shows one of them (reg. nr. 2539) which still had much solid bronze.

A final report on the top phases will include all of the specialists' studies. It will be published in the area concerned. However the area may have to be extended somewhat because of an appearing necessity to extend the excavations of phase IX beyond the area under study now.

The next season is planned for the beginning of 1984. Excavation will be concentrating on the unearthing of phase IX in parts of the 15.00 x 30.00 m. area near the top of the *tell*.

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