

**FIRST SEASON OF EXCAVATIONS AT  
TELL ABŪ ŠARBŪṬ, 1988  
A PRELIMINARY REPORT**

by

Hubert de Haas, H. Eduard LaGro  
and Margreet L. Steiner

### Introduction

The first season of excavations took place between the 19th of February and the 25th of March. The participants were H. de Haas (Leiden), H.E. LaGro (Netherlands Institute for the Near East), and M.L. Steiner (Leiden University). S. Rabaḍi was the much appreciated representative of the Department of Antiquities. A. Kana'an acted as foreman of the four workmen, who were later joined by two others. We thank Dr. 'Adnan Hadidi, former Director General of the Department of Antiquities and his staff for their continual interest and encouragement. We thank Prof. Dr. H.J. Franken, who instigated the research, for his sound advice and continuous support during the past years. Special thanks go to Dr. M. Ibrahim and Dr. E. van Donzel, who enthusiastically supported us and provided much logistic support. The excavations also benefited from visits by Dr. D. Whitcomb and several colleagues from Yarmouk University. The excavations were funded by the "Tell Abū Šarbuṭ" Foundation, The Oosters Institute in Leyden and Royal Jordanian Airlines.

### Site Location

Tell Abū Šarbuṭ is located in the central Jordan Valley, about 1.5 km west-northwest of Tell Deir 'Allā.<sup>1</sup> It lies amidst agricultural fields irrigated by small canals branching off from the main Ghor canal. Directly south of the tell, running approximately east-west, a small stream runs through a small canal along the edge of the

tell. At the north side, running parallel to the canal, is a road which leads from the main north-south road in the valley in the direction of the Jordan River (see Fig. 1, Pl. XLIV).

The tell is succinctly mentioned by N. Glueck. When he visited the tell, the stream, which now runs south of it, flowed through a small wadi along the north side, called Wadi el-Khor.<sup>2</sup> The tell is also included in the East Jordan Valley Survey of 1976.<sup>3</sup>

The tell measures about 250 m east-west and 125 m north-south. From the highest point, -248 m, it gently slopes to -252 m at the east and south sides and to -255 m at the north and west sides. At the surface traces of building foundations made of unworked stones are still visible. These are at some places disturbed by robber pits, especially at the top. On the east side, at the bottom of the tell, a scattering of worked stones might indicate the place where, as the story goes, in the beginning of this century the remnants of a gate were still discernable. Sherds, which are amply found on the surface, indicate Roman-Byzantine and extensive Umayyad-Mamluk occupation. No previous excavations are known to have been carried out.

### Objectives

The main purpose of the excavations at Tell Abū Šarbuṭ is to collect stratified sherd material in order to make a typochronology of the decorated and non-decorated pottery from the Islamic periods on that site. This typochronology will be

1. 35° 37' E. - 32° 12' N. 1: 250,000 map of Jordan, Sheet 1 (Amman). Department of Lands and Surveys of Jordan, 1948.

2. Nelson Glueck, *Explorations in Eastern Palestine*, IV. AASOR XXV-XXVIII (1945-1949),

p. 311.

3. Khair Yassine, Mo'awiyah Ibrahim and James A. Sauer, 'The East Jordan Valley Survey 1976, pt. II'. In: Kh. Yassine, *The Archaeology of Jordan: Essays and Reports*. Amman, 1988, p. 187-206.

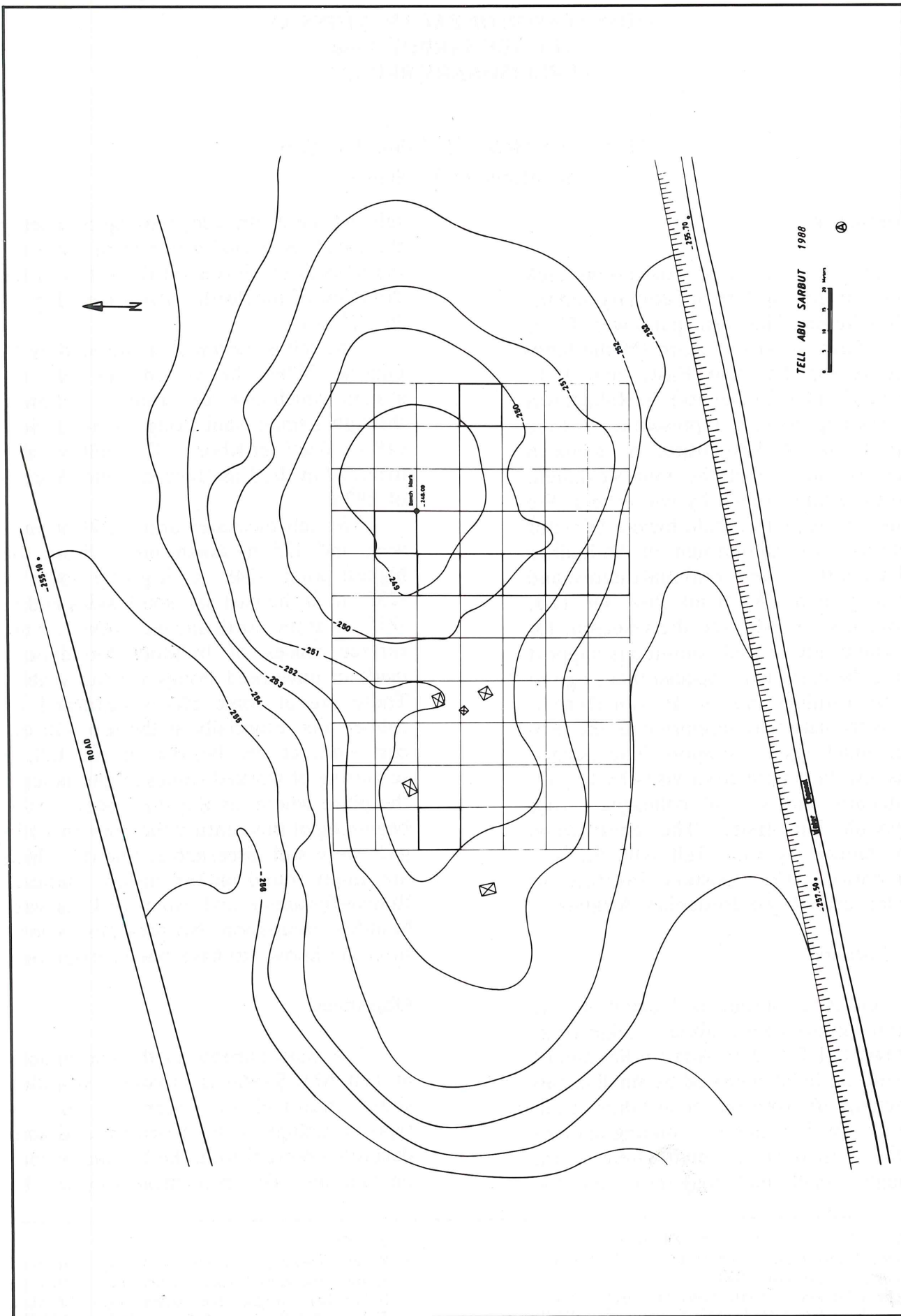


Fig. 1. Plan of Tell Abū Šarbūt.

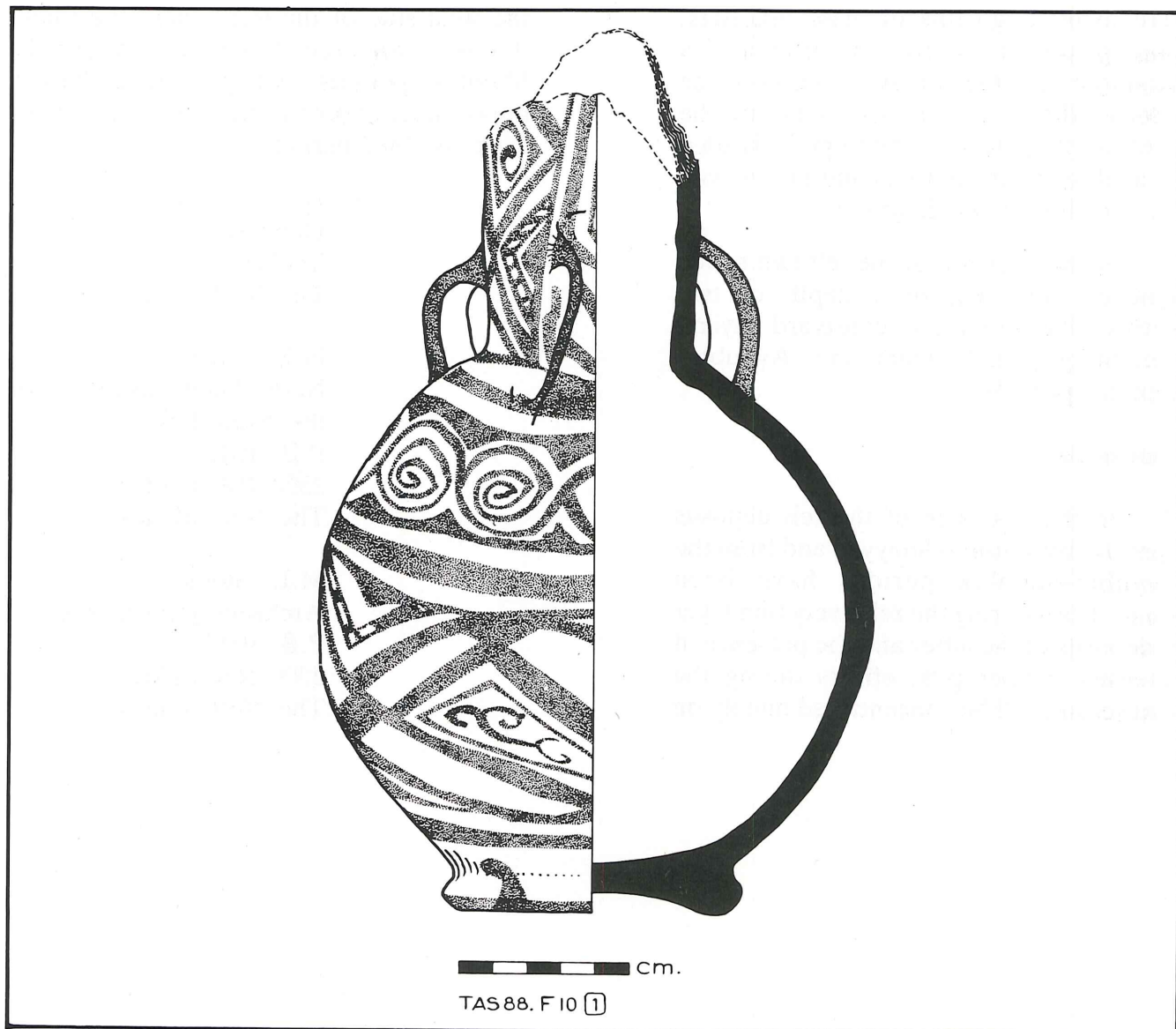


Fig. 2. Decorated jug with three handles.

based on technological analysis and statistical computation of the stratified material, combined with the results of excavations at other sites in the area, especially Abū Qurdān. Floral and faunal material will be studied, as well as the other remains of material culture.

The objectives of this first, preliminary season, were to verify the nature and extent of deposits dating from the Islamic periods and to collect sherd material to start the technological research.

#### Results of the First Season

On the southeast slope a trial trench 55 m long was dug to varying depths. At two points the trench was enlarged to 10 m

by 10 m squares (squares C and F). In square C, wash layers around 0.75 m deep and pits were found, probably belonging to occupational phases higher up the slope and on the top, which have been eroded away. The finds in these layers and pits can be attributed to the Ayyubid-Mamluk periods. Underneath these layers, deposits containing sherds from the Byzantine-Umayyad periods were found as well as some fragments from the Roman period. In square F, on the east top of the tell, at least four occupational phases from the Ayyubid-Mamluk periods were found (Fig. 2). The original stratigraphic sequence was, however, severely disturbed by the presence of numerous robber pits from recent times. Among the objects found

were many fragments of glass bracelets, some pieces of bronze and iron and a decorated jug (Fig. 2). A selection of the pottery, fifteen crates, was sent to the Institute of Pottery Technology in Leiden for analysis by the authors and Dr. A. van As, director of the Institute.

On the west top of the tell two probe trenches were dug to a depth of two metres. They revealed courtyard layers, containing sherds from the Ayyubid-Mamluk periods.

### **Conclusion**

On the east side of the tell deposits from the Byzantine-Umayyad and from the Ayyubid-Mamluk periods have been found. Considering the relatively thin layer of deposits of the latter and the presence of extensive robber pits, efforts during the next season will be concentrated mainly on

the west side of the tell, where the thick deposits attested from the Ayyubid-Mamluk periods will provide a better opportunity to obtain stratified material, at least for that period.

H. de Haas  
Dahliastraat 7  
Leiden,  
The Netherlands.

H.E. LaGro  
Netherlands Institute for  
the Near East  
P.B. 9515  
2300 RA Leiden,  
The Netherlands.

M.L. Steiner  
Archaeological Center  
P.B. 9515  
2300 RA Leiden,  
The Netherlands.