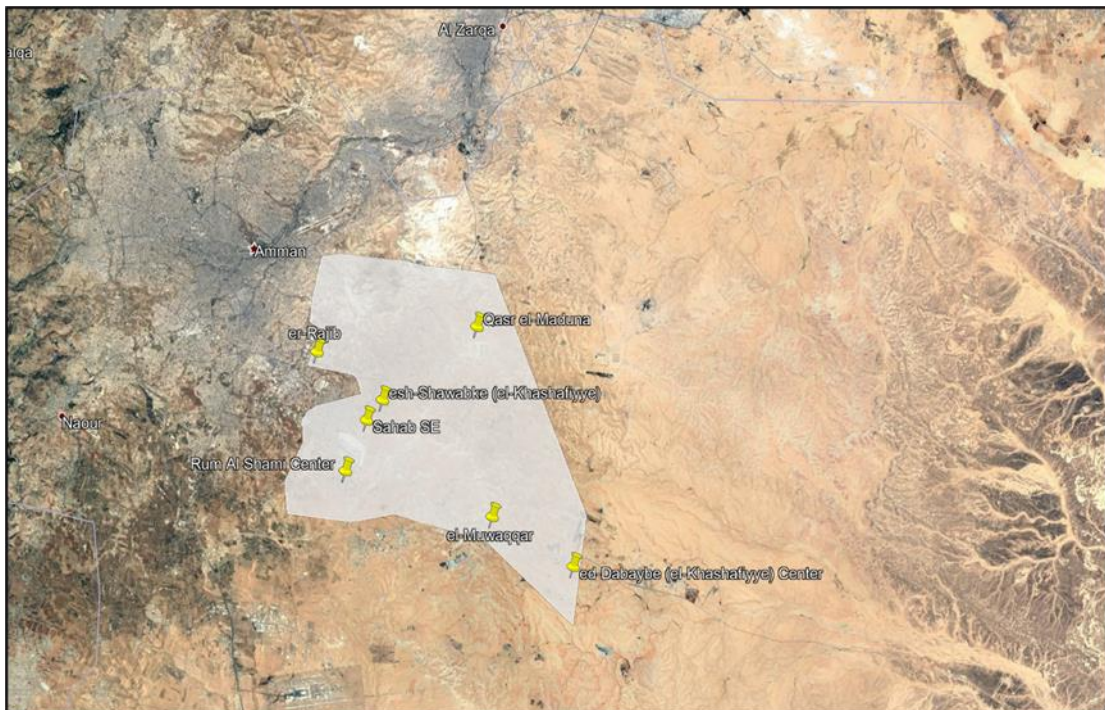


Archaeological Survey in the Area of SAHAB Southeast of Amman, 1983

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Sahab Survey 1983 Team:

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The Sahab Survey 1983

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Preface:

Over a four-week period in August 15 and September 15 of 1983, an archaeological survey was conducted in the vicinity of the major archaeological site of Sahab, located approximately 12 km to the southeast of the capital city Amman on both the modern and ancient road to the desert castles of the early Islamic Period, including Muwaqquer, Kharraneh, Quseir 'Amra, Azraq and others. The location on the transitional zone between the highlands of Jordan and the desert was evidently a lucrative choice.

The modern town of Sahab was founded on the ancient tell and spread from there to the surrounding area, destroying major parts of the ancient settlement in the process. Three major streets were cut through the occupation levels, leaving two large trenches which revealed the Stratigraphy of the upper part of the mound.

The ancient mound occupies an area c. 500 dunums and is 873 m. above sea level. The highest point of the mound is c. 22 m. above the western plains, but other areas of the site are much lower. The area around Sahab is well cultivated; the true desert begins c. 15 to 20 km. to the east. Sahab is bounded by Zarqa to the north, Amman to the west, Qasr Mshash to the east and Khan al-Zabib to the south where the Queen Alia International Airport is located.

The area varies in altitude from a minimum of c. 660 m above sea level in Wadi al-Qattar in the northwest to a maximum of c. 959 m at Zamlet al-Alayya in the center and is characterized by a major escarpment, which extends from the south of the sheet to the northeast near Jabal al-Ad'am; it forms a narrow asymmetric ridge and a line of rounded hills. It is capped for most of its length by rocks of the Umm Rijam chert limestone formation, which consists of relatively resistant beds of chert and limestone. The highest elevation along the escarpment is c. 959 m.

Drainage is ephemeral; wadis flow only in winter. The stream courses are subsequent, and related to structure, with that east of the escarpment flowing to the east and those to the north ultimately flowing northwards.

Sahab itself was under excavation between 1972-1980 under the supervision of Moawiyah Ibrahim. Sahab was under a long occupation from the fifth/fourth Millennium BC until the 6th century BC. It was reoccupied in the 19th century by families of the present residents.

As a result of Sahab excavations, several occupational phases were attested. The earliest evidence is connected with a large settlement of a village farming community belonging to the Neolithic/Chalcolithic period (ca.5th-4th millennium B.C.). Sahab was largest during this early period of habitation with architectural units including large and medium-sized storage pits, an indication of a self – supporting community.

The result of Sahab Excavation was published in two major volumes and several other articles which appeared in different journals and other publications. The immediate reason for undertaking an archaeological survey around Sahab was the correlation with the excavations at Sahab. The surveyed area was never explored except by some travelers and explorers at the beginning of this century who visited only a few sites

in the area. The area continued to be ignored by scholars until the excavation project started at Sahab in 1972.

The survey area located between desert and highland and reflects movement of population and changes in settlements patterns throughout human settled life, including beginning of settlements, early urbanization, and first kingdoms especially the Kingdom of Amon which probably started in this area as indicated from the excavations at Sahab and the surrounding Area. It also reflects connections with neighboring regions including Mesopotamia and Egypt.

After the work had shown the extensive occupation of the site, the excavation team made some reconnaissance to areas surrounding Sahab. Several sites from different periods were identified, however, it became clear that a more systematic work had to be conducted which only took place during the month of September 1983. A preliminary study was prepared by the present authors (Moawiyah Ibrahim and Zeidan Kafafi) after the field work but never reached the stage of final publication.

Adding to the urgency of the survey is the intense development that the city Sahab and its vicinity is presently undergoing; construction is accelerating at an alarming speed, and the need to document archaeological occupations in the Sahab region before they are destroyed is essential. A GIS and Remote Sensing Based Integrated Approach to Detect Land use/cover Change Dynamics in Sahab District (Central Jordan)" "were geometrically and radiometrically calibrated to each other in order to facilitate comparison and were then used individually for supervised classification purposes using Maximum Likelihood Classifier for six spectral bands of both images as input (with the thermal bands being excluded)" (Al-Sallal and Bilbisi 2011:2345). As a result of this study, it has been deduced that change detection results indicated an increase in the urban land class, where the spatial expansion was 4.91 km² in 1987 and became 13.82 km² in 2006, while the range land and agricultural land classes had declined, in 1987. They were 50.5 km² and 30 km², and they became 16.31 km² and 2.24 km², respectively, in 2006 (Al-Sallal and Bilbisi 2011:2345). Change detection results of Sahab district revealed that the decline of agriculture and range lands areas is clearly the result of accelerated expansion through the process of urbanization, which has negative effects on agricultural lands, and is therefore strictly land degradation.

The tremendous growth that the city of Sahab and its surroundings are currently facing makes the survey even more urgent; as construction is progressing at an alarming rate, it is crucial to record archaeological occupations in the Sahab region before they are destroyed.

Nevertheless, the main goal of this survey is to study the sites represented in the surrounding area of Sahab and to draw conclusions about the occupational history and function of each single site in correlation with other sites, as well as settlement patterns in the fringes of the eastern desert.

A survey of this kind would draw attention to sites which have potential for future excavations and more detailed study. Another aspect of the goals is to study climatic conditions, hydrology, agricultural and land use of the area. A significant aim is to throw light on the correlation between the various periods revealed during the excavations at Sahab and other sites in the vicinity.

The Sahab Survey 1983

Introduction

The major reason for undertaking the archaeological survey in the area of Sahab was to ensure correlation with the excavations at Sahab. The surveyed area was never explored except by some travelers and explorers at the beginning of this century who visited only a few sites in the area. The area continued to be ignored by scholars until the excavation project started at Sahab in 1972.

The site of Sahab lies ca. 12 km south-east of Amman on the present and old route to Saudi Arabia. After the work had shown the extensive occupation of the site, the excavation team made some visits to areas surrounding Sahab. Several sites from different periods were identified, but it was clear that more systematic work had to be conducted, which only took place during the month of September 1983. This was sponsored by the Center of Jordanian Studies of Yarmouk University and in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. The survey staff included Carrie Gaube, Heinz Gaube, Zeidan Kafafi, and Moawiyah Ibrahim, who also served as the administrative director of the project. Other members were Nabil Qadi (Archaeologist), Fayez Tarawneh (Surveyor and draftsman), Mohammad Darwish el-Ghoj (representative of the Department of Antiquities), Robert Erskine (draftsman and photographer), and Mousa Shrouf (assistant surveyor). A building in Sahab town served as the base camp for the survey, and the equipment for the survey was provided by Yarmouk University. The survey field work started on August 15, and it continued until September 15. Two field vehicles from Yarmouk University were at the disposal of the team.

¹ M.M Ibrahim, Archaeological Excavations at Sahab, 1972, ADAJ 17 (1972), 23-36, 117-124 (plates); Ibid. , Second Season of Excavation at Sahab, 1973, ADAJ 19 (1974), 55-61, Pl XII-XXIII; Ibid., Third Season of Excavations at Sahab, 1975 (preliminary Report), ADAJ 20 (1975), 69-82, Pl. XXV – XXXIV; Ibid., Excavations at Sahab, Jordan 6 No. 3 (1981), 14-23; Ibid., The Collared- rim Jar of the Early Iron Age, in : Archaeology in the Levant, Essays for Kathleen Kenyon (Warminster, England 1978), 117-126. One volume of final publication is under preparation. Ibrahim, M. 2016a; Sahab I, Chalcolithic Village Farming Community at Sahab. Amman: Department of Antiquities of Jordan; Ibrahim, M. 2016b; Sahab II, Excavations at Sahab Bronze and Iron Ages. Amman: Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

¹ R.E. Brunow & A.V. Domaszewski, Die provincial Arabia Band 2, Strassburg (1905).