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The harbour of al-Shihṛ, Ḥaḍramawt, Yemen: sources and archaeological data on trade

CLAIRE HARDY-GUILBERT

Introduction

Al-Shihṛ is a harbour of Ḥaḍramawt situated in the middle of the coastal plain of South Arabia (Fig. 1). It was visited in 1948 by Serjeant who supposed that the ancient city was located in one of the town quarters called al-Qaryah (Serjeant 1981: 220). I began excavations there in 1996 with the authorization of The General Authority of Antiquities, Manuscripts and Museums of Yemen directed by Dr Yusuf Abdallah, and with the financial support of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹ The first results were published in 2001 (Hardy-Guilbert 2001).

Al-Shihṛ is mentioned in more than twenty historical sources dating from the seventh century to the beginning of the sixteenth, which provide much information about its trading activity. Guy Ducatez and I have analyzed these and pointed out the links with the archaeological data (Hardy-Guilbert & Ducatez 2004). The aim of this paper is to discuss the links between the sources and the archaeological data.

Archaeological results (1996–2002)

Today the chronology of the occupation at al-Qaryah is more precise. Fifteen levels of occupation have been identified, which can be grouped into ten phases (Fig. 2):

Phase 1 — **the first occupation** — is on a level of sand and consists of clay ovens, deposits of ash, food, and common pottery, including Indian cooking pots, which allow us to date this first phase to the end of the **eighth century**.

Phase 2 consists of three levels of beaten earth floors associated with imported ceramics from Iraq, a Samarran assemblage (Sasanian-Islamic blue glaze, eggshell, lustre ware, and cobalt-blue on white glaze, see Northedge & Kennet 1994: 25, 29, 33) and Yemeni eggshell ware from Zabid (Ciuk & Keall 1996). This is a clear indication that this phase relates to an important

Abbasid occupation, which can be dated from the ninth to the first half of the tenth century AD (Fig. 3).

In Phase 3, large mud-brick buildings faced with blocks of stone were erected to the south and east, and were subsequently enlarged in a sub-phase. Hatched sgraffiato associated with African pottery and white Chinese pottery, all of it datable to the eleventh century AD, was recovered on the plastered floors. It is probable that the city was flourishing at this time. This period also corresponds to the development of the nearby harbour of Sharmah.

In Phase 4, the whole settlement was destroyed and filled in during the latter half of the twelfth century or the beginning of the thirteenth century.

In Phase 5, an open-air platform was built, on which palm-frond huts were erected. This is indicated by a large number of post-holes, and numerous pits and ovens containing deposits of ash and fish. These levels included a thick layer of ash, clearly visible throughout the tell of al-Qaryah. Different lines of post-holes indicate that the huts were rebuilt several times. Mustard ware with late sgraffiato associated with Longquan celadon was found, datable to the thirteenth century. These archaeological data testify to a radical change in the nature of the occupation and suggest economic activity based on fishing during the latter half of the thirteenth to the first half of the fourteenth century.

During Phase 6, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the whole area was built over once more with mud-brick and stone houses. The floors were remade several times and continued to be in use until the sixteenth century.

Phase 7, during the seventeenth century, consisted of another level of mud-brick houses.

In Phase 8, the site was abandoned.

Phase 9 consisted of a surface deposit 1 m thick, containing occasional hearths, cut into by rubbish pits.

During the final phase, part of the site was covered by a platform for drying fish made of a thick layer of mud and fish oil above a bed of pebbles. The other part contained the remains of several nineteenth-century

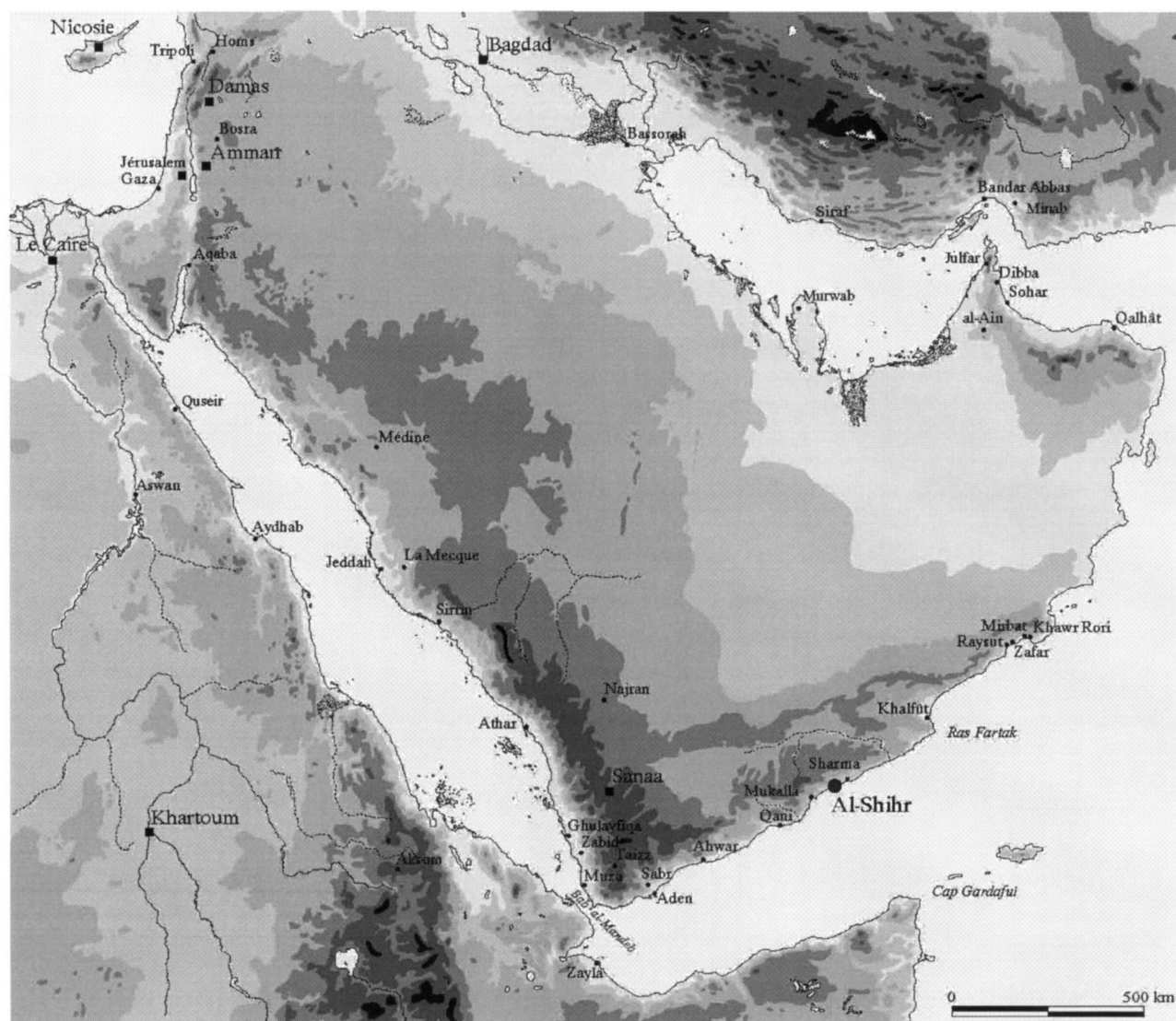


FIGURE 1. *A map of Arabia showing the location of al-Shihr.*

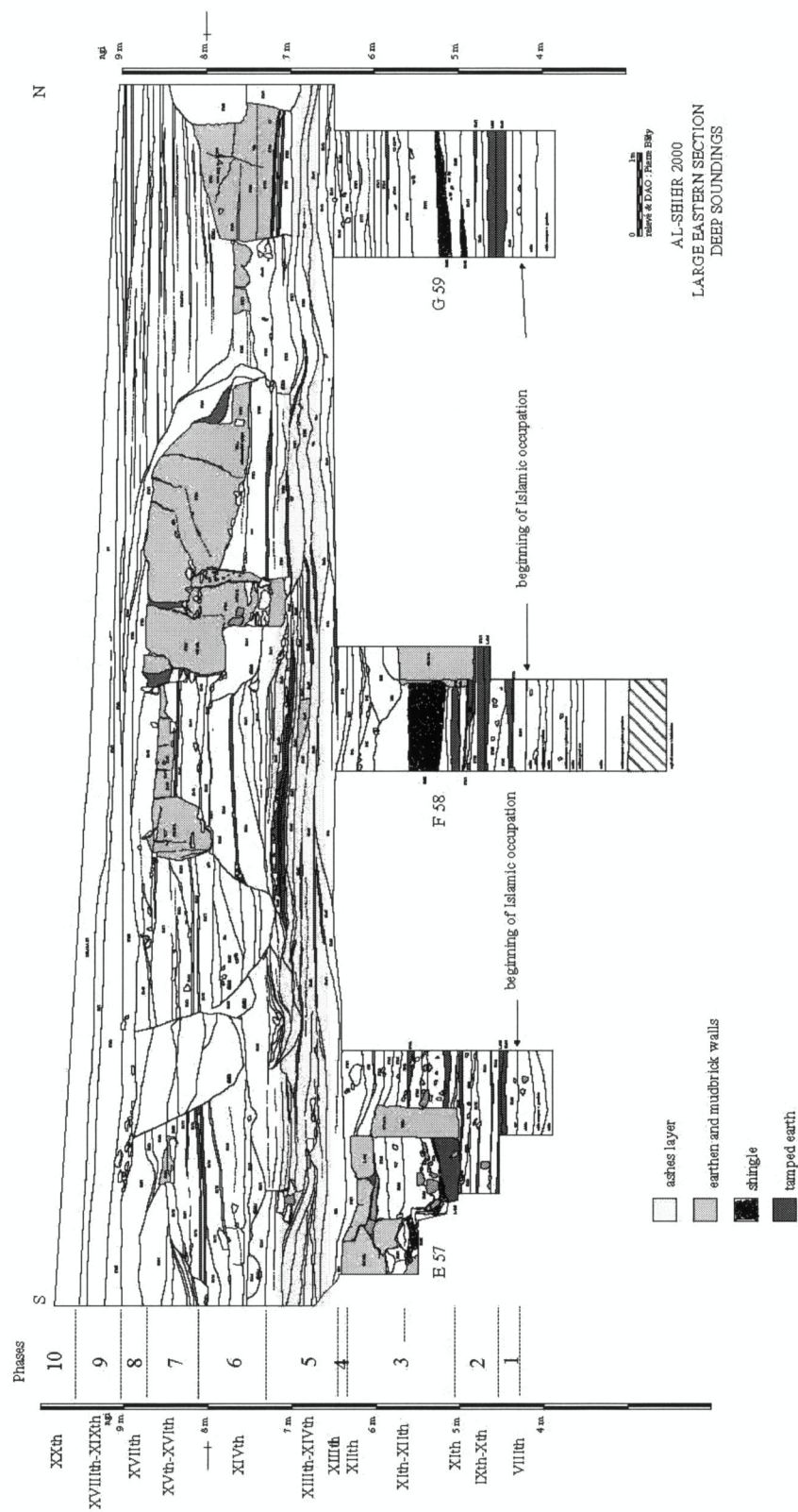


FIGURE 2. *Al-Shihr in 2000 and al-Qaryah-East, large eastern section and 3 deep soundings.*

houses corresponding to a period of prosperity. They were demolished some time before 1995, and were replaced by a building for the cold-storage of fish, built in 1995–1996.

Sources and archaeological data on trade

The city's main resources

From early times, the main natural resources of the city and its market are well documented in the texts: these included fish, incense, amber, ambergris (which was called *ʿanbar šihri*), and dates. It is probable that the city had trading connections with pre-Islamic Mecca.² Some goods were produced in the city and some were traded in its seaport, including spices, textiles, ceramics, and silver.

In two of the levels a hearth and eight crucibles indicate the presence of metalwork. Is this evidence of workshops linked to the importation of silver from China?

Fish

Al-Muqaddasī (1897: 53, translation 138) in the tenth century and Marco Polo (1991: 495) in the thirteenth, describe the sea around al-Shihr as being richly stocked with large fish. During excavations of the Phase 5 levels, a great quantity of fish remains was recovered, some of them belonging to the order *Cetacea*. The biggest vertebra measured 0.21 m in diameter. It was established that fish bones used as gaming pieces had come from a shark 6 m in length.³ Ibn Ḥawqal (Kramers & Wiet 1964, i: 38, transl. 37) and Marco Polo (Moule & Pelliot 1938, ii: 496) also mention the consumption of small fish — a kind of sardine — both by goats and camels and by humans. Fishing in this area today is increasingly important. In 1995, 222 fishing-boats or *ḥūriyyāt* (sg. *ḥūrī*) were recorded (Camelin 1995: 39). Tuna is the main fish and is exported as far as Brittany in France (Hardy-Guilbert 2002: 46).

Frankincense and incense-burners

Al-Shihr is mentioned as being rich in frankincense (*lubān*, *kundur*) by Abū Zayd al-Ḥasan,⁴ by Ibn Ḥawqal (Kramers & Wiet 1964, i: transl. 37), in the tenth-century *Book of the Wonders of India* (*Kitāb ʿajāʾib al-hind*),⁵ by ʿUmārah al-Ḥakamī (1892: 4, transl. 5), by al-Muqaddasī (1897: 53, transl. 138), by al-Masʿūdī (1962, ii: 337, §898), and by Marco Polo (1991: 496).

Incense itself was not recovered in our excavations,

but in every level different kinds of incense-burners (*majāmir*, sg. *mijmarah*) were found. They were made either of stone, unbaked clay, or pottery. Only the pottery examples are published here (Fig. 4). Five types can be distinguished:

Type 1 (Fig. 4/1, 2, 3, 6) is made of fine cream-coloured (Munsell code is "pink ware"), very well fired, and polished on the surface to a finish resembling ivory. They are thin-walled and are decorated like rings, as if incrustated with jewels, especially the handles (Fig. 4/1, 2, 3). Others have three kinds of decoration: they are incised, stamped with dot-and-circle motifs, and painted with red lines (Fig. 4/6). No parallels have been reported from elsewhere.

Type 2 is a footed incense-burner (Fig. 4/5), which has the same body as Type 1 but seems to belong to another type, with a high container.

Type 3 is made of a coarse pale brownish ware with friezes of excised triangles (Fig. 4/4). Incense burners of similar shape have been found at al-Qaraw and Kawd am Saylah.⁶

Type 4 is a footed convex bowl made of coarse paste (Fig. 4/8). It is decorated with rows of three dots made with a stylus.

Type 5 is represented by incense-burners made from a similar paste, thick walled (Fig. 4/7, 9, 10) and decorated with wedge-shaped indentations and incised lines.

According to the stratigraphy the Type 4 is the earliest (c. 1250), the Type 2 the most recent (c. 1550).

Amber

Sulaymān the merchant (Ferrand 1922: 22–23), Abū Zayd al-Ḥasan (Ferrand 1922: 126), ʿUmārah al-Ḥakamī (1892: 6, transl. 8), al-Masʿūdī (1962, ii: 148, §407), and Yāqūt al-Rūmī (1957, iii: 327) mentioned the presence of amber and "grey amber" on the coast of al-Shihr. The latter is called "Shihri amber" (*ʿanbar šihri*) and was a famous commodity of the area.

The maritime trade

The first archaeological evidence of maritime trade with the northern Islamic countries is the presence of a Samarran assemblage, mentioned above. The quality of the pieces allows us to associate them with the best Abbasid production in Iraq or Iran. No records mentioning contacts between al-Shihr and the Persian Gulf during the classical Islamic period have been found, but the presence of the Samarran assemblage clearly indicates that relations did exist. In the ninth century, Chinese ceramics were admired for their shiny white surfaces

and hard texture. Iraqi (or Iranian) potters created their own versions of these and imitated the porcelain by covering yellow clay bowls with an opaque glaze and moulding similar ribs on the interior. Similar pieces were also found at al-Shiḥr and this suggests links with these artistic traditions (Fig. 3/9). Among the sherds of lustre ware, the rims (Fig. 3/11, 12, 15) all vary in type and belong to three different bowls.

In the *Book of the Wonders of India*, the author recounts the adventures of a certain ship owner named Ismāʿīlawayh, which are said to have taken place in AD 929: "I made the voyage from Kalah to Shiḥr in the Incense-land on the Arabian coast in forty-one days..." (Van der Lith 1883–1886: 129–130, LXXXI). Kalah or Kēdah is located in present-day Burma. Later, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Sulaymān al-Mahrī gave details of the maritime route from Diū (in southern India) to al-Shiḥr (Tibbetts 1974: 91 and Sulaymān al-Mahrī 1970: 171–172). Evidence of contacts between India and al-Shiḥr is also provided by the Indian pottery associated with the first occupation, i.e. as early as the eighth century AD. Cooking pots and dishes in burnished black ware and burnished red ware, occasionally with black painted lines, were imported from India to al-Shiḥr up to the seventeenth century. Indian pottery is so common at the site that we have created a new class in the registration catalogue: "céramique lustrée". It is generally a coarse ware with a burnished surface, which is easy to identify amongst the common cooking pots because of its characteristic carinated shapes and the grooves on the rim and/or at the base of the neck. I agree with D. Whitcomb's comment on the purple wares from Quṣayr al-Qadīm: "While the variation in form might be seen as almost continuous, some types or groupings may be suggested" (Whitcomb & Johnson 1982: 243). Three main kinds of Indian ware are listed: a burnished black fine ware (only five pieces), a burnished red or greyish coarse ware (very common), and a black painted on red coarse or fine ware. On the other hand, there are no examples of the fine burnished orange red ware, the well-known Indian pottery imported into Arabian harbours, "approaching in the finest examples the gloss of Roman terra sigillata" and "commonly dated to the first five centuries of the Christian era" (Williamson 1972: 100, quoted by Kervran 1996: 38). However, the levels of the first occupation and of the Abbasid period contain Indian jars and cooking pots in burnished red or greyish ware.

Items 2, 3 and 5 on Figure 5 were recovered together in the fifteenth-century levels. Figure 5/3 has a parallel at Qalʿat al-Baḥrayn dated to the thirteenth–fifteenth centuries (Kervran 1996: fig. 9/3), but Figure 5/5 can be

compared with a cooking pot from Sharmah (same size and profile) of which the chronological horizon is from the end of the tenth century to the first half of the twelfth century (Rougeulle 2003: fig. 10/4). The painted cooking pot (Fig. 5/9) is associated with two other Indian cooking pots, one in globular brownish-red ware, the other in carinated and burnished black ware, which were found together in level 2164 of Phase 6, dating to the fourteenth century.

The jar with black painting on a red slip (Fig. 5/8) is smaller than an example from Sohar but it has the same profile and is made of the same paste. Its stratigraphical context at al-Shiḥr is connected with that of Sohar and is dated 1300–1600 (Kervran 1996: fig. 8A/1).

While comparisons can be established with the Indian pieces imported to the harbours of the Arabian or East African coasts, unfortunately the Indian Islamic pieces found on Indian sites do not as yet provide precise clues as to the dating.

In the *Tang Shu*, the history of the Tang dynasty (614–906), al-Shiḥr is referred to as "Sheguo" on the route from Guangzhou (Canton).⁷ Later, under the Song dynasty (960–1279), *The Records of Foreign Peoples*, or *Zhu Fan Ji*, mention "Shī-ho" (i.e. al-Shiḥr) on the way to Mecca (Hirth & Rockhill 1911: 120 quoted by Lane & Serjeant 1948: 118.).

The presence of Changsha pottery from the province of Hunan provides proof of these contacts during the Tang dynasty (Fig. 6/2). Later, celadon bowls from the workshops of Longquan, blue and white porcelain from the Ming dynasty, as well as late porcelain and Chinese coins⁸ (Fig. 7) show that exchanges continued until the nineteenth century. These objects were imported as crockery, whereas the Far Eastern stoneware jars contained goods such as perfume, according to the label on one of the jars.

From the navigational texts of Ibn Mājid and Sulaymān al-Mahrī in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, we learn that al-Shiḥr was the departure point for Soqatra on the route to Africa. However the African pottery recovered in the excavations testifies to contacts as early as the eleventh century. The African pottery assemblage consists mostly of Tana-type cooking pots, which were associated with hatched sgraffiato bowls (Hardy-Guilbert 2002: 50–52, fig. 8).

According to sources of the Rasulid period (1229–1454) — mainly Ibn al-Mujāwir (1951–1954, i: 268–270), Shanbal 1994: 132, 140, 151, 173, 188),⁹ and a recently published anonymous writer from the reign of Sultan al-Muẓaffar (Jazim 2003: 112–114, 171, 175, 435–496), — there was heavy traffic on the roads, and the movement of various soldiers and officials (*djundi*,

FIGURE 3. *The Samarran assemblage of al-Shihr.*

Key to the ceramic description: (the first number corresponds to the inventory number) SHR = Shihr; 99 = year 1999; 2015 = number of layer or artificial removal; Ω = unstratified.

The colour code for the body is that of the Munsell soil chart, ed. 1973.

1. SHR99 2449: *the neck of a jar in pale yellow ware (2.5Y 8/4), with incised decoration under the rim under an iridescent blue-green glaze (Sasanian-Islamic type).*
2. SHR00 2692.2: *a jar in pale yellow ware (2.5Y 8/4), horizontally fluted, decorated with a wavy line incised at the top under a bright blue-green glaze; the interior has a dark turquoise and black glaze (Sasanian-Islamic type).*
3. SHR96 1000: *a jar in white slipware (2.5Y 8/2), with pearls and curved lines under a turquoise glaze (Sasanian-Islamic type).*
4. SHR96 1000-66: *the neck and shoulder of a jar in yellow slipware (2.5Y 8/6), decorated with curved and wavy lines under a turquoise glaze (Sasanian-Islamic type).*
5. SHR97 2031-1: *the rim of an eggshell jug in fine white ware (5Y 8/1), with a combed decoration.*
6. SHR96 1000-4: *the fragment of the neck of an eggshell jug, in fine white ware (5Y 8/1).*
7. SHR02 2999-2: *the rim of a bowl in fine pale yellow ware (5Y 8/3), with a white glaze decorated with a cobalt blue palmette.*
8. SHR96 2000 Ω : *a bowl in yellow ware (2.5Y 8/6), with a white and green glaze.*
9. SHR99 2367: *a bowl in fine very pale brown ware (10YR 8/3), the interior is ribbed under a white glaze, imitating a porcelain bowl.*
10. SHR96 2000 Ω : *the bottom of a bowl or jug in fine very pale brown ware (10YR 8/3), with a metallic grey glaze.*
11. SHR02 3016.1: *the rim of a bowl in fine white ware (2.5Y 8/2), the interior is decorated with a dark olive-green design painted in lustre on a white ground.*
12. SHR02 2999.1: *a bowl in fine white ware (2.5Y 8/2), the interior is decorated with a dark olive-green design painted in lustre on a white ground.*
13. SHR02 2994.2: *a bowl in fine white ware (2.5Y 8/2), the design reserved in white against the olive lustre ground.*
14. SHR00 2713.1: *a bowl in fine white ware (2.5Y 8/2) with a white design, the design reserved in white against the olive lustre ground.*
15. SHR02 3008.1: *the rim of a bowl in fine white ware (2.5Y 8/2), the interior and exterior decorated with an olive-green design painted in lustre on a white ground.*
16. SHR02 3008. 2: *the rim of a bowl in fine white ware (2.5Y 8/2), the interior and exterior decorated with a dark olive-green design (Arabic letters?) painted in lustre on a white ground.*
17. SHR02 3008.3: *a bowl in fine white ware (2.5Y 8/2), the interior and exterior decorated with an olive-green and purple design painted in lustre on a white/grey ground.*

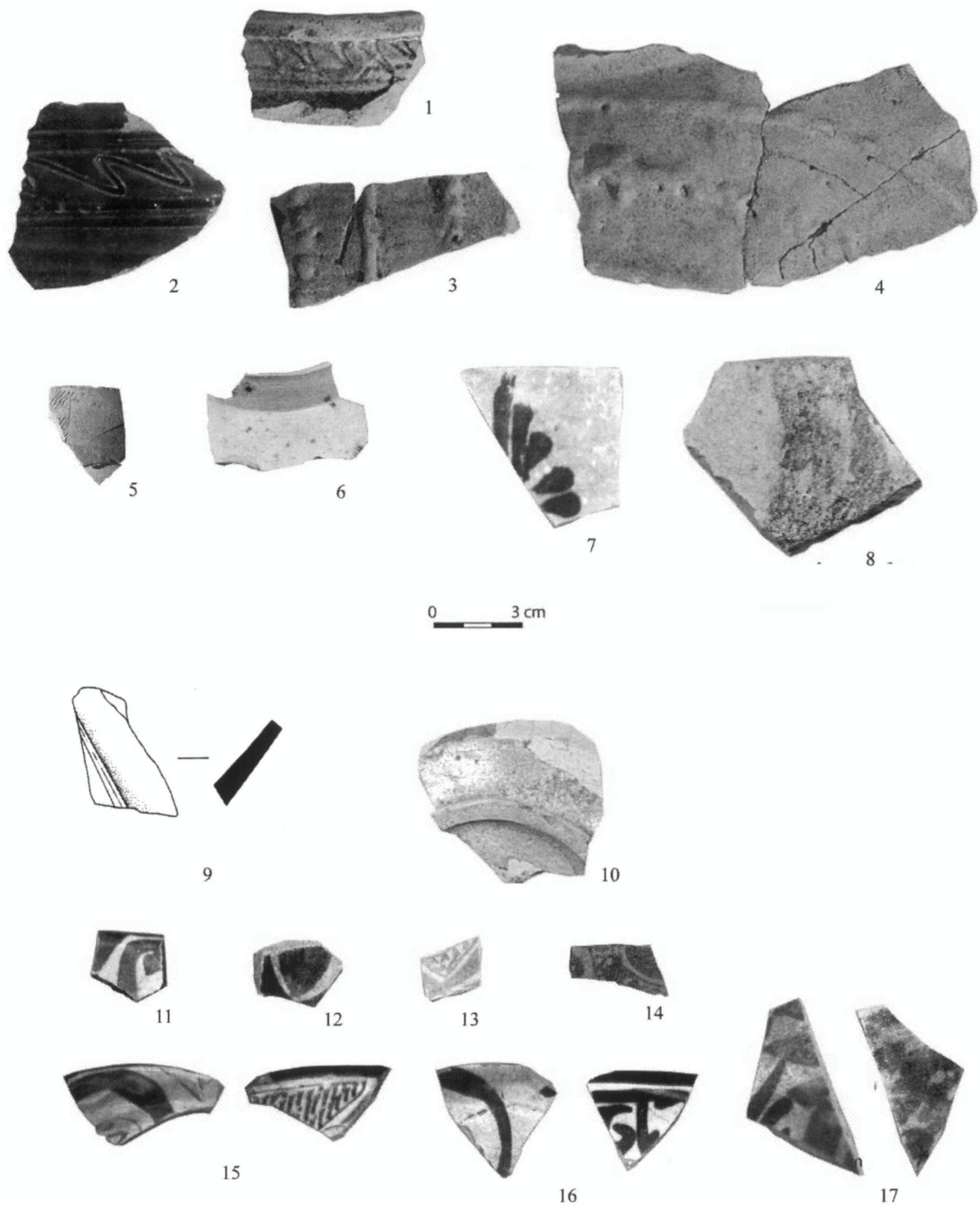


FIGURE 3. *The Samarran assemblage of al-Shiḥr.*

FIGURE 4. *Incense-burners from al-Shih̄r.*

Key to the ceramic description: (the first number corresponds to the inventory number) SHR = Shiḥr; 99 = year 1999; 2015 = number of layer or artificial removal; Ω = unstratified.

The colour code for the body is that of the Munsell soil chart, ed. 1973.

1. SHR02 2858.2: *the squared handle of a rounded incense-burner in fine pink ware (5YR 7/3).*
2. SHR02 2858.4: *the handle of an incense-burner in fine pink ware (5YR 7/3).*
3. SHR02 2838.1: *the squared handle of a rounded incense-burner in fine pink ware (5YR 7/3).*
4. SHR02 2899.1: *the rim and corner of an incense-burner, with excised triangles on the exterior and on the top of the rim, in coarse light brown ware (7.5YR 6/4).*
5. SHR99 2282.1: *the foot of a square incense-burner in fine pink ware (5YR 8/3), with incised and red painted decoration.*
6. SHR02 2858.1: *a fragment of an incense-burner in fine pink ware (5YR 7/3).*
7. SHR00 2730.3: *the foot of a square incense-burner in coarse light brown ware (7.5YR 6/4), with incised lines and wedge-shaped indentations.*
8. SHR99 2331.1: *a complete profile of a footed incense-burner in a coarse very pale brown ware (10YR 7/4), decorated with three rows of three dots made with a stylus.*
9. SHR00 2709.1: *a complete profile of a footed incense-burner in a coarse light brown ware (7.5YR 6/4), with incised decoration and wedge-shaped indentations.*
10. SHR00 2730.2: *a complete profile of a footed and squared incense-burner in a coarse light brown ware (7.5YR 6/4), with incised decoration and wedge-shaped indentations.*

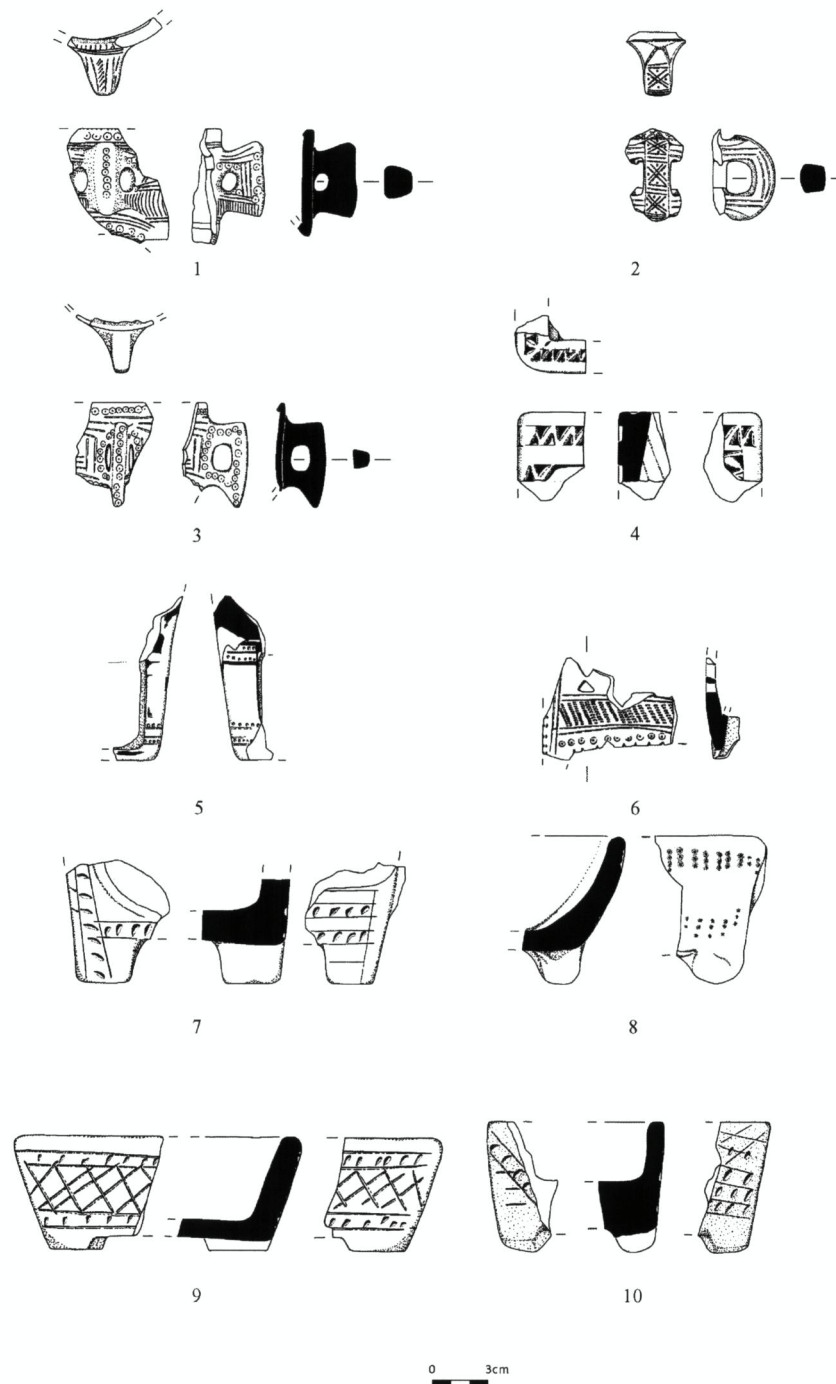


FIGURE 4. Incense-burners from al-Shiḥr.

FIGURE 5. *Indian pottery from al-Shih̄r.*

Key to the ceramic description: (the first number corresponds to the inventory number) SHR = Shih̄r; 99 = year 1999; 2015 = number of layer or artificial removal; Ω = unstratified.
The colour code for the body is that of the Munsell soil chart, ed. 1973.

1. SHR00 2777.1,2: the neck of a jar with a black core (2.5YR N 2.5) dark greyish-brown towards the surface (10YR 4/2), the exterior is decorated in a polished black slip.
2. SHR99 2459.7: the neck of a jar or cooking pot in light red ware (2.5YR 6/6).
3. SHR99 2459.6: a carinated cooking pot with a convex bottom, in red ware (2.5YR 4/6), decorated with a light red slip (2.5YR 6/6).
4. SHR96 1000.45: a lid in dark brown ware (2.5YR 6/8) decorated with a polished light red slip (2.5YR 6/6), and with a roulette decoration on the raised rim.
5. SHR99 2459.5: a carinated cooking pot in red ware (2.5YR 4/6), decorated with a polished reddish-brown slip (2.5YR 5/4).
6. SHR99 2418.5: a carinated cooking pot in a light reddish-brown ware (2.5YR 5/4).
7. SHR99 2214.1: a large basin or cooking pot in reddish brown ware (5YR 5/3) decorated with a red slip (2.5YR 4/6).
8. SHR96 2010: a jar in a reddish-brown ware (5YR 5/3) with black painting on a red slip.
9. SHR99 2164: the neck of a cooking pot in a very dark core (10YR 3/2) and a light red ware towards the surface (2.5YR 6/8), decorated in red paint (10R 4/8) and with black painted lines on a reddish yellow slip (5YR 7/6).
10. SHR96 1000.13: a fragment of a jar in reddish-brown ware (5YR 5/3), black painted on a polished red slip.
11. SHR97 2101.1: a fragment of a jar or cooking pot in black ware for the main part of the body (2.5YR N 2/5), and towards the surface in light red ware (2.5YR 6/6); the interior is black (2.5YR N2), the exterior is polished black painting on a polished red slip (2.5YR 4/8).
12. SHR97 2092.1: a dish or lid in reddish-yellow ware (5YR 6/6).

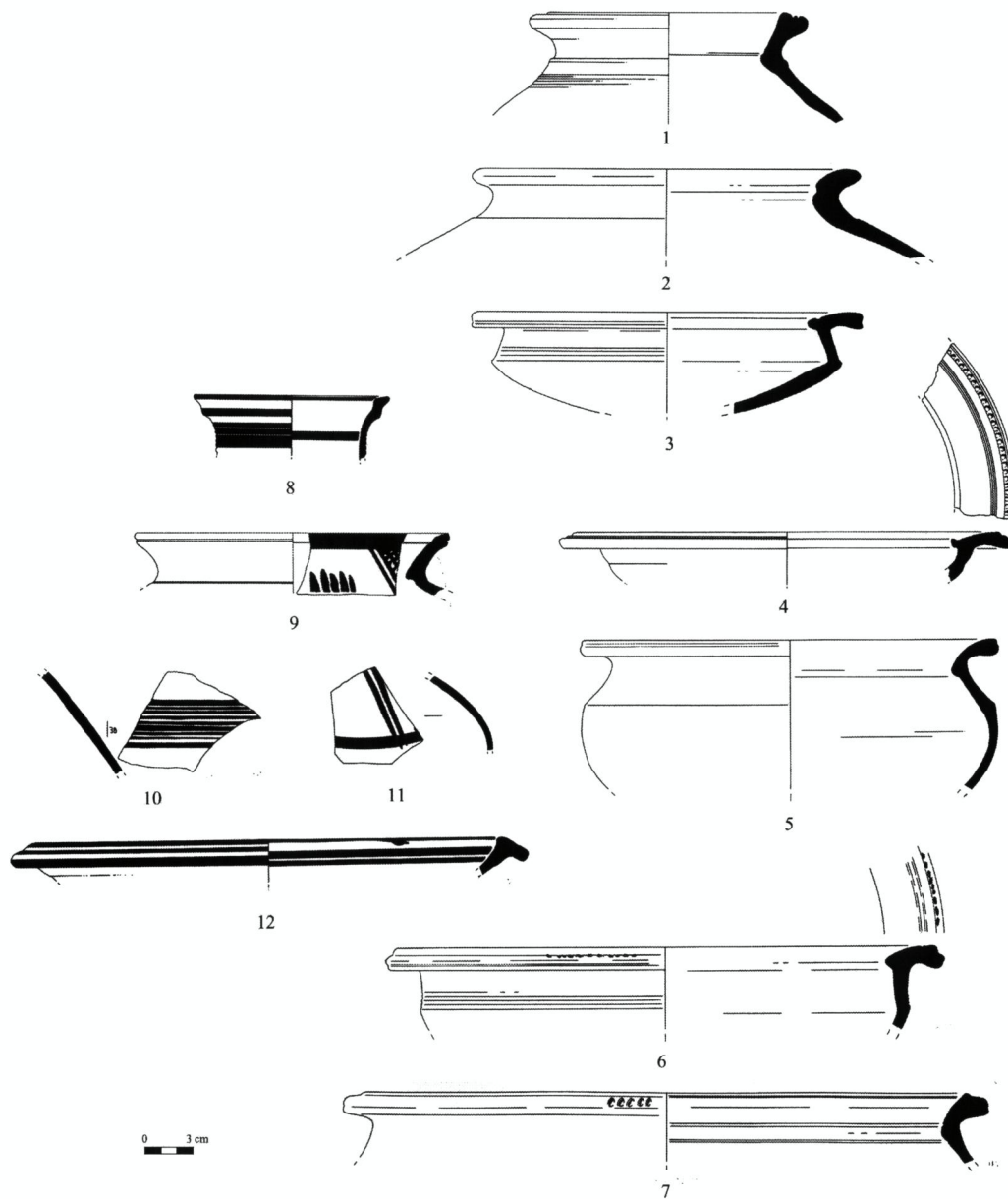


FIGURE 5. *Indian pottery from al-Shiḥr.*

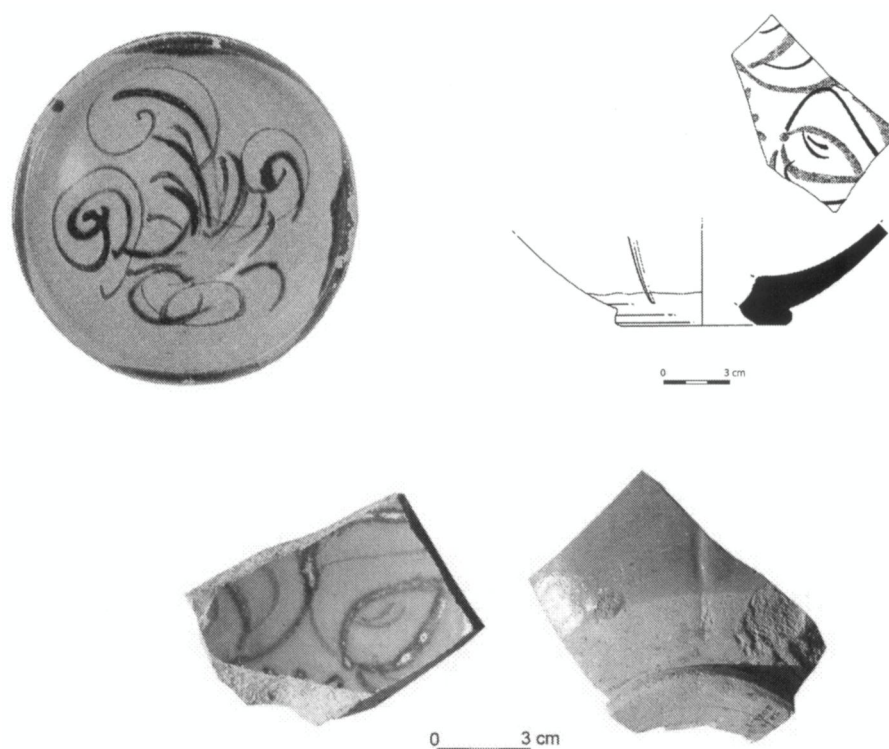


FIGURE 6. Tang pottery from al-Shiḥr.

1. A bowl excavated at Nishapur, Japanese collection (Medley 1981: fig. 90, right) 2. SHR97 2084.1: the base of a bowl in very pale brown stoneware (10YR 8/4) with a yellow or light grey glaze (5Y 7/1) on a slip-painted ground, decorated with a vegetal design painted in iron-brown; the interior is copper-green; fluted (4 external grooves) and unglazed lower part on the exterior; the flat bottom is unglazed.

diwani, *mukkatib*, *rattabi*) was intense between Taʿizz, Aden, and our harbour. Al-Shiḥr exported alum, dates, caraway, *fuwaṭ* (sg. *fūṭah*), large blankets, and pieces of black cloth to Aden, and imported more silver from China than did Aden.

Fabrics and foodstuffs have not so far been recovered from the excavations but the texts mentioned above indicate contacts with pottery-producing areas, and this is confirmed by the presence of abundant Tiḥamah ceramics, especially "Mustard Ware", and later, during the Ottoman period, of Ḥaysī types.

Pilgrimage

Even today the *madīnah* of al-Shiḥr contains the tombs of many revered personages (e.g. the al-ʿAṭṭās and al-ʿAydārūs families) who once exerted influence on the links between the coast and the hinterland of Ḥaḍra-

mawt and on cities such as Ḥuraiḍah, Shibām, and Tarīm. Sanbal (1994: 71, 81, 254) mentions the names of three of these religious dignitaries and indicates the locations of their graves. These are al-Shaykh Tāj al-ʿArifīn Saʿd b. ʿAlī (died 1210), the Sufi Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Abū ʿl Shaykh ʿAbdallāh Abū ʿAbbād (died 1224), and ʿAbdallāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Fahd (died 1512–1513). Archaeology can contribute little to this socio-religious aspect of the history of the port, but the mediaeval sources clearly show the importance of al-Shiḥr in the hierarchy of Yemeni cities. This is mentioned in the foundation texts explaining the origins of the city. The pilgrimage to the tomb of the prophet Ḥūd, the most important prophet of Ḥaḍramawt, began at al-Shiḥr. The protection provided by these venerated individuals contributed to the security of the merchants and of trade.



FIGURE 7. *A Chinese coin:*
SHR99 2165.1: A single-faced coin in copper or bronze; it is circular but seems to be pierced in the centre with a square hole.

Conclusion

The mediaeval sources provide information on the commodities produced, and in transit, at al-Shiḥr, and testify both to its links with Ḥaḍramawt and the Tiḥamah, and to its place in the networks which crossed the Indian Ocean as far as China. Apart from the well-known resources of the area — fish, incense, and amber — the Rasulid manuscript, *Nūr al-maʿārif*, provides us with new information on the export of other products such as alum, caraway, dates, blankets, *fuwaṭ*, and black cloth and silver from China. All these goods were exported to Aden and its environs. In earlier times, the harbour had had links with Asia (it took forty-one days to reach al-Shiḥr from Burma in 929) but it is the archaeological data (e.g. the Samarran assemblage), which provides evidence that trade with the Persian Gulf took place as early as the Abbasid period. The texts mention contacts with the eastern coast of Africa only around the fifteenth century, but there is evidence of eleventh-century African pottery at the site, and it is clear that further archaeological investigation in conjunction with research into the texts is needed. However, these data have helped to underline the importance of this mediaeval harbour, which was active for more than a millennium. We hope that we have contributed to its preservation and that it will one day be officially classified as part of the national heritage of the country.

Notes

- ¹ Five seasons of excavations, led by the author, have been carried out so far, with the participation of the following: K. Bādhafari, I. Al-ʿAmeri, M. Bāharama, S. Mohammad ʿAli, A. Albary, A.K. al-Bakarani; representatives of the Antiquities Department of Mukallā and Ṣanʿā; D. Parent, D. Guimard, S. Dalle, topographers with AFAN (Association Française pour l'Archéologie Nationale); N. Férault de Falandre, architect DPLG (Diplomé par le Gouvernement); P. Philippe, draughtsman and architect; S. Eliès and S. Vatteoni, draughtsmen; E. Alloin, S. Labroche, and V. Monaco, conservators; P. Bâty, archaeologist with AFAN; R. Alaoui, T. Creissen, N. Gilles, S. Gilotte, S. Guichou, A. Joyard, C. Juy, A. Masson, H. Morel, G. Plisson, P. Siméon and D. Willems, students of archaeology at the Sorbonne and the Universities of Nanterre, Paris IV and Paris I, and Aix-Marseille I; and G. Fusberti. This project is supported by the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (UMR 8084), the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and by the General Organization of Antiquities, Manuscripts and Museums of Yemen under the direction of Dr Y. Abdallah in Ṣanʿā, and of Dr ʿAbd al-ʿAziz bin ʿAqil in Mukallā. It includes the activities of CEFAS (Centre d'Etudes Français d'Archéologie et de Sciences Sociales) (Ṣanʿā). Finally, I would like to thank Guy Ducatez for his translations of the Arabic sources used in this paper.
- ² R. Simon refers to "ash-Shiḥr" together with four other markets: al-Mushaqqar/Hajar (al-Ḥasā/Bahrayn), Ṣuḥār (Oman), Aden and Ṣanʿā (Yemen) in the period from the end of the sixth to the beginning of the seventh century AD. Quoting al-Marzūqī, he suggests on the contrary that the independence of the market place was relative because it was linked with the long-distance trade by its goods (incense, myrrh, aloe-wood, pearls) and that "Banū Muharib from B. Mahra probably was entrusted with the protection of long-distance trade" (Simon 1989: 56, 88–89, 166, n. 57).
- ³ They were identified by J. Desse, CNRS, Laboratory of Archaeozoology, Valbonne, France.
- ⁴ The author of remarks that were added (c. AD 916) to the *Voyage du marchand arabe Sulayman en Inde et en Chine* (AD 851). See Ferrand 1922: 126.
- ⁵ The author of this work called the harbour "Shiḥr of frankincense", see Van der Lith 1883–1886: 129–130, LXXXI, 147, XCIII.

- ⁶ During the 1993–1995 surveys, we registered one sample in al-Qaraw in the Abyān area (Hardy-Guilbert & Rougeulle 1995: fig. 4/2) and another sample in Kawd am Saylah (unpublished).
- ⁷ Our thanks to Professor Ma Wenkuan (University of Beijing) and Zhao Bing (CNRS, Paris) who carried out this research for us.
- ⁸ One Chinese coin is published here, but several were shown to me in 1996 by an inhabitant of al-Shihr.
- ⁹ In his *Taʿrīḥ ḥaḍramawt* — known as the *taʿrīḥ sanbal* — Shanbal (1468–1514) wrote about al-Shihr and events that took place there during the Ayyubid and Rasulid periods.

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