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Excavations of the German Archaeological
Mission in Ras Al-Khaimah, U.A.E.

A Preliminary Report

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Since the survey of B.de Cardi and B.Doe in 1971 the Shimal area has been discovered to be a major zone of human implantation from the beginning of the 2nd millennium B.C.in the Oman Peninsula. The recent discovery of a settlement with the Wadi Suq cemetery at Shimal should help to understand the time-span covered by this period which up to now has not yielded a stratigraphy. In certain aspects the pottery assemblage of the Shimal settlement is quite different from that of Period III at Hili-8, the only other Wadi Suq settlement known in the region.

II.6.1. The pottery of Shimal

The present study is the initial stage of a laboratory analysis program which includes the pottery from the main Wadi Suq sites on the Oman Peninsula, i.e. Hili-8, Period III, Wadi Suq, Wadi Sunaysl, and Shimal.

During a stay at Ras al-Khaimah in February - March 1986 we had the opportunity to examine the material from the Shimal collective tombs SH 102 and SH 103, and the SX settlement excavated by the German Mission. The pottery from tomb Site 1 has been the subject of a technical and typological study by the excavator P.Donaldson (1984, 1985), while the material from Site 6 is under publication (de Cardi, in press).

The following were our aims during the preliminary phase of the project:

- description of paste fabrics and systematic classification of the material. This study relates to the classical typological study data (shape and decoration) and the examination of forming marks (rough shape and finishing).
- selection of representative samples for laboratory analysis.

We were able to distinguish 9 different fabrics¹ and 7 wares². Three of these wares that we called coarse, medium, and fine, are actually Wadi Suq (cf. Table 1). We noticed that whatever the fabric, the relative amount of mineral and vegetal temper varies from one sherd to another (this is what probably led P.Donaldson to differentiate 20 fabrics when he studied the Site 1 inventory). Thus, it seems that the Wadi Suq potters did not search to duplicate a particular type of paste as systematically as their predecessors did during the second part of the 3rd mil-

¹The fabric is defined by the colour of the paste, the dimensions, shape, colour, and frequency of the mineral inclusions, and the dimensions, shape, and frequency of the vacuoles.

²The ware is defined by a particular fabric, a characteristic shape and finishing, and a limited corpus of shapes and decorations.

lennium B.C. None of the Wadi Suq fabrics at Shimal forms a very tidy group such as the ones noticed during Period IIc2-g at Hili-8 (Blackman et al.n.d., Méry n.d.).

On the other hand, the forming, shaping, and finishing are quite standardized, at least for the fine pottery. Also, if the Wadi Suq funerary pottery does not vary typologically from one area to the other, it is surprising to realise how much the Shimal settlement pottery differs from that of Period III at Hili-8, especially for fabrics and sizes of vessels.

II.6.1.1. The settlement pottery

500 potsherds were examined from the SX-Area (mostly E 19, all sherds are collected during the excavation). Although the levels were close to the actual surface the material was scarcely mixed: less than a dozen Iron Age and Islamic sherds were isolated.

The plain coarse ware represents less than 5% of the sample. With the exception of some flat handmade bases with a diameter of 6cm, only wall-sherds less than 1cm thick were found. As a matter of fact, considering the high amount and thickness of the mineral inclusions, it would have been impossible to throw such a ware. No decoration was noticed.

We can distinguish two kinds of paste:

- fabric 1: orange, beige, red to brown colour. Many sherds have a reducing core. Numerous micro-pores, very numerous, elongated mineral inclusions, dark grey or black with metallic glitter, sub-rounded, and measuring 1 to 3mm. Scarce white and brown-red opaque inclusions.

- fabric 2: similar to fabric 1, except the very numerous light-grey and white mineral inclusions, subangular to angular measuring 1 to 3mm.

At Hili-8 a coarse ware was also found in Period III levels (nos.396, 397, 700 UF 62, 792 UF 66, 1295 UF 202, 2489 UF 754) which represent 10% of the assemblage. However, the materials from Shimal SX and Hili-8 cannot be compared in terms of percentage as in Hili only diagnostic sherds were saved, i.e. "every rim- or bodysherd representing an individual pot among the material issued from an excavation unit." (Cleuziou n.d.:1).

Pottery from the settlement SX is mainly associated with the plain medium ware, fabric 3 (Pl.29), thus re-grouping 89% of the SX-E 19 collection. The sherds are orange, beige, buff to brown. Many sherds have a reducing core. There are numerous micro-pores, vegetals and seed impressions. Considering their abundance and the fact that they were previously carefully chopped, we can surmise that the potter intentionally added them. Such temper tends to reduce the shrinkage ability and serves as internal combustible.

Most of the sherds belong to a large sized material: we counted more than 350 wallsherds from 1.5 to 2cm thick, with a diameter reaching up to 40cm, and 35 flat bases with a maximum 20cm diameter (Fig.51.2). Some vessels were thrown after they were coiled: the internal and external walls were carefully smoothed or there are fine horizontal, rhythmic grooves and the thickness of the walls is regular. Finally some bases were cut from the rotating wheel with a string (typical "shell pattern" considered by archaeologists to be a distinctive Wadi Suq feature). With the exception of few large rolled rims with a maximum diameter of 30cm (nos.65,1973 UF 501), there is no exact equivalent to such a large sized ware at Hili-8, Period III. There were also a few pieces from a smaller material associated with fabric 3: 6 rolled rims (a shape also known at Hili-8), 2 fragments of spouts and the bases of 3 footed goblets (Figs. 51.3-4). Two of them were string-cut. We shall see that spouted jars are typical for the fine funerary pottery.

Fine ware, fabric 5, is characteristic of the tombs and represents less than 5% of the material. We found fragments of beakers, some of them decorated with simple geometrical patterns painted in black or red. Its fabric will be described in the next chapter, together with parallels from Period III at Hili-8.

II.6.1.2. The funerary pottery

We examined the material of 4 collective burials: 67 vessels from Site 1, 70 from Site 6, about 50 from SH 102 and the pottery from SH 103.

Coarse ware is almost absent from the funerary context since we found only 2 big bowls (associated with fabric 2) inside tomb SH 103 (Fig.51.1).

Medium ware, fabric 3, is better represented. 3 flat bases and some large bodysherds from tomb SH 102 are identical to those from the settlement. Some thrown flasks were found in Site 6 (de Cardi, in press, nos. 45,47,48), footed goblets in SH 102 (3 pieces) and Site 6 (id.,nos.43,44), a large footed base in Site 6 (id.,no.46) and some beakers with a small foot (beakers shape b) in SH 102 (1 piece), from Site 1 (Donaldson 1984:Fig.10a.37), and SH 103 (nos.44.18,44.19, museum registration.Fig. 51.5).

Fine ware is characteristic of the funerary context since it represents more than 90% of the assemblage. The material is very homogeneous in forming, shapes, and decoration. Apart from few miniature pinched jars all the vessels are thrown.

The most frequent shapes are beakers and goblets. Considering the aspect of the base, there are two salient shapes (cf.Table 2):

- **shape a** (Figs.51.6-10): beakers with a flat or slightly convex bottom

under a very low carination. The vessels are removed from the wheel (sometimes from the rotating wheel) and dried to leather hard. Then, they were trimmed with a blade, leaving sharp-edged facets of unequal shape and size or long, flat sweeps sometimes with grit drag-marks. As to the string-cut, this forming technique is usually considered to be typically Wadi Suq.

- **shape b** (Figs.51.11-14): beakers with rounded base, short foot (not higher than 1cm) and flat bottom.

Beakers are the best represented shape in Hili-8, but lacking vessel bases we cannot make differences between shapes a and b. As at Shimal, those beakers are thin walled with chevrons or a series of undulating black lines (Figs.51.6-10. Cleuziou 1981:Figs.4,6), and sometimes a red external cover.

Footed goblets are represented in all tombs at Shimal. The foot is 2 to 3cm high. Some of the goblets are string-cut. Such goblets were never found at Hili-8, Period III.

Spouted jars (Figs.51.15-18) appear in each tomb. They are big globular, usually decorated jars with flat or slightly convex bottom. There are some with an open spout below the rim (type 1 of de Cardi, in press). Here Fig.51.17), others have a truncated spout on the shoulder (type 2, cf. Fig.51.18). Some of them are string-cut and trimmed. Fragments of spouted jars type 1 (nos.458 UF 59, 829 UF 60, 1141 UF 93, 1296 UF 202, 2060 UF 603, cf. Cleuziou 1981:Fig.3) were also found at Hili-8.

At Hili-8, Period III, one fabric only is associated with the fine Wadi Suq ware. Actually, this group is not really tight, but considering the smallness of the inclusions, the small differences detected between the sherds were impossible to quantify or even to qualify. We had exactly the same problem at Shimal and were able to distinguish only two fabrics of fine ware:

- **fabric 4** (Fig.51.18): bright red to brown paste, with numerous micro-pores and few vegetal impressions. Very numerous white opaque inclusions, 1mm or less. This fabric is not abundant, but appears in all Shimal tombs: most of the pieces are beakers shape a (6 pieces in tombs Site 6, 8 in Site 1, also present in SH 102 and SH 103), a few beakers shape b (3 pieces in tombs Site 6, present in SH 102 and SH 103), and only 1 footed goblet in SH 102.

- **fabric 5** (Fig.51.6): orange, red, beige, brown paste. Some sherds have a reducing core. Numerous micro-pores, chopped vegetal temper, more or less abundant. Very numerous light-grey and white opaque inclusions, 1mm or less.

The great majority are beakers shape a (37 pieces in tombs Site 1, 27 in

Site 6, present in SH 102 and SH 103), some beakers shape b (4 in tombs Site 1, 2 in Site 6, present in SH 102 and SH 103), and only one footed goblet in Site 6. Most of the spouted jars are associated with this fabric.

75 samples (representative sherds and sedimentological samples) were selected for the petrographic thin-section analysis.

We intend to privilege two topics of research:

- pottery technology reconstruction through the study of materials chosen by the potters, their forming and firing techniques.
- petrographic origin of the raw materials through the study of geological maps, earth, sand, soil, and rock samples we shall attempt to determine probable provenience areas for each recognized pottery fabric.

Table 1: fabrics and wares from Shimal

<u>fabric</u>	<u>description</u>	<u>main occurrence</u>
1	coarse ware	SX Wadi Suq settlement
2	-do-	-do-
3	medium ware	-do-
4	fine ware	Wadi Suq tombs
5	-do-	-do-
6 ¹	Harappan ware	late 3rd/early 2nd mill.BC
7	Hili domestic ware	3rd mill.BC Hili settlement
8	fine red ware	3rd mill.BC Oman Pen. tombs

Table 2: occurrence of beakers and goblets related to fabrics

<u>ware</u>	<u>beaker shape a</u>	<u>beaker shape b</u>	<u>goblet</u>
medium(3)	Site 1	SH 102, SH 103	Site 1, SH 102
fine (4)	Sites 1,6; SH 102	Sites 1,6, SH 102 SH 103	SH 102
fine (5)	Sites 1,6; SH 102 SH 103	Sites 1,6, SH 102 SH 103	-

¹see note 1 p.78

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Abbreviations:

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E&W - East and West
JOS - Journal of Oman Studies
Or.Ant.- Oriens Antiquus
PSAS - Proceedings of the Seminar of Arabian Studies
SAA - South Asian Archaeology
UAEA - Archaeology in the U.A.E., Al'Ain

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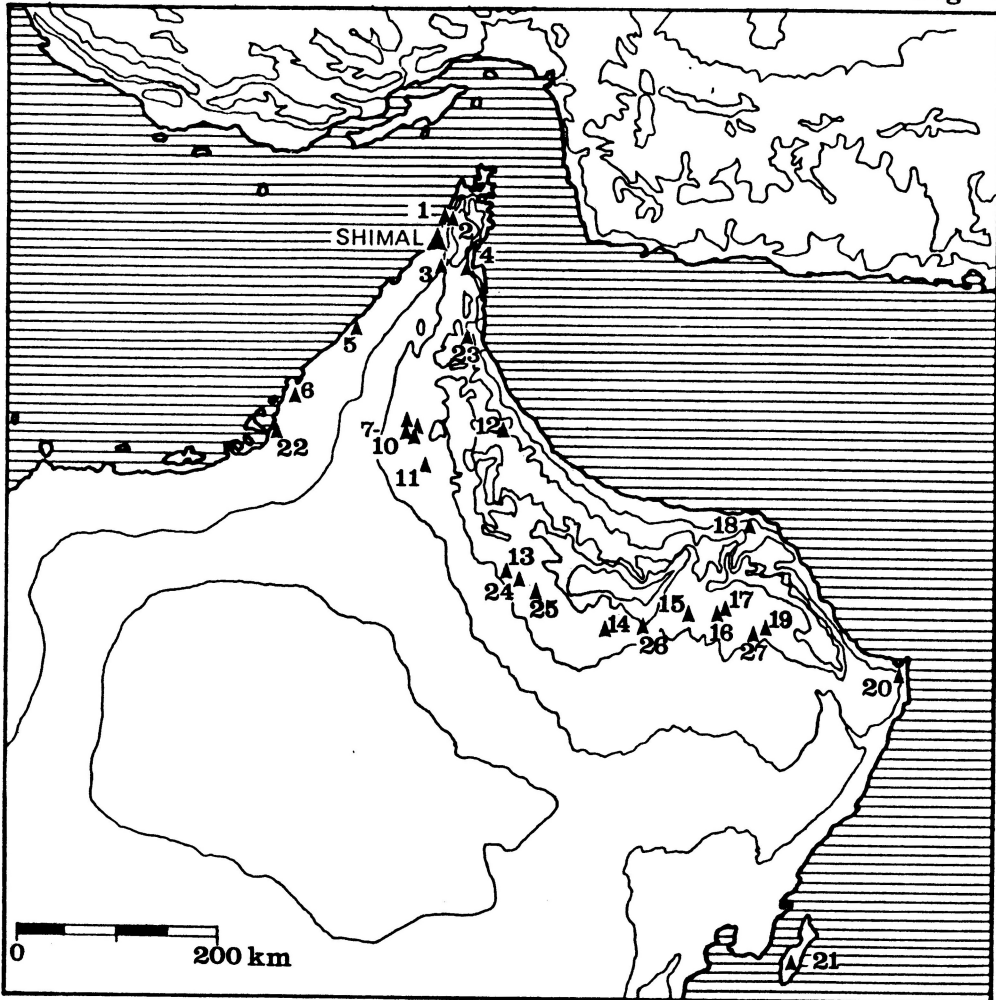
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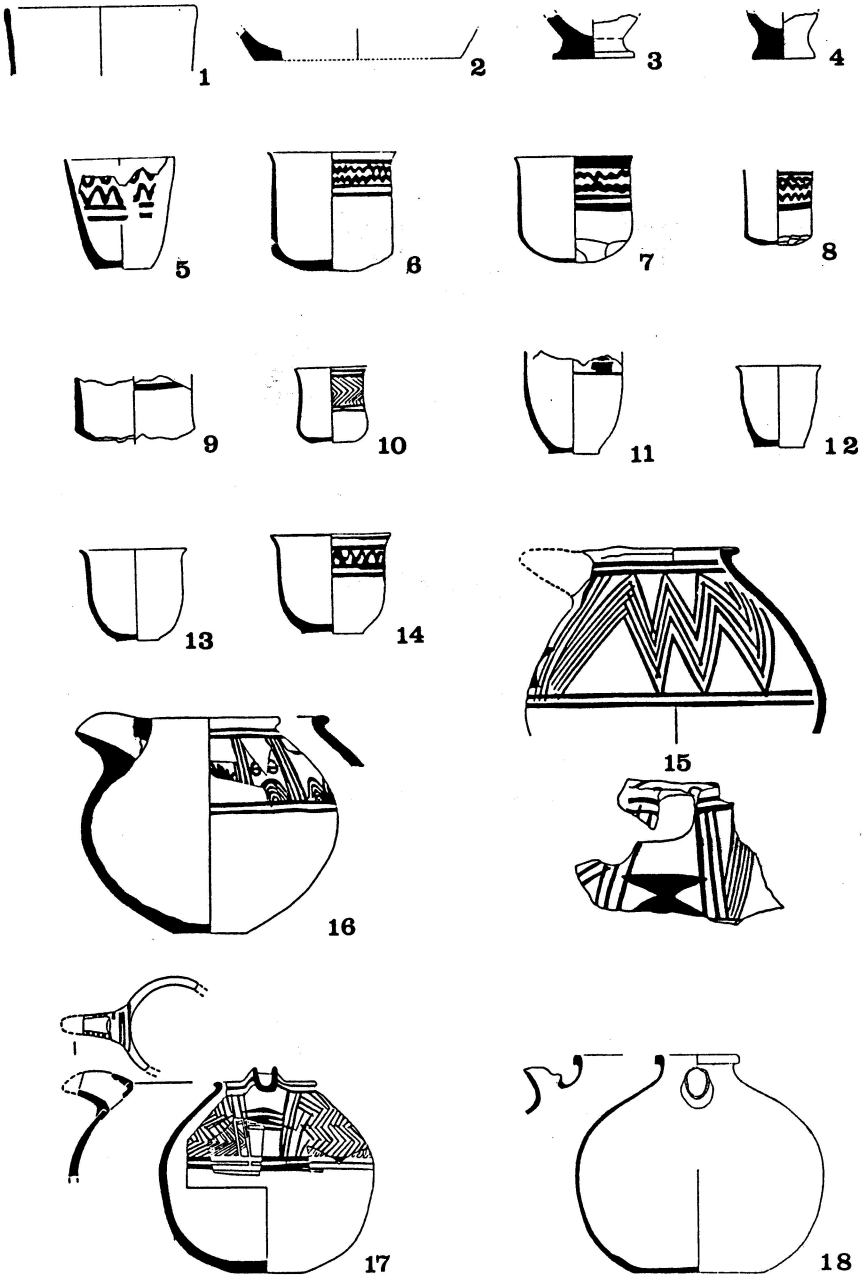
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Fig. 1

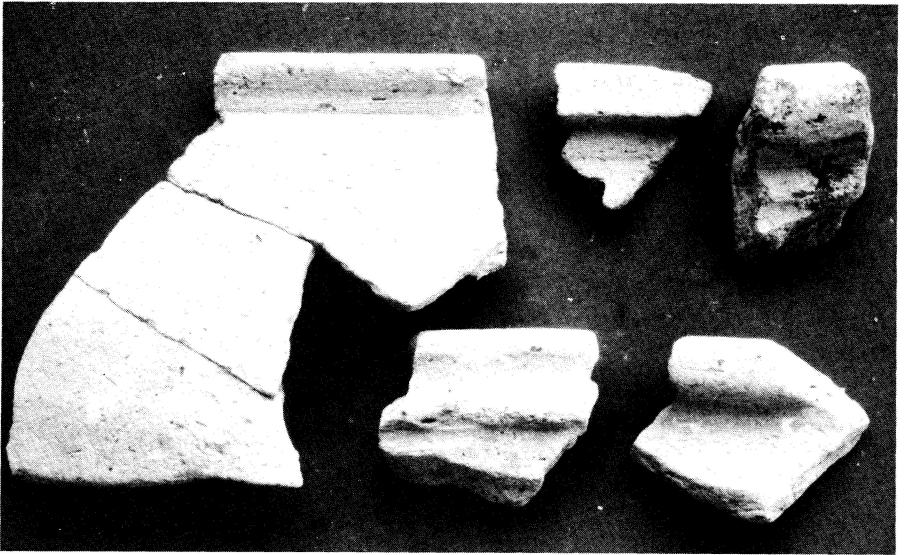


MAP OF THE OMAN PENINSULA SHOWING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PLACES MENTIONED

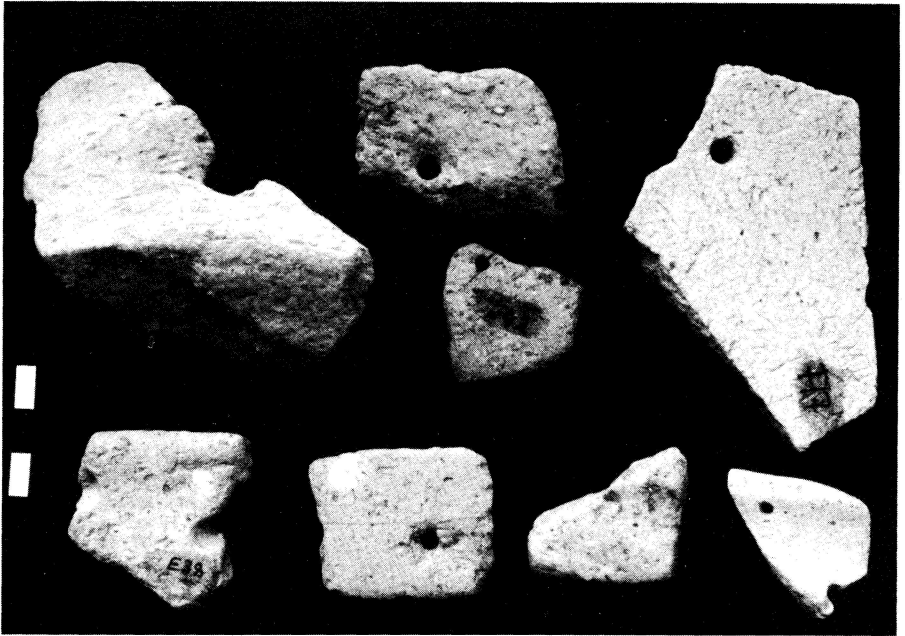
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|----|----------------------|----|---|
| 1 | Ghalilah | 15 | Wadi Salh |
| 2 | Dhayah | 16 | Wadi Samad (Samad cemetery, Maysar-27, Maysar-1 |
| 3 | al-Khatt | 17 | Khudr |
| 4 | Dibba | 18 | Ras al-Hamra |
| 5 | al-Qusais | 19 | al-Batin |
| 6 | Ghanadha | 20 | Ras al-Junayz |
| 7 | Qarn Bint Saud | 21 | Masirah Island |
| 8 | Rumeilah | 22 | Umm an-Nar |
| 9 | Hili-8, Hili North | 23 | Wadi al-Qawr |
| 10 | Qattarah | 24 | Baat |
| 11 | Jabal Hafit (Mazyad) | 25 | Amlah |
| 12 | Wadi Suq | 26 | Nizwa |
| 13 | Wadi Sunaysl | 27 | Tawi Sa'id |
| 14 | Wadi Bahla (Bisyah) | | |



DIFFERENT SCALES



PL.29: Medium ware storage jars (fabric 3) from the settlement



Pl.30: Perforated sherds from the settlement