

A Lost Late Islamic Port on the South Arabian Coast

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A couple of years ago, an extensive archaeological site near the mouth of the Wadi Masila was briefly visited by the Russian Mission to Yemen. Although the presence of a proper tell was surmised, the discovery remained without any further consequences or references in more recent contributions of our Russian colleagues. At that time and due to the shortness of their stay on the site a more precise dating through surface finds could not be accomplished and its local name could not be learnt.

In January 1993, while working on the high plateaus of the Southern Jôl, during a weekend we interrupted our work and did a short tour to the mouth of Wadi Masila. A two-hours stay on that very site¹ led to the impression that we are dealing here with the remains of a proper town covered all-over with masses of pottery, stonewares and other artefacts obviously, as quickly recognized, dating to the mediæval periods.

Very little is known about the Islamic archaeology of this area and hereinafter we hope to present a first glimpse, however scarce, into the life of a once prosperous coastal town with commercial and cultural contacts far beyond its immediate horizon².

The site

The site is situated directly on the coast some 5km west of the town of Saihut (map 2). It can be easily reached from the al-Mukalla - Saihut asphalt road: Coming from the west and immediately before crossing a smaller, but relatively deep-cut wadi bed, an Islamic cemetery (see below) is clearly visible on the south and just next to the road and a sporadically used dirt track of some 1.5km length takes us from here to the extensive ruins.

The borders of the entire ensemble (map 3) are not always clear and do not necessarily coincide with the distribution of the surface finds. The settlement is composed of two major units: an earlier walled precinct along the shore (Pl. 1) and an *extra muros* (?) occupation immediately inland. The northern end of the latter sector appears rather open and unorganized with a small but nonetheless prominent artificial mound (tell ?) off the center³. This area is partly indented by the extensive Islamic graveyard and both the interface of settlement and cemetery and the lack of a fairly

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clear planning principle may indicate that this part of the site is indeed a later appendix.

The eastern border of the site is the relatively steep bench of the above mentioned wadi bed. On the opposite side of the wadi is a minor cluster of ruins which could not be visited and the connection of which with the main site can therefore not be established positively.

The southern border of the site seems defined by the sea and a former small creek or rather what is now occupied by sabkha with a couple of small sandspit-like elevations. Some of the latter still show the foundations of stone buildings and a cistern. The former coastline in this sector is but clear: It seems that major parts of the site have been washed away by high tides and that in places only deeper stone foundations prevented a more complete erosion thus leaving small islets.

The western and northwestern limits of the site are given by the L-shaped creek (cf. Pl. 3).

When first entering the site I was highly astonished by really striking similarities with the late mediæval port of Julfar in the Emirate of Ras al-Khaimah. Like Julfar the general setting of this new site is best described as being located at the fringes of a coastal-piedmont plain with a mountain range of some 500 to 600m height behind and parallel to the coast in a distance of 4 or 5km (Pl. 2). The now silted creek has its concordance at Julfar and the sea front appears also heavily eroded.

Again like Julfar is the consistence of the topsoil inside the town area: It is of a slightly gravelly and very soft, cushion-like consistence. Two reasons can be hold responsible for this phenomenon: First, a relatively high content of ashes, broken mollusks and loam in the matrix coming from former mud brick constructions; and secondly the loose texture of the matrix caused by regular permeation of salt and brackish water. The high salinity has affected both the architectural remains as well as the preservation of the surface finds.

Last but not least, the site shares surprisingly many traits with Julfar in respect of constructional details as well as the composition and nature of its inventory: Save for the coarse ware pottery it is basically identical (see below).

The cemetery

When approaching the site from the asphalt road, one is surprised by a very extensive Islamic cemetery counting literally several thousands of graves. Without the knowledge of the nearby archaeological site its very presence would be rather striking because no modern housing is nearby and the town of Saihut is too far away to be linked with this graveyard.

The graveyard stretches along the wadi bed and in the south almost interfaces with the domestic remains of the settlement. In its general appearance the cemetery offers little surprises but almost at its northern end and concentrated in one spot there are three graves with walled enclosures of well finished limestone ashlar (Pl. 4) and furnished with tombstones carrying lavishly inscribed panels. Since two of the gravestones have been tipped over and moved, their original association is not yet clear but it can be assumed that the three graves were originally delimited by two stones each as it is for example known from the Dhofar Islamic cemeteries⁴. Two of the inscribed stones⁵ are fragmentary and possibly part of a dual or triple installation. One (Pl. 4) contains extracts of Quran Chapter 9 "repentance" Verse 21-22, the other one an abbreviated version of Quran Verse 255 of the second (cow) sura (Pl. 5). The third grave-stone, the best preserved one, gives witness of the burial of a certain *Zala Xamisah Allah*, a woman of

venerable virtues who died in the month of *Jumada I* of the year 910 A.H. (Pl. 6; for further comments see also appendix by Takashina, Yoshiyuki)⁶.

Caligraphically and ornamentally all three stones appear related. They may be among the earliest tombs within the cemetery, relatively far off the contemporary settlement, and it was from here that the graveyard probably started to grow all along the wadi bank towards the premises of the former town.

It is certainly of some interest to note that from what is known of our random surface collection inside the town area, most of the settlement occupation dates to 16th to first half of 17th cent. C.E., although 14th cent. and earlier stray finds may also indicate a longer history buried underneath.

The town area

The above mentioned town nucleus (cf. map 3) can be described as a peninsula with an approximate E - W orientation fringed by the wadi in the east and the small creek in the north and west. There are ruins everywhere but the most prominent features are a small but very high mound in the southeastern corner, a large complex resembling a suq (?) and the remains of the town wall.

Architectural remains

Erosion and deflation have diminished the site to a landscape of rather amorphous low mounds topped by regular alignments of wadi pebbles and boulders. Those are the only superficially visible remnants of the architecture and since larger heaps of collapse are absent (except for the high mound in the southeast and the town wall in the north) it can be assumed that we are dealing here not with proper walls but only with their foundations (Pl. 1). Likely, these were once superimposed by mud brick or pisé masonry.

The foundations are barely more than 80cm thick and appear dry-masoned. The only gypsum-mortared masonry, I am aware of, is that of an oval shaped cistern on one of the islets.

The town was once at least partly enclosed by a town wall. That is certain for its northern part where the wall has still survived in ruins. In the south no remains could be detected but they may have been destroyed by high tides. The same applies to its western sector whereas the eastern boundary of the town area may not necessarily have possessed a fortification: It is here that the steep wadi bench offered sufficient protection.

There is a bridge-like narrow pass between the bend of the creek and the northerly wadi. No wall section could be traced here nor any signs of a gate.

The visible northern section of the city wall (cf. Pl. 3) is between 1.2 and 1.5m wide and 0.8 to 1.0m high in places⁷. The wall is made of wadi pebbles; mortar could not be traced but may be washed out. It is built on the slope and parallel to the former waterline. The terrain on the inside has raised due to the accumulation of cultural deposits. There are several breaches in the wall, but without excavation it remains unclear if they represent gates.

The southeastern corner of the town area is occupied by a small but steep mound of estimated 15m height (Pl. 2). Particularly on its eastern and southeastern slopes larger patches of wadi pebbles and coral (?) stones are visible. The mound may represent the remains of quite a substantial building and the high altitude of the stone collapse indicates the presence of a buildings perhaps of rectangular (?) plan that was largely constructed of stones. From its size and favourable location inside the town one is

inclined to suggest a fortification right here⁸. Individual towers or the like could not yet be recorded.

No other public buildings nor any mosque were registered.

The major part of the walled town area is occupied with foundations of rectangular buildings following a fixed pattern on both sides of a road with E-W orientation. From what could be registered during our short stay, they are possibly an expression of a general plan at times superimposed upon parts of the terrain. Each building shows a system of interior walls plus perhaps a courtyard but further details could not be studied due to lack of time. Despite the fact that the individual plots are fairly spacious, we have defined this area as a sort of bazaar although a layout for instance of generously allotted merchant houses is equally possible (cf. Pl. 1).

Further foundations of rectangular plan but of clearly smaller dimensions could be observed mainly southwest to northwest of the base of the so-called fort. Their distribution and varying orientations do not seem to follow a given pattern.

Above we have already mentioned briefly the L-shaped creek (Pl. 3) which since abandonment of the town seems to have undergone drastic changes, i.e. a strong erosion at the sea-front and strong siltation in the backward sections. The area is now almost completely filled with sabkha-like sediments. Since the site is clearly unprotected against the sea, it is only reasonable to assume somewhere a safe haven for incoming vessels and those lying in the roadstead. Some sort of harbour can hence be surmised for the protected backpart of the creek. We know from early 19th cent. European depictions for example from Ras al-Khaimah that the dhows were simply tossed up the shore at high tide. A quay installation is not necessarily to be expected.

The surface finds and a first provisional dating

Plentiful of artefacts, mammal and fish bones as well as shells are scattered all-over the place although the distribution of certain categories is not regular. The surface collection includes coarse ware potteries, glazed wares, East Asian porcelains, celadons, and other stonewares, Persian frit ware, glass, glass bangles and the remains of a single metal vessel.

The density of finds was relatively thin near and on top of the so-called fort, the highest concentration of artefacts in general was in the "suq" area. Porcelains were absent at the "fort" but found in large numbers predominantly (albeit not exclusively) on the southern, eroded slope of the "suq" area. Due to the high salinity of the soil and the recurrently recorded combustion is the stray pottery badly affected resulting in peeling off its plain or glazed surfaces.

Glazed pottery

Among the glazed wares (Fig. 1, see also Pl. 13) we have to refer to two major categories, a monochrome glazed ware and a painted underglaze ware. The monochrome (green or blue) glazed ware, of which the yellowish green glazed bowl no. 1 is the most common type, is well known along the Arabian and also the East African coasts. In Tanzanian Kilwa it is running under the term of "Standard monochrome" said to be typical for the mid 15th to 17th cent.⁹ A similarly glazed grey earthenware bowl from Julfar has been interpreted by Hansman as a 17th cent. Persian glazed earthenware imitation of Thai celadon¹⁰. More recent finds, again from Julfar, have been classified by Sasaki as a 16th cent. Persian production¹¹.

Chittick has stressed that at Kilwa perhaps towards 1700 jars of the same ware appear occasionally¹². In ware and glaze is Hansman's 17th cent. sherd "r"¹³ very similar indeed with our jar fragment no. 3 while Sasaki's dark green glazed jar from Julfar, which in rim formation is distantly related, is said to be a 16th cent. Iranian import¹⁴. The underglaze painted ware with a dark paint under a light green or yellowish green glaze (Fig. 2: 4-5) is, by description, known from many places such as from Qaraw near Zinjibar¹⁵. Whitcomb mentions explicitly a "yellow-glazed red ware with painted decoration in brown and/or green"¹⁶ identified both with Keall's "Tihama green-yellow" ware and the identical Egyptian Quseir al-Qadim "mustard wares" as well as several related finds from East Africa. They may belong to a post-13th-14th cent. production that was imported from the Yemeni Tihama¹⁷.

Celadons, "Martaban" wares, and Porcelains

East Asian ceramics, i.e. Chinese porcelains, Thai and Chinese celadons, and other Chinese stonewares, are often overrepresented in surface collections of late Islamic sites and our site is certainly no exception. This is mainly due to their conspicuous colours and decorations. "While these fine porcelains and celadons may often be more precisely dated than unglazed local wares, too often they seem to be far more recent than other sherds and may rather be the product of chance additions by recent visitors"¹⁸. Since we take East Asian porcelains and stonewares as chronological markers for occupation, however sporadic and incidental, we do not hesitate to use these for dating purposes.

Each celadon and porcelain fragment on Figs. 2-4 and Pls. 7-9 and 14 represents an individual vessel (although being only a selection) indicating a high and wide-spread appreciation of this article inside the town area. That blue and white porcelain and celadons were highly valued is proved by the recurrently noted mending of broken vessels (as well as imitations of porcelain in Persian blue on white frit ware and Tihama glazed pottery). The necessary perforations were accomplished with a drill always from the inside of the vessels. They were then joined with copper clamps and rivets of which remains have survived¹⁹. These repairs evidence also a longer use and chronological implication than evinced by simple stylistic criteria. In general, we are not reluctant to put these fragments in the general context of the 16th-17th occupation of the site although comparative finds from controlled excavations may also yield earlier dates²⁰. These were times when markets were flooded by the increased export-oriented production of South China kilns. Late Ming porcelains are spread basically all over the late medieval coastal sites of the Arabian Peninsula (and in the interior).

The basic shapes are cups, bowls, and plates -several being "floriated".

Three thickened folded-over rim fragments (Fig. 2: 13-15) belong possibly to two different, coarse potted stonewares, one with an olive brown glaze, the other one with a deep, mottled dark gray glaze on the exterior surface and on the orifice. They all represent larger-sized containers. The former appears a South China production. The same is true for the latter type which was often dubbed "Martabani" ware after the Martaban entrepot in Birma, but most of these are thought "to have been produced at provincial kilns in South China, and some fewer types in Thailand"²¹.

Frit ware

Frit ware which is represented only by a handful of sherds, is depicted on Fig. 4 (46-50) and Pl. 10. We deal here with Persian frit ware imitating the blue and white style of Chinese porcelains. The few fragments are certainly not exceptional pieces of the

otherwise high-grade production; the execution and quality of the painting is fairly poor and squiggly. Although Persian frit ware appears on Arabian Gulf sites possibly as early as the 14th-15th cent. AD, a rather late date (17th-18th cent. ?) for our pieces may be assumed. Frit sherds from the Ras al-Khaimah sites come from stratified contexts of the 15th to 18th cent.²²

As indicated by a single waster, there was possibly some sort of frit production also at Kawd am-Saila near Aden²³.

Coarse wares

The term coarse ware includes in fact a rather inhomogeneous spectrum of coarse and domestic fabrics of which an undefined share certainly represents local fabrications. We generally distinguish between two major variations, the bulk of (pale to reddish) brown gritty ware hand-made vessels (Fig. 5-6: 51-58) and a group of wheel-thrown bowls and pots (Fig. 6: 59-64) with different hues of red plus a single dark gray specimen (Fig. 6: 63). The shapes which dominate our small collection are mainly bowls and short-necked jars with simple rounded, tapering, or sometimes externally thickened rims. Decoration is rare and basically confined to incisions and imprints.

Very little is known about the respective local ceramic productions of the region and the few comparative data is coming either from uncontrolled or from surface contexts.

Three pieces deserve a short discussion: The short-necked jar no. 52 may jibe in shape with Chittick's type 22 in Husuni Modelled ware²⁴, a kitchen ware first found at Husuni Kubwa and typically for the late 13th cent. to 1400 Kilwa IIIa Period. The characteristic Husuni technique of peeling out ridges and lozenge-shaped plastic ornaments cannot be traced although this may also depend on the stage of fragmentation, but several surface scratches may be taken for cutting marks.

The fragment of a wheel-made dark gray pot no. 63 with an angularly moulded rim recalls strongly Chittick's type 42 which is made in the very same ware and typical for period IV (16th-17th cent.) or later. "It is almost certainly imported from Gujerat"²⁵.

The last piece, a rim-shoulder sherd of a reddish brown quartz-tempered jar no. 65 (Fig. 7) displays a rich and neatly executed impressed and incised geometric decoration. It is most likely a product from the island of Soqatra which on the settlement site of Hajrya is said to antedate the 12th to 13th cent. AD²⁶ but it is also known from Dhofar²⁷.

Small finds

The site is very rich in small finds. Most conspicuous are glass fragments belonging either to vessels or bangles. The glass vessel depicted in Fig. 7 are represented by beaker no. 69 and the folded-over ring base no. 75²⁸, rim and base fragments of flasks (74, 76), and two neck pieces of what may be called "mosque lamps" (70-71). The latter have also parallels, in fact also distorted wasters, from the site of Kawd am-Saila²⁹ and we may assume that these "lamps" are a Yemeni production (see below). One glass flask (no. 73) possesses a bifacially thickened, incurved rim and displays certain similarities with finds for instance from Kilwa IV and Julfar dating mainly to the 16th-early 17th century³⁰.

The bulk of glass finds are bangles of different quality, a selection of which has been depicted on Pls. 11 and 12. Several types can be discriminated: monochrome green, blue and black bangles with circular and planoconvex sections, bichrome layered ones of green/yellow and black/red usually with planoconvex section, the same in a banded variation, inlaid polychrome ones with sub-rectangular section, polychrome banded

and sprinkled bangles with a wide variety of cross sections, and last a corpus of bangles -bichrome to polychrome- with yellow glass or enamel punts and trails applied to the dorsal surface. Twisted bracelets are absent.

It is in fact a very colourful collection that to a certain extent is duplicated by finds published from Julfar or from surface collections in the Wadi Hadramaut and the Aden hinterland³¹. Among the Julfar finds Hansman distinguishes between 16th to 17th cent. productions of Indian (Brahmapuri, Bombay?) origin and those of unclear provenance³². The latter are those with closest affinities to our surface finds.

It is probably not so much the technical aspects that help to evaluate the provenience of the bracelets but more the preference for certain colours and the general execution. The best parallels are indeed from Kawd am-Saila near Aden and from a first typological study of glass bangles and glass wasters it is clear that Kawd am-Saila was indeed an important glass manufacture. Monod's classification applies very well to our finds although his material is per se undated. He suggests the 17th cent. as a *terminus ad quem*³³. We have also to mention a single waster from our site³⁴ but no positive evidence for a local glass production could yet be gained.

Except for glass objects metal is also present but we collected only the heavily corroded fragments of a single copper or bronze vessel (Fig. 7: 77) from the foot of the northern town wall. The only preserved suspension handle is riveted on the shoulder. Parallels for this vessel cannot be quoted.

To sum up, the earliest material evidence from the site are several sherds and surface finds dating prior to the 16th cent., followed by the above three tomb stones dating to the early 16th cent. C.E. All the other finds, particularly the imported ceramics and stone wares, seem to date mainly to the 16th to first half of 17th cent. We do not know, however, when the town was destroyed or eventually abandoned. It might have been well during the 18th cent. AD. This was altogether a period of conflicting interests between the Hadrami and Mahrah sultanates, the Omanis, the Turks, and the Portuguese along and off the Arabian coasts.

The identification of the site and its historical context

The mouth of Wadi Masila is in a distance of another 5 km toward west. The Wadi Masila itself is the easterly extension of the Wadi Hadramaut and was once theoretically one of the most convenient cross-routes between the Yemeni Indian Ocean coast and the inland piedmont areas along the Jôl and the Yemeni highlands. That goes for all periods of human occupation and thus certainly also for the Middle Ages.

As much as we know from our Russian colleagues as well as from own, admittedly restricted, experience there is no larger Islamic site between Saihut in the east and `Ays west of the mouth of Wadi Masila³⁵. `Ays is an extensive prehistoric cemetery on the foothill of a relatively low promontory. A small mud *husn* has been built just above it; its date is difficult to distinguish. It may be 16th cent. or even more recent.

The entire coastal stretch between Aden and Ra`s al-Hadd in Oman is well described particularly by Arab authors. Special mention is to be made to Ahmad Ibn Majid, born in Julfar or Sohar and the most renowned navigator of his times. His most famous prose work is the *Kitab al-Fawa'id* which was finished by 1490 AD. Second to him is the pilot Sulaiman al-Mahri, having his home port at al-Shihr and being author of several navigational works and poems among them the *Umda* (1511) and the *Minhaj*³⁶.

Concordantly the coastal strip between al-Shihr and the cape of Ras Fartak is said to have possessed only two harbours, that of Hairidj and al-Mishqas. Serjeant regards the latter (like Zafar) the name of the region between al-Shihr and past the mouth of Wadi Masila³⁷. Tibbett on the other side states that "it is most likely the navigators' equivalent of the port of Qishn which appears in contemporary Arab and Portuguese texts but not in the works of the navigators"³⁸. Whatsoever the location of al-Mishqas was eventually³⁹, according to the sources, the astronavigational bearings, and the sequence of toponyms was Hairidj west of it. Serjeant emphasizes⁴⁰ that "Hairidj seems the correct vocalization. ... According to Sayid `Alawi b. Tahir, Kitab al-Shamil, ... it is a *bandar fi Wadi'l Masila* on its western side. It is frequently mentioned in the Hadrami chronicles, but seems to have lost its importance. ...". With reference to Serjeant, Tibbetts locates Hairidj as still "remembered as being on the west side of the mouth of Wadi Masilah, perhaps where the ruins of Sharkhat are shown on the International 1:1 m. map (see here map 2). Hairidj is mentioned as a starting point for India and appears as one of the main harbours for departure for Soqotra"⁴¹. As far as its alleged location in (the mouth of) Wadi Masila is concerned, it is to be pointed out that the heavy seasonal *sayls* may have prevented the foundation of a port town right in there. If the identification of Hairidj with our town site east of Wadi Masila is accepted, then we may also presume that its foundation goes well back at least into the 15th cent. It was a fully developed port when Ibn Majid made his respective references by the end of the 15th cent.

Hairidj was a fairly important port that together with al-Shihr was closest and linked economically to Soqotra (cf. map 1). Politically, Soqotra was later connected with al-Shihr and the Wadi Hadramaut too. Ibn Majid deals in some detail with Hairidj particularly in context with voyages to the island of Soqotra. The port of Hairidj was considered rather tricky. The arrival of monsoon winds at Hairidj was therefore an important date. Voyages between the two destinations were limited to certain seasons by the monsoons, sporadic cyclons and seasonal currents⁴². The most convenient time to setting sails from Hairidj is by November 7th, whereas the best time of return is by March 2nd⁴³. As much as the Arabian coast is concerned shipping was possibly monopolized by the ports of al-Shihr and Hairidj; the knowledge of the unusual and complex monsoon behaviour and the seasons around Soqotra was obviously exclusive and Ibn Majid is very explicit in stating: "Understand this wonderful and strange fact, the like of which you will not hear in navigational science from anyone other than me. ... Only the very skilful navigator knows the whole of this. There is no doubt that some of this is well known and we have mentioned it in summary form. Not every man tells what he knows." ⁴⁴

In a comparative chart of Portuguese, mediæval Hadrami and modern Arabic toponyms the following equations have been suggested⁴⁵:

(Port.) Cirije	(late mediæval) Hairij?	
(Port.) Caixem	(late mediæval) al-Mishqas	(modern) Qishn

Possible references in Portuguese documents could not be tested due to lack of access.

It is to be emphasized again that the above described mediæval site is a proper, too conspicuous a town to have simply escaped the attention of the Arab navigators. We have also to mention that nearby Saihut (5 km) is not mentioned in the contemporary texts: I suggest that Saihut is a later foundation (or hitherto a settlement of little import)

when Hairidj as its predecessor ceased to exist possibly after one of those devastating raids (Portuguese, Turk, Omani or tribal) as they characterized this period.

If we really deal here with Hairidj, what can be said about the history and life of this community? Respective sources available here are those Hadrami chronicles which were published by Serjeant first in 1963. It is mainly the *Tarikh Ba Fakh al-Shihri* and some complementing Huraidah manuscripts with several entries covering the period between 1528/29 and 1544/45. It is a record of acts of piracy and retaliation.

During the early part of this time span Hairidj was, quite obviously, not under the firm control neither of the Kathiri Sultan of al-Shihr nor of the Sultan of Qishn⁴⁶. Thus the Portuguese considered it (1528-9) a safe haven to take refuge to for example after capturing in al-Shihr a local vessel with a cargo of madder bound for India⁴⁷. Later at Hairidj, the owner is able to regain his vessel after paying ransom⁴⁸. A similar incident is noted for the year 1535 when "a grab of the Franks who had set off from al-Shihr direction had returned towards Ahwar, looting and taking captives; among those who had been robbed was a party of the Bait Ziyad [a group of Mahri]. Then he (the Frank) returned to Hairidj where he sold off his loot. Three of the Franks merchants then set off for India with Baniyan vessels, followed by a party of Mahrah who had been robbed and where making for al-Mishqas. They fell in with them en route and slew the three Franks, looting all that was in the vessel."⁴⁹

From this and other references it is not clear if the town was ever or throughout the years manned with a Portuguese garrison or if the Franks took simply advantage of the weak presence of power at the periphery of intersecting spheres of influence. It seems salient, however, that generally maritime trade between the South Arabian ports and other destinations was somehow dependent on Portuguese consent who were "compensated" by annual levies or shares in port revenues.

The year 1535 must have been essential in the history of Hairidj. Apparently, the Portuguese acts of piracy had been rampant. In a joint ground⁵⁰ and naval assault Sultan Badr of al-Shihr took Hairidj and after having "fortified ... its fort (*husn*) [sic], and placing forty shots there, ten of them musketeers... He placed zebratanas [arquebus] there, and filled it with grain, dates, and water"⁵¹ he returned to al-Shihr. The Portuguese in al-Shihr he put under siege, killed many of them and ended up with some 70 Frank prisoners.⁵²

These events of 1535 did not prevent the Portuguese from further actions: The *Tarikh al-Shihri* (107a) records for the year 947 H. / AD 1540-1 the appearance of two Frank grabs seizing a damaged Indian-bound vessel that had called in Hairidj and partly been unloaded for repair works, "but in return for a sum of money they released it at Qishn"⁵³.

The last respective entry in the chronicles of the *Tarikh al-Shihri* reports for the year 1544-5 a Turkish attack on Hairidj. Serjeant reports that, however, the people from Hairidj refused to accede (i.e. to pay levy/ port revenues ?) and resisted the Turks, but the latter managed to capture some Mahrah notables and some women (later released), Sultan Badr sent his slave "... to ask the Turks to set the Mahrah at liberty also". The Turks later met with Sultan Badr at al-Shihr after returning from the attack on Hairidj.⁵⁴

When eventually Hairidj disappeared from the political map remains for the time being obscure.

Notes

- 1 I am very grateful to Dr. Alexander Sedov, head of the Russian Mission, to take me to the site and to Prof. Dr. M.A. Bafaqih, chairman of the General Organization of Antiquities, Manuscripts, and Museums, Sanaa, to allow me to publish herewith some preliminary remarks.
- 2 Note that all measurements are only approximate and that the schematic sketch of the site has been mapped from memory.
- 3 There was unfortunately no time to extend the surface collection to this area.
- 4 cf. Oman 1983: 278, Pl. 7
- 5 for various shapes of gravestones cf. "type e" in Oman 1983: Fig. 9.
- 6 My special gratitude goes to Prof. Takashina, Yoshiyuki from the Oasaka Foreign Language University for his decipherment and comments summarized in the below appendix. I am also very much indebted to Abdurrahman as-Saqqaf from the Sayyun Branch of the General Organization of Antiquities, Manuscripts, and Museums and to Dr. Saad Ayoub from Munich for a first reading. A. as-Saqqaf pointed out that Zala Xamisah Allah is perhaps not a name of local origin while S. Ayoub read a date of 919 A.H. for her tombstone.
- 7 cf. for example the mudbrick town wall of Julfar with similar dimensions. Cf. to Fn 2.
- 8 I am tempted to assume a fortification similar to Hadrami forts of the Yafi'i type with square plan and four rounded towers at the corners.
- 9 Chittick 1974: 304, Fig. 91o; Fig. 10b; Colour Pl. II: 3rd row right.
- 10 Hansman 1985: 52, Colour Pl. VQ = Fig. 12f. For a better parallel in shape see also "imitation celadon" Fig. 12d in orange-red earthenware with mottled blue glaze inside.
- 11 Sasaki 1991: Fig. 3. 37
- 12 Chittick 1974: 320
- 13 Hansman 1985: Colour Pl. Vr
- 14 Sasaki 1991: Fig. 3:38
- 15 Whitcomb 1988: Fig. 9o
- 16 *ibidem*: 187, 189
- 17 see also Mason et al. 1989: 547, Fig. 3:7
- 18 Whitcomb 1988: 202
- 19 The same is true for some of the glazed sherds.
- 20 for example for Fig. 2: 8 a 15th cent. Thai celadon plate from Julfar (cf. Hansman 1985: Fig. 10d); for base fragment 45 for example at Kilwa (Period IIIa exclusively = 14th cent.) a white-bodied ware with creamy-white to grayish glaze classified by Chittick (1974: 309, 311) as Te Hua or "Marco Polo" ware.
- 21 Hansman 1985: 33
- 22 cf. Hansman 1985:53p., Fig. 12a-j, Cpl. III
- 23 Monod 1978: Fig. 107
- 24 Chittick 1974: 326-7, Fig. 123c
- 25 Chittick 1974: 326-7, Fig. 123c
- 26 Naumkin, Sedov 1993: 605; Fig. 19: 2,5-6.
- 27 kind pers. comm. by A.A.Battaya
- 28 see also Kilwa II late (late 13th cent.) in Chittick 1974: Fig. 156b; the piece is perhaps not very diagnostic; see also an undated surface find from Qaraw in Whitcomb 1988: Fig. 20q.
- 29 cf. "sortes de 'canules'" in Monod 1978: Figs. 90-93; see also Whitcomb 1988: Fig. 20aa-bb
- 30 Chittick 1974: Fig. 157h; Hansman 1985: Fig. 20a
- 31 cf. Whitcomb 1988: Fig. 21; Hansman 1985: Fig. 19; Colour Pl. IV

- 32 Hansman would have compared one of our pieces (Pl. 4: right row, 6th from top) with a similar, allegedly 18th cent. Persian fragment (cf. Hansman 1985: Fig. 19j).
- 33 Monod 1978: 117
- 34 cf. Pl. 4: left row, 5th from top
- 35 cf. En. 20
- 36 Tibbett 1974: 86
- 37 cf. Serjeant 1974: map I
- 38 Tibbett 1974: 91
- 39 An alternative identification for al-Mishqas with the considerable ruins of Misenaat (now Musaina`a) some 50 kms. from Saihut has been suggested by Horsburgh (in Tibbett 1981: 441).
- 40 Serjeant 1974: 54 Fn. 5
- 41 Tibbett 1974: 91
- 42 for details see Tibbett 1981: 229-230, 374-375
- 43 *ibid.*: 366: Tab. 1
- 44 Tibbett 1981: 230
- 45 Tibbett 1974: 99
- 46 The alleged location of Hairidj west of the mouth of Wadi Masila or as now assumed from the archaeological evidence east of Wadi Masila may be decisive for a reconstruction of its political allegiance. On the western bank it most certainly was under the formal sovereignty of the Kathiri Sultan of al-Shihr whereas a siting in the east associates it more likely with the rivaling Mahrah Sultan at Qishn. Note that until the 1507 capture of Soqotra through Alfonso de Albuquerque the island was held by the Mahrah Rulers of Qishn who had also political and economic interest in East Africa. We may therefore alternatively suggest that during those days Hairidj was less another harbour for interior Hadramaut but rather Qishn's gateway to Soqotra (until 1535?). This may explain some of the incongruities of the Hadrami chronicles and the lack of reference to Qishn within
- the context of the navigational writings dealing with the Soqotra traffic.
- 47 The port of al-Shihr for instance was apparently open to bombardment from the sea. "From the lack of artillery, the town seems to have been impotent to protect shipping lying in al-Shihr roads. ... the Portuguese sea marauders plundered the vessels in the port, *as was their custom.*" (Serjeant 1974: 27). The same was probably true also for the other ports along the South Arabian coast.
- 48 Tarikh al-Shihri (66a), Year 935 H. in: Serjeant 1974: 54. The ransom paid in this particular case was 1,800 ashrafis -an astronomical sum for a single vessel compared to the regular annual levy of 10,000 ashrafis imposed by "agreement" on al-Shihr (*ibid.* 27, 96).
- 49 Tarikh al-Shihri (81b) Year 942 H. in Serjeant 1974: 70
- 50 reportedly including 32 horsemen and some Mahrah tribesmen; cf. Serjeant 1974: 176, note U
- 51 Ba Fakiḥ (Huraidah MS., fol. 82b) in Serjeant 1974: 73; Fn. 2
- 52 According to the Hadrami chronicles was Sultan Badr a diplomat as shrewd as the Portuguese. The negotiations for a truce between him and the Portuguese seem to have started in 1532/3 and a ratification was repeatedly delayed. In 1535 he sends a messenger to Goa to confirm the peace and purchases from the Portuguese an Indian vessel seized with a cargo of cloth for 3,000 ashrafis only to sell it back to the owner for 7,300 ashrafis. The later events of 1535, the killing of many Portuguese and the taking of captives in al-Shihr, do not really affect the quality of the mutual relations. By 1536-7 the Portuguese resume the attempts to ransom their imprisoned compatriotes who have been spared from execution. "The sultan, however, evinced so much greed that the matter turned to their opening negotiations for a truce" (Serjeant 1974: 76) by demanding among others the guaranteeing of new hostages in exchange for the old ones. The process of talks does not prevent him by 1537-8 to publicly announce his "submission" to the Turkish Sultan Sulaiman. The truce with the Portuguese is ratified the same year shortly after. (cf. Serjeant 1974: 65-7, 70-71, 75-6, 78, 81)
- 53 Serjeant 1974: 101

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Fig. 1: Glazed wares

- 1: 5Y6/3 pale olive, no visible temper, small pores, well-fired, light olive green glaze, antique mending
- 2: 5YR5/3 reddish brown, few tiny white specks, in: dark purple glaze
- 3: 5YR5/6 yellowish red, no visible temper, few tiny pores, bluish green glaze
- 4: 5YR4/3 reddish brown, sand, dark paint under yellowish green glaze, burnt
- 5: 2.5 YR 5/6 red, sand+few minute grits, black paint under light greenish glaze
- 6: 2.5Y7/6 yellow, no visible temper, dense, once glazed?

Fig. 2: Celadons and Chinese stonewares

- 7: 5Y7/1 light grey, thin light green glaze
- 8: 10YR6/1 light gray, thin light olive green glaze, ex: partly burnt
- 9: 10YR6/3 pale brown, thin light olive green glaze
- 10: 10YR7/2 light gray, pale grayish green glaze (ex. thick)
- 11: 10YR7/2 light gray, thin light green glaze
- 12: 10YR7/2 light gray, pale grayish green glaze
- 13: 10YR6/2 light brownish gray, black glaze, black grits, folded-over
- 14: 10R4/2 weak red, dark olive brown glaze, tiny light brown specks, folded-over
- 15: 10YR6/1 light gray, olive brown glaze, few white grits (quartz?), many micropores, folded-over rim

Fig. 3: Blue on white porcelain (16-35), for decoration compare Pls. 1-2

- nos. 20, 21, 32, 33: with antique mending (nos. 21 and 34 with copper wire)
nos. 34-35: floriated
no. 32: $\varnothing \geq 6$ cm
no. 33: $\varnothing \geq 7$ cm

Fig. 4: Porcelains (36-45) and porcelain imitations (46-50), see also Pls. 1-2 and 3a

- nos. 36 + 38: floriated
no. 41: lid or foot
nos. 42 + 45: granulated grits under and inside ringbase
no. 45: Te Hua
no. 40: $\varnothing \geq 18$ cm
no. 46: black and dark blue painting
no. 47: blue painting under light greenish glaze
nos. 48-49: blue painted
no. 50: outside blue painting

Fig. 5: Hand-made coarse wares

- 51: 2.5YR6/6 light red, white specks and grits, imprinted decoration
- 52: 10R5/6 red, chaff, white specks + grits, in: burnt, Husuni Modelled Ware?
- 53: 10YR5/2 greyish brown, gritty, white grits, burnt
- 54: 7.5YR5/4 brown, gritty, partly burnt
- 55: 2.5YR5/4 reddish brown, gritty few white grits, partly burnt
- 56: 10YR7/4 very pale brown, white grits, chaff, in: reddish brown paint, "Julfar-related"
- 57: 2.5YR5/4 reddish brown, gritty, partly burnt, in: streak-burnished

Fig. 6: Hand-made (58-59) and wheel-made coarse wares

- 58: 7.5YR5/3 brown, gritty, burnt
- 59: 10YR6/3 pale brown, chaff, few white specks
- 60: 2.5YR6/6 light red, red+white grits, wheel-made, dark core
- 61: 5YR6/6 reddish yellow, chaff, red+white grits, wheel-made, dark core
- 62: 2.5YR4/6 red, few white grits, dark core, wheel-made?
- 63: 5Y4/1 dark gray, chaff, white grits, eroded external surface, wheel-made, Gujarat?
- 64: 5YR7/6 reddish yellow, eggshell, wheel-made, eggshell ware (Gulla)

Fig. 7: Coarse ware pottery and small finds

- 65: 2.5YR4/4 reddish brown, quartz, incised, impressed, burnt, burnished?, from Soqotra
- 66: 2.5YR6/6 light red, pores, no visible temper, partly burnt, water pipe?
- 67: 10YR6/4 light yellowish brown, large grits
- 68: 5YR5/4 reddish brown, no visible temper, grooves
- 69: glass beaker, yellowish green
- 70: "mosque lamp", green
- 71: "mosque lamp", brownish yellow
- 72-73: glass flasks, green
- 74-76: glass bases, green and dark green (76)
- 77: copper or bronze vessel with riveted handle

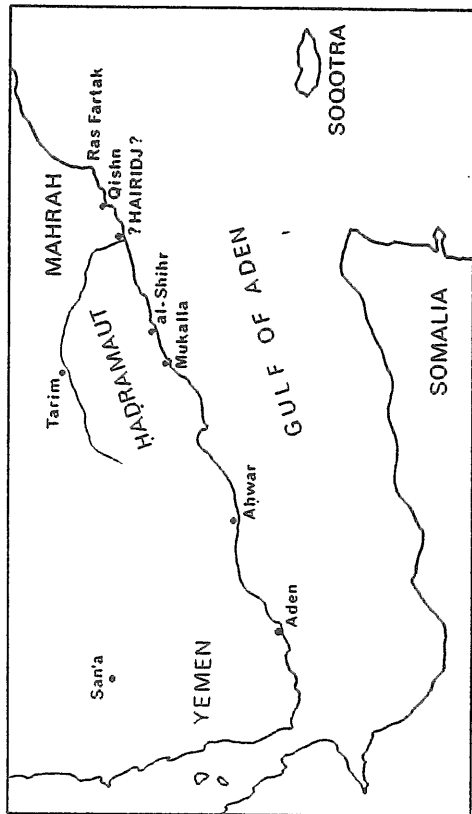
Sherds and small finds depicted only on plates:

- Pl. 7: 78: thin-walled porcelain beaker fragment, richly painted plus Chinese characters (verso)
 - 79: porcelain base fragment with Chinese characters underneath
- Pl. 8: 87: porcelain body sherd outside with fish design
- Pl. 9: 80: porcelain base fragment, inside with fish design, antique mending
- Pl. 10: 81: frit bowl fragment with dark blue and blue painting
 - 82: frit bowl fragment with dark blue and blue painting
 - 83: frit ring base fragment, outside with light blue painting
- Pl. 11: selection of glass bangles
- Pl. 12: selection of glass bangles
- Pl. 13: 84: body sherd, 10YR5/3 pale brown, with yellowish brown grits, well-fired, hand-made?, ex. olive brown glaze
 - 85: body sherd, 10YR6/3 brown, not levigated ?, well-fired, hand-made, olive glaze
- Pl. 14: 86: celadon plate body sherd with radial cannellation, 2.5Y7/2 light gray, thin light green glaze.

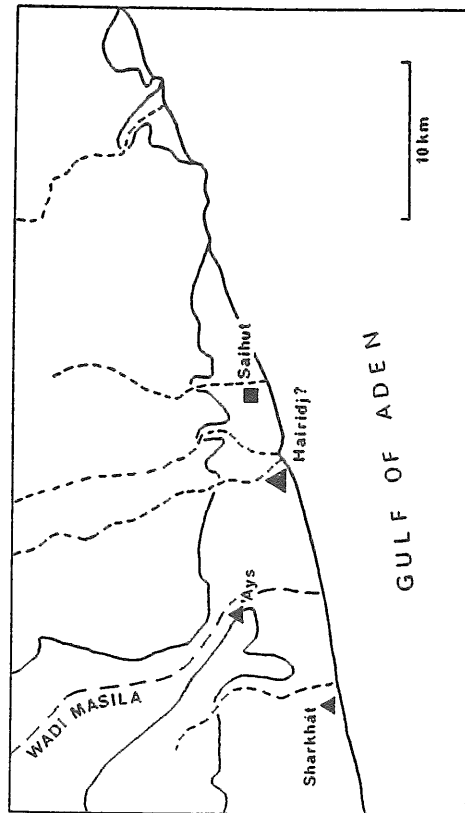
All drawings and photographs by the author.

List of Plates:

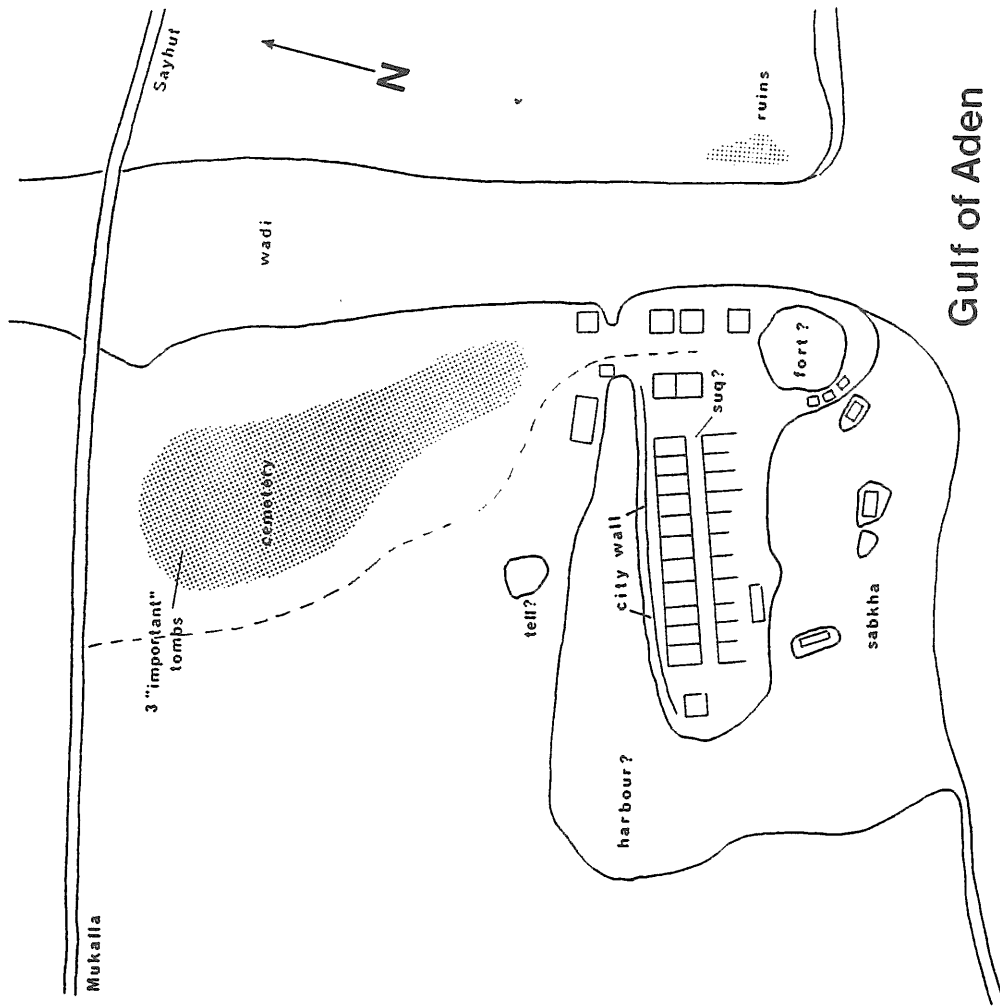
- Pl. 1: Town area from W to E, "fortress" mound in the background
- Pl. 2: Town area from E to W
- Pl. 3: Harbour area.-Walled town on left terrace.
- Pl. 4: Cemetery, enclosed tomb
- Pl. 5: Engraved tombstone with verse 255 of the (second) cow sura
- Pl. 6: Engraved tombstone of Zala Hamiseh `Allah (919 A.H.)
- Pl. 7: porcelains
- Pl. 8: same as Pl. 7 recto
- Pl. 9: porcelain bases
- Pl. 10: frit fragments
- Pl. 11: selection of glass bangles
- Pl. 12: selection of glass bangles
- Pl. 13: selection of glazed potsherds
- Pl. 14: selection of stoneware fragments



map 1: The Gulf of Aden in late Islamic times



map 2: The mouth of Wadi Masila



map 3: schematic sketch of the Late Islamic town site of (?) Hairidj

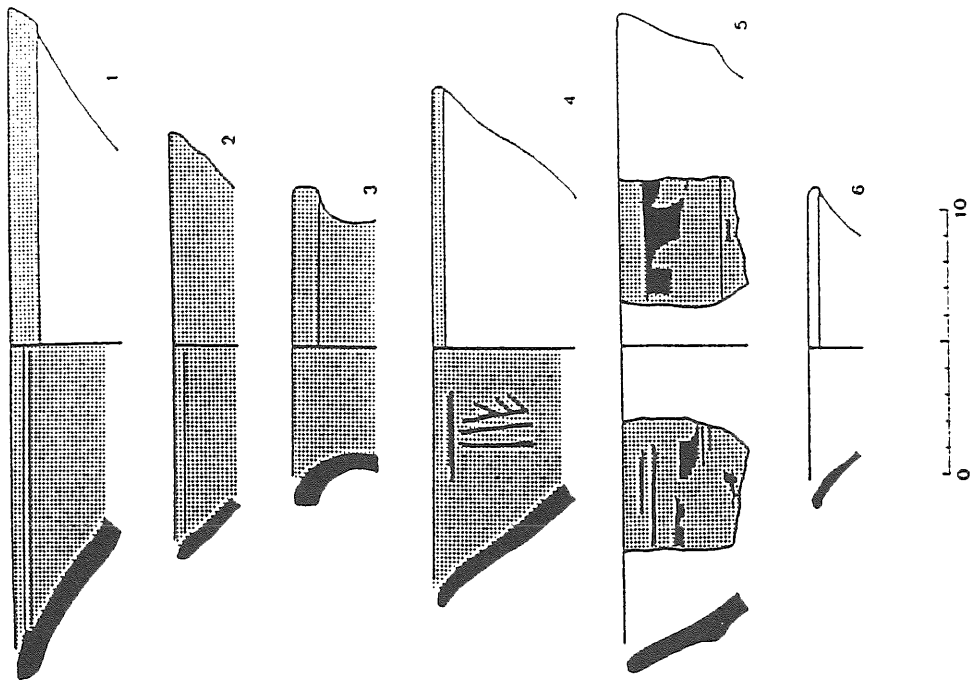


Fig. 1: Glazed wares

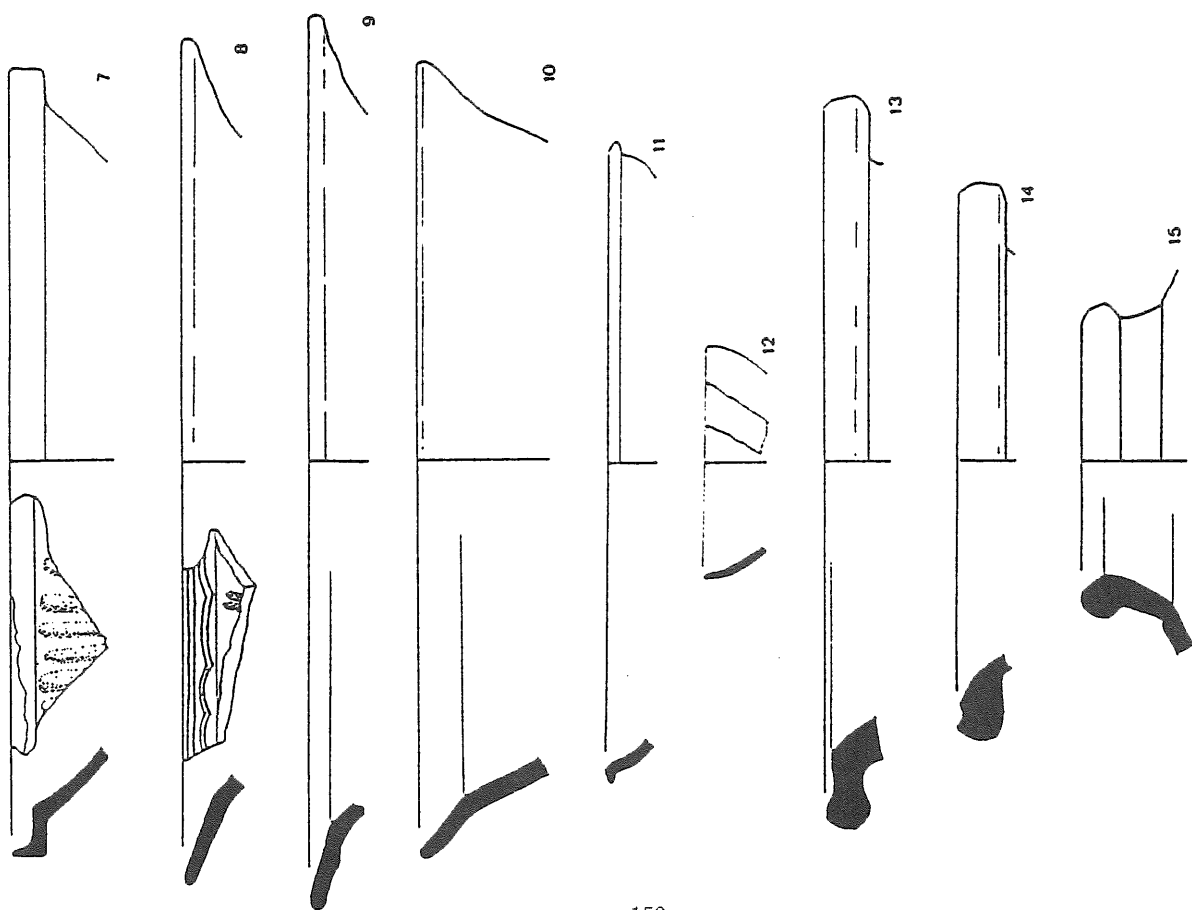


Fig. 2: Thai and Chinese celadons, stonewares

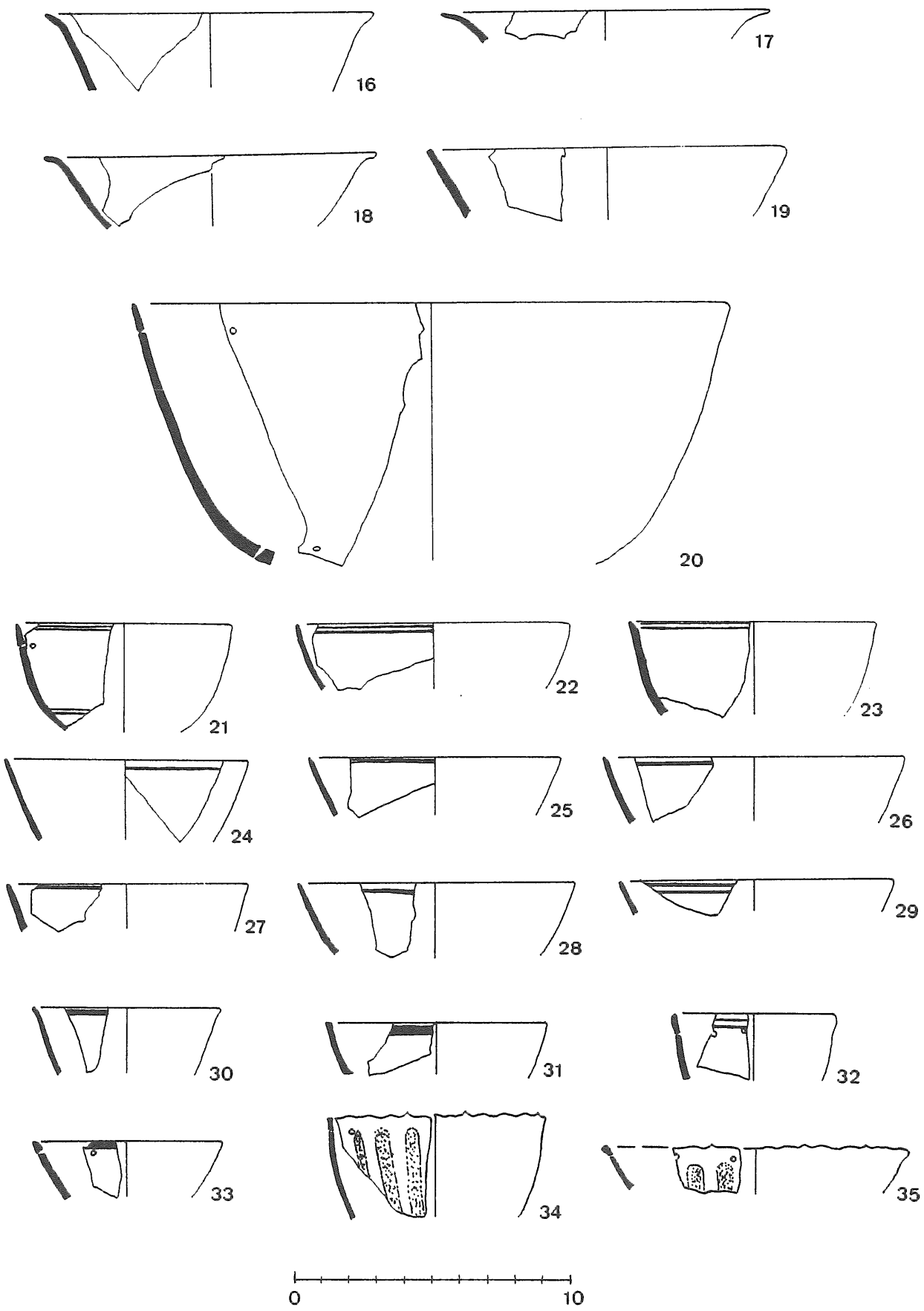


Fig. 3: Porcellains, for decoration compare Pls. 1-2

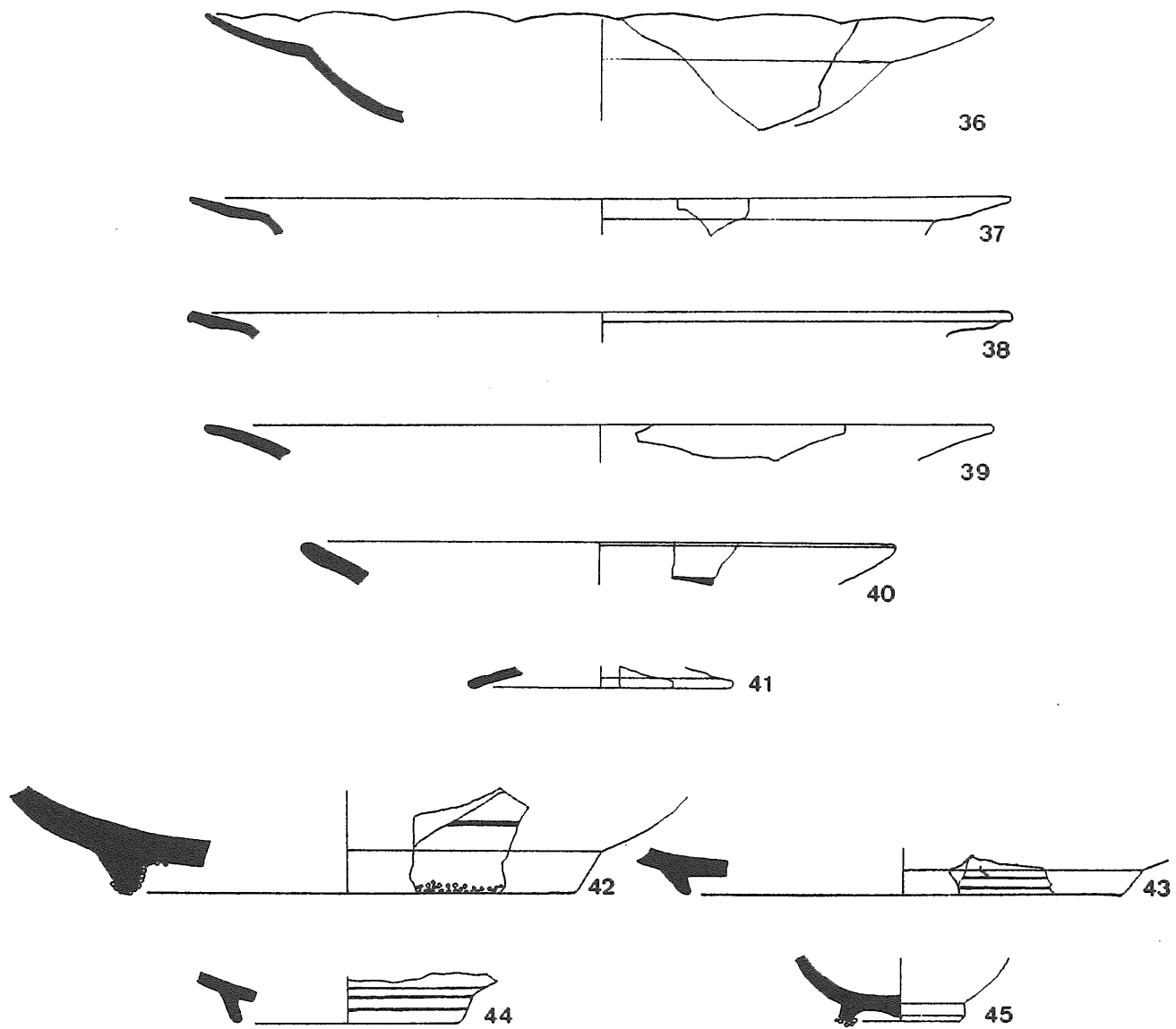
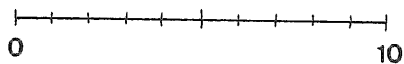
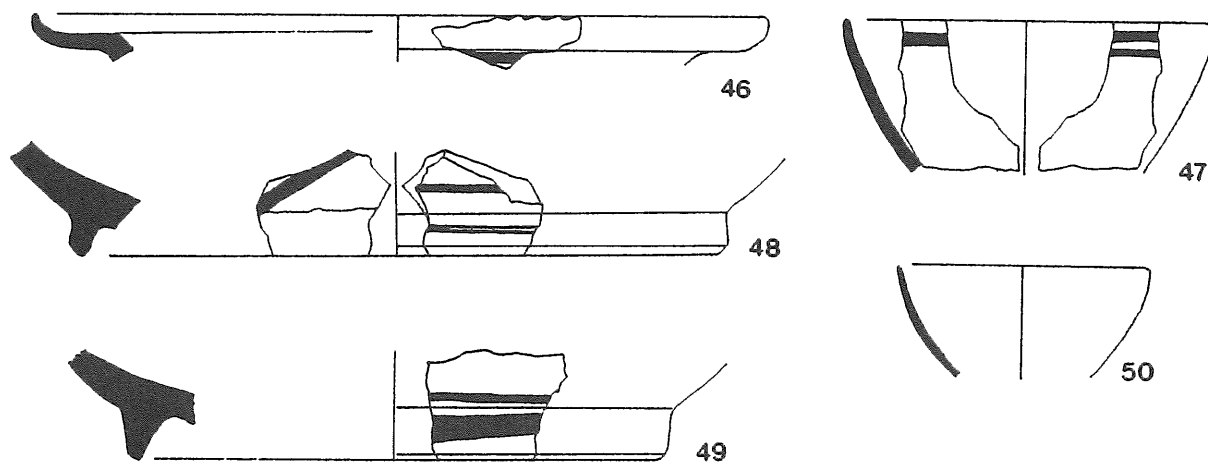


Fig. 4: Porcellains and porcellain imitations (46-50), see also Pls. 1-2 and 3a



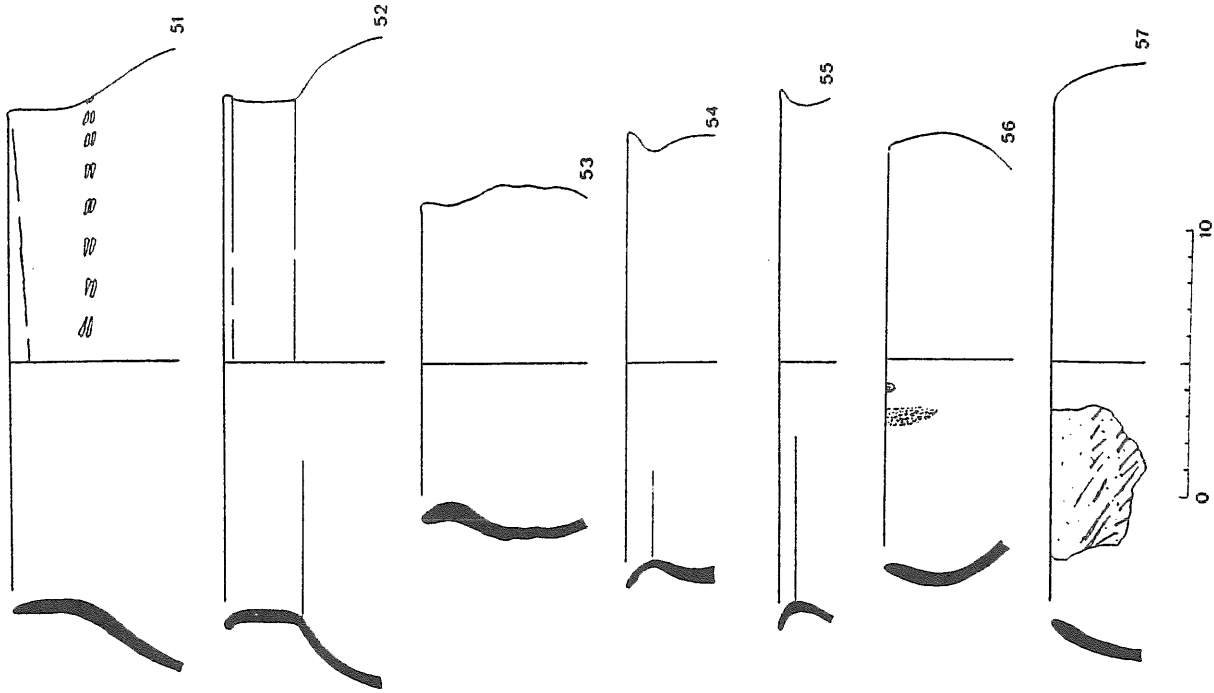


Fig. 5: Hand-made coarse wares

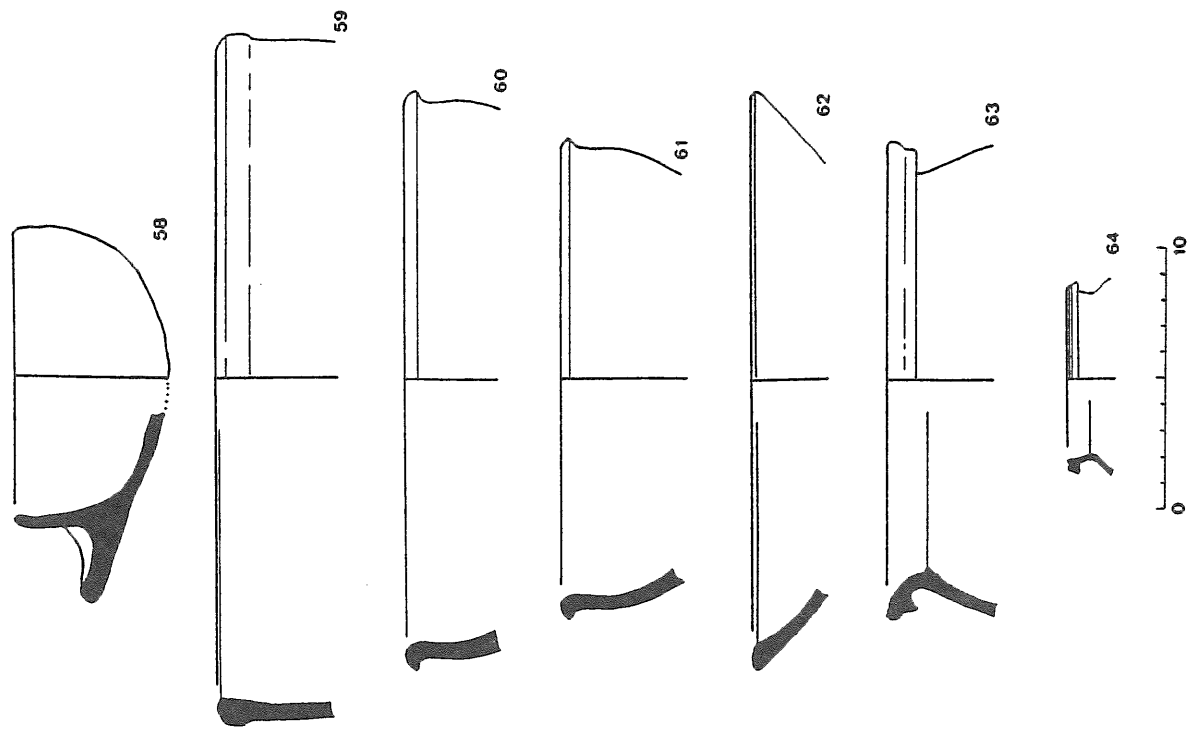


Fig. 6: Hand-made (58) and wheel-made coarse wares (59-64)

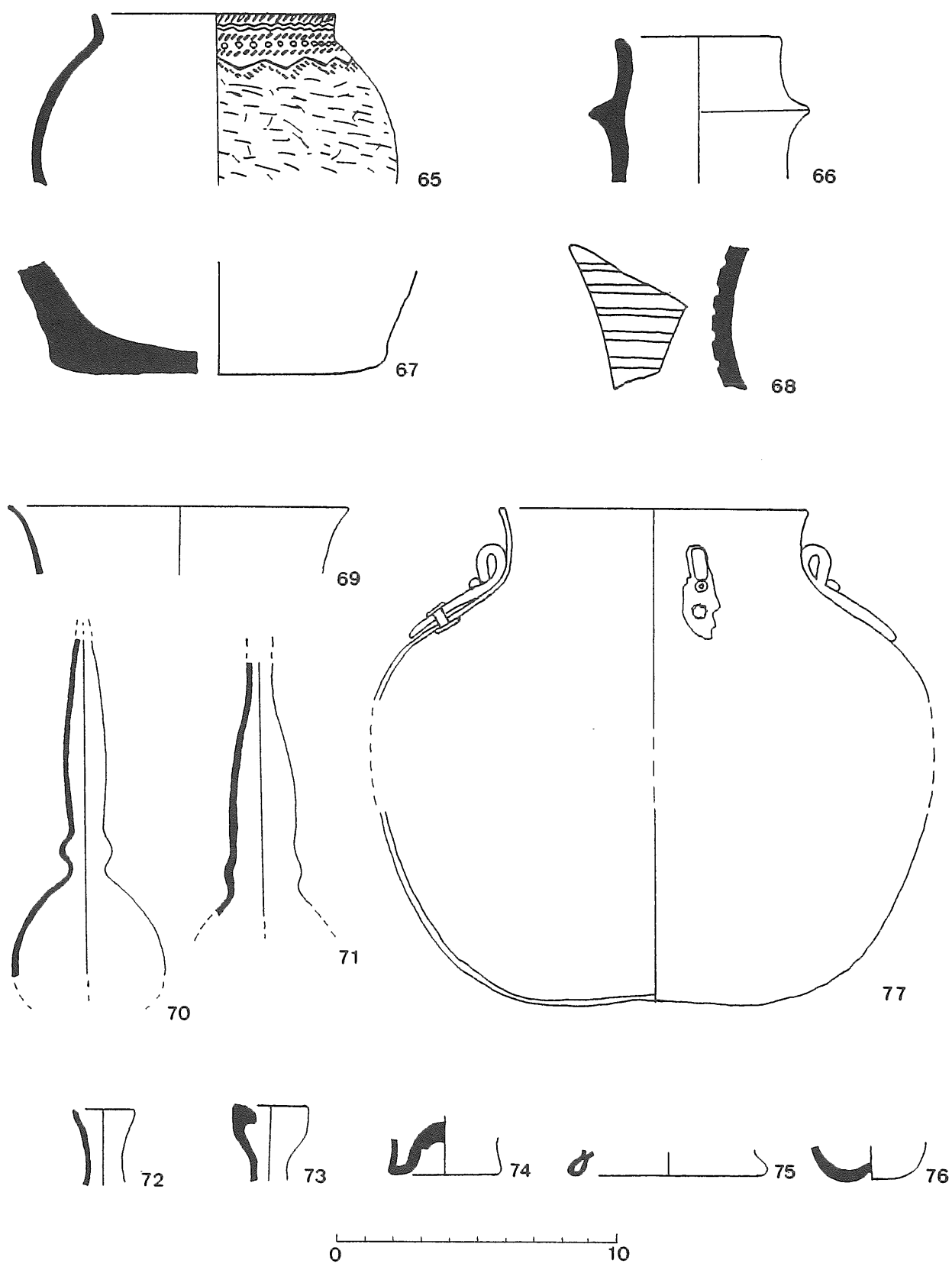
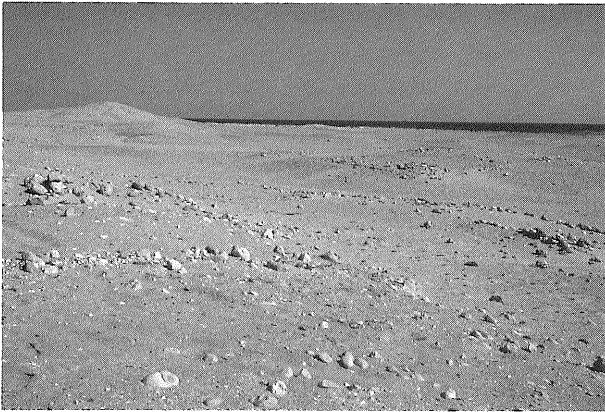
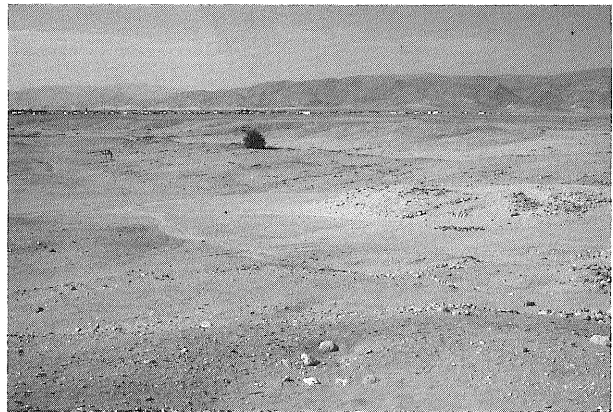


Fig. 7: Hand-made coarse wares, glass vessels (69-76), metal vessel (77)



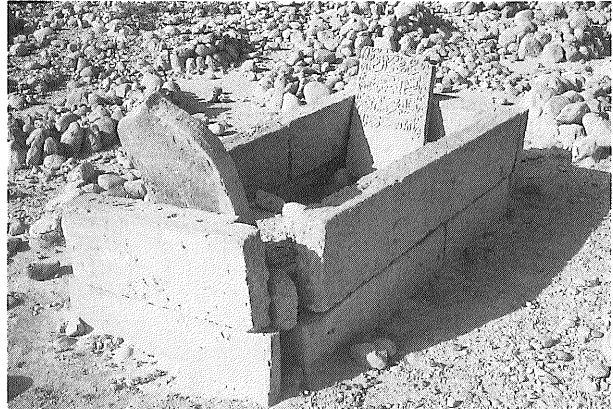
Pl. 1: Town area from W to E, "fortress" mound in the background



Pl. 2: Town area from E to W



Pl. 3: Harbour area. Walled town on left terrace.



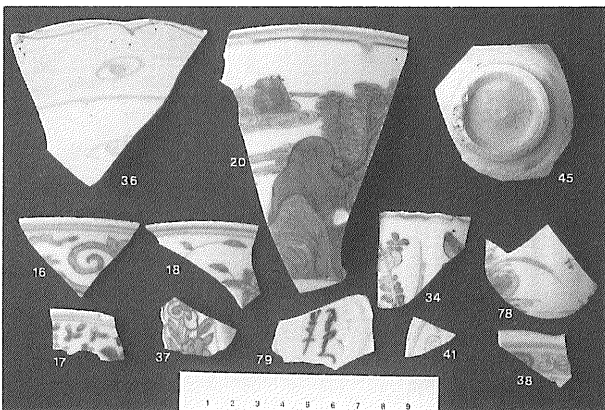
Pl. 4: Cemetery, enclosed tomb



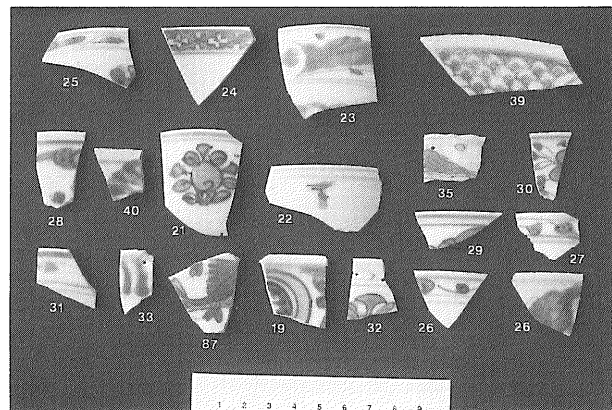
Pl. 5: Engraved tombstone with verse 255 of the (second) cow sura



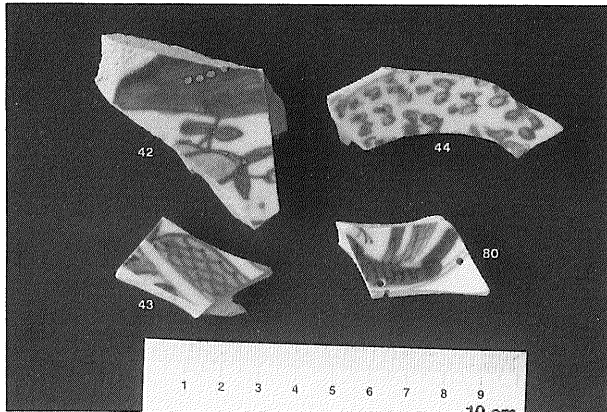
Pl. 6: Engraved tombstone of Zala Hamiseh `Allah (919 A.H.)



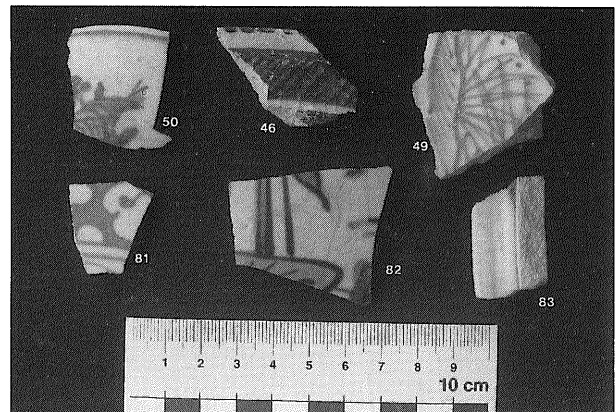
Pl. 7: porcelains



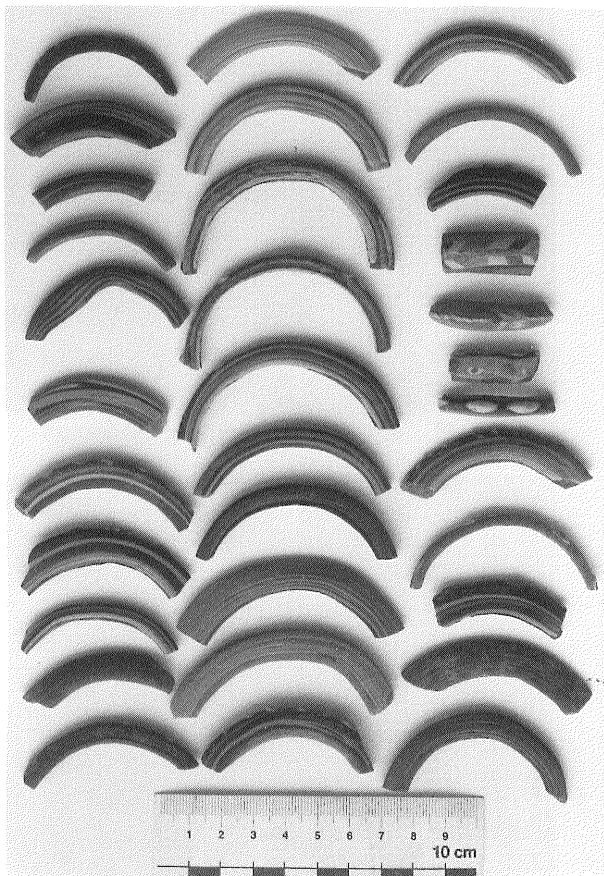
Pl. 8: same as Pl. 7 recto



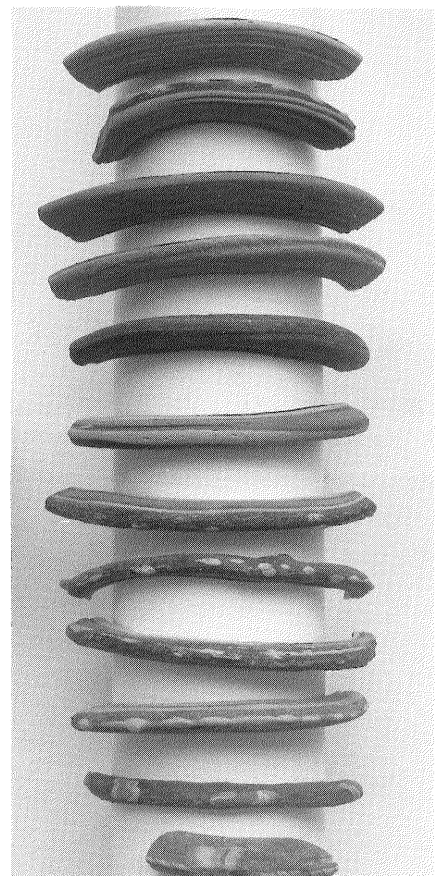
Pl. 9: porcelain bases



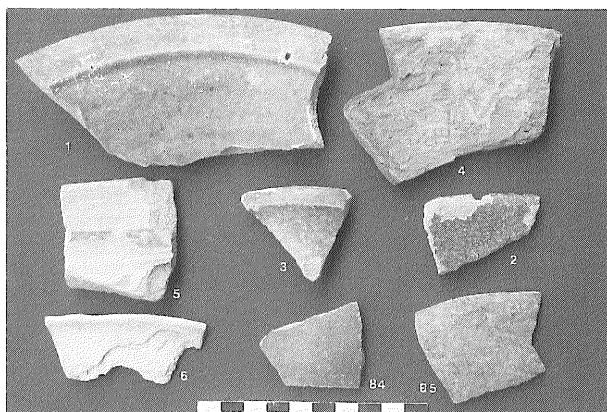
Pl. 10: frit fragments



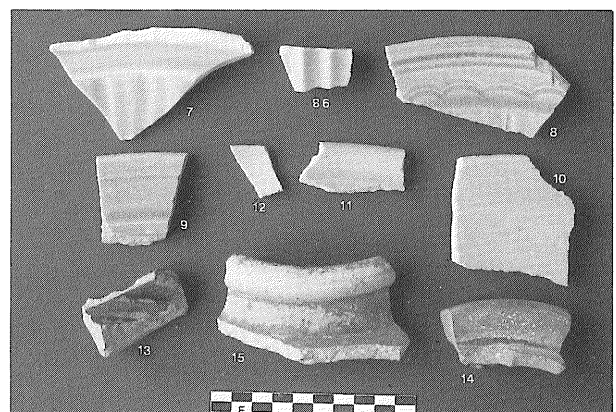
Pl. 11: selection of glass bangles



Pl. 12: selection of glass bangles



Pl. 13: selection of glazed potsherds



Pl. 14: selection of stoneware fragments