

Middle Hadramawt Archaeological Survey, 1997
Report to the General Organization for Antiquities,
Manuscripts, and Museums
San‘a’, Republic of Yemen

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The first season of the Middle Hadramawt Archaeological Survey spanned ten days, August 22–31, 1997. Directed by myself, Paul C. Zimmerman, and accompanied by Dr. ‘Abd al-Aziz Bin ‘Aqil of the Mukalla museum, this season’s goals were to sample a range of sites in the vicinity of Shibam, to test my own capacity as a project director, to determine the suitability of an intensive regional survey for my doctoral dissertation, to assess the areal extent that can be reasonably covered by such a survey, and to test the functionality of Geographic Positioning System (GPS) receivers in the Wadi Hadramawt. On all accounts, my impressions have been favorable.

Method

My initial plan was to intensively survey Wadi Na‘am and, time permitting, Wadi J‘aymah, both directly north of Shibam. However, our first day’s fieldwork took us to Wadi Bin ‘Ali (south of Shibam) to investigate Samu‘ah, where the soil had recently revealed a pre-Islamic site. After recording Samu‘ah, we visited two known lookouts of fairly recent date, and stopped to examine a large stone on which Dr. Bin ‘Aqil suspected (correctly) might be found pre-Islamic graffiti—all in the northern end of the same wadi. This first day set the tone for the rest of this season’s study, and our strategy was revised such that we visited sites, of any archaeological period, near Shibam that were either: a) known to Western scholars (primarily through the Russian and French expeditions to Hadramawt); b) known to Hadramis from the area; or c) encountered en route. This proved to be a very fruitful method, as Dr. Bin ‘Aqil is quite skilled at gleaned information from the locals about the presence of unrecorded sites.

At each site visited, GPS readings were taken. Wherever possible, multiple readings were taken and averaged to improve their accuracy. This new technology allows for the creation of a map that is far more accurate than any previously produced for the region ($\pm 100\text{m}$ with “selective availability” imposed by the US military, and potentially far more accurate when combined with satellite photos).¹ Sites were also categorized by type, photographed, and described textually. Because sites were defined by the presence of architecture *or* by concentrated artifact scatters, surface collections were also made.

Collection bags were classified by material (stone, bone, ceramic, glass, etc.) on-site and the contents were subsequently photographed, drawn, and described textually. (Full analyses,

¹ See Fig. 2 for the field map of this year’s data.

based on these records and compared against published reports, will be carried out in the USA.) On sites where artifacts were found in high density, multiple bags were taken, as needed—as happened with some frequency, in the case of ceramics.

All inscribed objects, as well as all others deemed significant, were bagged separately as catalogued objects. These, too, were categorized by material, photographed, drawn, and described textually. In theory, individual specimens could be removed from bags and catalogued separately. In practice (and because both Dr. Bin ‘Aqil and myself are familiar with Hadrami artifacts), this never happened. All catalogued objects were so designated in the field, at the time of collection.

Initially, the routes taken into and out of wadis were recorded by GPS. However, because of the difficulty in obtaining accurate readings from a moving vehicle, this was soon abandoned. I expect to resume the practice of recording routes in future field-walking surveys so that coverage maps can be generated.

All field data were entered into a computer database designed by me specifically for this project. Each route taken, each site recorded, each bag collected, each object catalogued, each photograph shot, and each drawing made were all given their own sequential and cross-referenced serial number from the same master list. The intention is that this practice will facilitate future readings of the field data. Since this survey was primarily interested in the identification of sites (however loosely defined), all sites were also given a second serial number—this in the form of “MH-xxxx”, where “MH-” stands for “Middle Hadramawt” and “xxxx” is the site serial number. In addition to the field data, a daily journal was kept documenting the daily progress of the expedition, as well as my thoughts and concerns about it.²

Conclusions

As stated above, the survey method followed has been borne out. In particular, four findings are of interest: a) accurate, reproducible GPS readings can be taken at most sites (excepting those in narrow wadis or immediately below steep escarpments); b) the collection of ceramics from a wide range of sites will provide a solid body of comparative material which can, I expect, be correlated with architectural styles; c) the presence and locations of two previously unrecorded pre-Islamic temples has been noted; and d) the possible presence

² See appendices for tabulations of sites, bags, and objects recorded in 1997.

of a previously unrecognized neolithic or bronze-age culture has been noted.³

Further Study

As originally intended, this season's fieldwork has been a pilot project to test the suitability of the region to my dissertation research. As I currently envision my future fieldwork in the Hadramawt, I expect to continue documenting sites, in the vicinity of Shibam, for about one month. This survey would be followed up by a more intensive survey of sites found, including topographic mapping, sampled collections, mapping of standing architecture, and field-walking areas between sites. With a small team of specialists, I expect that such a study can be completed in two to three months. Thus, in about one and a half years (depending on the availability of funds), I hope to return for four months' time to complete the body of my dissertation research. Besides the personal benefit to me, such a study would have the general benefit to Yemeni archaeology of documenting many sites that are currently imperiled by farming activities and deliberate destruction (as was witnessed at many of the sites visited this season).

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³ This final conclusion is tentative, and awaits the analysis of ceramics and lithics found at the sites in question.

Figure 1: Regional Map

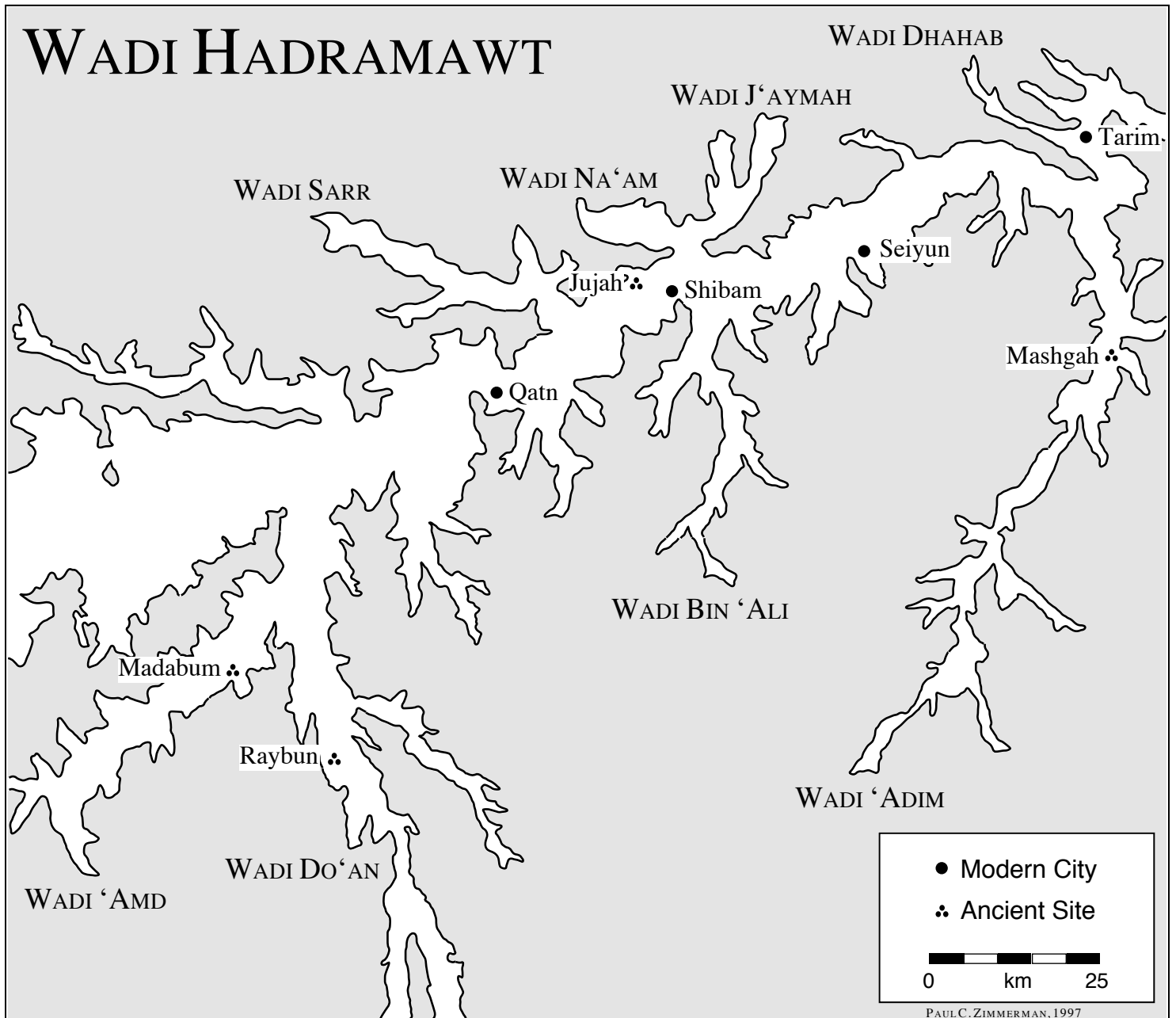
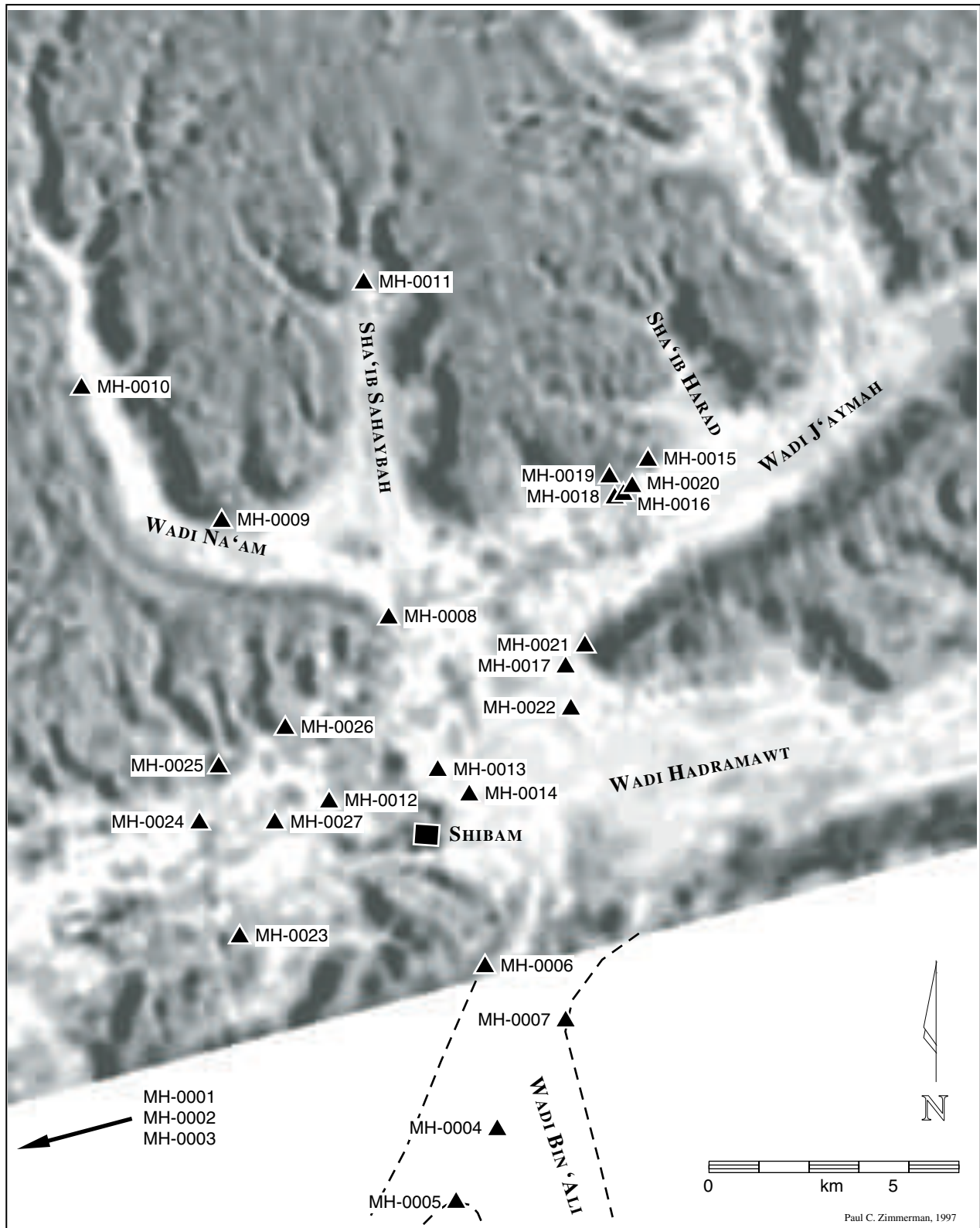


Figure 2: Map of Study Area



Appendix A: Sites Recorded

Site Counts, by Area

- 11 in Wadi Hadramawt, near Shibam
- 5 in Wadi J'aymah
- 4 in Wadi Bin 'Ali
- 3 in Wadi Na'am
- 3 along the road into the Wadi Hadramawt, west of Qatn
- 1 in Sha'ib Sahaybah

Site Counts, by Type

- 10 pre-Islamic (Hadrami culture) settlements
- 6 houses or lookouts
- 3 cairn sites
- 2 graffiti sites (with no associated architecture)
- 2 lithic scatters
- 2 mixed pre-Islamic and Islamic period settlements
- 1 Islamic period settlement
- 1 cave site (though other caves were found at sites listed above and one large cave was noted, but not explored, at the northern end of Sha'ib Harad)

Site Descriptions

MH-0001 Al-Safil (السفيل)

Two sites near the town of the same name. Called Safil I and Safil documented by Russian expedition. Both are of early Raybun date. Outside study area, but recorded as comparanda for the early First Millennium, BC.

MH-0002 Liqlat (لقلات)

Presumed to be early, based on its pottery. Outside of study area, but ceramics collected as comparanda for the early First Millennium, BC.

MH-0003 'Adiyya Ganimah Bin 'Aqil (عادييه غنيمه بن عكيل)

Soils mostly robbed out. At least 2 building levels visible in section. Much chipped stone on the surface, but it appears to be of comparable age to Level I at Jujah 1. Outside of my study area, but recorded for comparanda.

MH-0004 Samu'ah (سموعه)

Exposed recently in a gully formed by the seil. Walls visible, but no discernible ground plans. One large stone wall—possibly a dam, possibly the foundation of a large structure. Bones found by nearby townspeople, who claim they were from one or two burials. Prior to this season's study, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Saqqaf of the Seiyun museum had made collections on this site. These collections were photographed and drawn by me. Also prior to this study, a pre-Islamic inscription was removed from this site and taken to a school in Shibam.

MH-0005 Husn al-'Attan (حصن العطن)

Lookout on scree slope with a well to the north, down a staircase of about 10m. Dimensions: 6m E–W by 12m N–S (not including staircase or well); 4m preserved wall height. Turrets on corners of structure. Large retaining/terrace wall below structure, to the east of the staircase. Much painted Islamic pottery. Mud brick walls with stone foundations throughout.

MH-0006 Large stone at the bottom of the scree slope at the western edge of Wadi Bin 'Ali. Red painted figures on south and west sides of rock: horses (some with riders); ibexes; sheep(?). Pecked inscription in Musnad script on west side of stone. Arabic inscription on north face in the same red paint as the figures.

- MH-0007 Husn al-Rubaki (حصن الرباكي)
Lookout on the east side of the mouth of Wadi Bin ‘Ali. Main structure about 8m square. Remains of second structure, adjoining but more poorly preserved, to the south. Four storeys visible. Entrance facing south. Stairs inside, just to the right of the entrance. Well to the east of the building. Preserved part of second structure about 9m E–W by 6 N–S (entire structure probably much larger originally). Second structure has a turret in its southeast corner, whereas the first structure has none. Second structure has at least two storeys. Mud brick walls with stone foundations throughout.
- MH-0008 Qarat Abd al-‘Aziz (قارة ابد العزيز)
Large stone at bottom of slope, in front of a modern village. Pecked Arabic and Musnad inscriptions. East face has group of older(?), more heavily weathered inscriptions.
- MH-0009 Small cairn. At first, I was unsure whether this was a site or a natural formation, but it matches closely with the mounds at MH-0015 and MH-0019.
- MH-0010 Broad rocky ledge at the west edge of Wadi Na‘am. Many pieces of chipped chert, most with heavy patination. About five small stone mounds, each about 1m diameter, probably of recent construction.
- MH-0011 Stony ledge at the north end of Sha‘ib Sahaybah. Collected chert implements and one piece of painted pottery (probably not in association with the stone tools). One small circle of stones, probably a fire ring, of indeterminate age.
- MH-0012 Site mostly robbed by bulldozer to clear land for the adjacent field. Walls visible in section, but no discernible ground plans. Two adjacent structures, built against each other and on a small rise are visible in the east section. One construction level visible. Original ground surface evident in section, as are at least three earlier flood levels. Structures are made of mud brick without stone foundations.
- MH-0013 Large site NNE of Shibam. Many mounds, each possibly the remains of one house. Multiple periods represented in the finds (which include pottery, glass, metal, and stone). Five(!) ceramics bags collected. Earliest pottery looks to be Raybun I, latest include glazed china. Site may be as large as 5–8 ha., though partially eroded and covered in sand dunes, so it’s hard to judge the site’s actual size. Object 000394 said to be from here.
- MH-0014 Mosque of Ba ‘Alwi (با علوي)
Northeast of Shibam, very near site MH-0013 and named for the nearby mosque (though clearly predating it). Five or six small house mounds with exposed walls. Pottery suggests late pre-Islamic or early Islamic period. Mud-brick walls with no stone foundations evident.
- MH-0015 At least five stone mounds, aligned toward the larger of two stone-built structures to the west. No mud brick evident on the structures, but the presence of large quantities of small pebbles on top of the foundation stones suggests that the structures at one time had mud brick superstructures which have since washed away. The degree of patination on the stones of the structures looks like that on the cairns. The smaller structure stands below a large rock with red painted figures—possibly people on horseback. Smaller structure: 7.2m N–S x 3.8m E–W, with 0.8m wide doorway in its west wall. Larger structure: about 8m N–S x 7m E–W with two rooms of equal width (one to the north, one to the south). 0.8m wide doorway in the south end of the west wall leads into the southern room, and another doorway in the west end of the dividing wall accesses the north room. The northern wall of the larger structure is preserved to 1.5m. Much lithic debitage immediately south (downhill) of larger structure. Most pottery collected immediately north of the larger structure.

- MH-0016 Sahil J'aymah (سحیل جعیمه)
Westernmost of two lookouts (MH-0020 is the other) over a small village (MH-0018). Small structure with stone foundations and mud-brick walls. About 2 E-W x 3m N-S with 1m wide doorway at the south end of its west wall. \ little pottery. Possibly older than the houses of village and the other lookouts which look to be of the same age.
- MH-0017 Qabusah (قبوسه)
Exposed stone wall foundations. Large blocks, looking like those of Jujah 1, Level I. One long, curved wall running N-S, about 50m x 0.8m. Most of the pottery was collected along long wall.
- MH-0018 Sahil J'aymah (سحیل جعیمه)
Located on rocky ledge at edge of wadi. Probably actually three sites: about 10 fairly recent mud-brick houses with stone foundations; two modern, though apparently abandoned lime kilns; perhaps 7 small structures (and, also, 1 possible cairn) like those of MH-0015, which are presumed to be older than the other houses. The site is overlooked by MH-0016 and MH-0019, and MH-0020 farther to the east.
- MH-0019 Sahil J'aymah (سحیل جعیمه)
Perhaps twenty mounds on the scree slope, overlooking MH-0018 and about 200m to its north (no GPS readings taken). Two caves found, one of which is likely to be a tomb. Stone terrace walls present on the scree slope. Possibly associated with the "older" structures of MH-0018.
- MH-0020 Sahil J'aymah (سحیل جعیمه)
Lookout on a rocky spur to the east of MH-0016. Mud-brick walls with stone foundations. Turrets in the northeast and southeast corners of structure. Staircase along the west side of structure. Central tower and terrace walls intact. Old lithics found on southern slope, below the structure and its terrace walls (and presumably unrelated to them). Possible cave tomb on the southern slope.
- MH-0021 Qabusah (قبوسه)
Cave, possibly a tomb. Himyarite cursive(?) inscriptions carved into top. No artifacts found.
- MH-0022 Qabusah (قبوسه)
Stone structure, about 20m N-S x 5m E-W. No collections made. At the time of recording, this site reminded me somewhat of Jujah 2.
- MH-0023 Khashamar/Bir 'Ali (خشامر)
On ledge, and up the scree slope on the south side of Wadi Hadramawt between the villages of Khamur and Khashamar. Now mostly torn up by modern agricultural fields. Site approximately 200m E-W x 50m N-S. Stone foundations and some mud-brick superstructures visible. Much pottery, looking like Jujah 1, Level I. One large cave, which may have a stone dividing wall in it. Bones have supposedly been found, and subsequently reburied, in this cave. Inscribed ledge rims of two zirs were found and catalogued. Many grinding stones found in houses. Part of a stone incense burner found and catalogued. Hill temple located at the eastern end of site. No temple ground plan visible, but its location identified by the presence of dressed limestone (some of which is inscribed). Limestone fragments catalogued.

MH-0024 Jujah 1 (جوجه ١)

One piece of ancient (Byzantine or Early Islamic) glass bagged, but otherwise no collections were made. N-S stone wall at the western end of the eastern house has been robbed out since 1995. Excavated by NYU in 1994 and 1995. See site reports for more information.

MH-0025 Rocky spur. Islamic period structure, possibly built on the site of a pre-Islamic structure. Two small pecked Musnad inscriptions. One piece of pottery that may be Raybun I in date was collected. Stone wall foundations on the south and west slopes.

MH-0026 Jujah 2 (جوجه ٢)

Five or six mounds, each probably the remains of one structure. Site badly robbed for its stones. Northernmost structure has mud-brick walls, niched to take timbers, and stone foundations. The southernmost mound has been identified by the Russian expedition as a probable temple. Large blocks are visible in the scarp of the southern mound. Two pecked Musnad inscriptions on blocks in the southern mound. Few ceramics collected because these seemed very comparable to Jujah 1.

MH-0027 Jujah 4⁴ (جوجه ٤)

Tell site with three peaks. Partly robbed for its soils (but no more so than when first visited in 1994). Mud-brick walls visible where soils have been removed. Stone foundations are visible. Pottery looks like Jujah 1, Level III or IV. About same areal extent as Jujah 1, but lower relief (it looks like it only has architectural phase). Pieces of decorative friezes, of limestone and with black painted bands, found. Since these identify the probable existence of a temple, they have been catalogued.

⁴ This site was mistakenly identified as Jujah 3 by the NYU expedition in 1994.

Appendix B: Bags Collected

Bag Counts, by Material

26 ceramics bags
8 stone bags
3 glass bags
1 metal bag
1 shell bag
1 bone bag

Treatment of Bagged Collections

All bags were photographed in black & white, with color slide film, and with a digital camera. Because of time constraints, only ceramics bags were drawn—except for 000005 (stone) and 000020 (shell).

Multiple bags of ceramics were taken from some sites, so the following ceramics bags were not drawn, again because of time constraints:

000099 (from site MH-0013)
000100 (MH-0013)
000101 (MH-0013)
000102 (MH-0013)
000117 (MH-0014)
000187 (MH-0018)
000247 (MH-0023)

Appendix C: Objects Catalogued

Treatment of Catalogued Objects

Each catalogued object was marked with its serial number in indelible ink, except for object 000394, which may go on display in the Seiyun museum.

All catalogued objects were photographed in black & white, with color slide film, and with a digital camera.

Because of time constraints, the following objects were not drawn:

000274

000275

000276

000277

000278

000279

000280

000281

000313

Object Descriptions

000274 Ceramic. Site MH-0023

Sherd from a ledge-rimmed zir, inscribed on the rim. Found in a house at the eastern end of the site.

Inscription: JH



- 000275 Ceramic. Site MH-0023
Two joining sherds from a ledge-rimmed zir, inscribed on the rim. Found in a house at the eastern end of the site.
Inscription: DH MNT



- 000276 Stone. Site MH-0023
Limestone wall plaque, dressed and inscribed on one face. Found on slope below temple.
Inscription: H



- 000277 Stone. Site MH-0023
Limestone wall plaque, dressed on two faces and inscribed on one. Found on slope below temple.
Inscription: R WT



- 000278 Stone. Site MH-0023
Limestone wall plaque, dressed and inscribed on one face. Found on slope below temple.
Inscription: KR



- 000279 Stone. Site MH-0023
Limestone wall plaque, dressed and incised on one face. Found on slope below temple.



- 000280 Stone. Site MH-0023
Limestone wall plaque, dressed and inscribed on one face. Found on slope below temple.
Inscription: 'DB(?)



- 000281 Stone. Site MH-0023
Limestone wall plaque, dressed and with mason's mark on one face. Found on slope below temple.



- 000282 Stone. Site MH-0023
Agate bead, slightly lentoid. Found on slope below temple.



- 000283 Stone. Site MH-0023
One leg and one side of a limestone incense burner. Found in a house at the western end of the site.



- 000313 Stone. Site MH-0027
Limestone wall plaque, one face dressed and with a band of black paint. Found on the surface, near robbed out area.



- 000314 Stone. Site MH-0027
Limestone wall plaque, entire width apparently preserved. One face dressed and with two vertical bands of black paint. Between the paint bands is a raised lump of limestone. The lump is covered in white plaster, into which are impressed small triangles, pointed downward. (Orientation of the piece is based on Raybun examples.) Found on the surface, near robbed out area.



000315 Stone. Site MH-0027

Limestone wall plaque, two faces of which are dressed. A band of black paint runs vertically along the front (broader) face and along the front edge of the top face. On the front face, to the left of the paint is a raised lump of limestone. The lump is covered in grey plaster, into which are impressed small triangles, pointing downward. (Orientation of the piece is based on Raybun examples.) Found on the surface, near robbed out area.



000394 Ceramic. Site MH-0013

Clay model of a human head with appliqué eyes, nose, ear(!), mouth, and fillet around head. Left ear missing—apparently never having been a part of this object. Impressions of wood grain in a hole at the base of the head indicate that it was originally mounted atop a stick. Purchased by Dr. Bin ‘Aqil for 150 YR from a Shibami boy, Rafat Ba ‘Abad, who found it on the surface of the site. It has been donated to the Seiyun museum.

