

Pottery of the Early Iron Age from al Maysar M43 (Sultanate of Oman), in: M. Mouton F. Carrez (eds.), *Assemblages céramiques des sites de l'Age du Fer de la péninsule d'Oman*, Lyon 1998.

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The site

Owing to the similarity between Rumeilah in the United Arab Emirates and Lizq in Central Oman, they lend their names eponymously to the Early Iron Age. Study of the artefacts and contexts from 1986 to 1991 particularly from Samad and al Maysar revealed the problems in the dating of the Iron Age as a whole. Few clearly stratified contexts are known, not to mention those containing organic material for radiocarbon. In order to better structure the Iron Age, we selected two sites : Raki in the northern part of the Sultanate and al Maysar in its centre. Temporal and geographic variables in the material were to be studied in the peninsula. Our research strategy depended on finding settlements used for limited periods of time. The northern distribution of the Samad Period required clarification because the classes of pottery known from the northernmost sites were not typical of the assemblage. Its northern neighbour is known from the sites ed-Dur and Mleiha, which show no relation with it (Boucharlat et al. 1989: 5-72). Aside from these two sites, the distribution of their culture was little known.

Raki was selected as a site because on the basis of survey and excavation in 1982 and 1995 it seemed possibly to contain Samad-type pottery. It was hoped here to find copper smelting data to the [Lizq/Rumeilah](#) and to the Samad Period (Yule & Weisgerber 1996: 143 Abb. 3 & 4).

The settlements 1 km north of the present-day village of al Maysar were suitable for our research strategy. During the 1981 season the German Mission investigated the Early Iron Age remains in the area including al Maysar M42 (Tillmann & Kroll 1981). The adjacent small hill M43 04, one of a chain of settlements along the falaj-channel, also was trenched and its pottery sampled from the surface. The development of the settlement depends on that of the falaj. M42 was built and the falaj was needed to supply water for the settlement and its gardens. The water table, however, must have fallen, necessitating a lowering of the falaj in order to tap a diminished, deeper lying water supply. The result was that M42 became impractical. A new settlement, M43 was built further down the gentle slope somewhat to the south. Its settlement hills are strung along the falaj. M4302 is 30 x 25 m in diameter and is 2 m in height. In the northeast (B) and southwest (B) quadrants two L-shaped trenches went down without reaching virgin soil. The water exited the new falaj to the south of M42 and was available on the surface and not from a well. Begun in the Early Iron Age, M43 dates largely to the Samad Period on the basis of Weisgerber's survey of surface materials (Tillmann 1981: 234-8). 1 km to the southeast, the fort M34, was known to date to the Samad Period (Weisgerber 1981 pp. 233-234 ; Weisgerber 1982: 81-93, on the strength of limited excavation. Thus the Lizq/Rumeilah, Samad, and Islamic Periods are in evidence in al Maysar north.

Absolute means of dating the settlements in al Maysar north were few and far between. From M42 a thermoluminescence determination yielded a date of 280±170 BC (HD TL 10). Since the goal of the research was a chronological structuring of the Iron Age, it was disappointing not to find organic remains suitable for 14C or AMS analysis.

The descriptions of the sherds represented on fig. 1 and fig. 2 are preliminary since we have not had the opportunity to study the material in detail.

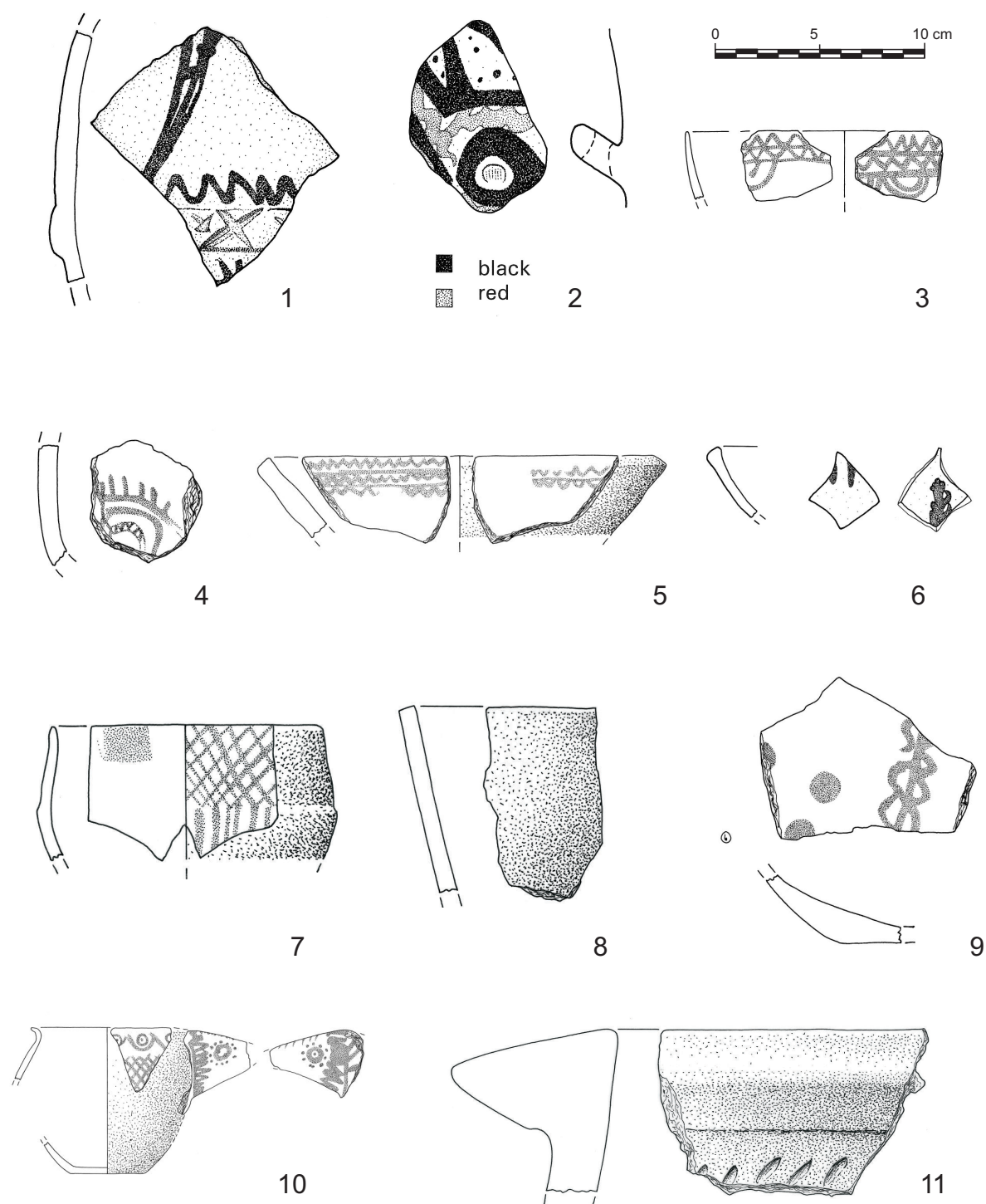


Fig. 1. Painted bowls, spouted vessel and incised jar, M4302.

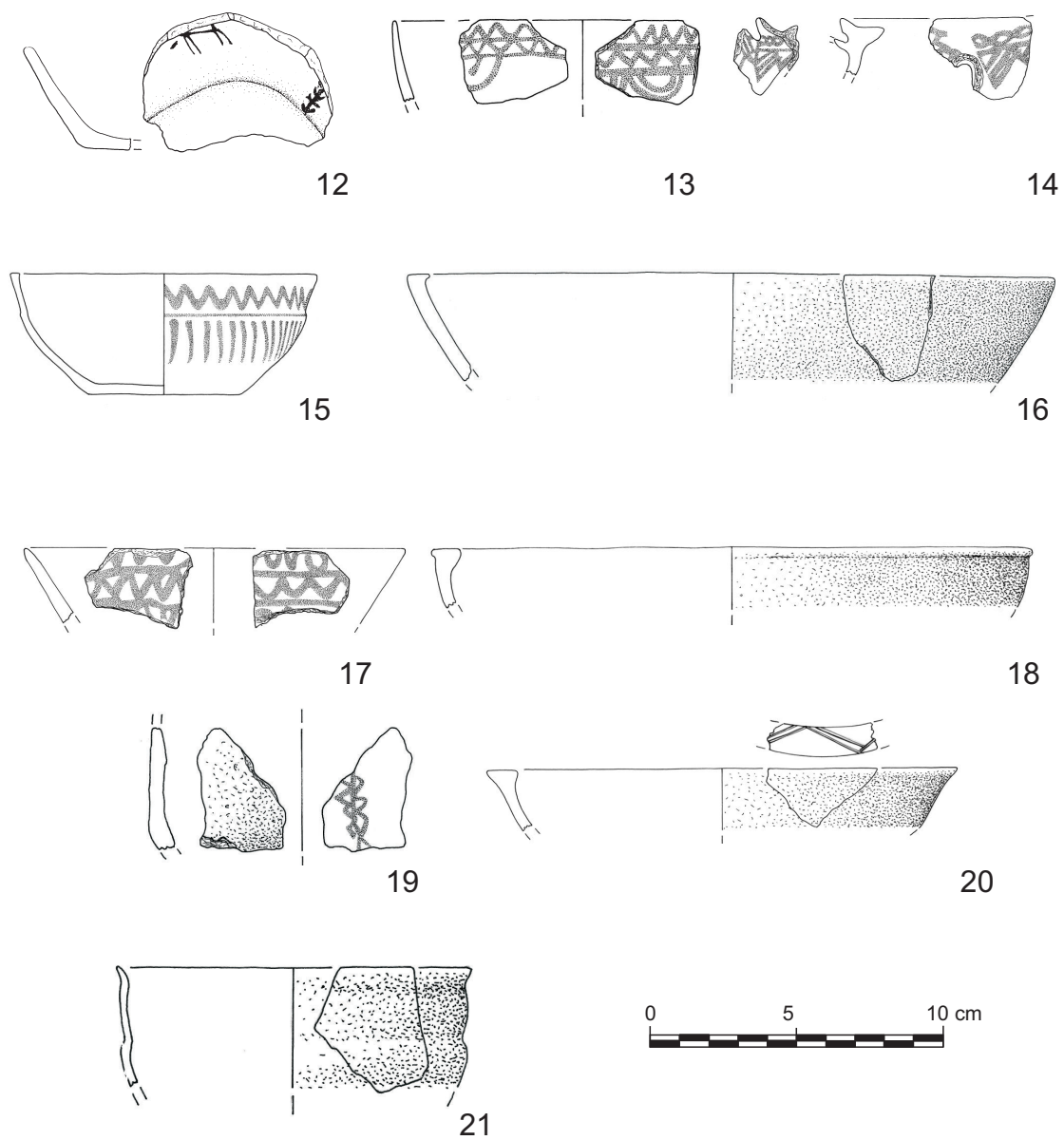


Fig. 2. Plain and painted bowls, M4302.



Photo 1

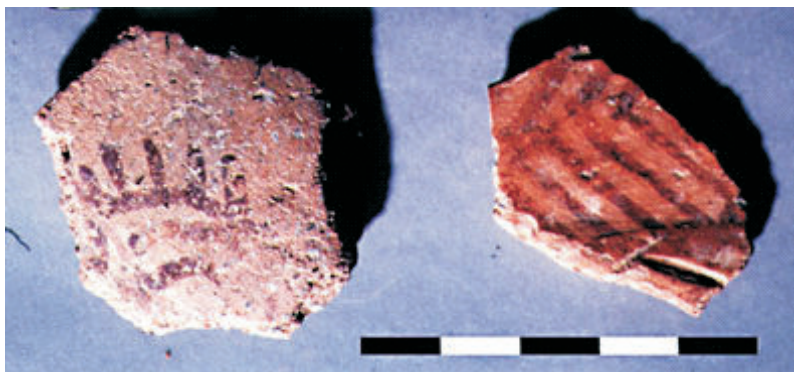


Photo 2

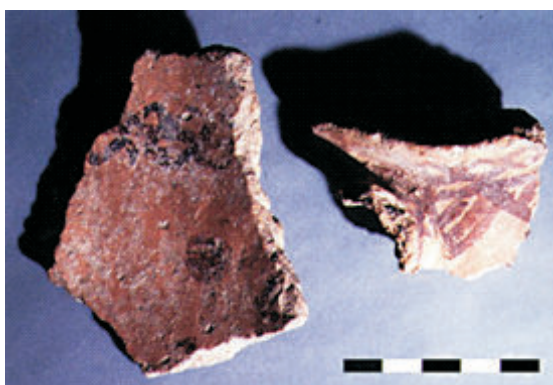


Photo 3



Photo 4

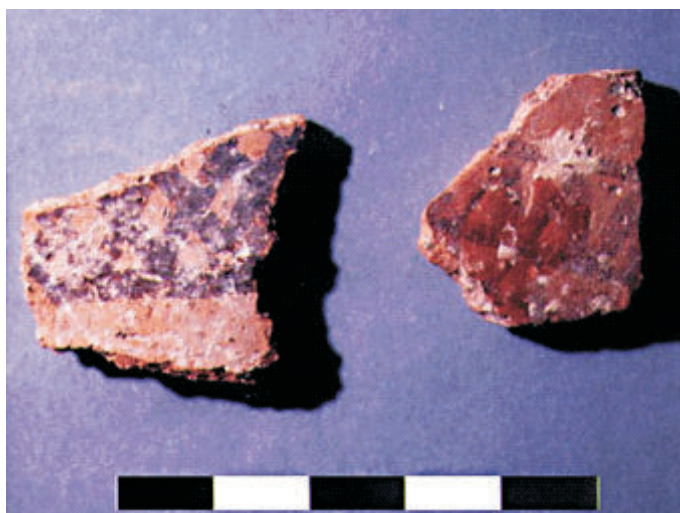


Photo 5

1	12915	B1.0	slip paint	not vis.	-	grits	medium	medium	-
2	12924	B2.1	slip paint	not vis.	dusky red & black paint on very pale brown	grits	fine	little	dark grey
3	12931	B2.3	slip paint	very pale brown	same	grits	fine	medium	reddish yellow
4	12942	B2.4	self slip	dusky red on light reddish br	light reddish brown	grits	coarse	small-medium	light reddish brown
5	12955	B2.6	slip, thick bl pnt	pink slip	-	grits	coarse black	heavy	grey
6	12955	B2.6	slip & paint	-	-	grits	fine	light	-
7	12955	B2.6	slip in & out	light reddish br	light red	-	very find clean	none	grey
8	12961	B2.7	none visible	reddish yellow	reddish yellow	chaff/grit	coarse	heavy	reddish yellow
9	12961	B2.7	self slip	light reddish br	pink	grits	coarse	heavy	pink
10	12961	B2.7	slip & paint	light reddish br	light red	grits bl/wh	fine	light	light red
11	12961	B2.7	none visible	light red	light red	grits br/bl	coarse	heavy	grey
12	12961	B2.7	paint	pnt dusky red	-	grits	coarse	heavy	yellowish red
13	12961	B2.7	smoothed	weak red	light reddish brown	grits bl/wh	coarse	heavy	red
14	12961	B2.7	slip & paint	reddish yellow	light brown	grits	coarse	heavy	reddish yellow
15	12961	B2.7	self slip & paint	light red	light red, pnt dusky red	grits	very fine	light	red
16	12968	B2.8	slip in & out	reddish brown	reddish brown	grita br/bl	med-coarse	medium	pale brown
17	12068	B2.8	ext none, int slip & paint	light red	reddish yellow	chaff/grits	coarse	heavy	reddish yellow
18	12974	C2.7	int slip	pnt weak red	light red	grits br/wh	coarse	heavy	light red
19	12968	B2.8	burned	weak red	reddish brown pnt dusky red	grits br/bl	coarse	heavy	reddish brown
20	12966	C2.7	slip & paint	reddish brown	reddish brown	grits bl/w	medium	medium	light red
21	12974	B2.7	slip, possibly burnished	weak red	reddish brown	frits wh	fine	light	reddish brown

Data for the pottery shown above from site M4302.