

Fig. 1. Plan of the Hushn Raydan, state: 26.03.2008.

Zafār, Capital of Ḥimyar. Seventh Preliminary Report, 2007 and 2008¹

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Abstract/Kurzfassung

Work begun in 2004 continued on the spacious Ḥimyarite so-called Stone Building, on the south-western flank of the Ḥuṣn Raydān mountain². In the ruined city, this is the first fairly intact building to come to light, an ashlar structure surrounding a stone-paved courtyard. Goals included locating the exterior walls, the investigation immediately to the north and the clearing of the courtyard. We mapped for the first time the dams and reservoir Sedd al-Ṣaybānī and Ma'ḡil al-Ṣaybānī. Our project emphasizes the little-known latter part of late antiquity in a field of study but one hardly developed in South Arabia.

Die Grabungsmannschaft setzte ihre Tätigkeit im geräumigen ḥimyarische sog. Steingebäude fort. 2004 begann diese Untersuchung an der südwestlichen Flanke des Bergs Ḥuṣn Raydān. Es handelt sich um das erste teilweise intakte Gebäude, das in der Ruinenstadt freigelegt wurde. Quadermauern rahmen eine mit Steinen gepflasterten Hof um. Ziele waren es die Außenmauern zu lokalisieren, den Bereich unmittelbar zum Norden hin und den Hof von Schutt zu befreien. Wir kartierten erstmalig die Staudämme und das Wasserreservoir.

Introduction

With a core area measuring some 110 ha, Zafār appears to be South Arabia's second largest archaeological site². As the capital of the Ḥimyarite confederation, the site's importance is historically established from a variety of written sources³. It dominated Arabia politically and militarily from c. 270 until 525 for some 245 years. Annual excavation reports illuminate its archaeology. The excavation campaigns of 2007 and 2008 continued investigation on what we have come to call the Stone Building, which is situated on the south-western slope of the mountain locally called Ḥuṣn Raydān (Fig. 1), in al-Ġāḥ(w) (standard Arabic: al-Ġaḥwa). According to Yūsuf 'Abdullāh, al-Ġāḥ

('the rump') is a common place-name in the Yemen for the base of a mountain. The concentration of Ḥimyarite tombs and other subsurface structures further impelled our work in al-Ġāḥ (Fig. 2) as this suggested an area with a special religious meaning to its ancient inhabitants. Unfortunately, the tombs cannot be dated more closely than probably pre-Islamic – at best, a

¹ First, again this year we thank the DFG for enabling excavation (grants ar 231/9-1 and ar 231/9-2). A donation from Qassim Yehya Abdu Jalap enabled the roofing of the reliefs discovered in 2008, which are discussed below. We also express gratitude to the General Organisation for Antiquities and Museums (GOAM) authorities for permission to conduct research.

Participants eighth field season 2007 included K. Franke (excavator), M. Gruber, J. Hohenadel, J. Orrin (excavators), C. Ruppert (Arabist), I. Steuer-Siegmund, A. Ungelenk, H.-J. Welz (find specialists), P. Yule (leader). Our GOAM inspectors included Ḥālid al-'Ānsī, 'Alī 'Abdul-Karīm al-Ḥakīm and 'Isa 'Alī al-Ṣaybānī. Nabīl Ṣāliḥ al-'Aṣwāl served as a trainee in the field. In Jena, Norbert Nebes is our epigrapher. We employed upwards of 35 labourers. Following arrival on 09.02., we cleared formalities and began work on the 13.03. at Zafār, before departing on 26.03.2007 for Ṣan'ā'. The text regarding the excavation of 2007 was adapted from the text of Kristina Franke. In 2008, following arrival on 02.02., we cleared formalities and began work on the 11.03. at Zafār, before departing on 31.03.2007 for Ṣan'ā'. Our team also enjoyed the generous hospitality of the German Institute of Archaeology in Ṣan'ā' at the beginning and end of the season, which allowed recovery from our Spartan field conditions. Participants of the ninth field season included Curt Hilbrig (excavator of the southern end of the excavation), Martin Gruber and Jens Gutperle (excavators of the northern end of the excavation), Johanna Greska and Sharlyn Lhuillier (draughtswomen), Tobias Schröder and Ingo Buchmann (surveyors), Elske Fischer and Stella Tomasi (palaeobotanists), P. Yule (leader). Our GOAM inspectors included Ḥālid al-'Ānsī, Rafīq Muḥammed al-'Arāmi, 'Alī 'Abdul-Karīm al-Ḥakīm, Fath 'Alī al-Julob and 'Abdu Tawab Miṣraḡī. In Jena, Norbert Nebes is our epigrapher. I also thank Walter Müller and Peter Stein for discussing the inscription of the crowned figure with me. Christine Strube (Heidelberg) pointed me in the right direction regarding the art historical aspects of the figure. Last but not least, Armin Kirfel again carried out the quantitative analyses of selected excavated materials. In both seasons we employed upwards of 35 labourers.

We were pleased to receive a large number of Yemenite and foreign visitors at the site in 2007 and 2008, especially Werner Arnold, our project patron. If not otherwise acknowledged, the illustrations are from P. Yule. Prior to the publication of the catalogue of the Zafār Site Museum, no attempt is made in the present report to find exhaustive parallels for all of the artefacts which appear. Contexts described in previous reports are not reiterated. Previous annual reports: 1998-2004: Yule et al. 2007; 2005: Yule 2006; Franke et al. in press.

² Site size = area + population density. The settled and unsettled parts of ancient Ma'rib – the largest site in the region – have been estimated variously from 70 to 114 ha. Without excavation, it is impossible to judge how much of the total area was settled, and how dense this was. The 110 ha surface area cited for Zafār is 10 ha smaller than that of our site-map (1000 m x 1200 m). Zafār's ancient habitation also is unequally dense, and lies in and outside the city wall. The more densely populated area inside the city wall is approximately 1/3 of the total estimated area. Sabir is said to be a 6 km long site (source: B. Vogt, 11.06.2008) although there is a question if it is one or several sites. Maṣna'at Māriya is a candidate as 2nd largest site, but simply using the entire surface area is an inadequate index of its size. Ist aggregate settled area appears to less than that of Zafār.

³ Müller 2001.

long period – which therefore makes guesses risky about the religion of the owners. Nonetheless, after death, for Christians to lie close to the grave of a saint is a privilege reserved for the few⁴. The practice of *depositio ad sanctos* provided each community with a map of the ranking order of its departed members around the holy grave. A similar ranking principle may work for polytheists there, but certainly not for Jews⁵. Despite the warnings of our older labourers, in 2003, we took up excavation in al-Ġāḥ. According to them, 40 or more years ago they and their fathers quarried here, and 100 square stones sold for as little as two "French riyals" (Maria Theresa dollars) to buyers in Bait al-'Ašwal and other places. Especially in the upper debris, this exploitation results characteristically in a lack of soil between the stones, heavy white accretions on them, and a lack of the small finds. Aside from ancient terrace walls (Arabic *ḡerab*) in the surrounding area, this building is the first major intact antique structure to come to light at Zafār.

Excavation of 2007

In 2003, excavation commenced on the south-western flank of the Ḥuṣṣ Raydān (Fig. 3). In 2004, 20 m to the south-east we began a trench designated z400 of the north-western corner of the Stone Building. Its courtyard was further cleared in 2006. In the following season, two adjacent surfaces were excavated, z400 and to its east, z500 (Fig. 4). The Stone Building consists of a stone-paved courtyard and rooms at the northern end. The main activities in 2007 were the partial clearing of the western and eastern walls to floor level, including a heavy mass of slag (operations 400-025 and z400-025b) ±1 m deep (Fig. 5 and 6). The western wall of the Stone Building rests on a foundation of porous, dark, volcanic ashlar in the Yemen known as *ḥabaši*. On top of these, a single course of limestone ashlar are preserved. This nearly completely plundered wall was rebuilt of smaller wadi stones with raised bastions over 1 m in height (z430, z431, z434, z438). The original western wall of the courtyard is preserved to a maximal height of 60 cm; that at the northern side is better preserved. The deeper the debris, the better the preservation of the architecture. Both the western and northern interior courtyard walls show features which may have been entrances in the

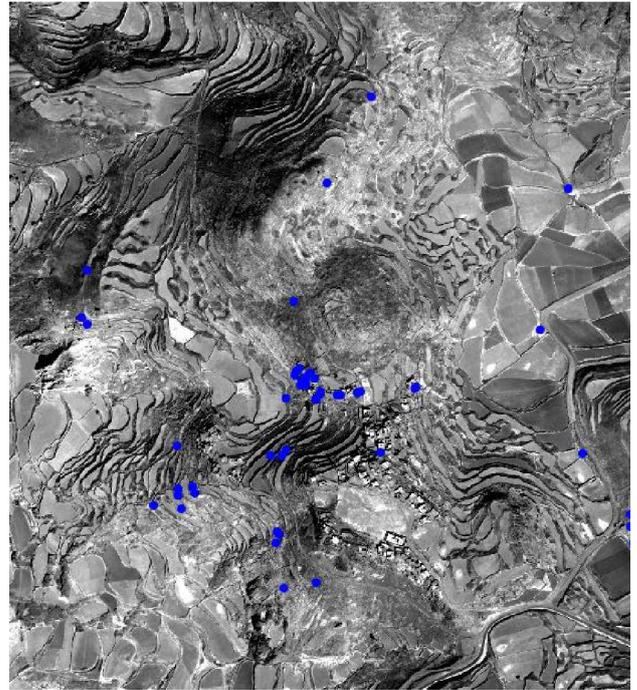


Fig. 2 Ḥimyarite tomb concentration in al-Ġāḥ plotted on a Quickbird satellite image from 1 February 2004, north is above.

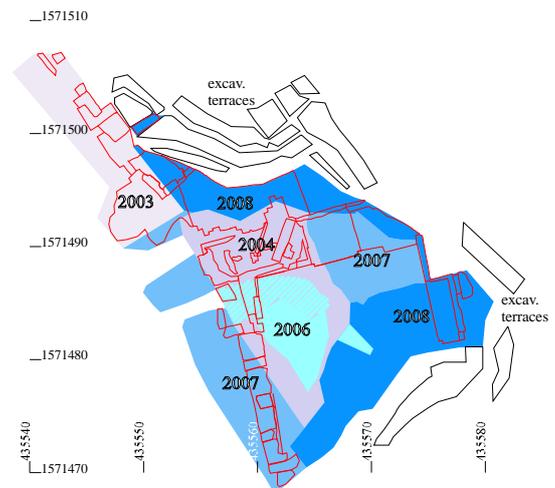


Fig. 3. Ḥuṣṣ Raydān, excavation progress since 2003.

⁴Brown 1985: 7.

⁵Yule – Galor in press.

⁶Physical analysis: Yule et al. 2007: 538–9 (context z400–025, lz04–256). A second sample (lz07–399) was taken from the upper surface of the deposit z400–025b: "An X-ray recording shows calcium carbonate (calcite) to be the main phase. In addition, two feldspars, quartz, magnetite and hematite also occur. Furthermore, vaterite (another calcium carbonate) was registered. The complex appears to be a degraded lime mortar, not however, like freshly burnt segregated lime". We thank Dirk Kirchner (German Mining Museum, Bochum) for this information (translated, letter 05.11.2007).

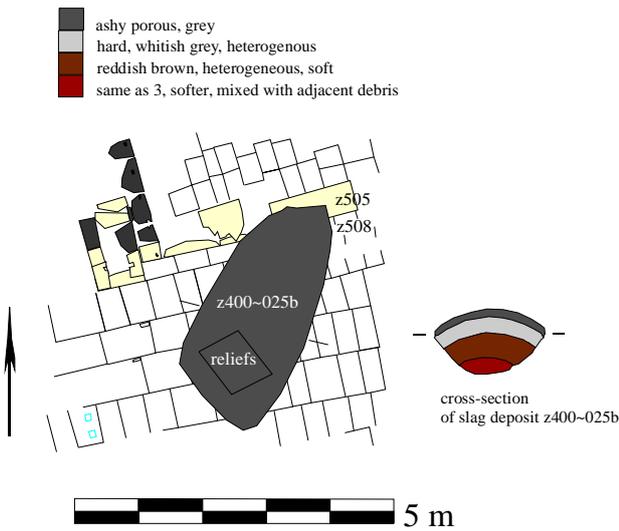


Fig. 5. Plan and section of context z400-025b.



Fig. 6. The pointed end on the stairs may be a relict of a charging opening for context z400-025b.



Fig. 7. Stone reliefs as found inside the context z400-025b.

earlier of several building phases.

Two slag deposits filled most of the courtyard. The larger is op400-025; the smaller, op400-025b, lay just to its north. The two deposits differ from each other in their makeup (infra). The heterogeneous mixture of slag, charcoal and stone fragments of op400-025 form an irregular heap, and appear to be the debris of a pyrotechnical process, possibly reducing limestone to lime for the production of cement. Two slag samples were analysed in the hope of determining their origin⁶. Both operations op400-025 and op400-025b rest on the same ± 10 cm charcoal layer (z500-041, z500-044, z500-045) as observed in 2004 and subsequently directly on the stone pavement of the inner courtyard, z413⁷.

The smaller slag deposit, op400-025b, was conical in plan, its pointed end facing the east-north-east. In section, it is biconvex. This heterogeneous mass contains layers different in density, colour, and contains inclusions. The body has no obvious exterior shell, but rather is a densely layered mass of slag with many charcoal inclusions. The upper surface is formed of a porous slag. Beneath it a hard heterogeneous grey-white layer contained charcoal and small stones and showed clear traces of burning. A thick layer of softer brown earth forms the lowermost zone. A hollow was formed beneath the eastern end of the slag. operation op400-025b lies in different brownish, ashy contexts which contain charcoal, botanical remains, and in some areas slag (contexts z500-033, z500-036, z500-043). Some reliefs from context op400-025b bear traces of burning, and slag adheres to them. More than 16 fragmentary limestone reliefs neatly stacked in the western end of op400-025b include bucranion plaques and low reliefs show different subjects (Fig. 7)⁸.

Excavation of 2008

In 2008 we continued the clearance of churned up surface debris and the obdurate slag beneath it from the courtyard of the Stone Building (Fig.

⁷ Cf. preliminary reports for the seasons 2004 and 2006 (Yule et al. 2007, 533; Franke et al. in press).

⁸ In contexts z500-018, z500-024 and z500-025: sculptures lz07-187, 07-191, 07-199, 07-346, 07-348, 07-352, 07-358, 07-361, 07-362, 07-370, 07-371, 07-372, 07-373, 07-381, 07-398, 07-438 (lz is the abbreviation for Laufzettel, that is find slips).

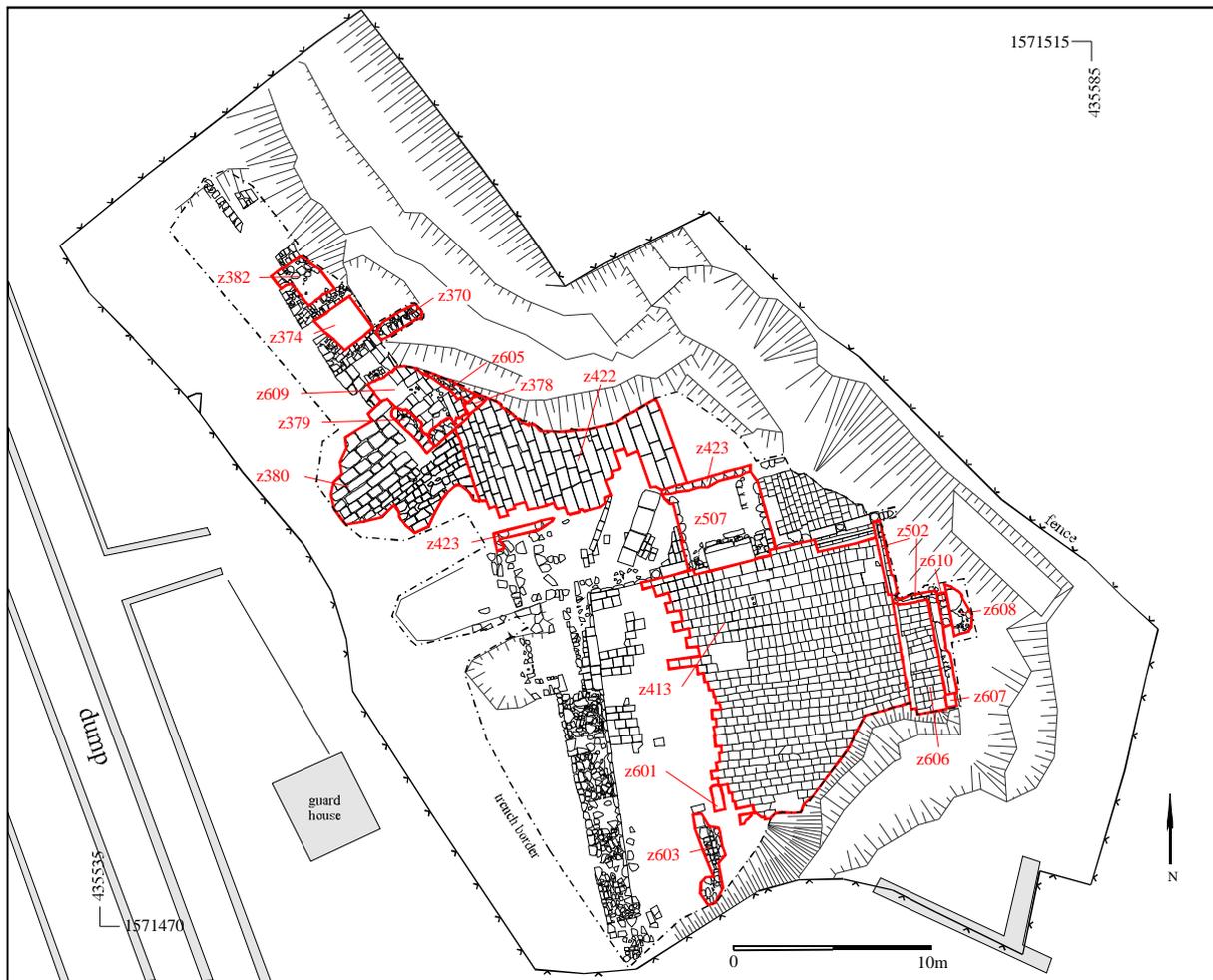


Fig. 8. Loci excavated in 2008 are outlined with a heavy line.

8). In the southern part of our excavation, on the pavement we cleared some 120 m² (north-west – south-east 6 m x north-east – south-west 20 m) of debris at a maximal depth of 6 m below the recent surface. The amount of debris removed from the southern and northern excavations and periphery in 2008 amounts to some 501 m³. Our southern excavation alone accounted for 314 m³. Some of this volume derives from our excavation terraces, which are much broader than the Stone Building. These prevent stones from careening into the building and comprise the upper levels of next season's excavation. The profile shown in Fig. 9, which transects the centre of the courtyard and the slag deposit (op400-025) in it, reveals a complex series of events after the Stone Building fell out of use. While the slag, which appears to be a primary context, is abundant, paradoxically no traces exist of furnaces from whence it came. Given the heap-like stratigraphic form of the slag op400

-025, it is more likely to reflect dumped industrial waste than be the result of an intense fire in the Stone Building, the only explanations which plausibly might explain the origin of the slag⁹. This adamant deposit served an unintentional positive function: It shielded the stones of pavement z413 below it from stone robbing. Although slag flowed onto and adhered to a few pavement stones, paradoxically hardly any show discolouration or damage from intense heat. An uneven layer of charcoal, maximally 10 cm in thickness lies between them. Where present, this layer prevented bonding. It may have originated from wooden timbers used in the construction. But not enough is present to support the assumption of a roofed courtyard. The compact slag deposit postdates earth and stone debris lying below it. Thus, prior to the

⁹ See Yule et al. 2007, 538–539 for qualitative/quantitative analysis of this material

inception of the slag, the Stone Building was already a ruin.

A 3 x 2.5 m room (z507), which is delineated by three walls and a step, lies at the northern end of the courtyard (Fig. 4, 10 and 11). Different building phases are in evidence. The northern foundation wall, z423, which possibly reflects a predecessor of the Stone Building, was built of ḥabaši stones. It is documented together with its foundation trench from room z507 to 10 m to the west, where a corner still exists. Preserved stones reveal a sandwich wall, the northern ones of which faced north and the two preserved southern stones, south. This wall forms the northern façade of the Stone Building. The broad monolithic step, bordering to the south on room z507, is a late addition which belongs together chronologically with flanking bastions which show the marginally drafted and pecked masonry of Van Beek type 6¹⁰. These two bastions are the only place in the Stone Building where swallow-tail mortises occur. The largeness and broadness of the step, excellent workmanship and manifest light use-wear from the traffic of ancient visitors, show this once to have been an important entrance. The eastern and western ḥabaši foundation walls of z507 face respectively outwardly. In the north-east of the room, four stones show the interior face of this sandwich wall. The room amounts to about a third the width of the courtyard. To the immediate west of room z507, a presumed adjacent room and entrance existed, but were destroyed by the building of the heavy stone settings z412 and z414, which stratigraphically postdate the Stone Building per se. On the other side to the east, the room adjacent z507 was not completely cleared during its excavation in 2007 because it lay immediately below the steep eastern edge of the trench. Further excavation might well unleash a subsidence. The pavement stones of this room also originally also may have existed in room z507, which was destroyed down to its foundations. The location of the northern façade of the Stone Building is now clear. Heavy, well-masoned stone slabs of pavement z422 butt up against the northern face of room z507. The pavement which they form extends 5 m toward the north and disappears in the balk. To the east, the flat surface consists of bed rock at the same height.

North of the Stone Building proper (Fig. 8) and

south of the building complex, z300, the transition is evident from the excellently masoned stone pavement, z422¹¹, to one adjacent to the west, z380, which is of rustic appearance and workmanship. The latter pavement appears to belong structurally/chronologically with the northern group of rooms designated z300, which also has a rustic masonry. In the case of pavement z380, the long axis of the rectangular stones is oriented north-north-east – south-south-west; in contrast, those of z422 are oriented north-west – south-east. Evidently there was a plaza north of the Stone Building during and after its lifetime.

In this same area, we cleared an estimated 57 m² at pavement level and a far larger amount in the higher-lying excavation terraces (Fig. 8). Further north in the chambers and pavement designated z300, reinvestigation of the already excavated room z374, yielded storage vessel sherds. In room z382 a stone floor appeared which lay below that excavated in 2003. The southern corner of a jerky-built angular wall (z378 and z379) came to light built on pavement z380 and z422. Its remains extend into the unexcavated area immediately to the north-east. Since this corner stratigraphically postdates both pavements, and the northern complex, z300, it belongs to the latest contexts at Zafār. It and other such primitive features are best explained as squatter constructions.

In 2008, eastern exterior walls of the Stone Building emerged, cut into the bedrock. The decorated interior courtyard wall, z502, abuts the parallel wall, z608, to its east (Fig. 12 and 13). Wall z502 is not preserved to its original height, despite the presence of four flat cap stones (context z610), which are held in place by means of white cement (Fig. 14)¹². There is no room on either side for an ambulatory. The outer stone wall faces west, that is, toward the courtyard, as is clear from the flat outer surfaces of its 'pyramidally' formed dark ḥabaši stones. This same type of masonry occurs at the north-western corner outside of the Stone Building (wall z423, supra), which can be taken as the remains of a predecessor building.

¹⁰ Yule et al. 2007, 533 note 72, Pl. 36.1 (field contains multiple smaller rectangular pecked fields).

¹¹ Quartz 15.42%, sanadine Na 0.85 84.58% (orthoclase feldspar).

¹² Quartz 6.79%, anorthite 14.66%, calcite 64.31%, sanidine Na 0.85 14.04% (orthoclase feldspar).

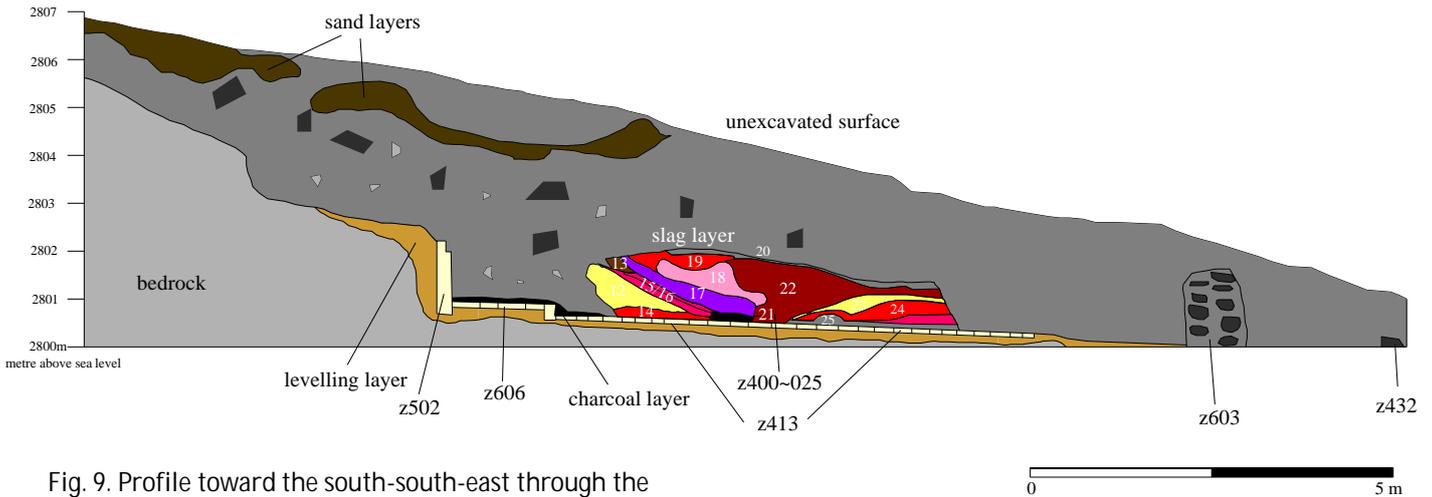


Fig. 9. Profile toward the south-south-east through the courtyard, state: 26.03.2008.

Legend

1 Rubble layer of unworked broken rock, mostly dm 15-20 cm, up to even dm 50 cm; loosely mixed with finer earth and sand.

12 Lime slag-like block white to cream-yellow, crumbly, burnt limestone; fine charcoal inclusions but also as large ones as 10 x 10 x 10 cm, melted with burnt red brick slag.

13 Mixture of soil, ash and slag, dark brown slightly penetrated by plants' roots.

14 Red brick slag, partly coloured black from the ash; with inclusions of burnt limestone and charcoal.

15 Gravel layer of loose broken brick, worked stone, dark broken stone, glassy slag, stone with adhering sand, nearly black slag [slag, nearly black], partly burnt ochre limestone.

16 Ochre coloured burnt limestone with red brick-slag, and charcoal small inclusions

17 Reddish-grey brick slag melted to a dense mass, with small inclusions of burnt limestone (dm about 2 cm) and

charcoal (dm about 0.5-3 cm)

18 Reddish brick slag, with heavier concentration of limestone inclusions, partly burnt, mainly whitish grey to creme coloured material.

19 Brick slag layer with small amount of other kinds of material; fragile + porous quality

20 Gravel layer comprised of unworked broken stone and earth.

21 Dark slaggy layer with heavy charcoal inclusions, little limestone and some red brick slag.

22 Dark bluish-red brick slag, crumbly with black inclusions (ash and charcoal), fewer small ochre-coloured limestone inclusions.

23 White burnt limestone with charcoal particles.

24 Red brick inclusions with charcoal and limestone, melted to a homogenous mass.

25 Black ashy layer, hard and dense.

In the western part of the main courtyard, z413, beneath the pavement slabs, an irregularly shaped 1.50 x 1.50 x 0.50 m cavity designated z601 (Fig. 8) came to light, undermined over the centuries by flowing water. Similar to the 1 x 1 x 1.5 m sounding, op400~035, excavated in 2004 and 2007 a few metres to the west (Fig. 4), it also contained the bones of large mammals.

Since 1998, the villagers maintained that 30 m south-west of the southern edge of this year's trench, a 6 m long stone pier lay buried. This year an elderly villager described its exact position. In a 4.3 x 3.3 x 1.5 m trench the pier came to light (Fig. 8 and 15). Not in its primary context, it evidently was simply too troublesome for the stone robbers to further transport. Accompanying finds included the rear light of a motor vehi-

cle (c. 1950s) and a plastic bag, telltale evidence of pillaging which took place in recent decades. An irregularly formed, poured, concrete foundation appeared in the northern part of the trench and 10 m north-west of the pier (Fig. 16), the likes of which we have not yet encountered in Zafār. Since all of the building remains in the area are antique, there is no reason yet to presume any other date for this foundation. The question arises whether this white cement can be dated narrowly.

Centimetres south of the point where we stopped excavation in 2007, the eastern wall, z502, jogs to the east at a right angle. This forms a limestone paved rectangular 1.8 x 6.0 m space which we designated z606, as it is presently known. The debris here consisted mostly of stones, the larg-

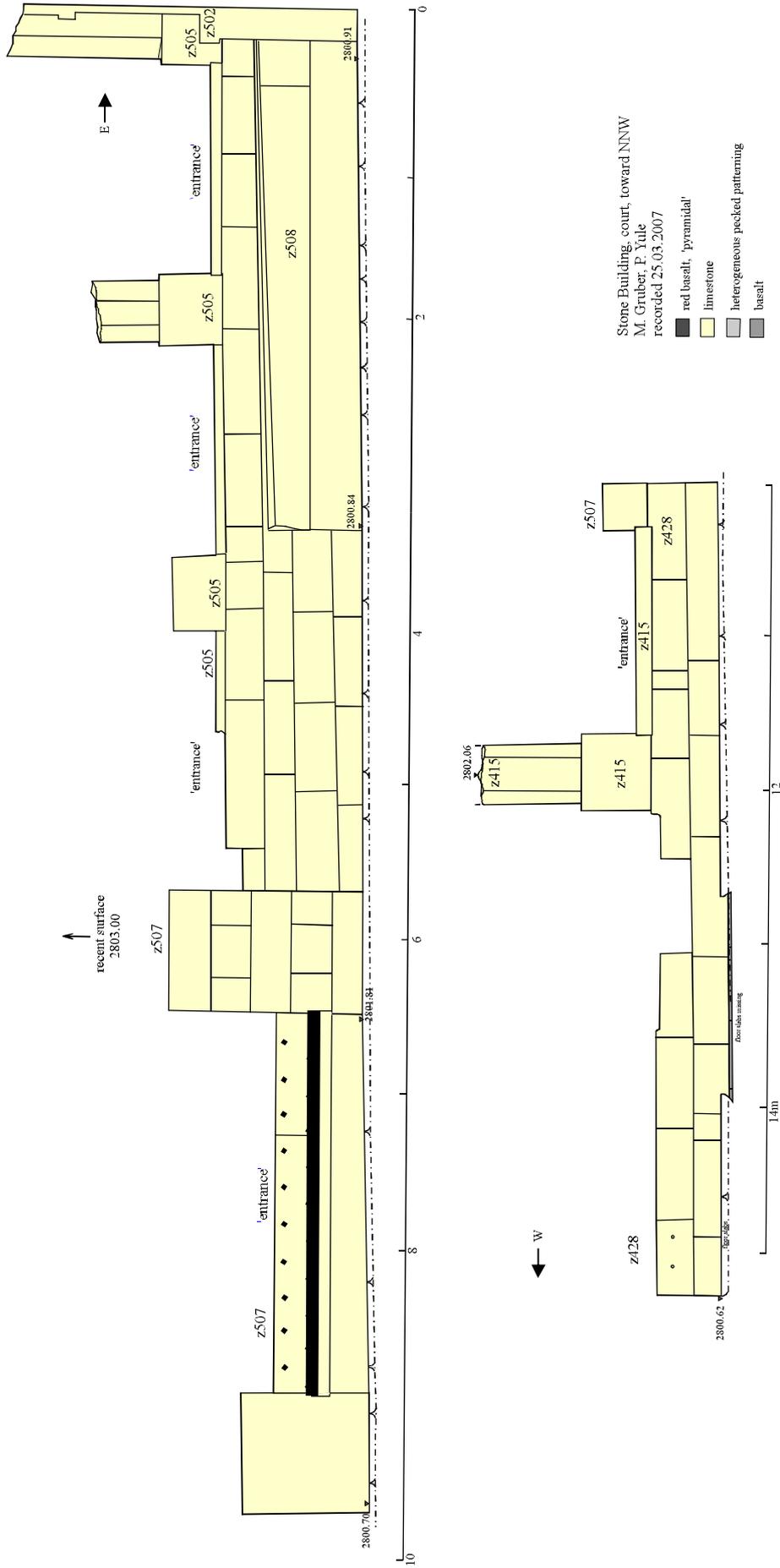


Fig. 10. Profile of the northern courtyard wall toward the north: state: 26.03.2007



Fig. 11. Room and walls designated z507 viewed toward the north-north-west, state: 26.03.2008.



Fig. 12. Profile photo of the eastern courtyard wall, z502, toward the east.

est of which was nearly 1.4 m in height. At the southern excavated end of the limestone relief-decorated wall, carved from a massive (0.67 x 1.70 x 0.50 m) basaltic block, a standing relief which shows a frontal male figure came to light (Fig. 17). This is the first life-size Himyarite figure to occur of a kind preserved hitherto only in fragments.

Sculpture¹³

Four bands of relief sculpture grace the wall, z502 (Fig. 12 and 13), moving downward, they are comprised of alternating rosettes and leaf crosses, antithetic animal compositions, alternating wine leaves and grapes as well as bucrania. Fig.

18 shows an antithetic animal composition from the eastern wall. Such animals appear in raised relief with incised details. The modelling and style are basically homogeneous, although different details are stylistically somewhat variable. Depicted are deer, lambs, leopards, sphinxes and tigers. They show peculiar features; some wear collars, for instance. The deer show shovel not spike antlers. Whereas some of the quadrupeds appear to be depicted with five legs, the fifth one in fact is a tail. Since some of these reliefs are cut off, perhaps the reliefs were also reused from an earlier building or building programme.

Reliefs identical in type and style to the frieze z502 are known from other parts of the excavation, from Qaryat Zafār¹⁴ and from neighbouring Bayt al-'Ašwal¹⁵ – the latter two a result of the exploitation of the villagers. The find situation suggests that this took place perhaps in the decades before the inception of the antiquities authority in the 1970s. If it happened much earlier, fewer such reliefs would have survived. As mentioned above, the villagers tell us that this exploitation served as a livelihood for their fathers and grandfathers.

The upper surface of one antithetic animal relief bears the remnants of the standard two-panel composition of a woman holding her breasts juxtaposed to a bucranium (Fig. 19), which were chiselled off when the image pair no longer were desirable. This iconoclasm shows a succession of pre-Islamic cultic attributes away from the image pair type.

The Standing Crowned Figure, z607

The figure's position within the Stone Building provides a first indication of its date (Fig. 17). This structure underwent various changes

¹³ Fig. 18 lz07-126 antithetic animals 56.5 x 36 x 31 cm, limestone
 Fig. 20 lz07-361 anthropomorphic relief 50 x 25 x 8 cm, limestone
 Fig. 21 lz07-031+083 winged figure 26 x 25 x 11 cm, limestone
 Fig. 22 lz07-112 face with 2° figure 20 x 19 x 11 cm +lz07-192 26.3 x 9.6 x 35.8 cm, limestone
 Fig. 23 lz07-263 bust of woman 18.5 x 13 x 11.5 cm, limestone
 Fig. 24 lz07-408 woman elab. hairdo 13 x 09 x 10 cm, limestone
 Fig. 25 lz07-451 head 8 x 6 cm, limestone
 Fig. 26 lz08-146.03 snake column 16.5 x 20.5 x 11 cm, marble
 Fig. 27 lz08-511 face 20 x 19.5 x 11 cm, marble
 Fig. 28 lz08-050 head 9.5 x 16 x c. 8 cm, limestone
 Fig. 29 lz08-065 interlace 11 x 11 x 05 cm, marble

¹⁴ House of 'Alī Hussain al-Zafāri in Zafār=Pirenne 1979: 41, figure above.

¹⁵ House of 'Abdullah 'Alī al-'Ašwal in Bait al-'Ašwal=Costa 1973, pl. 22.1.

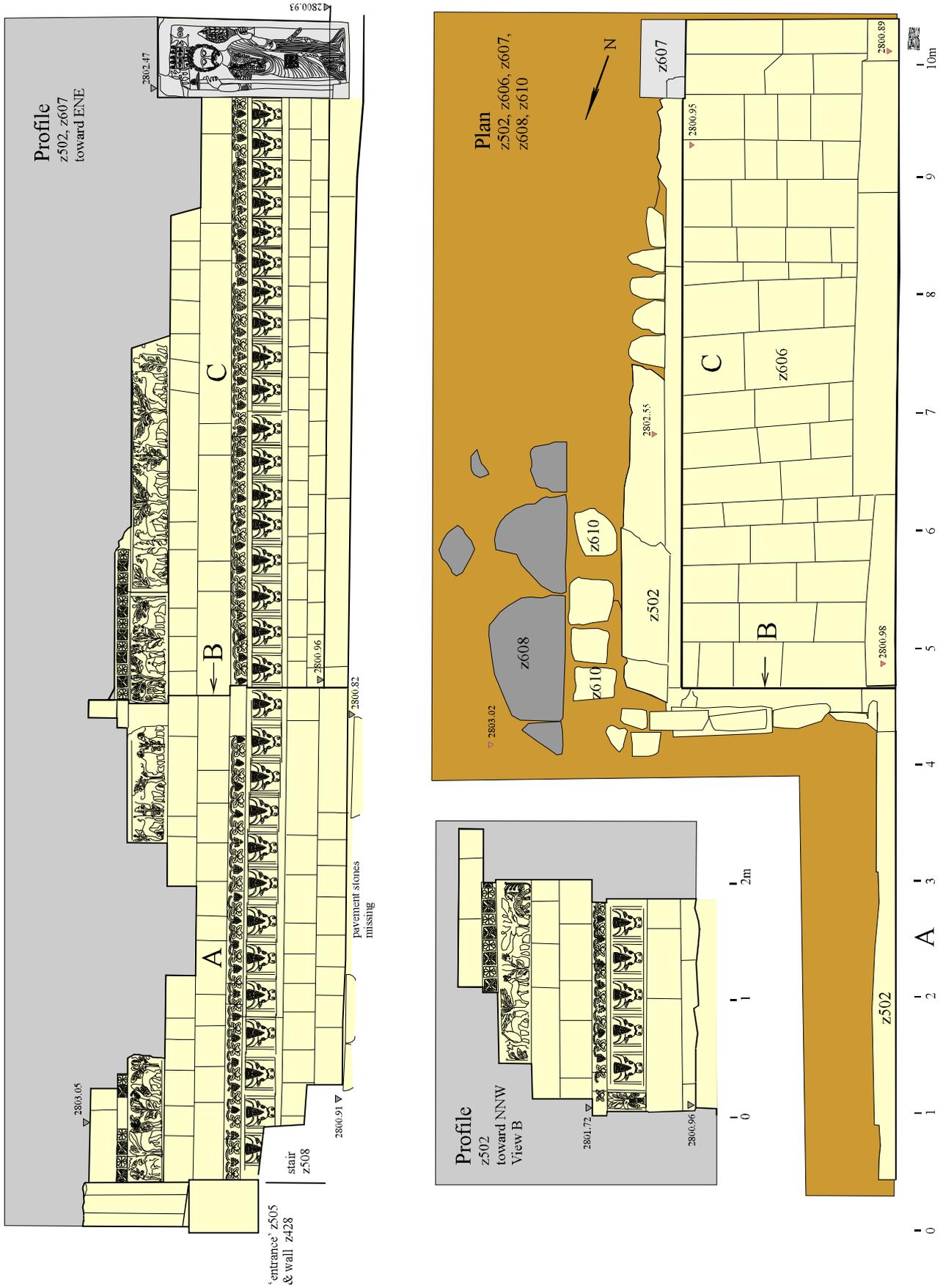


Fig. 13 Room and walls designated z507 viewed toward the north-north-west, state: 26.03.2008.

which rarely can be dated in absolute years, but rather only as relative dated alterations. Its courtyard, z413, is paved with rectangular stone slabs homogeneous in form, which appear to derive from a single build. Walls built of re-used limestone ashlar incorporated reliefs, seemingly also as one event. At the time of writing, the dating of the court pavement rests on a single ¹⁴C determination of charcoal sampled immediately beneath a pavement stone from the levelling course into which it is set. This calibrates to a 104 year long time slot of 42 BCE to 62 CE at the 2nd standard deviational level¹⁶. The relatively precise masonry of the Stone Building strengthens a dating as early as the first century BCE–CE¹⁷. The crowned figure postdates the rest of wall z502 (infra). It stands 20 cm deeper than the niche pavement, z606, before it, the latter representing an even later addition to the building, which cannot have been used much before it fell out of use. Excavation halted at the end of the 2008 season centimetres south of the standing figure. The standing figure is depicted wearing an elaborate fenestrated crown. In each of the relief squares a raised circular form appears suggestive of a jewel. Multiple relief lines form five concentric pentagonal points on the crown's upper edge. The figure's right hand holds a staff, which above terminates as a pointed pentagon, likewise formed of multiple relief lines. It abuts below a short cross member is formed also of multiple relief lines. The left hand holds a leafy branch bouquet which at first glance might be taken to be a torch or a mirror, especially in similar depictions from Zafār on a smaller scale or fragmentary ones¹⁸. The figure is rendered wearing a pendulous double necklace. A sword pointing to the figure's left hangs from a baldric which is slung over the shoulder. The scabbard slide is geometrically ornamented. The upper left of the figure's shirt is gaily patterned in relief. Over it the figure wears a diaphanous wrapped garment with multiple folds. Its border terminates in a zigzag. Just below the waist a leaf-cross panel adorns the garment. The right foot is viewed frontally and the left in profile – both barefoot, presumably because the figure stands on holy ground. The iconography and typology of the standing figure require comment. The fashioning and

placing per se of statues of men single them out as high status individuals an act which is potentiated by the Lysippean pose of an heroic leader in its innate superiority¹⁹. Declarative gestures often find use in dramatic scenes of gods, kings and emperors. The grasp at the upper end of the staff with the right hand and the presentation of the leafy branch bouquet with the left appear to adopt the semaphoric gesticulation with both arms characteristic of Roman imperial and Late Roman statuary²⁰. Although here the stronger right hand grasps the staff, not the left one, in Late Antique and Byzantine imperial representations, both right and left handedness appear in similar poses²¹. As is the case with Byzantine ivory diptychs of the late 5th and early 6th century, our figure does not exist in space, but is confined in a compositional frame. Moreover, an enormous head rests on an underdeveloped bust. Glaring eyes in the large head and the elaborate costume echo Late Antique Roman imagery. Turning to the figure's individual attributes, over the centuries numerous Mediterranean antique rulers were posed holding a spear, or staff²², but none to my knowledge hold a staff with a cross member. The cross member is slightly tapered in the direction of the figure. It does not cite Roman vexilla, sceptra, hastae or other Roman insigniae, such as the more common knobbed Roman and Byzantine staff, but is a different sign of authority. In its left hand, the figure does not hold a torch or branch, but rather a bundle of branches which has no close relevant comparisons²³. The moustache, curly hairdo and the narrow torso have several parallels including e.g. of the 2nd – 3rd century CE Hatraean statue of Sanaʿrūq II²⁴. Elaborate curls are fashionable in imperial

¹⁶ KIA-29699, Iz 06–088, ¹⁴C date 1988±23, calibrated at S.D. 1: -36–52 CE, at S.D. 2: -42 – 62CE: Yule – Franke – Kromer in preparation.

¹⁷ The ashlar of the walls are more precisely worked and regular in form than the pavement stones.

¹⁸ Cf. zm2294= Costa 1973, 193 no. 050 pl. 12; zm0227= Costa 1976, 449–450, pl. 11.137.

¹⁹ Brilliant 1963, 13.

²⁰ Cf. Brilliant 1963, 196–7 fig. 4.89, which shows a colossal statue of an unknown emperor from Barletta. The right hand holds a staff and the left an orbis.

²¹ L'Orange 1995, 106–7 figs. 48 & 49: ivory relief of the empress Amalasantha; Janson 1977 202 fig. 280: ivory relief of the Archangel Michael, early 6th century. The left hand grasps the staff and the right hand the earth orb.

²² E.g. an image from Nemrud Dag shows Antiochos and Herakles Verethragma (69–34 BCE), the king holding a sceptre: Ghirshman 1962, 66 fig. 79.

²³ Unless we assume it to derive from a syncretism of a barsam from Zoroastrian Sasanians living in South Arabia at that time.



Fig. 14. Walls z502 and z608 toward the north-north-east.

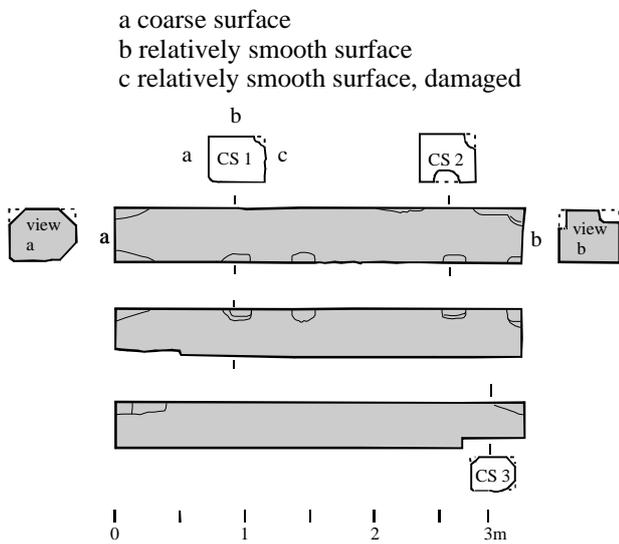


Fig. 15. The pier excavated 30 m south-east of the edge of the main excavation surface.



Fig. 16. White cement foundation 18.5 m south-east of the edge of the main excavation surface.



Fig. 17. Crowned standing figural relief z607 imbedded in the courtyard wall, z502.

Rome, perhaps originating among her southern neighbours²⁵. The tight curls of the figure z607 match among others those of the Byzantine Boethius image which is dated to 476 CE²⁶. The figure's long garment is unique but seems inspired perhaps by Roman-looking togati²⁷. The leaf-cross motif in a quadratic panel occurs in innumerable reliefs at Zafār, but also in early Byzantine depictions²⁸. Given its widespread occurrence in official contexts and its prominent depiction on the new figure, it may well have been a symbol of authority.

Further iconographic parallels illuminate the meaning and dating of the crowned figure. The crown is not the laurel wreath worn by Greek and Roman heroes as a token of victory or honour. Its height and gaudy decoration imbue a rank which distinguishes the figure from its contemporaries. Wreathed polos headgear ap-

²⁴ Ghirshman 1962, 94 fig. 105; Sommer 2003, 24 Abb. 28.

²⁵ Ghirshman 1962, 90 fig. 101 (Hatra, head of a man, 2nd century CE); 94 fig. 105; 99 fig. 110 (Hatra, warrior, 1st–3rd century CE).

²⁶ Kitzinger 1977, 46, fig. 81.

²⁷ Cf. Schmidt-Colinet 2005, 45 Abb. 63, 4th figure from the left which is some 200 years earlier than our figure.

²⁸ Kitzinger 1977, 46, fig. 81 (the consul Boethius, 487 CE) and fig. 86 (the consul Anastasius, 517 CE).

pear in reliefs of the tower tombs at Palmyra²⁹ and have Roman parallels as well. The crowns of the late Roman tetrarch statue group in Venice also are comparable in basic form³⁰, although their missing metallic parts, might have changed their original appearance. Unlike contemporary elaborate Sasanian depictions, the polos crown is cylindrical and austere in its basic form. It brings to mind the famed hanging crowns, in Paris and Toledo, of the 7th century Visigothic king, Recceswinth with their recesses, each containing a jewel.

Some 34 life-size figures of the typologically related relief series from Zafār show no traces of a crown. The most complete and important of these images hitherto known is the limestone head of the so-called Queen of Ḥimyar³¹. This head is not depicted frontally, as is the crowned figure, but rather aspectively in profile, with a frontally depicted mouth and eye. The new crowned figure provides an anchoring point for the dating of the large and growing group of nearly life-size figural fragments from Zafār. Different types for the pose, rendering of the hair and other details are emerging for this group. Further relief figures in wall z502 presumably stood south of the new one in the Stone Building, but await further excavation to tell their story. The question arises whether the crowned figure and its relatives show a single kind of figure, for example represent rulers, or show anthropomorphic figures with different functions and identities. The iconography of the crowned figure results from the cross fertilisation of Roman, Late Antique, Byzantine and Sasanian influences on indigenous art forms.

For the dating of the crowned figure, most important evidence is the inscription cut into the stone block. Walter W. Müller reads the broken

late Sabaic inscription originally as **WdA(b)** wd'[b]: (the god) Wadd (is) father. This apotropaic invocation finds use over the entire Old South Arabian (OSA) cultural realm on amulets, in rock inscriptions and on buildings. The calligraphically inverted triangle inside the aleph first occurs in the 4th century and becomes more common in the 5th³². At which point this inscription fits into the 200 year time-frame for such palaeographic details affects our understanding of the meaning of the figure. Might this Sabaic expression simply

have survived beyond its time of currency into the period when the first monarch converted to monotheism (after c. 375), or does the figure depict a 5th century apostate ruler who turned away from the monotheistic deity of his day back to traditional ones? Taking the inscription at face value in historical context, a dating for the figure and its inscription in the later 4th century, i.e. to late polytheistic times, better fits the evidence than a subsequent one. Thus, the depicted king postdates Šammar Yuhar'iš (c. 312) and probably predates the monotheist Malkīkarib Yuha'nim (c. 375). The following kings come into question as being depicted: Karib'īl (Watār) Yuhan'im, Yāsir^{um} Yuhan'im II, Ta'ran Ayfa', Damar'alī Yuhabirr, Ta'ran Yuhan'im³³.

As discovered, above and right of the crowned figure the corner of the block was broken, its right edge moulding and the beard were chipped. In addition, the upper edges of this and other reliefs in the southern part of wall z502 were spalled lengthwise, as seen from above (Fig. 14). To what extent this damage results from chemical or mechanical stress is unknown. GOAM authorities want the original reliefs to remain in situ in the Stone Building. Ideal would be to protect at least the crowned figure from potential (ubiquitous) vandalism in a sheltered air conditioned environment. Such good intentions, however, lie beyond the grasp of GOAM, in its present state. At the end of the excavation season, we roofed the excavated 10 m long eastern courtyard wall and its reliefs to shield these from daily temperature fluctuation and from rain. We also placed a protective heavy glass plate in front of the figure and built a one-room house for the watchmen.

The remains mentioned above of what may have been a lime furnace (op400-025b) contained high and low reliefs including bucranium plaques. For example, one of the reliefs (Fig. 20) shows a frontal figure which holds a spear in its right hand. Just to the left, a small hand holds a ribbon or file. The heavily rendered eyebrows

²⁹ E.g. Schmidt-Colinet 2005, 40 Abb. 52–54. Such appear to date much earlier, that is between 9 BCE and 128 CE (p. 39).

³⁰ L'Orange 1995, 57–9 Abb. 16–17.

³¹ Yule 2007a, 139 Fig. 100 bears only the collector's ('Abdullāh Ṣāliḥ al-'Annābi) provenance, "Zafār".

³² Kitchen 2000, table lxiii.

³³ Robin 2006, 196–197.



Fig. 18. Antithetic composition of leopards and sheep from wall z502, in situ.

Fig. 19. Anciently obliterated image of a woman and a bucranion panel, upper surface of a relief ashlar from wall z502.

Fig. 20. Anthropomorphic relief from context op400-025b (Iz07-361).

Fig. 21. Two fragments of a winged human, image 07-031 (surf.) & 07-083 (z400-066).

and nose of the main figure fortuitously bring to mind late Cubist works. Had this sculpture not come to light in an archaeological context, one readily might doubt its authenticity. Some of the reliefs from op400-025b are rather naturalistic in style, others schematic. Certain reliefs deserve closer attention. Fig. 21 shows two fragments which have been juxtaposed in order to give an idea of the original appearance of the motif. As depicted, such winged figures float in the air above the ground line. The winged genius, angel or victory is certainly widespread and by no means Arabian by birth or inspiration. We encounter it in the art of Rome, the Sasanian Near East and eastern Africa as well. Similarly, motifs including a series of human heads/faces reoccur repeatedly and are stereotype in appearance. Fig. 22, for example, shows a frontally depicted moustached man, flanked by an ancillary figure that extends a wreath to him. To judge from similar fragments, the composition originally may have been bisymmetrical. Common among the small figures are busts of a figure with long hair (Fig. 23). Some of the numerous heads from the excavation show hairdos of such elaborateness (Fig. 24), that they no doubt had some special meaning to the Ḥimyarites which remains inexplicable to us. A variety of reliefs came to light in the debris which filled the two excavation surfaces. Fig. 25 shows such an asymmetrical head of unique type. One of the finest depictions is a finely rendered miniature column fragment constricted by a snake. The image in Fig. 26 derived from the excavated terraces just north of the Stone Building, near wall z402 in surface debris. A rapport pattern of tendrils evenly covers the surface. It is singular in the motifs selected, its veristic and precise modelling. Its damaged state does not obscure the fact that originally it was a minor masterpiece.

Another depiction of a life-size face (Fig. 27) shows a full physiognomy and smooth skin which suggest the depiction of a young woman. It came to light in terrace 2 in the southern part of the trench.

Fig. 28 shows an example of another sculptural group of which numerous examples occur in the excavation, this one from the southern excavation terraces. These are small heads which show simple features with little modelling. Several examples have turned up each season. They represent images for the masses and probably were placed in shrines in a temple.

Several depictions exist of interlace of a kind that brings to mind early medieval European art. The interlace motif depicted in Fig. 29 derives from the northern excavation terraces. A decorative element used in Coptic and early medieval art on the whole is interlace, which also has come to light in several examples at ẓafār. While Coptic influence in OSA art might well be expected, it is surprisingly difficult to point out clear examples and isolate them as being from this source.

Small Finds

In 2007, 41 metal finds came to light in the Stone Building, most of them small fragments to be reused as raw material. The largest of these (Iz07-446) is made of copper (cuprite) mantled lead (cerrusite), is some 15 cm long in plan is curved and plano-convex in cross section. Its function is unknown. The variety of small finds increased in 2008 as a result of digging in levels less disturbed than those of previous seasons. Thus, glass fragments became more numerous. Arabian glass is still a rarity.³⁴ Most of the examples from the Stone Building belong to small vessels (Fig. 30) and beads. Rare are more complex kinds of glass such as millifiori.

A silver coin came to light in the southern terraces which has few close parallels (Fig. 31). Coin 08-024av is a struck-over anima that is silver plated on a bronze core, possibly a drachma.³⁵ The 18 mostly Sabaic inscriptions unearthed in 2007 and the 19 more in the following season are under study with Norbert Nebes. Two are written in Ge'ez.

Mapping

M. Barceló and his colleagues described the historic irrigation facilities around ẓafār. His results

help us to reconstruct the densely populated landscape there during Ḥimyarite times. Irrigation features have changed greatly over the centuries since they originated, evidently in the Ḥimyarite period. The two most important features are the ġirba/ġirab and sedd/'asdād, essentially fields and dams. The fieldwork of the Barcelona team was brief, lasting only one month, and the report shows only the ancient irrigation facilities east – not west – of ẓafār. Also, the mapping is selective, sketchy and difficult to understand, even for one familiar with the area. With few exceptions, what centuries ago were built as reservoirs have silted up and have become fields. The largest (230 x 160 m, 24200 m²) existing one known to me is the reservoir Ma'ġil al-Ša'bānī and the two dams back to back at its western end, Sedd al-Ša'bānī³⁷ (Fig. 32). Such place-names are important since many have never been written before, and may contain pre-Arabic names. The dam at the eastern end of the reservoir bears this same name. The water is 2 m or deeper during the rainy seasons. This site was probably already very old when mentioned by al-Hamdānī in the 10th century CE, as one of the largest 'asdād in the Yarīm region.³⁸ Another large example lies 800 m west of ẓafār village; the sedd al-Šaqaq (dialect: al-Šagog) measures 45 x 6 m, as compared with the Sedd al-Ša'bānī, which measures 50 x 1.5 m, partial confirmation of Hamdānī's description.³⁹ Both are presumed to originate in the Ḥimyarite period. But some of Hamdānī's information in his book, *al-Iklīl*, may refer to those during the Ḥimyarite period, half of a millennium before. Originally, the area around ẓafār had numerous reservoirs and was greener than today.

Ġarf As'ad near the Village al-Nizhah

At the beginning of this year's activity, Yūsuf 'Abdallāh suggested paying a visit to an alleged Ḥimyarite temple locally known as ẓubb As'ad (more politely, Ġarf As'ad). The first expression

³⁴ Freestone et al. 2005.

³⁵ Letter, Martin Huth, 24.04.2008.

³⁶ Barceló – Kirchner – Torró 2000.

³⁷ Barceló – Kirchner – Torró 2000, 31, 34–35.

³⁸ Barceló – Kirchner – Torró 2000, 35 citing al-Akwa' 1986, 188.

³⁹ Franke et al. in press.



Fig. 23. Bust of a woman from context z500-041 (Iz07-408).
Fig. 24. Relief representation of a woman with elaborate hairdo from context z500-037 (Iz07-408).
Fig. 25. Fragmentary sculpted head from debris layer z400-078 (Iz07-451).
Fig. 26. High relief, snake wrapped constricting a column (Iz08-146.3).
Fig. 27. High relief face (Iz08-511).



28. Small head of which many occurred in the Stone Building (Iz08-050).

29. Interlace relief fragment (Iz08-065.02).

means the 'phallus of As'ad', the second, the 'digging of As'ad'. The site lies some 20 km to the west of Yarīm, not far from the village of Iryān in the Bani Muslim area (Figs. 33 and 34).⁴⁰ We readily located the site, with the help of local villagers, although hardly few are aware of the name, even a short distance away. The name Ġarf As'ad refers first to a place which has been dug and secondly to the great Ḥimyarite king Abīkarib As'ad. The epithet As'adi also means in Yemenite dialect that something is really old or somehow special, such as an artefact or a nice Ġambīyah.

Posed alone in the beautiful mountainous landscape, Ġarf As'ad is cut into a cliff. This site lies some 200 m north of the tarmac road, and is accessible by means of steps recently cut into the cliff (Fig. 35). Inside the building, traces of carving with a pick are visible in many places. This three-chambered structure (Fig. 36) has a single primary entrance in room 2 which faces east. Chronologically primary and secondary passages can be distinguished by means of their geometric regularity and contrasting lack of such. A major feature of chamber 2 is that it is built on two levels. A window cut into room 1 shows the same quality and style of workmanship as the original cutting. The outside moulding around the primary entrance may be original. The lower parts of the walls and of a column have eroded away (Fig. 36 and 37). Immediately below the column, a slight raising shows its now disintegrated base. The column literally hangs from the ceiling, resembling an enormous phallus. The resemblance stops, however, with its cross-section, which is square. The structure has been used over time to house sheep and goats. Their urine chemically attacked the lower reaches of all the walls.

The explanation of Ḥubb/Ġarf As'ad as a Ḥimyarite temple is a popular belief which may go back to the alleged recent practice of women embracing the 'phallus' in order to become fertile. This practice was described to us by none other than 'Abdul Karīm al-Iryāni (previous political advisor to the president of the Yemen), who was born and raised in the immediate vi-

⁴⁰ In his lexicon of Yemenite place and tribal names, al-Maqḥafī vocalised the names al-Nuzha and Banī Mislim. I thank Walter W. Müller for this reference and for his correcting of my Arabic transliterations into English.

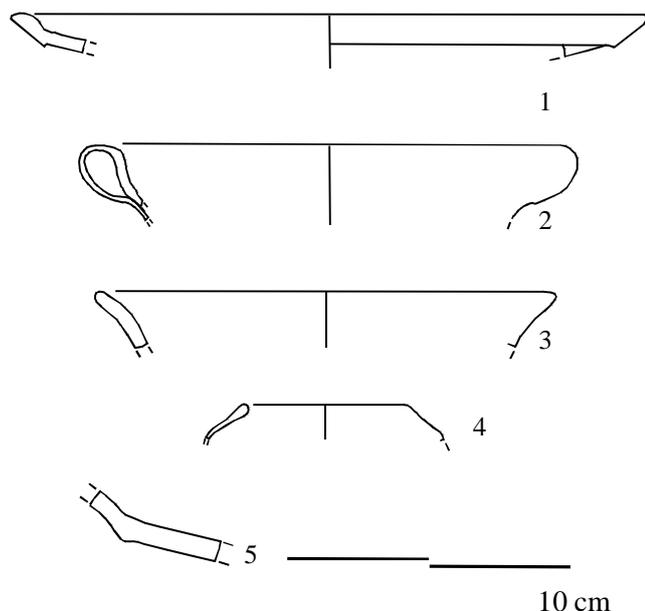


Fig. 30. Glass vessel fragments from the Stone Building.



Fig. 31. Partially cleaned silver and bronze coin (Iz08-024).

cinity. The 'phallus' is the source for considerable joking in the area. The question arises, whether or not it is Ḥimyarite and what its original function was. From the Islamic period such structures are unknown to the author. The most likely explanation for Ġarf As'ad is as a tomb. Pre-Islamic tombs rarely occur alone, unless they belonged to leaders. Still, Ġarf As'ad does not resemble other Ḥimyarite tombs in the area, heterogeneous in plan. Naturally, a tomb would not require windows, which must be later additions.

Conclusions

The size and position of room z507 and presumed flanking ones at the northern end of the Stone Building suggest the entire structure to have

been a temple, to judge from comparable structures such as Bar'ān in Mārib, which was conceived on a grander scale. If the Stone Building were a palace, one would expect much larger useable state rooms, as in the case of the palace at Šabwa,⁴¹ which is comparable in plan with our Stone Building, but is twice as large. Small cult rooms opposite the main entrance of the temple are known at such OSA sites as the Barāqīš Nakraḥ temple, 'Almaqah masagid, Mārib, Bar'ān and Awām. This may also be the case with the Stone Building.

The standing relief figure, z607, appears to be a rare representation of an OSA king, to judge from the elaborate crown, staff and sword – indicators of rank.⁴³ Naturally, deities also may be depicted wearing a sword,⁴⁴ but one would not expect this for a priest. Other potential interpretations for the figure such as the literary topos of a warrior-priest are impossible to substantiate for the Ancient Near East, owing to a lack of parallels. The figure can only be an official commission honouring the ruler of the day and representing the best work possible in Ḥimyarite Arabia.

The dating evidence for the crowned figure is somewhat contradictory. Palaeographic, historical and art historical arguments for the 4th and the 5th centuries can be cited. The inscription shows that the individual depicted adhered to the old religion, one may conjecture just before the new monotheistic religions – Judaism and Christianity – take hold in the upper classes.⁴⁵ The figure (c. 370 – c. 400 CE) belongs to the latest datable remains in the Stone Building. With the conversion of the aristocracy to monotheism, still it must have taken several years for such religions to have forced all of the competing traditional cults out of the capital, as was the case in Rome in 390.

Representations of OSA mukarribs and kings are rare,⁴⁶ but some figures without overtly royal at-

⁴¹ Breton 1998, 191 text fig.

⁴² 'Almaqah masagid: Schmidt 1997/98, 18–19 Abb. 14–16; Mārib, Bar'ān: *ibid.* 20–25 Abb. 14–23; Barāqīš Nakraḥ: *ibid.* 26 Abb. 26; Awām: *ibid.* 32–33 Abb. 36–37.

⁴³ As observed by C. Robin.

⁴⁴ As does Baalshamin (1st ½ of the 1st century CE) in an image from Palmyra: Ghirshman 1962, 7 fig. 10. Another comparison from Nemrud Dagh (*ibid.* 67 fig. 80) shows Antiochos depicted with a sceptre and standing beside Apollo-Mithra (69–34 BCE).

⁴⁵ Yule 2007a, 95–97.

⁴⁶ Examples: Vienna 1998, 286 Abb. 139, 383 Abb. 448, 384 Abb. 449, 386 Abb. 456 & 457.

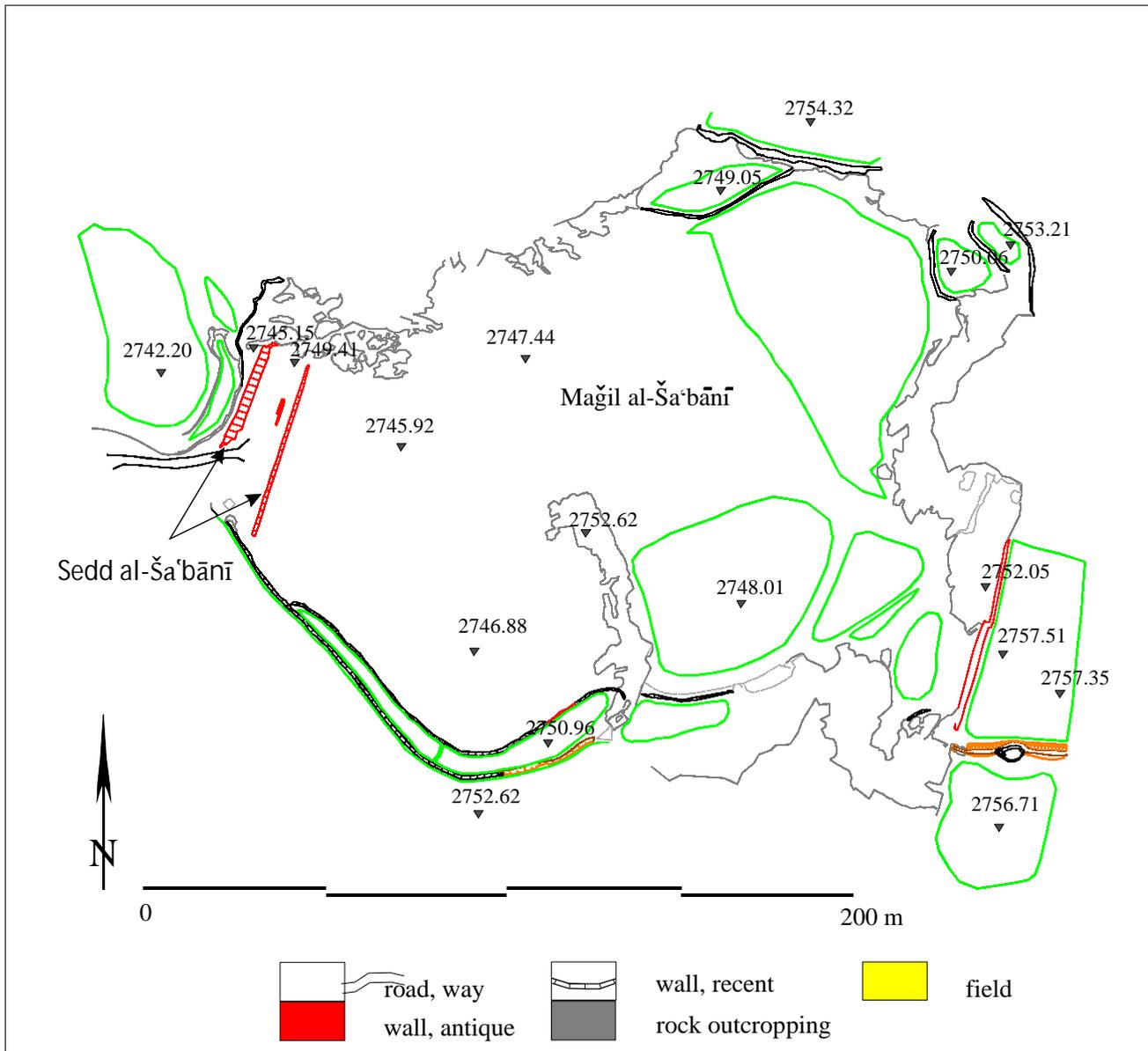
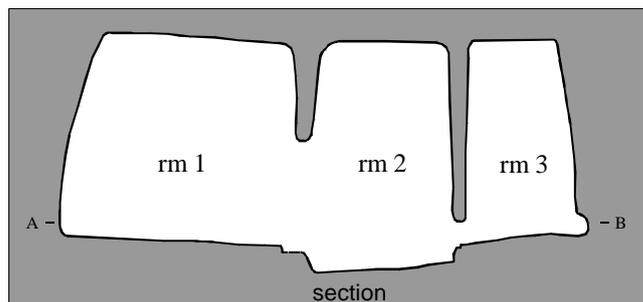
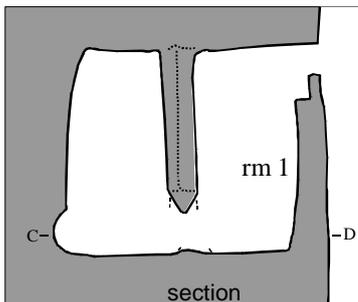


Fig. 32. Plan of the dams, Sedd al-Ša'bānī, and reservoir, Ma'ğil al-Ša'bānī.

tributes in fact may depict kings. One relief figure is very similar in type and style with the royal relief z607, except that it does not wear a crown (Fig. 22). The figural pose holding a staff in one hand and another object in the other is a borrowing from Greco-Roman iconography which continues in Late Antiquity, Byzantine and subsequent Christian contexts. In 4th century CE South Arabia, for some time kings were no longer considered to be deities. If so, why would a profane figure be erected in a temple, constructed for and used for sacred rights and ceremonies? Several models offer themselves, burial temples and coronation chapels, for example (supra, cf. *depositio ad sanctos*). In a 13th century Christian context, the famous profane 'Bamberger Rider',

in high relief in the Bamberg Cathedral, comes to mind. Perhaps the Stone Building was a temple which enjoyed royal patronage. Similarly, Solomon's First Temple or Herod's Second Temple in Jerusalem come to mind. A king may well aspire to heavenly identification or apotheosis, to enhance his authority or cater to his vanity.

For the latter part of the Ḥimyarite imperial period (270–525 CE) and the late/post period (525–632 CE) there is no internal chronology in the visual arts – only a few chronological points of reference. In terms of the history of style, in 4th century South Arabia, a beautiful body and historical events were no longer valued, similar



Ġarf As'ad
near al-Nizhah
14°16'40.1"N; 44°15'16.2"E

py/jh/je 28.03.2007

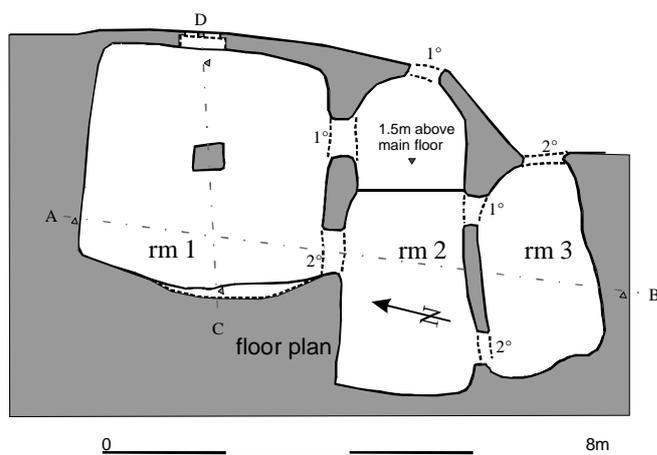


Fig. 33. Ġarf As'ad toward the west.
Fig. 34. Ġarf As'ad toward the west, entrance.
Fig. 35. Steps leading to Ġarf As'ad.
Fig. 36. Interior view of room 1 toward the north-east.
Fig. 37. Plan and cross-sections of Ġarf As'ad.

as in contemporary Rome.⁴⁷ The individual character which brought class and status to expression in the art of the Roman Republic gave way to implications of majesty for a society the social mobility in a rigid class structure.⁴⁸ These observations appear to hold for the Roman influenced art of OSA.

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⁴⁷ Brilliant 1963, 163.

⁴⁸ Brilliant 1963, 163.

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