

# The Incense Port of Moscha (Khor Rori) in Dhofar

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THE site of Khor Rori was excavated by an expedition from the American Foundation for the Study of Man in three seasons: April 1952–February 1953, February 1958 and January 1962.<sup>1</sup> Two inscriptions from the site have been published: one a dedication to the god Sin on a bronze plaque<sup>2</sup>, and the other an inscription of quite late date in three fragments<sup>3</sup>.

However, Wendell Phillips tells us that “carved on the walls of the inner city gate were seven inscriptions. Several mentioned King Ilazz of Hadhramaut. . . they included the name of the city of Shabwah and the local Hadhrami province and governor”<sup>4</sup>.

At the beginning of 1974, photographs of six inscriptions were sent to me at the C.N.R.S. in Paris. I recognized in one of them the text Ja 892, already published<sup>3</sup> and coming from Hanun; the others mentioned the town of SMHRM, and evidently came from Khor Rori.

On May 26th last, a telegram informed me of Mr. Andrew Williamson’s tragic death while returning from Khor Rori, where he had conducted a brief survey and where he had made some moulds (latex squeezes) of the inscriptions which he was intending to send me for publication. This intention is hereby fulfilled.

In order to ensure perfect reproduction of the squeezes, M. Nougaret, photographer of the Office de Radio et Télévision Françaises, generously took responsibility for producing photographs of them; this was done on M. Tuchband’s initiative, as a joint undertaking in the service of science and to carry out Mr. Williamson’s wishes.

The squeezes are of two major texts, which were undoubtedly among the seven texts inscribed on the wall of the gate. The photographs sent to me in 1974 showed three more of them. One is unfortunately indecipherable; it is inscribed on a huge long stone in a script of somewhat later date than that of the other texts, which together form a group.

The photographs show, alas, that these three stones were lying by themselves on the ground at the time of photography, no doubt ready to be reused for some other purpose. This explains why Mr. Williamson did not find them. The ones of which he took squeezes are (according to the photographs) still in a wall. No. 1 could still be *in situ*; no. 3 does not seem to be.

The probable conclusion is that the excavated wall must have been at least partially dismantled and that two texts were missing. Inscription no. 5 is not part of the same group of texts; it is in a slightly later inscriptional style.

## **The name of the town: Sumhuram or Samāramm?**

The American excavators obtained the name of the town from these unpublished texts, and from the bronze plaque already mentioned<sup>2</sup>. The expedition’s epigraphist, A. Jamme, interpreted it as “Sum-

hu-rāmī", "his name is high". But this would be a Sabaean form, with the pronoun "hu", when in Hadrami "su" would be necessary. The author concludes that, in his text in Hadrami dialect, "Sabaean influence is certain"<sup>5</sup>. He advances two other, really non-existent, pieces of evidence. The first is the proper name NDRT; when in fact it is found twice in Hadrami and once in Sabaean. The second is the verbal form HWFY, a causative with the prefix H as in Sabaean, when the prefix S would be necessary in Hadrami. But the author has not realized that this H was not used here as the Sabaean prefix, but as the Hadrami preposition H, usual in this position where Sabaean uses L. The translation of the text is somewhat better as a result: "... have dedicated to their lord (the god) Sīn for the protection of their persons and property."

There is therefore no trace of Sabaean influence in text Ja 402, any more than in the present texts. And hence there is no longer any reason to interpret the name of the town according to Sabaean dialect.

Furthermore the name is here written SMRM. We need an etymology that takes account of both ways of writing it. If H was a pronoun it would not be possible to elide it. It is therefore more probable that it is a weak letter.

For this name, G. Lankester Harding<sup>6</sup> has returned to RM and SMW, and he sees in SMW the arabic *samā'*, "to be high, exalted". For RM he gives the arabic *ramma* "to repair" and the noun *ramm* "care, anxiety".

The "Qamus" meanwhile (according to Lane, Dictionary p. 1151) specifies that this meaning is attached to the vocalised word *ramm*. It is "an object or a thing intended, or meant, or determined upon, or desired in the mind, and perhaps also anxiety." Thus the name of the town could have been "Samāramm" "the plan is great". This name is better suited to a foundation desired by a King, and realized in its entirety according to a precise scheme, as we shall see.

Let us now turn our attention to the translation of the texts, after which we will consider the historical implications that emerge.

### Inscription Khor Rori 1 (Plate 1)

The latex squeeze of the two pieces show that the six lines of the text covered an area of 49 by 27 cms. The photograph shows that we are dealing with a thick block of fine limestone, the edges of which form a frame in relief, on top and to the right.

The stone is broken vertically almost into two halves.

- 1) 'SDM/TL'N/BN/QWMM/'BD/L'D/YLT/MLK/H
- 2) DRMT/BN/HWR/HGRHN/ŠBWT/QTDM/HGR
- 3) HN/SMRM/GRBTT/WHNMTT/WHY'T/BN/R
- 4) BBM/'D/ŠQRM/WMBR'/W'GSM/SYT/BMWST
- 5) WTHRG/MR'S/BYT'/SLHN/BN/DMR'LY
- 6) QDM/GYŠ/HDRMT/B'RD/S'KLN/

- 1) 'Asadum Tal'an, son of Qawmum, servant of 'Il'ad Yaluṭ, king
- 2) of Hadramaut, of the inhabitants of the town of Šabwa, undertook according to the plan the town of
- 3) Samāramm, its siting and the levelling of the ground and its flow (of water) from
- 4) virgin soil to its putting in order. The creation and realisation were on the initiative
- 5) and by the order of his master 'Abyaṭa' Salḥin, son of Damar'ay,
- 6) who is commander of the army of Hadramaut, in the country of Sākalan.

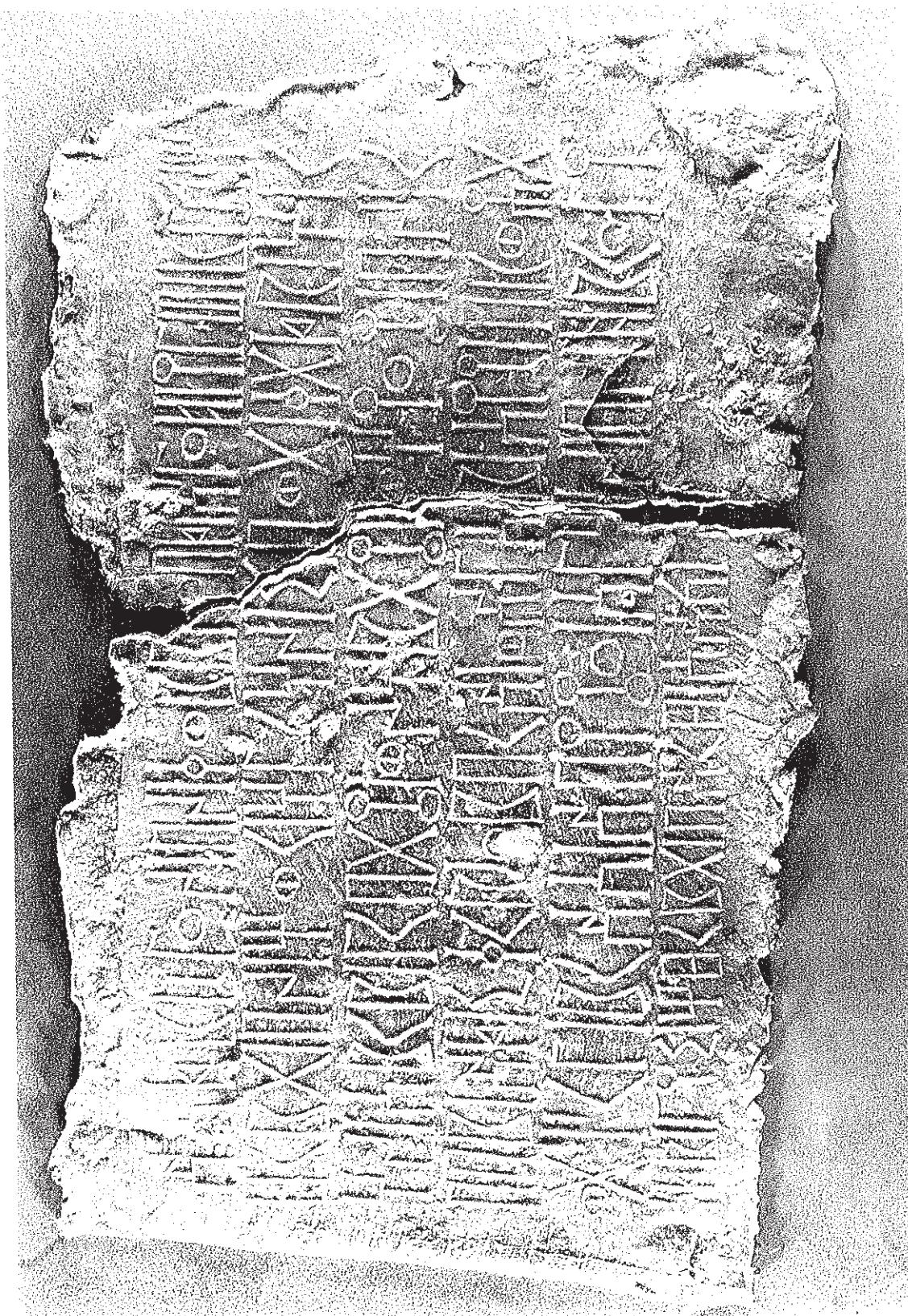


PLATE I. *The inscription Khor Rori I. Latex squeezes taken by Mr. Williamson.*

The dialect is Ḥaḍrami, with the masculine pronominal affix in 'S' and the feminine in 'T'<sup>7</sup>. I interpret SYT, in line 4, as the feminine singular demonstrative (governed by two abstract nouns) and having, in this phrase, the force of a verb *to be*; in this case, it would be the first example of this form in Ḥaḍrami, while it is known in Qatabani<sup>8</sup>. The vocabulary has points in common with the text of Obne (RES 2687).

QTDM, the verb *qadama* in the eighth form. TQDM is generally found the fifth form. In Arabic, a sense of the eighth form is "he did following his example", from which I take the shade of meaning: "he undertook a venture following a model, a plan".

GRBT/WNHMT. In the Obne inscription (RES 2687) GRBT/WNHMT have been translated "Bruchsteinen und behauenen Quadern", i.e. "crushed stones and trimmed blocks". Mr. Ghul<sup>9</sup>, to clarify the meaning of these two terms, quotes two verses of 'Alqama dū-Jadan describing the construction of the palace of Ghumdān of the Himyarite kings.<sup>10</sup> Mr. Ghul, in explaining the verse taken from Hamdānī (*Iklil*, VIII, 15): "a'lāhu munhamat-un ruhām-un 'āl-in wa 'asfaluhu jurūb-u", writes: "The latter verse may be translated: 'Its top is raised high with smooth blocks, *munhamat-un*, of marble and its bottom (foundation) is made of *jurūb*.' This last word is explained as *hijārat-un maqtū'* a cf. Rhodokanakis "Studien", II, 43. I think that *jurūb* in 'Alqama's description referred originally, at least, to the terrace shape of the bottom of the walls. A parallel may be found in the method of setbacks used in the foundation of the temple of 'Awwam in Marib; cf. F. P. Albright, ADSA, 217, col. B."

However, if *jurūb* does mean a wall in which the stones are set back in successive courses, it would not allow us to explain his first line (Tabari, *Tārikh*, I, 949) which reads: "bimunhamat-in wa'asfaluhu *jurūb-un*".

In my opinion, it is clear that *jurūb* is what is known in architecture as pecked stonework. It has the same sort of meaning as *jarab*: "an eruption of pustules upon the bodies of men and camels" or "rust upon a sword" (Lane p. 403).<sup>11</sup> Pecked stonework is thus called, in Arabic, "pimpled"—not a pretty, but an evocative, association. We can form a judgement from *Plate 4a*, since Mr. Williamson made squeezes of some graffiti on stones of this type.

The line of Hamdānī would be translated: "Its top is raised high with smoothed blocks of marble and its bottom is made out of pimpled (pecked) stonework." Tabari's line would run: "On its elevation of trimmed stones and on its foundation there are pimples (pecked stones)." The two lines now correspond. The second is more exact, since one can generally see a fine pecking on the visible stones and a coarse, more projecting pecking on the foundation (cf. the passage in F. P. Albright quoted by M. A. Ghul, above). The interpretation "crushed stones" is self-explanatory because we are dealing with stones which have been struck, to achieve a pecked surface.

Now, must GRBT be translated as *jurūb* and NHMT as *munhamat*? If so, we would have "its pecked stones and its trimmed stones." In my view the question is more one of substantives, of different forms, the meanings of which can be different. Landberg<sup>11</sup> states that *girbat* means "field" all over the south and, he says, "I do not see how *girbat* could have any connexion with *gurūb* = *hijāratun maqtū'* a, as is Glaser's opinion, accepted by Rhodokanakis. The verb *garaba* means simply "to make a field". Lane gives the following meaning for the Arabic *girbat*: "A place of seed produce, a land cleared for sowing and planting" (p. 403). Hence I would believe that, in the context of building, *girbat* is the "siting", the preparation of the site.

And NHMT has been very well translated by Mr. Ghul as "dressing of the rock" (an infinitive)<sup>11a</sup>. This is supported by the meaning given by Landberg: "nahama . . . in the south, to strike vigorously, to do something with force, e.g. the blacksmith who strikes the iron, the workman who strikes on the *ṣabarāh* to make a hole in the rock" (p. 2828).

Just as *munhamat* signifies a well-trimmed stone with a good, flat surface, I translate NHMT as “levelling of the ground”, which is undoubtedly rocky.<sup>12</sup>

HY'. MHY' is found in CIH 375, and I have proposed to read it as “the flow of water” from the Arabic *hā'* (action-noun *hay'un*) with the meaning “to flow, to be spread”.<sup>13</sup>

RBB. It cannot be “slaves” that are referred to here, a meaning which can be seen in CIH 308, 24 and RES 4145, 1 (cf. Arabic *rabib*). The phrase BN/RBBM/'D/ŠQRM is in the Obne inscription (RES 2687) in identical form, where it is translated “vom Grunde bis hinauf”, “from foundation to summit”, and RBB closely resembles the Amhari *rabrab*, “disposition” and also “foundation”.

'D. The Hadrami form of the preposition 'D (cf. Beeston, “Grammar”, para. 50:2).

ŠQR. This is generally translated by “summit”. But the Arabic *šaqūr* means “a want, or requisite, or business state or condition” (Lane p. 1581). Hence in a more extended sense it is “the state desired, the putting in order”. This applies equally well to work on the ground as to building.

'GSM. I propose to read this as a plural of GSM (Arabic *jasmun*, “body”), attested in the form GSM in RES 2687, 3 and 3869, 2, and translated as “massive construction”, and to give this plural an abstract meaning to correspond with that of MBR', “creation”: the act of giving material form to something, the realisation of a project.

MWṢT. We know HWṢT, “to undertake, to establish”. I translate it “initiative”.

### Inscription Khor Rori 2 (Plate 2A)

The text of this inscription is very close to that of no. 1, which is why I am dealing with them in conjunction, although there is only a photograph of this one and no latex squeeze.

- 1) 'M'L/'LHN/BN/RDW'L/GRBYHNN/[H]
- 2) DRMYHN/'BD/'L'D/YLT/MLK/H
- 3) DRMT/QTDM/GRBTN/WBNY/HGRHN/S
- 4) MRM/BN/RBBM/'D/ŠQRT/BKNŞM
- 5) WMBR'/W'GSM/SYT/BMWṢT/WTH[R]
- 6) G/MR'S/BYT'/SLHN/BN/DMR'LY
- 7) QDM/GYŞ/HDRMT/B'RĐ/S'KLHN

There is just one new word in this text: BKNŞM in line 4. I identify it with the Arabic *kanāṣun*, from the verb *kannaṣa*, to be strong or robust. I translate it as “in robust health”, or rather “in sound order”.

- 1) 'Am'il 'Alhan son of Rađaw'il, Garabitan, Ha-
- 2) -drami, servant of 'Il'ad Yalut, king of Ha-
- 3) -dramaut, undertook according to the plan the siting and the construction of the town of Sa-
- 4) -māramm, from virgin soil to its establishment in sound order.
- 5) And the creation and realization were on the initiative and by order
- 6) of his master 'Abyata' Salhi, son of Damar'alay,
- 7) who is commander of the army of Hadramaut, in the country of Sākalan.

### Inscription Khor Rori 3 (Plate 2B)

The photograph only allows this to be partly read, while the squeeze shows the text perfectly.

The inscription is in 7 lines on a block of fine limestone. The text covers an area 21 by 31 cms.

At bottom right the squeeze shows a word in large irregular letters: 'DYT. This is known as a

proper name in Safaitic.<sup>14</sup> But if it is not this name it is tempting to see it as a graffiti or political protest, for the action-noun or Arabic substantive *adiyat* denotes something that is somewhat detestable or wicked (Lane p. 44).

1) Š'TM/BN/FRTM/WMW[YM/BN]  
2) MT'/BN/HWR/ŠBWT/T [B. ....]  
3) Y'/MR'SMN/'BYT'/BN/DMR'L[Y]  
4) MT/TB'/BN/ŠBWT/HNY/'BY  
5) T'/HGRHN/SMRM/W'BYTT/WH[W]  
6) R/'MS/ŠLTT/'HTYM/BNMW/  
7) KTB'/'D/STFH/

'DYT

1) Ša‘atum son of Furâtum and Mâwi [yum son of]  
2) Mâti‘, of the inhabitants of Shabwa . . . .  
3) . . . their master (both of them), ’Abyata‘, son of Damar‘alay  
4) when they followed him from Shabwa, so that ’Abyata‘  
5) should set up the town of Samâramni and its houses and inhabi-  
6) -tants: ‘Umaïs, a third of ’HTYM, comprising (the part)  
7) selected for emigration  
Detestable

TNY. Cf. RES 2705, 2 = CIH 667, also corresponding to the Phoenician TN' meaning 1) to erect a temple and 2) to instal or appoint people.<sup>15</sup> The South Arabian word covers both these shades of meaning since it is used both of the town and its population.

H- This is the Hadrami form of the preposition L: cf. Beeston "Grammar", para. 46:8.

BMW. The preposition BN, here in its explanatory sense: cf. Beeston, "Grammar", para. 47:3.b.

KTB'. Cf. Arabic *kaba'a* "to cut in two, to sort while counting" (Kazimiraki, "Dictionnaire arabe-français") which would here be in its 8th form with passive meaning.

STFH. Cf. Arabic *safaha* "he poured out or forth" (Lane p. 1369).

### Inscription Khor Rori 4 (Plate 3A)

We have no latex squeeze, but we do have two photographs of this inscription. One shows the stone on the ground next to text no. 2 (cf. the photograph of the latter, *Plate 2a*, in which the edge of block no. 4 is visible to the left). The other photograph is published here.

This inscription has a break on the left which has more or less obliterated the first two lines. What is left of the first line is almost illegible. It only consisted of the names of two people with an indication of their relationship with Damar'ay.



PLATE 2A. *The inscription Khor Rori 2.*

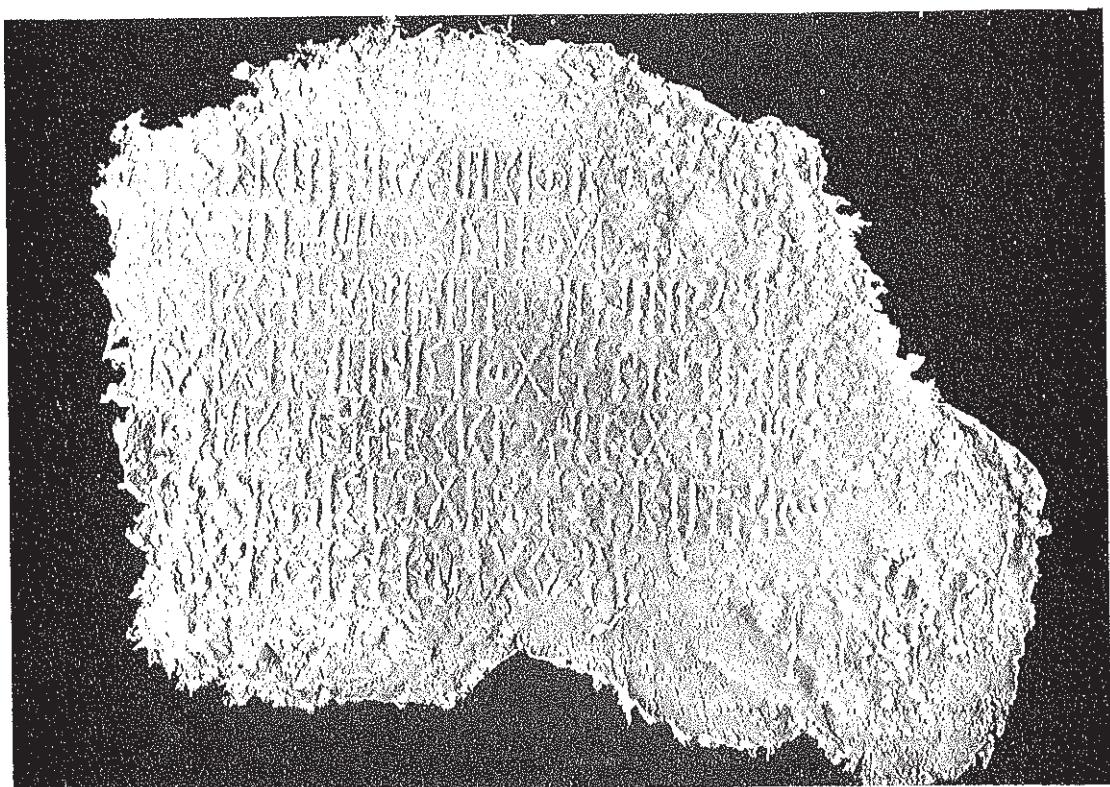


PLATE 2B. *Williamson's squeeze of the inscription Khor Rori 3.*

THE INCENSE PORT OF MOSCHA (KHOR RORI) IN DHOFAR

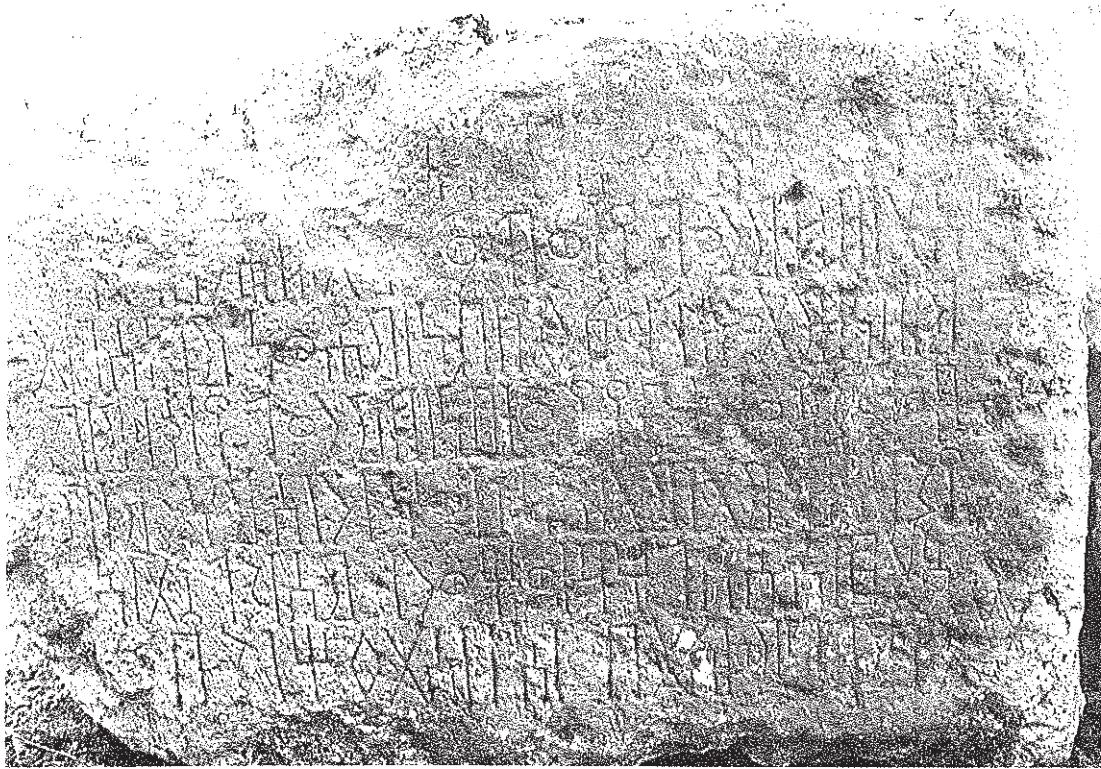


PLATE 3A. *The inscription Khor Rori 4.*

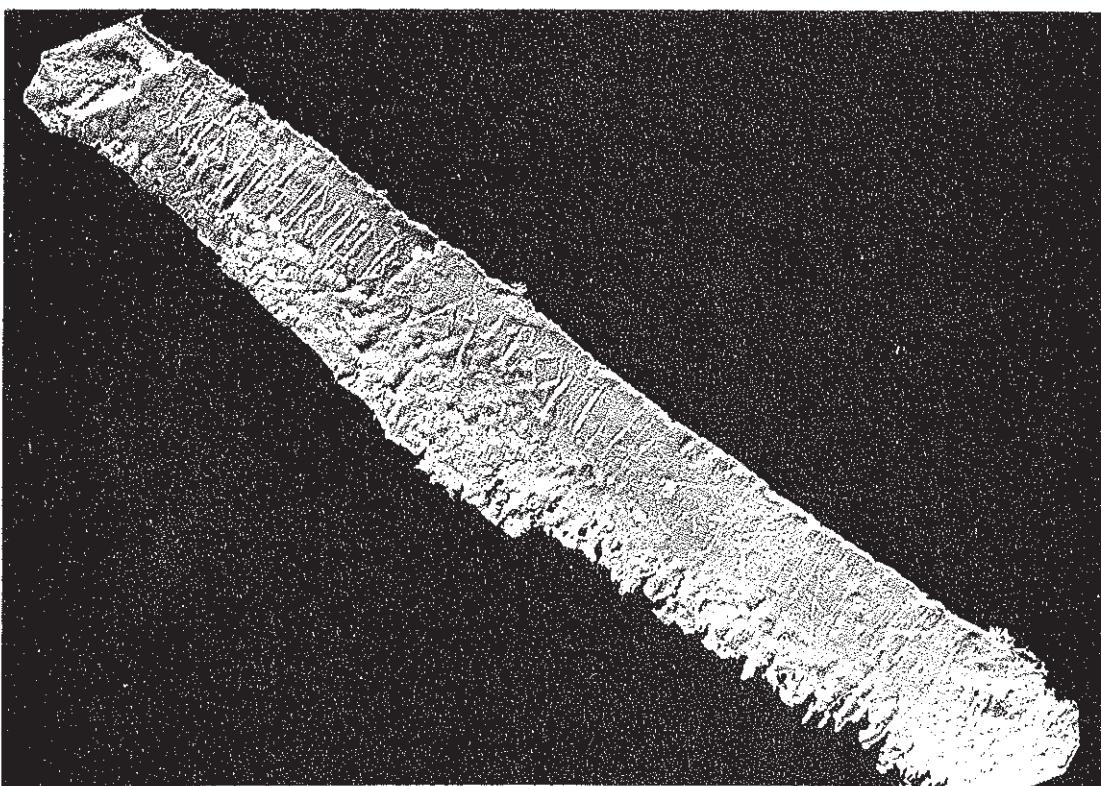


PLATE 3B. *Williamson's squeeze of the graffiti 1, a and b.*

'SG. This word is problematical. I propose to read it as a contraction of 'NSG (just as we have 'S contracted from 'NS and 'TT from 'NTT), cf, Arabic *nassāj* "weaver".

### Inscription Khor Rori 5 (see figure)

Shortly afterwards Mr. Peter Farries sent me the squeeze of an inscription which Mr. Williamson had brought back previously from Khor Rori and which is now in the Museum.



The stone measures  $37 \times 12$  cms at its widest points.

The two-line inscription begins with a name in large letters, after which the letters diminish in height. In the second line the other names are in smaller letters, with two groups of two letters in monogram; they lack style, and come to a finish precisely where the stone ends.

It reads:

1. 'NMRN/BN/SHYWHM/W
2. ŠY'LT/<sup>(W'YWR</sup>  
<sup>(W'B'WR / WHDL/YŠK'</sup>
1. 'Anmarum, son of Sahywahm, and  
2. Šai'lat, and ('Aywar, and Huđail are dissatisfied.  
('Ab'awar

Except for HDL (L. Harding p. 612), these proper names are nowhere attested as such.

SHYWHM. Cf. SHYTM and SHM (Harding, p. 312), and WHM (*ibid* p. 654).

SY'L'T. I would see SY' here (Harding p. 364), with LT which is well attested as the name of the goddess *Lat.*

<sup>9</sup> 'YWR.' Y is attested in 'YWKN (Harding p. 89 and alone, *ibid.* p. 87). WR is known in 'BWR; according to Harding p. 639 it is *warr*, "harvest abundance". But if we take account of the horizontal

bar (cf. fig.), we read a B in monogram with ' and we obtain 'B'WR (cf. Harding p. 448: 'WR means "the one-eyed").

YŠK'. This final verb is in the singular instead of the plural, but this is not without precedent. The Arabic *šaki'a* means "to experience pain". According to Landberg (Glossaire Datinois, p. 2072) it means "to complain of pain, to be ill" but also "to be weary, disenchanted with"; he states that the most prevalent meaning in eastern Datinah is "to complain, to be dissatisfied".

The inscriptional style dates the text, in my view, to the end of the 1st century BC.

### The graffiti

Mr. Williamson also made excellent squeezes of a series of graffiti, consisting of signatures inscribed on the edges of corner-stones and pecked stones. These are undoubtedly names of other people who took part in the foundation of the town because the script, although inscribed by amateurs, is in the same style.

1. A squeeze (60 cms. long) of the edge of a corner-stone (*Plate 3b*).
  - a) Letters between 2.5 and 4 cms high, with two groups in monogram.

F D  $\widehat{\text{SLM}}$  / B N / M B  $\widehat{\text{HL}}$  M

All these names are known. For *Fad*, cf. Lankester Harding op. cit. p. 463. For *Sâlim*, ibid. p. 325. For *MBHL*, ibid. p. 526.

- b) On the right, in very uneven letters:

M N Y F S / B N then possibly G R R  
obliterated by formless lines.

*Manyafaṣ* is not yet attested, but MNYD' is known as is YFS (v. Harding op. cit. pp. 570 and 679). For JRR, *Jarîr*, ibid. p. 157.

2. On the edges of a stone measuring 25 by 25 cms. with pecking in the middle, in well-formed letters which are very similar to those on the inscriptions (*Plate 4a*).

- a) At the bottom:

S L F D M L / N G R N

"*Salif Dumail* the carpenter", cf. Harding op. cit pp. 324 and 243.

- b) On the left hand vertical edge, in two lines, and with SB in monogram:

'SB Y' or, reading the second line in boustrophedon:

'SB ' Y—already attested, v. Harding op. cit. p. 50.

3. On the edges of a stone similar to the preceding (*Plate 4b*).

- a) At the bottom centre, in a rectangle and in letters decorated with triangles as extremities:

M R H B T

This is not attested in Harding. However, RHB (saf.) and RHBM in Qatabani are known, from this same root.

- b) At right:

NHR

Arabic *nîhâr* "clever".

- c) At left:

DYF

Cf. Harding op. cit. p. 246: DYFT.

d) On the left hand vertical edge, in very high letters, with the M displaced below:

H F N M

Hufnum, often attested, cf. Harding op. cit. p. 195.

e) In the top left hand corner:

M G D M

Cf. Harding op. cit. p. 528: MJD, *Magid*.

f) In the top right hand corner, with HN in monogram:

D L H N

LHN and DLH are known (v. Harding op. cit. pp. 521 and 256), so it is impossible to decide whether we are dealing with D—LHN or not.

4. Finally, there is a very thin squeeze of a worn text of two lines. It seems to have been damaged when it was separated from the stone. Once the damaged pieces were put back in place, I made a tracing of it.

Apart from the first word SMRM, the name of the town, I was unable to extract anything from the tracing.

### **The dating and the King 'Il'ad Yalut**

The texts give us evidence of a settlement of this place, the present Khor Rori, by the kingdom of Hadramaut, the reigning king of which was 'Il'ad Yalut. It is extremely important to give this king a firm date, since it allows us to date the foundation of the town.

F. P. Albright<sup>16</sup> has written that this king was the "Eleazus of Strabo", and Wendell Phillips<sup>17</sup> has identified him similarly: "the king, well known in classical writings, as Eleazus, king of the incense country". In fact, it is not Strabo (63 B.C.—20 A.D.) who mentions this King Eleazus, but the author of the "Periplus of the Erythraean Sea", and he alone. A date of about 75 A.D. had been confidently ascribed to this anonymous text by Arabic scholars, and of about 90 A.D. by Indian scholars. I believe I have shown that it can only be dated to the beginning of the 3rd century A.D.<sup>18</sup>. Now in my opinion, the Khor Rori inscriptions belong, on palaeographic grounds, to the 1st century B.C. Obviously, then, we are not dealing with the same King 'Il'ad Yalut—this is not surprising, however, since it is a traditional name among the kings of Hadramaut, like Karib 'il Watar, 'Il'sarah̄ Yahdub or Šamir Yuhar'iš in different Sabaean dynasties.<sup>19</sup> Besides, we know of the inscriptions of a King 'Il'ad Yalut, on the rock of Al-'Uqla, which are in a late inscriptional style and could belong to the Eleazus of the "Periplus" (RES 4910—Ja 921).

Hence it is palaeography that provides the date: the 1st. century B.C. And inscription no. 2 proves the existence of a King 'Il'ad Yalut I at that time.

### **The region of Sākalan and the port of Moscha**

The King of Hadramaut sent a group of settlers into the region of Sākalan. What is this region and why was it chosen?

According to Mr. Van Beek, it was chosen because it was the only part of Arabia that produced frankincense. The prosperity of the Arabian Kingdom of antiquity depended upon the trade in frankincense and aromatics, and this settlement would have been essential to it.

Mr. Van Beek maintains that "the frankincense tree of southern Arabia grows only in the province of Dhofar, between longitude 53° and 55° 2', on the coastal plain and the slopes of the Qara mountains"<sup>20</sup>. However, this confuses conditions of today with those of antiquity. Another source explains more fully: "From Bir 'Ali, west of the Hadramaut border, to Ras Fartak, it was once part of the incense

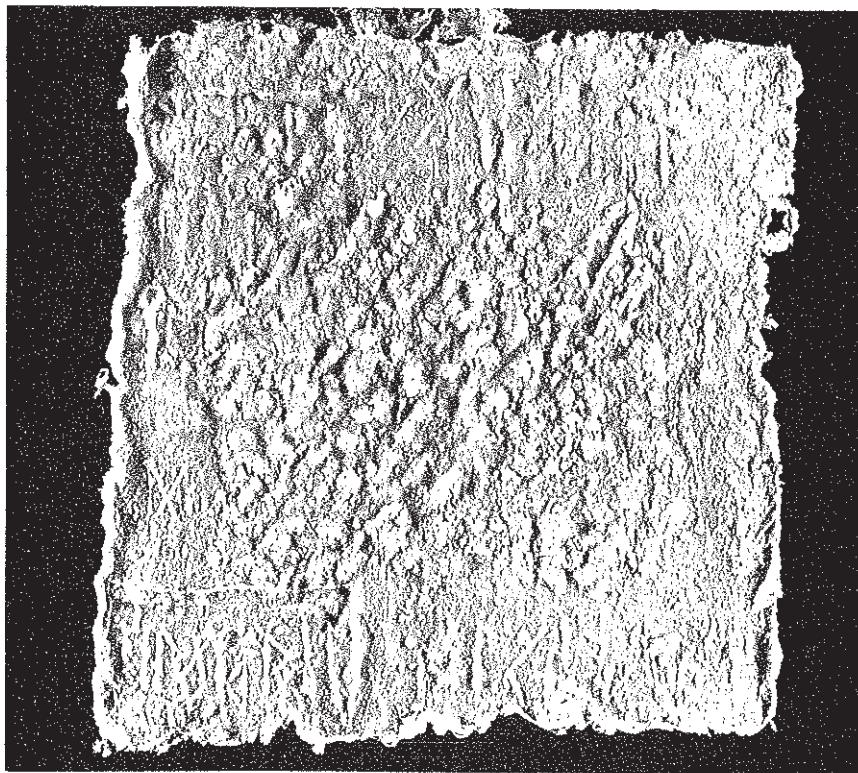


PLATE 4A. Williamson's squeeze of graffiti 2.

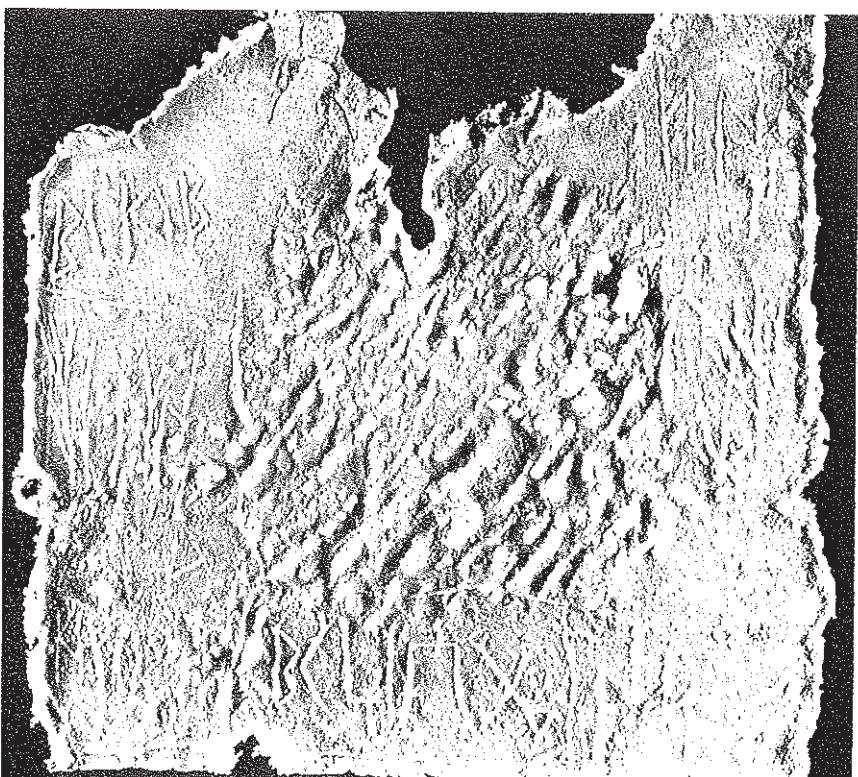


PLATE 4B. And of graffiti 3.

country, whose western part has now dwindled owing largely to decrease in demand for the product, for it still grows in quantity in the wild valleys of the interior. . . On the coast, Cana and Syagrus (Ras Fartak) were collecting centres with storehouses, whence routes converged on Wadi Hadramaut . . . . Now Cana lies buried in sand near Bir 'Ali, and most of the incense comes from the Dhufār coast, outside the region here described, though Damqūt and Qishn still perpetuate the ancient trade in the Hadhramaut, exporting annually about 100 to 200 tons respectively". And "It is clear from the 'Periplus' that, while all incense from Dhufar was brought by sea to Cana and thence by road to Shabwa, that collected from the much smaller area in the Hadhramaut itself—probably near the Wadi Hajar, where some incense is still collected—was brought direct to Shabwa by camel".<sup>21</sup>

We can see a clear discrepancy between present conditions and the conditions described by the ancient authors of circumstances that have quite disappeared.

However, Mr. Van Beek claims to base his assertion on Pliny, the Periplus and Ptolemy. He has not examined thoroughly the sense of what these authors say.

According to Pliny, (XII, 52) the capital of Hadramaut, Shabwa, "is 8 days' journey from the incense-bearing region called Sariba, a name which according to the Greeks means 'mystery' ". How would this alone prove that incense is found in Dhofar?<sup>22</sup> Especially when it was by boat that Dhofari incense was transported to Cana and then on to Shabwa. Furthermore, as Miss Freya Stark has observed, the description given to this incense-bearing region fits Hadramaut better than Dhofar.<sup>22a</sup>

As for the "Periplus", Mr. Van Beek takes it to mean the following: "The "Periplus" states that the frankincense country is located in a deep bay called Sachalites, and that frankincense was stored at Syagrus (modern Ras Fartak) and shipped from a port known as Moscha".<sup>23</sup> In fact, the "Periplus" sites the bay of Sachalites between Cana and Ras Fartak, which puts the "incense country" to the west of Ras Fartak, and so in Hadramaut, in plain opposition to Mr. Van Beek's thesis.

para. 28. "Cana, in the realm of Eleazus, in the incense country. Above it and inland is situated the metropolis of Saubatha (Shabwa), where the king lives. All the incense which grows in the country is taken there as to a warehouse. . .

para. 29. "After Cana, the land recedes markedly and another bay follows which is of great depth and extent—it is called Sachalites—, and the incense country, mountainous and difficult of access. . . .

para. 30. "There is on this bay a promontory of great size looking towards the east—it is called the Syagrus—on which there are a watchtower for the district, a harbour and a warehouse for the incense brought in. . . .

para. 32. "Immediately after the Syagrus headland there is a bay which cuts deeply into the coast-line: Omana; it is 600 stades across. Beyond it there are high mountains, of bare and craggy aspect, where men live in caves over a further distance of 500 stades.

"After these, there is a roadstead designated for the loading of Sachalitic incense—the place goes by the name of the port of Moscha—where ships from Cana are customarily sent; ships coming from Limyrike and Barygaza, which cruise nearby, spend the winter there due to the late season, and obtain from royal officials, in exchange for flax, grain and oil, a cargo of this incense which, all along the bay of Sachalities, lies in unguarded heaps; for a divine power watches over the place. It is impossible, either by stealth or openly, to embark on a ship without royal authorisation, and if anyone takes a single tiny lump of it, the ship cannot weigh anchor".<sup>24</sup>

According to this text, the bay of Sachalites is the Hadhramaut coast as far as Ras Fartak—Syagrus; after which the present-day Qamar Bay is the bay of Omana. The high, bare and craggy mountains would be the peaks of al-Qamr (3950 feet) and Ras Sajar (4800 feet), after which the small bay of Salalah

## THE INCENSE PORT OF MOSCHA (KHOR RORI) IN DHOFAR

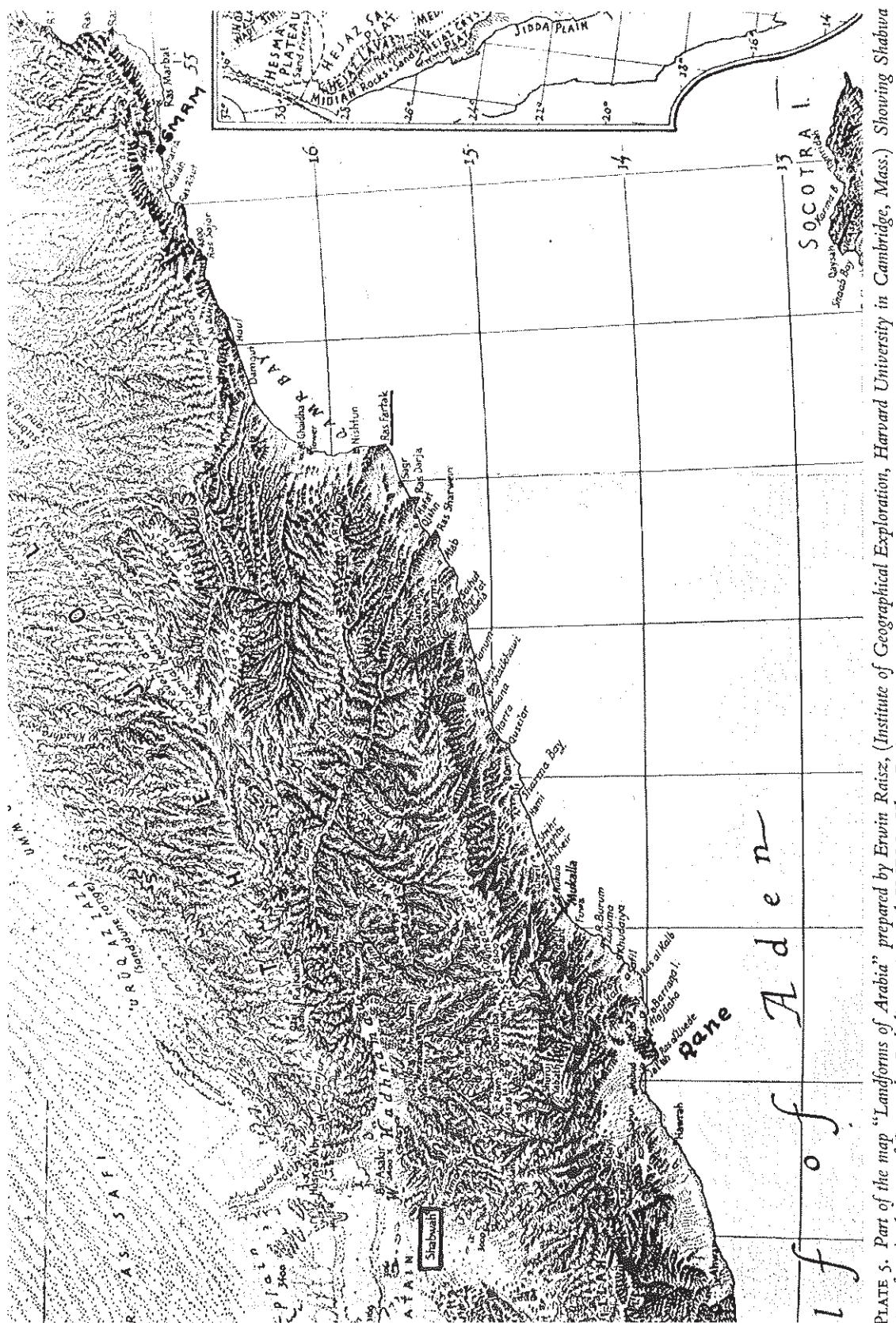


PLATE 5. Part of the map "Landforms of Arabia" prepared by Erwin Raisz, (Institute of Geographical Exploration, Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass.) Showing Shabwa (in a frame), the port of Qana, the Sachalites region and SMRRM=Khor Rori.

(i.e. the plain of Dhofar) follows on immeditaelly under the Qara mountains, where “the roadstead designated for the loading of sachalitic incense” (i.e. the port of Moscha) must have been. Sachalites is beyond all doubt the country of Sākalan in our inscriptions.

In its location of the bay of Sachalites to the west of the Syagrus, the “Periplus” is in agreement with Marinus. However, Ptolemy contradicted Marinus in this respect. As Mr. Van Beek reproduces him, he wrote: “(Marinus) places the bay of Sachalita on the western shore of the promontory of Syagrus, but all who navigate these parts unanimously agree with us that it is toward the east from Syagrus and that Sachalita is a region of Arabia and from it the Bay of Sachalita takes its name”. (Book I, XVII).

Are the “Periplus” and Marinus mistaken? Or could the region of Sākalan, of which our texts speak, have extended both to the west and the east of the Syagrus headland? If such was the case, the Sachalitic incense which was loaded at Moscha could have come from the whole incense coast. But it is plain that it was above all the incense from the “Bay of Sachalites” which was loaded there, and that this incense was from the coastal area around this roadstead.

It is noteworthy that the “Periplus” talks of a “roadstead designated” for the loading of incense. According to J. B. Palmer<sup>26</sup> the term applies to a port “publicly proclaimed, designated, appointed or prescribed for some purpose”. The text of the “Periplus” shows that the King of Hadramaut had imposed severe controls on the export of incense. However, it was at that port that incense could be bought in exchange for other goods—whereas the incense collected at Cana was intended for transportation to Shabwa and from there by caravan towards the Mediterranean.

The “Periplus” specifies in what follows that beyond the port of Moscha a mountain range follows the coast for nearly 1500 stades, and that seven islands continue in a line at its extremity. These show a clear correspondence with the islands of Kuria Muria.

Moscha must therefore be in the bay of Dhofar where Khor Rori is situated. Nonetheless, we still have to determine whether the site of Khor Rori is precisely that of Moscha, or the site of a colony of lesser importance. The fact that the American archaeologists, while exploring the region, have been unable to find a possible site for Moscha elsewhere, goes some way to constituting a proof. On the other hand, could this site accommodate a series of ships coming to winter there? Wendell Phillips describes it as follows: “At the present time Khor Rori consists of a long narrow expanse of water extending over a mile inland until lost in a dry, rocky wadi bed. A narrow sandbank has silted up the former outlet to the sea. . . .” “Several rather uninteresting ruins stood on the east side of it. The main ruin known as “al-kut”, “the fort”, to the local Arabs. . . from any distance appeared like a natural hill rising above the quiet waters of the inlet”. This therefore could have been “this impregnable fortress city of forgotten renown which once guarded the best harbour on the Dhofar coast”,<sup>27</sup> that is, Moscha.

### The Settlement

The “Periplus” gives us a vivid account of Moscha and royal control of the trade in Sachalitic incense, at the beginning of the 3rd. century A.D. But our inscriptions enable us to witness the foundation of the town.

The King of Hadramaut wished to assert an ownership over the Sachalitic incense like that over the incense of Hadramaut. He sent a detachment commanded by a man charged with the foundation in Dhofar of a settlement: a defensive base, a town and a harbour on the richest incense coast of all. The place was to be called Samāramm, “great scheme”. A levy of one third of a tribal group was imposed on the population of Shabwa, for emigration. The commander was assigned first a servant of the king (an

official) responsible for organizing the siting of the town and its water distribution (inscription 1). A second official was put in charge of construction (text 2). The lacuna in text 3 prevents us from knowing the profession of its two authors, but the five people in inscription 4 were weavers, and graffito 2a is the signature of a carpenter.

All these texts are in the same inscriptional style and, set side by side in the wall of the fortified town they commemorate the foundation.

If the word “detestable”, scratched under the line recalling the selection and expatriation of the men of Shabwa (text 3), is not a proper name, it might be supposed that this exile, probably more or less enforced, was not a cause of universal happiness, as inscription 5 also bears witness.

Thus the memory of a large-scale political and commercial venture is brought to life again by some inscriptions: the creation of a port and a centre of incense production from nothing, by men at a distance of 530 miles as the crow flies from their capital. Text Ja 892,<sup>28</sup> of which I will offer a reinterpretation later, shows that the dangers and arduousness of the road which separated them from their homes caused these men heavy hearts; they dreamed of returning to the temple of their god at Shabwa.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Wendell Phillips, “Unknown Oman”, Beirut, 1971, pp. 187, 191, 192 and 195.

<sup>2</sup> A. Jamme, “Une inscription ḥaḍramoutique en bronze”, in “Orientalia” vol. 22 NS, 1953, pp. 158–165. With “Remarks on the ḥaḍrami Inscription Jamme 402”, *ibid.* pp. 416–417.

<sup>3</sup> A. Jamme, “Two new ḥaḍrami Inscriptions from Zōfar”, in *Bi. Or. XXIV*, 1967, pp. 145–148 (the second inscription is from Hanun).

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 188.

<sup>5</sup> “Une inscription ḥaḍramoutique en bronze”, p. 161.

<sup>6</sup> “An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions” Toronto, 1971, p. 330.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Beeston, “A Descriptive Grammar of Epigraphic South Arabian”, London 1962, p. 45, para. 37:6

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 47, para. 39:1.

<sup>9</sup> Mahmud Ali Ghul, “New Qatabani Inscriptions—II” in *BSOAS*, XXII, 1959.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 427, note 1.

<sup>11</sup> de Landberg, “Glossaire Datinois”, I, p. 275: *jarab* = scab.

<sup>11a</sup> The word has been translated “red stones” in *CIH* 541, 9, and by Sidney Smith as “Workmen’s shops” in “Events in Arabia”, *BSOAS*, XVI, 3, 1954, p. 439.

<sup>12</sup> See the description on p. 95 from Wendell Phillips.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. J. Pirenne, “La maîtrise de l’eau en Arabie du Sud antique”, going to press.

<sup>14</sup> Lankester Harding, *op. cit.* p. 34.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. F. Jean and J. Hostijzer, “Dictionnaire des inscriptions sémitiques de l’Ouest”, Leiden 1965, p. 101.

<sup>16</sup> “Explorations in Dhofar, Oman”, in *Antiquity* XXIX, 1955, p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> “Unknown Oman”, p. 188.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. J. Pirenne, “Le royaume sud-arabe de Qatabān et sa datation d’après l’archéologie et les sources classiques jusqu’au “Péripole de la Mer Erythrée”, (Bibliothèque du Muséon, 48), Louvain 1961. Also, by the same author, “Un problème-clé pour la chronologie de l’Orient: la date du “Péripole de la Mer Erythrée”, in the *Journal Asiatique*, 1961, p. 441–459.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. J. Pirenne, “De la chronologie des inscriptions sud-arabes après la fouille du temple de Mārib (1951–2)”, in *Bi. Or. XXVI*, 1969, pp. 303–311 and illustrations.

<sup>20</sup> Gus. W. Van Beek, “Frankincense and Myrrh”, in the *Biblical Archaeologist* vol. XXIII p. 72, and map, fig. 5, p. 90; Also by the same author, “Frankincense and Myrrh in Ancient South Arabia”, in *JAOS*, 78, 1958, p. 142.

<sup>21</sup> “Western Arabia and the Red Sea”, (Geographical Handbook series, B.R. 527) Naval Intelligence Division, June 1946, pp. 147 and 224.

<sup>22</sup> His reasoning runs as follows: “While Dhofar is more than an eight days’ journey from Shabwa, and Wadi ḥaḍramaut is somewhat less, the figure is perhaps as correct as can be expected”. *JAOS* p. 142.

<sup>22a</sup> “The Southern Gates of Arabia”, London 1936, p. 307. Pliny’s description runs: “the incense-bearing region . . . inaccessible because of rocks on every side, while it is bounded on the right by the sea, from which it is shut out by tremendously high cliffs”. We should remember that the mountain range of ḥaḍramaut, behind Mukalla, attains a height of 8100 feet and the type of terrain—“incised meanders”—is the same as that on the heights of Dhofar (cf. the map, plate 5).

<sup>23</sup> *Biblical Archaeologist*, pp. 72–73, and *JAOS* p. 142.

<sup>24</sup> (Taken from the French translation of A. Maricq, in Jacqueline Pirenne “Le royaume sub-arabe de Qataban”, pp. 170–171.

<sup>25</sup> In the “Classical Quarterly”, XLV; 1951, p. 156.

<sup>26</sup> “Unknown Oman”, pp. 190 and 187.

<sup>27</sup> A. Jamme “Two new Hadrami inscriptions from Zōfar”, in *Bi. Or. XXIV*? 1967, pp. 146–148.

<sup>28</sup> Shabwa is the site of French excavations. See Jacqueline Pirenne, “Première campagne archéologique française au ḥaḍramout”, in *CR de l’Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, meeting of May 30th 1974.