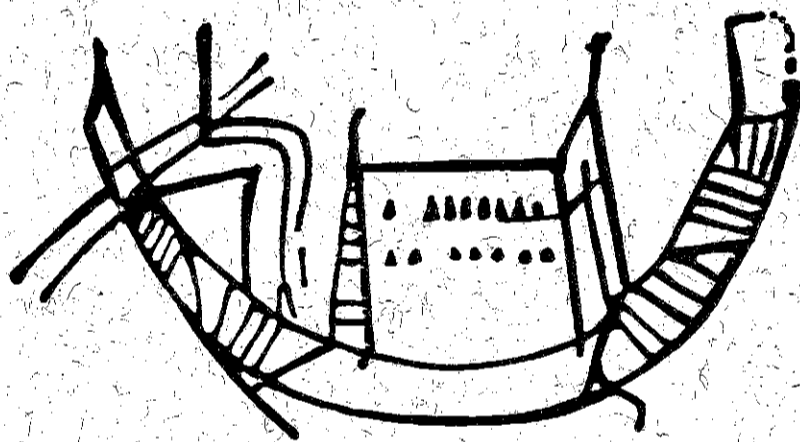


THE
JOINT HADD
PROJECT



SUMMARY REPORT ON THE SECOND SEASON

NOVEMBER 1986 - JANUARY 1987

CERAMICS FROM RJ-2

The pottery collected at RJ-2 during the two first campaigns is not very abundant⁴, but it is a very diagnostic material since it reflects the picture of a site deeply rooted in the Oman Peninsula from the last centuries of the third Millennium B.C. and at the same time widely opened to the Indian sub-continent.

OMANI WARES

The cream ware, characteristic of the site since it occurs for 57 % of the whole material represents a new ware among the Omani third Millennium pottery assemblage. It appears to be a standardised production in terms of technology (fabric, technique of shaping and finishing) and range of shapes⁵. It displays definite parallels with the so-called domestic ware (2500-2000 B.C.) of interior Oman Peninsula, except maybe for a few technical and typological features which are more related to the Indus Valley pottery.

The vases are wheel made, like those of Hili, Bat and probably Maysar. The shapes are perfectly symmetrical, the thickness of the walls (ca. 0.7 cm) is regular in the horizontal level and one can generally observe in the internal wall the fine, parallel, spiral grooves due to the throwing. Like at Hili the external wall of most of the pots has been smoothed and about 20 % of the sherds wear a more or less well preserved red cover. From the typological viewpoint, the RJ-2 material displays less precise parallels with the globular neckless jars from Hili than with the few ovoid vases published from Maysar 1 settlement, about 250 km west of Ra's al-Junayz. Their proportions and dimensions are similar as well as the details of rim shapes. Triangular flaring rims are present at Maysar (Weisgerber 1981, fig. 17 n° 5) and RJ-2 (RJ-2/218 fig. 34 n° 3) like the rounded flaring rims (RJ-2/84, fig. 34 n° 1, Maysar 1 DA 4042 in Weisgerber 1980, fig. 45). Among the other rim shapes, flaring convex rims with an horizontal flattened end are the most common. Also very distinctive are a flaring grooved rim (RJ-2/77, fig. 34 n° 2), and an oblique rolled rim (RJ-2/219, fig. 34 n° 4). Fifteen bottoms were found, all flat based, with a diameter ranging from 4 to 22 cm. One of them is string cut, a technique well known in Indus sites (see for instance Dales and Kenoyer 1986: 64). This technique is not attested in Eastern Arabia before Hili 8 Period III, when traces of contacts with the Indus civilisation are evident among the assemblage and comes

⁴ - 534 sherds have been registered, that is all rimsherds, bottomsherds and bodysherds, except about 50 pieces, too fragmentary or burned.

⁵ - The fabric is defined by the color of the paste, the dimensions, shape, color and frequency of the vacuoles. The ware is defined by a particular fabric, a characteristic shaping and finishing as well as a limited corpus of shapes and decoration.

only later into general use in the Oman Peninsula, around 2000 B.C., among the Wadi Suq assemblage. Another technical feature of the Indus civilisation (see for instance Dales and Kenoyer 1986, fig. 29 n° 3) is the series of incisions on the rim of a jar (RJ-2/68 in Report 1, fig. 20 n° 3), also present at Maysar 1 (Weisgerber 1984: 198 and fig. 24.5).

Among the few decorated bodysherds of cream ware are found chevrons, the most distinctive pattern of the black on red slipped fine ware well known all over the Oman Peninsula during the whole second half of the third Millennium B.C. (Cleuziou n.d.). Among them, bodysherd RJ-2/232 (fig. 34 n° 8) is probably part of the shoulder of a jar with a 6 cm diameter at the base of its neck corresponding to the mean diameter of the small fine red ware jars at Hili. Two bodysherds have a cross-hatched decoration, and a third one shows a lenticular cross-hatched uncomplete motif, maybe a bird or a fish (fig. 33 n° 10), a pattern more related to the Indus pottery than to the Omani assemblage. In some cases, bodysherds are decorated with two pairs of horizontal lines painted in black on a red cover - a pattern unknown in the late Umm an-Nar assemblage which we will discuss later.

Fine black on red ware. About ten sherds have a fabric (fine red paste practically without any visible inclusion) and shape characteristic of the fine black-on-red slipped third Millennium Omani necked jars, like a neck with an everted and rounded rim (RJ-2/236, fig. 33 n° 5) or a shoulder (for good parallels see for instance Frifelt 1970 fig. 2d; Cleuziou and Vogt 1983, fig. 6 n° 2 and 3). Even more diagnostic is the fragment of a ring base from a suspension vessel (RJ-2/360 fig. 33 n° 7), a fairly common shape at Hili North Tomb A and Hili Tomb 1059 dated back from a very late third millennium context (Frifelt 1970, fig. 4b; Cleuziou and Vogt 1983, fig. 6 n° 7 and 8).

Only one sherd, RJ-2/325 (fig. 34 n° 9), probably belongs to a small Wadi Suq bowl: it contains vegetal temper and is decorated with oblique red painted strokes, a decoration known at Hili 8 and Shimal settlement (Vogt and Franke - Vogt 1986, fig. 44 n° 4-11, 13-15).

INDUS-RELATED WARES

The most spectacular discovery this campaign is certainly a decorated jar, a well known type among the Indus assemblage and until now never found in South-Eastern Arabia. It is a necked pyriform medium sized jar with a complex decoration combining geometrical, vegetal and zoomorphic patterns. The best comparisons (fig. 35) according to shape (unfortunately its neck and bottom are missing) as well as to decoration are two vases from Lothal (Rao 1973, fig. 23 n° 1,2). Like at Mohenjo-Daro (Dales and Kenoyer 1986, fig. 1 n° 1), the vase from RJ-2 is thrown and probably made in two parts since a

juncture is visible on the internal wall near the bottom⁶. However, if the shape and decoration are without any doubt of an Indus character, the ochre, sandy and porous paste is macroscopically similar to the cream ware fabric. It could arise again the question of its provenience, if the local fabrication of the cream ware can be demonstrated. The vase is entirely covered with black painted patterns on a red cover applied on the smoothed external wall. The two main registers are separated by a frieze of suns in ovals, a common Indus motif (for instance Casal 1964, fig. 78 n° 340). Also very frequent among the Indus assemblages is the lower frieze of rosettes associated with lenticular hatched patterns, maybe leaves or fishes (Casal 1964, fig. 78 n° 339; Vats 1975, pl. LXVII n° 26). The upper register of this type of jar is always divided into metopes, and such is the Ras al-Junayz jar where typical Indus motifs are represented: a feathered tree (Casal 1964, fig. 89 n° 437; Vats 1975, pl. LXVII n° 2), a palm tree (Marshall 1973, pl. LXXXVII n° 5, pl. LXXXVIII n° 2 and 3; Vats 1975, pl. LXIX n° 4), series of horizontal cross-hatched scales (Mackay 1943, pl. XXX n° 2, 3 and 4; Marshall 1973, pl. LXXXVIII n° 4), and superimposed peacocks (Mackay 1943, pl. XXXII n° 2 and 9; Casal 1964, fig. 74 n° 316 a, fig. 77 n° 334).

The black slipped micaceous ware is rather abundant since it represents 14 % of the whole material with 75 sherds. Since its first discovery at Hili 8, this ware is generally related to the Indus pottery - an association mainly based at that time on broad considerations on the fabric and rim shape (Cleuziou 1984: 390,391), but the recent publication of the pottery from UM excavations at Mohenjo Daro allows us to specify the comparison.

Fabric and manufacture of the micaceous ware are very distinctive. The paste is red and contains numerous flakes of white mica and the walls are quite thick since they measure 1 cm on an average. Considering the few large pieces we observed, the body of these big jars seems to have been hand-made, which is not the case at Mohenjo Daro according to Dales and Kenoyer (1986: 83, 84), since such jars were thrown in several pieces and then assembled. One of the RJ-2 sherd has an impressed cord-mark, a well-known Indus feature found at Hili 8 (Cleuziou n.d.) and Maysar 1 (Weisgerber 1984, fig. 24-4). These cord impressions, always associated to the large jars in the Indus material, have been convincingly interpreted by Mackay (1938: 212) as marks "... produced by the string that was wound round the jars to prevent sagging during the drying...". Most of the pieces are coated with an internal and external thick black slip. We only found bodysherds and three big flaring rolled rims with a diameter at mouth ranging from 18 to 22 cm (RJ-2/417, RJ-2/378, fig. 34 n° 11,12), similar to those reported from Hili 8 (Cleuziou 1984, fig. 28 n° 4), Ras-Ghanada (al-Tikriti 1985, pl. 13B), and Maysar 1 (Weisgerber 1984, fig. 24-5). Such rolled rims with similar diameter and black internal/external cover are

⁶ - This point was noticed by Philippe Gouin while preparing the drawing.

reported by Dales and Kenoyer (1986, fig. 6) at Mohenjo-Daro. Because of such thick internal coating, they consider the jars to have been used "for the storage of liquids that required preservation in non-porous conditions" (ibid.: 84) - an attractive hypothesis as Ras al-Junayz could have been a seepport where trading-goods necessitating large containers for their transport should have been in transit.

A few other sherds are part of the Indus pottery assemblage: a perforated bodysherd from RJ-3 surface, a fluted bodysherd and some black on red slipped sherds from RJ-2 excavation.

Perforated jars are a common Indus type, from small globular to tall straight sided vase (Mackay 1938, pl. LXII n° 27-33; Mackay 1943, pl. XXVI n° 1-3, Dales and Kenoyer 1986, fig. 16). The perforations from the RJ-3 sherd (fig. 34 n° 6; fig. 37) were made from outside with a rounded tool, the potter did not smooth the interior of the vessel, leaving the excess clay around the holes and did not slip the vase, like at Mohenjo daro (Dales and Kenoyer 1986: 107).

The proper shape of the vessel represented by the fluted sherd is unknown but its fabric - an ochre micaceous matrix with numerous quartz inclusions below 0,5 mm - is of the same good quality as that of the black slipped micaceous ware fabric (that is fine, dense, homogeneous and hard), its dimensions (1 cm thick, 31 cm diameter at an unknown point of the body) and the space between flute ridges (about 1,5 cm) are quite characteristic of the Indus fluted globular necked pots with broad and flat bases, sometimes with a concave moulded base (Mackay 1943, pl. XXVI n° 61,67,67a; Vats 1974, pl. LXX n° 19; Dales and Kenoyer 1986: 145-147 and fig. 35).

Eventually, some bodysherds from RJ-2 associated with the same fabric are rather problematic. They belong to small or large jars with a red-brownish cover and pairs of black horizontal painted bands (fig. 34 n° 13). Because of the quality of the fabric, the thickness of the sherds (0,9 cm on an average) and the likely large dimensions of the vessel in most of the cases, we exclude this ware from the proper omani assemblage and tend to consider it as an Indus ware. This type of decoration is also extremely common in the Indus, but we are unable to trace precise parallels since it can be associated with bottom of tall jars like RJ-2/216 (fig. XX), large open vessels with an exterior projecting rim (Mackay 1938, pl. LXII n° 50,51; Dales and Kenoyer 1986: 156-158 and fig. 39 to 41), closed vases with a moulded base (Casal 1964, fig. 71 n° 289) or various other shapes.

The RJ-2 ceramic assemblage is chronologically very coherent, ascertaining for the site a date in the last three centuries of the IIIrd Millennium B.C. In less than ten years, the archaeological investigations in the interior Oman allowed us to catch sight of the various contacts between Eastern arabia and the Indus world. However RJ-2, the only excavated site from this period on the Indian Ocean coastline, is also the only eastern arabian site to

present up to now such a level of interaction. As a matter of fact, if we consider the pottery, more than a quarter of the material exhibits relations with the Indus. Future analytical research in laboratory will help to define the respective role of imported items (more probably as containers than for themselves), influences on the typology and/or sharing of technical features.

Report by Sophie Méry

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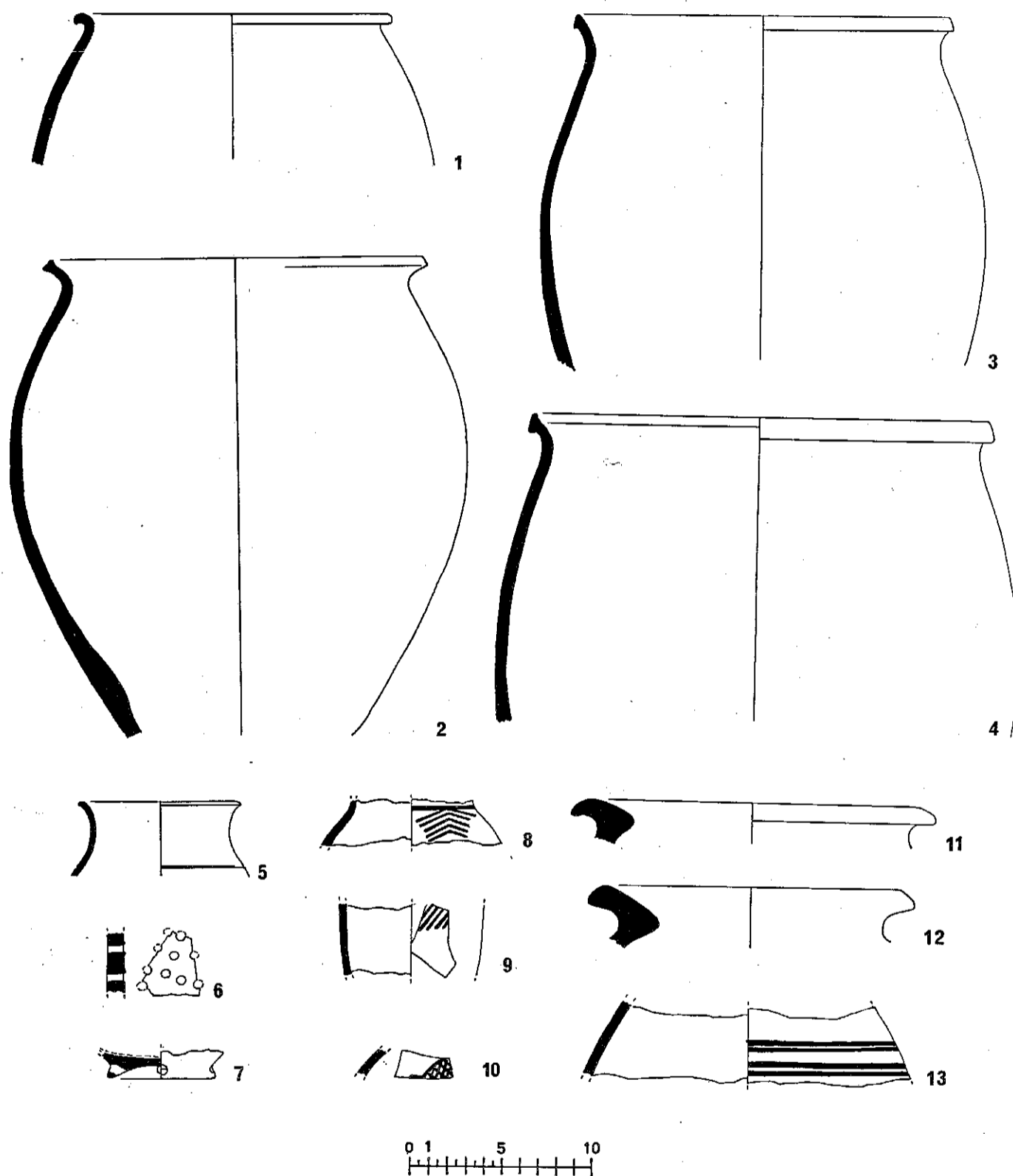


Fig. 34 - Late 3rd millennium pottery from Ra's al-Junayz : 14 : Neckless unpainted jars of cream ware (RJ-2/84, RJ-2/77, RJ-2/218, RJ-2/219) ; 5 : fine red ware, unpainted (RJ-2/236) ; 6 : perforated Indus related body sherd, unpainted (RJ-3/1) ; 7 : ring base of a suspension vessel, fine red ware (RJ-2/360) ; 8 : shoulder of a small jar, cream ware with black painted decoration on a red external cover (RJ-2/232) ; 9 : fragment of bowl with red painted strokes, Wadi Suq pottery ? (RJ-2/325) ; 10 : body sherd of cream ware with black painted pattern, fish or bird ? (RJ-2/139) ; 11, 12 : black slipped Indus-related ware, two rims of large transport (?) jar (RJ-2/417, RJ-2/378) ; 13 : shoulder of a big jar with black painted horizontal bands on a red external cover, Indus related material (RJ-2/386).

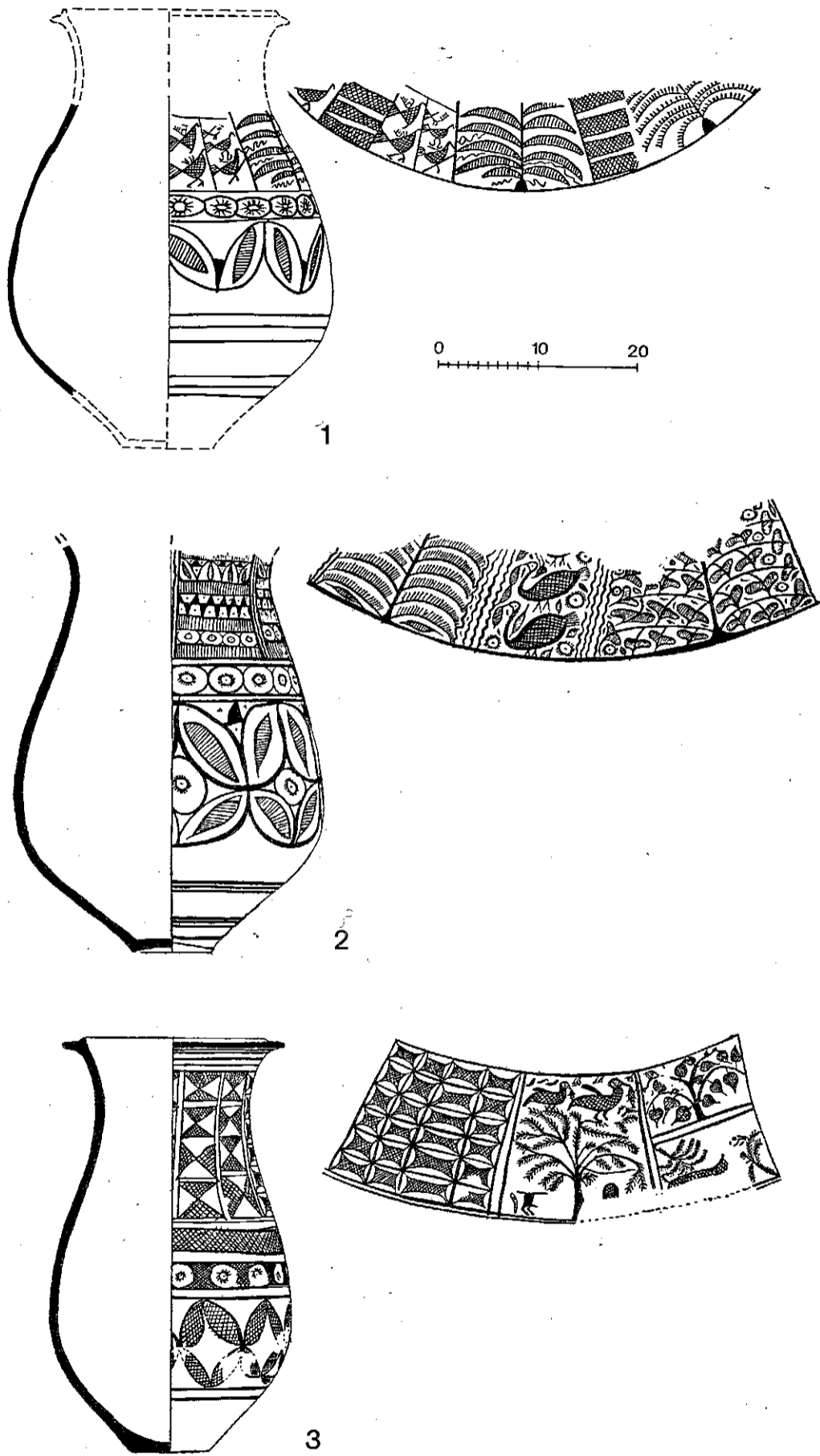


Fig. 35 - Indus painted jar from RJ-2, room VI (n° 1) and related vessels from Lothal (n° 2,3, after RAO 1972, fig. 23).

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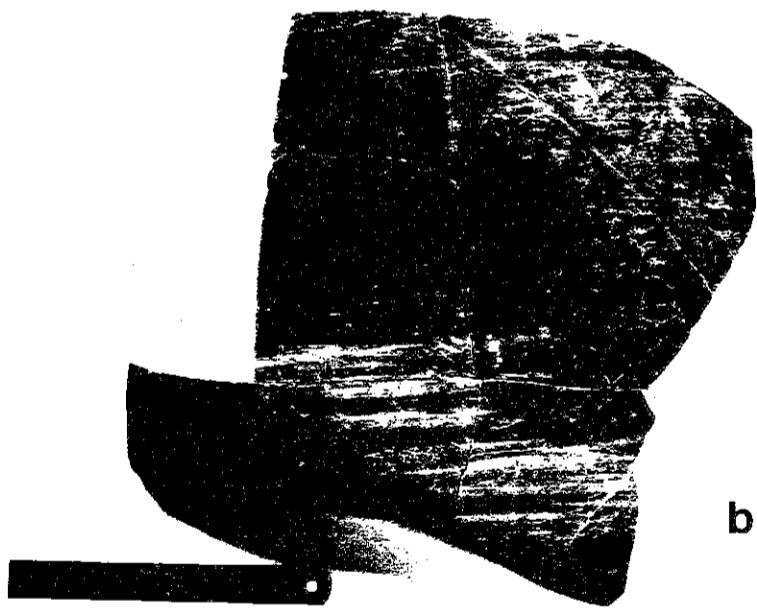
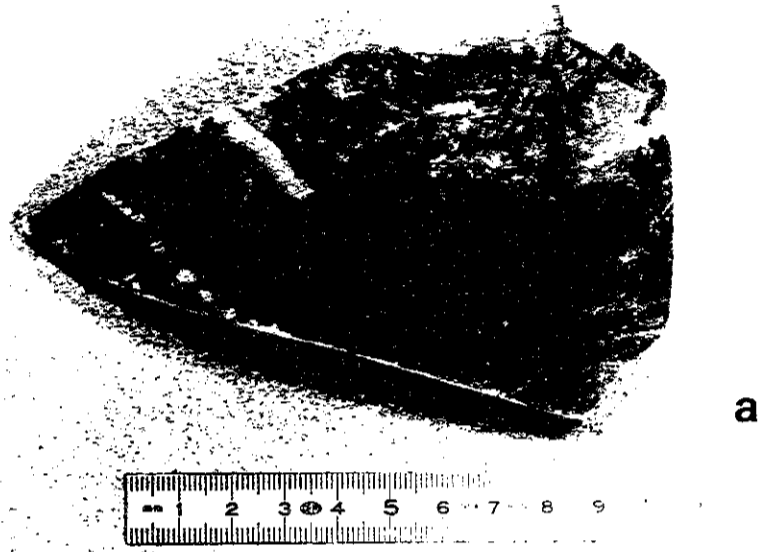


Fig. 36 - RJ-2, Indus painted jar of room VI : sherds from upper (a) and lower (b) registers.



Fig. 38 - RJ-2 : Rimsherd of cream ware
(RJ-2/219)

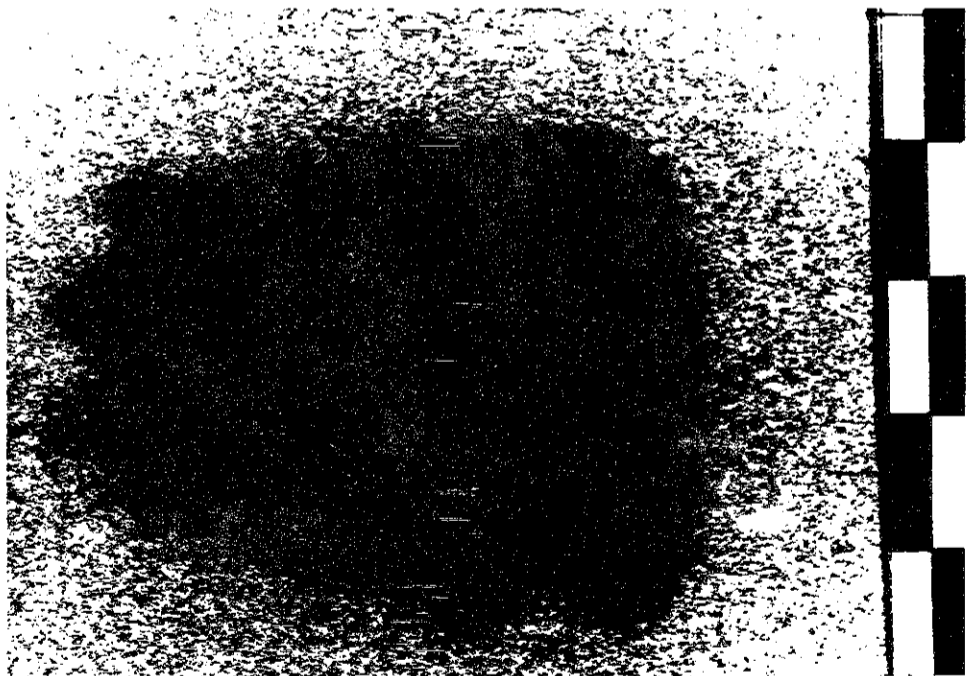


Fig. 37 - RJ-3 : perforated sherd. (RJ-3/1)