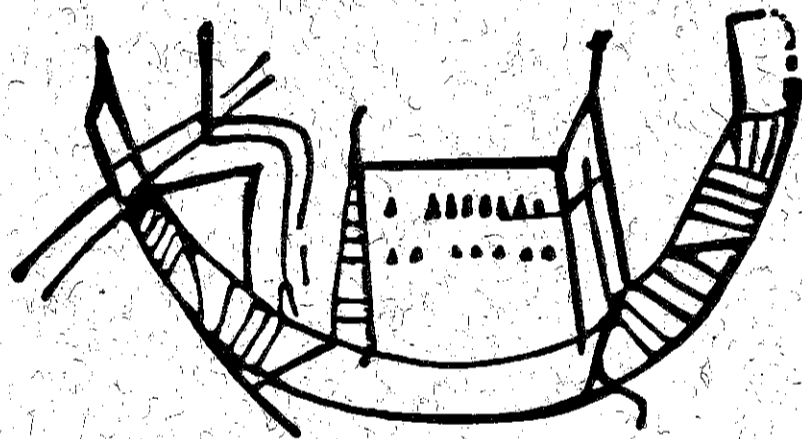


THE
JOINT HADD
PROJECT



SUMMARY REPORT ON THE SECOND SEASON

NOVEMBER 1986 - JANUARY 1987

A BRONZE AGE SITE AT RA'S AL-HADD

The extensive complex of low mounds at Ra's al-Hadd is already known to include settlement of Islamic period⁴³. After the discovery by Dr J. Reade of a black-slipped Indus-related sherd (fig. 62), on one of the mounds, which we designated HD-1, a short survey enabled us to identify this as a potentially important new Bronze Age site.

The site is located some 20 km north of Ras-al Junayz and 1 km west of the modern village of Ra's al-Hadd (fig. 60), on a sandy spit, about 5 m above sea-level. The spit separates the Gulf of Oman from an intertidal lagoon, partially dry at low tide (Khor al-Hajar). Except on its top and north-eastern slope, which are occupied by an Islamic cemetery, the low 250 m² mound of HD-1 is covered by a hardened topsoil salt crust and a deflation pavement made of small stones. The anthropic level, just 1 cm under the topsoil, is identical to the RJ-2 settlement surface (see *Report 1*: 5, 9): a soft mixture of sand and ashes, full of fishbones and mussels. No structures were visible on the surface but we found broken lightly baked bricks, not necessarily older than the Islamic period, on the top of the mound.

More than 60 well-preserved Indus-related sherds have been collected (an exceptional number and state of preservation compared to Ra's al-Junayz). Among them were fifteen bodysherds from a large container (about 50 cm diameter at an unknown point of the body), covered by a black internal and external coating and similar to the black-slipped micaceous ware from RJ-2 (fig. 62 and Méry, this volume). We found only one cream-ware sherd with a black on red decoration. Many flaking products were collected: two radiolarite fragments and a dozen of retouched or unretouched nummulitic flint blades, identical to those from Ra's al-Junayz (see Charpentier in *Report 1*: 43, 44). Among the other surface finds, there were several bronze fragments, including two nails, a calcareous net sinker, and fragments of worked *conus* and *pinctada* (an oyster species exploited by the protohistoric people for mother-of-pearl). This surface assemblage may be dated, by comparison with the RJ-2 material, to the second half of the third Millennium B.C.

Other significant finds from Ra's al-Hadd were a round agate eye-stone from the rocky promontary of HD-2, and many small chips of lapis lazuli from a very low mound at HD-4.

Today, the Ra's al-Hadd lagoon is a natural harbour. The coastline is there very exposed, especially to the northern wind which is dominant in winter. During the last campaign, we learned from the villagers that it was impossible to sail and fish around Ra's al-Junayz during the summer as the southern wind is too strong and the waves too high. Consequently people go and fish at Ra's al-Hadd, or collect palm-dates at Bilad Bani Bu Ali, 100 km away in the interior. There is also the question of the flint supply: we do not know if resources of this raw material are available in the calcareous coastal ridges south of Ras al-Hadd (we did not find any flint around Khor Jaramah, west of Ra's al-Hadd), but to judge by the extraordinarily large number of flint workshops at Ra's al-Junayz, it is reasonable to propose Ra's al-Junayz as a flint production site for the whole region. The question of the gathering of *conus* (used in the manufacture of rings) may also be relevant: while we found *conus* artefacts on both sites, *conus* shells have only been found up to now along the Ra's al-Hadd beach.

Seasonal variations, specialised activities? The two coastal settlements of RJ-2 and HD-1 may have acted during the Bronze Age as complementary sites, on each side of the most easterly Arabian cape. All these hypotheses remain of course to be tested. Future work at Ra's al-Hadd should allow a better understanding of the dynamics in a key-region of South-Eastern Arabia, broadly open to the Indus world in the second part of the IIIrd Millennium B.C.

Report by Julian Reade and Sophie Méry

⁴³ - WHITCOMB D.S.: The archaeology of Oman: a preliminary discussion of the Islamic periods, *Journal of Oman studies* 1, 1975, pp. 123-159, see p. 126, pl. 4B and fig. 8,9.

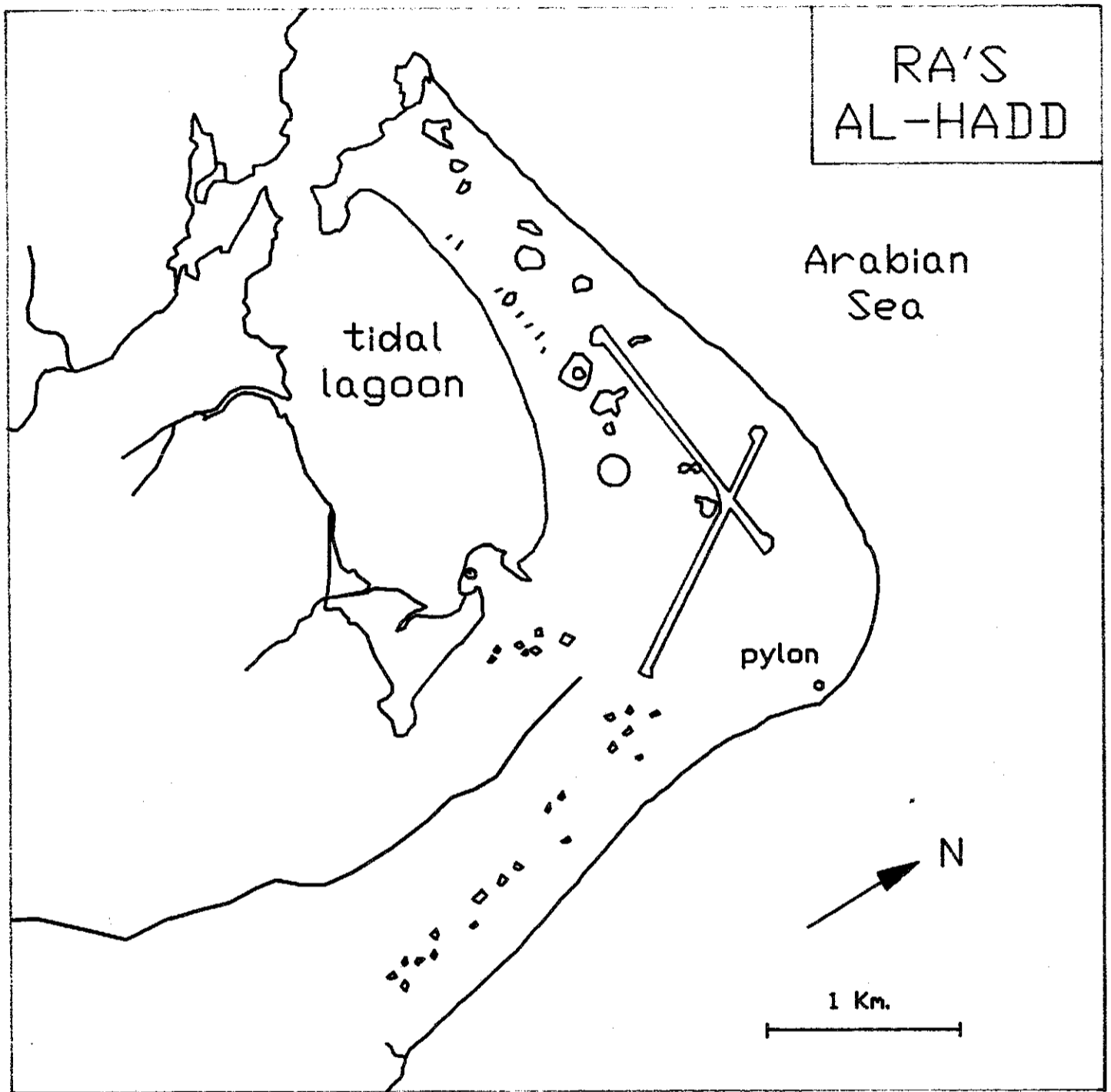


Fig. 60 - Map of the Ra's al-Hadd area.



Fig. 61 - Ra's al-Hadd, site HD-1.

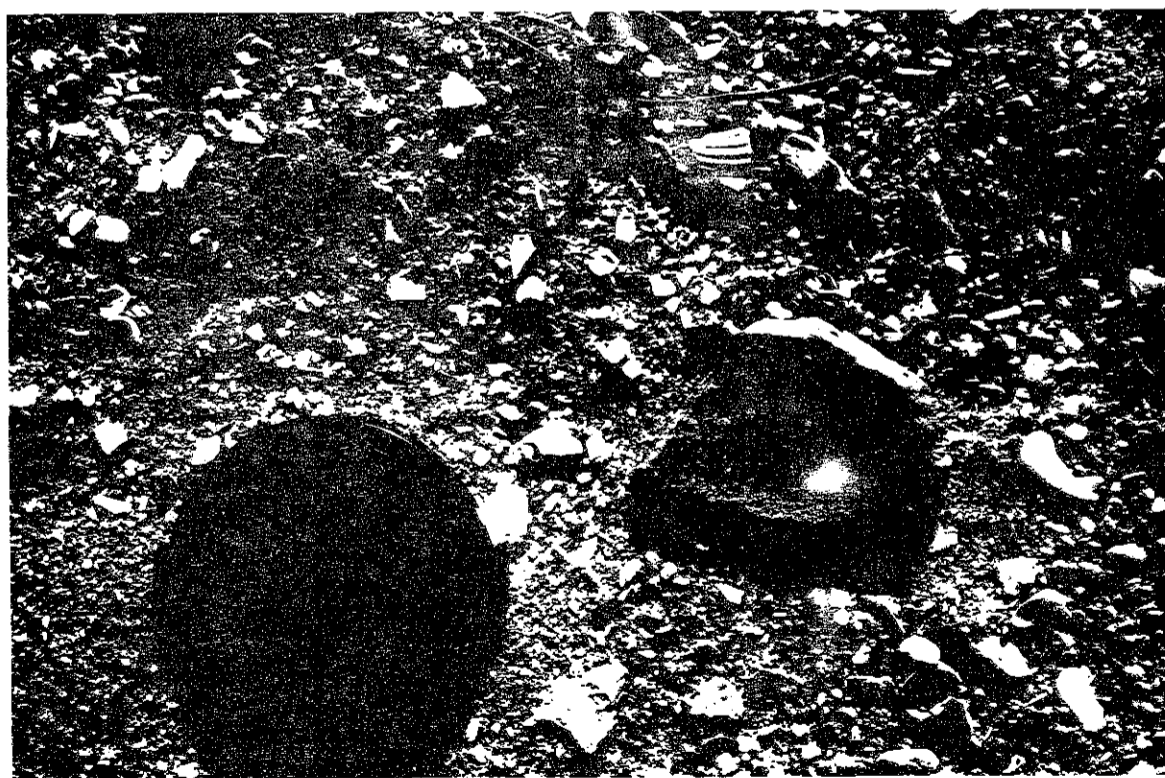


Fig. 62.-. HD-1 : surface, with Indus ware sherd *in situ* .