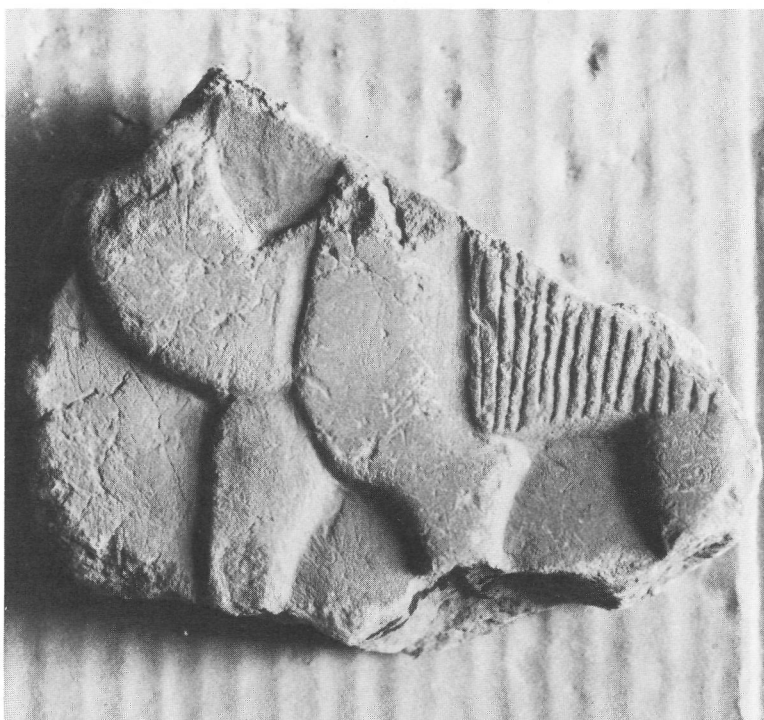


A R C H E O L O G Y

Raymond D. Tindel**Yemen Survey**

I returned to Yemen in April 1980, to continue the work at Zafar begun by our reconnaissance expedition in 1978. Zafar was once the capital of the Himyar empire and the center of a commercial network which extended from the Mediterranean to southeast Asia, its wealth founded on the trade in spices and incense. Its kings presided over a cultural synthesis which drew inspiration even from distant Greece and Rome. However, in the centuries following the decline of the



ZM 766: fragment with portion of camel in low relief (photo by Ray Tindel)

Y E M E N



ZM 765: architectural element with pattern of wavelets and rosettes in relief (photo by Ray Tindel)

pre-Islamic South Arabian civilization, Zafar fell into decay and the stones from its palaces were carried away to build surrounding towns and villages; today its ruins share their mountaintop with a modern village and a small museum. This year there were three priorities: to continue work on the Zafar Museum collection, to finish mapping ancient features on the site, and to extend the survey to the surrounding area.

Throughout these investigations we have been most fortunate to have the active support of Qadi Isma'il al-'Akwa, the Director General of the Department of Antiquities, and his staff, for which I am most appreciative. I also owe particular thanks to Abdul-Wahab Haidar and Rosalind Wade of the Department, and to Steve Sidebotham of the University of Michigan, all of whom helped with the work at Zafar, and to Dr. Jon Mandaville of the American Institute for Yemeni Studies in Sana, who provided a most welcome base of operations for American researchers.

Our efforts were quite productive. We photographed and catalogued ninety-four new objects including fifteen new inscriptions, an alabaster plaque with a very fine symmetrical vine pattern, a complete false window, and two statuettes of women, one with a curious arrangement of hair braids.

We also finished mapping the northern end of the site. Little remains of the structures which once stood there except for a scree of



Remains of a Himyarite dam near Zafar, from the downstream side (photo by Ray Tindel)

building rubble and occasional foundation and retaining walls. A proper understanding of this area will have to await clearing of the rubble and delineation of the foundations.

As we moved out from the site we found more impressive material. Near the village of Irafah is a system of what appear to have been water-retention dams which may once have supplied the capital. The largest is about two hundred feet long and fifteen feet high, with spillways at either end and facings of roughly squared stone on both the upstream and downstream sides. Both Irafah and the nearby village of Beit al-Ashwal are built substantially of stone from Zafar and its suburbs, and a number of houses in each village have important inscriptions or pieces of bas-relief built into their walls. As we extend this part of the survey, I think that ultimately we will be more surprised to find a village that does not have important Himyarite material than to find those that do.

The results from these two seasons will form the basis for a monograph on the history and culture of ancient Zafar, only the first, we hope, of a number on the civilization of Southern Arabia.