

Contacts between North West Arabia and Jordan in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages

A serious hindrance to an understanding of the archaeology of East Jordan is the way in which that country has so often been viewed only from a western direction, as a kind of appendage to Palestine. Now it is of course true that the Jordan river is not much of a barrier, and that the regions on either side of it have, for most of their history, been closely linked, to form a single cultural province. Yet even a casual glance at a map of the area is enough to show that the most important natural route through East Jordan is that which runs along the edge of the plateau, linking North West Arabia and the Aqaba Gulf on the one hand with southern Syria on the other; and it can therefore hardly be doubted that throughout its history Jordan must have been influenced by, and had an influence on, the cultures of the countries immediately to its north and south. That these northern and southern links have not yet been demonstrated archaeologically—except (and then still most inadequately) for the Nabataean period—is the result of the lack of appropriate research in these directions. Southern Syria remains to all intents and purposes unexplored archaeologically, except for the Roman and Byzantine periods, having not yet benefited from the revolution in archaeological activity and knowledge which is affecting the rest of that country¹. As for Arabia, for long the *terra incognita* of Near Eastern archaeology, the changes which are taking place there, set in motion by the Danish excavations in the Gulf States in the mid-1950s and culminating now in full programmes of activities by university departments, national antiquities authorities, and foreign expeditions,² have only very recently begun to affect the North West of the Peninsula. Most significant of these activities for our present purpose has been the Comprehensive Archaeological Survey of Saudi Arabia initiated in 1976 by the Department of Antiquities in Riyadh. This, in its first two seasons, investigated, amongst other regions, those of the

Wadi Sirhan and al-Jawf³, and more recently has operated in the northern Hegaz. Not all of the results of the work are yet published⁴; but from the Wadi Sirhan there is already available a large corpus of archaeological material which, as might be expected, has many close analogies with that from Eastern Jordan. The bulk of this material from the Sirhan seems to belong to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods (when moister climatic conditions almost certainly prevailed)⁵, and will now have to be taken into account when considering questions of, for example, population growth and urbanisation in Palestine at the end of the 4th millennium. This must be left for a future occasion, however. Our purpose here is to look at another period—the Late Bronze and Iron Ages—and to consider some implications arising from the discovery, in the N.W. Hegaz, of two different groups of painted pottery, one known best from the site of Qurayyah (N.W. of Tabuk), the other from al-‘Ula. This pottery was first recognised during the course of reconnaissances carried out in this region prior to the Comprehensive Survey mentioned above, though much additional material has since been found. In 1962 Drs F. V. Winnett and W. L. Reed conducted what was primarily an epigraphic survey of the region and included in their report a brief description of sherds picked up at al-‘Ula and Tayma.⁶ Six years later the present author, in collaboration with the late G. Lankester Harding and J. E. Dayton, made a rapid archaeological tour of much the same area, though including sites not visited by Winnett and Reed and concentrating more on the ceramic evidence. In the published account of that journey⁷ a description of the two main sites involved—al-‘Ula

³ R. McC. Adams, P. J. Parr, et al., 'Preliminary Report on the First Phase of the Comprehensive Archaeological Survey Program', *Atlat* 1 (1397/1977), 21-40; P. J. Parr, J. Zarins, et al., 'Preliminary Report on the Second Phase of the Northern Province Survey', *Atlat* 2 (1398/1978), 29-50.

⁴ A report on one aspect of the work can be found in 'Khief El-Zahrah and the Nature of the Dedanite Hegemony in the Al-‘Ula Oasis', by Garth Bawden, *Atlat* 3 (1399/1979), 63-71.

⁵ See discussion and references in *Atlat* 2, 29-30.

⁶ F. V. Winnett and W. C. Reed, *Ancient Records from North Arabia*, Toronto, 1970.

⁷ P. J. Parr et al., 'Preliminary Survey in N.W. Arabia 1968' *Bulletin of Institute of Archaeology, London University* 8-9 (1970), 193-242. (Henceforth cited as 'Preliminary Survey ...')

¹ A good short account of the history of archaeological research in Syria is given in the first chapter of Paolo Matthiae, *Ebla: An Empire Rediscovered*, London, 1980.

² For a brief review of 'The Present State of Archaeological Research in the Arabian Peninsula', see the paper by the present author, read at the Second International Symposium on Studies in the History of Arabia, held at Riyadh in 1978, to be published in the *Proceedings* of that Symposium in 1981.

and Qurayyah—and of the pottery was presented, and will not be repeated here. A summary of the main points will suffice as an introduction to a discussion of the possible significance of the pottery, in the light of more recent work and of new hypotheses; and we may begin with the site and pottery of Qurayyah.

The main features of Qurayyah—some 70 kms. N.W. of Tabuk—are its fortified citadel, its walled village and its extensive irrigated field systems. These were described in our original report, as was the pottery which was found on the surface, and until the results of more recent investigation have been published there is little more to be said about the site. Concerning the pottery, however, two points need to be emphasised. In the first place, it must be stressed that although it is the distinctive painted pottery (to which the name 'Midianite' was given, perhaps unwisely) which received most attention in that report, and which has figured most prominently in discussions since, this ware only forms a proportion—how large or small cannot be said, given the non-quantitative sampling techniques employed at the time—of the total pottery recovered, and there is a significant corpus of unpainted pottery which has not yet been studied, and which, when it is, can be expected to throw more light on the question of 'Midianite' origins and cultural contacts. Secondly, even within the painted ware, the diversity of fabric needs to be noted. It is true that the original report stressed the homogeneity of the painted pottery⁸, and this still seems to the writer to be essentially correct, with regard to the simplicity of the range of forms (mostly bowls) and the decorative technique and motifs. However, in the note accompanying the descriptions of the sherds published⁹, the pottery (decorated and plain) was classified under eighteen different ware types, of which seven occurred within the painted category; and although this was based on only a rough and ready field assessment and should not be taken as too reliable, the fact is that there is a considerable variation in the quality of the painted pottery, with some very fine fabrics as well as the more usual coarser gritty ones. This observation is important, if only because some of the parallels to the Qurayyah sherds cited in the original report as coming from Tell Fara in southern Palestine¹⁰ are in a very fine cream ware closely comparable to Ware E of the initial Qurayyah report (FIG 1). The presence of a number of different fabrics within the painted 'Midianite' pottery of Qurayyah might perhaps suggest that not all of it is locally made (though some certainly is, on the evidence of the ruined kiln found at the

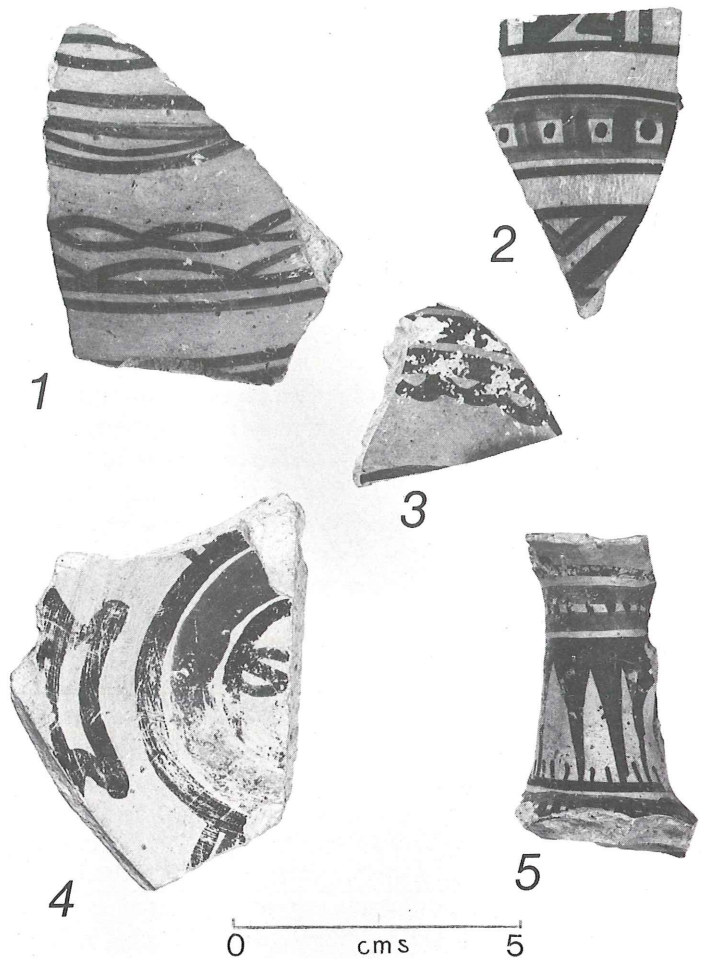
⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹⁰ E. Macdonald, et al., *Beth-Pelet II: The Cemetery* (1932), p. 29, and Plate LXIII, nos. 52–55. Attention should be drawn to an even more striking parallel between the Qurayyah and Fara sherds. An apparently hitherto unpublished sherd from Fara, marked F.ZZA 362' 10", now in the collection of the Institute of Archaeology, London, bears an almost identical design to the sherd published by Parr, Harding and Dayton, 'Preliminary Survey . . .', figure 16, no. 8 (see here, Plate 1, no. 4). Both are of fine buff-white ware.

1. Painted sherds from Tell Fara in collections of London Institute of Archaeology.

- 1) *Beth Pelet II*, plate LXIII, no. 56.
- 2) *Beth Pelet II*, plate LXIII, no. 53.
- 3) *Beth Pelet II*, plate LXIII, no. 42.
- 4) Unpublished.
- 5) *Beth Pelet II*, plate LXIII, no. 52.



site)¹¹, and/or that it covers a somewhat wider chronological range than was originally thought. However, nothing published or discovered since 1970 seems to indicate that the dating proposed then for the painted ware is seriously wrong. The main dating evidence—as has been noted many times since—is the presence of identical pottery from the Hathor temple and copper workings at Timna, in the Wadi Arabah, where Dr Rothenberg's excavations seem to have established without doubt a 13th–12th century date. Other analogous material recently reported¹² would generally support this. At Khirbat Meshash (Tell Masos) near Beersheba, a few comparable sherds are published from Stratum IIB, with other pottery for which the best parallels come from Megiddo

¹¹ 'Preliminary Survey . . .', p. 240 and plate 39.

¹² See the list in J. Kalsbeek and G. London, 'A Late 2nd Millennium BC Potting Puzzle', *BASOR* 232 (1978), 47–56.

Vla¹³. This might suggest the possibility of a rather later date for the painted ware, since some authorities date Stratum VIa to the 11th century¹⁴; but Megiddo is hardly the best peg on which to hang a chronology. From a tomb at Tel Jdur near Hebron several 'Midianite' (or related) sherds are mentioned by S. Ben-Arieh¹⁵, together with Cypriot LB vessels. The only site which still seriously conflicts with this evidence for a late LB—early Iron Age attribution is Tell el-Kheleifeh, where, according to Glueck, this type of pottery occurs in Level IV, dated by him to the 8th–6th centuries. The excavations at Kheleifeh have never inspired confidence, however, and in any case remain essentially unpublished; the site would well repay re-examination. Although it is perhaps theoretically not impossible for the 'Midianite' painted ware to have had a life span of five or six hundred years, the date originally proposed in the 13th–12th centuries, with a possible extension into the 11th, still seems the most likely, in the absence of more reliable contradictory evidence.

More important than the dating evidence provided by the recent discoveries of 'Midianite' sherds outside North West Arabia is their distribution pattern and frequency. A map of the relevant sites has been published by Kalsbeek and London¹⁶, and shows that, apart from a group of sites in the southern Arabah (Timna, Yotava, Kheleifeh and Jazirat Faraun) and Qurayyah itself, they cluster in the south of Palestine (Lachish, Jdur, Tell Fara and Tel Masos), with a distant outlier at Amman. It is important to note that, outside the Timna-Qurayyah region (the 'Midianite heartland') the sherds are only reported in very small quantities, even when (as at Masos, Fara, or Amman) the bulk of excavated material is very large. In other words, the Midianite sherds are here clearly foreign intrusions, and their rarity indicates that we are dealing at these sites not (as presumably we are at Timna) with the special pottery favoured by a sizeable group of 'foreigners', nor with articles deliberately and methodically traded (as in the case of Mycenaean pottery in LB Palestine and Syria, for example), but with isolated vessels brought and used (or perhaps simply admired) by their owners, who may have been either individual North West Arabians ('Midianites') resident in Eastern Jordan or in Southern Palestine, or (conceivably) Canaanites who had visited N.W. Arabia or Timna and who had acquired them as souvenirs.

This distribution pattern is very similar, *mutatis mutandis*, to that of the later Nabataean pottery, in that it shows a very distinctive ceramic type almost entirely confined to a rather restricted geographical region, despite the lack of any obvious physical barriers between that region and the neighbouring countries. The apparent absence of the 'Midianite' painted ware from Sinai is particularly striking, in view of the Egyptian contacts with Timna. Whether this fact justifies the

use of the ethnic determinative in connection with this pottery; whether it can tell us something of the political situation in N.W. Arabia and Southern Palestine/Jordan at the end of the 2nd millennium; whether it can, indeed, throw light on what may be called the 'national ethos' of the inhabitants of N.W. Arabia at this time; all these are questions (discussed by the writer elsewhere in connection with Nabataean pottery)¹⁷ which will not be investigated here.

The chief problem concerning the Midianite painted pottery remains that of its immediate stylistic origin. That its decoration is related to that (often in a bi-chrome technique, as are some of the 'Midianite' pieces) common throughout the Levant in the Late Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age, has never been doubted, while the ultimate Aegean inspiration of many of the motifs, demonstrated by Dayton¹⁸, is also clear. The close resemblance of some of the Midianite motifs, especially the representations of birds and bulls, to similar designs on LBI wheel-made Bichrome ware, has also been noted¹⁹, though the chronological gap of some 200 years between the two wares seems to argue against any direct connection. However, it remains as true today as it did ten years ago that 'comparative study reveals few close analogies to include shape, decoration and ware'²⁰, and the 'Midianite' pottery can best be classed as a hybrid, developed in N.W. Arabia not in direct and slavish imitation of Levantine wares (as are, for example, the well-known Levantine imitations of Mycenaean or Cypriot pottery), but as a more imaginative and individual expression of the artistic talents of the potters, inspired by a heterogeneous collection of ideas borrowed from their neighbours. Once again we may note the parallelism with the Nabataean painted ware. Where the borrowing took place is problematic. If the ideas behind the 'Midianite' ware were derived from contemporary Levantine pottery, then it is certain that they were not borrowed in Arabia itself, since no examples of such Levantine painted pottery have been found there. We must assume, then, that the North West Arabians were reproducing designs seen by them on pottery elsewhere, presumably in Palestine rather than in Egypt since, although bichrome painted pottery was known in Egypt during the early 18th Dynasty, later Egyptian pottery seems to bear little resemblance to the 'Midianite'²¹. However, it is not exclusively to pottery that we must look for analogies to the 'Midianite' designs; many Egyptian faience vessels have been found in Timna and in Sinai²², and a cursory glance at the publications indicate a number of possible comparisons. In view of the known presence of Egyptians at the copper mines

¹⁷ P. J. Parr, 'Pottery, People and Politics'. In, P. R. S. Moorey and P. J. Parr, *Archaeology in the Levant. Essays for Kathleen Kenyon*, Warminster (1978), 203–209.

¹⁸ J. E. Dayton, *Proceedings of the Fifth Seminar for Arabian Studies*, London (1972), 25–37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 31.

²⁰ 'Preliminary Survey . . .', 238.

²¹ I am indebted to Mr Colin Hope for discussing Egyptian New Kingdom pottery with me.

²² For example, B. Rothenberg, *Timna*, London (1972), FIG. 52; W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Researches in Sinai*, London (1906), plates 156, 158.

¹³ V. Fritz, 'Tel Masos', *Tel Aviv* 2 (1975), 109 and plate 23.

¹⁴ Kenyon dates the end of VIa to c. 1100, Aharoni to c. 1050, and Wright to c. 1000.

¹⁵ *Qadmoniot* XI (1978), 60–61.

¹⁶ *BASOR* 232 (1978), 48.

in the Arabah, and of the possibility, if not probability, that the Egyptians were already involved in Arabia at this time in connection with the trade in aromatics²³, a predominantly Egyptian inspiration for the Midianite ware remains, in the opinion of this writer, the most attractive of a number of alternatives.

We may now turn to a different set of problems raised by the discovery of another category of painted pottery at al-ʿUla. This site occupies one of the most fertile oases in the northern Hegaz, on the main route which linked South Arabia with the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean. Its identification—or rather, the identification of the ruins at Khuraybah, at the north end of the oasis—with ancient Dedan has never been challenged since it was first proposed by Glaser in 1890. The site with its rock-cut tombs and its inscriptions in the Dedanite, Lihyanite, Minaean and Thamudic varieties of the South Arabic script, has been described by a number of travellers, most recently by Bawden²⁴; and its history has been summarised by Albright and Winnett²⁵. Biblical references suggest that Dedan was a flourishing trading centre at least as early as the 6th century BC, but according to Winnett there is no proof that any of the inscriptions are as early as this. Winnett argues for a short-lived Dedanite kingdom, probably in the mid-5th century BC, followed at the end of that century by a Lihyanite dynasty which lasted for two hundred years or so. At the beginning of the Lihyanite period a colony of South Arabian Minaean merchants seems to have been established at the oasis, though for how long is unclear. There is little evidence for a Nabataean occupation of the site, and it seems fair to assume that it was more or less deserted at the end of the Lihyanite period, perhaps in the 2nd or early 1st century BC.

In the report of the 1968 survey it was argued, on the evidence of three statue bases found by Jaussen and Savignac just below the surface of the ruins and dated by Albright and Winnett to the late 4th or early 3rd century BC, that the final major building phase at the site should probably date to about this time; and Bawden has suggested²⁶ that Dedan was in fact abandoned in the 3rd century, to be replaced by a new settlement, discovered by him south of the oasis and characterised by 'Hellenistic-Nabataean' pottery. The force of this suggestion cannot be assessed, however, until the relevant pottery is published.

The pottery which lies on the surface of Khuraybah includes a significant quantity of painted sherds, and it is on these that our discussion will be focused. The same painted ware has been found by Bawden in soundings dug at the northern end of the ruins, and he has been able to confirm the

impression gained in 1968 that the ceramic inventory from the entire site is stylistically and technologically homogeneous and essentially of a single period²⁷. The duration of that period and its absolute dates cannot at present be stated with any precision, though it is reasonably clear that it must lie within the range of the 6th-1st centuries BC which, as we have seen, are the probable chronological limits of the site. It may be remarked that none of Bawden's soundings produced evidence for more than one phase of building construction, though this is not necessarily also true of the main Khuraybah site. In our previous report we suggested that the bulk of the surface pottery was most likely to belong to the last major occupation of the site: probably, therefore, to the 4th-3rd centuries BC (see above), and this still seems the safest assumption. However, the difficulties and dangers of interpreting surface material are well known, and the possibilities of its being earlier or later (or both) cannot be ruled out.

Little need, or can, be added to the description of the Khuraybah pottery given in our report of the 1968 survey. The sherds all relate to a fairly limited range of vessels, mostly bowls and jars, though there is a wide variety of rim forms, especially in the material published from Bawden's soundings. All the pottery (with the exception of a few sherds from large jars) is wheelmade, and is typically hard, gritty and of a reddish or purplish hue, though grey and brown fabrics are also present. The majority of the vessels seem to have been well and evenly fired. The surfaces of both plain and painted sherds are usually covered with a light brown, cream, pink or red slip, and are often smoothed. The simple painted decoration is applied in black or (less commonly) red or purple; occasionally a bichrome effect is achieved. It occurs on the upper parts of the vessels, on the inside of the open bowls and the outside of the closed jars, as might be expected. Designs are simple and of limited repertoire: horizontal bands, ladder patterns and cross hatching are common, wavy lines and loops much less so.

Ten years ago it was considered unproductive and unwise to search for analogies for the Khuraybah painted pottery, but much has happened since then in both Arabian and Jordanian archaeology to encourage us now to take a less timorous approach, and to cite evidence which may have a bearing upon it. The evidence is of both a negative and positive kind, and we shall begin with the former.

Apart from the possibility of a few sherds from the site of Tayma²⁸, it can be stated quite categorically that nowhere in Arabia outside the N. Hejaz has there been found to date any painted pottery, of approximately comparable date, which bears any real resemblance to that from Khuraybah, despite the fact that surface surveys have by now been carried out in most parts of the Peninsula. A glance at the illustrations accompanying recent reports in *Atlat*, and *The Journal of Oman Studies*, or in such publications as Van Beek's *Hajar*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁸ For example, that illustrated in FIG. 84, no. 4, of Winnett and Reed, *Ancient Records from North Arabia*.

²³ Abdel-Aziz Saleh, 'An Open Question on Intermediaries in the Incense Trade during Pharaonic Times', *Orientalia* 42 (1973), 370 ff.

²⁴ Garth Bawden, 'Kheif el-Zahrah and the Nature of the Dedanite Hegemony in the Al-ʿUla Oasis', *Atlat* 3 (1979), 63-72.

²⁵ W. F. Albright, 'Dedan', in *Geschichte und Altes Testament (Alt Festschrift)*, Tübingen, 1953; F. V. Winnett and W. L. Reed, *Ancient Records from North Arabia*, Toronto (1970), 113-120.

²⁶ *Atlat* 3 (1979), 71.

*Bin Humeid*²⁹ or Harding's *Archaeology in the Aden Protectorates*³⁰, is enough to confirm this. Painted pottery of any kind seems, indeed, to have been very rare in Arabia (with, of course, the notable exception of the 'Midianite' ware discussed above) between the Umm en-Nar period in the Gulf (3rd millennium BC) and Islamic times. Particularly significant, in view of the undoubted presence of South Arabians (Minaeans) at Dedan, is the rarity of painted decoration at Hajar Bin Humeid, where Van Beek records it on only 3 per cent of the total sherds³¹. One published example³² has a lattice design similar to a common Khuraybah motif, but the shape of the vessel has no parallel at the latter site, while the ware is of the normal chaff-tempered Hajar Bin Humeid type unknown at Khuraybah. Two sherds published by Harding from the site of Raibun in the Hadhramaut also have simple linear painted designs, but the ware is also coarse and chaff-tempered³³. These few decorative analogies in the south are surely coincidental.

Leaving aside for the moment the 'Midianite' painted pottery, it is only when we look further north that we find decorated pottery which possibly has, in our view, more than a fortuitous resemblance to the Khuraybah painted ware. We refer to the so-called Edomite pottery, first discovered by Glueck during his surveys of Eastern Palestine, and more recently excavated at Tawilan and Buseirah by Mrs Crystal Bennett³⁴. The suggestion of a relationship between these two groups of pottery is put forward tentatively since, at first glance, the resemblances do not seem close. The Edomite pottery encompasses a greater range of shapes, including graceful carinated bowls and vessels with high ring or pedestal bases, all of which have good Palestinian Iron Age parallels. A certain sophistication is also apparent in the bar-handles and 'notched' bands. The Edomite decoration is also obviously more elaborate than that of Khuraybah, particularly in the use of red slip, sometimes with reserved bands and sometimes burnished. Yet despite all these differences, actual physical comparison of some of the less elaborate Edomite sherds with those of Khuraybah reveals some remarkable similarities in appearance and 'feel'³⁵. To the naked eye the technique of manufacture of each group, as well as some of the fabrics represented, are very similar, and this latter point seems to be at least provisionally confirmed by the preliminary results of petrographic analysis of a few specimens from Tawilan and Khuraybah by Miss Lea Jones³⁶. As

for the painted decoration, many of the individual design elements in each group are identical—the ladder pattern and lattice especially—while the overall effect of both decorative styles is remarkably similar. Despite the differences between the two pottery groups, therefore, it is our belief that they have more than a fortuitous resemblance, and that some kind of relationship exists between them.

The question is, what kind? To attempt an answer to that, we must look again at the chronology. Mrs Bennett has demonstrated that the main period of occupation at Buseirah, with which the Edomite painted pottery is associated, belongs to the 7th century BC³⁷, although whether the pottery also occurs earlier and later than this—in the 8th and 6th centuries—when Buseirah was also apparently occupied, can only be known when the excavations are fully published. At Khuraybah we have suggested—though, as we have seen, it is little more than a guess—that the *floruit* of the painted pottery there falls most likely in the 4th and 3rd centuries. If this is so then there is an apparent chronological gap between the two pottery groups, which certainly creates a difficulty in our argument that they are related. However, it must be remembered that the earliest occupation of Dedan dates to the 5th or even the 6th centuries BC, on the evidence of the Dedanite inscriptions and of the Biblical references, and there is, strictly speaking, nothing to prove that the origin of the painted pottery does not go back as early as this, or even earlier (since the earliest settlement at Dedan might well pre-date the first mention of the site in the Old Testament). Despite our previous argument, therefore, that the bulk of the surface pottery at Khuraybah dates from the 4th–3rd centuries—an argument which still seems the most logical—the possibility that the painted style is earlier than this in origin, and could even be to some degree contemporary with the Edomite style, cannot be discounted. Unclear though the chronological situation is, it is perhaps not entirely unproductive—in view of what seem to the writer to be definite stylistic and technological links between the Buseirah/Tawilan and Khuraybah pottery groups—to explore some possible reasons for the relationship, recognising that any suggestions can only be highly speculative.

There are a number of possibilities. If—as seems to us most likely—the Khuraybah pottery is later than what might be termed 'standard' Edomite ware, it could be viewed stylistically as a late derivative, exhibiting that degeneration and simplification of form and decoration which is often found in such cases. Historically it may be interpreted as demonstrating the appearance of Edomite cultural influence in the al-'Ula oasis in the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Such an interpretation might fit quite well with what is known of the historical situation at this time. That situation has been thoroughly reviewed by Bartlett³⁸, who is inclined to accept Lindsay's³⁹

²⁹ G. Van Beek, *Hajar bin Humeid*, Baltimore (1969).

³⁰ G. Lankester Harding, *Archaeology in the Aden Protectorates*, London (1964).

³¹ G. Van Beek, *op. cit.*, 98.

³² *Ibid.*, FIG. 50, no. H 2064.

³³ Harding, *op. cit.*, plate XX, nos. 10 and 11.

³⁴ See especially her reports on Buseirah in *Levant VI* (1974), FIGS 15 and 16; *Levant VII* (1975), FIGS 5–8.

³⁵ I am indebted to Mrs Bennett for donating a selection of sherds from Tawilan to the Institute of Archaeology, thus making this comparison possible.

³⁶ I am grateful to Miss Jones for undertaking this research, and making her initial results available. A more extensive programme of petrographic and neutron activation analysis is planned.

³⁷ *Levant IX* (1977), 9.

³⁸ J. R. Bartlett, 'The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Edom', *PEQ* 1972, 26–37; 'From Edomites to Nabataeans', *PEQ* 1979, 53–66.

³⁹ John Lindsay, 'The Babylonian Kings and Edom, 605–550 BC', *PEQ* 1976, 23–39.

conclusion that it was Nabonidus, at the time of his Arabian campaign in 552 BC, rather than Nebuchadnezzar, thirty years earlier, who was responsible for the downfall of Edom. Bartlett's suggestion that it was only the Edomite monarchy that collapsed at this time and that there was no wholesale depopulation of the region, may well be true, though his arguments in favour of uninterrupted sedentary occupation throughout the Persian period until the coming of the Nabataeans is rather forced, in the absence of secure archaeological evidence, especially for the later 6th to early 4th centuries. Be that as it may, Nabonidus' military intervention in southern Jordan must surely have resulted in a certain amount of population upheaval, and it is not inconceivable that a group of Edomite refugees moved south to Dedan (where they surely already had commercial contacts), taking with them the memory of a style of painted pottery which was to influence the local potters. There are, inevitably, some serious weaknesses in this argument: for example, why should the postulated Edomite refugees flee south towards a region (N.W. Arabia) where Nabonidus had campaigned with apparently equal severity (Dedan being specifically mentioned in the Harran inscription as one of the places visited by the Babylonian forces)⁴⁰? However, the Edomite dispersal south may not have occurred immediately following the Babylonian attack, and could perhaps have been delayed until the 5th century, when (as we have seen) Dedan was again flourishing and conditions in N.W. Arabia presumably more settled. This hypothesis might perhaps be supported if it could be shown that the Khuraybah painted pottery had its closest parallels with the latest pottery from the Edomite sites, i.e. from the 6th century deposits which Mrs Bennett reports from Buseirah⁴¹; but the evidence bearing on this is not yet available.

There is, secondly, the possibility that the Khuraybah pottery is, in origin at least, contemporary with the Edomite ware. In this case—always assuming we accept that there is a stylistic relationship—we can best view the Arabian style as a provincial derivative of the more elaborate 'metropolitan' style of Buseirah and Tawilan. This type of stylistic relationship is well known from other places and periods, of course; for example, between imported Mycenaean ware and its local Canaanite imitations, where a similar element of simplification can often be seen in the designs on the local vessels. This is an attractive thesis in terms of historical reconstruction, since it would provide archaeological evidence to supplement the literary evidence for commercial links between Edom and Dedan in the 6th century (prior to the Babylonian attack) and possibly earlier, and would indicate that those links were strong enough to have affected the material culture of Dedan. One might even wonder whether the pottery evidence did not support the view, argued by Lindsay, that N.W. Arabia was an integral part—the southern

part, Teman⁴²—of 'greater Edom'. Alternatively, we may think in terms of a colony of Edomite merchants settled in Dedan, using a variety—albeit a provincial one—of the pottery they were familiar with at home further north. However, in either of these cases it has to be admitted that the suggestions would be stronger, archaeologically speaking, had even a few examples of 'standard' Edomite ware been found in N.W. Arabia; and such is not the case.

There is a final idea which has to be mooted. We have already remarked on the rarity—indeed almost total absence—of painted pottery in Arabia between the 3rd millennium BC and the Islamic period. The presence of two groups, the 'Midianite' and the pottery found at Khuraybah, in the Late Bronze and Iron Ages in the North West of the Peninsula stands out as all the more remarkable, therefore, and must raise the question of whether these two groups are themselves related. The relationship may simply be that the decoration on both is (as we have proposed above) ultimately derived from decorative styles of the Levant and the Eastern Mediterranean, where painted pottery is common at this time. However, the possibility that there is a more direct link between the 'Midianite' and Khuraybah pottery needs considering; though we must stress again that the necessary typological analysis has not yet been carried out, particularly with regard to shape, to make a full discussion possible. But, with regard to the decoration, it can already be said that although the designs on the 'Midianite' ware are generally speaking much more elaborate than those on the Khuraybah vessels, and include a significant number of animal motifs which never occur at Khuraybah, there are undoubted similarities between the simpler decorative elements, especially the ladder and trellis patterns. These, of course, are universal motifs, which can occur anywhere, and may be no more than coincidental; and it needs to be emphasised that the overall effect of the 'Midianite' ware, as well as its technical aspects, mark it off, in the writer's opinion, as something very different from the Khuraybah pottery. There is also the chronological evidence which, uncertain though it is, makes it difficult to avoid the conclusion that a period of several centuries, perhaps as much as half a millennium, separates the two groups. And yet . . . if the links we have proposed between the Khuraybah and Edomite pottery did not exist, or if the chronological gap between the 'Midianite' and Khuraybah pottery could be closed, it would be a not unreasonable temptation to see the Khuraybah style as a late manifestation of a tradition in painted pottery first introduced into N.W. Arabia in the Late Bronze Age.

We could even go further (if only we could show that the Khuraybah style of pottery originated several centuries earlier than the presently available evidence indicates) and suggest that this ware was not only the descendent of the 'Midianite' style, but also stood in some sort of ancestral relationship to the Edomite pottery. The attraction of this theory is that it

⁴⁰ C. J. Gadd, 'The Harran Inscriptions of Nabonidus', *Anatolian Studies* VIII (1958).

⁴¹ *Levant* IX (1977), 9.

⁴² R. de Vaux, 'Teman, Ville ou Région d'Edom?', *Revue Biblique* (1969), 379–385; Lindsay, *PEQ* (1979).

would not only help to fill the otherwise rather strange gap in the archaeological record of N.W. Arabia that seems at present to exist between the period of the flourishing of Qurayyah and that of Dedan, but might also help to explain the popularity of painted pottery in Edom at a time when, elsewhere in Palestine and Transjordan, painted wares are the exception rather than the rule. Edomite pottery would thus be

seen as an amalgamation of Palestinian shapes and certain decorative elements (red burnishing and reserved-slip), with a N.W. Arabian tradition of painting. However, at this point speculation has certainly gone too far. The various hypotheses suggested in this paper can only be tested by field work in both southern Jordan and in Arabia, and if they stimulate activity in this direction they will have been worthwhile.