

Rhodian amphora stamps found in Mleiha (Sharjah, UAE): old and recent finds

To date Mleiha has yielded eighteen stamps belonging to Rhodian wine amphorae. Eleven of these can be dated to the second half of the third and the first half of the second centuries BC. Rhodian stamps are vital for the chronological framework of the PIR-A period at Mleiha. Most of them, if not all, belonged to funerary contexts but were unfortunately rarely found in undisturbed contexts. The stamp types of the eponym Ἀριστεύς and of the fabricants Ἀπολλώνιος and Φλοιστόφανος do not seem to occur very often.

Keywords: Mleiha, south-east Arabia, stamped Rhodian wine amphorae, PIR-A period, funerary context, third–second century BC, G. Finkielsztein's 'chronologie basse'

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Introduction

The inland site and village of Mleiha is located some 55 km to the east of the coastal city of Sharjah, approximately 20 km south of al-Dhaid and 45 km west of the Gulf of Oman. The archaeological site, lying in the plain at the western foothills of the Oman mountains, covers an area of several square kilometres. Known since the late 1960s, the first excavations took place in 1973 and were carried out by an Iraqi team. In 1986 a French team started work at Mleiha and continued for many years (Mouton 1999: 9–12). After a long interruption, excavations were resumed more recently. In the meantime, while protecting this vast area from looting and destruction — particularly from the installation of farms — a team of the Directorate of Antiquities of Sharjah Emirate also initiated long seasons of excavations with often large-scale excavations in

and around the site. This research is still ongoing. Finally in 2009 a Belgian team¹ also started excavating, with the specific aim of exploring the remains of the last centuries of the first millennium BC. So far three seasons have been completed.

Michel Mouton, in his now published doctoral dissertation (2008) and his publication of some of the results of the French team (1999), has established a chronological framework for south-east Arabia of the period between

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