

# Unearthing Arabia: The Archaeological Adventures of Wendell Phillips

**On view** October 11, 2014–June 7, 2015, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

Wendell Phillips, a young, dashing paleontologist and geologist, headed the largest archaeological expedition to remote South Arabia (present-day Yemen) from 1950 to 1952. Accompanied by some of the leading scholars, scientists, and technicians of the day, Phillips was on a quest to uncover two ancient cities—Timna, the capital of the once-prosperous Qataban kingdom, and Marib, the reputed home of the legendary Queen of Sheba—that had flourished along the fabled incense road some 2,500 years earlier. Through a selection of unearthed objects as well as film and photography shot by the expedition team, the exhibition highlights Phillips's key finds, recreates his adventures (and misadventures), and conveys the thrill of discovery on the last great archaeological frontier.

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Phillips stands with Yemeni men, including Sheik Al-Barhi (center), a leader of the Bal Harith tribe, and a child in the desert. Courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.



Wendell Phillips discovering an ancient identification "dog tag" of a Qataban resident. Courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.

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Wendell Phillips, courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.



Wendell Phillips' team begins excavation at a peristyle hall in Marib, present-day Yemen. Courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.



Dr. Albert Jamme, leading South Arabian epigraphist, examines a find in Marib, Yemen. Courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.



Wendell Phillips (center, in robes) is made a sheikh of the Bal Harith tribe and given the name Hussein Ali, at a farewell party for the expedition in Beihan given by Sherif Hussein. Courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.



The bronze lions of Timna—one of the pair is shown here during excavation, outside House Yafash at the city's South Gate—indicated that Qataban culture evolved several centuries earlier than previously thought, and played a large role in confirming the chronology of the ancient history of South Arabia. Courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.



*Lion with rider*  
Yemen, Timna, 75 BCE–50 CE  
Bronze  
Gift of The American Foundation for the Study of Man, Wendell and Marilyn Phillips Collection, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian, LTS1992.6.88



Dr. Albert Jamme, leading South Arabian epigrapher, creating a latex squeeze (impression) of an inscription fragment. Courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.

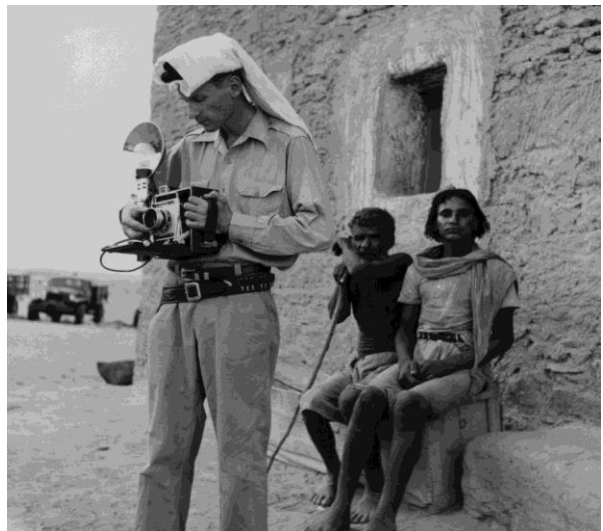


Local Beihani basket boys lined up outside the excavation site. Courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.





Wendell Phillips' expedition caravan winds its way into the desert; one truck reads "American Foundation Arabian Expedition". Courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.



Wendell Phillips, courtesy American Foundation for the Study of Man.



*Plaque with inscription and phiale*  
Yemen, Timna, first half of 1st century BCE  
Bronze  
Gift of The American Foundation for the Study of Man,  
Wendell and Marilyn Phillips Collection, Arthur M.  
Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian, LTS1992.6.49



*Head of a woman ("Miriam")*  
Yemen, Timna, 1st century BCE–first half of 1st century CE  
Alabaster, plaster, lapis lazuli or glass  
Gift of The American Foundation for the Study of Man,  
Wendell and Marilyn Phillips Collection, Arthur M.  
Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian, LTS1992.6.181