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# THE IASA BULLETIN



*The Latest News and Research in the Arabian Peninsula*



**IASA**  
International Association  
for the Study of Arabia  
الرابطة الدولية لدراسة الجزيرة العربية

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formerly the British Foundation for the Study of Arabia

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The IASA Bulletin is an e-publication for members of the IASA. It is published twice a year, in Spring and Autumn. The Bulletin depends on the good will of IASA members and correspondents to provide contributions. News, items of general interest, details of completed postgraduate research, forthcoming conferences, meetings and special events are welcome.

Please email: [bulletin@theiasa.com](mailto:bulletin@theiasa.com)

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors of the articles. They do not purport

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## Membership

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Excavations in Samahij and Muharraq Town, Bahrain : excavation in MUH-3 (photo. R. MacLean), see p. 11

## WELCOME FROM OUR CHAIR

Welcome to the first IASA Bulletin of 2022. We are welcoming several new people to the IASA in this issue, as well as outlining the events we have to look forward to over the rest of the year.

We have appointed Sarah Campbell as the new Outreach Consultant and editor of the Bulletin, of which this is her first edition. Sarah, who is from New Zealand, is a research assistant at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, and has a lot of experience with publications and communications, which she brings to the Bulletin. I am delighted that we have found such an excellent successor to Carolyn Perry, who has done so much for the IASA. Sarah is assisted by a new Research Editor, Maria Gajewska, who is currently doing a PhD at Cambridge University, and by the Reviews Editor Alexandra Hirst.

I hope you like and find helpful the new IASA website at <https://iasarabia.org/>. We needed to update our website after more than ten years, especially considering the majority of people now access the site using their phones or handheld devices, for which the new website is well suited. It took longer than we had anticipated to get it done but I am delighted at the way it works. Do please give us comments that might further improve it or let us know of any problems

you encounter in using the website by emailing [contact@theiasa.com](mailto:contact@theiasa.com).

Members elected two new trustees at the AGM on 14 October. Dr Ahmad al-Jallad and José Carvajal López – see the section on Trustees to learn more about them. Dionisius Agius stood down after six years as trustee. We are very grateful for all that he has done for the IASA.

I am delighted that the Seminar for Arabian Studies will take place in Berlin as a physical and virtual event. Further details are in this Bulletin. We are planning a joint workshop with the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL – chaired by one of our trustees, Bob Bewley), a lecture by Dr José Carvajal López, and another by William Facey, a former trustee and reviews editor for the Bulletin, on Charles Huber – France's Greatest Arabian Explorer. We are working on the Beatrice di Cardi Lecture in October by Professor Hugh Kennedy on al-Baladhuri, the historian of the Muslim Conquests. That will be an in-person event with a reception afterwards and a chance for members to meet each other after more than two years of Covid-19 restrictions. Clive Holes, another of our trustees, will also be giving a lecture later this year or early next. Details will follow nearer the time.

## **IASA Research Grants Appeal**

To coincide with the launch of the new website we want to start raising funds for the IASA Research Grants. We do not have the administrative capacity to undertake a major fundraising campaign, but we must do what we can to attract donations from members, supporters, our followers on social media and those attending our events and reading our publications. Our outreach activities are partly aimed at raising the IASA profile and making our work better known. The new website will help with that.

IASA does have a good level of reserves – currently at around £50,000 – but £30,000 of this is allocated to the IASA Seminar, which remains our most important activity. Since 2019 the seminar has been held in a different location each year and we have not yet arranged enough of them to estimate the income and spending in the long run. Much of the spending is on producing the Proceedings and that needs to be covered by income from registration fees for each seminar minus the IASA administrative costs of organizing the seminar. The £30,000 ensures that, even if we received no income, we could still run the Seminar and produce the Proceedings for at least three years.

We have been making research grants since 2013 following a generous donation from the IASA Patron, Valeria Piacentini. Since that was exhausted in 2018, we have drawn on our reserves to make awards totalling over £20,000. We cannot continue to reduce reserves at such a rate so we have had to allocate much less to grants in 2021 and 2022. In future years we will review the financial outlook and decide what we can afford each year using donations we receive and drawing on reserves for the balance.

We have set up a donations page on the new website which will enable people to make donations easily. The website also gives full details of the grants, how to apply for them and examples of the research conducted by recipients of the grants. We will speak about the appeal at our events and do what we can to publicize drawing on the following document.

## **Supporting IASA Research**

IASA began making awards to support research in the Arabian Peninsula in 2013 following a generous donation from the IASA Patron, Valeria Piacentini. We have since continued to make awards by drawing down on reserves, but this is not sustainable in the long term. We are thus setting up the IASA Research Fund with the aim of attracting donations.

Our research grants can make a real difference in sustaining current research and supporting a new generation of researchers. We attach great importance to disseminating the outcomes of research in the form of publications, contributions to conferences and inspiring exhibitions. Recipients of awards are required to make full reports to the IASA and agree to give lectures organised by the IASA as well as writing shorter reports in our bi-annual bulletin to

make outcomes known as widely as possible.

The IASA grants are intended to support research in any academic area covered by the IASA's aims, which are to promote research relating to the Arabian Peninsula, in particular its archaeology, art, culture, epigraphy, ethnography, geography, geology, history, languages, literature and natural history. Grants may be used to fund fieldwork, library or laboratory-based research, or research support.

There are two types of research grant:

Small Research Grants: up to £500 (for all categories of researchers)

Main Research Grants: up to £1,000 (for post-doctoral research).

The application deadline for grants is normally 31 May with the awards being announced by the end of June. They are assessed by our Research Committee, which is chaired by Dr Derek Kennet.

They are open to applicants of any nationality. Further details, including our past grants, are available at <https://iasarabia.org/grants/>

## **How to donate**

Please consider making a donation, no matter how small. To do so please go to the [Donations](#) page of our website. If you would like to discuss a possible donation, please contact Noel Brehony at [contact@theiasa.org.uk](mailto:contact@theiasa.org.uk).

## **Noel Brehony**

Chair

International Association for the Study of Arabia  
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Qala'at al Bahrain Palatial Quarter drone view, see p. 13



# IASA NEWS

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I am very pleased to be joining IASA as Outreach consultant, and I am looking forward to engaging with members through social media, hearing from you by email, and meeting you at the Beatrice Di Cardi lecture, and hopefully other in-person events soon.

As this is my first Bulletin it has been a great opportunity to connect with people working on projects in and on the Arabian Peninsula. I am excited to see updates from areas including Dhofar, Umm al-Quwain, Ras al-Khaimah and Bahrain, as well as reports on our IASA lectures covering Yemen, Abu Dhabi and the architecture of Dubai, and a review of the Juifs d'Orient exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris.

It would be wonderful to see updates from across the region, as well as from scholars working on Arabia globally, and from more local organisations as well.

I am also pleased that this Bulletin coincides with the launch of the new IASA website. Do check it out and offer your thoughts, as well as considering making a contribution through the donations page.

If you have work that you would like to share with the IASA membership – be it something you think should be highlighted on twitter or LinkedIn, an article you would like to submit for inclusion in the Bulletin, or an idea for a lecture or a book review – please get in touch! I am also particularly keen to see photos from your research and travel in the Arabian Peninsula, and to share these with the membership through our Instagram, so do share these with me if you are happy to.

Sarah Campbell

[outreach@theiasa.com](mailto:outreach@theiasa.com)



## TRUSTEE NEWS

Trustee biographies may be found on our website. Here we feature our two new Trustees.



**Dr José C. Carvajal López**

José C. Carvajal López did his undergraduate degree and his PhD at the University of

Granada (Spain). He then held a Marie Curie Intra European Fellowship at the University of Sheffield (UK), became lecturer of Islamic Archaeology at UCL Qatar, and since 2018 is a lecturer of Historical Archaeology at the University of Leicester (UK). His specialist field as an archaeologist is pottery and material culture in general, primarily in Iberia and Qatar, but he also has experience in landscape and architectural archaeology. He focuses on archaeological study of the Islamic culture, mainly on the process of Islamization and in interactions of Islam with other cultures. He searches for approaches that combine anthropological theory on material culture and analyses with scientific techniques.

**Professor Ahmad Al-Jallad**



Ahmad Al-Jallad is Univesitair Hoofddocent at the University of Groningen. His work focuses on the languages, writing systems, religions, and cultures of pre-

Islamic Arabia and the ancient Near East. He has done epigraphic fieldwork in Jordan and Saudi Arabia and is currently directing the King Fayçal Center for Research and Islamic Studies Tā'if-Mecca epigraphic survey.

## IASA LECTURES

*The IASA holds at least three online events per academic year, in addition to the Annual Beatrice de Cardi Lecture, named in honour of our late President, usually held in the Summer following the AGM, although in 2022 we will be holding this in the Autumn.*

*If you are a likeminded organisation and would like to hold a joint event please contact us via [bulletin@theiasa.com](mailto:bulletin@theiasa.com). Members with suggestions for events are also very welcome to forward them.*

**14 October 2021 'How Abu Dhabi's archaeology is reshaping the understanding of the Global Neolithic', by Professor Peter Magee, Director of Zayed National Museum and the Head of Archaeology with the Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi**

Professor Magee's fascinating lecture positioned some of the important discoveries made on the islands of Abu Dhabi in the last ten years within the broader history of scholarship of the period from ca. 8000 to 5/4000 BCE and highlighted the significance of those discoveries.

Before focusing on the specific site of MR11 on Marawah

Island, Professor Magee acknowledged that he was drawing heavily on work carried out by colleagues Mark Jonathan Beech, Noura Hamad Al-Hameli, Richard Cutler, Ahmed elFaki and others, and thanked them for their contributions, while noting that not everyone might agree with the conclusions he had drawn.



Excavations on the island of Marawah show that people were building and living in houses in the first half of the 6th millennium BCE. While we might take for granted that people settle and live in houses, Professor Magee pointed out that within the longue

durée of modern human history, it is only within a very small percentage of that time frame that people made the decision to settle, build a structure and live in it. This decision needs to be contextualized within the environmental, social and economic factors occurring at the time.

Evidence of Neolithic occupation on Marawah was revealed in the 2000s during the Abu Dhabi Island Archaeological Survey and also in subsequent surveys. Focusing on a dwelling excavated at MR11, Professor Magee noted that this was part of a broader socio-economic decision to build and to live in one place at a specific time. The structures so far excavated are not single cell units, but multi-unit buildings with a complex architectural history including multiple rooms and doorways, and a spatial complexity indicated by inside and outside space, such as walls creating extramural spaces for cooking or other activities.

Furthermore, Area C on the highest point of the MR11 plateau has a long central room, possibly indicating a communal gathering place and associated with extensive evidence of burning, indicating either everyday activity or perhaps another, special, function.

High precision radiocarbon dating and the context of charcoal samples show that the settlement existed by 5800/5700 BCE, pushing back both the chronology of the Neolithic of this part of the Gulf and the date of structures, leading Professor Magee to consider the factors that came together at that time and place to create the environment for this development.

This was a period of increased precipitation and successful nomadic pastoralism in the area. In the broader Arabian Gulf, from ca. 5500 BCE there was a period of intense maritime trade between the Arabian littoral and Mesopotamia. In the north, settlements in Kuwait are connected with this expansion of trade.

Though there is some evidence of interaction with the Ubaid world at Marawah, there is not enough for it to be considered as a driver for sedentarization, and the chronology does not fit.

V. Gordon Childe's 1936 work *Man Makes Himself* defined the package of the Neolithic period. At Marawah we see

a selective adoption of the package. Some elements, such as use of domesticated animals, are present but there is a rejection of agriculture. Though some have argued that this was due to climatic conditions; until ca. 4000 BCE the area benefited from more precipitation.



What made these people build and live in such dwellings? Mark Jonathan Beech's investigation of fish bones has shown that the dwellings were in use for a large part of the year. Was this a borrowed idea, or was something driving the human race to settle down at this period?

Professor Magee suggests adopting a more local viewpoint to understand this development. Scholars have previously attempted to understand the Neolithic by focusing on terrestrial resources (particularly agriculture) and the development of subsistence strategies that make sense to the largely western scholarship responsible for creating the narrative around events in the region. But that narrative has not really engaged with the locally available resources. It is possible that for coastal areas within the Arabian Gulf, including the islands of Abu Dhabi, we might see a relationship between the Neolithic period and a 'Fertile Coast'.

The rich maritime sources could sustain human populations. Additionally, stone tools provide evidence that terrestrial animals and birds were hunted, plus domesticated animals were used. These resources could encourage sedentary life and create the ability to live and thrive during the Neolithic period.

Exploitation of the sea provided other resources that could be traded, creating economic activity with neighbouring regions and a means of exchange for resources not available along the coast. Ongoing studies will shed light on the changing sea levels that existed around Marawah at the time. It is possible that the island may have been more like an archipelago connected to other islands.

How does a period of sedentary settlement of around 1,000 years affect what happens with a society in the long term? Professor Magee suggests it strengthens social bonds and creates a sense of place and identity rooted to the land. It also permits an in-depth knowledge of the sea, fundamental to later periods in the history of the UAE.

In conclusion, sites such as Marawah provide unparalleled



evidence for early selective adaption, experimentation, and sometimes rejection of the Neolithic 'package'. They reveal a society that was flexible, resilient and able to respond to challenges in a way that differed from societies in the more well-studied areas of the ancient near east and Europe at that time.

Professor Magee ended by noting that excavations will continue at Marawah and other islands and expressed gratitude for the support of the Department of Culture and Tourism, Abu Dhabi, under Chairman H. E. Mohamed Al Mubarak and his colleagues.

The lecture is available on the IASA YouTube channel: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33uo6C-4\\_Z0&t=872s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=33uo6C-4_Z0&t=872s)

Report by Carolyn Perry

## 14 December 2021, 'Showpiece City: How Architecture Made Dubai' by Todd Reisz

This was a joint event with the Emirates Society. Todd Reisz, who is an architect and writer, based the lecture on his book with the same title published by Stanford University Press in 2021. Todd lived and worked in Dubai for several years and became fascinated by the city as he came to understand the role John Harris, a British architect, played in its 20th century development. Looking at Dubai today it is easy to forget that 60 years ago it was really two towns of mostly palm frond houses separated by the Dubai Creek, with a total population of perhaps 30,000, compared with the current figure of just over three million (and an active daily population of four million), and around 20 million tourists a year. Harris's role in Dubai followed a chance encounter at a garden party in Central London in 1951 with Donald Hawley, who was at the time a British political agent in the Trucial States responsible for Dubai. Hawley was looking for British expert assistance for what he called Dubai's prelude to serious development and was attracted by Harris's experience in architectural projects in Kuwait and Qatar, which had embarked on modernization before Dubai. Shaikh Rashid bin Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai, had the vision and drive to transform Dubai, and Donald Hawley wanted British architects and engineers to make that vision a reality.

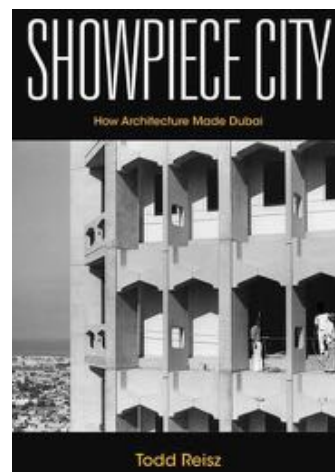
Dubai in the 1950s is often portrayed as a backward sleepy place, but its merchants were already well connected internationally, and Dubai was an entrepôt that imported goods mostly for re-export, albeit in the process of evading British attempts to control what was being traded. In that sense it was already modern even though there was no airport (Sharjah was used). Work on canalizing the creek was still in progress and goods were often unloaded from large dhows onto small ones, and sometimes then to even smaller ones. Hawley understood that the British could benefit not by seeking to control what was being traded, but

by finding a way of fostering the merchants' skills. Dubai should be a free port that would thrive – and for the British that might be achieved without too much expense and might even generate a profit, especially if British designers, architects and engineers were involved.

There was little else in the late 1950s: pearling had finished in the 1930s, and oil and gas production did not start until 1968. Shaikh Rashid's vision and Hawley's pragmatism were instrumental in the transformation of Dubai.

Hawley brought Harris to Dubai and introduced him to Shaikh Rashid, who received Harris's first town plan in May 1960. That plan defined the shape and development of Dubai. This was at the end of the era of British new towns and Todd noted that Harris, in some ways, took this new town design to Dubai. Harris himself later commented that the plan was too simple, yet it provided the basis for what was to come. The roads in the plan were built, and the roundabouts became the nexus of interconnection that is recognisable today.

Harris's plan provided a set of options for future development. These were implemented as resources became available from oil and gas. Todd highlighted the importance of particular buildings designed by Harris and linked these to the rapid changes that took place in Dubai in the 1960s, and then in the 1970s after Dubai became part of the newly independent UAE. He started with the piecemeal development of the Al Maktoum Hospital at a time when resources were often limited. The headquarters of the National Bank of Dubai was praised for the crispness of its façade against the muddle of the waterfront. It reflected the importance of the gold trade and the way Dubai pitched itself to the world to attract new investment and brought other banks to the city.



Shaikh Rashid had visited Qatar and seen the Doha State Hospital (designed by Harris) and wanted a hospital in Dubai to emulate it. That led to the Rashid Hospital, also designed by Harris, at a time when Dubai's infrastructure was rapidly developing and the first signs of Dubai presenting itself as an international city were emerging – along with an

element of competition between the Gulf states. Medical services are an understood infrastructure that can help show that there is a city, a state and a ruler who can provide.

In 1968 – as oil production started – Harris began work on a new and more ambitious plan that was finalised in 1971 and attempted to define the development of Dubai over the next decade. It maintained Dubai Creek as the focal point of activity, with concentric rings of development around the old

harbour with an expansion to the south. However, the pace of expansion soon surpassed the concept in the plan. Harris made only one reference to the two lane “Abu Dhabi road” – a road that soon became the city’s organizational spine as the Shaikh Zayed Road. An emblematic example of this new Dubai was the World Trade Centre built outside the main city on Shaikh Zayed road to Abu Dhabi. The original design was for a mid-sized building, but Shaikh Rashid wanted a tower – a place not for just exhibiting goods but also the ultimate showpiece of Dubai.

In researching the book Todd had been able to meet John Harris before his death and was given access to his archives. The lecture showed Todd’s great admiration for what Harris had done and his lasting impact on Dubai. It was fitting that Mark, John’s son, was able to speak at the end of the lecture. A lively Q and A session was moderated by Alistair Burt, chair of the Emirates Society. The IASA is grateful for all the support provided by the Emirates Society in making such an interesting evening.

Report by Noel Brehony.

This talk was not recorded. Make sure to sign up for our online lectures.

## 21 February 2022, 'Transformation of the Imamate in Yemen 1200–1800: Beyond the Failed State Paradigm', by Dr Ekaterina Pukhovaia

On 21 February IASA, along with British-Yemeni Society and the MBI Al Jaber Foundation, presented a joint talk, and the audience was treated to an exemplary online lecture by Dr Ekaterina Pukhovaia, a graduate in Oriental Studies from Moscow State University. She obtained her PhD in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton in 2021, and is presently a post-doctoral Fellow at the Polonsky Academy of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute.



In under an hour Dr Pukhovaia swept through six centuries of Zaydi rule, the subject of the book she is currently preparing entitled *Between Sultans and Imams: State and Elite Transformation in Zaydi Yemen, 1200–1800*. This was no mean feat of simplification, compression and illustration. So many online lecturers fail to communicate clearly, provide indigestible detail, and/or cram the screen with too many pictures. Dr Pukhovaia avoided these pitfalls. Her lecture was a lucid summary of extremely complex history and greatly enriched by well-chosen photos of maps, Arabic documents and sayyid genealogies.

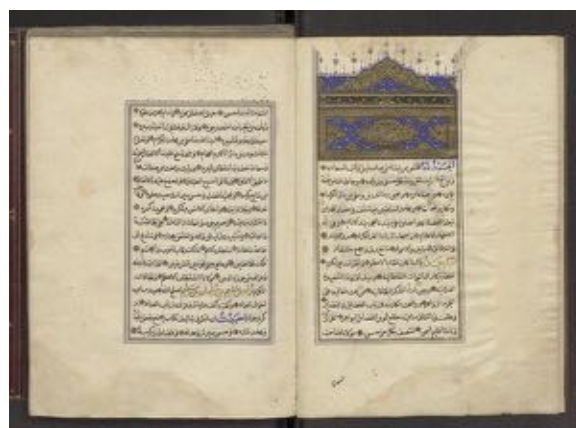
Dr Pukhovaia first outlined key features of the Zaydi imamate throughout the long period under consideration: the ideological basis of the Zaydi imamate, including the hereditary and personal qualifications for leadership, and the

associated problems in the transfer of power; the important role of the ‘ulema as intermediaries between state and tribes; and the perennial competition with polities to the south.

She began her account three centuries after the formation of the Zaydi imamate in Sa’dah in 897, summarizing how its territories and power waxed and waned over the following six hundred years in reaction to local and historical circumstances. She described the Zaydi imamate’s governmental development, and its consolidation (or loss) of territories and political control, in the context of local and regional competition, and of Yemen’s invasion and colonization by foreign states. Dr Pukhovaia divided this long history into three main periods.

### ca. 1200–1500: The development of the ‘classical’ Zaydi imamate

During this period there was an efflorescence of manuscript production, including political histories and biographies of the imams, which helped underpin their power and prestige. These centuries also saw the emergence of enduring sayyid dynasties which built alliances with the tribes and competed for the imamate. They included the Al al-Hamza, the Banu al-Wazir and latterly, and most successfully, Bayt Sharaf al-Din in the early 16th century. This dynasty rose to prominence in the context of competition from the Ayyubids in the south, and from rival Zaydi elites in the north, and after the Mamluks swept the Tahirids from power then retreated, Imam al-Mutahhar Sharaf al-Din took San’aa and Sa’dah. Under his rule the Zaydi state extended from Najran to Zabid, but was thereafter weakened by the difficulty of governing such a vast territory, and by competition for the succession.



### 1538–1635: The first Ottoman occupation

Dr Pukhovaia described the time between 1572 and 1622 as the ‘golden age’ of Ottoman-Zaydi cooperation in Yemen. During this period the Ottomans adopted a policy of indirect rule (my words), incorporating elite sayyid families and tribal leaders into state governance – recognizing their territorial claims, delegating legal, fiscal and military responsibilities to them, rewarding them materially, and expecting them to represent their constituents. She cited as a striking example of Zaydi-Ottoman ‘symbiosis’ the collaboration between the Al Shams al-Din of Kawkaban and an Ottoman governor, which is documented in a



beautifully written and ornamented biographical manuscript preserved in Leiden.

### 1600–1872: The rise and consolidation of the Qasimid imamate

Dr Pukhovaia explained how the Ottomans enabled the Qasimid dynasty to rise to power in the early 17th century by educating and employing sayyid and tribal elites, and after they departed in 1638, bequeathing them the apparatus to rule their state.

During the rule of Imam al-Mansur al-Qasim, the usual fierce competition for succession took place, and – in a break with tradition – the new imam, al-Mu'ayyad Muhammad b. al-Qasim, was elected from among his sons. In order to appease his brothers, he divided his northern domain between them into what Dr Pukhovaia calls 'dominions'. (One of these was Jabal Razih, where I did my field research, and where the descendants of one of these brothers, Ahmed b. Muhammad, still occupied important positions and often cited their illustrious ancestry to explain their elite status.)

Dr Pukhovaia suggested that the next imam, al-Mutawakkil Isma'il b. al-Qasim, was able to gain and hold power, and greatly expand the Zaydi state, in part because – by the time he acceded – he had no competing brothers, only nephews. This draws a veil over the fact that after al-Mutawakkil moved his seat to San'aa, his brothers created from their 'dominions' a rival Zaydi imamate based in Sa'dah. Also, the growth of the international coffee trade, and consequent massive increase in revenues, is surely more significant for understanding the consolidation and longevity of Qasimi rule than family dynamics.

Dr Pukhovaia's fascinating exploration of the evolution of the Zaydi imamate over a long period provoked interesting questions from the audience about the minutiae of the early history, in reply to which she displayed an impressive knowledge of the documentary evidence. In response to Marieke Brandt's question about state-tribe relations, she explained that in the pre-Ottoman period the tribes mainly provided temporary militias for the imams, and that it was not until the Qasimid period that they were integrated into the imamate's administrative system thanks to Ottoman innovations. However, as she acknowledged, her elite sources provide limited information on the role of tribes in Zaydi states.

This lecture is available to view on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BS0Db5b2GIY>

Report by Shelagh Weir

## FORTHCOMING IASA LECTURES

The much anticipated Annual Beatrice de Cardi Lecture scheduled for 2021 will take place in 2022.

Professor Hugh Kennedy FRSE FRAS FBA, SOAS University of London 'Al-Baladhuri's Account of the Muslim

Conquest of Arabia'

October; precise date and location to be announced.

24 May 2022 at 5.30 (BST)

Lecture by Dr José C. Carvajal López

'Nomads and connectivity in the Gulf in the early Islamic period: an archaeological assessment'

More details to come soon - please keep an eye on our social media.

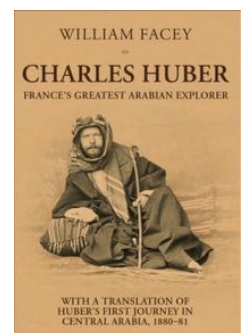
22 June 2022

Lecture by William Facey.

'Charles Huber: Arabia's Greatest Explorer' - exploring themes in his book of the same name (published May 2022).

Joint lecture with the MBI Al Jaber Foundation.

The French-Alsatian geographer Charles Huber (1847-84) achieved fame as one of the 19th century's great Arabian explorers. On his two heroic journeys between 1880 and 1884, he pioneered the scientific mapping of inland Arabia and made some of the earliest records of ancient North Arabian inscriptions and rock art. Despite Huber's great posthumous reputation, almost nothing has been written about him. William Facey fills this void, revealing much that was hitherto unknown about Huber's complex and risk-taking personality, and about his colourful life as a fervent French patriot coming of age in Strasbourg during a time of Franco-German conflict.



William is a historian and researcher specializing in the communication of the Arabian heritage through publications, museums and visitor centres. Since 1974 he has worked as a planning and research consultant on numerous projects to set up museums and exhibitions on the archaeology, history, natural history and people of the Arabian Peninsula, most notably in Saudi Arabia.

The zoom link will be sent out nearer the date.

The remainder of the IASA 2022/23 lecture series is currently being finalised and members will be sent details in due course. Non-members may check our social media accounts for details, or contact [outreach@theiasa.com](mailto:outreach@theiasa.com).

## SEMINAR FOR ARABIAN STUDIES

*The Seminar for Arabian Studies, founded in 1968, is the only international forum that meets annually for the presentation of the latest academic research in the humanities on the Arabian Peninsula from the earliest times to the present day or, in the case of political and social history, to the end of the Ottoman Empire (1922). Papers read at the Seminar are published in the Proceedings of*

*the Seminar for Arabian Studies in time for the Seminar of the following year. The Proceedings therefore contain new research on Arabia and reports of new discoveries in the Peninsula in a wide range of disciplines.*

The 54th Seminar for Arabian Studies was held over two weekends in July 2021 (2nd to 4th and 9th to 11th) in collaboration with the Casa Árabe, Cordoba (having been cancelled in 2020 due to Covid-19). This was the first Seminar for Arabian Studies ever to be held online (with some parts hybrid online/in-person).

A total of 73 papers and 6 posters were presented in 11 separate sessions and two parallel sessions, which ranged in topic from Palaeolithic and Neolithic Arabia to Maritime Arabia and Trade. In all, 164 people attended from 23 different countries around the world.

There were special sessions on North West Arabia (chaired by Rebecca Foote from the Royal Commission for AlUla) and Comparison of cultural & environmental adaptations in the Arabian and Iberian peninsulas/Intellectual links: language, law, theology and culture in Jazirat al-‘Arab and Jazirat al-Andalus (chaired by José Carvajal López and Maribel Fierro).

There were also panel discussion sessions on *The Bronze Age of Southeast Arabia* (chaired by Valentina Azzarà) and on *Arab Navigation – New Comparisons* (chaired by Eric Staples).

Dr Maribel Fierro of the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Spanish National Research Council) gave an excellent keynote lecture with the title *Medina in al-Andalus and North Africa: representations, beliefs and practices*, which was given live, and run online through the Seminar’s Zoom webinar and via Facebook.

Thanks are due to all who participated in and helped to organize the event, in particular the 2021 Seminar Secretary Carolyn Perry, the Casa Árabe (Cordoba), José Carvajal López, Durham University (for the Zoom administration) and the whole Seminar Committee.

The **55th Seminar for Arabian Studies** will take place 5–7 August, 2022 at the Humboldt University of Berlin, co-hosted by the DAI (German Archaeological Institute) and the Museum of Islamic Art (State Museums of Berlin). We expect that the event will take place in-person in Berlin and will also be accessible via the internet.

A Special Session is planned on the topic of incense called *Scents of Arabia – Interdisciplinary research on ancient olfactory worlds*. In addition, during the Seminar, two meetings will be held for scientific exchange among students and PhD candidates in the field of Arabian Studies. They will be both in-person and online, allowing those who are not in Berlin to participate, and are aimed at connecting the worldwide, young generation of scholars on Arabia. An invitation will be circulated soon.

The deadline for abstract submissions was at the end of

February. There has been a great deal of interest this year, with record numbers of abstract submissions. The Seminar Committee will announce the programme as soon as possible.

Further information can be found here: <https://www.theiasa.com/seminar/the-2022-seminar/> where details of booking and advice on accommodation will be posted, and from the Seminar secretary, Kate Ayres-Kennet [seminar.arab@thebfsa.org](mailto:seminar.arab@thebfsa.org)

We hope to see you in Berlin 2022!

**The Seminar Committee**

## OTHER CONFERENCES

***Epigraphy, the Qur’ān, and the Religious Landscape of Arabia, Tübingen, 8–10 September, 2022.***

This three-day international conference will bring together specialists in epigraphy, as well as scholars of the Qur’ān, with the aim of exploring how recent epigraphic and archaeological findings and research have been changing our understanding of the Qur’ān and the Arabian religious and political landscape. The conference seeks to integrate new archaeological finds with ongoing studies on the genesis of the Qur’ān, its Arabian background, and the broader cultural milieu of pre-Islamic Arabia, with a special focus on “late” Late Antiquity at the dawn of Islam. Themes that will be addressed include “Christian epitaphs and architecture”, “Ys3r’l (Israel) and the Jews of late antique Arabia”, “naming God in pre-Islamic Arabia”, “ethnicity and literacy”, and “cultic continuity”.

We believe there is a growing need to make the recent exciting discoveries of scholars working on the Qur’ān and Arabia more widely accessible to historians who may not have a solid background in archeology and epigraphy. Aiming to foster discussion between scholars, each panel will be paired with a specialist on the Qur’ān or on the wider history of Arabia, and each speaker will be asked to send a draft of their contribution to their respondent in advance. The event will be open to the public (registration will be required), streamed live (unless otherwise requested), and thereafter be made available on an institutional website free of charge. The papers presented at the conference, as well as the findings of the conference, will be submitted as an open access double issue to peer-reviewed journals.

This conference is the first of a series of events that will be organized in the framework of the EU-funded *The Qur’an as a Source for Late Antiquity | QaSLA Project*. The project seeks to map the interaction between the Arabian Qur’ān and the Jewish and Christian traditions surrounding Arabia, establishing which parts of the Islamic scripture overlap with which strata of the rich Aramaic traditions of both Rabbinic Judaism and Syriac Christianity. It also brings more securely dated Ethiopic materials and previously neglected Christian and pagan “Israelite” aspects of Arabic poetry into



dialogue with the Qur'ān. The project's innovation lies in a momentous shift of focus, which turns the Qur'ān from an object of study into a historical source for Late Antiquity. In addition to biblical, exegetical, homiletic, legal, narrative, ritual, and poetic discourses and practices, QaSLA also connects the Qur'ān to relevant epigraphic, archeological and historical records of Judaism, Christianity and pre-Islamic Arabian culture.

Valentina A. Grasso on behalf of the QaSLA team

## IASA PUBLICATIONS

The editors are always keen to hear from potential contributors, who in the first instance should contact either: Dr St John Simpson: [ssimpson@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk](mailto:ssimpson@thebritishmuseum.ac.uk) or Dr Derek Kennet: [derek.kennet@durham.ac.uk](mailto:derek.kennet@durham.ac.uk).

A full list of Monographs may be found on our website: <https://iasarabia.org/publications/> All titles can be ordered from Archaeopress at [www.archaeopress.com](http://www.archaeopress.com).

## IASA RESEARCH GRANTS

Each year the IASA makes a number of grants intended to support research in any academic area covered by the IASA's aims, which are to promote research relating to the Arabian Peninsula, in particular, its archaeology, art, culture, epigraphy, ethnography, geography, geology, history, languages, literature and natural history.

Grants may be used to fund fieldwork, library or laboratory-based research or research support. The number of grants

awarded each year depends on the amount of money available.

There are two types of research grant:

**Small Research Grants:** up to £500 (for all categories of researchers)

**Main Research Grants:** up to £1,000 (for post-doctoral research)

The application deadline is **31 May 2022**. Awards are expected to be announced by the **end of June 2022**.

For further information please see: <https://iasarabia.org/grants/>

In 2021 the IASA Grants Sub-Committee received five applications and made the following three awards:

**Dr Michael Fradley** (EAMENA, School of Archaeology, University of Oxford): *Re-assessing the archaeology of the Tihamah Plain using Kh9 Hexagon satellite imagery*.

**Dr Michele Degli Esposti** (Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences): *Looking for Omana. A geoarchaeological study of Akab island in the Umm al Quwain lagoon*.

**Kenta Sayama** (DPhil Candidate, School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford): *Protecting Quaternary palaeoenvironmental sites in south-east Arabia: a database approach*.

Congratulations to all three awardees and we very much look forward to seeing the results of their work.

IASA Grants Sub-Committee

Derek Kennet, Bob Bewley, Will Deadman

# COUNTRY NEWS AND RESEARCH

## BAHRAIN

### Investigations – Moesgaard Museum by Steffen Terp Laursen

#### Qala'at al-Bahrain

Following the publication of the third and final volume on the 1954–1978 campaigns (Højlund, 2019) and the conclusion of the French excavations, Moesgaard Museum were finally in a position to resume excavations at Qala'at al-Bahrain in 2020.

The new investigations have been carried out in close collaboration with the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA).

In March 2020, the joint excavation was untimely terminated by the Covid-19 pandemic, but we were able to continue on a modest scale in October–November 2021.

The first focus of the new investigations is to establish an absolute chronology of the Bronze Age capital of Dilmun and in particular, its grand palatial quarter.



Qala'at al Bahrain Palatial Quarter drone view

The minor portion of the royal palace which is exposed, or which can be reconstructed, is composed of three similar

buildings, apparently each ca. 220 m<sup>2</sup>, and flanking both sides of a 12-metre-wide plastered boulevard. The buildings were of finely dressed stone masonry, at least 5 m tall, and probably represent multi-tiered storages.

The early 2nd millennium BCE palace complex represented a colossal investment and was probably the largest building project undertaken in eastern Arabia for millennia. The working hypothesis is that the royal palace reflects a concentrated economic expansion that occurred at some point during the heyday of the Early Dilmun kingdom and state. This peak boom undoubtedly followed in the wake of the kings of Dilmun taking control of the sea trade between the Indus region and Oman in the east, and Babylonia and Elam in the northwest.

Consequently, a better dating of the time of the palatial complex's construction will allow a more qualified discussion on the global cultural and political background for Dilmun's dominion of the sea route.

During the 2021 season, a 3.5-metre-deep sounding was excavated from the level of the last plaster floor of Building I, and into the settlement layers below until sterile sand near bed rock.

The sequence starts on the terminal floor of Building I, which either represented a reused Early Dilmun floor, or a floor constructed as part of renovation of Building I during the First Dynasty of the Sealand or Kassite period. This floor was in use when a fire destroyed Building I during the Kassite period; old Danish excavations produced period IIIa and IIIb pottery and Kassite tables (Højlund 1997). The 2021 sounding has shown that Building I had two additional plaster floors, of which the lowest was constructed when Building I was first erected. The activities that pre-date the palatial complex are represented by sixteen distinct stratigraphic levels, with traces of changing functions and pottery ranging from period IIb/c to period I, (ca. 2200 BCE).

Twenty carefully selected C14 samples from this sequence have been submitted for radiocarbon dating. The plan is that by means of Bayesian modelling, the stratified samples can help us constrain the statistic uncertainties of the dates and establish a much-improved absolute dated sequence of the Bronze Age city. Dating the floors of Building I and the lower strata will mark a significant contribution to the question of exactly when Dilmun witnessed its major peak boom.

### **Royal Mounds of A'ali**

At the royal cemetery, Moesgaard and BACA in 2021 continued excavation of the 12.5-metre-high Mound Q, which has been ongoing annually since 2017. The project aims to integrate the dating frame of this royal tomb in the existing C14 chronology of Dilmun rulers (Laursen 2017). During the 2021 season the top plan of the lower chamber was finally exposed, revealing a more than 10-metre-long H-shaped tomb.



A'ali Royal Mound Q 2021 seen from the east.

The excavation of Mound Q has so far revealed an unusual sequence of exciting events. The tomb was first construed with a horizontal dromos passage ca. 1900 BCE and a king was apparently entombed in the lower chamber. Later, the lower chamber was opened, and another king was apparently laid to rest in an orderly fashion. In connection with the second royal burial, the dromos entrance way was fundamentally reconstructed and substituted by a huge 10 metre deep vertical shaft probably to be used in new rituals of death and royal burial. Later still, the entire mound was robbed and ransacked with extreme ferocity. Finally, the crater left by the tomb raiders appears to have been refilled and the mound was superficially restored.

### **New Publications by Moesgaard**

*Qala'at al-Bahrain 3: The Western and Southern City Walls and Other Excavations*, by Flemming Højlund. ISBN: 9788793423282 | Published by: Aarhus University Press | Series: Jutland Archaeological Society Publications | Jutland Archaeological Society Publications vol. 30:3 | Year of Publication: 2019 |

*Tell F3 on Failaka Island Kuwaiti-Danish Excavations 2012-2017*, by Flemming Højlund & Anna Hilton. ISBN 978-87-93423-62-6 | Jutland Archaeological Society Moesgaard Museum, Denmark National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, Kuwait | Series: Jutland Archaeological Society Publications | Jutland Archaeological Society Publications vol. 116 | Year of Publication: 2021 |

### **Excavations in Samahij and Muharraq Town, Bahrain**

*Timothy Insoll, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter, UK. T.Insoll@Exeter.ac.uk*

Four weeks of excavations were completed in Bahrain in November 2021 under the auspices of a project, *Early Islamic Bahrain*, which has been ongoing since 2001. The latest phase of excavations co-directed by Professor Timothy Insoll and Dr Rachel MacLean of the University of Exeter, and Dr Salman Almahari and Professor Robert Carter of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities is focusing upon Muharraq with the fourfold aims of investigating the Late Antique/Early Islamic transition, evidence for Christianity, how Muharraq fits into the overall settlement



pattern of Bahrain, and mercantile activity in Muharraq Town between the 18th and early 20th centuries. Following trial excavations at various locations in 2017 and 2018, two larger units were opened in 2019: one in the village of Samahij on the north coast and one in Muharraq Town, and these were continued and extended in 2021.

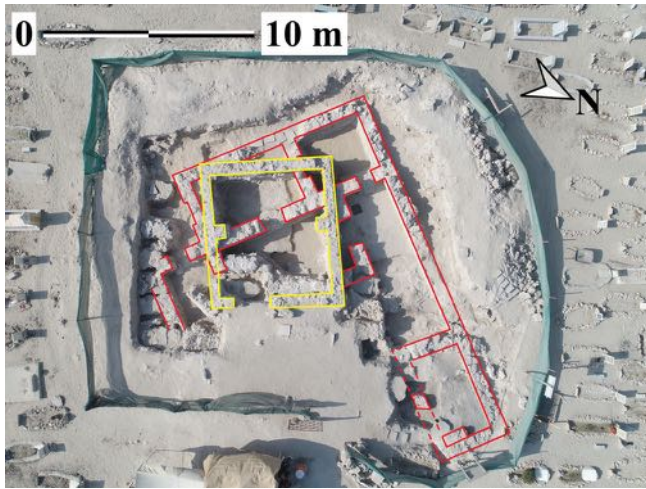


Figure 1. The excavated Christian building complex (in red) with rooms numbered and the later mosque and shrine (in yellow) excavated in Samahij (Photo. Survey Directorate, Ministry of Housing, Kingdom of Bahrain, annotated by N. Anderson).

The excavations at Samahij have provided confirmation for the long held belief, both by the local community and scholars (e.g., Beaucamp and Robin 1983) that there were Christian communities in Muharraq, as suggested for example by the name of the village neighbouring Samahij to the west, Al-Dair, or Dayr, meaning ‘monastery’ or ‘cloister’ in Aramaic (Potts 1990, 12). A large building complex was revealed at Samahij beneath the remains of a later Shi’a mosque and shrine under a mound in the centre of the village cemetery (Figure 1). Seven rooms have been identified within the building so far including one long room, possibly a refectory (Room 2), with marks in the plasterwork probably left by wooden fittings, and a smaller room that might have been used for craft activities (Room 1). Three spindle whorls and two and a half copper needles were recovered from the floor deposits in this room, which is suggestive of textile working. An internal room may have been living quarters (Room 5), and a room used as a kitchen (Room 7) has also been discovered (Figure 1).



Figure 2. The pearl shell from Samahij with the human face drawn on it in bitumen (Photo. T. Insoll).

Two C14 dates indicate occupation between the 6th and first half of the 7th centuries. The ceramic assemblage concurs with the radiocarbon dates and suggests continued

occupation or use as a midden through the 8th century (Insoll et al. 6, 12–13). Fragments of decorated stucco indicated its utilization in parts of the building, with designs comparable to those found at, for example, the monastery at Kharg Island (Iran) (Hardy-Guilbert and Rougeulle 2003, pls 11 and 12) and Christian buildings at Al-Qusur (Kuwait) and Sir Bani Yas (Abu Dhabi) (Lic 2017, 153–154). Other finds included glass wares, copper coins, faunal remains, a few beads, marine shell, and bitumen, with an interesting fusion of the latter two provided by a pearl shell (*Pinctada margaritifera*) that had been drawn on with bitumen to produce a human face with hair, eyebrows, nose and eyes, and perhaps a toy (Figure 2). The function of the building may have been a monastery or the episcopal palace of the bishop. Interpretation is tending toward the latter (Insoll et al. 2021, 21); the episcopal seat of ‘Meshmahig’ or ‘Mašmahig’, from which ‘Samahij’ is possibly derived from or a corruption of, is referred to in various historical sources including the Synods of the Church of the East in 410 and 576 CE (Beaucamp and Robin 1983, 178; Potts 1990, 124, 153; Langfeldt 1994, 54; Carter 2008).



Figure 3. Some of the features in the unit excavated in Muharraq Town (MUH-3). 1. Trough. 2. Well. 3. Test excavation and location of Large Incised Storage Vessel. 4. Stone-lined pit (photo. T. Insoll).

Evidence for a Christian presence in the form of two very small ivory crosses was also recorded in the excavations in Muharraq Town. These are undated, as is the site pending C14 dating, but based on the ceramics present it would appear there were two phases of occupation, an earlier 7th to 8th century horizon, and a later post-17th or 18th century horizon. Excavated in a vacant lot in the middle of the densely urbanized landscape, the top 100 cm or so of deposits was disturbed and mixed with modern rubbish, the remains of debris associated with structures that had stood on the site until the end of the 20th century. Beneath this, a variety of features were recorded attesting mixed kitchen/domestic and industrial usage – floors, a trough, a well, part of a *tannur* or oven, evidence for secondary glass working in the form of cullet and a couple of fused beads, and spreads of rubble from collapsed structures linked with the deep sequence of buildings represented (Figure 3). A pot was also found, filled with coins wrapped in textile and apparently buried for safekeeping. CT scanning indicated it contained a couple of hundred small coins, possibly silver, as well as items of jewellery (Figure 4), and is awaiting conservation. At the base of the sequence in waterlogged levels, a much larger pot was recorded, a large incised storage vessel, almost intact, and probably associated with the earlier phase of occupation (Figure 5).



Figure 4. The coin-filled pot during excavation in MUH-3 (photo. R. MacLean).

The results of the excavations indicate that Samahij was the centre of a Christian community with the remains of other buildings likely buried under the cemetery and surrounding modern housing. Christianity

disappeared in the 8th century and the centre of occupation appears to have shifted from Muharraq to the main island of Awal, particularly in the vicinity of Bilad al-Qadim (Insoll 2005; Insoll et al. 2016). The first archaeological proof of Muslim identity is then found there, a sherd marked with the beginning of the *basmalah* and dated to the 9th–early 10th century. In Muharraq, occupation appears to have reduced to a few scattered villages until the 18th–early 19th century when a commercial boom occurred fueled by trade in commodities such as pearls (e.g., Carter and Naranjo-Santana 2010, 2011; Carter 2012). This led to settlement expansion in Muharraq, and large-scale development ensued in Muharraq Town as attested by the extensive evidence for later occupation, trade and industry found. Excavations will continue again later this year.



Figure 5. The Large Incised Storage Vessel during excavation in MUH-3 (photo. R. MacLean).

#### Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to the communities of Samahij and Muharraq Town, and the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities for allowing the research. He is also most grateful to HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa for funding the research.

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## OMAN

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### UmWeltWandel: Reconstructing Bronze Age landscapes and the paleoenvironment in Central Oman through a new interdisciplinary project, by Rebecca Hahn

Despite being one of the driest regions in the world, the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula experienced a cultural heyday as early as the 3rd millennium BCE. However, it is not yet known how people managed to adapt to this extreme environment at that time. The research project



“UmWeltWandel”, jointly undertaken by the universities of Tübingen, Frankfurt, Mainz and Göttingen, Germany, thus aims to reconstruct the palaeoenvironment and paleogeography of Central Oman with a particular emphasis on the Bronze Age (3200–1300 BCE). Besides archaeology, various natural science disciplines are involved in this project, including archaeobotany, geomorphology, palynology and malacology. Together, data from these specialist analyses will reconstruct the former landscape, including local vegetation and water availability, in order to better understand people’s way of life, subsistence, and failed or successful sustainability strategies in the Bronze Age.



Figure 1: Overlooking Wadi Andam during the vegetation survey. (Photo: Tara Beuzen-Waller)

In 2021, the field season began with a qualitative survey of the modern vegetation and geomorphology at and around the site of Al-Khashbah, located 15 km north of the city of Sinaw at the confluence of the Wadi Samad and the Wadi Shuway’i. In general, the local vegetation today consists of heavily browsed xeromorphic desert plants, shrubs and small trees (mostly *Acacia* and *Prosopis*), as well as riparian elements located within the active wadi channels (Figure 1). The vicinity of Al-Khashbah is hydrologically favourable for both geographic and geological reasons: first, the alluvial plain of Wadi Samad is crossed by small hills, creating a natural dam that might artificially raise the water table level. Second, the concentration of surface flows of the Wadi Samad in narrow gaps can locally increase the volume of surface runoff. Finally, the lithological contact between the ophiolites and the limestones/chert folded hills of the Hawasina formation might be favourable for springs or groundwater emergence. During the field survey, quaternary



formations were mapped and delimited in the areas surrounding the archaeological sites in order to provide a better understanding of the geomorphological dynamics, with a special emphasis on Holocene formations.

Figure 2: Taking samples for further analyses. (Photo: Tara Beuzen-Waller)

Several soundings were excavated in likely Holocene alluvial formations with a mechanical excavator. The aims of these soundings were to 1) refine the chronology of the alluvial accumulation of the medium and low terrace systems visible along the Wadi Samad, 2) to analyse the fluvial and pedological records therein, and 3) to study potential biomarkers trapped in these formations. Soundings employed a multiproxy sampling strategy, including systematic sampling for sedimentary and palynological analyses, and selective sampling for soil analyses, as well as anthracological and malacological analyses (Figure 2). In every sounding, samples for optically stimulated luminescence (OSL) dating and snails and charcoal for radiocarbon dating were collected.

To allow deeper insights into the living conditions during the Bronze Age around Al-Khashbah, the former vegetation cover is of special interest. Its composition and pattern are archived in sediments from that time by pollen grains and phytoliths. Therefore, sediment samples from about twenty sites were taken to test their suitability as geoarchaeological archives. Sampling was undertaken both on-site and off-site in the surrounding landscape to elucidate contrasts between areas that may be more or less strongly influenced by humans. Surface samples and plant material were collected to get an overview of the recent pollen and phytolith signatures of varying sites and vegetation types (Figure 3). Herbivore dung pellets were also collected to identify plants commonly eaten by camels and goats by their pollen and phytolith content.



Figure 3: *Calotropis procera* growing amongst tamarisk in Wadi Andam. (Photo: Tara Beuzen-Waller)

Besides fieldwork, major efforts were undertaken in the fields of anthracology and malacology. This includes ongoing analyses of charcoal, found throughout the excavations of Building V in Al-Khashbah, and snails from one of the ditches of Building I. Early anthracological results indicate that tree cover during the Early Bronze Age was broadly similar in composition to today: *Acacia* and *Prosopis* dominate the wood charcoal assemblage from Building V, with the smaller components of *Ziziphus*, *Lycium* and other minor taxa. Efforts to record wood anatomical information from the charcoal beyond taxonomic identification promise to shed light on past harvesting practices, wood condition and management strategies. Meanwhile, the malacological results show the following:  $\delta^{18}\text{O}$  values derived from the aquatic gastropod *Melanoides tuberculata* revealed seasonal

patterns related to changes in the water temperature and in the precipitation-evaporation balance. Furthermore, it can be assumed that the water in the ditches was most likely not stagnant but continuously recharged with freshwater, e.g., groundwater. The data concerning terrestrial gastropods (*Zooteucus insularis*) are mainly used to reconstruct vegetation. Here it can be clearly distinguished from the  $\delta^{13}\text{C}$  data that the gastropods dated to the Bronze Age mainly consumed C4 plants, while those dated to the recent oasis primarily fed upon C3 plants.

More information can be found on the project's website: <https://www.archaeoman.de/en/the-joint-research-project-umweltwandel/>.

### An Iron Age necropolis (KR-N1) in the area of Khor Rori: new discoveries about the coastal culture of Dhofar

Silvia Lischi (University of Pisa – DHOMIAP project),  
Matteo Vangeli (University of Pisa)

The DHOMIAP project's initial focus on the study of the HAS1 settlement at Inqitat, with the aim of defining the characteristics of the coastal culture of Dhofar, has turned its interest to investigating the surrounding area with the intention of studying the distribution of archaeological evidence in the area of Khor Rori. The project involves fundamental and continuous collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of Oman. This systematic survey identified an area of ca. 22 hectares, just to the north of the promontory of Inqitat, scattered with archaeological structures of different shapes and sizes, and which appear to be exclusively related to funerary use. Among the numerous phases, the Iron Age is the most represented.

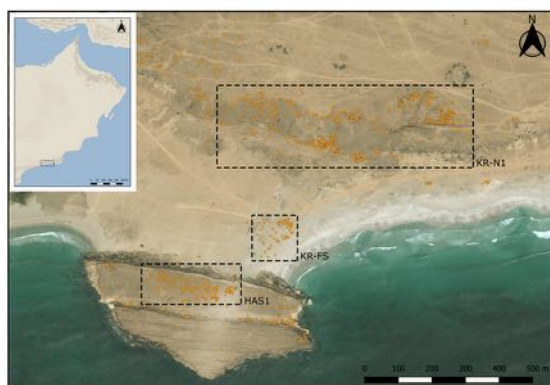


Figure 1. Location of the area of interest and the three sites discussed.

The necropolis of KR-N1 consists of approximately 700 structures covering the upper part of the promontory and its slopes facing the sea. Some structures arranged in clusters are also present at the base of the promontory.

The structures are composed of megalithic stones arranged vertically around a burial chamber supporting a covering consisting of two or more stone slabs. In the best-preserved structures there is an opening of varying size placed directly under the covering slabs, without a preferred orientation.

Some structures revealed a kind of lithic 'box' where the dead were laid.



Figure 2. a. View of the structure before excavation; b. Some human bone remains in situ; c. Distribution of the cluster to which the excavated structure belongs; d. The structure during excavation.

Three structures in different areas of the necropolis were excavated; the state of preservation of the human bones is very compromised, probably due to the presence of post-depositional processes linked to the climate (arid in winter and monsoonal in summer) and the acidity of the soil. These investigated structures were subjected to photogrammetric 3D modelling. The same work has been carried out with the human skeletal remains to preserve them and to avoid continuous manipulation that would cause further fragmentation.

The burials within the last excavated tomb were multiple (the osteological remains of the other tombs were so poorly preserved that it was impossible to determine the depositional context) and located in an open space. No selection of human remains is noted, but it is evident that special attention was given to the crania, which were carefully collected in a specific area of the tomb, arranged on the sagittal side. Two bronze hooks, from one of the tombs, represent the only grave good object.

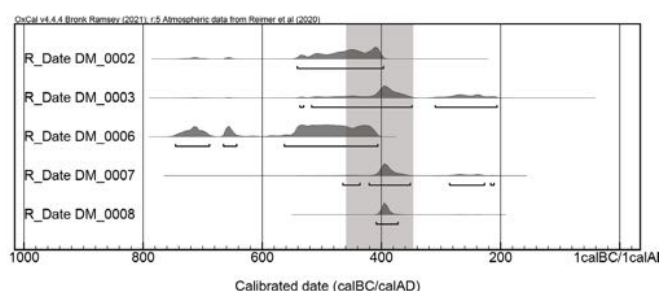


Figure 3. This graph collects the radiocarbon dates obtained at some of the major sites in the area and highlights their contemporaneity.

The determination of sex, age and disease is under study. The radiocarbon dating between 409 and 373 BCE confirms the use of this necropolis during the Iron Age and the cultural connection with the HAS1 settlement on the top of the Inqitat promontory, and the less structured settlement (KR-FS) at the foot of the promontory, which was probably dedicated to fishing. Although this is a preliminary study, it does provide knowledge that the area was inhabited during the Iron Age and brings us increasingly nearer to a complete understanding of the customs characterizing the coastal culture of Dhofar. Project's website: <https://dhomiap.cfs.unipi.it/>



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## New activities at the archaeological site of al-Balīd (December 2021–January 2022)

*A. D'Andrea, R. Giunta, A. Pavan, R. Valentini*

In December 2021 the archaeological investigations at the medieval city port of al-Balīd, Governorate of Dhofar, were resumed, after a prolonged stall due to the pandemic. The activities were carried out within the frame of a new collaboration between the University of Naples "L'Orientale" and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Muscat, with the constant and active support of the Ministry's branch located in Salalah. The field work was focused in an area located immediately west of the central north-south road axis of the town where P. M. Costa (1982) documented a building with two monolithic stone columns over three metres high, bearing interesting decorative motifs on the base and on the capital (Figure 1). On the top of a mound, at an elevation of approximately 5.5 m asl, sporadic outcrops of an east-west oriented structure were emerging. The location of the building, which stands in the central area of the site, and its orientation towards Mecca suggested the presence of a mosque worthy of interest that has never been the subject of an archaeological excavation.



Figure 1. Aerial view of the western part of al-Balīd with the location of the two investigated mosques (image: Google Earth)

The first trench, about 1.5 m wide, brought to light a wall 14.5 m long with a maximum preserved height of about 1.7 m, which defined the southern perimeter of the building. A second trench was opened to identify the presence of the western wall of the building in which the mihrab niche (qibli wall) must have been placed (Figure 2). A semi-elliptical niche was indeed discovered, originally flanked by two columns (base 20 × 20 cm). In the area facing the mihrab was found a floor consisting of a thick layer of white plaster, re-arranged in the area north of the niche through the adding of a second floor, greyish in colour. A further trench investigated 2 m north of the southern wall allowed the field team to find possible evidence of the housing of columns.

Within the frame of a study focused on the religious buildings of the town, the survey of a further mosque, located about 140 m northeast of the citadel, was carried out.



Figure 2. Mihrab of Mosque 1 during the excavations (image: A. D'Andrea)

The building, documented by photogrammetry, was chosen because it was delimited by walls in a good state of preservation, and three circular columns were still standing in the interior (Figure 3). Subsequently, a survey of all the site's buildings was carried out to identify columns and/or column elements still visible and preserved in situ or ex-situ. At the end of the work more than fifty elements were recorded.



Figure 3. Preliminary 3D model of Mosque 2 (elaboration: R. Valentini)

In parallel with the on-field investigations, some activities have been conducted in the exhibition halls of the Museum of the Frankincense Land, Salalah, and concerned

five portions of columns on display, three of which originally belonged to the mosque excavated during the last campaign. From a preliminary analysis of the ornaments it is possible to propose a dating of the columns between the last part of the 11th century and the first half of the 13th century, which allows us to date the phase of the mosque brought to light.

Finally, the activity focused on digitizing a selection of

significant artefacts discovered at al-Balīd and displayed in Oman's different museums or stored in Salalah has been implemented through updating over 500 finds (ceramic, metal, bone, glass, wood, stone). The selection includes different imported and noteworthy artefacts witnessing the relevance of the site in globalized Indian Ocean trade during the medieval period.

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## Ichthyophagoi: their Culture and Economy. Landscape and People during the Iron Age in Coastal Oman

*Romolo Loreto, Lucio A. Corrado, M. Cozzolino, B. Musella (Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"), Ibrahim al-Qysar (Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, Sultanate of Oman)*

## Introduction

This note introduces the season 2021 of the joint Omani-Italian archaeological project at Wādī Banī Ḥālīd (northern Ṣarqīyyah governorate, eastern al-Ḥaḡar), where a dense Iron Age and ancient Islamic occupation was detected. The aim of the project was to define the Iron Age settlement patterns along the eastern al-Ḥaḡar landscape and their relationship both with the coastal areas and the al-Ḥaḡar inner piedmont sites of central Oman. This project follows previous studies of the coastal environment between Muscat and Ra's al-Ḥadd (2014–2018), where several seasonal fishing villages were investigated (in particular Bamah), and their connections with inner permanent sites, such as Lizq, recognized during the Early Iron Age (1300–600 BCE) (Corrado 2020; Loreto 2018, 2020).



Figure 1. The synclinal valley of Wādī Banī Ḥālīd. WBK1 stands on a *talus* along the left slope of the wadi (to the right) dominating an alluvial bend (©UNO)

Such a scientific approach is well suited to the recent Omani ministerial context, with the birth of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the intention of finding a strategy focused not only on scientific research but also on the conservation

and promotion/enhancement of sites relative to the areas between Wādī Banī Ḥālīd and the coast (Bamah).

The project is funded by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by International Cooperation (Italy), the University of Napoli "L'Orientale" (UNO), and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (Oman).

## Season 2021

The Mission 2021, although brief in length because of the Covid-19 pandemic, took place from 14 to 27 December 2021, and focused on the excavation of the Late Iron Age fortified site of Wādī Banī Ḥālīd (WBK1) and on the study of the ophiolitic resources (metals and chlorite) supplying areas, both remotely and on the field (Fig. 1).

Activities in 2021 were focused on the opening of three new trenches (3–5) along the eastern part of the perimetral wall of WBK1 (Fig. 2), defining a new dwelling building (House C/A), investigating the Tower T5 and the wall sector between towers T3–T4. In trench 3 there emerged, indeed, a dwelling building with a rectangular plan extending to about 12m by 8m, of which three rooms (inside the trench perimeter) have been completely excavated, one of them characterized by a fireplace and a huge quantity of tableware dated to the Late Iron Age phase, in particular with decorative patterns related to Samad al-Ṣān and datable between I–II sec CE. In trench 4, inside the tower, an extensive level of collapse has preserved a remarkable quantity of pottery relating to storage purposes, once again datable to between I–II sec CE.; The sounding in trench 5, in proximity of the perimetral wall, has been opened to better define the foundation phase of the fortifications.

## Remote analysis: paleo-environmental maps for the definition of the mineral and ophiolitic resources

Between the research and training programs of the Italian Archaeological Mission of the "L'Orientale"

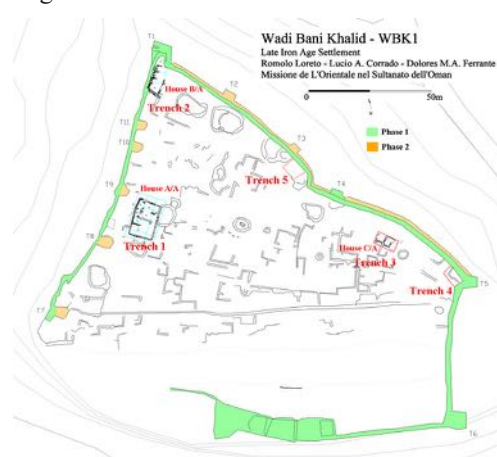


Figure 2. Topographic plan of WBK1 after seasons 2019 (Houses A/A and B/A) and 2021 (Trenches 3 to 5) (©UNO)

in Oman, attention is particularly directed to the study of the paleo-environment and the resources, following a geomorphological approach. The project has, among its objectives, the aim to produce a geo-archaeological map of the whole extension of Wādī Banī Ḥālīd, collecting in a



GIS system the data taken in the field up to this point, and integrating them with data that are constantly acquired by remote sensing procedures.

The overview of the geo-archaeological heritage would lend itself to programming each step of the research, emphasizing and protecting the most important emerging information. Referring to raw material and softstone quarries present in the investigated context, studies have not yet been undertaken in order to identify them precisely, but it would be desirable to plan an explorative investigation during further operations in order to detect the effective presence of raw material sources possibly matching with softstones which came to light from WBK1.

The same goes for the metal sources, distant from the site WBK1 too. Currently the area of Wādī Banī Ḥālid, rich in ophiolitic resources, does not present studies of this sector. However the finding *in situ* of metal items suggests that the research into metal resources can be deepened, whether this resource is local or imported.

As regards to the realization of the geo-archaeological map, concerning the integrated management of a balanced approach to archaeology and tourism, the northern Šarqiyyah governorate is well suited to such an approach. The coastal area, and its hinterland, represent diversified archaeological landscapes with multiple facets and perspectives, as well as being beautiful natural spaces.

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## Review of 3rd mill. BCE graves in HD-7, HD-10 and HD-15 (Ra’s al-Hadd, Sultanate of Oman)

Maurizio Cattani, Francesca Barchiesi, Lorenzo Bonazzi (Università di Bologna)

Since the 1980s, thanks to the survey carried out by the British team headed by Julian Reade, several groups of cairns (HD-7 and HD-10) have been known at Ra’s al-Hadd, located on the margin of the rocky platform which borders to the west and south the main Hafit site of HD-6. Each group of tombs has been given a code. Between 1997 and 2000, Sandro Salvatori and his team investigated some of the cairns from HD 10-3, HD 10-4, HD 10-2 and HD 7-3,

one for each group. The team chose the cairns which were apparently more preserved and so richer in information.<sup>1</sup> Between January and March 2007, five cairns of the group HD 7-3 were investigated by Olivia Munoz, Guillaume Seguin and their team because of their proximity to the construction of a new building for the Omani Security Services.

Recent expansion of the modern village is endangering the area with new buildings, requiring more detailed fieldwork.



Figure 1 GIS map by Francesca Barchiesi.

In Salvatori’s article there is a map of the Ra’s al-Hadd southern beach with site locations (including the tombs), resumed and partially modified in Munoz’s excavation report. We realized that, while there is information on the cairns excavated by the aforementioned researchers, there was no documentation regarding the others. Therefore, we decided to achieve a complete documentation with images and 3D models of the structures so far identified. For each feature GPS points were acquired with two kinds of hardware: a smartphone application (MotionX GPS for iPhone) and GPS Garmin. We noticed some discrepancies between the number and the position of the structures that we identified in this campaign and the structures marked in the maps of Salvatori and Munoz. We created a new map in a GIS with several images from Google Earth and other digital maps, locating features according to visibility and GPS points. It would be desirable, in future, to re-position all the tombs with a more precise instrument (such as a differential GPS) in order to obtain a new updated and precise map.

Since only the excavated tombs have been labelled, we gave a label also to the others in progressive order.

Concerning the characters and the state of preservation of the cairns, as already pointed out in Munoz’s report, the HD 7-3 group shows a significant difference compared to the

<sup>1</sup> The state of conservation is very variable; some tombs still have a clearly visible heap of stones, for others only some alignment is recognizable and little else.

others:<sup>2</sup> the burials have an external wall made up with a facing of worked white slabs in sandy conglomerate coming from the coastal area of Ra's al-Jinz. We recognized this type of external cover from graves of other groups close to HD 7-3: HD 7-2.1, HD 7-12.1, HD 7-12.2, HD 7-12.3, HD 7-12.4, HD 15-1.1, HD 15-1.2, HD 15-1.3, HD 15-1.4, HD 15-1.5, HD 15-2.1, HD 15-2.2, HD 15-2.3, HD 7-6.1, HD 7-6.2, HD 7-6.3, HD 7-6.4, HD 7-6.5 and other ambiguous structures in HD 15-1 group. Most of the tombs have a mixed wall made up of the sandy conglomerate and local rock blocks.

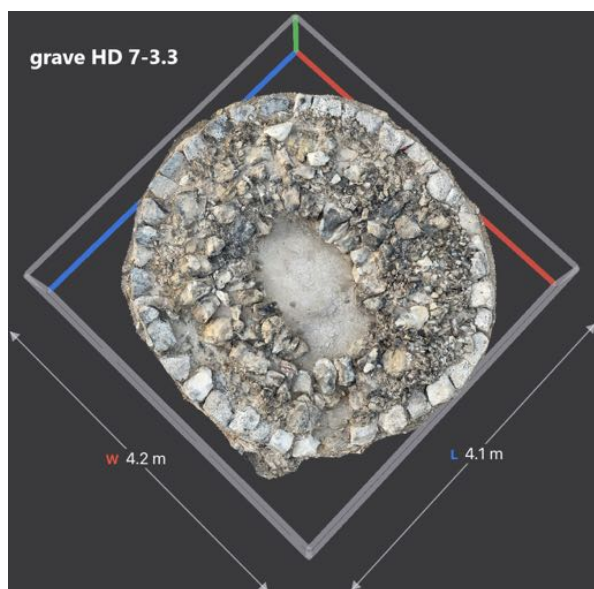


Figure 2 Lidar model by Lorenzo Bonazzi.

From Salvatori's excavation thousands of beads, a bronze knife, two shark tooth pendants, a *Pinctada* ring, a conus bracelet plate and two fragments of a bronze object (maybe a bracelet) have been collected. All these objects are consistent with a dating to the beginnings of the 3rd millennium BCE (Hafit period). The material collected by Munoz<sup>3</sup> seems to belong to the end of the 3rd millennium BCE, coinciding with the practice of cremation and the architectural method (worked white slabs of the external wall) for the Umm an-Nar period. This group of cairns is more probably related to the HD-5 site, located on the coast very close to terrace with HD-7 burials, dated to the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE. This detail leads us to consider the hypothesis that the graves with a white or mixed external face may be contextual to the settlement of HD-5 dating to the Umm an-Nar phase or to an intermediate phase within the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE.

Unfortunately, the imminent risk of urban growth in the area means there is a need to excavate more graves, which is also needed to better understand the relationship between

2 Usually, the burials have this kind of structure: a homogeneous coverage made of small limestone boulders. The proper cairn structure consists of a thick inner wall, made up as a double-faced limestone masonry with sometimes an entrance dromos to the east. The inner wall is surrounded by bigger stone slabs.

3 Various lithic industry, metal hooks, beads, conus, a metal razor, sharks' teeth, a softstone vessel and a lid with dot-in-circle motifs, copper and mother-of-pearl rings, shell pendants and pottery.

the two types of tombs. Lastly, we would like to improve the documentation of the structures by taking advantage of the use of the drone or lidar on the iPad<sup>4</sup> devoted to a valorisation of the site.

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- 4 We tried lidar on the iPad Pro, with good results for some cairns of the HD 7-3 group.



# SAUDI ARABIA

## The activities of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Saudi Arabia, Dūmat al-Jandal (ancient *Adummatu*), 2021 field season

Romolo Loreto (University of Naples "L'Orientale")

### Introduction

Within the archaeological activities of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Saudi Arabia, Dūmat al-Jandal (ancient *Adummatu*) (MAIRAS), ongoing since 2009, season 2021 once again took place from 17 October, 2021 to 19 November, 2021. The writer, Bruno Marcolongo, Simona Berardino, Alessia Vitale, Teodoro Coccozza, Carmine Andrea Falco and Filippo Pedron took part in the work in collaboration with the Saudi team from the Ministry of Culture, composed of Darhan al-Qahtani, Aiydh al-Qahtani, Nasser al-Ghuraibi, Khalifa ar-Ruweili, Ahmad al-Shammari, Jizah al-Herbi and Thamer al-Malki (Figure 1).



Figure 1. The Saudi-Italian team and Egyptian workers participating in the 2021 season (©MAIRAS).

Finances for the project were provided by the Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale (Italy), the University of Napoli "L'Orientale", the Saudi Ministry of Culture, and The Barakat Trust.

The activities proceeded with the various already well-established lines of research: 1) remote sensing, and 2) field surveys in the Jawf region aimed at studying the prehistoric Holocene population and the caravan routes of historical times; 3) excavations inside the oasis; 4) study of ceramic materials and classes of objects that emerged from the excavations; 5) training of Saudi personnel; 6) restoration works. Two of the most recent research lines are introduced here.

### Remote sensing activities on satellite imagery for the development of geoarchaeological maps

In the wake of what was produced with the 2020 remote campaign (Loreto 2020), this season intended to continue the systematic remote sensing activities, focusing on the areas

east and west of Dūmat al-Jandal. This process has led to mapping for the entire Jawf region, over 16,500 prehistoric archaeological sites, and can be considered preparatory to any future field survey.



Figure 2. The historical core of Dūmat al-Jandal revolving around the so-called 'Umar mosque (©MAIRAS).

The "ground-truthing" moved along two directions: towards the west, along the Wadi as-Sirhan, and eastwards, along the plausible caravan routes towards Mesopotamia (Loreto 2021). In the first case, it was possible to verify one of the major sites discovered remotely, an extensive necropolis (WS1) of the Bronze Age that consists of about 1,600 tombs (turrets, mounds) along an area of about 26 hectares. In the second case, it was possible to identify various Neolithic sites (compounds) and several Bronze Age tombs scattered along a route of about 60 km from the modern village of Zalum (120 km northeast of Skaka) towards the east.



Figure 3. Trench 11. Excavation/consolidation activities at the western foot of the castle of Mārid, facing the 'Umar mosque and also revealing new insights on the transitional Late Antique to Early Islamic period (©MAIRAS)

### From excavation to restoration/consolidation activities in ad-Dira'

The excavations inside the Dūmat al-Jandal oasis' core involved trenches 10, 11, 12 and the new trench 13, all of them revolving around the so-called 'Umar mosque and the western foot of the castle of Mārid (Figures 2–3). New insight on the chronological sequence were obtained by defining buildings and material cultures related to the Assyrian phase (8<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE); the Nabataean period (1st century BCE – 2nd century CE); and the transitional period between the Late Antique and Early

Islamic era (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Trench 10, sounding 4, to the west of the 'Umar mosque western wall: detection of a late pre-Islamic building (2nd to 6th century CE) resting on an earlier Nabataean phase (1st century BCE – 2nd century CE) that obliterates an Assyrian phase (8th–7th century BCE) (©MAIRAS).



The restoration activities of the 2021 campaign first addressed the consolidation of the buildings excavated between 2009 and 2021 and at the creation of fruition pathways, with particular attention paid to trenches 10 and 11, which are the most spectacular from an architectonic point of view as well as the ones closest to the so-called 'Umar mosque. Consolidation activities were performed by masonry works according to traditional drystone techniques (Figure 5). The works were directly verified and appreciated by the CEO of the Ministry of Culture, Deputy Minister Jasir al-Herbish, who came to visit on 27 October, 2021, just in time to be able to test the first fruition path created in trench 10 (Figure 4).



Figure 5. Trench 10, Late Antique to Early Islamic domestic context (house Lb1) as seen from the western top of the 'Umar mosque, restoration/consolidation procedure to the definition of fruition pathways: 1) cleaning; 2) restoring (staircase); 3) consolidating walls; 4) consolidating retaining walls (©MAIRAS).

Conspicuous works were also carried out in trench 11 (Figure 3) at the foot of the castle of Mārid, where Nabataean and ancient Islamic architectural phases emerged. In this case, it is a panoramic trench, where a second pathway is being prepared based on the consolidation of the banks of the trench, as well as the consolidation of the walls of the Islamic buildings most at risk of collapse. All masonry means – dry masonry of the pseudo-isodomic or irregular type – are used, which maintains a constant philological principle of not visually altering the oasis's architectural landscape.

### Conclusions and perspectives

This campaign, from the point of view of the Jawf region study, confirmed the extremely complex historical and

cultural framework of the region, which involves prehistoric (Neolithic and Bronze Age) and historic phases intimately connected to the Levant and Mesopotamia areas and is still largely to be defined.

Inside the ancient *Adummatu* oasis, the 2021 campaign highlighted the still high potential of the site, especially the ancient core that still hides much of the Assyrian phase and a huge part of the Nabataean one. In addition, much remains to be done regarding the definition of the Roman-Byzantine and ancient Islamic periods, as well as for the identification of the oasis necropolises, which are still almost totally unknown.

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## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

### Contributions from the Department of Antiquities and Museums in Ras Al-Khaimah (UAE)

#### Site Development: Thirteen Bilingual Info Boards for Dhayah

Throughout 2021, the Department of Antiquities and Museums in Ras al-Khaimah has been busy saving and developing the emirate's rich heritage. Visitors to the bay of Dhayah and its two forts – an important cultural entity placed on UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites – are now informed in detail about this scenic location and its significance.

A collection of thirteen bilingual info boards, written in Arabic and English, provides substantial insights into Dhayah's meaningful past and present. The instructive text panels are arranged along the stairway to Dhayah's hill fort and at potential viewpoints on the top. Each board also provides an informative photograph, architectural drawing, or geographical map. Altogether they tell the fascinating story of Dhayah's unique natural setting, diverse landscapes and cultural remains:



The Significance of Dhayah  
 Dhayah's Geography  
 The Mountains of Dhayah  
 Dhayah's Hidden Mountain Villages  
 Dhayah's Terraced Field Systems  
 The Date Palm Gardens of Dhayah  
 Dhayah's Indigenous Flora and Fauna  
 Dhayah's Mudflats and Mangrove Swamps  
 The Archaeology and History of Dhayah  
 Dhayah's Megalithic Tombs  
 The Lower Mud Brick Fort  
 The Hill Fort  
 Jazirat al-Hulaylah

### National Museum's New Archaeology Wing Pays Tribute to Beatrice de Cardi

While work on the restructuring and refurbishment of the National Museum continues, a new entrance area was added to the layout of the archaeology galleries. It will pay tribute to Beatrice de Cardi and her importance and extraordinary meaning to archaeological research in this emirate. Celebrating her dedication and friendship, an outline of her archaeological activities will be presented, highlighting her profound significance for Ras al-Khaimah.



PHOTO 1: View towards the bay of Dhayah, ©Imke Möllering

### Countess Beatrice De Cardi: Pioneer, Founder And Patron Of Archaeological Research In The Emirate Of Ras Al-Khaimah

After Beatrice de Cardi visited Ras al-Khaimah for the first time in 1968, she continued to return for the next forty-plus years, becoming the founder of archaeological work in this emirate, and its most important and dedicated supporter and contributor.

It was not only her attention to Ras al-Khaimah's rich archaeological heritage, but also her profound understanding of the emirate's unique landscape and geological composition that enabled the discovery of its distinctive cultural past.

Thanks to the unwavering support and interest of H. H. the late Ruler, Sheikh Saqr bin Mohammed al-Qasimi, who provided her with valuable information about monuments and places to visit, she was able to undertake the very first archaeological surveys in the years 1968, 1971 and 1976.

During her work, Beatrice de Cardi rediscovered Ras al-Khaimah's famous coastal town Julfar, an important Indian Ocean trading hub during medieval times. Despite its frequent mentioning in Arabic, Persian and European sources, Julfar's exact location remained unknown. She also discovered the unique prehistoric cemetery in Shimal, representing the largest burial site with megalithic tombs in Southeast Arabia.

Beatrice de Cardi's early fieldwork served as the foundation for her organization of the first archaeological excavations in Shimal and Ghalilah (1976–1978 by Donaldson) and in Julfar al-Mataf (1977–1978 by Hansman).

With the steady support of H. H. Sheikh Saqr, her rediscovery of Julfar initiated a succession of archaeological research carried out by international teams from Iraq, France, Britain, Germany and Japan (1979–1994). Further excavations were executed in Shimal by Göttingen University/Germany (1985–1990).

Today, both Julfar and Shimal have been selected for UNESCO's Tentative List of World Heritage Sites.

Beatrice de Cardi also enabled the extension of archaeological research to southern Ras al-Khaimah, where various excavations were carried out by a British team in Wadi al-Qawr (1986–1990).

The resulting wealth of archaeological information and artefacts gained through her initiative and commitment led to the formation of Ras al-Khaimah's National Museum. Beatrice de Cardi's knowledge and judgement were crucial for establishing the original archaeology galleries, and she was actively involved in every step before the museum's festive opening to the public in 1987.



On invitation of the government, she visited Ras al-Khaimah annually until 2011, and continued her commitment through field surveys and cataloguing of archaeological finds until the age of 97.

Beatrice de Cardi died aged 102 in her hometown of London in 2016.

PHOTO 2: Beatrice de Cardi 2011, ©Department of Antiquities and

Museums, Ras al-Khaimah

### Archaeological Survey: Al-Halla Mountain Village

One of the most extensive surveys and documentations ever undertaken inside Ras al-Khaimah's mountains was executed in al-Halla to study, document and save the architectural history of this spectacular mountain village overlooking Wadi Haqil.

Al-Halla comprises of 804 structures distributed over thirteen hectares: domestic buildings, storage facilities, walls, cisterns and two mosques, all dating back to around 400 years to the 17th century. Up to 500 inhabitants are estimated to have lived in eighty-seven compounds. The religious architecture of al-Halla comprises a central mosque and an open praying ground ('eid musallah').

The discovery of a narrow side wadi and its particular architectural set-up provided an element of surprise. Difficult to enter, the side wadi stops abruptly in front of a steep waterfall. Its entrance is guarded by two platforms, which appear to have been used as lookouts. Separated from central al-Halla, several houses are secluded along the wadi's southern mountain slopes, and a retaining wall shields them from the wadi below. Twenty metres further up the slope, two more houses are secured by enormous retaining walls of up to 4 m in height. They can only be reached in a zigzag climb over terraced ground.

It appears tempting to assume that this side-wadi might originally have been reserved for the social elite, with the Sheikh of al-Halla residing in the two houses at the top of the slope. However, remains of the material culture studied during the survey do not reflect this interpretation. The purpose of this secluded, reinforced and guarded living area of al-Halla remains to be further studied and understood.

In addition to the detailed documentation (mapping, GPS coordinates, numbering, describing, drone survey, masterplan and section drawings of all standing architecture etc.), surface finds were collected from selected compounds. Furthermore, the fieldwork in al-Halla has produced more than 20,000 photographs. Never before has a mountain village in Ras al-Khaimah been surveyed and documented on a large scale like this.

The Department of Antiquities and Museums is currently developing the infrastructure for al-Halla (walkways, information panels, viewing platforms and nature trails) before the site is opened to interested visitors.



PHOTO 3: Aerial photo showing part of al-Halla,  
©Department of Antiquities and Museums, Ras al-Khaimah

### **Jebel Jais Mountain Plateau**

Before the building of a hotel resort, a survey was conducted to study the selected plateau in the Jebel Jais mountains.

The fieldwork documented an assemblage of 186 structures, consisting mainly of terraced field systems, some buildings (one house still holding large storage jars in situ), cisterns, animal shelters and a fox trap. In addition to these domestic structures, a mosque and a small Islamic cemetery were also discovered. The Jebel Jais mountain plateau and its material culture will remain intact and preserved, serving as an open-air museum for future visitors to the hotel resort.

### **Cemetery Used For More Than 5,000 Years Discovered In Wadi Shaha**

While surveying the above mentioned Jebel Jais plateau, a remarkable funerary location was discovered in the adjacent Wadi Shaha. Made up of three cemeteries situated in close proximity, it comprises a prehistoric Hafit cemetery with three Hafit tombs, and two Islamic cemeteries from different time periods. The older Islamic cemetery is clearly distinguishable, primarily using stones of bright ochre-yellow to orange colour.

### **Wadi Sha'am**

Due to future development plans, a third archaeological survey was carried out in Wadi Sha'am, where 174 structures were documented (houses, field systems and a mosque). The most significant find, however, was the rediscovery of a large boulder with petroglyphs. After thirty years, the stone carvings, which had only been known from photographs without any exact position, could finally be accurately located.

### **Site Development: Jazirat Al-Hamra**

Restoration and excavation work has continued in Jazirat al-Hamra, the only surviving pearl fishing town in the United Arab Emirates and along the Arabian Gulf. Inside the centre and along two pathways for future visitors, eight compounds were selected, excavated and restored. They were chosen for their exemplary representation of past life, featuring various combinations of traditional domestic architecture (summer house, winter house, reception room/'majlis', date press/'madbasa' and a well).

### **Heritage Preservation: Digitalizing all Archaeological Records**

All archaeological records housed in the Department of Antiquities and Museums spanning more than 50 years have started to be digitized. The extensive body assembled from decades of research and scientific analysis (reports, MA theses, PhD/dissertations, photographs, slides, plans, maps, drawings, context sheets etc.) will be secured and preserved for future study and generations to come.

*Christian Velde | Chief Archaeologist*

*Imke Möllering | Senior Researcher and Archaeologist*

*Department of Antiquities and Museums*

*Government of Ras al-Khaimah*

*United Arab Emirates*



## A Geoarchaeological and Geomorphological Study of the Umm Al-Quwain Lagoon. Late Holocene Human-Environment Interaction in Coastal UAE

M. Degli Esposti (Institute for Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences; Italian Archaeological Mission in Umm al-Quwain)

F. Borgi (Italian Archaeological Mission in Umm al-Quwain)

A. Zerboni (Department of Earth Sciences "A. Desio", University of Milan)

T. Power (College of Humanities & Social Sciences, United Arab Emirates University)



Figure 1: The Umm al-Quwain lagoon (Khawr al-Bayda') and its main islands (official toponyms approved by the Umm al-Quwain Municipality). The main excavated sites (red) illustrate the continuity of human occupation in and around the lagoon from the Neolithic (UAQ2, Dugong Mound) through to the Bronze Age (Tell Abraq), the Late Pre-Islamic period (Ed Dur), and the Late Islamic period (Malāḥ towers). © F. Borgi/IAMUQ

In November 2021, a new research project focused on the lagoon of Umm al-Quwain was launched as a collaboration between the Italian Archaeological Mission in Umm al-Quwain (IAMUQ), the Tourism and Archaeology Department of Umm al-Quwain (TAD-UAQ) and the University of Milan – Department of Earth Sciences (UniMI).

The project originated from the blending of two investigation programmes developed by the same players: one in the *sabkha*, less than 200 metres north of the multi-period site of Tell Abraq, reported to once have been part of the coastal lagoon system (Magee et al. 2017, 210), and the second on the island of Akab. In the latter case, the geomorphology of the island is being studied, with specific attention paid to the connection with the Late Pre-Islamic occupation of the area, which was potentially instrumental to the intense commercial activity of Ed Dur on the lagoon's shore (e.g., Haerinck 2003). The latter research project – *Looking for Omana. A geoarchaeological study of Akab island in the Umm al-Quwain lagoon* – was funded by the IASA main grant in 2021, and its report will be submitted in due course and potentially appear in the next issue of this Bulletin.

Such widening of the research's scope made it natural, in February 2022, to team up with the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) and further extend the research to the other islands in the lagoon, with an initial focus on the larger island of Siniya. This geoarchaeological project thus became embedded in the joint archaeological and geomorphological project, *The Historic Environment of Khawr al-Bayda', Umm al-Quwain: 7,000 Years of Coastal Settlement in the United Arab Emirates*, funded by a start-up grant from the UAE and invaluable supported by the TAD-UAQ.

The Umm al-Quwain lagoon is an example of a pristine environmental system, possibly the best preserved along the shorelines of the Emirates. Preliminary and ongoing archaeological surveys on its islands and along its shores has shown that the natural resources of the lagoon attracted humans at least since the Neolithic, and its occupation has been almost continuous up until today; however, no major settlement exists on the islands. The mangrove ecosystem, which at different moments developed in some areas of the lagoon and today occupies large portions of it, was of capital importance for human implantation, especially during the Neolithic (Berger et al. 2013).

Changes in climate, relative sea level, fluctuating sea currents, and the related varying balance between erosion and sand deposition dramatically influenced the lagoon ecosystem and brought along remarkable modifications in its general settings as well as in the morphology of each island. Modifications include the formation of several sand spits which in turn contributed to the deflection of water streams and to shifts in the access points to the lagoon from the open sea. Moreover, all these modifications affect the whole ecosystem and brought about substantial changes in human subsistence strategies. The possibilities for human occupation in and around the lagoon are intrinsically connected with, and limited or favoured by, its geomorphological evolution. Understanding the latter not only can provide the context for archaeological discoveries, but can also inform the choice of further areas where excavations would be worth undertaking.

General reconstructions of the evolution of the Umm al-Quwain lagoon have been discussed in the past (Bernier et al. 1995; Sanlaville and Dalongeville 2005). However, the associated field data were not published and, moreover, no correlation was drawn between the morpho-sedimentary stages in the lagoon's evolution and the presence or absence of archaeological sites dated to the different periods. This was also due to the lack of archaeological data, now made available by more recent surveys. The project, whose next step was in late February with another in October/November 2022, intends to apply a cutting-edge approach to the study of the lagoon landscape and ecosystem, and consider it alongside the evidence for human activities. The aim is to provide a comprehensive picture of human-environment interaction in such a particular lagoon habitat that constituted a rather common, favourable niche for human occupation along the UAE coast before modern

modifications brought most of them to extinction.

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## Archaeological Survey and Excavation on Sīnīya Island, Umm al-Quwain

Timothy Power, Michele Degli Esposti, Robert Hoyland, Rania Hussein Kannouma

The Tourism and Archaeology Department of the Government of Umm al-Quwain (TAD-UAQ) has set up a new project on Sīnīya Island in the historic Khawr al-Bayḏā' lagoon. The project was prompted by development

plans and followed surveys by TAD-UAQ, supported by the federal Ministry of Culture and Youth (MoCY) and Italian Archaeological Mission (IAMUQ) that revealed the existence of major new archaeological sites.

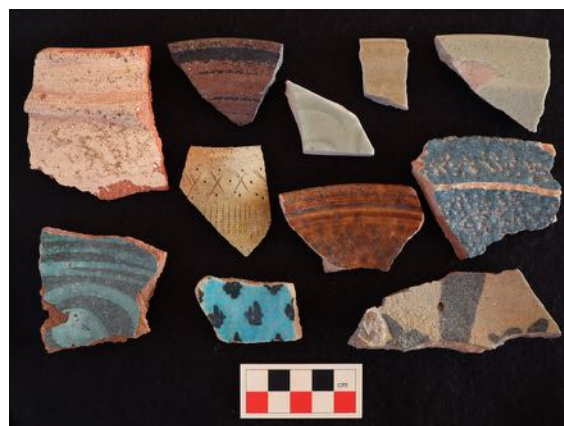


Figure 1: Fourteenth- and fifteenth-century surface ceramics from the site of Old UAQ

The two main archaeological sites on Sīnīya Island include a late antique monastery and village in the northeast, and a middle to late Islamic town and mosque in the southwest. The two towers of Mallāh, surviving vestiges of a late Islamic estate of the ruling Al Mualla, are located roughly midway between them. Dozens of smaller sites spanning the past two thousand years are scattered across the island, mostly consisting of pottery scatters and shell middens.

Given the outstanding universal significance of the new sites, an Archaeology Advisory Committee to TAD-UAQ was set up to secure funding and develop partnerships. The committee includes Peter Hellyer (MoCY) and Timothy Power (UAEU), who have worked under the direction of Shaikh Majid b. Saud Al Mualla, Chairman of TAD-UAQ, to ensure that the work is done to international best practices.

The committee has assembled a multidisciplinary team drawn from local and international institutions for the Sīnīya project. The field team is directed by Timothy Power (UAEU), Michele Degli Esposti (IAMUQ), Robert Hoyland



Figure 2: Preliminary test trenches on the Akab (Ak'āb) island were excavated to investigate ancient human occupation witnessed by several shell middens (A), as well as the natural sedimentary record, which preserves evidence of fluctuating environments (B). © M. Degli Esposti, L. Forti/IAMUQ





Panorama of the monastery with the possible font immediately behind the chancel of the chapel.

(ISAW-NYU) and Rania Hussein Kannouma (TAD-UAQ). Shaikh Majid is actively involved with the project and his energy and enthusiasm are key to its early success and long-term sustainability.

Specialist surveys planned and in progress include drone mapping by GeoTech3D (funded by MoCY), geophysical surveying by Studio GEO360 (funded by TAD-UAQ), geomorphological studies by the Department of Earth Sciences at the University of Milan (funded by UAEU), and an underwater survey by the Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT) Abu Dhabi. An interactive online archaeological map is being prepared by Dhakira Centre for Heritage Studies at New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD). Assistance with conservation is further being provided by DCT Abu Dhabi (artefacts) and Sharjah Archaeology Authority (buildings).

Archaeological surveys and excavations on Sīnīya Island are very much in the preliminary stages at the time of writing. Some initial characterization of the archaeological record is nevertheless possible, with the proviso that these early impressions will inevitably be subject to change as work continues. We look forward to presenting our first project report to the Seminar for Arabian Studies this summer.

The late antique monastery and village in the northeast of the island constitutes one of the most important archaeological discoveries in recent years. The monastery is built around a single-bayed chapel with strong architectural parallels to the church of al-Qusūr on Failaka Island in Kuwait. Ancillary buildings include a possible refectory and rectangular cistern, together with a circular tank variously interpreted as a cistern or baptism tank for full immersion.

Multiple phases of construction and modification have been noted, suggesting that the complex was used for several generations. The architectural parallels and the finds assemblage suggest we are dealing with a late-Sasanian to early-Islamic occupation. Ceramics are not generally well represented but, significantly, two sherds of turquoise

alkaline glazed with the type 72 rim shape have been noted in the vicinity of the monastery. This raises the possibility that the monastery was abandoned in the early 8th century.

The middle to late Islamic town and mosque in the southwest of the island constitute the remains of Old Umm al-Quwain. Two neighbouring settlements have been delineated on the basis of surface ceramics. The first may be dated to between the 13th/14th and 15th centuries and includes celadons and other ceramics identical to the sites of al-Maṭāf and al-Nudūd to the north. The second appears to date to between the 17th and early 19th centuries owing to the presence of kraak and Batavian porcelains, and the complete absence of any European refined white wares.

Historical sources state that the second town was destroyed on 18 January 1820 by a naval expedition despatched by the British East India Company. This prompted the move to the present site of Old Umm al-Quwain, located immediately opposite Sīnīya Island on the other side of the entrance to the lagoon, which thus represents the third and final settlement associated with the historic town. Umm al-Quwain town can therefore be shown to have been almost continuously occupied for the past seven hundred years.

## YEMEN

### The Islamic Fortifications of Soqatra

*Julian Jansen van Rensburg*

While vestiges of Islamic fortifications have been extensively studied in several regions across Arabia, little work has been done to determine the nature and scale of these fortifications on the island of Soqatra. The Islamic Fortifications Project on Soqatra will address this lacuna in our knowledge. The first season (2022) of this project will focus on the documentation and excavation of the Islamic hillfort, Jebel Hawari. This fort was at the site of a famous battle between

the al-Mahrah and the invading Portuguese in April 1507 (Brásio 1943, 12) – a battle that was eventually won by the Portuguese, who hoped that by conquering Soqatra and establishing a fort there it would be possible to disrupt the flow of Muslim trade into the Red Sea.



This victory, however, was short-lived, and with little local support and frequent attacks by the Mahri the Portuguese abandoned the fort six years later. According to Portuguese accounts, soon after they left Soqatra the al-Mahrah forces returned to re-establish their control over the island and its inhabitants. Despite several European and Arab accounts stating that the al-Mahrah had a military presence on Soqatra, this Portuguese account is the only one where we get a glimpse of the al-Mahrah fortifications on Soqatra. Indeed, virtually nothing is known about the actual number of forts that were built by the al-Mahri, where they were built and why, or how many people manned them. Moreover, despite over a decade of archaeological survey and excavations, the fortifications on Soqatra have received little attention and there has been no attempt to directly date them, or establish a building stratigraphy or chrono-typology. Indeed, many of the proposed hypotheses surrounding these structures are based on personal observations, a priori assumptions, and a limited overview of the varying geographical, geo-environmental, social and political systems within which these fortifications existed (Bent 1900; Shinnie 1960; Doe 1967, 1992; Naumkin 1993; Naumkin and Sedov 1993; Weeks et al. 2002).



The overall aim of the Islamic Fortifications Project on Soqatra is to address this gap and undertake a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary study of the Islamic fortifications on Soqatra to establish a deeper understanding

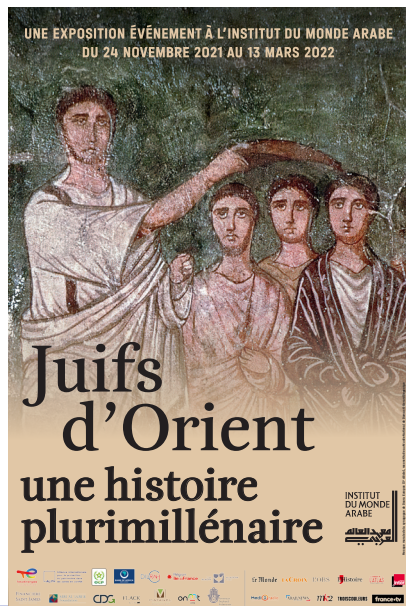
of Soqatra's Islamic past and allow an island that has been intrinsically linked with regional and inter-regional social, religious, economic and political events in the Indian Ocean to be better understood.

This project is sponsored by the Max van Berchem Foundation, established in 1973 in memory of Max van Berchem (1863–1921), the founder of Arabic epigraphy. Based in Geneva, the aim of the Foundation is to promote the study of Islamic and Arabic archaeology, history, geography, art, epigraphy, religion and literature.

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## EXHIBITIONS

### Juifs d'Orient. Une histoire plurimillénaire An exhibition at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, from 24 November 2021 to 13 March 2022

Carolyn Perry

Juifs d'Orient is the final part of a trilogy of exhibitions dedicated to each of the three monotheistic religions shown at the IMA, following 'Hajj, le pèlerinage à La Mecque' and 'Chrétiens d'Orient. Deux mille ans d'histoire'.

The exhibition looks at the history of Jewish communities in Arab countries and focuses on the cultural interactions that characterized Judaism covering a vast chronological period from middle of the first millennium BCE to the present day.

Because of this huge geographical and chronological spread, curator Benjamin Stora had to choose particular moments in time and works or artefacts that would capture a situation experienced by Jewish populations across space or time.

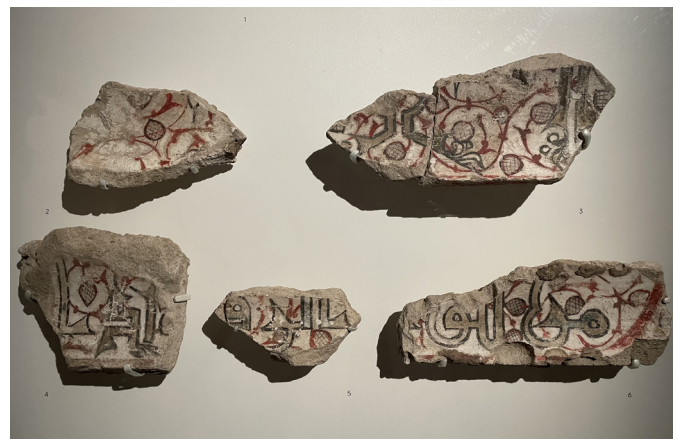
The exhibition is laid out chronologically (occasionally also using modern works to illustrate past moments), as Stora says "taking several paths to the same destination: despite the philosophical, literary, or geographical detours, the attachment to an ancient faith always prevails."

In putting together the first large-scale exhibition on this theme, Stora has brought together 280 objects, including archaeological material, manuscripts, textiles, liturgical objects, photographs, music and audio-visual installations from a variety of collections such as the British Museum, Musée Archéologique de Rabat, the Brooklyn Museum in New York and the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, the Louvre and other French institutions, alongside private loans from the Gross Family and Paul Dahan collections.

The carefully chosen pieces convey Stora's theme well. For example, the beautiful display of 'hamsa' amulets, for protection against the evil eye or to bring good luck, features a single type of object used by Muslims, Jews and Christians, whereas the *Tik* or Torah cases on display, though

specific to the Jewish faith, vary considerably in material and decoration depending on which country they are from. Commonalities and differences are illustrated in different ways.

There are some stunning pieces in the exhibition, but my favourites are some of the least visually appealing. They are fragments of papyrus showing Hebrew written using the Achaemenid Aramaic alphabet, and some of the Cairo Geniza manuscripts from the Fatimid period (969–1171 CE). Though well over a millennium apart, these apparently ordinary letters and messages provide a snapshot of the lives of people with the same concerns and preoccupations that we still experience today, and serve to illustrate that there is more we have in common than that which divides us.



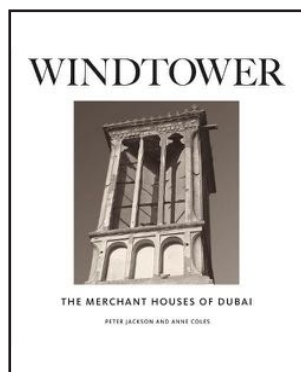
For Jack Lang, President of the Institut du Monde Arabe, one of the purposes of the exhibition is to fight against stereotypes of the Arab world, noting "knowledge is the greatest weapon against intolerance." The importance attached to this message was underlined by the fact that Juifs d'Orient was opened by President Macron.

The exhibition has accompanying activities and a catalogue. For more information see: <https://www.imarabe.org/fr/expositions/juifs-d-orient>

(This review previously appeared in Archaeology Worldwide magazine)

## NEW PUBLICATIONS ON ARABIA

Crawford, Michael, 2022. *The Imam, the Pasha and the Englishman: The Ordeal of 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'ud, Cairo 1818*. Medina Publishing. ISBN: 978-0992980863

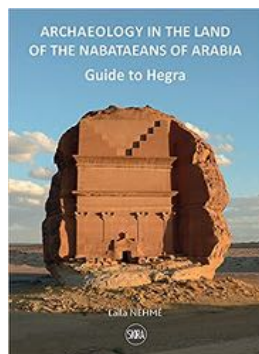


Jackson, Peter, and Anne Coles, 2022. *Windtower: The Merchant Houses of Dubai*. Medina Publishing. ISBN 978-1911487616

Freer, Courtney, and Alanoud al-Sharekh, 2021. *Tribalism and Political Power in the Gulf: State-Building and National Identity in Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE*. I.B.

Tauris/Bloomsbury. ISBN: 978-1838606084

Mason, Robert, ed., 2022. *The Gulf States and the Horn of Africa: Interests, influences and instability*. Manchester University Press (Series: Identities and Geopolitics in the Middle East). ISBN: 978-1526162168.

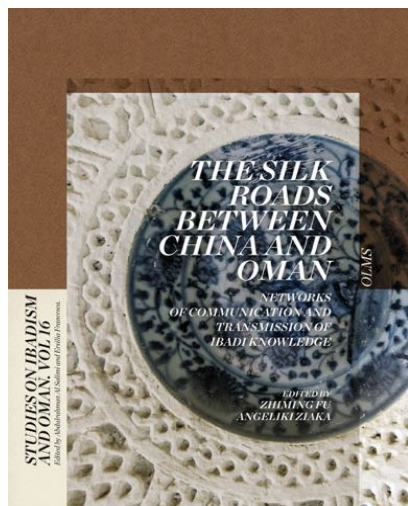


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Image from the exhibition "Juifs d'Orient. Une histoire plurimillénaire", see p. 29.



# THE LAST WORD

*The Last Word in this Edition of the IASA Bulletin goes to **Faisal Al Kubaisi, Kadim Baghdadi and Marsya A. Abdulghani**, looking at the link between video games and the cultural heritage sector.*

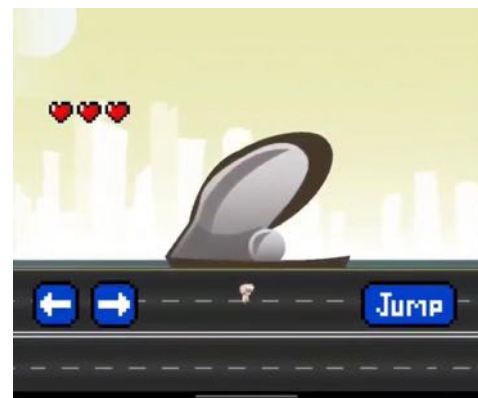
## GAMIFICATION AS A STORYTELLING TOOL



The tragic fire at Notre Dame resulted in some unlikely assistance as part of the restoration efforts. Ubisoft, a French game development company, donated €500,000 to the reconstruction effort and extended the offer of information from one of their games, *Assassin's Creed: Unity*. Accuracy may vary, as games tend to be for entertainment and elements of fiction may be infused to elevate certain experiences. While no progress has been publicly announced since then, this brings attention to video games as tools for preservation, commentary and storytelling.

This article provides two examples from Qatar's burgeoning game industry and its potential to assist the cultural heritage sector to achieve many of its aims including preserving, archiving, processing and disseminating the information to the audience. The two prototypes mentioned are: "Traffic Nightmare" and "Hamad and Sahar".

"Traffic Nightmare" was a result of a 24-hour game jam from around 7 years ago by my fellow school student, Kadim Baghdadi and I. Within a short timeframe, we extracted easy-to-code game play and focused more on the storytelling aspect in order to create an edge to the game proposal. By localizing the concept, we reflected our urban experience as pedestrians. We included the iconic WestBay skyline and several well-known landmarks such as City Center, the "Pearl Clam" sculpture and "Dallah" sculpture. The obstacles that the characters have to navigate satirize incidents such as road rage and street harassment. Our hope was that the audience would enjoy a game that is more relatable.



Screenshot showing Corniche backdrop along with Westbay skyline and the Pearl sculpture

In parallel, a fellow game developer, Faisal Al Kubaisi from Space Crescent and his team, debuted a prototype game called "Hamad and Sahar", an obstacle run game that explores Arabian folklore. The game provides different settings that are familiar in Arab culture including villages, coastal areas and Ramadan. In addition, the game is bilingual in Arabic and English, providing a learning experience for newcomers and a sense of familiarity for the Arab speaking population. The developers hope to combat existing stereotypes about the Arab world through fun storytelling.

Both examples mentioned are from homegrown, independent developers and reflect their own experiences in the country. An example of an entity approaching this is Katara Cultural Village, in partnership with Aman Center (Center for

Protection and Social Rehabilitation); “Snyar” was launched to commemorate the maritime heritage in the hearts of generations. In a way, it is a type of storytelling tool that deserves attention and should be included in archival materials as it contributes to the cultural memory of a diverse society. Therefore, the game development should be encouraged and supported as an interactive communication tool in the cultural heritage sector.

***Thank you to our members for your continued support, and to all of the contributors to this edition of the IASA Bulletin.***

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## **IASA SOCIAL MEDIA**

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If you do not already follow the IASA on social media, please do so. You do not need to have a Facebook account to see our page, and as well as posting our own news and information about events and lectures etc., we repost articles and items of interest from the news and from other organisations. It's a great way of keeping up with what is happening in the Arabian Peninsula.

As well as [Facebook](#), we are on Twitter (@IASArabia), Instagram (@theiasarabia) and [LinkedIn](#).

We also welcome any items of interest to share, or even just your photographs of sites, museums, the natural landscape or flora and fauna of Arabia. Just message us via any media!



*Screenshot showing different settings that are common in the Arab world*



