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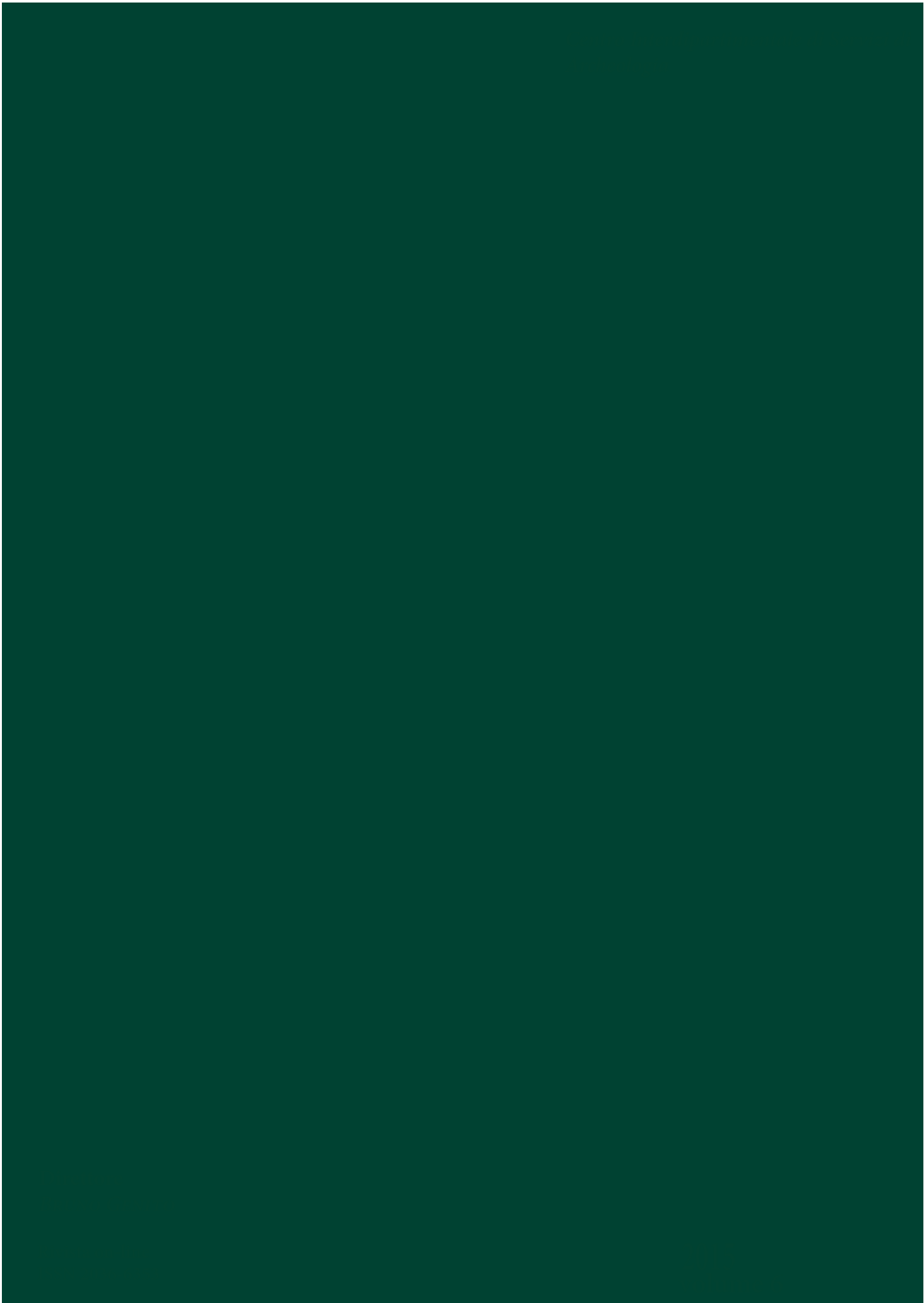


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**Direttore
Andrea D’Andrea**

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The site of Zafār/al-Balīd (Sultanate of Oman)

Archaeological investigations between past and present

Proceedings of the round table held at Naples, Università L'Orientale, on June 18th 2021

Edited by A. D'Andrea, R. Giunta, A. Pavan, R. Valentini



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Centro Interdipartimentale di Servizi di Archeologia (CISA)

Vicoletto 1° S. M. Agnone, 8 - 80139 Napoli

tel./fax +39 081440594 • • e-mail cisa@unior.it

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Direttore Andrea D'Andrea

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FOREWORD

I welcome with great pleasure this volume on the Italian researches over al-Balīd site published by the University of Naples “L’Orientale”. This is a further sign of how actual, dynamic and tangible is the collaboration between Italy and Oman in the archaeological field. Since the 1970s, the contribution of the Italian archaeological missions to the development of the relationship between the two countries has been essential. Thanks to the enthusiasm of the Omani authorities in promoting studies and research on the history of the Sultanate, Italian universities have always found responsive and supporting stakeholders, willing to facilitate excavations, analysis and in-depth activities by the archaeologists. Italian universities have always shared and agreed the goals and the features of their research with the Omani authorities, thus helping build a solid relationship of collaboration and trust, which has turned into a constant dialogue, joint activities and publications. These collaborations have also paved the way to a cooperation in the cultural and restoration sectors which allowed to share Italian conservation techniques with the Sultanate.

As part of the Vision 2040, the economic diversification strategy, the Omani authorities are focusing on the development of the tourism sector thanks to the appeal of the great historical heritage of Oman. The collaboration with Italy also supported the inclusion of several Omani sites studies by Italian scholars in the UNESCO World Heritage List. This is a great recognition of Italy and its scholars.

In this framework, the activity of “L’Orientale” in Dhofar is extremely important. This part of Oman is a key area for studies on the development of coastal civilizations in Southern Arabia. The research allows us to understand the relations that the Dhofar had with the rest of the region, from the African coasts the shores of Asia. This highlights the roots of the openness of the Sultanate to the world, which still today makes the maritime dimension a pillar of Oman’s development. The interest of the Omani Authorities for Dhofar – the birthplace of late Sultan Qaboos bin Said – and its potential for cultural tourism thanks to the presence of important UNESCO sites, makes the continuation of the studies on al-Balīd as promising as ever.

Since 2021, the Mission led by Prof. Roberta Giunta has received funds from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy. Italy has been supporting the work of Italian archaeologists in the Sultanate for over 40 years, thus gaining the appreciation of the Omani authorities at the highest level. Whilst recalling with great pleasure my participation to the roundtable of June 2021, I wish the mission full success in its research, which will be able to clarify still unknown aspects of the long history of Omani civilization.

A special thanks goes to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman, a strong partner of Italy and which has been supporting this new project. With the same spirit, I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Roberta Giunta and the co-director Dr. Andrea D’Andrea, as well as their working group, and Dr. Alexia Pavan in particular, for their dedication and constant collaboration with the Embassy of Italy in Muscat.

Alessandro Garbellini
Deputy Head of Mission Embassy of Italy in Muscat

INTRODUCTION

This volume collects the contributions presented at the remote round table “The site of *Zafār/al-Balīd* (Sultanate of Oman). Archaeological investigations between past and present”, held at the University of Naples L’Orientale on 18th June 2021. The choice to organise a workshop and not a traditional conference arose from the need to create an opportunity for exchange and comparison among the scholars and experts who have worked in different fields at al-Balīd during recent years. This opportunity for discussion was also necessary given the peculiar historical moment: in 2020 the Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs, under whose aegis the work of J. Zarins and L.S. Newton (2015-2012) and subsequently of A. Pavan (2016-2020) had been carried out, was closed and the activities passed under the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman. Moreover, the pandemic crisis of 2020 had caused a forced and prolonged interruption of fieldwork, requiring a change in the strategy of the archaeological activities conducted since 2021 by the mission of the University of Naples “L’Orientale”, co-directed by Roberta Giunta and Andrea D’Andrea.

It was therefore a priority to organise a meeting from which, on the one hand, the state of the art about the current knowledge of the site could emerge and, on the other hand, new research trajectories could be outlined. The last few years of work at al-Balīd have been characterised by a multidisciplinary approach, which, alongside the more traditional methods of archaeological investigation, first and foremost the stratigraphic excavation, has included the collaboration of experts from various sectors, from geo-archaeological investigations aimed at the reconstruction of the palaeo-environment, to the study of ceramics from both the Islamic Lands and East Asia, numismatics and wooden elements reused in architecture and, finally, the 3D survey of the citadel.

Despite the work that has been carried out, there is still much to be understood about the foundation of the city, its urban layout with its transformations, its relationship with the surrounding area and the ethnic components that are presumed to have inhabited it.

Only a holistic and interdisciplinary approach will allow us to try to understand many of the still unclear issues of the settlement’s development and therefore archaeological field research must necessarily be accompanied by a recovery and a re-reading of the available written tradition that may record different sources, Chinese, Arabic and also European.

The geographic location of the site represents a privileged perspective to outline a model of an Islamic city in southern Arabia at least for the middle and late Islamic period. In fact, al-Balīd is the only medieval city along the Indian Ocean coast where excavations can be carried out, given the political instability in Yemen and the lack of evidence along the eastern part of the coast, with the exception of Qalhāt, which was however abandoned in the 16th century.

The proceedings of this conference represent a starting point for a new season of investigations in al-Balīd including the contribution that scholars from different research perspectives can make to the understanding of life of this important crossroad in the East-West trade routes. The main purpose was to produce a “handbook” that could be used by those working on-field, also to guide necessary subsequent studies on the ancient landscape and on the materials. However, we are committed to continuing our investigations through activities aimed at understanding the urban development of the site, but also delineating the cultural and natural environment in which the site was able to develop and prosper for many centuries.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the authors who contributed with their articles and research to this volume. The resumption of investigations in al-Balīd can only be achieved by bringing together a young and old group of scholars who are experts in different fields and moved by a spirit of interdisciplinary collaboration.

Works at al-Balīd have been possible thanks to the cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and we would like to thank the Minister, HE Salim bin Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Dr Sultan Al Bakri, Director General for Archaeology and Dr Ali Al Mahrouqi, Director of Surveys and Archaeological

Excavations in Muscat for their support to the resumption of activities at the site.

In Ṣalālah Mr Khaled Abdullah Al Abri, Director General of Heritage and Tourism in the Governorate of Dhofar, Mr Ali Al Kathiri, Director of the Land of Frankincense Sites Department, and Mr Said al Amri, Supervisor of the site of al-Balīd, are heartfelt thanked for the strict and fruitful collaboration on the field, in the logistic and for their continuous support.

Warda Al Shahri, Salem Ghassani and Salem Tabook did a great job in the organization of the store and the conservation of the findings.

Warm and due thanks must also be directed to HE Abdulaziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas, former Adviser to the former HM the Sultan for Cultural Affairs who first believed in the potential of the site and initiated the development of the works at al-Balīd.

The efforts of surveyors, restorers, technicians and geologists have to be mentioned as well, in particular we are grateful to M. Cremaschi, S. Laurenza, A. Massa, A. Tilia, A. Zerboni for their contribution to the round table.

Finally, we really would address a heartfelt thanks to the Italian Embassy in Muscat in the person of HE Federica Favi, Italian Ambassador in the Sultanate and Dr Alessandro Garbellini, Deputy Head of Mission, whose constant support has been essential for an easier resumption of the activities at the site and the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation for the economic and political support provided to the mission.

The editors

THE OBJECTS FROM AL-BALĪD AT THE MUSEUM OF THE FRANKINCENSE LAND, ŞALĀLAH, SULTANATE OF OMAN

Alexia Pavan, former Director of the excavations at the citadel of al-Balīd (2016-2020)

Ali Al Kathiri, former Director of The Museum of the Frankincense Land, currently Director of the Land of Frankincense Sites Department, Şalālah, Sultanate of Oman

During the excavations carried out over the years at the site of Zafār/al-Balīd, pottery fragments and different kinds of items have been found in quantity of thousands, representing, most likely, the richest *corpus* of objects and pottery dated from the Middle to the Late Islamic period of the whole south-western and south-eastern Arabia. The findings unearthed during the first excavations at the site carried out in the '50s by the American Foundation for the Study of Men (AFSM) were transferred, after the works on the field, to the United States and placed in depot at the warehouses of the Foundation in Virginia. None of the artefacts from al-Balīd, found, however, a following home at the National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institute, unlike a number of pieces unearthed by the same archaeological mission at the pre-Islamic site of Sumhuram, in the area of Khor Rori.¹

The materials collected during the excavations headed by P.M. Costa (1979) are only barely mentioned in his final report, with the exception for the drawings, pictures and the location of a number of columns reported in relation with some of the mosques of the site. The image of a significant decorated wooden beam discovered during the works in the Great Mosque (Costa 1979, pl. 76a-c) which was later interpreted as a ship timber re-used as architectural element, has been provided as well.² Some Chinese coins unearthed during the works at the Great Mosque were studied by N. Lowick (Costa 1979, no. 2, 149) but are actually only reported in a paper of J. Cribb and D. Potts (1996, 115) about the Chinese coins discovered in Arabia. Some of the columns or parts of them, bearing a decoration made of vegetal and geometric elements³ and a monolithic column capital with part of its octagonal shaft are located inside the Museum of the Frankincense Land (*Museum of the Frankincense Land* 2007, 207-210),⁴ the others being left *in situ* or collected in the *lapidarium* located in front of the Grand Mosque, south of the citadel.

From the works carried out at al-Balīd under theegis of the former Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs – from 2020 Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman – since the end of the '90's, respectively directed by M. Jansen (1995-2001), J. Zarins and L.S. Newton (2005-2012), K. Lewis (2013-2018) and A. Pavan (2016-2020), the objects found during the archaeological investigations were stored in Şalālah. The most significant artefacts have found placement in the History Hall of Museum of the Frankincense Land (Fig. 1), which was inaugurated in 2007 within the frame of the opening of the Archaeological Park of al-Balīd.⁵ Some other noteworthy items, not exhibited to the public, constitute the Museum Collection, a selection of artefacts created during the works of M. Jansen and later enriched by the other archaeological missions working at the site under the coordination of the team of the Museum.⁶

The collection focused on the discoveries of al-Balīd at the Museum of the Frankincense Land has been changing over the years. Some of the most important objects discovered at the site have been in fact donated and moved after the conception and the subsequent construction, in recent times, of a number of new important cultural centres in the country, such as the National Museum of Oman in Muscat, established in 2013 and open to the public in 2016, and the Oman Across Ages Museum, soon to be opened in Nizwa, becoming an integral and important section of the permanent collections of these institutions. A number of items were also intended

¹ Pictures and information related to some of the objects discovered by AFSM in Dhofar and donated to the Smithsonian Museum as part of the Wendell and Marilyn Phillips Collection, are available at the website <https://asia.si.edu/>.

² According to the information gathered by the authors, the items discovered during the investigations headed by P.M. Costa are located in the warehouses of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in Muscat.

³ See Giunta in this volume.

⁴ One of the columns have been recently moved to the be on display at the Oman Across Ages Museum in Nizwa.

⁵ The Museum of the Frankincense Land was born with the aim of offering an insight into the history of the Sultanate of Oman, with a special focus on the region of Dhofar. The exhibition was organized by the way of two interconnected displays, located in two different sectors: the History Hall and the Maritime Hall. The first narrates the history of the country through an ideal time-line, which guides the visitors back to the early times, while the second illustrates the connection between the Omani people and the sea, providing insights into boat building, navigation skills, maritime trade and life at the sea.

⁶ These objects are located in the store of the Museum in Şalālah where they are subject to controlled humidity and temperature conditions and their state of preservation, as in the case of the wood items, is constantly monitored by a team of conservators. All the other objects discovered during the on-field investigations (pottery fragments and small finds) have been stored in plastic boxes according to the area where they were unearthed and the year of finding, with the exception the pottery and the small finds from the citadel (2016-2020) which are inventoried and stored on the base of the material.

to be housed in the Archaeological Gallery built within the Archaeological Park of the site of Ṣalūt, near Bisya, in al-Dakhiliyya region, Sultanate of Oman.

THE PERMANENT COLLECTION FROM AL-BALĪD AT THE MUSEUM OF THE FRANKINCENSE LAND

The items discovered at al-Balīd represent indeed one of the most important bulks of the permanent collection of the Museum of the Frankincense Land. Most of them are displayed in the core of the exhibition space, the circular area dedicated to the four places that make up the Land of Frankincense sites (Fig. 2, al-Shiṣr/Wubār, Sumhuram – in the area of Khor Rori, al-Balīd and the natural reserve of Wādī Dawka)⁷ where they are arranged both inside a display case on two levels and in a rounded space delimited above the floor (Fig. 3a,b).

The objects chosen for display from al-Balīd represent an overview of the discoveries made at the site that aims to show visitors the variety of artefacts, representative of the numerous commercial contacts that the site had during its long occupation and, at the same time, they document different aspects of the daily life in a medieval port on the western Indian Ocean.

On display there is a significant selection of ceramics ranging from local productions, manufactured in the area of the ancient site and in the region, which consists of daily-use containers such as bowls, jars and a pretty rare pot stand, to Chinese ceramics. These testify, on one hand, the demand of luxury items by the elites living in the town, and, on the other, the exchange of diplomatic gifts between the Chinese empire and the court settled in al-Balīd. It is the case of some of the exhibited samples, mainly dated between the 13th and the 15th centuries, which include a green-glazed celadon (Longquan celadon) bowl (ID: 0658, Fig. 4a), with inscription on the base which reads “happiness and prosperity”, a bowl in white stoneware (Dehua ware) with moulded decoration in the interior (ID: 0519, Fig. 4b), and the large bowl in blue and white porcelain (ID: 3092, Fig. 4c), decorated with high-iron cobalt-blue pigments displaying a floral decoration.

The resumption of conspicuous and frequent contacts with China in the 17th century is shown through vessels belonging to the Qing period (ID: 3088, Fig. 5a). They were found in the latest layers on the citadel or were collected from the surface and sometimes present readable marks, albeit with apocryphal inscriptions (ID: 3017, Fig. 5b). A bowl in glazed stonepaste ware (ID: 3026, Fig. 6) shows the reception and the imitation of the Far East productions in the Iran of the Safavid period and, contemporary, it is emblematic of the complex net of production, imitation and commercial exchanges developed in the western Indian Ocean during the medieval period.

As far as the objects are concerned, the display offers an overview of different aspects of the life at the site. The very well preserved wooden pen case with inkwell (ID: 3036, Fig. 7) unearthed at the citadel shows very close comparisons with a pen case at the British Museum, London, not in display,⁸ and testify aspects (wooden objects and writing devices) usually considered marginal in the archaeological records. The illumination tools are evidenced by a couple of terracotta pear-shaped oil lamps (ID: 3079) with pinched end and small vertical handle. Decorated sometimes with red paint, they were found in number of dozens at the citadel and used oil from sardines as a fuel for lighting. Some copper coins, representative of the hundreds discovered at the site⁹, have been exhibited as well. Of particular interest is the hoard of more 250 coins (Fig. 8), 365gr in weight, unearthed during the excavation of the northern city wall, which includes only two datable coins, issued in the 16th century, while most of them are rectangular/squared copper coins, to be interpreted as belonging to a still unidentified local coinage (Jansen 2015, 115, 354).

The collection of items from al-Balīd has recently been enriched with three sandstone carved faces (ID: 3207; 3208; 3209, Fig. 9), with an average size of 17×20 cm, which were found during the excavations carried out by J. Zarins and L. Newton in 2012. The faces were found inside a room, interpreted as a shrine, in a building known as the Merchant House and they seem have been used in the performance of rituals not related to Islamic practices (Newton, Zarins 2014). Their specific purpose, however, still remains an enigma also if the items discovered in the area seem to connect the objects with an Indian *milieu*.

A number of stone cannonballs with an average weight of 15 kg (ID: 3098; 2006; 2005; 2004; 1982; 0357; 2004) are related to the artillery in use at the site which finds further evidence in an iron bombard, exhibited together with smaller stone mangonels, ranging from 0.2 kg to 1.9 kg in weight (ID: 0513; 0667; 1866; 1982; 2899; 2900; 2901; 2902) placed in a different showcase (Fig. 10). Gunpowder production is

⁷ The four sites have been listed since 2000 among the World Heritage sites by UNESCO, because of their outstanding value in illustrating the importance of the trade of Frankincense in antiquity and its function of engine for the creation and development of the ancient civilization of the Arabian Peninsula (about this, see <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1010/>).

⁸ https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA43048_6. The object is dated to the Roman, Islamic (?) period.

⁹ See Annucci in this volume.

moreover attested at the site by the discovery of a block of raw sulphur and by different lumps of the same material, unearthened at the citadel.

NEW FINDINGS

In order to also show the objects kept in the warehouses or the most significant items found with the continuation of the excavations, it was decided to create temporary thematic showcases that would illustrate to visitors different aspects of daily life of the site.

It was therefore agreed to create two exhibition spaces focused respectively on objects related to body care, beauty treatments and personal adornments (Fig. 11) and to local pottery (Fig. 12). The choice to explore these two themes was conditioned by the noticeable number and noteworthy quality of some of the finds. Numerous are in fact the objects related to the female adornments among where stand out for number the glass monochrome and polychrome bangles (ID: 3139.1-3139.16), belonging to different typologies (twisted, with application, painted, with impressions) and, most likely, produced in India. This simple jewellery is very common in Islamic sites of the Arabian Peninsula where, however, is never found in connection with the Early Islamic materials and thus providing a chronological indicator.

Recurrent are also the tiny bronze finger-rings (ID: 2910; 2922; 3146; 2925 with dot-and-circle decoration and ID: 3147 with a small pearl) and the earrings or nose rings, always made in bronze (ID: 3145; 3201) and, in one case, in gold (ID: 0217) which area still used by the elder sellers at the traditional frankincense *sūq* in Ṣalālah.

Of particular value is the pendant which could belong to an earring or to a necklace or a tiara (ID: 3020, Fig. 13), realized with a technique based on the use of the twisted metallic wire. The object is made of a central element with three pearls alternated to two golden beads. The beads are made of a spiral of golden wire. To the central body are fixed three other segments made of two small pearls and a golden bead. Two crescents, framed by a small edge in relief and made in gold leaf, are hung to the lateral elements, while an element in shape of heart or leaf is fixed to the central pendant, made by a “*plique-à-jour*” technique. Three small pearls are hung to this element.

The display is completed by some objects related to personal care, such as the wooden comb with two different gauges of teeth (ID: 3031) and two small glass vessels, a fragmentary sprinkler (ID: 0522) and a tiny complete vessel (ID: 3033), most likely used to preserve perfumes or ointments. A bronze stick, used for kohl (ID: 3144) is exhibited as well. Beads were not found in large quantity at the site and they are realized in stone (carnelian, agate and, in one case, amethyst), in glass and, more rarely, in shell or metal of which a selection is presented in the showcase.

The showcase dedicated to ceramics, on the other hand, aims to illustrate, through a selection of artefacts of various types, the characteristic productions of the local manufacture of the medieval period, which include a storage jar with perforated handles (ID: 2989), a globular jar (ID: 3100), a small jar with dot-and-circle decoration (ID: 2244), a shallow conical bowl (ID: 3001), and a bowl with perforated bottom and cruciform decoration (ID: 3081). A characteristic infant feeding cup (ID: 3101), used until fairly recent times, has been exhibited as well. Particularly significant are also the two terracotta incense burners selected for the exhibition including a classic square-shaped burner – *majmar* – with minor parts missing at the corners, traces of red paint in form of lines and tiny dots (ID: 3078) and an archaeologically complete incense burner with punctuate marks near the base and impressions made with the point of a stick all over the surface, finished with red painting (ID: 0499). Related to the body care are a number of miniaturistic vessels, some of them with small holes under the rim which could contain beauty products and/or pigments (ID: 2911; 3103; 3104; 3105; 3106; 3107). Of anthropologic interest is the tiny vessel with spout and handle, possibly used for beauty treatment (P51). In Dhofar, till modern times, similar containers were used for nose cleaning. The exhibition is completed by a selection of lids, of the type still in use in the modern local production of Dhofar, with engraved decorations (ID: 2918) or with a thick burnishing decorated with painted motifs (ID: 2018; BA0572; P123).

CHINESE COINS

Findings from al-Balīd are also on display in Section 5 of the Museum, focused on the development of the Sultanate of Oman through a glimpse on his main historical periods. A number of Chinese coins discovered at the site would like to exemplify the frequent and strict relations between Oman and China which greatly developed from the Tang period (618-907) both by land and by sea. The coins (Fig. 14) are however to be dated to the Song period (960-1279) when diplomatic and commercial relations between China and southern Arabia started to develop from Muscat to Canton or Quanzhou and from Canton and Quanzhou to Ṣafār and the African ports (see Pavan, Visconti 2020). If the coins are a further evidence of contacts with China which

involved the trade of mainly perishable materials such as silk and, possibly, cinnabar, they could not be used as chronological indicators being in use for centuries after their first issue (Cribb, Potts 1996).



Fig. 1 - The entrance of the Museum of the Frankincense Land, Ṣalālah (Courtesy of the former Office of the Adviser to HM the Sultan for Cultural Affairs).



Fig. 2 - The central court of the Museum of the Frankincense Land, Ṣalālah (Courtesy of the former Office of the Adviser to HM the Sultan for Cultural Affairs).



a



b

Fig. 3a,b - The collection from al-Balīd on display in the circular sector of the Museum (Photos Ali Al Kathiri).



Fig. 4 - Pottery from China on display at the Museum of the Frankincense Land (Photos A. Pavan).



Fig. 5a,b - Pottery from the Qing period with spurious mark (Photos A. Pavan).



Fig. 6 - Iranian bowl in glazed stonepaste (Photo A. Pavan).



Fig. 7 - Wooden pen case with inkwell (Photo A. Pavan).



Fig. 8 - Hoard of more than 250 coins (Courtesy of the former Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs).



Fig. 9 - Sandstone carved faces (Photo Ali Al Kathiri).



Fig. 10 - Stone cannonballs, mangonels and an iron bombard on display (Photo A. Pavan).



Fig. 11 - Objects related to body care, beauty treatments and personal adornments (Photo Ali Al Kathiri).



Fig. 12 - Local pottery on display (Photo Ali Al Kathiri).



Fig. 13 - Pendant of necklace or tiara in gold and pearls (Photo A. Pavan).



Fig. 14 - Chinese coins dated to the Song period (Courtesy of the former Office of the Adviser to HM the Sultan for Cultural Affairs).

ANNEX

Visits, archaeological surveys and excavations in Zafār/al-Balīd (1834-2019)

Andrea D'Andrea, Roberta Giunta, Alexia Pavan

<i>Years</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>References</i>
1834-36	First visit by Stafford Bettesworth Haines to 'Awqad (lit. Audád), Salalah (lit. Şallálah), Hāfa (lit. Haffer) and the "extensive ruins located two miles and a half E.N.E. of Haffer, near a fresh-water lake".	Haines 1845, 118
1836	Charles John Cruttenden visits Salalah (lit. Solahlah), Dahrīz (lit. Dyreez), Hāfa (lit. El Hafah), and the remains of an old town called El Bellut (i.e. al-Balīd) located between Hāfa and Dahrīz.	Cruttenden 1836, 187
1839	Henry John Carter draws the first schematic plan and provides a detailed description of the site, which was located between the towns of Salalah (lit. Silalah) and Hāfa (lit. El Hafa) on the west, and that of Dahrīz (lit. Dareez) on the east. He visits the citadel ruins (pp. 229-30) and the ruins of the great mosque (lit. Temple or Mosque), which originally contained one hundred and eighty-three pillars (p. 230). He points out that the site was divided into two parts, of which only the eastern one was fortified (p. 225).	Carter 1844-46 (The same information can be found in Carter 1846)
1883 and 1884	Samuel Barrett Miles draws a historical picture of the region (pp. 498-514), and gives a description of the site, which he locates between Hāfa (lit. Al-Hafa) and Dahrīz (lit. Dareez). He clearly identifies the city walls, the towers, the ditch, the citadel, the great mosque and the custom house (p. 544). He also provides information on the burial grounds at al-Ribāt (lit. Robot; p. 547).	Miles 1919; Marshall 1989, 74
1894	The Bents (James Theodore and his wife, Mabel) visit al-Balīd (lit. Al Balad) and al-Ribāt (lit. Robot), which were the ancient capital of Dhofar (p. 115). Based on Sprenger's work (1864), Bent points out that the ancient name of al-Balīd was Zafār (lit. Zafar), which was destroyed in 618/1221-22, when al-Manşūra (lit. Mansura) was built, "under which name the capital was known in early Mohammedan times" (p. 116).	Bent 1895
1895	The Bents visit Dhofar region for the second time. With regard to al-Balīd and al-Ribāt, they provide very similar information to that of the 1894 publication.	Bent Th. and M. 1900
1918	Charles Craufurd visits al-Balīd (lit. Al Bilad), which is in a state of complete ruin, and the graveyard located in the western area. He also takes the first photographs of the Great Mosque.	Craufurd 1919

<i>Years</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>References</i>
1930	Visit to the ruined city of al-Balīd (lit. Balid) by Bertram Thomas (p. 38), “the most extensive ruins of the Dhofar (lit. Dhufar) plain” (p. 8). He takes some photos on the site (see also Peyton 1983, p. 75).	Thomas 1932
1930 ca.	Sultan Said bin Taimur carries out some excavation works along the east end of the south side of the citadel.	(Quoted in Albright 1982, p. 59)
1945	Wilfred Thesiger arrives for the first time in Ṣalālah, “the capital of Dhaufar”, and visits the site and the numerous ruins scattered around the city and the plain (pp. 43-44).	Thesiger 1959 (ed. 2008)
1952-1960	First archaeological excavations (started in spring 1952) under the auspices of the American Foundation for the Study of Man (AFSM). Wendell Phillips was the sponsor of the expedition; Frank P. Albright the main archaeologist and responsible of the whole work. The AFSM works involved the city wall, the towers, the two city gates, the citadel (“Area A”), the great mosque, the western bridge, four habitations in the western side of the walled city (“Area H”), and a number of buildings and mosques scattered around the site which are shown on a map drawn by Phillips (fig. 21; see also Zarins 2007, fig. 2). However, a full account of the excavation work and a complete list of the finds are lacking. Albright (p. 106) provides only a list of 90 artefacts, summarily described and without graphic or photographic documentation. Unpublished materials are held by the AFSM in various locales in Virginia.	Phillips 1971; 1972; Albright 1955; 1982
1977-1981	Paolo Costa leads three seasons of work (started in spring 1978, following a first survey in winter 1977) on behalf of the Omani Ministry of National Heritage and Culture and in cooperation of the local authorities. Costa employs a large team of experts, analyses the site for the first time with a scientific approach, and provides a detailed site plan with a 50 m interval grid system. The main excavation activities concerned the great mosque, the western bridge and city gates (called “Area A”), and an area located in the centre of the walled city (called “Area B”). However, once again, a final analysis of the materials and a study of the ceramic fragments are lacking.	Costa 1979
1980	Giovanni Oman, upon invitation of Costa, carries out a preliminary study of the epigraphic material from the western cemetery of the site (1983), as well as from Ṣalālah and Mirbāṭ (1982).	Oman 1982; 1983; 1989
1994	At UNESCO’s request, Michael Jansen draws up an executive project for the development of cultural tourism in the Governorate of Dhofar.	Jansen 2015, p. VII
1995-2003	The German archaeological mission from Aachen University, directed by M. Jansen, in cooperation with the National Committee for the supervision of Archaeological Survey in the Sultanate, carries out numerous campaigns. The main activities carried out by the mission were: the first topographic surveying of the site (1995-1996; Jansen 2015, p. 31); the application of digital prospection and three-dimensional documentation in conservation of architectural remains (1997-2000; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 32-37); the documentation methodology for the archaeological activities (2001; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 37-40). The excavation activities involved the Great Mosque (Sept. 1995; Sept. 1996; March 1997; Aug.-Nov. 1997; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 49-92); the citadel (March 1997; Aug. 1998; March 1998; Febr.-April 1999; Oct.-Dec. 1999; spring 2000; Nov.-Dec. 2000; March-April 2001; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 161-208); the northern and western city wall (Sept. 1996; Sept. 1997; March-April 1998; Oct.-Dec. 1999; March	Powell, al-Salmi 1997; 1998; Jamme 1998; Koschick 1998; Powell 1998a; 1998b; Yule 1998b; 1999a; 1999b; Hermann 1999; Jansen 1999; Al Shamsi 1999, White 1999; 2000a; 2000b; White, Unterlechner 1999; 2000; Peshkov 2001; Peshkov, Voyakin 2001;

<i>Years</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>References</i>
	2000; Nov.-Dec. 2000; March-April 2001; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 93-160); the small mosques 655 and 940 (spring 2000; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 219-226); the House 803 (May-June 2000; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 231-232, 258-263); the courtyard 720 (May-June 2000; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 228-231, 237-257); the residential area south of the citadel (March 2000; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 232-233, 235-236). Seven soundings (1998; <i>Id.</i> , pp. 270-284) were moreover carried out with the aim of finding pre-Islamic evidences which, however, did not emerge. A number of conservation actions, such as the restoration of a number of columns, were performed as well.	Stevens 2001; Urban 2001; Franke-Vogt <i>et alii</i> 2003; Jansen 2001; 2002; 2003; 2015
1996-1997	Two excavation campaigns lead by an archaeological team of the Sultan Qaboos University focused on the so-called “funerary mosque” with its facilities and burial area.	Ibrahim, Al Tigani 1997; see also Jansen 2015, pp. 209-217.
1996-1998	Mauro Cremaschi conducted a number of geomorphological surveys within the works carried out by the Italian Mission to Oman (IMTO) in the coastal area of Dhofar and in the interior of the region. In 1997 a palynological study was carried out as well with the samples processed by the University of Amsterdam (Carina Hoorn). At al-Balīd tests were conducted on three different spots in order to collect palynological samples. The results confirm the idea of Costa that the settlement was a kind of virtual island and that the lagoon was connected to the sea until recent time.	Hoorn, Cremaschi 2004
1997-2004	First studies on ceramic material with proposals for typologies	Yule 1998 <i>a</i> ; Franke Vogt 2002; Yule <i>et alii</i> 2005; Yule, Muhammed 2006
1998	Within the frame of the Oman Maritime Heritage Project, Jana Owen made a short reconnaissance campaign in the lagoon of al-Balīd. https://museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/maritime-reports/oman-maritime-heritage-project	Owen 1998
2000	A first sedimentological study is conducted by the Canadian Edward Reinhardt who prepared a PhD thesis discussing the development of the site from a palinological, sedimentological and micropalaeontological perspective.	Reinhardt 2000
2005-2012	Archaeological works are carried out by Juris Zarins and Lynne Newton under the auspices of the Office of the Adviser to H.M. the Sultan for Cultural Affairs, directed by Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas. Their work focused on the citadel, the western and south-eastern areas of the walled city, jetties, breakwaters, southern towers and gates, “Custom House”, a small mosque located to the east of the citadel and the building complex in the southwestern corner, outside the city wall. Most of the excavated material were cleaned, classified and placed in boxes.	Zarins 2007; Belfioretti, Vosmer 2010; Newton, Zarins 2010; 2014; 2017; Zarins, al-Jahfali 2012; Zarins, Newton 2006; 2012
2012-2018	Krista Lewis of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock directs new excavation works that lead to the discovery of a large multi-storey building, located in the south-western part of the site.	Lewis 2012; 2013 <i>a</i> ; 2013 <i>b</i> ; 2013 <i>c</i> ; 2014; 2015

<i>Years</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>References</i>
2015-2016	Excavation campaign by the Italian Mission to Oman (IMTO), University of Pisa, headed by A. Avanzini and directed by A. Pavan (October-December) and S. Lischi (February-March 2016). Works were carried out exclusively on the citadel following the request of HE Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas.	Pavan 2015; Lischi 2016; Pavan, Lischi 2016
2016-2019	The most recent archaeological work carried out at the site focused on the citadel and was conducted by Alexia Pavan under the auspices of the Office of the Adviser to H.M. the Sultan for Cultural Affairs, directed by Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas. New and important results have also been achieved through the study of ceramic and porcelain material, as well as ship timbers and coins.	Pavan 2017-18; 2019; 2021; Fusaro 2018; Pavan <i>et alii</i> 2018; 2020; Fusaro 2019; Pavan <i>et alii</i> 2019; Annucci 2020; Fusaro 2020 <i>a</i> ; 2020 <i>b</i> ; Ghidoni 2020; Pavan, Visconti 2020

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