

NOTE ON THE 2015 EXCAVATION SEASON AT BMH2
(BIMAH, SULTANATE OF OMAN)

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Introduction

A second archaeological campaign within the framework of the project “*Ichthyophagoi: their culture and economy. Landscape and people during the Iron Age in coastal Oman*” was carried out from the 5th December 2015 to the 3rd January 2016 (Loreto 2014; 2015a-b). Participants to the field activities were: the author, Dr. Michela Gaudiello (archaeologist Università degli studi di Napoli “L’Orientale” - UNO), Maria De Falco (archaeologist UNO, drawer), Luisa Terminiello (student, UNO), Fausto Mauro (student, UNO), Denise Antonietti (student, UNO), Domenico Filosa (student, UNO) and Valentina Cozzolino (student, Ferrara University).

The 2015 activities were devoted to the implementation of what has been achieved during 2014 campaign, after which it was clear that the BMH2 village is strictly related to a peculiar geomorphological environment: the wadis close to the site provide both water and agricultural areas to be exploited in addition to the resources coming from the sea. Also, the 2014 excavation of the hut H5 indicates that the main activities inside the village were related to food processing practices, i.e. the production of dry fish or, in addition, the production of shell beads. Then, 2015 activities were scheduled in order to emphasize the arisen topics: 1) survey of the coastline from Bimah to Tiwi; 2) excavation of a second hut inside the Iron Age village, the H1 hut.

Field activities

Survey of the coastline from Bimah to Tiwi

The 2015 survey were devoted to the recognition of archaeological evidence along the coastline from BMH2 to Tiwi and first analyses of wādī Fins (Fig. 1). The survey allowed us to identify sepulchral evidence that must be analysed in detail in order to define the prehistoric ones from the historical ones (Korn *et alii* 2004).

Excavation of a second hut inside the Iron Age village, the H1-H1a hut and the material culture

The hut chosen for the archaeological investigation is H1 (Figs. 2-3) (Loreto 2015a: fig. 2).

The excavation, together with a test probe opened in L1, revealed a complex sequence of occupation, made of at least two main construction phases: the first one related to the construction of wall M1, a 18m long oval surrounded by a single wall that define a single hut; the second occupational level is the one related to the construction of H1a, the southern area paved by stone slabs divided by the main oval by the construction of the walls M2 and M3. Coming to H1a, this area seems to be the most interesting feature of the hut: the paved corridor and the rooms could suggest a living space where no food processing transformation activities took place. In fact, this space has revealed an interesting amount of pottery items, in particular room L3, where a rich amount of Samad al-Shān Iron Age II imported items were collected: it is a collection of food consumption orange or grey fabric and red painted decorated ware (Fig. 4).

Thanks to the abundance of the collected materials from the sounding, since now we can confirm the strong antiquity of the village, apparently built during the early Iron Age (13th century BCE), as testified by pottery and softstone vessels (Benoist 2001; Yule 2014). The 2014 archaeological campaign focused on the definition of the pre-historical and historical phases related to the ancient Adummatu and its palaeo-environment, with particular interest to the transitional period between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age to the definition of the ancient landscape and climate changes which led to the oasis exploitation. In particular, field investigations were conducted in northern al-Nefūd pre-historical region: Asfān Neolithic sites and Shaqīq Bronze Age site; and Sector A, the archaeological area of the Mārid Castle, related to the historical Adummatu.

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Fig. 1 - 2015 survey area



Fig. 2 - The hut at the beginning of the excavation (left) and at the end (right). Ortho-restitution of a Photogrammetric 3D photographic mapping

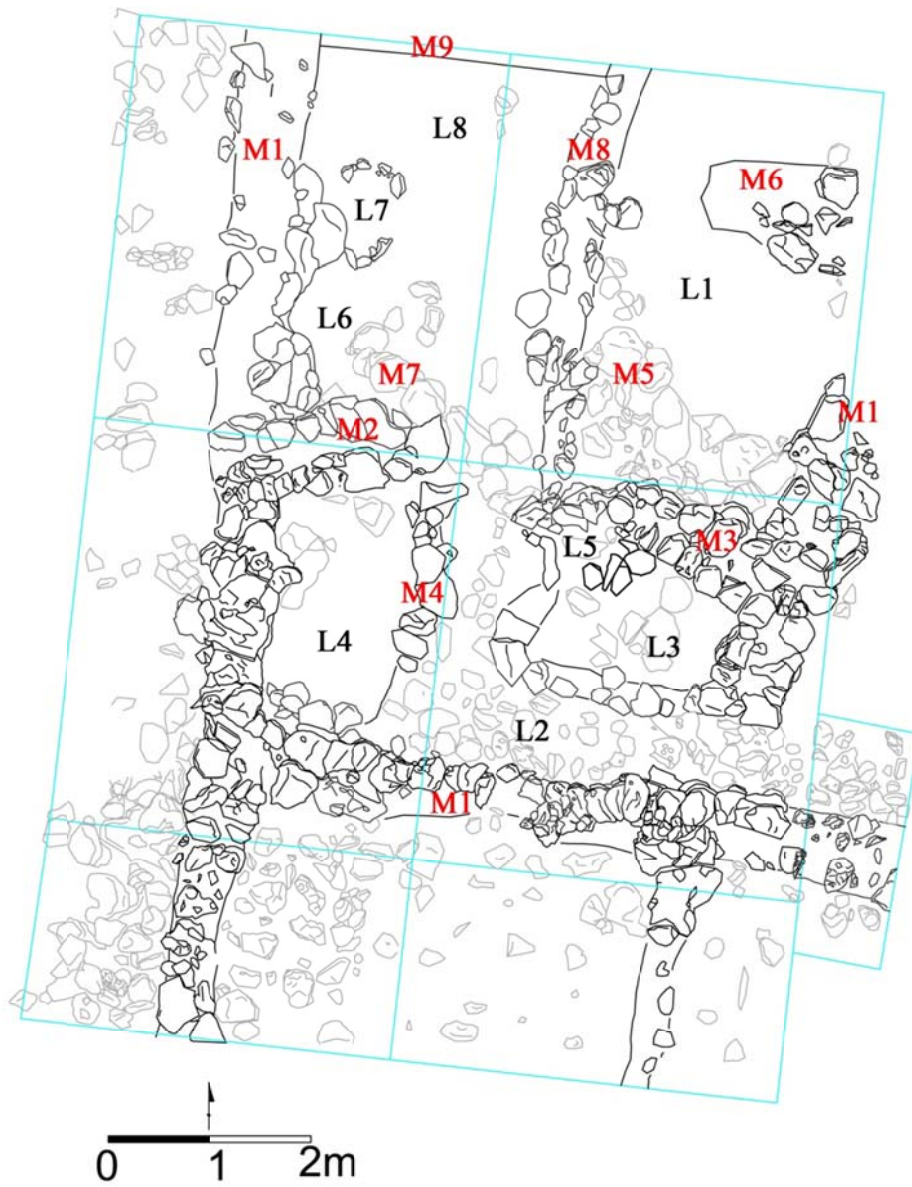


Fig. 3 - H1-H1a, plan of the excavated area



Fig. 4 - Iron Age II pottery items for food consumption