
A FIRST DEFINITION OF THE DHOFAR COASTAL CULTURE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPLORATION ON THE INQITAT PROMONTORY IN THE KHOR RORI AREA (DHO FAR, SULTANATE OF OMAN)

Silvia LISCHI

ABSTRACT

Archaeological investigations in coastal Dhofar, southern Oman, have extensively documented the presence of South Arabian occupation, but local settlements during the Iron Age remain poorly understood. Recent surveys and excavations along the Dhofar coast have revealed a site that could provide significant data on the Iron Age in the region. On the Inqitat promontory, in the area of Khor Rori, archaeological investigations have revealed continuous human settlement from the 8th-7th century BC to the 1st-2nd century AD. The stratigraphic evidence highlighted climatic changes and different uses of the promontory during its occupation. In particular, a previously unattested indigenous tradition with a specific material culture and socio-economic organisation — labelled Dhofar Coastal Culture — has been documented at the Iron Age site Al Hamr al-Sharqiyah 1 (HAS1), which partially overlapped with the occupation of the nearby South Arabian city of Sumhuram.

KEYWORDS

Pre-Islamic Arabia, Iron Age, Dhofar, Khor Rori, Inqitat, HAS1, Dhofar Coastal Culture

INTRODUCTION

The Inqitat promontory, which began to be explored under the Italian Mission to Oman (IMTO) in 2016 and 2017 from University of Pisa, has become the focus of the newborn DhofarMap & Inqitat Archaeological Project (DHOMIAP), directed by the author under the auspices of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman with the aim of understanding and making acces-

sible a site of fundamental interest for the history of Dhofar. The Inqitat promontory is located in the archaeological park of Khor Rori, part of the Land of Frankincense UNESCO property in Dhofar, southern Oman, about 2 km south of the South Arabian city of Sumhuram (Fig. 1; Albright 1982; Avanzini 2002, 2008, 2011, 2014). The promontory consists of a rocky hill about 30 m above mean sea level (AMSL). Its summit is characterised by two plateaus of about 600 x 120 m each, separated by an

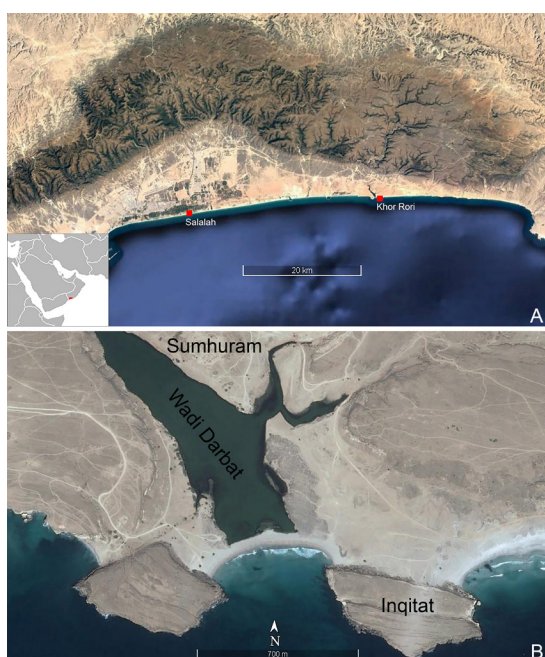


Fig. 1. Location of the areas mentioned in the text (© DHOMIAP Project).

- A: Satellite image of Dhofar coastline showing the Khor Rori area and the city of Salalah, and the study area in relation to the Arabian Peninsula (lower left box),
 B: Satellite image of the Khor Rori area with the Inqitat promontory, the city of Sumhuram, and Wadi Darbat.

intermediate valley running east-west.

The area was the subject of repeated surface surveys from 1996 to 1998 and again in 2006 (Cremaschi and Negrino 2002; Morandi Bonacossi 2002; Cremaschi and Perego 2008). The promontory was also mentioned by Zarins (2001: 150), who noted the presence of an Islamic settlement. During the IMTO activities, several architectural structures were documented, including a long wall running along the entire northern cliff of the promontory (Avanzini et al. 2001: 49), and the Islamic settlement already mentioned by Zarins, now labelled HAS2 (Al Hamr al-Sharqiyah 2) by the DHOMIAP Project (Fig. 2). In order to gain a better understanding of its chronology, a small excavation campaign was carried out with the aim of clarifying three structures within the walled area. This made

it possible to date the settlement between the 10th and 11th centuries AD (Rougeulle 2008). Moreover, the quality and variety of the pottery recovered suggest that the site, although it does not seem to correspond to any mention in the historical sources, was actively involved in maritime trade (Fig. 2). According to A. Rougeulle, the modest size and basic urban organisation of HAS2 suggest that it was not a fully developed settlement but rather a small entrepôt that served only as a transit depot for goods along the maritime trade route. This would also explain the massive fortifications and the great variability in the pottery found. It has also been argued that HAS2 had direct trade contacts with Sharma, a similar site on the Yemeni coast that is also unreported in the sources (Fig. 2; Avanzini et al. 2001: 49-58; Rougeulle 2008, 2015).

The new archaeological investigations on Inqitat carried out in the framework of the DHOMIAP Project, including both surface surveys and excavations, have interested the entire promontory but have concentrated outside the area of HAS2. This paper summarises the results of survey and excavation activities on Inqitat, focusing on the most important discovery: the HAS1 (Al Hamr al-Sharqiyah 1) settlement, the first site of the Dhofar Coastal Culture to be discovered.

GEOMORPHOLOGICAL NOTES

Inqitat is a mesa part of the marine erosional terrace extending from Taqah to Wadi Hinna (Fig. 3), which ranges from 30 to 100 m AMSL and consists of Oligocene-age bioclastic and micritic limestone belonging to the Ashawq Formation. Pleistocene erosion has cut through the strata to form the flat surface of the Inqitat promontory, the geological bedrock basement which is displaced by direct faults, increasing the effect of the erosional process-

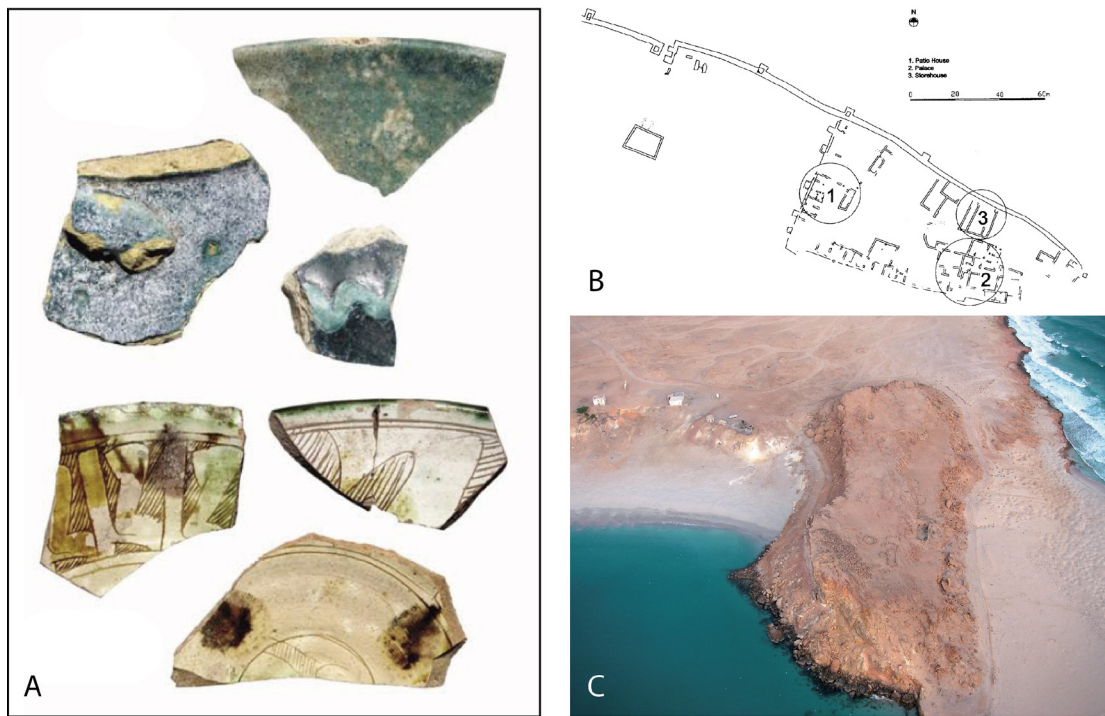


Fig. 2. Some details about the HAS2 settlement.

A: Fragments of Abbasid blue ware (above) and fragments of sgraffiato ware (below) (after Rougeulle 2008), B: Simplified plan of the HAS2 settlement (after Rougeulle 2008), C: Aerial view of the archaeological site of Sharma (after Rougeulle 2015).

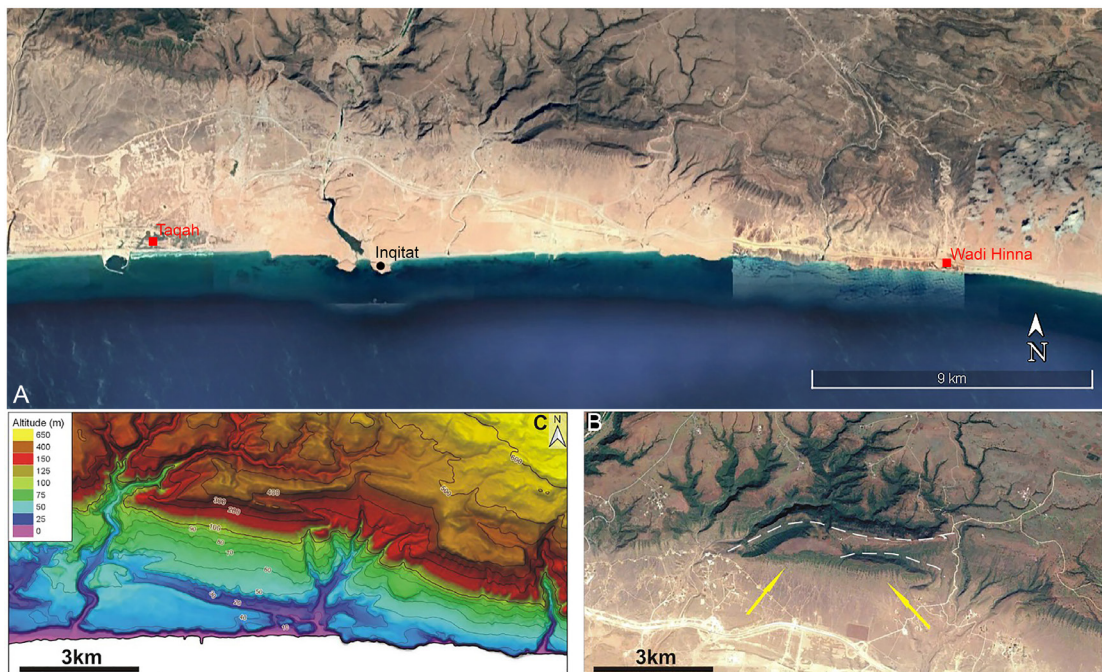


Fig. 3. Coastal features between Salalah and Mirbat.

A: Map showing the location of the town of Taqah and the mouth of Wadi Hinna in relation with Inqitat (© DHOMIAP Project),
 B, C: GoogleEarth™ and DEM images of the area to the north of the Khor Rori archaeological park
 (after Zerboni et al. 2020: Fig. 2).

es that broke up the Pleistocene marine terrace into separate mesas. Inqitat is divided by an east-west valley formed by the same erosional processes. In some parts of the promontory, a paleosol was found to have developed on the marine abrasion terrace during Marine Isotope Stage 5 (MIS5), indicating a long history of climatic change. At the base of Inqitat, there is evidence of a sea level + 5 m above the present level, dating back to the early Holocene.

As a result of wind erosion, the surface of Inqitat is covered by a stone pavement. The geoarchaeological survey has divided the promontory into different areas defined by specific geological characteristics and archaeological features. The southern plateau is characterised by a surface concentration of marine molluscs and denticulate/microlithic assemblages, while the northern plateau has a thicker stratigraphy generated by human



Fig. 4. The first circular structure explored prior to excavation (above) and the same structure during excavation with some archaeological material still in place (below) (© DHOMIAP Project).

activity overlying the paleosol. The intermediate valley is almost completely covered with anthropogenic debris forming high dumps to the north, and has several small natural shelters created by various forms of erosion along the southern slope (Cremaschi 2017).

THE DISCOVERY OF HAS1: THE FIRST TRENCH

The decision to excavate a test-trench in the north-eastern sector (NE-S1) of the Inqitat promontory was dictated by the presence of two parallel megalithic stones protruding from the surface and several megalithic stones all around them, which seemed to define a structure of pseudo-circular shape (Fig. 4; Lischi et al. 2016).

The stratigraphy revealed in this trench was characterised by a surface layer devoid of fine sediments, which were removed by wind action, in which stones and small-to-medium-sized material had accumulated densely over the entire surface. This setting allowed the preservation of the underlying layers. In fact, the upper layer covered a relatively soft reddish layer with sporadic anthropogenic material, which overlaid a layer of aeolian deposits completely devoid of anthropogenic material. This latter layer is probably evidence of an abandonment phase of the area. In turn, it covered and preserved the earliest occupation phases in the area under exploration, eventually found to be associated with the settlement HAS1 (Al Hamr al-Sharqiyah 1).

Once the upper layers had been removed, the perimeter of the structure appeared to be circular, with the two megalithic stones in parallel position defining an entrance. Excavation of the interior revealed a collapse caused by a fire that affected the entire structure. The stratigraphy of the collapse

can be summarised as follows, and can be used as a reference for most of the excavated contexts in the HAS1 settlement area (Fig. 4):

- The upper layer was rather compact and dark brown and included numerous small-and-medium-sized stones and many fragments of charcoal. No artefacts were found.
- Beneath this is a layer consisting of reddish, crumbly-fired clay mixed with sandstone slabs, interspersed with charcoal and ash.
- After this layer was removed, the presence of loose stones suddenly decreased. A bench began to emerge, built with stone slabs laid horizontally on the upper surface and medium to large unworked stones forming its perimeter. This bench ran around much of the inner perimeter of the circular structure. The layer also contained many charred fragments of wooden beams of various sizes, ashes and, closer to the floor, anthropic materials such as pottery, stone tools, and objects of various uses. It is interesting to note that much of the material was found directly on the floor or on parts of the collapsed structure. This arrangement suggests that the materials were found as they were arranged immediately before the fire caused the structure to collapse (Crippa et al. 2023).
- The floor was set directly on the original surface of the bedrock, with packed clay soil filling some natural depressions to form a levelled surface.

HAS1: GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SETTLEMENT

Settlement HAS1 occupied the central-western part of the northern plateau and covered an area of about 2 ha, without overlapping with the area later

occupied by the Islamic settlement HAS2 (Fig. 5).

It has been possible to identify the remains of about seventy structures on the surface, but it is likely that surface sediments entirely or partially cover many more. They are generally irregular in shape, varying from almost perfectly circular to semi-circular or sub-rectangular (Fig. 5). The diameter is generally between 3.0 and 4.5 m. The construction technique involved the use of megalithic undressed stones for the inner perimeter and medium to large stones for the outer perimeter, which is often poorly preserved. The filling, where preserved, consisted of incoherent material mixed with earth. The use of binders has not been found, but the presence of an earth mortar that has degraded over time cannot be excluded. The entrance consisted of two parallel, upright megalithic stones with flat stones variously arranged between them to form a threshold (Fig. 6). The average width of the entrances is between 0.45 and 0.60 m. Usually, one or more steps lead down to the floor of the structures. This arrangement seems to indicate a difference in height between the outside and the inside of the structures. This possibility could be explained by the need to dig a few tens of centimetres into the ancient surface to stabilise the megalithic stones that formed the structure.

The natural surface of the bedrock, which was generally relatively flat, was used as the floor. Occasionally, stone slabs of different sizes were used to level it (Fig. 6). The upper part of the structures was not preserved. However, from the structural remains and the evident similarities with the traditional architecture used by the shepherds of the area to this day, it was probably made of wooden beams, covered with light organic material (such as straw) and the whole covered with clay. The excavated structures were all destroyed by a major fire event. The collapse of the organic cover made it possible to document an undisturbed stratigraphy with objects and materials still in their primary

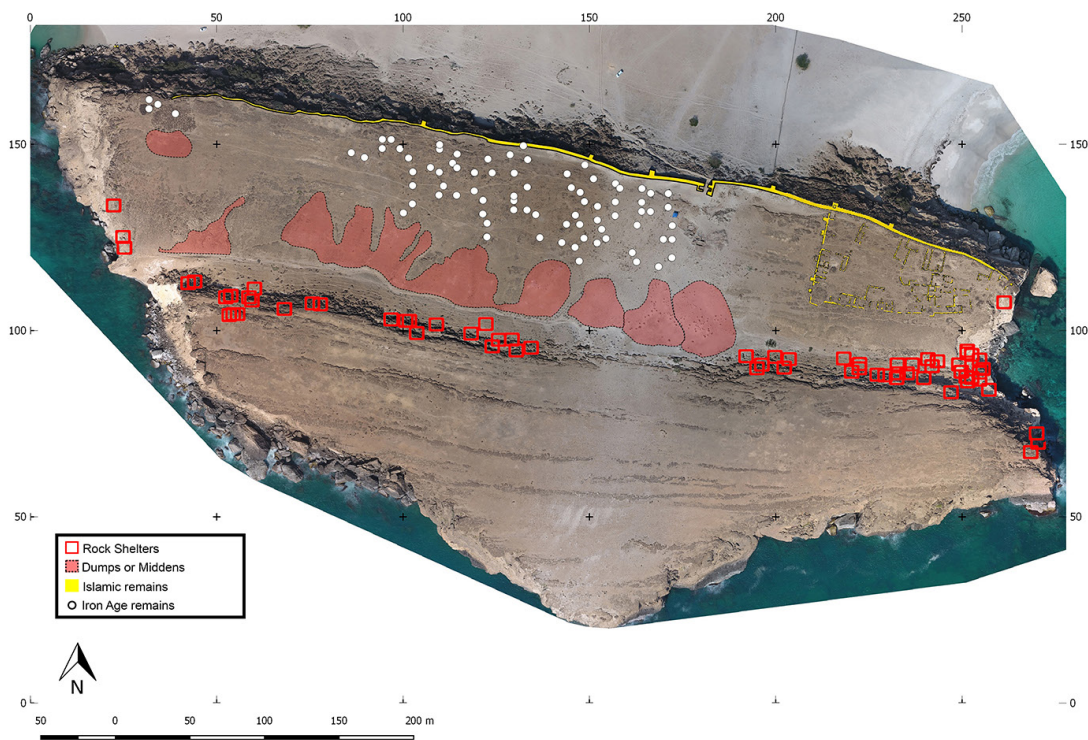


Fig. 5. General map of the Inqitat promontory (above), aerial view of the NW-S1 area (bottom left), and the plan of the same area highlighting the morphological variability of the structures (bottom right) (© DHOMIAP Project).

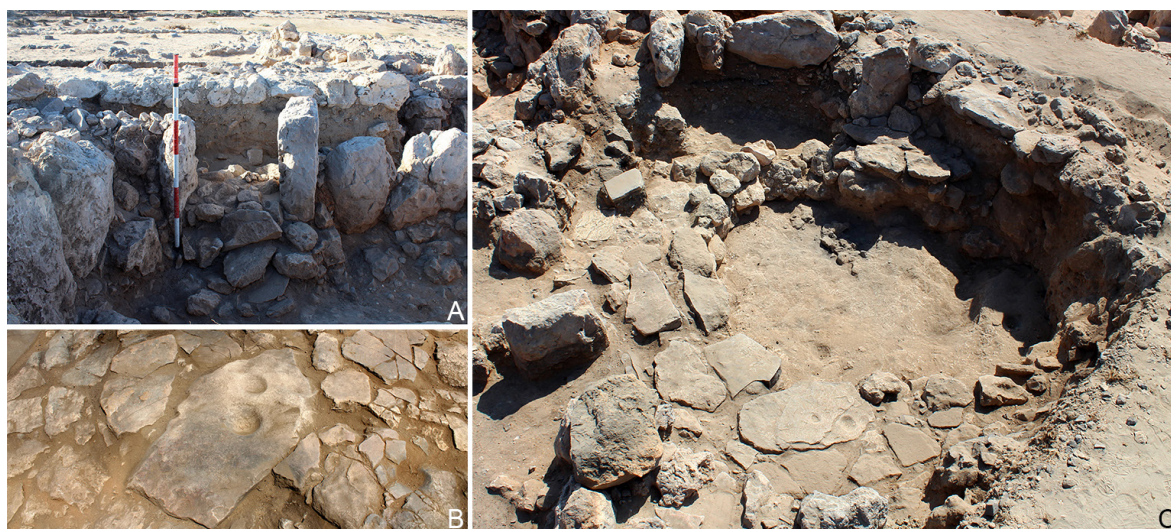


Fig. 6. Some examples of the most common architectural features of HAS1 structures (© DHOMIAP Project).

- A: Entrance to one of the circular structures in the HAS1 settlement,
 B: Part of a stone slabs floor with two cup marks made by beating or grinding on one of the larger slab,
 C: Top view of one of the circular structures excavated with a bench running around the perimeter.

context. The interior was generally equipped with benches running around the inner perimeter of the structure (Fig. 6). They varied in size but consisted of an upper surface made of slabs lying over a low wall built using medium-sized stones running parallel to the perimeter of the building, with the space between them filled with incoherent material mixed with earth. Cup marks were often found on flat surfaces inside the structures, suggesting that they were created by grinding and crushing household products. Although less common, the presence of variously structured fireplaces and small walls delimiting areas for specific activities is also to be noted.

THE INTERMEDIATE VALLEY: EVIDENCE OF VOLUNTARY SPATIAL DIFFERENTIATION

In order to gain a better understanding of the land use and extension of the HAS1 settlement, in-

tensive surveys were carried out in the intermediate valley between the two plateaus that form the Inqitat promontory. It soon became clear that the geological characteristics of the cliffs marked a different use of the northern and the southern sides (Fig. 5).

The northern side was characterised over much of its length by a series of dumps or middens, of which at least seven were clearly distinguishable. A trench of 29 x 13 m was dug in the best-preserved midden to understand their nature and chronology (Fig. 7). The excavation made it possible to identify numerous layers that composed three main phases. The earliest consisted of two layers of considerable thickness with an anthropic presence attested by food remains and lithic industry. It has been dated by radiocarbon analysis to 2600 ± 45 BP (843-739 cal BC) (Lischi 2019). The second phase, which was the largest in number of layers and thickness, was characterised by an alternation between layers very rich in anthropic material, mainly food remains, and layers composed almost exclusively



Fig. 7. The main midden (© DHOMIAP Project).

A: Eastern section of the excavated midden,
B: Aerial view of the entire trench excavated in the midden.

of aeolian deposits without significant anthropic traces. The radiocarbon analyses of two layers that are not directly contiguous date this phase to at least 2390 ± 25 BP (702-397 cal BC) and 2319 ± 45 BP (515-349 cal BC) (Lischi 2019). The latest phase was composed mainly of cemented ash, hearths, charcoal, and traces of burning, mixed with food remains in smaller quantities than in the layers of the previous phase. The analysis of the section showed that at some point in the occupation of the promontory, the top of the midden belonging to the second phase was cut horizontally to create a large flat area on which production activities were later carried out, leaving behind residues of charcoal, ash, and slag.

The southern cliff of the valley, on the other hand, is characterised by a rather steep slope of rocky outcrops interspersed with small terraces, in which numerous rock shelters of varying depths and heights open up, often surrounded by curving dry-stone walls of clearly anthropic origin. These

dry-stone walls, when well preserved, are characterised by one or two small openings in the upper part of the wall (Fig. 8). The excavation of some of these structures has revealed the presence of an extremely thin stratigraphy, consisting mainly of layers of fine wind deposits. In other cases, they were instead characterised by a dark and fibrous layer of caprid droppings. Their use, therefore, remains uncertain, also because the size of some of them does not allow them to be used as shelters for animals. Unfortunately, no dating material has been found and it is, therefore, difficult, at the present stage of research, to establish a date for the use of these structures.

THE MATERIAL CULTURE

A preliminary overview of the material culture recovered during the fieldwork on the Inqitat promontory, both survey and excavation, is summarised in the following paragraphs to highlight certain chronological aspects fundamental to understanding the settlement history of the area. The material found during the excavations consists of pottery, lithics, metal, bone, glass, and shell artefacts. It should be noted that the surface distribution of the archaeological material was considerable on the northern plateau, while it was sporadic on the southern plateau.

The Pottery Assemblage

The surface distribution of pottery sherds on the promontory was relatively homogeneous on the northern plateau, while it was rather poor on the southern plateau. This is consistent with the hypothesis that the two plateaus had different functions during the occupation of the area. So far, we have documented over two-thousand diagnostic



Fig. 8. Details of the rock shelters that characterized the southern slope of the valley (© DHOMIAP Project).

- A: Rock shelters in the central part of the southern slope of the intermediate valley,
- B, C: Frontal view of a rock shelter with a closing dry wall before (B) and after (C) the archaeological exploration,
- D, E: Images of the same rock shelter from the west (D) and from the east (E), highlighting the small openings at the top of the dry wall.

and non-diagnostic pottery sherds and about ten complete or nearly complete vessels. It is immediately apparent that the ceramic material can be

divided chronologically into two well-defined macro-phases: the Late Iron Age/Classical Period (ca. 1st cent. BC - 2nd cent. AD) and the Islamic

Period (ca. 10th - 11th cent. AD).

As for the pottery group attributed to the Late Iron Age/Classical Period, mainly found in contexts related to the HAS1 settlement, a first main distinction has to be made between local and imported ceramics. The local pottery (Fig. 9), which is discussed in detail in a dedicated publication (Lischi et al. 2022), has very distinctive characteristics. It consists mainly of hand-made containers, including open and closed forms of various sizes, to be used as kitchen ware. Their surface often shows traces

of smoothing and sometimes simple decoration on the shoulder, rim, and outer surface. The decoration may consist of red painted lines or fingerprints and various incised or impressed motifs. This pottery appears to have been used rather sporadically throughout the occupation of HAS1. Remarkably, it is not comparable to any of the types found in the nearby city of Sumhuram (Pavan 2017; Lischi et al. 2022).

Imported pottery, on the other hand, was largely reused. It consists mainly of Mediterranean and In-

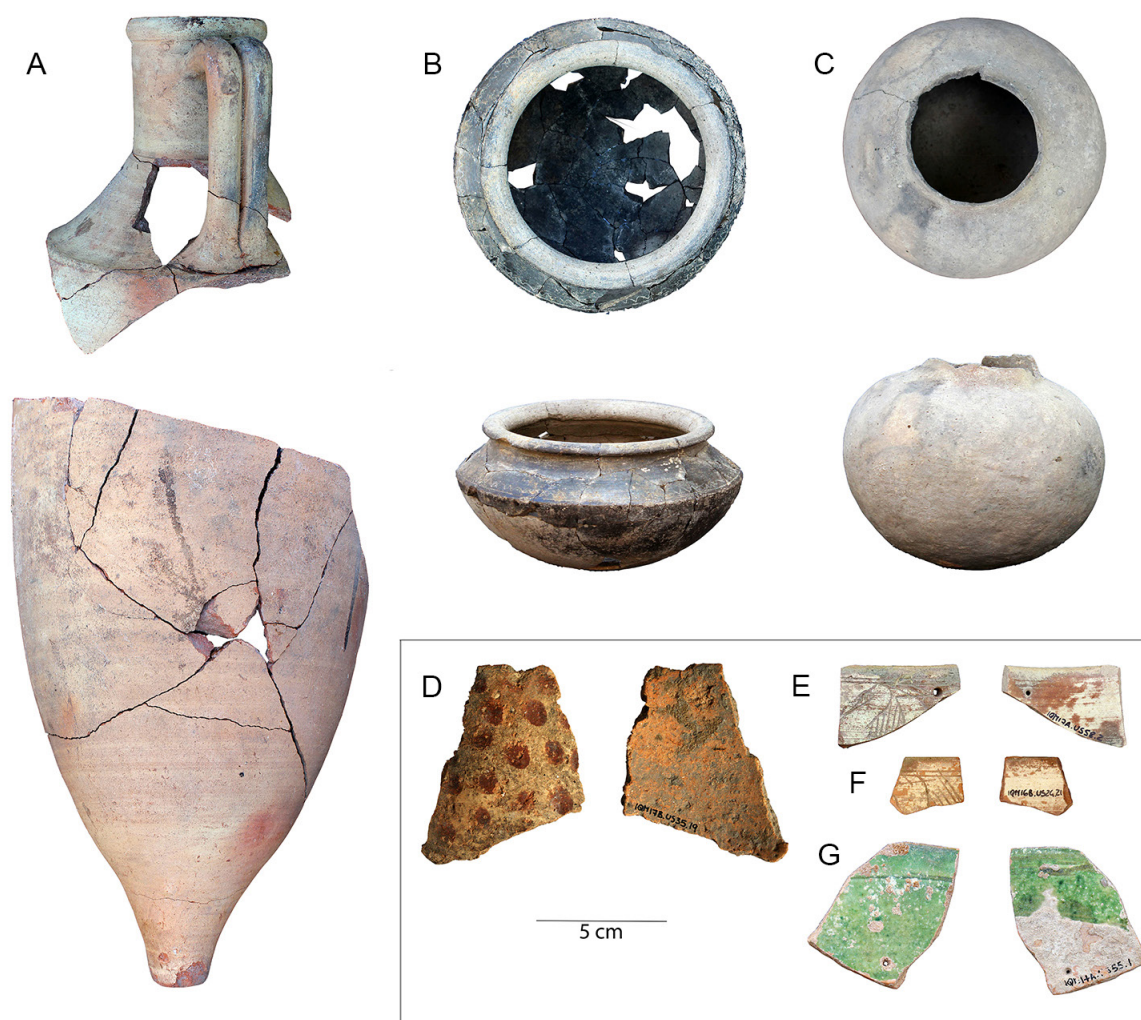


Fig. 9. Selection of ceramics mentioned in the text (© DHOMIAP Project).

A: Amphora Dressel 2-4, B: Indian cooking pot, C: Handmade coarse ware pot, D: Handmade coarse ware pot with red fingerprints decoration, E, F: Sgraffiato ware, G: Glazed ware. A, B, and C are out of scale.

dian wares. The Mediterranean pottery is currently all attributed to amphorae of the Dressel 2-4 Campanian type made of the typical black-sand fabric characterised by abundant black inclusions (Fig. 9; Tomber 2017: 350). Many complete amphorae were found inside the houses of HAS1, suggesting a functional reuse of these vessels. Moreover, in at least two cases, the presence of reworking traces on the shoulder probably testifies to their prolonged use over time. In any case, they define a *terminus post-quem* for the destruction of the settlement. In fact, this event can be placed in the period following the distribution of this specific type of amphora after the 1st century BC (University of Southampton 2014; Tomber 2017: 350). Ceramics from India are also abundant (Fig. 9). Many fragments have been found, as well as a complete vessel, consisting almost exclusively of cooking pots and only sporadically of transport vessels such as jars or dolia. The presence of Indian pottery is not surprising as a considerable amount has also been found at Sumhuram (Pavan 2017). However, it shows that HAS1 was also involved in long-distance commercial activities through contacts with Sumhuram or direct trade with merchants from overseas.

The Early Islamic pottery is only briefly mentioned here as its detailed description is beyond the scope of this paper. It comes mainly from the surface collection, with only occasional finds from contexts related to this period outside the HAS2 settlement. Early Islamic pottery was distributed on the surface of the northern plateau and only quite rarely on the southern plateau. Although the assemblage is limited in quantity, it mirrors the previous detailed analysis by A. Rougeulle (2008). The Islamic ceramic assemblage is mainly represented by glazed pottery, among which sgraffiato wares and alkaline blue glazed wares were also found (Fig. 9). These two pottery types contribute to confirming the chronology previously attributed to the occupa-

tion of HAS2. The presence of sherds from Africa, India, and the Far East confirms the idea of Rougeulle that the settlement was linked to long-distance maritime trade routes across the Indian Ocean (Lischi and Strolin 2018).

Lithic Tools Assemblage

The complexity of the lithic industry found on the Inqitat promontory has been extensively discussed in a dedicated paper (Hilbert and Lischi 2020). Therefore, only a general overview of the characteristics defining the lithic production of the Dhofar Coastal Culture is presented here. Indeed, the surface of the promontory is covered with lithic artefacts and flakes from the processing of raw materials. This data is particularly noteworthy as it contrasts sharply with the situation defined at Sumhuram.

No intensive surface sampling was conducted because the continuity of use of the promontory resulted in the lithic material being evenly distributed over its entire surface. This seems to indicate that the lithic material has been accumulated over a long period of time and certainly reflects numerous human activities, which are difficult to identify and distribute over time without the chronological clues of stratigraphy.

Approximately 60 % of the lithic material found during the excavations consists of flakes and debris, while cores are rare and often in an advanced state of reduction. Most of the cores appear to be multi-plate with a reduction sequence aimed at maximising the number of fragments produced, regardless of size and morphology. The production of blades is rare. Tools such as scrapers and perforators are present, but most are simply retouched fragments (Fig. 10). The most interesting tools found are the microliths with a geometric, lunate, or rectangular shape, retouched at one of their long ends (Fig. 10).



Fig. 10. Lithic tools from sector NE-S1 including retouched flakes (left), and microliths found during excavation including trapezoidal, rectangular, and circular shapes (right) (© DHOMIAP Project).

They were usually part of composite instruments such as harpoons.

The lithic assemblage from Inqitat includes a variety of raw materials such as flint, obsidian, and quartzite. There do not appear to be any nearby outcrops of such raw materials that could have been used for this purpose. The flint probably came from the Nejd area, some 15-20 km inland, while the quartzites were most likely collected near Mirbat, some 30-40 km to the east. The obsidian came from further afield, and more detailed studies are underway to determine its origin.

Miscellanea

The assemblage of materials found mainly during the excavations is very heterogeneous, demonstrating the complexity of the area under study. Finished objects were found alongside raw materials and semi-finished products.

Seashells are one of the most common materials found in all stratigraphic contexts. Many of these are food remains, but others show traces of anthropogenic modification. Molluscs are represented by large quantities of *Conus* sp., *Oliva bulbosa*, and

Cypraea sp. (Fig. 11), while other species are less common. Many of these specimens show clear traces of polishing and drilling, suggesting their use as beads (Lischi 2020b). Positive comparisons can be made with the beads found at Sumhuram (Lischi and Pavan 2012; Lischi 2018). In the layers of the Late Iron Age/Classical Period, some *Mimachlamys townsendi* with traces of combustion were also found (Fig. 11), suggesting that they were used as oil lamps, like those found at Sumhuram (Lombardi et al. 2008: 397). Flywheels or spindle whorls made from shell have also been found (Fig. 11). Once again there are parallels with this type of artefact at Sumhuram (Lombardi et al. 2008: 357). The spindle whorls from later contexts were instead made by reusing pottery sherds.

Numerous fragments of vitrified clay crucibles were found on the surface of the middens along the northern edge of the intermediate valley (Lombardi et al. 2008). The inner surface of some of these is covered with copper or bronze residues, confirming that they were used to melt small quantities of these materials in order to cast small objects.

Many stone tools dedicated to various activities, such as pestles, mortars, grindstones, hand tools

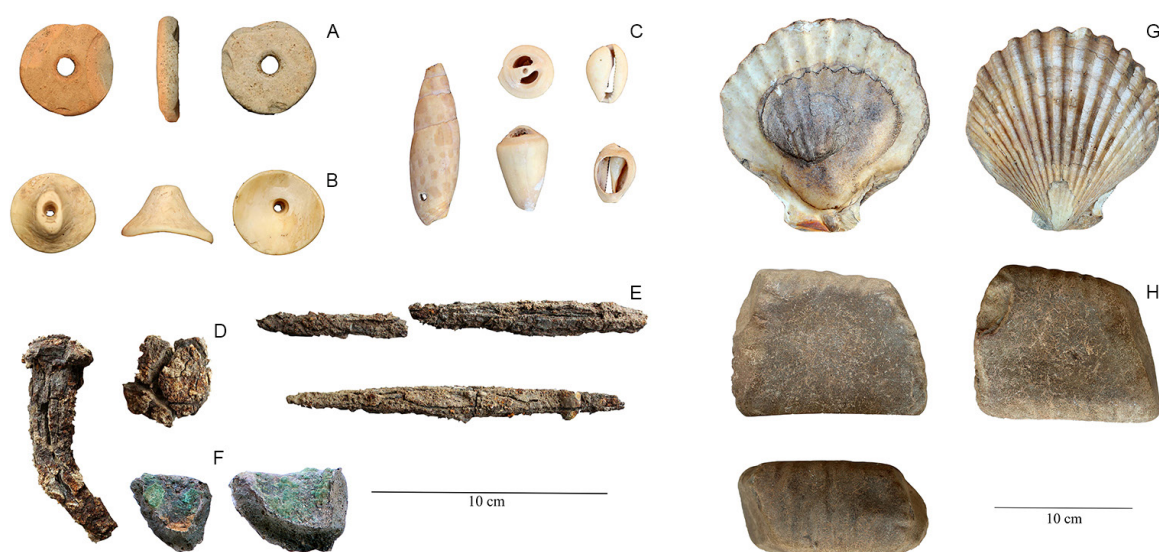


Fig. 11. Some of the artefacts described in the text (© DHOMIAP Project).

A: clay spindle whorl, B: shell spindle whorl, C: shell beads, D: iron nail, E: iron rods, F: clay crucible fragments with copper/bronze residues, G: oil lamp, H: stone tool.

and multi-purpose tools, have been consistently found in contexts associated with HAS1. Most of these tools were found in domestic structures. A detailed description of their individual uses is not provided here. However, their frequency and combination seem to describe the use of such structures by a family unit.

Some less common, but still frequent, objects are made of sandstone. The most interesting are the two conical bases for the wooden pillars that supported the roof of one of the structures in HAS1. They were arranged with the conical part facing downwards, wedged into a depression of the bedrock that served as floor. The flat part facing upwards formed the base for the poles that supported the structure, which were found burnt over the sandstone bases.

Another group of very interesting stone tools was found in an open area between several structures of HAS1. These stones show deep abrasion marks along their edges, most likely resulting from the polishing of beads (Lischi 2020b). Beads are

present throughout the stratigraphy of HAS1. Seashells were the primary raw material exploited for making beads. However, there are also numerous beads made from semi-precious stones such as carnelian and agate (Lischi 2020b), and others from glass paste, including a fine example of luxury mosaic flower bead most likely produced in Alexandria (Egypt) (Lischi 2020a).

The discovery of metallic materials is unusual, possibly because the state of preservation of metals is generally poor due to the proximity to the sea and the climatic characteristics of the area. Copper artefacts include coins from South Arabian and Indian mints, fish hooks, and other small objects such as hair ornaments (Fig. 11). Iron objects comprise nails, rods, and other fragments that are difficult to identify but are probably fragments of tools. The discovery of iron rods next to charred wooden beams suggests that their use was somehow related, such as reinforcing the roof structure or hanging objects.

CONCLUSIONS

Excavations by the DHOMIAP Project on the Inqitat promontory are attempting to define and clarify the characteristics of the newly discovered Iron Age Dhofar Coastal Culture. The continuity of use of the promontory is most likely favoured by its natural defensive characteristics and strategic location, which made it easy to control the mouth of Wadi Darbat.

The material recovered highlights two main periods of occupation during which the promontory appears to have been heavily frequented: the Iron Age and the Early Islamic period. This paper focuses on the Iron Age occupation and only marginally mentions the evidence associated with the Early Islamic period. The characteristics of the HAS1 settlement make it a site of critical importance for understanding the cultural and socio-economic organisation of the indigenous inhabitants of the Dhofar coast during the Iron Age, the so-called Dhofar Coastal Culture.

In fact, this is the first time that a settlement belonging to an Iron Age culture indigenous of Dhofar has been systematically and comprehensively explored and documented. Previous research on the subject, which has been entirely sporadic (Newton and Zarins 2019), has not succeeded in systematically collecting data that would allow a sufficiently detailed characterisation. In addition, the materials collected during the excavation of the middens have made it possible to highlight the social and economic complexity of this culture, which is also reflected in a specialised use of space: the northern plateau was reserved for the settlement, the northern slope of the intermediate valley was used for dumping waste (the middens), the southern slope was probably used for animal shelter, and the southern plateau was probably primarily used for

grazing (Lischi 2022).

It is evident at this point that several questions have been raised about the distribution of this culture, but also about the possible relationships that existed between HAS1 and the nearby port city of Sumhuram. Of course, this is only the beginning of a long-term research that will have to be extended and deepened in order to answer the numerous questions raised about the chronology and distribution of the Dhofar Coastal Culture, and its relations with the Ancient South Arabians and the other international players involved in long-distance trade across the Indian Ocean. However, it is clear from the data presented that the end of the settlement's history is due to a destructive fire (Crippa et al. 2023). Understanding the nature and consequences of this event will form the basis of future research.

The stratigraphic excavations conducted by the DHOMIAP Project will be able to provide chronological and cultural data of critical importance for obtaining a clearer and more complete picture of the human occupation in the Khor Rori area. The definition of this indigenous culture is also fundamental to understanding some of the particularities that distinguished Sumhuram from its motherland in the Hadramawt. It may also be significant in reconstructing the historical process of endogenous cultural development that eventually blossomed into the Islamic cities mentioned by medieval travellers, so crucial to the Indian Ocean trade routes of the time.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman and the Land of Frankincense Museum for generously granting the DHOMIAP Project a long-term research permit and access to the materials presented in this paper, as well as for their invaluable support during

our archaeological explorations in Dhofar over several years. I would also like to sincerely thank Dr Yamandù H. Hilbert for his study of the lithic industry and Prof. Mauro Cremaschi for the work he conducted during his first visits to Inqitat. His presence was sometimes enlightening. Many of the results achieved here would not have been possible without him sharing his experience.

Silvia LISCHI

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies,
University of Oxford

REFERENCES

- Albright, F. P. 1982.** *The American Archaeological Expedition in Dhofar, Oman: 1952-1953*. Publications of the American Foundation for the Study of Man, Washington, D.C.
- Avanzini, A. (ed.) 2002.** *Khor Rori Report 1*. Edizioni Plus, Università di Pisa, Pisa.
- Avanzini, A. (ed.) 2008.** *A Port in Arabia between Rome and the Indian Ocean (3rd C. BC - 5th C. AD)*. *Khor Rori Report 2*. 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, Rome.
- Avanzini, A. 2011.** *Along the Aroma and Spice Routes: the Harbour of Sumhuram, Its Territory and the Trade between the Mediterranean, Arabia and India*. Bandecchi & Vivaldi, Pontedera.
- Avanzini, A. 2014.** Un port d'Arabie entre Rome et l'Inde. *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 158: 485-508.
- Avanzini, A., V. Buffa, A. Lombardi, R. Orazi and A. V. Sedov 2001.** Excavations and Restoration of the Complex of Khor Rori. Interim Report (October 2000 - April 2001). *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 24: 5-63.
- Cremaschi, M. 2017.** A Geoarchaeological Perspective. In *Inqitat Archaeological Mission IQM17A and IQM17B, Preliminary Report*, pp. 25-32. Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs and University of Pisa, Salalah.
- Cremaschi, M. and F. Negrino 2002.** The Frankincense Road of Sumhuram: Paleoenvironmental and Prehistorical Background. In A. Avanzini (ed.), pp. 325-348.
- Cremaschi, M. and A. Perego 2008.** Patterns of Land Use and Settlements in the Surroundings of Sumhuram: An Intensive Geo-archaeological Survey at Khor Rori: Report of Field Season February 2006. In A. Avanzini (ed.), pp. 563-608.
- Crippa, G., S. Lischi, A. Chiari, M. Dapiaggi and M. Cremaschi 2023.** Discovering Fire Events in the HAS1 Settlement on the Dhofar Coast (Oman) by a Multi-methodological Study of Mollusk Shells. *Quaternary Research* 113: 105-121.
- Hilbert, Y. H. and S. Lischi 2020.** The Lithic Industry from the Iron Age Coastal Settlement HAS1 (Inqitat), Southern Oman. In K. Bretzke, R. Crassard and Y. H. Hilbert (eds.), *Stone Tools of Prehistoric Arabia*, pp. 177-191. Supplement to Volume 50 of the Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies. Archaeopress, Oxford.
- Lischi, S. 2018.** Macroscopic Analysis of the Bead Assemblage from the South Arabian Port of Sumhuram, Oman (Seasons 2000-2013). *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 29: 65-92.
- Lischi, S. 2019.** Risultati preliminari delle ricerche archeologiche presso l'insediamento HAS1 di Inqitat, Dhofar (2016-2019). *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 42: 119-134.
- Lischi, S. 2020a.** A Mosaic Glass 'Flower' Bead from Inqitat, Dhofar. *Journal of Indian Ocean Archaeology* 15-16: 24-30.
- Lischi, S. 2020b.** Beads and Pendants from Inqitat (Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman). *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 29(1): 337-354.
- Lischi, S. 2022.** *Settlement Dynamics and Territorial Organization in Dhofar between the Bronze Age and Late Antiquity: Understanding the Settlement Process of the Khor Rori Area and Development of a New*

- Regional Cultural Model*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Pisa, Pisa.
- Lischi, S. and A. Pavan 2012.** Le perle di Sumhuram: appunti per una tipologia di vaghi di collana dall'Arabia meridionale. *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 35: 175-192.
- Lischi, S. and L. Strolin 2018.** *Inqitat Archaeological Mission IQM17C e IQM18A (October 2017 - March 2018), Preliminary Report*. Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs and University of Pisa, Salalah.
- Lischi, S., Y. H. Hilbert and A. Moretti 2016.** *Inqitat Archaeological Mission IQM16B (September-December 2016), Preliminary Report*. Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs and University of Pisa, Salalah.
- Lischi, S., A. Pavan and A. Fusaro 2022.** La ceramica locale in Dhofar (Oman meridionale): tipi, tecniche produttive e circolazione dall'Età del Ferro al periodo Islamico. In S. Granziani and G. Lacerenza (eds.), *Egitto e Vicino Oriente: antico tra passato e futuro. The Stream of Tradition: la genesi e il perpetuarsi delle tradizioni*, pp. 169-178. UniorPress, Napoli.
- Lombardi, A., V. Buffa and A. Pavan 2008.** Small Finds. In A. Avanzini (ed.), pp. 317-476.
- Morandi Bonacossi, D. 2002.** Excavations at Khor Rori: The 1997 and 1998 Campaigns. In A. Avanzini (ed.), pp. 29-69.
- Newton, L. S. and J. Zarins 2019.** *Dhofar through the Ages: An Ecological, Archaeological and Historical Landscape*. Archaeopress, Oxford.
- Pavan, A. 2017.** *A Cosmopolitan City on the Arabian Coast: The Imported and Local Pottery from Khor Rori. Khor Rori Report 3*. 'L'Erma' di Bretschneider, Rome.
- Rougeulle, A. 2008.** A Medieval Trade Entrepôt at Khor Rori? The Study of the Islamic Ceramic from Hamr al-Sharqiya. In A. Avanzini (ed.), pp. 645-667.
- Rougeulle, A. (ed.) 2015.** *Sharma: Un entrepôt de commerce medieval sur la côte du Hadramawt (Yémen, ca 980-1180)*. Archaeopress, Oxford.
- Tomber, R. 2017.** The Late Hellenistic and Roman Pottery. In A. Pavan, pp. 321-391.
- University of Southampton 2014.** *Roman Amphorae: A Digital Resource* [Data-set]. Archaeology Data Service, York.
- Zarins, J. 2001.** *The Land of Incense: Archaeological Work in the Governorate of Dhofar, Sultanate of Oman, 1990-1995*. Sultan Qaboos University, Salalah.