EXCAVATIONS AND RESTORATION
OF THE COMPLEX OF KHOR RORI

INTERIM REPORT (OCTOBER 2001-APRIL 2002)

ALESSANDRA AVANZINI, CHIARA BENVENUTI, VITTORIA BUFFA,
ALESSANDRA LOMBARDI, ROBERTO ORAZI, ALEXANDER V. SEDOV

With contributions by
MICHAEL D. BUKHARIN, MARTA MARIOTTI LIPPI and ROBERTO ORAZI

(Drawings by Vincenzo Labianca)
INDEX

1. Excavations at Sumhuram
   1.1. *The Area between the Gate Complex and the Palace*
   1.2. *Small gates in the S-E defence city wall*

2. Architectonic and geometrical survey at Sumhuram

3. Excavations at ‘Ayn Ḥumrân
   3.1. ‘Ayn Ḥumrân village
   3.2. ‘Ayn Ḥumrân fort

4. An Indian inscription from Sumhuram (Michael D. Bukharin)

5. Indagini palinologiche nel sito archeologico di Sumhuram (Khor Rori) in Dhofar (Oman): primi risultati (Marta Mariotti Lippi)

6. Documentation and restoration project of the historical houses of Salala (Roberto Orazi)
EXCAVATION AND RESTORATION
OF THE COMPLEX OF KHOR RORI
INTERIM REPORT (OCTOBER 2001-MARCH 2002)

The Italian Mission to Oman (IMTO) carried out two new archaeological campaigns in the Khor Rori area: the first in October-November 2001 (SUM01B) and the second in February-March 2002 (SUM02A)\(^1\).

During the two last expeditions the field activities were focused mainly on the city of Sumhuram, but also the site of 'Ayn Ḥumrān, located in the piedmont area roughly 12 km NE of Salala, was investigated.

1. Excavations at Sumhuram

The main goal of the SUM01B and SUM02A field campaigns was to determine the character of the buildings in the part of the ancient town adjacent to the Gate Complex and to the palace (Area A), and to clarify the stratigraphy of the ancient site, to trace its different constructional phases. In addition, the small second entrance to the city located in its SE corner (Area B) of the site was re-excavated (Fig. 1).

1.1. The area between the Gate Complex and the Palace

At the Area A the excavations of the Building BA3 (square h11) located south of the Gate Complex, and the Building BA2 (square h11) located under the Building BA3 were completed\(^2\). In addition, excavations of the two new buildings, Building BA4 (square h12) located in the corner formed by the city-wall M14 and SE wall of the Gate Complex (M4) and Building BA5 (square h10) located outside the SE corner of the palace against its wall M16, were started. All four buildings were constructed and inhabited during different phases of the city existence (Fig. 2).

\(^1\) During the SUM01B campaign our working team was formed by the following members: Prof. Alessandra Avanzini (IMTO’s director), Arch. Roberto Orazi (field-director), Prof. Alexander Sedov (chief-archaeologist), Mr. Raimondo Boenni (restorer), Mr. Gianluca Buenomini (restorer), Arch. Gabriella Burlazzi, Arch. Vincenzo Labianca (surveyor architect), Dr. Alessandra Lombardi (archaeologist), Dr. Mario Mascellani (land surveyor).

The SUM02A campaign saw the presence of the following members: Prof. Alessandra Avanzini, Arch. Roberto Orazi, Prof. Alexander Sedov, Dr. Chiara Benvenuti (archaeologist), Dr. Vittoria Buffa (archaeologist), Arch. Vincenzo Labianca, Dr. Alessandra Lombardi.

\(^2\) Both the buildings were partly excavated in the SUM01A campaign. Cf. AVANZINI et al., EVO 24 2001, pp. 32 ff.
Fig. 1. Stambul map, general plan with reference grid.
Building BA3. The building consisted of three rooms: room A27, room A28 (both were partly excavated in the season 2001A) and room A31 (Figs. 2-4). The entire ruins of the building were covered with greyish loam mixed with a large amount of rough stones (collapsed walls of the surrounding buildings), a small amount of animal bones and marine shells, very few pieces of pottery (US21). The following small finds were discovered in the US21: fragment of a stone vessel (S296), stone polished tool (?) (S297), fragment of a stone tray (S169).

Room A27, which occupied the NW corner of the building, is rectangular, 2.1x4 m in size. A narrow passage, 0.7 m wide, in the SE corner (in the wall M53) connected it with the adjacent room A28. The passage was strengthened with a doorstep, 0.15 m high, made of rough stones. The floor of the room (floor US79) made of packed earth was reached at the point 35.80. In roughly 2.00 m from the floor of the room, in the NE wall (M5) of the building, two square holes, 25x10 and 30x15 cm in size and roughly 10-12 cm deep, were traced. Apparently, they were used to fix the wooden beams intended to support the room’s ceiling. The filling of the room (US79) was greyish brown crumbled loam mixed with medium and small size rough stones fallen down from the top parts of the surrounding walls, a small amount of ashes and charcoal, a large amount of fish and animal bones, molluscs' shells *perna picta*, a small amount of pottery shards. A number of small finds was discovered in the filling of the room (US79) above the floor: fragment of a stone vessel (S294), fragments of whetstones, grinding stones and hammerstones (S290, S291, S292, S288, S289, S295, S293), bone handle of a metal (?) tool (B10), stone net-weights (S188, S287), shell pendants (Sh51), a stone inlaid for a finger-ring (?) (S298).

Room A28 occupied the southern part of the building. It's elongated room, 1.7-1.8x6.1 m in size. The entrance to the building from the square A8 was located in the NW corner of the room, in the wall M51. The passage to the room A27 was roughly in the middle of the NE wall (M53-M56) of the room, and another passage, 0.6 m wide, in its NE corner connected the room with a staircase leading to the upper floor of the building. The floor of the room (floor US97) made of packed earth was strengthened occasionally with rough stones and/or sandstone slabs. It was reached at the point 35.90 (thus, it is about 10 cm higher than the contemporary floor in the room A27). The filling of the room was divided into two units: US96 (upper part of the filling) and US97 (lower part of the filling). US96 consisted of large amount of rough stones collapsed from the top parts of the walls of the building and mixed with greyish brown loam, fish and animal bones, molluscs' shells *perna picta* and *anadara*. The following small finds were discovered in the US96: fragment of whetstone (S299) and stone pendant (S300). Lithologically the lower part of the room’s filling (US97) is similar to US79 registered in the room A27; it consists of greyish brown crumbled loam mixed with small stones, a small amount of ashes and charcoal, a large amount of fish and animal bones, molluscs' shells *perna picta* and *anadara*, a small amount of pottery shards. The following small finds were discovered in the US97: oil lamps made from big molluscs’ shells *chlamys townsendi* (Sh52, Sh53, Sh54, Sh55), fragment of stone vessels (S306), fragments of whetstones (S304, S305), a conical-shaped stone inlaid or weight (S307), fragments of grinding stones (S301, S302, S303).

3 The entrance was unearthed in 2001A season (cf. AVANZINI *et al.*, EVO 24, 2001, p. 34).
Room A31 occupied the NE corner of the building. It's a small rectangular room, roughly 1.5x2.0 m in size. Walls M55 and M56 separated it from the rest of the building. The room was totally occupied with a staircase made from nicely dressed stone blocks (Fig. 5). It led to the upper floor of the building. Altogether eight steps were cleaned. On the top they end with the remains of what was supposed to be a stone pavement of the upper floor: three slabs of the pavement were discovered against the walls M55 and M5. It seems that two archaeologically complete storage jars found on the top of the building in the season 2001A were standing on this pavement. Lithologically, the filling of the room (US105) is similar to the filling of the adjacent rooms A27 and A28 (US79 and US97 respectively). It consists of greyish brown crumbled loam mixed with a very small amount of small stones. The eastern wall of the building (M54) and a thin subsidiary wall (M59) made from rough medium size stones bordered the staircase. The corner between walls M55, M56 and M59 was filled with greyish brown loam. No small finds were reported (Fig. 6).

Building BA2. It's one of the earliest structures discovered so far in Sumhuram. Its opening was possible by means of the partial removal of the ruins of the Building BA3 constructed later in the same area. Excavations allowed us to trace the general layout of the Building BA2 (Figs. 2, 7).

The building was built against the SW wall of the Gate Complex, and its outer walls
Fig. 4 - Sumhuram, Area A, Building BA3: general view from the east.

Fig. 5 - Sumhuram, Area A, Building BA3, from the south: to the right the staircase in A31.
were determined as follows: the wall M5 of the Gate Complex served as the NE wall of the building; its NW wall (M51) bordered the building from the square A8, and the SE wall M65 – from the «street»; the NE wall M54 separated the building from the adjacent complex (Building BA4). The internal dimensions of the building are 3.5x5.6 m. The width of the outer walls M51 and M65 is 0.75-0.8 m. The partition wall M55 divided the interior of the building into two rooms: square room A27a, 3.5x3.5 m in size, and rectangular room A31a, 1.5x3.5 m size. The door between the rooms, c. 1.0 m wide, was opened in the middle of the wall M55. It had a doorstep, c. 0.35 m high. The SE corner of the room A27a was occupied by a niche, 0.8 m wide and 0.3 m deep, constructed in the partition wall M55. A stone block, 0.3x0.35x0.5 m in size, was placed at the base of the niche. The entrance to the building was not defined with certainty. Probably, it was situated in the SW corner of the building, where an inner threshold made of big flat stone block, 0.3x0.5x0.75 m in size, was discovered (unfortunately, the wall M65 was almost completely down to the last two courses, demolished during the construction of the Building BA3).

The initial floors of the Building BA2 were reached at the point 35.23-35.27 in the room A27a and at 35.22 at the room A31a. Both floors were constructed from the packed

---

4 The room was only partly excavated because of its location directly under the room A31 with staircase of the Building BA3.
earth. The NE corner of the room A27a was occupied with a slightly raised square bordered by four stone-blocks. It is rectangular in layout and 0.75x1.0 m in size. The upper surface of the square was plastered with mortar, and bore the traces of a big storage jar once standing in its centre. Against the NW side of the square and the wall M5 a semi-circular fireplace, 0.3x0.5 m in size, was constructed from medium-size un-worked stones (Fig. 8). The filling of the fireplace was dark brown loam mixed with ashes and charcoal. Part of another construction made from five elongated roughly dressed big stone blocks was discovered in the SE corner of the room A27a, just in front of the niche in the wall M55. Four round hammerstones were found in situ lying above the two central stones of the construction, and two more bigger stones, round and rectangular in shape, probably used as anvils, were discovered on the floor of the room between the structure and the wall M65. Part of the floor adjacent to the construction from the NW as well as its stones bore traces of intensive fire, while lenses of ashes were discovered above the floor all over the room, especially in its SW part. A number of iron tools were found during the cleansing of the floor: a nail, fragment of pointed tool with bronze handle, two fragments of another pointed tool, a piece of iron slag. In addition, excavations revealed also fragments of pottery, a fragment of bronze ring, beads made of stone, glass and shell, whetstones, grinding stones and hammerstones, two pieces of stone sticks, and 8 bronze coins (Co124, Co126, Co127, Co129 were found on the floor; Co123, Co125, Co128, Co131 were found in the filling above the floor).

The discovered remains and character of small finds from the room A27a give some ideas about the possible function of the building. It’s very tempting to interpret it as the ruins of a blacksmith workshop. In this case, the part of the construction in the SE corner of the room with traces of intensive fire can be considered as remains of an oven, round and rectangular stones nearby – as anvils, and raised square in the NE corner – as place for storage jar with cold water. A number of hammerstones found in the room A27a, as well as iron finds, fits well with such interpretation. It should be also pointed out that the exact position of the two iron axes (Fig. 9) found in the NW corner of the room A27, which belonged to the later Building BA3 during SUM01A campaign, was not clear. They were found when a small sounding in the corner of the room was carried out, and were recorded as the finds from the floor US79 belonging to the room A27, but it seems in fact that both tools came from the strata located underneath the abovementioned floor, i.e. from the stratum designated as US100, which is the filling of the preceding room A27a of the Building BA2. The reconsideration of the location of these extraordinary finds gives more support to our interpretation of the Building BA2 as the remains of the blacksmith workshop.

The characteristic pottery fragments (Dressel 2-4 amphorae, Indian BRW) collected in the strata above the floor of the room A27a (US99 and US100) as well as coins found during the cleansing of the floor (two identifiable pieces belong to the Hadrami series radiated head/winged caduceus and head/eagle) allow us to date the construction and period of functioning of the Building BA2 rather precisely. It’s no doubt the 1st-2nd cent. AD. Coins found in the upper filling of the room A27a between stones, which were placed to strengthen the floors US79 and US97 belonging, accordingly, to the rooms A27 and A28

5 See A. AVANZINI et al., EVO 24, 2001, p. 35.
of the Building BA3, give the date limit for demolition of the early Building BA2 and for construction of the late Building BA3. At least three of them can be tentatively, before cleaning, identified as the coinage of Ḫ̣addh Yalu, son of Ammîdhakhar (series radiated head/bull; type 5.3). Thus, such event took place, most probably, in the very early 3rd cent. AD, when, perhaps, the considerable reconstruction of the entire city of Sumhuram was made.

**Building BA4.** The building located in the corner formed by the city-wall M14, the SE wall of the Gate Complex (M4), and the NW wall (M60) of the room O1 unearthed by F.P. Albright was only partially excavated during the SUM02A campaign (Figs. 2, 10). On the general plan made by Albright it was designated as M22.

The top stratum at the area designated as US21 covered the entire ruins of the building. Its thickness was 0.3-0.45 m, and lithologically it consisted of light brown loose loam on top and reddish-brown, more compact loam underneath; it was mixed with big and medium size stones collapsed from the upper parts of the surrounding walls. In addition to pottery fragments, a number of small finds were revealed in the stratum: grinding stones and whetstones, fragments of limestone incense-burner and mortar.

The general layout of the building was not determined – we were able to clean roughly one third of the complex, parts of two rooms constructed against the walls M14 and M4 (Fig. 11).
Fig. 10 - Sumhurum: detailed plan of the Building BA4.

Fig. 11 - Sumhurum, Area A: Building BA4 from the S-E.