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P.O.Box 183, Amman 11118, Jordan.
- Tel. 06/5342924, Fax 06/5336924.
E-mail: gpia@go.com.jo.
- Editor: Dr. Jutta Häser, Amman.
- Technical and editorial assistance: Susanne Helbig, DEI Hannover, Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland.
- Newsletter logo above by Samir Shraydeh.

Jutta Häser – the new director of the German Protestant Institute in Amman

By: Dieter Vieweger, BAI, Wuppertal (Germany)

On the 1st of April 2004, Dr. Jutta Häser started her new job as director of the German Protestant Institute of Archaeology in Amman. She is an internationally respected scientist with a lot of experience in archaeological projects in the Arab world. Her reputation in the scientific world was acquired by a lot of successful excavations and surveys in Sudan, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Jordan as well as in Germany and Italy.

Dr. Jutta Häser was born in 1961. She studied Near Eastern archaeology, prehistory and cuneiform studies in Göttingen, Aarhus and Berlin. Her MA-thesis was about stone artefacts of the second millennium B.C. in the Gulf region. Her Ph.D.-research was entitled: „Archaeology of Settlement Patterns in the Jebel Marra Region in Darfur (Sudan)“. This work was based on remote sensing data in the Sahel region. Both investigations were carried out at the Free University Berlin and su-

pervised by two distinguished prehistorian archaeologists: Prof. H.-J. Nissen and Prof. B. Hänsel.

During the last six years, Dr. Jutta Häser was employed by the Department of Orient-Archaeology in the German Archaeological Institute in Berlin. She was especially engaged in the publishing of journals and books of the German Archaeological Institute Berlin.

During this time her scientific interest was directed to Oman. She is the head of the archaeological team of an interdisciplinary research group focused on the exploration of the transformation processes in oasis settlements in Oman. This project is financed by the German Research Foundation, the German Archaeological Institute and the University of Muscat. It will continue until 2006.

A second special interest of Dr. Häser is the water management in arid and semi-arid regions of the Near East. She worked especially on irrigation and tunnel systems in Oman and Jordan.



prototypes but there are also stylistic features that can only be understood regarding local contexts. The most prominent example for this is the so called *Isis dolente* (3), whose cult picture is represented in many Nabataean and Roman copies and were of greatest importance in Petra at least since the first century BC.

This leads to the question to what extent there were links with local panthea and theologies. Again, in Petra this became evident with a Nabataean votive stela adorned with the *Basileion*, the Isis crown (4). A Roman terracotta from Pella showing a mother goddess nursing her child proves the resemblance between local ideas and the iconography of Isis lactans by depicting the baby with the typical lock of Horus. The search for so called syncretism widens the focus for elder relations between Egypt and the Middle East. Both areas were continuously connected over millennia under changing circumstances, but it would be curious if such a proximity should be totally shaken off. A cultic worship in later times could be accrued from this. It is at least highly unlikely, that in such a wealthy and multifaceted world like the Middle East the knowledge about Isis and her companions was only motivated by Hellenistic and Roman influences.

This work would be impossible to carry out without the support of many persons and institutions. Firstly to be named is the Department of Antiquities of Jordan whose staff cooperated in the most generous and liberal manner. Jordanian colleagues of the Department, of museums and universities were helping everywhere and were giving very helpful advices. The author owes also a great debt to many members of foreign missions who gave access to excavations and their scientific results. The basis for this success-

ful study was the German Protestant Institute at Amman (DEI), that served as home over three months and whose members gave countless advices and encouragements. The author had a great and very successful time in Jordan, because of which he can look optimistically into the future.

Notes

(1) Compare Th. Weber, *Gadara decapolitana* (2002).

(2) Recently presented by T. M. Atiat, *An Egyptianizing Cult at the Ci-*

tadel (Jabal al-Qal'a) of Amman, Jordan, *Levant* 35, 2003, 117-122.

(3) L. Bricault, *Isis dolente*, *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale* 92, 1992, 37-49; L. el-Khouri, *The Nabataean Terracotta Figurines* (2002).

(4) M. Lindner, *Eine al-Uzza-Isis-Stele und andere neu aufgefundenene Zeugnisse der al-Uzza-Verehrung in Petra*, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 104, 1988, 84-91.

Archaeological reconnaissance at Izki and the Jebel Akhdar

Transformation processes of oasis settlement in Oman 2004 – third stage. A preliminary report.

By: Jürgen Schreiber, German Archaeological Institute, Orient Department, Berlin

Introduction

An interdisciplinary German-Omani cooperation project „Transformation processes in oasis settlements in Oman“ started in 1999. It was conducted by members of the Sultan Qaboos University at al-Khod (Department of Archaeology and Department of Agriculture), the University of Tübingen (Oriental Institute), the University of Stuttgart (Institute for Urban Planning), the University of Kassel (Institute of Crop Sciences) and the German Institute of Archaeology in Berlin (Orient Department).

After three survey campaigns in Wadi Bani 'Awf and in the al-Hamra' region in the years 1999 and 2000 (Häser 2000, 2003) and one campaign for studying the finds in 2001, a second phase of the project started in 2002. The German

Research Foundation, the Sultan Qaboos University and the German Institute of Archaeology financed this second project phase, which lasted two years and saw archaeological surveys at Tiwi at the coast (Korn et al. in press, Schreiber / Häser in 2004) across the Eastern al-Hajar mountains to Ibrâ' (Schreiber in prep.) in the interior at the edge of the Wahiba sands.

In December 2003 this project was extended for another two years by generously financial grants of the institutions mentioned above. Archaeological research will concentrate on surveys in Izki in 2004¹ and Nizwa in 2005, and on a minor level, on the Jebel Akhdar and Bahla.

Work at Izki

The town of Izki is located in the upper part of Wadi Halfayn, directly at the southern end of the Sumail-gap (Fig. 1), which is one of the most important passages through the al-Hajar mountains, connecting the interior of Central-Oman with the coastal areas of the Batinah since prehistoric times.

The spacious oasis of Izki is divided into several quarters or settlement areas. The oldest and most important centres of the oasis are the quarters of al-Yaman and al-Nizar, separated by a c. 200-year-old fort, located between the quarters of the formerly two rival tribes. Situated to the north are the settlements of Seddi, Maghiuth, and Harat al-Raha, and located to the west are the small villages of Wuddai and Harat Bani Husain. To the south, a few small settlements and fields extend in the direction of Zukait.²

In every respect, Izki has to be considered as one of the most important places in Omani history. So is Izki the only town in Oman, which is mentioned in sources of the neo-assyrian period. Accord-

ing to an inscription of the so-called „Ishtar-slab“ in Nineveh (c. 640 BC), a king named Padê came from his land Qadê after a half a years journey to the royal court of Nineveh, to pay tribute to Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria. The name of Padê's town can be transcribed as *Is / S / z - ki / qi-e*, which fits strikingly well with the modern name Izki (Potts 1985a, 1985b).

Furthermore, according to local tradition Izki is the oldest town of Oman and one of the places, where the Azd-tribes under Malik bin Fahm settled after their immigration from Yemen (Wilkinson 1977, 1983). And another oral tradition mentions Izki as an important place in pre-Islamic times, where an idol named Jurnan was worshipped in a cave (Wilkinson 1977).³

We started our fieldwork in Izki at an area locally known as „Saruj“. This area is formed by some low plateaus, which border the southern part of the main oasis to the west for some kilometres. P. Costa already shortly described this part of the Izki oasis in the late 1980ies (Costa 1988).

The main feature at Saruj is a large circular structure (Iz0005) (diam. 20 m), built of very large un-worked boulders, which probably formed the foundation of a platform, incorporating a natural rocky outcrop (Fig. 2). While the northern part of the structure is founded on top of the plateau, its walls run down the eastern slope towards the wadi. This means, that the eastern side of the structure must have been of enormous height to achieve an even level for the platform. There is no doubt that this structure dates to the 3rd millennium BC. This date is confirmed by comparisons to similar buildings (cf. 'Amlah, Firq, Wihi al-Murr etc. [Schreiber 1998]) and Umm an-Nar potsherds, which were found in and around the structure. Generally these structures occur never as single buildings, but are always accompanied by at least a second one, if not more (cf. Bat, Firq, Hili etc.). Unfortunately, no second circular structure was found until now, but it may have been located on the opposite wadi-bank and may have been vanished today beneath the old and modern parts of the quarter of al-Nizar.

South of Iz0005, down the slope several structures (a retaining wall, terraces, house foundations), also build of relatively large boulders were visible, which probably belonged to a 3rd millennium BC settlement. These were re-used during the Early Iron Age (Iz0118). This is shown by the remains of structures build of smaller stones set between the larger Umm an-Nar structures, as well as by a dense scatter of local Iron Age pottery. The actual size of this settlement site is around 1 ha, but may have originally been larger, as the eastern part of the site towards the wadi is heavily eroded today. In our days, this area is also used partly as a cemetery and around two dozen Islamic graves are located there.

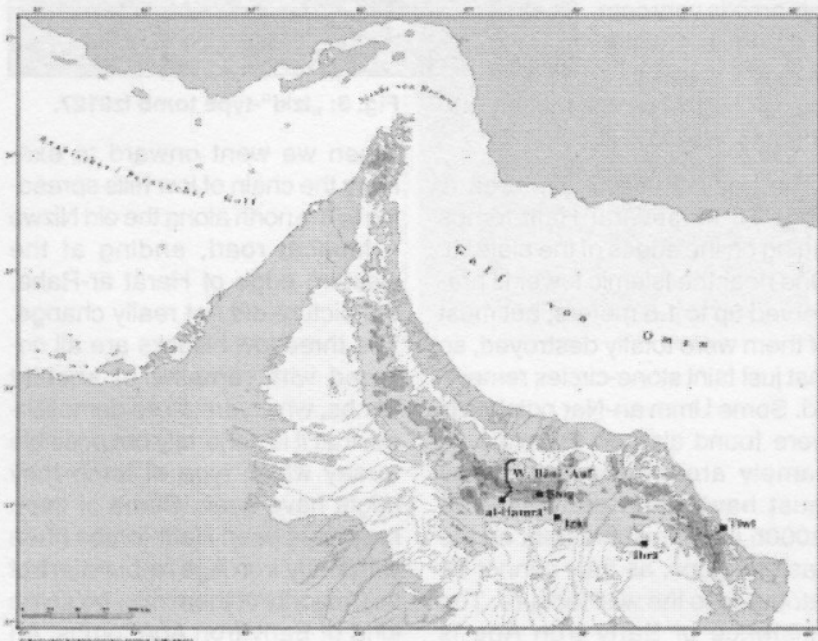


Fig. 1: Map of Southeastern Arabia with areas of research 1999 - 2004.



Fig. 2: Monumental 3rd millennium BC circular building (Iz0005) seen from the east.

Situated immediately to the west of the circular building Iz0005, are some large rectangular structures, possibly tombs. They consist of a double-faced foundation wall of large undressed rocks. They all appear to be heavily disturbed and normally just the lowest stone layer is preserved. Generally they are oriented NE-SW, but some few examples are oriented N-S also. They do not differ much in size and their average dimensions are 5.00 m x 3.00 m (Fig. 3). These structures are loosely distributed all over the oasis: They are also found at the aforementioned settlement area (Iz0118), on top of the plateau above the settlement, where they stand alone or in small clusters, on the Islamic cemetery west of Iz0005 and at a small Islamic cemetery (Iz0406) at the western wadi-edge at Harat ar-Raha, as well as at the large main Islamic cemetery east of al-Nizar. There a group of 27 of these tombs has been recorded by a team of the German Mining-Museum at Bochum in 1988, but were not excavated. These tombs cannot be dated for sure, as this type of tomb is unknown on other sites of the Sultanate – therefore the term „Izki-tomb“ was introduced (Yule 1994). Because of their NE-SW orientation, they were tentatively dated to the Late Iron Age or Samad-period by P.

Yule (2001). Pottery of this period was at least found at the surface of the main cemetery between these tombs as well as at the surface of Iz0406 (among the potsherds were also two fragmented clay camel-figurines). It seems striking that some of the older Islamic cemeteries were founded at sites, where Izki-tombs have already been built – this speaks for a long continuity in use of burial places.

On the southern part of the plateau at Saruj an Islamic tower, a house-ruin, a wall running along its eastern edge and a Hafit-tomb seemed to be the only visible structures. However, a closer look showed, that the whole area was full of archaeological remains, but nearly all of them were in a very bad condition. Because of that, just the better-preserved monuments were mapped. An interpretation of this area is very complicated, but according to the archaeological record it can be roughly outlined as follows:

The earliest use of this area is attested by several Hafit-tombs sitting on the edges of the plateau. One near the Islamic tower is preserved up to 1.5 meters, but most of them were totally destroyed, so that just faint stone-circles remained. Some Umm an-Nar potsherds were found also on the plateau, namely around the wall. They must have been connected to Iz0005 and the settlement on the eastern slope, as they cannot be attributed to the wall for sure. The existence of Early Iron Age is proofed at least by re-use of older

Hafit-tombs, as well as some circular crater-like structures with some Early Iron Age pottery, which may be remains of a campsite of this period. It is also possible, that some of the badly disturbed tombs may have been of Early Iron Age origin. A handful of Late Iron Age potsherds as well as some tombs with a stone-set underground chamber, which were partly excavated by grave robbers, can be seen as a hint of Late Iron Age occupation.⁴ While no traces of the Early Islamic period were found, the Middle and especially the Late Islamic period is well represented by the watchtower, the house-ruin and probably the wall. Scatters of modern Islamic pottery shows, that the plateau was occupied until recently.



Fig. 3: „Izki“-type tomb Iz0127.

When we went onward to examine the chain of low hills spreading to the north along the old Nizwa – Muscat road, ending at the western edge of Harat ar-Raha, the picture did not really change. The three low hillocks are all covered with remains of ancient tombs, which are all so demolished, that it is generally not possible to say which type of tomb they might have been. Some of them may have been Hafit-tombs (then with Early Iron Age re-burials) but the majority of them may be some kind of Early Iron Age tombs. An interesting feature is a wall, which

runs at least across the two northern most hills toward a Late Islamic/recent mud brick tower, overlooking the now deserted old quarter of Harat ar-Raha. As this wall was built over a row of pre-historic tombs, it should be of Islamic date.

After finishing the work at these eastern hills, we crossed the old main road to examine the other side of the road, which is bordered by relatively high mountains to the west. This is a flat area that was nearly completely bulldozed for building new houses there over the last 20 years. So we just found a few traces of old remains to the north of this area near the new sewage plant. There are some very demolished prehistoric tombs situated in the plain as well as some collapsed shaft-holes of a deserted falaj.

When we looked at the slopes above the modern houses we saw some tombs there and when we climbed up, we found a large number of them. The two upper most were 3rd millennium BC beehive-tombs, while on the ridges below them large (Iron Age) tombs were built of un-worked stones. They consist of one or two concentric ring-walls around an oval chamber, which was covered by large flat stones and were partially preserved to a height up to 1 m. A closer look showed, that the slopes in this area were full of several hundred tombs. The situation is similar to that, we found at the vast Late Iron Age cemetery at the coastal site of Tiwi (Schreiber / Häser 2004). As in Tiwi, tombs were built here using natural features, especially large free-standing rocks. A semicircular wall was built in front of these rocks, incorporating them into the structure (Fig. 4). Other tombs were totally built between large natural rocks, which rolled once down the mountains. They form clusters of different size, de-

pending on the number of demolished graves. All in all we recorded about 350 tombs there, but as we just mapped the better-preserved ones, their number must have been much higher. Unfortunately, finds were very scarce at this site. We just found a handful of potsherds, which are of Late Iron Age date – this also fits with the archaeological record at Tiwi.

Another vast cemetery is located on a flat plateau south of the canyon where the small village of Wuddai is situated inside and some hundred meters to the west of the structure Iz0005. This relatively wide plateau ends near the Sinaw - Nizwa junction. Around 60 large tombs were recorded on this plateau, most of them in very bad condition. Their average diameter is 7 m, but some reach 9 m and the better preserved of them are still standing up to 1.5 m high. The foundations of these tombs were built of large un-worked boulders and form a plinth and concentric ring-walls around a circular or rectangular chamber. Some tombs are divided by cross walls into two or four chambers. According to their location on this flat plateau, their size and elements of construction they should be Hafit- and Umm an-Nar tombs. Some smaller round or oval tombs with a diameter of 2 – 3 m intermingled between the larger ones, should be of a later (probably Iron Age) date. Finds were also scarce here. Just a few potsherds of Iron Age date were found and may derive from reuse of the tombs in this period as well.

The only non-funereary feature on this plateau is a long wall (Iz0712) running from the slope of the western mountains through a small valley up onto the plateau and across the middle of

this plateau towards the wall Iz0106, which is located on a hill at the east side of the main road. As the position of the wall in the middle of the plateau does not make any sense as fortification, the wall may represent a kind of tribal boundary.

To conclude the preliminary results of this campaign, we can say that the oasis of Izki was at least occupied with the beginning of the 3rd millennium BC, what is attested by beehive- and Hafit-tombs, but no settlement remains of this period were found. A settlement area with a large circular structure represents the following late 3rd millennium BC, together with the tombs of the vast necropolis described above. While the Wadi Suq period seems totally lacking, the Early Iron Age period sees the reuse of the 3rd millennium BC settlement-area and an extensive reuse of older tombs, but also the construction of new ones. The Late Iron Age is best represented by the vast cemetery at the slopes of the western hills as well as by a settlement area, located directly between the two quarters of al-Yaman and al-Nizar.⁵

Our examination has shown, that the „outskirts“ of the oasis were mainly occupied during pre-Islamic times and due to this, Islamic sites are somehow under-repre-



Fig. 4: Late Iron Age tomb Iz0334.

sented until now. Most Islamic remains we recorded during this campaign were some cemeteries, watchtowers and some single ruins in the deserted fields east of Harat ar-Raha – most of these features (except of some of the cemeteries) are of a relatively young date, but this will change, when we turn to the centre of the oasis during the next campaign.

All in all we mapped 744 archaeological sites/features, mostly tombs. At least 1500 potsherds (mainly of Early Iron Age date) were collected. Among the small finds (shells, fragments of soft-stone bowls, some flint-flakes) the most interesting are a bronze arrow-head (Early Iron Age), an iron bracelet (probably Late Iron Age) and the fragments of three clay figurines (one is a painted camel [Fig. 5] like the examples from Rumeilah [Boucharlat / Lombard 1985] in the United Arab Emirates and should therefore be of Early Iron Age date, while the second camel is unpainted; the third one is not a camel, but very similar to a figurine we found at the Late Iron Age settlement I0052 at Ibra in 2003).

Taking in account the results listed above, aims for the autumn campaign 2004 will be to examine the core of the oasis and the Islamic periods more carefully; to have a look what is preserved at the east side of the oasis after pipelines and the new Nizwa-Mus-



Fig. 5: Fragment of red painted camel-figurine from Izki.

cat highway were built there; search for another circular structure(s); extending the survey area further to the south and closer examination of the Izki-tombs, maybe including excavation of one or two of them to clarify their date.

Work at the Jebel Akhdar

Because of its strategic and military importance, access to the enormous area of the Jebel Akhdar massive was prohibited until recently. Due to this, almost no scientific research was done at the „Green Mountain“ until now.⁶ This and the special climatic conditions, which have led to a completely different cultivation compared to most other areas of Oman, made the agriculturists of our team establish a project there. We accompanied them from March 22nd – 25th for a short visit to get a first impression of archaeological monuments in this area.

The question was: Did the good climatic conditions (annual rainfall 200 mm and more, so no artificial irrigation was necessary) encourage early settlement or was the area so remote, that settlements developed relatively late?

We concentrated our short survey mainly on the Saiq-plateau (2000 m), where today the main settlements of Jebel Akhdar are located. Even in this short time, we were able to map around 70 archaeological remains, mainly tombs. The densest occupation of tombs we found at Saiq itself, where the southern edge above the valley Saiq is located in, was full of remains of Hafit-tombs. We noticed, that generally these Hafit-tombs were placed on flat mountain ridges, flanking small wadis. It was very obvious, that they were always located in such a way, that



Fig. 6: Hut-grave JA062 near Saiq (Jebel Akhdar).

they were visible for those people, coming up the mountains. So they mark perfectly occupied territory. This also holds for areas away from the Saiq-plateau, as we noticed some Hafit-tombs in similar positions, when we made a short trip to Hail, some 15 km northwest of Saiq. We also found three hut-graves of the Early Iron Age (Fig. 6), which were built with stones of older Hafit-tombs near-by.

To identify prehistoric settlements was much more difficult. Above Saiq we found remains of what once was probably a camp. There were a few foundations of houses as well as some circular structures (probably stables), which were built of stones of nearby ancient tombs. As we found no single potsherd in this area, we are not able to date this site. But as there is also an adjacent small Islamic cemetery, the site should at least be Islamic and of relatively late date. The same picture occurred, when we visited some of the villages there. The paths inside these villages were so clean, that generally no potsherds were found there too, with one exception of an Early Iron Age rimsherd from the village of al-Ain. When we looked at the waste dumps of these villages we generally found potsherds, dating back no more than 50 years. But as the pre-historic settlements may have occupied

the same locations than the modern villages, potsherds from these periods may be found deep down the canyons and gorges, where they were washed down in the course of time.

Coming back to our initial question, the answer is still a preliminary one, but may be as follows:

Taking into account the natural, climatic and topographic conditions with its wells and caves, the Jebel Akhdar area could already have been occupied in Neolithic times, but this would need further exploration. For sure, the area was used as herding-grounds at the turn of the 4th to the 3rd millennium BC, as it is attested by a relatively large number of Hafit-tombs. The next period we can prove is the Early Iron Age. Even if we have just a single potsherd we found some hutgraves. The Late Iron Age is attested by a re-burial inside of one of the disturbed Hafit-tombs above Saiq, where we found a soft-stone spindle-whorl of this period.

The other prehistoric but also older Islamic periods should be found during a more thorough exploration

This shows, that the Jebel Akhdar was not a remote area, but was occupied early in prehistory and was connected with the surrounding areas. This also fits with the information given by local people there, that within the range of a four to five hours walk, it is possible to reach major oases and wadis like Birkat al-Mawz, Nizwa, Tanuf, Rostaq, Wadi Bani Khalid etc.

¹ The first campaign of the third stage of the project took place from March 7th – March 29th 2004. Participants were Jürgen Schreiber as director (archaeologist) and Frank Voigt (Student assistant). All in all eight days were spent in the field in Izki, three days at the Jebel Akhdar and another seven days were used to

study the finds and work on the documentation.

- ² At Zukait is a vast necropolis of beehive-tombs, which was mentioned already by de Cardi et al. 1976. A short visit showed not only beehive- and Hafit-tombs sitting on the ridges of the mountains, but also tombs built in the plain. All in all there must have been hundreds of them, but we were not able to detect any traces of settlement remains during this short visit.
- ³ This cave may be found in the wadi terrace beneath the quarter of al-Nizar, but collapsed rocks block the entrance, so the cave is inaccessible at the moment (Hanna / al-Belushi 1996).
- ⁴ As grave robbers heavily disturbed these tombs, it is difficult to recognize their exact structure. Some of them seem not to be oblong, but semi-circular. Therefore a date in the Wadi Suq-period may not be excluded, but neither potsherds nor other finds from this period were found.
- ⁵ This site (Iz0002) was already discovered by J. Häser and the author in November 2002, but was not visited again this time.
- ⁶ One exception was the „Oman Flora and Fauna Survey“, which worked there in 1975 for a short period of time (Harrison 1975).

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