Survey in the Sharqīyah, Heidelberg University & Ministry of Heritage and Culture[1]

27 February –3 March 2018, Khalīfa Khamis al-Rasibī, Prof. Dr. Paul A. Yule, Prof. Dr. Werner Arnold, internal report, Ministry of Heritage and Culture

27.02.2018 Monitoring the multi-period Ǧebel al-Ṣalāylī site.

Time allowed for a visit to the Ǧebel al-Ṣalāylī site, some 10 km north of Samad al-Shān in order to monitor encroachment there (see our previous report von January 2018). There was no antiquities sign to inform visitors about the site importance. Inspection of the east end enabled us to observed the extensive mining operations there of the Muslim period. Mansur al-Shabibi of the GUTech (Muscat/Halban) documented in the form of a video a 130 m x 20 m bull-dozed surface at the site entrance which is to be built on. This video shows the position of al-Ṣalāylī site 2, which consists of c. 100 Early Iron Age hut tombs in good condition (Figs. 1 & 2). Time did not allow mapping and filming the mine opening. Sultan al-Bakri has this video.

28.02.-02.03.2018 Recording of a folk tale about a jāhil in al-Rākī, al-Sharqīyah

In 1996 Yule and al-Rasibī translated a tale about a *jāhil* as part of the field operation for the recording of the 3rd millennium archaeological tower site al-Jaylah on the Ǧebel Abyaḏ in the Sharqīyah (Yule–Weisgerber 1998). A first publication appeared (Yule–Bergoffen 1999). Shortly thereafter others followed suit in Oman. This *yāhil* is credited with the building of the stone towers by means of his flaming sword. In 2012 al-Rasibī made his own improved rendering of the tale in Arabic language as a report to the Ministry of Heritage and Culture, treating it as a literary work. Aside from the story itself, Arnold was convinced that a recording and transcription would enable a valuable first view of the dialects of this isolated part of central Oman, which rarely have been studied and might add new details of the story. A scientific analysis should focus not merely on the emplotment–which generally was known anyway since 1999–but also should analyse the speech itself. Some of the vocabulary is special, easily misunderstood, and its antiquity is still to be determined with focused study. Whether the *'yāhil'* (local pronounciation) of this tale is cast in the *ǧāhilīyah* before the coming of Islam or is simply a lawless more recent person is impossible to understand without further analysis. Do questions which arise reflect historic events and persons?

After clearing formalities, our study group departed for an arranged interview with Nāsir Sālim al-Saʿdī in al-Rākā near Ismaʿīyah. We attempted in 2016 and 2017 to make a recording of the tale, but neither came to fruition. On 28.03. (Wednesday) the group recorded Nāsir telling the tale in his home and transcribed the Arabic. This proved difficult. Some dialect words spoken in al-Rākī challenged even al-Rasibī, who is from nearby al-Wafī. Unusual words, such a *yaba* (lake) made the story difficult to understand, but interesting. We visited the grave in al-Rākī and verified that it is not of Samad Late Iron Age (LIA) type. Nāsir Sālim

explained that one jumps over the grave to prevent illness, which he promptly demonstrated.

On the 1st March (Thursday) a second visit resolved many of the questions regarding the actual speech. At the end of the visit, Nāsir's wife told us that she was the source of much of Nāsir's al-Saʿdi narrative. More importantly, she spoke much differently than he, slower, more clearly and with a different phonology. Dialectically speaking, her speech was purer than his, less influenced by outside influences. There was still much to correct in the Arabic transcription of Nāsir's account, which took place in the hotel, before even beginning a new translation. This is one of the only recorded linguistic interviews of a woman in all of Arabia.

On the third day (2nd March, Friday) Nāsir agreed to a second recording of the tale, this time speaking slower, more clearly and trying to be more thorough. He also agreed for his wife to be acoustically recorded, telling the same story. Although Arnold could make a valuable recording of her speech, there was no time to make a transcription and correct it. This will have to happen at a future visit. This linguistic recording is one of the few of a woman in all of Arabia. The son, Sultan Nāsir al-Saʿdī, suggested that the version, as we know it, is local to the al-Saʿdī tribe. The main figure is called *yāhil* and not *Kebi keb*, which adjectively refers to his great stature. In al-Ǧaylah on the Ǧebel Abyaḏ we could count on hearing a different version.

Nāsir and his son, Sultan, showed us a cemetery at Misera al-Rākī (Figs. 3 & 4) which consisted of some 35 graves (Figs. 3 & 4). Half adhere to the qibla direction, the other half not. Some showed Muslim *shawāhid* stones others did not. Some simple rock rings may be pre/non-Muslim.

Subsequently, we visited the Samad LIA fortified village at Ibrāʾ I52 (cf. Yule 2016, 63 Figs. 28 & 29). We saw no sign of new damage or vandalism on the north-eastern side. There is no antiquities sign.

We noticed in passing a small trilith without ash pits at a place called Rayhibat (Fig. 5), but had no time to properly record it, aside from taking photos and the coordinates. It has no ash pits. There is no antiquities sign.

On March 3rd (Saturday) al-Rasibī and Yule took a monitoring visit to the rock art stations at Shenah 2. We assigned two new site nos. there: 3 and 4 (Figs. 6 & 7) and visited the rock art station, Qufaysī (Fig. 8), to check the condition of the ministry signs, verify the coordinates and to make additional photos.

Later that day, on the way back to the capital area Shaikh Saʿīd Masoud al-Muharbī at al-ʿAmqāt (literally, the low place) showed the team hitherto unknown sites. Most of these consist of Early Iron Age hut tombs (Figs. 9 & 10). Several sherds of Late Iron Age pottery came to light (Fig. 11), but not in context. Several find-spots could be marked by means of the GPS. In one area, we observed property markers from the Ministry of Housing in the midst of thick archaeological remains.

Sites visited

no.	site designation	UTM 40Q E	N	alt. m	designation	period	area	fig.
1	Ǧebel al-Ṣalaylī 2	631235	2536611	693	hut tombs, mine, slag-fields	EIA+Islamic	5000m²	1&2
2	al-Rākī	700476	2520070	840	house of Nāsir al-Saʿdi	modern	-	
3	Misera al-Rākī	702460	2519591	956	cemetery	LIA+Islamic		
4	Shenah 2	680435	2532136	587	rock art	?		
5	Shenah 3	680147	2532209	616	rock art	?		
6	Qufaysi	681307	2532160	588	rock art	?		
7	al-ʿAmqāt 6	615951	2592775	214	hut tombs	EIA		
8	al-ʿAmqāt 7	615794	2592802	182	sherd scattter	LIA		
9	al-ʿAmqāt 8	616048	2592957	246	hut tombs	EIA		

Images:

1. Ǧebel al-Ṣalaylī site, Google earth image.
2. Ǧebel al-Ṣalaylī site 2, EIA hut tombs.
3. Misera al-Rākī cemetery.
4. Misera al-Rākī grave.
5. Rayhibat trilith.
6. Shenah 3, quadruped images.
7. Near Shenah 3, quadruped images.
8. Qufaysī, quadruped images.
9. Al-ʿAmqāt, site-plan, Google earth image.
10. Al-ʿAmqāt, site 6, EIA niche tomb.
11. Al-ʿAmqāt, site 7, LIA sherd scatter.
12. Al-ʿAmqāt, site 7, LIA sherds.
13. Al-ʿAmqāt, site 8, EIA cemetery area. To be built by the Ministry of Housing.

Sources:

P. Yule, Valorising the Samad Late Iron Age, *Arabian Archaeology Epigraphy* 27/1, 2016, 31–71.

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P. Yule–C. Bergoffen, East of Ibrāʾ: A Jahil in the Sharqīyah with two graves, in: P. Yule (ed.), *Studies in the Archaeology of the Sultanate of Oman*, Orient-Archäologie, vol. 2, Rahden/Westfalia, 1999, 187–93.
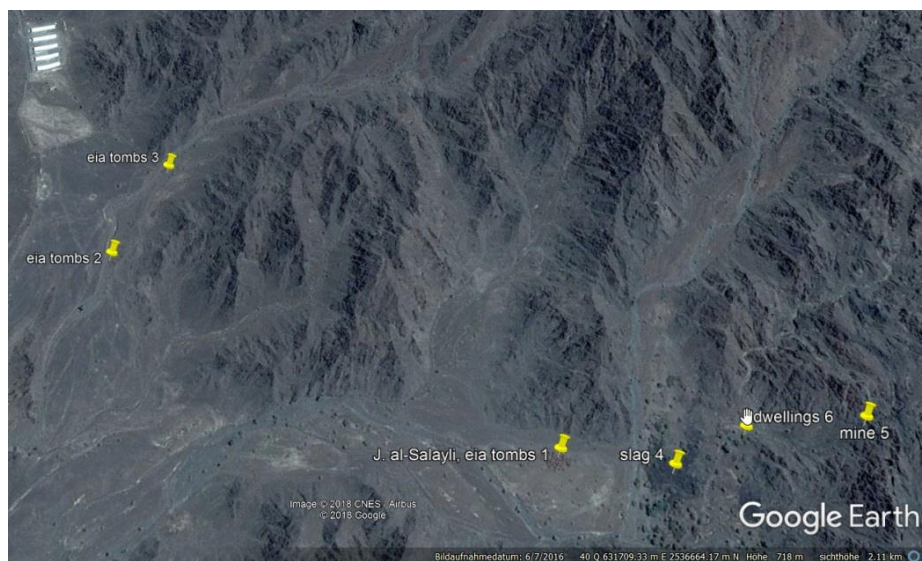
Fig. 1. Ğebel al-Ṣalaylī, Google earth image.

Fig. 2. Ğebel al-Ṣalaylī, site 2.

Fig. 3. Misera al-Rākī cemetery.

Fig. 4. Misera al-Rākī cemetery.

Fig. 5. Rayhibat trilith.

Fig. 6. Shenah 3, quadruped images.

Fig. 7. Near Shenah 3, quadruped images.

Fig. 8. Qufaysi, quadruped images.

Fig. 9. Al-ʿAmqāt findspots, Google Earth.

Fig. 10. Al-ʿAmqāt, site 6, EIA niche burial.

Fig. 11. Al-ʿAmqāt, site 7, LIA sherd scatter.

Fig. 12. Al-ʿAmqāt, site 7, LIA sherds.

13. Al-ʿAmqāt, site 8, EIA cemetery area. To be built by the Ministry of Housing.