

Special Surface Finds from Old Wibil, an Iron Age Site in Ar Rustaq, Sultanate of Oman

Khaled A. Douglas, Guillaume Gernez & Mohamad A. Hesein

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a study of two archaeological objects that were found by the research team on the surface of the Old Wibel, located on the northern borders of the city of Ar Rustaq, during an inspection visit to the site, which recently faced a massive bulldozing movement that destructed large part of it. The pottery scattered densely on the surface indicates that the site dates back to the Early Iron Age. One of these two pieces represents a part of a clay anthropomorphic figurine of a naked standing woman. Only the upper body of it remains intact, while the head, legs, and arms are missing. This figurine is unique as it not a functional and/or decorative element of a pot like most Iron Age figurines found at different Iron Age sites in the region. Generally, most of the anthropomorphic figurine found in the Omani peninsula were associated with buildings of a ritual nature, suggesting that these figurines were used for ritual purposes. In Old Wibel, an isolated building with a distinctive architectural features was found near the figurine spot, which may have had a ritual function. The second archaeological object represents a stamped seal made from soft stone. The shape of the seal is almost parallelepipedic. The base on which the impression is made is wider than the heel, which is slightly narrower and more rounded. The other sides are flat and regular. The deep incisions that mark the seal pattern consist of two median longitudinal lines, around which radiate oblique lines and three circular cups. It is very difficult to recognize a motif, although it may be a highly stylized human figure. The existence of a seal near the distinctive building might support the interpretation of the team of the Ar Rustaq-Batinah Archaeological Survey project (RBAS) as a communal building.

KEYWORDS: Ar Rustaq, figurine, stamped seal, Iron Age I

لقى أثرية سطحية مميزة من منطقة وبل القديمة، أحد مواقع العصر الحديدي في الرستاق، سلطنة عمان

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الملخص:

تقدم هذه الورقة دراسة لقطعتين أثريتين تم العثور عليهما من قبل فريق البحث على سطح موقع وبل القديم، الواقع على الحدود الشمالية لمدينة الرستاق، وذلك خلال زيارة تفقدية للموقع والذي عانى حديثاً من أعمال تجريف كبيرة حصلت في الجزء الشرقي منه أدت إلى تدمير أجزاء كبيرة منه. ويشير الفخار المنتشر على السطح وبكثافة إلى أن تاريخ الموقع يعود إلى فترة العصر الحديدي المبكر. تمثل أحد هاتين القطعتين جزءاً من تمثال طيني آدمي لأمرأة عارية واقفة، بقي سليماً منه فقط الجزء العلوي من الجسد في حين فقد الرأس والأرجل والأذرع. ويعتبر هذا التمثال فريداً من نوعه حيث أنه لا يمثل عنصراً وظيفياً أو زخرفياً لإناء فخاري كبقية تماثيل العصر الحديدي التي عثر عليها في مواقع مختلفة من العصر الحديدي. وبشكل عام كانت معظم التماثيل الأدمية التي عثر عليها في شبه الجزيرة العمانية مرتبطة بمبان ذات طابع ديني مما يوحي بأن تلك التماثيل استخدمت في طقوس دينية. وهنا في وبل القديمة عثر بالقرب من موقع التمثال على مبنى منفرد له طابع معماري مميز، ربما كانت له وظيفة دينية. أما القطعة الأثرية الثانية فتتمثل ختماً مصنوعاً من الحجر الأملس، وشكله تقريباً متوازي السطوح. وكانت القاعدة التي نفذت عليها طبعة الختم أعرض عن كمب الختم الذي يبدو تقريباً أضيق ومدوراً بشكل أكبر، وكانت الجوانب الأخرى مسطحة ومتسقة. تتكون الحزوز العميقة التي تميز نمط الختم من خطين طوليين متوسطين، تشع حولهما خطوط مائلة وثلاثة أكواب دائرية. كان من الصعب جداً التعرف على الزخرفة، على الرغم من أنه قد يكون شكلاً بشرياً منمطاً للغاية (أو شكلاً لعصا). إن وجود ختم بالقرب من المبنى المميز قد يدعم تفسير فريق مشروع المسح الأثري بالرستاق- الباطنة (RBAS) على أنه مبنى عام.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرستاق، تمثال طيني، طبعة ختم، العصر الحديدي الأول.

INTRODUCTION

During the first season of the archaeological excavations of the Omani-Italian expedition at At Tikhah in Wilayat Ar Rustaq in southern Al-Batinah region, a local resident (Mr. Mohammed Al-Ma'awali), who lives nearby in the village of At Tikhah, contacted the archaeological team, asking them to accompany him to visit some archaeological sites located to the east of the At Tikhah in order to see the recent damage that occurred to some of these sites. The visit actually took place on January 26, 2022, when a number of archaeological sites were visited, the old Wibil site being one of them. The team visited the area composed of Khaled Douglas, Guillaume Gernez and Nasser al-Hinai. After examining the site, it was found that the southeastern side of it was bulldozed. Here, soil and stones were shoveled and accumulated in the form of little mounds to create a barrier that prevents the flow of rain water coming from the eastern side, towards west, where there are some modern houses and date palm groves adjacent to Wadi al Fara (وادي الفرع). While walking among the accumulated tells, intensive archaeological materials were found, which were mostly in the form of pottery sherds distributed all over the bulldozed debris. Among the distinctive archaeological finds were a broken female clay figurine and an intact steatite seal that were found by Khaled Douglas. This article presents the results of the preliminary study of these finds and their archaeological context.

THE SITE OF OLD WIBIL AND FINDS CONTEXT

Ar Rustaq region in the south of the Al-Batinah plain is considered one of the richest and most prosperous regions in the Sultanate of Oman in terms of the density of settlement in ancient times that dated back from the Stone Ages to the late Islamic periods. Sites ranging from small farmstead to large cities. Although several archaeological missions tried to document the cultural history of the region (Hastings, Humphries & Meadow

1975; Ibrahim & Gaube 2000; Häser 2000 & 2003; Ribbeck & Gangler; Al-Jahwari 2004), the joint British-Omani «Ar Rustaq-Batinah Archaeological Survey project (RBAS)» (2014-2018)¹ considered to be the most comprehensive expedition that covered the entire region of Ar Rustaq and its surroundings (Kennet et al 2014, 2015, 2016 & 2017; Deadman et al 2022). Several archaeological sites from different periods were discovered during this project.

The results of the archaeological survey indicated that Ar Rustaq area was prosperous during the Iron Age period, when a large number of settlements were discovered, most of which are located along both sides of Wadi Al-Ghashab and its tributary wadis such as Manaqi, At Tikhah, and Old Wibil. The clay figurine and the seal, which are the subject of this paper, were found in Old Wibil.

The site of Old Wibil is located ca. 6.5 km to the northeast of the city center of Ar Rustaq on the eastern side of Wadi al Fara (40 Q 545891.00 E 2592671.00 N). The site is sitting between Al-Mazahit village (ca. 2 km to the north) and the village of Wibil (2 km to the south). It is located about 2.5 km to the south of the confluence of Wadi al Fara with Wadi al-Sahtan (Fig. 1).

The area of Old Wibil was first discovered during the 2014-2015 season of Ar Rustaq - Batinah Archaeological Survey (RBAS) (Kennet et al 2015: 38). The entire area of the site was identified by the survey team as “Old Wibil Complex” (Kennet et al 2016: Fig. 23). Under the umbrella of this complex different sites were included: four small Iron Age villages (al Mamur, Wadi Al Maawil 1, Wadi Al Maawil 2, Wadi Al Maawil 3), agricultural fields, Al Tikha, peninsula site, clearance mound site. The last two sites were identified as the major one of the complex². In our paper we are focusing on the Iron Age peninsula site where our objects have been found.

¹ This is a joint project between the Department of Archaeology at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman and the Department of Archaeology at Durham University, UK.

² For more detailed information about the total area of Old Wibil see Kennet et al 2015: 38-54; 2016: 35-44.

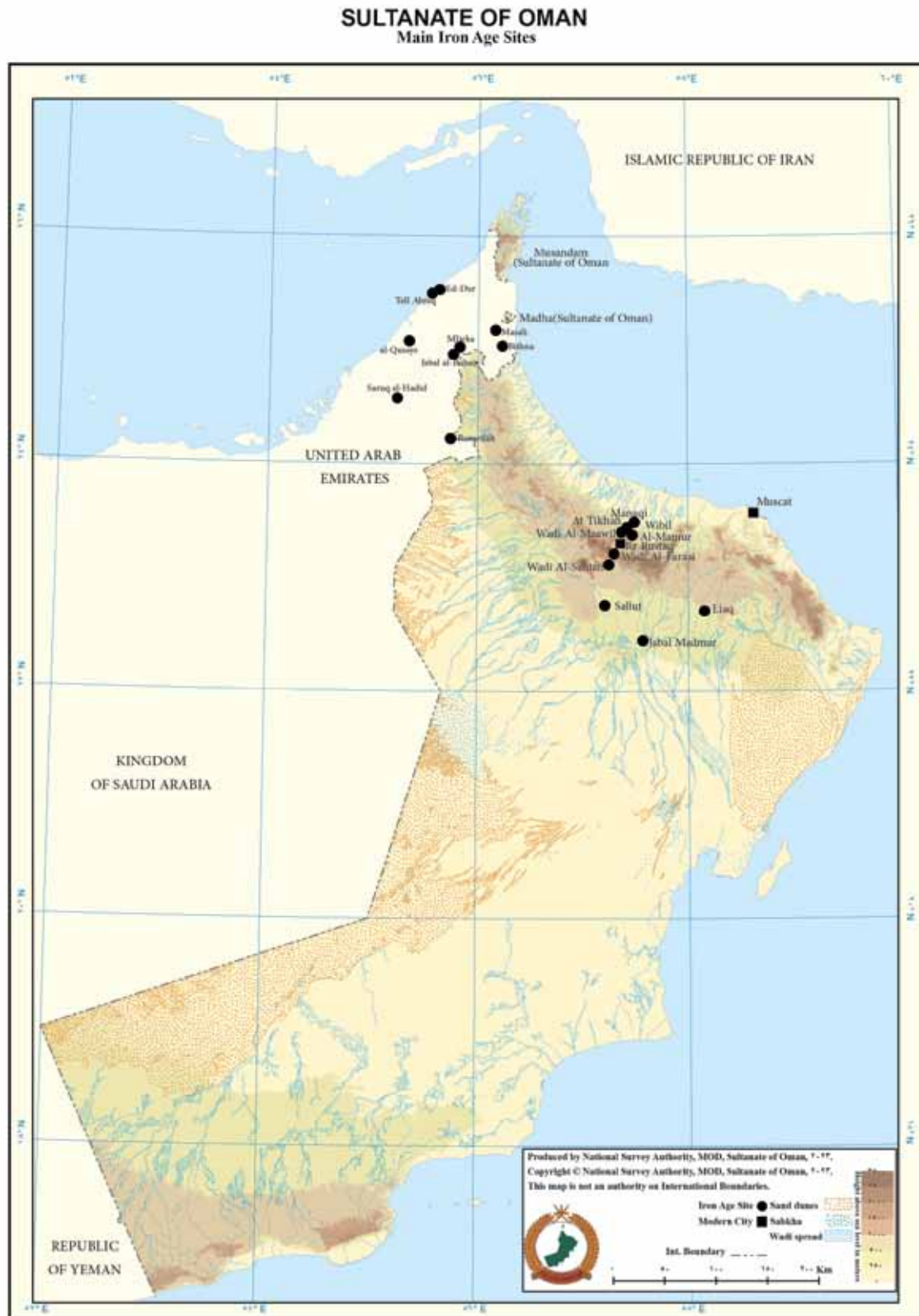


Figure 1: Map showing the location of Old Wibil and sites mentioned in the text (Drawn by: M. Hesein).

The initial visit to the peninsula site showed that the site is a nearly rectangular in shape surrounded by Wadis, covering an area of 700 x 150 m (Fig. 2). A long wall (fortification?) can be identified clearly on the peninsula dividing it into an eastern and western parts. The wall seems enclosing the western part which is the larger and include remains of structures on its western end. Dense Iron Age pottery sherds spread on the surface. Furthermore, Umm an-Nar and late Islamic pottery sherds were found too. At least one Umm an-Nar tomb was identified where its *Sugar lump* stones were reused in later tombs (Fig. 3). Nevertheless, based on the high percentage of pottery at the site, one can say that Iron Age was the main occupation phase. The eastern part of the peninsula is open and shows no indications of structures except of few burials. Different tombs were placed later inside parts of the wall.

To the east of the peninsula a lower flat area yielded large quantity of Iron Age pottery. It is presumably part of the site. This lower area was suffered recently from bulldozing activities from some of the local people living in houses to the west in the aim of preventing the rain water runs towards their farms and houses.

The bulldozed material composed of a large quantity of stones, soil, and remains of modern material such as plastic, cements bricks and waste of modern structures accumulated in a form of an elongated mound (Fig. 3). The bulldozed materials were accumulated in several mounds distributed in different parts, east of the wadi terrace. They are in different sizes and material. Some of them had very few archaeological materials, the color of their soil is different than the original surrounding soil, and most of their component is modern construction waste. For all these reasons we think that the materials of some of the mounds came from outside, dumped there, in some case were mixed with bulldozed material from the site itself. It was easy to follow the traces of the bulldozing activities on the lower area. On the outer edge of the lower area there is an elongated mound of bulldozed materials represent the eastern border of the lower area. This mound yielded the largest amount of archaeological materials (Fig. 3).

The clay figurine was found on the surface, almost in the middle part of this mound on its eastern slope combined with large quantity of Early Iron Age pottery sherds. The seal was found on the other side (western slope) of the same mound (Fig. 3).

A distinctive building is located on the western side of the elongated mound. This building was identified previously by the Ar Rustaq survey team as an Iron Age communal building (L0762) (Kennet et al 2015: 50-52). It is the only building existing in the lower area. It is difficult to ensure if there were other buildings existing before the bulldozing activities in the area. However, the Ar Rustaq survey team mentioned that the building was not surrounded by other Iron Age structures but it was described as a “*unique and important*”. It is a rectangular structure (8 x 11.3 m) with irregular polygonal shape³. It has an open courtyard and a square room 4 x 4m (Figs. 4 & 5).

THE FEMALE FIGURINE

The figurine is undoubtedly anthropomorphic according to all its characteristics (Figs. 6-7).

Dimensions

- 8.4 cm x 3.3 cm (middle) x 2.6 cm. Weight = 99 g

Technical indications

- Surface: Munsel 10 YR (6/2) Light brownish grey; the surface is thin and self-slip, seems also smoothen.
- Core: Munsel 10 YR (4/1) Dark Grey
- Temper: small black grains, pieces of dark grey or dark brown/red limestone; few elements of plant temper.

From a technical point of view, it can be seen that the object is very hard (thus well fired) and that the degreasing agent in the paste is less coarse than that used for ceramic vessels. It is therefore likely that this figurine is not a functional and/or decorative element of a pot.

³ For the detailed description of the building see Kennet et al 2015: 50-51.



Figure 3: Aerial view for the bulldozed material in a form of elongated mound on the eastern side of the lower flat area of the Old Wibil (Photograph by M. Hesein).

Morphology

A groove marks the sex, and although the head and limbs are missing, female elements can easily be identified, notably the breasts, buttocks and pubis. Interestingly, these features are quite simple: the breasts and buttocks in particular are simply two small circular bumps.

The left arm starts a little higher than the right arm, which means that there could be movement, at least of the arms with a different position.

The area between the breasts and the lower abdomen is very cylindrical (elliptical). There are no indications of muscles or details of the belly or back. The hips are very straight and the start of the thighs is barely widened, which could look a

bit more masculine. The legs are not constricted. The right leg seems to go a little further to the right than the left, which implies a particular position, not at all fixed. This is confirmed by the distance between the buttocks which is not too natural, and could confirm the distance between the legs, and this position.

The proportions are realistic. There is no indication of clothing, ornaments, or hairstyles.

In spite of the simplicity, the realistic aspect (without hypertrophy, with normal breasts, normal buttocks, indicated and slightly rounded) could indicate elements related to the population, or at least to the modes of representation, hitherto unknown in the region.

KNOWN PARALLELS AND DISCUSSION

So far only three other anthropomorphic terracotta figurines have been found in the South East Arabia (Oman and UAE) in the Early Iron Age (EIA), and only one of them is unambiguously female. It is very similar to the one found at Old Wibil in Ar Rustaq. It comes from Bithna-50 (UAE) near Structure H (Benoist 2007, fig. 15.7), a site associated with the cult according to the material elements identified. It is a human figurine, female according to its physical characteristics (in particular the absence of the male genitalia), but lacking the head and limbs (Fig. 8.1). According to the publication, this object is considered to be the handle of a perfume burner,

a type well known during the Early Iron Age, and always associated with ritual uses, at sites like al-Qusays (Taha 2009: pl. 52/A-B), Bithna-44 (Benoist 2007: figs. 15/2-4, 6), Masafi-3 (Benoist et al. 2012: fig. 14), Sallut (Degli Esposti and Condoluci 2018, pp. 52-53) and Jabal Madmar (Jean et al. 2018, p. 131). Although there are handles decorated with snakes or faces for example at Jabal Madmar (Jean et al. 2018, p. 133, fig. 6) and Sallut (Degli Esposti and Condoluci 2018, p. 69, pl. 6), the interpretation of the figurine as an incense burner handle seems questionable to us insofar as if the head and arms were not broken, the handling of the object would be difficult. It could therefore be a figurine in its own right, and not part of a vessel.

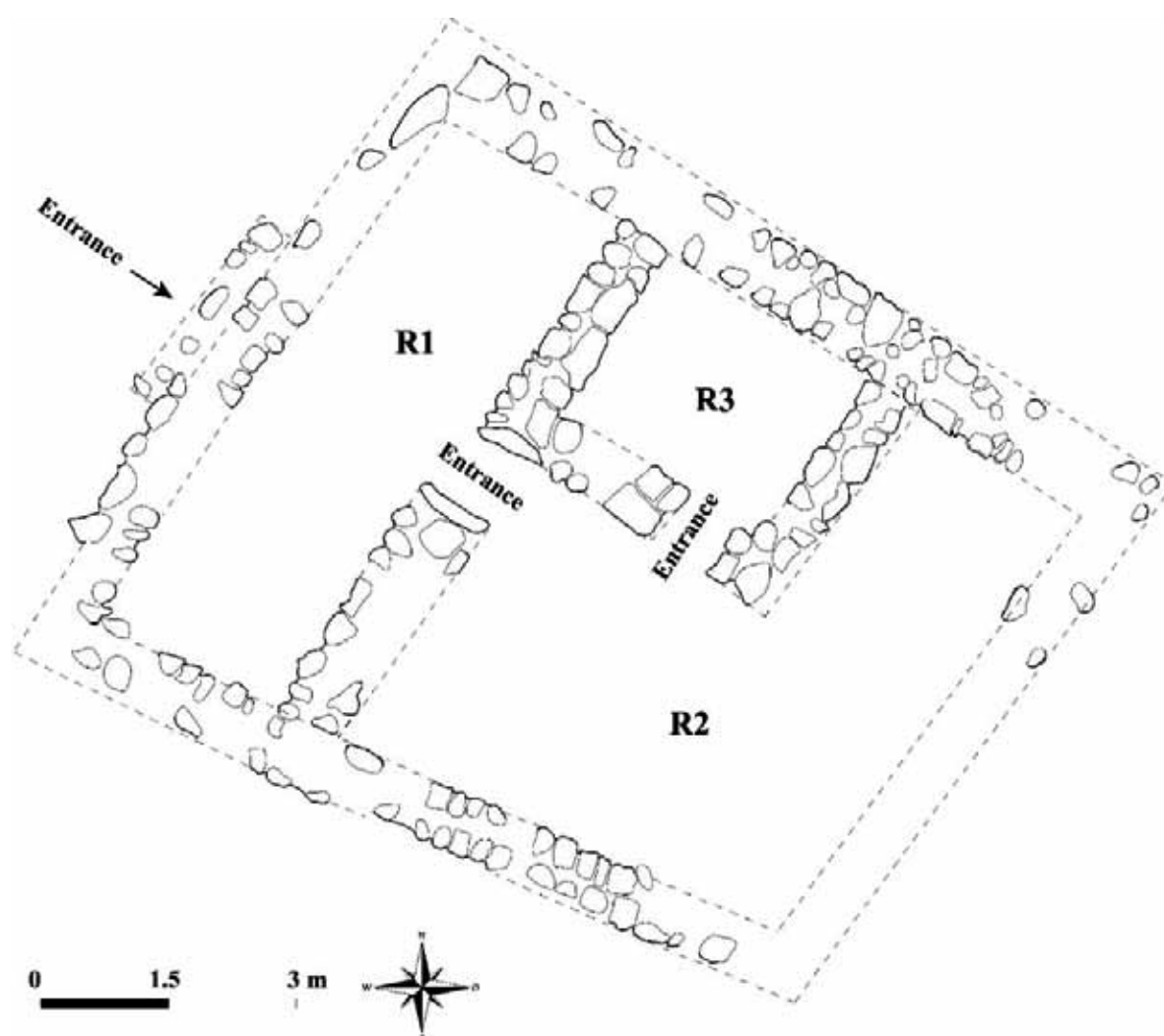


Figure 4: *The distinctive building behind the elongated mound (Drawn by M. Hesein).*

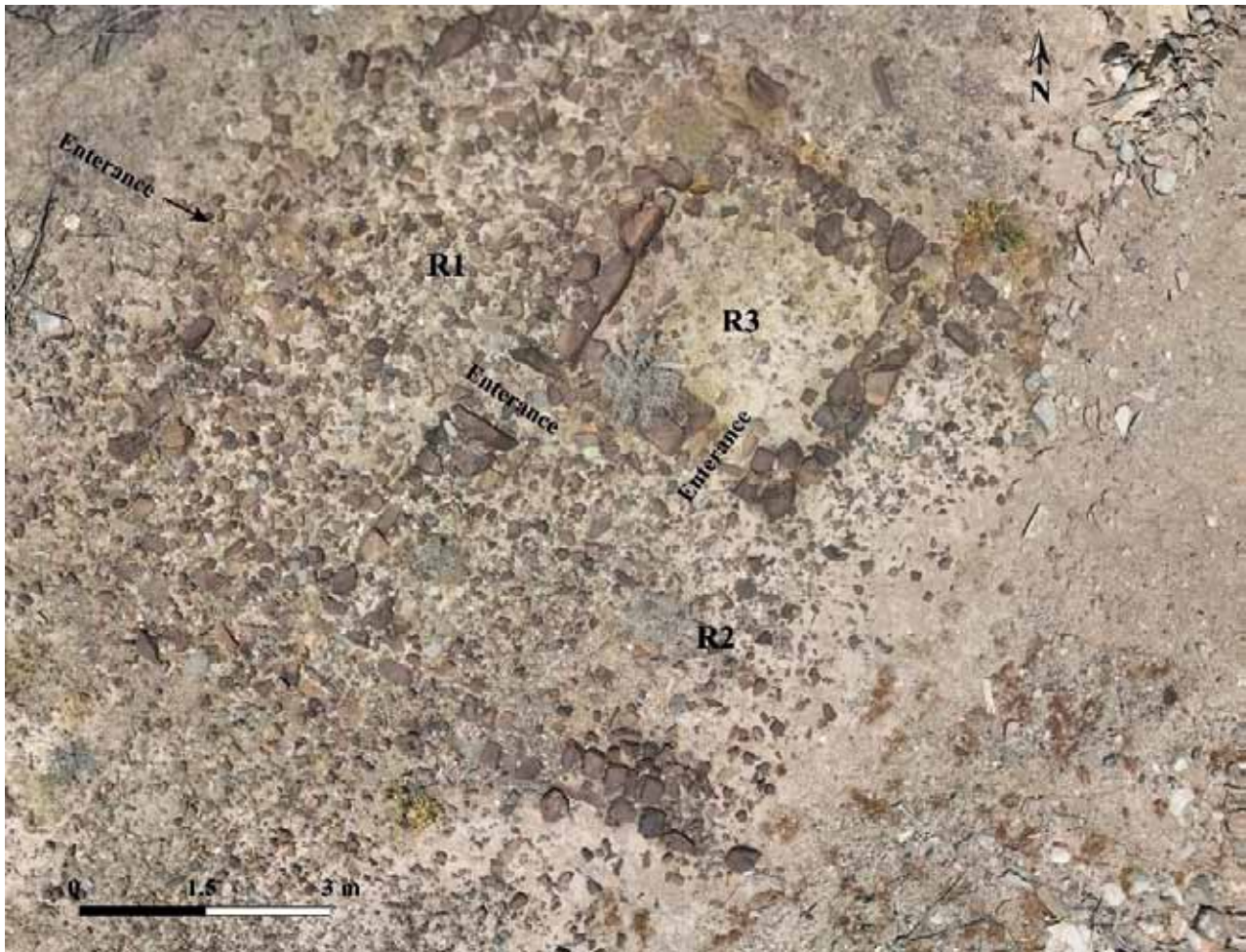


Figure 5: Aerial view of the distinctive building (Photograph by M. Hesein).

The second figurine comes from Masafi-1 (Benoist et al. 2012, p. 151, fig. 7). It is “A figurine of a naked man with a snake around the waist and a keffieh on the head” found in the pillar room (Fig. 8.2). According to the paint, the paste and especially the assembly, this figure could be part of the lid of a brazier. It is therefore not a figure in its own right. Moreover, this one is not comparable to Ar Rustaq figurine.

The third figurine is a smiling head from Rumeilah, period 2, which places it in the Early Iron Age III (600-300 BC) (Boucharlat and Lombard 1985, pl. 65.3), but it is not possible to establish a comparison with Ar Rustaq figurine (Fig. 8.3).

The other figurines are more recent (Late Iron Age) or badly dated. This is the case for the male head found at Mleiha - Layer 3 (Fig. 8.4), dated to

the Late Iron Age (=PIR A) (Jasim 2001, p. 117, fig. 27.1) and those of Ed-Dur (Fig. 9.4), belonging to the Seleuco-Parthian period, even if similarities with elements of the first half of the 1st millennium BC at Qal’at al-Bahrein have been noted for a figurine head (Daems 2004, 94).

A figurine was also found in the vicinity of an Iron Age cult site, but this time in Oman, during surveys at Hosn Sallut (Fig. 8.5) (Degli Esposti and Condoluci 2018, p. 54, and pl. 7.10). It is badly damaged and no female sexual attributes are visible. It bears traces of red paint, which leads the authors to compare it with figurines found in Yemen.

Indeed, the collection of 55 terracotta figurines in the National and Military Museums in Sana’a (Yaseen and Shargabi 2007) contains only objects whose origin is not precisely known, even if they

are mainly from Ma'rib or Wadi al-Jawf (Fig. 9.2). Their dating is therefore uncertain. Based on their highly stylised characteristics, the Yemeni figurines of Group A sub-group I ('Standing female figurines with bird head', Yaseen and Shargabi 2007, pp. 193-194, figs. 3-4) could be related to the one found at Sallut, but not to the one from Ar Rustaq, whose forms are more realistic and detailed, especially the start of the legs and the buttocks.

The most exceptional Early Iron Age assemblage in the Gulf comes from Qal'at al-Bahrain. It consists of 200 figurines and fragments, mostly male, discovered in the pillared room of the residential complex (Lombard 2016, pp. 58-61). Although these figurines are in no way comparable to the one from Ar Rustaq, it is interesting to note that they are associated with a cult space, as are the rare examples from Eastern Arabia (Fig. 9.1).

Finally, we have to mention the existence of Early Iron Age II copper anthropomorphic figurines discovered at Saruq al-Hadid (Fig. 9.3), also from a cultic context including some copper snake figurines (Valente et al. 2019).

As we can see, there are few clear parallels with the figurine found at Ar Rustaq. Anthropomorphic figurines are rare in Arabia, especially during the Early Iron Age, and Old Wibil figurine is one of the earliest found in Oman.

CONCLUSION

How should the terracotta Old Wibil, Ar Rustaq figurine be interpreted? In Oman, it is a particularly rare object for any period and the first of its kind to be found here. Even in the UAE, where many Iron Age sites have been excavated, figurines are extremely rare, and often later (Late Iron Age). As we have seen, they are very often associated with cult furniture. The only close parallel is the figurine found at Bithna.

According to the pottery found in the vicinity and the few architectural remains preserved, the area is linked to an Early Iron Age domestic and/or storage activity, but no elements linked to the cult (incense

burners, copper snakes) were identified there until now. It could be an object linked to a family cult, perhaps made to be offered to the temple, or kept for good luck (maternity, fertility?). Only excavations on the site would make it possible to answer the functional questions and to ensure the dating of this rare find.

Here, it is worth to mention that the only building near the place where the figurine was found shows distinctive architectural features that differ from traditional domestic buildings (Fig. 4). This was confirmed too by the team of the Ar Rustaq-Batinah Archaeological Survey project (*RBAS*) where it was described as a communal building that might serve a ritual function (Kennet et al 2015: 50-52). If this interpretation of the building is correct, it may be that the figurine is also associated with a cult function, especially if we assume that its primary context came from that building.

IV. THE SEAL

A soft stone stamp seal was found in the lower flat area of the site, in the fill moved by the bulldozer (Figs. 10-12). The material is a soft metamorphic rock, steatite or chlorite, green to dark grey in color with light grey inclusions. It is a material frequently used in the manufacture of vases in the region throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages. Pendants and other seals made of this material are also known from, for example, Sallut (Degli Esposti and Condoluci 2018, 77, pl. 10).

The shape of the seal is almost parallelepipedic. However, the base (1.7 x 1-1.4 cm) on which the impression is made is wider than the heel, which is slightly narrower and more rounded. The other sides are flat and regular. Its dimensions are (2.7 x 1.7 x 1-1.4 cm).

The sides of the object are polished, and a large hole (outer side is 1.1 cm in diameter, inner side is oval in shape 0.4 cm long)- intended for the passage of a cord - has been made on both sides of the two larger sides. This hole is shaped like a double funnel.



1. Photo of the front side of the figurine.



2. Photo of the backside of the figurine.



3. Photo of the top side of the figurine.



4. Photo of the bottom of the figurine.



5. Side view for the figurine.



6. Side and front view for the figurine.

Figure 6: *Photos of the female figurine from Old Wibil (Photograph by Yaqoub Al-Rahbi).*

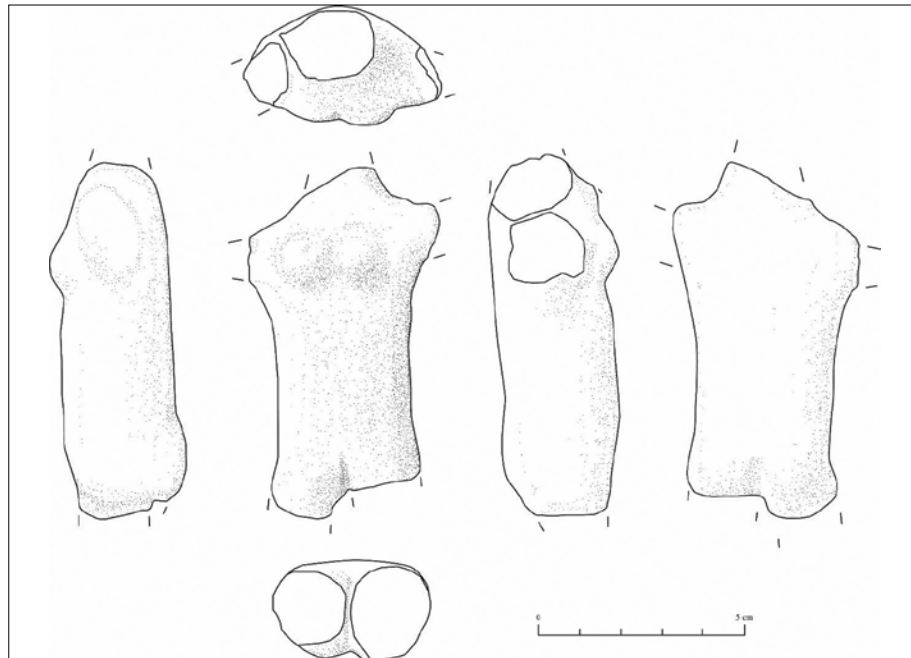


Figure 7: *Drawing of the female figurine from Old Wibil (Drawing by G. Gernez).*

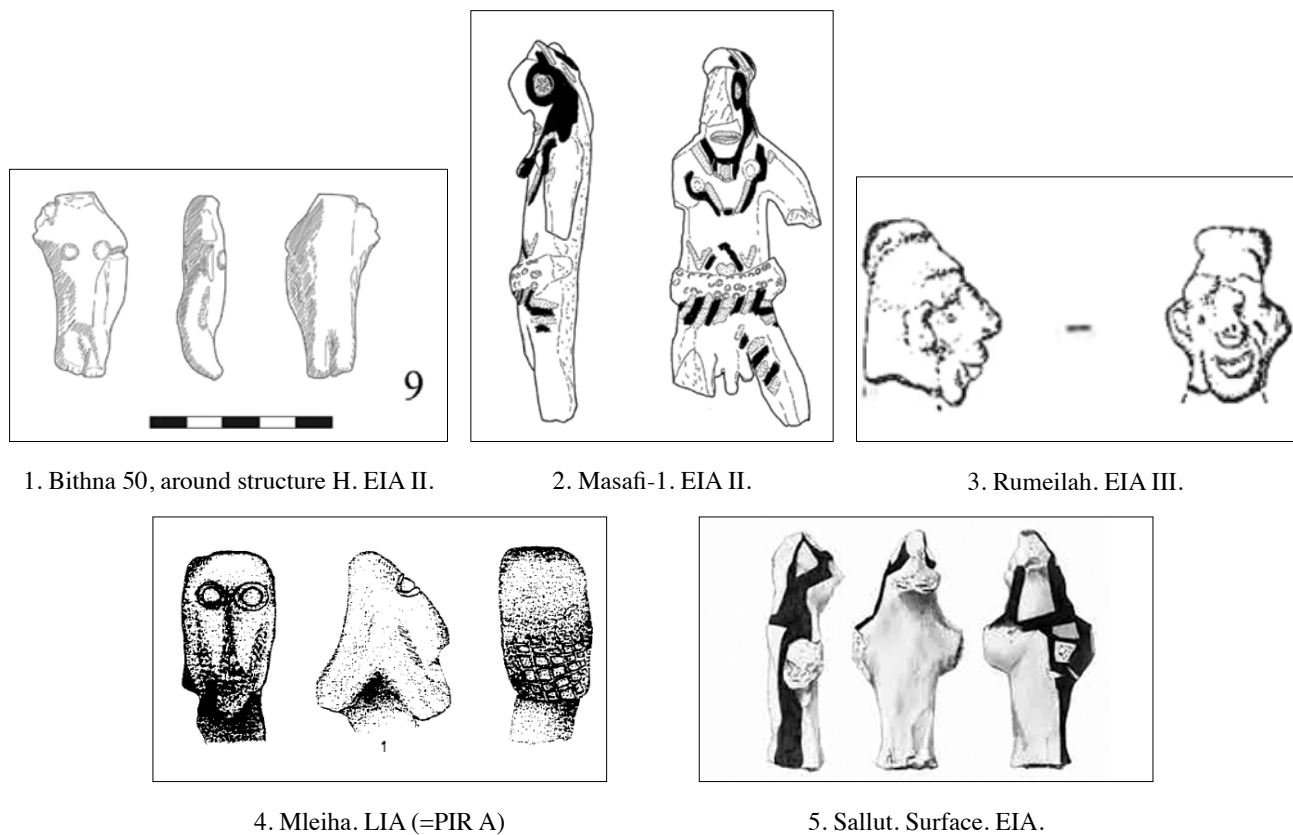
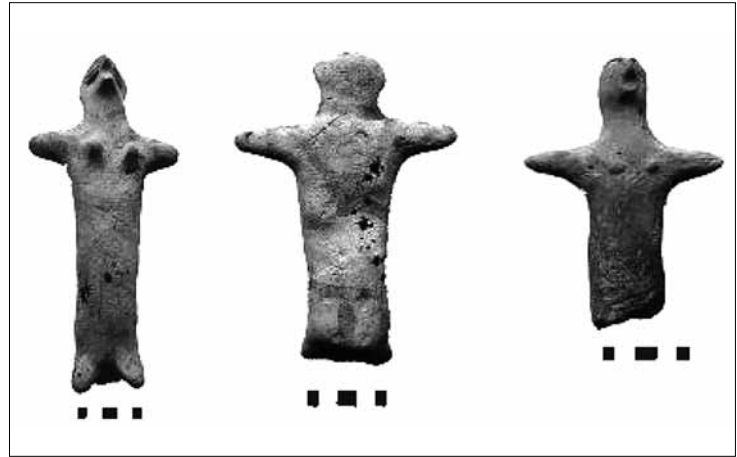


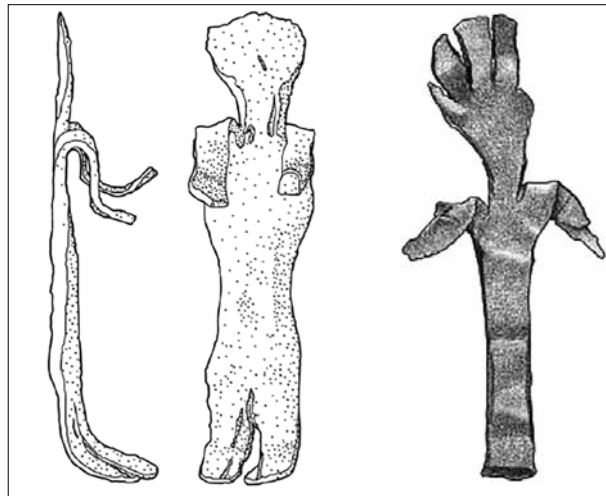
Figure 8: *Parallel figurines 1. Bithna (after Benoist 2007, p. 48, fig. 15.7), 2. Masafi-1 (after Benoist 2010a, p. 127, fig. 9), 3. Rumeilah (after Boucharlat and Lombard 1985, pl. 65.3), 4. Mleiha (after Jasim 2001, p. 122, fig. 27), 5. Sallut (after Degli Esposti and Condoluci 2018, p. 71, pl. 7.10).*



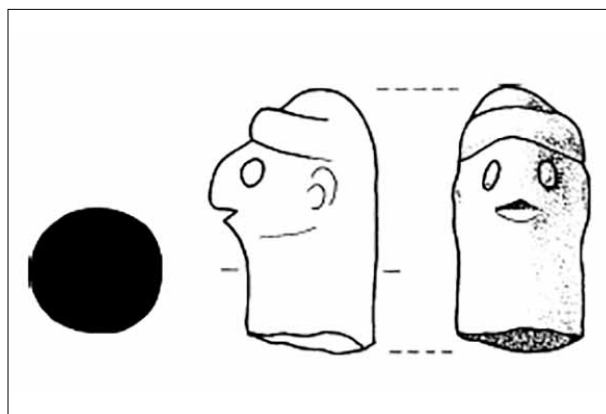
1. Qalat Al-Bahrain. EIA.



2. Yemen



3. Saruq al Hadid (copper). EIA.



4. Ed-Dur. EIA.

Figure 8: *Parallels figurines*. 1. *Qalat Al-Bahrain* (after Lombard 2016, p. 62) , 2. *Yemen* (after Yaseen and Shargabi 2007, p. 197, fig. 3), 3. *Saruq al-Hadid* (after Valente et al. 2019, p. 287-289, fig. 4 and 7), 4. *Ed-Dur* (after Daems 2004, p. 94, fig. 1)

The deep incisions that mark the seal pattern consist of two median longitudinal lines, around which radiate oblique lines (two on one side, four on the other) and three circular cups (one at the sum of the median axis, the other two grouped near the opposite vertex). It is very difficult to recognize a motif, although it may be a highly stylised human figure (or stick figure).

While the shape of the seal is unusual in the region where pyramid-shaped seals are widespread (Boucharlat and Lombard 1985: pl. 66; Boraik Radwan Karim et al. 1997), the iconography is local and typical of the EIA, both in style and motifs. Indeed, representations of sticks, figures or other stylised radiating motifs, associated with hollowed small discs, are well known from this

period: they are present on objects (stamps or pendants) discovered at Lizq (Kroll 2013: 173, fig. 14), Jabal Al Buhais tomb BHS 65 (Jasim 2012: fig. 206), Sallut (Degli Esposti and Condoluci 2018: 77, pl. 10.16), Rumeilah (Lombard 1998: 156), Tell Abraq (Potts, 1991: 95-97, figs. 135-139) and Saruq al-Hadid (Boraik Radwan Karim et al. 2017). The presence of this stamp among the collected material therefore confirms the dating of this assemblage to the EIA.

The existence of a seal near the distinctive building might support the interpretation of the team of the Ar Rustaq-Batinah Archaeological Survey project (*RBAS*) as a communal building. Only further study and excavations to the site can explain the function of the building.

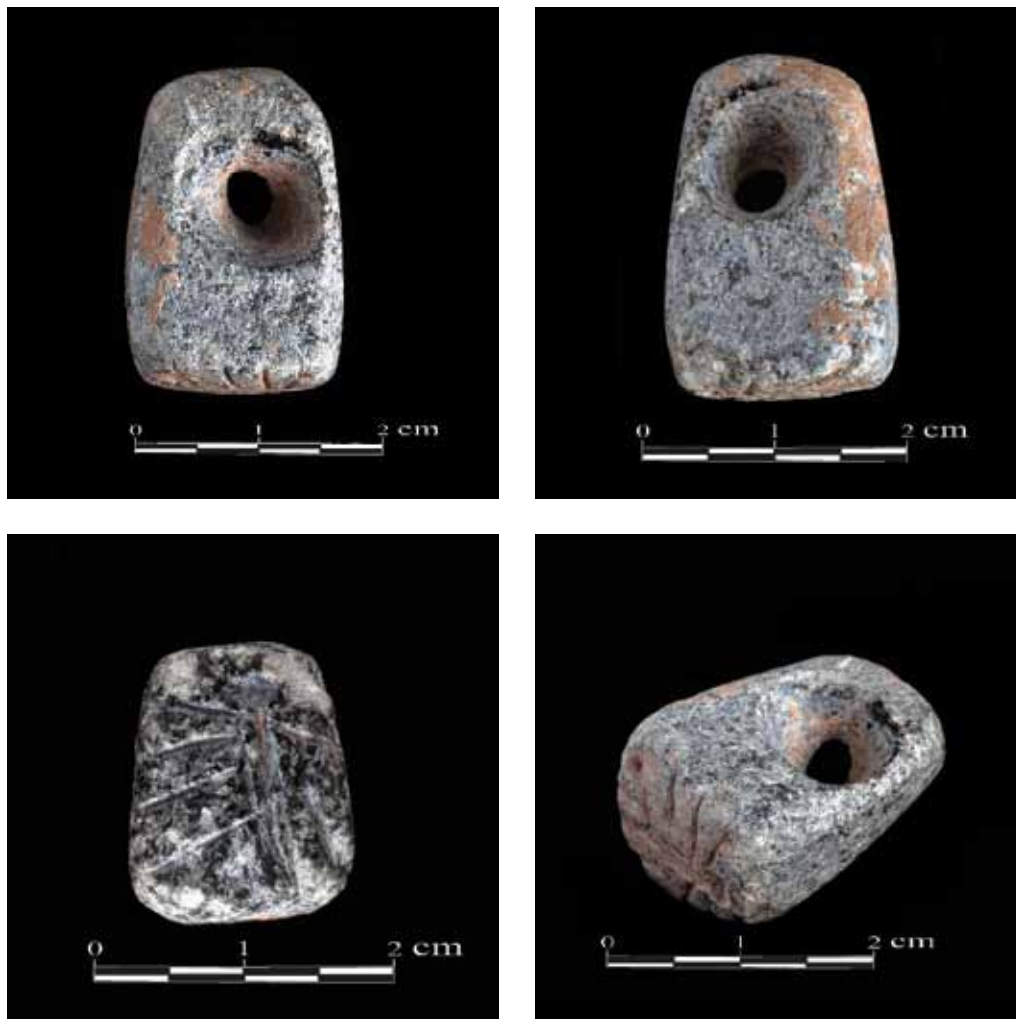


Figure 10: *Photo of the seal (Photograph by Y. Al-Rahbi).*

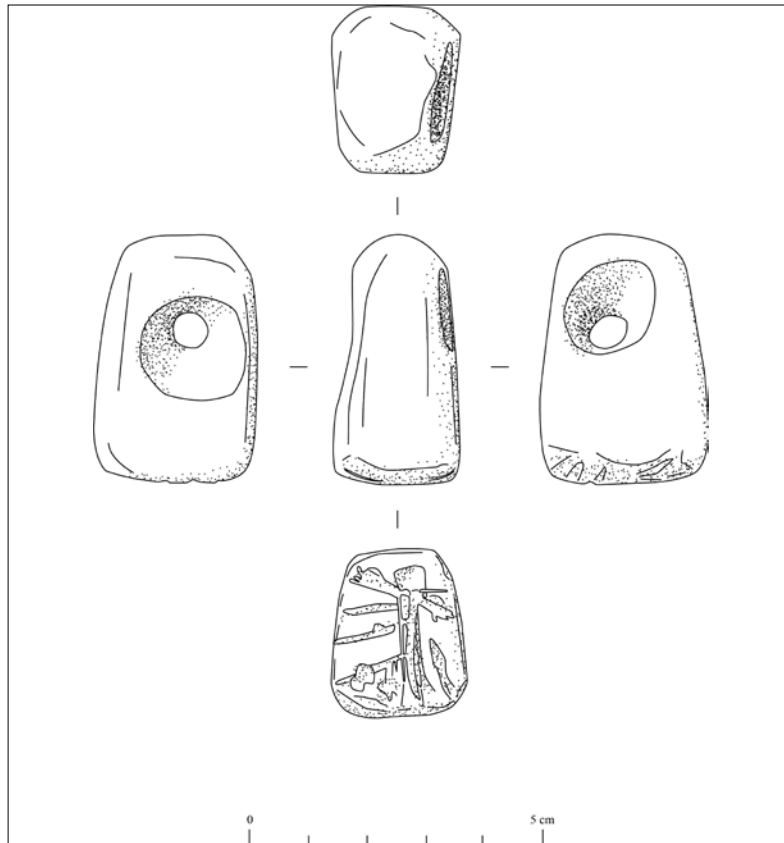


Figure 11: *Illustration of the seal (drawn by G. Gernez).*

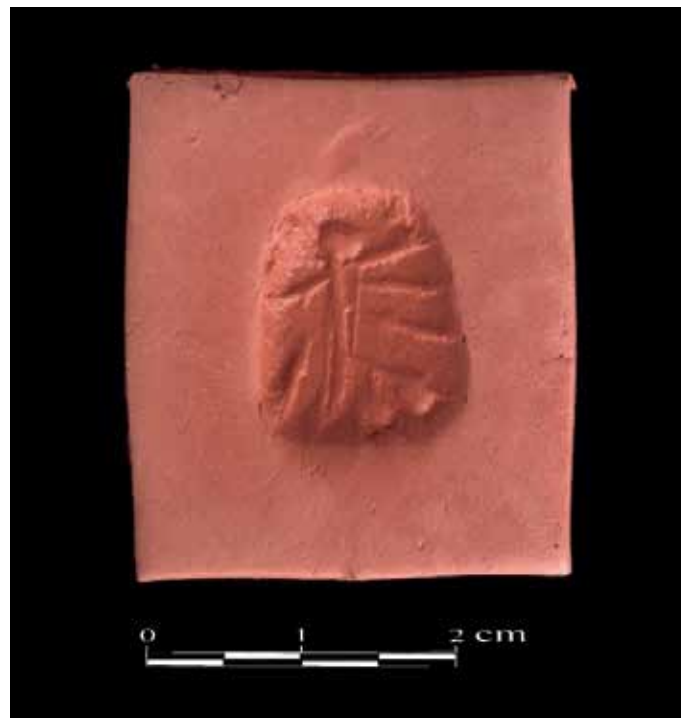


Figure 12: *Seal impression (Photograph by Y. Al-Rahbi).*

V. POTTERY

During the survey samples of pottery sherds were collected from two areas of the site.⁴ The first is the lower flat area, where the figurine and the seal come from, which was largely destroyed by the bulldozer. The second is the upper area, called the peninsula Iron Age site, where there are remains of older structures, including a 3rd millennium BCE tomb, fortification wall, and Islamic cemetery.

Despite this difference in location, the pottery has the same general characteristics: it is mainly domestic pottery, related to consumption and storage (Figs. 13-14).

From a technological point of view, a great homogeneity can be observed: the paste is characterized by a pale red to orange color and the presence of red mineral inclusions. The surfaces are also covered with a red, orange or grey-beige wet-smoothed slip. The large jars seem hand-made assemblage. For the thinner and smaller forms, especially the cups/bowls, it is difficult to establish the mode of making, but evidence of slow-wheel manufacture is known for similar objects at Lizq (Kroll 2013: 173).

This common coarse ware is very characteristic of the Early Iron Age domestic pottery, based on known parallels throughout the region, notably at Lizq (Kroll 2013: 175), Sallut (Degli Esposti and Condoluci 2018: 50), and Jabal Madmar (Jean et al. 2018: 131). The shapes confirm an Early Iron Age dating, based on comparisons with known types.

Simple open bowls and cups with slightly beveled rims (Fig. 13.4-5 ; fig. 14.2) are well known from Rumeilah Period I (Boucharlat and Lombard 1985, pl. 46), Jabal Madmar (Jean et al. 2018: 132, fig. 5) and Sallut (Condoluci 2018, pl. 68), in levels rather dated to EIA II.

A fragment of a spouted jar rim (Fig. 14.3 showing traces of painting (two horizontal bands on the base of the neck) belongs to a type also well known in the region, typical of the Iron Age (e.g. at

Sallut, Condoluci et al. 2018: 121, pl. 23). Another fragment (fig. 13.3 ; fig. 14.4) could belong to a similar type, or a rare one (hole-mouth globular jars, like the ones known at Jabal Madmar, Jean et al. 201, p. 133, fig. 7).

A closed, neckless jar with a molded rim, protruding on the inside and with a two-lobed lip facing outwards is distinguished by a finer degreasing paste (Fig. 13.2). This is a form known from Lizq (Kroll 2013: 186, pl. 25), but unlike the examples found there, the jar is not decorated.

A jar with a wide beveled rim is decorated with a frieze of alternating incisions that may have been made with a fingernail, and has four lugs in slight relief (Fig. 13.6). A sherd of identical shape, but not decorated, comes from Sallut - Burnt Building US 35 (Basement, c. 1000 BCE) (Condoluci 2018 et al. 2018: 137, pl. 31).

Most of the other sherds belong to flat-bottomed storage jars (Fig. 14.14-15), some of which were probably large according to their thickness and the diameter of their openings, which may have been up to 40 cm. The rims are also very thick, rounded or protruding inwards and angular to rectangular outwards (Figs. 13.7-12 and 14.6-12). These are very common forms in the EIA throughout the region, from Manal (ElMahi and Ibrahim 2003: 88, fig. 10), Lizq (Kroll 2013: 190, pl. 29), Jabal Madmar (Jean et al. 2018: 132, fig. 5) and Sallut - Burnt Building (Basement US 16, before 1050 BCE) (Condoluci et al. 2018: 123, pl. 24) to the UAE at Rumeilah periods I and II (Boucharlat and Lombard 1985: pl. 47, 59).

One of the red slip jar sherd is decorated with a horizontal relief on which are incised aligned crosses (Fig. 14.13). These decorations are attested throughout the EIA: at Sallut, examples are attested in HS I (Condoluci 2018: 273, pl. 75) but become especially ubiquitous from EIA II onwards.

It is not easy to assign these forms chronologically to a precise period, but it can be observed that horizontal rims of large jars are present as early as the EIA I (HS I) levels at Sallut (Condoluci 2018: 249, pl. 63), but remain until the EIA III (HS III) levels (Condoluci et al. 2018: 163, pl. 44, 167, pl. 46).

⁴ *It was not our intention to collect large quantities of pottery sherds but rather some representative samples.*

It is worth mentioning the absence of fine painted pottery, as well as of elements usually associated with ritual contexts, such as incense burners and jars decorated with snake motifs. No globular jars were found in the collected sample either.

In conclusion, whether in the upper or lower

area, the corpus seems to correspond to a domestic assemblage, dated to the Early Iron Age. The corpus is very limited and does not allow us to be much more precise. Excavations in the non-destroyed parts of the lower area will probably enable this dating to be refined.

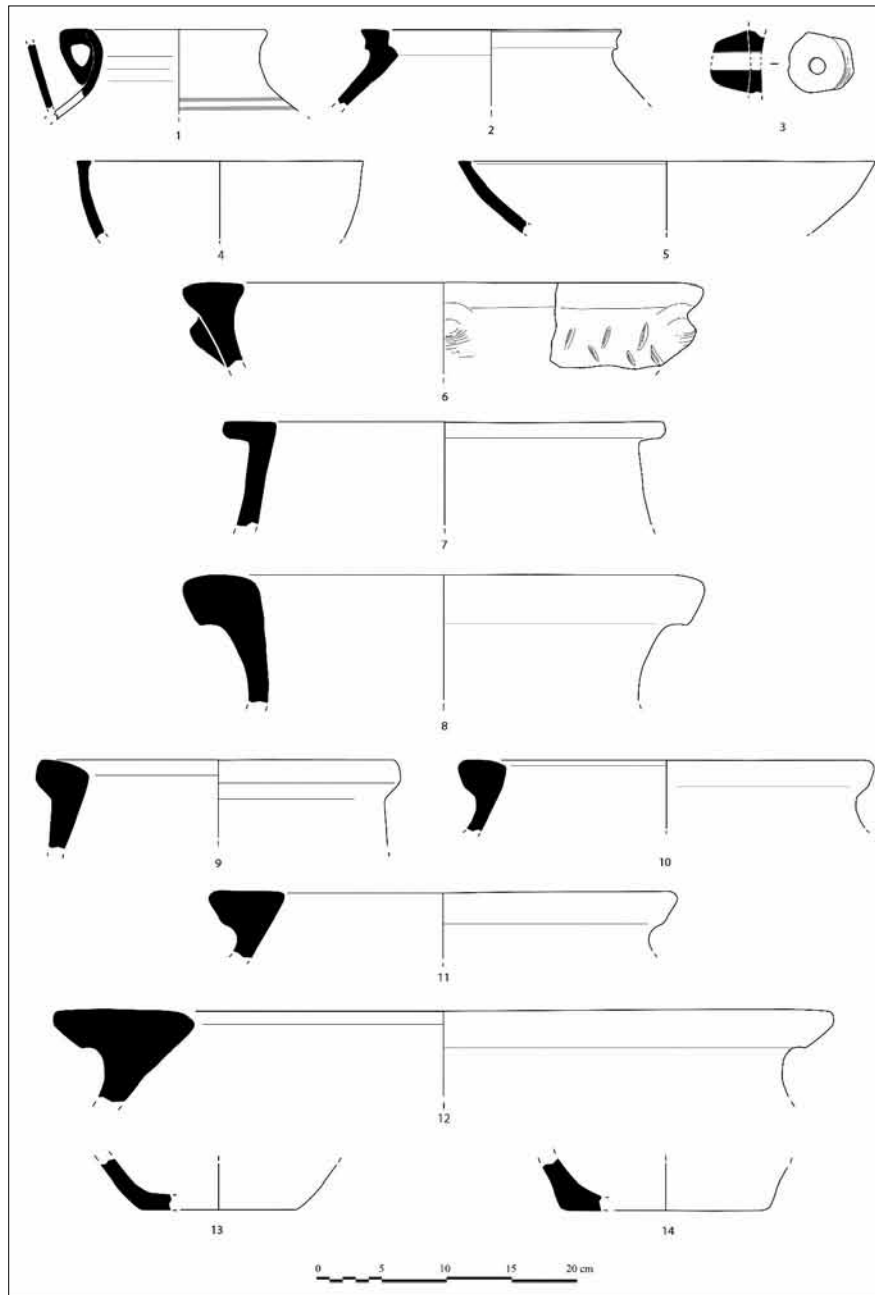


Figure 10: Pottery drawings of selected sherds from the Old Wibil (the peninsula site and the lower flat area, (drawing by: G. Gernez and Kh. Douglas).



Figure 14: *Photos of selected pottery sherds from the Old Wibil (the peninsula site and the lower flat area, (Photograph by: Y. Al-Rahbi).*

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