QUADERNI DI ARABIA ANTICA 3

Chiara Condoluci
Michele Degli Esposti

High places in Oman

The IMTO excavations of Bronze and Iron Age remains on Jabal Salut

with a contribution by
Carl Phillips

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Editing and page layout: Alessandra Lombardi
English text editor: Evan M. Rap
Cover: A. Lombardi, original photo C. Condoluci

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1. Introduction

A characteristic feature of the archaeological landscape of South East Arabia (Oman & the UAE) is the widespread distribution of thousands of stone built cairns, punctuating the summits and slopes of prominent hills and mountains. Although the building of such monuments is not confined to the Bronze Age, some of the most iconic sites, such as Jabal Hafit (UAE) and al-ʿAin (Oman) for example, date from the early third-millennium and the earliest tombs have, therefore, been named for the location where they were first excavated or for their characteristic beehive shape. Hence, Hafit/beehive tomb is a frequently used description. It has long been evident, however, that many of the Early Bronze Age Hafit/beehive tombs were later re-used, and most frequently in the Iron Age.

Like the majority of the hills surrounding the site, the hill facing the site of Salut from the north-east, known to the locals as Jabal Salut,[1] hosts a conspicuous number of such graves (fig. 1). These have invariably been considered to originate from the Early Bronze Age and are therefore contemporary with several Bronze Age towers/settlements located in the Wadi Bahla/Bisya area. At the same time these tombs, which are generally located along the ridges, frequently show evidence of reuse, robbing and dismantling in different periods.

The team of the Italian Mission to Oman (IMTO, University of Pisa), under the direction of Prof. Alessandra Avanzini, has recently started a survey program of the area around the main Iron Age site of Salut aimed at the collection of new data that could help the reconstruction of Bronze Age and Iron Age settlement patterns, and the key factors which influenced them (Phillips *et al*. 2010; 2012; Condoluci *et al*. 2014; Degli Esposti & Phillips 2012). The aforementioned hills were included in this program since abundant evidence for the re-use of the tombs had already been collected through simple field walking.

More recently, the Office of HE the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs, with which the IMTO has collaborated since the beginning of the works at Salut, established a plan for the creation of an Archaeological Park focused on Salut but enclosing a larger area around it, thus also including Jabal Salut. Requirements for public presentation called for the restoration of a few of the tombs located there, in order to give them back their original visual impact and landmark role. This clearly implied the need to fully document their current state of preservation, and to carry out exhaustive and detailed excavation of their remains.

Thus, in November 2011, a total of eight tombs were excavated on Jabal Salut. They are located in three different areas along the Jabal's ridge, and were chosen either because they were deemed well-suited for an impactful restoration or for their good state of preservation.

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[1] Although it has also been reported elsewhere as Jebel Sebekhi (Jabal Sabakhi) (see Orchards & Orchards 2007: pl. 6).

Figure 1. *The main cluster of tombs of JSS1, seen from Jabal Salut, and other tombs along the hillcrests.*

These areas were named as Jabal Salut 1 (JS1), JS2 and JS3, with the tombs being numbered independently within each area (fig. 2). Only in area JS2 was more than one tomb excavated.
The excavations revealed that some tombs underwent significant modifications during the Middle Bronze Age (Wadi Suq period) and some were clearly re-used in the Iron Age. During this latter period further building activity took place on the highest point of Jabal Salut (JS2), where an exceptional pillared building was erected on top of a cluster of dismantled second millennium tombs.
In addition to architectural details, the excavations produced an abundance of pottery and soft stone vessels, which provide important dating information and enable the use of the tombs to be considered alongside evidence obtained both from the IMTO excavations of nearby Bronze Age and Iron Age settlements, and from the survey carried out on the nearby jabals.
At Salut itself, two Bronze Age tombs were discovered right on the top of the hill, dismantled and buried beneath Iron Age structures. Although some preliminary data regarding these burials was provided elsewhere (Degli Esposti & Phillips 2012: 89-90), their complete publication is presented here.
As well as showing the results from the excavations and placing them in a local context, this paper will discuss how typical the results obtained from Jabal Salut might be for the rest of South East Arabia. In particular, it is tempting to consider what importance the region's ancient inhabitants gave to high places.

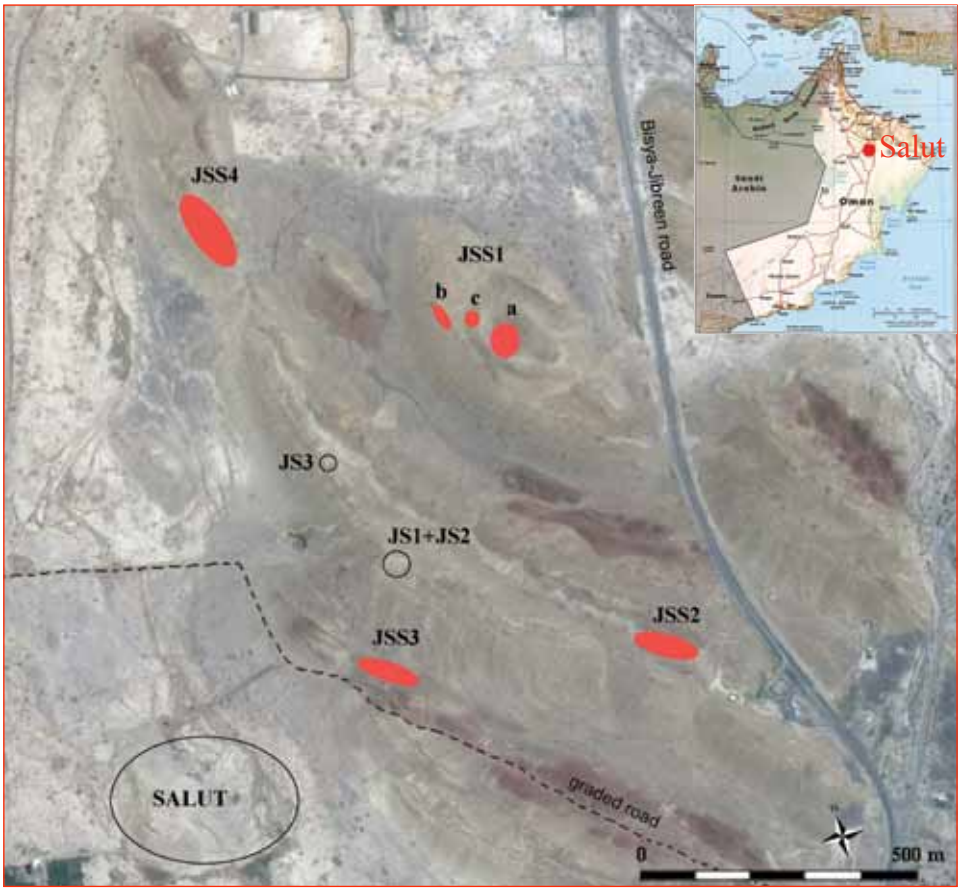

FIGURE 2. *Satellite view (after Google Earth) with the location of the excavated tombs and survey areas.*

Acknowledgements

The Italian Mission To Oman would have never started and lasted almost twenty years without the painstaking efforts of Prof. Alessandra Avanzini (University of Pisa, Dipartimento di Civiltà e Forme del Sapere), who created and directed the project since its start (http://arabiantica.humnet.unipi.it). The authors would like to warmheartedly thank her for giving the opportunity to be part of the project on the field as well as participating in the publication work. Prof. Avanzini must also be acknowledged for the further merit of promoting the new series "Quaderni di Arabia Antica" which hosts the present work, and providing the necessary funds.

Alessandra Lombardi is gratefully acknowledged for the work of editing and page layout, accurate as usual. Evan M. Rap has to be thanked for editing the English text of this paper while sharing a period of excavation at the site of Ostia Antica with one of the authors.

Works of the Italian Mission To Oman are made possible by the strong support supplied by the Office of His Excellency the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs – Muscat (Sultanate of Oman). Our thanks go to all its representatives who over the years have helped the Mission in many ways.

2. Two Early Bronze Age tombs at Salut

It is by now a well established fact that the main period of occupation of Salut was the Early Iron Age, and that the site's purpose, albeit uncertain and probably not unitary, was surely not funerary. Nevertheless, the site revealed its connection with the more ancient, Early Bronze Age funerary landscape already in the first field campaigns when limestone "sugar lumps" blocks and soft stone vessels datable to that period started to be found in Iron Age contexts (Degli Esposti & Phillips 2012: 92, fig. 5). These items were immediately to be interpreted as the result of looting and spoliation of the numerous Hafit/beehive tombs visible on all the surrounding hilltops, and also indicating the presence of some less readily locatable Umm an-Nar type tombs in the proximity of the site.

This picture changed when the dismantled remains of two adjacent tombs were uncovered sitting on the bedrock at the highest point of the hill of Salut, directly covered by Iron Age structures. A first description of these two graves, named as Structure 33 and Structure 39, was given by Degli Esposti & Phillips (2012: 89), who also mentioned the presence of badly preserved human remains as well as the retrieval of a few grave-goods. All of these came from Structure 33 and were virtually neglected after the excavation, apart from the publication of a general picture of the assemblage (Avanzini & Phillips 2010: 97, fig. 7).

Before dealing with the graves' features, it is worth mentioning that the original morphology of the hill on which they were erected, which looked completely different than it does today. Its more or less rounded profile, with a steeper southern side, is in fact the result of the collapse of the imposing Iron Age structures originally built on top of substantial artificial terraces. When the graves were built, the only flat area available was the one they occupied atop a series of inclined rocky ridges which offered no ground for building activities. During the Bronze Age the hill had a more slender profile, on top of which the impressiveness of the graves was further enhanced.

Iron Age building activities on the site completely dismantled the graves, which were subsequently buried beneath a wide mud-brick platform occupying the upper part of the site. It is likely that the graves were already lying in a state of disrepair, nor can earlier robbing or reuse can not be excluded as well. What remained at the time of discovery were the lower courses of the walls and a scatter of smaller, angular stones, in all likelihood coming from the walls' filling.

The excavation

Structure 39

This grave was apparently intercepted by the outer wall of Structure 33, and thus has to be considered the earliest of the two.

The unearthed portion amounts to only about one quarter, although more of it is surely preserved under a later Iron Age building which was not deemed appropriate to remove. What is visible

allows a rough reconstruction of the original layout of the grave, comprised of a series of concentric walls (at least three), with a maximum diameter of *ca*. 13 m (fig. 3).
Walls were single faced, with roughly hewn blocks used for the outer skin and small angular stones in the filling between the face of one wall and of the following one. The inner visible wall seems to be encircling a continuous fill of such angular stones.
No deposit likely to be connected with the original grave was recognized, the stones being directly covered by Iron Age levels, and no scattered material came to light.

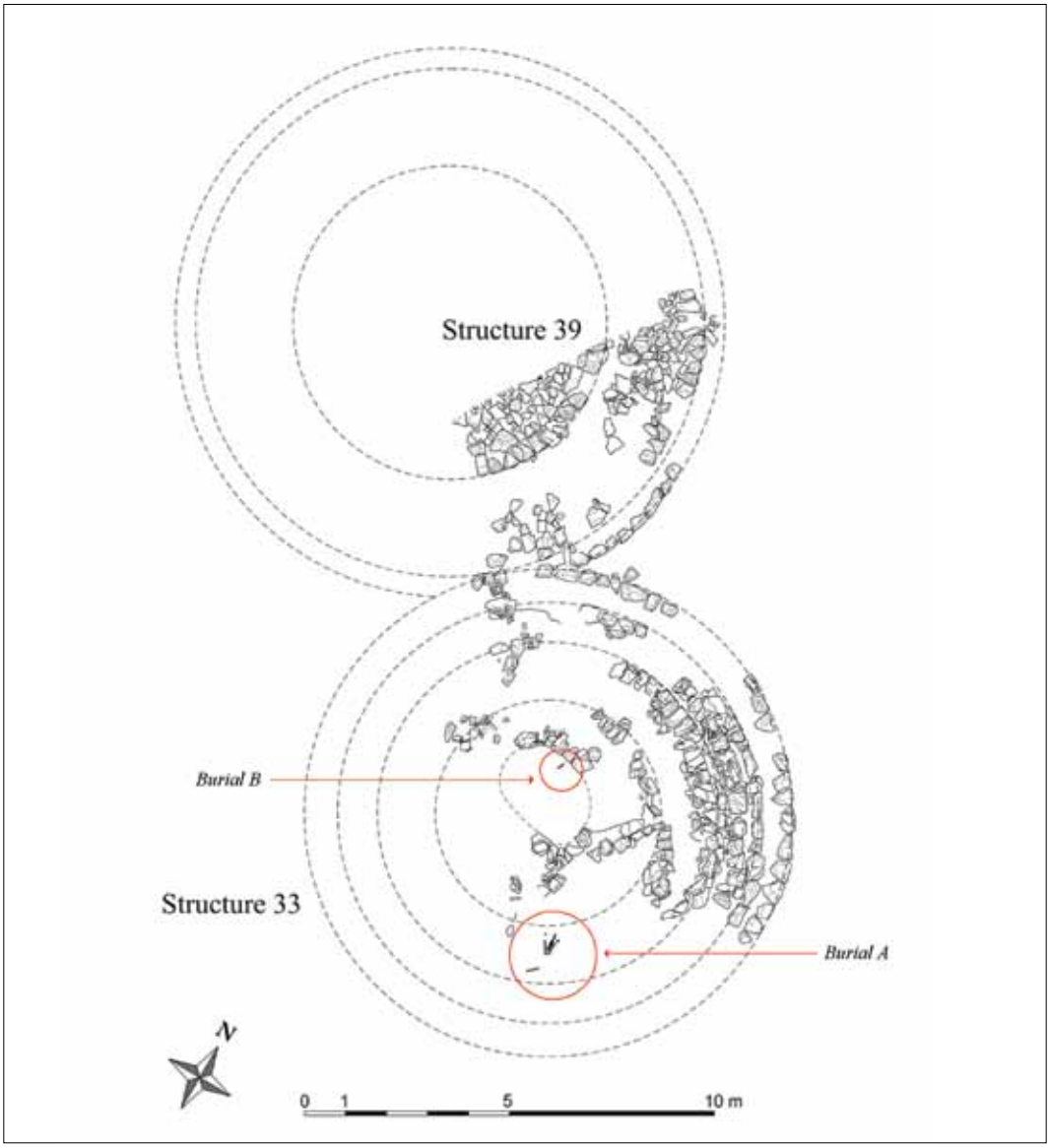

FIGURE 3. *Plan of the two tombs discovered at Salut showing the hypothetic complete diameter of the walls.*

Structure 33

The general layout of this grave is for the most part identical to that of Structure 39. Visible remains comprise at least four concentric walls (the widest measuring around 12 m in diameter) and a 2.5 m long stretch of what seems to be a straight wall which stands in the central part of the grave (fig. 3). The nature of this feature, not so well defined, is discussed below. The walls' construction technique is identical to that of Structure 39; of all the walls just the lower course of stones remains. Overall, slightly less than one half of the tomb plan survives (fig. 4). Two layers were distinguished which could be connected with the original filling of the grave, one on each side of the central straight wall.

South of it stood US305, a medium compact, light brown deposit of loam and gravel, covering its related floor – a layer of packed, light brown loam laid down above the bedrock. This floor hosted some poorly preserved human remains (Burial A). Only the lower part of the body survived, but long bones were present in a sufficient number to recognize that the body was in a flexed position (Degli Esposti & Phillips 2012: 89); a few grave-goods were discovered in association with it, including fifty-two different beads. (Degli Esposti 2015a: fig. 3; see pl. 1).

North of the central straight wall, floor US338 was distinguished, in fact very similar to US305 and possibly to be considered as one with it. Above this surface, other severely disturbed human remains were found (Burial B). Close to these bone fragments, three small carnelian beads were recovered.

Although slight differences in the hosting layers lead to the definition of two different stratigraphic units and consequently to the identification of two distinct burials, there is no certain evidence to exclude that the bones of Burial B originally belonged to Burial A, and that the three scattered beads found close to it did not originally belong to one and the same collection as those from Burial A. This appears likely when we consider that Burial B bones come from an area of the tomb far more disturbed than Burial A, and were thus less likely to lie in their original position.

Figure 4. *Structure 33, looking southeast, after conservation.*

Contents (pl. 1)

1. (US305, MB164) Copper or copper alloy pin (or tool). Broken at both ends. The rod was originally circular, flattened toward the possible working point, which has a triangular shape. The point is again round in section.
2. (US305, S189) Stone mace head. Ovoid, with flattened top and bottom, has an almost cylindrical perforation running along its main axis. Most of the outer surface hardly encrusted.
3. (US305, S188) Collection of 52 beads, for the most part made of carnelian but with several specimen in different materials (bone, shell, other types of stone).
4. (US338, S195) Three small carnelian beads.

Discussion

Tombs structure

When the architectural features of these two graves are considered, various more or less close parallels can be traced, all suggesting a date in the Early Bronze Age – more precisely in the first half of the third millennium BC. In general, early third millennium graves, belonging to the so-called Hafit or beehive type, often show a structure comprising more than one circular wall, most commonly two. This kind of graves was replaced by a new typology around the middle of the millennium, when Umm an-Nar type tombs started to be erected, usually on low plains instead of the elevated places preferentially chosen for the earlier graves.

More articulated, early third millennium structures are not unknown, however. Probably the most fitting comparison for the graves at Salut is still represented by "Cairn 1", a tomb excavated in 1976 at Tawi Silaim (De Cardi *et al*. 1977: 20, fig. 2). This grave comprises three concentric walls, surrounded by a low plinth and enclosing a central, slightly oval chamber, with a diameter of *ca*. 2 m. The dimensions of Cairn 1 are also quite close to those of the two Salut graves, particularly if one envisages the external stone ring of Structures 33 and 39 to actually represent an outer plinth.

In the area around Salut, beehive tombs are widely scattered on the crests and lateral slopes of jabals, and thousands of them form the large necropolis located on Jabal Bu Rzuz in Wadi Bahla. One of these tombs, named as Tomb 4 (Orchard & Orchard 2007: 148), sitting on a small hill at the northern fringes of this wide jabal, was recently excavated and revealed a structure which is also comparable to that of the Salut graves. Tomb 4 was described as comprising two concentric walls, surrounded by a plinth and enclosing a built up stone floor which in turn incorporates a central, rectangular cist (*ibid*., and pl. 16).

The detail of the central stone floor, encasing the burial cist and made of the same unhewn stones used for the walls, could fit the visible remains of Structure 39, where the third and innermost concentric wall could actually be framing a similar feature. The layout of this central paving appears in fact quite different from the usual paved floors known from several Hafit/beehive tombs, made up of larger flat stone slabs (i.e. Frifelt 1975: figs 16, 21, 23), but it could just be the preparation for such a well laid floor. Unfortunately, the central part of the grave lies below the mentioned, not removed Iron Age building.

Structure 33 appear to be somewhat different. Severe disturbance has to be accounted for, and possible reuse along with consequent restructuring of the grave can not be excluded; nevertheless, the presence of the aforementioned stretch of a straighter wall in the middle of the grave,

as well as the position of Burial A (and also of Burial B, assuming it as primary), raise some question about the original layout of the grave.
Three possible reconstructions can be put forward. The first would see this wall as part of an original squared cist, in accordance with the example of Tomb 4 and with the possible layout of Structure 39. If that was the case, however, the position of the two identified burials would be inconsistent, unless related to a secondary use of the grave involving partial dismantling and restructuring, and the cist itself would oddly fall off the centre of the grave.
A second hypothesis, probably the most plausible from the point of view of architectural remains, is that this wall simply represents just a fortuitous survival of aligned stones originally belonging to the core of the innermost circular wall or to a continuous floor preparation like in Structure 39. The latter would encircle an internal oval chamber, thus similar to Tawi Silaim Cairn 1 (the possible shape is indicated by the dash-and-dot line in fig. 3). Also in this case Burial A would fall outside the chamber, thus having to be considered a later intrusive interment, while Burial B would turn out to be standing at least very close to its original placing.
The third and last hypothesis has farther reaching implications, and would also be consistent with the burials' placing. Interpreting the aligned stones as a partition wall could supply some evidence to date this grave's construction closer to mid third millennium. Alongside a carefully shaped and polished external revetment in fact, internal partitioning is one of the peculiar features of Umm an-Nar tombs. Hence, the discovery of partition walls inside funerary monuments otherwise absolutely consistent with the Hafit/beehive type, has been interpreted as evidence of a transitional type between this and the following Umm an-Nar type.
Indeed, a somehow continuous evolution of graves typology from the Hafit to the Umm an-Nar type was initially suggested by Frifelt (1975: 67-69) on the basis of tombs distribution in the Bat necropolis but also pointing out the occurrence of embryonic supporting/dividing walls in some Hafit type graves.
Further examples interpreted similarly were more recently excavated on Jabal el-Emalah (Benton & Potts 1994: 30 and fig. 36) and on the nearby Jabal al-Buhais (Jasim 2012: 287-289 and fig. 343). Tomb K2 at Kalba also shows general Umm an-Nar characteristics (circular shape and dividing wall) blended with earlier Hafit features (masonry and corbelled construction), suggesting a date which precedes the proper Umm an-Nar period (David & Phillips 2008: 118; see also Eddisford & Phillips 2009: 112-114). Be that as it may, it is worth notice that a lowering of these graves' dating towards the middle of the third millennium would partially fill the gap between their erection and the period of occupation of the nearby Early Bronze Age tower ST1, in course of excavation by the IMTO and provisionally dated to the last centuries of the third millennium BC (Degli Esposti 2015b; Degli Esposti *in press*).

The finds
Stone and other materials beads are widely known throughout South East Arabia, but the contexts of their retrieval span such a wide chronological range that they can be of little if any help in dating Salut tombs. Beads dated to the third millennium are known, among many others, from tombs excavated on Jabal Hafit (Frifelt 1975: 63), from sites Amlah 1 and 5 (De Cardi *et al.* 1976: 140), from Tombs A at Hili North and N at Hili, where several carnelian beads similar to the Salut ones were discovered (Cleuziou *et al*. 2011: fig. 253; figs 61-62), as well as from tombs excavated at ʿAjman (also referred to as Mowaihat tombs – al-Tikriti 1989a: 92, 94 and pl. 46 and Haerinck 1991: fig. 9B) and Umm an-Nar (Frifelt 1991: fig. 236b (left), fig. 249).

However, their production shows a continuity covering the whole second millennium that reaches at least the second half of the first millennium BC. Indeed, the majority of sites from which similar beads are reported spans both Wadi Suq and Iron Age periods, and, for what concerns burial sites, long-lasting reuse contributes to shed some uncertainty on the dating of the different finds, when not supported by safer typological chronologies.[2] In the second half of the first millennium, similar finds are known from contexts dated to the Late Iron Age (or Iron Age III).[3] The tradition of bead-making carries on until Islamic times, as it is also witnessed on the same site of Salut, where different (mainly carnelian) beads were retrieved in contexts dating to an early Islamic occupation of the site (12th-13th century AD).

Despite such a wide chronology, the beads presented here nonetheless perfectly fit the proposed third millennium date for the tombs, based on their overall shape and manufacturing technique. Moreover, funerary assemblages are by far the most common finding context for beads, a striking example being Shimal where only four beads from the settlement – though less-extensively excavated (Vogt & Franke-Vogt 1987: 81, 90) – face the more than 1000 found in graves.[4]

Regarding the earlier discussion attributing Structure 33 to a possible transition from the Hafit/beehive to the Umm an-Nar type, it is worthwhile to mention a remark made by K. Frifelt (1975: 67) about the fact that similar beads would be more common in Umm an-Nar tombs than in earlier ones. In particular, among the different kinds of beads, carnelian ones seem to be later than those made in burnt steatite or than the chlorite microbeads (Cleuziou 2002a: 206), not found at Salut. Given the bad state of preservation of the Salut tombs, such an *ex silentio* argument must be considered with the greatest caution.

Finally, it is interesting that carnelian is not native to Oman and was likely imported from India (Frifelt 1991: 116), or possibly from Yemen, even though it can not be excluded that the actual making of the beads was local (Cleuziou 2002a: 207).[5]

More circumscribed and coherent with the proposed dating of Structures 33 and 39 is the distribution of pins with similar dimensions and shapes to MB164. Among third millennium settlements suffice it to mention the Early Bronze Age site at RJ-2, where several copper-base pins were recovered (Cleuziou & Tosi 2000: fig. 12.5-6 and fig. 14.3-4). More widely diffused is this kind of pin within burial assemblages. Hafit Cairn 6 for example gave back two pins bended at one end and with uneven section – going from squared to rounded (Cleuziou *et al.* 2011: fig. 31). Other similar, straight specimens came from Tomb A at Hili north (*ibid*.: fig. 246). Anyhow,

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[2] Sites dated to the Wadi Suq period by their excavators are, among others, Shimal site 1 (Donaldson 1984: 219) and a number of burials on the Jabal al-Buhais (Uerpmann *et al.* 2006: 22-44). Dated to the transitional period between Wadi Suq and Iron Age are Bithna tomb 4 (Courboud *et. al.* 1996: 90, though dubitatively as regards earlier occupation), Shimal (Vogt & Franke-Vogt 1987), and Sharm (Barker 2001). To the Iron Age are dated Ghalila site 2 (Donaldson 1984: 275), Fashgha 1 (Phillips 1987: 16), Rumeila period I (Boucharlat & Lombard 1985:62) and other tombs from Jabal al-Buhais (Uerpmann *et al.* 2006: 45-58).

[3] Rafaq 2 (C. Phillips, pers. comm.) and Rumeila period II (Boucharlat & Lombard 1985: 62). Also Bithna tomb 4 occupation was proposed to last until the mid 5th century by its excavators (Courboud *et al*. 1996: 90), in a moment when Iron Age III period had not been defined yet.

[4] Vogt & Franke-Vogt 1987: 31, 41, 47, 54. To these should also be added those reported by Donaldson (1984: 210-212 and 259-266).

[5] A diachronic selection of beads from Salut is currently under study by M. Kenoyer, including Bronze Age ones.

probably the closest example is a complete "awl or 'eye-pencil'" found in Hafit grave 1305 (Frifelt: 1975: fig. 5B), which has the same uneven section of Salut's MB164, and is dated to the Early Bronze Age.
It is more difficult to find parallels in the region for what was interpreted as a mace head – S189. So far, we are informed of only two comparable objects, the first coming from tomb SH 99 at Shimal (Vogt & Franke-Vogt 1987: fig. 35.5). The object is fragmentary, only one half preserved, and actually of a neatly rougher manufacture than the Salut one.
For the Shimal find the excavators suggested an alternative interpretation as a loom-weight, on the basis of possible use wear at both ends of the perforation (*ibid*.: 54). The absence of such traces on S189, together with its good surface polishing, make the mace head interpretation more likely in this case.
Tomb SH 99 was dated by the excavators to the early second millennium BC (*ibid*.).
A closer similarity is borne by a pear-shaped mace-head discovered inside tomb BHS 76 at Jabal al-Buhais (Jasim 2012: 213, 215 and figs 256, 257.3). Described as being made of marble, parallels were indicated among the third millennium weaponry of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and the object interpreted as an indication of the deceased's high status (*ibid*: 215). It has to be stressed that the same tomb also possessed sherds of Mesopotamian ware, which could suggest a *milieu* in which such a high rank could be actually perceived.
Tomb BHS 76, a Hafit type cairn, was firstly built during the Hafit/Umm an-Nar period and was later reused during the Iron Age (*ibid*.: 213).
Interestingly, another indication of a likely third millennium date for this mace-head comes from Mohenjo-Daro, in the heartland of that Harappan civilization that will become a major partner for South East Arabia's long distance connections in the second half of the third millennium. From the lowest levels of the site in fact comes a yellow limestone mace-head strikingly similar to the one from Salut (Mackay 1938: 399 and pl. CX.22). These levels were dated by the excavator to the first half of the millennium, in the light of the presence of a sherd of a greenish soft stone fragment decorated with a woven-mat pattern (*ibid*.: pl. CXLII.45). While at the time of its publication this dating was oscillating between 3000 and 2600 BC on the basis of a comparison with Susa II finds (*ibid*.: 7), the production of such kind of vessels, belonging to the so-called figurative style, is now known to have begun in Iran "some time prior to the mid 3rd millennium BC." (David & Phillips 2008: 119).
All in all, it is clear how this grave-goods assemblage would be of little help in itself for the issue of assigning the Salut graves a precise date. Nevertheless, when this it is combined with their structural features, which suggest a date in the first half of the III millennium – likely in the second quarter –, no contradiction arises, finally reinforcing this chronological attribution.
A slightly later date for Structure 33 is indicated by its stratigraphic relation with Structure 39, notwithstanding the hypothesis of transitional features which would place it closer to the mid-third millennium, that has probably to be discarded. To this latter date one could instead refer the reuse of the same Structure most likely indicated by the position of Burial A, based on the presence of the mace-head S189 and, more doubtfully, on the predominant presence of carnelian beads.
Whether or not the tombs were reused in later periods is not evident. Such a phenomenon is almost ubiquitously recognized in Omani tombs, and also witnessed for the tombs recently excavated on Jabal Salut (see Chapter 3).

3. Excavations on Jabal Salut

On Jabal Salut two adjacent stone heaps deriving from tombs collapse (JS1 and JS2) were chosen on the highest point of the mountain (fig. 2; pl. 2 top). At a lower height north, on the ridge descending from JS1, a third, better-preserved tomb was also selected (JS3).

Jabal Salut 1

This area is almost perfectly aligned with the main axis of the site of Salut as can be traced through its tower which projects onto the plain (pl. 2 top). At JS1, the collapsed remains of what could be recognized as a beehive tomb were located and deemed worth of investigation and restoration in order to show an archetypal example of this kind of tombs. Its excavation provided no dating evidence for the original construction. The plan that was revealed, however, as well as the style of masonry indicate that it was most probably constructed in the early third millennium BC. After Iron Age re-use, witnessed by several characteristic potsherds, its contents and stonework were further robbed. After inspecting several tombs in the vicinities, it was decided that a reconstruction height between 2.8-3.0 metres would represent the maximum probable height of the original construction.[6]

Grave 1

The tomb was circular, erected above outcropping bedrock. It comprises a ring-wall (W1) with a diameter of *ca*. 5 metres (pl. 2 bottom). The wall was preserved to a maximum height of 0.5-0.7 m, corresponding to two irregular stone courses. It was built using very large stone blocks, mainly rough or roughly hewn, and was laid above a thick stone platform which originally formed a sort of plinth on the south and north side of the mountain ridge.

Even before excavation, the relatively little amount of collapsed stones that could be observed in the area (US1) indicated that the grave had at some point been reused, and stone robbing had been anyhow intense, probably for reuse in other nearby structures. Indeed, once the collapsed stone heap within the ring-wall (US2) was removed, no paving could be traced *in situ*, thus showing that deeply impacting looting also took place in ancient times.

Inside the chamber only the probable setting for the actual floor remained, made up of medium size stones laid down in a spiral way and embedded in a brown-yellowish loam (US3) (fig. 5). US3 was investigated digging two small trenches. The first, located in the southern part of the tomb, revealed two stratified deposits: US4, a medium compact, light brown loam with rare stone chips, intentionally laid down as a levelling layer above US5, which actually represents the

[6] For more details see the IMTO Preliminary Reports SL2011B.

FIGURE 5. *JS1-Grave 1 after excavation.*

outcome of bedrock decay and thus comprises abundant brown-greenish sandstone chips mixed with scarce loam. The second small trench, in the northern part of the tomb, clearly showed that the tomb's ring wall was built simultaneously with US3, whose edges are in fact tied with the wall's footings.
No human skeletal remains were found.
In the small area outside the tomb's ring wall, above the bedrock, several Iron Age potsherds and a fragmentary soft stone suspension vessel were found, scattered inside a medium compact brown loam which also included several stone blocks (US6). Finds from US6 are listed together with those from Grave 1, at the end of the list.

Contents (pl. 3)

Numbers indicate the correspondence in the drawings tables; between brackets is the inventory code for each find, which also accounts for the stratigraphic context.

1. (US6,3) Bowl. Medium-coarse brown fabric with abundant small black and brown grits and vegetal temper. Black/brown slip exterior.
2. (US6,4) Bowl. Medium-coarse light brown fabric with abundant black grits and some vegetal temper. Smoothed and cracked exterior and interior.
3. (US3,2) Bowl. Medium-coarse light brown fabric with abundant black grits and some vegetal temper. Smoothed and cracked exterior and interior.

4. (US6,2) Bowl. Medium orange-brown fabric with small red grits and some vegetal temper. Black slip exterior and interior.
5. (US6,1) Bowl. Medium light brown fabric with brown grits and vegetal temper. Black/brown slip exterior and interior.
6. (US3,3) Lug. Medium-coarse red-brown fabric with black and red grits and some vegetal temper. Red-brown slip.
7. (US3,1) Base of carinated cup. Fine brown fabric with tiny white grits. Red-brown slip exterior and interior. String cut base and shaved bottom.
8. (US6,5) Body sherd. Coarse brown fabric with abundant brown grits and vegetal temper. Cordon on exterior surface. Orange-brown slip exterior and interior
9. (US6, S1) Soft stone globular suspension vessel. Fragment of wall with a vertical pierced lug. Incised decoration on the upper part of the wall, under the rim, comprising a row of double dotted circles above a horizontal line. The lug also bears a decoration comprising vertical incised lines. Fine tool marks visible on the wall and lug.
10. (US6,6) Fine light brown fabric. Slightly sandy texture. Wheel-made. Outer surface smoothed and incised. (Modern, not illustrated).

Jabal Salut 2

This site is located 20 metres southeast of JS1 on a small plateau delimited by natural alignments of boulders detached from the mountain ridge.
At an early stage in the excavation it became clear that the original tomb had been considerably re-used and remodelled (pl. 2 bottom). Ultimately a short stretch of the original, third millennium outer wall was uncovered; elsewhere the architectural layout had been modified to form a cluster of smaller, discrete burial chambers. These comprise six Bronze Age graves – Grave 1 to Grave 6 – unevenly grouped together, some of which later superimposed by the most unexpected structure discovered, that is, a rectangular pillared building which was likely built during the Iron Age period. This building and its interpretation will be fully discussed in Chapter 4. Construction works for this structure are probably to be regarded as the cause for the final dismantling of most of the tombs; moreover, all of the burial chambers excavated at JS2 had been thoroughly robbed. Only a few fragmentary pieces of bone remained from Grave 2, but fortunately a wide range of pottery and soft stone vessels had survived.
A few potsherds and shells were retrieved between Grave 2 and Grave 3, in context US8, a very soft loam accumulation layer which was covered by collapsed materials coming from the pillared building (US3). This finds will be listed after those coming from Grave 2.
Surface stones and debris, coming from the tombs collapse and Aeolian accumulation, were named as US1 over the whole area.

Grave 1
All that remains of this above-ground tomb is a stretch of its original ring-wall (W1), recognized by virtue of its more careful and regular construction. It was built using medium size, unhewn stones to shape its opposite faces, with smaller angular stones and loam as a binder and filling. It is preserved up to a maximum height of 0.65 m and shows three irregular courses of big stone blocks and medium size slabs.

Later building activities removed the most part of the tomb structure; the surviving wall was first englobed in a later, second millennium grave (Grave 6), and then buried beneath the pillared building Shrine 1 which crowned the small tombs cluster.
No artefact or skeletal remain can be associated to this grave.

Grave 2
This above-ground tomb with a roughly squared plan and rounded corners lies to the northeast of Grave 1, slightly detached from it (pl. 2 bottom). Internal dimension are around 2.5 x 2.5 meters, and the chamber is divided into halves by a short wall jutting out from the western perimeter wall and reaching the centre of the tomb, also meant to support the roofing. Walls comprise one row of medium and big size stone blocks of which three-four irregular courses still survive (fig. 6). The tomb was built directly above bedrock; the entrance was not located, and no evidence for an internal paving was collected.
The structure was covered by US5, a layer of soft loam mixed with stone chips and rare larger blocks. The southwestern portion was instead buried beneath the already mentioned US3, i.e., the outcome of the pillared building's collapse comprising stone blocks in a medium compact loam. Below these *strata*, a thick, medium soft loam layer with stone chips and rare blocks (US2) was the only substantial filling inside the chamber. Within this context scanty, fragmentary and scattered skeletal remains were associated with several painted sherds (cups and jars), fragmentary soft stone vessels and soft stone lids. Three small carnelian beads and one shell, containing copper oxide powder, were also found.

FIGURE 6. *JS2-Grave 2 after excavation.*

Below US2 stood US4, a soft, brown-yellowish loamy layer, some fourteen centimetres thick, directly covering the bedrock. A small bronze snake comes from this context. In the northwest part of the chamber US4 covers another thin deposit – US6, loam mixed with decayed bedrock's yellow-greenish small chips – from which two small carnelian beads were collected.

Contents (pls 5-8)

11. (US2,4) Beaker. Fine, light brown fabric with vegetal temper and tiny (less than 1 mm) red and white angular grits. Red-brown slip on lower half of vessel and black painted decoration over light brown/white slip on upper part. Wheel traces on interior. String-cut base and slightly shaved base and bottom.
12. (US2,9) Bowl. Very fine, light brown fabric with vegetal temper and occasional tiny white flecks. Red-brown slip on lower half of vessel and black painted decoration over cream slip on upper part. Orange-red slip interior. Wheel traces on interior.
13. (US2,10) Bowl. Very fine, light brown fabric with vegetal temper and occasional tiny white flecks. Brown slip on lower half of vessel and black painted decoration over cream slip on upper part. Orange-red slip interior. Wheel traces on interior.
14. (US2,2) Hole-mouth jar. Medium light brown fabric. Soft texture. Abundant vegetal temper and occasional red and white grits. Light brown slip exterior with black painted decoration. Wheel traces on interior.
15. (US2,5) Beaker. Fine light brown fabric with vegetal temper. Light brown slip exterior with traces of black painted decoration.
16. (US2,7) Hole-mouth jar. Fine orange-brown fabric with vegetal temper and tiny red and white grits. Light brown slip exterior. Traces of black painted decoration.
17. (US2,8) Hole-mouth jar. Fine orange-brown fabric with vegetal temper and tiny red and white grits. Light brown slip exterior. Faint traces of black painted decoration.
18. (US2,3) Spouted bowl. Fine orange-brown fabric with vegetal temper with red and white small grits. Dark-brown slip exterior.
19. (US2,6) Closed-bowl. Medium orange-brown fabric with vegetal temper and white flecks. Dark-brown slip exterior and interior.
20. (US2,1) Jar. Medium orange-brown fabric with abundant vegetal temper and very rare tiny red grits. Light brown/beige slip exterior with patches of red-brown. Black painted decoration; horizontal lines and painted rim. Wheel traces on interior.
21. (US2,11) Large jar. Medium red-brown fabric with vegetal temper and rare tiny red and white grits. Light red-brown slip on rim and neck becoming lighter brown over body. Brown, transparent wash over body below the band of black painted decoration. Horizontal bands on the interior suggest (slow) wheel finishing.
22. (US2, S8) Soft stone circular lid. Complete with a cylindrical, flattened-top knob. A shallow indentation in the lower part was made to fit the associated vessel. The upper surface bears an incised decoration comprising a band of double dotted circles. The knob shows a band of double dotted circles closely packed, with two identical motifs in the centre. Part of the surface is damaged by a concretion.
23. (US2, S1) Soft stone circular lid. Half preserved, with a central fragmentary knob. A shallow indentation in the lower part was made to fit the associated vessel. Incised decoration comprises a line of double dotted circles along the edge and two parallel lines at the base of the knob.
24. (US2, S3) Knob of soft stone lid. An incised decoration of double dotted circles fills the upper surface.