References:

Further investigations at al-Khutm Bronze Age monumental tower Al-Dhahirah region, Oman by Enzo Cocca (CNR National Research Council, Italy), Maurizio Cattani (University of Bologna, Italy) and Francesca Barchiesi (University of Bologna, Italy)

Al-Khutm tower is a well-preserved monument dating to the end of 3rd and the first half of 2nd millennium BCE. Since 1988 the site is registered in the UNESCO world Heritage list together with other monuments of Bat and the tombs of Al Ayn, representing a unique portrayal of the landscape in the 3rd millennium BCE (Thornton, Schmidt 2015). Thanks to the high state of preservation and monumentality, the tower of al-Khutm is currently undergoing a project of valorisation that will enhance the main features of the building and surrounding area.

The results of these first years of excavations carried out by an Italian team (2016-2018), directed by Dr. Enzo Cocca and supervised by Prof. Maurizio Cattani of the University of Bologna, were impressive: the tower with a circular plan has a diameter of 20-22 m and a total height from the surrounding plain of 8 m. The inner area is unique among all the known towers, presenting a central corridor with floors and doors leading to lateral rooms. Common to other monuments is the well, located approximately in the middle of the central corridor (Thornton, Cable, Possehl 2016).

Even though the earliest main entrance to the tower was not clearly identified, a complex path running along a monumental ramp was supposed on the north-western side thanks to the presence of corridors with doors marked by thresholds and pivots (Cocca et al. 2016).

Along with the restoration activities of the monuments, a further phase of excavation started in the last months of 2022 carried out by the University of Bologna. The aim was to continue investigations of the external perimeter wall to establish the stratigraphic dating of the monumental structure and to present the full view of the site to visitors.

This last campaign was fully satisfactory: among the main results of the investigation is the full layout of the perimeter wall, built with the same technique of the tower, assuming an original height of at least 4 m. Dimensions and technical characters support the idea of a purposeful monumentality in the design of the building, and the interpretation of defensive function of the structure.

Outside the perimeter wall, a concentric space 2.50 m large was recognized as buffer zone, delimited by a dry-stone wall, possibly built to support the external terraced plain (although this interpretation is still to be clarified) (Fig. 1 & 2). Several traces of activities were recognized in the stratification...
dating to the 2nd millennium BCE (above the collapse SU 479), while the lowest layer, containing Umm an-Nar pottery, allowed the team to confirm the construction of the tower at the end of 3rd millennium BCE (Fig. 3).

The activities will continue with the study of the buffer zone up to the building associated with the aforementioned entrance on the north-western side of the tower, in order to complete the footpath for visitors and to improve the visibility of the monument.

References


