

SUR LES ROUTES D'ARABIE

ITINÉRAIRES TERRESTRES ET MARITIMES
DE L'ÂGE DU BRONZE À LA PÉRIODE ISLAMIQUE

12-13-14 décembre 2024

Institut du Monde Arabe



Organisé par

M. Josselin PINOT et Dr. Sterenn LE MAGUER-GILLON



Avec le soutien de la Commission CVEC « Initiatives étudiantes » de Sorbonne Université



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Les organisateurs remercient toutes les institutions partenaires



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JEUDI 12 DÉCEMBRE 2024

8H30 **CAFÉ D'ACCUEIL ET INSCRIPTION**

9H15 **INTRODUCTION : SUJETS ET THÉMATIQUES DU COLLOQUE**

- **Sterenn Le Maguer-Gillon** - Professeure invitée à l'Université de Lausanne, chercheuse à Archaïos et chercheuse associée au CEFREPA
- **Josselin Pinot** - Doctorant à l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (UMR 7041 – ArScAn-VEPMO et UMR 8167 - Orient & Méditerranée) et chercheur à Archaïos

9H30 **CONFÉRENCE INTRODUCTIVE**

- «The men of Dedan were thy merchants»: trade and exchange at the ancient oasis settlement of Dadan (northwest Arabia), from the Bronze Age to Late Antiquity
- **Jérôme Rohmer**, chargé de recherche au CNRS (UMR 8167 - Orient & Méditerranée)

THÈME 1 : LES STRUCTURES INHÉRENTES AUX ITINÉRAIRES TERRESTRES ET MARITIMES

Modérateurs : **Maria Paola Pellegrino**, chercheuse à Archaïos, & **Kaina Rointru**, doctorante à l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (UMR 8215 - Trajectoires)

10H00 Piste caravanière, sanctuaire nabatéen et militaires romains : deux campagnes sur le « caravansérail » du Wadi Sabra (Pétra, Jordanie)

- **Nicolas Paridaens**, Université Libre de Bruxelles, & **Laurent Tholbecq**, Université Libre de Bruxelles

10H30 Résidences, forts, caravansérails : déterminer la nature des structures sur le Darb Zubayda (VIII^e-X^e siècles)

- **Sterenn Le Maguer-Gillon**, UNIL, Archaïos et CEFREPA

11H00 Pause café (30 mn)

11H30 A possible station or settlement on a Pre-Islamic trans-Arabian sub-road, north of Riyadh (Central Arabia)

- **Mohammed A. Alsubaie**, Durham University, King Saud University

12H00 Presence and practices of the Minaeans on the incense road. New insights from the oasis of AlUla

- **Josselin Pinot**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (UMR 7041 – ArScAn-VEPMO et UMR 8167 - Orient & Méditerranée), Archaïos

12H30 Pause déjeuner (1h30)



THÈME 2 : LES ACTEURS DES CIRCULATIONS DANS LA PÉNINSULE ARABIQUE ET SA PÉRIPHÉRIE

Modérateurs : **Guillaume Charloux**, ingénieur de recherche au CNRS (UMR 8167 – Orient & Méditerranée) & **Kilian Moreau**, doctorant à Sorbonne Université

- 14H00** **The Omani Empire: A Journey of Passion from Makran to Zanzibar**
- **Beatrice Nicolini**, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart
- 14H30** **A critical incident of a Sabaean traveller on his voyage by sea to the city of Aden**
- **Mohammed Maraqtan**, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Research Center Corpus Coranicum
- 15H00** **Along the frankincense road: movement of people and goods in Southwestern Arabia during the Iron Age**
- **Silvia Lischi**, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford
- 15H30** **Pause café (30 mn)**
- 16H00** **The economic topography of pre-Islamic State-Christianities in the late antique Red Sea**
- **Valentina Grasso**, Historical Studies Program, Bard College
- 16H30** **«They May Crush My Body, but They Will Not Be Able to Crush My Spirit»: Long Distance Trade in Times of Global Interaction**
- **Yifat Thareani**, New York University Tel Aviv.
- 17H30** **CLÔTURE**



VENDREDI 13 DÉCEMBRE 2024

THÈME 3 – PARTIE 1 : COMMERCE ET RÉSEAUX MARCHANDS

Modérateurs : **Laïla Nehmé**, directrice de recherche au CNRS (UMR 8167 - Orient & Méditerranée) & **Josselin Pinot**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon – Sorbonne (UMR 7041 - ArScAn-VEPMO et UMR 8167 - Orient & Méditerranée), Archaios

- 9H** **Unveiling the complexity of trading networks in southeastern Arabia (late 2nd millennium B.C.E. - first centuries A.D.): insight from the collective graves of Abraq 2 (Umm al-Quwain, U.A.E.)**
- **Maria Paola Pellegrino**, Archaios, **Michele Degli Esposti**, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences, **Enrica Tagliamonte**, University of Geneva, **Zuzanna Wynnanska**, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences & **Dominika Majchrzak**, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences
- 9H30** **Exchange in Eastern Arabia during the Iron Age Period (c. 1300-300 BC): Some Reflections about Trade in the Gulf**
- **Carlos Fernández Rodríguez**, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
- 10H00** **Copper and Soft-Stone from Ancient Magan: Geographic and Materials Analysis of Ancient Trade Networks**
- **Michael J. Harrower**, Johns Hopkins University, **John L. Shannon**, Johns Hopkins University, **Hélène David-Cuny**, CEFREPA, **Paige E. Paulsen**, Johns Hopkins University, **Ioana A. Dumitru**, The University of Sydney, **Smiti Nathan-Staudt**, Anthico, **Alexander J. Sivitskis**, Teton Science Schools, **Amir Zaribaf**, The University of Sydney & **Joseph W. Lehner**, The University of Sydney
- 10H30** **Pause café (30mn)**
- 11H00** **Mapping Incense Culture at the End of the Iron Age to the Beginning of Late Antique: The Typology, Lexicography, and Taxonomy of Incense Burners, 'Aromatics of All Kinds,' and Gum Resins from Arabia**
- **William Zimmerle**, New York University Abu Dhabi
- 11H30** **A new map of trading Arabia in the 3rd century BC**
- **Mounir Arbach**, CNRS (UMR 5133 - Archéorient), Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée, Université Lumière Lyon 2
- 12H00** **Crossroads of belief? A 1st century shrine at Tell Abraq between India, Caracene, and Arabia**
- **Michele Degli Esposti**, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Sciences
- 12H30** **Pause déjeuner (1h30)**



THÈME 3 – PARTIE 2 : CIRCULATION DES BIENS, MATÉRIAUX ET TECHNIQUES

Modérateurs : **Julien Charbonnier**, chercheur à Archaios, & **Cassandra Furstos**, doctorante à l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

- 14H00** Al-Fāw: Trade and Crossculturation from the Bronze Age to Late Antiquity
- **Juan de Lara**, Khalili Research Centre, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford
- 14H30** Exchange networks in the al-'Ula (AlUla) region in the longue-durée
- **Francelin Tourtet**, CNRS (UMR 8167 - Orient et Méditerranée), Archaios, **Mustafa Ahmad**, German Archaeological Institute - Orient Department / Goethe-University Frankfurt, **Yasemin Akinci**, Ankara University, Protohistory and Near Eastern Archaeology Department; for Teos Heritage, Izmir, **Caroline Durand**, CNRS (UMR 5189 - HiSoMa), **Cassandra Furstos**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Archaios, **Yvonne Gerber**, Department of Ancient Civilizations, University of Basel, **Nolwenn Guedeau**, Aix-Marseille University, LA3M, ED 355, CNRS, Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, BCDSS, Islamic Archaeology Research Unit, BIGS-OAS; for Teos Heritage, Izmir, **Celil Samet Harmandar**, independent archaeologist; for Teos Heritage, Izmir, **Julie Monchamp**, CNRS (UMR 5648 - Ciham), **Maria Paola Pellegrino**, Archaios, **Pr. Andrew Petersen**, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, **Josselin Pinot**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (UMR - 7041 ArScAn-VEPMO et UMR 8167 - Orient et Méditerranée), Archaios, & **Shadi Shabo** CNRS (UMR 8167 - Orient et Méditerranée)
- 15H00** Vent de graines et lancer de bûches sur l'Arabie
- **Vladimir Dabrowski**, Laboratoire de Géographie Physique (LGP / UMR 8591), LabEx Dynamite, UPE, Paris 1, CNRS, **Elora Chambraud**, MNHN-CNRS (UMR 7209 - Archéozoologie, Archéobotanique : Sociétés, Pratiques et Environnements), **Charlène Bouchaud**, MNHN-CNRS (UMR 7209 - Archéozoologie, Archéobotanique : Sociétés, Pratiques et Environnements), & **Saskia Ryan**, MNHN-CNRS (UMR 7209 - Archéozoologie, Archéobotanique : Sociétés, Pratiques et Environnements)
- 15H30** Pause café (30 mn)
- 16H00** Crossroads of Culture: Ceramic Circulation and Cultural Dynamics at Qurh/al-Mabiyat, Northwest Arabia
- **Mustafa Ahmad**, German Archaeological Institute - Orient Department / Goethe-University Frankfurt
- 16H30** Les routes : corridors d'exploitation des ressources minières de la péninsule Arabique aux débuts de l'Islam (VII^e-X^e siècles)
- **Guillaume Chung-To**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, ED112 – CNRS (UMR 8167 - Orient & Méditerranée)
- 17H00** 'Imperial leather:' reconfiguring commerce and distribution in the western Indian Ocean, c. 1850-1918
- **Itamar Toussia Cohen**, University of Oxford
- 19H00** **Conférence ouverte au public :**
« Explorations en Arabie : à la recherche des routes de l'encens »
- **Laila Nehmé**, directrice de recherche au CNRS (UMR 8167 - Orient & Méditerranée)



SAMEDI 14 DÉCEMBRE 2024

THÈME 4 – PARTIE 1 : SUR LES ROUTES DE PÈLERINAGE À L'ÉPOQUE ISLAMIQUE

Modérateurs : Sterenn Le Maguer-Gillon, UNIL, Archaiōs, CEFREPA, & Guillaume Chung-To, doctorant à l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne

- 9H30** The Early Abbasid Patronage of the Meccan Sanctuary: The Darb Zubayda and Beyond
• Mehdy Shaddel, Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations, Aga Khan University London
- 10H00** Interactions along the Darb Zubayda: An exploration based on new discoveries from the pilgrim way-station at al-Aqiq, Taif Governorate, Makkah Province, Saudi Arabia
• Peter J. Brown, Honorary Fellow, Department of Archaeology, Durham University, Ajab Al-Otibi, Heritage Commission of Saudi Arabia, Mashael Al-Dughailbi, Heritage Commission of Saudi Arabia, & Mishal Al-Khudaydi, Heritage Commission of Saudi Arabia
- 10H30** Pause café (30mn)
- 11H00** Qurh/Al-Mabiyat (Saudi Arabia) – Exploring the urban layout of a main pilgrimage stop during the Early – Middle Islamic Period
• Ulrike Siegel, German Archaeological Institute - Orient Department
- 11H30** Reconstituer les itinéraires de la route médiévale du hajj syrien : le projet Harmhajj
• Elodie Vigouroux, Université Lumière Lyon 2 (UMR 5648 - CIHAM), IFPO, & Jules Jacquemet-Payrastre, Université Lumière Lyon 2 (UMR 5648 - CIHAM)
- 12H00** Sur les routes d'Arabie: un itinéraire terrestre portugais de la Bibliothèque Vaticane (1565)
• Dejanirah Couto, Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des sciences historiques et philologiques
- 12H30** Pause déjeuner (1h30)



THÈME 4 – PARTIE 2 : SUR LES ROUTES DE PÈLERINAGE À L'ÉPOQUE ISLAMIQUE

Modérateurs : **Wissam Halawi**, Professeur, Université de Lausanne, & **Alexia Rosak**, doctorante à l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne, Archaios

- 14H00** The Syrian Hajj Route during the early Ottoman Period
• **Andrew Petersen**, Bradford University, Department of Archaeology and Forensic Sciences
- 14H30** A Headmaster on the Hajj: Environment, Railways, and Spirituality in the Hijaz and Palestine, 1912
• **Ayah Aboelela**, Northeastern University, Boston
- 15H00** En route vers La Mecque. Enjeux symboliques des itinéraires du hajj à l'époque contemporaine
• **Luc Chantre**, Université Rennes 2, CEFREPA

THÈME 5 : ITINÉRAIRES ET RESSOURCES MARITIMES

Modérateurs : **Solène Marion de Procé**, chercheuse à Archaios, & **Romy Vartin**, doctorante à l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne

- 15H30** Des poissons et des coquillages dans le désert et les montagnes d'Arabie, du transport à leur utilisation. État des lieux de la question
• **Kévin Lidour**, Département de la Culture et du Tourisme Abu Dhabi ; UMR 7041 - ArScAn & MNHN-CNRS (UMR 7209 - Archéozoologie, Archéobotanique : Sociétés, Pratiques et Environnements), **Anaïs Marrast**, MNHN-CNRS (UMR 7209 - Archéozoologie, Archéobotanique : Sociétés, Pratiques et Environnements) & **Hervé Monchot**, Sorbonne Université (UMR 8167 - Orient et Méditerranée), CEFREPA
- 16H00** Sailing the Red Sea: Medieval ships to Arabia
• **Dionisius Agius**, University of Exeter
- 16H30** Pause café (30 mn)
- 17H00** The Khawajas: A West Asian connection in the Indian Ocean (1350-1500)
• **Francisco Apellániz**, Università di Napoli L'Orientale
- 17H30** The Umm Lajj Shipwreck: Its Route and the Trade of Chinese Porcelain in the Red Sea Region
• **Chiara Visconti**, Università di Napoli L'Orientale, & **Chiara Zazzaro**, Università di Napoli L'Orientale
- 18H00** CONCLUSION
• **Sterenn Le Maguer-Gillon**, UNIL, Archaios, CEFREPA & **Josselin Pinot**, Université Paris 1 Panthéon - Sorbonne (UMR 7041 - ArScAn-VEPMO et UMR 8167 - Orient & Méditerranée), Archaios



Piste caravanière, sanctuaire nabatéen et militaires romains : deux campagnes sur le « caravansérail » du Wadi Sabra (Pétra, Jordanie)

Nicolas Paridaens, Université Libre de Bruxelles, & Laurent Tholbecq, Université Libre de Bruxelles

À l'inverse de la situation qui prévaut à Palmyre, la présence de caravansérails (c. 40 x 40 m) autour de Pétra n'est pas documentée. Après avoir passé en revue l'ensemble des sites repérés dans l'arrière-pays, W. M. Kennedy (2021) constate que les données ne permettent pas d'affirmer que des caravansérails sont présents dans le paysage ; il propose toutefois de hiérarchiser un certain nombre de sites associés à des pistes et voies comme infrastructures d'appui, à côté de structures militaires caractérisées. Jusqu'il y a peu, aucun de ces sites n'avait été fouillé. C'est désormais chose faite. A 7 km de Pétra, un important sanctuaire nabatéo-romain s'est développé dans le Wadi Sabra, l'un des axes principaux menant à la capitale nabatéenne. À côté de deux temples, d'un théâtre et de thermes, un petit bâtiment de 23 x 14,5 m a fait l'objet de deux campagnes de fouille (Université libre de Bruxelles et Mission archéologique française de Pétra). Construit au 2^{ème} siècle, ce bâtiment (une *mansio* ?) est détruit dans la première moitié du 3^{ème} siècle et rapidement transformé en petit fortin militaire (avec latrines), avant d'être détruit une seconde fois au milieu du 4^{ème} siècle. À la même époque, le théâtre est réorganisé en une esplanade fortifiée (possiblement des écuries), contrôlant les uniques réserves d'eau du site ; de son côté, le village adossé au sanctuaire est ceinturé de murailles, ce qui permet d'identifier Sabra à Sabura de la *Notitia Dignitatum*. Cette fouille récente éclaire l'histoire du sanctuaire du Sabra, son évolution au cours de l'époque romaine, mais aussi l'articulation entre commerce et sanctuaires ainsi que l'intégration du réseau caravanier dans l'infrastructure militaire de la province romaine d'Arabie.

Résidences, forts, caravansérails : déterminer la nature des structures sur le Darb Zubayda (VIIIe-Xe siècles)

Sterenn Le Maguer-Gillon, UNIL, Archaïos et CEFREPA

Le Darb Zubayda est le nom couramment donné à la route de pèlerinage (*hajj*) reliant Koufa à La Mecque. Si cette route est probablement en service avant l'essor de l'islam, c'est à partir des périodes omeyyade et, surtout, abbasside, qu'un pouvoir politique va investir de manière conséquente dans les infrastructures de la route afin de permettre aux sujets musulmans d'accomplir le *hajj*, l'un des cinq piliers de l'islam. Si les infrastructures d'approvisionnement en eau sont les plus importantes, d'autres infrastructures comme des portions de route pavée, des magasins, des tours pour les feux de signaux (*manār*, ou *manāra* pl. *manāwir*), ou des bâtiments administratifs et/ou résidentiels ont également été érigés.

La présente communication s'intéressera ainsi à ce dernier type d'infrastructures. Dans la littérature secondaire, elles sont dénommées « caravansérails » ou « khan », « palais », « résidences », sans qu'aucune argumentation claire ne permette de justifier de l'une ou l'autre appellation. Dans les sources textuelles médiévales, le terme « *qasr* » (palais) ou « *hisn* » (« fort ») apparaît le plus souvent. Nous tenterons donc de clarifier ces dénominations grâce à une analyse typologique et chronologique. Pour cela, nous nous baserons sur les données archéologiques anciennes et récentes. En effet, le Darb Zubayda a fait l'objet d'une série de prospections en Irak et en Arabie saoudite. Du côté saoudien, trois sites (Al-Rabadha, Fayd et Zubāla) ont été ou font encore aujourd'hui l'objet de fouilles archéologiques. Plus récemment, l'étude cartographique d'une dizaine de sites a également permis de renouveler les connaissances de terrain sur cette route. Ces données archéologiques seront confrontées aux données textuelles, et les structures concernées seront comparées à des structures similaires contemporaines afin d'affiner leur analyse fonctionnelle.



A possible station or settlement on a Pre-Islamic trans-Arabian sub-road, north of Riyadh (Central Arabia)

Mohammed A. Alsubaie, Durham University, King Saud University

This paper will introduce one of the results from a survey conducted for my Ph.D. study in Central Arabia (CA) 2022-2024. The focus is a site I visited to record archaeological features and systemically collect pottery samples to understand the date of the site and its nature. The site, which is called Marāt, is an oasis about 120 km northwest of modern Riyadh, known as early Islamic site that mentioned in geographical sources to be a station on one of pilgrimage sub-roads between al-Yamāma region and Mecca. The results of this visit indicate that the site may be a station or a settlement on a pre-Islamic trans-Arabian caravan trade route that ran from Ancient South Arabia through CA.

The primary study of the pottery collected from the site shows that the pottery comes from an industry of pre-Islamic time found in different parts of Arabia, from 400 BC to the early centuries AD. This is based on very abundant chaff-tempered pottery collected from the site, which is dated by comparison with pottery published from the Saudi-French mission in Al-Kharj at the site of al-Yamāma (2016) and Qaryat al-Fāw (2019). Additionally, sherds of greenish bitumen-lined jars with straw tempered fabric from the site show the possibility that trade may have been one of the site's purposes. Apart from the pottery, a single incense burner with pre-Islamic style decoration, identical with those from Thaj and Qaryat al-Fāw will be presented. Furthermore, the survey shows that the site seems to have been inhabited perhaps in the early centuries BC.

The paper will first present a plan of the site and discuss the evidence of its date. After that it will review the trans-Arabian caravan trade sites in Central Arabia questioning their roles in inland trade.

Presence and practices of the Minaeans on the incense road. New insights from the oasis of AIUla

Josselin Pinot, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (UMR 7041 - ArScAn/VEPMO et UMR 8167- Orient & Méditerranée), Archaios

The incense and aromatics trade flourished on the Arabian Peninsula from the 8th to the 1st century BCE. From the 6th century BCE, this trade appears to have been mainly managed by the Minaean kingdom, whose capital was Qarnawu, located in the Jawf province of present-day Yemen. Evidence of the Minaeans has been found in three trading posts: Timna and Najran in the south, and one in the north in the oasis of AIUla. However, Minaean influence extended much further, with inscriptions discovered in Egypt and as far away as the island of Delos.

Recent research conducted as part of the Dadan Archaeological Project (CNRS/AFALULA/RCU) has provided new insights into the nature of one of these trading posts, particularly following the discovery of a Minaean high-place in the heart of the Jabal Khuraybah. This processional pathway, along with numerous Minaean inscriptions found in the oasis, certifies their presence from the 4th century BC, at least until the 2nd century BCE. This raises questions about whether their presence was purely commercial. Was it merely a trading post, or did it serve as a genuine colony that sought to replicate aspects of life in the South Arabian kingdom?

This paper will discuss the organization of these Minaean trading posts, their chronology, their particularities and how new archaeological and epigraphic discoveries have enhanced our understanding of them.



The Omani Empire: A Journey of Passion from Makran to Zanzibar

Beatrice Nicolini, Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart

The historiography of Asian migration patterns in the Indian Ocean has evolved from written and colonial Eurocentric perspectives to incorporate oral, multidisciplinary, and global approaches, enriching our understanding of this complex phenomenon. The study of Asian migration in the Indian Ocean has shed light on the historical and cultural interconnections between Oman, Makran, Zanzibar, and East Africa, revealing the immensely wider connections and trade lengths that existed between the littorals of the Arabian Peninsula, South-Central Asia, and the tropical islands of East Africa in ancient times. The shared ecologies and maritime networks of the Indian Ocean have facilitated the movement of people, goods, and ideas between these regions for centuries, leading to a cultural synthesis represented by continuous and constant migratory flows. Oman was part of a global unity that long preceded the economic unification of the world, with numerous trade relationships established between the peoples of the Asian, Arabian, and East African coasts, stretching back to time immemorial. These trade links and power relationships were shaped by the equilibrium around the Arabian Sea, namely, the monsoons, the mercantile laws, and the trade routes for spices and ivory. The present paper will focus on the archaeological, historical, and environmental components of the Indian Ocean region, addressing questions of continuity, change, and identity over centuries. This study will aim to reconstruct the nature, pattern, and intensity of resource use, the environmental contexts and impacts, the nature and form of the port towns, the mechanisms and technologies of trade and maritime activity, and the nature of settlement activities outside of the towns. There is further scope for developing ideas on the way interaction between land and sea has fashioned the histories of many societies and civilizations, and on the significance of trans-oceanic links between maritime societies. The similar ecologies around the Indian Ocean and the monsoon system that dominates the region have given rise to intercultural connected land and maritime societies.

A critical incident of a Sabaean traveller on his voyage by sea to the city of Aden

Mohammed Maraqtan, Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Research Center Corpus Coranicum

The critical incident is reported by a Sabaean traveller by sea to Aden, as documented in the Sabaean inscription from the Awām Temple/Mahram Bilqīs in Ma'rib, Yemen. This recently discovered and unpublished text reports an offering to the Sabaean chief god Almaqah in gratitude for protecting the owner of the inscription when his boat was destroyed during a voyage to the city of Aden, and for saving him from illness during that voyage and from dropsy while in the region of Radmān. The inscription provides valuable insight into the maritime activities and cultural relationships of the ancient Sabaean. The inscription is dated to the Middle Sabaean period, around the 2nd century BC.



Along the frankincense road: movement of people and goods in Southwestern Arabia during the Iron Age

Silvia Lischi, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oxford

This presentation explores the role of frankincense in shaping the movement of people and goods in Dhofar, southern Oman, during the Iron Age (800 BC– AD 400). It focuses mainly on the archaeological area of Khor Rori, a key hub during the Late Iron Age along the frankincense route. Frankincense, a valuable commodity in the ancient world, attracted trade routes and influenced regional economies. The presentation shows that two distinct cultures were present in Dhofar, on the periphery of the South Arabian Kingdom: the Dhofar Coastal Culture and the Dhofar Inland Culture, each with its own way of life and likely involvement with frankincense.

The arrival of the South Arabians from Hadramawt around the 3rd/2nd century BC marked a turning point for the entire region, also known as Sa'kalhān. They came to facilitate the frankincense trade with these cultures, and probably to prevent internal problems within the kingdom. Their arrival led to a period of peaceful coexistence, followed by a more defensive approach with fortified settlements. The rise of large-scale maritime trade in the Indian Ocean coincided with a shift in regional dynamics. The inland route from Dhofar to the heart of the Kingdom of Hadramawt and then northwards to the markets of the Middle East and the Mediterranean began to lose its importance with the opening up of maritime trade, leading to the rapid growth and importance of Sumhuram on the international scenario. The South Arabians strengthened their presence and exerted greater control over frankincense production and trade. In conclusion, the presentation tries to understand the role of frankincense in this complex palimpsest, trying to consider it not only as a valuable commodity but also as a driving force behind cultural interaction, political developments, and the movement of people within Dhofar and beyond.

The economic topography of pre-Islamic State-Christianities in the late antique Red Sea

Valentina Grasso, Historical Studies Program, Bard College

In the first millennium CE, as the lexicon of Christianity changed and evolved, so did the physical spaces used for its worship. While ancient temples were purged of idols, cleansed, and re-consecrated, the conversion of pagan into distinctively Christian spaces of worship was gradual and fluid. Both newly constructed and merely renovated religious edifices attracted local communities and led to the emergence of an international network through the interaction between ecclesiastical leaders, local merchants, and regional powers. This network promoted both spiritual and economic missions. The former aimed at increasing the number of converts, while the latter sought to establish profitable partnerships. This network facilitated the movement of goods and people across different polities. Merchants and missionaries travelled together, relying on ecclesiastical centers along their journeys. In following Christianity's doctrine of unreciprocated altruism, these establishments welcomed newcomers on the condition of their recognition of Jesus Christ's saving power. Religious connectivity was based on trans-regional social networks shaped by a trans-regional balance of forces. A crucial phase of early cross-cultural trade took place through the mingling of newly formed Christian communities and State-Christianities such as those present in the Arabian Peninsula during Late Antiquity, when the number of proselytes increased or decreased based on their faith's institutional legitimization. My paper examines the co-constitutive link between economic and religious activity during this period, laying special focus on the pre-Islamic Red Sea region as a particularly revealing case study given the region's centrality to trade.



“They May Crush My Body, but They Will Not Be Able to Crush My Spirit”: Long Distance Trade in Times of Global Interaction

Yifat Thareani, New York University Tel Aviv

Camel caravans bearing exotic commodities, making their way to royal courts, have led many scholars to assume that ancient imperial powers stimulated the growth of the long-distance trade across the Arabian desert. A growing corpus of archaeological objects from the Southern Levant, attests to extensive commercial activity originating from the Arabian desert. While ancient empires expressed a keen interest in the trade, its management and maintenance were carried out by local proxies.

Instead of the common scholarly practice of classification of governance using a “top-down” perspective, this study surmises that a dialectic nature of relations between the dominating power and the local groups residing in the desert, owns the potential to shed light on the nature of life in the arid zone.

By exploring three imperial eras during which trade thrived in the Negev desert and across Wadi Arabah, the interaction between global power and local agency in the desert frontier stands out. Archaeological objects and historical analogies reveal the active role of non-elite individuals in shaping social life, interaction with the imperial power and identity through the daily life of local trading population, both sedentary and semi-nomad.



Unveiling the complexity of trading networks in southeastern Arabia (late 2nd millennium B.C.E. - first centuries A.D.): insight from the collective graves of Abraç 2 (Umm al-Quwain, U.A.E.)

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Recent excavations at Abraç 2, near Umm al-Quwain in the United Arab Emirates, have unearthed three subterranean and semi-subterranean collective tombs, yielding a rich assemblage of pottery, over 1200 other artifacts, and 450 beads. The investigations were undertaken in 2018 by the Tourism and Archaeology Department of Umm al-Quwain (U.A.E.) and then carried out in collaboration with the Italian Archaeological Mission in Umm al-Quwain (IAMUQ).

Despite extensive looting, the artifacts allow for dating the tombs' use from the late 2nd millennium BCE to the early centuries AD. This study focuses on the provenance of specific imported items – ceramics, stone vessels, and small finds – as tracers of trade contacts in the region. Through a diachronic examination of these imports, the research reveals a complex, long-distance trade network. The network spanned multiple regions, ranging from neighbouring ones like Oman to more distant locations like northwest Arabia, southern Iran, and Bahrain (Dilmun). This research sheds light on the scale and timing of trade contacts in the Arabian Peninsula, highlighting previously unknown routes and emphasizing the interconnections of ancient Arabian communities within broader trade networks.

Exchange in Eastern Arabia during the Iron Age Period (c. 1300-300 BC): Some Reflections about Trade in the Gulf

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Interregional trade in the Gulf is well attested during the third millennium BC thanks to the Mesopotamian textual sources, which show us a flourishing trade of raw materials, products, people and ideas that travelled from Mesopotamia to the ancient Meluhha, as well as Dilmun and Magan through the Gulf. Magan, in fact, was the place from where huge quantities of copper were exported to Mesopotamia.

Since the second half of the second millennium BC, Mesopotamia stopped the importation of the copper from Magan, and started a trade relationship with Cyprus. During this centuries, the golden age of the interregional trade ended, due to the scarcity of texts that mention it. But in our opinion, it is important to keep in mind that the cuneiform sources only reflect the Mesopotamian perspective of the problematic. To develop this issue, we focused our attention on the understanding of the material relationships of the regions of the Gulf. Some decades ago, the archaeological discoveries were not so eloquent. Now, we can confirm that trade during the Iron Age was not based in anecdotic examples; it was, in fact, a steady flow of multidirectional imports and exports.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the objects resulting from the trade exchanges in all Eastern Arabia (throughout the entire region of Eastern Arabia?) during the Iron Age, particularly between the Bahrain Island and the Oman Peninsula: pottery, softstone, stone supply, metal tools, weaponry and perhaps copper supply. Due to the absence of textual sources regarding this issue, we must focus this research on the archaeological discoveries in both regions.



Copper and Soft-Stone from Ancient Magan: Geographic and Materials Analysis of Ancient Trade Networks

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Southeast Arabia, widely known in ancient times as Magan, was a major source of raw materials for luxury goods traded across West Asia. Copper and chloritite (soft-stone) from Magan are attested in both the written and archaeological records of southern Mesopotamia as early as the third millennium BCE. Despite Southeast Arabia's clear standing as an important source of these and other geologically rare and valuable raw materials, many questions remain about where exactly in Southeast Arabia copper and chloritite came from and how extraction, production, and transport were organized. The prevalence of copper and chloritite at archaeological sites in Southeast Arabia from the Bronze Age through the Islamic period indicates the existence of long-standing exchange networks that mobilized raw materials and finished objects. This presentation discusses ongoing Archaeological Water Histories of Oman (ArWHO) Project research on copper and chloritite that employs a variety of methods including archaeological and geological survey, excavation, satellite imagery, network, and materials analysis. Our investigations clarify details of copper production at sites in Wadi Raki, a major center of Iron Age and Islamic copper smelting and examine the environmental circumstances of Safah a desert site where hundreds of bronze artifacts and hundreds of furnaces/hearths/pits have been found. We have also identified three geological sources of chloritite exploited in antiquity as well as two Iron Age villages where chloritite was being carved, one of which has yielded more than a metric ton of material demonstrating industrial-scale production of chloritite vessels. These analyses are shedding new light on the ancient trade networks and their economic, political, and social foundations.

Mapping Incense Culture at the End of the Iron Age to the Beginning of Late Antique: The Typology, Lexicography, and Taxonomy of Incense Burners, 'Aromatics of All Kinds,' and Gum Resins from Arabia

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The vast study of Arabian resins and scents as principal components for understanding the diverse and multidimensional functions for all types of incense-related material culture in the Iron Age and later is still in its developing stages. This study utilizes multidisciplinary methods including archaeological data from material culture studies and excavations, organic residue analysis, and ethnography and ethnoarchaeology in the Arabian Peninsula. The curated evidence serves as a proxy for reconstructing patterns of olfactory consumption along the overland caravan incense roads of the southern and northern Arabian Peninsula, ranging in time from ca. 6th century BCE to ca. 1st century BCE, and spatially across the ancient world from Jerusalem and Petra to Babylonia.



A new map of trading Arabia in the 3rd century BC

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Following Alexander the Great’s conquest of Persia in 330 and Babylon in 323 BC, a new configuration of the map of Arabian trade routes emerged. Numerous relay cities were created or regained importance, particularly in Eastern Arabia as Ikaros (today Failka, Koweït), Gerrha (today Thāj, al-Hufūf, Saudi Arabia), Tylos (old Dilmun) and Mleiha (al-Shāriqa, EAU), where imitations of Greek coins were widely distributed. In South Arabia, while Maʿīn controlled the trade of the caravan route of Western Arabia towards the Middle East, the kingdom of Sabaʿ reactivated its presence on the caravan trade market, establishing links with southern Mesopotamia, then under Seleucid control and with the newly established kingdom of Gerrha via Najrān and Qaryat al-Fāw. This last one is also founded around the 3rd century BC. The city of Gerrha then became a hub for the incense trade in Arabia eastern.

Further south-east, in the Oman peninsula, Mleiha with its port ad-Dūr, became the center of the kingdom of Oman, which ensured commercial traffic with Indian Ocean via Khawr Rūrī, the port of Zufār, whose emergence also dates around the end of 3rd century BC. It was with the small kingdom of Najrān that Oman established relations, as evidenced by a new inscription from Najrān, whose coins of its sovereign, Abīyathaʿ, circulated in Qaryat al-Fāw and in Arabia eastern.

Finally, it is also in the 3rd century BC that the South Arabian writing would be introduced into eastern Arabia.

Crossroads of belief? A 1st century shrine at Tell Abraq between India, Caracene, and Arabia

Michele Degli Esposti, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures, Polish Academy of Science

Recent excavation at the pluri-stratified site of Tell Abraq near the coast of Umm al-Quwain has provided exceptional new evidence to redefine its occupation in the early centuries AD. In the eastern part of the site, the poorly preserved remains of a small shrine and associate open-air altar were discovered. Despite substantial reworking and erosion, sparse fragments of glazed pottery were still in association with the remains. More significant, however, is a unique collection of artefacts scattered in the surroundings of the shrine, mixed with tumble coming from the dismantling and decay of the ancient structures.

These notably comprise a large number of human and animal clay figurines, bronze figurines, and small size stone statues of human personages. Exceptional was the discovery, together with several bronze coin of the local Abiel (Abīʿēl) issue, of four gold imitations of Roman aurei. A decorated stone bearing an Aramaic inscription was also discovered among the rubble of the altar structure.

All these different classes of materials bear witness to a variety of influences and to the import of non-utilitarian artefacts from a vast area comprising South Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula more in general, the Levant, lower Mesopotamia, and possibly India. They highlight the inclusion of Tell Abraq in a thriving network operating through the Arabian Gulf, likely under Characene control, and intersecting with the arrival of overland routes from Arabia. While this picture represents a new blooming of connections that were active already in the Bronze Age, the presence of the shrine hints at a different nature of cultural exchange and leaves one wondering about its specific allure to cosmopolitan sailors traversing the trade routes of the Arabian Gulf.



Al-Fāw: Trade and Crossculturation from the Bronze Age to Late Antiquity

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The oasis of al-Fāw, in the Najd region of central Saudi Arabia, was one of the most transited areas of ancient Arabia. As early as the Bronze Age, the site appears to have held significant importance for the people from Dilmun, and it may have been regarded as sacred. Some members of this community undertook journeys of over 1000 km to bury their members near the slopes of Mount Tuwaiq, which separated the oasis from the vast Empty Quarter.

It was in the latter half of the first millennium BCE when the oasis developed into a prosperous urban settlement due to its strategic location, acting as a bottleneck for the renowned Incense Trade Routes that supplied West Asia, the Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, and India. Dealing in these precious resins and aromatics propelled Qaryat to become one of the largest and wealthiest cities in Arabia in its heyday during the late antique period.

The diversity of inscriptions, artefacts, and artistic styles found therein demonstrate the formation of a cosmopolitan metropolis. Records show the existence of a pantheon of Arabian, Graeco-Roman, and Egyptian deities. At the same time, the material culture suggests close interlinks and trade exchanges with the various cultures of North Arabia, the Hellenistic kingdoms of West Asia and North Africa, as well as those from South Arabia and the Roman Empire. Within this dynamic template, the presentation aims to discuss and hypothesise over the possible trade routes that may have crisscrossed the region, highlighting the cultural milieus that accompanied the movement of goods and craftsmen across different stages, and using the material culture as illustrative examples.

Exchange networks in the al-'Ula (AlUla) region in the longue-durée

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In Northwest Arabia, several archaeological sites of the al-'Ulā region are well-known as historical resting and trading stations, whether on trade or on pilgrimage routes: Dadan, Hegrā/ Māda'in Sālih, Qurh/ al-Mābiyāt, and al-'Ulā (Old Town) to name the most famous ones, respectively for the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, the Nabataean, the Early Islamic and the Ottoman periods. However, recent research, especially at Dadan, attests the role of the area as a more significant crossroads since the Bronze Age than had been recognized.

Focusing on non-local pottery, this paper investigates the importance of imported pottery at al-'Ulā sites over the longue-durée, from the



2nd millennium BCE to today. It relies largely on qualitative and quantitative analysis of data collected from various excavated or surveyed sites by different projects: al-ʿUlā Old Town, al-ʿUlā oasis gardens, Dadan, Hegrā, Khayf al-Zuhrah, Qurh, Tall al-Kathīb, Umm Daraj.

The identification of assumed or verified regions of origin for non-local pottery productions sheds light on the complexity of this connectivity and exposes a substantial extra-regional diversification within Northwest Arabia. Through a comparison of the relative frequencies of different ceramic imports, this investigation reveals the diversity and dynamics of exchange networks. The scale of investigation, integrating data from multiple sites across the al-ʿUlā region rather than an isolated case study, enables an intra-regional analysis of the distribution of imported pottery, and thus contributes to understanding the different degrees of participation of various sub-areas in inter-regional exchanges.

Vent de graines et lancer de bûches sur l'Arabie

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Le dynamisme des échanges commerciaux durant les périodes antique et médiévale (5^e s. av. n. ère-15^e s. de n. ère) tel que relaté par les sources archéologiques et historiques favorise les connexions entre plusieurs acteurs socio-économiques (paysans/paysannes, voyageurs/voyageuses, marchands/marchandes) par le biais de réseaux de transport maritimes et caravaniers, au sein desquels s'échangent une variété de produits végétaux, bruts ou transformés. Ces derniers correspondent à des matériaux de construction, des objets de la vie quotidienne, des bijoux, des contenants, des vêtements, etc. La matérialité de ces échanges peut être appréhendée grâce aux analyses archéobotaniques menées sur des sites archéologiques de consommation, de production agricole, de stockage et de distribution. En effet, les données archéobotaniques, en particulier les vestiges de graines, de fruits et de bois, provenant de sites archéologiques antiques et médiévaux de la péninsule Arabique, montrent la présence de nouveaux produits souvent non ou peu mentionnés dans les sources textuelles, originaires des régions tropicales indo-pakistanaïses ou africaines – tels que le poivre, le coton, le riz, le sorgho, le teck, le palissandre – ou des régions méditerranéennes / proche-orientales – tels le buis, l'érable, le pin, le cyprès, le platane et le cornouiller. Certains de ces produits vont peu à peu être intégrés et cultivés au sein des systèmes agricoles oasiens tandis que d'autres restent des produits exotiques importés. Pour discriminer les produits importés des plantes cultivées localement et proposer des régions de provenance, des critères archéobotaniques et écologiques couplés à des analyses géochimiques du strontium sont conjointement utilisés. La présentation s'attache à décrire ces nouveaux produits végétaux et la chronologie de leur apparition, à discuter leur provenance et leur potentielle acclimatation et à interroger les composantes économiques, écologiques et techniques associées.



Crossroads of Culture: Ceramic Circulation and Cultural Dynamics at Qurh/al-Mabiyat, Northwest Arabia

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This paper delves into the complex dynamics of ceramic material exchange during the Early and Middle Islamic periods with a focus on Qurh/al-Mabiyat in Northwestern Arabia. Through the examination of the pottery from the 2022-2023 excavations by the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), funded by the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU), broader trade networks and cultural interactions of the time will be brought into focus. It is the aim to shed the light on imported pottery and investigate the interactions of local potters with these imports, creatively synthesizing external influences with indigenous practices to produce hybrid ceramic forms or through reproduction by replication reflecting both local markers and regional connections.

Archaeological data, historical narratives, and material analysis will be used to contextualize the material, emphasizing technological innovations and adaptations. Central to this analysis is the application of the chaîne opératoire approach, elucidating the potter's fingerprints and providing insights into the skillful manipulation of the materials. Thus, the interplay between material culture, economic dynamics, and acculturation in Northwestern Arabia during the Early and Middle Islamic periods are highlighted. This comprehensive analysis contributes to our understanding of ceramic circulation networks, emphasizing the intricate balance between local and global influences in historical trade and cultural exchanges.

Les routes : corridors d'exploitation des ressources minières de la péninsule Arabique aux débuts de l'Islam (VIIe-Xe siècles)

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Les recherches sur les routes (al-Rashid 1977; al-Ghabbān 2011) et sur les mines (de Jesus *et al.* 1982; Hester *et al.* 1984) d'Arabie se sont grandement développées depuis les années 1970-1980. Le travail considérable entrepris dans l'exploration de cette terra incognita limitait ces études à leurs domaines respectifs, sans véritable croisement des deux champs thématiques. Les routes de pèlerinage étaient intimement liées, voire réduites, à leur rôle d'itinéraires pour les pèlerins – proche finalement de la vision qu'en offraient les sources médiévales (al-Harbi 1969) – sans que leur dimension économique soit véritablement considérée. Les données accumulées permettent aujourd'hui de prendre du recul par rapport à cet objet d'étude et de sortir de la « route monument » (Robert 2009). Elles offrent aux chercheurs un vaste champ dans lequel adopter une approche plus systémique. Ces dernières ont souligné l'étonnante répartition des exploitations minières le long des principaux itinéraires qui sillonnaient la péninsule Arabique (Heck 1999; Peli 2006; Power 2012). Si les mines situées sur le tracé du Darb Zubayda (Ma'din al-Nuqra et Mahd al-Dhahab) illustrent bien cela, d'autres sites localisés sur les routes du Yémen et de Syrie invitent à généraliser ces modalités d'organisation. Partant de ces hypothèses et faute d'études détaillées sur les mines, on ne peut à ce stade que proposer un modèle de cette relation étroite entre centres d'exploitation et routes. Cette communication tentera de souligner le rôle des routes à la fois dans le contrôle des exploitations et leur possible stratégie dans le transport du minerai vers les centres du pouvoir, dans une politique qui s'apparenterait à ce qu'on appellerait aujourd'hui de la prédation. Elle souligne ainsi tout l'enjeu du maintien de ces routes, que ce soit dans l'implantation des haltes ou les relations vis-à-vis des tribus locales, dans une dimension diachronique.



'Imperial leather:' reconfiguring commerce and distribution in the western Indian Ocean, c. 1850-1918

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Following the trail of a particular commodity from collection through processing to distribution has proved a productive lens for teasing out otherwise occluded transregional and global connectivities. In the Arabian context, coffee, dates, and pearls have been particularly generative in tying together geographies extending from highland Yemen and the Persian Gulf to East Africa and western India, and as far afield as Europe and North America. In this talk, I propose to follow one such underappreciated yet no less ubiquitous commodity, namely raw animal hides and skins.

Although the hides and skins trade long predated technological breakthroughs in the leather industry, industrialization in Europe and the United States demanded the mass production of leather products; military requirements, population growth, and new consumer wants of emergent working classes meant that the need for raw materials far exceeded what Europe and the United States could produce domestically, rendering remote locations like southern Arabia and East Africa central to an increasingly globalised industry.

Not limited to sketching a material history of a global commodity, however, this paper invokes the hides and skins trade in order to narrate the dramatic transformations taking place in the western Indian Ocean following the opening of the Suez Canal—a period dubbed by Jonathan Miran as 'the Red Sea boom.' Drawing on a variety of consular, trade, and administrative archives, the paper foregrounds Parsi and other Indian merchant groups in Arabia as it traces the technological, spatial, mercantile, and financial processes by which the port of Aden emerged as the region's paramount entrepôt and clearinghouse, reversing in the process established circuits of capital flows and usurping traditional centres like Zanzibar, while reducing neighbouring ports to the position of commercial (and, in certain facets, cultural) satellites.



The Early Abbasid Patronage of the Meccan Sanctuary: The Darb Zubayda and Beyond

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The removal of the imperial capital from Syria to Iraq after the Abbasid revolution led to the development of the Zubayda pilgrimage route from Iraq to Mecca. Fieldwork on the trail has uncovered a significant amount of material remains and inscriptions that attest to substantial building activity in the early Abbasid period, thus complementing the evidence of the literary source material. The present talk will argue that this building activity on the Zubayda trail needs to be understood against the backdrop of the wider patronage of the holy sites of Mecca and Medina by the early Abbasid caliphs and the role they assumed for themselves as leaders of the pilgrimage and custodians of the Kaaba, which, they asserted, was their ancestral prerogative. In the Umayyad period the Kaaba and the site of the Temple in Jerusalem were rivals for the status of the most sacred site in Islam, and the Jerusalem Temple benefited from the patronage of the Umayyads in this conflict. Bringing together literary and newly discovered epigraphic evidence from the Darb Zubayda and Mecca (in the form of graffiti, milestones, and monumental inscriptions), this talk will argue that, after overthrowing the Umayyads and moving the capital away from Syria, the Abbasids decided to lend their patronage to Mecca at the expense of Jerusalem, in a clear break with Umayyad practice. The development of the Zubayda trail was thus part of a larger, systematic programme with the aim of solidifying the Abbasids' claim to be stalwarts of Islam and custodians of God's house.

Interactions along the Darb Zubayda: An exploration based on new discoveries from the pilgrim way-station at al-Aqiq, Taif Governorate, Makkah Province, Saudi Arabia

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The Darb Zubayda pilgrim route played a pivotal role in mobility across Arabia during the early Islamic period. The route's different infrastructural elements - including waystations equipped with facilities for pilgrims, milestones and waymarkers, as well as pathways cleared of obstacles, or paved in some areas, for easier passage - represent significant, and ongoing, investments that correspond to its importance for political, religious and practical reasons. As well as facilitating pilgrimage to Mecca, the Darb Zubayda pilgrim road also provided a key economic artery connecting the cities of the Hejaz with trans-regional trade networks. In turn, these far-reaching commercial contacts impacted the local economies of the communities dwelling along the route. This paper explores new discoveries from recent fieldwork at the al-Aqiq waystation, Taif Governorate, Makkah Province. Though still in the preliminary stages, this project has revealed new evidence - through a methodology incorporating pedestrian survey, excavation, drone-based photogrammetric survey, and survey and recording of inscriptions - allowing a deeper understanding of the interactions taking place along the Darb Zubayda in the early Islamic, and especially early Abbasid, period. In particular, flows of material culture including soft-stone vessels, turquoise glazed jars from southern Iraq, and Chinese ceramics, attest to the diverse sources of material passing through one of the waystations along the route. Investigation of the



al-Aqiq site in greater detail, meanwhile, allows a more nuanced understanding of the nature of life within these settlements. Sophisticated, newly documented, water management structures provide a more detailed understanding of the facilities available within the waystation as well as possible land use scenarios practised in its surroundings. This paper will draw the various strands of evidence gleaned from fieldwork at Al-Aqiq together to consider the importance of the route at a broader scale as well as its long-term sustainability as an artery of interaction and exchange.

Qurh/Al-Mabiyat (Saudi Arabia) – Exploring the urban layout of a main pilgrimage stop during the Early – Middle Islamic Period

Ulrike Siegel, German Archaeological Institute – Orient Department

The site of modern al-Mabiyat, identified as the ancient city of Qurh in the Wadi al-Qura, lies approximately 19 km southeast of modern al-Ula (Medina Province, Saudi Arabia). The site is known from historical sources and said to be one of the most important cities of the Early to Middle Islamic period (7th–12th centuries AD) in Arabia. The location of Qurh coincides with reconstructed ancient trade routes connecting the southern and northern parts of the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. These routes subsequently became important for the pilgrimage from Syria and the Levant to the holy Islamic sites of Makkah and Madinah.

In 2022 a new interdisciplinary project involving conservation, survey and archaeological excavations was launched by the Orient Department of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) in collaboration with and funded by the Royal Commission for AlUla (RCU). Whereas previous investigations by the Department of Antiquities (1984) and the King Saud University (2004–2019) mainly focused on the excavation of residential areas, the new project aims to develop a more holistic picture of the settlement.

The paper discusses the preliminary results of urbanistic studies of the first three seasons (2022–2023). New insights into the urban layout and the spatial-functional organization of the city of Qurh were gained by using a combination of methods from ground surveys, geophysical prospections and remote sensing. In addition, different architectural features were recorded in the surroundings of the settlement giving information about the environmental setting. The paper will also discuss how the requirements for an important pilgrimage stop affected the urban layout and development of the approximately 40 ha city.



Reconstituer les itinéraires de la route médiévale du hajj syrien : le projet Harmhajj

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Depuis 2015 le site de Khirbat al-Dusaq, fondé dans la région de Shawbak par le sultan de Damas au XIII^e siècle, est au cœur d'une étude historique et archéologique qui a permis de replacer le site dans son contexte. La construction de ce complexe architectural unique témoigne du réaménagement de la route dite « syrienne » du hajj après le départ des croisés et matérialise son changement d'itinéraire. Venant accompagner cette étude, depuis 2022, le programme Harmhajj (ANR-Université Lyon 2-MEAE-Fondation Max van Berchem, IFPO-CIHAM-CNRS) vise à éclairer l'histoire et l'archéologie de la route Damas-La Mecque et ses différents tracés, à travers la mise en évidence de structures liées à la fréquentation des environs du site, et plus largement de cette région, par les caravanes, dans les premiers siècles de l'Islam et jusqu'à la construction de forts par le pouvoir ottoman au XVI^e siècle. Son but est d'identifier des zones de stationnement possibles, de les dater et de déterminer les différents itinéraires envisageables et leur raison d'être selon des critères de la topographie, de la franchissabilité des terrains, de l'accès à l'eau et des possibilités d'approvisionnement. Il fait appel à des sources littéraires, iconographiques et archéologiques et met en œuvre des méthodes telles que la télédétection et la modélisation d'itinéraires de moindres coûts. Dans le cadre de ce colloque nous présenterons l'apport de l'étude de Khirbat al-Dusaq pour la connaissance de la route médiévale du hajj ainsi que l'ensemble de la méthodologie mise en œuvre depuis 2022 associant prospection géomorphologique, archéologique et analyse spatiale.

Sur les routes d'Arabie: un itinéraire terrestre portugais de la Bibliothèque Vaticane (1565)

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En 1942, Giorgio della Vita trouva dans la bibliothèque du Vatican un manuscrit (Ms. *Vaticanus Arabicus* 217) contenant quelques surates du Coran (*Sūrah* 25, *Al-Furqān* : 21, jusqu'à *Sūrah* 26, *As-Shu'arā'* :109), dont les deux premiers folios comportent une note cryptée en système de substitution mono-alphabétique. Anonyme (mais datée du 9 mai 1565) cette note décrit de façon précise un itinéraire de pèlerinage aux Lieux Saints d'Arabie, l'auteur ayant voyagé au sein de la caravane qui emprunta la route égyptienne du pèlerinage (*darb al-hajj al misri*) qui quitta le Caire le 9 mai 1565 et y retourna en Septembre 1565. À la suite de l'itinéraire proprement dit, le document comporte une description succincte de la grande mosquée de la Mekke (*al-Masdjid al-Harām*) et de la Ka'ba.

Qui a pu être l'auteur de ce court itinéraire d'une grande précision, qui complète, d'un point de vue des étapes décrites d'Arabie, celui de l'ancien captif portugais Gregório da Quadra (1516-1517) ? À qui était-il adressé ? À l'ambassadeur portugais à Rome, par quelqu'un qui a effectué le *Hajj* ? La présente communication se propose d'identifier l'auteur et le destinataire de l'itinéraire, tout en mettant en lumière un vaste réseau portugais d'information et d'échanges en mer Rouge pendant la première modernité.



The Syrian Hajj Route during the early Ottoman Period

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This paper will discuss the pilgrimage stations on the Syrian Hajj route before the changes introduced in the nineteenth century. The paper will compare the evidence provided by different Ottoman travellers such as Qutb al-Din Nahrwali (1511-1582), Evliya Çelebi (1611 – 1682) and Mehmed Edib (d.1801) to provide information about the development of the route during the first three centuries of Ottoman rule (1515-1800). Subjects of particular interest include changes to the course of the route, the establishment of new stations and comments on local conditions.

The paper will also assess archaeological evidence from the southern section of the route in particular the Hajj forts and associated features in the region between Dhat al-Hajj and Hadiyya in present day Saudi Arabia. Many of the forts once contained inscriptions and although most of these have now been lost the texts were recorded and provide valuable information about the construction process and identities of the people involved in the design of the route.

Although superficially the forts appear to be of uniform design there are considerable variations in both the architectural details and the chronology of the buildings which provide valuable information about the development of the Hajj. Questions of particular interest include the location of the Hajj camp sites, the presence of cemeteries, remains of earlier buildings and choice of construction materials.

In addition to analysing the buildings themselves the paper will also pay particular attention to the natural environment along the route comparing historical descriptions with the landscapes of the present day. Whilst nineteenth century European travellers accounts often describe the forts as isolated features in an otherwise empty landscape recent archaeological surveys show that they form part of complex historical and geographical landscapes interacting with nomad encampments, villages, field systems, water catchment as well as a variety of natural habitats.

A Headmaster on the Hajj: Environment, Railways, and Spirituality in the Hijaz and Palestine, 1912

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In 1914, a school headmaster from an Egyptian village, Muhammad Gasan Ghāli, published a guidebook detailing his 1912 route to Medina. His guidebook would be so comprehensive, he proclaimed, that Egyptian readers wanting to follow his trajectory via steamship to Greater Syria, then via train routes in Palestine, and finally via the Hijaz Railway “will not need to ask anyone anything.” True to his goal, Ghali provided a wealth of information, detailing train schedules, station stops, suggested packing lists, ticket prices, hotels, food, and natural phenomena. Most importantly for this paper, the guidebook reveals how he perceived the Ottoman-constructed modern infrastructure as he traveled through the once-peripheral frontiers of the Hijaz and Palestine. This paper is a microhistory of an ordinary pilgrim, examining the historical contexts that made him extraordinary. It explores how the Hijaz Railway changed the Hajj journey in terms of infrastructure, environment, individual pilgrim experiences, and spirituality. Taking an environmental history approach, it compares Ghali’s perceptions of the environment and modern infrastructure with those of Ottoman officials who embraced reformist ideas of mastering nature, settling Hijazi nomads, and asserting their authority over areas that used to be peripheries, particularly Palestine and the Hijaz. This paper also argues for expanding



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studies on the Hajj and the Hijaz Railway beyond the traditional boundaries of the Hijaz to include the spiritual geographies constructed by pilgrim itineraries. Ghali used new railway networks not only to visit Medina, but also to visit Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, and other cities in Palestine. His observations on the environment, modern infrastructure, other state symbols of power, and his own spirituality as he traveled through these lands allow us to reimagine the Hajj experience in the late Ottoman Empire.

En route vers La Mecque. Enjeux symboliques des itinéraires du hajj à l'époque contemporaine

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Associées au pèlerinage à La Mecque (*hajj*), les routes terrestres ont longtemps joué un rôle structurant dans l'imaginaire islamique. Elles matérialisaient l'unité et la solidarité du *dār al-islām* qu'elles innervaient et irriguaient. Les caravanes de pèlerins constituent ainsi une figure familière du paysage musulman allant jusqu'à se confondre avec le pèlerinage lui-même. Pour le pèlerin pris individuellement, l'ascèse de la pérégrination est au cœur du processus de représentation que le pèlerin se fait de lui-même et de la valeur qu'il accorde à son pèlerinage. Cette contribution a pour objet de rappeler les conséquences pour le *hajj* de l'apparition de nouveaux itinéraires, terrestres, maritimes et aériens, à l'époque contemporaine, généralement associés à des innovations technologiques (navire à vapeur, avion, chemin de fer, automobile) plébiscitées par les pèlerins eux-mêmes. Envisagés comme une alternative au pèlerinage pédestre, ces nouveaux modes de déplacements n'ont-ils pas contribué à en diminuer la valeur méritoire ? N'ont-ils pas dès lors modifié les conditions mêmes de réalisation du *hajj* et contribué à revaloriser l'imaginaire traditionnel du pèlerinage par voie de terre ?



Des poissons et des coquillages dans le désert et les montagnes d'Arabie, du transport à leur utilisation. État des lieux de la question

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Les ressources marines tiennent un rôle crucial dans les réseaux d'échanges entre les sites côtiers et ceux de l'intérieur de la péninsule arabique. Les plus anciennes traces – bien que modestes – de circulation de coquillages marins destinés à l'alimentation sont localisées sur les contreforts occidentaux du massif d'Al-Hajar et remontent au Paléolithique final. C'est à cette époque que se développent les premières économies basées sur la pêche dans la région. Dès le Néolithique, des ornements faits de coquilles marines sont troqués sur une vaste échelle, des côtes de l'Hadramaout jusqu'aux confins du Ramlat al-Sab'atayn, et de la péninsule d'Oman jusqu'aux rives du Golfe persique, voire jusqu'en Mésopotamie et en Susiane. Avec l'Âge du Bronze, les industries spécialisées dans le travail des coquilles se développent, notamment pour la production de grands anneaux et de médaillons en nacre, en apex de *Conus*, ou encore en test de grands strombes. Jusqu'alors marginale, la diffusion de ressources marines à des fins alimentaires – tant coquillages que poissons – prend son essor au cours du Bronze récent et de l'Âge du Fer. Cette période est marquée par une intensification des échanges avec les sites de l'intérieur, qui prospèrent grâce à l'exploitation minière, à la métallurgie et à l'agriculture oasienne – cette dernière étant dynamisée par l'apparition des systèmes d'irrigation des falaj et des qanat. Un domaine de recherche encore peu exploré concerne l'utilisation des produits marins comme nourriture pour le bétail et amendement des sols dans les oasis – pratique dont les preuves remontent à l'Âge du Bronze. Séchés, les poissons et les chairs de mollusques deviennent une source de protéines économique, facilement transportable et conservable sur plusieurs mois. Ces denrées jouent ainsi un rôle central dans le développement du commerce caravanier à travers le désert d'Arabie. Cela témoigne de l'établissement d'un système économique durable qui se maintiendra jusqu'aux sociétés traditionnelles arabes de l'époque islamique.

Sailing the Red Sea: Medieval ships to Arabia

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The northern link of the Red Sea was hazardous to ships sailing south to north. Early medieval Arabic sources agree on the difficulties of navigating these waters. Captains encountered unpredictable north westerly winds and numerous coral reefs and submerged rocks leading to shipwreck and destruction. Navigating north to south was safer with the prevailing winds. Aden, in the south, strategically controlled the Red Sea corridor. Ocean-going ships locally and far away from the Indian Ocean put in at Aden and/or proceeded to Jeddah. At Aden, they unloaded, loaded, or transhipped their cargo onto smaller vessels to minor ports on the African and Arabian Red Sea, while the pilgrim traffic from different ports converged on Jeddah. This study is concerned with ship-types and their functionality. Generic terms *safīna* and *markab* for ocean-going ships found in medieval Arabic sources are not helpful, though some details of their merchant and pilgrim activities



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are important to our study. One such Arabic source for the information it gives on large vessels known as *dīmanī*, *sa'īl*, *kārimī*, *shihri* ships and others, is the agricultural almanac of Yemen, in particular Aden, compiled by the Rasulid Al-Malik al-Ashraf cUmar b. Yusuf (d. 670/1271). Although questions about ship design, construction methods, sail-types and configuration are hard to find in this and other Medieval Arabic sources, it is possible to find answers in the Genizah letters (354-663/ 965-1265) about smaller ships such as the *jalba*, *sunbūq*, *cushāī*, *qārib*, *ghurāb* and *qitcī* information on which will help to reconstruct the medieval maritime past.

The Khawājās: A West Asian connection in the Indian Ocean (1350-1500)

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With the outbreak of the Black Death and related political changes such as the advent of the Ming in 1368, the way West Asia interacted with India and China experienced important changes. In the post-plague scenario, trade routes were reorganized, and an emerging group of Arab and Persian entrepreneurs based in Mecca – called Khawājās – acquired a prominent role in the Indian Ocean World. Yet despite the abundance of Arabic sources, we still lack a comprehensive understanding of how Arabia, the Horn of Africa, and the Red Sea region were connected to South and East Asia in the late Middle Ages.

For the period before the plague, a fundamental role was played by the seasonal convoy called the Kārim. Linking Arabia to Southern India, it is documented for almost four centuries, a remarkably long timespan. Yet the subsequent chapter in the history of Arabian connections with Asia, extending from the end of the Kārim at the turn of the 15th century to the arrival of the Portuguese in 1500 has been neglected by world history narratives. The participation of merchant groups from the Islamic West is rarely considered in the light of Chinese descriptions of the tribute missions or foreign, barbarian countries.

In this contribution, I aim to provide a clear narrative of how the Ming dynasty's new trade and navigation policies, the end of the Kārim Convoy, and the participation of Muslim merchants from Egypt and Syria brought about a new geography of commerce. These changes resulted in an increasing entanglement of Mecca and South Asia and in the integration of trading cities in Malabar and the Malacca Straits into the Khawājās' commercial networks.



The Umm Lajj Shipwreck: Its Route and the Trade of Chinese Porcelain in the Red Sea Region

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The Umm Lajj shipwreck is the most recent Ottoman-period shipwreck identified in the Red Sea, dating back to the 18th century according to its cargo. The first investigations on the merchantman wreck were conducted in 2015-2016 thanks to a joint project of the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Culture and University of Napoli l'Orientale. Research resumed in 2022, when excavations allowed for in-depth examination of cargo artefacts such as storage jars, clay pipes, and Chinese porcelain cups. Personal items, spices and remains of food supplies were also brought to the surface, offering further insights into the ship's routes and cargo.

At the current stage of research, two other wrecks have been identified and partially excavated in the same sector of the Red Sea: the Sadana and the Sharm El Sheik. All three ships were loaded with Chinese porcelain and sank while sailing northwest, testifying to the significant maritime activity along the Red Sea coasts during the Ottoman period, prior to the opening of the Suez Canal and the emergence of European commercial interests in the region.

In addition to the archaeological evidence offered by these shipwrecks, Ottoman archives, and other contemporary sources, mention the wreckage of many other ships, usually due to bad weather conditions or to unexperienced captains and mariners. These sources reveal interesting information on sailing routes and dangers in the Ottoman Red Sea.

Although none of these shipwrecks have been thoroughly investigated, the comparative analysis of materials and the study of the documentary sources may already offer interesting insights into the 18th century inter-Asiatic trade along the Red Sea and the complexity of the routes taken by Chinese porcelain in the broader Indian Ocean region.



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