The Umm an-Nar (ca. 2700 BCE) period of southeastern Arabia is defined by its monumental towers and tombs—both also by its dramatic increase in the number and scale of permanent settlements across the Oman Peninsula. Archaeological studies of the Umm an-Nar characterize it as a period of increasing sociopolitical and economic complexity. However, the nature and characteristics of that complexity are clouded by theories that have traditionally studied Umm an-Nar monuments and settlements in isolation from one another. This paper introduces the next step of the Bat archaeological project: the first time, a coherent picture of an Umm an-Nar site and its society—incorporating data from monuments, settlements, and the spaces between them. Targeting a key area of the UNESCO World Heritage site of Bat, this project will use trends in spatial organization, material culture, architectural variation, and land use to study sociopolitical organization and as well as systems of exchange and production. These patterns will inform theories of alternative complexity that, in turn, will nuance our understanding of Umm an-Nar society.

THE UNESCO WHS OF BAT

- The site of Bat, located to the south of the inner region of the Oman Peninsula, is the largest known urban site from the Umm an-Nar period (Thornton et al. 2016).
- It includes at least nine known monuments, 12 necropoleis of hundreds of tombs, and multiple known areas of domestic occupation. Occupied throughout the Umm an-Nar period, Bat likely served as a regional social and economic center.

Contexts Examined in This Research

The Umm an-Nar as a Complex Non-State

Through lacking state-level institutions, urban-centric, and expanding systems, the Umm an-Nar people constructed monumental architecture, supported irrigated agriculture and specialized craft production, and traded with states and non-stanish throughout the Greater Ancient Near East. Previous interpretations have loosely characterized the Umm an-Nar as having a tribal or clan-based social organization (Cleuziou & Tosi 2007); however, when taken together there is increasing evidence that Umm an-Nar complexity was greater than initially thought.

THE BAT ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT

Bat: an Umm an-Nar regional center

Bat is one of several contemporaneous sites located along the inner piedmont of the Al Hajar Mountains. However, Bat is unique in several ways that make it the ideal site with which to examine Umm an-Nar complexity, including:

- Umm an-Nar cemetery (space reserved for burial) and Umm an-Nar tombs distributed outside the cemetery, alongside non-mandatory features. Glass spatial and structural interconnections between tombs and other monuments and areas of domestic occupation/economic production;
- A continuous history of occupation throughout the Umm an-Nar period, a long tradition of archaeological research

The Target Research Area

The target research area consists of a 1.25km2 (27 hectares) space created by 4 Umm an-Nar towers (Kearl al-Rojaim, Ksar al-Khafai, Mataraya, al-Alliyah, and 1259). The Bat settlement plan (below). The area is divided into four quadrants (7.9 hectares each) by a modern road and a cross-cutting valley.

SURVEY

Multi-scale stratified, non-random survey will be used to (1) document surface sites and assemblages and (2) identify potential locations of test trenches

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH

The Ministry of Heritage & Culture archives include numerous detailed survey and excavation reports focusing on the central part of Bat. Results of this unpublished research will be integrated into project reports.

EXCAVATIONS

Test trenches will (1) expose structural relationships between monument and settlement spaces, (2) clarify site chronology, and (3) probe the potential of promising locations identified in survey for further excavation.

DATA SETS

MATERIALS ANALYSIS

Macrophotographic analysis of ceramics, metallic materials, stone, and/or mudbrick architecture, etc. will (1) define chronological sequences and (2) clarify building site function. Two-cameral phtographic studies will examine production techniques and inter-regional trade.

REFERENCES

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