From stone heaps to heritage landmarks. The excavation, restoration and reconstruction of prehistoric tombs at Salūt (central Oman) between experimental archaeology and site valorisation

Michele Degli Esposti[1], Stefano Bizzarri[2]
[1] Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures - Polish Academy of Sciences
[2] DZAA Architects, Italy

Abstract
The archaeological investigation by the former Italian Mission to Oman (University of Pisa) in the ancient oasis of Salūt, in central Oman, targeted several prehistoric burials located within the perimeter of the Archaeological Park of Bysiah and Salūt, a fundamental cultural pole developed under the auspices of the Ministry for Heritage and Tourism of the Sultanate of Oman. After stratigraphic excavation and documentation of the surviving structures, the tombs were restored and in some cases reconstructed to make them fully understandable to the wider public visiting the Park. This work provided useful information about the costs in human labour and raw materials procurement entailed in their construction, revealing itself as an experimental archaeology process capable of further highlighting the importance that these monuments had for the ancient community at the same time as fostering the bonds between the locals and their archaeological heritage.

Keywords
Funerary monuments, archaeological restoration, Oman, experimental archaeology, sustainable conservation.

The long-standing project of archaeological research by the Italian Mission to Oman (IMTO) in the area of Salūt, near Bisyah in central Oman (Fig. 1), was started in 2004 to investigate the prominent Iron Age settlement of Husn and Qaryat Salūt and gradually widened to include other nearby sites (Phillips et al., 2015; Degli Esposti, 2016; Avanzini, Degli Esposti, 2018; Tagliamonte, Avanzini, 2018; Degli Esposti et al., 2019). Since 2011, the excavation of several Bronze Age graves located along the slopes of Jabal Salūt was also undertaken (Condoluci, Degli Esposti, 2015; Degli Esposti et al., in press), adding another element to the relevant archaeological landscape of the area.
These activities finally found a comprehensive frame when the Office of HE the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs, Muscat, started the implementation of the Archaeological Park of Bisyah and Salūt[1]. The creation of the park is of extreme significance in placing the ancient oasis of Salūt at the centre of tourist interest, as well as strengthening the bonds with the local community, which has always shown a strong interest in the IMTO work.

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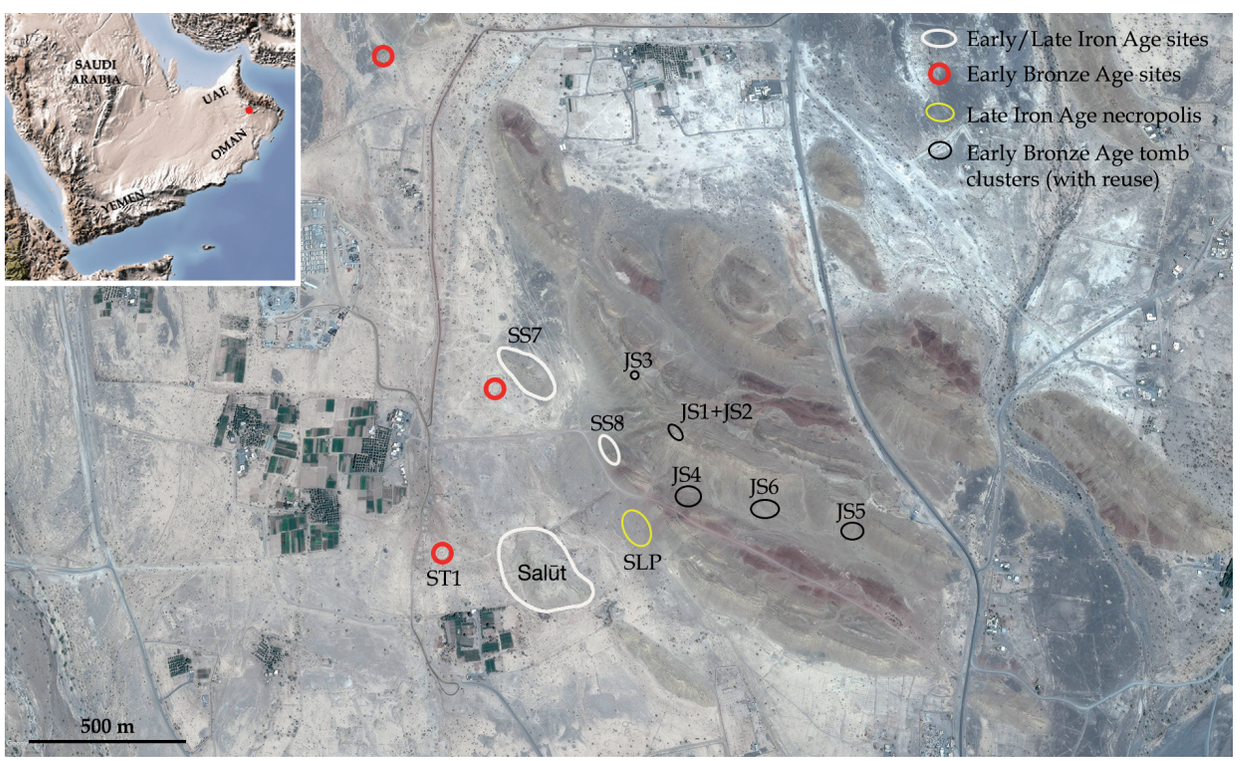

Fig. 1
above
View along the crest of Jabal Salūt in central Oman, looking southeast towards the large landmass of Jabal Bu Rzuz (in the background). Stone-built tombs punctuating hill crests and slopes are a distinctive feature of the South East Arabian landscape, where they are found by the tens of thousands.
below
The location of Salūt in Northern Oman and satellite view (© Google Earth) illustrating the dense archaeological landscape of the area. Names are given for the sites excavated and/or surveyed by the Italian Mission. "Salūt" includes the fortified area of the Iron Age site (Husn Salūt) and the wider settlement surrounding it (Qaryat Salūt).
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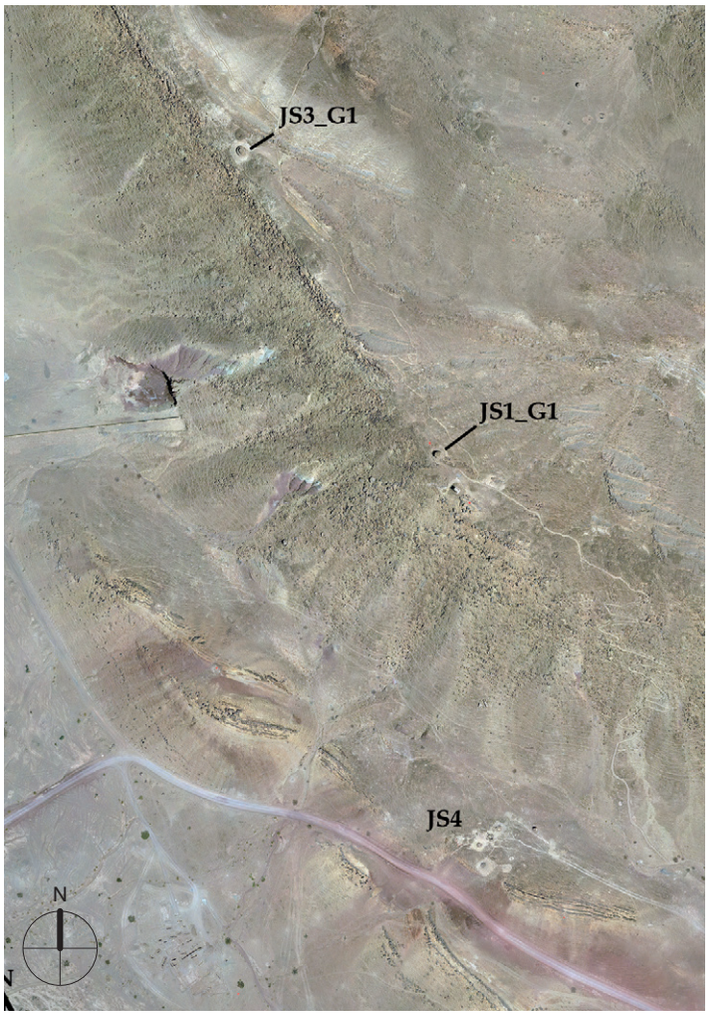
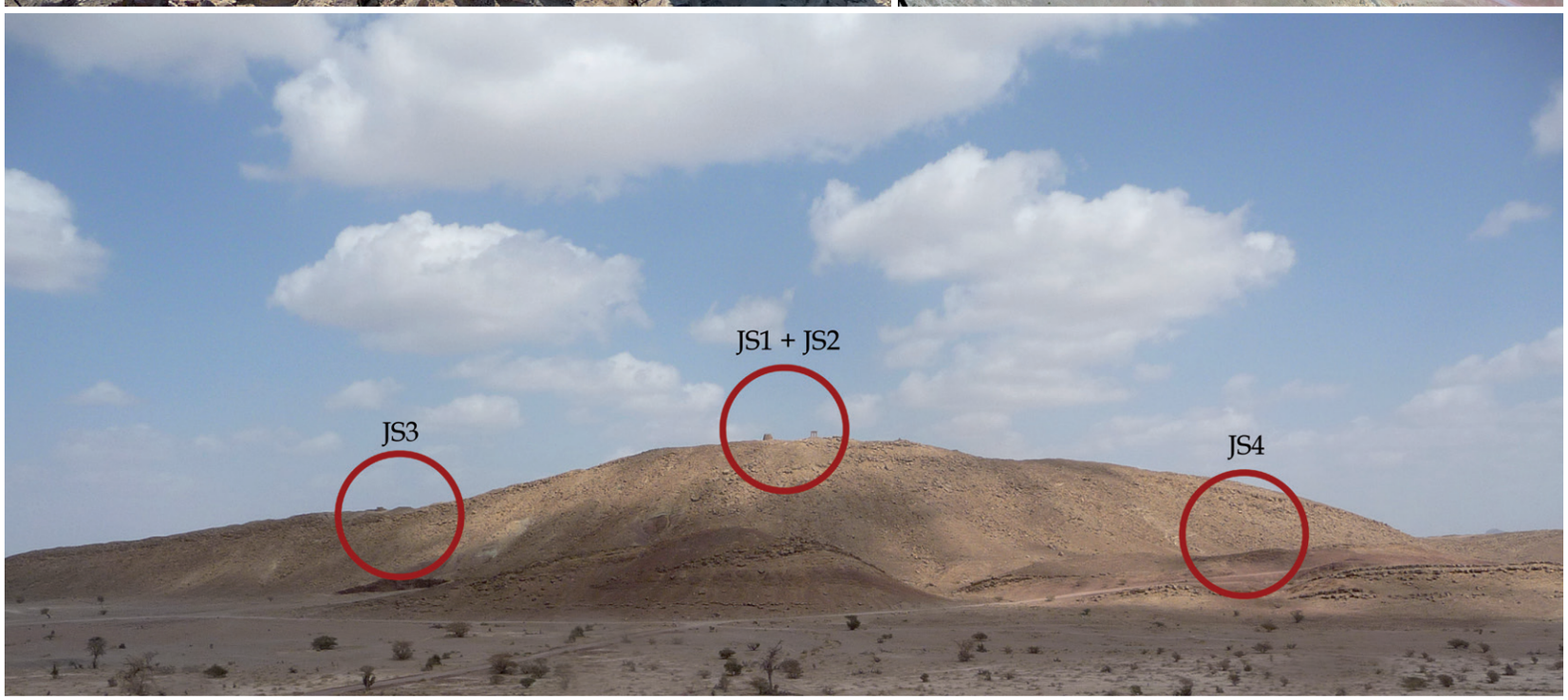
However, the poor preservation of the excavated graves often makes their real nature difficult to understand for the non-specialist eye, when not to the excavators themselves (Fig. 2). Willing to provide the Park's visitors with the most complete experience possible, a programme of restoration and partial reconstruction of the excavated burials was, therefore, undertaken, including the erection of new, didactic examples.
Stone-built graves are the most evident features of the archaeological landscape of South East Arabia, here intended as the modern-day territories of the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates. They can be easily spotted by the thousands, characteristically punctuating most of the crests and slopes of the al-Hajar mountains, the massive, almost 700 km long range which runs in an arc from Musandam to the south-eastern tip of the Arabian Peninsula (Yule, Weisgerber, 1998; Giraud, Cleuziou, 2009; Deadman, 2012; Deadman, Al-Jahwari, 2016).
Often difficult to reach, their real nature is usually hidden under substantial heaps of collapsed stones, making the identification of their actual structure more a matter of speculation than deduction.
The restoration and reconstruction work at Salūt proved to be an additional source of experimental archaeological information, as it provided insights into the issues of human labour costs and raw materials procurement logistics connected with the construction of these monuments, aspects which contribute to the evaluation of their relevance to the ancient community.
In this paper, the restoration and reconstruction of several graves located in the areas distinguished as JS1, JS3, and JS4 (Fig. 3) will be accounted for, to elucidate the general strategy and the resulting guidelines which will inform future interventions.

opposite page
above
Fig. 2
The poor remains of grave JS1_G1 provide a good example of a structure the visitor would hardly understand and appreciate. © S. Bizzarri.
Fig. 3
Ortho-rectified aerial view showing the location of the restored graves along the crest and slopes of Jabal Salūt. © S. Bizzarri.
below
Fig. 4
A view of Jabal Salūt from the southwest, with the indication of the sites where restoration and reconstruction were carried out. © S. Bizzarri.

Excavation and preservation state

The detailed reports on the graves' excavation, the discussion of their structures and the associated archaeological materials were already presented elsewhere (Condoluci, Degli Esposti, 2015, pp. 15–17, 29–39; Degli Esposti et al., *in press*). Here, only a concise description of the graves and their state of preservation will be provided.
The tombs are located along the crest and western slopes of a low, elongated rocky ridge that is currently referred to as Jabal Salūt by the locals (Fig. 4), although different names were reported in past publications (Orchard, Orchard, 2007, plate 6) and the Geologic Map of Oman (1.250,000, sheet NF4007 – NIZWA) mentions it as part of Jabal Hammah. The bedrock consists of the Late Jurassic to Cretaceous Wahrah Formation (Glennie et al., 1974), which includes lithoclastic, oolithic, marly limestone, chert, and silicified limestone that tends to split in the shape of broadly parallelepipedal blocks. The latter is particularly convenient for dry masonry construction, as is the case for the tombs discussed here.
On the higher crest of the hill, one grave was restored at site JS1 and another one at JS3. At a lower elevation, at site JS4, three more graves were restored and partially reconstructed while the other four were only restored to ensure better preservation. Built upon the dismantled remains of a cluster of earlier graves, a small, unique rectangular shrine was discovered at JS2, the restoration of which was accounted for elsewhere (Bizzarri, 2015; Phillips, 2015).
Remarkably, no two graves among the selected ones belong to the same typology (except for JS1_G1 and JS4_G2), which allows offering the visitor an overview of the variety in prehistoric tombs' architecture.


JS3_G1
JS1_G1
JS4
N


JS1 + JS2
JS3
JS4

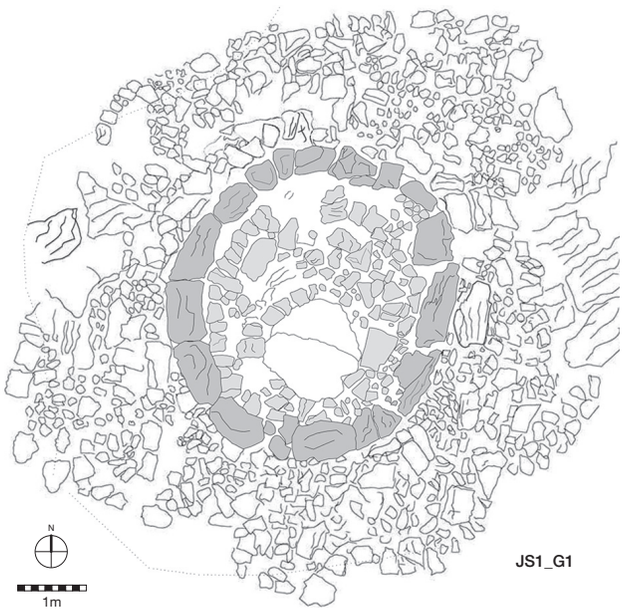
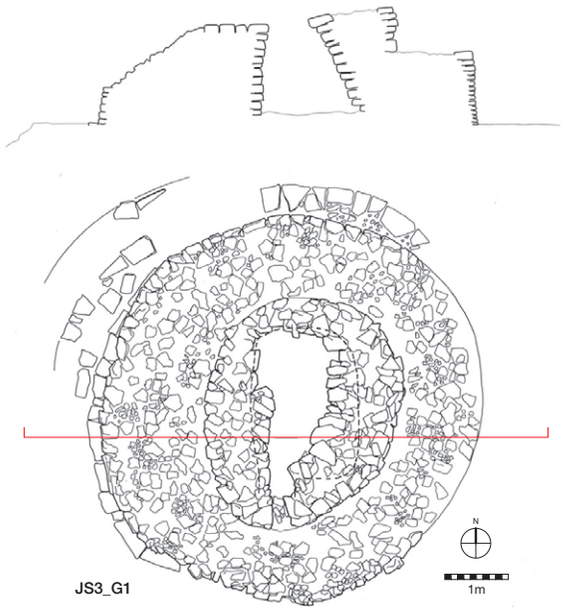


Fig. 5
Plan of grave JS1_G1.
© C. Condoluci/IMTO.
Fig. 6
Grave JS1_G1 at the end of the excavation, looking north-east. © C. Condoluci/IMTO.

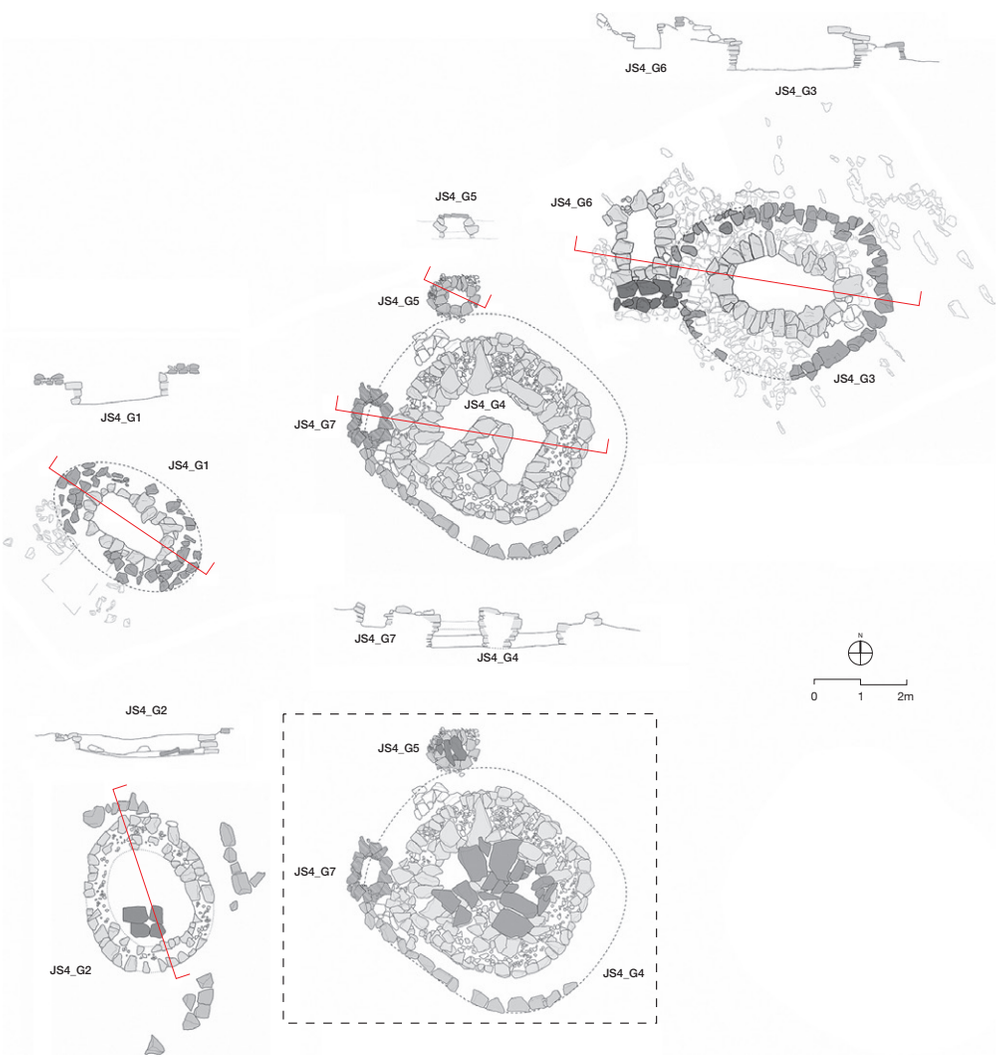
JS1_G1 comprised one circular perimeter wall, made of a single row of large, roughly squared stones (Fig. 5). The above-ground burial chamber within this wall was paved with flat stones laid down directly above the bedrock. Only one course of the perimeter wall was still standing (Fig. 6); nevertheless, it is possible to reckon it as an example of the characteristic Early Bronze Age (3100-2000 BC) so-called beehive tombs (e.g. Frifelt, 1975a).
JS3_G1 represents an example of a concentric wall grave (Fig. 7), a widely attested typology generally dated as well to the Early Bronze Age (e.g. Frifelt, 1975a; de Cardi et al., 1977, p. 20, Fig. 2). In this case, the structure comprised two concentric walls, the inner one preserved to a maximal elevation of 1.8 m and the outer one to a maximal elevation of 1.2 m (Figg. 8a, b, c). The outer wall had no entrance, as it was encasing the chamber's perimeter wall. The original entrance, in the form of a short and narrow corridor, crossed this inner wall and had been blocked with flat, medium-sized stones.
At JS4, all the graves comprised a central pit cut through the bedrock and lined with stones quarried from the same hill. All had an above-ground part comprising one or more concentric walls, except for JS4_G5 (Fig. 9).
JS4_G1 comprises a NW-SE oriented, stone-lined rectangular pit framed by one or possibly two, above-ground oval concentric walls. The inner chamber was cut through the bedrock and lined with stones quarried from the same hill. The grave was placed at a point where the slope is steeper and a step was realised in the stone structure to avoid erecting the lining walls above a slanted foundation.
JS4_G2 lay in a very bad state of preservation. It comprises an oval, N-S oriented above-ground chamber made with unhewn stones, only preserved for two or three courses. The existence of an additional concentric cannot be discarded. A flagstone floor was originally sitting directly on the bedrock.
JS4_G3 comprises a central, semi-subterranean chamber, E-W oriented and lined with medium and large flat stones forming a false dome that emerged above ground. Above ground level, a single-faced wall ran around the chamber. The space between it and the



a

b

c



above

Fig. 7
Plan and section of grave JS3_G1. © C. Condoluci, M. Degli Esposti/IMTO.

Fig. 8
Grave JS3_G1
a before
b during
c at the end of the excavation.
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on the left

Fig. 9
Plan and section of the graves excavated at JS4. Bottom left, the plan of graves JS4_G4, G5 and G7 with the surviving capping stones still in situ within the dashed line.
© M. Degli Esposti/IMTO.

Fig. 10
The subterranean, c-shaped chamber of grave JS4_G4 at the end of the excavation.
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Fig. 11
Grave JS4_G4 during excavation. The flagstones of the chamber's cover are highlighted.
© E. Tagliamonte, M. Degli Esposti/IMTO.

chamber's dome must have been filled with small angular stones and gravel, providing the grave with the overall appearance of a solid 'drum' concealing the domed cover of the chamber.

Grave JS4_G4 comprises a NW-SE oriented, subterranean chamber turned into a sort of C-shaped corridor by the erection of a central pillar (Fig. 10), protruding from the perimeter wall. The latter and the pillar have a cantilevered layout supporting a flat flagstone cover, partially still *in situ* (Fig. 11). The above-ground part of the chamber's perimeter wall was double-faced with an angular stone and rubble inner fill. An outer, single-faced concentric wall was also present, of which a limited part survives, and the space between this and the outer face of the chamber wall was filled with rubble and rough stones. The above-ground aspect of the grave, therefore, might have been similar to that of JS4_G3, although one cannot exclude that the outer wall only stood at a low elevation and framed an inner "drum" coinciding with the chamber's wall outline.

JS4_G5 represents the exceptional attestation of a sealed grave. It was discovered buried beneath the collapsed stones of JS4_G4's structure. It comprises a small subterranean pit lined with a stone-made false dome structure, the uppermost stones of which were surfacing above ground.

JS4_G6 consists of a subterranean rectangular chamber, perpendicular to the main axis of Grave 3. It was lined with roughly hewn stones and tied to Grave 3's outer wall. Any possible upper structure or cover was lost.

Finally, JS4_G7 is a small circular, stone-cist grave established along the JS4_G4's outer wall at a later moment, partly dismantling the wall itself.

With the mentioned exception of JS4_G2, most likely dated to the Early Bronze Age like JS1_G1, all the other graves at JS4 better fit a Wadi Suq (or Middle Bronze Age) date, c. 2000-1600 BC (Velde, 2003). The great variability in shapes is also consistent with the characters of the funerary architecture of this period (see for example Jasim, 2012).

Restoration, reconstruction, and didactic examples

All restoration and reconstruction works (Fig. 12a, b) were conducted abiding by the UNESCO/ICOMOS principles and guidelines (ICOMOS, 1964, 2003a, 2003b; ICOMOS/ICAHM, 1990; Petzet, Ziesemer, 2004). Specific procedures and methods were perfected during the analysis of the extant structures and planning of the interventions. The principles that most strongly informed the restoration and reconstruction process were the evident distinction between the original surviving structure and any added part, and the use of materials and methods as close as possible to the ancient ones.

Figg. 12
JS4 at the end of works.
a general view, looking west/southwest, with the reconstructed beehive tomb JS4_G2 towering over the Salūt plain. Husn Salūt is visible in the background.
b ortho-rectified aerial view, G2 stands further south.
© S. Bizzarri.

The latter issue entails a limited consumption of environmental resources, reduced costs, and a low visual impact thanks to the harmonization with the surrounding natural landscape. The whole process becomes, therefore, highly sustainable under many aspects. Other essential points were the possibility of a detailed analysis of the single stages of the process and the assessment of their compatibility with the whole restoration process itself.

The peculiarities of the structures; their degree of preservation; and the presence of debris coming from their decay, required a diagnostic study which entailed multi-disciplinary surveys conducted in collaboration between architects and archaeologists. These surveys not only targeted the excavated graves but were extended to the ruined burials scattered on the nearby hills (Fig. 13). Chance had, in fact, differentially preserved certain features in some graves better than others. The entrance's shape was, for example, defined by collecting available evidence from some of these ruined graves and comparing it with the archaeological literature (e.g. Deadman, 2012).

Up-to-date technologies such as drone photography and Structure-from-Motion 3D reconstruction were implemented both before excavation, to accurately map the collapse heaps[2], and at the end of the stratigraphic excavation, to obtain the precise reconstruction of the *de facto* state of the graves. These data were then analysed against the background of previous experiences (i.e. Bizzarri, 2015; Bizzarri et al., 2020) and relevant literature (Frifelt, 1975b; Yule, Weisgerber, 1998; Schmidt, Döpper, 2014) to contextualise the burial monuments in the landscape and define the characteristics of their construction and decay. Knowing the causes behind the ancient collapse of the structures, and specifically evaluating the incidence of the inaccurate building or inconvenient location (e.g., steep slopes) against the intentional undermining of the structures (plundering) was preparatory to the restoration.

During the excavation, removed stones that could be recognised as once being part of the monuments were piled nearby to be reused during the restoration. However, a fully proper anastylosis was not possible, as the majority of the original stones had been displaced, either due to further tumbling along the hillslope or reuse. Thanks to the nature of the bedrock, construction material was nevertheless widely available in the same areas where the graves were standing.

The restoration works started with the estimation of the surviving structures' solidity and the removal of any unstable element. A clear differentiation was always kept between the original and the restored parts, despite using the same type of stone. This was achieved by laying a layer of geotextile above half of the upper surviving ancient row of stones, on top of which the restoration began. Invisible from the distance, this geotextile marker would be visible at a closer look.

For some graves, the original structure could not be determined or they needed no integration. In those cases, only a capillary consolidation of the surviving stones was carried out, with no reconstruction (grave JS4_G1, the smaller graves JS4_G5-G6-G7). First of all, the structure's stability and the quality of the clay mortar bedding of the stones were checked. If excessive chalking was noticed, the ancient mortar was removed, possibly keeping the stones in place.

Subsequently, where necessary (oscillating stones), stone wedges, roughly cut in place or collected in the vicinity of the tomb, were inserted. Larger wedges were inserted diagonally to block the stone into the structure while smaller ones were used to fix its final position and fill the gaps in the structure.

Fig. 13
A partially decayed grave on Jabal Salūt providing evidence for the squared entrance shape and an overview of the wall structure.
© S. Bizzarri.

Ancient stones were only cut to size to allow a stable placing within the structure, with no surface polishing or finishing. No dimensional selection is evident concerning the position of the stones within the original structure (for example, larger stones at the bottom and smaller at the top). The average height of each course of stones is also similar from bottom to top. The occurrence of more rounded stones did not cause stability issues.
Exceptionally, raw materials for our reconstructions could be lacking. In the case of grave JS2_G4, for example, its "corridor-like" chamber was covered with remarkably large, flat stone slabs (see § 2). Apart from the original ones still *in situ* (Fig. 11), the necessary stones to complete the cover were not found and part of the chamber was left uncovered. Indeed, this was no constraint to the restoration work since an incomplete cover does not prevent stability. Besides, the partial reconstruction allows a clearer vision of the grave's inner layout (Figg. 14a, b).
The legibility of the monuments for the visitors represents, in fact, the main goal of this restoration and reconstruction work, alongside the preservation of the existing archaeological evidence. Although the latter could be also achieved by leaving the structures untouched, the former often required reconstruction, which turns out to be also necessary when structures are only partially preserved and must be provided with key stability points[3].
With the objectives of wider-public enjoyment and site dissemination in mind, the didactic replica of a turret-shape tomb (similar to JS1_G1 and JS2_G2) was built along the path accessing the JS4 excavation area (Fig. 15). The structure was designed to show the open section of the tomb, highlighting its most important components: the outer wall's base courses, the structure of the vault, and the inner chamber's layout. The use of (hidden) cement-based mortar in the walls provides stability to the structure and allows the visitor to safely enter and examine the tomb. The common shape of the entrance of similar graves is conversely visible in the completely reconstructed grave JS4_G2 (Fig. 12).

Costs, logistics, and timing of the stonemasonry work

The reconstruction of some of the graves (Figg. 16-18) provided a great opportunity for experimental archaeology, as the materials and methods differed only slightly from those available in antiquity.
The only difference one may mention is the use of metal hammers for the rough hewing of the stones, instead of the stone hammers that would have been available throughout the Bronze Age. Occasionally, iron chisels were also used to allow better hewing of the stones as well as using them as levers to fit the stones into place.
The possible use of copper tools by the ancient stonemasons at Salūt remains a hypothesis, as the type of local, calcareous stone available there does not preserve the same clear tool marks (nor deserved the same accurate trimming and polishing) as the white limestone blocks typically used for the outer revetment of the Umm an-Nar (Early Bronze Age) type graves, as reported, for example, from the UNESCO site of Bat further north in Oman (Böhme, 2012, p. 117).
The average "building team" comprised 6 workmen, including the head stonemason; his assistant; two workmen collecting the building stones and helping to lift them; and two workmen collecting the smaller, angular stones for the fill between the wall faces. Teams could be enlarged in the case of a longer distance to cover for stones procurement, although this always remained generally short, as mentioned above.

a

b

above
Fig. 14
Grave JS4_G4 after restoration and partial reconstruction which allows a view of the inner structure.
a looking west, with the small grave JS4_G5 to the right
b looking east, with the small grave JS4_G7 in the foreground.
© S. Bizzarri.

below
Fig. 15
The didactic replica of a turret-shape tomb built along the path leading to JS4.
© S. Bizzarri.

Fig. 16
Initial steps in the reconstruction of the turret-shape (or beehive) tomb JS4_G2. The base for the double-faced perimeter wall is laid above the surviving stones of the original structure. © S. Bizzarri.

Fig. 17
Reconstruction of tomb JS4_G2. The mason and his help can carry on the construction standing directly on the wall, with no need to erect scaffolding, a ladder suffices. © S. Bizzarri.
opposite page
Fig. 18
Reconstruction of tomb JS4_G2. The entrance to the chamber is given the shape and position most commonly witnessed in the graves surveyed around the site. Note the prominent Iron Age site of Salūt background left. © S. Bizzarri.

Although once trained the teams were relatively self-sufficient, the presence of an architect was necessary to ensure that the work was properly carried out. He/She would check the texture of the stone masonry, the solidity of the stones, and their correct size and shaping. In fact, every row of stones requires careful evaluation both from a static point of view and to check its consistency with the rest of the construction in terms of shape, colour and position. Apparently insignificant happenstances can turn out to have detrimental effects on the work: for example, the occasional change of workers within the team often corresponds to different criteria for stone selection. This was also the case when intensive collection depleted a specific area, causing the shift to a different point. Moreover, the single workers tend not to consider the overall appearance of the construction as seen from a distance. This is a key aspect especially in the restoration/reconstruction of truncated-cone tombs, as their profile can end up being inconsistent if not carefully controlled. Another point needing visual control during the construction was the need to fill up every space between the larger stones with small, angular stones of no static value.
The remarkable extension of the working area required the implementation of some logistics. Connecting the various teams working on different tombs and supplying them with water or with new tools implied the use of a vehicle, also used by the supervisor to move from one team to the other. Whether this specific logistic aspect can have had some relevance to ancient builders is impossible to say, as there is no evidence at hand to suggest the contemporaneous construction of more than one tomb.
Apart from the hammers and chisels mentioned above, the equipment needed for the reconstruction works included mallets to break the larger stones; picks to lever them out of the ground; shovels, trowels, brushes, iron sticks, red and white tape to mark out the working area, gloves, ropes for pulling up the stones, and buckets for collecting the small-

er stones. Large (c. 1.5 x 1 m) geotextile cut-outs were used as a particular means of transporting larger stones, with four workers lifting them by the corners as a sort of stretcher.
Of interest is the issue of the devices possibly used to erect the upper part of the graves comprising a substantial above-ground part (i.e., turret-shaped or beehive graves). No evidence for the use of scaffolding was collected (scaffolding holes on the walls; post-holes around the grave perimeter) and experience has shown that for graves of a maximum elevation around 2/2.5 m scaffolding is not necessary (*contra* Steimer, Besse, 2020, p. 111), as the head stonemason can just straddle the wall under construction and climb up with a ladder (Fig. 17). In fact, the structure is not that of a real dome but a corbelled vault, with the inner face of the wall tapering from just above the entrance until it reaches as narrow an opening as to be covered by large, flat stone slabs[4]. Examples of turret-shaped tombs considerably higher than those visible around Salūt however exist (Yule, Weisgerber, 1998). In those cases, the use of wooden (less likely rope) ladders and makeshift scaffolding must be envisaged. Scaffolding to support the inner structure during construction might also be envisaged in the case of real dome structures. At Salūt, simple scaffoldings made of iron and wood were used during reconstruction to meet health and safety requirements.
The cost for the restoration/reconstruction – and original construction likewise – of one grave can vary sensibly according to its complexity and size and, therefore, duration.
As raw materials are available on-site the main expenses depend on the daily pay of the workers and, secondarily, the cost of the tools. Saying whether these aspects were of relevance in ancient times is difficult at best. Mirroring the composition of our working teams, one can envisage that only the head mason and possibly his assistant were hired and were then helped by unskilled members of the community. At the same time, the know-how linked with grave construction might have been passed on

between generations, not necessarily implying that the builders were paid a specific price but maybe only acknowledged a particular skillfulness, which appears, however, not so hard to achieve. An important issue is the time required for the restoration (and construction) of a grave. A medium-sized tomb with a base of approximately 2.80 x 3.50 m (e.g. JS4_G2) took approximately 24 working days of 5.5 hours each to be completed, stones being collected partly from the collapse heap and partly near the grave. A larger group of people would obviously speed up the work.

The significance of the graves to the ancient community and the modern one

The ubiquitous distribution and exceptional visibility of prehistoric – mainly Early and Middle Bronze Age – tombs in South East Arabia has made of them an obvious objective of archaeological investigation ever since the early years of research in the region (e.g., Frifelt, 1975b; Yule, Weisgerber, 1998; Giraud, Cleuziou, 2009; Madsen, 2018). On the one hand, their excavation was pivotal in the initial comprehension of the region's Early Bronze Age culture and exchange network, highlighting contacts with Mesopotamia, Iran, and the great Indus Valley (Frifelt, 1975a; Cleuziou et al., 2011). On the other hand, the study of their distribution pattern has prompted several hypotheses reckoning them as territorial markers for specific tribes and landmarks placed along the main connection routes (Cleuziou, 2002; Deadman, 2012), contributing to the actual and ideological appropriation of the territory by the community (Giraud, 2012). Generally, they witness the strong bond of the community with its ancestors, a bond that seems to be reflected in the recurrent evidence of long-period re-use of the graves, or the construction of new tombs on the same spot of decayed, even remarkably earlier ones (e.g. Döpper, 2014).

The great significance these graves, which changed from individual to collective burials over time (Bortolini, Munoz, 2015), had for the people who erected them, is evident. The reconstruction of some examples carried out at Salūt has shown that this significance can only limitedly be connected with a particular workforce investment in their construction, a point that is, conversely, often made when referring to communal, monumental architecture. It was illustrated above how the construction process for these types of graves ends up being rather straightforward and apprehendable in a relatively short time. This rules out, most likely than not, the possible connection with any highly specialised class of workmen, and likely also with domestic know-how transmission.

One can then wonder what is the relevance and perception of this restoration work to and among the community living in the area today. In a moment when public archaeology and the related issues are becoming central in the agenda of cultural operators[5], the interest that this restoration work raised among the locals, indeed already nourished by the long-lasting excavations carried out in the area, requires mention. While the description and explanation of the ancient structures in front of the unearthed remains usually left the visitor somewhat puzzled if not unsatisfied, restoration provided him/her with easily understandable monuments. The modern community can thus reconnect with these fundamental elements of its ancestors' landscape which, long remained silent in the background, can only now be perceived in their full significance.

Another main field of interest in recent times is the so-called digital humanities, and the implementation of 3D reconstruction techniques and virtual reality in the dissemination of archaeological research. Structure from Motion technique, employed at Salūt in several instances (Brandolini et al., 2020) was also used to document both

the state of the tombs after excavation and their structure after restoration (Bizzarri et al., 2020). This can allow presenting the visitor and the researcher with an explicit, clear comparison between the two, further clarifying the construction technique of the monuments.
The philological reconstruction of Early and Middle Bronze Age graves at Salūt represents, therefore, a successful work of experimental archaeology which entailed intrinsic and collateral operations related to site valorisation and communication. The results contribute a significant understanding of ancient building techniques and logistics, at the same time as improving the wider public's enjoyment of the Archaeological Park of Bysiah and Salūt, and providing a clear picture of ancient burial architecture that goes beyond the insight of a few specialised scholars. When carefully conducted and respectful of the UNESCO guidelines for the restoration of archaeological monuments, it is believed that this type of intervention has a great potential for the enhancement of archaeological sites open to visitors also by virtue of its sustainable nature.

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Note

[1] The Office was dismissed in 2019, and the Park is now under the responsibility of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism Ministry of Heritage and Tourism Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.
[2] Their volume can, in fact, help estimating the original elevation of the structures.
[3] Perimeter walls at mid-height, for example, which requires full reconstruction as the cover would serve as their false vault-key.
[4] This also implies that the inner height is remarkably lower than the extrados.
[5] Mirrored, for example, in the establishment of devoted journals such as Public Archaeology, but also in special issues of long-established journals, such as the 2019 issue of Archeologia Medievale.