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See my letter to Erskine
Napoli, April 2, 1981

My dear uncle, his answer 1981

it is a long time since I received your last letter
and I think you must be terribly busy writing your India book.

To day I send you the program of investigation
written by my friend Valeria Piacentini, as I am sure you may be
interested in it and because I would like to have your important
suggestions as you usually gave me. My friend went to Oman in October
1980 and she discovered a Jewish cemetery and an inscription. Therefore
she asked me to take part to this program of research and I should
inquire about the Jewish settlement there. Do you think it has any
connection with the Yeminite settlement? There is any document about
this settlement in the Cairo Geniza?

I enclose also the article that you have already
read and that have been printed in the Annali.

With my best wishes for Pesah to you and your wife

yours affectionately

Galiello

4c.2.5 Various
papers

A SYSTEMATIC PROGRAMME OF INVESTIGATION

The subject of the investigation is: " The system of emporia in the Gulf and the Euro-Asiatic Maritime Trade-Routes from the first centuries of the Christian Era(parthico-sasanid domination) up to the first centuries of the Muslim Hejira(XIII... Century A.D., circa): the Batinah and its main emporia and settlements, an historical study(Arabic Peninsula/ Sultanate of Oman)".

1) Investigation purpose and planning:

The proposed investigation originates from the finding that the coasts of the Gulf are still practically unknown from the archaeological and historical stand points for the period running from the centuries immediately preceding the islamization of the region up to nearly the present days.

The first historical and archaeological studies - the results of which have been already partially published - can be traced in the years around the 1970's. They were aimed at investigating the emporia in the Gulf (mainly iranian coasts) and similiar organizations and settlements on the monsoon routes of the Indian Ocean (i.e. East Africa Coasts: Kilwa, Gedi, Manda, Pemba, Mafia, Zanzibar, etc.; Arabic Peninsula: Yemen, Salalah, Sur, Qal'at, Muscat, Suhar, etc.; India: Banhore; Ceylon; and so on). In particular, the investigations started from two emporia of the Iranian Gulf Coasts: Sīrāf(the main port of the Persian town of Shiraz in the Fārs, already known in the pre-islamic era but particularly important during the first centuries of the hejira - VIII-XIII Cen.A.D.) and Hormoz(already well known in the pre-islamic era, turned extremely flourishing when Sīrāf declined reaching its maximum splendour between the first half of the XIII and the end of the XVI Century A.D.). At the same time, a team of british Scholars began systematic excavations and studies of similiar emporia along the East Africa Coasts. From all these researches emerged a particularly evocative picture of lively and incessant inter-connections, both political and historical, and cultural.

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Reverting now to the Coasts of the Gulf, while a group of British Scholars(lead by prof. L.whitehouse, currently the Director of the British School in Rome) focused their investigations on Siraf, bringing to light its ruins and the rich city-emporium(bandar) (the preliminary reports have been punctually published in "Iran"; the printing of the complete study is under way. Of this I have been given the task of preparing the introduction concerning the profile - both historical and institutional - of the bandar), the undersigned concentrated her studies on the second emporium: the bandar and molk of Hormoz.

From those research works - three surface surveys in the years 1973-1975 and comparative analysis of the found evidences with every possible written literature in arabic, persian and also western, integrated with archives research - it emerged the historical and institutional profile of an emporium-city(bandar) that later became the capital city of an actual kingdom of the same name(molk) : Hormoz, the "Curmos" of Marco Polo and of the medieval Latinity. Around the XIIIth Century A.D., the capital city was transferred from the Iranian continent to the island of Jerun(the present island of Hormoz) where, in a few decades, it became the capital city of an actual coastal and muslim kingdom: the kingdom of Hormoz. It was a mercantile and cosmopolitan kingdom that, for a couple of centuries, enjoyed ample autonomy as to the political power of the continent - from which it still depended de jure . its own influence(which not erroneously can be defined a real thalassocracy) spanned from the Gulf to the eastern coasts of Africa, to the Makran, the Sind and various calling ports along the monsoon route towards the asiatic South-East and China. Governed by a rich family of merchant-princes that ^{took their stand} ~~was~~ on a local prosperous and powerful aristocracy of the same mercantile and economic origin, this Kingdom of Hormoz possessed its own fleet and its own army mainly recruited in the facing Omani Coast. Together with its own internal structures, that very fleet and army were able to secure to the small kingdom: not only its commercial and financial independence, but also its political and territorial integrity. Agents of the Hormoz Merchants were active till the end of the XVIth Century, in the main ports along the India maritime route. Moreover, ^{through a} ~~its~~ shrewd matrimonial policy, the royal family of Hormoz made it possible that many among the main emporia

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and ports of call along the stream of the big international maritime traffics fell under the control - even political - of those capable merchants.

These previous researches, based mainly on historical texts and other written sources, were integrated by artistic and archaeological evidences, that described the wealth and the magnitude of the quantity of merchandize traded. Such evidence confirmed also the importance of the insular town of Hormoz - and of the land town of Siraf previously - as "two only" of the principal markets of the great international commercial maritime traffics. Still the same researches did emphasize the importance of those emporia in the first centuries of the Hejira as two of the links of a chain of coastal emporia, of whose traffics they were the prime movers. As well, their connections - in a series of reciprocal exchanges and strict relationship - cultural, economic and often even political - begins to appear, now, quite evident.

Goods from China and the Asiatic South-East, from East Africa, from Egypt, the Near East and the European West, and also from the Central and Oriental Regions of Asia along the well-known " caravan trade-routes of the desert", were all stored in those market places to be sold, bartered, exported. These emporia were points of passage of maritime convoys that followed the monsoon routes, of foreign people that for centuries have passed from East to West and vice-versa; they were also meeting places of civilizations - sometimes well differentiated - and of their cultural elements. Occasionally these same emporia became also the sanctuaries of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities; they were able to subside through the exercise of trade and crafts, giving, thus, their own contribution to the institutional set-up of those towns and endowing them with a particular cultural trait.

Therefore an addition was made to the initial objective of reconstructing a certain cultural-economic and social life of an epoch(or that of a single emporium) through the study of the existing literature supplied with evidences gathered on the spot. Namely, the objective of the proposed study is to give quite a precise trait to the history and the culture of the coastal region - still so little explored in its totality - which, by this time, appears to be substantially different from

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that of larger urban centers that conditioned the history of the different continents throughout the considered centuries.

The excavations, the surveys and the studies carried out along the Iranian coasts and the Eastern ones of Africa are already outlining this profile. The present investigation is aimed at concentrating the studies on the coastal strip of Oman, taking as a starting point the Batinah and its main settlements, to begin with the important emporium-city of Suhār (well-known in literature , but still to be definitely identified in situ) and its environs.

From this very point of view the proposed investigation is an historical study - and not "only" an archaeological search - to be carried out according to the following method criteria of research.

2) Method criteria of research:

The texts and documents now available are, after all, of little help on the method plan when thinking of a research in the direction mentioned before.

Indeed a type of research limited only to the written historical sources and to the available literature may lead, once more, to a purely philological work mainly aimed at reconstructing the dynastic life, the rivalry among families and clans, but utterly unconnected with the socio-political, institutional and cultural reality of the country. On the contrary one should consider as sources, no less precious and integrative than the written ones (better still, less than secondary vis-a-vis to these latter) all the data of an archaeological, historic, artistic, architectural, epigraphic and numismatic nature as well as the evidences emerged from the studies on pottery findings; no less precious and integrative than the written ones are also other kinds of sources, as those supplied by the use of applied sciences to archeology, or by disciplines related to the social sciences such as ethno-linguistics, sociology, anthropology, ethnology, economics, studies on religious rituals, geography, and so on. Moreover, in consideration of the importance of the element "water" in regions now days desert or semi-desert, the study of the irrigation systems and those of the utilization

of the few existing water strata, of peculiar technologies of hydraulic engineering, that are constantly used in all that coastline, allow a deeper analysis of settlement and population processes tied to their primary sources of subsistence.

To this purpose it is necessary to start - in a preliminary way - with a survey of the surface of the sites; this, naturally, will be rather undetailed in consideration of the extension of the area.

It will be only after the ^{first} gathering of data and other evidences (after a careful analysis of such evidences to be scrutinezed under the well-known principles of interdisciplinary collaboration) that it will be possible to proceed to the study of the written sources and - based upon these - to start making a first reconstruction of the institutional structures and of the history and culture of the region.

On a more strictly operative plan, it is then proposed to initiate the study from the emporium-town of Suhār, its environs and its hinterland, and the Batinah. Suhār is situated on the Arab coastline of the Gulf of Oman - nowadays in the Sultanate of Oman. It used to be one of the principal ports of call and storing and clearing centers of the coast in the centuries that elapsed from the parthico-sasanid domination up to circa the XIII Cent. A.D.; all this, naturally, according to the written literature. The life of that emporium seems to be the same (rise and fall) of that of its twin "bandar" of Sīrāf on the facing iranian coast of the Gulf. These analogies (surely not only cronological) have therefore suggested the possibility of tighter links between the two coasts; and these links could have been not only of a purely commercial nature, but even - in some way - political, and - certainly - artistic and cultural. These are, of course, data that must be studied deeper and with the support of other evidences, according to the abovementioned method criteria.

In second place, the selection of such location as a first starting point for a much simpler survey was suggested by a first series of contacts with the country and some sites during the voyage in the Sultanate of Oman to attend the "Conference on Oman Studies" organized by the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture and held in Muscat from the 1st to the 10th of November, 1980. It was just in that circumstance - during quick but very interesting

trips made also inland - and thanks to very useful contacts and exchange of views with Foreign Scholars - that the impressive evidences of the aforementioned analogies of all these emporia created along the Euro-Asiatic commercial maritime trade-routes were highlighted.

The researches in the Suhār area are naturally still at their initial stage: not even the identification of the old site is absolutely certain. At present the following Missions are operating in this region: an official French Archaeological Mission(led by Dr. Monique Kevran, Sorbonne, Paris); a German one, in charge of whose researches is Dr. Gerb Weisgerber(Bochum Museum, Berlin) for the study of the utilization of the mineral resources also during Islamic centuries; and an official search made by a British searcher, Dr.T.Wilkinson(Cambridge), for the study of the complex hidrological situation of the Batinah. The research that is hereto proposed is meant to go alongside with the three other researches, in order to complement their work with an hisotrico-cultural study of the area,beginning the surveys from the emporium-city of Suhār and its hinterland in particular.

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ORGANIZATION AND STEPS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

The research is divided into three phases, that represent three autonomous moments - strictly linked one to the other - of this investigation.

To begin with it may be necessary to remind that historians and geographers have often studied the Arabic Peninsula and the facing Iranian Coast the former as an Arab appendix of the Near East, and the latter as a region strictly tied to and depending on the continent in the historic and cultural plan. As far as the Arabic Peninsula is concerned - on which we wish to concentrate now the investigation - such Peninsula is generally considered and classified as one of the most extended arid lands existing on the Earth. On the other hand, little attention has been paid - up to the very recent times - to the traditional routes of the Arab Wealth as it developed throughout a long process of adaptation and selection of its biological resources. As a matter of fact, the economic history of the Arabic Peninsula - differently from what took place in other geographical regions - heavily and deeply conditioned its settlements and their own structures as well as their development throughout the times(millennia, indeed, as the most recent studies have demonstrated). From these considerations follows the necessity of starting any kind of study from an accurate investigation of the very history of the selective utilization of the resources of that area, from a "hunters' Economy" up to an economy based upon settlements - prevalently along the coastline - that essentially subsided on fishing activities and - in certain cases - also on agriculture and cattle-breeding(in fact has been already ascertained the existence of the domesticated camel- the Camelus Dromedarius L. - as well as that of the date-palm - Phoenix dactylifera L.). The beginning of this process can be placed around the early times of the V millennium B.C., and its conclusion around the II millennium B.C.

After the second millennium B.C. in the Arabic Peninsula events took place that brought a radical change of the traditional life mentioned before. These events can be resumed in the arrival of nomadic populations, in the exploitation and utilization of the mineral resources there existing(such as copper and diorite);

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and the stable settlements in the oasis. The most recent archaeological discoveries and studies still under-way can, now, clearly demonstrate the importance of this economic and social transformation and the characteristics of the change itself - cultural as well - consequent to them.

Therefore, it is only having in view such extremely complex background that it is possible to investigate the political and social institutions of the region, and - in particular - of that part of the South-Eastern coast of Arabia that bears the geographical name of Oman Peninsula and that includes the territories of the Sultanate of Oman and of the United Arab Emirates, in the period that goes from the parthico-sasanid domination up to the first centuries of the Hejira. Some Italian and foreign research groups - mainly composed of archaeologists and specialists of sciences applied to archaeology - are already active in studying the preceding epochs and the connected processes of settlement and population; on the contrary, the sasanid epoch and the first Islamic period are still - more or less - "terra incognita" under the profile of the historical, archaeological and cultural research.

Based upon the preceding considerations, it is therefore proposed to organize the researches into the three following phases:

1) A diacronic analysis of the economic life and of the political, social and cultural institutions of the Region.

The purpose of such first phase is that of completing a general survey of the area under examination - at least from Suhar to Sur - trying to sort out the specific problems that it presents, and assign them to the different epochs.

As a first target it is also proposed to establish a historical map - still necessarily approximative - of the Region, having in mind the span of time comprised between the period of the sasanid presence and the X - XV Centuries A.D. up to the arrival of the Portuguese fleet.

Finally, it is also proposed to begin to outline the differences between the coastal types of settlements, ~~the~~ the urban life and idea of defence of the territory, on one side, and the urban life and settlements in the hinterland of the country, on the other side.

2) An analysis of the cultural background of the Batinah during the Centuries immediately preceding the Islamization; an analysis of the main lines of the euro-asiatic maritime trade; an analysis of the permanent coastal settlements.

3) An analysis of the coastal history and culture during the first centuries of the Hejira, focusing, in particular, on the political and social structures.

Carry out the analysis and the outline of the existing relations between the coastal emporia along the omanite coastline, their hinterland and other similiar emporia along the euro-asiatic maritime trade-routes.

The first year of the investigation will be essentially devoted to the phase shown sub 1).

The phases of the investigation sub 2) and 3) , although planned since the first year, will instead take place in the successive years.

To be mentioned at last that, from the very beginning, the present investigation should take advantage of the presence of an archeologist and of a specialist in pottery - mainly islamic , of a landscape historian(for the environment/human reconstruction) and of the valuable contribution of a group of linguists and epigraphists. To that group is, in fact, assigned the task of making surveys on the terrain(in a country where - quite often - the memory of the elders constitutes historical evidence) and to make researches and studies in the Manuscripts Library of the "Ministry of Cultural Meritage" of the Sultanate of Oman; here one can find one of the richest funds - still practically unpublished - pertaining also to local history.

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1981 MISSION'S TIME-TABLE

It is necessary to keep in mind that the presence of the Mission in the Sultanate of Oman is inevitably conditioned by the local climate and monsoon cycles. The season optimum is there_ fore that between November and February.

It is consequently proposed to make - in 1981:

1) a short 2 members mission, approximately from 30th January to ~~the~~ 15th February, 1981. Its aim is: a) to make a first survey - rather general of course - in the mentioned region to carry out what already done in November 1980; b) to define, on the spot, the contacts already under way with the local Authorities and to pre_ pare the next campaign.

2) The Mission - along the programme lines mentioned and with its full complement of participant members. This should take place in December 1981-January 1982.

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MEMBERS OF THE PROPOSED MISSION

- 1) PIACENTINI FIORANI, prof. Valeria - director - Historian from the Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli.
- 2) an Archaeologist, still to be determined.
- 3) CERQUA SARNELLI, prof. Clelia - linguist(Arabic), from the Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli.
- 4) ORAZIE VALLINO, Dr. Fabienne, researcher - Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università di Milano - landscape historian(for the environment/ human reconstruction).
- 5) RAHIM, prof. Reza - linguist(Urdu and Hindi - Persian) from the Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli.
- 6) STEINLLER, prof. Gabriella - linguist(Arabic and Hebrew) - from the Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli.
- 7) TORRE, dott. Paola - Museo Nazionale di Arte Orientale(Roma) - inspector / director - specialist in islamic pottery.
- 8) VECCHIONE, Dr. Arch. Nice - Sovrintendenza per le Antichità (Firenze) - designer, plans.
- 9) a Geometer or a Topographer, still to be determined.

PUBLICATIONS AND REFERENCES

As treated in the "programme", the investigation will be devoted to subjects that are still practically unexplored. Little or nothing has been ascertained on the history and cultural life of Suhār and the Batinah. As J.C. Wilkinson has already pointed out, we know - for example - that Suhār was considered the international port of Oman in early islamic centuries; this we know according to written literature (and recent discoveries in the valuable Manuscript Fund in the Ministry of National Heritage collection in Muscat). Nevertheless, on an archaeological standpoint, very little physical traces of early Suhār have been found; and these only after the recent researches of the French Archaeological Mission (Nov. - Dec. 1980). The same consideration is valid as far as other coastal islamic sites are concerned. Consequently, the most recent references concerning the emporium-town of Suhār or other centres of the Batinah in the epoch here considered are still the works of A.Williamson, T.J.Wilkinson and J.C.Wilkinson; all of them are very interesting and well informed, but not yet systematic studies.

On the other hand a systematic study had already been started on some emporia along the euro-asiatic monsoon trade-routes (iranian coasts, East Africa, India, South-Arabian Peninsula), whose mercantile and political events appears to be strictly linked to those of Suhār and with those of the whole of the Omanite Coast (including its southern portion), in the period of time between the centuries immediately before the islamization of the region (dating back at least into the 4th century A.D.) and the XIII Cen. A.D. circa.

The scientific works already published on those emporia (and the connected caravan-routes) in the last five years by members of the proposed Mission are the following:

- V.Fiorani Piacentini, L'emporio e il regno di Hormoz . Vicende storiche, problemi ed aspetti di una civiltà costiera del Golfo Persico (VIII - fine XV sec. d.Cr.), nelle "Memorie" dell'Istituto Lombardo - Accademia di Scienze e Lettere, XXXV/1, Milano, 1975.

- V. Fiorani Piacentini, Presenze monumentali selgiuchidi nel khorāsān: spunti di storia locale, in "Nuova Rivista Storica", LXII, 1978.
- V. Fiorani Piacentini, Vie carovaniere e processi di popolamento del khorāsān orientale: il kuhestān " Regione dei Monti" (Iran orientale), in "Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli", N.S. XXIX, 1979, pp. 563-601 and tables + two plans.
- P. Torre, Evidenze ceramiche "bianco e blu" a Qa'en, ibid., pp. 602 - 605 + 3 tables.
- N. Vecchione, Qā'en: la "Fortezza del Monte" (Qal'e-ye Kuh), la "Fortezza delle quaranta fanciulle" (Qal'e-ye čehel dokhtar) e il mosallā "Abu Zahrā' ", ibid., tables IV-XVIII and comment.
- R. Biscione, Marāk (Birjand) : un complesso fortificato di epoca partica (Qal'e-ye Dokhtar), ibid., tables XIX-XXI and comment.
- L. Caterina, Frammenti "bianco e blu" ad Hurmuz, in "Atti del VII Convegno Internazionale della Ceramica", Albisola, 1974.
- V. Fiorani Piacentini, Orientamenti delle ricerche verso il kuhestān: dall'emporio di Hormoz nel Golfo alle vie carovaniere del deserto a sud di Mashhad (le spedizioni del 1976, del 1977 e del 1978), preliminary report on three surface surveys - in print c/o Is.M.E.O. (Roma).