



**Sultanate of Oman**  
Ministry of Heritage and Culture



UNIVERSITY  
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POLISH CENTRE  
OF MEDITERRANEAN  
ARCHAEOLOGY



## Archaeology of the Qumayrah valley – from Bilt to Ayn Bani Saidah

There are many archaeological sites in this area, that date from almost all periods of Oman's past. Stone Age campsites are up to 9 thousand years old; about 5 thousand years old burials from the early and middle Bronze Age are typical of the Hafit and Umm an-Nar periods. There are also some remains of towers that can be of a Bronze Age date. Settlements and dwellings from the Bronze and Iron Ages were also found, not to mention numerous traces of the region's more recent, but no less fascinating, past. To study as much of the archaeological heritage as possible, in 2016 three sites in the vicinity of the Ayn Bani Saidah village were chosen for excavations, each site dating from a different millennium.



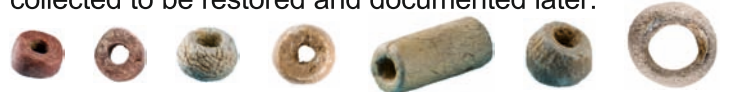


## Archaeological sites around Ayn Bani Saidah

The oldest of them is a **Stone Age campsite** on a slope next to the shop at the crossroads (QA 2 on the map). Although no ruins are visible on the surface, some fireplaces and round stone platforms were found during excavations. There are many flint tools and fragments of worked flint. Archaeologists record the position of every such object in the trench to find out for what kind of work they were used.



Another investigated site is a **burial ground** with 10 round stone tombs, just next to a modern cemetery (QA 1 on the map). The tombs come **from the Umm an-Nar period**. So far, excavations have been carried out in just one of them. The work is progressing slowly because, although the tomb is damaged, there are still bones, pottery, softstone vessels, and tiny beads inside the burial chamber. Each object is photographed in the spot where it has been found, and the whole earth dug out from the grave is sieved to find all the objects. Many vessels are broken, so all pieces need to be carefully collected to be restored and documented later.



The largest site – a **settlement** – is located on the eastern side of the *wadi*, near the modern village (QA 3 on the map). Its ruins include a round tower and houses. The tower can date back from the Bronze Age. Houses come from different periods – **the Bronze and Iron Ages**, and probably also from **the pre-modern era**. To find out about the age of the structures archaeologists look at the type of pottery they find during excavation, so more will be known about this settlement when excavations progress.

More **settlement** ruins are located on top of a hill south of QA 3, and in a *wadi* beyond the hill. This year, the archaeological team is working on mapping them to find out how many buildings there were and what they looked like. There are also the remains of two badly damaged **stone towers** in the vicinity: a round one near the water reservoir, and a rectangular one standing in the *wadi* bed.

It is clear, that the **spring** that still feeds the fields in Ayn Bani Saidah was active also in the past. For millennia it attracted settlers, be they Stone Age hunters and gatherers, Bronze Age villagers and traders, or Iron Age farmers. The presence of water, the wide expanse of cultivable land, and a good view of the surrounding valleys made this place an ideal spot to call home. The rich archaeological past of this place is something of which the present-day inhabitants of the area can really be proud.



The Omani–Polish Archaeological Mission in the region of Qumayrah is a cooperation between the Ministry of Heritage and Culture of the Sultanate of Oman and the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw. It began in 2015 with a survey around the villages of Ayn Bani Saidah, Qumayrah and Bilt.