

**Silvia Lischi**

Independent Researcher

## **Traces of an Indian community in the city of Sumhuram (Oman): investigations on material culture**

Since 1997 the Italian Mission to Oman (University of Pisa), directed by prof. A. Avanzini, has been working in the area of the ancient city of Sumhuram (modern day Khor Rori). Archaeological excavations have proved that Sumhuram was a fortified port city with a trading/military vocation, set on the coast of the Sultanate of Oman. In the past the city was a strategic location on the maritime trade routes from India to the Mediterranean and Africa. A lot of findings were brought to light during excavations, part of them with iconographic and stylistic characteristics which differ from the common traits found in South-Arabian sites. The iconographic, artistic and material study and the comparison with findings from other South-Arabian sites and the Indian Subcontinent allowed the identification of these artefacts as coming from India or at least being influenced by its culture. The goal of this research is to collect information gathered during the last years and prove that the variety of Sumhuram's Indian findings are not casual traded goods, but objects commonly used by a small Indian community living in the city. This evidence could support the current hypothesis implying that the fortified city of Sumhuram was not only a trading outpost along the Indian Ocean maritime routes, but a real urban centre, actively engaged in the International trading to such an extent that it could host motherland inhabitants as well as foreign communities.