

Executive Summary

State Party

Sultanate of Oman

State, Province or Region

Governorate of Al-Sharqiyya South, Wilayat of Sur

Name of property

Ancient City of Qalhat

Geographical coordinates

UTM ZONE 40 (744200 E, 2512000 N)

Textual Description of the Boundary of the Nominated Property

The Ancient City of Qalhat is limited by the inner and outer city walls as well as the zones outside the walls where the necropolises are situated. It has the shape of an oblong triangle nearly 1600 m long on the side of the sea. It extends on a high sloping ground between the Sea of Oman to the east, the steep edge of the Wadi Hilm to the north-west and the foot of the Jabal Al-Hajir Al-Sharqi to the south-west.

To the north-west, Wadi Hilm (between 80 to 160 m the wide) separates the site from Khur Matmur and the modern residential quarter of Qalhat. On the right bank of the wadi, lay some palm farms, which cover almost an area of 5,500 m². A road crosses both Wadi Hilm and the palm oases reaching the Ancient City of Qalhat.

To the south-west, the site is bordered by Al Hajir Mountains which reach about 200 m high above the sea level. Parallel to this mountain range, the highway leading to Sur is situated 50 m above the sea.

Map of the Nominated Property

See the following pages.

Criteria under which Inscription is proposed

The Ancient City of Qalhat is nominated under criteria (iii), (v) and (vi)

Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

a. Brief Synthesis

The ancient city of Qalhat was an incomparable port city on the sea of Oman, opened to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, it functioned as a great center of trade between Asia and India in the Islamic era. The historical resources prove that Qalhat was a pivot in the kingdom of Hormuz, in fact it was considered as the second capital after the old and new cities of Hormuz. Since the 11th till the 15th centuries Qalhat under the ruling of the princes of Hormuz played a vital role in the commerce in the region, not only in the exporting of the famous Arab horses from its valleys to as far as India, but also in the exchange of other precious goods like dates, incense and pearls.

As many other cities from the kingdom of Hormuz, Qalhat had its share of Portuguese attacks and earthquakes, leading the city to its fate to be abandoned early 16th century, only to keep its site intact as it was five centuries later. The remains and monuments on site comprehensively represent the kingdom and reflect its legacy, architecture and heritage. Extensive studies and excavations are expected to reveal more about this great kingdom.

b. Justification for Criteria under which Inscription is proposed

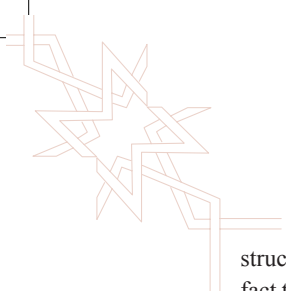
The Ancient City of Qalhat is nominated under Criteria (iii), (v) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): Bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared

The Ancient City of Qalhat presents a unique testimony to the great Kingdom of Hormuz, which prospered from the 11th to 16th AD century. Qalhat has played a significant role in the development of the Kingdom of Hormuz. The archaeological site of Qalhat is by no doubt the most significant and complete physical representation of the kingdom of Hormuz. Almost all city's components can be read on site from houses, to streets and square, as well as the Friday mosque, the *hammam* and the only standing still building of Bibi Maryam mausoleum. The fact that Qalhat has been totally abandoned and that no modern settlement has disturbed the site makes this property of great value for archaeological research on the kingdom of Hormuz and it will allow understanding more about the ways of life in a medieval Arabian port city.

Criterion (v): An outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change

The Ancient City of Qalhat is an outstanding example of traditional town development and building techniques created to answer the constraints of the local environment. Qalhat is an extraordinary reflection of a traditional human settlement in a medieval Islamic port city with a prominent position in the maritime trade routes reaching as far as India, China and the Far East. The town planning shows different quarters, sometimes fortified, defined by their use (religious, economic, etc.). The materials used for con-



struction were the traditional locally available coral. The fact that site is intact since its abandonment makes it a fine presentation of the kingdom of Hormuz in all its social, cultural and commercial aspects.

Criterion (vi): Directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance

Since the Pre-Islamic period and until the Middle Age, the Ancient City of Qalhat was directly associated with great events and traditions of outstanding universal significance, such as (1) the development of structural and decorative elements of the Islamic architecture, (2) the development of a corpus of tales and beliefs, which even if not fully proven by the archaeological and historical data, contributed greatly to the creation of a specific local culture, and (3) the descriptions in the major historical travelogues of the city and its commercial importance in the kingdom of Hormuz and of the lifestyle of its inhabitants, which can be authenticated though detailed comparisons with the available archaeological data.

c. Statement of Integrity

The Ancient City of Qalhat covers all chosen attributes corresponding to the above defined criteria. The ruins of site are completely preserved under the rubble caused by the destruction of an earthquake and by the Portuguese attack in the 16th AD century . The site has never re-used, therefore it was not affected by any infrastructural modification or development. The results of the geophysical survey confirmed the existence of more than 2800 houses under the ruins, organized in quarters. The city includes important elements corresponding to an upmost important Islamic town such as the Friday Mosque, which could have been certainly seen from far away on the sea, the Bibi Maryam mausoleum as an outstanding example of funerary architecture, the *hammam* near the entrance of the town and many entrapped buildings showing the importance of this port. The array of finds, including wares

from as far away as China or Southeast Asia, confirm the international importance of this city in the Islamic Middle Ages. The materials used for the constructions were entirely local, showing a great dexterity in applying regional materials also for the construction of mighty monuments. The entire Ancient City of Qalhat is an archaeological site under the protection of the Government of Oman, which safeguards the site from any development pressure. The Qalhat Development Project, which started in October 2012 and will end in 2017, ensures a development process including excavation, conservation and a tourism development plan for the site. The application of the final draft management plan will ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained.

d. Statement of Authenticity

Once again, the abandonment of the Ancient city of Qalhat plays a positive role in the conservation of its authenticity. The site has never been occupied and no later re-use ever took place, therefore it preserves all characteristics of organization, function and particular architectural techniques corresponding to the Islamic Period in general and the period of the Hormuz Kingdom in particular. The “frozen” spatial organization of the Ancient City of Qalhat offers the best relicts of the social and economic urban planning in the early medieval cities on the Arabian Sea. The use of traditional building materials and, coral stones in particular, ensure the authenticity of all its structures, these traditional materials are still used for the conservation of the excavated buildings in Qalhat. The location of the Ancient City of Qalhat between the mountains, deep valleys and the sea is untouched by modern constructions.

e. Protection and Management Requirements

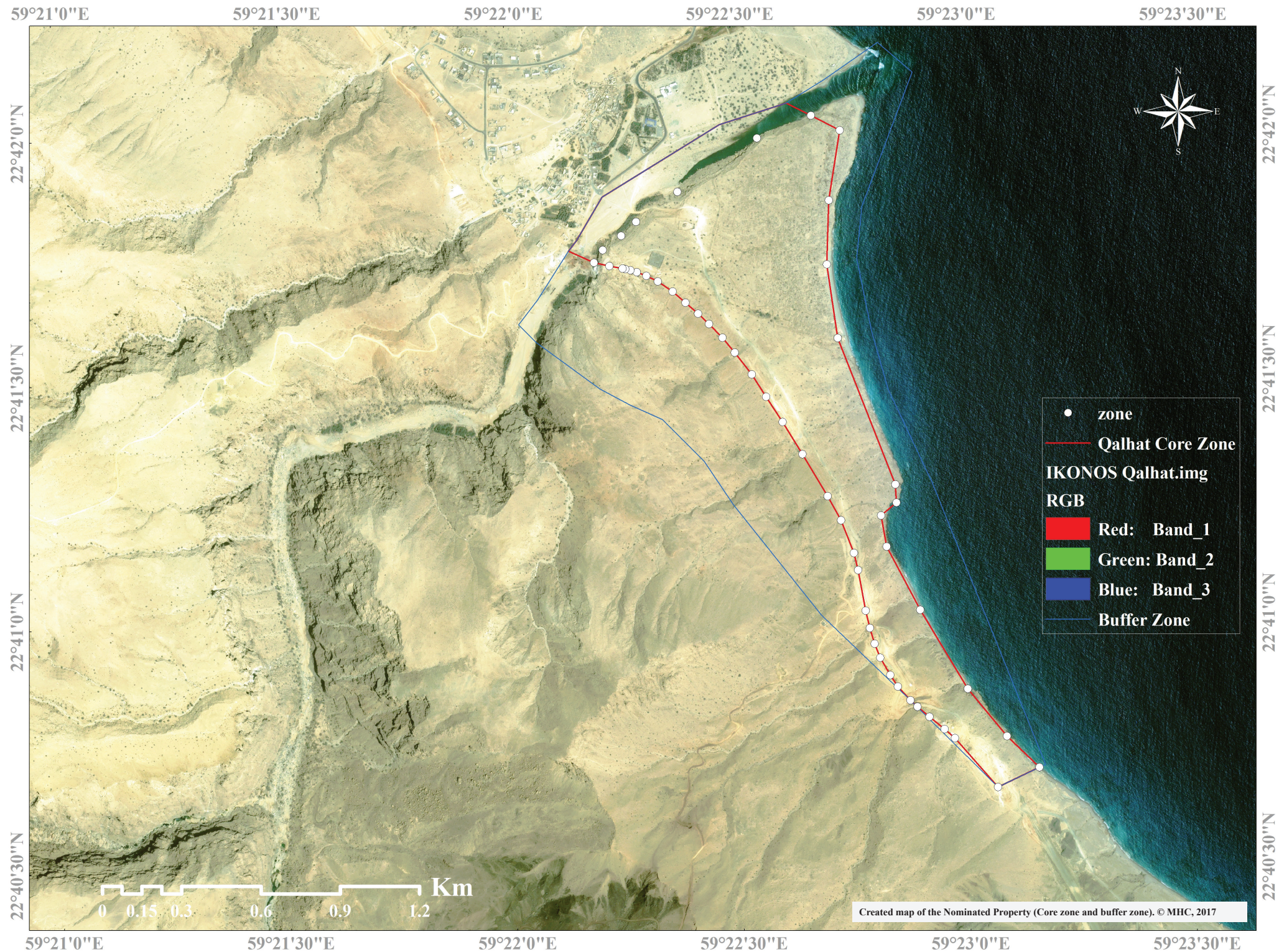
The administrative organization responsible for the protection and management is the Ministry of Heritage and Culture. The management of the site is organized as follows: according to the Statute of the State (The Constitution), and the mandate approved by the Royal decree of the

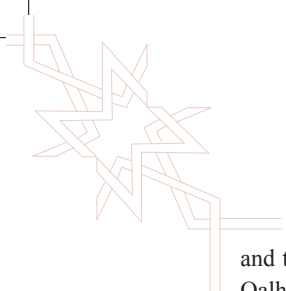
Ministry of Heritage and Culture, the Ministry remains as the main official body responsible for the protection, management and safeguard of this site. The Directorate General of Archaeology as a part of the Ministry’s Administrative structure looks after the day to day management of the site through the mandate of its four main departments and with the support of other departments:

- Department of Archaeological Excavations & Studies.
- Department of Restorations & Maintenance.
- Department of World Heritage Sites
- Department of Underwater Archaeology

The protection and management of the site is implemented under the laws and regulations of the government of Oman in respect to the UNESCO Convention concerning the protection of world cultural and natural heritage adopted on 16th of November 1972¹. The current framework regarding the protection of the property is the National Heritage Protection Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. 6/80 (See Annex 1&2). The Ministry of Heritage and Culture ensures its commitments to all the mechanisms specified by the said law to implement the required protection measures for the Ancient City of Qalhat. The Qalhat Development Project, which started in October 2012 and will end in 2017, ensures a development process including excavation, conservation and a tourism development plan for the site. The application of the Final Draft Management Plan will ensure the protection and long-term development of the site. The State Treasury will ensure all the required financial and qualified human resources in order to ensure the necessary requirements for protecting and administrating the Ancient city of Qalhat in a sustainable way, in addition to monitoring the site, as well as including systems of prevention against natural threats. The first and most urgent measure is the preparation of a management system including an ambitious final draft management plan for the Ancient City of Qalhat in collaboration with *The World Monument Fund* in which the protective measures

¹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>





and the management mechanisms for the Ancient City of Qalhat will be clearly identified. The Final Draft Management Plan will also ensure that risks and vulnerabilities in buildings which were excavated.

Name and contact information of Official Local Institution / Agency Organization

Ministry of Heritage and Culture, Sultanate of Oman

Address

Al Wizarat Street, Al Khwair North

Muscat

Sultanate of Oman

PO. Box: 668, Muscat. PC.100

Phone: + 968 24641357 / + 968 24641442

Fax: + 968 24641359

E-mail: hassan.lawati@mhc.gov.om

Website: www.mhc.gov.om

