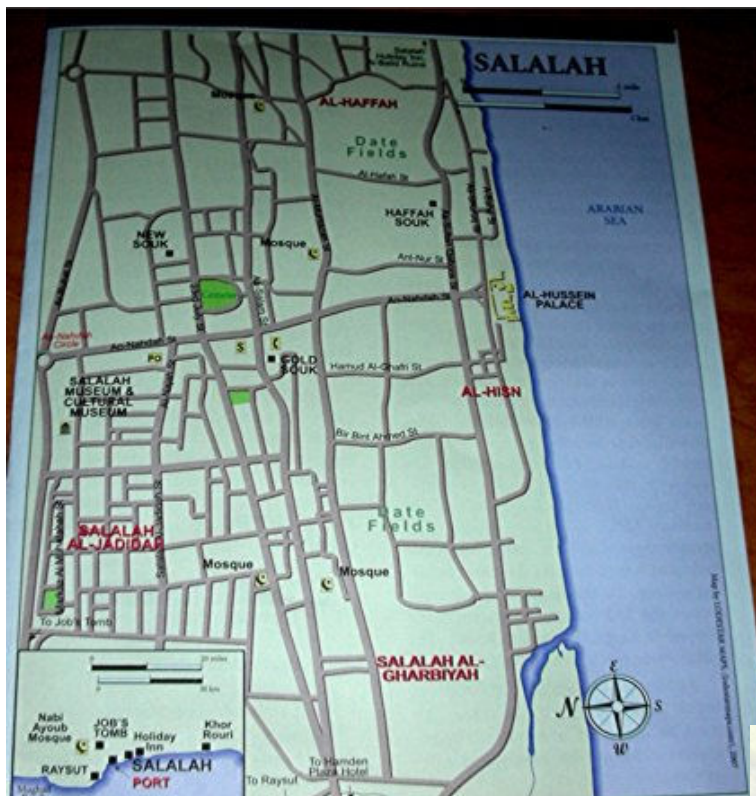


3/29/07 Day 73 – Salalah, Oman - Thursday; 29 March 2007: The Amsterdam arrived in Salalah, Oman about daybreak and tied up at the General Cargo Terminal. Here is where we were located on the map.



The General Cargo Terminal was well equipped with huge mobile cranes for handling cargo containers which were stacked on the pier. However, unlike Dubai, this terminal had no cruise terminal building and it was surrounded by desert. The town of Salalah was barely visible as low lying buildings about 5 miles from the terminal. Here are some views from the top deck of the Amsterdam.





Later in the day the cruise ship Silver Whisper that we had seen in Dubai came in and docked near the Amsterdam.

We took a bus tour of the Salalah area. Our tour guide's name was Kawthur. She said it meant "river in heaven". She was dressed in a traditional black Arab outfit and she spoke good English for tour purposes. She was not experienced as a tour guide. We surmised she had bravely taken on this morning's assignment when someone else didn't show up for work. She didn't know all the answers to questions but we got our money's worth. Here she is with Barbara.



We took a bus out of the terminal and headed down the well paved road through the desert towards one of their most famous site known as Job's Tomb. We were surprised to learn that Job, in the Old Testament that we know, is also revered among the Muslims, perhaps to a higher degree than among Christians and Jews. The preservation of his tomb serves as a testament to his high standing as a prophet in the Muslim Faith. Known to Omanis as nabi ayoub, Job's Tomb is a destination for religious pilgrims from all over the world. Along the 30 miles of road to Job's Tomb were hospitals, schools, mosques, wide open spaces, small stores and homes as shown below.





For a couple miles along both side of the highway there were mounds of dirt in a regular pattern that had no obvious purpose or source. Our guide had no explanation.



We finally arrived at Job's Tomb which is located next to a Muslim Mosque on a high hill. This is the view of it as we approached.

The facility covers the top of the hill with the Mosque minaret near the center and Job's Tomb being a small white building on the left forming part of the compound wall.



The approach to Job's Tomb goes by the Mosque and Mausoleum both dedicated to the prophet. Barbara put a shawl over her head as is required of all women entering a holy Muslim place like a Mosque or Job's Tomb. Men do not have to cover their heads but everyone must remove their shoes when entering such a place.



Job's Tomb is a rather small, unimposing building with the grave in the center of the room and covered with a green cloth. Green is a color that is sacred to the Muslim religion. A frankincense burner was smoking at the head of the grave.

According to the guide one of the important functions of frankincense is as an insect repellent. Mohammed and the prophet Job instituted the burning of frankincense in the mosques in order to protect the worshipers from the bites of mosquitoes and other insects. This was before malaria transmission was traced

to mosquitoes so it must have been just for the comfort of the worshipers. That tradition of burning frankincense has carried on to this day in Muslim holy sites and mosques.

In the pathway a few feet from the entrance to Job's Tomb was a two foot by two foot square hole covered with a steel plate painted green. The guide lifted the steel plate to reveal a hole about 18 inches deep with a flat stone bottom. In the stone at the bottom of the hole was what appeared to be the imprint of a human foot. It was about the right width but a little too long to be a normal foot. This is claimed to be an imprint left by Job himself. Dr. Howard Clarke, one of the lecturers on the Amsterdam, said that the Christian and Jewish traditions have not picked up this part of the story of Job. He said that the



Muslim tradition has embraced the idea that in response to some misunderstanding with God, Job stamped his foot on this rock so hard that it left an imprint. That imprint is what we are seeing at the entrance to Job's Tomb. This will remain a Google subject for when we return home. Here are a couple photos of the site.



The imprint of Job's right foot is on the left side of the bottom of the hole. The toes point down. The steel cover of the hole is at the top of the photo showing its green and rust colored bottom side.

After the visit to Job's tomb the bus took us to the town of Salalah.

Salalah is the capital of the Dhofar Province and is the Sultanate's second most important city next to Muscat, the capital of Oman. Salalah once was the center of the frankincense trade.

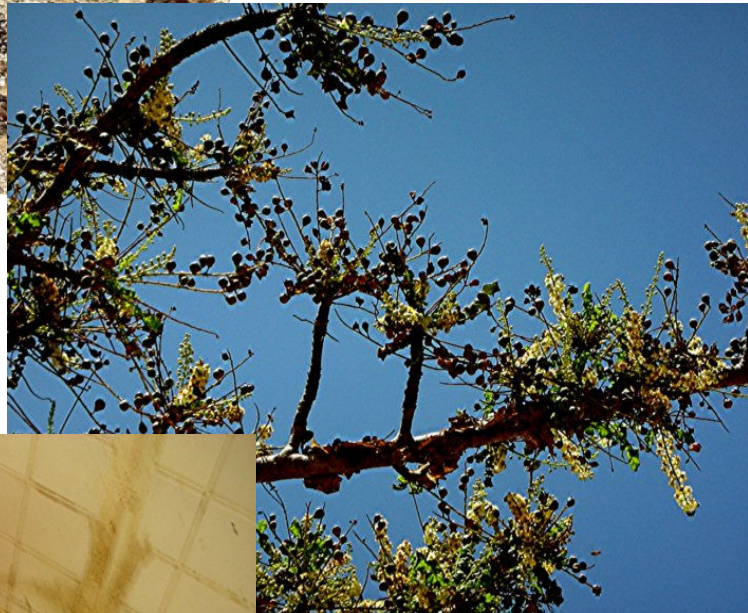
According to literature provided by the Amsterdam, a few thousand years ago, as new religions were vying with long established faiths; frankincense became an important commodity in most of the known world. Frankincense apparently was an important part of religious ceremonies.



The boswellia tree, which produces the frankincense resin, is a scraggly tree that only grows on the southern Arabian Peninsula and a small part of northern Africa. At the height of commerce around 100 AD, tons of frankincense was being shipped to Egypt, Greece and Rome. The Salalah region became one of the worlds richest because of the frankincense trade. Those times have past but the trader tradition and interest in frankincense survives to this day.

Our guide had the bus stop at a convenient boswellia tree alongside the highway and we took a close look at the source of frankincense.

The bus driver took a knife and sliced off some pieces of the thin bark. A sticky aromatic resin covered the exposed wood but it did not drip out like a maple sugar



harvest. We were probably tapping this poor tree at the wrong time of year. The tree branches had small leaves and a lot of berry-like seeds.



In Salalah the first thing us tourists wanted was a toilet break. Barbara is getting used to this way of life and took this somewhat blurred picture of the facilities which were adequate and even slightly upscale from some others.



The shop keepers were selling spices, including frankincense, as well as clothing and fine shawls made of cashmere wool.

We bought some frankincense along with the little burner that is used with it. Barbara also found some cashmere shawls she liked at a reasonable price.



After the shopping trip we drove by the Al-Husseini Palace in Salalah which is the summer residence of the Sultan. It was a fine example of an Arabian mansion.

Near the Sultan's Palace was an extensive collection of buildings for housing the Sultan's staff.



The tour of Salalah included a side trip to a coconut and banana farm on the edge of town.





This satellite dish at the coconut and banana farm confirms that modern technology has made its way into this ancient region.

After the tour of Salalah we traveled back through the desert to the port.

During the day we had seen camels now and then in the open desert. They were probably domesticated but just allowed to roam free to hunt for food. Near the entrance to the harbor a group of camels was browsing on the scrub brush and the driver stopped so we could take some pictures.

About 6pm the Amsterdam got underway for Sharm el Sheikh on the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt.

