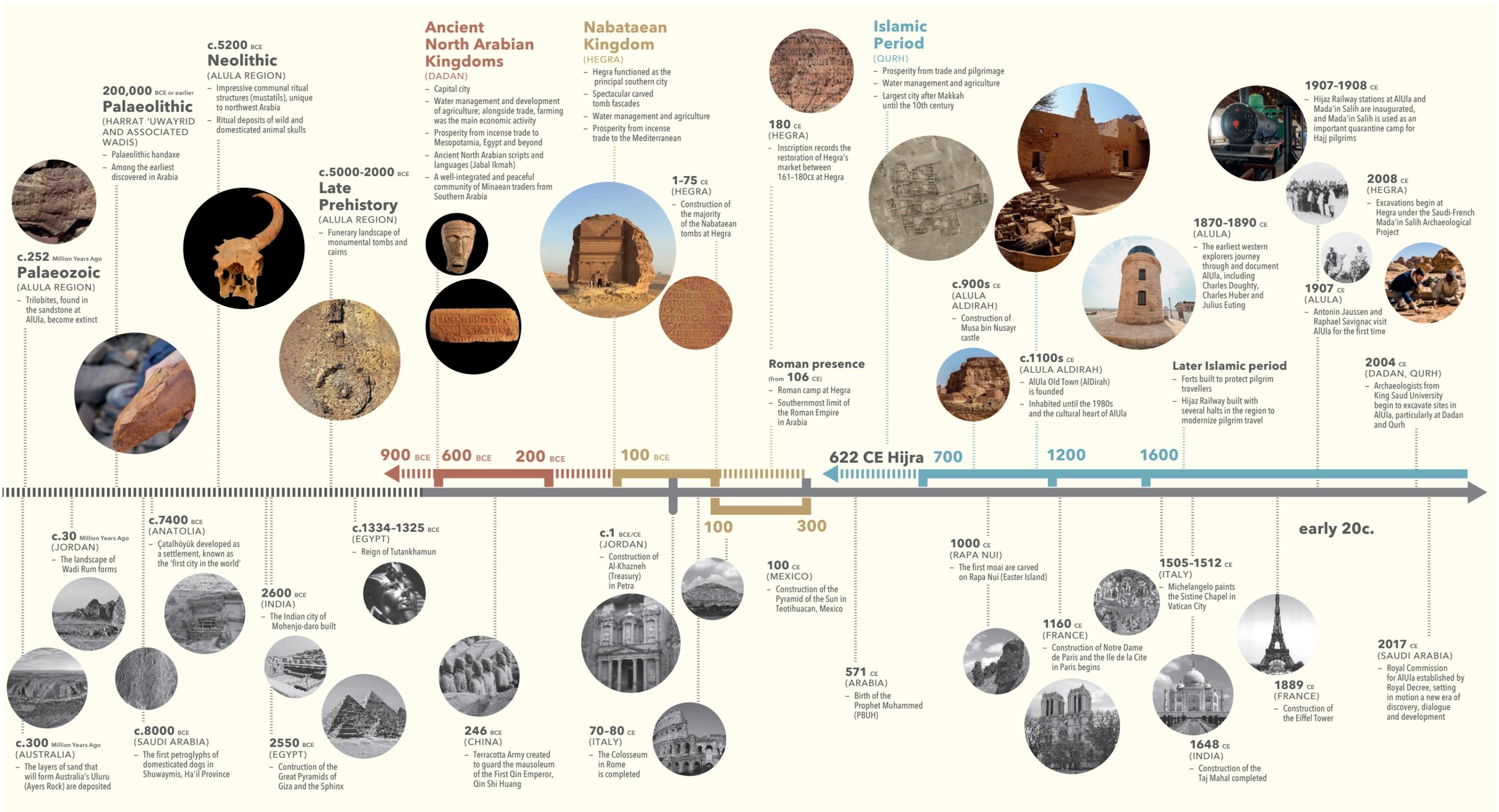


ALULLA

A RICH
HISTORY

THE TIMELINE OF ALULA



ALULA IS A SPECIAL PLACE



The county of AlUla lies in the northwest of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Its main city of the same name is located approximately 325km north of Madinah. It is a place of exceptional natural beauty and deep history, home to a wide range of flora, fauna and human communities for thousands of years.

LOOKING OUT FROM OLD TOWN,
ACROSS THE SUMMER FARMS
Royal Commission for AlUla





GEOLOGY: SANDSTONE AND LAVA FIELDS

Centred around its famed oasis and framed by sandstone mountains, AlUla's geography, environment and climate have enabled human communities to flourish here.

The area's underlying sandstone was created during the Cambrian period over 485 million years ago, and tectonic activity has helped further shape its dramatic geology, creating volcanic landscapes, basalt plateaus and sandstone massifs (Rigot 2019: 28). These geological features enable the area to act as a water catchment basin with an area of nearly 700 square kilometres, allowing the wadi to flow southwards towards AlUla's settlements (Rigot 2019: 29).

Trilobite trace fossils discovered in AlUla's sandstone date to at least 252 million years ago and provide evidence of some of the earliest life in the area. The soft and porous rock, perfect for carving, also acts as an aquifer that can store the vital fresh-water resources required to sustain life in an arid environment (Rigot 2019: 29).

Visitors to AlUla throughout the ages, including explorer Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth century and the French Dominican fathers Jaussen and Savignac in the early twentieth century, have remarked on the plentiful supplies of water (Rigot 2019:30).

Above: JABAL ALFIL (ELEPHANT ROCK), ONE OF ALULA'S UNIQUE GEOLOGICAL SCULPTURES
Royal Commission for AlUla

Below: WIND, SAND AND WATER HAVE SHAPED ALULA'S SANDSTONE OVER MILLENNIA
Royal Commission for AlUla





ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

Above: ALULA'S ENVIRONMENT IS VARIED AND INCLUDES LUSH OASES THANKS TO NATURAL AQUIFERS
Raguet, 2018

Below: LOOKING TOWARDS THE OASIS FROM THE ANCIENT CAPITAL OF DADAN
Royal Commission for AlUla

AlUla is a fertile oasis within the otherwise arid climate of northwestern Saudi Arabia, and successive communities alongside diverse flora and fauna were able to utilise the area's richer earth and support sizable populations.

The wider region is arid, with low levels of annual rainfall: observations made between 1998 and 2004 reveal that the average annual amount of rain was 29mm (Courbon ND: 5). Rainfall occurs episodically

and suddenly, with a few hours of rain in the mountains enough to fill the region's wadis and pools (Eichmann et al. 2006: 165).

The damper climate of earlier periods caused the erosion of the basalt strata, releasing colloids (clays and silts) into the environment. This created a rich, high-quality agronomic soil containing a range of important trace elements and oxides such as iron, magnesium, calcium and aluminium (Rigot 2019: 30).





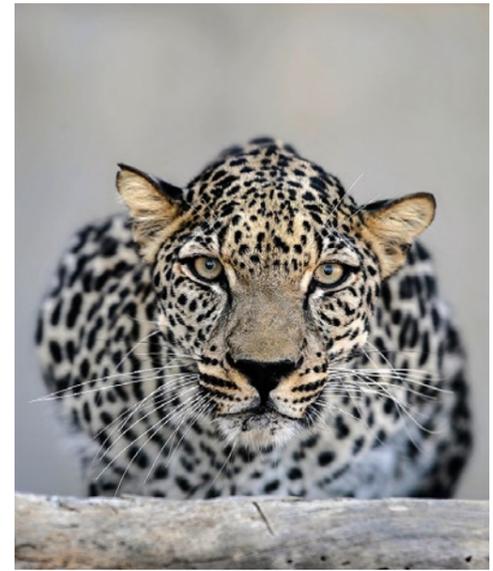
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01 CAMELS IN THE ALULA LANDSCAPE
Royal Commission for AlUla
02 OSTRICHES RECORDED IN ALULA'S PETROGLYPHS
Royal Commission for AlUla
03 ARABIAN LEOPARD
Royal Commission for AlUla
04 DATE PALMS, INTEGRAL TO ALULA'S AGRICULTURE FOR MILLENNIA
Royal Commission for AlUla

FLORA AND FAUNA

AlUla belongs to the Saharo-Arabian phytogeographical region, resulting in an environment subject to Mediterranean influences. The distinctive feature of the AlUla area is the presence of wadi vegetation: many of these plant species originated from the Mediterranean, such as acacia and tamarisk trees, which can survive in arid but humid environments.

The combination of fertile soils and available water enabled AlUla's populations to realise its significant agricultural potential. The development of hydro-agricultural systems in the mid-first millennium BCE enabled the cultivation of date palm groves, as well as other plants recorded in AlUla's archaeological and literary records. These include a variety of barleys and wheat, as well as citrus fruits such as sour lemons and oranges, alongside lentils, peas, chickpeas, figs, olives, pomegranates,

almonds and grapes. Bitter gourds, wild caper and aizoon were also gathered from uncultivated sources (Bouchaud 2009: 258-264). Today, small farms still grow date palms, vegetables, and fruit including oranges, lemons and bananas. Acacias and moringa, famed for its restorative qualities, are amongst the many species of plants that can be found across the valley.

A range of animals are known to have inhabited AlUla throughout its history. Many species have been

recorded in the region's petroglyphs and faunal record, including bovines, goats, camels and ibex, as well as felines such as Arabian lions and leopards (Sadig 2019: 35; Studer 2010; Tuttle, pers. comm). Some images represent animals that are now extinct in the area, including aurochs, the Arabian ostrich, mountain gazelle and a type of grouse (Almazrou 2019: 48). Animals were utilised for their products, including their meat, milk and skins. Ostrich egg fragments recovered during

excavations at the Nabataean site of Hegra show evidence of intentional engraving and burning, perhaps to make them into vessels (Studer 2010: 286). Similarly, a range of marine mollusc shells were used to create jewellery found in AlUla across periods of its human habitation (Studer and Tardy 2015a). Wildlife in this unique landscape today includes rock hyraxes (rock badgers), Arabian hares and wolves, striped hyenas, caracals, wildcats, sand cats, honey badgers and desert hedgehogs.



A RICH HISTORY: AN OVERVIEW

SOME OF ALULA'S OLDEST MONUMENTS ARE FOUND ACROSS THE VOLCANIC HARRAT
Royal Commission for AlUla



THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE OF DADAN, OVERLOOKED BY SOARING CLIFFS STREWN WITH ROCK-CUT TOMBS
Royal Commission for AlUla

Over thousands of years, many communities and societies have lived in and created settlements in AlUla.

Evidence for the earliest human activity in AlUla dates to around 200,000 years ago. Stone tools from this period, together with later, Neolithic funerary monuments including on the harrat lava fields demonstrate activity long before the development of the urban settlement of Dadan in the first millennium BCE.

The capital city of the Dadanite and Lihyanite civilisations, Dadan was a key hub on the incense route linking the southern Arabian kingdoms producing valuable aromatics with markets around the Mediterranean and beyond. The sites of this period also include religious features, such

as the temples and sanctuaries at Dadan and Umm Daraj, and the practices reflected in the inscriptions at Jabal Ikmah (Al-Ansary 1999: 194; Alsuhaibani 2019: 62).

With its role in the incense trade, AlUla also likely had access to further markets and trade routes, including out to the Indian Ocean and Red Sea. These connections have enabled the area to thrive as a cultural crossroads for thousands of years.

AlUla's inhabitants created cultural and commercial contacts in areas ranging from southern Arabia and Egypt to modern-day China. Its settlements and oases were

important destinations for traders of frankincense, myrrh and other precious commodities.

AlUla's position on these important routes drew the attention of the Nabataeans, who are thought to have settled in Hegra during the early first century BCE.

Hegra became the southernmost outpost of the Nabataean Kingdom in Arabia and was pivotal for its control of the incense route, rapidly developing as the aromatics trade flourished.

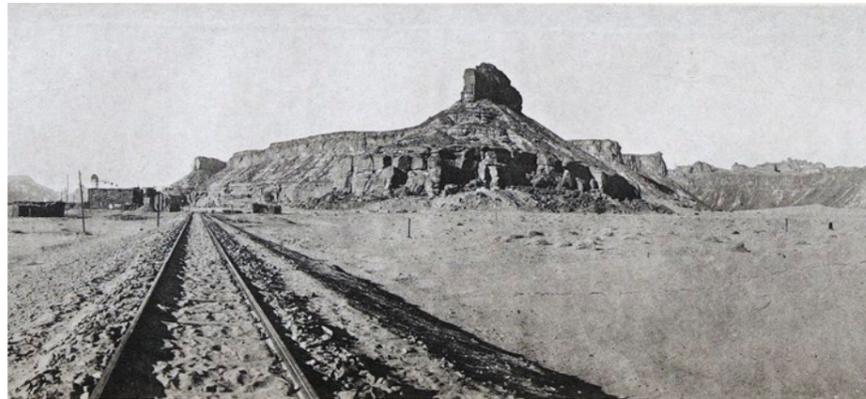
The most visible evidence for the Nabataeans at Hegra are the monumental tomb facades carved into the

area's dramatic sandstone outcrops, now recognised as Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site. The presence of inscriptions and a variety of symbolic decorative architecture demonstrates the importance of Hegra's citizens and their international connections. The city remained important following the Roman annexation of the Nabataean Kingdom in 106 CE, with defensive structures including a hilltop fort revealing the importance of maintaining the safety of the overland trade routes.



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01 THE TOMB OF LIHYAN, SON OF KUZA, HEGRA
Royal Commission for AlUla
02 THE HIJAZ RAILWAY THROUGH ALULA, IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY
Moritz, 1905-1915
03 MUSA BIN NUSAYR CASTLE, OVERLOOKING ALULA OLD TOWN
Royal Commission for AlUla
04 EXCAVATED AREA AT QURH
Royal Commission for AlUla



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After Islam was established in the seventh century CE, two settlements in the oasis valley - Qurh and AlUla - became important places along the pilgrimage route to Makkah.

Inhabited from around the sixth century CE, Qurh was an important trading station and later a stopping point on the Syrian Hajj route. Its prosperity enabled it to become a city reported as second only to Makkah, with its population living in the city, protected by a gated city wall.

Qurh was inhabited until around the twelfth century, when it was replaced as the key settlement in the valley by AlUla's Old Town (Aldirah). Over 900 buildings have been identified within Old Town, which is overlooked by the Musa bin Nusayr fort, an earlier citadel. A defensive wall was formed by the conjoining walls of the outermost houses, creating a maze of streets and squares within.

Outside the town's walls, fertile agricultural areas including date palm orchards were cultivated, and AlUla's inhabitants created temporary structures occupied in the summer.

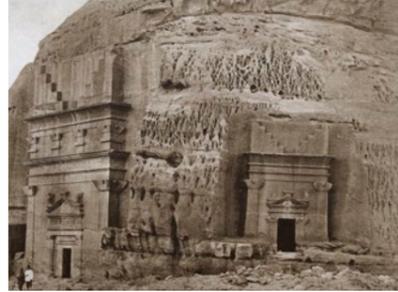
The AlUla valley is also significant in the history of the Hijaz Railway. Construction of the railway, which ultimately ran for over 1,300 kilometres between Damascus and Madinah, began in 1900. It was intended to reach the holy city of Makkah, but construction was halted due to the outbreak of the First World War. Twelve railway stations were built in AlUla county, with AlUla Station being the final stop for non-Muslim travellers and construction workers alike.



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EARLY EUROPEAN VISITORS TO ALULA

Despite being known in the Arab world, AlUla was 'rediscovered' by European explorers and academics from the late nineteenth century. These early explorers brought its deep history and magnificent archaeological wonders to the wider world, sparking interest and research that continues to this day.

The earliest modern European visitor to AlUla was the English traveller Charles Doughty, a former geology student. While passing through Petra in the spring of 1875, he heard of other ancient cities to be found to the south, including Hegra, then known as Mada'in Salih. He set up an expedition, but after failing to secure funding, instead joined an international pilgrimage to Makkah. He studied Arabic in Damascus, and set out in November 1876, reaching Hegra after ten days of travel. There he hired a Bedouin guide, a sheikh named Zayd. He spent two months recording the site and made detailed drawings of the tombs and inscriptions he found (Pouillon 2019: 118). His epigraphic work was published in 1884, but Doughty is best known for his 1888 work *Travels in Arabia Deserta* in which he published his full account.

Next to visit Hegra and AlUla were two researchers named Julius Euting and Charles Huber. French Orientalist Huber, famed for discovering the 'Tayma stone' that now resides in the Louvre, visited AlUla between 1878 and 1882 to record more of the area's ancient inscriptions. He later returned with the German academic Julius Euting to visit AlUla as part of their wider exploration of northern Arabia. The rubbings they created resonated in French scientific circles, with many examples published by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres in France following Huber's death in 1884. These works created an initial core of knowledge on AlUla's early societies (Pouillon 2019: 119-120).

The early twentieth century saw a period of more intensive exploration by the French Dominican fathers Antonin Jausсен and Raphaël Savignac. The two fathers were key members of the École biblique et archéologique française in Jerusalem and experts in ancient languages. They utilised the newly-built Hijaz Railway to travel, making three trips between 1907 and 1910. Throughout this time they made a thorough recording and photography of Hegra and other sites in AlUla, including drawings and photographs of the sites, topographical and geological data, and information about AlUla's contemporary inhabitants. Their work was published in several volumes between 1909 and 1914 as *Mission Archéologique en Arabie*, forming a key record of AlUla's archaeological sites in the early twentieth century (Pouillon 2019: 120-121).

01 CHARLES MONTAGU DOUGHTY

Unknown photographer; photogravure by Emery Walker, 1908

02 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MONUMENTS AT HEGRA, CAPTURED BY GERMAN ARCHAEOLOGIST BERNHARD MORITZ
Moritz, 1914

03 ANTONIN JAUSSEN AND RAPHAËL SAVIGNAC

By the kind permission of EBAF: École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem

04 THE BASIN AT DADAN, CAPTURED BY GERMAN ARCHAEOLOGIST BERNHARD MORITZ
Moritz, 1905-1915

RESEARCH IN ALULA



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Following the unification of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, a period of renewed archaeological research and investigation began in AlUla, building on the discoveries of AlUla's nineteenth and early twentieth century European explorers.

The 1950s heralded a resurgence in archaeological activity in AlUla. In 1951, King Abdulaziz granted an official survey permit to a group of scholars interested in studying the archaeological remains of central and southern Arabia. Led by Harry St John Philby, a British envoy with a passion for archaeology, the team recorded 12,000 new inscriptions, adding to the tens of thousands recorded over the previous eighty years.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Ruth Altheim-Stiehl, one of the first female professors in the then Federal Republic of Germany, visited AlUla on several occasions. Focusing her research on AlUla in late antiquity, she published a range of the site's inscriptions (Cassola 2019: 122-123).

Archaeologists from Saudi Arabia's Department of Antiquities and Museums initiated a formal survey in 1966, followed in 1972 by the creation of a fenced and guarded archaeological park. Excavations at the site began in the 1980s and continue today (Cassola 2019: 125). The first were undertaken by teams from the Department of Antiquities and Museums and King Saud University from 1986 to 1990, who attempted to identify the chronology of Hegra and its position within the Nabataean Kingdom (Al-Talhi 2000: 4-5).

Since 2002, the Franco-Saudi Mada'in Salih Archaeological Project has uncovered vital information concerning the Nabataean habitation of Hegra. Excavations within the city, the Roman fort, the necropoli and religious areas have increased our understanding of this mysterious culture and inspired further studies of the Nabataeans across Saudi Arabia (Cassola 2019: 125).



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In 2004, the Department of Archaeology at King Saud University launched its own excavations at Dadan and Qurh, providing physical evidence to support the epigraphic evidence collected over the past 120 years (Cassola 2019: 126).

Most recently, survey and excavation carried out under the Royal Commission for AlUla are documenting and recording thousands of newly discovered archaeological sites and features across AlUla county.

01 ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS AT THE URBAN CENTRE OF HEGRA, CONDUCTED BY THE SAUDI-FRENCH MADA'IN SALEH ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT
Raguet, 2018

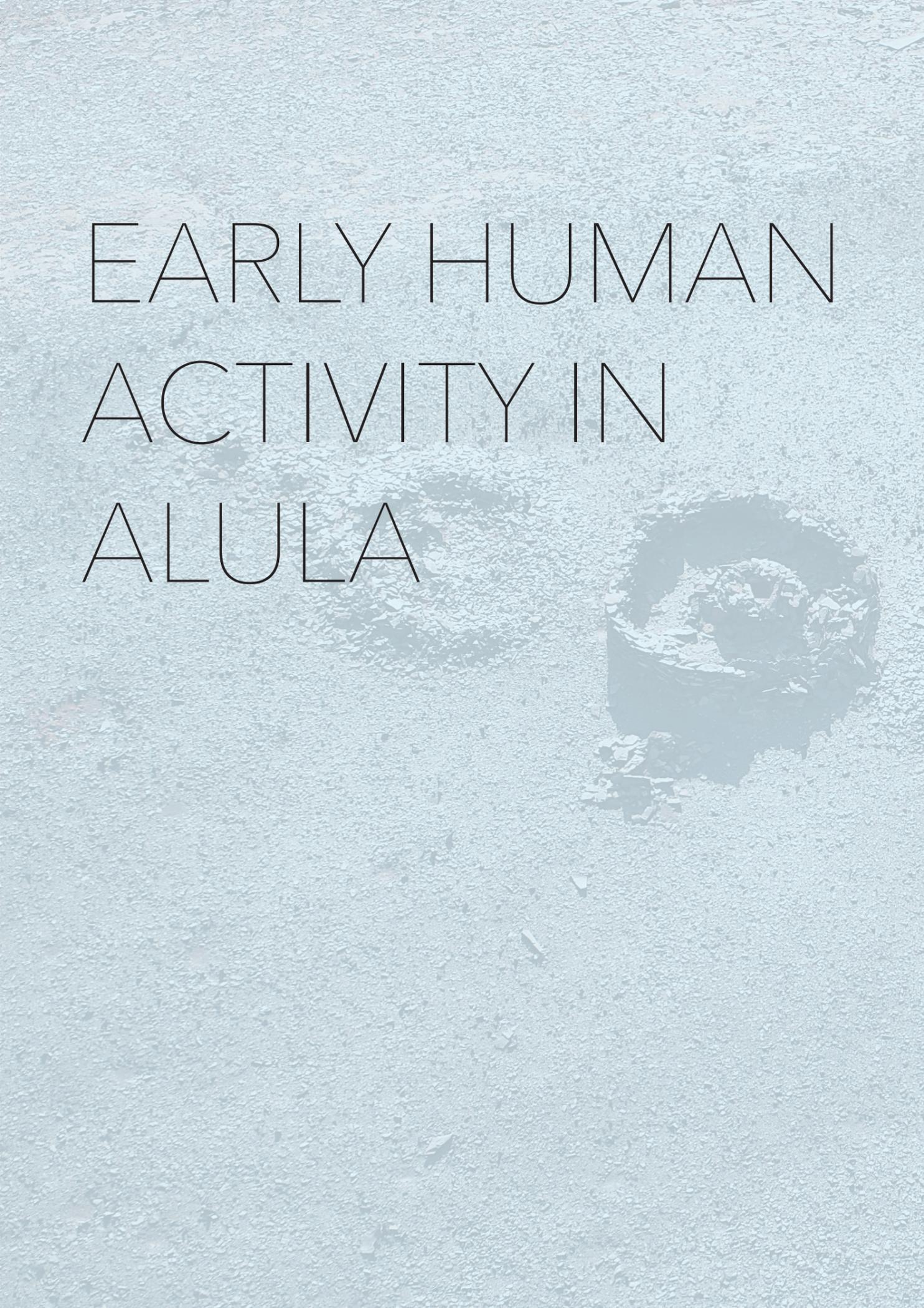
02 MONUMENTAL STATUES DURING EXCAVATION AT DADAN
King Saud University

03 EXCAVATIONS AT HEGRA UNDER THE SAUDI-FRENCH MADA'IN SALEH ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT
Raguet, 2018

04 SURVEYING PREHISTORIC RINGED CAIRN
Royal Commission for AlUla

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EARLY HUMAN ACTIVITY IN ALULA



HARRAT 'UWAYRID

The earliest humans in Saudi Arabia are thought to have arrived approximately 1.6 million years ago during the Lower Palaeolithic period (Sadig 2019: 32).

The earliest human activity is evidenced in AlUla in Harrat 'Uwayrid and elsewhere in northwestern Saudi Arabia in Harrat Khaybar. These important volcanic areas comprise two of the largest in Saudi Arabia. Harrat Khaybar includes a spectacular 100-kilometre long vent system containing lava domes, tuff rings, basaltic cones and the Jabal Qidr stratovolcano (Sadig 2019: 32).

The dramatic lava flows of volcanic events can be seen across the region. Harrat Khaybar has at least seven post-Neolithic (less than 4,500 years old) and eight historical (less than 1,500 years old) lava flows (Global Volcanism Project NDa). The last eruption in the Harrat 'Uwayrid is believed to have occurred around 640 CE (Global Volcanism Project NDa). According to Bedouin legends, the Hala-'I-Bedr erupted fire and stones, killing herdsmen and their animals (Global Volcanism Project NDb).

Systematic research of the area began relatively recently when compared to other elements of AlUla's natural and human heritage. An exploratory programme of Harrat 'Uwayrid was begun in 2013 by the Department of Archaeology at King Saud University. As a result, dozens of lithic (stone) tools and stone-built structures have been discovered across the governorate of AlUla. This picture has been added to in recent years by extensive survey under the Royal Commission for AlUla.



THE CRATER OF A VOLCANO IN HARRAT 'UWAYRID
Royal Commission for AlUla



THE LANDSCAPE OF ALULA FEATURES BASALTIC PLATEAUS
Royal Commission for AlUla

LITHICS

Lithics, commonly known as stone tools, are a key source of evidence when examining the activities of early human groups.

Clusters of stone tools, including hand-axes and hammerstones dating from the Lower Palaeolithic, discovered during the exploration of Harrat 'Uwayrid demonstrate the long history of human activity in the area. These tools were made from pieces of locally-available basalt between 1.6 million and 300,000 years ago and are comparable to items found on similar sites throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The people living in AlUla during the Lower Palaeolithic period had a nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle, benefitting from the region's relatively abundant water supply and access to the raw resources needed to survive. Their tools would have been used for a variety of activities, including hunting and butchering animals, cutting leather, and uprooting plants. Their dispersal throughout the landscape means that 'functional activity zones' can be defined, demonstrating how the tools were made and where key activities may have taken place (Sadig 2019: 33).

Sites dating to the Middle Palaeolithic period, between 125,000 and 55,000 BCE, and the early



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01 PALAEO-LITHIC HANDAXE FOUND IN ALULA
Royal Commission for AlUla



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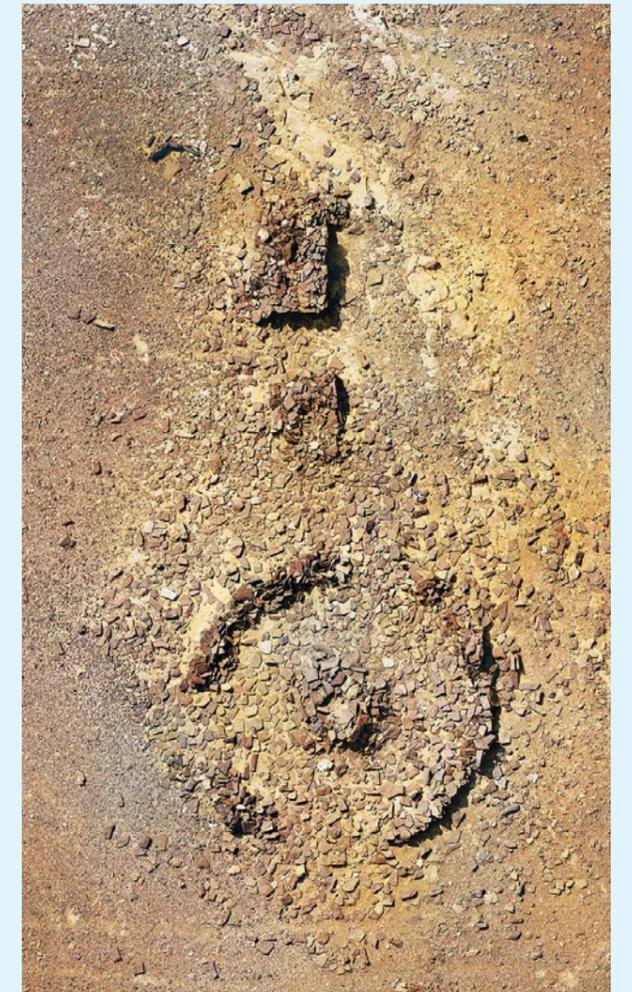
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Holocene (beginning around 10,000 BCE) have also been discovered in AlUla. Some of the tools found in Harrat 'Uwayrid and elsewhere in the AlUla valley zone compare to European or Levantine Mousterian tools, but few tools from the more technically-advanced Levallois class have been discovered (Sadig 2019: 35). However, current survey work is adding to the known corpus of Levallois lithics.

We know little about the early Holocene period in AlUla. This period marks the development of settlements and increased human movement across the Arabian Peninsula. However, no settlements from the early Holocene period have yet been identified at Harrat 'Uwayrid, despite the wetter climatic phases experienced during this period. Archaeological sites from later periods such as the Neolithic (c. 5,000 BCE) and the Bronze Age have been discovered in AlUla, including tumuli tombs and other stone structures. Whilst many of these have been affected by time and human activity, their remains show that the inhabitants of AlUla during this period were capable of creating elaborate funerary monuments that could survive for millennia.

02 PREHISTORIC BURIAL CAIRN
Thomas, Royal Commission for AlUla
03 PREHISTORIC BURIAL CAIRN WITH 'TAIL' STRUCTURES
Raguét, 2018
04 RINGED CAIRN
Royal Commission for AlUla



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PETROGLYPHS

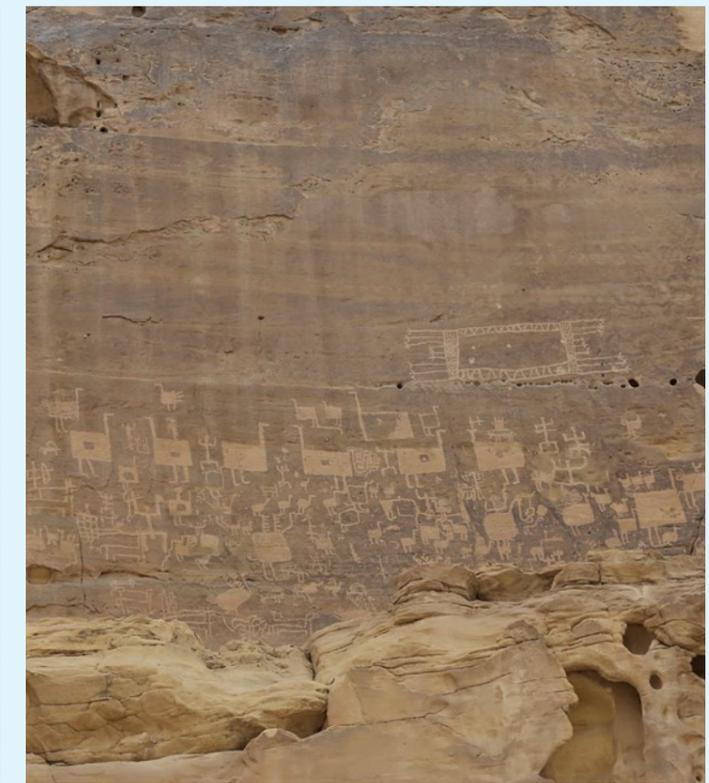
Petroglyphs, or rock art, comprise representations of human, animal or symbolic figures created by using tools to scrape or incise the rock surface (Almazrou 2019: 46).

Multiple sites featuring petroglyphs can be found across AlUla, including Jabal Ikmaah and Aba Oud (Almazrou 2019: 46). They are often concentrated near settlements, caravan waystations, and close to water sources, such as along the banks of the wadis, carved into mountain slopes, sandstone outcrops or on small rocks (Almazrou 2019: 48; Jennings et al. 2013: 678; Sadig 2019: 35).

Petroglyphs can constitute a significant source of information concerning ancient ways of life. A range of motifs and ideas were expressed through the rock art created throughout Saudi Arabia during the Neolithic period (Khan 2013: 449). The analysis of the symbols and abstract forms used by the past inhabitants of AlUla, when placed within their historic context, can illustrate a range of the daily activities of AlUla's residents as well as the events deemed significant enough by their authors to record (Almazrou 2019: 48; Khan 2013: 457). Whilst it remains difficult to precisely date these works, many are accompanied by inscriptions that can provide approximate ages (Sadig 2019: 35). Others can be roughly dated by analysing the different techniques used to produce them, whilst the overlaying of images can provide a relative chronology (Almazrou 2019: 48).



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Many petroglyphs depict the animals that inhabited AlUla thousands of years ago. Camels, bovines, goats, scorpions and ibex can be readily identified, shown both individually and in groups. Examples of the earliest rock art in AlUla depict animals that are now extinct in the region, such as aurochs and a squat, grouse-like bird.

Humans are also frequently pictured in AlUla's rock art. A recent discovery at Wadi Danan depicts abstract human figures both in groups and individually, with the large jars included in these images interpreted as ritual offerings. Humans are also depicted in hunting scenes, holding spears and swords and chasing animals such as aurochs. Abstract images of chariots also appear, whilst decorative motifs may refer to ancient settlements (Almazrou 2019: 48).



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01 PETROGLYPHS SHOWING HUMAN FIGURES

Babelli, 2019

02 DEPICTIONS OF ANIMALS NOW EXTINCT IN THE REGION INCLUDE OSTRICHES

Royal Commission for AlUla

03 DEPICTIONS OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AT JABAL IKMAH

Babelli, 2019

04 DEPICTIONS OF JARS, POSSIBLY ILLUSTRATING OFFERINGS

Babelli, 2019

BURIAL PRACTICES

The nomadic nature of AlUla's earliest inhabitants means that no identifiable permanent settlements have yet been discovered in the area. However, enigmatic and durable funerary monuments were constructed, leaving lasting impressions on the landscape.



FUNERARY CAIRN SEEN FROM ABOVE, DATED BETWEEN 5000 BCE AND 2000 BCE
Thomas, for Royal Commission for AlUla

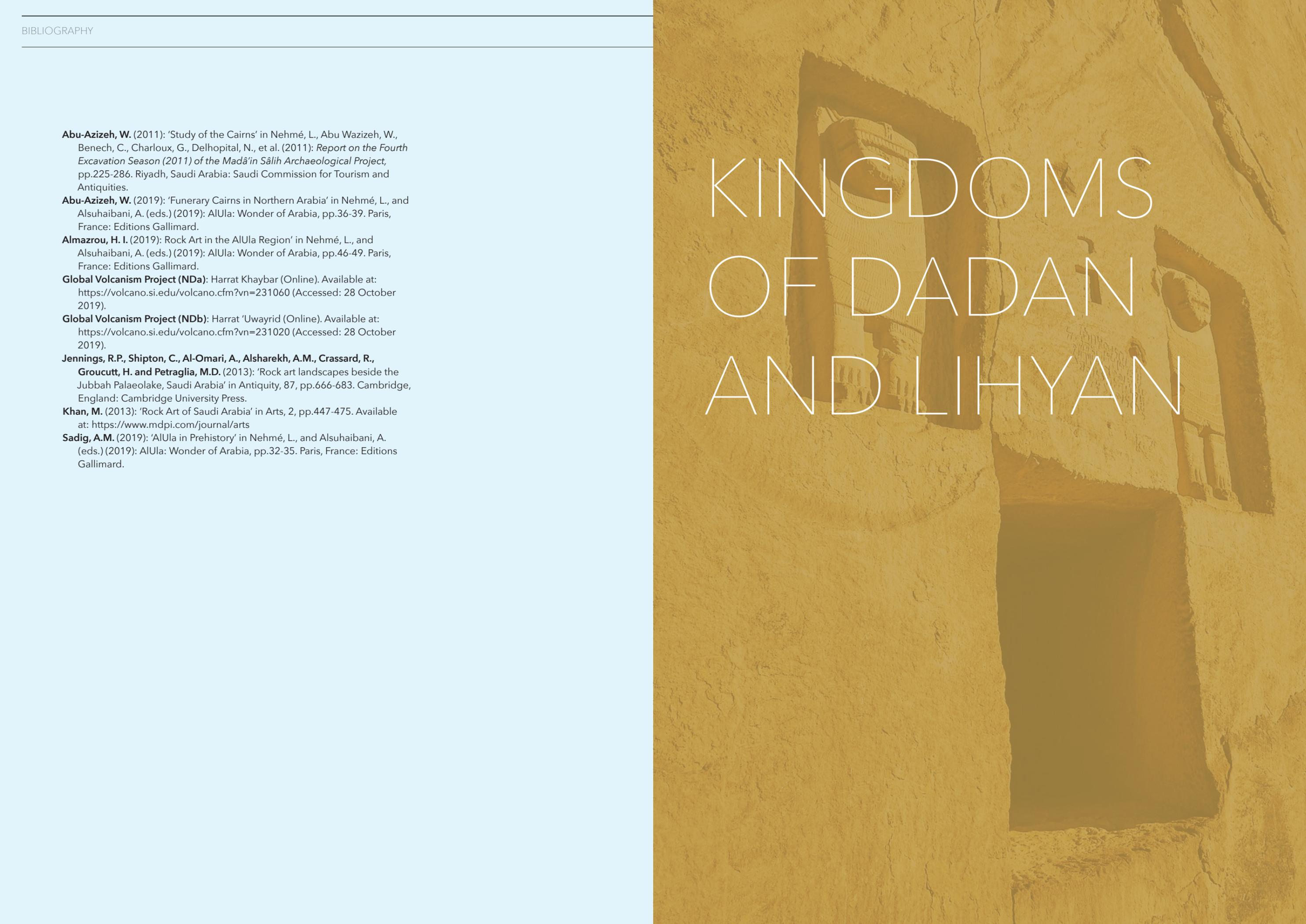
Some of the earliest burials in AlUla are distinctively marked by tumuli or cairns, large mounds of earth or stones that cover a grave. These are often grouped together in significant numbers and can stretch across large areas. Tumuli are often built on high and visible places within the landscape, forming necropoli that may have acted as markers of territory or memorial. Examples can be found on the outcrops of Jabal AlKhuraymat to the south-west of Hegra, or across the harrat. These are often difficult to precisely date (Abu-Azizeh 2019: 36).

Some of AlUla's prehistoric tombs feature stone wall 'tails' that form shapes in the landscape. The 'pendant' form is one example. Funerary avenues can also be found, including in Khaybar to the south-east of AlUla. Other shapes include the rectangular mustatil. These appear to be particular to AlUla and Khaybar, and consist of large areas enclosed by stone walls. Many of these structures have now been recorded, including the world's largest known example, measuring some 520 metres in length, at Harrat Khaybar.

A study involving some two hundred and seventy-six structures has revealed the variety of shapes and styles visible throughout AlUla. One tumulus was excavated in 2008 in Hegra, revealing an elongated tomb in the centre of a circular tower made of pink sandstone, surrounded by an exterior ring made of white sandstone (Abu-Azizeh 2019: 36). Two sherds of pottery were found during the excavation, one roughly dated to the Bronze or Iron Age and the other to the Nabataean period (Nehmé 2010: 19). A flat shell bead is similar to examples recovered from Tayma, an oasis settlement over 100 kilometres to the north-east of AlUla, which have been dated to the early first millennium BCE, along with fragments of soft-stone vessels, stone beads and stone tools (Abu-Azizeh 2011: 233). Radiocarbon dating on three samples of human bones from this structure produced dates between the first century BCE and third century CE. As these dates lie firmly within the Nabataean inhabitation of AlUla, the structure was likely reused at this later date (Abu-Azizeh 2011: 225; Abu-Azizeh 2019: 37).

A compartmentalised tomb was excavated in 2014, revealing fragments of human bone. These were radiocarbon dated to give the complex a construction date of around 2000 BCE. Alongside the bones, a shell bracelet made of more than eighty-two beads was recovered. Similar burials have again been identified in Tayma at Rujum Sa'sa', revealing the existence of a previously unknown funerary tradition in this region of north-western Arabia (Abu-Azizeh 2019: 38-39).

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KINGDOMS OF DADAN AND LIHYAN

ALULA AS A REGIONAL POWER: THE DADANITES AND LIHYANITES

During the first millennium BCE, AlUla was home to one of Arabia's most important and complex capital cities: Dadan.

Below: LOOKING ACROSS TO THE OASIS FROM THE
SITE OF DADAN
Royal Commission for AlUla



Located approximately 5 kilometres north of the modern town of AlUla, Dadan was one of the major centres on the route linking the incense-producing societies of southern Arabia to the markets in the Mediterranean, Egypt and Mesopotamia, where the aromatics were used and consumed in volume.

Hundreds of inscriptions were left by visitors to the area in a variety of ancient languages. Excavations undertaken within the settlement and its hinterland have revealed a large number of artefacts and carefully constructed stone architecture, including temples and rock-cut tombs.

The city and its monuments and architecture were matched by a sophisticated political system that enabled it to flourish, including the development of city defences, substantial agricultural holdings and methods of water management.



02

02 AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE, TAKEN DURING SURVEY
Kennedy, Royal Commission for AlUla
03 THE EXCAVATED REMAINS OF THE TEMPLE TO DHU
GHABBAT, DADAN
Raguet, 2018

03



WHO WERE THE DADANITES AND LIHYANITES?

Below: THE SITE OF DADAN, WITH TEMPLE IN FOREGROUND AND ROCK-CUT TOMBS IN THE CLIFF FACE BEHIND
Royal Commission for AlUla



Left to Right:
DADANITIC VOTIVE INSCRIPTION NAMING KING 'ASI
King Saud University
INCENSE BURNER WITH DADANITIC INSCRIPTION
King Saud University



The relationship between the Dadanite and Lihyanite Kingdoms has been much debated. Some scholars regard Dadanite and Lihyanite as one culture, whilst others see them as successive kingdoms, and still others believe Dadan was the place and Lihyan the Kingdom. Most are now agreed however that the Dadanite Kingdom was in power from around the late ninth/early eighth century - late sixth/early fifth century BCE, and the subsequent Lihyanite Kingdom from the fifth - late second/early first century BCE.

The settlement at Dadan appears to have functioned as the capital, or seat of power, for both Kingdoms.

The oasis of Dadan is mentioned in a text describing the arrival of trading caravans in the Mesopotamian city of Uruk, and a king of Dadan is recorded on the Harran stele, carved in the mid-sixth century BCE (Al-Said 2010: 263). Biblical sources dated around this time refer to the city's caravans and trading activity (see Isaiah 21:31, Ezekiel 27:20).

They indicate a well-organised state that played an important role in the political and economic life of the region (Al-Ansary 1999: 192-193; Al-Said 2010: 263; Alsuhaibani and Nehmé 2019: 23). An account of the Mesopotamian king Nabonidus' campaigns also refers to the slaying of a 'king of Dadan' (Hoyland 2001: 66).

Later, the Lihyanite Kingdom is credited with expansion, and the taking over of Tayma, an oasis settlement just over 100 kilometres north-east of AlUla, making it the centre of the north Arabian trade networks.

The first known reference to Lihyan is in a text from Yemen, which records the travels of a Sabaean merchant. He first visited Dadan whilst en route to Cyprus in the early sixth century BCE, later visiting the 'land' of Lihyan whilst on a diplomatic mission (Rohmer and Charloux 2015: 302).

The Lihyanites were the contemporaries of the important southern Arabian trading kingdom of Ma'in and the Ptolemies of Egypt (305-31 BCE). The city at Dadan, and its relationship with the Minaean merchants who came from Ma'in, are recorded in Minaean texts (Hoyland 2001: 67). Critical examples are the Hierodulisten discovered at Ma'in: these texts

list the marriage of Dadanitic women to Minaean merchants in the fourth century BCE (Rohmer and Charloux 2015: 302-303).

Lihyan's importance is also noted by the Roman author and naturalist Pliny the Elder, who refers to the Gulf of Aqaba as the 'Gulf of Lihyan' (Alsuhaibani 2019: 61).

POLITICS AND SOCIETY IN DADAN

Supreme authority was in the hands of a king, who levied taxes and controlled the region's economy with the support of a council called the 'hajbal' (*Al-Hasan 2010: 272; Alsuhaibani 2019: 61*).



Left: DADANITIC INSCRIPTIONS AT JABAL IKMAH
Royal Commission for AlUla
Right: LOOKING ACROSS THE SITE TOWARDS THE
OASIS, WITH THE SACRED BASIN, OR MAHLAB
ALNAQAH, AT THE LEFT
Royal Commission for AlUla

At least five kings of Dadan have so far been recognised, including Mata'il, his son Kabir'il and 'Asi. Power was hereditary; transmitted from father to eldest son (Alsuhaibani 2019: 61). Twelve kings of Lihyan have been identified in inscriptions from AlUla, covering around 199 regnal years (Rohmer and Charloux 2015: 299). References to kings of Lihyan in Aramaic

inscriptions have been identified on the route between Dadan and Tayma, demonstrating the spread of their influence (Rohmer and Charloux 2015: 301). It is thought that there were strong links between political and religious leaders, with land distributed to farmers so they could pay a share of their harvests to the temples (Alsuhaibani 2019: 61).

Inscriptions found elsewhere in AlUla reveal the need felt by the Dadanites to protect their territory. Inscriptions found at Jabal Ithlib to the north of Hegra refer to 'guardians' of Dadan, and may have been left by soldiers patrolling the area.

This system would have required a central power and efficient administration to organise, both of which are also recorded in inscriptions.

Outside of trading activities, inhabitants of Dadan also utilised the region's fertility to grow multiple types of crops. Agriculture would likely have been an important part of the region's economy. Inscriptions feature multiple terms relating to agriculture, including the seasons, types of produce, water and parcels of land.

DADAN: ARCHAEOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURE

The site of Dadan provided its inhabitants with several advantages. Its position close to the eastern cliffs not only protected it from enemies, but the cliff itself and the carving of tombs provided rocks to be used as building material *(Alsuhaibani 2015: 183-184)*.

Left: FRAGMENTS OF STONE MATERIAL EXCAVATED FROM DADAN
Royal Commission for AlUla
Right: THE MOUNTAIN-TOP SANCTUARY OF UMM DARAJ, ABOVE DADAN
Royal Commission for AlUla



The location of Dadan provided several advantages. To the west, it was likely bordered by Harrat Uwayrid, the date palms and the wadi. Dadan would have needed to control a large agricultural area to support its population. There is evidence that the people of Dadan developed a qanat-style system to transport water from higher areas of the valley and support their agriculture.

Believed to have first been used over 2,500 years ago in the areas of modern-day Iran or Oman, qanat networks made it possible to farm a long strip of land following the course of the wadi. In Arabia, scholars have drawn on epigraphic and historical sources to date the qanat systems to the Lihyanite period *(Marquaire 2019: 50-52)*.

Excavations in Dadan and its hinterlands have largely focused on its religious structures, resulting in limited domestic architecture being uncovered as yet. However, works undertaken in the vicinity of the Temple of Dhu Ghabbat have revealed carefully-crafted basalt and sandstone foundations which would have supported structures made of sandstone blocks and sun-dried mudbrick *(Al-Said 2010: 266)*.

Additionally, it is likely that natural materials such as date palm and tamarisk wood were also used in the construction of Dadan's buildings.

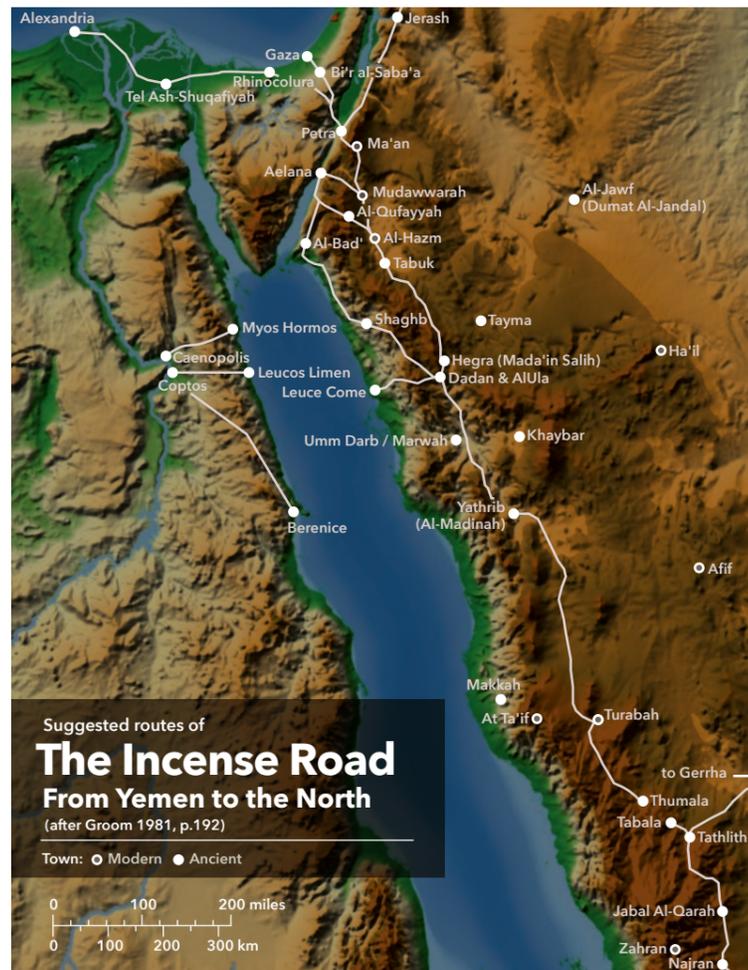
A range of structures have also been identified outside the city. To the north, peripheral settlements, agricultural areas and a 600 metre long fortification wall have been noted, whilst defensive, hydraulic and cultic installations have been discovered in the mountains to the east

of the city. Several sandstone quarries have also been identified close to the settlement, whilst basalt is believed to have been quarried from Harrat 'Uwayrid to form the foundations of these structures.

TRADE AND INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS IN THE FIRST MILLENNIUM BCE

Trade was Dadan's most important economic activity, linking it to major powers across the ancient world via the movement of high-quality aromatic products from southern Arabia.

Left: SUGGESTED ROUTES OF THE INCENSE ROAD
Royal Commission for AIUla
Right: INSCRIPTIONS, INCLUDING IN ARABIC,
AROUND THE ROCK CUT TOMBS OF DADAN
Royal Commission for AIUla



Incense was the most valuable commodity on offer in the markets of the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean during the first millennium BCE. AIUla benefitted from this trade by protecting the camel caravans, providing guides and guards for a fee and taxes on their goods (MacDonald 2010: 9). Evidence for this trade can be found in inscriptions left by inhabitants of Dadan in these distant locations, as

well as by archaeological materials recovered during excavations in AIUla.

Dadan had strong connections to Ptolemaic Egypt. The statues discovered at the temple at Dadan, dedicated to Dhu Ghabbat, and at Umm Daraj are stylistically similar to examples from Egypt and the Hellenistic world. There are examples of Lihyanite kings using the name 'tlmy', which may be linked to

the contemporary Ptolemaic Egyptian rulers (Rossi 2014: 111).

Dadan also maintained relationships with other Arabian kingdoms during the first millennium BCE. Traders from the south Arabian kingdoms of Ma'in and Saba' and the north-western oases of Tayma and Dumah left inscriptions along the routes linking these areas, some of which have been dated to the sixth century BCE (Durand 2019: 86).

The Minaeans established a community at Dadan which appears to have been well integrated into the local population whilst maintaining their own religious and linguistic traditions. The community was run by a 'kabir', or council, responsible for managing its affairs and facilitating its trading activities (Alsuhaibani 2019: 62-63).

RELIGION IN THE DADANITE KINGDOM

Dadan was an important religious centre during the first millennium BCE with areas of special cultic significance, including at Jabal Ikamah, Umm Daraj and Tell AlKathib (*Al-Hasan 2010: 271*).

THE MOUNTAIN-TOP SANCTUARY OF UMM DARAJ,
ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT RELIGIOUS SITE OF THE
KINGDOM
Royal Commission for AlUla



Above: THE CIRCULAR SANDSTONE BASIN
Alsuhaibani
Right: STEPS CARVED INSIDE THE BASIN
Royal Commission for AlUla



The chief deity worshipped in Dadan was Dhu Ghabbat, the primary god of the Lihyanites. Known as 'the master of the grove', 'the one of the thicket, tangle-wood, forest, or wood', he is also sometimes referenced as 'the absentee' (Hoyland 2001: 141). A significant temple to him was established in the northern part of the city. Excavations have revealed a rectangular building measuring 16 by 13.20 metres.

Stature fragments and bases were found in the temple and its annexes. The temple complex was decorated with carved stone elements including columns featuring animals such as bulls and ibexes, whilst blocks decorated with snake motifs were also recovered (Al-Said 2011). Artefacts discovered during the excavations include statues of human figures, some of them larger than life-size, alongside smaller

objects such as altars, grinding and milling tools and clay oil lamps (Alsuhaibani 2019: 63).

Outside the temple stands a monolithic circular sandstone basin. Believed to date from between the fifth and first centuries BCE, the basin is 3.75 metres in diameter and 2.15 metres deep and could hold up to 27,000 litres of water. The reservoir was supplied both by rainwater and from a recently discovered well.

Access to the bottom of the basin was via an interior staircase, with both its interior and exterior surfaces covered in inscriptions in Dadanitic, Minaean, Thamudic and Arabic (Alsuhaibani 2019: 63). It is one of the earliest vestiges of the city to be reported by explorers of the oasis, who wrongly linked it to the story of the pre-Islamic prophet Salih, giving rise to the basin's name of Mahlab AlNaqah, or "the place where the

she-camel was milked". The water from the basin was probably used for ritual activities such as washing and cleaning (Marquaire 2019: 50). Similar reservoirs can be found at other cultic sites across Dadan, including at Umm Daraj, highlighting the ritual importance of water in the area.

ART AND STATUES FROM DADAN

The presence of a range of sculptural items in Dadan suggests that a sculpture school or workshop may have existed in the area (Al-Said 2010: 267).

01 VOTIVE STATUE, UMM DARAJ
AlUla Museum
02 BAS RELIEF OF LIONESS AND CUB
King Saud University
03 TORSO OF STATUE, DADAN
King Saud University
04 STONE BLOCK WITH SNAKES, DADAN
King Saud University

05 INCENSE BURNER WITH GAZELLES, DADAN
King Saud University
06 FEET OF STATUE, DADAN
King Saud University
07 FIST OF STATUE, DADAN
King Saud University
08 MONUMENTAL STATUE, DADAN
King Saud University



The most famous artworks produced in Dadan are a range of statues that were recovered from Umm Daraj and the Temple of Dhu Ghabbat in the city of Dadan, which were made about 2,500 years ago in the fourth and third centuries BCE.

The first statues were identified by Jaussen and Savignac in the early twentieth century. More than seven further examples were discovered during excavations by the King Saud University Archaeology Department. Many are life size or larger, with some

measuring up to 2.7 metres tall. They are all similar in appearance, depicting men with strong limbs, defined stomachs and broad shoulders, with hands clenched, the left foot forward and a stern gaze. Similar features, such as the shape of the eyes and eyebrows and the striding stance, can also be found on statues from Egypt and Mesopotamia (Al-Said 2010: 267). However, several localised, Arabian Peninsula features can be identified, including the use of the local short loincloth, the

depiction of a headband and the placement of a bracelet on the wrist (Al-Said 2010: 267; Rohmer and Charloux 2015: 300-301). The clothing depicted on the statues, including kilts, armbands and sandals, is a highly useful source of information about Dadanite dress. Similar examples have also been recovered during excavations at Tayma, but it is currently unclear as to where the style originated (Al-Said 2010: 268).

We do not know exactly who the statues represent or who they were

carved for, though it is likely they were carved for high-status members of society. One features an inscription mentioning a King of Lihyan, whilst their size suggests that they represent important people in society, perhaps kings (Hausleiter 2012: 827). Alternatively, they may be images of the worshippers themselves, presented to the gods to gain their blessings (Al-Said 2019: 66). It is suggested that up to 36 statues may once have lined a path or avenue leading to the temple (O'Brien 2012).

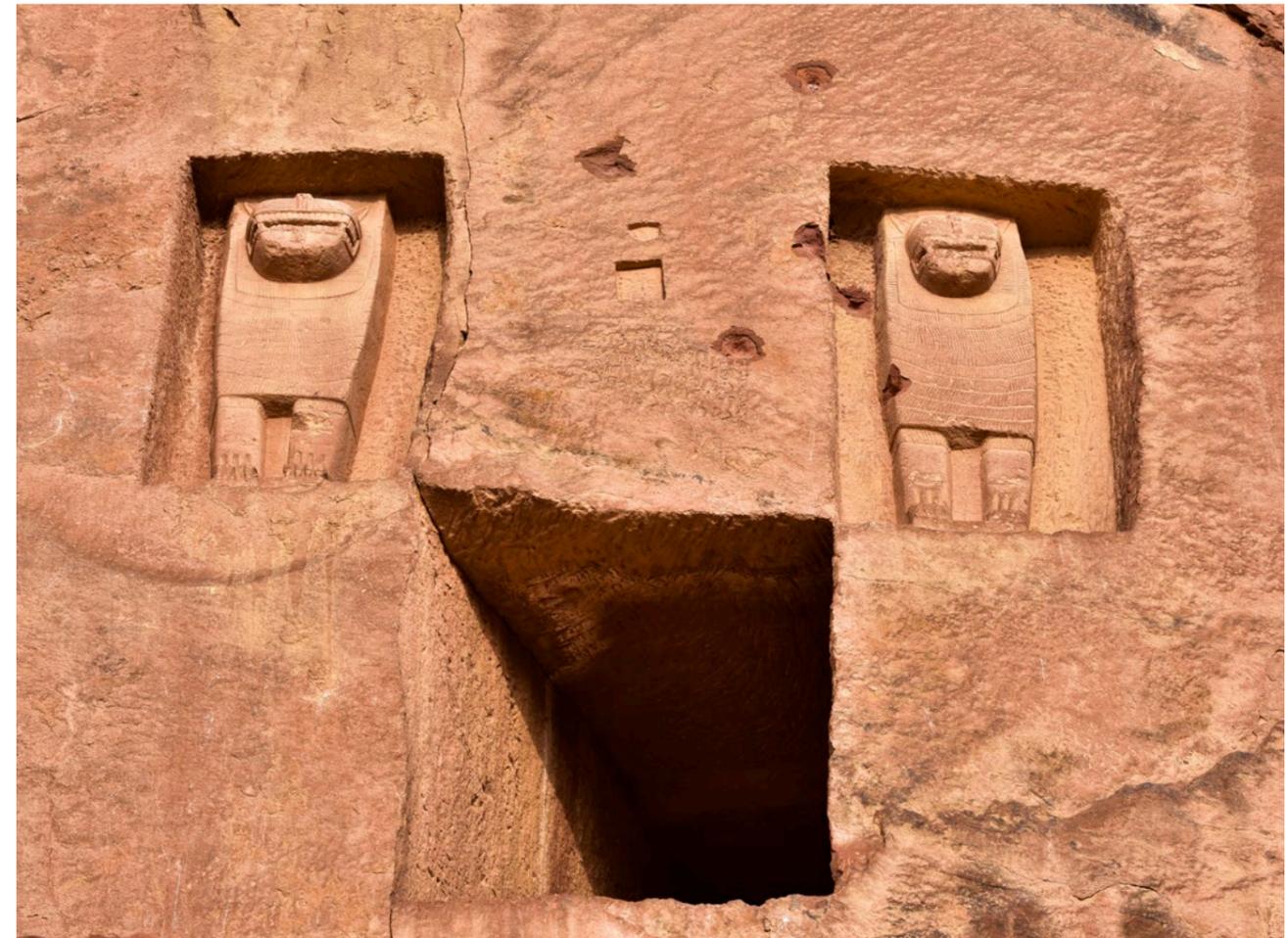
Smaller statues have been recovered from a temple at Umm Daraj. Like the Dadan statues, these male figures are around 2,500 years old. Their small size – averaging around 20cm in height – suggests they may have been used as offerings. They are stylistically very similar to the examples from Dadan. Whilst many of the statues are well-crafted, others appear to have been made by less-skilled artisans as their designs and decorations are much simpler. Their design may also have been

influenced by – or influenced – sculptures from Tayma (Al-Hassan 2019).

Further sculptural elements discovered at Dadan include animal designs. A sculpture of a lion, recovered from the temple, shows the influence of Hittite and Assyrian sculpture through the detailing of its square jaws and fangs. Clay figurines representing camels were decorated by mixing the red clay with basalt or lime to create striking coloured designs (Al-Said 2010: 269).

FUNERARY STRUCTURES IN DADAN: THE LION TOMBS

Left: LION TOMBS AMONGST OTHER ROCK-CUT TOMBS, DADAN
Royal Commission for AlUla
Right: CLOSE VIEW OF LION TOMBS
Raguet, 2018



A complex of about 87 tombs cut into the cliff can be argued to mark the beginning of monumental rock-cut tomb building in AlUla (Alsuhaibani 2015: 187-188). These tombs are approximately five metres above ground level and are the most visible funerary structures at Dadan. Most have square entrances and are horizontally cut more than two metres into the cliff face to create a single burial pit.

Some have a small room or burial chamber with multiple pits cut into the walls or the floor. Stone slabs or mudbrick walls would have been used to seal the tomb, protecting the deceased from animals and robbers (Al-Said 2011: 133-134; Alsuhaibani 2015: 186). However, many of Dadan's funerary monuments have been robbed since their creation over 2,500 years ago.

The most famous funerary monuments in Dadan are the Lion Tombs. Carved in the southern section of the cliff, these adjacent tombs are each decorated with a relief of a seated lion (Alsuhaibani 2019: 63-65). Lions symbolised power and protection and may have marked the burial of a member of royalty (Al-Said 2011: 133-134). Whilst we can't be sure exactly who was buried within these tombs, an inscription identifies one occupant as possibly an elite from Ma'in.

There are also several unfinished tombs that reveal how they were constructed. Spaces for loculi tombs were claimed by individuals by engraving a square 'frame' into the cliff face. These often contain an inscription naming the owner of the space. Using the square as a guideline, the tomb is carved into the cliff for a distance of approximately two metres (Alsuhaibani 2015: 186).

WRITING AND INSCRIPTIONS

The people living in and passing through Dadan during the first millennium BCE left various inscriptions and petroglyphs in and on the landscape around them.

Left: ANCIENT INSCRIPTIONS AT JABAL IKMAH
Royal Commission for AlUla
Right: INSCRIPTIONS AND PETROGLYPHS LINE THE WALLS OF THE
OPEN-AIR LIBRARY, JABAL IKMAH
Royal Commission for AlUla



Many of the inscriptions record religious rituals and dedications to the gods, written in a formulaic style including the author's name, the offering given and requests for blessings and protection. They also provide information concerning trade, taxes, and the rule and defence of Dadan (Al-Hasan 2010: 273-274). The site's many inscriptions have revealed glimpses of the religious practices of Dadan's inhabitants in

the first millennium BCE. The term 'afkal' is believed to describe a priest, guardian or performer of cultic functions, whilst the terms 'sahl' and 'sahla' denote the title priest and priestess (Hoyland 2001: 159). These three terms appear in many inscriptions in Dadan and at Jabal IkmaH, where pilgrims dedicated inscriptions to Dhu Ghabbat and other deities to commemorate their offerings and visits to AlUla.

The largest number of formal inscriptions record a religious ceremony for Dadan's chief deity, Dhu Ghabbat. This was called the 'zll' ceremony, which was performed to protect the authors' crops and families. The inscriptions suggest that Dadan was regarded as a religious place of significance by the people living in the wider region during the first millennium BCE, as worshippers describe themselves as travelling

from far away to perform thanksgiving ceremonies (Al-Hasan 2010: 272-273). More locally, those living in and near Dadan ask for the blessings of the gods on their crops and date palm groves, wishing for plentiful spring rains and asking for protection for themselves and their families (Hoyland 2001: 86). One tenth of the crops grown there appear to have been returned to the temple in the form of a tax called the 'tahl',

providing the king with income whilst appeasing the gods.

Many of these inscriptions can be found within Jabal IkmaH, a large outcrop to the south-west of Dadan. Its surfaces are covered in hundreds of inscriptions as well as petroglyphs, including representations of animals, humans and musical instruments (Al-Hasan 2010: 274).

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THE NABATAEANS



THE TOMB FACADES ON THE WESTERN FACE OF
JABAL ALBANAT, HEGRA
Royal Commission for AlUla

THE NABATAEANS AT HEGRA

The Nabataeans were a nomadic tribe who emerged in modern-day Jordan in the mid-first millennium BCE (Rohmer and Charlux 2015: 303-304). They are believed to have become a settled civilisation by the second century BCE, when they began to expand their territory to the south, with Petra as their capital. The Kingdom eventually stretched almost 800 kilometres from Damascus in the north to Hegra in the south (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 69). They are mentioned by ancient Greek author Diodorus Siculus as a people of “semi-nomadic origins”; later accounts of the Nabataeans by Greek historian Strabo and Romano-Jewish historian

Josephus record them as traders who interacted with a wide range of contemporary civilisations.

The Nabataeans established Hegra, which can be described as their southern principal city, in the mid-first century BCE some 500 kilometres south of Petra (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 69). By the first century BCE, Hegra had eclipsed and replaced Dadan, becoming the key stopping point on trade routes linking southern Arabia to Egypt and the Mediterranean, as well as taking advantage of the developing maritime trading routes via the port of Leuce Come (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 69-71).

Today, the site is famous for its monumental facade tombs, which surround the urban area and provide the most visible surviving architecture for the Nabataean presence in AlUla (Rohmer and Charlux 2015: 303-304). The first dated funerary monuments here belong to the early first century CE, whilst archaeological excavations in the residential area show a significant period of building activity in the first and second centuries CE.

Excavations at Hegra have revealed a significant settlement, religious installations and later military features, revealing the important role Hegra played during AlUla’s Nabataean period and beyond. After the Roman annexation of the Nabataean Kingdom in 106 CE, Hegra remained an important trading centre for a time, and became the Roman Empire’s southernmost outpost in Arabia.



HEGRA'S MONUMENTAL TOMBS
Royal Commission for AlUla

TRADE: INCREASE IN TRADING RELATIONS

Much of the Nabataeans' economic and political importance and wealth came from their control of trade commodities and routes around the ancient Near Eastern world. For four hundred years between 100 BCE and 300 CE, they had virtually complete control of the incense trade. This enabled Nabataean merchants to become rich as they traded with the Mediterranean empires who highly valued the south Arabian aromatics used in religious and cultural settings.

The Nabataeans had access to three major trading routes: the incense routes from southern Arabia, the Silk Road from the east and the maritime trading routes from the Indian Ocean via the Red Sea. Key imported items may have included ivory, semi-precious stones such as lapis lazuli and carnelian, glass, and spices.

Despite limited contemporary historical references, the foreign relations enjoyed by the Nabataeans are believed to have been truly 'global' by ancient standards. There is evidence that the Nabataeans had contact with India and China in the east, whilst also interacting with Rome, Greece and others. Excavations at Hegra have uncovered ceramics, glass and textiles from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syro-Palestine and India. Strabo,

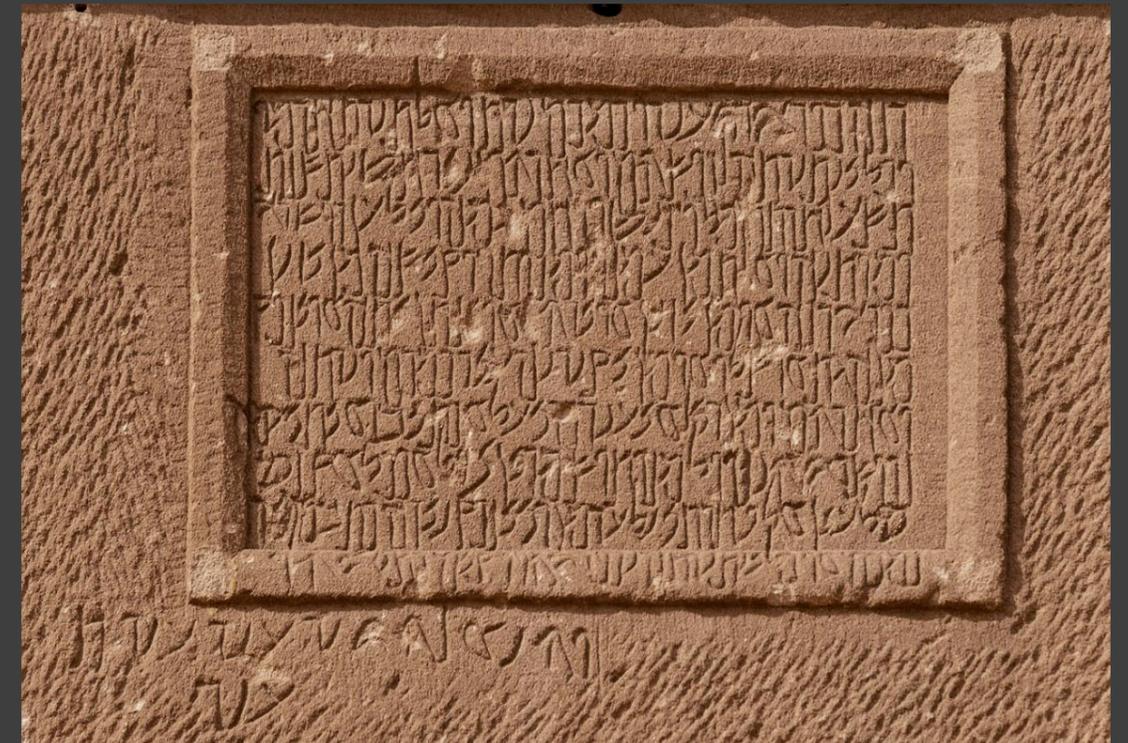
writing at the turn of the first century CE, suggests that 'foreigners' also resided in Nabataean cities. Hegra's position between the Mediterranean and the Far East, as well as at the head of northwestern Arabia, enabled it to act as both a political and trading bridge: a true crossroads between three continents. The Nabataeans were excellent middlemen in the international flow of goods.



LOOKING TOWARDS THE SIQ AND DIWAN AT JABAL ITHLIB, HEGRA
Royal Commission for AlUla



Top: VIEW FROM INSIDE THE DIWAN
Royal Commission for AlUla
Bottom: EXAMPLE OF TOMB INSCRIPTION, WITH FORMAL LEGAL FORMULATION
Taylor, 2019



RULERSHIP: NABATAEAN KINGS AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE

As part of the Nabataean world, Hegra was ultimately ruled by its kings. Kings mentioned in Hegra's inscriptions include Aretas IV, Malichus II and Rabbel II. However, due to its distance from the capital in Petra, Hegra would have had its own government officials and military officers supervising its day-to-day operations. The names and titles of a number of these officials appear in inscriptions on the city's monumental tombs: titles include Greek and Latin military and civil terms such as *'strategos'*.

How this translated into the Nabataean context is not clear, but these individuals were certainly members of Hegra's elite.

THE DIWAN

Throughout the Nabataean world, triclinia, or banqueting chambers, would have been a main focus for local political discussion or activity. At Hegra, examples include the smaller Ith 78, and the much larger example known as the Diwan. The Diwan is a monumental triclinium carved into the rockface of Jabal Ithlib, one of Hegra's most spiritually significant areas. Benches are carved into three sides of the space, with the front being fully open, possibly indicating some kind of display function. The use of such spaces for gatherings and tribal

discussion was banned under the Roman Empire following annexation, possibly due to fears of revolts or uprisings (Nehmé 2019: 71).

To the left of the Diwan is a natural rock passage known as the Siq, which leads to the centre of Jabal Ithlib where there were sanctuaries, inscriptions and ritual markers. These include numerous betyls, stone carvings representing Nabataean deities in a stylised form.

HEGRA'S DECORATED TOMB FACADES LINE THE
OUTCROPS SURROUNDING ITS URBAN CENTRE
Royal Commission for AlUla



HEGRA'S TOMBS: FACADES, CONSTRUCTION AND INSCRIPTIONS

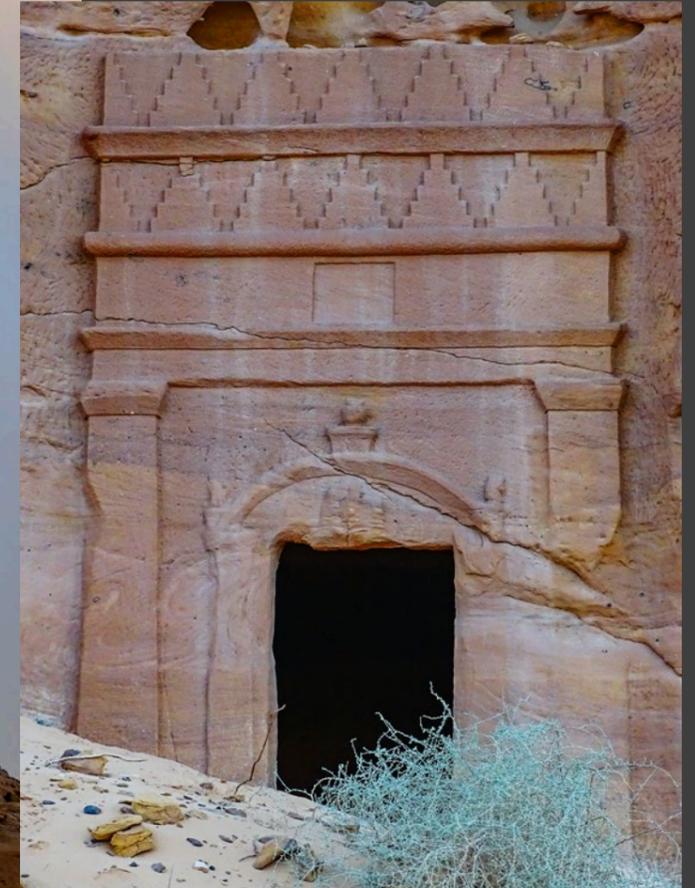
Hegra's monumental tombs are its most recognisable monuments. There are over 100, of which 94 are decorated, and there are over 30 tomb inscriptions, mostly above their doorways. The number and range of tomb inscriptions at Hegra is remarkable, and are more numerous than at Petra. They record legal formulations, the name of the owner or commissioner and their family, and sometimes the craftsman who created them.

The decorated facades are testament to the Nabataean's architectural skill. Their excellent

preservation makes them some of the most remarkable archaeological remains in northern Arabia and of the Nabataean civilisation (Sachet and Delhopital 2019: 40). The tombs were commissioned and built to hold the remains of families or groups of the most wealthy or elite members of Hegra's society. Simpler pit graves, found further up in the outcrops around Hegra were the final resting places of people of lower social status and number many hundreds more. The main locations of monumental tombs include Jabal AlBanat, Jabal AlAhmar and

Jabal AlKhuraymat. The Tomb of Lihyan son of Kuza, Hegra's most iconic tomb, stands alone in the landscape, a single tomb in one outcrop. They were constructed by skilled masons. Once a site for a tomb was selected, it was carved from the top down enabling them to be carved without the use of scaffolding. Simple wooden and metal tools including chisels, hammers and picks were used to remove blocks of stone and execute the fine sculpting of motifs and sculptures such as eagles, sphinxes, snakes, masks, urns and rosettes.

The surviving tomb inscriptions demonstrate that they were commissioned by both men and women, including public figures such as doctors, magistrates and military leaders. Many of these inscriptions are also dated, marking their construction mainly between 1 and 75 CE. These also reveal a strict set of rules that were used to ensure the endurance of their tomb, including specifying who could be buried within them, as well as the potential fines and punishments for those who disobeyed the rules or disturbed the tomb.



TOMB OF HINAT DAUGHTER OF WAHBU
Royal Commission for AlUla

OUTCROP OF JABAL ALAHMAR WHERE THE TOMB
OF HINAT IS CARVED
Royal Commission for AlUla

FUNERARY PRACTICES AT HEGRA

Hegra's tombs reveal much about Nabataean society and particularly about the Nabataeans at Hegra. The decorations on the facades themselves include symbols and features that speak of the influences and interactions with contemporary civilisations with whom they were connected by trade, including Mesopotamia, the Hellenistic world and Egypt.

However, they also include many uniquely local features not seen elsewhere in the Nabataean Kingdom. Many of these symbols can also be linked to elements of Nabataean beliefs, including the symbols of major deities such as the chief Nabataean god Dushara, the need for protection from harmful spirits, and beliefs in an eternal afterlife enjoyed by the soul. Excavations within some

tombs have also provided evidence of funerary practices at Hegra. Significant human remains and artefacts were excavated from the Tomb of Hinat daughter of Wahbu (IGN 117). Around 80 people were buried there, probably from several generations. The remains in the tomb have helped to establish that the Nabataeans at Hegra wrapped their dead in layers. Closest to the body was a wrapping of dyed wool. The next two layers were of a rougher, non-dyed linen. The top layer was a leather

shroud, sometimes with handles for carrying the body into the tomb. This final layer might include decoration. Jewellery found in the tombs of Hegra included a necklace made of dates, which may have represented fertility or prosperity.

Once in the tomb, the body was placed within a niche, pit or occasionally a coffin, or placed directly onto the ground.



EXCAVATIONS HAVE REVEALED A THRIVING CITY IN THE EARLY FIRST MILLENNIUM BCE, INCLUDING A SANCTUARY OR TEMPLE COMPLEX
Babelli, 2019

HEGRA'S CITY: RESIDENCES AND PUBLIC BUILDINGS

Excavations in the urban centre of Hegra have revealed a thriving settlement that was at its height between the first century BCE and first century CE, but with some form of activity on the site lasting from as early as the fifth century BCE and as late as the fifth century CE (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 73).

Located on a plain, the earliest settlement at Hegra may have been part of Dadan from the fifth century BCE. However, no traces of any early defensive urban

structures have yet been revealed (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 73).

Excavations suggest that the urban area measured around one square kilometre and was contained within a rampart. Within the city, several residential areas composed of many one-storey mud brick houses with flat roofs were divided by small roads and alleyways. Archaeological surveys demonstrate that these routes enabled a form of urban planning by limiting the ways in

which the settlement could be redeveloped. During the city's height, many of these houses featured carefully-laid stone pavements, whilst others contained tannur ovens, hearths and water drainage systems. In the centre, a temple and its supporting buildings surrounded an outcrop now known as IGN 132, upon which stood a four-pillared monument made of white sandstone. Civic buildings can also be identified through their architectural remains, including stone columns, their capitals and their bases (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 73).

After the Roman annexation, the city appears to have continued but the urban area declined towards the fourth century CE, with no more coins, inscriptions or elaborate buildings. By the early fifth century, Hegra's last occupants left the site, but it was still visited, perhaps by the inhabitants of newly-founded Qurh or the village of AlHijr (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 73).



ONE OF THE GATES IN THE RAMPART
INTO THE CITY OF HEGRA
Babelli, 2019

MILITARY ACTIVITY AT HEGRA

Hegra's position on the incense and trading routes meant that it was provided with strong military protection by both the Nabataeans and the Romans. Although many of the military remains have been destroyed, excavations have revealed sections of the town's rampart, the Roman period fort and many inscriptions left by the military forces (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 72-73).

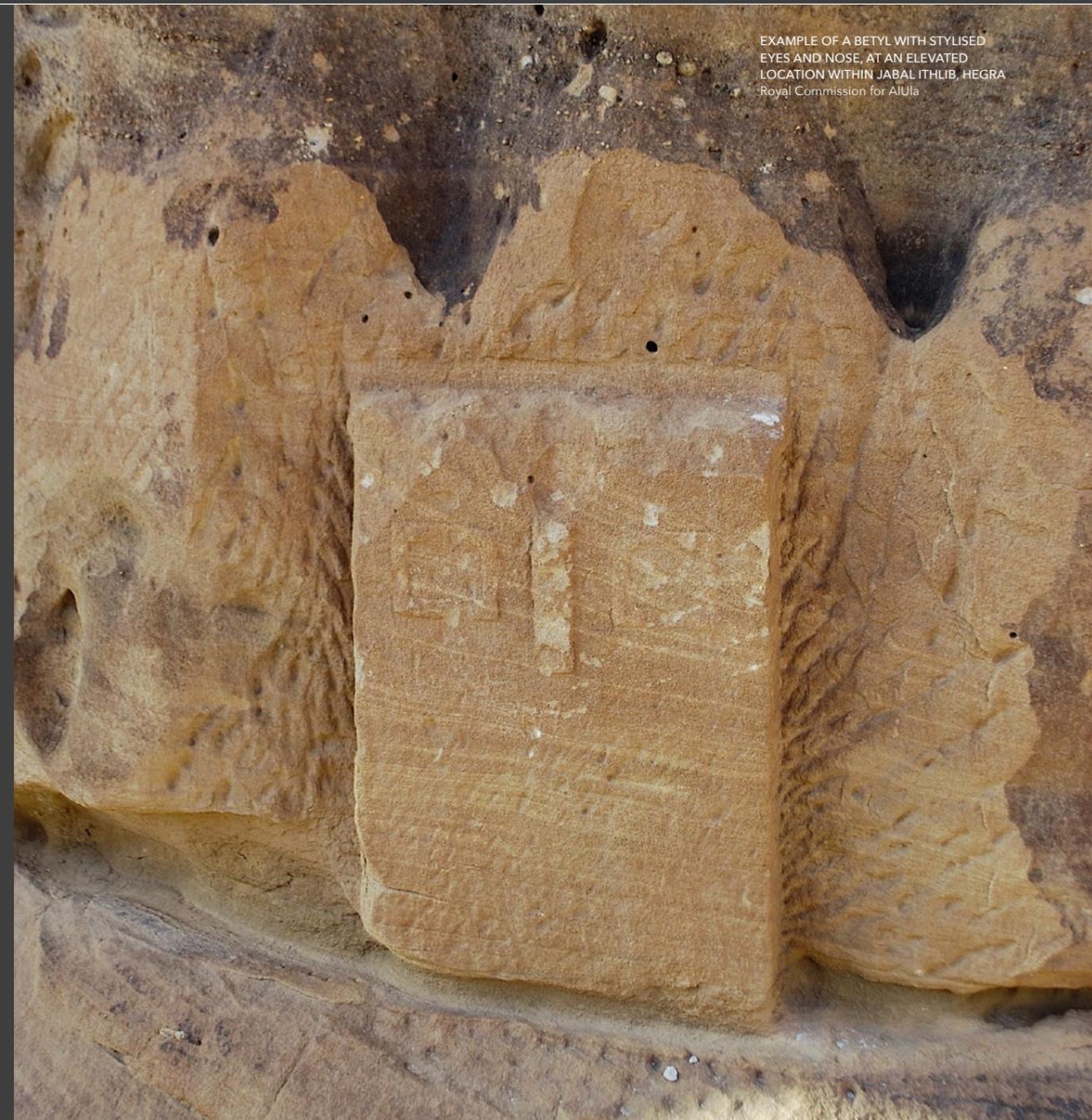
Traces of the rampart were first discovered during the early twentieth century. Excavations in the 1990s and by the ongoing Saudi-French project have revealed that the town was encircled by a 3 kilometre-long wall with between three and five gates, protected by at least towers and significant buttresses. Made of mudbrick and stone, the wall varies between 1.3 to nearly 4 metres in thickness. The first wall was probably constructed during the first century CE and was restored in the late second century CE (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 72-73).

Hegra also contains remembrances of the individuals who protected the city and its trading links. Graffiti carved by Nabataean and Roman soldiers can be found along the routes leading to the settlement, perhaps created as they accompanied trading caravans. Within Hegra, several graffiti have been discovered on reused masonry, whilst entire formal inscriptions in Latin, both painted and incised, have been used on blocks in

structures such as a gate within the city wall. One inscription records the refurbishment of a market in 180 CE by a Nabataean military officer, which was recovered in 2002 during excavations of a residential area.



EXAMPLE OF A NICHE FEATURING COLUMNS AND URNS, WITHIN JABAL ITHLIB, HEGRA
Royal Commission for AlUla



EXAMPLE OF A BETYL WITH STYLISED EYES AND NOSE, AT AN ELEVATED LOCATION WITHIN JABAL ITHLIB, HEGRA
Royal Commission for AlUla

RELIGION AT HEGRA

Hegra contains a range of religious features that can be compared to those used around the ancient world in the first centuries CE. Nabataean worship could be both public and private, utilising both natural features in the landscape and humanmade representations of the divine.

The Nabataean pantheon included a number of deities, evidence of which appears in the archaeological record. The characteristics of gods from other cultures were often mingled with those of local deities,

demonstrating the breadth of the Nabataeans' cultural contacts. The chief Nabataean deity was Dushara, whose name translates as 'Lord of Shara', a sacred mountain near Petra (Nehmé and Villeneuve 2019: 71). His various attributes include god of vegetation, the sun and the storm, as well as being a dynastic, royal deity. He can be compared to important deities from other cultures, including Greek Zeus, Egyptian Osiris, and A'ra, the god of Bosra, the Nabataean capital city from the end of the first century CE.

The Nabataeans also worshipped female deities, including Al-'Uzza ('the strong'), and Manat, the goddess of fate, justice and destiny. Gods were frequently represented in a stylistic or non-anthropomorphic form. At Hegra, they are found in the form of betyls, stone blocks that acted as representations of the gods. These are found both individually and in groups. Some feature

stylised eyes, noses and mouths. Betyls could be portable or carved into cliffs, where they were often positioned in niches. These niches could be relatively plain, featuring simple arched openings, or could be embellished with similar symbols to those used on tombs, such as pillars and eagles. Offerings could presumably be left in these niches.



Far left: REMAINS OF STRUCTURES AND INSTALLATIONS IN THE SACRED AREA OF JABAL ITHLIB
Babelli, 2019
Left: SANCTUARY OR TEMPLE AT IGN 132
Babelli, 2019
Below: HEGRA'S TOMBS BEAR MANY SYMBOLS THAT PROVIDE CLUES TO THE BELIEFS OF HEGRA'S NABATAEAN INHABITANTS
Royal Commission for AlUla



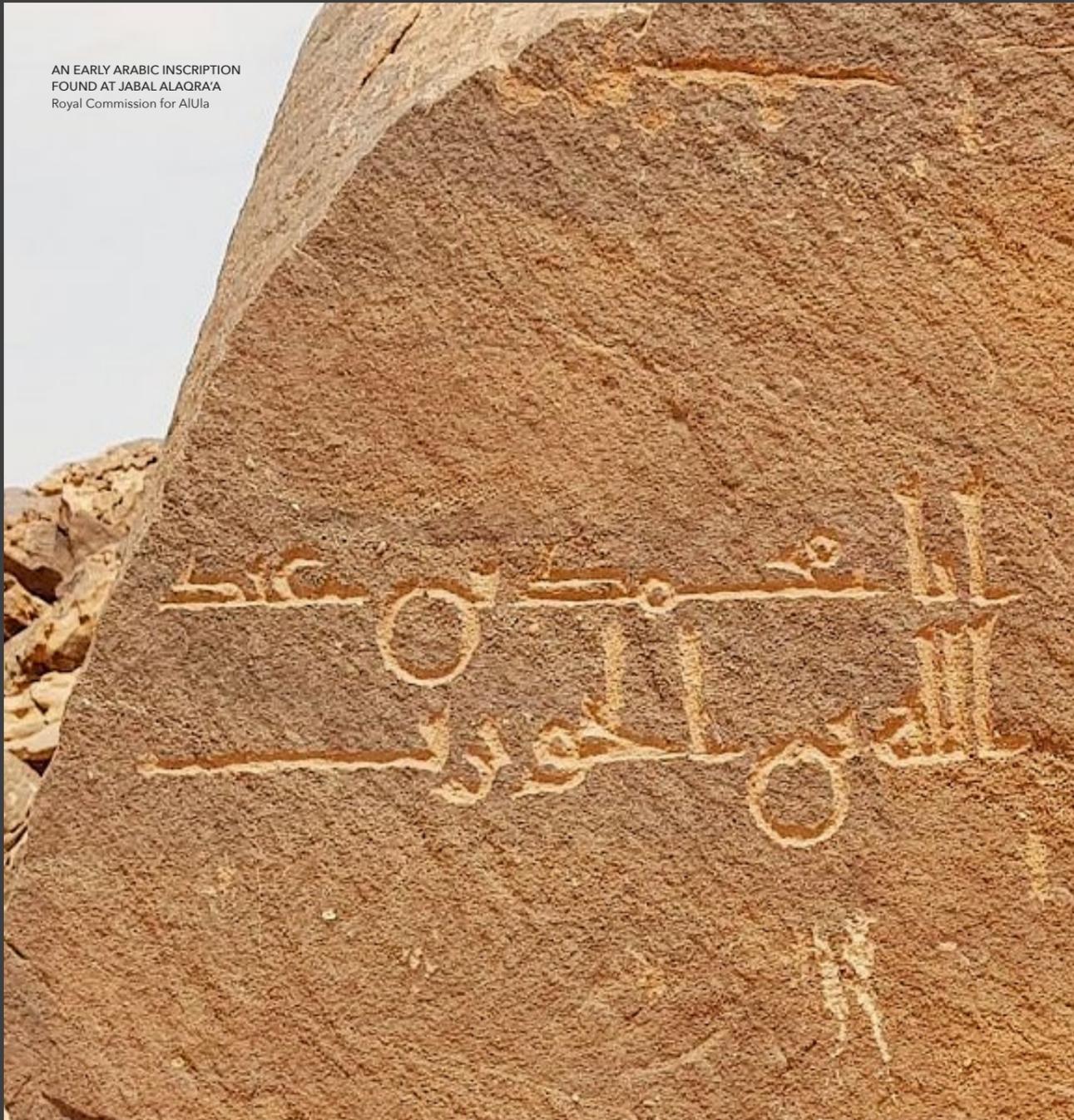
A concentration of betyl representations can be found inside Jabal Ithlib, a sandstone massif located to the north east of the residential area. Jabal Ithlib contains a range of religious features and inscriptions. The Siq in particular contains a range of betyls, niches and inscriptions, including one dedicated to A'ra (Healey 1986: 113). Examples of the elite or ritual feasts held in

the Nabataean Kingdom in spaces such as the Diwan were recorded by Strabo and Roman historian Tacitus in the late first century BCE and the early first century CE. They record that such a meal was shared by thirteen people. Musicians and performers, both male and female, may have provided entertainment.

One site located within Hegra's urban centre, now referred to as Area 6, is thought to have had a cultic use during the Nabataean period, with excavations revealing a large complex of structures surrounding a central massif. The remains located on the mountain, IGN 132, may have been used as a temple, sanctuary or religious structure, and a white sandstone block there may have been used as an altar. However, its precise use and function is difficult to determine. Surrounding the structure are the remains of several basins used to hold water from a well

dug at the bottom of the outcrop. The water may have served a ritual function, whilst a bronze incense container discovered amongst the basins suggests that some of the aromatics transported through Hegra may have been used on the site. A human-made chamber dug into the sandstone may have been intended to be used as a triclinium. However, this was prevented by the collapse of the chamber's ceiling in antiquity (Nehmé 2010b: 116).

AN EARLY ARABIC INSCRIPTION
FOUND AT JABAL ALAQRA'A
Royal Commission for AlUla



JABAL ALAQRA'A HAS HUNDREDS OF
EARLY ISLAMIC INSCRIPTIONS
Royal Commission for AlUla



INSCRIPTIONS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE ARABIC SCRIPT

Nabataean inscriptions can be found throughout AlUla. Concentrated in Hegra, these provide rare glimpses into the Nabataean world and appear primarily in the form of funerary inscriptions and graffiti.

The Nabataean occupants of Hegra appear to have spoken a dialect of Arabic, but used the Aramaic script to write their inscriptions. Nabataean Aramaic consisted of twenty-two letters, composed of sixteen shapes differentiated using a system of dots. It was unlike other contemporary Arabian scripts, which were composed of twenty-eight letters (McDonald 2019: 59).

The earliest inscriptions of the Arabic script were also found in this region, initially written in Nabataean Arabic, before the script fully evolved into Arabic by the late fifth century. After the decline of Roman control in the area in the third century CE, control of the region returned to Arab principalities and the written script evolved from being suitable for carving into stone to a script primarily written in ink (MacDonald 2019: 59; Nehmé 2019: 82).

Thanks to evidence from Hegra and AlUla, we now know that the Arabic script derived from Nabataean rather than Syriac as was originally believed (Nehmé 2019). This makes AlUla very significant in terms of the study of the origins and derivation of the Arabic script.



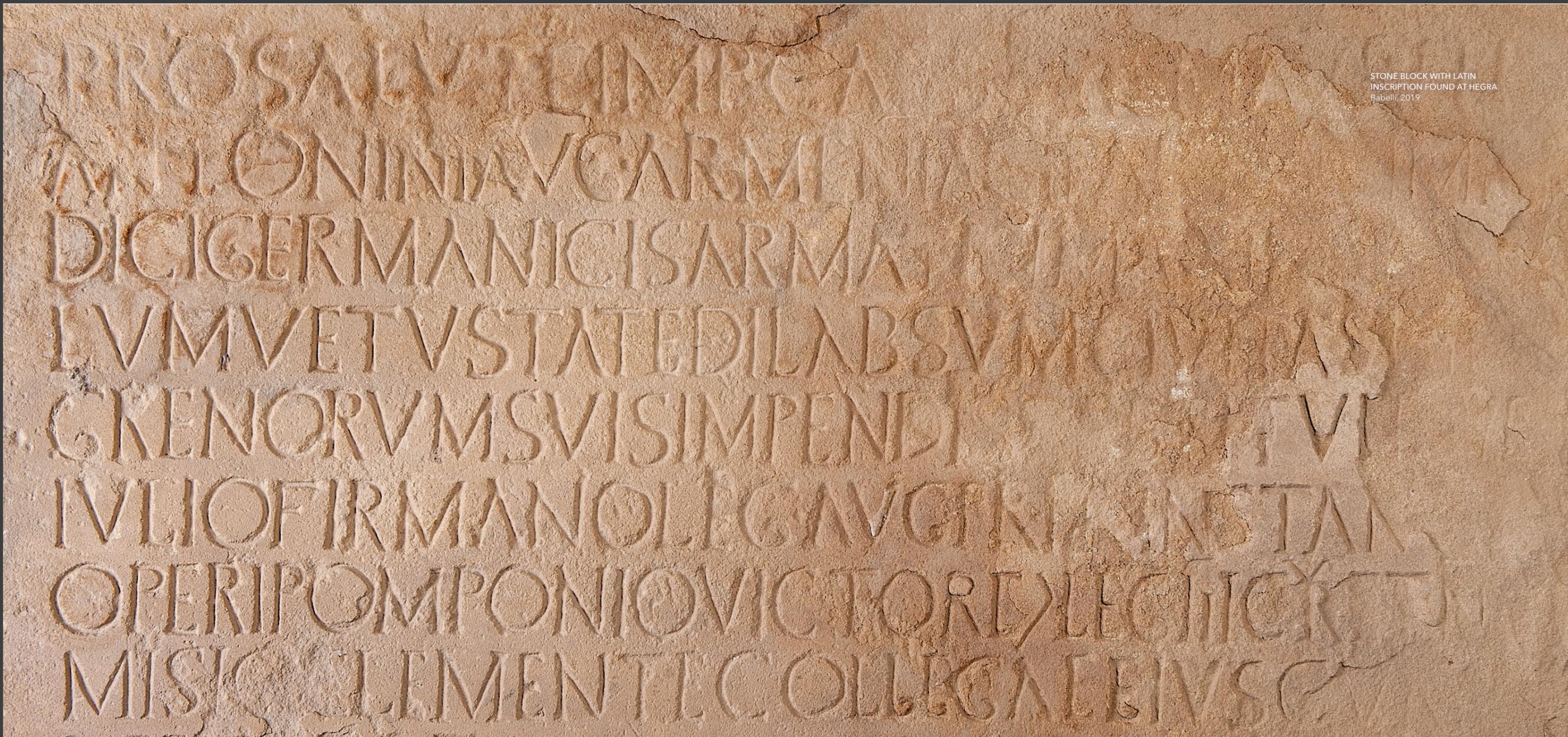
ONE OF HEGRA'S 130 WELLS,
REUSED IN THE 1970S
Raguet, 2018

WATER MANAGEMENT

The Nabataeans were known in the ancient world as master hydrological engineers, able to find and control water even in the most arid climates. At Hegra, they utilised multiple methods to support their settlement.

Over 130 wells were constructed in Hegra and used to access the water table located approximately 9 metres below the surface. While it is difficult to date all examples to the Nabataean period, their location and structural similarities suggest they were built around the same time. The wells could be replenished by groundwater and rainfall, enabling them to also act as cisterns. The largest example is 7 metres in diameter and 17 metres deep. Water from the wells was often stored in cisterns either carved directly into the rock or made from monoliths, enabling water to be stored across the site.

Water channels were also used across the site to manage the movement of water across parts of the site. Excavations in the residential zone have shown that ceramic pipes and stone-lined channels were used to move water away from courtyards into the streets. Channels were also carved above the tomb facades to move rainwater away from the intricate details, helping to preserve them.



STONE BLOCK WITH LATIN
INSCRIPTION FOUND AT HEGRA
Babelli, 2019

THE ROMANS IN ALULA

The Nabataean Kingdom was annexed by the Roman Empire under Emperor Trajan in 106 CE, when it became Provincia Arabia. Despite being on the very limits of the new province, Hegra was important because of its position on the trade routes. The Romans could easily monitor trade passing through the region from Hegra, using the site's readily available water resources and fertile lands to sustain forces based there (Al-Theeb 2019: 80).

Notable traces of the Romans in AlUla appear through surviving inscriptions and the excavated fort. Many examples of Greek and Latin graffiti can be found along the routes leading to the city from across Arabia, as well as on an outcrop to the east of the city that overlooks these roads.

A Latin inscription records major restoration work undertaken on the rampart around 175 CE which was

overseen by two centurions. These have revealed the presence of at least two identifiable companies: a cavalry corps of Gaetuli (Berbers from North Africa) and the Cyrenean Third Legion, consisting of professional Roman soldiers (Villeneuve 2019: 74).

Despite the Roman presence, Hegra does not appear to have been Romanised as other contemporary Arabian and Middle Eastern cities were. The city lacks the theatre, paved roads or forum that identify a city as Roman: excavators have seen this as evidence that Hegra may have declined after the annexation, perhaps due to changes in the trading routes as sea-based trade became more common (Villeneuve 2019: 74-76).

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ISLAMIC ERATO MODERN DAY



THE ISLAMIC PERIOD

AlUla found renewed importance in the Islamic period. Following the decline of trade in the third century CE and the abandonment of Hegra, new settlements were established that utilised the area's agricultural potential and access to important travel routes to maintain AlUla's importance.

The first mention of AlUla in epigraphic sources comes from the era of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Prophet is reported to have visited the region three times: in his youth, in 7AH and in 9AH (629 and 630 CE respectively). On his journey to Tabuk in 630 CE he stopped at Wadi AlQura and passed the ruins of Hegra, as recorded in early Islamic sources (Al-Muraikhi 2019: 101; Nehmé et al 2006: 43). The Prophet's early followers also left graffiti and inscriptions in AlUla: descendants of the Prophet's companions, writers of the Hadith and early pilgrims are believed to have created commemorative inscriptions along the routes they travelled (Al-Ghabban 2019: 91).

Following the advent of Islam in the seventh century CE, the AlUla Valley was an important connecting point between the Levant and the holy sites of Makkah and Madinah. The area's settlements were visited by pilgrims following the Syrian and Egyptian Hajj routes and the Aylah route connecting Madinah to Aqaba via the Hisma plateau (Al-Ghabban 2019: 90). The journey from Hegra to AlUla took approximately half a day (Al-Muraikhi 2019: 100-101).

AlUla is frequently mentioned by famous travellers and pilgrims. The Arab geographer Al-Istakhri (died 346 AH/957 CE) recorded his visit, mentioning the Nabataean and Lihyanite remains and the monolithic basin linked to the Prophet Salih in the Qur'an (Al-Talhi 2000: 1). The twelfth century Arab geographer Yaqut, fourteenth century traveller Ibn Battuta and seventeenth-century traveller Kibrit Al-Madani, all record the area's abundant water, fertile land, and friendly inhabitants (Al-Ghabban 2019: 91; Al-Muraikhi 2019: 100). AlUla was the final stop for non-Muslims travelling along the pilgrimage routes, with reports stating that Christian merchants sold their wares in AlUla. Many pilgrims also left their property in the town before undertaking the final stage of their journey, returning after completing their pilgrimage to recover their items (Al-Muraikhi 2019: 101).

ISLAMIC SETTLEMENTS IN ALULA

The settlement of Qurh, known more recently as AlMabiyat, was founded twenty kilometres to the south of AlUla around the sixth century.

Qurh is located in the centre of a plain, overlooking the natural reservoir of Mughayrah al-Gharbi which drains into the Wadi al-Jizl (Al Aboudi 2019: 94). Prior to the seventh century, Qurh was known as Suq al-'Arab, "the Arab's Market", highlighting its economic importance. Qurh rose to prominence with the advent of Islam, becoming a major stopping point on the Hajj routes from Egypt and Syria and experiencing a major economic boom. The Arabic scholar Al-Muqqadasi wrote in the tenth century that Qurh was the largest town in the Hijaz after Makkah and was a highly successful trading settlement (Al-Aboudi 2019: 94). The city was protected by a rampart, whilst excavations have revealed traces of the markets, houses and production areas within the urban area. Its buildings were elaborately decorated with Arabic calligraphy, Islamic art, carved stone and plaster elements, as well as multicoloured bricks, divided by narrow streets. Alongside its economic activities, Qurh is also credited as being the birthplace of Arabic song (Al-Aboudi 2019: 94). It flourished until the twelfth century, when the settlement now known as AlUla's Old Town rose to prominence (Nassif 2019: 112).



Top and far right: EXCAVATED AREA AT QURH
Both Royal Commission for AlUla
Right: FRAGMENT OF GLAZED POTTERY FROM THE NINTH OR TENTH
CENTURY, FOUND AT QURH
King Saud University



ISLAMIC SETTLEMENTS IN ALULA

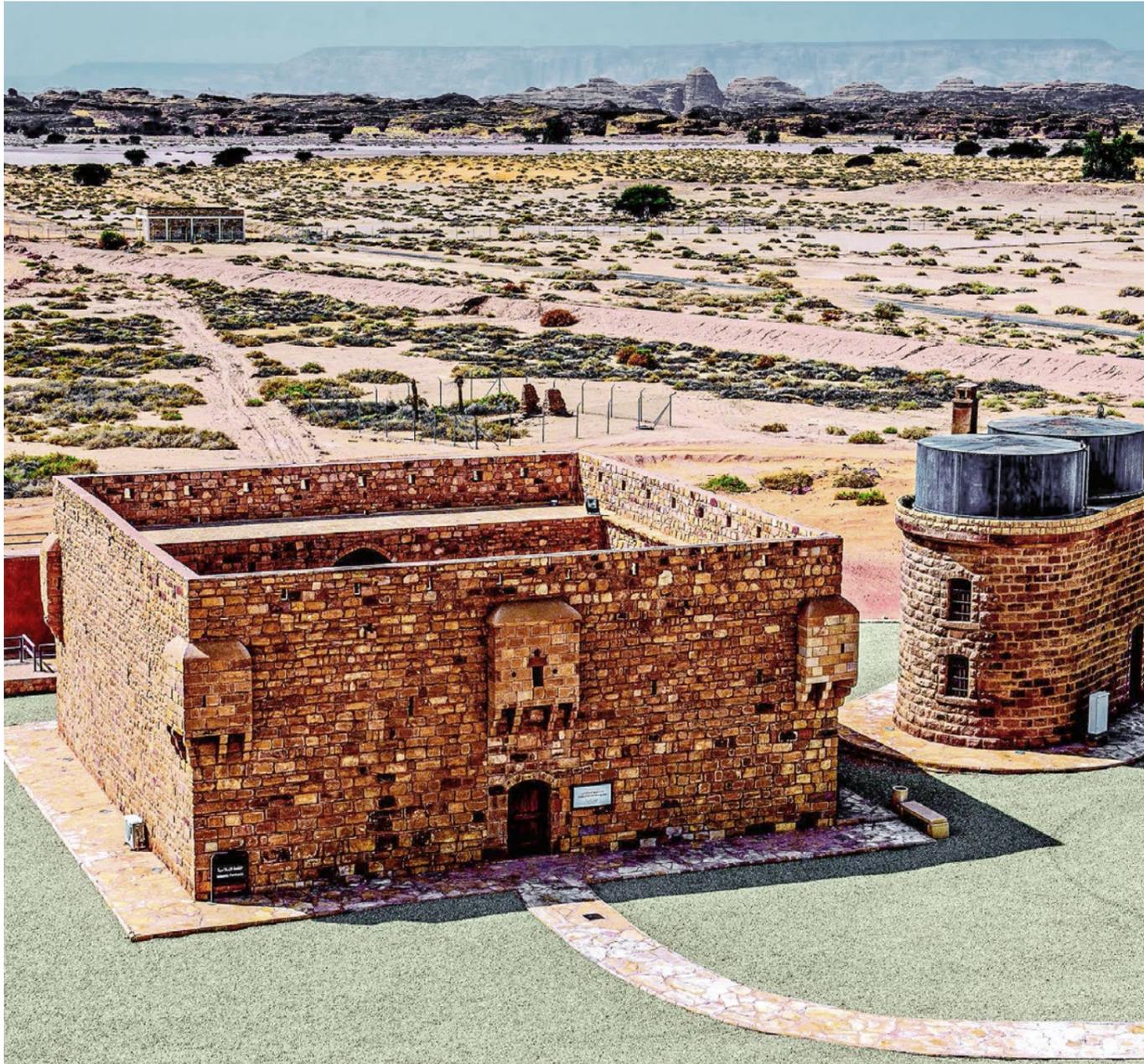
The settlement of Old Town (AlDirah) is located in the narrowest part of the AlUla valley. Built on a slight elevation, the town is overlooked by the Musa bin Nusayr Castle, a citadel dating to at least the tenth century.

Old Town was continuously occupied from the twelfth century until the 1980s, when its last occupants moved to the current town. The town replaced Qurh as the major stopping point on the pilgrimage routes and is favourably mentioned by a range of important travellers from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries.

Its houses, built of mud brick, date palm wood and stone blocks, some taken from the surrounding ancient settlements, were accessed by a series of small alleyways often measuring less than three metres wide. Over 900 properties have been identified, including mosques, houses and shops. Many of the houses were decorated with art painted onto the lime walls, using natural pigments such as blue indigo, red iron oxide and white gypsum. Motifs painted on the walls included images of local plants and animals, household objects such as dalla (coffee pots) and incense burners, calligraphy and geometric shapes such as triangles. The close proximity of the houses formed a natural protective wall; and entrance to the city was by fourteen defended gates (Nassif 2019: 112).

The settlement was supported by a fertile hinterland and was supplied with water from a series of human-made canals. Palm gardens and fields provided its inhabitants with foods including dates, cereal crops, fruits and vegetables: its fertility resulted in Jausen and Savignac describing AlUla as a "land of milk and honey" in the early twentieth century (Nassif 2019: 112-113).

The Summer Orchards included temporary structures constructed of date palm leaves and wood to enable better ventilation during the hottest part of the year, when residents of the Old Town would stay there. During this time, they would undertake works on their homes in the town, and would return there after the completion of the date harvest in late October. Summer nights in the orchards could include a range of entertainments such as singing, visiting markets established by the town's women, and celebrating important events such as weddings. Remains of these structures can still be seen amongst the date palms today.



EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY ALULA DEFENSIVE FEATURES

A range of defensive structures were created throughout AlUla to protect travellers passing through the region.

Caravanserais (for rest and respite along a route), birkas (water reservoirs) and forts together provided pilgrims with safe stopping points, which were served by wells. Boundary stones marking the way through AlUla's landscape can be dated from the twelfth to the early twentieth centuries (Al-Ghabban 2019: 91).

The Fort of Mada'in Salih at Hegra, was built in the eighteenth century, perhaps to protect an existing well, as well as to protect the route travelled by pilgrims on their way to Makkah. It acted as a point at which pilgrims could purchase goods including dates, lemons and oranges. The remains of spotting towers can also be found throughout the county.

EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY ALULA THE HIJAZ RAILWAY

Commissioned by Sultan Abdulhamid II in March 1900, the Hijaz Railway aimed to connect the Islamic holy city of Makkah to Damascus and on to Constantinople (modern Istanbul) (Nicholson 2019: 5; UNESCO ND).

Before the construction of the railway, pilgrims travelling the Syrian Hajj route by foot would have to trek for approximately forty days through harsh terrain. Other risks included disease and poor weather, resulting in a high mortality rate amongst the pilgrims (Nicholson 2019d: 8).

The Hijaz Railway enabled the same journey to be undertaken in as few as four days (UNESCO ND). Priced at seven pounds for a third class return ticket (equivalent to SAR 4,000 or GBP 800 today), the railway provided a much safer travel alternative.

Stations spaced every twenty kilometres along the line provided vital services for the railway such as water, engine repair sheds and accommodation for railway workers. The trains also transported goods such as grain, wood, coffee and sugar to settlements along the line (Nicholson 2019d: 3).

Twelve stations were constructed in AlUla, with the railway construction reaching these stations by 1907. They made use of the existing caravanserais that had served the pedestrian pilgrims. Reflecting AlUla's local significance, a major station complex was planned for the town. However, many of the construction workers were affected by an illness known as the 'Aleppo Button'. An agent for the Cairo Intelligence Department wrote of the disease in 1907, stating his belief that it was in fact 'Madinah worm', "a disease prevalent in the Hedjaz and caused by swallowing the parasite in water." It was therefore decided that Mada'in Salih to the north, easier to defend than AlUla, would be the primary station (Nicholson 2019c: 5). On 1 September 1907, a joint ceremony was held to inaugurate the stations of AlUla and Mada'in Salih, with invited guests treated to congratulatory speeches and a feast (Nicholson 2019c: 5).



The Hijaz Railway reached Madinah in August 1908 and was used commercially for six years. Pilgrim numbers doubled during this period, with passenger services accounting for almost half the railway's total revenue (Nicholson 2019d: 3).

In 1908, Mada'in Salih was used as a quarantine camp, inspecting the nearly 13,000 pilgrims who passed through the area for symptoms of plague or cholera. According to Dr F.G. Clemow, a British doctor based in the embassy at Constantinople, fifty-seven of the 101 cholera cases diagnosed were fatal. A hospital was set up to provide medical facilities for the railway workers, as dysentery, scurvy, typhoid and cholera were common problems.

The outbreak of the First World War saw the railway become a target. Large, well-garrisoned stations like AlUla, while difficult to attack by land, were open to raids from the air. British aircraft carried out a series of bombing campaigns on AlUla in 1917, whilst troops led by Lawrence of Arabia attacked the line outside of the county (Nicholson 2019a: 6). These attacks crippled the railway, preventing the movement of goods and troops along the western coast of Saudi Arabia.

The Hijaz Railway never recovered from the damage of the wars. Subsequent civil unrest and severe winter storms led to the collapse and abandonment of the Hijaz section of the line by the 1920s. Today, the Hijaz Railway is on the "Tentative List" for consideration for UNESCO World Heritage status (UNESCO ND).



MADA'IN SALIH STATION TODAY
 Royal Commission for AlUla
 THE OLD RAILWAY BUILDINGS ARE TODAY RE-USED, INCLUDING HOUSING A
 RESTORED LOCOMOTIVE
 Royal Commission for AlUla

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