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EDITORIAL

Abdulrahman Al-Ansary

The Pioneer of Archeology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The archaeological community has lost the pioneering academic and founder of archeology in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Professor Abdulrahman Al-Tayeb Al-Ansary (1935-2023 AD), who passed away on Monday, March 6, 2023 AD; Shaban 14, 1444 AH. Professor Al-Ansary, has had a long academic journey, establishing and studying archaeology, archaeological excavations, and discoveries in Saudi Arabia.

Professor Al-Ansary was one of the pioneers obtaining a PhD in Archaeology in 1386 AH (1966 AD). He graduated from Cairo University with a Bachelor's degree in Arabic Language in 1960 AD. He came back home and was appointed a teaching assistant at King Saud University, the College of Arts, the Arabic Language Department. The following year, he was awarded a scholarship to study for his PhD at the University of Leeds, England. During the first year of preliminary studies, he decided to study Lihyanite inscriptions. He studied the Lihyanite inscriptions in Al-Ula, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and received a PhD in Semitic inscriptions from the Department of Semitic Studies.

In 1966 AD, Professor Al-Ansary came back home and was appointed as an Assistant Professor at King Saud University, Department of History. However, his passion for archaeology and ancient history led him towards establishing an academic entity for archaeological studies at King Saud University. He founded the History and Archaeology Society in 1966 AD, the same year he returned back from abroad. This society, with the support of Al-Ansary's colleagues and students, began to care for antiquities in the Kingdom, organizing field visits to archaeological sites in various regions of the Kingdom, collecting archaeological artefacts and displaying them in the corridors of the College of Arts at the university. This initiative marked the beginning of interest in Archeology, establishing the first archaeology museum in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Professor Al-Ansary was a field archaeologist who had a great status in the archaeological community in the Kingdom and the Arab World. He contributed to the development of archaeological studies at King Saud University and excavated the archaeological site in the Al-Faw in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, directing



Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Ansari during one of the Archaeological Excavations' season at Al-Faw site.

the field excavations for more than two decades. He also contributed greatly on Al-Ula, its history and archaeology .

Professor Al-Ansary was a distinguished academic, applying the expertise he knew and disseminated it to those learning from him. . He would give young people great care and respond to them when they asked him for advice regarding their research or graduate studies. He would receive them in his office and talk to them with an open heart and patience, listening to their requests and inquiries, which led to the formation of a generation of qualified Saudi archaeologists who studied and worked with him for decades, from the 1960s of the twentieth century till his passing, may he rest in peace.

Professor Al-Ansary was known for his patience, vision and self-denial towards official appointments. He was also keen on developing Saudi archaeological expertise and that they are the ones to study the cultural heritage of their own country. Professor Al-Ansary had a distinctive communication approach, in an era when archeology was viewed with suspension in Saudi Arabia. He would invite officials from the university and other institutions to visit Al-Faw site and the museum at the Department of Archeology. He wanted to promote them; thus, contributing to the formation of a positive attitude regarding archaeology in general; He was able, with his wisdom to attract those officials and dignitaries and win their support of archaeological studies and cultural heritage in Saudi Arabia.

In 1972 AD, Professor Al-Ansary, under the umbrella of the Society of History and Archaeology, began the first and most important excavation project in the Kingdom at Al-Faw site (the village of Dhat Kahl). The excavations revealed an ancient city dating back to the first century BC until the fourth century AD, which was the capital of the Kingdom of Kinda.

During his chairmanship of the Department of Archeology at King Saud university, Professor Al-Ansary was keen to choose the best international universities with diverse educational departments, to send teaching assistant colleagues from the university to complete their postgraduate studies. This resulted in a large number of the university's scholarship students obtaining PhD degrees in archaeology, studying with some of the most prominent archaeologists in the world. This contributed to building strong relationships with numerous international universities and contributed to building generations of archaeologists specializing in various branches of archaeology. When the scholarship students returned and joined academic work at the university, Professor Al-Ansary facilitated their participation in the department's archaeological excavations.

He would treat graduating staff returning from abroad as colleagues; He would empower them with the ropes of academic work and provide them equal opportunity to reach leading positions at the department and college levels. This is a quality of academically mature professors with an impetus for their national project; creating a Saudi archaeological school that contributed to achieving the national goals of preserving, protecting, studying, and promoting the national heritage.

In regard to Adumatu Journal, Professor Al-Ansary played an important role in establishing the journal in agreement with Dr. Ziad Bin Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy, Director General of the Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy Foundation, at the time. The Board of the foundation approved issuing a journal that contributes to serving the archaeological and cultural heritage in Al-Jawf Region, the main headquarters of the Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy Foundation, and in order to activate one of the objectives stipulated in its bylaw. The Board agreed to name the journal "Adumatu"; an ancient name of a kingdom that once reigned in Dumat Al-Jandal, Saudi Arabia. The management of the foundation assigned Professor Al-Ansary as the head of the Editorial Board. Since the beginning, Professor Al-Ansary began mobilizing support for the journal at the level of local and Arab universities. He nominated two of his colleagues at the Archeology Department to work with him on the editorial board; Dr. Khaleel Al-Muaikel and Dr. Abdullah AlSharekh. However, later he nominated Dr. Mohammad AlOtaibi to join the board. The first issue of the journal was issued in 2000 AD, and the journal was remarkably received among archaeological academics interested in the antiquities of the Kingdom and other Arab countries.

Being the head of the Editorial Board of Adumatu, Professor Al-Ansary was keen to diversify reviewing committees for papers submitted for publication, to ensure that the authors of such research would benefit from the views of various specialists in the various branches of archaeology. Professor Al-Ansari was keen on the regular meeting of archaeologists interested in the archaeology of the Arab world, and hence he proposed that Adumatu oversees holding a conference every five years and researchers from around the globe are invited to submit a research



Faisal bin Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy, the Chairman of the Board of Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy Cultural Centre, honors Professor Al-Ansary, may he rest in peace, during the Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy Forum for Saudi Studies held at Dar Al Uloum, Al Jouf in 1434 AH (2012 AD), and standing next to him is Dr. Salman bin Abdulrahman Al-Sudairy.

paper. Three conferences were held and they were well received by participating specialists, and the proceedings were published in three separate monographs.

This pioneering role in the field of archaeological studies by Professor Al-Ansary earned him appreciation and honors from many dignitaries. He received numerous prestigious medals and awards, including: the order of Merit First Class, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia 1982 AD/1402 AH, the Kuwait Foundation for Scientific Advancement Award 1984 AD/1404 AH, the Culture and Arts Award from the Ministry of Culture, Republic of Yemen 1998 AD/1419 AH, the Arab Archaeologists' Shield from the Union of Arab Archaeologists, Cairo in 2001 AD/1422 AH, the May 22 Gold Medal from the President of the Republic of Yemen 2004 AD/1425 AH, the Prince Salman (King) Award for Pioneers in the History of the Arabian Peninsula, from the King Abdulaziz Foundation 2005 AD/1426 AH, and the Shield of the Honors of Arab Historians from the Union of Arab Historians in Cairo 2007 AD/1428 AH. He was also honored by the Emir Abdulrahman bin Ahmed Al-Sudairy Forum for Saudi Studies, held in 2012 under the title: " Archaeology of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Saving What Can Be Saved". Professor Al-Ansary was named the personality of the forum having devoted his life to the service of archaeological excavations and research. In recognition of his distinguished efforts in archaeological research in Saudi Arabia, and known to the world as a cultural depth and an authentic component of human culture, The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, awarded the late Professor Al-

Ansary the King Khalid Medal, First Class. In addition, he was chosen, may his soul rest in peace, as a member of the Saudi Shura Council in the first and second periods of the Council (1993-2001 AD).

In appreciation of his scientific and professional career, Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, the Chairman of the Commission for Tourism and National Heritage at the time, launched in 2016 an award in his name for serving the Kingdom's cultural heritage, stressing that professor Al-Ansary has made great and useful discoveries in heritage and antiquities. His most important achievement was the initiation of a generation of archaeologists who studied under him, and will continue on his trail. Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdulaziz pointed out that Al-Ansary was a prominent academic figure, a national role model, and a man of initiatives. He contributed with his knowledge, effort, and perseverance to highlighting the Saudi heritage in international forums. He also contributed, with his advanced mindfulness, to raising awareness of the importance of antiquities and national heritage and preserving them so that future generations can appreciate them.

The loss of Professor Al-Ansary from the Saudi and Arab archaeological scene left a void that will be hard to bridge. He will remain present among us through his legacy, represented in more than forty books (some in collaboration with other colleagues), more than 50 published research papers, and numerous archaeological, heritage and tourism publications and brochures.

Professor Al-Ansary, "the person," passed away, but the "symbol" of the distinguished archaeologist and enlightened thought, will remain among us; not only at the level of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, but also in the Arab World. He also left his mark among his fellow archaeologists worldwide, as he enjoyed their respect and appreciation. They often invited him to attend international archaeological conferences and meetings. He was also an important reviewer invited by various international universities to review countless theses for graduate students when their subject was related to antiquities in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia or antiquities in the Arab World. These universities had full confidence in his academic capabilities in the field of his specialization.

Editor -in-Chief