

EDITORIAL

The success of Adumatu's first Forum (December 2005) was a strong incentive for us to convene Adumatu's second Forum in May 2010. For the second Forum, after a careful and thorough deliberation, my two colleagues and I settled on the topic of "Man and the Environment in the Arab World in Light of Archaeological Discoveries." The influence of environment was clearly a pressing factor that weighed heavily on man's choice of dwelling and settlement, and changes in environment conditions dictated the remapping of trade routes. On the other hand, environmental good conditions and the presence of rich food resources in certain geographical areas led to conflicts among the various human groups. With these facts in mind, we drew the following objectives for the second Forum:

Highlighting the strong relation between Man and the environment.

Identifying the environmental factors which influenced human communities throughout the ages.

Highlighting the important roles scientific techniques and technologies play in enhancing archaeological studies that address the reciprocal relation of influence between Man and the environment.

As soon as Adumatu's new invitation to this Forum reached Arab and international universities, academic research centers, and those interested in Arab archaeology, we were overwhelmed by the positive responses. Scholars made sure to meet deadlines for abstracts and final paper submissions, and expressed their strong interest in attending. We received many interesting and strong papers addressing the theme of the forum, and our Scientific Committee waded through all and picked what we thought spoke most closely to the main theme of the Forum.

The preparation demanded long hours and strenuous efforts which involved both important and serious matters and irrelevant but vital logistic issues. The first included communication with participants, reading and evaluating contributions, asking for further clarifications, exploring possibilities of specific editing, further explanations, and so on. The second involved arrangements for travel, reservations, arrival and departure dates and accommodation. Our team worked day and night, raced against time, and conquered all difficulties and hurdles. Though hectic and strenuous, the work was both exciting and rewarding. The Forum convened on time: Jumadi Awla 20-22, 1431H (May 4-6, 2010), in the City of Skaka, al-Jouf Region.

Just as it was anticipated and meant, the Forum was a rich environment of scholarly work where opinions and ideas found a fertile soil of acculturation; scholars presented their research skills and experience on the main topic, and the results were inspirational and enlightening. In format, content, and outcome, the Forum was indeed exemplary. Everyone felt its moving impact, and the contributors in particular expressed their happiness and satisfaction over its achievements.

On the Forum's last day the Scientific Committee held a workshop on the "Archaeological Activities in the Arab World and the Role of Archaeology Societies"; it was Adumatu's contribution to highlighting and introducing the work of Arab Archaeological Societies.

It is with pride that the editorial board of Adumatu reports on the success of its second Forum, and promises the readership of the journal to publish these papers in a especial volume. Such a publication, we are sure, will contribute to the advancement of the field, enrich Arab and international libraries, satisfy the inquisitive researcher and, in its unique theme, cover a long neglected though vital area. In sum, such a

publication has all the potentials to become the reference that scholars and interested researchers cannot do without consulting. Adumatu, therefore, is proud to be the first to initiate, authenticate, and bring to light such a volume.

On this happy occasion the editorial board wishes to thank Mr. Faisal bin Abdul Rahman Al-Sudairy, Head of the Administrative Council of Abdul Rahman Al-Sudairy Charitable Foundation, for his motivating encouragement and moral support in holding this forum; thanks and gratitude are also owed to Dr Ziyad bin Abdul Rahman Al-Sudairy, Director General of the Foundation, for his enthusiasm, unlimited support, persistent follow up, and helping overcome all setbacks we faced. We are indebted to the "work-team"—members and personnel of the Foundation—who spared no effort in administering the program with professionalism and skill.

The editorial board is also grateful for the financial and moral support the Forum received from the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities and from the National Bank; these financial contributions and support have facilitated the convening of the Forum on time and in accordance with its specified plan.

We note with pleasure the fact that the Forum attracted interested audiences not only from the city of Sakaka where it was held, but also from neighboring places; those included the academic staff members and students from the Department of Archaeology at Hail University in Hail Region, and the other groups who took the trip from the city of Al-Qurayat in Al-Jouf Region.

The sessions covered all areas the Forum specified: prehistoric ages, reciprocal relations between similar and diverse environments, river transformations and irrigation engineering (especially as practiced by the Nabataeans), and inscriptions along with the living patterns they depicted of the historical time to which those inscriptions belonged.

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Of the Saudi exhibition in Paris, one cannot help but say it was indeed a wonderful "international" Exhibition to which thousands and thousands thronged to see. Those people were indeed eager to witness the national heritage of Saudi Arabia whose right to its own deeply rooted civilization many have been long denied, considering its people no more than flocks of Bedouins roaming with their animals the four corners of the Arabian Peninsula. Of this whole area, however, light was shed only on Yemen or what came down in history as Arabia Felix which received few international exhibitions.

This interest in ancient Yemen is based on nothing other than the mythical relation between Queen of Sheba and the Apostle of God, King Solomon (PBUH). Yet, thousands of texts and inscriptions have been discovered in Yemen, and still no evidence supports any historical existence of any Queens in Arabia Felix. The case of the north, however, is the exact opposite: the North boasts the rule of five Queens! And still, despite scientific evidence to the contrary, no one seems to care. The claim that Solomon's fleet dominated the Red Sea is, for all, evidence enough to bind Solomon to Sheba in Yemen.

In the Louvre, fortunately, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has made its firm appearance not through unsupported and wild myths, but through irrefutable archaeological facts going back in time millions of years. All corners of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are replete with ancient civilizations that maintained relations with those of Mesopotamia, Nile Valley, Anatolia, and Syria. Within the Peninsula, one has the ancient civilizations of Najd, Hejaz, Ahsa, Asser, the Empty Quarter, and Dilmun when it meant the entire eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula.

The presence in the Louvre of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia entrenched in millions of years of civilization

was nothing but a shocking surprise to Paris, the very city deservedly acknowledged as the World's center of learning and enlightenment. This presence added to that enlightenment; it has come from the land of a long line of Prophets: Abraham, Ismael, Hud, Saleh, Sho'aib, the Prophet of the people of Tuba'a, and sealed with Muhammad who was sent not to a particular nation, as was the case with the others, but a mercy to all nations.

This is the first undertaking the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities has launched, led by a young man who first explored space as an astronaut and is now exploring the space of culture, learning and science. This mission, under his leadership and assistance of a capable team, will move on to Spain and Germany, and perhaps farther still to Russia and the USA.

This is indeed the opportunity for Ancient States and Centers of Settlement of the Arabian Peninsula to vie for their well deserved recognition and well-earned historical place: al-Shwaihithieh, for one, has claims to millions of years; Dumat al-Jendal (Adumatu) with its Queens boasts thousands of years and repeated victories over Assyrian Kings; great Tayma crowns itself with its deep history and the honor of battling Nabonidus, the neo-Babylonian King who conquered it only after having exterminated its people.

Tayma in particular was the meeting place of faiths, economic transactions, international conflicts between Egypt and Iraq, and the nurturing origin of kingdoms. If I were to imagine the first initiation of Lihyan State in Tayma, I would wager it sprang from and grew in "Dadan" (present day 'Ula). Located firmly between two mountains, "Dadan" was a secure place for the State of Lihyan; then it expanded to cover a large area extending from the Gulf of Aqaba in the north to the boundaries of al-Madinah al-Monwarah in the south, and even to Makkah al-Mukarramah demographically.

Excavations in Tayma and 'Ula unearthed inestimable treasures: imposing statues as commanding as its history and rich texts revealing aspects of religion, economy and society. Throughout the volcanic areas and mountains extending from the north to the south, the Arabian Peninsula has become an open book. In the east, came the Princesses of Thadj with all their fragrance, jewelry, and lavish furniture. There is also Gerhea the sea port of Qaryat al-Fau, the town that lived eight centuries building a glorious history. This is the very town that slept for three thousand years to wake up to the clanking shovels of Saudi excavators from Riyadh-based King Saud University, led by the first Saudi specialist in ancient inscriptions and in archaeological excavations⁽¹⁾.

Texts discovered at Qaryat al-Fau testified to the prosperity its society had enjoyed, including the presence of temples, inns, markets, and colorful drawings among which the deity of wine Backhaus appeared amid grapes and pomegranates. Houses and burials showed advanced and distinct architecture; the people seemed to have maintained their commitment to the gilded couches, decorated censers, jewelry, and sandalwood coffins in their burials. Such is the civilization to be enjoyed by those who seek to see the civilization of the Arabian Peninsula, the original site of all Semitic migrations to the four corners of the world.

One cannot help but send the most heart-felt thanks to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities for what it has done and will do in the future.

Editor -in-Chief

(1) The reference is to Professor Abdul Rahman Al-Tayyeb Al-Ansary, who returned in 1966.