

EDITORIAL

The famous Arabic line “too many hyenas thronged for Khirash that she did not know which one to choose” would look most appropriate here. This time the choice for Kirash is nothing other than “Lihyan,” the 6th century BC State that originated and expanded in the northern part of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. I have recently read the second edition of the valuable book “Lihyan throughout History” (1432H). The author, Omair bin Owaimer al-Swaidi al-Lihyani, has admirably covered and traced all relevant information on Lihyanites: tribe, people, kingdom, present dwelling places, etc. The only reservation one may entertain, however, relates to the author’s inconsistency in determining Lihyanite tribal lineage. At times he assigns it to the tribe of Hothail; at others he returns to his own Lihyanite tribe as if he sought to satisfy the claims of one tribe then the other. Still, at other times he places the two side by side. This methodological flaw is consistent throughout his study plan.

It is now possible to determine the origin of the Lihyanite Kingdom and the extent of its expansion. For me, Lihyanite State seems to have originated in Tayma, and written its first texts in the Aramaic script. Such a position is supported by two texts referring to two ruling Kings of Tayma. The first text of the first king points to “Fisgoo Shahro bin King of Lihyan”. The following is a rendering of the text:

(1) *The Monument of Dhu Shahro, Ruler of Tayma.*

The Text:

- (2) *Fisgoo/Shahro bin*
- (3) *King of Lihyan did raise the building of the house (of)*
- (4) *Slm Deity and expanded it and*
- (5) *constructed this throne (chair) in front of*
- (6) *Slm Deity to be the seat of Shingla*
- (7) *and Ashima the Two Deities of Tayma*
- (8) *for the duration of the spirit’s life of Fisgoo*
- (9) *Shahro and his descendent Maraa*
- (10) *and for the duration of the spirit’s life of who...*



The text of the second King, recovered by the Saudi-German mission excavating in Tayma, reads:

- * *On (day) 10 of (the month of) February of*
- * *the 20th year of the rule of Talmi*
- * *King of Lihyan*

The rule of these two kings expanded to al-‘Ula; much of this expansion seems to have taken place during Talmi’s rule in particular. In al-‘Ula people used the Lihyanite script for writing (the script of the Lihyanite people). It is therefore plausible to claim that Mata' Al, Kabeer of Dadan, ruled when Dadan was independent and it became part of his title (Kabeer of Dadan). But when the Lihyanite Kingdom expanded, its name also changed to reflect the expanded kingdom. That is why during different reigns of Lihyanite kings, the people of Lihyan wrote in Lihyanite script, although their kings used the Aramaic script—the dominant script of the time. Consequently, we can identify the Kabeer of Dadan as the first ruler of this area before the expansion of Lihyanite kingdom and its domination of the region of “Dadan” to become, since then, the Kingdom of Lihyan.

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One cannot pass in silence over the sad occasion of Prince Naif bin Abdulaziz’s passing away. We pray that Allah Almighty bestow on his soul the divine mercy and blessing. Prince Naif was the caring benefactor of our archaeological heritage; he chaired the Administrative Council of the General Commission for Tourism and Archaeology for three years (6/5/1426 to 15/3/1429H). During his chairmanship, he initiated within the Public Security sector a specialized administration responsible for all issues concerning archaeological sites in the Kingdom. Many have been the benefits of this most important unit. To name only few, the administration organized the mechanism of cooperation between the Commission for Tourism and Archaeology and the Ministry of Interior on the procedures concerning smuggled or stolen archaeological items; it also issued many regulating rules for monitoring archaeological sites and reporting any suspicious practices therein. These measures in particular provided high security for all archaeological sites.

Prince Naif was also known for his deep interest in and care for the national heritage, and patronized many activities of the archaeological Commission. Of these was the first meeting and conference on the protection of the Kingdom’s archaeological legacy. And

Islamic archaeological remains received his particular attention and reverence.

If these relate to national concerns, other instances from my own experience testify to his personal virtues. During my tenure as head of the National Society for Pensioners, his Highness Prince Saud Al-Thunayan suggested Prince Naif as the Society's Honorary head. He generously accepted and, few days later, we visited with him in his office. His reception was most cordial and intimate, honoring us in a way many would certainly wish to have had. Nor was the reception the only remarkable memory. One cannot forget Prince Naif's patronage of and presence at the celebration of the Society's launching, and the two million Saudi Riyals he donated in support of the Society's establishment. To top it all, he in person accompanied us to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and was at the head of our group introducing each and every one of us to the King.

These are the manners we rarely find except in the offspring of King Abdul Aziz, the man who unified the country around the true faith. His sons have closely followed the steps of the founder and inherited his values. Blessed is the father who unified the country; blessed are the sons who have followed suit. May Allah Almighty honor Al Saud and set onto righteousness their march. They are the example after which we take.

Editor -in-Chief