

## EDITORIAL

### **Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah (Home of Islamic Archaeology)**

“ad-Dar” (home) is perhaps the noun that accumulates so many cherished meanings and significance; and “Hadeeth ad-Dar” (lit. Homey Talk) is the annual publication Sheikha Husa Sabah al-Salim publishes. It usually comprises carefully chosen studies that were presented at the “Home of Islamic Archaeology” in its home of Kuwait. This publication introduces readers to the Islamic culture and its distinct high Art, especially that which reflects high taste and striking beauty. The large and comprehensive collection of al-Salim is its best representative, and covers a period extending from the dawn of Islam to the 12th Hijra Century (6th-18th centuries). The collection’s rich items are well classified and ordered chronologically and geographically. And in terms of archaeological excavations, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah is best known for sponsoring the field work of the Islamic Fatimid remains in the city of el-Bahnsa (Coptic: Pemdje), in addition to the Raya excavations at Mount Sinai to uncover the ancient Spice Route.

Ad-Dar, for its cultural seasons, annually hosts distinguished researchers and scholars of different specialties to lecture on various fields of the Islamic material culture: Islamic Art, Archaeological remains, Architecture among many others that concern historians and interested specialists. One also would not forget the library; it is rich in its holdings of references, books and publications pertinent to the collection.

Established in 1983 as a local institution attending to the antiques of al-Salim’s collection, Dar al-Athar al-Islamiyyah was then loaned to the Kuwaiti government to become a world cultural institution. It sought to share its rich holdings with friends, the public at large, and with those interested in Islamic art world-wide. In so doing, ad-Dar sought to create an active artistic and intellectual involvement among all in Islamic art in general and in this collection of rarities in particular. No words will do justice to those fascinating artistic and historically significant items.

I personally was lucky to have had the chance to see the collection and was dazzled by what I saw. At that point, I asked Sheikha Husa whether they had a plan to save this impressive collection in case an invasion would—God forbid—befall Kuwait! She looked bewildered in disbelief at this unlikely possibility. When Kuwait was invaded, I remembered that exchange, and wondered whether Sheikha Husa recalled my question. However, those who took control of the museum were cognizant of the collection’s value and accorded it the care it deserves; fortunately, the collection was later returned unharmed to Kuwait.

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### **The Saqifah of Bani Sa’ida**

The historical function the Saqifah of Bani Sa’ida witnessed after the death of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) had far reaching consequences, dating not only for a new period in the history of Islam, nor for the launching of Islam world-wide, but also for putting down the grounds for the election of the Caliph of Islam. Like other important places, it had its claim to an equal influential role in the history of Islamic civilization. And as a historical relic, Saqifah of Bani Sa’ida ,therefore, has as much right as any other of equal importance to careful attention, conservation, and preservation.

To name some of the most obvious consequences to which it led, one cannot overlook its role in initiating the Caliph governing rule, nor can one neglect the beginnings of Islam’s reception in the four corners of the world. It was, again, at the Saqifah that the wars against “apostasy” was decided to become the first battle to fend off a serious threat to the very roots of Islam, a worthy cause for which many committed Muslims sacrificed the lives. The consequences were immense: with God’s grace, Islam’s pillars remained intact; Arab revolting tribes willingly re-embraced Islam and thus joined ranks to help spread Islam in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt. It is to such early places and people that Islam owes its great civilization that surpassed those of Persia and Byzantine and served the advancement of humanity.

Since Saqifah was the cornerstone of the Islamic Government after the Prophet (PBUH), we ought to acknowledge our indebtedness to the place and our obligation to monumentalizing the site. Only in this way can we pride ourselves for having preserved the heritage that our early Muslim ancestors left us. After all, it is in this

place that the early seeds of Islam were sowed; it is also from there that we have the early companions of the Prophet (PBUH), Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Abu Obaidah ibn al-Jarrah, among many others. Those were the companions who preserved Islam in its purity, setting right the faulty opinions that threatened the faith, helping surpass differences, putting an end to separatism and discord, and uniting all to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr as the first Caliph of Muslims.

With such a rich history and importance, the Saqifah has the right to claim its place among Islamic sites. And the celebration of naming al-Madinah al-Munwarah the Capital of Islamic Culture is an opportunity to call on its governor HRH Prince Faisal ibn Salman ibn Abdul Aziz to take on the Saqifah as his own to turn it into a historical monument that plays a role in the striding progress of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia we are now living. Of such a deed, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, may Allah grace with all success his efforts in serving our Umma, will no doubt be as proud as he is honored in serving the two holy places.

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### **Obituary of Prof. Safwan Al-Tell**

The Arab archaeological community has lost one of its most active, hardworking and distinguished members, Professor Safwan Khalaf Al-Tell. I have only belatedly known of my friend's passing in October 2012. Dr. Al-Tell has been the professor of Islamic History in the University of Jordan for a long period; he also served as director of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (1991-1994). In those capacities, among others, he served dedicatedly both Islamic History and Arab archaeology. I have visited with him many times, exchanged ideas on pressing and non-pressing Arab archaeological issues, and discussed various other common concerns. Professor Al-Tell can only be remembered as a pleasant person to be around, an avid learner and an authority in his field. In our field, he bequeathed the Arab library many important publications and studies on Archaeology and contributed a great deal to discovering many Archaeological sites in Jordan. I can only pray he rest in peace at a better place

### **Editor -in-Chief**