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EDITORIAL

As part of its ongoing pursuit of becoming a center of academic advancement and cultural exchange, Adumatu is pleased to announce the new dates for its Fourth Symposium, titled: "Religious Structures in the Arab World Throughout the Ages Based on Recent Archaeological Discoveries."

This important academic symposium will be held on Thursday and Friday, December 3-4, 2026, in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain.

The choice of Manama, Bahrain as a venue for this symposium affirms Adumatu's vision serving as a bridge between its origins in Al-Jawf, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the rest of the Arab World. It also aims to provide researchers with an opportunity to explore the rich archaeological sites in the Kingdom of Bahrain and enrich the dialogue on religious pluralism and cultural tolerance that the region has witnessed, as embodied in religious structures throughout history. We welcome all researchers from Arab and international universities to participate with their insightful research, which will contribute significantly to archaeological knowledge.

Efforts continue to have Arab archaeological sites registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee, held in New Delhi (July 2024), witnessed further successes with the registration of three new Arab sites on the UNESCO World Heritage List, reaffirming the profound cultural depth of Arab heritage and renewing international recognition of its significance.

The registration of the Cultural Landscape of Al-Faw (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Umm Al-Jimal (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan), and the Monastery of St Hilarion/Tell Umm Amer (Palestine) on the UNESCO World Heritage List does not merely represent an addition to the World Heritage List; it is in fact a global acknowledgment of the pivotal role these sites have played in shaping shared human history.

Saudi Arabia has succeeded in registering its eighth site (the Cultural Landscape of Al-Faw), underscoring the Kingdom's commitment to the Saudi Vision 2030. Located on the edge of the Empty Quarter, at a strategic crossroads, Al-Faw was a vital passage for trade caravans between northern and southern Arabia, specifically on the Najran route; a crucial part of the ancient Silk Road.

Archaeological excavations at Al-Faw, which flourished between the mid-First Century BC and the early Fourth Century AD, have revealed a comprehensive cultural system and a unique architectural and civilizational character. The city incorporates the

remains of a large marketplace and residential buildings with advanced architectural designs, in addition to an agricultural oasis and an ancient irrigation system that used rain and floodwater. This intricate system demonstrates the ingenuity of the inhabitants of the area in adapting to the harsh desert environment and exploiting available natural resources.

The discoveries pertaining to religious life in Al-Faw are among the richest discoveries in the Arabian Peninsula during that period. The uncovered temples and rock inscriptions indicate the presence of diverse and varied beliefs (worshipping of idols such as Athtar, Wadd, Shams, Kahl, and Al-Lat). This diversity of beliefs points to a unique cultural environment characterized by religious tolerance and coexistence, making it a spiritual hub as well as a commercial center. These discoveries enrich our understanding of the concept of cultural exchange in pre-Islamic Arabia. Therefore, we urge archaeologists to explore deeper into the analysis of the excavation results at this site to shed more light on its political, economic, social, and religious history.

The site of Umm Al-Jimal in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan stands as a testament to the ingenuity of human adaptation in the harsh basalt plains of Hauran area. Known as the "Black Oasis" due to its use of local black basalt as a primary building material, the city possessed a unique and robust architectural character.

The exceptional significance of Umm Al-Jimal lies in the ability of its inhabitants to thrive in the arid desert environment. The city has demonstrated a sophisticated and ingenious system for harvesting and storing water in pools and cisterns, in addition to its distinctive stone roofing system. Umm Al-Jimal was also a crossroads of strategic trade routes connecting Palestine and Jordan with Syria and Iraq, making it a vital route for caravans.

The site also serves as an open record for studying cultural succession and interaction between various powers and civilizations. Actual settlement in this site began during the Nabataean era, and reached its pinnacle as a border city during the Roman and Byzantine epochs, and later during the subsequent Islamic periods (from the 1st to the 8th Centuries AD). During this time, the city expanded significantly and prominent temples and fortresses, such as the Church of Julian, dating back to 345 AD, were constructed. Settlement continued during the early Islamic epochs, as evidenced by the Umayyad Mosque, which stands as a testament to the architectural development that Umm Al-Jimal enjoyed at that time.

The inclusion of the Monastery of Saint Hilarion/Tell Umm Amer (Palestine) on

the UNESCO World Heritage List is of particular importance, since it is not merely an archaeological site, but one of the oldest and most important monastic centers in the Middle East, located in the Nuseirat area of the Gaza Strip. This monastery was founded by Saint Hilarion in the 4th Century AD (around 329 AD); a prominent figure who played a pivotal role in establishing the Christian monastic way of life in the Holy Land and who influenced numerous monastic centers in the region. The monastery was a vibrant center for religious, cultural, and economic exchange during the Byzantine era, due to its location at the crossroads of major trade routes between Asia and Africa.

The site encompasses wide-ranging architectural remains, making it the largest monastery in Palestine by area, incorporating four successive churches, sophisticated baths, cisterns, and exceptional mosaics that reflect the development of architectural and decorative arts during that period. The monastery persisted and flourished throughout the Byzantine era and into the 8th Century AD.

Due to the evolving security situation arising from the war on the Gaza Strip, the site was registered on the List of World Heritage in Danger by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee on July 26, 2024. This measure, while intended to provide a mechanism for international protection, stems from the outstanding universal value of the site and the imminent threats and dangers it faces as a result of the ongoing conflict in the Gaza Strip. The registration of this site on the UNESCO World Heritage List places a moral and scholarly responsibility on the academic community to focus on documenting this site and its rich history. It also advocates for its preservation, serving as a testament to an important chapter in our shared cultural history.

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