

Archeological Sites in Al Jouf Province:

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1- Geographical Location:

Al Jouf province is located between 42.37° longitude and 32.29° latitude in the northwestern part of Saudi Arabia stretching out in the east from Hail region westward to the border of Jordan and from the region of Tabuk in the south until northern border region in the west. The surface area of the land of the province is low and starts declining from the east to the west with the surface elevation varying between 1200 meters to 300 meters above the sea level. Al Jouf province is occupying an area of 258,000 square meters of the land in the Kingdom, and has a population of 290,000 people spread over the provinces and cities and villages of the region centers spread throughout the area.

The name of Al Jouf is indicating the low level of its land compared to its neighboring areas. This is considered an old name given to the province. The low lands are called Al Jouba, which is representing a hole or a lower place. Also is called Al Nagrah, in the past and the province was given the name 'Al Nafakh Valley'.

2- Archeological and Historical Importance:

Al Jouf province is considered a rich area of civilization with great cultural and archaeological heritage, where the visitor to the province will find in it historical diversity of different periods and the signs of stability in the region dating back to prehistory. That could be acquainted through coming across to the ancient heritage sites in the region, such as "Al Shwaihityah", which dates back to the old stone age, "Al Dawan Age" which is approximately dating between three hundred thousand million years to one million years ago before the birth of Christ, followed by the second level at the site of Al Rajajeel Columns, which dates back to the era of copper or fourth millennium BC.

The advantage enjoyed by Al Jouf province is its location near to the entrance of Al Sarhan Valley as well as at the entrances to the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, and Syria has made it an important partner in the trade movement which flourished before Islam. Also Al Jouf province has appeared on the scene in the history of the Assyrian cities. There are written texts in detail mentioning its history that it is dating back to the eighth and seventh centuries BC. These texts are provides a picture regarding the political relations between the region and other parts of the ancient world.

Assyrian sources indicate to Dumat Al Jandal as (Odomato) or (Adoumo). Also indicates that it was located within the property of Arab tribe of Qedar. References to Dumat Al Jandal began in the third century AD in the reign of the famous Arabian Queen (Zenobia) it seems that the Queen had invaded Dumat Al-Jandal, but the city had a fortified castle that the Queen had not been able to storm. Then she return back unrewarded where she expressed in two words "The Marid insurgency and Al Ablaq Glory". Marid was a giant palace in Dumat Al Jandal and Al Ablaq is a famous palace in Tem'a. the city emerged once again in the historical record in the fifth century AD when it was taken over by the Arabian King Amro Al Qaiss. These episodes were followed by the emergence of Al Ekaidar Kingdom. When we visited the sites in Al Jouf province we were focusing on the archaeological sites in Sakaka and Dumat Al Jandal municipalities.

Sakaka municipality is located about 50 kilometers away from Dumat Al Jandal. It should be noted that, every province has a distinct characteristics compared to the other province,

where each municipality is rich in archaeological sites and cultural heritage of its own. A visitor to these sites will experience a historical account of the region beginning from the old stone age with its all periods, pre-Islam and subsequent periods until the recent time of the third Saudi State. This journey is a narrative of many stories about how it has witnessed interaction of a great cultural impact which left its clear traces in the remaining antiquities whether they were architectural or the written or movable ones.

3- Archeological Sites:

3-1- Zupal Castle:

It is located in the longitude 040.12.088 and 29.59.589 latitude; it is a castle on the top of a mountain has four towers in its irregular-formed corners due to the nature of the mountain peak area. It has a surrounding wall built of mud and stone decorated with mud engravings. The height of the wall is approximately two meters. There are two rooms inside the castle built of mud and stones and the roofed covered palms trunks, Alothel and palm branches which are available throughout the region. One of these rooms is located in the center of the castle, was built over high rock base. The second chamber is located to the left when visitors walk through the entrance to the castle they will be faced by a water tank embedded in rock to a depth of approximately 80 cm and 1 meter length approximately. The tank was used for storing water in case of barricaded inside the fortress. The castle is accessed through semi-circuitous narrow staircase built stone when you just go to the top. When entering the castle you see on the left, "Prince Mountain" which is located near Zupal Castle in the northeast side. At the food of the mountain there is an old cemetery surrounded by low fence which is also bearing the same name. (The name of the mountain is explained as for its height and its steep gradient, engraved on it are thirteen women wearing head coverings in addition to a small number of drawings of animals).

Worth mentioning that, the castle is overseeing an old residential quarter and town below as well as some old farms. The castle is witnessing renovation works on it. On the other hand the castle was famous for its strong fortifications which made it inaccessible. Local residents circulate legendary stories regarding the castle and its strength against the invaders who were planning to demolish it due to its military and strategic importance.

3-2 Sisrah Well:

It is located on 040.11.987 longitude and 29.59.625 latitude, approximately 200 meters southwest to the Zupal Castle, which represents well sculptured rock hole with dimensions about 9x8 meters. Its depth reaches around 15 meters outspread by stones in its top with a wide hole and engraved staircase reaching the bottom of the well and there is also a tunnel at the eastern side in the bottom of the well, which is feeding the farms with water that are located in the lower areas about three kilometers away from the city. The well has dried out since a long time where it dates back to Nabatean period.

Sisrah Well is considered as one of the most significant antiquities in the region. It took its name from the Kanaani military commander, Sisrah who fought the Jews in Palestine as the commander of Kanaani army. His name is mentioned in Torah and Christian holy books as a Jew. Some people connect name of Sisrah to the name Cesar as an English translation to the name of Cesar in the western culture.

3-3 Hudrah Cave: Rocky-Drawings:

It is located on 040.11.923 longitude and 29.59.443 latitude, 200 meters to the south of Sisrah well. It is a grotto carved into a mountain hill and there are small round holes in its walls. The style of engraving is largely resembles the Thamudic engraving at Madian Saleh. Sheikh

Hamad Al Jasser said that, "Al Jouf residents are claim that the top of the mountain contains a first grave of a Sahabi called (Hadrh). He had come to the region they called him with an odd name and it was not found within the Al Sahabah names (the companions of the Prophet). Hence this grave can be older than they think." It is noteworthy that, the cave is superjacent, at the right side, some rock drawings and graphics of a picture of a camel and the image of a man on a camel, as well as a picture of two men of interlocking hands which is similar to that of the play or a dance of some forms of markings and abstract sculpture.

3-4- Al Towair Site:

It is located on 040.12.392 longitude and 29.54.797 latitude at the south of Sakaka city representing an ancient city now covered by sand dunes. Also Al Towair is considered as a big site and it can be divided into "A" and "B" intersected by the airport road remarkably interspersed with various pottery fractures. there are many forms and patterns vary among the type of dough and the method of burning and decoration as well as different kinds of ceramic-coated metal as well as tin dating back to first century BC. He also notes the existence of a wall built of stone and mud visible on the surface of the earth besides remains of a city as well.

Noteworthy that, the urbanization expansion which is growing towards the site may lead to trespassing and vandalism of the site.

3-5 Al Rajajeal Antiquities "Erected Stones":

The erected stones are located on 040.13.199 longitude and 29.48.664 latitude, 5 kilometers to the south of Garah administrative center. And that "the site is on high ground overlooking a large area of low level to its north, and the current site has an area of approximately 300 m x 500 m with an extension in the west, where there are a number of separate groups of stone on the main site." The site consists of a group of about fifty stone columns. The numbers of the columns in each group are differing from the other groups. Also columns are appearing compact straight lines, some columns rise to more than 3.5 m, while others did not exceed 50 cm in height due to the fall of the upper parts of some of these columns and the thickness of 75 cm per column. There are also writings on some of the columns. The site dates back to the copper age or the fourth millennium BC.

These columns are believed to be primarily a religious site or second-class graves. We hope researches and excavations will reveal to us the secrets of the site. It should be noted that the location of Al Rajajeal site to some extent, looks like the site of "Stonehenge" which located 8 miles from Salisbury in England, a temple built from a combination of huge stones made in a circular motion, and is topped by a huge stone slabs.

3-6 Alshoihaitia Site:

It is located on 040.13.199 longitude and 30.17.000 latitude, approximately 45 kilometers to the north of Sakaka stretching out through a wide valley to the north of Al Shoihaitia village. Alshoihaitia site is considered as oldest archaeological site in the Kingdom so far as it reaches the age of one million three hundred thousand years to one million BC, and return to the age of Al Oldawan in the stone ages. Field survey the field survey teams found some 16 settlements, in which are found about 2,000 pieces of stone tools, including: stone knives, hammers, the heads of arrows, and some of the tools of multi-spherical surfaces. The area has been fenced with great columns erected on large distances at the entrance of site.

There is also a site on the outskirts of a small hill in which many rocky paintings of camels, ibex, and fishing manifestations. In addition to a drawing presents three men riding on camels, besides engravings, straight geometrical lines stand on three legs they could be

marks or incomplete drawing in such irregular line forms that they are looking like the following figures:

Rocky drawings coordinate: 040.090.279 longitude and 30.17.58 latitude

3-7 Marid Castle:

It is located on 039.50.00 longitude and 29.48.000 latitude. The city of Dumat Al Jandal and Marid Castle's history is dating back to more than 2,000 years, which are mentioned in the records of the Assyrian era, especially there are written and detailed texts about Al Jouf dating back to the eighth and seventh centuries BC, and spoke of those texts from the ancient city of Dumat al-Jandal, as the capital for a number of Arab queens such as *Tel Khono, Tab'a, Tarabo'a, Zabiba, and Simsi*, where Taqlash Flasher III and Sarjon II, they are mentioning about the tribute which was sent by the kings of the neighboring countries and they are placing Queen Simsi on the same level with the Pharaoh of Egypt and Amar Al Suba'l, as well as the high standing assumed by Dumat Al Jandal could be interpreted to the saying that some Gods such as "Dulbat Ashtar Atarashtine" had great following and importance in the north of the Arabian Peninsula during those times. It is well known that, Delbat Queen had an important temple in Dumat Al Jandal. But texts do not specify the time of the building of Marid Castle or who built it.

The famous Arabian traveler Al Was Moseal, mentioned that, Queen Simsi the queen of Dumat Al Jandal, had arouse the anger of Assyrian king Teglath Falsher in 732 BC after assisting the king of Damascus against Assyrians, the thing that drove him to prepare military campaign to conquer the Arabian queen. The Assyrian text mentioned that, the queen had suffered grate losses. One hundred thousand men were killed, in addition to losing 30,000 camels and 20,000 livestock. The news of the said victory has been supported by a drawing representing two Assyrian knights holding spears and running after an Arab who is riding a camel. Below the two knights and in front of them there are Arabian dead bodies on the ground. It is mentioned that, Assyrians directed their efforts towards Duomat Al Jandal for the second time when the King Sunharib attacked Dumat Al Jandal in 689 BC. Babylonians also attacked the city some times as did the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar against Gidar tribe, and the attack that was launched by Babylonian King Nabonid in 539/56 BC. Historians have mentioned that, the famous Arabian queen Zanuibia, who ruled Tadmor from 267 to 272, had invaded Dumat Al Jandal, but the city's fortification was immune where the invading army was not able to storm it and it turned back to the place it came from. She apparently came in and said "Marid Insurgency, Glory of Ablaq".

The Marid castle is a giant walled fortress built on a high plateau overlooking the ancient city of Dumat al-Jandal. Some of its parts have been rebuilt, but most of its other parts remain as it was in the ancient situation since the past times. The form of the original building was rectangular but some additions including conical towers which look as if they have been added in the later periods. As for the lower part of the building it has been made of mud. The few excavations which have been made in the lower part in 1976, revealed some Nabatean and Romanian pottery which are dating back to the first and second century BC.

In his book about the north of Arab Peninsula, the scholar of Arab Peninsula, Sheikh Hamad Al Jasser, says regarding Marid Castle: "I have walked all the surrounding buildings around the castle, I saw that the fort is located on a mountain or rocky hill overlooking city below, in accurate words it extends from the west towards the east, where the east it is a low land with country's orchards and in addition to some ancient palaces neighboring the castle. The castle is dominates over Al Jouf surrounding areas from where one can see in all directions to remote distances. The castle is built on high rise rock and it is built with strong rocks. strong. Also, Dr. Jawad Ali in his Sulum Tema worship, he also said that, the city of Tem'a was an

important place which was worshipping this fetish in around 600 BC, where Tem'a people worshiped Sulum in the form of a bull's head. This symbol has also been found in the Thamudic inscriptions, among some gods names, that had been worshiped in Thamud, in addition to the cultural and religious links between Tem'a and Thamud, besides, Sulum's name in the Roman inscription which has been founded in Dumat Al Jandal.

Mr. Abdullah Al Tameem states in his book "Historical Images of Al Jouf Civilization" that, the construction period of the castle indicates to a life of powerful nation, and may be Thamud Folk "peace be upon him" has a role in building some of it. The castle building and the castles watchtowers throughout the castle built of solid rock pieces. The area was immune with rock fence preventing invader's attacks, and prevented them from entering to it through its two main entrances, one of which is to the south near the castle, the other one to the north beside the tower. It has two strong doors with iron locks and shutters, surrounding them are iron chains.

After the emergence of Islam, the first invasion to Dumat Al Jandal was commanded by the prophet Mohammad himself "peace be upon him" in the fifth year of Hijra corresponding to 626 AD. but the inhabitants fled after hearing the progress of Muslims. The second invasion to the Dumat Al Jandal was in the sixth year of Hijri corresponding to 628 AD. There is a version of the invasion that says that they were not stopping attacking Al Madinah merchant caravans which led the prophet to send a battalion commanded by Abdulrahman Bin Aouf. The third invasion was in the ninth Hijri year corresponding to 630 AD. It is likely that, Al Ekaider, the governor of Dumat Al Jandal who represented the Roman emperor Hercules had continued attacking the Al Madinah trade caravans because merchants were not stopping at its city. In ninth Hijri year the prophet sent Khalid Bin Al Walid in a battalion of four hundred soldiers where Tabuk was the launching place of the invasion. Historical are differing on the achieved goals of this invasion. Some of whom say that Khalid had conquered Dumat Al Jandal and took its King as hostage. Another narration says that, Khalid Bin Al Walid had freed Al Ekaider to convince his brother Hussan who was still fortified inside the castle in order to enable Muslims to enter it. They say that, Al Ekaider had become a prisoner because he had been captured while he was chasing a cow outside the castle. Al Ekaider was considered a significant person of this era. In this respect Al Jahez said that, the ancient people of wisdom, presidency, and rhetoric were Obaid Bin Shurbah Al Jarhami, Najran archbishop and Ekaider of Dumat Al Jandal. Dumat Al Jandal had had relations with the two great powers at that time; Persian and Byzantine, where there is an account describing how Al Ekaider gave prophet Mohammad "peace be upon him" overcoat made by Alsasanyen.

It is noted that the castle in the process of restoration of some parts of the external and internal. The visitor to the castle will be taken by awe of the place which indicates the strength of the castle with the existence of sufficient wells which are well within reach until the summit of the citadel, a circular stone building. In addition to the castle there is a mosque of Omar Bin Al Khattab as well as the old district, "Al Der'i Quarter" which we will address in particular in this report.

3-8 Omar Bin Al Khattab mosque:

The mosque of Omar Ibn al-Khattab is situated in the town of Dumat al-Jandal, a major intersection of ancient trade routes linking Mesopotamia, Syria and the Arabian Peninsula. The mosque itself was built in 634-644. However, the actual building appears to have been built in a much later period, casting doubt upon its attribution to Umar Ibn al-Khattab. Some scholars attribute it to the Umayyad Caliph Omar bin Abul Aziz, and some believe that the mosque was named after Bani'Amr, a tribe that settled in Dumat al-Jandal.

The north (qibla) wall of the mosque faces the al-Marid castle across a street. On its other three sides, it is surrounded by dense urban fabric. Like the other old buildings in the town,

the mosque is built in stone. It is composed of a courtyard preceding the main prayer hall to the south and another space, also used for prayer, to the north. The minaret is at the southwestern corner of the prayer hall bridging over a street.

The mosque is entered through a door situated in the qibla wall, near the minaret. The prayer hall is formed by three rows of stone pillars, running parallel to the qibla wall. The pillars are all by wooden lintels, which in turn support layers of stone that are roofed by mud-plastered acacia and palm trunks.

The mihrab is a narrow, highly pointed niche in the center of the qibla wall, and is defined by a similar niche with three built-in stone steps to its right. The mihrab, the minbar, and the lower part of the qibla wall are plastered white. Viewed from the exterior, one sees that the mihrab and minbar protrude slightly out of the qibla wall. Also visible is an exposed stone staircase constructed along the qibla wall from the street side that reaches the mud roof. The minaret shaft has a rectangular shape that tapers upward to end in a pyramidal roof. The four internal floors of the shaft were accessed by a now-collapsed spiral staircase entered from the mosque. On each side of the minaret, and on each floor, a rectangular window with a stone lintel provides lighting for its interior.

The Saud family is believed to have rebuilt the prayer hall in 1793. Later, in the mid-nineteenth century, the Saud family restored the mosque. In 1975, buildings surrounding the minaret from the south and the west were demolished, and the minaret and the mosque restored yet again.

3-9 Al Dar'i Quarter:

Al Dar'i Quarter is located in the neighborhood of Omar Bin Al Khatab Mosque and Marid fortress, which represent the old quarter of Dumat Al Jandal. Al Dar'i Quarter is considered to be one of remaining antiquities of Dumat Al Jandal's ancient city which has escaped the demolition shovels befalling the historical market of Dumat Al Jandal 25 years ago. Dr. Khalil Al Meaigil has stated that, the facilities of the quarter which dates back to the middle Islamic age have established on antiquities layers and is based on layers of archaeological works dating back to the mid-first millennium BC. The neighborhood is characterized by the stone buildings and stone lanes between the gardens and water, which had a life of residents living near the by springs. In Al Dar'i Quarter there are many of houses which we hope will enjoy the necessary care and restoration. Worth mentioning that, the old quarter is built on the ruins of the earlier revivals which can be seen in multiple layers, as well as the emergence of the old road of the district under the existing buildings. We recommend documenting the individual buildings so as not to overlap the work of the buildings at the excavation site and lose interest to know the chronology of the site.

3-10 Dumat Al Jandal Wall:

Dumat Al Jandal boundary wall is considered as one of the ancient antiquities in the city. It is still one of the historical evidence that characterize the region. The wall is located at the western side of the city. Its height reaches around 4.5 meters. It was built of stone on the same pattern built as the Marid castle, where there are walls and towers with rectangular two holes. These towers attached to the wall supported by a wall of mud from the inside. Regarding the wall, Yaqoot Al Hamawi says: "As for Doma was protected by a fence, inside the fence there is a strong castle called Marid, it is the castle of the King Ekaider Bin Abdul Malik Bin Abulhi Bin Aa'a Bin Al Harith Bin Muyawia Bin Khalawah Bin Imama Bin Sulm Bin Shukama Bin Shapep Bin Ashras Bin Thor Bin Ogair Bin Kundah Al Sokony Al Kundi."

3-11 Lake of Dumat Al Jandal:

