

New archaeological discoveries demonstrate Saudi Arabia's rich past

SCTH President: Archaeology will reveal Islam's history through the ages

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Recent groundbreaking archaeological discoveries have reaffirmed the Arabian Peninsula's importance as a meeting point for civilizations before and after the birth of Islam, a senior official of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) told the 1st Saudi Archaeology Convention in Riyadh.

Professor Ali Al-Ghabban, General Supervisor of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Cultural Heritage Initiative, said the finds include the remains of a mosque on the outskirts of Al-Kharj (near Riyadh) built around 900 to 1,400 years ago. It was believed to be third largest mosque in the Arabian Peninsula at the time after the two holy mosques in Makkah and Madinah.

He also highlighted the discovery of pottery dating back to 2,800 BCE in the northern region of Tayma, while studies are being conducted on the first mummified corpse found in a Nabatean-era tomb in the UNESCO-listed site of Madain Saleh.

Prof. Al-Ghabban was addressing a session headlined by SCTH President HRH Prince Sultan bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz, who presented a paper on why archaeology was important in connecting the origins of Islam with the beginning of history.

"History proves that Islam did not emerge from a land devoid of civilizations, knowledge and genuine Arab values. Many civilizations have been in this blessed land throughout history, proving there was continued movement paving the way for this great and supreme message of Islam," he said.

Prince Sultan pointed to exegesis studies that said the Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was ordered by Allah to construct the Kaaba in 18th century BCE Makkah.

"What Ibrahim (peace be upon him) did was revive the monotheistic religion, lighting the way for the emergence of Islam in Makkah," he said.

In the 24 centuries between the eras of Prophets Ibrahim and Muhammad (peace be upon them), several civilizations and Arab kingdoms were established in the Arabian Peninsula such as the Midian and Kindah kingdoms, he added.

Elsewhere, King's College London's Dr. Paul Breeze mapped out Paleolithic-era sites of lakes and other water sources found in Saudi Arabia, providing compelling evidence prehistoric Arabia was characterized by lush vegetation and wildlife.

"We can also be certain that we had homo sapiens in Arabia during the Paleolithic eras - 85,000 years ago, possibly earlier," he said.

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