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PRESS RELEASE

Roads of Arabia debuts in Rome

Items on display include archeological masterpieces and iconic pieces of art, spanning centuries of Arabian history. The collection tells the story of the region's development over millennia and explores its unique merging of tradition and modernity.

'Roads of Arabia. Treasures of Saudi Arabia', opens next week in Rome at the Museo Nazionale Romano of the Baths of Diocletian. It will run from the 28th November 2019 to the 1st March 2020.

The unique exhibition - brought to Rome by the Saudi Ministry of Culture and Italian Ministry of Heritage and Culture and Tourism - explores the rich heritage of the Arabian Peninsula through archaeological masterpieces, important pieces of art and ancient documents.

Spanning more than one million years of history, from prehistoric times to the formation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the exhibition illustrates the depth and breadth of Arab civilization. Over 450 rare artefacts will be on the show, including many uncovered through cutting-edge archaeological exploration across the Gulf.

The exhibition has been exclusively sponsored by Saudi Aramco and is supported by Fondazione Alda Fendi.

It is also accompanied by a catalogue, published by Electa, which includes a rich array of insightful essays which bring us closer to the Saudi archaeological world and enables us to discover many archaeological sites located across the Arab world that are UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

museonazionaleromano.beniculturali.it
roadsofarabia.sa
#roadsofarabia

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ROADS OF ARABIA

FACT SHEET

title	Roads of Arabia Treasures of Saudi Arabia
venue	Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano Baths of Diocletian viale E. De Nicola 78
open to the public	28 November 2019 – 01 March 2020
opening times	9:00am -7:30pm Closed on Monday Ticket shop closed 18:30pm
admission charges	free admission with museum ticket 10 € 2 € EU members between 18 and 25 years old free admission according to current legislation 5 € On Friday and Saturday from 29 November to 28 December 2019 special opening form 8:00pm to 11:00pm
information	museonazionaleromano.beniculturali.it tel. +39 06 39967701
website	museonazionaleromano.beniculturali.it roadsofarabia.sa electa.it #roadsofarabia   
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ROADS OF ARABIA

COLOPHON

ROADS OF ARABIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL TREASURES FROM SAUDI ARABIA

Museo Nazionale Romano
Terme di Diocleziano, Rome
28th November 2019 –
1st March 2020

CURATED BY
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Mohammed A. Alahmari

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for the support and the
collaboration to this project
in its various stages

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ROADS of ARABIA

CATALOGUE FACT FILE



Roads of Arabia.
Archaeological Treasures from Saudi Arabia
edited by
Alessandra Capodiferro, Sara Colantonio

Electa
format 21,5 x 28,5 cm
Paperback with flaps
pp. 328 with 470 illustrations
Italian and English edition € 49
in bookshop from November 2019

After sixteen international shows, *Roads of Arabia. Treasures of Saudi Arabia* debuts in Rome at Museo Nazionale Romano. The exhibition collects in the halls of Baths of Diocletian the most important archaeological finds and documents from Saudi Arabia: from the first human Neolithic settlements to the 20th century.

The catalogue, edited by Alessandra Capodiferro and Sara Colantonio, presents a rich array of in-depth essays on the Saudi archaeological world in relation to the Greek-Roman one and with a focus dedicated to the Baths of Diocletian, site of the exhibition.

This volume is a useful tool to discover the many archaeological sites, Arab and Islamic, included in the UNESCO World Heritage list, and the magnificent treasures that they contain: from the examples of rock art found throughout the territory (from the “Camel Site” to Tayma and Tarut) up to the large oases in the desert (Tayma, Qurrayah, Ayn Jawan, Dedan), from the ancient caravan cities (Qaryat al-Faw) to the kingdom of the Nabateans, up to the Islamic period and the birth of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Alessandra Capodiferro, Mohammed A. Alahmari

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Romolo Loreto

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Sara Colantonio

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Antonella Ferraro

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Anna De Santis

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EXHIBITION ITINERARY

Pre-history

The earliest evidence of human settlement on the Arabian Peninsula consists of stone tools that date to around 1.3 million years ago. Archaeologists refer to this time as the Lower Paleolithic period. These objects were found at Shuwayhitiyah in the north and at Bir Hima in southwestern Arabia.

Around 10,000 years ago, at the beginning of the later Neolithic period, Arabia's climate was humid. The Peninsula's green vegetation, deep lakes, fertile marshes, and plentiful wildlife attracted hunters and gatherers. It was also inviting to wandering shepherds from the eastern Mediterranean region. Evidence suggests that these people shaped stone into different tools and weapons for use. By 5500 BCE, communities had settled along the coasts and around the oases of the Arabian Peninsula. They grew crops, raised cattle, hunted, and fished. A thousand years later, when the climate became increasingly dry once again, people returned to a more mobile way of life. Tools, including arrowheads and blades have been found at sites throughout the Arabian Peninsula.

Tarut Island, Dilmun, and Gerrha

Tarut Island is one of the largest date palm oases in northeastern Arabia. In the 1960s the construction of a causeway led to several important archaeological discoveries. Some of the earliest objects date to around 2900 BCE and point to trade relations between Tarut and Mesopotamia. Other objects highlight the island's connections with southeastern Persia, which produced items such as finely-carved chlorite vessels in large quantities. Tarut was important during this period as it was one of the main centers of the Dilmun civilization - an ancient culture mentioned in Mesopotamian texts. Archaeologists believe that between the late fourth millennium and the beginning of the third millennium BCE, the Dilmun people lived on the island of Tarut and surrounding inland areas. A large mound, now covered by a fort, may be evidence of a large port for Dilmun's famous shipping industry. In addition to the coastline and Tarut, the people of Dilmun inhabited the island of Bahrain. In the fourth century BCE, Alexander the Great conquered Mesopotamia. This region maintained Greek influence until the arrival of the Sasanians from Persia in the third century CE. Since no large Greek settlements have been found in the northeast of Arabia, this influence seems to have come from trade in objects such as gold jewelry, coins, and sculpture.

Tayma, Al-'Ula and Qaryat Al-Faw

Tayma is one of the most important archaeological sites in the region. Human permanent settlement in this area dates back to the fifth millennium BCE. Its wealth and significance were due to its location on the legendary incense route that linked southern Arabia to Syria and Mesopotamia in the north, and to Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean region.

Tayma also attracted the attention of the last Babylonian ruler, Nabonidus (who reigned between 556-539 BCE). He settled in this oasis for ten years and carried out raids into northwestern Arabia. During this time, new artistic imagery and techniques were introduced and combined with local traditions. Tayma continued to play an important role in the region until the arrival of Islam in the seventh century CE.

Al-'Ula is a modern name for the ancient settlement of Dedan, which was an important stop on the incense route in northwestern Arabia. In the sixth century BCE, Dedan rose to prominence under the rule of a local tribe known as the Lihyanites. The city grew wealthy by taxing all caravans that traveled from southern Arabia to the Mediterranean and Mesopotamia in exchange for supplies and protection. With their growing economic wealth and status, the Lihyanites developed a written language and created a rich artistic legacy that was unique to Dedan. The Lihyanites built several temples filled with large figures. They also honored their dead by carving tombs into the rocky face of al-Khurayba, one of the oldest sites at Dedan.

Qaryat al-Faw was one of the wealthiest cities along the ancient trade routes. It was located on the western edge of the Empty Quarter. Qaryat al-Faw was at the crossroads of different trade routes that led from southern to northeastern Arabia. With its market, temples, and cemetery, all situated in fertile palm groves, the settlement became known as Dhat al-Jnan (City of Paradise).

Makkah and Pilgrimage

Makkah, the sacred heart of Islam, maintains a steady supply of water from the surrounding hills that feed the celebrated Zamzam well near the Ka'ba. As Makkah was situated some distance from the incense route, it became an important trading center in the fifth century CE, when Quraysh tribesmen, who were actively involved in the caravan trade, arrived in Makkah.

The Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), was born in 572 CE in Makkah. In 622 CE he left for Medina, a city also known as Yathrib – located more than 300 km away – to promote the new religion 'Islam'. The momentous journey (Hijra) from Makkah to Medina therefore marks year one of the Islamic calendar. By 631 CE, Muslims had returned to Makkah, bringing Islam back with them.

By the late seventh century Islam had spread rapidly beyond the borders of Arabia. Many complex networks of roads were needed to accommodate the huge numbers of visiting pilgrims to Makkah. Roads that once transported trade out of Arabia were now replaced by new ones that brought pilgrims to this holy site. As a result, additional way stations, wells, and supply centers also developed along several major routes.

The difficult journey to and from Makkah could take months—and even years. To pay for some of their expenses, pilgrims travelled with portable goods, such as ceramics, glass, metal objects, and textiles that they could sell or exchange.

Saudi State

Arab poets were perhaps the first explorers of the peninsula's past. Their verses often describe ruins and ancient monuments. Travelers and pilgrims continued to remark on important sites throughout the Islamic period. In the early twentieth century, when the Hijaz Railroad was built to transport pilgrims from Damascus to Makkah, it also made the Arabian Peninsula more accessible to European visitors. Starting from the 1960s, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia began an extensive archaeological program across the peninsula. This survey program included a detailed study of the Darb Zubaydah pilgrimage road as well as excavations at Qaryat al-Faw and al-Rabadha. Such projects have greatly expanded in recent decades, but archaeological understanding of the Arabian Peninsula is still in its infancy. Many of the objects in this exhibition were discovered only in the last decade, and some were excavated just a few years ago.

ROADS OF ARABIA

INSTITUTIONAL TEXTS

The Baths of Diocletian of the Museo Nazionale Romano open their doors to the beauty of the Middle East with the exhibition *Roads of Arabia. Archaeological Treasures from Saudi Arabia*, hosting artefacts and documents that bear witness to the history of the Arabian peninsula, from the first human settlements of the Neolithic Period to the twentieth century.

The recent discoveries by the Italian archaeological mission of the Università Orientale of Naples in the site of ancient Adummatu conducted by Alessandro de Maigret, and continued by Romolo Loreto, have shed new light on the prehistoric and historical past of this region, bound to the Mediterranean world and to the Middle East by strong commercial and cultural relations.

For centuries, products, people, and ideas travelled the trade routes connecting Arabia to the Greek and Roman worlds, all the way to the gates to India. The Arabian caravan route along which the incense road ran was one of the great roads around which civilization flourished and developed. Visitors can now admire the objects from this civilization, displayed in the spaces of one of the most impressive monuments in Rome.

This exhibition allows visitors to discover a world about which little has been known until now. At the same time, it offers an opportunity to reinforce the cultural cooperation between our countries, capable of bearing new fruits in terms of knowledge and understanding. A sign of just how much culture continues to be the channel for ever-improving international relations and exchanges.

Dario Franceschini

Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Activities and Tourism

ROADS OF ARABIA

The Kingdom, led by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz and Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, believes that cultural communication with peoples all around the world is an essential means to achieve common understanding and promote friendship among nations. The Roads of Arabia: Archaeological Treasures from Saudi Arabia exhibition, organised by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage at Museo Nazionale Romano, in Rome, the capital of Italy, is a culmination of the strong friendly relationship between our two countries. This catalogue provides a brief description of the exhibition, which has previously toured sixteenth museums around the world. The aim of the Roads of Arabia exhibition is to build a bridge of communication with peoples worldwide, familiarise them with the Kingdom's civilization and heritage and attract them to visit our country and learn about it. The Kingdom has been and continues to be a partner in the development of urban and human civilization. This is demonstrated through the rock arts spread throughout the Kingdom, especially in Jubba and Al-Shwaimis in the north, which have been recorded in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

It is further evidenced by the impressive buildings carved into the mountains of Mada'in Saleh, the Arab and Islamic architectural styles of the historical forts, the Islamic monuments in Makkah, Al-Madinah and Historic Jeddah, and the antiquities of the Saudi State such as Diriyah. All these cultural way stations are part of a global human heritage that we are happy to present to people everywhere, through the world's museums. The cultural relations between Italy and the Arabian Peninsula have witnessed strong connections for more than 2,000 years, contributing to the enrichment of human civilization and the development of culture, the sciences and literature between the two civilizations. In conclusion, we hope that the Kingdom's masterpieces exhibited in the Museo Nazionale Romano will further enhance the strong friendship between our two countries, and that the next step will be the presentation of Italy antiquities in the Kingdom's museums, as has been the case with many other countries.

**HRH Prince
Badr Bin Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Farhan Al-Saud**
Minister of Culture

ROADS OF ARABIA

The occasion of the exhibition *Roads of Arabia. Archaeological Treasures from Saudi Arabia* held at Museo Nazionale Romano embodies the historic privileged relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Italian Republic. During their long history, these friendly relations have seen a continuous development in all fields; in their course, numerous events have been held in various sectors, including cultural events, in the light of an ancient heritage and cultural repertoire our two friend countries are proud of. Our collaboration continues and is still evolving.

Undoubtedly, the exhibition *Roads to Arabia* at the Museo Nazionale Romano will offer the Italian friend people a chance to know the Kingdom's history and civilization, as well as a lively image of the Kingdom and the Arabian Peninsula. The exhibition highlights the historical depth and the cultural variety the Kingdom is proud of; it affirms the Kingdom's presence worldwide, its position in the Islamic world, as the cradle of the Two Holy Mosques, as well as its economic role and its influence in human relations, by virtue of its privileged geographical position which has represented a main pivot in the cultural and economic exchange between East and West, as well as a bridge in communication between civilizations since the most remote ages and up to the present day.

On this occasion, I express my appreciation for the cooperation and excellent coordination with the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Activities and Tourism of the Italian Republic and with Museo Nazionale Romano, which gave life to this exhibition, with the hope that it will realize the desired objectives.

HRH Prince

Faisal Bin Sattam Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud

Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques
in the Italian Republic

ROADS OF ARABIA

Along the many roads that in the ancient, modern, and contemporary world lead to Rome, after travelling long distances, internationally hosted by great and famous museums, from the first edition in Paris in 2010, from Abu Dhabi to Washington, from Berlin to St. Petersburg, *Roads of Arabia*.

Archaeological Treasures from Saudi Arabia now arrives at the Museo Nazionale Romano, mounted in the monumental, magnificent spaces in Roman brick of the Baths of Diocletian.

Thousands of years of lives and stories from the Arabian peninsula, from the most ancient settlements to the sites of the Age of the Roman Empire and all the way to Late Antiquity are illustrated by what are absolute treasures, excellent witnesses chosen amongst the hundreds of findings from the archaeological research carried out in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia over the last three decades of the past century by both Saudi and foreign specialists, including the important activity of the Italian archaeological mission. The path of discovery continues into the Islamic period until the birth of the Saudi Kingdom.

The purpose is to introduce the viewer to archaeological, artistic, and historical heritage most of which is still unknown, in the firm belief, and in the hope, that learning about things also means overcoming intellectual and physical borders, and gaining a better understanding of another culture in its specificity and over time.

It is with this widely shared goal in its heart that Museo Nazionale Romano welcomed and supported the project for the realization in Rome of the *Roads of Arabia* exhibition, promoted by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Cultural Heritage with the Ministry of Culture of Saudi Arabia and the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Activities and Tourism with Saudi Aramco as the exclusive sponsor.

I would like to add to our heartfelt thanks to the Institutions of the two countries, and to those we owe to Saudi Aramco, the exclusive sponsor of the entire project, my own personal acknowledgement of the contribution of the Fondazione Alda Fendi, and of the considerable efforts made by Electa, whose competence and efficiency we have come to know and appreciate.

Lastly, the honing and implementation of the project owes a great deal to the invaluable general coordination of Cinzia Chiari, to the curators of this Roman edition, Mohammed A. Alahmari and Alessandra Capodiferro, to the scientific work of the archaeologists Sara Colantonio, Antonella Ferraro, Chiara Giobbe, and Agnese Pergola. To them and to the other technical-scientific professionals of the Museo Nazionale Romano who have lent their individual skills to make this exhibition and the publication of the accompanying catalogue possible, to all the museum staff, I am especially grateful.

Daniela Porro

Soprintendente Archeologia Belle Arti e Paesaggio of Rome
and ex Director of Museo Nazionale Romano

ROADS OF ARABIA

The Arab civilization so close, but astonished with respect to a world that fascinates us Westerners in a fabulous triumph that unites, in the eternal youth of each of us, eager for myth, the *One Thousand and One Nights* and the Queen of Sheba, the legendary caravan trade routes, the divine sense of incense and the colour of amber, which all tinges with feeling in a perfumed and idyllic kaleidoscope.

Roads of Arabia, instead, brings us back to an archaeological scientificity that illustrates the infinite metamorphoses of a cultured, rarefied, illuminating civilization that precedes Rome and its empire.

Precious knowledge for us always attracted, but confused, by this millenary primordial history, teacher of the world. A very great cognitive and intellectual possibility of 'near' peoples. The 'ancient Near East.'

I'm proud that my Foundation took care of the artistic side of this 'legendary' *Roads of Arabia*.

Alda Fendi

Fondazione Alda Fendi – Esperimenti



EXCLUSIVE SPONSOR

Saudi Aramco is proud to be the sponsor of *Roads of Arabia. Archaeological Treasures from Saudi Arabia*. This magnificent exhibition displays some of the oldest relics ever discovered in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It offers a rare window into the diverse history of our nation; it affirms Saudi Aramco's deep-rooted commitment to conserving the Kingdom's rich heritage, culture, and environment; and it allows us to share these historical treasures with the rest of the world.

Our association with this unique showcase stretches back to 2012, when we co-sponsored a successful two-year tour of the United States. It has since travelled to various locations around the world such as Athens, Beijing, and Seoul. Now, it is anchored at the prestigious Museo Nazionale Romano here in Rome. Saudi Arabia and Italy have enjoyed close ties for many decades. Diplomatic relations were established in 1932, and Italy was the Kingdom's first trading partner in Europe. Bringing the *Roads of Arabia* exhibition to Italy reflects the ever-expanding range of bilateral partnerships, not least for the many Italians who work in the Kingdom supporting our efforts to enable a strong, thriving, and progressive nation in line with Saudi Vision 2030.

At Saudi Aramco, we are proud to be at the heart of this relationship, and the enduring friendships we have built with our Italian partners are among our most treasured. And just as I believe that we have even closer ties to explore, the artefacts on display here are, I believe, just a taste of the full heritage we have yet to unearth, share, and preserve for future generations. That is why Saudi Aramco is committed to both these worthy endeavours, and I very much hope that you enjoy this rare opportunity to admire the historical treasures of the Kingdom while helping to bring our two great nations even closer together.

Amin H. Nasser

President and Chief Executive Officer
of Saudi Aramco

CURATORS' TEXTS

Roads Of Arabia In Rome

Alessandra Capodiferro - Mohammed Al-Ahamari

The idea of the path, of the transit of nomadic peoples and merchants—then voyagers—moving from cities to villages, local squares and cosmopolitan markets, streets filled with stone and sandy trails, desert and oasis, comes to mind—immediate, rich with images of the imagination and not too much history—simply by reading, upon hearing the title Roads of Arabia.

The exhibition tells the story of the territory, vast and little known, of the Arabian Peninsula, an extensive sub-continent of over three million square kilometres of natural, varied, and extraordinary landscape, still intact, which covers most of Saudi Arabia. The story unfolds through the recovery and interpretation, in an expository key, of about a hundred archaeological finds, the understanding of material evidence, and the relationship between peoples and different cultures.

The ancient and historical tale, the beauty of the places, the wealth of the resources, evoked by the ancient literature, are proven by the important results achieved by the archaeological research conducted on various occasions over the decades in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by Saudi specialists and international missions, including the Italian mission.

Re-emerging from the underground, finally subtracted from oblivion, are archaeological sites from which an important number of finds appears, referred in their use to a very long chronology that from prehistory continues up to the Age of Imperial Rome and Late Antiquity. Objects of everyday use and luxury, hunting tools, weapons, jewellery, crockery in precious metal, glass, alabasters, ceramics, sculptures and frescoes bear witness to the local production as well as to the exchanges and cultural cross-pollination of a full-fledged trade of artefacts and ideas.

These are the caravans of men and goods that, crossing the country from north to south, from east to west to transport goods and precious substances travel the many Roads of Arabia, routes over land that foster contact between peoples, customs, the beliefs of the surrounding regions, such as Mesopotamia and Egypt, and of distant cities like Rome. Upon them, while maintaining the mercantile tradition, are the roads of the pilgrimages to the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina.

Representing the intersection between millenary cultures, in Rome the exhibition is hosted by the Museo Nazionale alle Terme di Diocleziano, a unique archaeological and monumental complex that still preserves the imperial majesty of the Baths of Diocletian, albeit violated by the never-ending overlapping of the modern city upon the ancient one.

The public Roman baths were a spacious place filled with people, a welcoming site that fostered encounters. With this same spirit we offer visitors the chance to discover and learn about the rich past when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was born.

The close-knit and fruitful collaboration between many people who with different degrees of responsibility but the same passion have contributed from the initial idea to the development and realization of the exhibition and catalogue bears witness to our two countries' reciprocal interest in culture and history.

The curators are grateful to all.

The Cultural Heritage of Saudi Arabia

Abdullah A. Al-Zahrani

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is strategically located between Africa and Asia as such stands as a bridge between the ancient civilisations of the two continents. Given the importance of the country's heritage, the Council of Ministers of Saudi Arabia decided in 1383 AH/1963 CE to form a special department within the Ministry of Education. The Supreme Council of Antiquities was formed in 1392 AH/1972 CE. It was responsible for determining the objectives of the department and supervising its ongoing works. The Council's duties further extended in early 1970s through the creation of a department for registration of all archaeological sites, accompanied by initial steps to preserve and conserve, as well as to fund the establishment of new museums.

In 1396 AH/1976 CE a long-term plan was started to record and document the archaeological sites. This plan included establishment of a National Museum in Riyadh (fig. 2). A further important objective was the creation of a professional archaeological journal—*Atlat: the Journal of Saudi Arabian Archaeology* (appearing regularly since 1397 AH/1977 CE).

Over the past 45 years, more than ten thousand archaeological sites have been documented because of the comprehensive archaeological survey of the entire Kingdom in its various regions and provinces (figs. 1, 3-4). Exploration and excavations have been carried out at the famous archaeological sites of Qaryat al-Faw and al-Rabadha. This work contributed to the training of archaeology students and at the same time, conducted scientific research and archaeological projects funded by the government. The Department of Antiquities and Museums initiated a program to restore and renovate important historical buildings, to establish local and regional museums near archaeological sites, and to restore historical buildings in Jeddah and Ta'if and convert them to cultural museums.

In 1424 AH/2003 CE, the reconceptualisation of the need to update the methodology resulted in the incorporation of the department into the Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities. This was followed by the initiation of a five-year plan, which, among other things, included a strategic plan for funding and enhancing archaeology and museology in the Kingdom. One of the projects initiated was the development of methodologies that are in line with globally applied and certified scientific research practices. One guideline directs the realisation of important projects within the areas of historical and archaeological fieldworks, exploration and research as well as the documentation of the urban heritage and historic buildings. These projects included the establishment of new museums and the preservation and restoration of the Kingdom's cultural heritage. Guidelines were also laid down to create archives of data and the documentation and management of archaeological sites. Together with the Ministry for Communal and Rural Affairs, the Commission has started a programme that concerns the preservation and development of the urban heritage and sites of important architectural history. The aim is to introduce functional mechanisms and sufficient criteria for monitoring the condition of such sites in order to prevent their destruction. The Commission is also responsible for determining the rules for the care of privately owned archaeological sites and historical buildings. In addition, in the same context, a plan for the development and expansion of historical villages was created. During the first phase, five villages and municipalities have already been selected that included the ancient settlements of al-Ghat and al-'Ula in the Al-Madinah province, the municipality of Jubbah in Ha'il, and the villages Rijal al-Ma'a in 'Asir and Dhi 'Ain near al-Baha in the south-western mountain region of Tihama.

We have already initiated the improvement of historic towns and city centres that contain important examples of traditional architecture or other buildings of historic importance. The aim is to make Saudi towns and cities more attractive to tourists while, at the same time, preserving their cultural and historical identity.

The restoration of architecturally important monuments in the ports of Yanbu', Amlaj, al-Wajh and Dhaba on the Red Sea is one of the important projects of the Department for Antiquities and Museums. Its aim is to preserve monuments that have survived in the historic town centres along north coast of the Red Sea. A further plan is devoted to the preservation and expansion of local markets to support the country's economic life through the development of cultural and tourist entities including weekly or seasonal, commercial and tourist-oriented events.

A manual for the restoration of Mud-brick and Stone Monuments, published by the Commission in cooperation with the Ministry for Religious Affairs and Riyadh Development Authority, has been prepared to supervise and control the urban heritage and to support and provide guidance, experts and entrepreneurs responsible for the restoration and use of such buildings.

In recent years, more than fifty built heritage sites have been selected included large, well-known cities, to be developed for tourism. A further ten will follow and be accessible to the public in the near future. Nine most important historical and archaeological sites have been selected by the government to have them included in the list of UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites. Five such sites have already been registered on the World Heritage list. This necessitates the improvement of the facil-

ities for the reception of the local citizens and tourists in the best possible conditions while at the same time ensuring the preservation and protection of the sites.

A further project is devoted to restore historic buildings and palaces dating from the era of King 'Abd al-'Aziz al Sa'ud, the Kingdom's founder. The buildings are considered to be the central points at the heart of considerable urban development and had been restored and renovated with the local building materials available back then (fig. 5). These monuments reflect the era of unity of the nation under a consolidated Kingdom and offer a good example of the nature and quality of architecture in that period. The aim of the projects is to restore and renovate all buildings reflecting the history of the foundation of the modern Saudi state and its unification at the hands of King 'Abd al-'Aziz who ordered houses to be built in almost every town he visited. With the project restoration of the buildings does not only trace back that history, but also highlights the impressive style and mode of construction and provides appropriate spaces for local museums and cultural centres.

In all thirteen administrative regions of the Kingdom museums will be established; each would display the local cultural and above all architectural heritage, with a special focus on traditional artisanship. The existing museums will be modernised at the latest international standards. The focus is on cultural activities, educational programmes and the expansion of tourism. In addition, public museums will be established concentrating on special themes, such as the treasures of the Holy Mosque in Makkah. Private museums run by dedicated collectors will also be subsidized by the government to promote them publicly and to display these collections through the latest technology and media.

A further important project is the digitalisation of the national cultural and ethnographic heritage of the Kingdom. A central database will store information on all archaeological sites and the most important artefacts and historic buildings. With funding from and the collaboration of the Saudi ARAMCO Oil Company, a central digital database of architectural, archaeological and historical assets will consolidate archaeological and bibliographic resources.

The central database will also enable and improve the protection of the national archaeological heritage as well as adherence to national and international regulations on the treatment and safeguarding of antiquities. An important matter for the Department of Antiquities and Museums, in addition to the identification and preservation of the cultural and natural heritage, is the systematic combating of art theft.

The continuous decay of the historic buildings due to the weather elements, climatic conditions and social-economic developments requires determined action. The same also applies to privately owned monuments and buildings, the technical assistance offered and made available to private owners.

The Saudi authorities have started a campaign to raise public awareness among citizens of all age groups concerning the importance of the national cultural heritage, museums and archaeological sites. This involves providing information on authenticity, the historical value of traditions and customs. An important objective of this programme is to involve the public to preserve the cultural assets and, by so doing, to raise awareness concerning the country's cultural heritage.

Since 1975, the department has been managing scientific, archaeological exploration programmes throughout Saudi Arabia in order to ascertain the importance of archaeological sites and to register them as a valuable cultural heritage. Scientific studies have been conducted at all preserved sites. In addition, targeted surveys are carried out in order to discover particularly important artefacts. All archaeological finds are thoroughly examined and analysed with the aim of restoring and exhibiting them in local or national museums.

Cooperation programmes have been initiated with international universities, organisations and institutions specialize in archaeology, in order to develop research projects and to make use of the experience of other institutions. Saudi Arabia is currently working with France, Italy, Great Britain, Germany, the USA, Australia, Japan, China and several other countries. The Department of Antiquities and Museums issues a variety of publications. Recently, fifty-seven books have been published and several are now in the press. Attempts are being made to improve the methods of communication and publication. This is a broad-based project that among other things includes the redesign of magazines and journals, the creation of websites and the preparation of guides and maps for archaeological sites.

This exhibition coincides with the surveys and excavations undertaken by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage across the Kingdom, where Saudi archaeologists and international missions from various countries share in unveiling the ancient civilization and heritage of Saudi Arabia.

Surveys and excavations have proven that the Kingdom has a deep-rooted heritage that goes back thousands of years until the advent of Islam, highlighting the kingdom's civilization, spreading its culture and history to the farthest corners of the earth from east to west. The country still has hidden treasures in several unexcavated areas that potentially could reveal additional information about the culture of the Kingdom and how it influenced and was affected by other cultures.

Italian Archaeological Expeditions to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Italo-Saudi Scientific and Archaeological relations

Romolo Loreto

The first Italian archaeological work in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia started in 2008, when Alessandro de Maigret (1943-2011), a tenured professor at the University of Naples 'L'Orientale' (UNO) who was, from 1980 to 2010, Director of the Italian archaeological expedition to the Yemen Arab Republic, invited by the then Saudi Commission for Tourism and Antiquities to visit the site of Dumat al-Jandal (figs. 1-2), in the Al-Jawf region. That expedition's intended goal was to investigate the historic centre of the oasis, which was believed to be the ancient Adummatu, capital of the Queens of the Arabs and Kings of the Qedar Confederation cited in sources belonging to the Neo-Assyrian sovereigns, which for two centuries (between the 8th and 6th centuries B.C.) fought against Assyrian imperialism in Arabia.

One of the very first European archaeological missions to the Kingdom after a French team visited Madā'in Sālih and a German team Tayma, the Italian expedition set off in 2009, backed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the Rome-based Italian Institute for Africa and the Orient. Many more archaeological expeditions were to follow, involving the participation of broader swathes of the scientific research community as Italy's presence expanded, most recently as part of a restoration campaign that began in 2013 with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. To date, research undertaken by Italian experts and students alongside staff from the SCTH and Saudi universities has focused on study of the prehistory and history of the North-Arabian region of Al-Jawf. Archaeological finds have confirmed that Dumat al-Jandal was indeed the ancient capital of Adummatu. This discovery now forms part of a broader framework, one that has revealed Al-Jawf's immense archaeological heritage dating back to prehistorical times, from the earliest Neolithic age hominids in 'Green Arabia' to Bronze Age cultures.

Field research has subsequently expanded to a series of training activities for Saudi operatives, driven by the growing desire of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) to foster the transmission of cultural heritage technologies, research methods and management systems. As part of this process, Italian experts have been working alongside their Saudi counterparts from the National Museum in Riyadh and the authorities in charge of the archaeological park at ad-Diriyah, which was the first al-Saud capital.

One early result of these intercultural relations between the Republic of Italy and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was a celebration of eighty years of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2013 with an exhibition event at the Complesso Monumentale del Vittoriano in Rome. This brief exhibition made it possible, for the first time in Italy, to admire some of Ancient Arabia's great treasures. To mark the occasion, the two nations signed a second agreement, a concession for Italian archaeological research at Dumat al-Jandal between 2013 to 2018. This was followed by a third agreement, which is still ongoing.

More recently, the SCTH began a series of research initiatives surveying the Kingdom's coastal areas, particularly its maritime archeology and recovery of heritage that today lies underwater. Within this framework, in 2015 UNO began working on an archaeological survey of an eighteenth-century merchant shipwreck off the Saudi coast in the northern Red Sea, near Umluj, as part of a project co-directed by myself and Professor of Maritime Archeology Chiara Zazzaro.

On the road in Europe, the US and Asia since 2010, *Roads of Arabia's* arrival in Rome offers a major showcase for the tradition of international studies in Arabia, a region so intimately associated with the ancient Mediterranean world and the Near East.

PRESS IMAGES

Download imagines: <https://www.electa.it/ufficio-stampa/?categoria=presskit=electa-mostre>



Funerary mask
1st century CE
Gold
17.5 x 13 cm
Thaj, Tell al-Zayer
National Museum, Riyadh



A human statue
4th millennium BC
Sandstone
57 x 27 x 5 cm
Qaryat al-Kaafa, near Ha'il
National Museum, Riyadh



A human statue
4th millennium BC
Sandstone
92 x 21 cm 31 Al-Kahfah village,
Hail
National Museum, Riyadh



A human statue with embossed
designs
4th millennium BC
Sandstone
100 x 36 x 9 cm
Al-Ula
National Museum, Riyadh



Necklace
1st century CE
Gold, pearls, turquoise, and ruby L
22.5 cm
Thaj, Tell al-Zayer
National Museum, Riyadh



Head of a monumental statue
of the Lihyanite dynasty
5th-2nd century BCE
47 x 49 x 51 cm
Tayma, German-Saudi
archaeological mission, Yard E,
deposit of the ancient Temple
E-b1
Tayma Museum



'Eye-stele,' human face and aramaic inscription
5th-4th century BCE
Sandstone
26 × 15 × 72cm
Tayma, stray find
Tayma Museum,



Frontal jewel
2nd century CE
Gold, fine stone and pearl, l. 41.5 cm
Tomb of Ayn Jawasn
National Museum, Riyadh



Circular pendant with inlaid garnets and pearls
2nd century CE
Gold garnet teardrop cabochon and fine pearl, Diam. 2.2 cm
Tomb of Ayn Jawasn
National Museum, Riyadh



Stele representing a man with a dagger
1st-3rd century CE
Calcite-alabaster, 57 × 30 cm
Qaryat al-Faw
Department of Archaeology Museum, King Saud University, Riyadh



Statuette of Harpocrates, with name of owner or artist
1st-3rd century CE
Bronze, H 32 cm, th. max. 9.2 cm
Qaryat al-Faw
Department of Archaeology Museum, King Saud University, Riyadh



Fragment of a wall painting with head of a man and Old South Arabian inscription: banquet scene?
1st-2nd century CE
Black, red and yellow paint on white plaster, 53 × 36 cm
Qaryat al-Faw, residential district (palace)
National Museum, Riyadh



Bell-shaped earrings
ca. 1st-3rd century CE
Gold, H 3.4 cm, Diam. ca. 2 cm
Qaryat al-Faw
Department of Archaeology Museum, King Saud University, Riyadh



Statuette of a dromedary
3rd century BCE - 3rd century CE
Clay
H 15.3 cm
Qaryat al-Faw
Department of Archaeology Museum, King Saud University, Riyadh



Female figurine
1st-2nd century CE
Bone, H 8 cm
Qaryat al-Faw
Department of Archaeology Museum, King Saud University, Riyadh



EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

During *Roads of Arabia*'s exhibition, Coopculture, in collaboration with the Museo Nazionale Romano's Educational Service, offers a program of educational activities for schools and families. Taking inspiration from the theme of the exhibition - which intends to tell the infinite roads traveled by men, precious goods and pilgrims- the educational activities will present the true reality of land too often associated exclusively with endless deserts. Students and children with their families will be able to discover the extraordinary and precious archaeological and cultural heritage of Arabia. The archeological objects on display will reveal the numerous and, sometimes unexpected, points of contact between places and people, antiquity and our time. With expert guidance we will also discover that henné is not just used for the hair but to decorate hands with valuable traditional motifs; Arabic calligraphy is a true form of art with its own styles and instruments and that men have learned to derive perfumes from plants to offer them as precious gifts.

Info and reservations:

06 39967701 Monday-Friday 9-13 / 14-17; Saturday 9-14

BATHS OF DIOCLETIAN. HISTORY

The Baths of Diocletian, the largest in the ancient world, are the historical premises of the Museo Nazionale Romano.

Established in 1889 as one of the principal **centers of historical and artistic culture of a united Italy**, the museum was intended to preserve and exhibit the works of historical collections passed to the state and the numerous *antiquities* that were found in the course of the work of adapting Rome to its new role as the Capital of the Kingdom of Italy. The museum's purpose was to increase the city's historical and artistic heritage and contribute with it in the most effective way to fostering culture. About a century after its establishment in the Baths of Diocletian, the Museum was reorganized with four distinct locations, with Palazzo Massimo, Palazzo Altemps and the Crypta Balbi being added to the Baths.

The Baths of Diocletian were built in just eight years, between 298 and 306 AD, on a site between the Viminal and Quirinal hills. They covered **an area of over 13 hectares**. They were surrounded by a large wall and an imposing exedra with steps, corresponding to today's Piazza della Repubblica. On either side of the exedra there were **two libraries** set side by side at the edge of the wall, with two circular rooms, one transformed in 1598 into the church of S. Bernardo, the other still visible at the beginning of Via del Viminale.

The principal rooms, the *frigidarium*, *tepidarium* and *calidarium*, were laid out in sequence along a central axis, at the sides of which, symmetrically arranged, were all the other rooms: next to the *frigidarium* there were two large open-air *palaestrae* (or gymnasiums). Aligned with the *calidarium* were two octagonal rooms, one of which was used between 1928 and the 1980s as a **Planetarium**.

The complex was restored at the beginning of the 5th century and probably remained in use for a few more decades. **After lying derelict for almost a thousand years, in 1561 Pope Pius IV decided to build a basilica inside the Baths with a Carthusian monastery attached to it dedicated to the Madonna degli Angeli** and the memory of the Christian martyrs who, according to legend, had died during the construction of the Baths. **The project was entrusted to Michelangelo**. He respected the ancient building, using the *frigidarium* and the *tepidarium* without altering their features, and devised the **great Cloister**. In the same years the **small cloister** was also built (**called the Ludovisi Cloister** after the collection of ancient sculptures that it long housed, now in Palazzo Altemps), adjacent to the presbytery of the church, which occupies about a third of the great pool (*natatio*) of the Baths.

In 1575, under Gregory XIII, the great halls of the baths were transformed into granaries and warehouses for olive oil.

The Great Halls of the Baths of Diocletian

Room VIII hosts some of the magnificent architectural fragments of the Baths. Through a prospect lined by pillars and columns, the room faced the *natatio*, with part of its monumental façade now visible.

The pool covered some 4,000 square meters. The façade, whose restoration has brought out its architectural articulation, was designed on the model of the fixed scenery in a theater, with three orders of columns framing niches containing statues. Its surface was covered with colored marbles and mosaics creating extraordinary polychrome effects.

Room X was one of the entrances to the central body of the Baths. On display here is the so-called Platorini sepulcher, discovered in 1880 on the right bank of the Tiber. It is important to remember that the remains discovered in Rome and its suburbs have been brought together in the Museo delle Terme di Diocleziano. For this reason two chamber tombs set inside a large core of tuff (volcanic stone) are also exhibited here. They were excavated in 1951 on the Via Portuense. In the niches of this room there are statues of men in togas and women in drapery, of unknown provenance, but probably from funerary settings.

Room XI was used as the reservoir of water supplying the thermae. It currently displays a large black and white mosaic dating from the 2nd century AD. Found in 1931 in the archaeological area of Nero's villa at Anzio, it measures about 80 square meters. In the center, among elegant volutes, Hercules is portrayed victoriously holding the horn he has just torn from the bleeding head of the river god Achelous.