



## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# Researchers Study Ancient Kingdoms in Saudi Arabia

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In northwest Saudi Arabia, archaeologists are working to dig up the remains of the ancient and long-forgotten **kingdoms** of Dadan and Lihyan.

The remains of these kingdoms are in Al Ula, a place known mainly for the **tombs** of Madain Saleh, a 2,000-year-old city **carved** into rocks by the Nabateans. The Nabateans were a pre-Islamic Arab people who also built Petra in Jordan.

A team of French and Saudi archaeologists is now digging at five nearby areas related to the Dadanite and Lihyanite civilizations. These were important powers some 2,000 years ago.

Abdulrahman Al-Sohaibani co-leads the Dadan archaeological mission. He said, "It's a project that really tries to unlock the mysteries of (these) civilizations." In this case, unlock is a term that means to find out about something that was unknown.

The Royal Commission for the project notes that Dadan appears in the Bible's Old Testament. The Lihyanite kingdom was one of the largest of its time. It went from Medina in the south to Aqaba in the north.

Lasting nearly 900 years, the two kingdoms controlled important trade **routes**. But very little is known about them. The team is hoping to learn more about their religion, social life and economy.

Jerome Rohmer is a researcher with the French National Center for Scientific Research. Rohmer noted that previous digs had been limited to a smaller area around the tombs. He added that researchers would like to do a more complete study of the history of the area and "its material culture, its economy."

In Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's push to change Saudi Arabia's economy and society, Al-Ula has gained recognition. The kingdom is hoping for international visitors as it tries to open up to the world and **diversify** its economy away from oil.

Al-Ula's development is part of a move to **preserve** pre-Islamic areas in order to draw in non-Muslim tourists and strengthen national identity.

I'm Dorothy Gundy.

*Mohammed Benmansour reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for Learning English. Hai Do was the editor.*

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## Words in This Story

**kingdom** -- *n.* a country whose ruler is a king or queen

**tomb** -- *n.* a building or chamber above or below the ground in which a dead body is kept

**carve** -- *v.* to make (something, such as a sculpture or design) by cutting off pieces of the material it is made of

**route** -- *n.* a way that someone or something regularly travels along

**diversify** -- *v.* to change (something) so that it has more different kinds of people or things

**preserve** -- *v.* to keep (something) in its original state or in good condition

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