



Route to Madain Saleh

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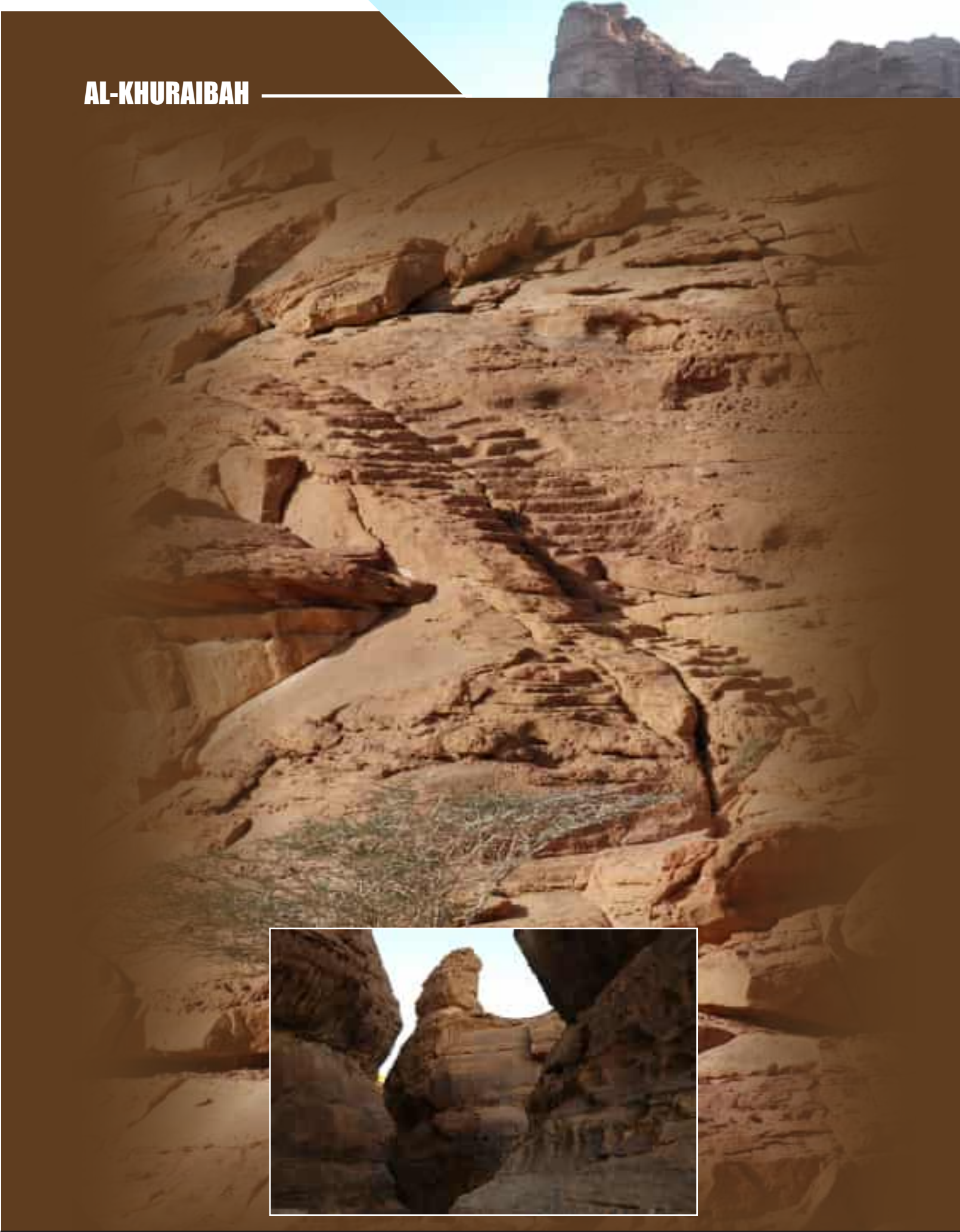
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FOREWORD



Al-Ula was known in the ancient manuscripts and works of Dedan. The inscriptions and writings discovered in Al-Ula indicate that a group of Arab tribes from the south and north of the Arabian Peninsula dwelt in Al-Ula and formed kingdoms throughout the ancient history.

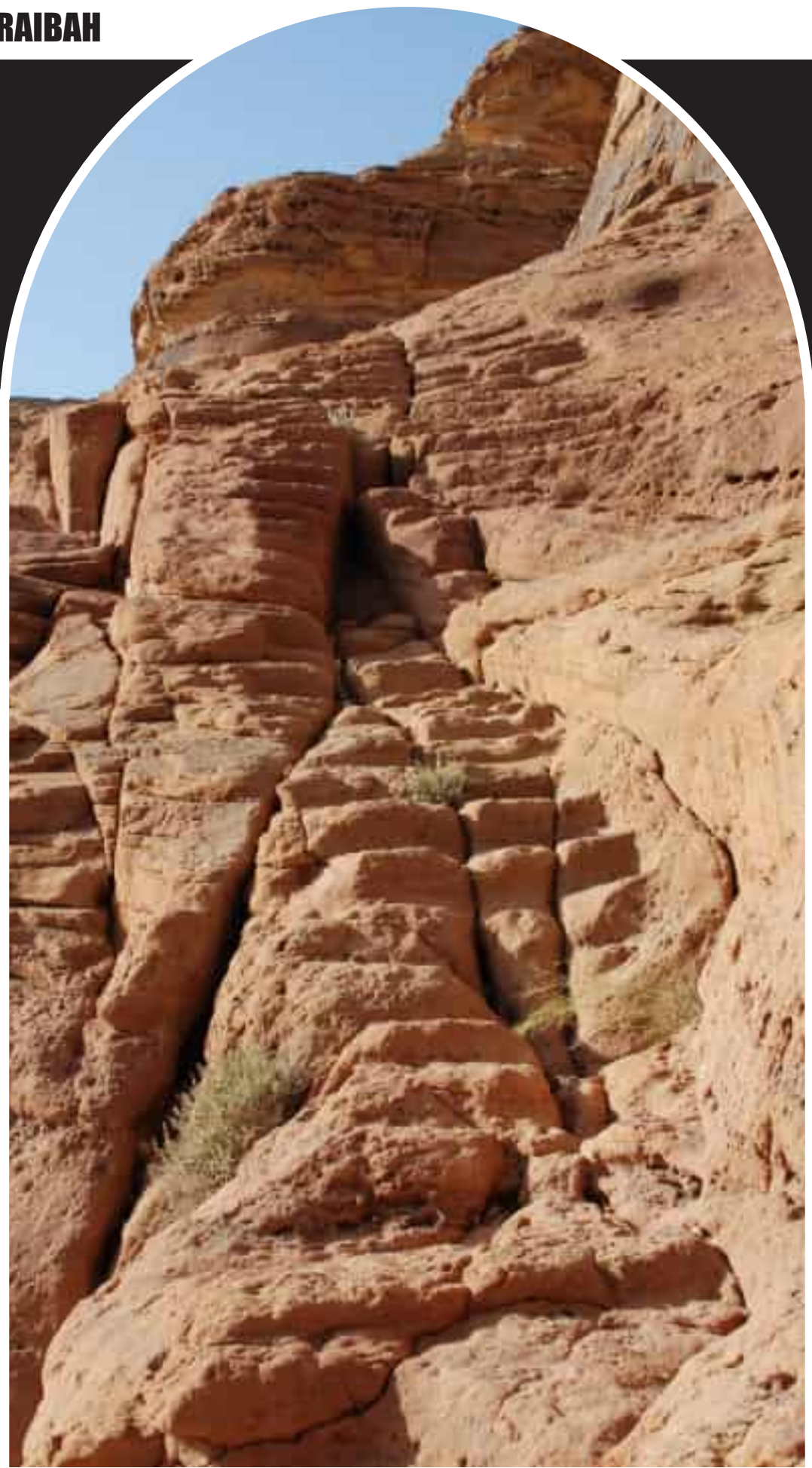
The most important name given to Al-Ula was the «Kingdom of Dedan» which is the oldest Kingdom created in the region. That name was given (according to Dr. Abu Al-Hassan Al-Ansari) based on a form that is contained in only one Arabic text as “دَدْنُ”, which means “city ruler or Sheikh”. It is also said that the name Dedan was derived from the name of idol Wed that worshipped in the region from the first millennium B.C. The name “Widd” means love and this love associated with city then became the «City of Love».

Date back to sixth century B.C. the Kingdom of Dedan was governed by a royal regime. Its borders expanded to include Al-Ula and Madain Saleh in the north where Al-Ula occupied a strategic location on the main Incense Trade Route. Traders are selling aloes wood, incense and spices, which was among the most important commodities in the ancient world. Al-Ula played the role of mediator between civilizations of the ancient world such as India, Babylon, Levant and Egypt. Such importance and position continue until the end of the first century A.D.

The name Dedan was mentioned in the Torah as Ulaat that refers to the Arab people from the north. It was also mentioned that the land of Dedan was adjacent to the borders of Adomat land, where inhabitants of Dedan sent their crops to the Egyptian markets. Dedan was famous for importing spices, perfumes and incense from the kingdom of the northern Arabian Peninsula and exporting them to Egypt and Al-Sham countries.



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LOCATION

Mount Ikmah shows different information about the history of the kingdoms that inhabited the area. That information explains the aspects of the social life, politics and economy of those kingdoms. The location also includes more graves dug in the middle of the rocks along with many archaeological inscriptions and a large stone basin amid the remains of a demolished city.

The sculptured graves in the mountains are divided into Dedan and Thamud graves. The location of Dedan is considered as one of the best archaeological locations retailing the stories of three ancient Arab Kingdoms that lived the area around 4,000 B.C. until the first century A.D., where the system of their government was monarchy.



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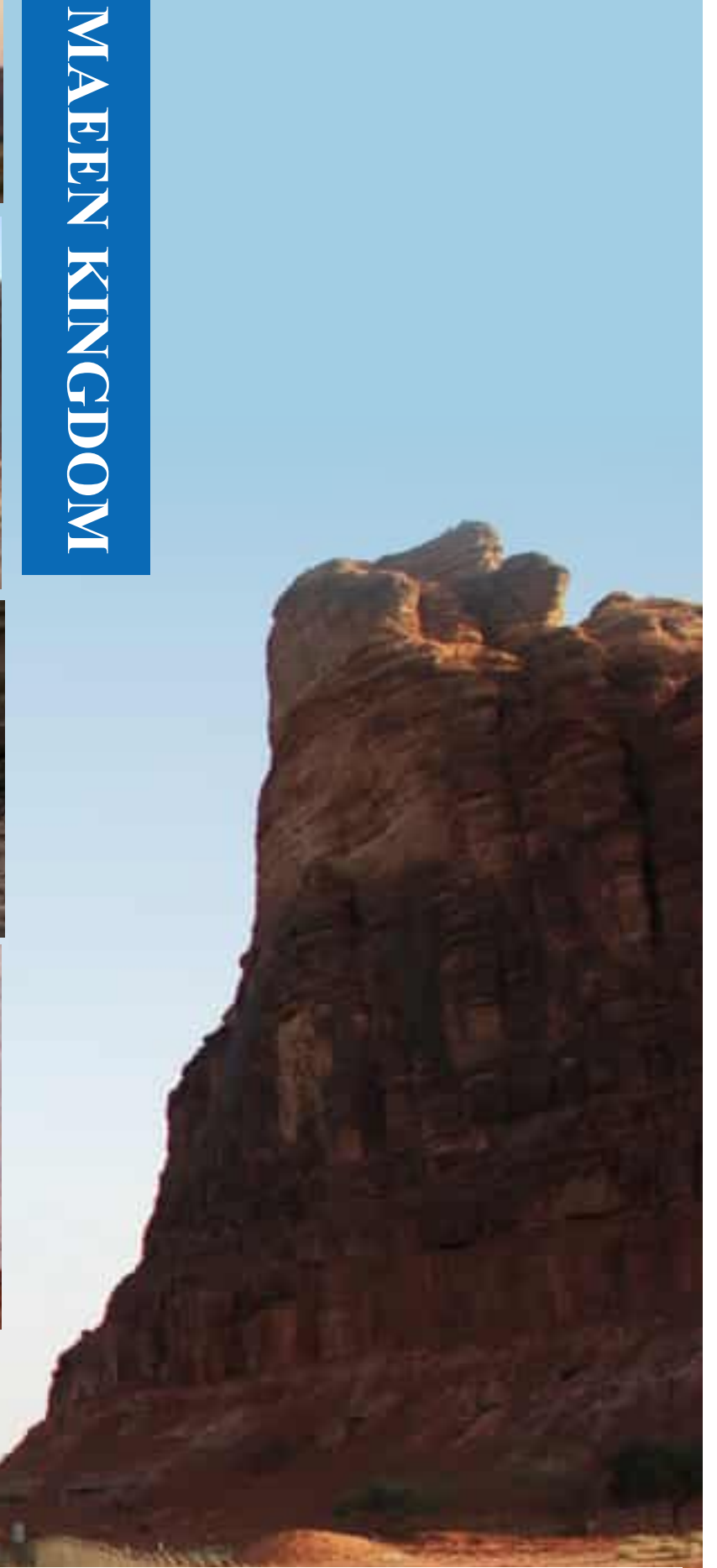


The Maeen Kingdom was established in Yemen, south of the Arabian Peninsula dominating entire Yemen, Al-Sham Countries and Hejaz. Maeen Kingdom is one of the oldest ancient Arab Kingdoms including Saba'a Kingdom and Hemiar Kingdom, but there is no definite date specifying with their ruling period. However, some historians believe that the era of Maeen Kingdom is from 4,000 B.C. to the sixth century B.C. (4,000 B.C. - 600 B.C.). Archaeologists and historians link Maeen Kingdom to the Arab Thamud Tribe (Maeenaen Thamud) as the Thamud migrated after the death of the entire tribe of Aad to the Empty Quarter in Yemen and established Maeen Kingdom. More Maeen inscriptions mentioned Thamud's tribe name under the names Thamud, Thamud and Thamudy. Both Kingdom of Dedan and Lehyan were influenced by the culture of the Maeen Kingdom.

A strong relation between the two kingdoms has grown, which are based on mutual interests and benefits that included dominating the trade routes. Maeen Kingdom appointed many commercial representatives residing permanently in Dedan to supervise and take care of the commercial matters and operations of the Maeen nationals living in Dedan. This commercial representative was responsible for the behaviour and actions of Maeen traders and nationals living in Dedan and report to the king. Yet, there is no information evidencing that Dedan was not under the rule of Maeen Kingdom or any information about disappearance of the Kingdom of Maeen. Some researchers mentioned that a war broke out between north and south of Maeen Kingdom fighting for dominance over trading caravans and for their protection and resources that leads to the division of Maeen kingdom. Besides, some inscriptions mentioned Yemen and a war between Za Yemnt and Za Shamlet and that is the north and south.



MAEEN KINGDOM



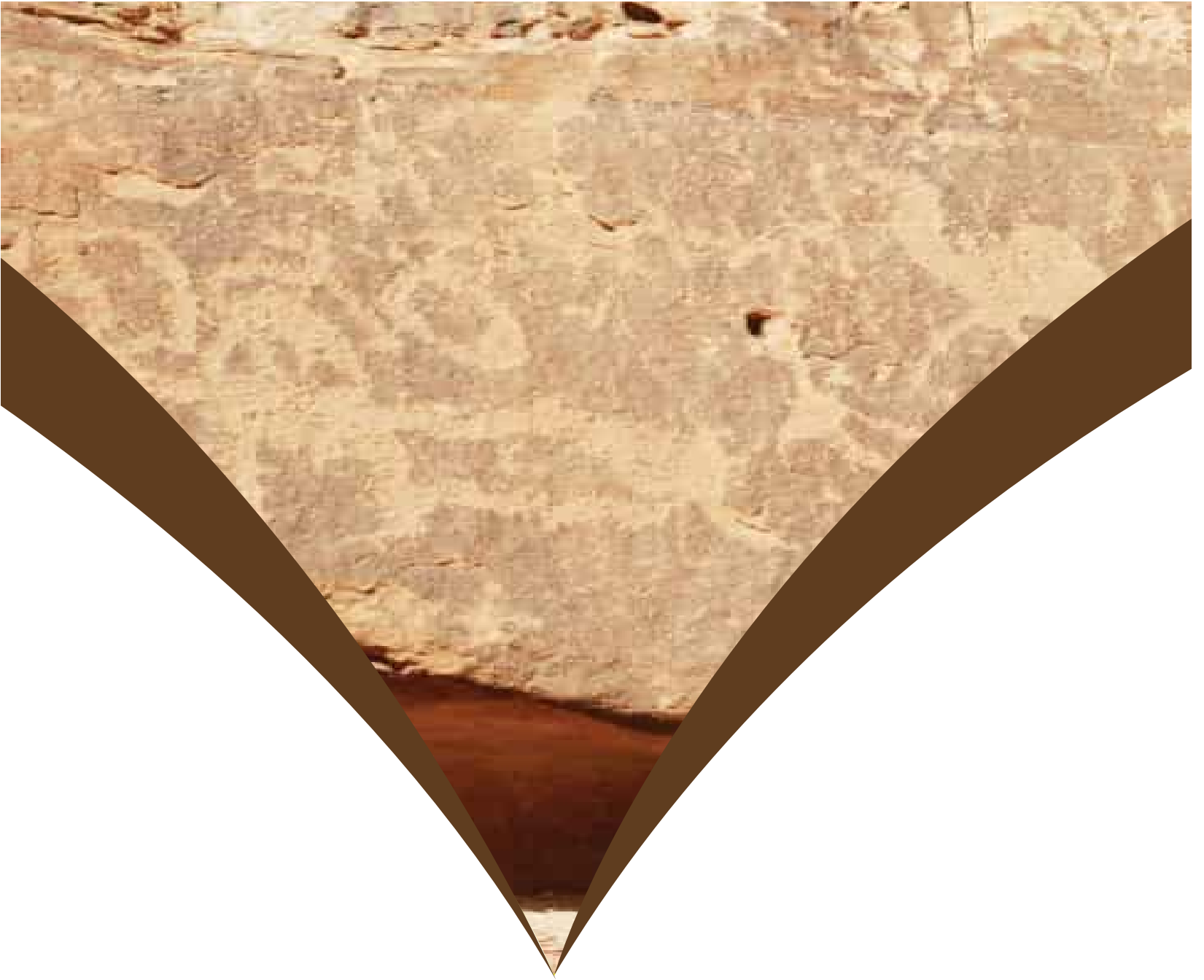
LEHYAN KINGDOM

Inscriptions indicate that another Kingdom was established in Al-Ula. It was the Kingdom of Lehyan dates back to the beginning of the fifth century B.C. which is governed by a royal hereditary regime. The regime was limited to one family, however it sometimes moves from one family to another. The king has advisory council to help and advise him in all decision making. Despite the fact that king had dominated the economy of the kingdom including trade, agriculture and grazing in addition to the revenue from the temples' donations and sacrifices provided to their god, his authority was not absolute. He was rather committing to council's advice. Kings of Lehyan enjoyed a high position among their people as they used to mark the most important events and occasions by the rule of their monarchs. The power of Lehyan Kingdom spread to dominate almost the entire Arabian Peninsula and Al-Sham countries. They also dominated Old Trade Road and Maritime Trading Routes and the bay of Aqaba was named Lehyan Bay.





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THE RELIGION OF LEHYAN KINGDOM

Religion for the old Arab was not only a cultural manifestation, but also the power from which life is driven and civic culture is characterized. The geographical factors and economic situation of Arab communities affected the formation of beliefs, where the beliefs of inhabitants from the desert differed from those of the urban people. The activities of society in trade and travel between cities made the people worship the things that can help them find their path in the desert and in dark nights. It is usual to find them worshipping the moon, stars and sun. On the other hand, the Bedouin community that depends on grazing, presence of grass and forbs worships rain, thunder, lightning and so on. The social system impacted the religious beliefs as well. Each tribe had its own religious beliefs that differ from what the other tribes believe in.

There were many gods worshipped in the Arabian Peninsula including the sun, moon, stars, rain, storms, trees, mountains and others. The writings on the rocks are one of the most important sources that provide information of the Arab's religion before the emergence of Islam. The Lehyan inscriptions that have been discovered in Al-Ula contain several indications of religion in the Lehyan society. It was clear that Lehyan communities used to worship the idol Zu Ghibah and built temples for it.

Mahlab Anaqah or Al-Halauiah (a place for milking camel) which is located in the middle of the city of Khuraibah is considered to be the remains of Zu Ghibah temple. It was used for washing and purification before entering the temple. Other remains of Zu Ghibah temple were found on the apex of Um Daraj Mountain, some remains of reservoirs dug in the rocks can be also found there. There are also numbers of statues or parts of them, in addition to some Lehyan inscriptions written on stone sheets indicating sacrifices for Zu Ghibah. Other than Zu Ghibah, Lehyans also worshipped different

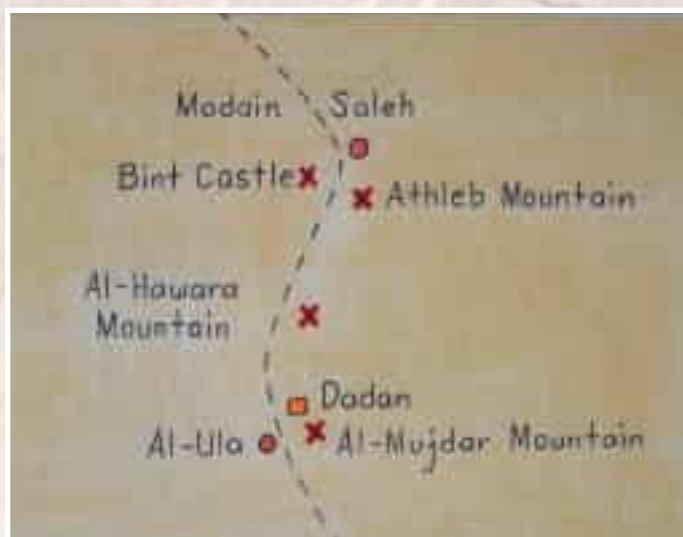


idols such as Salman, Abu Ilaf, Allat, Al-Oza, and Manat. Because of the presence of Maeen community in Al-Ula they worshipped the gods known in their Kingdom. In the south of the Arabian Peninsula they worshipped Nakrah and Widd, whose names included in the Maeen inscriptions found in Al-Ula. In addition, the people of Maeen used to worship Lehyan idols as well.

ECONOMY IN DEDAN

Dedan was one of the most important commercial stations on the Caravan Trade Route leading from the south of Arabian Peninsula to Iraq, Levant and Egypt. Lehyan people benefited from the caravans passing through their country by collecting taxes and providing services like selling food and drinks for traders. Lehyan people switched the commercial routes from southern Arabian Peninsula to northern Arabian Peninsula. Inscriptions indicate to the alms and sacrifices that provided by traders to their god Zu Ghibah for the animals pulling the carts that transported the commodities.

In addition to trading, people of Lehyan also depended on agriculture for their livelihood. Many words are mentioned in the inscriptions indicating their knowledge of agriculture such as kharaf means harvesting crops in autumn; ditha means the harvesting crops in the spring, thirt means agricultural land and mo means water. Beside trade and agriculture, their economy also depended on grazing. Lehyan inscriptions show many sacrifices and alms given to Zu Ghibah including she-camel, black camel, and cattle. Such sacrifices had not been given if there was no integrated economic system codifying alms and overseeing their tax spending.





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ECONOMY IN DEDAN



Most historians believe that the end of Dedan and Lehyan Kingdom was at the end of the second century B.C. As historical texts indicate that there was a king called Massaoud who proclaimed himself King of Lehyan and used the Nabataean writings where three inscriptions bearing his name indicating his use of the language discovered. There is no indication that this king was from Lehyan or Nabataean as the Nabataean kings used to bear names such as Haritha, Lord, Aal, Al-Ubada, Malik, etc. Therefore, historians agreed that Massaoud was not the king of the Nabataean but an adventurer who came to Al-Ula from an area with Nabataean culture. Perhaps Massaoud was the first to reap the benefits of expansion of the Nabataean influence to the south which captured the area from Madain Saleh to Al-Ula at the end of the first or second century B.C.

Thus, Al-Ula and surrounding areas such as Madain Saleh, Tayma, Dawmat Al-Gandal and Petra became under the Romanian rule as of the beginning of the second century A.D. Kaskl says that the Kingdom of Lehyan existed until 201 A.D. when the Roman armies entered the Arab happy countries, but he did not refer to the areas occupied by such armies. The military campaign against the so called by Romans as "happy Arab countries" was led by the Caesar's son Astimos II in 198 A.D.

However, the Romanians did not go far into the Arab territories where Thamud and Kingdom of Dedan were the last areas captured by them. Al-Ula remains under the Roman influence until the emergence of Islam in the sixth century A.D.

THE END OF DEDAN AND LEHYAN KINGDOM



GETTING AROUND DEDAN

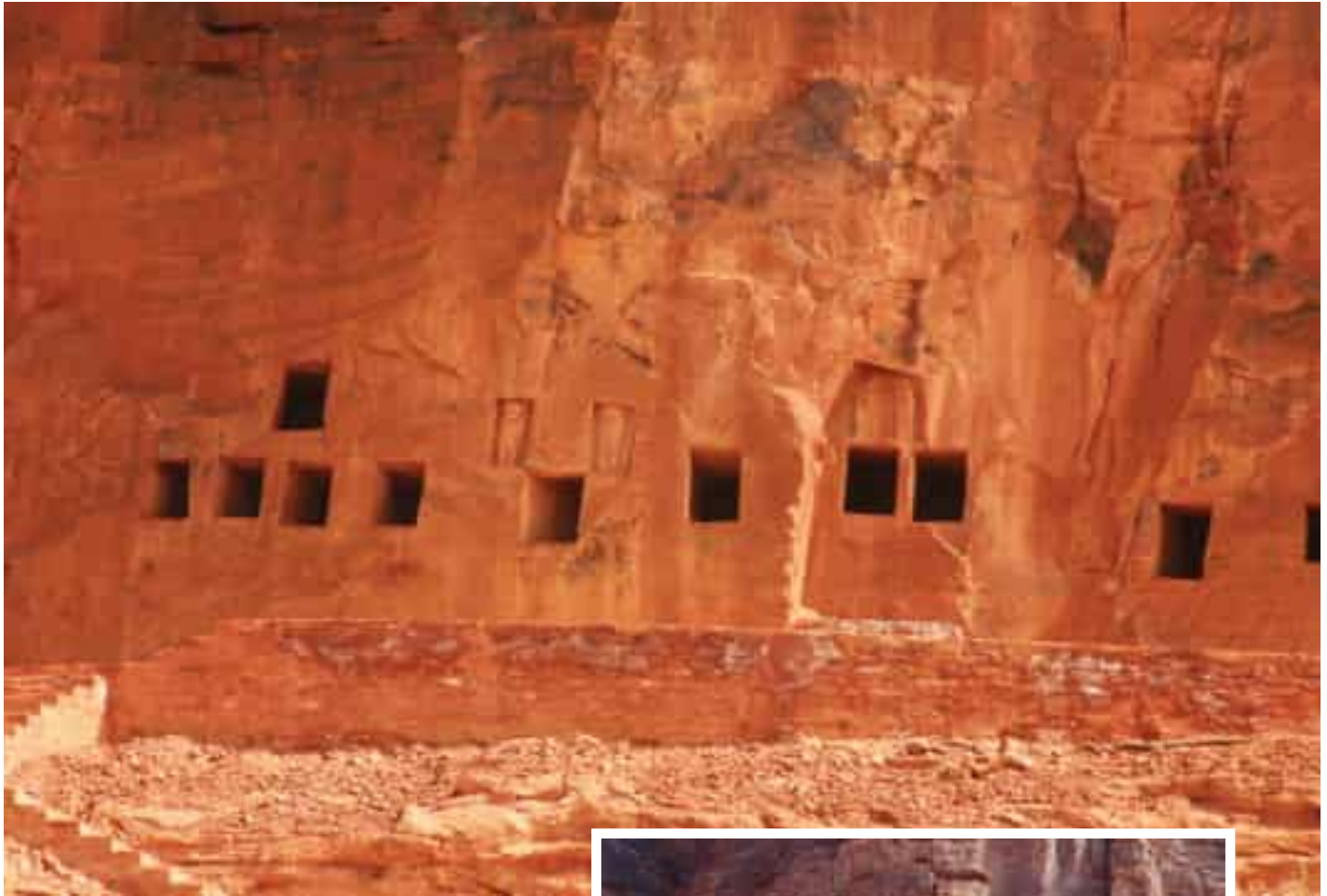


AL-USOUD (LION) TOMBS

Al-Usoud Tombs is a series of facades dug inside the rocks. These groups of graves appear at the foot of the eastern mountain after entering the fenced archaeological site passing through the remains of Dedan City and stone basin to the south. There are some sculptured works on these graves. The facades of Dedan City are less advanced and not as beautiful as the graves in Madain Saleh.

The record indicating ownership of the tomb by Maeen inscription are translated as follows; “Hani bin Wahab el Al Malih has been granted remission of his sins by offering sacrifice to the god Nikrah and Wadd. May gods punish whoever removes or damage the tomb as long as there is earth and sky.”







DEDAN TOMBS

Dedan Tombs are located to the north of Maeen Tombs which are different in all shapes and sizes.





MAHLAB AL-NAQA or AL-HALAUIAH (STONE BASIN)

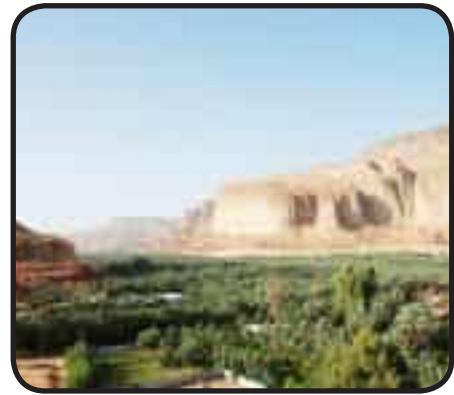
A large stone basin cast in a rock called by local people of Al-Ula as Al-Halauiah or Mahlab Al-Naqa that can be found in the center of demolished city, where some parts of its walls and canals are still visible. Many local people believe that Prophet Saleh's she-camel filled this basin with milk, which become a legend narrated locally but has nothing to do with the site. This large stone basin is remnants of the Lehyan Temple in center of the town.



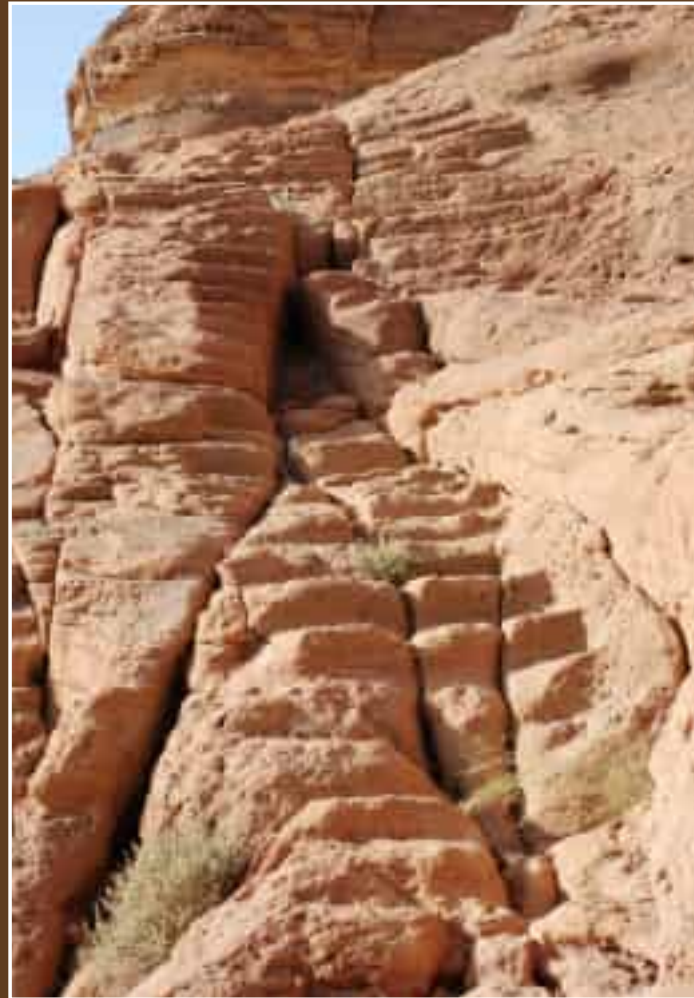


MOUNT IKMAH

The tombs of Khuraibah which are delicately carved into the mountain are much different from those in Madain Saleh, possibly due to culture differences of people who carved them. The site of Mount Ikmah is also worth visiting as the variety of inscriptions can be seen depicted in high concentrations. These different inscriptions are from Lehyan, Dedan and Thamud Tribe.



UM-DARAJ

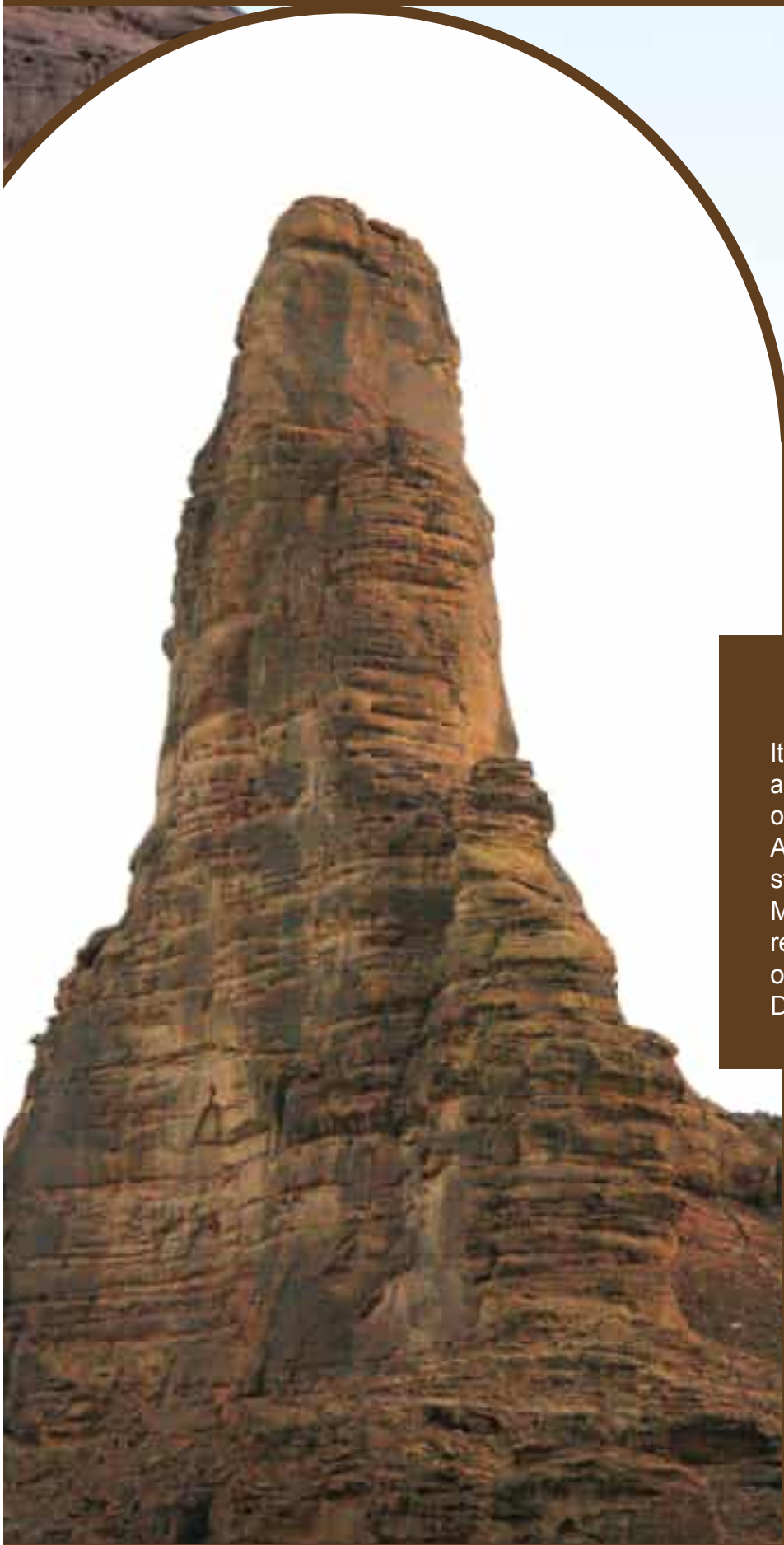


It is located into Saq District to Harat Owerud Mountain at the western part of Al-Ula. The stairs engraved at the foot of the mountain can be seen even the visitors stay in the car during sightseeing. These stairs lead to a Lehyan temple in the mountain, but it is ruined at the time being. Visitors are not advisable to ascend the temple because access to it is not easy and dangerous.





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DENAN

It is located to the north-west of Al-Ula. It is a beautiful valley surrounded by mountains on the east and west and contains many Arab and non-Arab writings, graffiti and strange rock formations. It is parallel to Mount Ikamah from the west and can be reached by two ways: first, from behind of Arac Hotel and the other is through Denan Valley, southwest of Qaraqir.



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OTHER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

There are other important archaeological sites that are still under research and discovery. Those are the Azohrah and Tal Al-Kateb sites located about one kilometer away from the site of Dedan. Some studies have been undertaken by scientists at the site of Tal Al-Kateb where they found remains of an agricultural village date back 1,000 B.C. It tells us about the development of farming and the construction system in irrigation channels at that time. In any case, these sites are part of the extension created by Dedan Kingdom.





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