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**Social and economic benefits, supporting sustainable development, measures
taken and proposed for the implementation of resolutions.**

**Geographic Names and UNESCO World Heritage sites
in Saudi Arabia**

Submitted by Saudi Arabia **

Summary

The UNESCO World Heritage List is a very prestigious list that reflect on an international cultural dialogue. Saudi Arabia has an impressive six UNESCO World Heritage sites – that reflect, both, on the vast and diverse history of the country in addition to the efforts to preserve this history. These sites are Al-Hijr Archaeological Site (2008), At-Turaif District in ad-Dir'iyah (2010), Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah (2014), Rock Art in the Hail (2015), Al-Ahsa Oasis, an Evolving Cultural Landscape (2018), and Himā Cultural Area (2021). The research aims to study the issue of the relationship between toponymy and cultural heritage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This discussion will analyze key features of cultural heritage, the links with toponymical studies and also provides geographical, historical, linguistic and cultural information on the geographic names of UNESCO sites in Saudi Arabia.

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1- Introduction

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) established in 1972 is engaged in the protection and preservation of cultural or natural heritage in the world. The research and studies of toponymy has grown in UNGEGN since its launch in 1960. This paper looks at the linkage between toponymy and cultural heritage sites in Saudi Arabia. There are six UNESCO World Heritage Sites in different directions of the country (Figure 1) as well as diversity in terms of language, environment, culture and geographical characteristics (Table 1).

Table 1: List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Saudi Arabia.

Name	Date of inscription	Location	Description	X, Y	Arabic name	Romanized name
1 Hegra Archaeological Site	2008	Al Ula governate	Archaeological area	26°48'14.55" N 37°57'26.03" E	الحجر	Al Hjr
2 At-Turaif District	2010	ad-Dir'iyah city	Historical district	24°44'3.09"N 46°34'32.35" E	طريف	Tryf
3 Historic Jeddah	2014	Jeddah city	The Gate to Makkah	21°29'15.17" N 39°11'10.86" E	جدة التاريخية	Jdh At Tārykhyh
4 Rock Art	2015	Hail Region	10,000 years of history	28° 0'13.18"N 40°55'47.71" E	الفن الصخري	Al Fn Aš Škhry
5 Al-Ahsa Oasis	2018	Al-Ahsa Oasis	An Evolving Cultural Landscape	25°24'39.58" N 49°41'36.60" E	واحة الأحساء	Wāḥh Al Aḥsā'
6 Ḥimā Cultural Area	2021	Najran region	7000 years of history	18°14'58.04" N 44°27'8.38"E	حمى الثقافية	Ḥimā Ath Thqāfyh

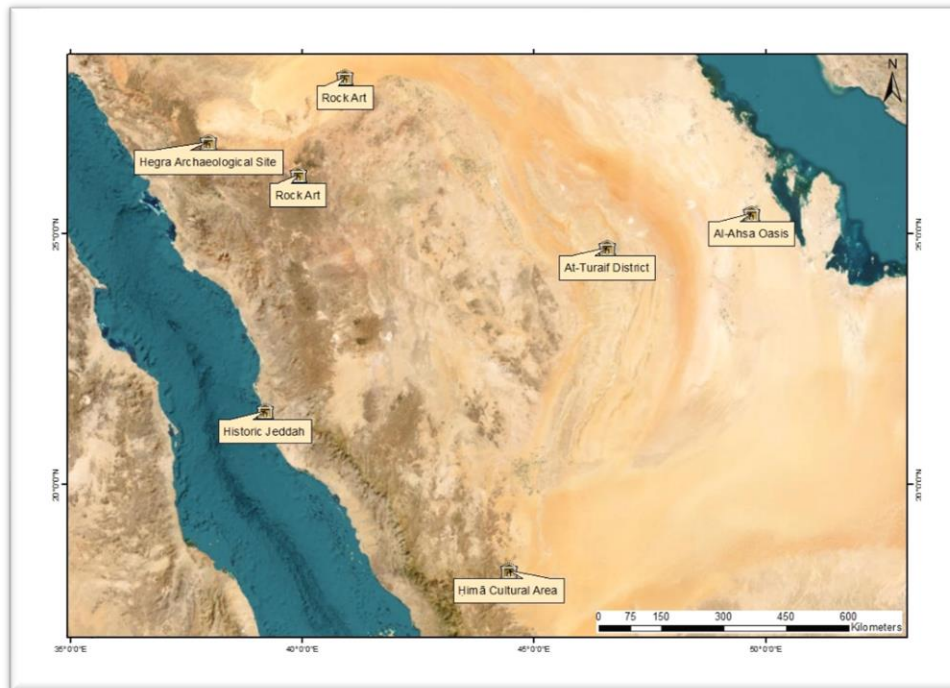


Figure 1: The locations of UNESCO sites

2- Hegra Archaeological Site

Hegra Archaeological Site which is known as Al Ḥj̄r. The name of Hegra was referenced by Strabo - a Greek geographer and philosopher - (64 BC) for the Nabatean site, while it officially calls Al Ḥj̄r in the Arabic language in the meaning of preservation and denial of access. In addition, the area is also called Madā' in Ṣālīḥ since the Abbasid Caliphate (750 CE) where (Mada in) refers to a couple of towns and the name of (Ṣālīḥ) is a great man in that area called Ṣālīḥ.

This site is located at Al-Ula governate which is sometimes formally as AlUla, where Its expansion in the Medina province of northwestern Saudi Arabia. The population of the governate was about 65,000 persons with number of housing at 12,700 (census, 2010). The history of AlUla was related to the incense route between India and Europe, however, there are various pieces of evidence found in the AlUla area such as (1) Tumulus tombs dates C14 2113/1892 BC (Bronze Age). (2) The evidence of water management and development of agriculture, and ancient North Arabian script at Jabal Ikmaḥ (Ancient North Arabian Kingdoms; DADAN), (3) Spectacular carved tomb facades, artificial wells in rocky ground (Nabataean Kingdom; Hegra), (4) Site of fort (Roman Empire), (5) water system management (Islamic period, Qurh AlUla), (6) Hijaz railway, forts (Ottoman Empire).

The main four geographic names of cities in AlUla governate are AlUla city which means the upper of lands as noted by Yaqut Al-Hamawi (1179-1229), and it was also mentioned that AlUla is called as it has two well-known spring waters (Al M'iq and Td'l). AlUla city has a heritage village called Ad-Deerah (containing more than 1000 houses), which meaning is an old town down, with a significant Tantora wall. The name of Tantora comes traditionally from a sundial, culturally significant to the people of the region, who relied on it to tell the time and celebrate the return of the planting season at the beginning of each winter. The other main cities are (1) Mughira which is located southeast of AlUla where the old Islamic city of Al-Mabiyat (13th century), (2) Abu Raku is situated northward of AlUla, and (3) Al Hajar at the northeast of Alula where the UNESCO site is located. Moreover, there are many individual scattered areological sites (Table 2).

Table 2: Individual scattered areological sites in AIUla.

	Arabic name	Romanized name	Description	X, Y
1	قصر الفريد	Qsr Al Fryd	(Nabataean Kingdom) tombs	26°46'26.18"N 37°57'40.06"E
2	قصر البننت	Qsr Al Bnt	(Nabataean Kingdom) tombs	26°47'18.27"N 37°57'35.51"E
3	الديوان	Ad Dywān	(Nabataean Kingdom) tombs	26°47'30.74"N 37°57'49.53"E
4	جبل البنات	Jbl Al Bnāt	(Nabataean Kingdom) tombs	26°47'18.27"N 37°57'35.51"E
5	مدافن الخريمات	Mdāfn Al Khrymāt	(Nabataean Kingdom) tombs	26°47'6.97"N 37°56'9.81"E
6	محلّب الناقة	Mh̄lb An Nāqh	Large stone basin	26°39'20.53"N 37°54'46.72"E
7	الخريبة	Al Khrybh	Area of Archeological sites	26°39'19.08"N 37°54'48.42"E
8	مقابر الأسود	Mqābr Al Aswd	Carved lions tombs (DADAN)	26°38'49.58"N 37°54'57.92"E
9	جبل عكمه	Jbl 'Kmh	A petroglyph (Dadan and others)	26°41'8.33"N 37°54'10.37"E
10	المابيات	Al Mābyāt	Area of Archeological Islamic sites	26°30'12.30"N 38° 3'11.23"E

3- At-Turaif District in Ad-Dir'iyah governate

Ad-Dir'iyah lays on either side of the narrow valley known as Wadi Hanifa near to Riyadh city. The population of governate was about 73.600 persons with number of housing 14.274 (census, 2010). The name of Ad-Dir'iyah was known as Ghussaibah, Al-Mulaybeed and later on the At-Turaif was settled (UNESCO site). These three areas changed their names to Ad-Dir'iyah referring to the name of Ad Drw' Tribe. Historically, At-Turaif District was founded in the 15th century, and in the mid of 18th century At-Turaif became the capital of the Saudi Dynasty. This district is the most important archaeological features of Ad-Dir'iyah as it included most of the historic administrative buildings

and Salwa Palace, which has the meaning of comfortable design and happiness of resident and visitor to the place (Table 3).

Table 3: Individual sites in Ad-Dir'iyah.

	Arabic name	Romanized name	Description	X, Y
1	حي الطريف	Ḥy At Turyf	Historical district	24°43'58.57"N 46°34'32.12"E
2	قصر سلوى	Qsr Slwá	Historical palace	24°44'2.10"N 46°34'32.59"E
3	قصر سعد بن سعود	Qsr S'd Bn S'wd	Historical palace	24°44'2.14"N 46°34'29.97"E
4	وادي حنيفة	Wādy Hnyfh	Natural landmark	24°44'2.87"N 46°34'37.00"E
5	مسجد الامام محمد بن سعود	Msjd Al Amām Ṃhmd Bn S'wd	Historical mosque	24°44'11.40"N 46°34'28.01"E
6	البيري	Al Bjry	Historical district	24°44'9.83"N 46°34'31.82"E
7	غصيبة	Ghsybh	Historical district	24°44'47.44"N 46°33'41.62"E
8	قصر العوجا	Qsr Al 'Wjā	Historical palace	24°44'9.55"N 46°34'4.71"E
9	بيت المال	Byt Al Māl	Historical building	24°43'59.75"N 46°34'34.52"E

4- Historic Jeddah, the Gate to Makkah

Historic Jeddah is situated in the old down town of Jeddah which is also known as Al-Balad. This area was established as a major port on the Red Sea (7th century AD), and the gateway for Muslim pilgrims to Mecca. Therefore, the historic Jeddah was developed into a thriving multicultural center, characterized by a distinctive architectural tradition, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the development of steamboat navigation routes linking Europe with India and East Asia. This power location adds Jeddah to the Beta World City.

Jeddah city was named as "Balad Al-Qanasil" during the Islamic era (647 AD) as a major port for entering the city of Makkah. The etymology of Jeddah (romanized Jdh) has different common meaning, for example, it was mentioned that the name of Jeddah comes from the chief of Quda'a

tribe (Jeddah Ibn Al-Quda'iy). On the other hand, it was mentioned that the name comes from the Arabic name Jaddah which means grandmother. This is related to the Tomb of Eve (the grandmother of humanity) is located in Jeddah city. While Yaqut Al-Hamawi (1179-1229) noted the name of Jeddah reflect the meaning of Sea shore city. Moreover, Jeddah was spelled in different ways, for instant, Jiddah city was written in the diary of Ibn Battuta (1330). Whereas, the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office used Jedda. Recently, prevailing usage in Saudi maps and documents are transcribed as Jeddah.

The population of Jeddah governate is over 3,450,000 persons with number of housing 702,527 (census, 2010). Jeddah was remained within a wall surrounding an area of 1km square during the period 1509-1947 AD, with eight gates; one at the east, one at the south, two at the north, while there are four gates on the west facing the Red Sea (Table 4).

Table 4: Gates in the Historic Jeddah

	Arabic name	Romanized name	Description	X, Y
1	باب مكة	Bāb Mkh	The gate was located in the eastern sector of the wall to facilitate travelers and convoys from Makkah which the gate takes its name. The gate leads to the markets and to provide a passage for funerals heading to the cemetery outside the wall.	21°29'6.91"N 39°11'33.88"E
2	باب شريف	Bāb Shryf	The gate is located in the southern sector of the wall to go outside auctions, and to reach the uphill calls Quoz of Hamala for overlooks pleasant view.	21°28'51.85"N 39°11'14.49"E
3	باب الصبة	Bāb Aṣ Ṣbh	The gate is located in the western sector of the wall, and it was accessible to the Market and to go to important government departments and to the court. The gate was known for the imported grain and transfer to the merchants' warehouses. This processed was call Aṣ Ṣbh which the gate takes its name.	21°29'3.39"N 39°11'5.14"E
4	باب المغاربة	Bāb Al Mghārbh	The gate is located in the western sector of the wall, and it was the only exit for pilgrims coming by the Red Sea. The gate takes its name from the neighborhood of Mghārbh people (Moroccan).	21°29'6.84"N 39°11'34.22"E
5	باب صريف	Bāb Ṣryf	The gate is located in the western sector of the wall.	21°29'21.20"N 39°11'10.66"E
6	باب المدينة	Bāb Al Mdynh	The gate is located in the northern sector of the wall, and it was used to reach the military barracks "Al-Qishla", to serve passage of carts laden with stones, and to facilitate travelers and convoys from	21°29'25.47"N 39°11'13.06"E

			Makkah and Madinah which the gate took its name.	
7	باب النافعة	Bāb An Nāf'h	The gate is located in the western sector of the wall, and it was a crossing point for workers in the Red Sea.	21°28'53.90"N 39°10'59.08"E
8	باب جديد	Bāb Jdyd	The gate means a new gate as it was built under the rule of Saudi Arabia, and it is located in the northern sector with design of double gate to accommodate the passage of cars.	21°29'21.68"N 39°11'10.28"E

5- Rock Art in the Hail Region of Saudi Arabia

Hail province is located in the northern part of central Saudi Arabia. The area of province extends over 120,000 km², with population of 600,000 persons, and number of housing 93,000 (census, 2010). Hail city is famous for the two mountain ranges Aja and Salma, and its association with historical paths of trade caravans and pilgrims toward Makkah. The name of Hail was originally a name for the valley on which the city is located, and other explanation of Hail name is related to its location divided between Aja and Salma.

The UNESCO site rock art includes two sites situated in a desert landscape: Jabel Umm Sinman at Jubbah city, located approximately 90 km northwest Hail city, and the Jabal Al-Manjor and wadi Raat at Shuwaymis city, approximately 250 km south of Hail city. The drawings and engravings of these two mountains are characterized by rich scenes of the daily life of humans and animals that inhabited this region, and their existence can be divided into two periods: the first dates back to the seventh millennium BC, and it shows human and animal figures such as camels, undomesticated horses, ibex, and various groups of sheep, cats, and dogs that were used in hunting. The second period of the Thamudic era, where its most prominent drawings and rock inscriptions are represented by the domestication of camels, where scenes of warriors appear on their backs with spears in their hands, and ibex, leopards and ostriches appear, in addition to palm trees (Table 5).

Table 5: Individual scattered areological sites in Hail.

	Arabic name	Romanized name	Description	X, Y
1	جبل أم سنمان	Jbl Umm Snmān	It is a mountain and its name means that the shape of the mountain is similar to a two-humped camel stable on the ground.	28° 1'53.76"N 40°55'7.20"E
2	جبال المنجور و راطا	Jbāl Al Mnjwr W Rāṭā	Heights formed from sedimentary sandstone, dating back to about 14,000 years old, surrounded by the lava area and crossed by a Raat valley.	26° 9'5.22"N 39°53'49.95"E
3	مدينة جبة	Mdynh Jbh	Jubbah city is located 90 km northwest of Hail city. The city lies on an ancient lake bed, and it is	28° 0'17.50"N 40°56'31.44"E

			completely surrounded by the vast Nefud desert.	
4	مدينة الشويمس	Mdynh Shwmys Ash	Shuwaymis city is located 250 km south west of Hail city. This area of 50 km square of art rocks can be counted as one of the largest open-air natural history museums in the world.	26° 9'5.89"N 40°14'34.48"E
5	مدينة حائل	Mdynh Hā'l	Hail city is the capital of Hail province. The city lays on the eastern side of the massive Aja mountain.	27°31'9.23"N 41°42'16.63"E
6	جبال أجا	Jbāl Ajā	The Aja mountain range extends on the north of Hail about 100 kilometers in length, and this chain embraces a number of small villages and springs of water, and the highest peak reaches more than 1350 m.	27°33'24.79"N 41°30'14.91"E
7	جبال سلمى	Jbāl Slmá	The Salma Mountains extends on the south of Hail about 60 km, and the peak is about 1,200 m.	27° 9'6.15"N 42°16'22.70"E

6- Al-Ahsa Oasis, an Evolving Cultural Landscape

Al-Ahsa governate is located in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia. The area of province extends over 379,000 km², with population of 1,063,000 persons, and number of housing 152,853 (census, 2010). Al-Ahsa Oasis is located in the eastern part of Saudi Arabia. It is the largest oasis in the world, with its 2.5 million date palms, which has a unique geocultural landscape and an exceptional example of human interaction with the environment. The etymology of Al-Ahsa refers to a landscape of accumulated sand with an impermeable layer underneath. Whereas, it is also mentioned that Al-Ahsa means springs. In addition, Al-Ahsa was known as Hajer, which includes a group of archaeological sites. Consequently, Al-Ahsa has been inhabited since prehistoric times, due to its abundance of water in an otherwise arid region. It has a historical buildings, urban fabric and archaeological sites from the Neolithic era (Table 6).

Table 6: Individual scattered areological sites in Al-Ahsa.

	Arabic name	Romanized name	Description	X, Y
1	الاحساء	Al Aḥsā'	The oasis is a fertile plain between the Gulf coast and the desert. The main cities of the oasis are Al-Hofuf and Al-Mubarraz.	25°21'57.44"N 49°35'46.32"E
2	جبل القارة	Jbl Al Qārḥ	Al-Qarah Mountain is located in the center of the oasis and is one of the most important natural features. The mountain contains caves with fairly constant temperatures throughout the year. Jabal Al-Qara takes its name from the town of Al-Qara, and is known as Jabal Al-Shaban, as it is completely surrounded by palm trees.	25°24'42.27"N 49°41'34.15"E
3	قصر صاهود	Qsr Ṣāḥwd	It is a historic palace which was built between 1790-1800 AD in Al-Mubarraz city.	25°24'50.90"N 49°35'0.61"E
4	سوق القيصرية	Swq Al Qyryh	Al-Qaisariya Market was built in 1822 as one of the oldest and largest traditional markets in the Gulf region.	25°22'36.14"N 49°35'21.33"E
5	مسجد جواثا	Msjd Jwāthā	one of the oldest Islamic mosques after the Prophet's Mohammed Mosque.	25°28'11.33"N 49°40'42.44"E
6	المدرسة الأميرية	Al Mdrsh Al Amyryh	An old school which was built in 1941 in Al-Hofuf city.	25°22'26.90"N 49°35'15.63"E
7	قصر إبراهيم	Qsr Ibrāhym	A historic palace (1871 - 1913), with many military installations. This palace was known as Qubba Palace or Kut Palace.	25°22'44.20"N 49°35'12.44"E

7- Ḥimā Cultural Area

Najran province is located on the southern part of Saudi Arabia. The area of province extends over 365,000 km², with population of 500.000 persons, and number of housing 85.150 (census, 2010). Najran named was given to the valley and to the capital of the province. The etymology of Najran refers to a wooden gate on which the hinge of the door rotates, and it is mentioned that the name of Najran was called for a person his name Najran bin Qahtan. The history of its civilization extends to the middle of the Stone Age, dating back more than 25 thousand years.

Hima Cultural Area lies in a mountainous area and it was on the Arabian Peninsula's ancient caravan routes, where the wells of Bi'r Himā date back at least 3,000 years and still produce fresh water. The area is boasting a substantial collection of rock art images that depict a cultural continuity of hunting, fauna, flora and lifestyles for 7,000 years. In addition, it has inscriptions of different scripts such as Musnad, South-Arabian, Thamudic, Greek and Arabic (Table 7).

Table 7: Individual scattered areological sites in Hima Cultural Area.

	Arabic name	Romanized name	Description	X, Y
1	آبار حمى	Ābār Ḥmá	There are more than 13 sites containing drawings of hunting and grazing scenes, human figures painted larger than life size, as well as writings in Thamudic script, the southern Musnad, and Kufic script, dating from 7000 BC to 1000 BC.	18°15'0.97"N 44°27'4.58"E
2	الأخدود	Al Akhdwd	It is located on the southern bank of the Najran Valley (600 BC). Its castle is expected to start from 2-4 meters.	17°26'39.27"N 44° 4'41.47"E
3	وادي نجران	Wādy Njrān	Natural heritage???	17°30'43.87"N 44°13'5.21"E
4	قصر العان	Qsr Al 'Ān	A heritage palace is located on Jabal Al-Aan, built in 1689 of mud on foundations of stone.	17°28'49.47"N 44° 5'45.49"E
5	قلعة رعووم	Ql'h R'wm	A historical castle located on the top of Mount Raoum, Najran.	17°28'8.92"N 44° 5'14.43"E

8- Conclusion

This study has focused on UNESCO World Heritage Sites from a historical, geographical perspective, and an overview of its toponyms. It can be seen from the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites that their locations are scattered in different directions of the country. This is to confirmed that Saudi Arabia has a geostrategic location for many civilizations that flourished within the area, and its land was an important trade corridor and a peaceful route for other civilizations caravans.

The toponyms of the UNESCO sites show that most of UNESCO sites are still using their ancient geographic names for example Hegra, Historic Jeddah, At-Turaif. some sites are not a monolithic concept such as the sites of Rock Art and Hima Cultural Area which its name is linked to well knwen valley or mountain. these sites are required more research on their ancient history. whereas Al-Ahsa Oasis site has changed its old geographic name Hajer to Al-Ahsa, even though the name of Hajer is still used in the oasis such as Hajer footable club.

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