



NEW DISCOVERY AT EARLY ISLAMIC SITE IN JORDAN

UNCOVERED INSCRIPTION REVEALS NAME OF UMAYYAD PRINCE WHO COMMISSIONED BUILDING

For Immediate Release—Amman, Jordan. . . Recent conservation work at Qusayr 'Amra, a UNESCO World Heritage Site 85 kilometers east of Amman, has revealed the name of the Umayyad prince who commissioned the construction of the building. The conservation work is being conducted by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, the Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro in Rome, and World Monuments Fund

The site is a small building dating to the Umayyad period and is known for its mural paintings. Gazelle and wild donkey hunts, dances, musicians, court scenes and allegories, and zodiac symbols are all painted on interior surfaces.

The inscription, which previously could not be read due to accumulated dirt and previous unsuccessful cleaning attempts, is an invocation to Allah beginning with the formula "Allahumma aslih al-Walid ibn Yazid" ("Oh God! Make al-Walid ibn Yazid virtuous"). This inscription was painted in white above a window in old Kufic alphabet without any diacritical dots. Sections of the three-line inscription are still being translated.

Walid Ibn Yazid, or Walid II, was an Umayyad caliph who reigned for a little over a year, from February 743 to April 744. The inscription, however, is missing the typical expressions used for Umayyad caliphs ("God's servant," "Prince of the Believers"), indicating that it was painted when Walid was still a prince, during the reign of Hisham bin Abd el-Malik (723–743).

The current conservation campaign at Qusayr 'Amra began in 2009 with the goals of consolidating the structure and cleaning the mural paintings. The latter activity is revealing brilliant colors and unexpected details that can be seen now for the first time, almost 1,300 years after the site was abandoned following the Abbasid revolution, which resulted in the defeat of the Umayyads in 750. Due to its artistic and architectural significance, Qusayr 'Amra was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1985 as an exceptional testimony of Umayyad civilization and figurative art. In 2008, Qusayr 'Amra was included on the World Monuments Watch to call attention to the importance of the site and its conservation needs.

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Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Jordan's Ministry of Tourism is the governmental authority in charge of the promotion and management of tourism and the protection of archaeological and historic sites. The Department of Antiquities of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is the technical body in charge of research and conservation activities at the more than 10,000 registered archaeological sites in the country.

Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro

Istituto Superiore per la Conservazione ed il Restauro is a technical institute of the Italian Ministry for Cultural Activities and Heritage. The institute was founded in 1939 through the endeavors of Giulio Carlo Argan and Cesare Brandi with the aim of establishing a scientifically-based approach to the restoration of monuments, unifying the methodologies for treating works of art and archaeological finds, and training new conservators.

World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is the leading independent organization devoted to saving the world's most treasured places. For over 45 years, working in more than 90 countries, its highly skilled experts have applied proven and effective techniques to preserve important architectural and cultural heritage sites around the globe. Through partnerships with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF inspires an enduring commitment to stewardship for future generations. Headquartered in New York, WMF has offices and affiliates worldwide. www.wmf.org, twitter.com/worldmonuments, and facebook.com/worldmonuments.



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