



الهيئة العامة للسياحة والتراث الوطني  
Saudi Commission for Tourism & National Heritage  
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## Cultural Rock Arts in Himā Najrān, Saudi Arabia

### A SERIAL NOMINATION OF ROCK ART AND ROCK ART INSCRIPTION SITES

at Hima Wells, An Jamal, Dhibah, Minshaf, and Najd Khayran, near Najran  
Submitted by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage as a  
proposal for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List as a Serial  
Nomination 2018 CE - 1439 AH

## NOMINATION DOCUMENT

## Executive Summary

<i>State Party</i>	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
<i>State, Province or Region</i>	Najrān Region, Ḥimā Province
<i>Name of Property</i>	Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, Saudi Arabia
<i>Serial properties</i>	<p>Serial nomination of six properties:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ḥimā Wells</li> <li>2. Saidah</li> <li>3. ‘Ān Jamal</li> <li>4. Dhibāh</li> <li>5. Minshaf</li> <li>6. Najd Khayrān</li> </ol>
<i>Geographical coordinates to the nearest second</i>	<p>Ḥimā Wells:  18° 14’ 57.26” N  44° 27’ 06.62” E</p> <p>Northernmost site (Najd Khayrān):  18° 21’ 02.65” N,  44° 30’ 57.23” E</p>
<i>Textual description of the boundaries of the nominated properties</i>	<p>The nominated sites are located at:  Ḥimā Wells: 18° 14’ 57.26” N, 44° 27’ 06.62” E  Saidah: 18° 14’ 39.06” N, 44° 27’ 46.16” E  ‘Ān Jamal: 18° 17’ 49.00” N, 44° 30’ 52.56” E  Dhibāh: 18° 18’ 10.95” N, 44° 30’ 54.21” E  Minshaf: 18° 19’ 00.16” N, 44° 32’ 43.21” E  Najd Khayrān: 18° 21’ 02.65” N, 44° 30’ 57.23” E</p> <p>The buffer zone consists of a polygon comprising thirteen points. They are located, commencing from the northwestern most and proceeding clockwise:</p> <p>18° 30’ 10.00” N - 44° 27’ 00.00” E  18° 31’ 00.00” N - 44° 31’ 00.00” E  18° 28’ 10.00” N - 44° 31’ 47.00” E  18° 22’ 26.00” N - 44° 35’ 00.00” E  18° 20’ 00.00” N - 44° 35’ 00.00” E  18° 17’ 30.00” N - 44° 33’ 30.00” E  18° 17’ 00.00” N - 44° 31’ 00.00” E  18° 14’ 30.00” N - 44° 29’ 00.00” E  18° 11’ 40.00” N - 44° 29’ 00.00” E  18° 11’ 40.00” N - 44° 28’ 00.00” E  18° 15’ 00.00” N - 44° 27’ 00.00” E</p> <p>Essentially, this area includes most of the more than 550 rock art and rock inscription sites known in the region, with very few outlying sites outside this buffer zone (Map 1 refers).</p>
<p><i>Map 1, next page: the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, southern Saudi Arabia. The boundary of the proposed buffer zone and the six nominated sites are shown.</i></p>	





Map 2. The locations of the six nominated serial properties within the southern part of the proposed buffer zone.

### The six serial properties nominated

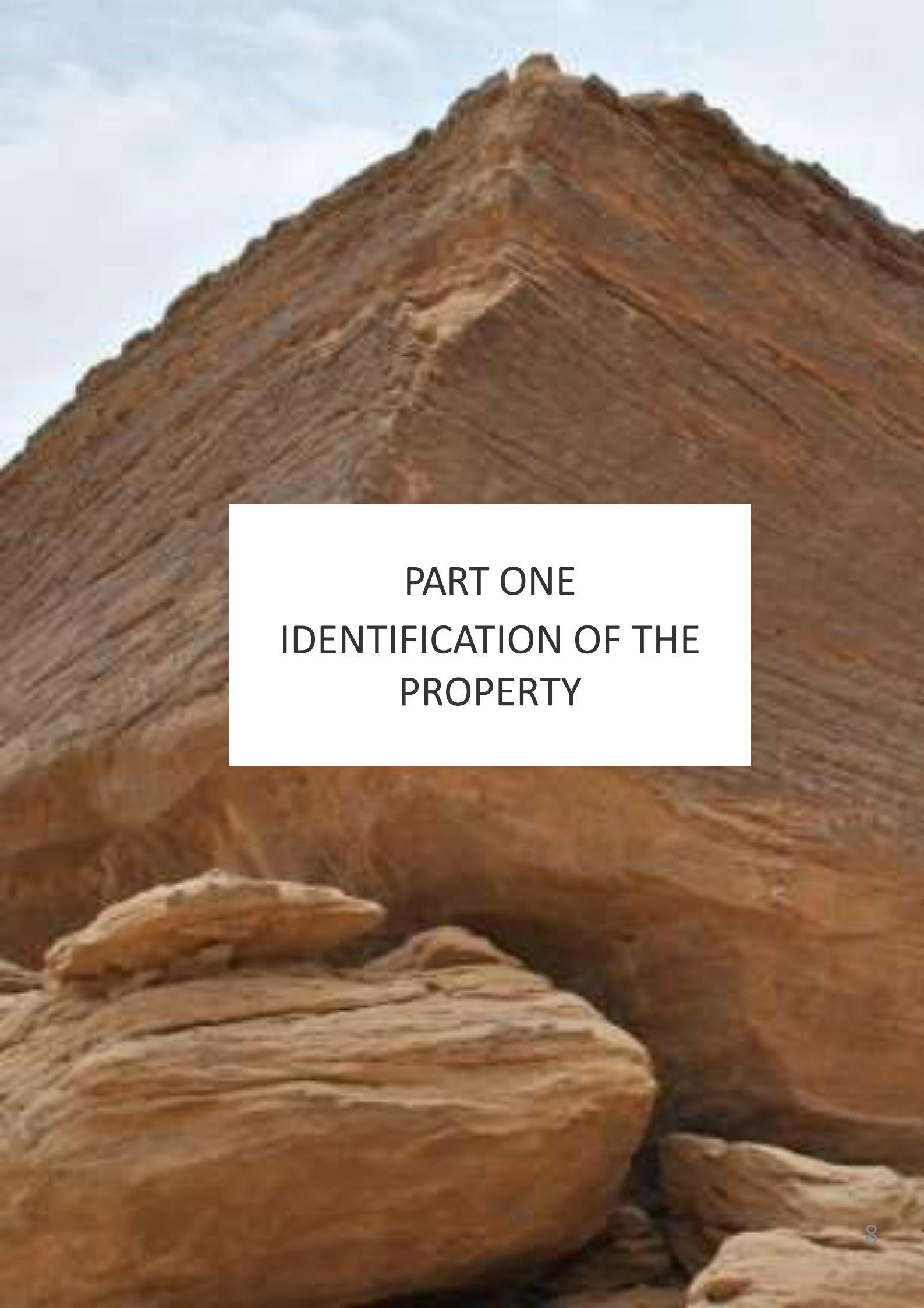
1. **Himā Wells (آبار حمى)**.. Himā is famous for its wells and it is known as a routing point on the frankincense road between Najrān and the northern parts of Arabia during antiquity. It is also famous for the presence of some important inscriptions. Himā is the area with the most important concentration of protohistoric tombs in the region.
2. **Saidah (سيدااح)**.. This small isolated hill 1.3 km southeast of the wells is protected by a fence. On its top are three stone tombs and a recent necropolis occurs next to the hill. Saidah's main feature is a large inscription on the cliff face and another 43 smaller inscriptions, both Thamudic and South-Arabian. There are also numerous petroglyphs, mostly on boulders around the base of the hill.
3. **'Ān Jamal (عان جمال)**.. A rocky outcrop rising in the plain between Himā and jabal Dhibāh, where cliffs are covered with petroglyphs and South Arabian and Himaitic (Thamūdīc) inscriptions. Other panels in this site show a large camel with dark patina, big bovids and apparent hunters. 'Ān Jamal was the first site discovered and protected in this sector during the early survey project.
4. **Jabal Dhibāh (جبل ذباح)**.. Located 9.5 km north-east of Himā, consisting of a complex of scattered sandstone outcrops overlooking the northern path towards wādī al-Sammā' and jabal al-Kawkab. The various sites are a few hundred metres to roughly one kilometre apart. The most notable images are three petroglyphs representing an elephant with its mahout. Other sites are rich in South Arabian and pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions.
5. **Minshaf (منشف)**.. The area has two rock stacks with a large smooth vertical panels adorned with huge bulls, other animals and palm trees, and many small inscriptions.
6. **Najd Khayrān (نجد خيران)**.. The northernmost property nominated, a major site complex among the 58 sites so far recorded north of and along wādī Saad. Thousands of petroglyphs have been created along the escarpment, on the cliffs and on large blocks of sandstone at their base.

<p><i>Criteria under which property is nominated</i></p>	<p>[i] It represents a masterpiece of human creative genius.          [ii] It exhibits an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in monumental arts and writing.          [iii] it bears a unique or at least exceptional testimony to several cultural traditions and to a civilization which is living.          [v] it represents an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement and land-use which is representative of a series of cultures, or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.</p>
<p><i>Draft Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV):</i>  <i>a) Brief synthesis</i></p>	<p>The OUV of the nominated Property derives from several factors. The overarching cultural role implied by its name, Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, reflects the site’s historical function as one of the most important desert wells in the Middle East, if not the world. The passage of vast armies and myriad caravans has resulted in an unequalled historical ‘library on rock’, comprising massive numbers of rock inscriptions and petroglyphs that reflect Arabia’s history over the duration of the Holocene period.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of pre-Arabian texts confirm sometimes incredible historical facts, and the enormous corpus of often spectacular petroglyphs records the irreversible changes wrought by climate variations and the human responses to them. But this record not only covers the past; it continues right up to the present: the desert Bedouins whose history it tells still occupy Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, still relate to the rock art, and still modify it or produce new images today. Moreover, the rock art’s ethnographic potential is often found enhanced by accompanying rock inscriptions.</p> <p>This is not just an outstanding archaeological complex; it presents a living tradition that extends back many millennia. In that sense alone, it is almost unique in the world. Other factors contributing to the OUV are the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān status as one of the largest concentrations on the planet of both rock art and rock inscriptions.</p> <p>The pristine preservation and spectacular desert setting also add to the OUV of the Property.</p>

<p><i>Draft Statement of OUV: b) Justification for Criteria</i></p>	<p><i>Criterion (i):</i> Many of the Ḥimā petroglyphs and their compositions represent masterpieces of human creative genius, from the Neolithic period to the very present. They were generally created with simple hand-held stone hammers, but the artistic skills demonstrated in the high depictive standards of this corpus of rock art are undeniably exceptional. This magnificent catalogue of historically anchored productions invested with the beliefs, concerns, desires and priorities of its creators represents the surviving cultural precipitate of 300 to 400 generations.</p> <p><i>Criterion (ii):</i> Located at a crucial node in the network of Arabian caravan routes, the Ḥimā rock art and rock inscriptions exhibit an important interchange of human values of many ethnic groups from all over the Middle East, representing a long span of time in the developments in monumental arts and writing. Indeed, the inscriptions record systems of writing which eventually bestowed alphabetic scripts on the world.</p> <p><i>Criterion (iii):</i> The cultural precipitate of many millennia found in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān bears a unique testimony to several ancient traditions, culminating in a civilization that is still living today. This Property chronicles the history of the Arab people more effectively than any other site or site complex, representing a massive outdoor library of that history.</p> <p><i>Criterion (v):</i> The cultures that created the massive corpora of petroglyphs and rock inscriptions at Ḥimā present an outstanding record of human interaction with the environment where successive societies became highly vulnerable to irreversible changes in climate and aquifer level. This human interaction with a volatile environment thus provides a salutary lesson to modern society globally.</p>
<p><i>Draft Statement of OUV: c) Statement of Integrity</i></p>	<p>Access to the six fenced-in core areas will be fully controlled and sites supervised. Unauthorized access to the unprotected sites of the Property is not realistically possible. There is no recent development in the core zones, except protective measures; and none in the buffer zone except for Ḥimā township.</p> <p>Due to the highly arid environment of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān and the Bedouin custodianship since time immemorial, its Outstanding Universal Values have been exceptionally well preserved. Both the core zones and the proposed buffer zone are of adequate sizes to ensure the continuing integrity of the monument.</p>
<p><i>Draft Statement of OUV: d) Statement of Authenticity</i></p>	<p>All petroglyphs and rock inscriptions in the Property have retained their original location, setting, materials, ambience, form and design. To some extent even their traditional function within a cultural tradition has been preserved, through the continuation of traditional use. The clearly different phases of weathering and patination of both petroglyphs and inscriptions underline their authenticity, demonstrating that they are from different eras.</p> <p>Authentic form and design can be seen in the depiction in the rock art of ancient modes of apparel, tools, weapons and ornaments. The age of successive traditions of petroglyphs and thus their authenticity is also established by similarities with direct-dated rock art elsewhere in Saudi Arabia. Direct dating has been conducted at Ḥimā, and the precise ages of some inscriptions are known from their content.</p>

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A photograph of a large, layered rock formation, possibly a cliff face or a large rock outcrop. The rock is reddish-brown and shows distinct horizontal layering. A white rectangular box is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the text "PART ONE IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROPERTY".

**PART ONE  
IDENTIFICATION OF THE  
PROPERTY**



# 1. Identification of the Property

- a. Country: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.
- b. State, Province or Region: Najrān Region, Ḥimā Area.
- c. Name of Property: *Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān*
- d. Geographical coordinates of the nominated sites to the nearest second:

ID No.	Name of component	Region	Coordinates of central points	Area of Nominated component	Area of buffer zone	Map
HIM02	Ḥimā Wells	Najrān	18° 14' 57.26" N 44° 27' 06.62" E	1.22 ha		Figure 7
HIM01	Saidah	Najrān	18° 14' 39.06" N 44° 27' 46.16" E	1.70 ha		Figure 10
JML01	ʿĀn Jamal	Najrān	18° 17' 49.00" N 44° 30' 52.56" E	3.66 ha		Figure 12
DBA01	Dhibāh	Najrān	18° 18' 10.95" N 44° 30' 54.21" E	4.59 ha	31,757.83 ha	Figure 13
IBD02	Minshaf	Najrān	18° 19' 00.16" N 44° 32' 43.21" E	119 ha		Figure 13
SAD07	Najd	Najrān	18° 21' 02.65" N	112 ha		Figure 13
	Khayrān		44° 30' 57.23" E			
				242.17 ha		

## 1.e Maps and plans, showing the boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone



Map 3. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, showing the Najrān Region in green and the location of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.



Map 4. Location of the nominated property within Najrān Region.



Map 5. The Cultural Rock Arts in Himā Najrān with core sites shown red. For greater detail see Map 1, p.

**1.f Area of Nominated Properties and Proposed Buffer Zone**

- Total area of the six nominated properties: 242.17 ha
- Area of the buffer zone: 31,757.83 ha
- Total area: 32,000.0 ha (see Table 1.d)
- Length of buffer zone perimeter: 85.9 km



**PART TWO  
DESCRIPTION**

## 2. Description

The nominated Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān is the core area of one of the largest rock art concentrations in the world. It is 47.5 km long and up to 15 km wide, with a perimeter of 85.90 km total length. However, it comprises only the densest concentration of the general region's rock art and rock inscription sites.

Other sites occur scattered beyond its limits. Nevertheless, most of the currently known 550 sites are within the nominated buffer zone and in that sense form part of the present application (see Maps 1 and 5). The six nominated sites are outstanding examples of the region's vast corpus of rock art and rock inscriptions, occurring in the buffer zone's southern part.

They have been singled out for full protection that consists of steel fences surrounding the sites and of supervision by local residents. It is proposed that all visitation of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān by members of the public be focused on these six specific sites.

### 2.a Description of Property

The Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān encompasses numerous cultural and historical values. It is located at an important nodal point of the ancient caravan routes of the Arabian Peninsula (*Arbach et al. 2015*). In avoiding the mountainous regions to the west, caravans from Yemen in the south to the interior were compelled to follow a narrow corridor along the western margins of the vast Rub' Al-Ḥālī (or Rub' Al Khālī) desert, the 'Empty Quarter'.

The wells at Bi'r Ḥimā offered the last supply of water on the way north, and the first after crossing the deserts on the way south. This intensive traffic channeled through the nominated Property is reflected in tens of thousands of rock inscriptions written in several scripts, and in at least one hundred thousand petroglyphs. Both features are preserved in pristine conditions.

The rock art provides a continuous record from the Neolithic period to the very present time, i.e. for a timespan of 7000 years or so (*Bednarik and Khan 2005*). It has only recently been discovered that in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, rock art continued to be created, modified and venerated during the last 30 years (*Bednarik 2017a*). This is therefore one of very few places in the world, outside of Australia, where rock art expresses a living cultural tradition.

Moreover, the ethnographic record effectively extends for millennia into the past, through the myriad rock inscriptions. They occur in various scripts, such as the Al-Musmad alphabet of 29 letters, Aramaic-Nabatean, South-Arabian scripts, Thamudic and even

in Greek, as well as Arabian. All of these writings can be deciphered and they provide rich information about the world of their authors.

They also confirm historical events and several of them are precisely dated. Moreover, these inscriptions are an invaluable source of epigraphic understanding concerning the development of alphabetic writing. Such a rich and informative source of archaeological, epigraphic, historical and ethnographic information is of great scientific and cultural value.

However, underscored by the vast archaeological resources in the nominated area, found in the form of cairns, stone structures, interments, stone tool scatters and deep ancient wells. The caravan traffic was so intensive that a toll station once existed at 'Ān Jamal, one of the six sites nominated here. It is this intensive use, especially after the region's final desertification, that explains the extraordinary concentrations of rock art, one of the largest in the world, and of rock inscriptions.

However, as the designation Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān emphasizes, this is not just a vast rock art and rock inscription depository; it is the site of a living, continuing cultural tradition. The Bedouins living there are the descendants of some of the authors of the rock art and inscriptions, and the culture underwriting the rock art production still continues today. This is amply evident, for example in the use of the several millennia-old tribal markings called wusūm (singular wasm) that are still current today (*Khan 2000*), and through the continuing veneration of the fertility goddess Alia, both of which are prominent features in the Ḥimā rock art.

Moreover, the evidence from the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān illustrates the interaction between people and nature, such as the response of the local population to the gradual lowering of the aquifer and the economic adjustments to the desertification. It thus represents an exceptional example of a traditional human settlement and land-use which is representative of a series of cultures, or human interaction with an environment that has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.



*Figure 1. Two depictions of Alia, ancient goddess of love and fertility, at Bayḍā' site complex, Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, site No. BYD03.*

### **2.a.i Environmental setting**

The Ḥimā area that is the subject of this serial nomination begins about 80 km north of Najrān, a town in the extreme south of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and near the Yemeni border. It extends from just south of Ḥimā to 40 km to the north along the eastern outliers of Jabal Al-Qāra, but at this stage excludes Jabal Al-Kawkab. To the east of Ḥimā lies the seemingly endless sea of sand aptly named Rub' al-Khālī, the Empty Quarter.

To its west is a succession of poorly accessible mountain ranges, beginning with nearby Jabal Al-Qāra and extending all the way to the coastal 'Asir ranges along the Red Sea. The majority of rock art and rock inscription sites covered by the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān — the area described here as the buffer zone — occur along the eastern margins of Jabal Al-Qāra, a complex system of sandstone stacks dissected by canyons and sand-filled wādīs. The region's environment is highly arid today, with very sparse vegetation and minimal wildlife.

Meagre tree cover can be found in canyons that are subjected to sporadic flooding. Other vegetation consists of small shrubs and dormant small plants that are activated by rains. Episodic pools are rare in the entire region, but one occurs at al-Ḥuṣayba in a narrow gorge at Jabal al-Kawkab.

The only other surface water in the Area is found in clay pans after rain falls. The area therefore continues to draw its primary water supply from the five ancient wells of Bī'r Ḥimā. The fauna of the wider Najrān region includes various birds, several reptiles, rodents, predators, and rare larger animals.

These have been subjected to much hunting. Rain falls are generally light and are most frequent from February to April, when 103 mm of the annual average precipitation of 132 mm tends to occur. Temperatures range from an annual average low of 16°C to an annual average high of 31°C, with an average annualized daily mean of 23°C.

Today's desert climate extends just a few millennia into the past as there is ample evidence that the region was much wetter in the past. In particular, the rock art of the Neolithic and early Bronze Age includes apparent depictions of species that could not possibly inhabit the region today. More directly, in various parts of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, carbonate encrustation of the sandstone bedrock indicates the former presence of super-saturated pools of water.

Such a deposit has been dated at 'Ān Jamal (*Liritzis et al. 2013*). The canyons in the mountain massifs also provide evidence of greater flashfloods than are possible today, although that erosive activity may predate human presence. In the past the climate fluctuated considerably, between relatively moist and hyper-aridity.

The major moist interval of the final Pleistocene (the Würm), marked by grasslands and playa lakes in the Ḥimā region gave way to the aridity of the Last Glacial Maximum about 17,000 years ago. Of particular relevance is the Pleistocene palaeolake Mundafin, located in the western Rub' Al-Khālī c. 80 km northeast of Ḥimā. Conditions became gradually more moist between 15,000 and 9000 years ago, leading to the Neolithic wet phase that ended about 6000 years ago.

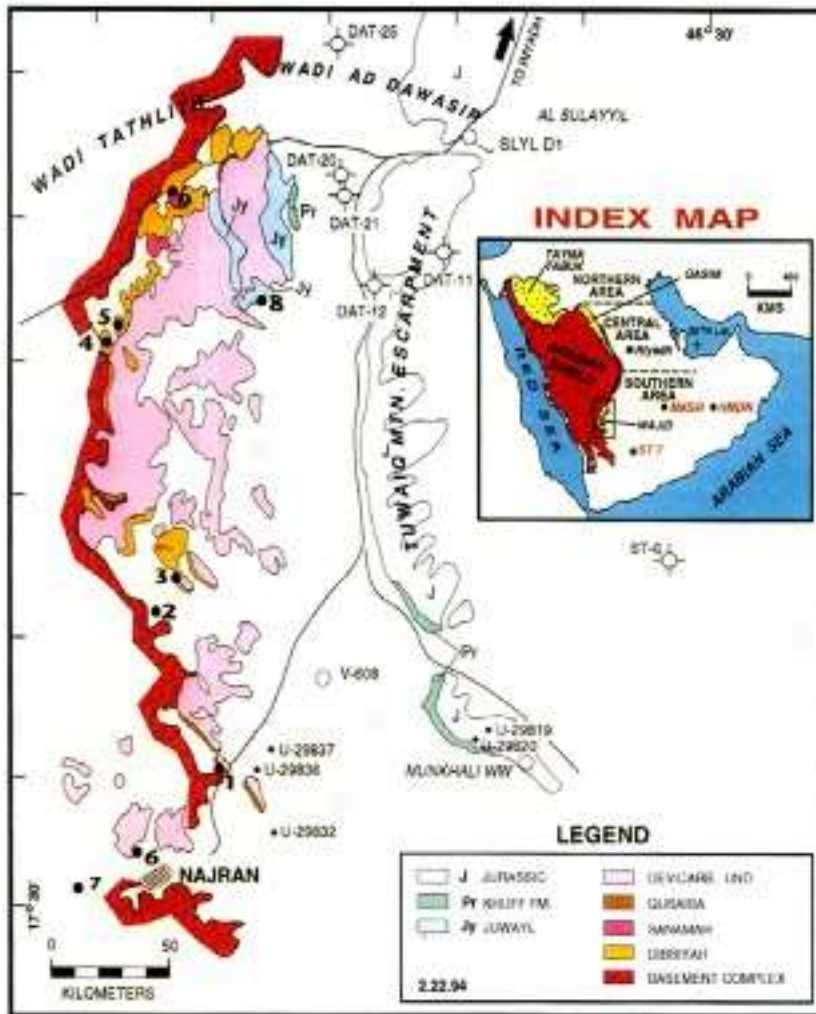


Figure 2. The geology of the region north of Najrān. Ḥimā is at location 1.

It was followed by a short arid period between 6000 and 5000 years before the present, leading to the final moist conditions of the late Holocene. Between 5000 and 3500 years ago, the lakes once again filled, in some cases surpassing previous levels. These optimum conditions did not last, but the arrival of the final aridity 3500 to 3000 years BP was not so much the result of climatic deterioration, but of a gradual lowering of aquifer level.

This led to the progressive final desertification marking the last 3000 years. In the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, the human reactions to the environmental conditions are perfectly recorded, in both the rock art and the rock inscriptions. Of particular importance to the hydrology of the Ḥimā area is the local geology.

Generally, the rocky mountain ranges, which can rise several hundred meters above the sand plains and wādīs, are composed of Wajid Sandstone. This is a permeable sedimentary rock facies of the Paleozoic that retains water poorly. Just south of Ḥimā, the underlying granite of the Precambrian Arabian Shield is exposed (Figure 2), and it is that

rock's low permeability that accounts for the raised aquifer at Ḥimā.

As the aquifer retreated underground during the first millennium BCE, the wells at Ḥimā had to be progressively deepened into the solid bedrock and they are now about 20 m deep. However, there were great differences in the lowering of water levels across Saudi Arabia; for instance at Jubbah, the aquifer is now 75 m below ground level. The Wajid Sandstone comprises several facies: the Sag and Qasim formations (Cambrian-Ordovician age), the Zarqa and Sarah formations (Late Ordovician to Early Silurian age), the Qalibah Formation of Early Silurian age, and the Unayzah Formation (Haushi Group) of late Carboniferous to Early Permian age (Evans et al. 1991).

### 2.a.ii Archaeology and Ethnography

Bi'r Ḥimā is an ancient Palaeolithic and Neolithic occupation zone that has been categorized as a Lower Palaeolithic or Oldowan site, although propositions concerning the presence of chopping and cobble tools specifically in this area remain to be verified. Nevertheless, Site No. 226-63 near Najrān to the south has yielded Mode 1 artefacts (Whalen and Pease 1992). The presence of Acheulian hand-axes and Mousterian implement types from the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān

has been reported, e.g. at 'Ān Jamal and Sha'ib Hinmat (Bednarik and Khan 2005).

Elsewhere in Saudi Arabia, Acheulian tools have been attributed ages of c. 200,000 years by uranium-series dating (Whalen et al. 1982). Recently Mode 2 tools were reported from sites near the Red Sea coast, including specimens embedded in coral deposits c. 130,000 years old at wādī Dabsa, and chert tools encased in a lava flow near wādī Dhahaban that has been dated to c. 440,000 years (Sinclair 2017). Upper Paleolithic artefact types occur at Ḥimā sites such as Sha'ib Mahash, while Neolithic finds are ubiquitous.

Stone tools comprise implements made of quartzite, andesite and chert. Ceramic remains of mid- to later Holocene times occur widely, and are especially common at a series of rock tumuli at Najd Sahi, near site MRY11 (see Annex 3 for site locations).



*Figure 3. Stone cairns on mountain top, central Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.*



*Figure 4. Stone tombs made with dry-laid stone slabs, northern Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.*

Archaeological data from the Ḥimā area remain limited as no excavations have been conducted to date. However, the intensive traffic of caravans over millennia has resulted in great concentrations of archaeological surface evidence, particularly stone cairns (Figure 3), dry-laid stone tombs (Figure 4), extensive stone arrangements (Figure 5) as well as surface scatters of stone implements and ceramic shards that await detailed evaluation. The continued residential presence of Bedouins in Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, both in the small township of Ḥimā and at desert camps, adds an important dimension to this nomination.

This is a 'living' cultural area, where rock art continues to play cultural roles and, in some cases, is still being produced. For the local Bedouins the rock art is a source of pride, connecting them with their ancestors and defining their cultural identity (Figure 6).



*Figure 5. Stone arrangement in northern Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.*

The continued use of the wusūm and the continued reverence of the fertility goddess Alia still link these people to their cultural roots. The principal tribe of the area are the Banū Yām, a large tribe native to Najrān Province. They belong at the western margins of the Empty Quarter, was occupied by the Madhḥig.



Figure 9. Partial view of the rock inscriptions of the *Ḥimā Wells site (HIM02)*.



Figure 10. Aerial view of the *Saidah rock inscription site (HIM01)*.

### 2.a.iii The Six Nominated Sites

*Ḥimā Wells* comprises two sites of extensive living from the southeastern-most foothills of *Jabal Al-Qāra* into the sand desert, located c. 8.5 km north-east of *Bi'r Ḥimā* (see Map 1, p. 3). This was the first site discovered and protected in this region during the Rock Art and Epigraphic Survey of Saudi Arabia last century.

'*Ān Jamal* was recently enclosed by a 610 m long, lockable steel fence. The site is marked by a group of very large angular boulders, which together with the vertical cliffs above them are densely covered by petroglyphs and rock inscriptions (Figure 12).

Arbach et al. (2015) have counted 245 petroglyphs at '*Ān Jamal*, and 438 inscriptions in South-Arabian, Thamudic and Arabic. One of the latter, thought to be between 1300 and 1350 years old, has provided the micro-erosion calibration for southern Saudi Arabia



Figure 11. The main rock inscription *Ry 507 of Saidah*, high up on the vertical cliff.

(Bednarik and Khan 2005). '*Ān Jamal* has also furnished other important scientific evidence, establishing the most recent presence of surface water, in the form of a pool or lake.

A white calcite accretion has been precipitated from a saturated carbonate solution on the lowest bedrock exposures of the site. Similar deposits can be observed elsewhere in the area, and a sample taken from '*Ān Jamal*, of the sandstone together with the calcite accretion concealing it has been subjected to optically stimulated luminescence analysis (Liritzis et al. 2013). This established that the sandstone was last exposed to daylight 3580 ±250 years BP, indicating that the last stagnant pool or lake of the area existed between 3800 and 3300 years ago.

This provides an estimate for the time the gradual lowering of the aquifer commenced for the last time, ushering in the region's final desertification phase. Presumably because '*Ān Jamal* was directly on rock inscriptions, both in close vicinity of the historical wells of *Bi'r Ḥimā*. The five ancient wells of *Bi'r Ḥimā* are arranged in a V-shaped pattern and about 25 m apart from one another (Figure 7).





Figure 6. Bedouin site custodian Hamad Shanoof Al-Alarjaa proudly showing the Minshaf 2 site, No. IBD02.



Figure 7. Aerial view of the Himā Wells site, at the end of the sealed road, and the inscription site HIM02. The protection fence is clearly visible.

Each well is roughly cylindrical, between 5 and 7 m in diameter and about 20 m deep (Figure 8). These wells are believed to be the oldest in the Middle East, having been in use continuously for at least 3000 years. They are very possibly older, predating the retreat of the aquifer that commenced around 3500 years ago (Liritzis *et al.* 2013). They still provide water today.

During the millennia the wells were in use they provided a focal point for the economy of southern Arabia because all caravans travelling north or south had to provision their water supplies there. This applied also to those caravans that travelled between Yemen and Egypt, which at Ḥimā turned to the northwest. Large armies camped at or near Ḥimā, including those of Ḥimyarite King Yūsuf Dhū Nuwās in



Figure 8. Two of the five historical wells at Bī'r Ḥimā (Ḥimā Wells).

c. 523 CE and Aksumite King Abraha Al-Ashram in c. 570 CE.

The next wells north from Bī'r Ḥimā were those of Al-Jabjab and Murayghān, some 150 km away, and then after another 80 km, the al-Maqar well. Finally, 520 km north of Ḥimā was the well of Sigah (Sijā) in the land of the Nizār. Therefore, Ḥimā was a location of extraordinary importance to the caravans as they skirted the Rub Al Khālī (Robin and Antonini de Maigret 2017).

On a small hill 150 m from the wells (Figure 7) occurs one of the largest inscribed rock panels in the world (HIM02). Along the foot of the cliff and extending over 45 m are 15 Thamudic and South-Arabian inscriptions and 11 South-Arabian monograms, as well as six Arabic graffiti and 95 petroglyphs (Arbach *et al.* 2015). The main area of over 20 m<sup>2</sup> of writing includes the 4 m long inscription Ja 1028 which was written by Ḥimyarite qayl (*military commander*) Šaraḥ'īl qū-Yaz'an during the siege of Al-Ukhdūd (at Najrān) in c. 523 CE (*Qur'an, Sura Buruj 85, verses 1–7*) (Figure 9). At the foot of the slope below the cliff are seven stone tombs. The site is well protected, having long been enclosed by a protective fence of 450 m length (*visible in Figure 7*).

Jabal Saidah (HIM01) is a small isolated hill 1.3 km southeast of the wells, immediately north of the sealed road leading to Bī'r Ḥimā (Figure 10). It is fenced in by a steel fence of 450 m length and access is via a lockable gate. The site consists of a rock outcrop c. 20 m high and 90 m in diameter.

On its top occur three dry-laid stone tombs and a recent necropolis extends next to the hill. Saidah's main feature is the large inscription Ry 507 high up on the cliff face (Figure 11) and another 43 smaller inscriptions, both Thamudic and South-Arabian. However, there are also numerous petroglyphs, mostly on boulders around the base of the hill.

ʿĀn Jamal (JML01) is a low rocky ridge extend all incoming and outgoing caravan traffic close to Bī'r Ḥimā, a toll station existed there in the past. It accounts no doubt for the concentration of inscriptions and images.



Figure 12. Aerial view of 'Ān Jamal (JML01).

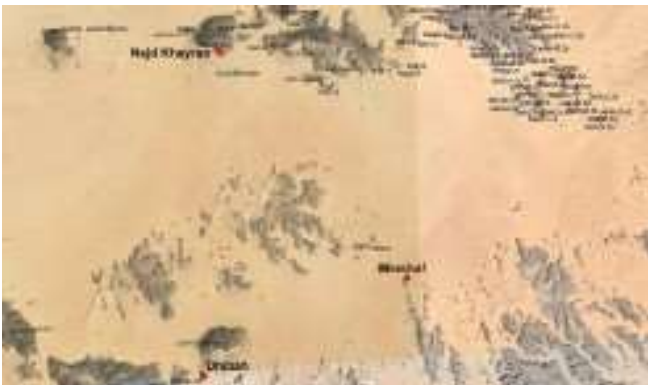


Figure 13. Aerial view of the area north of 'Ān Jamal, showing the locations of the three remaining core areas, Dhibāh 1, Minshaf 2 and Najd Khayrān.



Figure 14. Two of the presumed elephant images with mahouts at Dhibāh 1 site (DBA01).

several rock art panels, one of the ten sites of the Dhibāh complex. This stretches 2.5 km from west to east, and DBA01 is just 900 m north of 'Ān Jamal (Figure 13). The site consists of a series of large boulders located at the foot of a mountain slope.

As in 'Ān Jamal, there are calcite encrustations on low-lying bedrock, again indicating the former presence of surface water. The site is best known for its presumed depictions of three or possibly four elephants, animals that did not occur in Arabia naturally during the Holocene (Figure 14). One possibility to explain them is that the artist(s) saw elephants elsewhere and depicted them. Elephants have been extinct in the Peninsula since the Middle Pleistocene, the period yielding the 325,000 year old remains of *Elaphus recki* from a palaeolake in the Nafud Desert (Zalmout 2017).

However, the more plausible interpretation of these images is historical. In 570 CE or shortly before, in the 'Ām El-Fil (the 'Year of the Elephant'), Aksumite King Abraha Al-Ashram launched a campaign against Quraysh of Makkah, placing at least one war elephant at the head of his army. In view of the extensive roads of stone slabs constructed to facilitate the passage of elephants it is very likely that several or many war elephants were involved. That army passed through Ḥimā, as evident from rock inscriptions, so it would not be surprising if the exotic animals aroused curiosity among the local people. The Dhibāh 1 site (Figure 15) remains currently unprotected but it is intended to shortly enclose it by a steel fence.

MINSHAF 2 (IBD02) is part of a small site complex about 3.5 km east of Dhibāh 1, located at jabal Idhbah (Figure 15). It is also to be enclosed by a protective fence. The site's dominant features are the large bovid depictions, up to about 2 m long (Figure 6). Their internal body decoration is particularly elaborate. These geometric markings are usually associated with Neolithic cattle depictions in the north of Saudi Arabia, at the rock art complexes of Jubbah, Shuwaymis and Al-Mismā. At Ḥimā, however, their patination implies a considerably more recent antiquity, and these depictions at Minshaf are regarded as being of the Bronze Age, but preceding the final desertification phase. Elsewhere Neolithic rock art does occur in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.

NAJD KHAYRĀN (SAD07) is one of hundreds of sites found among the sandstone stacks to the southeast of jabal al-Qāra. A total of 58 sites have so far been recorded immediately north of and along wādī Saad. The perhaps most outstanding among them is Najd Khayrān, located along the base of a meandering cliff (Figure 16). Its focal point is where during rains a waterfall occurs at an impressive overhang. Thousands of petroglyphs have been created along the escarpment, on the cliffs and on large blocks of sandstone at their base. There are several features of particular interest. In front of the 'waterfall' lies a huge block, about 6 m high, with a steely sloping flat panel. Dhibāh 1 (DBA01) is a small petroglyph site comprising several rock art panels, one of the ten sites of the Dhibāh complex.

Within a maze of large boulders to the east of the "waterfall" comprising a number of panels of petroglyphs are several depictions of bovids in combination with human figures. In some cases there appear to be interactions between the two, and of particular interest are a few apparent depictions of "bull leaping". This activity is well known from Minoan Crete frescoes of the Bronze Age and from Hittite Anatolia, and claims for the depiction of such practices have been made for rock art as far away as India.

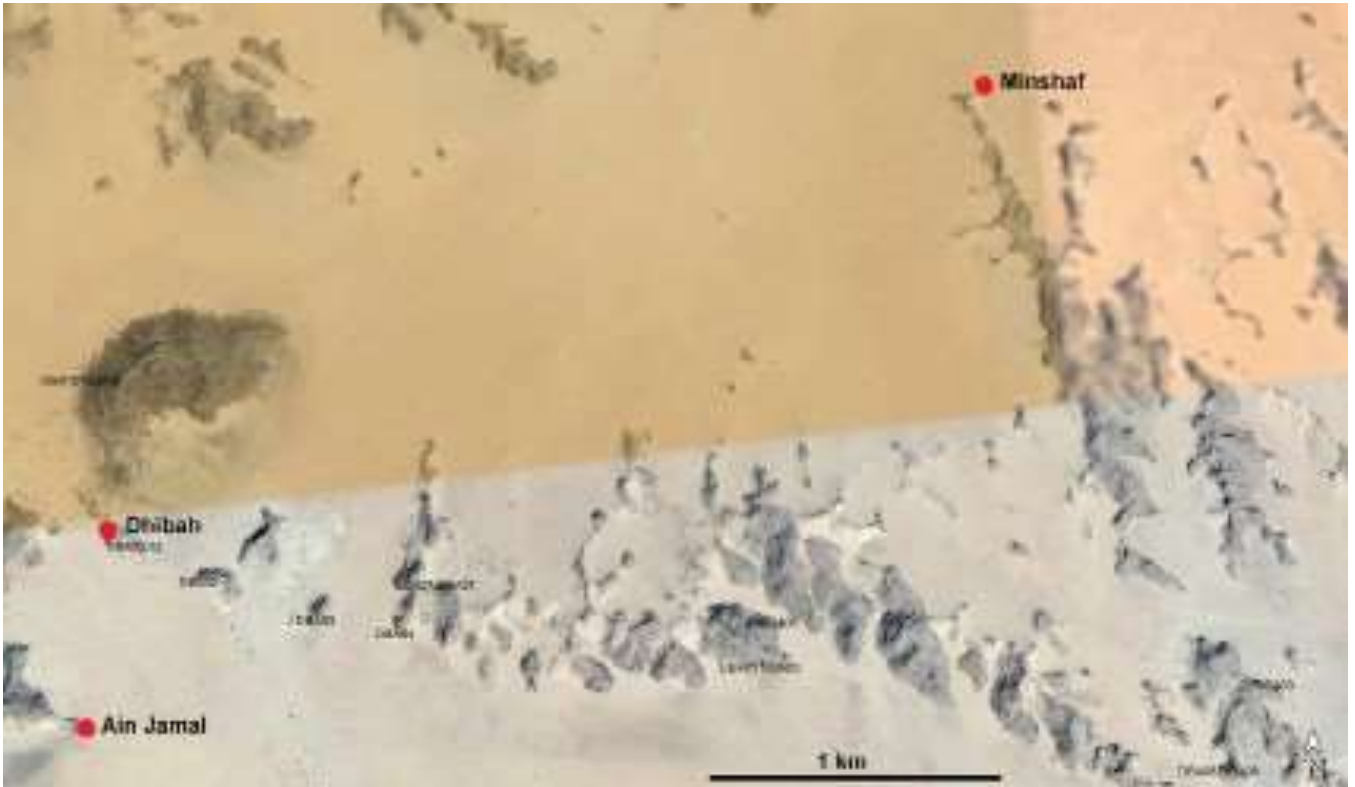


Figure 15. Aerial view of the three core areas 'Ān Jamal, Dhibāh and Minshaf.

It is still today a custom in south-western France (*course Landaise*) and in parts of Spain. Essentially it consists of the custom of jumping over a charging bull, be it as a display of athletic skill or a cultural or religious custom. Since it is feasible that such a practice could have found its way into Arabia and the Najd Khayrān depictions seem rather distinctive, this possibility needs to be considered (Figure 17).

It is suggested that the Najd Khayrān site be developed as a tourism destination. It is extensive and of mostly level access, well suited for the provision of walkways, viewing platforms and possibly wheelchair access. In part the panels form a fairly continuous gallery, appropriate for self-guided tours.

Along the handrails of the walkways, interpretive panels in Arabic and English could be displayed. Most importantly, the site will need to be enclosed in its entirety.

#### 2.a.iv Other sites in the Ḥimā area

In addition to the six sites identified for nomination and special protection, another 545 rock art and inscription sites have been recorded recently in Ḥimā (See Annex 3). The actual number of rock arts and inscriptions remains unknown for all of the sites.

Moreover, it is very likely that more sites remain unrecorded at present. Only 58 of the known sites were registered before 2016, and the canyons and wādīs of jabal Al-Qāra remain largely unexplored in terms of content.

As a theoretical exercise one could assume an average number of motifs for all sites in order to estimate the total number of petroglyphs in the Ḥimā

region. Whatever reasonable number is applied, it needs to be appreciated that the total number of motifs would be in excess of 100,000. If it is considered that the number of known sites is likely to increase further in the years to come, it becomes obvious that this is one of the world's largest concentrations of petroglyphs.

Similarly, the Ḥimā region probably houses the largest corpus of rock inscriptions. In terms of site numbers, the largest complex is currently that of wādī al-Sammā', with 229 registered sites (Figure 18). The wādī al-Sammā' site complex follows the eastern-most extreme margin of the jabal al-Qāra massif, leading to the gap between it and jabal al-Kawkab.

The caravans would have followed this route, travelling past Al-Murayra' rather than skirting Kawkab. It is no doubt this level of traffic over several millennia that accounts for the great number of sites. Another

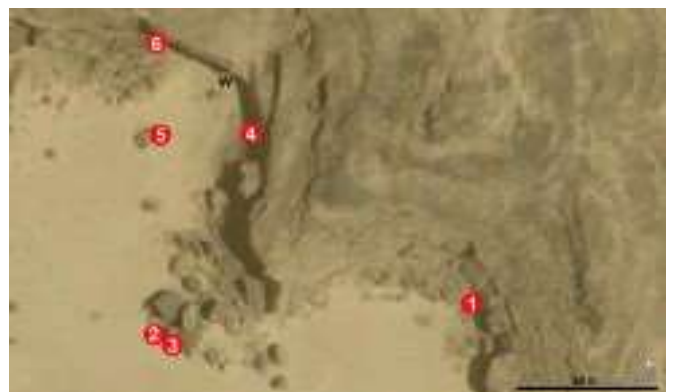


Figure 16. Najd Khayrān showing the main concentrations of petroglyphs and the location of the 'waterfall' (W).



Figure 17. Apparent depictions of 'bull jumping', a practice well-known from Minoan Crete and still current in some parts of south-western Europe; from the site marked 2 in Figure 16, Najd Khayrān petroglyph complex.

rock art complex of significance is that of wādī al-Bayḏā', west of wādī al-Sammā', with 26 currently recorded sites.

Of particular interest is site BYD01, where the continuing production of petroglyphs in the region was first demonstrated. This was possible because recent modifications to the site's main panel proved to be absent in a photograph taken in 1987 by Majeed Khan (Figure 19).

Not only are there modifications to pre-existing images, in this case a large camelid figure has also been added in the last few decades (Figure 19). Since this recent discovery other examples of fresh traces have been found, including additions to the rock art, 'commentaries' on it, retracing's and evidence of cultural use (*Bednarik 2017b*). There are many more rock art sites of great historical or scientific importance in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, and much the same applies to rock inscriptions.

Some examples are the Ta'ar site in a northern wādī of jabal Al-Qāra, where an anthropomorph has been direct-dated by micro-erosion analysis. There are also important sites among the canyons of jabal Al-Kawkab, and around its northern and eastern fringes. Among the latter are major rock art sites, such as those of the Ān al-Halkān site complex, as well as important rock inscription sites.

Two of the Ḥimyarite texts, RY 507 and RY 508, commemorate the siege of Najrān by King Ywsif 'sī'r Yṭ'r (or Dhû Nuwās) and date from June and July 633 Ḥimyarite (corresponding to 523 CE), i.e. they concur

with inscription Ja 1028 at Ḥimā Wells.

Another message inscribed next to RY 508 are graffiti attributed to qayl Sharaḥb'il Yaḡbul, son of Shuraḥb'il Yakmul of the lineage Yaz'an and Jadanum, Ḥabbum, Nas'ān. There is also the image of the soldier Tanim Yazid with his inscription.

A similar design appears next to inscriptions RY 507 and Ry 510, by the same soldier who two years earlier fought with the army of Ḥimyarite King Ma'adīkarib Yafur. Yet another inscription in the area is dedicated to the pre-Islamic god Dhû-Samāwî, the principal deity of the Najrān Region. There are literally thousands of ancient rock inscriptions in the many sites of Jabal Al-Kawkab, and they even include an inscription engraved by Philippe Lippens in 1951.

### 2.a.v Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān

Khan (*2007: 339*) estimates that 70.4% of the Saudi rock art he is familiar with consists of zoomorphs, and 21.1% of anthropomorphs, the rest he defines as geometric. As he recognizes himself (*2007: 344*), his statistics are distorted by uneven research attention in different parts of the country. For instance, he lists the Tabuk Region in the north-west as comprising 27.5% of the nation's 1106 rock art sites, while the Najrān Region only has 11.4% of the total.

Clearly the rock art of much of the country still needs to be accounted for, and this applies not only to Najrān Region. With hundreds of sites known just in the Ḥimā area, the magnitude of the monument that is the subject of this application becomes evident.



Figure 18. Petroglyph and inscription panel at wādī al-Sammā' site No. SMA09 02. The central zoomorph has been interpreted as a lion image.

This is a vast corpus of more than 100,000 petroglyph motifs covering a long period of time. The earliest petoglyphs surviving on the Wajid Sandstone are fully patinated, typically Neolithic zoomorphs and anthropomorphs. Cupules also occur in the early phase.

Unfortunately, no petroglyphs have so far been found on granite exposures, where they could have survived for much longer. Therefore the potential age of Saudi rock art seems determined by its preservation characteristics (Bednarik 1994). The Neolithic rock art, so prominent at the Shuwaymis and Jubbah complexes in Hail Region, plays a relatively minor role at Ḥimā.

It grades into the Chalcolithic and Bronze Age traditions, which offer stylistic similarities. Most particularly, large bovid figures with distinctive and individualized geometric body markings continued to be made. Conditions facilitating the continuation of cattle breeding are attributable to the later onset of the final desertification event in the south, compared to the northern regions of Saudi Arabia.

Cattle require reliable water supplies, and at Ḥimā these were still abundant 3600 years ago, i.e. in the late Bronze Age. At about that time, however, there is a marked change in the faunal elements apparently depicted in the rock art, now emphasizing species that tolerate or even prefer arid conditions. By the advent of the Iron Age this change is complete, and environmental conditions similar to today's seem to be indicated in the rock art iconography.

Another distinctive trend is the increased incidence of portrayals of apparent armed conflict, or at least an emphasis on the depiction of arms, especially presumed swords, daggers and lances. Such representations, either very rare or completely absent in the Neolithic or early Bronze Age, become dominant



Figure 19. A comparison of a 1987 photograph of a panel at Baydā' 1 (BYD01) with one taken of the same panel in 2017 shows that many modifications and additions have occurred, including changes to the genital areas, feet and legs of the two anthropomorphs.

with the first millennium BCE, perhaps coinciding with increasing aridity. References to armed violence are still largely absent in the early Thamudic and South Arabian rock inscriptions, but with the first centuries of the Common Era, shortly before the stabilizing introduction of Islam, such texts tell of vast armies camped in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.

The Ḥimā rock art therefore records a microcosm of Arabian history spanning at least 7000 years. The horse was introduced only late in this massive rock art corpus, during the centuries leading up to the Islamic Era. Initially, its depictions are rare, they only become common after Hijra.

Petroglyphs continue to be produced throughout the last 1400 years. This includes anthropomorphs Anati (1968a, 1968b, 1972) defines as 'oval-headed people' and places in his 'pre-literate' period, claiming them to be 3000 to 5000 years old. Some of these can only be a few centuries old, on the basis of patination and superimposition, and all of them are from literate periods (Bednarik and Khan 2005).

Similarly, the female depictions named "Alia" (a pre-Islamic deity) by the Bedouins continued to be produced well into the Islamic era. The portrayals of Alia in the Ḥimā area are of such a distinctive combination of characteristics that they are easily identifiable through the eras. They have been suggested to be related to the early Arab goddess Allat, Al-Ezza and Manat (Trimingham 1979: 18; Zarins et al. 1981: 36).

Of particular interest is the continued use of these representations up to the present time. The images' vulvar cupules or recesses were in many cases modified in recent years, and sometimes small stones were placed in them, perhaps in the course of supplication rituals (Figure 20). In contrast to the goddess Al-Ezza, Alia is of a distinctively feminine personality, with detailed depiction of long hair, narrow waist and wide hips, but inevitably lacking a head or face.

She is always shown with half-raised arms (Figures 1 and 21). Her role was that of a deity of love and fertility. Another factor connecting several rock art traditions in the region over some millennia are the wusūm - ancient tribal symbols or ownership brands still in use today on domestic animals, especially camels.

The tradition of these symbols is certainly more than 2000 years old and may well have begun very much earlier (Khan 2000). Until very recently it was unknown that rock art production has been continued right up to the present time in southern Arabia, or in the Middle East generally. The first solid evidence of such continuity was provided in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, at the site Bayḍā' 1 (BYD01).

A comparison of a photograph taken by Majeed Khan in 1987 with the present condition of the panel

demonstrated that numerous modifications had taken place during that interval. The panel features three main figures attributed to the late Bronze Age: a quadruped zoomorph and two anthropomorphs. The smaller of the latter is interpreted as female, the larger as male. The genital areas and feet of both figures were altered significantly in recent years, and there were fresh peck marks along the legs of the male figure. A large infilled camelid has been added, partially superimposed over the early zoomorph. Interestingly, its lower neck contour follows an engraved line that was already present in 1987, and was then already patinated to the same degree as the three earliest figures.

In other words, it appears that the modern rock artist was prompted by a pre-existing line dating from the Bronze Age to add a camel figure. There can hardly be a more telling demonstration of the continuity of tradition (Figure 19). Moreover, close examination of the remaining motifs on this panel demonstrates the presence of all shades of patina, from the original three figures to the very present.

These conclusions have been confirmed by other very recent findings elsewhere (Bednarik 2017b), including at the al-Mismā complex which was only discovered in 2017 (Bednarik and Khan 2017). There, petroglyphs were certainly still produced in the 20th century, and extensive rock paintings are also of very recent antiquity. In summary, the Ḥimā area features evidence of continuous rock art production for many millennia, of a comprehensiveness hardly found at other sites.

It is a cultural area of continuous and continuing use by the region's Bedouins. Not only does it chronicle their history, it presents a microcosm of the complex historical narrative of the Arabian Peninsula particularly in combination with the immense body of rock inscriptions coinciding with this cultural treasure.



Figure 20. an example of the recent practice of placing small stones in the deep vulvar cupules of Iron Age Alia depictions at Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān sites.

### 2.a.vi The Rock Inscriptions

Some of the Ḥimā inscriptions are among the largest such panels in the world, particularly those at Ḥimā Wells and Saidah (HIM02 and HIM01), located in the Ḥimā township (Figure 22). They have long been well protected. Khan's (2007: 345) review of the Saudi rock inscription sites shows the national predominance of the Najrān Region clearly.

According to his statistics, 38.7% of the 17,362 inscriptions then reported in the Kingdom are located in Najrān, one of fourteen provinces forming Saudi Arabia. The recent discovery of hundreds more sites in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān could have only increased that percentage greatly. By far the most common inscriptions are those grouped together as Thamudic or South-Arabian.

They account for 59.7% of the total of the rock inscriptions recorded by 2007 in all of Saudi Arabia (Khan *op. cit.*: 358). In second place are Kufic inscriptions (17.9%), followed closely by Southern Musnad scripts (17.5%). Nabatean (3.9%) and Safaitic (1.0%) rock inscriptions are comparatively rare.

Superimpositions imply that Thamudic precedes Southern Musnad writing and is the earliest script in Arabia. Thamudic texts are categorized into five types according to letter forms, vocabulary and direction of writing, called Thamudic A to E (Winnett 1937: 20). Type A is thought to have been introduced in the 6th century BCE, but some see an earlier introduction in the north and the earliest date derived scientifically from a Thamudic letter is E2830 ± 700 years BP (note large tolerance margin), while another is indeed of the 6th century BCE (Bednarik and Khan 2005).

The Thamudeans certainly existed already in the 8th century as reported by Sargon of Assyria. The last phases of this script, Thamudic C to E, appear to have been in use from the 2nd to the 4th centuries CE. There are essentially two views concerning the origins of alphabetic writing. One school of thought perceives letters developing from wusūm tribal brands (Winkler 1952; Field 1952; Nayeem 2000).

The other school regards scripts as having developed from rock art (Gelb 1963; Driver 1976; Khan 1993). Certainly there is agreement that the Arabian writing systems were not introduced from outside but developed locally. Within the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, several forms of alphabetic writing occur: the Musnad al Janubi scripts of 29 letters, the Aramaic-Nabatean alphabet, Southern Thamudic inscriptions, Arabic, Safaitic and rarely Greek.

Bi'r Ḥimā rock inscriptions were initially reported by Jamme (1965, 1966) and later investigated by Zarins et al. (1981), Zarins (1982) and Zarins et al. (1983). In 2002 a Japanese mission led by Kawatoko sought to explore the rock inscriptions of Al-Ḥuṣayba at jabal Al-Kawkab (Kawatoko 2005; Kawatoko et al. 2005), in the first attempt to record Mutsuo one site comprehensively.

It was followed by the painstaking rock inscriptions survey of the Saudi-French Archaeological and Epigraphic Mission in Najrān, commenced in 2007 (Robin 2008, 2010; Robin and Ṭayrān 2012; Arbach et al. 2015). This project is sponsored by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the French Embassy and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS-UMR 8167). This work is continuing.



Figure 22. Aerial view of the Ḥimā township, showing the locations of the ancient wells of Bi'r Ḥimā, the Ḥimā Wells inscriptions site (HIM02) and the Saidah rock art and inscriptions site (HIM01).

South-Arabian rock inscriptions in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān are mainly thought to be proper names of persons, although there are clearly also instances where this cannot be the case (*Bednarik 2017b*): the name S1lm with the depiction of a "camel" cannot be the name of a person when within a meter there is a smaller "camel" with the words S1lm-wrb-l-Hld (S1lm has given birth to Khālid). Thamudic (a northern variant of South-Arabian of 28 letters) was widely used in variant form in the southwestern regions, including near Ḥimā. Surprisingly, Arabic inscriptions are much less common than the earlier scripts.

Most Arabic texts are characteristic of the first centuries of the Islamic era (Figure 23).

### 2.b History and Development

The human history of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān begins with occupation sites of the Acheulian at ‘Ān Jamal and Sha’ib Hinmat and possibly even of an earlier Oldowan-like industry. Following this Lower Paleolithic hominin presence, Middle Paleolithic stone tools have also been reported, and Upper Paleolithic artefacts from such sites as Sha’ib Mahash. The Neolithic is represented by rock art and possibly by stone structures.

In the absence of archaeological excavations, only surface finds have been reported and their dating within the Holocene is limited to typological variables. However, the rock art leaves no doubt that the region was occupied continuously since the Neolithic. The rock art of the Property first came to outside attention through an expedition by Philby, Ryckmans and Lippens in 1951–52 (*Ryckmans 1952, 1954; Lippens 1956; Grohmann 1962*).

They traversed the region and took photographs along the route. Using 232 of their photographs, Anati invented a chronology of all Arabian rock art on the basis of selected sites at Ḥimā (*Anati 1968a, 1968b, 1972, 1974*). His proposal has since been reviewed critically.

McClure (1971: 77–80) was the first to note its inconsistencies, but Khan (1998) offered a more detailed review and Anati’s chronology was eventually refuted in almost its entirety (*Bednarik and Khan 2005*). From 1979 to 1981, the Rock Art and Epigraphic Survey of Saudi Arabia conducted a first survey of the Ḥimā region, recording several dozen sites (*Zarins et al. 1980*). During 1980 alone, 31 sites were recorded (*Zarins et al. 1981*).

Further sites were added by the Survey during 1983 (*Hester 1984: 115, 124*) and again in 1990 (*Al Kabawi et al. 1990*). During this period, age estimates for the rock art were based on stone tools and pottery shards, but neither their provenance nor their relationship with any rock art can be regarded as secure. In 2004,



Figure 23. The oldest fully Arabic rock inscription known, site No. MRY07, northernmost part of Ḥimā bufferzone.

Bednarik and Khan (2005, 2009) commenced a scientific investigation of Ḥimā rock art.

They provided the first testable rock art dating evidence at the Ta’ar site (TUR01), established a new micro-erosion calibration curve, applied optically stimulated luminescence analysis at ‘Ān Jamal (JML01), and they conducted colorimetric sequencing of patina at Najd Sahī. Their work, a collaboration between the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH) and the International Federation of Rock Art Organizations (IFRAO), has been continuing to the present time, with expeditions undertaken as recently as 2017. Site management and protection of the Property have been considered since the work of the Rock Art and Epigraphic Survey of Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, and three sites have subsequently been enclosed in protective fences and equipped with explanatory signs.

Similar measures as well as facilities for the convenience of visitors are planned at three more sites currently. These works will be completed in the course of 2018.





**PART THREE  
JUSTIFICATION FOR  
INSCRIPTION**

## 3. Justification for Inscription

### 3.1.a Brief synthesis

The *Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān* is not merely one of the world's largest concentrations of both rock art and ancient rock inscriptions; it is not just a historic site of remarkable qualities or a splendid example of the pristine Arabian desert landscape; and it is not only an archeological zone of immense promise. It is all of these things, but it is also a living cultural zone, where some practices of the distant past have remained alive. It is an immense monument to the human interaction with a volatile environment and to the human ingenuity in the face of irreversible climatic and environmental changes. The Property being submitted for inscription bears exceptional testimony to a continuous succession of ancient cultural traditions spanning many millennia that still survive today among the Bedouins of the desert, who still live among the relics of the past created by their ancestors.

These remains are of an extraordinary density and number, unequalled at least in the Middle East. The masterpieces of the human creative genius found among the rich and highly diverse rock art of the Property, together with thousands of decipherable rock inscriptions, illustrate the interchange of human values and conceptions across the vastness of the Middle East. The focal site, the wells at Bī'r Ḥimā, compelled the caravans and armies of millennia to pass through the Property as they travelled to or from Yemen, Syria, Egypt and other parts of the greater region.

What remains of their passage are the myriad inscriptions, found in many scripts and languages, and the many thousands of petroglyphs - the precipitate of many millennia. These many traditions of rock art have continued to the present time, and their ethnographic potential is enhanced by the often a accompanying and decipherable rock inscriptions.

The wells of Bī'r Ḥimā have been suggested to be the oldest desert wells in the world. This claim cannot be substantiated at present, but there is no doubt that they were of exceptional importance due to their strategic location. They are the reason for the extraordinary concentration of rock art, inscriptions and other ancient evidence.

But just as the water of these wells still sustains the present Bedouin population, playing a role during past millennia, the cultural precipitate found also remains of cultural relevance to that population, in a relationship persisting in few parts of the globe. Therefore, this Property is not submitted as an archaeological site, or as an epigraphic resource, or as a rock art gallery, but as an integrated cultural area of Outstanding Value.

It remains of cultural relevance today, not least of all in this time of global climate change, when many other societies may face the challenges faced by those who created the rock art of this Property. The primary objective of the State Party in this serial nomination is the prestige to be gained, and the improved public appreciation of the Kingdom's ancient cultural heritage due to their strategic location.

Thus the principal purpose of this nomination is not to secure large-scale tourism, but to create a greater understanding of the importance of its immovable cultural heritage through the international recognition engendered in World Heritage listing. Other factors related to this serial nomination are the planned role of Najrān City as the "gateway" to *Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān*, the provision of a new museum, and the establishment of both an archaeology department and a rock art research center at Najrān University. One of the most tantalizing qualities of this nomination is the mystery that it engenders.

The presently known values of the Property already amply justify its inscription, but the area remains incompletely explored. Not only has archaeological investigation been very limited methodologically; surveys have been largely restricted to those areas that are readily accessible to vehicular approach, essentially the fringes of the rock stacks. Most of the canyons and less accessible wādīs remain unexplored and it would be unreasonable to expect so much of the extensive sandstone massifs to be devoid of rock art and inscription sites.

The only interior of a massif reconnoitered so far, that of Jabal Al-Kawkab, features large concentrations of both types of evidence. Many of the countless valleys and recesses of the neighboring massif of Jabal Al-Qāra are still to be explored, and therefore the presently registered 550 sites (*Annex 3*) may only provide a glimpse of the full extent of this monument. Inscription of the Property would provide a strong incentive to the relevant agencies to pursue its further exploration.

The Property manifests Outstanding Universal Values with respect to four complementary World art images of the Property and the high quality of many of the petroglyphs renders it almost inevitable to find a large number of exceptional individual images or group compositions that are exceptional masterpieces of creativity and skillful workmanship (Figure 24). Creative genius is evident in the artistic or conceptual solutions the ancient artists employed in solving challenges of depiction or attributes. In literally thousands of cases, unique perspective, or simply those of a location's given solutions are evident in selecting topographic context, visual impact, use of rock texture or patination, integration of natural rock markings, foreshortening and similar devices to achieve desired creative effects.

Therefore, the artistic skills demonstrated in the high depictive standards of this corpus of rock art are undeniably exceptional. Their values are not only reflected in the work of successive generations of rock artists but also in countless rock inscriptions of several ancient scripts. The developments of the monumental arts over more than 7000 years.

### **3.1.b Criteria under which inscription is Proposed**

Criterion (i), "*representing a masterpiece of human creative genius*": The huge number of rock evident in the Property reflect changes in human values, thoughts and priorities.

They also manifest changes in the environment and the human adaptations to these variations.

Criterion (ii), "*exhibiting an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design*": The location of the Property at this important node of main caravan routes across the Arabian Peninsula has contributed to a wide interchange of values, involving numerous ethnic groups of the Middle East for many millennia.

Criterion (iii), "*bearing a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared*": From the Neolithic, through subsequent Chalcolithic, the Metal Ages and the historical periods, for many cultural traditions or civilizations, this corpus of rock art presents an exceptional record of cultural priorities and dramatic environmental adaptations during the Holocene period.

It is exceptional at least in terms of its sheer quantity, being one of the largest concentrations of rock art and non-architectural rock inscriptions on the planet.

Both these resources provide a unique testimony to a whole sequence of cultural traditions, one through their graphic and the other through their written materials.

Criterion (v), "*being an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change*": The cultures that created the massive bodies of petroglyphs and rock inscriptions at Ḥimā present an outstanding record of human interaction with the environment where successive societies became highly vulnerable to irreversible changes in climate and aquifer level. Both rock art and inscriptions present a library recording the interaction of successive cultures or peoples with their volatile environment. Especially the final desertification setting in before the introduction of writing, the effects of which so much characterize Arabia today, has had a profound effect on the human population, the fauna and flora.



*Figure 24. Finely crafted anthropomorph with several presumed weapons, Bronze Age, wādī al-Sammā'.*

But this rich record also provides a demonstration of the people's resilience, adaptability and determination in the face of catastrophic changes. The Outstanding Universal Values of the Property therefore offer an exceptional record of human interaction with a drastically deteriorating environment.

### **3.1.c Statement of integrity**

Integrity of the Property, as a measure of the wholeness and intactness of the cultural heritage and its attributes, is ensured in relation to this nomination. Each component core area of the six serial nominations comprises ample space around the elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Value of the site, and the surrounding buffer zone is most adequate to ensure full integrity in terms of ambience, as well as protection for the hundreds of other sites. Nearly all of the Property (nominated sites and buffer zone) is entirely free of any development, except site protection works described herein.

There are no made roads, established vehicular tracks or fixed structures or installations, the only exception being the area occupied by the small township of Ḥimā, at the southern end of the Property. This area occupies approximately 3.5 km<sup>2</sup>, or 1.1% of the total area. The physical fabric of the Property has essentially remained in pristine condition and the state of the Outstanding Universal Values is determined almost entirely by their natural environment (i.e. by weathering).

Humanly induced effects are limited to bullet impacts on some prominent rock surfaces, a potential source of damage that has now been arrested. So far it has not been attempted to control natural deterioration processes because in this environment of only 132 mm average annual rainfall these are fairly limited (see 5.c below). The buffer zone has been designed to provide maximal coverage of the main concentrations of Ḥimā petroglyphs and rock inscriptions, especially the massive corpora of Al-Bayḍā' and wādī Al-Sammā'.

Jabal al-Kaukab has been excluded because of sensitivities among the Bedouins, but it is hoped that an agreement can be negotiated at a later time, allowing the annexure of Al-Kawkab massive. That would increase the size of the buffer zone to a total of 49,986.8 ha. Similarly, should new discoveries of sites necessitate their inclusion in the future, the boundary may also change in response, especially in the inaccessible western parts of the nominated buffer zone.

### **3.1.d Statement of authenticity**

As the Nara Document on Authenticity states, the understanding of authenticity plays a fundamental role in all scientific studies of cultural heritage, and in conservation and restoration planning. All petroglyphs and rock inscriptions in the Property have retained their original location, setting, materials, ambience, form and design. Moreover, to some extent their traditional function within a cultural tradition has been preserved.

The petroglyphs as well as Thamudic, South-Arabic (musnad) and more recent inscriptions that have been progressively added over the last three thousand years hint at intangible heritage that probably contributed to the spirit and feeling of the culture of the people who made the petroglyphs.

As no vandalism or illegal entry has been possible to the protected sites in recent years, and as the recent modifications of and additions to any of the rock art are regarded as legitimately and significantly adding to the Outstanding Universal Value of the monument, deterioration processes are largely limited to the effects of natural erosion.

The causes of deterioration have been mostly meteoric water, wind and geological weathering, which are inevitable and have so far had limited effect on the petroglyphs, considering their age. The clearly different phases of weathering and patination in fact underline the authenticity of the rock art corpus as they would be impossible to replicate artificially. The following significant attributes of authenticity of the nominated rock art properties can be further elaborated.

Authentic form and design can be seen in the depiction in the rock art of ancient modes of apparel, tools, weapons and ornaments. Authentic materials and substance are evident in the patinated condition of more than 100,000 petroglyphs (*Figure 25*) and their state of weathering, and in the presence of hammer stones used in the creation of the petroglyphs. The authenticity of the rock art is further verified by the similarly patinated and weathered ancient scripts of which the rock inscriptions are composed.

The ages of some of these are known from their contents. Changes in the use and function of particular characters are evident in the inscriptions as well as in the depiction of animal species that have long disappeared from the region. There is a distinctive separation of the zoomorphs of different periods into the wet and cool phases and the dryer periods.



*Figure 25. The degrees of patination of these petroglyphs vary greatly, demonstrating their authenticity. The large unpatinated camelid postdates 1987. The three large central figures are of the Bronze Age and the remaining motifs are of intermediate ages. Site Baydā' 1 (BYD01).*

The integrity of the authentic location of the petroglyphs is also evident in the frequent occurrence of archaeological remains nearby. Furthermore, the authenticity of many petroglyphs is evident from their truncation by fractures in rock panels that can be shown to postdate the petroglyphs. Finally, the age of successive traditions of petro glyphs and thus their authenticity is established by stylistic similarities with direct-dated rock art elsewhere in Saudi Arabia, and by the scientific work conducted specifically in the Ḥimā Property (Bednarik and Khan 2002, 2005; Bednarik 2017b).

### **3.1.e Protection and management requirements**

The Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān is well managed within the legal protection system provided by Royal Decree No. M/26 dated 23/06/1392H (1972), defining the law on antiquities. The relevant details are provided in 5.b below. A revised and updated version is currently in the process of being passed by the Council of Ministers.

This updated version broadens the scope of the original legislation, but will not affect the way in which these sites are protected. All antiquities sites in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are managed and protected by the Saudi Commission of Tourism and National Heritage. The overriding concern of protection and management of the Ḥimā Property is not just to ensure, but to virtually guarantee the preservation of the Outstanding Universal Values of these properties over time.

Specific requirements are that in addition to existing legal and physical protection of the Property, physical protection measures will be extended to three more sites (Dhibāh, Minshaf and Najd Khayrān), and that there will be a comprehensive program of monitoring.

The first prerequisite is being met by present initiatives and will be completed in the course of 2018. Plans for these additional protection measures, and at Najd Khayrān of visitor facilities, have been finalized to effect the relevant works.

The proposed monitoring program, detailed in Section 6 below, is to record the precise condition of the Outstanding Universal Values, especially in terms of the effects of increased visitation and natural deterioration. The challenges to protect and conserve the attributes that carry Outstanding Universal Value, especially those deriving from a major increase in visitor numbers as a result of inscription, may not be readily predictable for the long term, and may demand significant adjustments to the Management Plan (Annex 1). The Management Plan submitted with this nomination sets out the general parameters of managing the Property, but it will need to be flexible to accommodate any new requirements deriving from the findings of the monitoring program.

Various aspects are set out in subsequent sections below, including the pressures arising from development and environmental factors (4.b.i & 4.b.ii), the projected level of visitation (4.b.iv), the available legislative protection (5.b) and the means of implementing protective measures (5.c). Based on experiences at other listed properties and the specific site profile of the Property, it is anticipated that the most significant threat to the Property's Outstanding Universal Values will come from increased visitation. However, the managing authority, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, possesses the required human and financial resources to continue managing the Property most effectively.

It has at its disposal adequate legislative means, the political will and support to discharge its duties to the best standards, and a long-term commitment to the protection and preservation of the Ḥimā monument that is entirely under its executive control. In this sense it is in a far better position than State Parties in countries where various agencies share the management of immovable cultural heritage. The administrative structures in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are highly centralized and effective, and the commitment of the SCTH, representing the State Party, to the long-term protection, preservation and effective management of the nominated Property is beyond question.

### **3.2 Comparative Analysis**

A comparative analysis intended to assess what renders the nominated Property particularly outstanding needs to include comparisons of the exceptional qualities in question, as well as the state of conservation and the future prospects of a site, with similar properties elsewhere. Such comparisons are attempted between the nominated Property and other Saudi sites; its context in the rock art of the Middle East; and its context in the world.

#### **3.2.i Comparisons with other Saudi Arabian sites**

Saudi Arabia is one of the rock art-richest countries in the world. It is therefore not surprising that it comprises numerous exceptional bodies of rock art. Two of which, the petroglyph complexes at Jubbah and near Shuwaymis in the Hail Region in the country's north, have been inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2015.

The principal justification for that inscription was that they are the finest examples of Neolithic rock art known in the world. This rationalization sought to find some semblance of balance in the List, where numerous Upper Paleolithic rock art sites are inscribed, but none from the preceding Middle and Lower Paleolithic, and none specifically for being of the Neolithic period. The Hail site complexes are large by international standards, but are certainly not the largest known in the country, which the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān indeed is.

In dividing Saudi Arabia into sectors arbitrarily, the most numerous known rock art concentrations are those of the northwestern and northern regions, at Kilwā, wādī Damm, Bajdah, Tabūk, wādī Asafir, Taymā' and Khabar in the former; and Sakāka, Al-Jawf, Jubbah, Janin, Yaṭīb, Miliḥiya, Al-Shamli, Al-Mismā and Shuwaymis in the latter sector. The larger central region provides a smaller number west and south of Riyadh, such as Ma'sil, Muzahmiyya, Khashan Dalqan, Al-Ḥotah, Al-Ḥsayla, Umm Al-Sbaâ, and much further south Al-Khammassin, Al-Sulayl and Al-Fāw.

The western region offers Al-Ṭā'if, while in the southwest the rock art concentrations at Abhā, Bīsha, Al-Ḥamda, 'Aṣīr and Jāzān are relevant.

The eastern-most zone features only jabal Khaslian Khazanna and jabal Makhruq. None of these sites and site complexes approaches in size the massive statistics of the Ḥimā complex being submitted here. Most have not yet been subjected to detailed scientific scrutiny, such as direct dating.

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Such work has so far involved several analytical methods in Saudi Arabia, including radiocarbon, micro-erosion, uranium-series and optically stimulated fluorescence analyses as well as colorimetric seriation (Bednarik and Khan 2002, 2005, 2009, 2017; Bednarik 2017).

Scientific studies have been undertaken, so far, at Jubbah, Janin, Al-Mismā, Shuwaymis, al-Ḥsayla, Umm As-Sbaâ, and some smaller sites (Qilat al-Ḥissan, jabal al-Bargh), besides the Ḥimā Property (Table 1). The present application emphasizes qualities that are entirely different from those of the Jubbah and Shuwaymis properties. At Ḥimā, the rock art component is only one of various remarkable features, the most important of which is the area's function as an integrated cultural area of exceptional continuity.

Although some of the rock art is of great antiquity and much of it is of high quality, the most striking aspect is that it links so many periods and traditions through prehistory and history, from the Neolithic to the very present. Indeed, this is one of few places in the world, outside of Australia, where rock art is still being produced today, and where it still plays a role in present-day cultural practices. This factor determines the Property's key Outstanding Universal Value.

Added to this is the presence of the probably largest known corpus of ancient rock inscriptions, the relatively high concentration of rock art motifs, and the role of the place in documenting the history of the Arabian Peninsula through the precipitate of countless caravans and various armies. In comparing the present state of conservation and the prospects of future survival of various major rock art concentrations in Saudi Arabia, it is fortunately true that a combination of favorable arid climate and remoteness has been conducive to preservation at most properties. The same factors also augur well for the future, provided the menace of human over-visitation can be kept in check.

Site	Dating		Range (bp)	Approx. age (bp)
<i>Umm As-Sbaâ</i>	Calibration		Known age 1120 bp	
<i>Al-Usayla</i>	'Ibex'		3180 – 2120	E2680 + 500 / - 560
<i>Umm Sinman main complex</i>	Calibration		Known age 1150 to 1200 bp	
	Anthropomorph	1	5650 – 4240	E4890 + 760 / - 650
	Anthropomorph	2	7070 – 5650	E5877 + 1190 / - 220
<i>Jabal Ash Shuwayhit</i>	Inscription 1		3530 – 2130	E2830 ± 700
	Inscription 2		3530 – 2120	E2540 + 990 / - 420
<i>Janin</i>	'Gazelle'		Greater than 1820 ± 50 bp	
<i>Jabal al-Bargh</i>	'Date palm'		3180 – 1770	E2370 + 810 / - 600
<i>Jabal al-Raat, Shuwaymis</i>	Anthropomorph		5660 – 4960	E5310 ± 350
	'Ibex'	1	6000 – 5300	E5550 + 450 / - 250
	Anthropomorph	2	4940 – 4240	E4590 ± 350
	Cupule		9330 – 6220	E7968 + 1360 / - 1750
<i>Ān Jamal, Ĥimā</i>	Calibration		Known age 1300 to 1350 BP	
<i>Tha'ar, Ĥimā</i>	Anthropomorph		2360 – 1570	E2109 + 250 / - 540
<i>Fardat Shamous South Site</i>	Bovine		6010 – 5650	E5810 + 200 / - 160

Table 1. Dating results from petroglyphs and rock inscriptions, for calibration, microerosion analysis and radiocarbon analysis.

### 3.2.ii The Middle Eastern context

In attempting a comparison of the nominated Property with rock art elsewhere in the Middle East it must first be conceded that knowledge about the wider region remains limited by uneven research intensities in different parts. Instances of direct dating of rock art are only available from Saudi Arabia (Table 1) and archaeological minimum dating by excavation has only been attempted at one site in Egypt (*Huyge et al. 2001*). Intricate relative chronologies invented for some regions, such as the Sinai Peninsula and southern Saudi Arabia, have been refuted at least in the latter case (*Khan 1998; Bednarik and Khan 2005*).

It has been claimed that 40,000 images exist at Sinai's mountain Har Karkom (*Anati 1996*), but the reliability of religious claims made about this site questions credibility and the tentative dating of the Negev sequence (*Anati 1996*) is dependent on the refuted stylistic chronology of Arabia (*Anati 1963, 1968a, 1968b, 1972, 1974*). Rock art can be found in all countries of the Middle East, and some of the earliest has been claimed to occur in southern Turkey, at sites such as Belidibi (*Mellaart 1975*), Kara'In and Öküzlü'In, but these contentions refer to portable art rather than rock art, which has in fact been found of earlier ages in the Levant (*Weinstein-Evron and Belfer-Cohen 1993; Goring-Morris 1998; Kaufman 1999*). Rock art in Anatolia occurs in small concentrations and lacks the spectacular statistics and visual impact realized in Arabia. possesses the required human and financial resources to continue managing the Property most effectively.

It has at its disposal adequate legislative means, the political will and support to discharge its duties to the best standards, and a long-term commitment to the protection and preservation of the Ĥimā monument that is entirely under its executive control. In this sense it is in a far better position than State Parties in countries where various agencies share the management of immovable cultural heritage. The administrative structures in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are highly centralized and effective, and the commitment of the SCTH, representing the State Party, to the long-term protection, preservation and effective management of the nominated Property is beyond question.

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Relatively richer concentrations are found in northern Syria, where a wealth of pre-Islamic inscriptions, c. 28,000 are reported, in Safaitic, Hismaic, Thamudic, Nabatean, Greek and Latin. A large proportion are related to adjacent petroglyphs, as also the case in the Ḥimā Property. Rock art continues in Jordan, where again art is dated through epigraphy (Betts 1998), and where rock art also co-occurs with rock inscriptions (Alzoubi et al. 2016).

About a hundred rock art sites have been reported in Yemen (Jung 1991a, 1991b, 1994; Garcia et al. 1991; Garcia and Rachad 1992, 1997; Braemer et al. 2007; Inizan and Rachad 2007) and include rock paintings, which are exceedingly rare in Saudi Arabia. Yemeni petroglyph traditions resemble those of southern Arabia and are better documented in the north of the country than the south. Jung (1991a) lists a total of 63 sites in northern Yemen.

However, there are no major concentrations in Yemen and the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān is clearly a main center of rock art on the southern Arabian Peninsula. Similar conditions are apparent in neighboring Sultanate of Oman, where 2 notable concentrations occur at jabal Akdhar in Al-Hajjar mountain range (Jäckli 1973, 1980; Clarke 1975; Preston 1976) and in Dhofar (Al-Shahri 1991), with a total of 50 sites. Petroglyphs occur in wādīs where they are worn by floodwater.

Moreover, a preference for limestone surfaces that tend to poorly preserve them contributes to relative rapid deterioration. Dhofar sites comprise extensive cave paintings as well as painted inscriptions. In United Arab Emirates, several scattered petroglyph sites have been reported (e.g. Jongbloed 1994), but they are small groups and of comparatively crude execution.

Further north along the coast of the Gulf, even Qatar contains numerous rock art sites, where the occurrence of presumed boat petroglyphs is noteworthy (Facey 1987), especially at the site of Jusasiyah. There are also cupules (cup marks) and game-boards on the limestone pavements (Hassiba et al. 2012). Rock art certainly does occur in Iraq, but there is a lack of detailed reports about it, although it appears the major occurrences may be in Kurdistan.

Most certainly petroglyphs are plentiful across Iran, but published reports about this wealth have only begun to emerge in recent years (Lahafian 2004, 2010; Ghasrian 2007) and in all cases describe comparatively small assemblages (e.g. Fazel and Alibaigi 2012; Ghasimi et al. 2014; Karimi and Ujang 2015; Azandaryani et al. 2015; Ghasrian 2016; Aali 2017). Further east, in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, the level of knowledge about rock art is even lower than in Iran. Although it is known that there are great bodies of rock art in those countries, nothing of consequence is known about them internationally, and there are, in contrast to Iran and especially India, not even well-established traditions of surveying rock art.

Finally, as part of the actual Middle East, Egypt features substantial rock art sites (Winkler 1938; Červíček 1986; Reimer 2009), especially in the Eastern Desert (Redford and Redford 1989; Judd 2007). In fact, Egypt is the only Middle Eastern country, apart from Saudi Arabia, to have provided scientific dating for any rock art (Huyge et al. 2001). However, due to the strong focus on dynastic archaeology, rock art has been neglected in Egypt and there are no sites known of a quality approaching that of the nominated Property. Although there are substantial corpora of rock inscriptions in both Syria and Jordan (e.g. at wādī Rum), the comparative body of Saudi inscriptions is greater (Huber 1899; Winnett 1937; Jamme 1966; Albright 1969; Bellany 1981; Livingston et al. 1985; Al-Shahri 1991; Khan 1993; Al-Theeb 1999; Eichmann et al. 2006).

In contrast to preceding sporadic and opportunistic forays into the extensive rock art, the Epigraphic and Rock Art Survey of the Kingdom was established in the 1980s (Khan et al. 1986, 1988; Kabawi et al. 1989, 1990, 1996; Khan 1990). It has initiated a program of site protection that is, in comparison to the rest of the Middle East, exemplary. In short, there is no rock art complex known in the Middle East that would match the Outstanding Universal Values found at a few Saudi Arabian properties, or match their petroglyphs, preservation or management qualitatively.

Moreover, the continuity of culture, the unbroken link between the distant past and the very present, has not been demonstrated elsewhere in this part of the world. The Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān is therefore of outstanding uniqueness.



### 3.2.iii The Global Context

In drawing a comparison between the Ḥimā Property and rock art or rock inscription sites elsewhere in the world, the first observation concerns the extraordinary size of the Ḥimā monument. With very few exceptions, no motif counts have been attempted at any of the 550 sites currently registered at Ḥimā, and there are without doubt many more sites still to be recorded. On the basis of estimates of many local assemblages it needs to be appreciated that there are in excess of 100,000 rock art motifs in the nominated Property, and that Ḥimā is therefore one of the world's largest local rock art concentrations (2.a.iv).

Secondly, the rock inscriptions occurring in the nominated Property number in the tens of thousands, according to Prof. Christian Robin, the principal investigator of the Ḥimā inscriptions (*Robin et al. 2014; Robin 2015; Robin and Gorea 2016; Robin and Antonini de Maigret 2017*). Some of them are unusually extensive, measuring several meters. Although there are also large numbers of this class found in Syria, these are spread over various areas of the country and not found within a single concentration.

Most similar are the large galleries of wādī Rum Protected Area in Jordan, with an estimated 20,000 inscriptions. Therefore, it is anticipated that the Ḥimā library of inscriptions will be found to be one of the largest in the world. Rock inscriptions occur in several parts of the world other than the Middle East.

Those of China are numerous but they usually occur singly rather than in dense concentrations (*Tang et al. 2017*). In India, Pakistan, the Sahara and other parts of the world, the density found in the Middle East is also lacking. Thirdly, evidence of continuing rock art use and production is rare globally outside of Australia, but its existence has been established at Ḥimā and one other Saudi rock art complex (Al-Mismā).

This is an exceptional feature of the Property and one of its key Outstanding Universal Values. It is one of the reasons of naming it a cultural rather than archaeological or epigraphic area. Finally, the Ḥimā Property is a site of historical significance.

It includes some of the oldest desert wells known, it has witnessed the passage of armies and myriad caravans, many of which have left messages to read, in a variety of languages and scripts. There are other factors that add to the special status of this Property, such as the enormous archaeological potential within this area, or the fact that the cultural sites occur in a spectacular landscape setting matching the best examples anywhere.

The splendor of the natural surroundings of any rock art site adds to its visual impact, and in that sense many of the Ḥimā sites are undeniably stunning. Quantity of rock art is, after all, not the only variable determining the importance of a rock art corpus. For instance, the Final Pleistocene cave art of south-western Europe is a relatively small body of a few thousand images spread over more than 300 sites, but it is of great scientific and cultural importance and is therefore over-represented on the World Heritage List.

Other factors determining the relative importance of regional rock art corpora are their visual appeal, their potential for tourism, their significance to specific living societies, and their roles in determining the identities of cultures and societies. Just as French cave art underscores for some a belief in cultural pre-eminence or the Australian rock art establishes the belief of the Aboriginal people of who they are, significant rock art in other parts of the world can greatly help define the cultural origins of peoples. This is clearly the case in the Arab region where rock art and inscriptions chart the origins of the Bedouin people, the Arab tribes.

On the basis of current information, three of the four largest rock art accumulations of the Middle East are in Saudi Arabia. Two of these, Jubbah and Shuwaymis, are now World Heritage listed. The third is the massive assemblage of hundreds of sites at Ḥimā, which chronicles the history of the Arab people more effectively than any other site or site complex.

In comparing this Property to others in the world that are of great significance, be they on the World Heritage List or not, the following examples are considered.

**Wādī Rum Protected Area.** The 74,000-hectare property was inscribed in 2011 as a mixed natural and cultural site and is situated in southern Jordan, near the northern border of Saudi Arabia. This listed property provides a good comparison with the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān. It also features an arid landscape consisting of narrow gorges and towering cliffs.

The number of rock inscriptions (said to be 20,000 but probably much lower) could be of some magnitude, also recording the early development of alphabets. Wādī Rum is a significantly larger area than Ḥimā, but with an estimated 25,000 petroglyphs its rock art corpus is much smaller. It offers a shorter evidence of human occupation and in contrast to Ḥimā, there is no evidence of a continued contemporary use or production of rock art at wādī Rum. None of wādī Rum's rock art has been subjected to direct dating.

**Tassili n'Ajjer..** At 7.2 million ha size, this desert property features more than 15,000 exceedingly exquisite petroglyphs and rock paintings, thought to date from the last 8000 years but not dated by direct methods. This rock art corpus, inscribed in 1982, ends with the first centuries of the Common Era. Discovered in 1933, this is deservedly one of the world's most iconic rock art monuments. The sheer size of the property ensures the protection of its most impressive geological features, but it also means that the density of rock art, 0.2 motifs/km<sup>2</sup>, is significantly below that attributed to Ḥimā, over 1500 times greater (at least 300 motifs/km<sup>2</sup>). Also, there are no rock inscriptions and there is no continuity of tradition, as there is at Ḥimā.

**Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape..** This property in central Azerbaijan comprises 6000 petroglyphs in an area of only 537 ha. The rock art is not credibly dated but appears to be prehistoric and was inscribed in 2007. The site also features formerly inhabited caves, settlement remains and burials, all reflecting an intensive human use of the area during the wet period that followed the last Ice Age and up to mediaeval times. Located in a semi-arid region, the site lacks the desert vistas of the previous properties, there are no inscriptions and cultural continuity is also lacking.

**Chongoni Rock-Art Area..** Situated within a cluster of forested granite hills and covering an area of 12,640 ha in central Malawi, the property features 127 rock painting sites. Billed to be the richest concentration of rock art in central Africa, this site complex was still added to until well into the 20th century. The rock art retains cultural relevance to the Chewa people and remains associated with ceremonies and rituals, as do some of the considerably older petroglyphs of Ḥimā. The Chewa girls' initiation ceremony, Chinamwali, continues to be practised (mostly in secret) in some of the painted shelters. The property was added to the List in 2006.

**Twyfelfontein or /Ui//aes..** This Namibian property of 57.4 ha was inscribed in 2007 and is credited with one of the largest concentrations of petroglyphs in Africa. Most of the 2500 images depict animals and there are also images of human and animal footprints. The petroglyphs are thought to be less than 2000 years old but are undated. The rock art assemblage is relatively small by global standards but the density of petroglyphs is very high at almost 5000 motifs/km<sup>2</sup>.

**Cueva de las Manos, Río Pinturas..** Inscribed in 1999, this Argentinian property contains a group of rock art shelters that derives its name from the large number of undated hand stencils. There are also many painted depictions of animals, interpreted as guanacos, and purported hunting scenes. The people responsible for the paintings may have been the ancestors of the

historic hunter-gatherer communities of Patagonia found by European settlers in the 19th century. The core zone is 600 ha, the buffer zone 2331 ha.

**Rock Paintings of the Sierra de San Francisco..** Located in Baja California, Mexico. This property of 182,600 ha was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1993. It comprises more than 250 rock shelters with paintings, including the famous Great Murals. They mark a distinctive tradition of creating large, multi-colored rock paintings that is unique to the Baja peninsula.

**Zuojiang Huashan Rock Art Cultural Landscape..** Located on steep limestone cliffs in the border regions of southwest China, close to the border with Vietnam, these 38 sites of rock paintings were inscribed in 2016. Using vertical cliffs along the Zuojiang and Mingjiang Rivers as their canvas, the Luoyue people created a series of spectacular rock painting sites. The most famous of them is the cliff of Huashan, where the rock art is found between 15 m and 90 m above the river. This is the largest single panel of rock paintings in the world. In all, the property's 38 sites feature 3855 paintings: 3300 anthropomorphs (of up to 2.4 m height), 110 zoomorphs and circular forms interpreted as bronze drums (*Bednarik 2016*). The property is one of the most astonishing rock art complexes known, if only for the fact that the paintings are inaccessible and the methods of access remain unknown.

**Petroglyphs within the Archaeological Landscape of Tamgaly..** Set around the Tamgaly Gorge amidst the arid Tianshan mountains of Kazakhstan, this concentration of 5000 petroglyphs was inscribed in 2004. It is said to date from the second half of the second millennium BCE to the beginning of the 20th century but remains effectively undated. The property covers a roughly circular area of 900 ha, with the Tamgaly River flowing through its centre. It is surrounded by a large buffer zone of 2900 ha, which to the northwest and southeast of the property includes outliers of the petroglyphs. Although the complex features a high density of rock art, by global standards it is quite modest in size.

**Dampier Cultural Area..** In contrast to all above properties, this cultural monument is not on the World Heritage List. Located on the northwestern coast of Australia, it comprises in the order of one million petroglyphs and thousands of stone arrangements. The average density of petroglyphs is about 4500 motifs/km<sup>2</sup>. Dampier has the largest rock art concentration known in the world but has not been submitted to UNESCO because it is compromised: 95,000 petroglyphs have been destroyed in the establishment of a large industrial estate whose acidic emissions are gradually destroying the rest of the rock art by dissolving the patination (*Bednarik 2002*). Moreover, the nearest town, Karratha, lacks any

facilities for the volume of tourism which listing would attract to the property.

The above comparisons imply that the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān is one of the most outstanding rock art properties in the world, as well as one of the largest.

### *3.3 Proposed Statement of Outstanding Universal Value*

#### *3.3.i Brief Synthesis*

The archaeological importance of the Arabian Peninsula, as the geographical nexus between Africa and Eurasia, is self-evident. Just as it facilitated the passage of human populations between these continents, the desertification of Arabia in several phases during the final Pleistocene and the Holocene prompted the practice of long-distance passage across the Middle East, especially in the form of caravans. The history of these developments, from the lake environments of the Neolithic period to the starkly arid landscapes of the Iron Age and the historical periods, is captured in the rich rock art traditions and the many thousands of rock inscriptions of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.

This Property chronicles the history of the Arabs more effectively than any other site or site complex, representing a massive outdoor library of that history that has been so much ruled by climate changes. The qualities that justify inscription include not only their spectacular environmental setting in the midst of a visually stunning desert-landscape, but also an immense corpus of petroglyphs of exceptional quality. The myriad rock inscriptions of the last 3000 years begin with the early alphabet of the Thamudic traditions and end with Quranic verses of the Islamic period.

These stages reveal the use of sites in different cultural periods during that population adapted successfully to severe environmental changes by acquiring domesticated animals (cattle and sheep) then camels and most recently the horse. The exquisite rock art of Ḥimā is not only a historical or archaeological monument; it is part of a living tradition. People of the Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze, Iron Age and Historic traditions all used same sites to create their corpora.

The cultural heirs of desert Bedouins, still live in the vicinity, they still revere the patrimony created by their ancestors and still respect the power of specific forms of rock art, such as the “Alia”. They even renew ancient motifs on occasion or modify them (Figure 27), and add new ones of similar style (Figure 25). This is not only a testament to Arabian past; it is an important part of a cultural practice that continued to this day just as the rock art of Chongoni in Malawi or any of Australian sites remains a powerful influence on descendants of earlier rock art producers.

The rock art also records the dramatic climatic and environmental changes during the region’s entire Holocene period, and the human adaptations and responses to these fluctuations. These, too, are highly relevant to today’s communities, in the present times of global climate changes and, in many parts of the world, ongoing desertification and aquifer retreat. Although these factors are also evident at the rock art properties of Jubbah and Shuwaymis, no similarly comprehensive library chronicling such changes over a corresponding time span has been inscribed on the World Heritage List.

Most other rock art successions in the world lack reliable chronological sequencing, but the rock art dating program conducted in various parts of Saudi Arabia since 2002 has yielded adequate anchor points to place the progression of petroglyph traditions at Ḥimā into a credible framework. This satisfies the implied need in three of the four criteria under which inscription is proposed: to identify the specific cultures that created the Outstanding Universal Values in question. These values form a crucial and integral part of the historical narrative of how Middle Eastern civilizations, including their systems of writing which bestowed alphabetic scripts on the world, developed. Their history is also chronicled at Ḥimā and includes historical texts reporting the passage of great armies.



*Figure 26. Mysteries of Ḥimā rock art: the main features in this group of petroglyphs resemble oxes—but why do they seem to have small animals attached to their mouths that were added later?*



*Figure 27. One of two ancient, most probably Neolithic depictions of ostriches are renewed almost completely in more recent times, possibly less than a millennium ago.*

### 3.3.ii Justification for Criteria

*Criterion (i):* Created with simple tools, the carefully crafted rock art masterpieces of the Ḥimā Property are visually stunning expressions of the human creative genius by any standards. Each cultural tradition adding to the site assemblages over millennia helped create a magnificent catalogue of historically anchored productions invested with beliefs, concerns, desires and priorities of many successive societies. In the sense that they represent the surviving cultural precipitate of over 300 generations are of Outstanding Universal Value.

*Criterion (ii):* Rock art and rock inscriptions at Ḥimā reflect the interchange of human values of the entire Middle East for a period of millennia, because the place was a crucial node travelers, caravans and armies traversing the greater region. People have travelled via Ḥimā wells for millennia, and it is precisely their passage and cultural interchange that prompted the creation of the Outstanding Universal Values they bequeathed to humanity.

*Criterion (iii):* Ḥimā rock art bears an exceptional testimony to a long series of cultural traditions beginning with the Neolithic and ending with the very present. Through this, one can appreciate the struggle of successive societies and civilizations against environmental catastrophes experienced and successfully adapted to. The pristine record left of their existence, often the only source we have of their passing, is of a magnitude rarely encountered in the world.

*Criterion (v):* There can be few comprehensive records of human interaction with a vulnerable environment under the impact of irreversible change than the massive library at Ḥimā. Indeed, this criterion seems to have been formulated specifically for the Saudi rock art sites. Civilizations facing environmental oblivion, anywhere in the world, have rarely left such brilliant testimony of their struggles. The archive created at Ḥimā is an outstanding example of the adaptations imposed by major fluctuations in climate and aquifer levels.

### 3.3.iii Statement of integrity

The integrity of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān will be protected by the six fenced-in core areas and the surrounding buffer zone. The core areas feature some of the more outstanding rock art concentrations and major rock inscriptions, and were selected as destinations for visitors. Access to these six sites is fully controlled and can only be gained in the presence of site custodians.

This will ensure that the present integrity of the Property (3.1.c) will be maintained, firstly through the supervision of all visitors, secondly by drawing the attention of visitors away from the hundreds of other sites of the Property. There are other factors protecting the integrity of the Ḥimā sites. All vehicular access to the cultural area is via one single road, which leads to Ḥimā township.

Therefore, all visitors, other than those travelling by helicopter, must pass through Ḥimā. This renders visitor control highly effective and unauthorized access to the unprotected sites of the Property is not realistically possible. Moreover, the boundary of the protected buffer zone will be marked with white-painted, 1 m high concrete blocks wherever vehicular access seems possible.

All elements necessary to express the Outstanding Universal Values of the nominated Property are therefore well protected:

1. The very numerous well-preserved petroglyphs.
2. Identifiably different rock art traditions over the period from hunting and gathering to animal domestication and writing.
3. Evidence for human interaction in a vulnerable environment.

Both the core zones and buffer zone are of adequate size to ensure the complete representation of the features that convey the Outstanding Universal Values.



Figure 28. Petroglyphs interpreted as depicting elephants with mahouts at site No. DBA01, probably marking the passage of the army of Aksumite King Abraha al-Ashram in about 570 CE.

### 3.3.iv Statement of Authenticity

This includes the separation of zoomorphs of successive periods into faunas of wet and cool phases and hot and dry phases. In addition, numerous details of the iconography of the rock art attest to its authenticity, including modes of apparel, tools, weapons and ornamentation. Many of the rock art motifs are truncated by exfoliated rock portions or have been dissected by cracks that clearly postdate the images.

The different phases of weathering in both rock art and inscriptions underline the authenticity of the entire corpus as they would be impossible to replicate artificially. The countless archaeological remains in the area also bear witness to the authenticity of the monument, as does direct dating of rock art and other scientific attention (Bednarik and Khan 2002, 2005, 2009; Bednarik 2017b). Finally, many of the rock inscriptions can be dated by their content, and they show identical weathering and patination as the corresponding body of petroglyphs.

The petroglyphs and rock inscriptions in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān have all retained their original locations, settings, materials, forms and designs, and some of the rock art still functions within a cultural tradition. The petroglyphs as well as the Thamudic, South-Arabic, Arabic and other inscriptions that have been added within the last 3000 years define an intangible heritage that still forms part of the cultural tradition of today's resident descendants of the authors of that legacy. The authenticity (see 3.1.d) of both the monumental rock art and the inscriptions is assured by the degree of weathering and patination, which has affected practically all of it.

In addition, historic facts recorded in rock inscriptions. For instance the presumed elephant images and mahouts at Dhibāh (Figure 28) are most probably related to a historically proven passage of an army that intended to tear down the Holy Ka'ba with these animals. Authenticity also demonstrated by the petroglyphs' stylistic changes through time, similar to those in other rock art complexes in the wider region.

As vandalism was limited and is now excluded, together with illegal entry, deterioration processes are limited to the effects of natural erosion. The causes of deterioration have been mostly meteoric water, wind and geological weathering, which are inevitable and have so far had limited effect on the petroglyphs, considering their age.

### 3.3.v Risk Management

The nominated Property is well managed within the legal protection system provided by the Antiquities and Museums Sector (see 5.b). The specific long-term expectations are that there will be a program in place for monitoring the precise condition of the Outstanding Universal Values (see 6.a to 6.c), especially in terms of effects of increased visitation and natural deterioration. It is proposed to extend the management and protection of the sites by:

1. Preparing for risks caused by increased visitation.
2. Continuing constructive collaboration with key stakeholders and local municipalities.
3. Improving visitor facilities and infrastructure.
4. Improvement of staff expertise.

It is also acknowledged that significant adjustments to the Management Plan (Annex 1) may be required due to unforeseen challenges, e.g. those ensuing from a major increase in visitor numbers. The Management Plan submitted with this nomination sets out the general parameters of managing the Property, but it will remain flexible to accommodate any new requirements deriving from the findings of the monitoring program. Various aspects are set out in subsequent sections below, including the pressures arising from development and environmental factors (4.b.i & 4.b.ii), the projected level of visitation (4.b.iv), the available legislative protection (5.b) and the means of implementing protective measures.

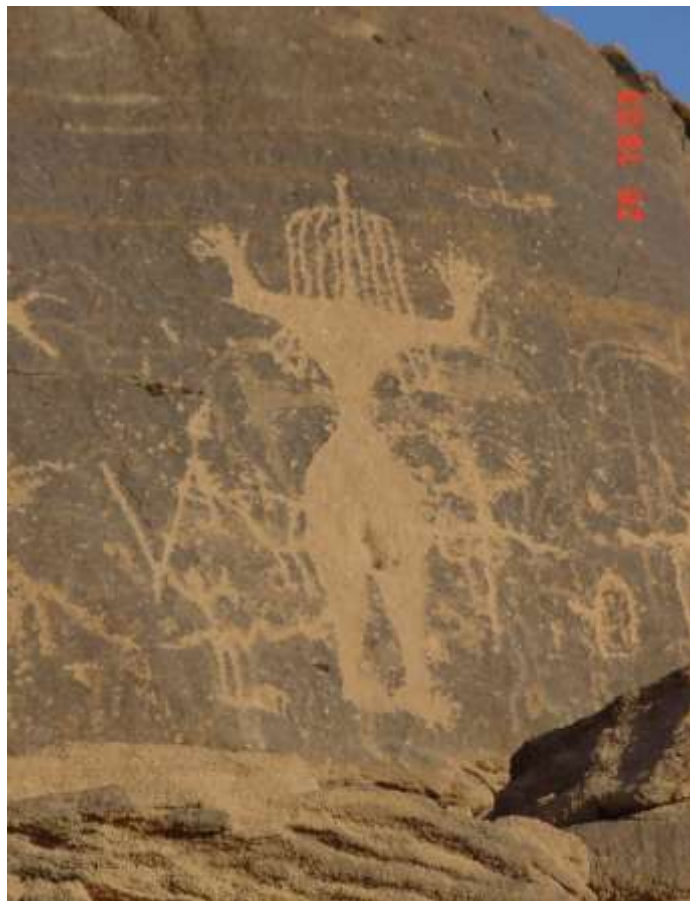
The specific requirement to extend physical protection measures to three of the nominated core

areas is being met by present initiatives and will be completed in 2018. This also applies to the need to install markers indicating the extent of the buffer zone. The Property is owned and managed by a single government authority, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, which possesses the required human and financial resources to continue managing the Property most effectively.

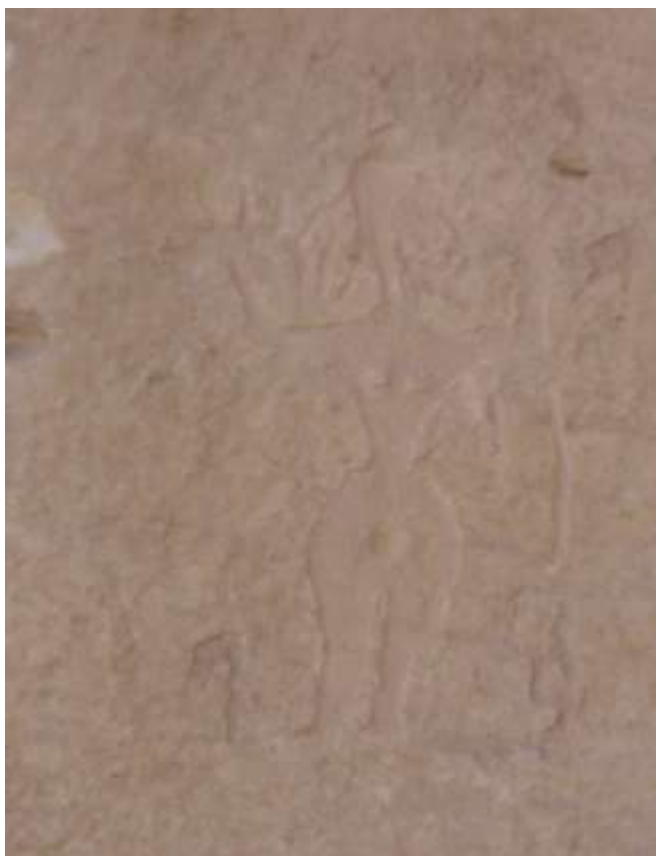
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It has at its disposal adequate legislative means, the political will and support to discharge its duties to the best standards, and a long-term commitment to the protection and preservation of the Hīmā that is entirely under its executive control.

The commitment of SCTH to the long-term protection, preservation and effective management of the nominated Property is beyond question.



*Depiction of the Goddess Aliya, demonstrates the continuity of the Rock art tradition*





**PART FOUR  
STATE OF CONSERVATION &  
FACTORS AFFECTING THE  
PROPERTY**

## 4. State of Conservation and Factors Affecting the Property

### *4.a Present State of Conservation*

The rock art and rock inscription sites of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān have been preserved in excellent condition under the custody of the Department of Antiquities and Museums since the 1980s and are now under the care of the Saudi Commission of Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH). Three of those nominated here Ḥimā Wells, Saidah and ‘Ān Jamal have been enclosed in lockable steel fences in previous years, debris has been removed and site guards have been appointed. The remaining three sites: Dhibāh 1, Minshaf 2 and Najd Khayrān (wādī Saad 7) are to be enclosed by similar fences in the immediate future (TBD in 2018).

The last mentioned site will be developed for tourism. Walkways and viewing platforms will be installed as appropriate to suppress dust and to enhance visiting experience. Minor vandalism has occurred at several Ḥimā sites, in the form of bullet impacts from using large blocks of rock for target practice.

In a few cases these scars have impacted on petroglyph panels, but this conservation flaw has become an advantage in dating research. Nevertheless, the practice of discharging firearms has been discontinued within the area of the monument. More customary forms of site vandalism, such as recent graffiti defacing rock art or inscriptions, are strikingly absent throughout the many sites.

There is a palpable respect evident, especially for inscriptions. Moreover, no indication has been observed, anywhere in the Ḥimā Property, that any cultural features have been removed, chiseled out or sawn off. Indeed, the general impression is that the sites are essentially pristine.

The effects of natural deterioration are relatively limited, owing to the low precipitation and the high ambient atmospheric pH that characterize most arid regions in the world. Aeolian erosion by the effects of air-borne quartz sand does occur, but it is mostly limited to low elevations that are usually free of rock art, and microscopy has shown it to be of comparatively low effect on the cultural heritage values. The principal weathering process is through the removal of interstitial colloid silica by solution, leading to granular exfoliation.

However, on most surfaces this process advances very slowly, and in particular it seems to be effectively inhibited where adequate patination, perhaps stabilized by silica, has been established.

On such surfaces no significant deterioration has taken place in more than 6000 years. It would be reasonable to expect that, in the absence of any significant changes in climatic and atmospheric conditions, these petroglyphs can survive several more millennia provided that anthropogenic (humanly caused) impairment can be avoided.

This would include direct threats, essentially from increased or uncontrolled visitation, and indirect, specifically through acidification of the atmosphere. Of particular importance to conservation seems the absence of capillary moisture, probably attributable to the extremely low aquifer level. Thus the three key factors that have preserved the Ḥimā monument in such excellent repair are its location at a cul-de-sac deep in the desert; a favorable attitude of the local Bedouins; and the care taken of it by the managing agency.

It is this excellent state of conservation that the circumstances of future protection requirements will need to be assessed against.

### *4.b Factors Affecting the Property*

The Ḥimā Property and surrounding land is owned by the State and illegal activities are prohibited by the protecting legislation. The only potential hazards through human agency would be from local Bedouins or from tourists. Since the human threat to the Outstanding Universal Values is significantly greater than the aggregate natural risks, the priority must be to encourage the goodwill of the local people and to devise effective measures containing the perils of tourism.

These factors need to be addressed in the Management Plan and they are in need of regular review, especially in conjunction with evaluating the results of the monitoring program. Another aspect of physical protection refers to the need of protecting individual sites from adverse effects of significantly increased foot traffic. Many Ḥimā sites are at the base of cliffs, and the physically unstable talus slope or berm at its foot is often used for access to the rock art or inscriptions.

Walkways and viewing platforms is primarily not for visitors convenience, but for controlling flow and for protecting the ground in front of rock panels. This applies especially where need arises to cater for heavy visitation at selected sites. Effects of natural factors, diurnal temperature differences and unloading stresses have created some deterioration of the rock surfaces but in an overall perspective are far less damaging than potential anthropogenic threats.



#### **4.b.i Development Pressures**

The Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān is hundreds of kilometers from any major industrial, agricultural or mining development and there are no plans of establishing such projects in the region, not even in the long-term. The nearest town is Najrān, more than 80 km to the south. Therefore, the danger of the kind of vandalism associated with the proximity of a major urban center does not exist, nor does the potential destruction or damage by development.

The only pressure from development that can be envisaged for the future is that arising from tourism. At present there is practically no tourism at Ḥimā. If visitation increases significantly, development may need to include facilities for accommodation, dining and shopping.

These issues are addressed in the Management Plan. It will be necessary to install paths for visitors at some sites, as well as other access and interpretation facilities. This may also necessitate the erection of shade structures outside the core zones, as well as visitor books and interpretation material.

It will then be incumbent upon the managing authority to employ best-practice procedures for such work, modelled on rock art properties elsewhere in the world and employing minimal visual and environmental impact methods.

#### **4.b.ii Environmental Pressures**

It is difficult to predict any environmental pressures for the Ḥimā Property. There is no development planned and industrial pollution, which can have a greatly adverse effect on rock surfaces through atmospheric acidification, is not locally present. Paradoxically, climate change and the further desertification it is likely to engender would be of benefit to the rock art, because it is the highly arid environment that has facilitated its survival so far. No danger from environmental pressures is therefore anticipated for the Outstanding Universal Values of Ḥimā.

#### **4.b.iii Natural Disasters and Risk Preparedness**

Apart from the seismicity along the axis of the Red Sea and along the Gulf of Aden, considerable activity occurs at the Dead Sea transform fault system and in the Gulf of Aqaba. However, the Arabian plate is relatively free of earthquakes. Should such events occur at Ḥimā they might lead to the dislodgement of large blocks, but this would be almost impossible to prepare against.

Severe seismic activity is not predicted for the area and no contingency plan exists. Owing to the very sparse vegetation there is no risk of fires in the Property. Similarly, flooding is not likely to occur; the rare heavy rains only affect the sandplains and wādīs. All rock art and inscriptions are at elevated locations.

#### **4.b.iv Responsible Visitation at World Heritage Sites**

Present visitation of the Ḥimā Property, apart from the small township of Ḥimā, is limited to Bedouins living in semi-permanent encampments in the desert; to management personnel from the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage; and to researchers. There is currently no cultural tourism. Future visitation by the public is envisaged to be largely domestic, although inscription on the World Heritage List is likely to also engender international tourism.

In view of the remoteness of the sites only the most intrepid visitors are expected to reach them, and they are unlikely to engage in vandalistic activities. Vehicular traffic will not be permitted in the core areas, if only to suppress dust development at the sites. The six core areas have been/will be protected by physical barriers in the form of substantial steel fences (Figure 29).

Visitors will be required to walk to the sites under supervision. Only one of the six sites, Najd Khayrān, will have wheelchair access. None of the other hundreds of rock art and inscription sites will be accessible to the tourists, except by special arrangement with the managers of the Property and under appropriate guidance.

Accredited tour guides, preferably local Bedouin people, will be available after the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage has established a suitable system of accreditation. As this is a very arid region the impact of tourism is not expected to have any appreciable effect on flora and fauna, but refuse receptacles will be installed at site gates to keep the Property as clean as it is now. Projected levels of visitation due to inscription are difficult to predict.

They will depend largely on promotional efforts. For instance, public domestic interest in the Property would significantly increase if it were opened by a member of the Royal Family. Because the sites are spread well apart and reaching them involves extended vehicular transport (i.e. most visitors would be in transit most of the time), the daily carrying capacity will be quite high.



*Figure 29. Protective fence and sign at 'Ān Jamal site, Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, seen against the site's decorated rocks.*

Between 1000 and 1500 visitors/day could reasonably be coped with, provided there are adequate numbers of accredited tour guides and an efficient transport system in place. Such visitor numbers, however, are unlikely to be reached. Since all visitors will be supervised, site vandalism and touching of rock art are not expected to pose problems.

The perhaps greatest concern relating to high visitor numbers would be the effects on the stability of slopes, boulder screes and berms at the foot of cliffs and large blocks. It is therefore particularly important to establish stable and sustainable paths for visitors, and to ensure that these will be strictly adhered to.

**4.b.v Number of Inhabitants Within the Property and the Buffer Zone**

There is no human habitation in the six core areas of Himā. Within the buffer zone of almost 320 km<sup>2</sup> live about 2500 people, most of them in the small township of Himā (date of estimate 2016). A small number of this population lives in semi-permanent Bedouin camps among the rock stacks of jabals al-Qāra and al-Kawkab.

Estimated population located within Buffer zone: 0  
 Area of nominated Property: 2500  
 Total: 2500



*Figure 30. The endless sea of sand in which the rocky outcrops dot its landscape is well suited to eco-tourism practices.*



*Figure 31. Signage Poasted by SCTH banning the abrupt practices against tampering with the assets, and pointing to the penalties brought by the new Antiquities Law.*



*Figure 32. Concrete Markers with the SCTH Emblem marking the area owned by the state.*



PART FIVE  
PROTECTION &  
MANAGEMENT OF THE  
PROPERTY

## 5. Protection and Management of the Property

### *a. Ownership*

The *Cultural Rock Arts in Himā Najrān* is located in the far south of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and falls under the Governorate of the Najrān Region. It is a government-owned property and a protected zone under national law that satisfies all key requirements for effective long-term management and protection of the Outstanding Universal Values. The protected sites of the Kingdom are managed by a competent, well equipped staff that has ample monitoring and enforcement capabilities, and is adequately backed by legal mandates and regulations.

There are antiquities laws and regulations imposed by a Royal Decree in the Kingdom that prohibit any digging, excavations or damage to the heritage sites in the country. There is a Branch of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage in Najrān whose director and staff are responsible for the protection and management of all rock art and inscription sites in the Najrān Region, including those on the Property submitted herein.

### *b. Protective Designation*

A Royal Decree No. M/26 dated 23/6/1392 AH (1972) was issued over 45 years ago, and through the Resolution by the Council of Ministers No. 78 dated 16/3/1429 AH (2008). The properties are managed by the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH). Royal Decree No. M/26 contains the following relevant Articles:

*Article (8):* Movable and immovable antiquities and archaeological sites existing in the Kingdom shall be considered government property.

*Article (12):* When planning development, expansion and improving villages and cities, preserving archaeological sites shall be considered. Planning projects in archaeological sites shall not be approved unless having the approval of the Antiquity Department which shall determine the archaeological areas and inform the city planning body thereof.

*Article (14):* The Antiquity Department in association with relevant departments of land surveys shall determine archaeological hills, buildings and sites close to populated areas in order to secure them from being inhabited.

*Article (22):* The Antiquity Dept. alone shall be responsible for maintaining and restoring registered immovable antiquities in order to preserve them.

*Article (23):* Registered archaeological land shall not be used for storage. No cemeteries, buildings or irrigation system shall be placed, or planting or any trees removed that cause change to the land's feature without a license from the Antiquity Dept. Remains of

the historical buildings and ancient ruins shall not be used nor any sand or rock shall be removed from archaeological sites without the written approval of the Antiquity Dept.

*Article (55):* The Antiquity Dept. is the only body which shall have the right to excavate and investigate for antiquities in the Kingdom. Commissions, scientific associations and archaeological delegations shall have the right to undertake excavations with a license according to these regulations.

*Article (57):* Excavation license shall not be issued for associations and scientific commissions unless proven to be qualified both financially and academically.

*Article (59):* Commissions, associations and delegations licensed to carry out excavations shall comply with the following:

1. Not to remove any part of the archaeological building unless approved by the Antiquity Dept.
2. Provide detailed scientific report valid for publication regarding the results of the excavation in a one-year period following the end of each season.
3. Submit the discovered movable antiquities at the end of each season to the Antiquity Dept. and undertake the expenses of wrapping and transporting to the specified location, provided that antiquities are not removed from the excavation location without an approval from the Antiquity Dpt.

*Article (65):* All discovered antiquities found by the commissions, associations and delegations shall be of the government properties and shall not be transferred to others.

Following the integration of Antiquities and Museums into the Supreme Commission for Tourism through the Resolution by the Council of Ministers No. 78 dated 16/3/1429H (2008), the responsibility for all antiquities sites in the Kingdom was transferred to that Commission, and eventually to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage where it resides now.



*Figure 30. Composition of petroglyphs at Site No. SAD06, Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.*

#### **5.c Means of Implementing Protective Measures**

The Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān is under the jurisdiction of the provincial Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage office in Najrān, which operates under the direction of the SCTH head office in Riyadh. Practical protection of the Ḥimā Property is provided by the staff already operating there, which completely controls access to three sites, to which the three other core areas will be added shortly. Visitors will only be permitted to enter the core zones under the supervision of the designated site guards or SCTH-accredited guides.

They will be required to strictly comply with the directions of guides. Records will be kept of daily visitor numbers and of the composition of tourist groups. The operation of site visitation practices will be subjected to regular review by the directorate of the SCTH office in Najrān, in consultation with the Riyadh office.

The actual process of legal protection involves a report by site guard (or citizens) on any infringement of laws detailed in 5.b, especially any interference with or defacement of rock art or inscription panel, made to local police. This has resulted in the apprehension of responsible parties and processing by courts in the Kingdom. Local Bedouin tribesmen have also become involved in protecting rock art sites and have reported misdemeanors to their sheikh or directly to the police.

People defacing rock art have been prosecuted under the existing legislation elsewhere in Saudi Arabia.

This process has already resulted in significant adjustments to public attitudes.

#### **5.d Existing Plans Related to Municipality and Region in which the Proposed Property is Located**

The municipality of Najrān has no jurisdiction over the management of the Ḥimā Property. It has, however, been involved in discussions and consultations with the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage and is most supportive of the present serial nomination. A National Sustainable Tourism Plan for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was completed in 2002, and a Provincial Tourism Plan specifically for Najrān Region has been prepared in 2004. The latter identifies tourism resources of the province as being:

1. Resources related to the natural environment such as scenic landscape beauty of the mountains and deserts, flora and fauna with a variety of wildlife.
2. Resources related to archaeological sites and historic places including prehistoric sites, especially rock art, and buildings in the traditional architectural style and materials.
3. Resources related to other aspects of cultural heritage including Bedouin way of life, traditional markets, handicrafts and cuisine.
4. Other types of resources including a strong sense of hospitality, museums, festivals and use of camels and horses.

The Provincial Tourism Plan is being actively implemented by the SCTH Branch in Najrān in collaboration with national and regional partners.

### *5.e Property Management Plan or Other Management System*

The Management Plan submitted with this nomination (Annex 1) considers the long-term development, preservation and protection of the sites, governance arrangements with the local administration, and the impact on the ecosystem and aesthetics generated by the nomination for World Heritage listing. The local community played an important role not only in preserving and protecting the sites but also takes an interest in the development of the area and welcoming visitors. The management objectives according to the Management Plan submitted together with this serial nomination are to:

- a) Protect the rock art and rock inscription sites and their Outstanding Universal Values in line with international best practice and guidance, and as an exemplar of good practice.
- b) Engender wider appreciation and understanding of the sites in the local communities and beyond.
- c) Enhance visitors experience sites engagement.
- d) Realize sites potential to serve regional tourism, economic and social development and sites associated communities.

### *5.f Sources & Levels of Finance and Political Support*

As the cultural properties, monuments and surrounding buffer zone being submitted for inscription are all State properties, all the development funds are provided by the Government of the Kingdom. For the current three-year period, a budget of about 1 billion riyals has been allocated to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage for development projects. A regional museum is under construction in Najran in place of the already existing local museum.

It will comprise a special rock art gallery relating to the Ḥimā Property. The initial estimated cost of the museum is about 20 million riyals. For survey and excavations in the Najrān and Ḥimā areas an annual budget of 1 million riyals has been allotted.

The cost of the remaining site protection works currently proceeding will be 3 million riyals, and an allowance of up to 4 million riyals has been made for the buffer zone markers and signage of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān. Finally there is an annual budget for general expenses of 80,000 riyals related to the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.



*Najran is well-known for its traditional Handicrafts industry that can enhance visitor experience*



*H.R.H Governor of Najran is always supportive of the nomination process*

These details show that the levels of financial support for the project are more than adequate and would be considered quite generous in most countries. HRH King Salmān ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl Sa‘ūd and HRH Jalawi bin Abdulaziz bin Musaid, Governor of Najrān Region, are keenly interested in preserving and highlighting the cultural heritage of the country and region. The government provides a substantial financial budget for the development and safeguarding of Saudi rock art sites as the common heritage of humanity.

This strong support also extends to the Mayor of Najrān, Faris Mahjia, and the Administrator of Ḥimā, Abdullah Mubarek Al-Dowsary. The local people appreciate the importance of the cultural heritage and the value of the sites. The Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, headed by HE Ahmad Al-Khateeb, is the motivating center for tourism and antiquities that works in close partnership with various stakeholders to achieve the vision and mission of tourism in the Kingdom through the creation of sustainable tourism development.

The Saudi Council of Ministers issued Resolution No. 9 on 12/1/1421H (16/04/2000) to establish the Supreme Commission for Tourism (SCT). The resolution came to emphasize tourism activity as one of the productive sectors in catering to Saudi tourists within the country while at the same time increasing opportunities for investment, development of human resources, and expansion and creation of new job opportunities for Saudi citizens. Subsequently, in view of the importance of the antiquities and museums, another resolution by the Council of Ministers, No. 78 dated 16/3/1429H (24/3/2008), was issued to integrate the Deputy Ministry of Education for Antiquities and Museums into the Supreme Commission for Tourism.

With this, the SCT became a body responsible for the implementation of their related tasks in addition to being responsible for tourism. According to the resolution, the name Supreme Commission for Tourism (SCT) was changed to Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (SCTH), with the confirmation that domestic and international tourism is a reality that requires the formation of a national authority responsible for its planning and development owing to the distinct components of tourism in the Kingdom.

#### *5.g Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques*

The staff of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage is very well trained and educated in restoration and conservation of antiquities. In some cases, wherever this is required, outside agencies are contracted to undertake technical assignments and the appropriate funds are provided by the State. Saudi archaeologists are educated and trained both inside the country and abroad, especially in European and American universities.

There are some joint archaeological projects with foreign institutions which also trained Saudi archaeologists on the sites in various aspects of archaeology and rock art research. The current Palaeo-deserts Project with British archaeologists and paleo environmentalists is an example of such collaboration, as is the cooperation with the International Federation of Rock Art Organizations in the case of the Ḥimā Property and several others. Another example of collaboration is the Saudi-French Archaeological and Epigraphic Mission in Najrān, which focuses on the rock inscriptions of the region.



*Figure 32. Iron Age horseriders and earlier petroglyphs, wādī al-Sammā’.*

Archaeology departments in many universities have trained many undergraduates and graduates now working as researchers and archaeologists in the Saudi Commission of Tourism and National Heritage. In these universities they have received training in all aspects of restoration, conservation and rock art studies.

#### *5.h Visitor Facilities and Infrastructure*

This section describes the inclusive facilities available in the vicinity of the Ḥimā Property for visitors and demonstrates that they are appropriate and compatible with the protection and management of the Property's Outstanding Universal Values. This includes the need for effective presentation of these values, as well as the needs of visitors and their safety. The following facilities and infrastructure are either currently available or will be provided in the near future.

The small village of Ḥimā is located about 80 km from the city of Najrān and is connected by paved roads. The transnational highway connecting Najrān to Riyadh passes Ḥimā about 11 km to the east. There is an airport at Najrān and taxis and rental cars are available.

Najrān is a modern city of just under 300,000 people, with many hotels at all levels of comfort, and with restaurants and shops. It is intended to develop Najrān as the gateway to the country's major rock art and rock inscription corpora. This will be accomplished by adding to the Najrān Provincial Tourism Plan of 2004 several new initiatives.

A new provincial museum with a section dedicated to the local rock art is at present being constructed in Najrān. In November 2018 this new museum will host a workshop of stakeholders to finalize the sharing of responsibilities concerning the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān by all stakeholder agencies. The University of Najrān is creating an archaeology department and an inter-disciplinary rock art research center is to be established as well.

This latter new facility will closely collaborate with the planned archaeology department at Najrān University and will establish links with international partner institutions. The upgrading of tourism facilities will also include new developments of the large archaeological area of the ancient city of Al-Ukhdoud (Figure 32). Located at Najrān, that city was sacked by the Ḥimyarites in c. 523 CE, an event recorded in rock inscriptions in the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān.

Najrān's role as a gateway to the immovable cultural heritage of the Kingdom will be further reinforced by the development of other archaeological sites in the town's vicinity.

A visitors center is being established in Ḥimā and has already been used in 2017 to accommodate researchers. It will comprise ticketing facilities, restrooms, first aid equipment, as well as search and rescue equipment. From there guards or guides will take the visitors to the gates of the nominated core zones, unlock the gates, and guide the visitors to the rock art panels, providing explanations and ensuring appropriate conduct of all visitors.

Further site facilities are still to be decided and established, including formed paths within core areas, especially at Najd Khayrān (wādī Saad 7), and possibly elevated ramps and viewing platforms at selected locations. It may also be decided to establish temporary shade structures as required.

#### *5.i Policies & Programs related to the Presentation and Promotion of the Property*

The World Heritage Convention requires that State parties adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural heritage a function in the life of the community. The most important effect of World Heritage listing is that it provides to the public a measure of relative importance of the generic cultural content of the Property in question. It is therefore imperative that programs of presenting and promoting the nominated estate be developed and implemented.

Obviously this can only occur after the Property has been inscribed on the World Heritage List, but it would be prudent to prepare for this event by planning a major promotion of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān, celebrating its role in Arab history through the media, the schools and public channels. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, such an exercise would perhaps be most effective if, in response to successful listing, senior members of the Royal Family were to visit the sites and commented appropriately on the importance of the nation's appreciation of its earliest origins, and to honor the genius of the rock artists and their masterworks and early inscriptions.



*Figure 32. Petroglyph on the remains of a city fortification of Ukhdoud, the ancient city at Najrān that was destroyed by the Ḥimyarites c. 523 CE and whose 20,000 inhabitants were burned alive.*



Such a climate of public appreciation of the value of ancient rock art would lead to a number of desirable effects, among them an understanding of the need to preserve this heritage; to protect and conserve it; to develop scientific methods of study and preservation; and to support the relevant legal, scientific, administrative and financial measures all this involves. Ultimately such policies would foster the establishment of relevant research centers, raising the status of the immovable cultural heritage throughout the Kingdom. The achievement of World Heritage listing can in this way have far-reaching positive consequences. To this end it is planned to develop an effective awareness-raising program for the public, the implementation of which would coincide with the public announcements concerning listing.

**5.j Staffing Levels and Expertise**

The skills required for the good management of rock art properties relate to their presentation to visitors, to the management of these visitors, and to issues concerning the rock art's conservation. It is the latter aspect that involves the greatest need for technical expertise. Over recent decades, rock art conservation has been developed into a sophisticated discipline that is engaged in arresting or alleviating a range of natural deterioration factors, such as hydrology, physical weathering, biological weathering factors as well as anthropogenic effects (Bednarik 2007: 85-114).

The scientific and technical skills involved in rock art conservation will need to be made available to the site managers on the ground. This is realistically possible and the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage is committed to establishing a domestic technical knowledge and skill base of modern rock art conservation and management practices, to ultimately manage not only the properties nominated here, but the vast rock art heritage of the Kingdom generally. The establishment of the Centre for Rock Art Research in Najrān will also promote educational potential relating to the region's rich rock art heritage.

The Centre will work in partnership with research missions and seek funding to facilitate PhD level studies at international partner institutions of rock art research. It will also introduce lectures or modules on rock art in archaeology departments in both Riyadh and Najrān universities, including input from international scholars.



*Figure 33. Inscriptions on the remains of a city fortification of Ukhdoud, the ancient city at Najrān that was destroyed by the Himyarites c. 523 CE and whose 20,000 inhabitants were burned alive.*



*Figure 34. Petroglyph on the remains of a city fortification of Ukhdoud, the ancient city at Najrān that was destroyed by the Himyarites c. 523 CE and whose 20,000 inhabitants were burned alive.*



*Figure 35. The complete story of Al-Ukhdoud as witnessed by a military personnel.*

PART SIX  
MONITORING

## 6. Monitoring

It is essential that a baseline be established for monitoring of cultural resource, the Outstanding Universal Values of the Ḥimā rock art and rock inscription sites, at the time of the Property's listing. This is proposed to be instituted on the basis of the following criteria.

### 6.a Key Indicators for Measuring State of Conservation

It is not practicable to individually monitor each of the tens of thousands of petroglyphs and inscriptions, therefore it will be essential to establish a representative number of monitoring stations across the six sites selected for public visitation. These need to be carefully selected, ensuring that all major rock art phases, rock types and represented morphological circumstances and weathering states are accounted for. The criteria to be taken into account include particularly the Outstanding Universal Values of the sites.

Monitoring is intimately connected with, and prelude to, conservation intervention when this might become necessary. Permanent monitoring stations will be selected on the following basis:

1. Individual petroglyphs of the Neolithic, Chalcolithic/Bronze, Iron Age and inscriptions, and historical images or Islamic inscriptions (i.e. of significantly different ages).
2. Where differences in sandstone faces are detectable, these need to be accounted for.
3. Monitoring stations need to include fully exposed and protected locations (under cover).
4. Fully, and partially patina and un-patina sampling sites will need to be included.
5. 'Controls' will be located away from decorated areas, and they will include areas of obviously active granular exfoliation.

A simple example of organizing the monitoring program given in the following table: Each monitoring station will measure from one to few square millimeters and will be identified photographically in a way that it can easily be found. Monitoring will be by binocular light microscopy and records in the form

of microphotographs will be taken by digital field microscope. Special attention will be given to deterioration or changes in mineral accretions, degree of inter-granular porosity and the removal of colloid silica. The retreat of the latter will be precisely quantified.

Another variable to be observed closely will be differences between sites immediately next to visitor tracks and sites not accessed by visitors. Monitoring studies need to be conducted at regular periodic intervals to be meaningful. In view of the rock art's relatively stable condition, as evidenced by the great antiquity of some of it, monitoring will be undertaken once every five years.

### 6.b Administrative Arrangements for Monitoring Property

Monitoring of Property conditions is fundamental to designing informed conservation. For procedures to be meaningful, the records need to be kept safely over long periods of time. The Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage will be responsible for monitoring, storing data, designing and implementing conservation measures.

The responsible person, in the first instance, will be the Director of the SCTH Branch in Najrān, Saleh M. Al-Mereh, and can be contacted on:

mereahs@scth.gov.sa

Tel. 0175292564.

### 6.c Results of Previous Reporting Exercises

There has been no previous monitoring or reporting of the detailed conditions of the Ḥimā Property. Listing of the Property would provide much momentum for the introduction of such practices in Saudi Arabia because it would reinforce the need for developing such methods of formal scrutiny, and for producing condition reports generally in cultural heritage management.

Survey date .....	Attribution of petroglyph					
	Neolithic	Bronze Age	Iron Age	Historic	Control	Etc.
Weathered, protected						
Weathered, unprotected						
Unweathered, protected						
Unweathered, unprotected						
Etc.						



**PART SEVEN  
DOCUMENTATION**

## 7. Documentation

### *7.a Photographs & Audiovisual Image Inventory and Authorization Form*

See Table 3 below. Photographs have been provided in Annex 2.

### *7.b Texts Relating to Protective Designation, Copies of Property Management Plans or Documented Management Systems and Extracts of Other Plans Relevant to the Property*

Other than the Management Plan (Annex 1) and the List of Rock Art Sites (Annex 3) there are no texts being submitted with this application.

### *7.c Form and Date of Most Recent Records or Inventory of Property*

The petroglyphs and rock inscriptions of the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān are being intensively investigated and many of the cultural sites are registered and documented. A digital record of these sites is available on the websites of the National Museum and SCTH. Also, the hard copies of all records of registered sites and petroglyphs are safely stored in the Survey and Excavation Centre, with original digital photographs, maps and charts, etc. available for researchers and students. The most recent inventory of the Property's rock art and inscription sites is provided in Annex 3.

Id. No.	Format	Captions	Date of photos	Photographer	Copy-right owner	Contact details of copyright owner	Non-exclusive cession of rights
HCP 1-30	Prints	As per Annex 2	1987 to 2017	Dr Majeed Khan	SCTH	P.O. Box 66680, Riyadh 11586, Saudi Arabia - Tel.: 011/8808622 - 011/8808855, Fax: 011/8808625 e-mail: info@scth.gov.sa	Yes for all images

*Table 3. Photographs inventory and authorization form.*

### **7.d Address where inventory, records and archives are held**

Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage  
Riyadh, King Abdul-Aziz Historic Center  
Tel: 011 880 8622 - 011 880 8855  
Fax: 011/8808625  
P.O. Box 66680  
Riyadh 11586  
E-mail: info@scth.gov.sa

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**PART EIGHT  
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If the Cultural Rock Arts in Ḥimā Najrān is  
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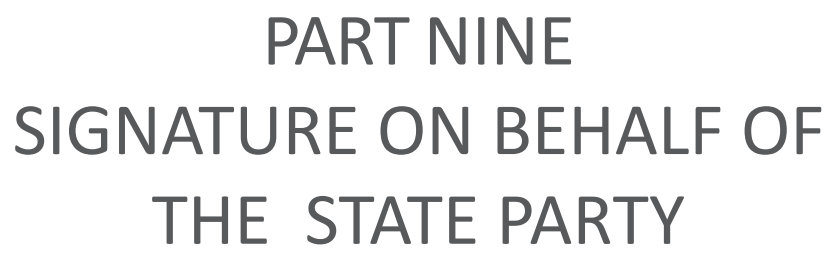
Municipality of Najrān  
Faris al-Mahaya  
Mayor of Najrān  
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### **8.g Official web address**

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PART NINE  
SIGNATURE ON BEHALF OF  
THE STATE PARTY

## 9. Signature on Behalf of the State Party

Introduction by H.E. Chair of SCTH Board of Directors

Over the past millennia great civilizations have left their imprint on this distinctive land that characterizes the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

As empires rose and fell, the Arabia Peninsula remained a crossroads for those who braved the harsh climate and arid terrain, linking various cultures through its trade routes.

Through the spread of Islam, these routes were expanded to disseminate science, philosophy and commerce throughout the world.

In recognition of its outstanding role in shaping the ancient world and its contribution to the interchange of human values, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage is proud to nominate the Cultural Rock Arts of Himā Najrān, with the hope that this significant site will be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Thereby, SCTH in its endeavor to realize its commitment and its duty towards the Kingdom's cultural heritage will see the site protected according to international guidelines and its legacy preserved as a treasure for future generations.

.....  
H.E. Ahmed A. Al-Khateeb  
Chair of the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage Board of  
Directors

ANNEX 1: Management plan for the *Cultural Rock Arts in Himā Najrān*, Saudi Arabia.

ANNEX 2: Photographs of rock art and archaeological sites in the *Cultural Rock Arts in Himā Najrān*, Saudi Arabia.

ANNEX 3: List of rock art and rock inscription sites in the *Cultural Rock Arts in Himā Najrān* and nearby.

