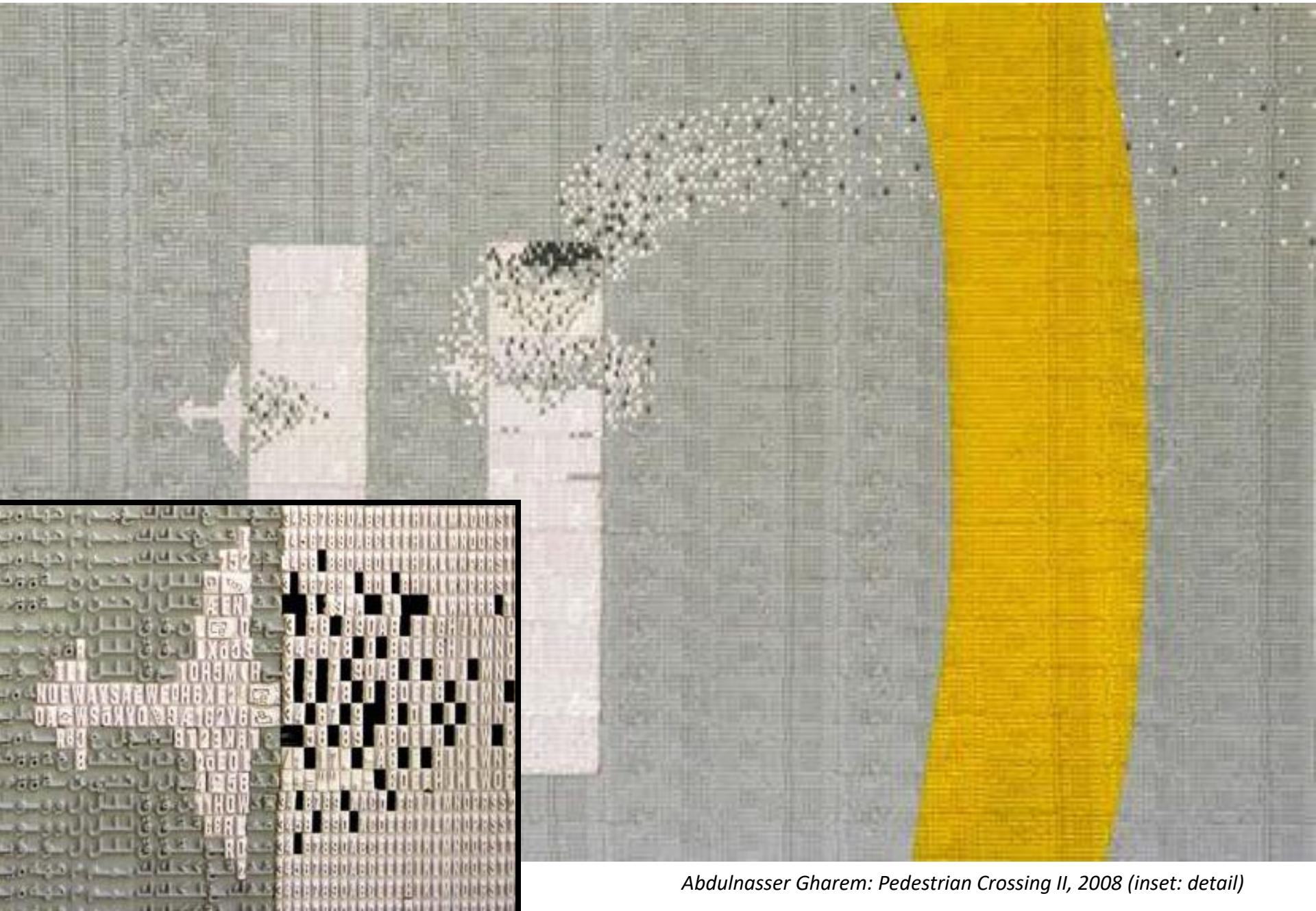




Seminar 4: the a-historical development of the Arabian Peninsula

1. Unassimilated ancient history
2. Fabricated current identity
3. Artists' perspectives on contemporary identity issues

9/11/2001: Wake-up call. Muslims worldwide and Arab world in particular under attack



Abdunnasser Gharem: Pedestrian Crossing II, 2008 (inset: detail)





* Damascus

Iran / Persia

* Baghdad

* Kufa

* Basra

* Jerusalem / Al Quds

* Petra

Nabataeans

* Failaka

Dilmun

BAHRAIN

HORMUZ

Al Hasa *

* Cairo

Egypt

* Meda'in Saleh

Ad Diriyah / Riyadh *

MAGAN

* Muscat

OMAN

* Yathrib / Medina

HEJAZ

Jeddah *

* Makkah

* El Faw

ASIR

DHOFAR

* Najran / Al Ukhdood

SABA

HADHRAMAUT

* Ma'rib

Arabia Felix

Jibla *

YEMEN

AXUM

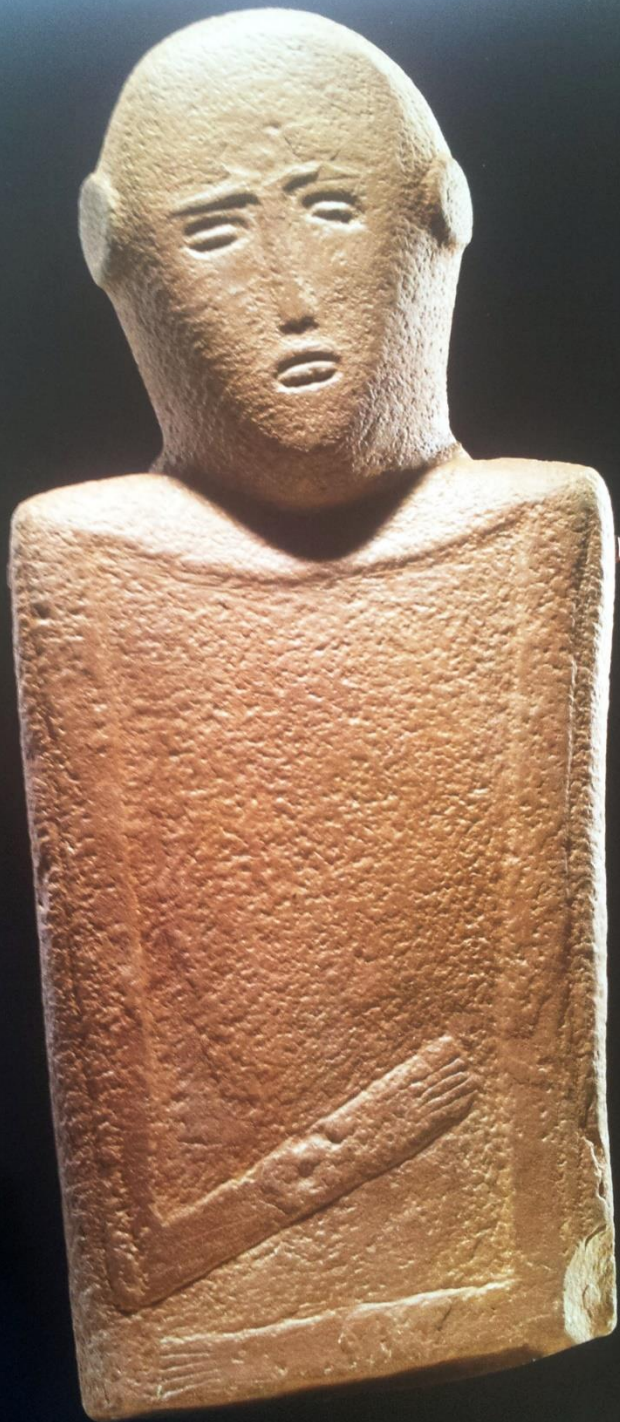
Mochha *

* Aden

Ethiopia

Geoglyphs discovered in aerial surveys of the Saudi Arabian desert





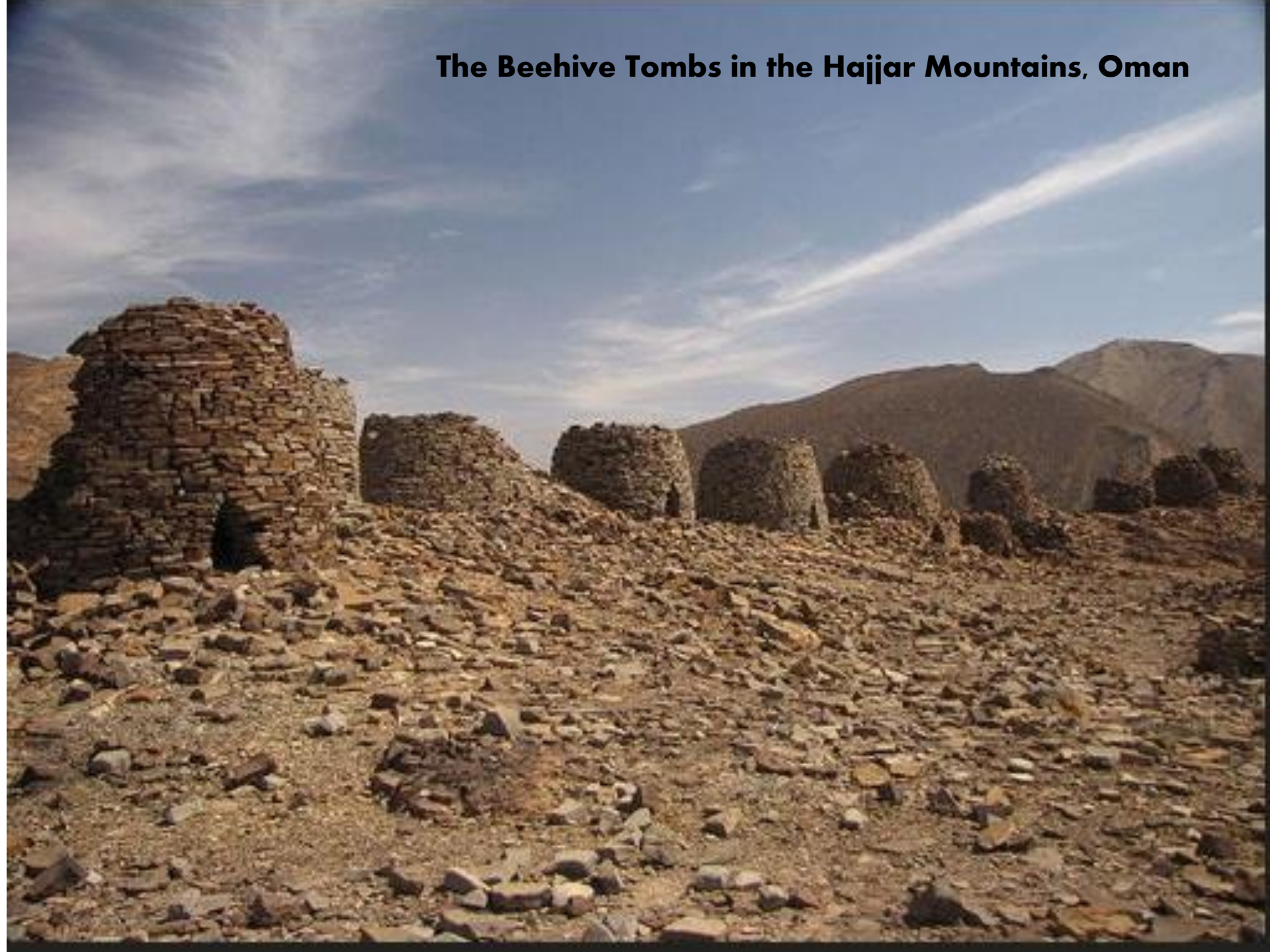
**Grave markers,
Tayma, Northern
Saudi Arabian
Desert, 4000 to 3000
BC**



Stone Age Burial sites, Jebel Buhais, Sharjah Emirate



The Beehive Tombs in the Hajjar Mountains, Oman





**Irrigation channels, Al
Thuqaybah, Sharjah Emirate
(UAE) 2nd – 1st millenium BC**



Petroglyphs, North and South Arabian desert

Ruins of the Palace of Saba, Ma'rib, Yemen, 8th – 2nd C BC





**Funerary Stele for
Ghalilat, Yemen, 7th C BC**



**Votive Statues,
Yemen,
4th - 3rd C BC**

Town of Saar, Bahrain, 2300-1900 BC



Seals, Bahrain, Dilmun period (3rd – 2nd millennium BC)



Stele commemorating the victory of Tiglath-Pileser III over 'Queen Shamsi of the Arabs'; Babylon, 7th C BC



Hellenic art found on the island of Failaka, Kuwait





Lihyanite statues, 7th - 4th c BC



Monumental Rock Architecture from the Nabataean era, Meda'in Saleh, Saudi Arabia



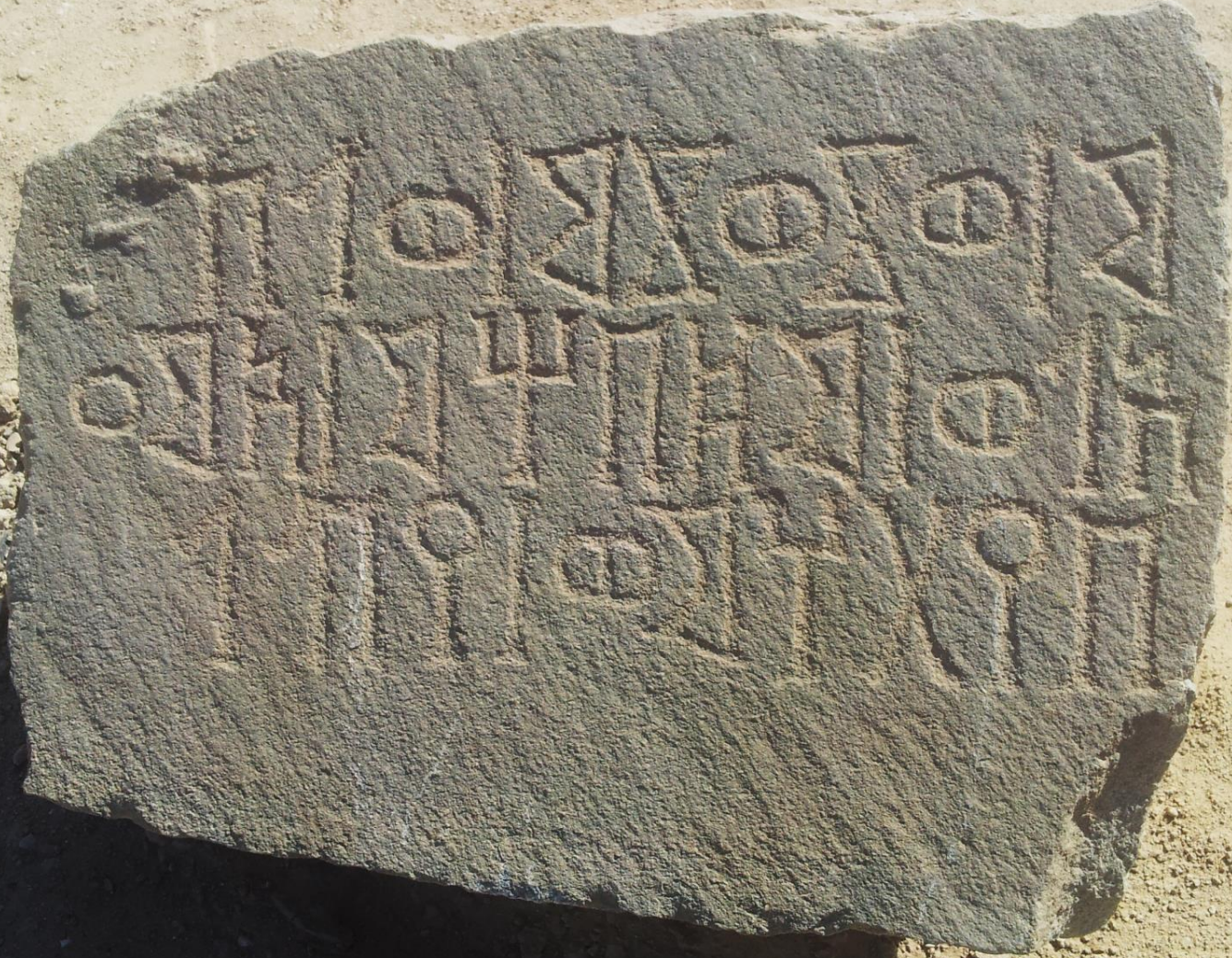
**Nabataean God
Stone, Petra,
approx. 1st C AD**



South Arabian (above) and North Arabian (below) scripts – precursors of Arabic

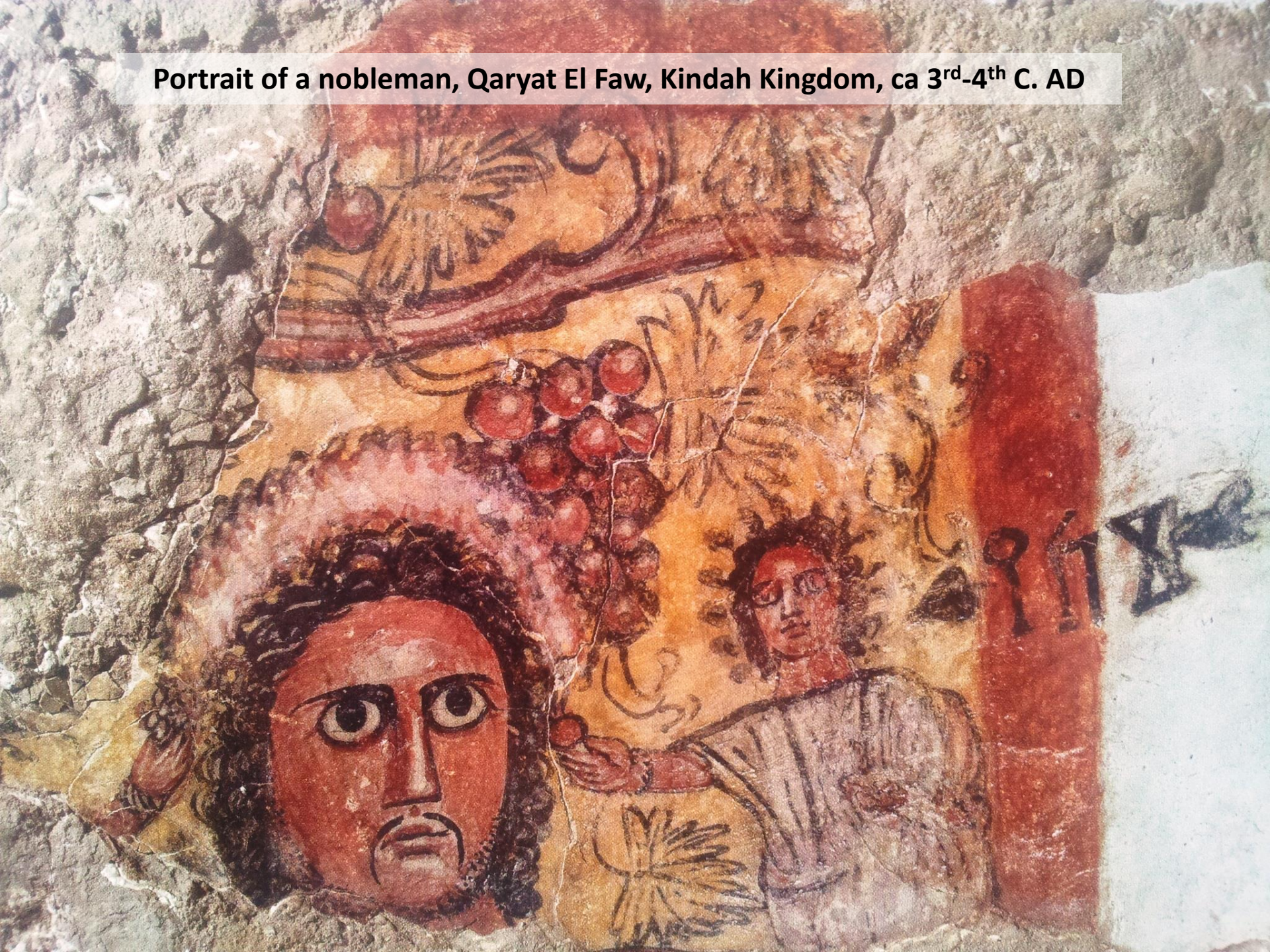


The site of Al Ukhdoon (Najran) burnt circa 525 AD



**Inscription, Najran,
South Saudi Arabia**

Portrait of a nobleman, Qaryat El Faw, Kindah Kingdom, ca 3rd-4th C. AD





Characteristics of pre-Islamic Arabia

- Culturally and artistically rich
- Advanced technically and economically
- Cultural diversity
- Various social systems incl matriarchy
- Polytheistic, but also secular-looking art (with emphasis on mundane representations)
- Cyclic nature of civilization: rise and fall
- Regional integration: importance of trade

National Museum of Riyadh



**Thaj collection (from Al Hasa,
Eastern Saudi Arabia), 1st mill BC**



**Temple from El Faw, (3rd C AD)
reconstructed in National Museum of
Riyadh**

Ridda Wars (first years after the death of the prophet)



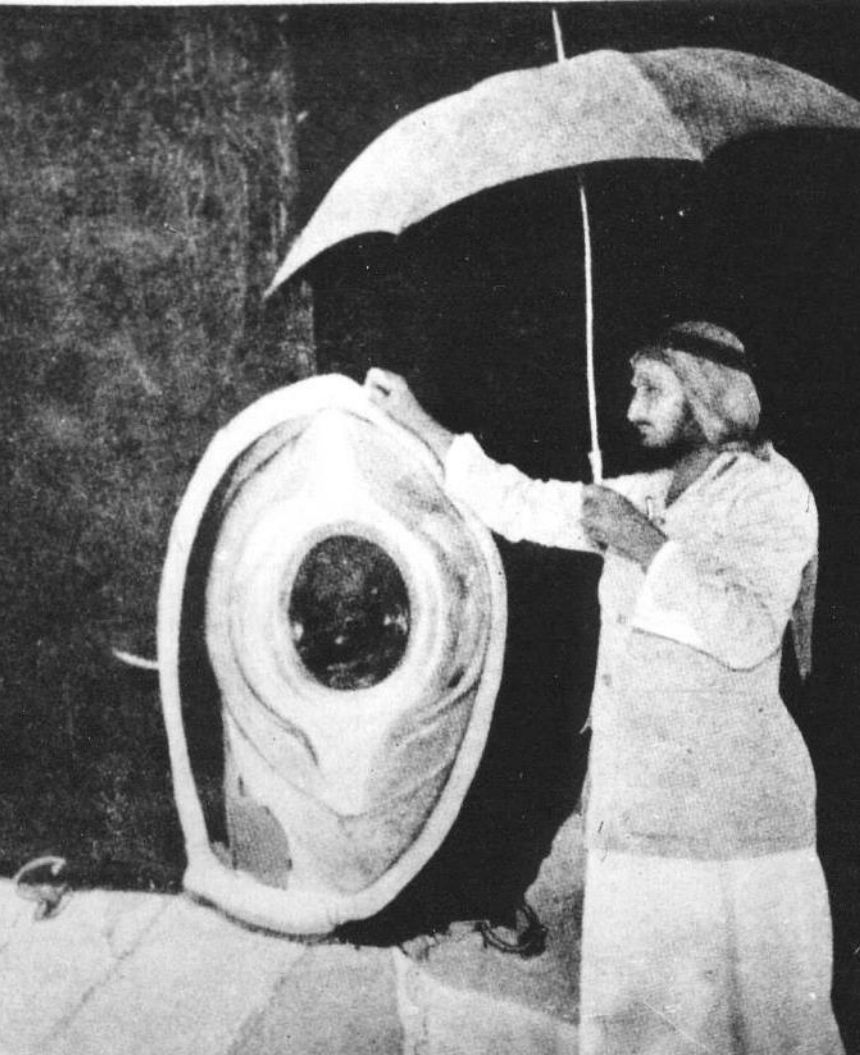
Tombs of the 10,000 apostates, Dibba (UAE)

Christian Monastery on Sir Bani Yas Island, Abu Dhabi – 7th C AD





**Ancient dam
at Khaybar
(a Jewish
oasis 150 km
North of
Medina)
destroyed ca
7th-8th C AD**



The **Qarmatians** (Shia Isma'ili) built a utopian republic on the shores of the Gulf around Al Hasa, 10th-11th C AD. They stole the Black Stone from the Ka'aba and sold it back for a ransom.



CÔTE

DE

PERSE

Gomgun

ILE D'ORMUS ou de JERUN

RADE

Forteresse

Parade

Allomus

Lavilimani

N.D. de la Yona

Lucia

Palais de Roi

Porte de Stevrene

Palais des Ferveux

Ile de Kishan ou Querman

dou ORMUS
l'île sans eau



البيضة | بقول لم يرفع الحمل
 الشريف

رخصة من ديوان الدائرة البلدية بمصر لسنة
 ١٩١٤م بقول مخصص لخدمة المحمل
 الشريف المسمى بقمره مدموغة على حوافرها
 الامامية ومدموغ على رقبته بدمغة مطوية
 الطرق بهذا الشكل (٥) ليس بدون مانع
 على مراكز الدخوليه وشوارع المحروسه
 والسفر للاقطار العجازه

اسبق



Al Sabah (1718)



Al Khalifa (1783)



Al Thani (1825)



Al Nayhan (1761)



Al Maktoum (1833)



Al Qasimi (18th C)



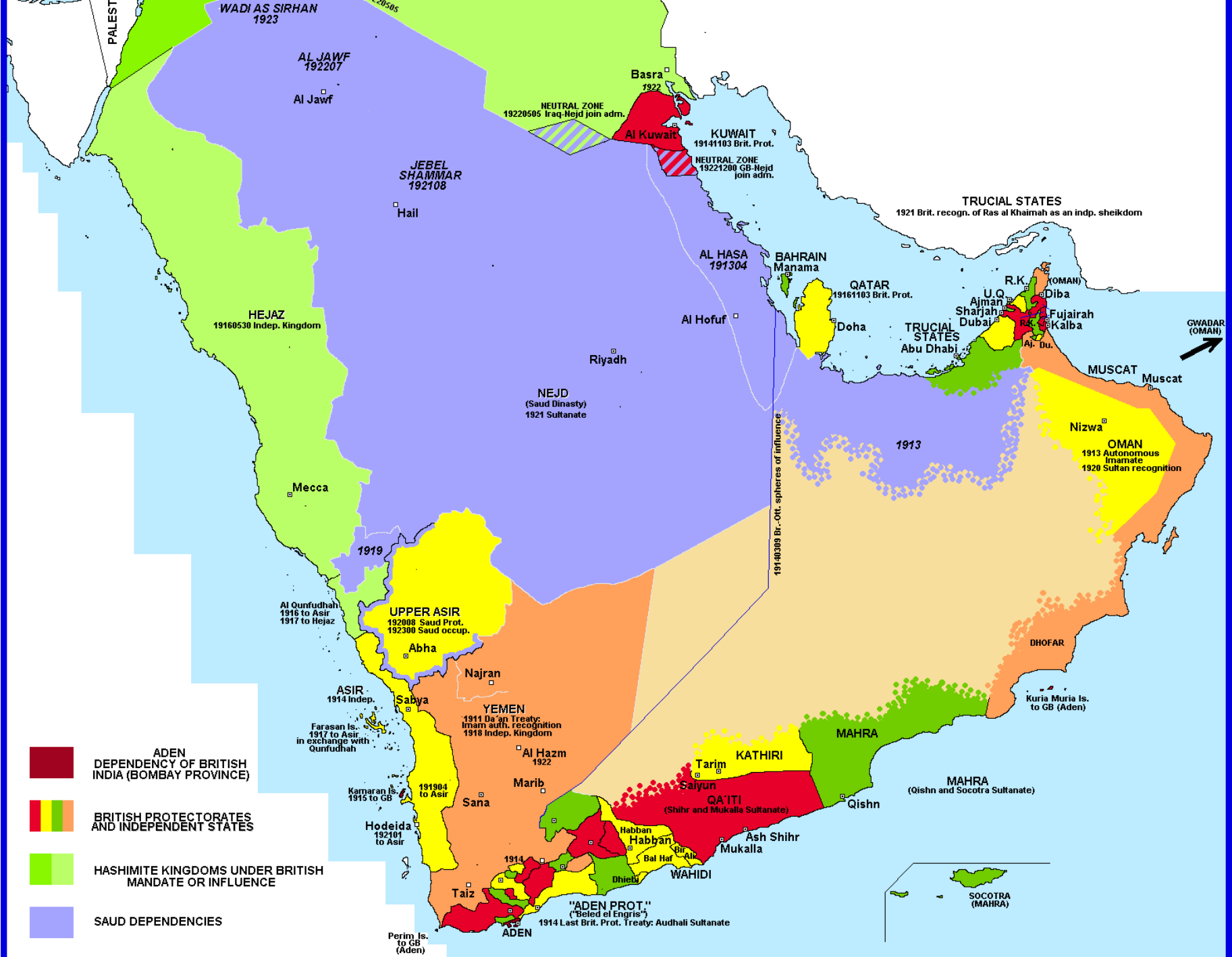
Al Saud (1744)



Oman Al Said (1749)

Part 2: Establishing the Current Historical Reality of the Gulf

Rulers of the Gulf and starting date of dynastic rule



- ADEN
DEPENDENCY OF BRITISH
INDIA (BOMBAY PROVINCE)
- BRITISH PROTECTORATES
AND INDEPENDENT STATES
- HASHIMITE KINGDOMS UNDER BRITISH
MANDATE OR INFLUENCE
- SAUD DEPENDENCIES

The Hejaz Railway: vector of Tanzimat and Nahda? Line completed (to Medina) in 1912





Flag of the Kingdom of the Hijaz 1917-1925

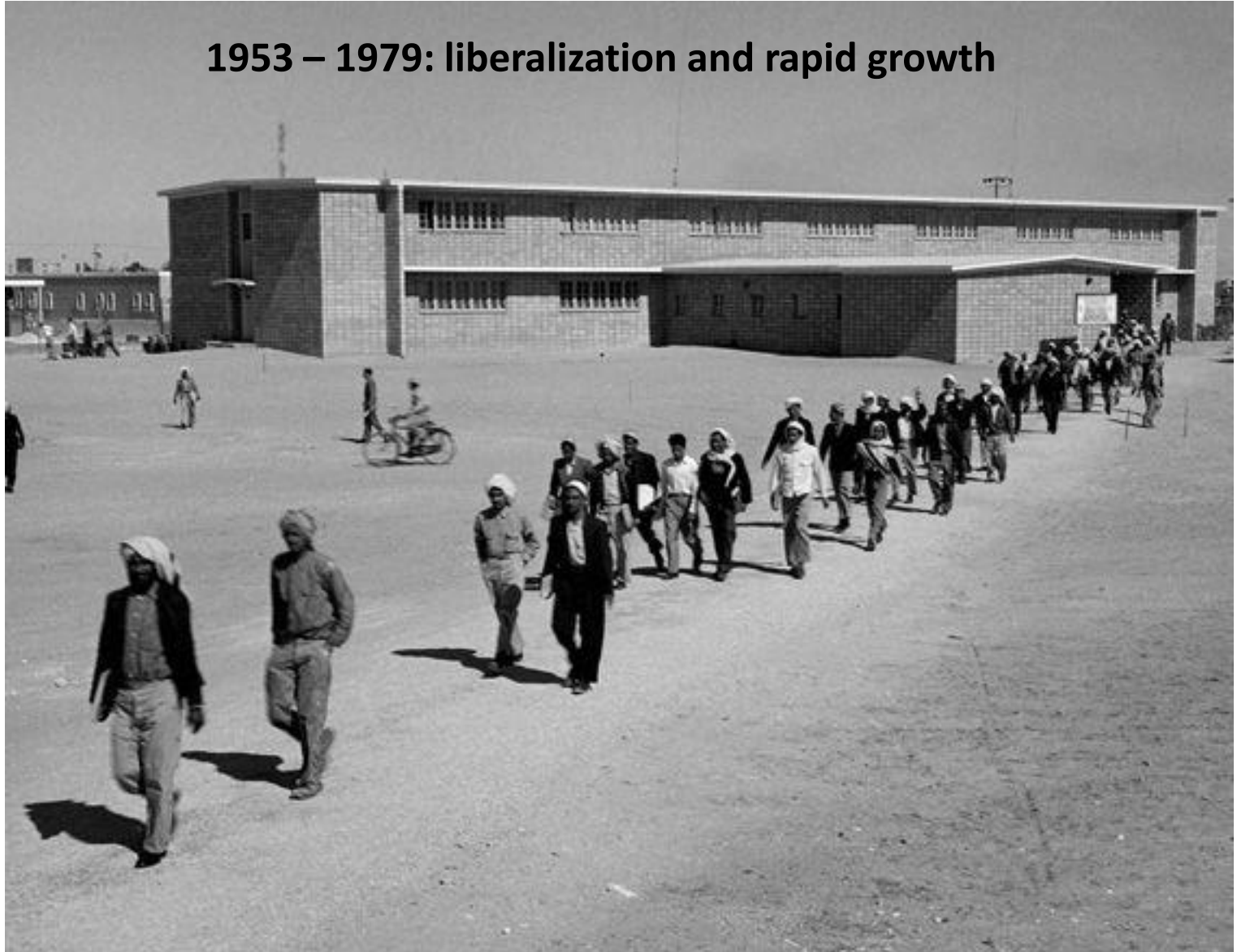




1934



1953 – 1979: liberalization and rapid growth



1955

Jeddah, 'City of Art' (1970s beautification)



Post 1973 OPEC price hike:
sudden affluence...



... but also 'Sahwa'

The capture of the Haram El Sharif in Mecca, 1979, by Juhayman al Otaibi and his followers



1979: Three Events impact Saudi Arabia and cause a change in policy:

1. The Iranian revolution proves that an Islamic revolution can succeed. This does not only put pressure on the official policy towards Saudi Shias (who have restricted rights and are discriminated against in many ways: the discrimination and repression will increase) but also on the relatively liberal course Saudi authorities had been following, against the wishes of the Saudi clergy. Balance royals-clergy is thus modified.
2. The occupation of the Sacred Mosque of Mecca shows that conservative anger among the population (the Sahwa) is a serious threat to Saudi dynastic rule
3. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan provides a path to Saudi authorities to channel popular anger towards the external field

As a result, the Saudi regime embarks on a Wahhabi policy

- abroad, pushing its religious creed with the intention to make it dominant among Sunni nations. Saudi Arabia will no longer be a safe haven for persecuted Muslim Brothers, and those staying in the country are forced to realign (or stay quiet) or go abroad. Gulf War shows however pragmatic nature of Saudi foreign policy.
- Internal, by turning back many of the liberalization policies, restricting the penetration of foreign culture and homogenizing the cultural and religious practices of the Saudi population. Difficult time for artists.

1995/2005 – 2015: Cautious Reforms

- From 1998 bombings to 9/11/2001 = Wake-up call, danger of becoming a pariah state.
- 2003: Petition ‘Vision for the Present and Future of our Nation’
- Establishment of National Dialogue, Human Rights Commission, freer media
- Establishment of KAUST, Princess Nora University and other institutes of higher education
- More participation of women in society: work, politics, sports, film...
- Weakening of religious-conservative grip on society. Example: the book market
- Establishment of SAGIA (2000) and economic cities – planning for post-oil era and employment drive – ‘Saudification’ of labor market (but not a success)
- Difficulty of fundamental change in the Saudi polity – liberals support current reforms but the Saud-Wahhabi pact remains a fundamental factor of legitimacy and identity



Renderings of co-ed KAUST (left) and Princess Nora University (right), which has an on-campus shuttle train

Part 3: Artistic Explorations of Saudi Identities



Ahmed Mater: Empty Land (2011)





Ahmed Mater, Artificial Light, 2012



*Manal Al Dowayan: Satellite
Hallucinations, 2008*

Maha Mullah, from the i-Shemagh series, 2010-11



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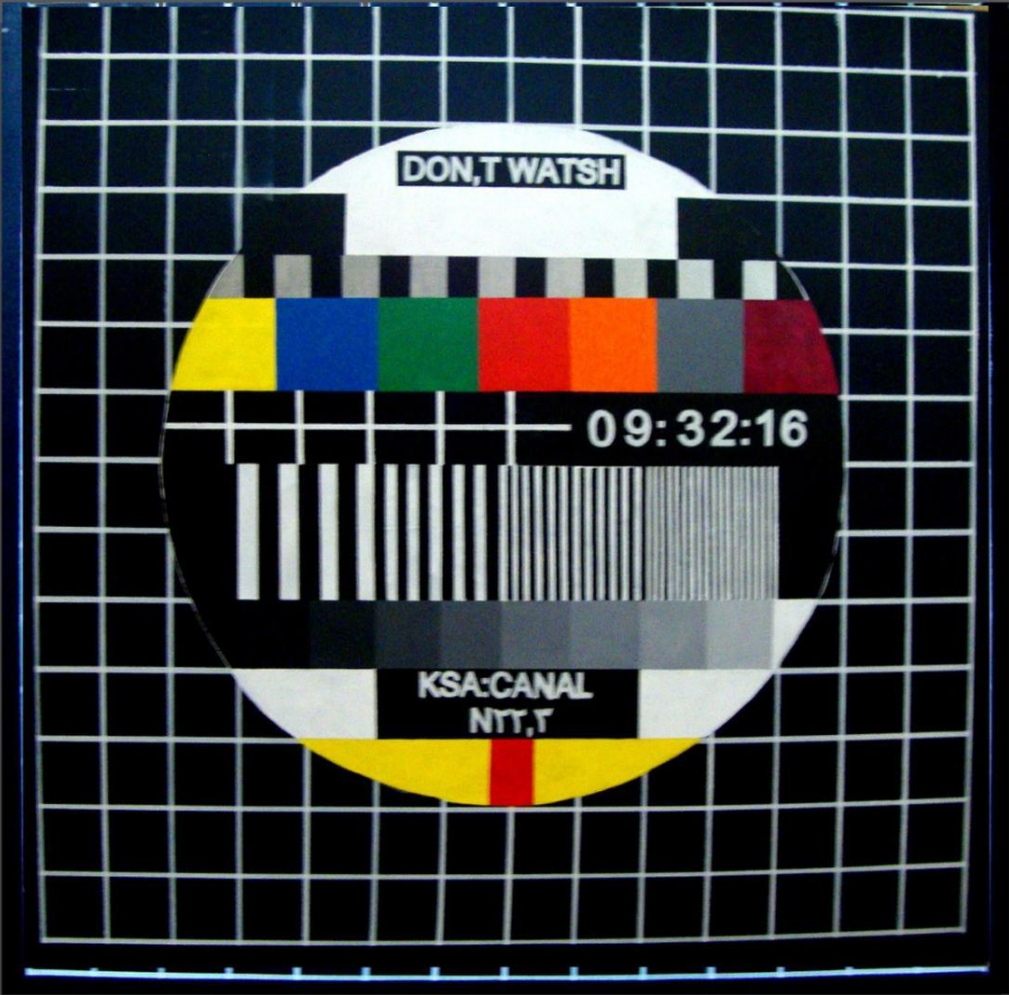


Small text block



90

60



290



Bassem Al Sharqi: Jeddah Barcode, 2010



The house Negro lived in the house next to his master.



He dressed good, he ate good, what the master left him.



If the master got sick, he'd say, "What's the matter? We sick?" "We sick" ! This is the thinking of the house Negro.



He loved his master. He loved his master better than the master loved himself.



If master said, "We got a nice house," you say, "Yeah, we got a nice house."



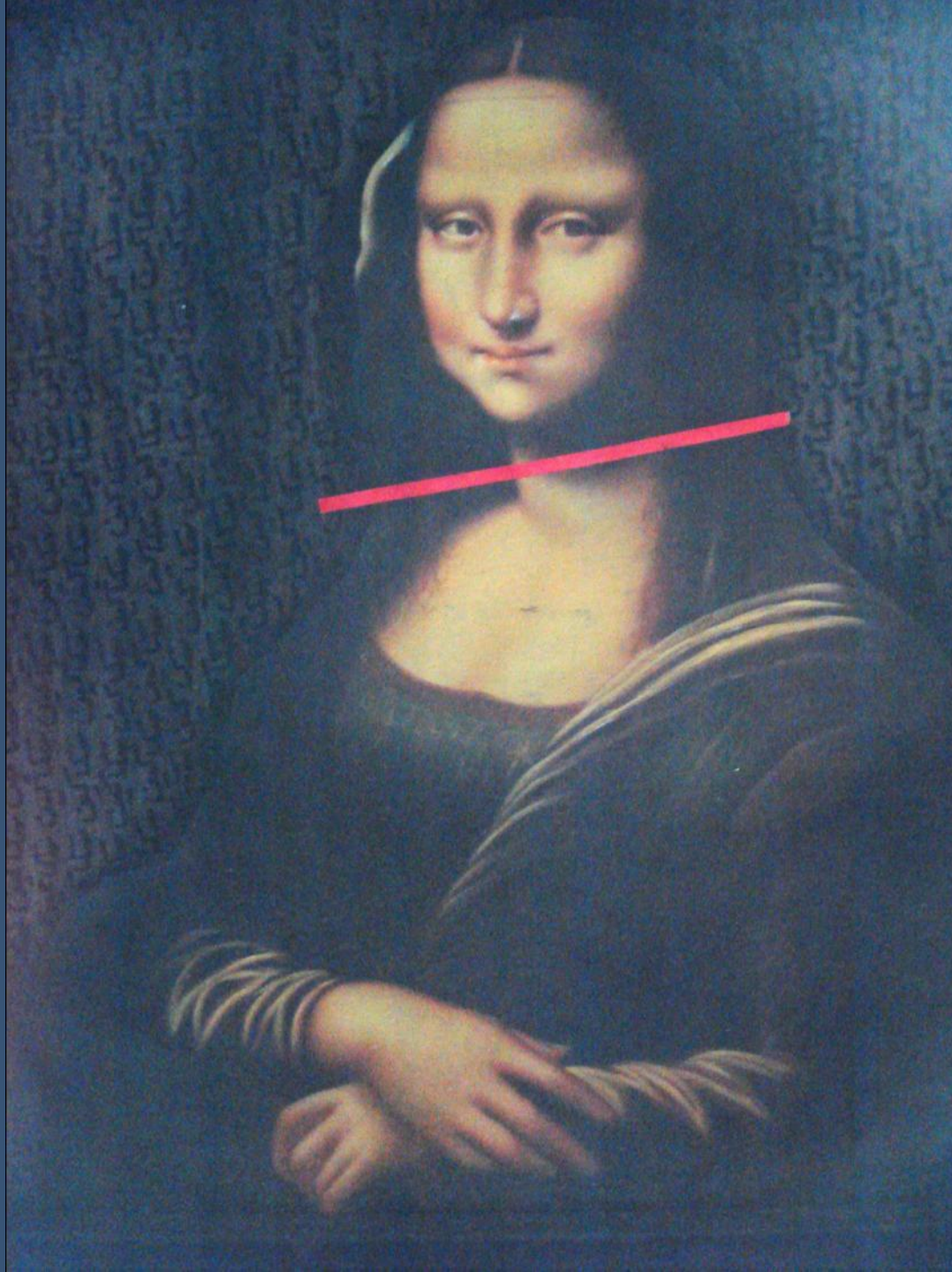
Master's house caught on fire, the house Negro would put the blaze out.



If another slave said: "Let's run away, let's separate from this cruel master"



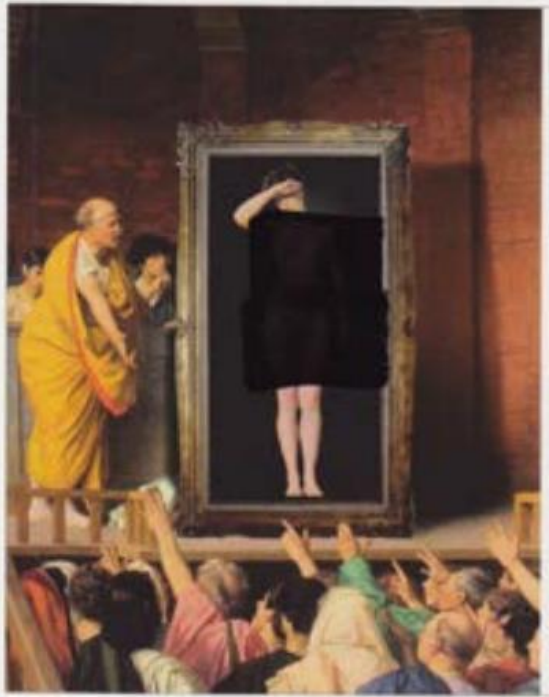
He said, "Why? What's better than what we got here?"



*Ayman Yossri Daydban:
Sakakeen, 2007*

Another example of an artist dealing with Gulf censorship:

Faycal Baghriche “Family Friendly” series, 2013



Richard Prince
flavour of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* art of Weimar
© Richard Prince 2013. All rights reserved.



Richard Prince
flavour of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* art of Weimar
© Richard Prince 2013. All rights reserved.



Ahmed Mater: Illuminations, 2007



Majed Althobaithi: Isolation Room, 2013



Sami Al Turki, Marhaba (from the Washaeg series), 2011



Hamza Serafi: World Carpet, 2011-12



Talal Al Zeid, Khaleeji Girl, 2011



Manal Al Dowayan: Vocations, 2009



Manal Al Dowayan: Suspended Together, sculptural installation, 2012



*Alaan Art Space, Riyadh, 2013.
With work by Sara Abu Abdallah (left) and 'Ismi' by Manal Al Dowayan (right)*



Sarah Abu Abdallah: Misfits, 2013

Artists from the Asir - Abha



Ibrahim Abumsmar: Family Portraits, 2008
– 2015?



Ibrahim Abumsmar: Qebalah Kite, 2013

Ashraf Fayadh, Saudi curator, poet and artist
of Palestinian origin

Issues Saudi artists work on:

- History of the country versus official historiography (the narrative)
- The sense and possibility of censorship in a global, interconnected world
- Social problems such as inequality, lack of opportunities for young people
- International issues such as the place of Saudi Arabia in the world
- Social polarization around the place and role of women
- Religious hypocrisy and rapid uniformization of Saudi society under Wahhabi guidelines – but this remains a very sensitive topic
- The absurdity of the art market in this context
- Critique on the royal family is a complete no-go area!

Why do Saudi artists remain in Saudi Arabia?



Abdulnasser Gharem: Have a Bit of Commitment, 2008