



## ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

# Umm Daraj: New Insights from a Major High Place of North Western Arabia.

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## Abstract

Despite significant progress in the understanding of the AlUla region thanks to major archaeological projects launched since 2018, the mountainous site of Umm Daraj, a major sanctuary and possibly the most important in the region, remains understudied. A brief investigation in 2015 revealed the importance of the site and that it appeared to be a religious complex, a high place linked to the town of Dadan located 2 km away. However, it is a key location in the valley, overlooking the oasis at a height of 220 meters, probably central to the Dadanite and Lihyanite kingdoms during the 1st millennium BC. The site, located in a remote and largely inaccessible area, poses significant logistical challenges for exploration.

This paper will present the initial results of a first archaeological evaluation consisting of a systematic pedestrian survey, conducted via climbing with ropes, from the bottom to the top of this mountain. The study adopted a holistic approach to documenting the archaeological features of the site — including buildings, rock-cut stairways, cisterns, inscriptions and petroglyphs — to assess their quantity, nature, and state of conservation.

By highlighting the site's incredible diversity and scientific potential, this study is intended to be a crucial first step in developing a multi-faceted excavation strategy and raising awareness of Umm Daraj's historical and religious significance.

## Keywords

Alula, Sanctuary, Dadan, Iron Age, Saudi Arabia

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