Searching for the Jordanian Nation: Archaeology and the Fluidity of Nationalism

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Abstract:

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Abstract:

In Jordan’s national history, the country has struggled to create a coherent nationalism and national identity for its people in the face of the ever-changing political, economic and social circumstances of the twentieth century. Jordan's Hashemite monarchs, namely King Abdullah I and King Hussein I, worked to create different national identities for Jordan during the different periods in its history - the Mandatory Period, the Independence Period and the Modern Period – that conformed to the changing needs of their country and, they created these national identities, in part, by using archaeology – respectively, a Holy-Sacred national identity using Biblical and Christian archaeological sites, an Arab-Islamic national identity, using Arab and Islamic archaeological sites, and an Organic Jordanian national identity, using native Jordanian archaeological sites. Archaeology was used as a tool and agent by the Hashemites to uncover Jordan’s diverse historical and cultural heritages in the land in order to create national identities through a visible, shared connection between present Jordanians and the archaeologically
unearthed histories, peoples and cultures of Jordan’s past. The Hashemites then used these national identities in each historical period to unify the people of Jordan, to generate a loyalty to the nation and to legitimize Hashemite rule over Jordan. While archaeology had varying degrees of success in creating these national identities and the national identities had varying degrees of success in providing unification, loyalty and legitimacy, these national identities proved to be a crucial element in Jordan’s survival as they provided less of a loyalty to the state and more of a loyalty to the Kings themselves. The national identities proved to be extensions of the personal identities that the Hashemite kings assumed and espoused and, by assuming these identities and fostering them for their people, the Hashemites created a loyalty to, unification under, and legitimacy for themselves. Ultimately, by having loyalty, unification and legitimacy created by the king and towards the king, the king became the constant in Jordanian nationalism and the stability of his figure in Jordan has enabled the country to survive.
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Introduction:

Many scholars and observers have been consistently confounded by the stability, and even the continued existence, of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. While the destruction of the perceived artificial nation, whose borders were drawn arbitrarily and whose transplanted leaders were put in place by a foreign British power in order to fulfill a promise, has been predicted time and again, Jordan has endured and remained one of the most stable states in the Middle East. Ironically, the internal political astuteness, acumen and courage of Jordan’s transplanted monarchs have been central factors in the nation’s survival, endurance and national unity.¹

In the modern age, nationalism has been considered an essential factor in the stability of the nation-state, however, the case of Jordanian nationalism is often described as fuzzy, incoherent and unconventional in comparison with other cases of nationalism in the Middle East and around the world. Jordan’s task of trying to create nationalism and a national identity that reconciled the country’s different tribal, monarchical, Arab, Islamic, ethnic, sacred and religious, civic, popular, and local elements that are all contained within its borders, while simultaneously handling British colonial intervention and legacy and foreign and external influences, demanded that the Jordanian national identity be flexible and fluid with the ability to change and re-inscribe itself in different ways. Jordan’s nationalism also needed to be able to endure the political discontinuities and ruptures experienced by the small, newly formed nation: This called for the ability of the Jordanian national identity to encompass many different political and social ideas,

some that co-existed and some that conflicted with one another and, to be multi-faceted, allowing the national identity to serve differing political purposes and create legitimacy for Jordan as a nation at different times in the country’s history.²

I. Thesis

Jordan’s national identity needed to conform and adapt to encompass all of the country’s differing elements, to embrace and include all of Jordan’s peoples and to fit the social, political and historical contexts of the time. The Jordanian government, run by the Hashemite Royal Family, used many different mechanisms and justifications to create and maintain a national identity for Jordan that would accomplish all of these tasks and, one of the most interesting components used in the creation of the Jordanian national identity was archaeology. During each of Jordan’s different historical-national eras, the Hashemites used archaeology as a tool and agent to uncover certain elements of Jordan’s cultural heritage in the land that served to help create and privilege a specific national identity for Jordan. The Jordanian national identity, created in part by archaeology, would change and conform in order to be able to unify Jordan’s people, politically and socially stabilize the country and maintain the Hashemite’s position and legitimacy as the leaders of Jordan with the advent of each different historical era in order to help the nation survive.

For this thesis, Jordan’s history is carved into three historical eras: Each era is separated from the previous one by major political and social shifts that occurred which caused the need for a different national identity to be created for Jordan. The Mandatory Period, when TransJordan was under the influence of the British Mandate, is dated between 1921 and 1946.

The Independence Period, when the British Mandate was lifted and Jordan worked to stabilize and maintain their independence, is dated between 1946 and 1970. The Modern Period, in which Jordan searched for its distinctiveness as its own country after the loss of war, land and people, is dated between 1970 and 1997.

With each one of these historical eras, there was a corresponding national identity that was created by the Hashemite Royal Family as a way to unify the Jordanian people, to stabilize the country in the face of the political and social issues and events of the historical era and to legitimize the Hashemite’s rule over Jordan and the Jordanian peoples. In turn, each one of these national identities has corresponding archaeology and archaeological excavations that helped to create and support them.

During the first historical era, the Mandatory Period, 1921-1946, the Hashemites tried to create a Holy-Sacred national identity for Jordan. The Hashemites sought to create this national identity by uncovering Jordan’s sacred cultural heritage through the excavation of Biblical and Christian archaeological sites in TransJordan, namely Jerash, Madaba and Mount Nebo, believing that this Holy- Sacred national identity would serve to make TransJordan an extension of the Holy Land, which would bring the country prestige and legitimacy, foster foreign tourism and pilgrimage, build Jordan’s economy, and help Jordan gain European approval.

During the second historical era, the Independence Period, 1946-1970, the Hashemites tried to create an Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan. The Hashemites sought to create this national identity by uncovering Jordan’s Arab and Islamic cultural heritage through the excavation of Jordan’s Arab and Islamic archaeological sites, namely, Ayla, the Umayyad desert castles and Jerusalem, believing that this Arab-Islamic national identity would help Jordan assert its independence and gain a position of power and leadership over the Arab and Muslim World
through religious prestige and a strong connection with the Muslim faith and the great Arab and Islamic civilizations of the past.

During the third historical era, the Modern Era, 1970-1997, the Hashemites tried to create an Organic Jordanian national identity for Jordan. The Hashemites sought to create this national identity by uncovering the country’s distinctively Jordanian cultural heritage through the excavation of archaeological sites in Jordan that were genuinely Jordanian, namely Petra and Wadi Rum, believing that this Organic Jordanian national identity would help Jordanians connect with their ancient and tribal heritage and indigenous roots which would provide them with historical and cultural ties to their native homeland of Jordan.

With each historical phase and created national identity, supported by its corresponding archaeology, the Hashemite Royal Family sought unification, stability and prosperity for Jordan as a country and for the Jordanian peoples and legitimacy of rule over Jordan for themselves. Each different historical era and national identity experienced success to varying degrees in accomplishing these long-term goals and the Hashemite’s short-term goals of each specific historical era. As well, the manipulation and use of archaeology in the creation of these national identities also had varying degrees of success in each phase.

II. Archaeology, Nationalism and Archaeology’s Role in Nationalism and National Identity in the Middle East and Jordan

As a science, archaeology began to be practiced formally in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and has evolved over time to employ a wide range of different procedures, including stratigraphy, carbon dating, surveying, excavating, analysis, geology and many others, in order to trace human history, evolution and culture. Archaeology involves the recovery and
analysis of the material culture and environmental data, including artifacts, architectures, eco-
facts and cultural landscapes, also known as the archaeological record, in order to study human
activity in the past and make an informed analysis of past human history and culture.³

The notion of nationalism is hard to define as it has taken on many different definitions
and meanings in order to encompass its fluctuating uses over time. Mainly, nationalism is “a
belief, creed or political ideology that involves an individual identifying with, or becoming
attached to one’s nation,” and includes the construction of a national identity, in which a person
defines themselves by a sense of belonging to a state or nation and a feeling they share with a
group of people - usually as a result of the presence of common elements in people’s daily lives
such as national symbols and colors, language, a shared national consciousness, history, and
culture, blood ties and popular culture, like music and cuisine.⁴

From this perspective, if archaeology is a tool that can trace the human history and
culture of the past through material remains and environmental data, it can be used to uncover
the ruins and artifacts within the boundaries of a nation and present that nation with a record of
its human history and cultural heritage from their land. This archaeologically uncovered cultural
and historical heritage can then be analyzed and used to construct a national history, culture and
consciousness for the nation, which are elements that are essential to the creation of a national
identity and provide a shared sense of belonging and attachment to a nation, and this in turn,
allows for an individual to identify with their nation, creating nationalism. This process is how
archaeology was used as a tool to create national identities and nationalism in Jordan.

By no means was Jordan that first nation in the Middle East to use archaeology to

³ P. G. Bahn P. G. and C, Renfrew, *Archaeology: Theories, Methods, and Practice* (London:
uncover a shared national history and cultural heritage that was used to create a national identity to foster nationalism. Egypt looked to archaeology to uncover the historical and cultural heritage of its land and, the creation of an Egyptian national identity was possible from the archaeological exposure of the ancient Egyptian civilization, which became identified as Egypt’s national history and culture. This connection is evidenced in Neil Silberman’s chapters on Egypt in his book “Between Past and Present: Archaeology, Ideology, and Nationalism in the Modern Middle East.” A similar study entitled “Heirs of the Hittites,” found in James Goode’s book, “Negotiating for the Past: Archaeology, Nationalism and Diplomacy in the Middle East, 1919-1941,” revealed that the nation of Turkey followed in Egypt’s footsteps by using archaeology to construct a shared history and culture and a Turkish national identity based on the uncovered historical and cultural heritage of the ancient Hittite civilization that inhabited their land thousands of years ago. In her book, “Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society,” Nadia Abu El-Hajj shows how Israel also used archaeology to uncover the historical and cultural heritage of the ancient Israelite civilization and constructed Israel’s national identity based on this shared history and culture with the past.

However, Jordan is unique. All of these other nations sought national identities through the single lens of their connection to a grand, ancient past, whereas Jordan, the nation whose creation was artificial, whose past as a single entity was not established like many of these other areas, and whose survival was ever in question, needed a national identity that was flexible enough to conform to the nation’s ever-changing needs, and has therefore had to construct different national identities based on these needs instead of being able to rely on one national identity that stems from an ancient past. Studies have been done that track archaeology’s role in the formation of a single national identity in Jordan and show how this identity rises and falls.
based on the different political and social circumstances from Jordan’s foundation to the present, such as Elena Corbett’s book, “Competitive Archaeology in Jordan: Narrating Identity from the Ottomans to the Hashemites,” which tracks archaeology’s role in the formation of Arab nationalism in Jordan throughout its history. As well, studies have been done that track different national identities in Jordan, but do not discuss archaeology’s role in the creation of these identities like Joseph Massad’s “Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan.” My study is unique in that it tracks how Jordan’s national identity changes based on its political, social and cultural needs at different times in Jordan’s history and, how archaeology played a role, and remained a constant tool in, the creation of these different national identities through time.

Figure 1.1 Map of Archaeological Places in Jordan
III. Sources, Terminology and Organization

The historical parameters of this study use great and well-known political and social events to create its periodical boundaries. This study is written from the perspective and voice of the Hashemite kings and government sand it should be noted that the voices of the Jordanian peoples, other key players of the Arab-Muslim world, and external political players are not taken into account and are beyond the scope of this study as a larger project would be needed to investigate these other perspectives and voices adequately and thoroughly.

The sources used for this study are historical and archaeological scholarship from a multitude of different types of writings, including books, scholarly articles from academic journals, memoirs, autobiographies and archaeological excavation reports, that were written about the subjects of Jordanian archaeology, Jordanian nationalism and national identities and the Hashemite Royal Family. While there are other possible sources that are not examined in this study, the texts that were used were selected based on their ability to represent the archaeology and excavations of the different periods, archaeology’s agency in uncovering cultural heritage and creating the national identities and, the Hashemite’s perspectives, goals and their use of archaeology to fit their nationalizing agendas, accomplish these goals and to legitimize their political rule in Jordan. All images used are in JPEG format. In this study, all of the archaeological scholarship and excavation reports that are used within each historical-national-archaeological era were specifically written within the dates of those time periods, demonstrating that the national identity of the historical era was supported and created by archaeological excavations that were occurring during that specific era (i.e. the excavation reports for the Arab-Islamic archaeology of Ayla, the Umayyad desert castles and Jerusalem date to between 1946-1970, showing that active archaeological action was being undertaken within
the era to create and support the Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan during the Independence Period). A more detailed discussion of the sources, scholarship and authors of each specific historical period is contained within each individual chapter.

All of the categorizations for this study, including the labeling of historical eras, national identities and archaeological phases, were all of my own construction and origination, but the labeling was influenced by how other historians and archaeologists referenced to certain time periods, discussed national identities and identified archaeology. Additionally, while I have constructed what appears to be clear-cut historical eras, categorizations, labels and identities for this study, allotting each of them a specific space within definitive dates, the lines are not necessarily as hard and fast as they appear. The dates, labels and categorizations I have constructed are based upon the dominant trends of the time period and the information that is put forward in the scholarship, but not everything fits precisely into the defined dates. For example, during the Independence Period, in which an Arab-Islamic national identity was pursued, not all archaeological investigations on Biblical and Christian sites that were happening during the Mandatory Period were suddenly dropped to pursue excavations of Arab-Islamic sites. Instead, those archaeological excavations on the Christian and Biblical sites were still ongoing, however, they were pushed into the background as the archaeological excavations of the Independence Period became clearly dominated by investigations of Arab and Islamic sites and cultural heritage more so than any other type of site or heritage in Jordan. Similarly, come 1970, Arab nationalism and an Arab-Islamic national identity did not simply disappear in favor of an Organic Jordanian national identity. The Modern Period still contained strands of an Arab-Islamic national identity in Jordan, however, the dominant form of nationalism and national identity in the country became the notion of a Local Jordanian identity. The historical,
archaeological and national identity categories cannot be strictly confined to definitive labels, 
dates and archaeology, they are subject to exceptions, extensions and overlaps, but on the whole, 
the labels I have given for my constructed historical eras, national identities and archaeological 
excavations reflect the prevailing trends of the time.
Chapter 1: The Mandatory Period in TransJordan, 1921-1946: Biblical and Christian Archaeology, the Sacred Character of TransJordan, and the Development of TransJordan through Tourism, Pilgrimage and International Relations

I. History

When World War I ended, the Ottoman Empire collapsed. Consequently, Arab subservience to Ottoman rule was replaced by a series of mandates in which the Allied powers that won the war, namely the imperial nations of Great Britain and France, carved the former empire into geographical territories, seizing control of the areas they prized most in order to satisfy their own ambitions and interests and ultimately to gain access to the region’s valuable oil resources. In the Skyes-Picot Agreement of 1916, the territory of TransJordan had been allocated to the British, and after the territory changed hands multiple times between 1915 and 1921, the Emirate of TransJordan was officially established as a British protectorate under the Mandate for Palestine in April of 1921.\(^5\) Under the Mandate for Palestine, the British had administrative and political control over the territory of TransJordan, maintained a military presence in the territory and controlled the kingdom’s foreign affairs and finances. Also, the Mandate considered TransJordan to be a separate entity from the actual territory of Palestine, and therefore there was “a recognition by His Majesty’s Government of an independent, monarchical government in TransJordan under His Highness Emir Abdullah Ibn Husain, subject to the

approval of the League of Nations. 

‘Abdullah Ibn Husain was a member of the Saudi Royal Hashemite family who effectively occupied the territory of TransJordan between November 1920 and March 1921 and, due to his occupation of the territory, the strength and power of the Hashemite family, and Britain’s need to fulfill certain promises made to the Arabs during World War I, Abdullah was placed on the throne as the first Emir of TransJordan who was tasked with the challenging duty of nation-building in TransJordan. 

During the Mandatory Period in TransJordan, new political and social constructs were brought from the West into the region and Emir Abdullah both grappled with and embraced these trends. The West “exported to the Orient their dominant political concept, the idea of nationalism, with its strident insistence upon the independent development of the self-conscious territorial group,” and during this period, King Abdullah I tried to embrace nationalism, seeking to create a national identity for the Transjordanian people that would produce a collective of citizens with a harmonized national consciousness who would feel loyalty towards their fellow citizens, their nation and their government. 

Abdullah I also had expansionist aspirations, seeking to create a unified Hashemite Arab Kingdom known as the “Greater Syria nation (nation being a Western concept), comprising the borders of what was then TransJordan, Syria, Lebanon, and the British Mandate for Palestine under a Hashemite dynasty,” and, in order to accomplish this goal, Abdullah I sought the initial steps of political autonomy and independence, both Western ideas, for TransJordan from the British.

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Interestingly, these Western ideas of nationalism, independence, and expansion conflicted with the idea of Mandatory rule. Mandatory rule allowed Britain to exploit TransJordan’s resources, politics, and geographical position in the region to serve their own interests and subjugate TransJordan to the political, economic and social control of Great Britain. Additionally, Abdullah I relied very heavily on the British military Legion to “ensure the pacification, stability and survival of the [TransJordanian] state under Hashemite rule.”\(^\text{10}\) Relying heavily on the British who exploited his country to help TransJordan survive served to undermine Emir Abdullah I’s power, strength, and influence which made it impossible for him gain independence or expand his territory as he needed power, influence and strength to achieve these goals. As well, the Mandate situation also made it particular challenging for Emir Abdullah I to create a shared national identity that encompassed all of TransJordanian society, instilled its citizens with loyalty to their nation and to his authority and kept him as the political head of TransJordan as his power and influence were undermined by foreign British rule and, “King Abdullah I did not find TransJordanian society, primarily tribal in structure, all that willing to submit to his authority.”\(^\text{11}\)

Facing these obstacles, Emir Abdullah I instead spent the Mandate period focusing on different, more short-term goals. Abdullah I writes in his memoirs that he sought to engage in cooperative statesmanship with the British, stating that “TransJordan is resolved to strengthen friendly relations and economic ties between the Governments of TransJordan, Great Britain and France,”\(^\text{12}\) expressing that a relationship with Great Britain may bring good fortune to Trans-Jordan: “I, [Abdullah], have seen many signs of British friendship from which I hope we shall

\(^\text{10}\) Deighton, “The Arab Middle East and the Modern World,” 513.


reap great benefit...it be God’s will, we shall soon attain the freedom and prosperity in our
country with the aid of the Great ally, [Britain].”\(^\text{13}\) Additionally, Abdullah I strove to gain the
loyalty and respect of the TransJordanian people in hopes of being able to create a shared
national identity for all of TransJordan’s peoples in time and voiced this notion and his
commitment to it when addressing the sheiks of TransJordan’s tribes in Amman. Abdullah I
stated that, “Your [the sheiks’] nationalism is a matter of great importance, for you are striving to
obtain your national rights...All I, [Abdullah], want from you is loyalty and obedience. Be
confident that all my life and wealth will be expended in the service of my country.”\(^\text{14}\) Lastly,
Abdullah I focused on building his, and TransJordan’s, political, social and economic standing
and power during the Mandate Period. He set forth a program in TransJordan by which “the
government resolved to further the country’s interests by a vigorous policy of economic
developments, especially in the areas of public security, finance, construction, taxation relief,
education and tourism, and the prosecution of every lawful means for the realization of a
constitutional government.”\(^\text{15}\) One way Emir Abdullah I and his Hashemite monarchy worked
towards accomplishing these goals was through the use of archaeology.

During this Mandate Period, Abdullah I promoted and supported the archaeological
excavations of Biblical and Christian sites in TransJordan as a means to portray TransJordan as a
nation that was a “custodian of Holy places” and “identify TransJordan before the international
community an extension of the Holy Land.”\(^\text{16}\) Luckily, the British Colonial Authority under the
Palestine Mandate had already begun excavating such sites for many years in hopes of finding a

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\(^{13}\) King Abdullah I, *Memoirs*, 206.
\(^{15}\) King Abdullah I, *Memoirs*, 220.
glimpse of the historicity of the Bible and Christian history in the landscape. Consequently, Emir Abdullah I adopted this existing archaeological trend, promoted and supported these Biblical and Christian archaeological excavations, and sought to use the archaeology of these sites as a cultural tool and an agent to uncover the Biblical and Christian cultural heritage in the land of TransJordan which would subsequently endow TransJordan with a visibly sacred character and identify the country as 'a Holy Land’ and Holy nation.17

While the bigger goal of creating a Holy-Sacred national identity for TransJordan through the country’s being an extension of the ‘Holy Land’ was not realized, Abdullah I’s support and promotion of these archaeological excavations did give TransJordan a sacred character and, this holy nature served to achieve some of his immediate goals. Biblical and Christian archaeological excavations in TransJordan during the Mandate Period fostered a large amount of foreign tourism and religious pilgrimage from Europeans and Christians into the country. This influx of tourists and pilgrims gave the new nation a seal of approval and an esteemed status from European powers as they viewed Biblical and Christian history as part of their heritage and, it boosted TransJordan's economy by providing a steady flow of money into the new nation that was essential in keeping the country running on a day to day basis. These circumstances helped Abdullah I to accomplish his short-term goals of strengthening the relations between TransJordan and the European powers, building his and his country’s political, social and economic power, gaining the loyalty and respect of the TransJordanian people while proving himself to be a successful ruler.18

18 King Abdullah I, Memoirs, 215.
II. *Archaeological Sites, Scholarship and Sources of the Mandate Period*

The historical scholarship on archaeology in TransJordan that was produced during the Mandate Period, 1921-1946, focused on the excavations of sacred Biblical and Christians sites, mainly on the sites of Jerash, Madaba and Mount Nebo. The archaeological scholarship on these sites appeared in academic journals such as the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, *The American Journal of Archaeology*, the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature* and *The Biblical Archaeologist* and was produced mostly by American and British archaeologists. Some of the major archaeologists and authors of this scholarship include William Foxwell Albright, an American archaeologist and biblical scholar, Nelson Glueck, an American archaeologist, biblical academic and rabbi, Clarence S. Fisher, an American archaeologist and academic of the Near East, C.C. McCown, a British biblical archaeologist, J. W. Crowfoot, a British, biblical archaeologist and academic, and B. Bagatti, an Italian priest and archaeologist. Most of the archaeologists that worked in Trans-Jordan during the Mandate Period belonged to the Christian or Jewish faiths. All of these archaeologists worked under the auspices of the American School for Oriental Research (ASOR), in collaboration with British archaeological organizations, such as the Palestine Exploration Fund (PEF) and the British School of Archaeology, and with Middle Eastern archaeological institutes, such as the Franciscan Biblical Institute in Jerusalem. Abdullah I and his Hashemite government verbally and visibly supported these organizations and their excavations of the Biblical and Christian sites in TransJordan.

III. *Jerash*

The archaeological scholarship produced during the British Mandate Period concentrated
heavily on a handful of Biblical and Christian archaeological sites in TransJordan, or Eastern Palestine as it was known at the time, and one of the most intensely studied and excavated sites of this period was Jerash/Gerasa. Jerash was a Greco-Roman city that flourished and prospered in this region during the second through the sixth centuries A.D. and was “the greatest and richest of the cities of the Decapolis, or League of Ten Cities, next to Damascus, in Early Christian times,” marking Jerash a center of Roman political power and culture. Additionally, with the earliest expansions of the Christian religion occurring within the territory of Palestine, especially in the rich and prosperous region east of the Jordan, Jerash was a city that fully witnessed the transition from paganism to Christianity during the Roman Empire and a site that is of “absolutely unique value for Early Christian archaeology,” as it exhibits this Pagan-Christian transition and the prosperity of early, sacred Christian culture and civilization in Palestine.

![Figure 1.2 Roman/Christian Ruins in Jerash](image-url)

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When the excavations of the remains of Jerash began during the Mandate Period, they were conducted under the auspices of Yale University, the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem and the British School of Archaeology during the 1920s and early 1930s, with the goal of the excavations focused on the Christian ruins of the site. W.F. Albright of the American School of Oriental Research, recorded in his 1933 excavation report, “Excavations during 1933 in Palestine, TransJordan and Syria,” that “the work [of the excavation involved] clearing and recording the most important monuments of Jerash...expecting that the principal monuments, the Christian churches, would be first.”

Similarly, when excavations commenced under the direction of J.W. Crowfoot, the director of the British School of Archaeology at the time, the preliminary excavation report by C.S. Fisher and C.C. McCown stated that the “immediate objective was the uncovering of the Christian churches of Jerash…[of which] thirteen churches [were discovered].”

Moreover, in the archaeological report, “The Yale Excavations at Gerasa,” it conferred that the main motivation of the excavation was to:

“throw open to the light of day the Christian remains of the city of Jerash where the new faith flourished and grew directly upon the Greco-Roman foundation from the New Testament times until the days of Origen and the TransJordanian Bishoprics; to uncover its ruined basilicas; to read its hundreds of inscriptions; and to depict from the half obliterated record the life of Christianity while still at death grips with the power of the [Roman] Empire.”

While the site of Jerash contained ruins from many different eras and had historical and cultural value to many different groups of people, it is clear that during the Mandatory Period in Trans-

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Jordan, the Christian ruins and cultural heritage was the principal focus of the archaeological excavations.

The archaeological excavations of Jerash revealed the remains of a spectacular Greco-Roman site. The excavation team cleared and began the restoration of the grand triumphal archway that served as the entrance to the city, a fantastically preserved oval forum, a Roman Hippodrome, many paved and colonnaded market streets, and fabulous Roman-style temples and theaters between 1925-1931. Besides these visual testaments to the power and prosperity of the Roman Empire, the excavations revealed many Christian sanctuaries, excavated extensively between 1928-1934, that are sacred ruins from the religion’s early centuries after Constantine established Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire in 313 A.D.

During these excavations, the archaeological reports detail that, “a large Christian community was discovered [in Jerash], [and] remains were found of more than thirteen churches, many with superb mosaic floors…[as well as remains of a] fourth century cathedral with a shrine of St. Mary, and a painted inscription to Mary and the archangels Michael and Gabriel." These thirteen churches were situated in such a way in the city so as to form a “whole complex of ecclesiastical buildings, which was laid bare by the Yale-British excavators.” This complex contained a “fountain court with processional stairs, the bishop’s seat, a fountain and pillared aisles,” and, the monument that attested to the fundamentally Christian identity of Jerash, the “Basilica of St. Theodore, built for the soldier martyr of Amasea in Pontus in 320 and also called

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‘the Martyrium.’\textsuperscript{29} The excavations of Jerash fully uncovered the Basilica of St. Theodore and detail the discovery, noting that “several of the small rooms surrounding the Atrium of the church have fine mosaic floors...all of the columns of the nave are lying as they fell, including the capitals, and all the fragments of the three western entrances exist, even the lintels.”\textsuperscript{30} With the uncovering of the ruins of the Basilica of St. Theodore, the excavators detailed a plan to reconstruct the entire basilica, restoring it to its former grandeur and explained that, “when finished, it [the Basilica of St. Theodore] would make one of the most complete and imposing Christian monuments in the East,”\textsuperscript{31} serving as a testament to Christianity’s roots and success in and triumph over the land of TransJordan in the ancient past.

While Jerash is viewed in the present-day as being archaeologically valuable to many different eras and civilizations, the city is a testament to the power and prestige of the Greco-Roman Empire and, its Christian ruins are physical embodiments of TransJordan’s sacred Christian cultural heritage and these monuments inscribed Trans-Jordan’s landscape with a holy and sacred character. The archaeological investigation, conservation, restoration and reconstruction that occurred during the Mandate Period on the Christian monuments revealed the site’s cultural value and allowed Jerash to be registered under law as a protected antiquities site in 1939. This event marked the site’s official legal protection and allowed big plans to be put underway to restore the site further and develop infrastructural elements to accommodate and promote increased tourism to, and cultural activities at, Jerash. Jerash’s sacred, Christian cultural heritage and intensive archaeological work made the site a significant draw for foreign tourists during the Mandate Period, making Jerash the “second most visited cultural tourist

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{29} B.W.B., “The Yale Excavations at Gerasa,” 7.  
\textsuperscript{31} Fisher, “The Campaign at Jerash in September and October 1931,” 143.}
attraction and heritage site in TransJordan,” and this tourism “brought large swathes of foreign money into TransJordan, helping the TransJordanian economy through a steady cash flow and the creation of jobs.”

IV. Madaba

Another site that was of great interest to archaeologists and scholars of the Mandatory Period in TransJordan was Madaba, also known as “the City of the Mosaics.” The city of Madaba, capital of the Madaba Governate in central TransJordan, is located along the Kings’ Highway and is one of the most memorable places in the Holy Land. While Madaba has a very long history stretching back to the Neolithic period, its Christian history and heritage, spanning from the second to the seventh centuries during the Roman and Byzantine Empires, was the focus of the excavations and scholarship during the Mandate Period. The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon, held in 451, “witnessed the first formally established and politically powerful Christian community in the city [of Madaba], with its own bishop, Gaiano, who signed [the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon] as the “Bishop of the Madabeni [Madaba].” These Acts of the Council of Chalcedon demonstrate Madaba’s roots within Christianity and it’s strong connection to Christian politics and the religion’s sacred culture and heritage.

At Madaba, the archaeological excavations occurred in the 1930s, starting with Nelson Glueck’s monumental survey of Eastern Palestine, done under the auspices of the American School of Oriental Research, and continuing under British and Italian archaeological expeditions guided by the British School of Archaeology and the Oriental Institute. The monumental archaeological remains that were discovered, and that were the focus of the excavations, derive

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mainly from the height of the Christian Byzantine era in Eastern Palestine/TransJordan, the fifth through the seventh centuries. Some of secular monumental ruins from the Roman Christian and Byzantine eras include the colonnaded Roman Road, the Hippolytus Mansion which is a “vestibule of the Church of the Virgin and was built above the hall of an early sixth century Madaba mansion” and the Burnt Palace, which was a “large residence hall that was abandoned after it was burnt down in the Byzantine era.”

The major Christian monumental ruins from this era include many Byzantine churches such as, “the Church of the Virgin Mary, identified through an inscription referring to the Virgin Mary and built on top of a sixth century Roman Temple,” and “the Church of the Holy Martyrs (Al-Khadir) which dates from the sixth century, [with] its basilica incorporating a number of columns, capitals and bases which were re-used from a previous Roman structure.” Other important Christian structures at Madaba are “the Church of the Prophet Elijah with its crypt, the Church of the Sunna family and the sixth century Church of Saint George, also known as the Church of the Map.”

While the monumental ruins of Madaba were of great importance, the most intriguing archaeological finds, which historical scholarship in this Mandatory Period is centered around, are the inscriptions and mosaics discovered within Madaba’s monumental churches and structures. In three of the churches, “invocations to St. Lot and St. Procopius have been

37 Bonfioli, “Syriac - Palestinian Mosaics in Connection with the Decorations of the Mosques at Jerusalem and Damascus,” 72.
discovered and to Saint George...[and] all three contain references to Bishop John [as well].”

These invocations to the Christian saints display the religiosity and faith of the Byzantine Christian community at Madaba. Moreover, mosaics were found in almost all of the buildings at Madaba. In the crypt of the Church of Saint Elijah “single panels of mosaics were found that portrayed animals and hunting scenes.” Other mosaic masterpieces found in the Church of the Virgin and the Hippolytus Mansion “depict a profusion of flowers and plants, birds and fish, animals and exotic beasts, as well as scenes from mythology and everyday pursuits of hunting, fishing and farming, all dating from between the fifth and seventh centuries.”

Of these mosaics that adorned the churches and buildings of Madaba, the most famous mosaic was found on the floor of the Greek Orthodox Basilica of Saint George. The mosaic, dating to the sixth century A.D., depicts a map of the city of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The impressive map is made of “two million pieces of colored stone” and is an index map of the region that shows the “hills and valleys, villages and towns in Palestine and the Nile Delta” and, it contains the earliest representation of Jerusalem in which “the cardo, or central colonnaded street, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are clearly visible.” The map is labeled with an inscription denoting it as the “Holy City,” referring to Jerusalem, and in later years scholars used it as a crucial piece of visual information to aid in the development of knowledge about the physical layout of Jerusalem after its destruction and rebuilding in 70 AD.

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39 Bonfioli, “Syriac - Palestinian Mosaics in Connection with the Decorations of the Mosques at Jerusalem and Damascus,” 71.
The city of Madaba is a testament to the power and strength of the Christian religion and community in TransJordan from Christianity’s inception to the present day. The site’s Christian ruins are visible, material expressions of TransJordan’s Christian cultural heritage and these churches and mosaics inscribed TransJordan’s landscape with a holy and sacred character. The archaeological investigations at Madaba that occurred during the Mandatory Period revealed the site’s cultural value and paved the way for “Madaba [to be] one of TransJordan’s most frequented sites by religious pilgrims.” Moreover, during the Mandatory Period, “the cartographic mosaic was restored and was set as a guiding point to lead new pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem,” like it was thought to have done during the Byzantine era. Madaba’s Christian cultural heritage and status as a pilgrimage site, coupled with the archaeological investigation, made the site a draw for foreign tourists, especially religious pilgrims, during the Mandatory Period. Like at Jerash, this tourism and pilgrimage brought foreign money into TransJordan and helped the TransJordanian economy increase its money supply, which was re-

Figure 1.3 Mosaic Map of Jerusalem at Madaba

invested back into the new nation, creating more infrastructure and employment opportunities related to tourism.”

V. Mount Nebo

A last significant place that got archaeological and scholarly attention during the Mandate Period is Mount Nebo, or Jebel Siyaghah, located in the ancient region of Moab, which was present day TransJordan. Most people believe that Mount Nebo is the location where “after forty years leading the Israelites through the desert, Moses first gazed upon the Promised Land,” and then instructed the Israelites to enter into it. The summit of Mount Nebo occupies a vantage point that provides a panoramic view of the Holy Land, the Jordan Valley and the fruitful, cultivated and productive hill country of Palestine. The towers of Jerusalem and Bethlehem can also be made out easily, connecting this biblical site to the ancient and sacred biblical sites of Bethlehem and Jerusalem.

Mount Nebo is also believed by many Christians, Jews and some Muslims to be the place where Moses died and was buried, making it one of the most revered holy and sacred sites in TransJordan and a place of pilgrimage for Christians, Jews and Muslims alike.

The excavations at Mount Nebo, or Jebel Siyaghah, began on the summit of the mountain and were undertaken by archaeologists S. J. Saller, American, and B. Bagatti, Italian, under the auspices of the Franciscan Biblical Institute in Jerusalem in the 1930s. During these excavations at Mount Nebo in the early 1930s, archaeologists concentrated their efforts on uncovering ruins from Biblical times, specifically focusing on findings related to the story and figure of Moses, and ruins from Christian times that would be of great importance to both Christian and Jewish heritage. The excavations revealed “the remains of a fourth century triple-apse Byzantine church with a relatively complex history [that was] part of a group of buildings [on the summit of Mount Nebo], which was expanded into a basilica in the fifth and sixth centuries.” This basilica had “a hall on the north and two chapels on the south that were all built in the sixth and early seventh centuries...as evidenced by an inscription in the baptistery dated to 597 A.D.,” and one of the chapels was “dedicated to the Virgin Mary and is dated by an inscription to the

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beginning of the seventh century.”

The Christian character of these sacred structures is emphasized by the “sculpted crosses carved on the gable and cornice, and by other stones with incised crosses and inscriptions,” and the “mosaic floors [of the churches] that featured geometric designs, glass and alabaster fragments, Greek inscriptions and sculpted crosses.”

Moreover, the site of Mount Nebo has a strong Biblical identity as being the place where Moses viewed the Promised Land before his death and, this idea is demonstrated in the excavations by the discovery of a dedication that displays that the aforementioned church on Mount Nebo was built by the Christians “to commemorate the end of Moses’ life in that place.” Additionally, Mount Nebo is thought to be the place where the tomb of Moses is located. Excavations uncovered “six tombs that were discovered hollowed from the rock beneath the mosaicked floor of the church,” but whether one of them is in fact the tomb of Moses is currently unfounded and highly disputed.

The archaeological site of Mount Nebo, with both the Biblical and Christian ruins, is the physical embodiment of TransJordan’s Biblical and religious cultural heritage and, these monuments inscribed TransJordan’s landscape with a holy and sacred character as “Moses not only viewed the Promised Land from across the Jordan, but stood and died in a blessed country.”

The archaeological investigations and excavations that occurred during the Mandatory Period on the Christian churches and remains of Moses’ journey and person,

uncovered Mount Nebo’s cultural and religious heritage and value and allowed Mount Nebo to be used as evidence by Biblical archaeologists to argue the historicity of the Bible and the truth of early events in the Jewish and Christian religions. This evidence proved to be a significant draw for foreign tourists and made “many Jews and Christians flock to Mount Nebo on pilgrimage to visit the churches and honor Moses.” The tourism and pilgrimage to Mount Nebo brought a large amount of foreign tourism and money into TransJordan, boosting the TransJordanian economy through cash flow and the creation of jobs and infrastructure.

VII. TransJordanian Support for Biblical and Christian Archaeology and Excavations During the Mandatory Period

While the British, and other European powers, were in charge of most of the archaeological excavations in TransJordan during the Mandatory Period, Abdullah I and the his Hashemite government in TransJordan both verbally and tangibly supported the archaeological excavations of these Biblical and Christian sites. Abdullah I sought to promote the connection this archaeology provided for TransJordan in giving it a sacred character, which subsequently brought political, social and economic benefit to the country and to Abdullah I himself.

During the Mandatory Period in TransJordan, the Hashemite government established systems that regulated, administrated and protected the archaeological process, excavations and cultural heritage. In 1923, Abdullah I established the Department of Antiquities in TransJordan. The establishment of a law for antiquities in TransJordan followed soon after that, in 1925. This

statute identifies the Department of Antiquities (DoA) as the national, governmental authority responsible for the protection, excavation, restoration, conservation, presentation, and management of antiquities in TransJordan. It also gives the DoA the responsibility to promote awareness of archaeology, through educational activities, provides for a national register of all archaeological sites, and sees that the ownership of immovable antiquities, or archaeological sites, is solely vested in the national government. The TransJordanian Hashemite government went to great lengths to establish these regulations and controls for archaeological projects and to make itself the sole authority over the archaeological sites and remains.

In order to support and oversee the excavations taking place at Jerash, the offices of the Department of Antiquities were established and strategically located by the TransJordanian government within the Jerash archaeological site. Placing the office of the DoA in Jerash recognized the site’s high archaeological value, due to its potential for revealing and presenting the archaeological process, and its cultural value as a display of Roman and Christian heritage. It was also expressed by the excavators at Jerash that “the expedition [at Jerash] is indebted to the TransJordan Government for their deposit at the office of the treasurer in Amman and their enabling the withdrawal of funds from the local office of the treasury department in Jerash. It was thus possible to have a constant supply of money on hand for wages, without the necessity and risk of bringing the payroll from Jerusalem.” As displayed, the TransJordanian government also supported the excavations at Jerash through providing the finances the excavation needed to be undertaken, and it appears that without these funds, the excavation may have been delayed,

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stopped altogether or outsourced to a different organization.  

Additionally, the TransJordan Department of Antiquities was associated with both of the archaeological expeditions in Madaba and Mount Nebo. The excavations at Madaba were part of the archaeological Survey of Eastern Palestine and the “TransJordan Department of Antiquities was closely associated with the entire project [Survey of Eastern Palestine]. Mr. George Horsfield, Adviser to the Department of Antiquities, is continuing his deep interest in the plans of the expedition, and is supporting and assisting it in every way possible. He has permitted Mr. R. G. Head, Inspector of Antiquities, to join the expedition to Madaba for the period of its duration, and has assigned ‘Ali Abu-Ghosh, Antiquities’ Guard, to act as guard to it.” For the excavations of Madaba, the TransJordan Department of Antiquities, acting on behalf of the Hashemite government and Abdullah I, provided personal supervision over the excavations by sending their Head inspector and Antiquities Guard of the DoA to the site to oversee the project. Moreover, the Department of Antiquities, personally committed their support and assistance to this excavation, financially, laboriously or in any other way possible.  

Also, during the expedition to Mount Nebo, the Franciscan School was “accompanied by Mr. R. G. Head, representing the TransJordan Department of Antiquities” because of the “enlightened policy being pursued by the TransJordanian Government...to avoid the destruction of antiquities with the concomitant loss of invaluable historical material.” The TransJordanian monarchy under Abdullah I viewed Mount Nebo as a site that had valuable cultural heritage and sought to work closely with the archaeological expedition occurring there to ensure the proper handling and preservation of the archaeological remains and ruins.

Additionally, besides supporting the Biblical and Christian archaeological excavations through supervision and protection of the excavations and monetary support, the Hashemite state also took other measures to promote TransJordan’s sacred and holy character. The Hashemite government “invested in the building of the Jerash archaeological Museum in 1923.” This museum “prominently featured the Christian finds of the city of Jerash,”\(^{60}\) displaying the sacred and religious material heritage of TransJordan.

Through the establishment of the Department of Antiquities, the giving of funds, the sending of supervisors and members of the Department of Antiquities to personally oversee archaeological projects, and the building of archaeological museums that specifically feature the holy and sacred objects found in TransJordan, the Hashemite government clearly supported the archaeological excavations of the Biblical and Christian sites of Jerash, Madaba and Mount Nebo.

**VIII. Conclusion**

The focus of archaeological excavations and scholarship on the sites of Jerash, Madaba and Mount Nebo during the Mandatory Period in TransJordan reveals a search for the sacred and holy nature of the land of TransJordan through the investigation of these Biblical and Christian sites. The Hashemite monarchy of TransJordan, under the reign of Abdullah I, promoted and supported these excavations - through the establishment of regulating and legal archaeological processes and organizations, funding, oversight personnel, the building of museums, and the publication of archaeological scholarship on these sites - in hopes of uniting the TransJordanian people under a holy and sacred national identity for TransJordan, with the nation being an

extension of the ‘Holy Land,’ in order to fulfill the goals of gaining independence for Trans-Jordan and expanding the country’s territory.

While the archaeological excavations at Jerash, Madaba and Mount Nebo did serve as cultural tools and agents in uncovering a sacred and holy character of the land of TransJordan, this holy nature was not strong enough to create and invent a holy and sacred national identity for TransJordan and transform the nation into a ‘Holy Land.’ However, this notion of Trans-Jordan as having a sacred character did aid Abdullah I in achieving his smaller, short term goals, such as strengthening ties between TransJordan and Great Britain, building his and his country’s political, social and economic power, and gaining the loyalty and respect of the TransJordanian peoples, which then allowed him to work towards his longer term goals.

These archaeological excavations at Jerash, Madaba and Mount Nebo, which were supported by Abdullah I and gave TransJordan a sacred character, served to bring biblical and religious prestige to the land of TransJordan, and this prestige attracted a “growth in international interest in and endorsement of TransJordan by European tourists and Christian pilgrims who had the desire to observe firsthand the sites mentioned in the Bible and early Christian history, which led to the establishment of a large tourist industry [in TransJordan].” Increased tourism and pilgrimage into TransJordan provided the developing nation with an influx of foreign monetary capital and created a need for tourist infrastructure and services and, these conditions allowed for the creation of thousands of jobs, which boosted the TransJordanian economy.\(^6^1\)

By bringing biblical and religious prestige and attracting European approval, tourism, pilgrimage and money through the archaeology of Biblical and Christian sites in TransJordan, Abdullah I and his Hashemite government were able to accomplish important short-term goals

\(^6^1\) King Abdullah I, *Memoirs*, 218.
During the Mandatory Period, these circumstances helped to improve the political and economic ties between Great Britain and TransJordan, as Abdullah I writes:

“The British government was able to participate in the development [of a peaceful and progressive TransJordan] by extending to the Government of the Emir moral help, and a number of financial grants to facilitate the establishment of economic programs and a regular mobile force and public security units in this country. Airplanes and armored cars were placed at her disposal, if necessary, and political as well as military advisers were ready to help when needed.”

During the Mandatory Period, it is clear that the British aided TransJordan politically, economically and militarily, and that overall, the relationship between the two states was greatly strengthened and worked to favor TransJordan in its development and growth as a new nation. The money and good international relations from tourism and pilgrimage, created in part by the Biblical and Christian archaeology in TransJordan, also helped to build TransJordan’s internal and external political power - with the formation of a constitutional government with representative, legislative and executive councils, ministry positions, and a Cabinet, along with a full fledged military and the maintenance of peaceful relations with neighboring Arab countries - its economic power - with the building of schools and education facilities, roads, infrastructure, public works, and a reformed taxation system - and its social power - with the advent of a justice system, social services, job creation and elections. Lastly, all the political, economic and social power the country gained during the Mandatory Period aided Abdullah I in distinguishing himself as a successful ruler and gaining the loyalty and trust of the TransJordanian peoples, as he states that “I want to thank the whole nation for their adherence to our true ideas, and their loyalty to those in authority [i.e. himself]. Their confidence has been rewarded with success and

62 King Abdullah I, Memoirs, 211.
63 King Abdullah I, Memoirs, 212-222.
I have no doubt that the nation will continue to prosper in the future.”64 Additionally, he writes, “I am grateful to say that I have found a cooperative spirit among the Bedouin tribes and the people of this country [TransJordan] generally, and I look forward to an active development of the interests of the country.”65

Achieving the short term goals of having good relations with the British and the international community, developing TransJordan’s political, economic and social power and gaining the loyalty and respect of the TransJordanian people, helped to stabilize the newly formed country, allowing it to gain a certain level of peace and to grow, develop and prosper. Moreover, these short-term achievements opened the door for the accomplishment of Abdullah I’s bigger goals. He expressed these long-term goals in his memoirs stating, “the Government’s program seeks loyalty to the Emirate, a resolve to raise the country to the same sovereign status within the Arab Union as that of her sister countries, and strict adherence to the principle of the Arab cause, namely, national unity.”66 Abdullah I outlines that independence for TransJordan from Britain, along with the expansion of territory, the formation of a unifying national identity and culture, and loyalty to the Emirate are the goals he is working towards in the hopes that they will bring TransJordan considerable progress towards national unity and freedom and help to solidify his legitimate power as the head of state for TransJordan.67

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64 King Abdullah I, Memoirs, 208.
65 King Abdullah I, Memoirs, 216.
66 King Abdullah I, Memoirs, 220.
67 King Abdullah I, Memoirs, 221.

I. History

In 1945, the Second World War ended and with Great Britain being virtually bankrupt and its domestic economy in shambles from the war, a pro-decolonization government was elected in England. In TransJordan, Abdullah I had been successful in developing the country politically, economically and socially and in gaining the loyalty of the TransJordanian people in the Mandatory Period, and these successes, coupled with this shift in the political and economic fortunes of Britain, proved favorable to Abdullah I’s plans for independence. In 1946, the United Nations approved the end of the British Mandate and recognized the sovereignty and independence of the new Kingdom of Jordan, stating: “The decision of the Houses of Parliament was taken on May 25th, 1946, and declared the independence of this country with the name of this Kingdom as the “Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.” Achieving his goal of a sovereign and independent state of Jordan, Abdullah I was proclaimed the first King of Jordan.68

Immediately following independence, the new nation of Jordan and its sovereign leader, Abdullah I, faced a number obstacles that affected the country’s political stability, national security and unity. During this time, Abdullah I had big aspirations to expand the territory of Jordan, and in particular, he had his eye on controlling the Holy City of Jerusalem, especially to

68 Muhammad Khalil, The Arab States and the Arab League: A Documentary (Beirut: Khayats, 1962), 53-54.
compensate for the Hashemite family’s loss of the guardianship of Mecca when Ibn Saud seized the Hejaz in 1925. Due to these expansionist aspirations, Abdullah I was distrusted by the leaders of the other Arab nations, and he, in turn, thought the other Arab leaders weak and distrusted them as well. Additionally, Abdullah I faced tensions with his Arab neighbors over the Yishuv: Abdullah I wanted to avoid war with the Jewish community in Palestine as they were Jordan’s neighbors, but when tensions between the Yishuv and the Arab Palestinians escalated and war broke out in 1948, Abdullah I joined the side of the Arab states in order to not alienate his Arab brothers further, to restore Jordan’s good standing in their eyes and, to attempt to take control of Jerusalem.69

At the end of the 1948 war, the Jewish community in Palestine won and formed the independent state of Israel. However, Jordan also came out victorious as well, as the nation was able to occupy and annex the territory of the West Bank, including Jerusalem, into their state, which fulfilled a major part of Abdullah I’s expansionist aspirations and gave him control of the prized holy city of Jerusalem. But, from the war and annexation of territory, the Jordanian state also received a huge influx of displaced Palestinian Arabs into its kingdom. The influx of these Palestinians created social, economic and political issues for the new Jordanian state. Many of Jordan’s limited economic resources needed to be diverted and shared with the refugees, and limited inhabitable space needed to be given and allotted to the refugees as well, causing financial and social strain on the new nation. Also, the new Jordanian state saw continued fighting between the Palestinians and Israelis as Jordan was left to deal with the activities of the Palestinian paramilitary elements, the fedayeen, who were engaged in launching guerrilla

military attacks over the border into Israel from within the state of Jordan. Furthermore, the large number of Palestinian refugees became a quasi-state of their own within the Jordanian state, equipped with their own political group, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and with their own political aspirations they were willing to fight for, the formation of an independent Palestinian state, an aspiration which the Jordanian Hashemite government either catered to or quelled based on the needs of the nation of Jordan.70

All of these issues both benefited and threatened the Jordanian state’s independence, stability and unity all at once. While fighting alongside the Arab states in the war and gaining control of the Holy City of Jerusalem quelled the distrust of Jordan from the other Arab nations, expanded Jordanian territory, resources and power, and redeemed the Hashemite name, the continued guerrilla fighting, the sudden influx of displaced, frustrated Palestinians with political aspirations, and the stretching of limited resources threatened Abdullah I’s ability to keep political and economic stability within the country, maintain secure and safe borders, and unify and govern a splintered and diverse peoples. Subsequently, these issues directly threatened Abdullah I’s ability to hold onto Jordan’s independence and his personal power and position as the King of Jordan.71

Facing these issues, Abdullah I knew he needed to politically stabilize his country and unify the people of Jordan under his rule if Jordan was to survive. In order to accomplish these tasks, Abdullah I sought to create a national identity that would unite the Jordanians and Palestinians as citizens of a shared country and instill in both groups a loyalty to the state of Jordan, that would put Jordan on good terms with other Arab countries, and that would

legitimize his political rule over Jordan by directly connecting himself with the united Jordanian people and the nation of Jordan. Abdullah I embraced the idea of creating and fostering an Arab and Islamic national identity for Jordan and the Jordanian peoples during the Independence Period in order to accomplish these goals.\textsuperscript{72}

Arab nationalism dates back to the mid-nineteenth century and is a nationalist ideology that celebrates the medieval past when the Arab and Islamic empires and civilizations extended from the Atlantic Ocean to the Persian Gulf, binding the Arab peoples through a common language, heritage, culture, and faith, Islam. It calls for Arab unity and Arab ethnicity to be the dominant traits of nationalism and for the rejuvenation and political union of the Arab world. Arab nationalism gained momentum in the twentieth century during the first major Arab Revolt, which occurred against the Ottomans who were trying to destroy Arab identity during the first World War, and was subsequently used as an anti-imperialist tool against the British and the French who carved up the Middle East into mandates after the war and prevented a major goal of Arab nationalism, the creation of a single, independent Arab state that encompassed the whole of the Arab world. Also, Abdullah I, and his grandson who would succeed him as King of Jordan, Hussein I, felt a very strong personal connection to an Arab-Islamic national identity. The Hashemite family not only led the revolts in the hopes of allowing the Arabs to take their place alongside other nations, but the Hashemites claim to be the keepers and inheritors of Muhammad’s holy flame: They are the descendants of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, who spread Islam and laid the foundation for the great Arab and Islamic civilizations of the past and, they controlled the area of the Hijaz for many years as the administrators and protectors of the

\textsuperscript{72} Katz, \textit{Jordanian Jerusalem}, 54.
holy Arab-Islamic cities of Mecca and Medina.\textsuperscript{73}

In 1946, while the Arab world was divided politically by mandates and states and divided ideologically over what the goals of Arab nationalism should be, Abdullah I praised and supported the idea of Arab nationalism upon Jordan’s independence, stating that:

“The Arab nation, with its glorious past history, and its Prophet to whom the Koran was revealed, in less than a quarter of a century conquered East and West. It carried out a religious, moral, cultural and civil reformation, and brought the ideals of human brotherhood to the world. Such a nation will not be subdued, but must be independent and great.”\textsuperscript{74}

Abdullah I hoped that promoting and creating an Arab-Islamic national identity for the people of Jordan would help alleviate the problems his country, and he as a ruler, faced. He believed that “Arab nationalism means the ultimate loyalty of the individual to the Arab world as a whole; it demands that a Jordanian be an Arab first and a Jordanian second,”\textsuperscript{75} and while he did ultimately work for a single, independent Arab state that encompassed the whole Arab world, Abdullah I worked to create an Arab-Islamic national identity for the peoples of Jordan, Jordanians and Palestinians alike, that emphasized a shared history, religion, and consciousness that would connect them with the larger Arab world and help restore Arab glory, hegemony and brotherhood in the present-day in Jordan.

Even after Abdullah I’s assassination in Jerusalem in 1951, his grandson, King Hussein bin Talal I, who became king upon his eighteenth birthday in 1953, followed in Abdullah I’s footsteps. Though young, King Hussein I sought to keep stability in the country, assert Jordanian independence with acts such as replacing all the British military officers with Arab ones, and prove himself to be a successful and legitimate Arab ruler. He fought to preserve

\textsuperscript{74} King Abdullah I, \textit{Memoirs}, 243.
peace in the region and while he preferred dialogue to war when dealing with Israel, his desire to have good relations with the neighboring Arab nations and the continuing raids conducted by Israeli soldiers into Jordanian territory to confront the Palestinian guerrilla fighters resulted in more war than peace with Israel. Being a young king and wanting to be on good terms with the surrounding Arab nations and to gain the trust and loyalty of the Jordanian peoples like King Abdullah I had, King Hussein I continued his Grandfather’s hard work and legacy and worked towards uniting all the people of Jordan and legitimizing his power under an Arab and Islamic national identity.\textsuperscript{76} He stated this goal by saying, “Since my accession to the Throne of the Kingdom...I have worked with all the means at my disposal to continue on the path of Arab unity, in a genuine effort to fulfill the aims and aspirations for which my grandfathers had dedicated their lives.”\textsuperscript{77}

During this Independence Period, which lasted from 1946-1970, King Abdullah I, King Hussein I and the Hashemite government worked to stabilize the independent country of Jordan, unite all the peoples within the territory of Jordan under a shared Arab and Islamic national identity, and legitimize their position as rulers through this national identity and, one way they worked towards these goals was through the use of archaeology. Abdullah I and Hussein I sought to use archaeology as a cultural tool and an agent to uncover the physical remains of the great Arab and Islamic civilizations of the past in the territory of Jordan. These remains endowed the land with a visible Arab and Islamic character and cultural heritage, giving the nation of Jordan and the Jordanian peoples within it a shared Arab and Islamic history, culture and identity by connecting Jordan and its people with the great Arab and Islamic civilizations

\textsuperscript{76} Avi Shlaim, \textit{Lion of Jordan; The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace} (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 199–302.

and caliphates of the past. As a result, both kings promoted and supported archaeological excavations and restorations of key Arab and Islamic sites in Jordan to identify Jordan as a genuine Arab-Islamic nation, to identify the Jordanian peoples as the true bearers and inheritors of the Arab-Islamic identity and, to identify themselves, and their legacy as descendants of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad through the Hashemite family, as the rightful and legitimate Arab-Islamic rulers who were worthy of ruling Jordan, its peoples and the Holy City of Jerusalem.

II. Archaeological Sites, Scholarship and Sources of the Independence Period

With these major political events occurring within and without Jordan, there also occurred a major shift in the focus of archaeological excavations and scholarship from Biblical and Christian sites that promoted tourism and the economy to sites that highlighted the Arab and Islamic heritage of Jordan, specifically Ayla, the Umayyad desert castles and the Holy Islamic sites of the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. During this Independence Period, 1946-1970, the Jordanian Hashemite government took over control from the British in undertaking and implementing the archaeological exploration of Arab and Islamic sites: “Since the joining of Western Palestine and Trans-Jordan in 1949 to form the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, interests and activity in archaeology have continued at a high level in the country…the work has been carried on by the Jordanian Government through the Department of Antiquities, and by several institutions which have recently engaged in excavations in Jordan.”

With the Jordanian government and Department of Antiquities taking control of the archaeological excavations, the scholarship on the Arab and Islamic sites appeared in a more

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78 Frisch, “Fuzzy Nationalism: The Case of Jordan,” 89.
mixed variety of academic journals, continuing to appear in journals like the *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, and *The American Journal of Archaeology*, but also beginning to appear in newer journals with a more Arab-Islamic character like *Studia Islamica* and the *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*. The archaeologists working on the sites also reflect a mix of Arab and Islamic archaeologists and American and European archaeologists. Some of the major Arab and Islamic archaeologists and authors of archaeological scholarship were Maurice Chehab, a Lebanese archaeologist and scholar, Nabia Abbott, a Turkish professor of Oriental Studies, and Muhammad Khalil, a famous Arab historian. The major British and European archaeologists and authors were Alexander Melamid, an American geographer and historian, Oleg Grabar, a French historian and archaeologist, Philip Mayerson, an American historian of Near East Antiquity, and Beatrice Laurent, an American professor of Islamic art and history. Most of these archaeologists belonged to the Christian and Muslim faiths.

The archaeologists worked under the auspices of organizations like the Oriental Institute and American and European universities in close collaboration with, and oversight by, the Department of Antiquities for Jordan and the Jordanian Hashemite Government. These organizations and the excavations reflected a higher level of Jordanian involvement in archaeology than in the Mandatory Period and, shows that the Hashemite government of Jordan and their emphasis, support and promotion of the excavations of these Islamic and Arab archaeological sites during this Independence Period, used archaeology as a cultural tool to serve and fulfill political and national goals.

III. ‘Aqaba-AYla
The archaeological, historical writings produced during the Independence Period concentrated heavily on a handful of Arab and Islamic archaeological sites in Jordan. One of the most intensely studied and excavated archaeological sites of this period was the medieval Arab-Islamic site of Ayla, or Aila, near modern-day ‘Aqaba. Towards the end of Roman-Byzantine rule in what is present-day Jordan, Ayla was “the Roman fortified border against the desert nomads [of Arabia, the Hijaz],”81 situated at the head of the Gulf of ‘Aqaba and was “a flourishing, cosmopolitan center where caravans from Damascus and the interior could meet and trade with ships coming up the Red Sea and connect with the trade routes going into the interior of Arabia.”82 During this time, Ayla was the city that served as the strategic crossroads between the Christian, Romanruled, Levantine Near East and the then pagan, nomadic, and tribalruled Arabian Peninsula, through which people, commodities, news and ideas traveled.

Figure 1.5 Ruins of the Islamic Town of Ayla

With the strategic importance of Ayla-‘Aqaba in mind, the city came to have great

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significance for the Prophet Muhammad and the spread of Islam in the early sixth century. As Muhammad advanced from Medina into northwestern Arabia, he conquered the city of Tab’uk and opened negotiations with neighboring settlements, leading to their submission to Muslim forces. The first among these settlements to enter into an agreement was Ayla. The agreement was negotiated between Muhammad and the ‘chief’ of Ayla, Yuhanna Ibn-Ru’bah, and the agreement “gave the people of the city of Ayla, as well as their ships and caravans, the right of protection against raids by Muhammad and the tribes under his control. In return, Ayla gave the Muslims access to water from the wells, when they desire it, nor are they (the people of Ayla) to prohibit them (the Muslims) from the roads which they desire to travel, whether by land or sea.” This treaty, which occurred in 630, neutralized Ayla and capitulated the city to Muhammad and the Muslim forces, opening the back door of Palestine and the Sinai to the Muslims for undisturbed travel and providing the Muslim armies with a rest area and water supply before launching attacks and raids into Palestine. But besides these economic benefits, this treaty is also considered a turning point in that it signified Ayla as the place and point from which Islam very rapidly spread from the Hijaz and conquered the Levant, Northern Africa and parts of Central Asia.

With the negotiations between Muhammad and Yuhanna Ibn-Ru’bah and the advent of Islam, Ayla was transformed from being a Roman-Byzantine, Christian city into being the first Islamic city founded outside of Arabia. The Caliph Uthamn Ibn Affan officially absorbed the city into the burgeoning Islamic Empire in the year 650 and, Ayla prospered under the Muslim dynasties of the Umayyads, Abbasids and Fatimids and became a principal city on the

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84 Philip Mayerson, “The First Muslim Attacks on Southern Palestine (A.D. 633-634),” 173.
pilgrimage route from the Levant to Mecca. These events mark the city of Ayla as having great
importance to both the Arab ethnicity and Islamic religion as it is the place from where Islam
spread and conquered huge swathes of the known world and from which the great Arab-Islamic
empires and civilizations gained power and flourished for hundreds of years.

The archaeological excavations of Ayla that occurred during the Independence Period
were done under the direction of the Oriental Institute in collaboration with the Department of
Antiquities for Jordan in the 1950s. As Alexander Melamid reports in his article, “The Political
Geography of the Gulf of Aqaba,” the excavations focused on bringing to light the Arab and
Islamic ruins of the site, specifically “the early Islamic walled city [that] flourished in Ayla from
the mid seventh to the early twelfth centuries.” Archaeologists concentrated their efforts
mainly on the infrastructural ruins of Ayla, including the walls of the city, its archways, the
residences of wealthy Islamic merchants who used Ayla as a main trading port, and the main
Congregational Mosque. While the site of Ayla contained ruins from many different eras and
had historical and cultural value to many different groups of people, it can be seen that during the
Independence Period in Jordan, the Arab and Islamic ruins and cultural heritage was the
principal focus of the archaeological excavations.

The archaeological excavations at Ayla were a very important project for “our
understanding of the whole early Islamic period...and this site is vital to understanding town
planning and urban development during this time.” The archaeological work revealed the
extent and layout of the first Levantine Islamic city. The excavations uncovered the walls of

85 Philip Mayerson, “The First Muslim Attacks on Southern Palestine (A.D. 633-634),” 175.
86 Alexander Melamid, “The Political Geography of the Gulf of Aqaba,” Annuals of the
88 Hindle, “‘Aqaba: An Old Port Revived ,” 68.
Ayla, which contained four gates on all four sides of the city, “the door of Egypt (north), the Damascus Gate (East), the door of the Hijaz (South) and the door of the Sea (West),” and these gates defined the two main axial avenues that intersected at a small square at the center of the city. Additionally, the remains of twenty-four defensive towers that stood along each city wall and flanked each gate were discovered. The most remarkable monumental structure to be uncovered was the Congregational Mosque, which dates to between the mid-eighth and mid-ninth century and represents a great example of early Islamic architecture. The Mosque has “a large open courtyard with multiple gravel floors dating from the eighth through the tenth centuries and, the court was surrounded by a colonnade set on plastered piers and archways and the qibla wall of the mosque is oriented towards the place of prayer, Mecca,” revealing the mixture of late Byzantine and early Islamic architectural elements. And lastly, the remains of an administrative building thought to be the governor’s residence, the Dar Al-Imara, lie just outside the remains of the congregational mosque and it speaks to the wealth, notoriety and prestige of this commercial hub on the pilgrim trail during the medieval Islamic era in Jordan.

A highlight of the excavations was “a large inscription of a Quranic verse that was hanging on top of the arches of the eastern (Damascus) gate of the city in the ninth century.” The Quranic inscription was done in beautiful Islamic calligraphy and is known as the “Throne verse,” or Ayat Al-Kursi (Quran 2:255), and speaks about Allah’s throne and praises his power. The inscription of the Throne Verse on the entryway of the city of Ayla displays Muhammad’s and Islam’s victory over the city that was considered the gateway to the Levant and the

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exponentially rising power of both Islam and the Arabs in the ancient world.\textsuperscript{91}

While Ayla contains ruins that are viewed in the present-day as being archaeologically valuable to many different civilizations, the city was the site from which “Arab power first came to Jordan, and the great Islamic religion reached the area and made it [Jordan] powerful,” and it serves as a testament to the power and prestige of the great Arab civilizations and Islamic Empires in the region during ancient times. Abdullah I, Hussein I and the Hashemite government, who sanctioned these excavations at Ayla, used archaeology as a cultural tool and agent to uncover the ruins of the early Arab-Islamic city of Ayla, to reveal the physical embodiments of Jordan’s Arab-Islamic history and cultural heritage and to symbolize Jordan’s connection to the great Arab and Islamic civilizations and caliphates of the past. The kings promoted and supported these excavations at Ayla in the hopes that, by inscribing the landscape of Jordan with a distinct, visible Arab-Islamic character, they could connect the Jordanian peoples with their nation, their land and themselves as rulers and unify all the peoples of Jordan through the creation of an Arab-Islamic national identity by way of a visibly and tangibly shared and inherited Arab and Islamic history, religion and culture.\textsuperscript{92}

In addition to being the site from which the Arab and Islamic civilization flourished outside of the Hijaz, Ayla is also the site from which Muhammad and his descendants prospered, bringing wealth, stability, power and prestige to the land by spreading Islam and building the foundations of the powerful Islamic caliphates and empires. The Hashemite family, who claims to be ancestors of the Prophet Muhammad through their descendants from Hashim ibn ‘Abd Manaf, the great-grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad, used their familial connection to the

\textsuperscript{92} Melamid, “The Political Geography of the Gulf of Aqaba,” 238.
Prophet Muhammad not only to liken themselves to being rulers that would bring wealth, stability, prosperity and prestige to Jordan, like Muhammad did, but also to prove their legitimacy as the political rulers of Jordan by being the true inheritors of the Islamic religion, the Arab civilization and the Arab-Islamic national identity.\textsuperscript{93}

IV. \textit{Umayyad Desert Castles}

Other key archaeological sites described in the historical scholarship of the Independence Period are the seventh and eighth century castles and fortresses that were built across the East Jordanian desert under the caliphs of the Umayyad dynasty. The Umayyad dynasty was the second major caliphate established after the death of Muhammad, with its founders coming from Mecca, conquering nearly all the Near East from the Byzantines and Sassanian Persians, and establishing their power and dynasty under the third caliph, Uthman Ibn Affan (644-656). The Umayyads officially solidified their power in 661 C.E. and established their capital in Damascus, Syria, creating the fifth largest empire ever, incorporating the land and peoples from the Iberian Peninsula, Northern Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia. The Umayyad Empire ruled until the Abbasid Revolution toppled it in 750 CE.\textsuperscript{94}

During their reign in the seventh and eighth centuries, “the Umayyad family increase[d] the wealth and power of the new Arab Empire…[and,] conscious of their newly acquired prestige and imitation of their Byzantine and Persian predecessors, built for themselves many luxurious palaces,” as they conquered large swaths of land. These desert castles were scattered in the Jordanian desert, east of Amman, the capital of Jordan, and the majority of these desert castles were built on the ancient trade routes under the order of the caliphs of the Umayyad

\textsuperscript{93} Melamid, “The Political Geography of the Gulf of Aqaba,” 239.
\textsuperscript{94} Oleg Grabar, “The Umayyad Palace of Khirbat Al-Mafjar.” \textit{Archaeology} 8 (1955): 229.
The exact function of these desert palaces is highly debated and scholars have suggested a variety of purposes for these buildings. Some scholars believe that these desert structures were meant to be fortresses, built to defend the newly forming Arab-Islamic Empire, or that they were retreats or residences for the nobles or princes under of the Umayyad Empire. Still, some posit that these desert structures were used for agricultural and commercial purposes as many of these desert dwellings were surrounded by “extensive irrigation systems, canals, cisterns, and aqueducts [which] served to supply the palace with water and also to provide for fields, meadows, parks and game reserves for hunting.” Scholars also believe that these palaces often served as meeting places where transactions took place between the Umayyad nobles and governors and the locals Bedouin tribes. The presence of these palaces gave the desert an acquired aristocratic, residential character.96

These desert castles and fortresses in the eastern Jordanian desert are very special as they are some of the most full and impressive representations of early Islamic classical art and architecture. The numerous Umayyad desert palaces were “usually comprised of three separate parts: a palace proper, a mosque and a bath.” The architectural plans of these palaces have “the typical Umayyad square with towers at the corners and on the sides, a central courtyard surrounded by a portico and rooms arranged along the walls.” This central enclosure is considered the main residential area in which the princes lived and received guests. There was often a “throne room on the second floor [of the palace], over the entrance, but in most instances

[this room] has not been preserved." Additionally, these fortress-like structures contained “an extraordinary wealth of mosaics, paintings, stuccoes, stone sculpture, mural paintings and other symbols of power and rich life.” As these castles were constructed, their seemingly numerous elements, “makeshift arrangement of an [architectural] plan” and “anomalously composite character” progressed into a “formal, single entity that would tie together functions which had not, until then, been organized.” These castles were:

“an original creation made possible by the peculiar combination of four features: a highly developed agricultural infrastructure created several centuries earlier; the emigration of large landowners; the existence of an aristocratic ruling group; and the availability of themes, ideas, tastes and modes of behavior drawn from the entire breadth of a newly conquered world and amalgamated with older Arabian habits.”

The palace’s cosmopolitan character, which was the essential feature of early Arab-Islamic art and architecture, was produced from the Levant being a major crossroads for cultural exchange due to the trade routes, the conquest of a large world with an immense wealth of styles, the early Muslim’s ingenious absorption and adaptation of art, and the palace’s characteristic, decorative, figural frescoes and reliefs of people and animals. All these architectural, artistic and socio-economic factors together created the quintessential Umayyad palace and these palaces served as the crucible from which classical Arab-Islamic art and architecture emerged, forming a well-established and distinct Arab-Islamic art and architecture that flourished in many sections of the Muslim world only two hundred years after the foundation of the religion Islam.

*Qasr Amra*

One of the best examples of these desert castles is *Qasr Amra*. It was built in the early

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99 Grabar, “Islamic Art and Byzantium,” 75.
100 Grabar, “Islamic Art and Byzantium,” 76-77.
eighth century, between 711-715 A.D., in the eastern Jordanian desert by Walid Ibn Yazid, the future Umayyad caliph Walid II, who launched a massive building campaign across the Empire, and this castle was “meant to be a sign of the Muslim prince’s accession to universal power” during this time.  

Figure 1.6 Umayyad Castle Qasr Amra

Archaeological excavations during the Independence period were mostly done by a Spanish archaeological contingent under the guidance of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and they revealed that Qasr Amra was established as both a fortress with a garrison and a residence palace. While only the foundation of the larger castle-like fortress remains, the small, residential palace is exceptionally well preserved, and is comprised of a reception hall and a hammam, or a bath complex. The bath complex consisted of “the apodyterium, a changing room, and the tepidarium, the hot bath, which included a domed ceiling known as a caldarium.” Traces of stone walls that used to enclose the site remain, as well as traces of agricultural and animal-driven mechanisms, a water-lifting hydraulic system and a drainage and

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102 Grabar, “Islamic Art and Byzantium,” 83.  
dam system, attesting to the outstanding ability of the Umayyads to create civilization, resources and power in the desert environment.

Qasr Amra is most noted for the archaeological remains of its frescoes that remain on the walls and ceilings of the residential palace complex. Frescoes depicting scenes of animal hunting, figures consuming fruit and wine and naked women were uncovered on the main entry vault to the residential palace. The most famous fresco of Qasr Amra is known as ‘the six kings,’ and it shows “the caliph with the rulers of neighboring powerful figures - the Byzantine Emperor, the Visigothic king Roderic, the Sassanid Persian Shah, the Negus of Ethiopia, and two others who remain unidentified, though thought to be a Turkic khagan and an Indian raja.”

The excavators and conservators in the late 1960s uncovered the Greek inscription of the word “nike,” meaning victory, close to the fresco, and archaeologists have concluded that this famous fresco was meant to “imply that the Umayyad dynasty was the descendant and heir of the dynasties it has defeated,” and was to be viewed as a testament to the Muslim caliph’s victory over his enemies, and the triumph of the Islamic and Arab civilization in the region.

In the bath chambers of Qasr Amra, there are frescoes of “hunting, games, banquets, dancing, music, scantily clad females performing various tasks, animals engaging in human activities, such as performing music, and plants and trees” decorating the walls. Most notably, above the bath chamber, on the caldarium, or hemispheric dome, is a representation of the zodiac, which is one of the earliest known, surviving portrayals of a map of the heavens with

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thirty-five identifiable constellations.\textsuperscript{106}

Qasr Amra and its frescoes constitute an exceptional artistic achievement in the Umayyad Period, contributing to what is known of this unique period, and it is considered to be the essence of the early Islamic architecture and art. The palace is the best conserved architectural and archaeological ruin of the grand Jordanian desert castles, and its remains are a testament to the exceptional rise, power and domination of the Jordanian region by the Umayyad civilization.

\textit{Qasr Kharana}

A second example of the desert palaces is the archaeological remains of Qasr Kharana, one of the best-known Umayyad castles in the eastern Jordanian desert. The construction of the castle is dated to the early eighth century, circa 710 C.E., and was built by the Umayyad Caliph, Walid I as a sign of his rise and dominance in the region. Its exceptional preservation makes it one of the best examples of early Islamic art and architecture in existence. Its exact function remains unclear, but most scholars agree that it most likely served a variety of functions, such as being a retreat for the noble class, a place where negotiations with the Bedouin tribes took place, and in times of war, a defensive fortress. Its limited water supply indicates that the palace was meant for temporary use and was probably not used for agricultural enterprise.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{106} Grabar, “Islamic Art and Byzantium,” 84.
The excavations took place in the late 1960s and ran well into the 1970s under the auspices of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities. These excavations uncovered the archaeological remains of the castle itself, which are very well-preserved, with the building itself being made out of limestone blocks arranged in a square shape of one hundred and fifteen feet on each side with small corner towers that project out of the walls and a rounded entrance on the south side. The inside of the residential building is a structured system of “transverse arches supporting barrel vaults,” and the arches are placed on bearing arms instead of being connected to the carrying wall. The palace has two levels with about sixty rooms or apartments, arranged around a central courtyard with a pool in the middle meant to harvest rainwater and, many of the rooms are decorated with “pilasters, blind niches and medallions.” Most of the rooms contain narrow slits offering views to the outside and larger windows that decorated the interiors. There is a small room on the south side of the castle that archaeologists thought to be designated for

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prayer.\textsuperscript{109}

Just inside the main entrance to the palace, there are remains of a large inscription that is “rich in Quranic flavor,” and the “epigraphy of the inscriptions are of special interest and importance [as] they are neither like that of the common graffiti nor are they typical of the script of the few well-executed specimens of the first century of Islam.”\textsuperscript{110} This script bears a resemblance to the script of the earliest dated Arabic papyrus, reflecting a then “current manuscript practice of Arabic script” that is symbolic of the early Islamic period and early Islamic art and civilization.\textsuperscript{111}

The Umayyad dynasty was considered one of “the Golden Ages of the...Arab and Islamic Empires.” They possessed the ability to hold their own against alien and hostile intrusions. They also possessed the means to contribute abundantly and creatively to world culture and civilization.\textsuperscript{112} These Umayyad castles built in the Jordanian desert serve as a tribute to the power and prestige of the great Arab-Islamic civilizations and empires and symbolize the rise, spread and power of Islam in the region. The Hashemite monarchy, who sanctioned these excavations under the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, used these archaeological excavations of such sites as Qasr Amra and Qasr Kharana as a cultural tool and agent to “recover, preserve, and conserve some of the most impressive examples of early Islamic art and architecture,”\textsuperscript{113} to reveal these ruins as physical, visible examples of Jordan’s Arab and Islamic heritage and to display Jordan’s connection to the great Arab-Islamic civilizations and caliphates of the ancient past. The kings promoted and supported these excavations at Qasr Amra and Qasr

\textsuperscript{112} King Hussein I, A Foreword, x.
\textsuperscript{113} Maurice Chehab, “The Umayyad Palace at ‘Anjar,” \textit{Ars Orientalis} 5, 1963, pg. 20.
Kharana in the hopes that, by inscribing the landscape of Jordan with a distinct Arab-Islamic character, they could connect the Jordanian peoples with their nation, land and themselves as rulers, and unify all the peoples of Jordan through the creation of an Arab-Islamic national identity by means of a shared and inherited Arab and Islamic history, religion and culture.114 Additionally, the Hashemites used these Umayyad desert castles as symbols of the strength and power of Islam and the flourishing of the Arab race, civilization and culture in order to reinforce and emphasize the Hashemites’ role as the rulers that would restore wealth, prosperity and a great Arab-Islamic civilization to Jordan and the Arab world. As well, the Hashemites connected themselves to these goals as a way to prove their legitimacy as the political rulers of Jordan and their position as the genuine inheritors of the Islamic religion and Arab civilization and culture and therefore, the epitome of the Arab-Islamic national identity.115

V. Jerusalem: Al-Haram Al-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary - The Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque

When Jordan captured and annexed the West Bank, with the Holy City of Jerusalem, into their territory and brought it under their control after the 1948 War, this development “achieved the impossible in keeping for the Arab world a large section of Jerusalem, and saved the holy places of all believers [Christian, Jewish and Muslim alike].”116 This development was huge for Jordan as Jerusalem was the MOST important site that archaeological scholarship concentrated on in this Independence Period. Jerusalem was the crucial and instrumental site for both Abdullah I and Hussein I in creating and fostering an Arab-Islamic national identity to stabilize

116 King Hussein I, Uneasy Lies the Head, 134.
Jordan, unify its people and legitimize Hashemite sovereignty over Jordan and within the Arab World as Jerusalem gave the Hashemites a personal connection with the Arab-Islamic identity.117

The city of Jerusalem has an incredibly rich and complicated history and political control of the city has switched hands many times, but for practical purposes, its Islamic history is what is particularly important. In Islamic tradition, Jerusalem is considered to be the third holiest city, behind Medina and Mecca. Muslims believe that Muhammad traveled to Jerusalem, the site of the furthest mosque, in the year 621, on his famous Night Journey, known as the Isra. The Prophet is believed to have been awoken in Mecca by the angel Gabriel, and to have traveled on the back of a mythical beast, the Buraq, through the night to the Furthest Mosque in Jerusalem. There, he led other prophets in prayer, ascended into Heaven and spoke to God, an event known as the Mi’raj, and God gave Muhammad instructions to take back to the faithful regarding the details of prayer. The Isra and Mi’raj, respectively the Night Journey and the Ascension, are considered the most important narrative events in Islam as Muslims view them as symbolizing the journey of the soul of every individual and the potential for humans to rise above the comforts of material life and become closer with God through prayer, piety and discipline, as Muhammad rose through the heavens to become closer with God.118

When Jerusalem was captured in 638 by Arab-Islamic forces under Umayyad Caliph Omar, he immediately headed to the Al-Haram Al-Sharif, or the Temple Mount, in the Old City of Jerusalem to find the holy site of the “Furthest Mosque.” He declared that upon this site, where the famed events of the Isra and Mi’raj were believed to have occurred, “would be built a shrine to celebrate and commemorate those holy events.” The shrine, known as the Dome of the

Rock, was actually constructed at a later date, between 689-692 CE, by the order of Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik. While it has been reconstructed and renovated many times throughout the centuries, its basic structure is the same. The Dome of the Rock, was “built in a double-ambulatory octagonal shape with its signature double-shelled wooden dome constructed of gold-covered lead crowning the skyline of Jerusalem.” Arcades, pilasters and columns support its octagonal shape and dome and its exterior “boasted brilliant mosaics which were later reconstructed out of brightly colored tiles.” A long Quranic inscription in gold runs around the base of the arcade of the outer ambulatory and the interior is decorated with marble slabs that have colored and gilded stucco patterns on them.\footnote{Grabar, “The Umayyad Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem,” 34.} The Dome of the Rock is one of the oldest known works of early Islamic architecture and, during the Umayyad dynasty, it served as the spiritual capital of the newly formed Umayyad Empire, establishing Jerusalem as a center of religious pilgrimage and making a strong religious and political statement which proclaimed the sovereignty of Islam in Jerusalem and Jerusalem’s sacred status within Islam as the religion’s third holiest city.\footnote{Beatrice Laurent, “The Dome of the Rock and the Politics of Restoration,” \textit{Studia Islamica} 17 (1968): 14.}
The Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, translated to “the farthest mosque,” was also constructed on the al-Haram al-Sharif in the early Umayyad era, and it is believed that this mosque was the one Muhammad traveled to during the Night Journey. The mosque was originally a small prayer mosque built by Caliph Umar, but was rebuilt and expanded by the Umayyad caliphs Abd al-Malik, and his son Al-Walid, between 690 and 715 CE. This mosque contained “the first Qibla, or a wall niche, known as a mihrab, which indicated the fixed direction Muslims should be facing during prayer.” For a period of sixteen months after the migration of Muslims to Medina in 624, the direction, qibla, of pray for Muslims was towards this spot of the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, until Muhammad changed it to face the Kaaba in Mecca. The mosque consisted of a large, rectangular ambulatory structure, lined with columned archways, and a large silver dome, “a layout and features that were characteristic of early Islamic architecture.”

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1.9 Al-Aqsa Mosque

Throughout the centuries, as different peoples took over control of Jerusalem and natural disasters and warfare caused damage and destruction to the city, both the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque underwent multiple archaeological reconstructions and renovations. When a newly independent Jordan took over the city of Jerusalem in 1950, declaring it Jordan’s ‘second capital’ in 1953, the Jordanian Hashemite rulers undertook some major archaeological renovations and restorations of the sacred Muslim sites through both governmental and monarchical involvement. The Hashemite family already had a precedent of taking authority over renovations of Jerusalem’s Holy spaces as the Sharif of Mecca, Abdullah I’s father, had made a large financial contribution to the renovations of Al-Aqsa and the Dome of the Rock in the 1920s. This financial contribution allowed the Hashemites to claim ownership of the 1920s renovation and initiated the Hashemite’s connection to Jerusalem as the “guardians of the holy sites of Jerusalem,” a title Abdullah I and Hussein I fully intended to keep and exert in the Independence Period with their new wave of archaeological renovations and restorations. Immediately after the 1948 war, Abdullah I sounded the call for the restoration and reconstruction of holy sites on the al-Haram al-Sharif that had suffered considerable damage.
King Hussein I, after Abdullah’s death, took the lead in the renovation of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa beginning in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{122}

The archaeological restorations and renovations were prepared, studied, legislated, financed and supervised by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, Ministry of Tourism and the Hashemite king, Hussein I, himself and they were carried out over the course of a decade staring in 1954. For the Dome of the Rock, the major project was the restoration of the iconic golden dome that defined the skyline of the city. After a thousand years, the gold of the original dome had worn away and the black lead of the dome was clearly visible, so it was replaced “with colored-gold anodized aluminum panels...giving the dome back its golden hue to maintain the symbol of Islamic pride.”\textsuperscript{123} An extensive renovation was also undertaken in the interior with the replacement of the wooden ceilings of the arcades and the entire wooden rib structure of the outer dome and the repainting of the interior of the dome. Additionally, there was a “replacement of a large number of the brightly colored mosaic tiles on the exterior,” with the originals dating back to 1561, when the Ottoman sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent commissioned their production. These restorations of the Dome of the Rock were completed in 1964.\textsuperscript{124}

At the end of the Independence period, in 1969, the Al-Aqsa mosque suffered great damage when it was set on fire by a Jewish fundamentalist. The fire damaged a third of the Al-Aqsa mosque complex and King Hussein I immediately begun a very expensive restoration project in collaboration with the Applied Balqa University in Salt and supervised by Arab and

\textsuperscript{122} Katz, \textit{Jordanian Jerusalem}, 100.
\textsuperscript{124} Laurent, “The Dome of the Rock and the Politics of Restoration,” 18.
Muslim specialists and technicians. Both the eastern and southern walls of the mosques were rebuilt, but the Minbar of Salaheddin was completed reduced to ashes. The minbar was a “decorated pulpit from which the imam would deliver sermons, but this particular one was brought from Aleppo to Jerusalem in the twelfth century by the legendary Muslim leader Salaheddin, who liberated Jerusalem from the Crusaders.” The loss of this minbar, considered a great art from the height of the Islamic empire that symbolized the grandeur of Islamic civilization, Islam’s devotion to God and the religion’s regaining sovereignty over the third holiest city of Islam, was a tragic loss of irreplaceable Arab-Islamic cultural heritage. King Hussein I was determined to rebuild the minbar as part of a major effort to safeguard the rapidly vanishing cultural heritage of the Islamic world, and he hired Minwer Meheid, a Bedouin from a family in Saudi Arabia to complete the task. Meheid spent many years searching for and studying Islamic master craftsmen and gaining knowledge on how to design and build a minbar. Abdullah II finally restored a replica of Salaheddin’s minbar to its proper historic place in 2007. The restoration of the Minbar of Salaheddin is one of several significant restoration and preservation efforts that Jordan's monarchs have championed over the last several decades, and that have put Jordan at the forefront of Islamic scholarship and cultural preservation today.¹²⁵

In Islamic tradition, Jerusalem is the third holiest city after Mecca and Medina: It contained the first qibla, or direction of prayer, the site of the furthest mosque, Al-Aqsa, where the Prophet Muhammad traveled on the Night Journey, known as the Isra, and the Dome of the Rock, the spot that commemorates the Mi’raj, Muhammad’s ascension into Heaven and conversation with God. The Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque stand as testaments to the power and prestige of the ancient Arab-Islamic civilizations and empires and symbolize

Jerusalem’s importance as a sacred, Islamic city and Islam’s claim to a stake in the ‘ownership’ of Jerusalem.

At the present time in the Independence Period, Abdullah I, Hussein I, and the Hashemite monarchy directly and personally prepared, financed, studied and supervised the archaeological renovations and restorations of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque under the Jordanian Department of Antiquities after Jordan’s capture of Jerusalem in 1948. These renovations were used by the Hashemites as a political, religious and cultural tool and agent in order to recover and restore the grandeur, strength, and glory of Islam and the Arab civilization in the Holy City and to reveal these sites as physical and visible embodiments of Islam’s new found sovereignty over Jerusalem and of Jordan’s direct connections with the Arab-Islamic civilizations of the past and their cultural and religious heritage. The kings undertook these renovations and restorations in the hopes that, by inscribing the landscape of Jordan with a distinct Arab-Islamic character, the Jordanian peoples would connect with their nation and their rulers and unite under a true, inherited Arab-Islamic national identity revealed in Jerusalem by a visibly shared, sacred Arab-Islamic history, culture and religion.

Jordan’s control and ownership of the Holy City allowed the Hashemites to officially imagine themselves and their kingdom as an extension and part of ‘the Holy Land’ with the third holiest city of Islam. As well, the renovations of the monuments of the al-Haram al-Sharif served to officially nationalize sovereign Muslim rule in Jerusalem and Jordan and afford the Hashemites the title of ‘the protectors and guardians of Jerusalem’s Holy Places,’ as they proved themselves to be in charge of the maintenance and conservation of some of Islam’s and the Arab race’s most sacred cultural and religious heritage sites.\(^{126}\) Jordan’s new nature as ‘the Holy

\(^{126}\) King Hussein I, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, 235.
Land’ and the Hashemites’ guardianship of Islam’s holy places and their hand in the renovations and restorations of Jerusalem’s sacred Islamic sites served to strengthen and legitimize the independent Jordanian ruler’s political control over the city by putting the Hashemite’s personal mark on the sacred sites and, served to help Jordan gain respect and legitimacy in the Arab World as their ‘ownership’ of Jerusalem was recognized by other Arab powers.\textsuperscript{127}

Additionally, gaining political control of Jerusalem was a huge opportunity for the Hashemite family on a personal level. Traditionally, Arabs and Muslims had “turned for leadership to the Hashemite dynasty, as they were descendants of the Prophet Muhammad and were respected all over the Muslim World,”\textsuperscript{128} but after the Hashemites lost control of Mecca and Medina in the Hijaz to the house of Saud in 1925, their role as leaders of the Arab world was diminished. Capturing the political and national control of Jerusalem and it’s Islamic holy sites compensated the Hashemites for their previous loss and helped them to renew their rightful and legitimate position as leaders in the Arab World and guardians of the Islamic faith. Also, the restoration and revitalization of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque served to re-establish the familial connection between the Prophet and his Hashemite descendants, Abdullah I and Hussein I, which further legitimized Hashemite political control of Holy Jerusalem and, solidified the Hashemite’s rightful ideological construction and use of an Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan as the Jordanian rulers, and their peoples, were the true inheritors of an Arab-Islamic identity through their descendants from the Prophet.\textsuperscript{129}

Jerusalem was the crowning jewel for the Hashemites of Jordan. Jerusalem, with the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque, was the site that proved the legitimacy of the

\textsuperscript{127} Katz, \textit{Jordanian Jerusalem}, 99.
\textsuperscript{128} King Hussein I, \textit{Uneasy Lies the Head}, 87.
\textsuperscript{129} Laurent, “The Dome of the Rock and the Politics of Restoration,” 18.
Hashemite rulers in Jordan, and their control of the city gave them a stake in Muslim history by fitting their dynastic story as leaders of the Arab world, descendants of the Prophet and protectors of Islam’s holy places. In contra-distinction to the previous Mandatory Period, where archaeology was only successful in bolstering the economy and strengthening ties with the British, control of Jerusalem was the key for letting archaeology play a significant part in the creation of a national identity in this Independence Period, as the site helped establish a shared history and culture between the Jordanian land, people and rulers and allowed for a true connection with, and inheritance of, an Arab-Islamic national identity that united the Jordanian peoples and legitimized Hashemite rule in Jordan.¹³⁰

VII: Jordanian Support for the Arab-Islamic Archaeological Excavations and Renovations During the Independence Period

While the British and other European powers still had a presence as archaeologists in Jordan, during the Independence Period, Jordanians and other Arabs had much more of a presence as archaeologists and scholars of Jordan’s cultural heritage, and as well, the Hashemite monarchy, and Abdullah I and Hussein I themselves, were highly involved in the archaeological excavations at Ayla, Qasr Amra and Qasr Kharana, and the archaeological renovations and restorations the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. Abdullah I and Hussein I promoted, supported and were even personally involved in these archaeological excavations and renovations in order to provide Jordan with a visible Arab-Islamic cultural heritage and a tangible connection to that heritage in order to make an Arab-Islamic identity the national identity of Jordan under which the Hashemite monarchy could unify its people, stabilize the

country and legitimize their authority in Jordan and the Arab World.

During the Independence Period in Jordan, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, under the supervision of the Jordanian Hashemite monarchy, oversaw the archaeological investigations at Ayla and funded much of the excavations. The Hashemites also built the Archaeological Museum in Aqaba during this time. It was a ten room historical museum just south of the site of Ayla that specifically housed and “displayed artifacts from the seventh to the twelfth centuries,” showcasing antiquities that displayed the power of Islam and the Arab race in the region from the height of the Arab-Islamic period in Ayla.\footnote{Harding and Reed, “Archaeological News from Jordan,” 1.}

In regards to the archaeological excavations at Qasr Amra and Qasr Kharana, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities were involved at both sites, supervising the excavations of European archaeologists at the sites. When the excavations neared completion, the desert castles were put under the complete jurisdiction of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and Ministry of Tourism, which controlled access to the sites. To highlight the archaeological artifacts and ruins uncovered at both Qasr Amra and Qasr Kharana, the Hashemites built the Jordan Archaeological Museum in 1951 in the middle of the Amman citadel. The museum was symbolically “built on the citadel hill….on the spot of a house of the Umayyad period,” and housed many antiquities from the desert castles. The location of this museum on the old Umayyad house, atop the Amman citadel in the center of the city displayed the importance of the Umayyad, and other Islamic Empires, to the foundation of today’s Jordan, and served to try and connect Jordan with its ancient Arab-Islamic past, further promoting the Arab-Islamic identity as Jordan’s national identity.\footnote{Harding and Reed, “Archaeological News from Jordan,” 1.}

The Hashemite monarchy was extremely close to and involved in the archaeological
renovations and restorations that occurred at the Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque during the Independence Period. Financially, the Jordanian monarchy contributed sixty thousand Jordanian dinar to the restorations of the Dome of the Rock in the 1950s, and a record six million Jordanian dinar to fund the restoration of the Al-Aqsa mosque after the 1969 fire. Additionally, in order to ensure personal Hashemite involvement in the restorations and directly associate the Jordanian Hashemite monarchy with the renovations, Jordan’s government promulgated the “Law for the Restoration of the Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.” This law legally established Jordan’s authority, under the Hashemite King Hussein I, over the archaeological renovations project. Jordan also formed a Committee for the Renovations of the Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, which approved a team of Egyptian architectural engineers and specialists to supervise the technical aspects of the renovation, but gave the administrative control of decisions and money directly to the Hashemite government of Jordan.\textsuperscript{133} The Hashemite monarchy further promoted the renovations and restorations of the Islamic holy sites of Jerusalem and Jordan’s authority over the projects by issuing stamps, brochures and newspapers into circulation with pictures and images depicting King Hussein gazing over the newly renovated of the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque. Having full control over the renovations of the Islamic sites of Jerusalem and the circulation of items with images of the Islamic holy places and the King meant to proclaim Jordan’s political and national authority over Jerusalem vis-a-vis the Muslim holy places and to the entire Arab and Muslim world.\textsuperscript{134}

Moreover, the Hashemite government sponsored a highly public and publicized celebration to commemorate the completion of these archaeological renovations and restorations


\textsuperscript{134} Katz, \textit{Jordanian Jerusalem}, 111.
at the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa in August of 1964. This celebration served to foster a universal Islamic connection to Jerusalem and show Jerusalem’s importance to a shared Arab-Islamic heritage and identity within the Muslim world. The celebration was attended by kings and heads of state from many Arab and Islamic countries and each was presented with a symbolic key to the city to share a part of Jordan’s country and spiritual capital with those countries and offer a link to Jerusalem and sense of the ‘universal Arab and Islamic appeal’ of the Islamic holy sites. This celebration also fostered a local Jordanian connection to Jerusalem, which was used to reflect “the close relationship the Hashemites had been developing with Jerusalem and the Holy places, and demonstrated their role as ‘the protectors of Islam’s holy place.’”

During the celebration, King Hussein I led a prayer and gave a speech about the renovations, and there were signs and images - arches banners, flags, etc. - that bore symbols and pictures of the holy places in Jordan and the Hashemite crest in all locations of the celebration, which suggested a ‘Jordanizing’ of the renovations and a clear sign of the establishment of Hashemite Jordanian legitimate authority and political presence on al-Haram al-Sharif and in Jerusalem and the Jordanian people’s connection to Jerusalem through a shared Arab-Islamic heritage and national identity.

VII. Conclusion

Interestingly, the Independence Period stands in stark contra-distinction to the Mandatory Period as archaeology in the Mandatory Period was instrumental for certain political,

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economic and social uses, but archaeology in the Independence Period was instrumental for nationalistic and identity purposes. The focus of archaeological excavations, renovations and scholarship shifted in the Independence Period to concentrate on the sites of Ayla, the Umayyad desert castles of Qasr Amra and Qasr Kharana, and the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque on the al-Haram al-Sharif in Jordan and, this shift reveals the Hashemite’s search for the Arab and Islamic heritage in the land of Jordan.

The Hashemites, both Abdullah I and Hussein I, clearly supported and promoted these archaeological excavations and renovations of these Arab-Islamic sites. They established museums to house and display the uncovered artifacts, provided massive funding projects, oversaw all excavations by the Jordan’s Ministry of Tourism and Department of Antiquities, encouraged the publication of archaeological scholarship on these sites and, they even personally pursued sole legality for the authority over the renovations in Jerusalem, forming committees to oversee those projects, publicizing the renovations on commercially circulated items like stamps, brochures and newspapers, and planning a massive celebration to commemorate the completion of the Jerusalem renovations.

Consequently, these archaeological excavations, renovations and investigations were used by the Hashemites as cultural tools and agents to uncover Jordan’s Arab-Islamic cultural heritage and, by inscribing the land with a visible Arab and Islamic character, the land, the Jordanian peoples and the Hashemite rulers connected to each other and with the ancient Arab and Islamic civilizations and caliphates through a shared Arab and Islamic history, culture and identity. Abdullah I displayed this sentiment of a shared Arab and Islamic past, culture and identity through a connection, caused in part by archaeology, between present and past Arab-Islamic societies by expressing that “the formation of Arab unity is now a great source of
strength… supporting and strengthening the ancient democratic states which with their majority of Muslim subjects, have kept alive a flourishing Muslim culture from the beginning of our era to the present day.”

King Hussein I echoed his grandfather’s sentiment stating that Jordan has “strong links with the past, with Islam, and with the Muslim world…[through a] common tongue, a common cause, a common future and a common challenge of survival,” indicating that Arab-Islamic unity was formed among the peoples of Jordan.

These archaeological excavations and renovations, the Hashemite’s support of them, and archaeology’s uncovering of the Arab-Islamic heritage and character of Jordan, served to create an Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan. King Hussein I indicated this fact by expressing that, “In the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, we are eager to carry out our duties toward free people, to justify our existence. A nation once divided, we are now bound together by daily strengthening ties, inspired by need, by common interests, by patriotism and, above all, by what is known as Arab nationalism.”

King Hussein I indicates that Arab-Islamic nationalism, uncovered and created by archaeology, is the factor that bound together the nation of Jordan, identifying Jordan as a genuine Arab-Islamic nation and identifying all the Jordanian peoples as the true inheritors and authentic bearers of the Arab-Islamic identity through a shared history and culture between past and present Arabs and Muslims.

In turn, the creation of an Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan helped Abdullah I and Hussein I to accomplish their major goals during this Independence period. An Arab-Islamic national identity helped the Hashemites unite all the Jordanian peoples under this shared Arab-Islamic national identity. “The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan…believe[s], and will never cease

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139 King Hussein I, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, 92-93.
140 King Hussein I, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, 85.
to believe, in the basic need for Arab freedom, unity, equality, strength and progress. Jordan’s main strength lies in holding to those ideals bravely. We are Arabs first and Jordanians second.”¹⁴¹ King Hussein I articulates that the peoples of Jordan, urban Jordanians, Bedouins and Palestinians alike, were united under an Arab-Islamic national identity, putting their loyalty to identifying themselves and connecting with others as Arabs and Muslims first, and as Jordanians second. Having the Jordanian peoples unified under an Arab-Islamic national identity helped the Hashemites to stabilize the newly independent nation of Jordan as, “It had been Jordan’s destiny...to strive realistically for Arab unity. It is only through these factors [Arab nationalism] that the turbulent Arab World and Jordan moved towards the stability, prosperity and peace that its people so greatly deserve.”¹⁴² An Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan brought both internal and external stability to Jordan, uniting the people within Jordan and strengthening Jordan’s peaceful relations with the rest of the Arab and Islamic world, both being accomplished through mutual ties as Arabs and Muslims and, this stability and improved foreign relations aided in securing Jordan’s borders, giving the nation room to prosper, develop and grow.

Most importantly, the Hashemite’s creation of an Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan through the use of archaeology helped them legitimize their position as the rightful and authentic Arab-Islamic rulers, capable of leading the Arab world and worthy of ruling Jordan, its people and Jerusalem. Traditionally, “the Arabs turned for leadership to Mecca and to the Hashemite dynasty…[as they were] descendants of the Prophet Muhammad…[and] were respected all over the Muslim world,”¹⁴³ but the Hashemite’s loss of Mecca hurt their image of

¹⁴¹ King Hussein I, Uneasy Lies the Head, 97.
¹⁴² King Hussein I, “A Foreword,” viii.
¹⁴³ King Hussein I, Uneasy Lies the Head, 87.
power and leadership in the region. However, their uncovering of the sites of Ayla and the Umayyad castles, which showcased the power and prestige of the ancient Arab-Islamic civilizations, their gaining of the control of Jerusalem and their personal hand in the renovations of its Islamic holy places, coupled with their connection as descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, all served to strongly associate and bond the Hashemites with the Arab-Islamic identity. As patrons of the excavations and preservation of Arab and Islamic cultural heritage sites, protectors of Muslim holy places, investors in the power and prosperity of the Arab world and Jordan, and ancestors of the Prophet Muhammad, “the Hashemite House was the prime factor in the Arabs’ attainment to a place of honor,”144 and, during this Independence Period, the Hashemites demonstrated themselves to be the embodiment and true inheritors of the authentic Arab-Islamic national identity and this, in turn, proved the Hashemites to be the rightful leaders of the Arab world and the legitimate Arab-Islamic rulers of Jordan, its peoples and the Holy City of Jerusalem.


I. History

At the end of the Independence Period, some major political events occurred, which caused the Arab-Islamic national identity in Jordan, and its uses by the Hashemites as a civilly unifying and politically legitimizing tool, to unravel. On June 5th, 1967, the Six-Day War broke out between Israel and its neighboring Arab States, including Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Relations between all of these states had never officially normalized following the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, and in fact, tensions had reached a dangerously high level due the amassing of troops at borders, small border clashes, mutual defense pacts between Arab nations, PLO guerilla activity in Israel and, Egypt’s declaration of the closure of the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. As a result of these heightened tensions, Israel’s National Unity Government launched Operation Focus, a large-scale surprise, pre-emptive air attack on the Egyptian Air Force. Fighting took place over six days, in the Sinai Peninsula, the West bank, including Jerusalem, the Gaza strip, and the Golan Heights. When the ceasefire was called on June 11th 1967, the losses for the Arabs were huge: They suffered a total of over twenty thousand causalities and, Israel had gained control of the Gaza strip and Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the Golan Heights from Syria, and most importantly, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan.145

The loss of Jerusalem and ownership of its holy sites was devastating for Jordan. King

145 Shlaim, Lion of Jordan, 238.
Hussein I expressed that “the loss of the capital of the Hashemite Kingdom [Jerusalem],” which formed an “integral and inseparable part of Jordan, is irreplaceable.”146 This loss not only hurt Jordan’s tourism industry but, it caused the Hashemite’s to lose the city that was crucial and an anchor to their creation and implementation of an Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan. Moreover, with the loss of Jerusalem, the Hashemites lost a vital connection to their claims of legitimacy as rightful rulers by losing their title as ‘the protectors of Muslim holy places,’ their physical manifestation of the Hashemite’s familial connection to the Prophet Muhammad and their inheritance of a true Arab-Islamic identity through this lineage. Following the loss of Jerusalem, King Hussein I was also forced to let go of the vision of a United Arab state, expressing that “I believe that the Arab world is never going to be a united nation, as had been hoped in the Arab Revolt...we have developed within each part of the Arab world our own identities, and unity in the future must be a unity of sovereign equals,”147 causing the entirety of the Arab-Islamic national and international identity to crumble.

Additionally, the loss of the West Bank caused problems for Jordan in other ways. The West Bank contained seventy percent of Jordan’s agricultural land and half of the kingdom’s industrial establishments, and its loss devastated Jordan’s economy. This put great financial strain on Jordan whose options for economic growth were limited from the nation’s inception due to its lack of usable land. As well, a new wave of 300,000 Palestinian refugees fled to Jordan after being uprooted from their homes in the West Bank during Israeli occupation. This new wave of Palestinian refugees caused further problems in Jordan as Palestinians and Jordanians were left competing for even more limited space and resources, a great difficulty due

147 King Hussein I, “The Hashemite Option,” 3.
to the loss of land, industry, agricultural production and finances the war had caused.  

Tensions came to a head when Civil War broke out in Jordan between September 1970 and July of 1971. After the loss of Jerusalem and the West Bank to Israel, the frustrated and angry Palestinians under the PLO continued to conduct guerilla raids into Israel in order to ‘liberate’ a Palestinian state and, the PLO threatened King Hussein I if he tried to interfere or stop them, even making repeated attempts on King Hussein I’s life. As a result, King Hussein I in September of 1970 ordered his Jordanian Armed Force to drive the PLO out of the country, an event known as Black September, and a short war was fought in Jordan between the Palestinians, represented by the Palestine Liberation Organization led by Yasser Arafat, and the native Jordanians, represented by the Jordanian Armed Force under the leadership of the Hashemite King, Hussein I. The war was meant to determine if the PLO or the Hashemite monarchy would rule Jordan. The Palestinian radicals lost the war and the PLO was expelled from Jordan, fleeing to Lebanon, and thousands of Palestinian civilians were also expelled or killed. The war between the Palestinians and Jordanians, both Arab and Muslim peoples, served to ultimately undermine and tear apart the idea of Arab unity and an Arab-Islamic national identity in Jordan as Arab brother was fighting Arab brother and Muslim companion was fighting Muslim companion. As well, the Arab world, which generally backed the plight of the Palestinians, largely isolated Jordan and King Hussein I throughout most of the 1970s. 

After the 1967 Six-day War and the 1970-1971 Black September and Jordanian Civil War, Jordan and King Hussein I once again found themselves at a crossroads. These events did serve to help Jordan get rid of some of the political tensions with Israel due to their expulsion of

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the PLO, and served to re-establish the Hashemite family as the political head of state for Jordan with their win in the Civil War but, these events also left Jordan isolated from the rest of the Arab world and in economic, political and social strains. Jordan was now faced with political isolation, being left out of major political developments in the region by other Arab countries, an economic downfall from the expenses of war, loss of land and few options for development and, social problems from a disgruntled civil society who had taken on an anti-Hussein sentiment as a show of their discontent with the present state of the country. All these problems threatened the security and stability of Jordan and Jordanian society and created a serious internal threat to King Hussein’s security and legitimacy. In the wake of the loss of Jerusalem and the expulsion of their Arab brothers, the Palestinians, King Hussein I saw the dissolution of the Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan, an identity he and his grandfather Abdullah I had worked extremely hard to establish and promote and, this left Jordanian society in a divisive state without an identity to provide cohesion.150

Facing these circumstances, King Hussein I knew he needed to politically stabilize, economically revitalize and socially and culturally unify the people of Jordan under his rule if Jordan was to survive. In order to accomplish these tasks, Hussein I sought to create a national identity that would foster the growth and development of Jordan internally, unite the Jordanian peoples, instilling in them a loyalty to the nation of Jordan, to each other as Jordanians and to their King, and, once again, connect himself with the united Jordanian people as the legitimate and rightful ruler of Jordan. King Hussein I embraced the idea of creating and fostering a localized, Organic Jordanian national identity and consciousness that confirmed the Jordanian self versus the Arab and Palestinian other, and sought to unify Jordan, and the Jordanian people,

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through a connection to their native, indigenous, Jordanian roots.  

For Jordan, creating an Organic Jordanian national identity meant linking the Jordanian peoples to their indigenous Jordanian past through a connection with their ancient origins, tribal heritage, and cultural traditions. This indigenous Jordanian national past was acquired from both the Nabataeans and the successor Bedouin of Jordan, both Arab peoples who are viewed as native, originating in and having historical ties to the land of Jordan, and who espouse the distinctive tribal heritage and ancient culture that permeated local Jordanian society. The Organic Jordanian national ideology sought to celebrate Jordan’s intrinsic ancient past and culture - symbolized by the Nabataean’s wealthy and powerful tribal kingdom that thrived in the Levant between the fourth century B.C. to the third century C.E. and had its own distinct language, culture and religion – and to exalt Jordan’s tribal heritage and culture, symbolized by the Nabataeans and the Bedouin of Jordan, the successors of the Nabataeans - whose tribes thrived on a hierarchy of loyalties and alliances based on kinship, lineage and descent, a system of conflict management and justice based on and maintained by these loyalties, and the ideals of collective responsibility, patriarchy, honor, valor and courage.

As the first native-born King of Jordan, Hussein I felt a strong connection to the Organic Jordanian national identity and he expressed support for and certainty in this national identity for Jordan, recalling that, “as the servant of Jordan, I [Hussein] always endeavor to give Jordanian citizens...confidence in themselves, which is their right. I want to give them pride in their country, to get them to believe in it and its future, and its role and duty as their homeland. Jordanians should be Jordanians first and their loyalty should be to their country and king.”

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151 Yapp, *The Near East since the First World War*, 298-299.

expresses his belief that the country of Jordan belongs to the Jordanian people, that king and
country work for the benefit of Jordanian citizens and that the land of Jordan is the true
homeland of the Jordanian people, who are in themselves the descendants of the Bedouin tribes
and Nabataean peoples, and he displays his desire to make Jordan a successful and prosperous
nation, built for, and on the backbone of, real Jordanians.  

During this Modern period, 1970-1997, King Hussein I and the Hashemite government
worked to politically stabilize and economically restore the country of Jordan, unite the
Jordanian people under a shared Organic Jordanian national identity, and legitimize Hussein’s
position as the rightful ruler of Jordan through this national identity and, one way he worked
towards these goals was through the use of archaeology. Hussein I sought to use archaeology as
a cultural tool and an agent to uncover the physical remains of the ancient Nabataean kingdom
and the tribal heritage and cultural traditions of the various Bedouin tribes in the land of Jordan.
These remains inscribed and endowed Jordan with a visible, genuine and specifically Jordanian
character, giving the land itself and the Jordanian peoples within it, a shared Jordanian history,
culture and identity by connecting Jordan and its people with their indigenous Nabataean and
Bedouin ancestors, civilizations and heritages of the past. As a result, King Hussein I promoted
and supported these archaeological excavations of local Jordanian sites to identify the territory of
the country as an organic Jordanian nation, to identify the Jordanian peoples as true Jordanian
nationals before any other identity, and, to identify himself, and his legacy as a Hashemite, as the
rightful and legitimate Jordanian ruler, worthy of ruling the great nation of Jordan and the
Jordanian people. 

153 King Hussein I, Uneasy Lies the Head, 131.
II. *Archaeological Sites, Scholarship and Source of the Modern Period*

With these major political events occurring within and without Jordan, there also occurred a major shift in the focus of archaeological excavations and scholarship from the study of Arab and Islamic sites that promoted an Arab-Islamic national identity for Jordan, to sites that highlighted the specifically Jordanian national heritage of Jordan, particularly the sites of Petra and Wadi Rum. During this Modern Period, 1970-1997, the Jordanian Hashemite government continued their control, authority and oversight over the archaeological explorations of the genuine Jordanian sites under the auspices of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and the Jordanian Ministry of Tourism.

With the Hashemite government in control of the archaeological excavations, the scholarship on the Jordanian sites continued to appear in many of the government-run and specifically Jordanian journals like *The Journal of Palestine Studies* and the *Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan*, and also continued to appear in more broad journals like *Middle East Journal, Archaeology, Near Eastern Archaeology* and the *International Journal of Heritage Studies*. Additionally, scholarship on archaeology and archaeological knowledge in Jordan during Modern Period was disseminated in a mix of genres, including the usual excavation reports, but also in more dense scholarly and academic articles, and even comprehensive books. The archaeologists working on the sites were majority Arab-Islamic, Jordanian and American archaeologists, with an assortment of other European archaeologists contributing as well. Some of the major Jordanian and Arab-Islamic archaeologists and authors were Salam Al-Mahadin, a Jordanian Professor of Media and Cultural Studies, Suleiman Farajat, a Jordanian archaeologist, Director of the Petra National Park and a Jordanian Department of Antiquities representative, and Nasser Ghassen, a Jordanian archaeologist and tourism manager.
The major American and other archaeologists and authors were Martha Shoup Joukowsky, an American professor of archaeology, art and anthropology, Philip Hammond, an American archaeologist and professor of anthropology, and W.J. Jobling, an Australian archaeologist. The archaeologists belonged mostly to the Christian and Muslim faiths.

The archaeologists worked under the auspices of mostly universities, such as Brown University, Utah University and Basel University, and under organizations like the Petra Archaeological Park and Foundation for Archaeology Abroad and the American Center of Oriental Research, all in close collaboration with, and oversight by, the Department of Antiquities for Jordan and the Jordanian Hashemite Government. These excavations at Petra and Wadi Rum had a high level of Jordanian involvement in the archaeology and, this displays that the Hashemite government of Jordan, and their emphasis, support and promotion of the excavations of these Jordanian archaeological sites during this Modern Period, used archaeology as a cultural tool to serve both political and national goals.

III. *Petra*

The archaeological investigations and historical writings produced during the Modern Period concentrated heavily on a few genuinely Jordanian archaeological sites in Jordan. The most significant archaeological site that was intensely excavated and studied during this period was the ancient Nabataean site of Petra in the southern Jordanian desert. The site of Petra, located in what is known as Wadi Musa, has been inhabited almost continuously since about 7000 B.C. by many different peoples, but the city reached its height and full glory when the Nabataean peoples inhabited it. The Nabataeans were an ancient, Arab peoples, living a tribal, nomadic, Bedouin lifestyle in the Hijaz, until they gradually began migrating north during the
sixth century B.C.E. Over time, they abandoned their nomadic ways and settled in the Levant and northern Arabia around the fourth century B.C.E., making their main settlement at Petra, in the heart of the southern Jordanian desert.  

The Nabataeans built for themselves a great empire in the deserts of Jordan. They conquered the arid climate, as they were highly skilled water engineers, building an extensive system of dams, canals and reservoirs to irrigate the land and make it a prosperous place. They also conquered the crucial trade routes that ran from the Levant to southern Arabian and the Nabataeans amassed great wealth and prestige and became a powerful commercial kingdom through facilitating trade between the Arabian, Assyrian, Egyptian, Levantine, Greek and Roman civilizations, dealing in all kinds of goods from spices, textiles, and metals to animals, medicines and luxury items. The Nabataeans were socially and politically organized into tribes and clans, governed by a king and ‘royal’ family, and they had their own distinct culture, speaking their own language, a particular dialect of ancient Arabic, before later adopting Aramaic. The Nabataeans also had a thriving religious culture, worshipping a pantheon of Pre-Islamic Arab gods and goddesses. The main deities were Dushara, the primary male god, his female trinity, Al-’Uzza, Allat and Manat, and, Obodas I, the famed king of the Nabataeans who ruled from 96-85 BC who became deified after his death due to his heroic feat of defeating the Seleucid ruler Antiochus XII’s attempt to invade Nabatea and giving his life for the cause.  

Most importantly, the Nabataeans were exceptional engineers, architects and artists, constructing great cities in their empire that displayed their power, intelligence, religiosity and wealth. Petra, the legendary ‘rose-city, half as old as time’ was established as their capital city

157 Hammond, “Petra, the Timeless,” 22.
around 312 B.C. and was breathtakingly grand and impressive. The city served as both a commercial center, controlling the trade routes of the region, and a religious center, being a site of pilgrimage, religious gathering and worship in the region. Petra was truly a product of the Nabataean people as they specifically made it their own and marked it with their distinct architectural and artistic style by half-building and half-carving the city into the existing rock. The Nabataeans constructed grandiose and monumental monasteries, temples, mausoleums, theaters, tombs, street facades, and dwellings, meticulously carving these structures and all their details out of the solid sandstone rock that surrounded the city and fortified it with its numerous passages and gorges. These constructions are considered architectural miracles and Petra is unlike any other city in the world due to its unique half-carved structures.¹⁵⁸

Over the centuries, as the Nabataeans grew in wealth and power, they attracted the attention of their neighbors. The Seleucids managed to gain control over the region in the second century B.C.E., though the Nabataeans remained essentially untouched and independent under their rule and were also greatly influenced by these Hellenistic neighbors, which is reflected in the blended Nabataean and Hellenistic architectural elements of some of the structures in Petra. Eventually the Romans conquered the Nabataeans and Petra in the second century C.E., and they claimed the kingdom for their Empire and incorporated traditional Roman architectural designs into the city of Petra. The Nabataeans eventually left the area and abandoned the city of Petra in the sixth century C.E. due to the decline in trade, but they constructed a truly impressive city, with their own distinctive Nabataean style, at Petra whose grandeur is still awe-inspiring today.¹⁵⁹

Though Petra contains ruins from many different eras and had historical and cultural

value to many different peoples, during the Modern Period in Jordan, archaeological excavation at Petra sought to “concentrate on the Nabataean period in its most developed state and focused work on the ruins of the ancient Nabataean city-center and monumental structures with special interest in...uncovering Nabataean culture, art, religion, architecture and technology.”\textsuperscript{160} With the focus of uncovering the remains of the ancient Nabataean civilization and their culture at Petra, there were many excavations carried out in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, on multiple monumental and smaller structures in the city. Different American, Arab and European universities and archaeologists carried out all these excavations and all were done under the supervision and auspices of the Jordan Department of Antiquities.

\textit{Al-Khazneh: The Treasury}

The archaeological excavations at Petra during this period were incredibly important for uncovering the Nabataean cultural heritage in Jordan. One of the main monumental structures at Petra, the famous ‘Treasury,’ Al-Khazneh, known as the “elaborate architectural wonder carved directly out of a sandstone rock face,”\textsuperscript{161} underwent excavations during the Modern Period. The Petra Archaeological Park, a Jordanian organization, under the Department of Antiquities, conducted the excavations and Jordan undertook excavations on Al-Khazneh with the aim of “attempting to solve the controversy regarding the nature of the Al-Khazneh.”\textsuperscript{162} The Treasury, constructed in the first century BC, is most famous for its grand and ornate facade that combined Hellenistic and Nabataean architectural elements. The facade consisted of a basic Hellenistic layout: it consisted of a lower order that was a six-columned portico with a main entrance in the

\textsuperscript{160} Hammond, “Cult and Cupboard at Nabataean Petra,” 31-32.
center of the columns that opened on either side into a spacious room upon entry, and had a small triangular pediment which sat atop the portico and, the upper order, which consisted of a broken pediment interrupted by a rotunda *tholos* in the middle with indented niches between these elements. The whole structure was riddled with statues and sculptures of Nabataean gods and goddesses. The lower pediment was crowned with a disk between horns surrounded by ears of wheat, which were symbols of the Nabataean goddess al-Uzza, the goddess of love and immortality. The upper, broken, pediment had a sculpture of the God Tyche, the Fortune of the City, in front of the rotunda, sculptures of Amazons bearing axes ornamenting the side niches of the rotunda and the front and side niches of the broken pediments, and winged Victories (Nike) decorated the indented rear niches between the *tholos* and pediments. The Eagle of Zeus, identified with the Nabataean God Dushara, crowned the broken pediments and the rotunda is topped by a symbolic funerary urn, believed to complete the decorative scheme whose elements reinforce the symbolism of the death of a hero and the victory and glory of his city.”

164 Wright, “The Khazneh at Petra,” 118.
While this magnificent facade of the treasury had been uncovered before the Modern Period, archaeologists focused their excavations on “uncovering part of the paved courtyard [in front of the Treasury] that is an extension of the Siq, the passageway that led to the Treasury, understanding its nature and relation to the Khazneh and, investigating the ‘rock-cut shelters’ to the north of the monument [Treasury] which presented an indication that there were remains still buried [in them].”¹⁶⁵ Excavators revealed a series of tombs in the area north of the Treasury, respectively named the “Incense tomb, the Window tomb, the Staircase Tomb, and the Obliterated Tomb,” depending on what the excavators discovered within them and, archaeologists were able to determine that the remains found inside the tombs were from the beginning of the first century AD., roughly around the same time as the facade of the Treasury was constructed. The excavations of the courtyard revealed remains of “a paved courtyard,

floors, staircases, walls, dams, and water drainage system,” all dating to after the building of Al-Khazneh’s great façade in the first century AD. From these finds, archaeologists believe that they indicate that the Treasury “was a funerary temple-tomb that attracted many pilgrims, who gathered in the large courtyard and practiced religious rites and burnt large amount of incense in honor of the dead.”\textsuperscript{166} From the discovery of infrastructure, like the paved courtyard, staircases, and water systems, archaeologists surmised that these structures were built to accommodate large numbers of pilgrims that came to worship, practice their religion and honor the dead at Petra.

Additionally, the facade’s adornment with the statues of Nabataean gods and goddesses and funerary sculptures and the large amount of smaller tombs constructed next to the larger funerary Treasury, coupled with the infrastructure to accommodate a large number of worshippers, led many archaeologists to believe that the Treasury was, in fact, not a Treasury, but both a tomb, to honor the Nabataean king, or kings, of the city, and a temple to worship the Nabataean’s gods and goddesses. The Treasury, and all these other archaeological discoveries of the Modern Period, were constructed within the forty year reign of Aretas IV, a Nabataean king, leading archaeologists to believe that Al-Khazneh was the resting place of a great king, maybe Aretas III (85-62 BC), or a mausoleum to the famed Obodas I, who died fighting the Seleucids. The Treasury at Petra was a place where people were meant to gather, to worship and honor the Nabataean’s gods and mortal kings, or ‘earthly gods’ and, to recognize this grand, architecturally impressive, monumental structure as a “display of the glory of the city of Petra, cut and built from the desert landscape, and the grandeur and power of the ancient Nabataean civilization.”\textsuperscript{167}

\textit{Al-Deir: The Monastery}

\textsuperscript{166} Farajat, “Excavations of the Plaza at the Treasury in Petra,” 18.
The largest monumental structure at Petra, the Monastery, known as Al-Deir, also underwent some smaller archaeological work throughout this Modern Period. Carved entirely out of the red sandstone from the mountain wall, Al-Deir, built in the first century AD, sits eight hundred sets up the mountain in Petra in a remote gorge. Similar in structure to the Treasury, the Monastery consists of a solid lower level with six semi-engaged columns, the main entrance to the monastery, which is flanked by two columns and topped by a small pediment, and two smaller carved out niches flanking the entrance. The upper level is, like the Treasury, a broken pediment interrupted by a rotunda and there are two single columns that flank the outer sides of the broken pediment. Unlike the Treasury, Al-Deir has very austere ornamentation: it contained no statues and the capitals of the columns were a basic design with a linear drum and plain, horned capitals. The only real ornamentation that can be found is in the upper level frieze above the columns of the broken pediment, where there is an alternating triglyph and disc pattern and, atop the rotunda, where an urn-shaped finial crowns the structure and is clearly visible against the skyline. This plain, but elegant and aesthetic architectural design of “Al-Deir exhibits the Nabataean Classical style of architecture…a style native to these ancient peoples.”

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During these excavations at Al-Deir, “a huge area was cleared in front of the monument,” and it was concluded by excavators that this was used for great congregations of people as “the surrounding hills of the monastery form a great natural amphitheater.” As well, not far from Al-Deir, archaeologists uncovered “a wall full of caves and cisterns,” presumably for large numbers of people to get water, bath, perform religious rites and live in when congregations would gather. Also discovered during these excavations was “a carving showing two camels and men,” which was interpreted to symbolize travel or a pilgrimage being made to Al-Deir in Petra. Additionally, one of the most important finds of this period at Al-Deir was “an inscription referring to ‘the symposium of Obodas the God.’” This inscription was a major discovery, as archaeologists believed that Al-Deir may have been a “meeting place for members of the cult of Obodas, and possibly a tomb used for the descendants of Obodas I,” Petra’s great king who defeated the Seleucid invaders. Overall, the evidence of a huge courtyard and discovery of the caves and cisterns, coupled with the carving of the camels and the discovery of the inscription, led
archaeologists to conclude that the Nabataeans used Al-Deir as “the site of large-scale ceremonies for worshipping Obodas and other Nabataean Gods.” The excavations at Al-Deir helped archaeologists determine the specific function of this impressive monumental structure, and at Petra, Al-Deir is considered “a pure example of the distinctive Nabataean architectural style that ‘crowned’ the city of Petra and radiated the grandeur of these ancient, Jordanian peoples.”

The Great Temple and the Temple of the Winged Lions

Major excavations were also done at two of Petra’s biggest free-standing monumental structures, the Great Temple and the Temple of the Winged Lions, two great examples of Nabataean architecture, art and culture. Archaeological excavations at the Great Temple were undertaken by Brown University between 1992 and 1998, under the direction of Martha Joukowsky, and were implemented under the auspices of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities. The Great Temple, built in the first century B.C., is one of the main archaeological and architectural components of central Petra. The temple’s main architectural components were uncovered during these excavations and consisted of “three terraced components...planned as a single unit, with the lowest terrace, or propylaeum (monumental entryway), the middle terrace, or Lower temenos (sacred lower terrace), with monumental east and west stairways, and the Upper temenos - the sacred enclosure for the Temple Proper.”

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Excavations of the Propylaeum uncovered a two-story building, which enclosed the front of the temple precinct, and its function was as an entryway to reach the temple forecourt on the second level. The main architectural elements of the Propylaeum consisted of thirty steps ascending to the Lower Temenos with columns that flanked the stairway on either side. In the Propylaeum, archaeologists discovered “a shrine with aniconic Nabataean double standing stones - finely sculpted white limestone depictions venerating the supreme Nabataean god, Dushara. The shrine and Dushara blocks, also known as betyls, housed the spiritual essence of the deity. A horned altar associated with these blocks was also discovered, and clearly indicates that this entryway had a cultic use.” These religious elements of the propylaeum suggest a direct connection between the religious nature of this entryway and the Great Temple precinct that sat above it.  

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Figure 1.13 Architectural Layout of the Great Temple at Petra

In the Lower temenos (terrace) area, investigators unearthed the “spectacular, roofed triple colonnades” that flanked the lower temenos on the east and west side and led into “apsidal exedrae, semi-circle niches,” which in antiquity were probably decorated with sculptures. Beneath these colonnades the archaeologists uncovered vaulted cryptoporticus (subterranean passages), which functioned to support the terrace. A scattering of “large white sandstone hexagonal paving tiles” were discovered, which were believed to have completely covered the floor of the lower temenos, making it “an elegant plaza from which the astonishing temple comes
into full view and can be approached.”

The Upper Temenos functioned as a frame that surrounded the sides and rear of the Great Temple proper, separating the Temple from the rest of the site. Unearthed in the Upper Temenos area was an “above-ground cistern and small reservoir...a paved south passageway where the relief of a sword deity had been carved into the rear bedrock...and a series of structures including an anteroom, a chapel and the so-called Baroque room with frescoed walls in the south passageway.” In the chapel room, excavators uncovered in-situ decorative plaster, consisting of “a purple border surrounding a red painted panel...[and in the chapel south wall] was a niche with a prepared surface for a sacred object...and the flooring of the chapel consisted of wet-laid small limestone hexagonal paving stones.” The Baroque room was an incredible discovery as archaeologists unearthed a room filled with “delicately designed painted and gilded plaster frescoes dating to the first century C.E.” Also found was a residential quarter consisting of “eleven rooms of interconnecting caves appointed with columns and arched walls...and recovered here were masses of unpainted and figuratively painted Nabataean ceramics.”

Uncovering the Great Temple itself made for some fascinating finds during the archaeological work. The temple is what is known as tetrastyle in antis - four columns in front, with the space between the central two columns being greater than the spacing between the two central and two end columns. Behind these columns were side and back anta walls, which when unearthed, were found to contain “square pilasters - rectangular columns - with relief sculptures of the goddess Tyche-Fortuna, the patron deity and protector of the city, who is carrying a cornucopia. These columns and walls were stuccoed and painted in red and white or yellow and

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These columns and walls supported the lintel entablature and the triangular pediment of the temple and, they rested on a forecourt floor, decorated with small hexagonal pavers. The forecourt had a stairway that ascended to the temple’s broad, deep, pronaos (entry), which was marked by two columns and another pair of sidewalls (antae pilasters). In a later Nabataean phase of rebuilding, the interior of the temple was converted into a “semicircular un-roofed theater with tiers of seating for about 640 people, with inter-columnar walls constructed between the free-standing columns and appointed with arched doors and windows, which created lateral corridors and walkways that became part of the architectural fabric of the temple.”

The archaeologists uncovered many Nabataean artistic elements to the Great Temple, such as “architectural stucco on the face of the walls, suggesting that the surfaces were at one time decorated with plaster that was painted in reds, yellows, greens, blues and purples but also with variegated designs and gilded for accents.” The richness of the remaining fragments of stucco that was uncovered “conveys the passionate Nabataean taste for stucco.” Archaeologists also found evidence that many of the walls of the temple that were plastered and painted had intricate designs like “enclosed cassettes and were bordered by classically ornamented stucco moldings with bead and reel, egg and tongue and dentalia designs. Many gilded stucco fragments were discovered with delicate, skillfully executed flowers, tendrils, leaves, partial inscriptions and human faces.” The temple column capitals were Nabataean adaptations of the classical Corinthian capital. The lower order of columns had “a profusion of bunched acanthus leaves,” while the upper order of column capitals were “crowned with a proliferation of deeply carved

twisting vines, blooming hibiscus flowers, pine cones in high relief and wavy tendrils flourishing with compact curvilnear volutes.” These column capitals truly “represent the Nabataean countryside...and [they convey a] native Nabataean spirit with classical traditions.”

The capitals of the columns in the Lower Temenos were especially unique as archaeologists excavated capitals that were “carved in a two-part single order of the ionic tradition, but contained unparalleled Asian elephant heads in place of the usual carved volutes...[with] each elephant face [having] a character and personality of its own and they represented victory and power.”

These elephants were limited to only a few Nabataean sites and their use “truly represents the innovation of Nabataean artistry [which] integrated new motifs into established architectural traditions - [and] recognized the degree to which Nabataean sculpture created novelty from heterogeneous elements...[which made] the blending of so many disparate influences a uniquely Nabataean style.”

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Figure 1.14 Asian Elephant Columns on the Great Temple at Petra

The Great Temple was truly an architectural feat by the ancient Nabataean civilization. Archaeologists posited that the remains of the imposing and magnificent structure “was both the principal audience hall for the kings of Petra, serving as a site of both governance and entertainment for the Nabataean monarchy, and a major religious center in Petra.”\(^{183}\) The creation of the monumental Great Temple is “indeed a hallmark of the shift from their nomadic past,” and it is a “structure representing the finest workmanship of the Nabataeans and their distinctive native style, which owed much to the Hellenistic world, but represents a statement that is peculiarly Nabataean.”\(^{184}\) The Great Temple monument represents a “unique, indigenous, Nabataean tradition,”\(^{185}\) that is specific to the city of Petra in Jordan and the Nabataean peoples and represents their eclectic ancient civilization and its wealth, power and prosperity.

During this Modern Period, another free-standing temple structure, known as the Temple of the Winged Lions, was also uncovered by archaeological excavations. The American Expedition to Petra from Utah University, under the direction of Philip C. Hammond and the supervision of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, started work on this site in 1974 and are still excavating to this day. Built during the first century AD, the Temple of the Winged Lions was a religious structure with much of its original decoration, architectural details and cult practice still preserved in its ruins. Excavations revealed, “the floorplan of the Nabataean temple [that] took shape as a square...with dressed and riveted side walls and a plain front.” Inside the temple structure, it was found that the walls were broken by “semi-engaged columns forming wall decoration and between these columns were deep niches...and down each side of the temple there was also a set of free-standing columns.” In the rear of the building, a built up structure

\(^{183}\) Joukowsky and Basile, “More Pieces in the Petra Great Temple Puzzle,” 52.
was uncovered, and it was labeled by the excavators as ‘the platform,’ and there was evidence of a “surface flanked on all sides by semi-engaged columns which rose to become free standing ones…and the platform was probably the raised floor of an altar, the pedestal for a cult image, and an actual platform for conducting ritual ceremonies.” In its rear wall was set a niche, closed by doors, which served as a cupboard and storage place for the ceremonies involved.¹⁸⁶

Figure 1.15 The Ruins of the Temple of the Winged Lions at Petra

All along the temple facades, walls and columns, there was great decoration that was revealed. Excavators discovered “roof tiles, burned beams, board flat fragments of friezes, large chunks of egg-and-dart and dentilled moldings, grotesque ‘tragic masks,’ along with finely modeled plaster male and female faces which had been placed into the friezes with wooden plugs… and tantalizing pieces of floral and figured paintings.” The capitals of the columns were carved on two separate drum blocs with “the lower ones being ‘conventional’ acanthus-leaved ‘Corinthian’ type columns but the upper ones were the creation of the Nabataeans alone: a strange garden of flowers, pine cones, palm branches and intertwined tendrils, with a carved

¹⁸⁶ Hammond, “Cult and Cupboard at Nabataean Petra,” 32.
head replacing, in good Nabataean style, the flower that marks the center of the usual Corinthian column.” These columns were very similar to the ones excavated at the Great Temple complex, and like those, reflected a particular Nabataean artistic style. Interestingly, for the columns, in place of the expected volutes on such capitals, “the Nabataean artisans brought to life winged lions crouching upon spreading acanthus leaves...[their] wings gracefully curled back and down, these regal animals looked down upon the worshippers below with degrees of ferocity ranging from that of a soon-to-pounce beast to the unconcerned state of a pussy cat.” Excavators also recovered a Nabataean inscription that read ‘the goddess,’ and painted moldings of dolphins cavorting alone. These discoveries, along with the winged lions on the capitals of the columns all “symbolically represented the goddess Atargatis, also known as Al-’Uzza, the ‘people’s’ goddess and the fertility goddess of the day, known to be the consort of the Nabataean desert deity, Dushares.” Excavators believed that this temple of the winged lions was a dedication to the goddess Al-‘Uzza, to worship her for good fertile harvests and a fertile civilization.

The archaeologists also uncovered many smaller finds like “bits of copper chain that belonged to hanging lamps, small copper bells that tinked to the rhythm of services and evidence of color on every side in the form of plaster fragments from fresco panels, moldings and other decorative elements - reds, browns, blacks, stark whites, lavenders, blues, and yellows often accented with gilding.” The 1977, excavations unearthed remains of related facilities of the temple complex, such as “a worship center, residential quarters, a metalworking workshop, an oil workshop, a marble workshop, a Souvenir workshop and a painter’s workshop with in-situ

188 Hammond, “Cult and Cupboard at Nabataean Petra,” 34.
189 Hammond, “Cult and Cupboard at Nabataean Petra,” 34.
pottery vessels, raw pigments, mixed paints and paint-binding materials.”

The Temple of the Winged Lions dates to the reign of Petra’s greatest and most energetic king, Aretas IV, and the elements of the structure “blended together to create religious awe and the splendor of the ancient gods.” The Temple serves as a window to the past, revealing the creativity and artistic innovations of the ancient Nabataeans. “The temple is a major monument to the past glory of Nabataean culture and achievement...displaying all elements of Nabataean architecture, art, religious and secular life, political rise and fall,” and its archaeological recovery reveals, “Petra’s vast historical and cultural heritage...[which] must be done if we are ever to fully understand the cultural and archaeological history of Jordan.”

*Domestic Discoveries*

At Petra, there were also many archaeological excavations in the Modern Period that focused on smaller domestic findings, as opposed to the monumental structures, that sought to uncover the everyday life of the average Nabataean Bedouin peoples in the city of Petra. Starting in 1988, Basel University, under the patronage of the Swiss-Liechtenstein Foundation for Archaeology Abroad and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, had group of archaeologists excavate the residential area known as Al-Zantur, located southeast of the Great Temple. Excavators discovered a “first century CE, Nabataean residential mansion.” This structure was “a two-story mansion that towered above the surrounding buildings and offered its inhabitants spectacular views of the southern landscape of Petra.” On the slop of the mansion, remains of densely packed, compact urban residences and an architectural complex comprised of an altar and a small temple were discovered, believed to be housing for the less wealthy and, also

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190 Hammond, “Petra, the Timeless,” 23.
191 Hammond, “Petra, the Timeless,” 25.
discovered, was the local shrine of this residential district.\footnote{192}

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\caption{Layout of Al-Zantur Mansion at Petra}
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The mansion complex is “comprised of three main functional areas: an east wing of servants’ rooms, the central and southern reception areas and luxury rooms, and a west wing of private rooms.” The interior of the mansion revealed outstanding interior decoration, complete with “mural paintings, painted gilded stucco depicting large-scale geometric motifs with rhomboids, triangles, and squares, painted in green blue and red marble imitation on white background, and black-and-white mosaics.” This residential complex provided insight into the domestic architecture of Petra and the way of life of the Nabataean urban middle-class.\footnote{193}

Also excavated during the Modern Period were two domestic, Nabataean tombs on the North Ridge of Petra. Excavated by the American Center of Oriental Research (ACOR) under Megan A. Perry and in collaboration with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, the project

\footnote{Kolb, “Excavating a Nabataean Mansion,” 263.}
“uncovered the entrances to two Nabataean-period shaft tombs.” The first excavated tomb had been disturbed a number of times but, “contained the remains of four individuals, an adult man, a woman, an infant, and a four year old child.” Also discovered inside the tomb was a corpus of ceramics containing both painted and unpainted wares, utilitarian items likely used in funerary feasts honoring its occupants, storage jars, strap-handled pitchers and dipper juglets, bowls and round-bottomed cooking pots. As well, archaeologists discovered “fine ware items including classical Nabataean eggshell-thin bowls and vertical-rim serving dishes with elegant painted designs, thin-walled, painted cups, and an exquisite double-handled chalice with a painted interior.”194 In the second tomb, the remains of thirty-six individuals were uncovered, with eight of the burials still in situ. Many of the remains were of individuals of different ages and sexes placed in the tomb at the same time, and the remains of the other twenty-eight individuals in the tomb were found co-mingled and scattered, thought to have resulted from human and natural disturbances.195

All the evidence taken the tombs provides “a glimpse of death and burial rites in Nabataean society,” and allowed for a better picture of “Nabataean mortuary practices in the urban center of Petra… with their funerary practices displaying a variety of interment techniques, having communal, shaft and primary cist graves…and evidence for multiple concurrent burials, suggesting a fatal event…or reuse of tombs at later dates, for ritual or wealth reasons.” These discoveries showed that “the Nabataeans did not adhere to a strict mortuary code,” and, the discovery of a lot of dishware and ceramic items in the tombs also offered insight into the idea of “funerary feasts [at Petra], which served a primary role in Nabataean funerary rituals.” The

excavation of these tombs displays that the Nabataean mortuary customs were, like their art, traditions and society as a whole, a blend of practices and customs from many different areas, but this blend is what made their funerary rituals uniquely Nabataean.  

While Petra contains archaeological ruins that are viewed in the present day as being valuable to many different civilizations, Petra is the site that “epitomizes the history and culture of the Nabataeans…[who made] Petra one of the greatest commercial, religious and cultural centers of the ancient Middle East” and, the city serves as “a testament to a long departed, sophisticated, Nabataean civilization.” King Hussein I and the Hashemite government, who were deeply involved in the excavations at Petra, used archaeology as a cultural tool and agent to uncover the ruins of the Jordanian city of Petra, to reveal the physical embodiments of Jordan’s indigenous ancient history and native cultural heritage and to symbolize Jordan’s connection to the great Nabataean civilization and kingdom of the past. King Hussein I promoted and supported these excavations at Petra, believing that, by unveiling “the uniquely Nabataean monuments at Petra [that] were carved into the ‘living rock’ [of] the natural landscape of Jordan [that Petra would] inscribe the glorious Nabataean civilization and culture into the very soul of the land,” giving the landscape of Jordan a visibly Jordanian character. He believed that uncovering the city of “Petra, considered the national symbol of Jordan, [with its] ancient past and its native people,” would connect the Jordanian peoples with their land and nation, and would unify the peoples of Jordan under the creation of an Organic Jordanian national identity by means of a visibly and tangibly shared indigenous, ancient, Jordanian history, peoples and

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198 Hammond, “Petra, the Timeless,” 18.
The Nabataean period and its cultural development - its transition to statehood, commercial expansion, intercultural contacts, architectural and artistic invention, technological development, linguistics and culture - is by far the most significant period in Petra, and in Jordan’s, history, and it gave Jordan an ancient, classical past with native and indigenous peoples, akin to Greece’s Athenians and Italy’s Romans, that is all their own and from which, an Organic Jordanian national identity could be built.\(^{200}\) In the wake of the formation of this localized Jordanian national identity, King Hussein I sought legitimacy of rule over Jordan through proving himself to be truly Jordanian by connecting with this new national identity. King Hussein I stated:

“Jordan itself is a beautiful country. It is wild, with limitless deserts where the Bedouin roam, but the mountains of the north are clothed in green forests, and where the Jordan river flows, it is fertile and warm in winter. Jordan has a strange, haunting beauty and a sense of timelessness. Dotted with the ruins of Empires once great, it is the last resort of yesterday in the world of tomorrow. I love every inch of it. I love Amman, where I was born, and which I have seen grow from a township. I am still awed and excited each time I set eyes on the ancient city of Petra...[and] above all I feel at home in the tribal black tents in the desert.”\(^{201}\)

Hussein appealed to the notion of being the first Hashemite monarch to be born on Jordanian soil, in the capital, Amman, and expressed his deep love for all of the different parts of Jordan in order to convey his being a true native Jordanian, to displace the fact that his family, the Hashemites, were originally from Saudi Arabia, and to tie himself to Jordanian soil and connect to all the native Jordanians of the country, whether they are from the desert tribes or the urban centers of the country. Additionally, King Hussein I specifically recalls his love of Petra, its significance as a genuine, Jordanian site, and his relationship with the site recounting that:

\(^{201}\) King Hussein I, Uneasy Lies the Head, 4.
“The most amazing sight in Jordan is the red-rose city of Petra. I never tire of taking this excursion to this ancient city, unique in all the world, with its home in iconic desert of Jordan. You leave the hard-surfaced desert highway at Ma’an...Horses or mules are necessary for the hour’s ride through the narrow Siq that for centuries kept the Nabataeans of Petra safe from invasion, at the height of their splendor, which started around 300 B.C...In this constantly winding, twisting gorge, sandstone cliffs, of varied and striking colors and fantastic shapes, tower three hundred feet overhead, at points that seem to meet. An aqueduct chiseled from the rock next to the path reminds one that this was an ancient city whose greatest problem was water, the supply of which had to be defended at all costs. The first magnificent rock-cut tombs of the city appears suddenly, in a burst of strong sunlight. Indeed, rose-red, incredibly preserved in the ageless rock, this is but a forerunner of the splendid array of temples, palaces, churches, tombs and the incomparable treasury to be explored in Petra. The city has a special place in my heart, as I see the history of my great people unfold in its ruins.”

King Hussein recounts the splendor and wonder of Petra, and specifically mentions that its home is in Jordan, making the site a permanent fixture of Jordan’s landscape and an important part of Jordan’s own history and, showing the Nabataeans to be true Jordanians and the ancestors of modern Jordanians. He makes the connection between the idea that the Nabataean’s history and Petra’s history is Jordan’s ancient history and, he further states that Jordan’s history is his own history: He feels a personal and emotional attachment to the site as he gazes upon the creation of his and his people’s ancestors and, this connection reflects upon the king’s own ‘Jordanian-ness’ and his relationship to the people through the identity of being Jordanian. The king’s establishment of his identity as a native Jordanian through his birth in Jordan, his love of his country, and his personal attachment to the indigenous Nabataean-Jordanians and their history serves to legitimize Hussein I’s place as the rightful ruler of Jordan and allows him to propagate an Organic Jordanian national identity for his country during this time.

IV. Wadi Rum

The archaeological excavation and scholarship of this period also concentrated on

202 King Hussein I, Uneasy Lies the Head, 279.
another specifically Jordanian site, the site of Wadi Rum, the home of some of Jordan’s most notable and influential Bedouin tribes. Wadi Rum, situated in Southern Jordan near the border of Saudi Arabia, is both a natural and cultural archaeological site, displaying spectacularly unique desert scenery, created by millennia of geological and climatic processes, and containing within it, the archaeological remains of thousands of years of human interaction with the desert landscape and cultural heritage.²⁰³

![Figure 1.17 Wadi Rum](image)

Permanent human occupation of Wadi Rum started in the Paleolithic period, about nineteen thousand years ago and remained constant through the Iron Age period, to about fifth century BC. Semi-nomadic peoples, who thrived off of a combination of agriculture, animal husbandry and herding, and followed the water of reservoirs and channels from place to place, inhabited the area. By the fourth century BC, tribes from northern-Arabia known as the Thamud peoples, who bred camels and goats and practiced irrigated agriculture, controlled Wadi Rum. Thamudic inscriptions, an ancient north Arabian dialect known from pre-Islamic times, marked

the ownership of this area by these tribes during that time. Shortly after, the Nabataeans began to settle and take ownership of the area of Wadi Rum, co-existing with the Thamud peoples. From their base in Petra, the Nabataeans controlled the trade routes linking the Arabian Peninsula to the rest of the Levant and Mediterranean and Wadi Rum became an outpost on these trading routes between Arabia and Petra. Numerous ruins and inscriptions, dating to between the first century BC and the first century AD, display religious and commercial activities and were left on the landscape of Wadi Rum as evidence of the Nabataeans’ settlement there.204

Wadi Rum was largely overlooked after the Nabataeans left the area when trade declined, but through the Roman, Byzantine and Islamic periods at the site, a continued pastoral population, evidenced by petroglyphs and inscriptions dating to the fourth century AD and after, continued to live and thrive in Wadi rum. The Bedouin that inhabited Wadi Rum were the descendants of the Nabataeans and they led a semi-nomadic life, moving between different water sources, working caravans that carried goods across the desert, and living by a tribal/clan-based societal structure, maintaining a patriarchal hierarchy and system of loyalty based on kinship and ties of lineage. The area remained largely untouched and inhabited only by these Bedouin tribes until World War I, when the Great Arab Revolt passed through Wadi Rum, introducing the area to the industrialized outside world. Following the establishment of the British Mandate, the creation of state borders, the building of schools and army outposts and the rising tourism industry all limited the movements of the Bedouin tribesmen and their nomadic lifestyles became threatened by steady employment, pastoralism and agriculture took over the area.205

During the Modern Period, the natural landscape of Wadi Rum, with its incredible rock formations and land features attracted a lot of attention. Many geographical and archaeological

204 UNESCO, “Wadi Rum Protected Area (Jordan),” 41.
205 UNESCO, “Wadi Rum Protected Area (Jordan),” 41-42.
surveys were carried out to catalogue the outstanding and peculiar landforms of Wadi Rum. The surveyors described Wadi Rum as an area of “flat, sandy valley beds bounded by towering red sandstone cliffs and rock formations,” and catalogued countless “narrow gorges, natural arches, towering cliffs, massive landslides, and honeycomb weathering features and caverns” which created a brilliant contrast between high and low geological landforms in the landscape. These land formations have evolved and developed under the influence of various factors, such as tectonic activities, lithology, surface processes, erosion and weathering and these various shapes and formations are hallmarks that make the land unique. The diversity and massive size of the Wadi’s land formations comprised excellent examples of various components of desert geomorphic systems that were described as dramatic and related a grand mosaic of colors that added aesthetic value to the landscape and, Wadi Rum was recognized as “a superlative and iconic desert landscape.”

Additionally, archaeological excavations were carried out at Wadi Rum on a number of different remains and ruins, however the focus of these excavations concentrated on “uncovering the Nabataean ruins, and the remains of their Bedouin successors.” Excavations carried out in the 1980s and 1990s by the University of Victoria, Canada under the advisement and supervision of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, focused on the Temple of Allat, a Nabataean goddess, and its adjacent bath complex. During excavations, archaeologists uncovered “a Nabataean temple at Rum built between in reign of Aretas IV, 9BC and 40AD, the height of the Nabataean Empire in the region,” and they discovered that it was built on the site of an earlier Thamudic temple, a temple belonging to the Thamud Bedouin tribes of northern Arabian who spoke their distinctive Arabian dialect. The remains of the small temple were uncovered,

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including its walls, free standing and engaged columns and a raised platform that was most likely an altar or shrine in what is known as the cella of the temple. Excavators also uncovered a “thamudic inscription mentioning the tribe of ‘Ad…on a stone reused in the second building phase,” which allowed for accurate dating of the temple and led excavators to believe the ‘Ad tribe, a tribe also mentioned in the Quran, was a powerful and sacred tribe that inhabited Wadi Rum in the fourth century BC.\textsuperscript{207}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{temple_of_allat_at_wadi_rum}
\caption{Temple of Allat at Wadi Rum}
\end{figure}

As well as being a cultic center, the temple was thought to have functioned as a civic and administrative center due to the discovery of both a villa and bath complex near it. The villa had private rooms attached and “it was built and decorated in a fairly luxurious style, with painted pilaster walls of red, yellow and blue,” leading archaeologists to believe that the villa was the residence of wealth individuals, maybe the residence of wealthy Nabataean individuals who carried out the administrative affairs of the day. As well, a Nabataean bath complex was unearthed near the Temple of Allat and dates to roughly the same at time as the temple. The

baths are “clearly built by the Nabataeans, with the appropriation of the Roman model,” and were used as communal and civic gathering centers. Also uncovered by archaeologists was “a small Nabataean shrine with inscriptions and dedications to several deities, including ‘Allat, al-Uzza, al-Kutba, Balshamin and Dushara,” highlighting the religious and cultic practices of the Nabataeans. As well, a small Nabataean building, named Um El-Qaseir, with Nabataean and Thamudic inscriptions whose function is not clear, was unearthed, along with some major Nabataean hydraulic installations, several dams and caravan outposts between Nabataean settlements.²⁰⁸

Uncovering and cataloguing the thousands of inscriptions and rock art in Wadi Rum was also a focus of the Modern Period excavations. The university of Lyon and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities undertook excavations in the 1980s and 1990s to survey and excavate the inscriptions and rock art at Wadi Rum. Many different peoples and cultures have left their mark on the site as evidenced by the more than “twenty-five thousand rock carvings, twenty thousand epigraphs and countless petroglyphs and archaeological ruins” that were uncovered on the boulders and rock faces of cliffs and hills. Most of the epigraphs, or engraved inscriptions, date from about the fourth century BC to the fourth century CE. The earliest of the textual inscriptions are in the Thamudic language from the Thamud tribe and they indicate early literacy among the pastoral nomads of the region. Numerous inscriptions were also uncovered in the pre-Arabic Nabataean and Aramaic scripts, with a good number of later inscriptions appearing in Arabic. Inscriptions ranged in function from being dedicatory inscriptions to pre-Islamic deities, such as Allat, usually in Thamudic or Nabataean script, to being personal names, signatures or genealogies associated with individuals skilled in hunting, fighting or water storage, to funerary

inscriptions.\textsuperscript{209}

Often found along with the inscriptions and epigraphs were petroglyphs, or engraved pictures, representing human and animal figures in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic forms. The most common pictorial scenes were of “hunting, collective fighting or duels, domesticated animals with humans, dance scenes or ritual practices, erotic scenes and parturition, feet and hands or abstract motifs and tribal mark.” These petroglyphs depict the daily lives, activities and cultural traditions of the Bedouin tribes, including the Thamudic, Nabataean and Arabic tribes, who created them and, their location on the faces of nearly every kind of rock and sandstone formation spanning the entirety of Wadi Rum attests to the nomadic, mobile lifestyle of the Bedouin, the original, indigenous Jordanians, and their close interaction with the desert in which they lived and thrived. The inscriptions and petroglyphs of Wadi Rum allowed archaeologists to “trace the evolution of human thought and the development of the alphabet through many centuries and, are evidence of long-term patterns of pastoral, agricultural and urban human activity of the Bedouin tribes in Wadi Rum.”\textsuperscript{210}


Figure 1.19 Epigraphs and Petroglyphs at Wadi Rum

While the ruins and remains at Wadi Rum are archaeologically valuable to multiple civilizations and eras in history, Wadi Rum is a unique desert landscape with iconic landforms and archaeological significance which displays thousands of years of human evolution and land use and, the site serves as a testament to the traditional, but dynamic, Bedouin culture that has interacted with and thrived in the environment for hundred of years. King Hussein I, and the Hashemite government who sanctioned these excavations at Wadi Rum, used archaeology as a cultural tool and agent to uncover the ruins and remains of the Thamudic, Nabataean and successive Bedouin tribes of Wadi Rum, to reveal the physical embodiments of Jordan’s indigenous peoples and their cultural heritage and, to symbolize present-day Jordanian people’s connection to these Bedouin peoples and their traditions.

King Hussein I promoted and supported these excavations at Wadi Rum, believing that, by unveiling “the cultural traditions and heritage of the many diverse Bedouin tribes and peoples that inhabited this area for thousands of year…[that a] continuum of settled and mobile lifestyles and history in the desert landscape by these Bedouin tribes would be revealed,” giving the landscape of Jordan a visibly Jordanian character. He believed that uncovering the
archaeological sites of Wadi Rum, considered to be “the graphic testimony of the diverse Bedouin tribes’ cultural traditions and civilizations that inhabited this area,” would connect the Jordanian peoples with their land and nation and, would unify the peoples of Jordan under the creation of an Organic Jordanian national identity by means of a visibly and tangibly shared native Jordanian history, territory, culture and lifestyle, much of which still permeates through modern Jordanian society.\(^{211}\)

In the wake of the formation of this Jordanian national identity, King Hussein I sought legitimacy of rule over Jordan through proving himself to be truly Jordanian. The King often sought to identify himself, and his family, with the Bedouin peoples, stating that his grandfather, King Abdullah I, was “a man of desert ways who had been brought up as a child among the Bedouin tribes,”\(^ {212}\) and that he was “a Bedouin at heart, loved the desert so much that even in his palace grounds he erected tents where he used to pass some of his time. In the cool of the evening he would often recline on silken cushions, with friends who visited him, and it was in the tent.”\(^ {213}\) By identifying his grandfather as a Bedouin and talking of his adoption of the Bedouin lifestyle and customs, Hussein sought to put the origination of the Hashemite family and the Hashemite dynasty in Jordan as coming firmly from the desert soil and from the Bedouin peoples and culture in order to convey the Hashemites as true, native Jordanians.

Additionally, King Hussein I recalls

“The truth is that most of us are descended from the life of the Bedouin.”\(^ {214}\)...[I] look forward to my trips into the desert, visiting my tribes. What a different life! I


\(^{212}\) King Hussein I, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, 17-18.

\(^{213}\) King Hussein I, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, 6-7.

\(^{214}\) King Hussein I, *Uneasy Lies the Head*, 62-63.
was still their King, but with them I did not feel lonely. I felt one of them. To them I was “Hussein.” The only protocol was that of the Bedouin, whose life is based on three virtues - honor, courage and hospitality. We believe that to be an honorable man you must always show hospitality. What is yours belongs also to your guests. Even an enemy has the guarantee of shelter and food once he reaches the camp of any enemy tribe. When I visit my tribes, I sit at the head of the tent, with the other guests around me. Members of the tribe stand in front, dancing their traditional dances and singing...coffee is served. Then the chief of the tribe makes his traditional welcome speech composing it as he goes along...Soon a poet appears from the crows and makes up poetry as he talks. Then comes dinner - usually a mansef, consisting of “a big Dish,” and sometimes a score of lambs will be slaughtered. We recline on silken cushions in tents fifty yards long.”

...“It was a wonderful experience to see for myself, among the people who formed the backbone of Jordan, how devoted they were to their King and country.”

The King recounts the Bedouin lifestyle, their customs and traditions, noting his own personal connection to the Bedouin by calling them ‘my tribes,’ showing how he fits in as they call him by his first name, ‘Hussein,’ and not by a title, like king or majesty, and recalling his participation in Bedouin traditions, and how he felt he is ‘one of them.’ King Hussein I firmly asserts his personal and familial connection to the Jordanian Bedouin peoples, and this connection to the Bedouins, the indigenous Jordanians, establishes the king’s own ties to the land and peoples of Jordan and asserts his own ‘native Jordanian-ness,’ justifying his place as the legitimate ruler of Jordan. As well, he displays how an Organic Jordanian national identity for all Jordanians is feasible as, all Jordanian people are native to the land of Jordan through their being descendants of these Bedouin tribes and their lifestyle and traditions, which is all still very present in Jordanian society today.

V. Jordanian Support for the Organic Jordanian Archaeological Excavations During the Modern Period

215 King Hussein I, Uneasy Lies the Head, 64-65.
216 King Hussein I, Uneasy Lies the Head, 42-43.
During this Modern Period, Jordanians had a large presence as archaeologists, scholars, and supervisors of Jordan’s cultural heritage, and as well, the Hashemite monarchy, under the auspices of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, were highly involved in the archaeological excavations at Petra and Wadi Rum. King Hussein I promoted and supported the archaeological excavations at these sites in order to provide Jordan with a visible and organic Jordanian cultural heritage and a tangible connection to that heritage in order to make a Jordanian identity the national identity of Jordan, under which the Hashemites monarchy could unify its people, stabilize the country and legitimize their authority in Jordan.

During the Modern Period, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, under the supervision of the Hashemite Monarchy, approved, oversaw and vigorously supported all the archaeological excavations on Al-Khazneh, Al-Deir, The Great Temple, the Temple of the Winged Lions, and the residential and domestic areas at Petra, and as well, the Hashemite monarchy and the Department of Antiquities contributed significant amounts of money to fund the excavations.217 The Hashemites built the Petra Museum in 1994. It contained more than six hundred artifacts displayed in three permanent exhibition halls, specifically “showcasing the antiquities of the Nabataean period in Petra, including artifacts from most of the major temples and rock-cut facades, as well as items pertaining to the Nabataean’s daily life and civilization that display the wealth, power and artistic invention of the Nabataeans.”218

The Hashemites also made Petra a Protected Area. King Hussein I formed and had constructed the Petra Archaeological Park, which was managed by the Ministry of Tourism and Department of Antiquities. The Petra Archaeological Park was responsible for the overall planning and implementation of infrastructure projects at the site, preservation and conservation

of the site, tourism at Petra and the planning, scheduling, overseeing, administration and management of all archaeological excavations and projects at Petra.\textsuperscript{219}

In 1989, the Jordanian Hashemite government established the Petra National Trust (PNT), which, in collaboration with local, national and international organizations, was an attempt to “protect, preserve and conserve Petra’s archaeological, historical and cultural heritage,” including the cataloguing of past, present and future excavations at Petra. Moreover, the Jordanian government petitioned UNESCO to add Petra to their World Heritage List and was successful when Petra was added as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985. Petra’s addition to the UNESCO list gave the site great international exposure and renown and, being designated a ‘world heritage site’ allowed Jordan to claim Petra as the symbol and icon of Jordan and their nation, as the archaeological site that is genuinely Jordanian and, as a representation of the power, wealth, cultural heritage and splendor of the Jordanian peoples and their country to the rest of the world.\textsuperscript{220}

In regards to the archaeological excavations at Wadi Rum, the Jordanian Department of Antiquities was highly involved, supervising the excavations undertaken by various European and North American universities at the sites. The Department of Antiquities in Jordan sent Antiquities inspectors to oversee that the archaeological work was being carried out thoroughly and properly and that conservation efforts were made at the excavated sites and, the department also contributed material to the Visitor’s center, collaborated with organizations, such as Friends of Archaeology, to conduct lectures and put together material about excavation site visits to spread awareness and knowledge of the area’s significance. The Department of Antiquities also

\textsuperscript{219} Hammond, “Cult and Cupboard at Nabataean Petra,” 21.
had full control over the excavations as they had full charge of licensing excavators, collaborating with the foreign teams of excavators at the sites, investigating the excavated materials and the interpreting of rock art and inscriptions at Wadi Rum.\textsuperscript{221}

The Hashemite government took extensive legal measures to ensure their involvement, protection and control over Wadi Rum. Under the National Areas Network prepared by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, Wadi Rum was confirmed as a Protected Area by the government, and the area is officially governed and owned by the Hashemites under the 1988 Law of the Department of Antiquities, which recognizes Wadi Rum as an archaeological, as well as natural site, and officially extends legal protection to all movable and immovable antiquities - including the natural landscape and the environmental area of Wadi Rum, Wadi Rum’s cultural heritage, including rock art, inscriptions and archaeology, and the local Bedouin peoples who inhabit the area. Under this law, special consideration is given by the Jordanian government to protect the integrity, authenticity and quality of archaeological excavations at Wadi Rum and to prevent the removal of archaeological artifacts from the site itself.\textsuperscript{222}

Additionally, the Hashemites also established infrastructure for tourism at Wadi Rum, including a Visitor’s center, parking, and camp sites, and trained hundreds of personnel and individuals for the tourism effort to enforce site regulations, manage tours, interpret, educate visitors, promote and market the tourist site, support the staff and work with the local Bedouin communities to conserve and preserve their home and the archaeological integrity of the site. Financially, the site of Wadi Rum received the highest level of government funding of all protected areas in Jordan, averaging a little over a million dollars per year to support Wadi Rum.

\textsuperscript{221} Jobling, “Preliminary Report on the Archaeological Survey between Ma’an and ‘Aqaba,’” 105.
\textsuperscript{222} UNESCO, “Wadi Rum Protected Area (Jordan),” 38.
Rum’s archaeological excavations, tourism industry, management and conservation. The Jordanian government even set up a special Wadi Rum Development Fund with the aim of taking donations, both nationally and internationally, to ensure the financial and institutional sustainability of the site, with all the money being funneled through Jordan’s national treasury and allotted to different tasks by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.\textsuperscript{223}

\textit{VI. Conclusion}

Similar to the Independence Period, in the Modern Period archaeology was instrumental for nationalist and identity purposes. The focus of archaeological excavations and scholarship shifted in the Modern Period to concentrate on the sites of Petra and Wadi Rum and this shift reveals the Hashemite’s search for an Organic Jordanian cultural heritage in the land of Jordan.

King Hussein I, and the Hashemite government, clearly supported and promoted the archaeological excavations of these Jordanian sites. They established museums to house and display uncovered artifacts, provided massive funding projects, took legal actions to ensure the quality and integrity of excavations, oversaw every excavation through Department of Antiquities, encouraged the publication of archaeological scholarship on these sites, built archaeological parks and even personally pursued international recognition of Wadi Rum as a Protected Area and Petra as a ‘World Heritage’ site.

Consequently, these archaeological excavations and investigations were used by the Hashemites as cultural tools and agents to uncover an Organic Jordanian cultural heritage in the country and, by inscribing the land with a visible and genuinely Jordanian character, the land, the Jordanian peoples and the Hashemite rulers were able to connect to each other and with the great

\textsuperscript{223} Jobling, “Preliminary Report of the Sixth Season of the ‘Aqaba-Ma’an Epigraphic and Archaeological Survey,’” 211.
Nabataean civilization and native Bedouin peoples of the past through the archaeological exposure of a shared Jordanian history, culture and identity at Petra and Wadi Rum. King Hussein I displayed this sentiment of a shared Jordanian past, culture and identity through a connection, caused in part by archaeology, between present and past Jordanian societies by expressing that, “Jordan is a country with a people and a history of its own...they descended from an ancient civilization as grand as that of the Greeks or Romans, the Nabataeans, who built the city of Petra and made it great and prosperous...and [descended from] a peoples who have existed in the land for hundreds of years, [and who] embody the great tribal traditions of old and embrace the values of honor, courage and hospitality - practices from which the Jordanian social patterns [of today] are derived - the Bedouin tribes of Jordan.” This shared history and culture, espoused by the ancient Nabataean civilization and the indigenous Bedouin of Jordan, and the Jordanian people’s connection to it, was the foundation for unification of the Jordanian peoples.  

These archaeological excavations at Petra and Wadi Rum, the Hashemite’s support of them, and archaeology’s uncovering of the Jordanian heritage and character of Jordan, served to create an Organic Jordanian national identity for Jordan. This fact is expressed by the idea that during this time in Jordan, “the notion of being a ‘Jordanian,’ was prevalent in the nation’s consciousness, and it meant belonging only to Jordan…agreeing on common principles, propagating the principles of equality, democracy, rule of law and showing loyalty to King and country, as a means of unifying all Jordanians behind a national goal and identity.” Jordanian nationalism, uncovered and created by archaeology, is the factor that bound together the nation of Jordan, identifying the country as a uniquely Jordanian nation and identifying all the

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Jordanian peoples as the true inheritors and bearers of a localized Jordanian national identity through a shared history and culture between past and present native Jordanians.\textsuperscript{225}

In turn, the creation of an Organic Jordanian national identity for Jordan helped Hussein I to accomplish some major goals during this Modern period. Not only did it serve to unite all the Jordanian peoples under this shared identity by encouraging loyalty to the nation of Jordan and helping them to connect with others as Jordanian first, but having a unified Jordanian peoples also helped the Hashemites to re-stabilize the nation of Jordan after the turbulent political events of the Six-Day war and Black September, as the notion of identifying as a Jordanian and relating to others in that way “prepared Jordanians to face the rapid social change and the challenges of economic development and political transformation, as this nationalism enhanced patriotism and upheld the country’s loyalty to its nation and king and unity in its diversity.” A Jordanian national identity brought internal stability to Jordan, uniting the different peoples of Jordan after having political upheaval and strengthening the bonds between Jordanians politically, socially and culturally through their mutual ties as Jordanians and, this stability and improved political unity aided in securing Jordan’s national integrity and gave the nation room to prosper, develop and grow economically, politically and socially.\textsuperscript{226}

Most importantly, the Hashemite’s creation of an Organic Jordanian identity for Jordan through the use of archaeology helped Hussein I solidify his position as the legitimate and authentic Jordanian ruler, capable and worthy of ruling Jordan and its people. The Hashemites’ loss of Jerusalem during the Six-day war hurt their image of power and leadership in the region and in Jordan. However, their uncovering of the sites of Petra and Wadi Rum, which showcased the power and prestige of the ancient Nabataean civilization and native Bedouin tribes, and their

\textsuperscript{225} Al-Oudat and Alshboul, “Jordan First,” 81.
\textsuperscript{226} Al-Oudat and Alshboul, “Jordan First,” 82.
gaining of political and economic stability and prosperity for Jordan, coupled with the idea that “the Hashemites were the descendants of the Nabataean and Bedouin tribes, as their position as Kings in the network of kinship of all Jordanians made them the super-tribal leaders [of the Jordanian family],” all served to strongly associate and bond the Hashemites with the Jordanian identity. With the Hashemite’s strong bond with the Jordanian national identity during this Modern Period, they demonstrated themselves to be true inheritors of the Organic Jordanian national identity and this, in turn, proved the Hashemites to be the “legitimate Jordanian rulers of the country of Jordan and its great people.”

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Conclusion:

The creation of nationalism and building of national identity in Jordan was, and still is, an incredibly complex process that proved to be in a state of continuous adjustment and reconstruction. However, from the nation’s inception, archaeology has played a key role in the formation of Jordan’s national identities. Archaeology was able to uncover the cultural heritage in Jordan from many diverse time periods, inscribe in the land the history and culture of many great civilizations, from Christian to Arab to Nabataean and, give Jordan a visible and tangible connection to these different pasts. Archaeology was able to conform and adapt to the needs of the state and invest sites with national meaning for whatever identity is being propagated to combat the political, social and cultural problems of the time, and archaeology was therefore a successful agent and tool for fostering national identities.

The national identities that were created, the Arab-Islamic national identity and the Organic Jordanian national identity, or that were attempted to be created, the Holy and Sacred national identity, for Jordan during the different historical eras, had varying degrees of success in uniting the Jordanian people, stabilizing the country, and legitimizing the rule of the Hashemite monarchs in Jordan. While archaeology was able to uncover a limited sacred and holy character in TransJordan through the excavation of Biblical and Christian sites, ultimately a Holy and Sacred national identity could not be created while TransJordan was under western, imperialistic rule. Additionally, Jordan found it difficult to unify its population, and Abdullah I experienced difficulty in stabilizing his country and legitimizing his rule, despite the economic boom Trans-Jordan received from tourism and pilgrimage during the Mandatory Period. In contra-distinction
to the Mandatory Period, in both the Independence Period and the Modern Period, archaeology uncovered the Arab-Islamic and Organic Jordanian cultural heritage, inscribing these characters in the land through the excavations of Arab-Islamic and Organic Jordanian sites and, archaeology achieved great success in helping create both an Arab-Islamic and Organic Jordanian national identity for Jordan in their respective historical eras. Moreover, the creation of these national identities in their historical eras through archaeology by the Hashemites greatly helped Jordan to unify its peoples and stabilize the country and helped Abdullah I and Hussein I legitimize their rule over Jordan through connecting themselves to these national identities.

Interestingly, while these national identities gave the Jordanian peoples a sense of belonging and attachment to their country, through a shared history and culture uncovered by archaeology’s revealing of cultural heritage, the loyalty and attachment the Jordanian people experienced towards ‘the nation’ and ‘the state’ was actually a loyalty to the Hashemite King of Jordan. In order to legitimize their political place as the rulers of Jordan, both Abdullah I and Hussein I vigorously searched for their connection with and relationship to these Holy-Sacred, Arab-Islamic and Organic Jordanian identities. In doing so, the Hashemite Royals effectively connected with and actually assumed these national identities as their personal identities. This assumption of national identity by the King of Jordan made the idea of nationalism, usually perceived as being an attachment, loyalty and sense of belonging to the ‘state’ through a shared national identity, become a loyalty and attachment to the Hashemite King himself and a sense of belonging with the King through being part of that shared national identity together, as the Hashemite King of Jordan essentially became and ‘was’ ‘the state’ of Jordan. ‘The state’ of Jordan in actuality served merely as an extension of the King himself and therefore, the national identities created for Jordan by archaeology, that were fostered and made for the unification of
the Jordanian peoples, were the multiple and changing personal identities of the King and the identities that the King wanted for his nation.

While this idea of national loyalty to ‘King’ rather than loyalty to ‘state’ seems to be a different and potentially dangerous kind of nationalism, one of the main reasons Jordan has survived and is one of the most stable countries in the Middle East is because Jordanian nationalism and national identity lies with their King. Jordan has been fortunate in that their monarchs have all been intelligent, politically astute, and courageous, have encouraged a good relationship with their people and sought stability for their country through the establishment of national identities. These qualities and goals have carried over to each successive monarch, making the transition from king to king go very smoothly and allowing the loyalty to the monarchy to remain stable. The strength of the individual kings and the Jordanian people’s loyalty to and identification with the monarchy through the creation of national identities, formed with the aid of archaeology, has been a key factor in the stability, success and prosperity of Jordan, a nation many believed would never survive.
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