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Landscapes of Divine Power at al-Ḥumayma

A civic landscape is a product of natural, human, and divine influences. The natural constraints of an environment make some places more desirable to live than others. Human motivations then determine which actual site is chosen, a decision, which is sometimes also apparently influenced by divine guidance. Natural, human, and divine factors also interact to influence the physical appearance of a town, both at its foundation and as it evolved through time. The site of al-Ḥumayma (ancient Ḥawāra) in Jordan's Ḥismā desert provides a good example. The town was founded by the Nabataeans in the first century BC and remained a small but important settlement through the Roman, Byzantine, and early Islamic periods. This paper will examine how the residents of al-Ḥumayma conceptualized and valued their local environment by examining the physical appearance of the settlement in each time period. As we shall see, the most salient structures in each period were not situated randomly, but rather were placed in accordance with each groups' ideas of what was most important about their settlement.[1]

Al-Ḥumayma is located in the Ḥismā region of southern Jordan, a desert plain bounded on the north by the ash-Sharā limestone escarpment, on the west by a concentration of sandstone hills and inselbergs, and on the south by 'Aqaba's granite mountains (see Oleson, this volume, Fig. 1). The plain of the Ḥismā is bleak and unwelcoming. This is a steppe desert covered with sand and rocks. What might be a monotonous landscape, however, is occasionally and dramatically broken by scattered sandstone inselbergs, which rise up to 300 m above the desert floor (Henry 1995: 17-18).

1. E125 shrine precinct during excavation, overview facing west from courtyard door.

The inselbergs and the northern ash-Sharā escarpment are essential for the life of the Ḥismā. In the Nabataean through early Islamic periods, aquifers were too deep to be tapped by wells so winter rains provided the region's predominant source of water (Oleson 1996). Yet with an average of only 95mm of rain a year, and in some years as little as 40mm (Eadie and Oleson 1986: 54), this precious resource would be all but lost were it not for the rocky hills, which naturally collect and channel the rainfall towards the desert floor. This runoff hits the desert floor as a flood, which, as it sinks into the soil, allows vegetation to flourish. Humans who attempt to live in this region need to be cognizant of how and when the life-giving water will flow. Particularly strategic humans can even trap the winter

[1] The starting point for this analysis was the Nabataean and Roman period shrine in Field E125, whose excavation I have been directing. In extending the analysis to the site's other major periods, I have made use of the publications of my al-Ḥumayma colleagues, particularly John Oleson, Robert Schick, Khairieh 'Amr, Rebecca Foote, Erik de Bruijn, and Andy Sherwood. This analysis would not have been possible without their work, but for the specific line of interpretation presented in this paper, I take full responsibility.

flow for use throughout the year (cf. Oleson 1992, 1995, 1996, 2001, 2007b).

Both history and archaeology record that the Nabataeans, who controlled the Ḥismā from approximately the fourth century BC to early second century AD, were experts at finding and storing water in the desert. According to Diodorus Siculus:

"They live in the open air, claiming as native land a wilderness that has neither rivers nor abundant springs from which it is possible for a hostile army to obtain water…Whenever a strong force of enemies comes near, they take refuge in the desert, using this instead of a fortress. For the desert lacks water and cannot be crossed by others, but to them alone it furnishes safety, since they have prepared subterranean reservoirs lined with plaster... After filling these cisterns with rain water, they close the openings, making them even with the rest of the ground, and they leave signs that are known to themselves but are unrecognizable to others..." (Diodorus Siculus 19.94.2-10, extracts, trans. Oleson 2007b: 218).

Clearly the Nabataeans knew how to gain control of the Ḥismā's limited water resources. Yet the Nabataeans described by Diodorus also lived a nomadic lifestyle. They stored water in manmade structures, but, as Diodorus further noted, they did not plant grain, set out fruit-bearing trees, nor construct houses. They moved freely though the desert, watering themselves and their flocks, but they did not choose to settle down. Indeed humans do not usually create permanent settlements in a desert without some incentive.

For the Nabataeans, an incentive to settle in the Ḥismā had been recognized by the first century BC. By this time a radical and profound shift in Nabataean society was probably already at least a century underway (Bowersock 2003). The previously nomadic Nabataeans were now building permanent settlements with impressive architecture, planting crops, accumulating luxury goods, minting their own coinage, and acknowledging their leaders as kings. All of these changes no doubt resulted from the Nabataeans' ability to control the lucrative incense routes running from southern Arabia to the Mediterranean Sea. These routes passed through the Nabataean territory and Diodorus Siculus (19.94) reports that, due to this trade, the Nabataeans far surpassed the other Arabian tribes in wealth. It was thus probably to cement their control over the trade routes that the Nabataeans had begun building permanent settlements along all the major roadways in their territory by the first century AD (Graf and Sidebotham 2003: 70). In the Ḥismā desert, their largest settlement would be located along the ancient King's Highway at a place they called Ḥawāra (modern al-Ḥumayma).[2]

Nabataean Ḥawāra

As John Oleson has shown, it was probably no accident that the Nabataeans chose Ḥawāra for the site of their largest and strategically most important Ḥismā settlement (Eadie and Oleson 1986; Oleson 1992, 1995, 2007b). Ḥawāra provided an excellent environment in which to create a permanent settlement because the sandstone hills immediately west and north of the site created a floodplain on the desert floor below. By building their trademark cisterns within this floodplain, the Nabataeans were able to store enough water throughout the year to sustain a small permanent community. Such a community would be able to monitor the caravans passing along the King's Highway. Moreover, with the addition of a 27km long aqueduct stretching all the way to the ash-Sharā escarpment, the settlement also had enough extra water to sell to caravans, likely at exorbitant prices.

Logically, therefore, both the natural geography and human motivations lay behind Ḥawāra's foundation: the Nabataean king wanted to establish a settlement in the Ḥismā along the trade routes and he needed a location with ample natural water supplies. The site of al-Ḥumayma would have fit his needs well. It is interesting therefore that neither the hydraulic nor the trade advantages of this location are mentioned in the site's ancient foundation myth. There it is recorded that one, and only one, factor led to the site's selection, the directive of a god:

"…Aretas [probably Aretas III (Oleson 2007a: 447)] set out to investigate the oracle, which was 'to seek a place *auar*' — that is 'white' in Arabic or Syrian. When Aretas had arrived and was keeping watch, there appeared to him an apparition, a man clothed in white riding a white camel, and when the apparition disappeared, there appeared spon-

[2] "HWR" in Nabataean; "Auara" in Greek, "Havarra" in Latin. Since the early Islamic period, the site's official designation has been "al-Ḥumayma", although locally "Ḥawāra" also survived to modern times (Musil 1926: 59 n. 20; Lawrence 1926: 665). Both ancient and modern spellings vary.

taneously a craggy hill, firmly rooted in the earth. There he founded a town. (*FGrH* 675 frag. A.1.b, trans: Oleson 1990: 145)".

Hence according to Ḥawāra's foundation myth, preserved in a sixth century AD encyclopedia but dating to at least 200 years earlier,[3] Ḥawāra was founded in response to an oracle. Ancient kings sought the advice of oracles because they were known to give good advice. On the other hand, however, oracles had a reputation for giving responses, which were obtuse. Thus after receiving the advice of an oracle it was the responsibility of the recipient to figure out what it meant.[4]

In this case, the Nabataean prince (who would become Aretas III) had apparently asked the oracle where to establish a new town and had been told to seek a place that is "white". Moreover the foundation myth underlines the significance of "white" by rendering it in three different languages (Arabic, Syrian, and Greek). Previous scholars have suggested that Ḥawāra's whiteness refers to the color of the soil and/or rocks either at the site or in its general vicinity (e.g. Graf 1992: 73-4; Musil 1926: 59 n. 20; Oleson 2007a: 447). I would like to point out, however, that Ḥawāra is not the whitest spot in the region either in terms of soil or rock color. Moreover it seems to me to go too far to link the settlement's name with even relatively nearby hills when the foundation myth's emphasis is on a particular (non-white) rock formation. As is apparent in Figure 1, the flagstones used in this ancient pavement are white, but the craggy hill of the myth, shown in the background, is not.

So when the Nabataean king was told to found a town at a "white" place what might a knowledgeable but obtuse oracle have been telling him? Note first that the oracle never mentioned soil or rock color, just a white place. Note also that whenever a king asked an oracle's advice, the oracle (or at least the oracle's priestly staff) probably knew precisely what the king desired. In this case the king was presumably wondering where along the desert caravan routes he could establish a permanent settlement. With that in mind, I suggest that the knowledgeable oracle was really advising the king that, in order to found a settlement in the Ḥismā, he needed to find a place with enough runoff water to make the Ḥismā bloom. Ḥawāra was one such place (TABLE 1).

TABLE 1. Wild Plants Most Abundant in Soil Samples as Charred Seeds.

Common Name	Scientific Name	Total %
➜White Broom	*Retama raetam*	14.1
Goosefoot family	UnID *Chenopodiaceae*	4.3
➜Mouse-ear chickweed	*Cerastium sp.*	3.7
Plantain	*Plantago sp.*	3.4
➜Common peganum	*Peganum harmala*	2.9
Medick	*Megicago scutellata*	2.9
Sea-Blite	*Suaeda sp.*	2.1

Table 1 shows the wild plants representing at least 2% of all charred seeds recovered from the al-Ḥumayma Excavation Project's published soil samples (Oleson 1997: Table 2). The entries with an arrow beside them indicate plants, which bloom white. These include the first, third, and fifth most prevalent plants in the ancient soil samples and 20.7% of all charred seeds recovered. Incidentally, the plant most prevalent in our ancient soil samples — white broom — was also thriving at the site in a more recent "unsettled" period; i.e. in 1910 when Alois Musil visited and photographed the site (Musil 1926: figs. 16 and 17).[5] When these plants were blooming, Ḥawāra would have been covered in white vegetation. Perhaps, therefore, what the oracle was really telling Aretas was that in order to found a settlement in the desert, he needed to look for a place where the desert blooms.

It thus seems that natural resources, human motivations, and divine guidance all combined to bring about the establishment of the Nabataean town at this desert location. The Nabataeans named their town Ḥawāra in recognition of what made it

[3] Stephen of Byzantium, in his sixth century *Ethnica*, repeated the myth from Uranius' *Arabica*, which is generally thought to have been written in the fourth century AD (West 1974: 283-4), although Bowersock (2003: 25) has argued for a sixth century AD date. Uranius' source for the myth is not known, but Bowersock notes that "…the surviving fragments all demonstrate an unusual familiarity with Arab customs, toponyms, and onomastics" (2003: 25).

[4] One of the most famous examples of this is when Athenians sought advice from an oracle during the Persian invasion of Greece in the 480s BC. The Delphic Oracle told the Athenians that they would be safe behind their "wooden walls". The task for the Athenians was to figure out that that "wooden walls" meant a wall of ships (Herodotus 7.140-4).

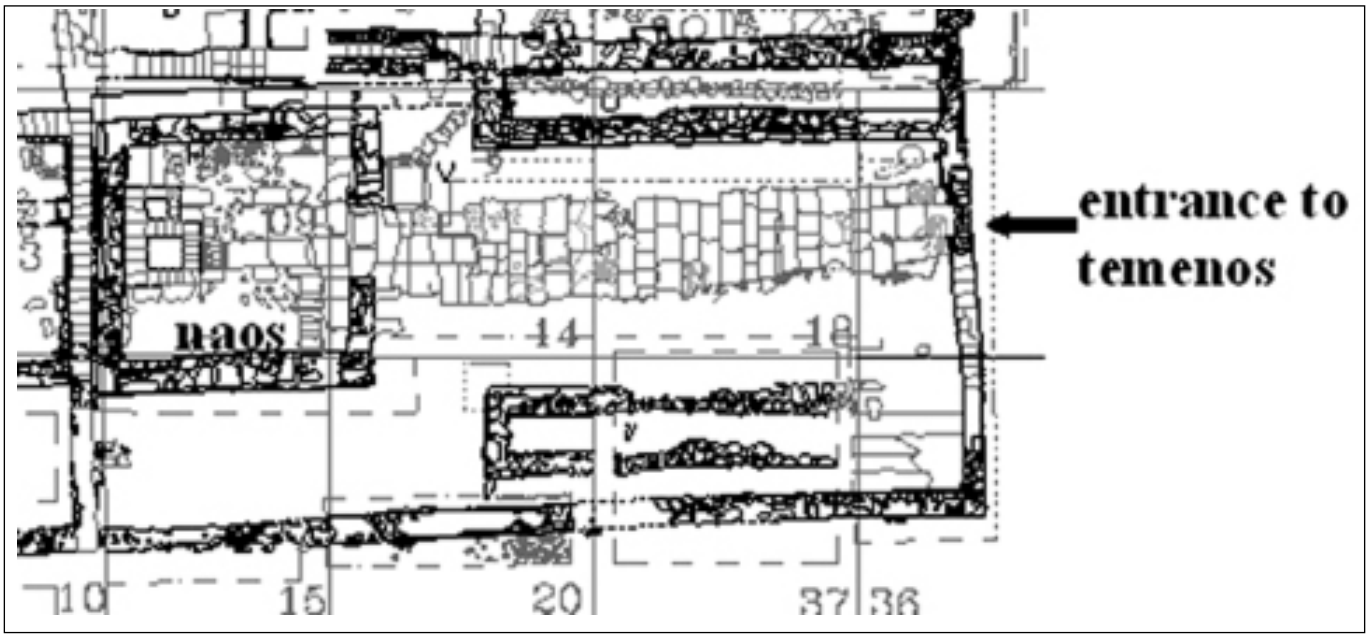
[5] According to Jennifer Ramsay (personal communication, July 2007) the largest shrubs in Musil's photos are white broom.

special, and that name, with slight variations would remain until the early Islamic period when the community's official name changed to al-Ḥumayma, a name which can also mean white.[6]

Due to subsequent occupation, little is known about the appearance of the Nabataean town, except for its hydraulic structures and a few of its religious centers. One particularly important structure for understanding how the Nabataean settlers regarded their local landscape is a shrine located in Field E125 (Reeves, in prep.). Figure 2 provides a plan of the shrine as it looked in a later (Roman period) incarnation. The shrine's essential features at that time included a *temenos* wall, a processional way, an external altar, a fresh-water basin next to the *naos* door, a square enclosed *naos* with a cult figure inside (FIG. 3), and an east-west visual axis running from the door of the *temenos* to the cult figure. Although its extant features date from the Roman period, it is likely that the essence of the shrine remained constant from its Nabataean foundation. Consider, for example, the remains of finely constructed ashlar walls beneath the Roman period rebuild (FIG. 7L). These Nabataean walls encircled the original *naos* and suggest that an impressive structure must have stood here during the site's Nabataean phase.

For the purposes of the present discussion, I will only focus on the orientation of the shrine and on the primary cult image found within. As previously mentioned, the shrine's major axis ran westward from the door of the *temenos*, down the processional way, through the door of the *naos*, and to the cult figure (FIG. 3). This cult figure was rendered in the traditional Nabataean fashion as an upright stone sitting on a base. The Nabataeans would have associated the standing stone with a god and the base with his or her throne. What is particularly interesting about the carefully carved betyl in Ḥawāra's shrine is the notch in its base. Although there are hundreds of extant betyls from the Nabataean realm, I have not been able to find a parallel for such a notch. The betyl in Ḥawāra's shrine thus seems to be unique. Note moreover how the craggy

3. *Naos* of E125 shrine with betyl *in situ*, facing west.



2. Plan of E125 shrine precinct; north at top.

[6] There is no record of why the official name changed. For a discussion, see Reeves 1996: Appendix C.

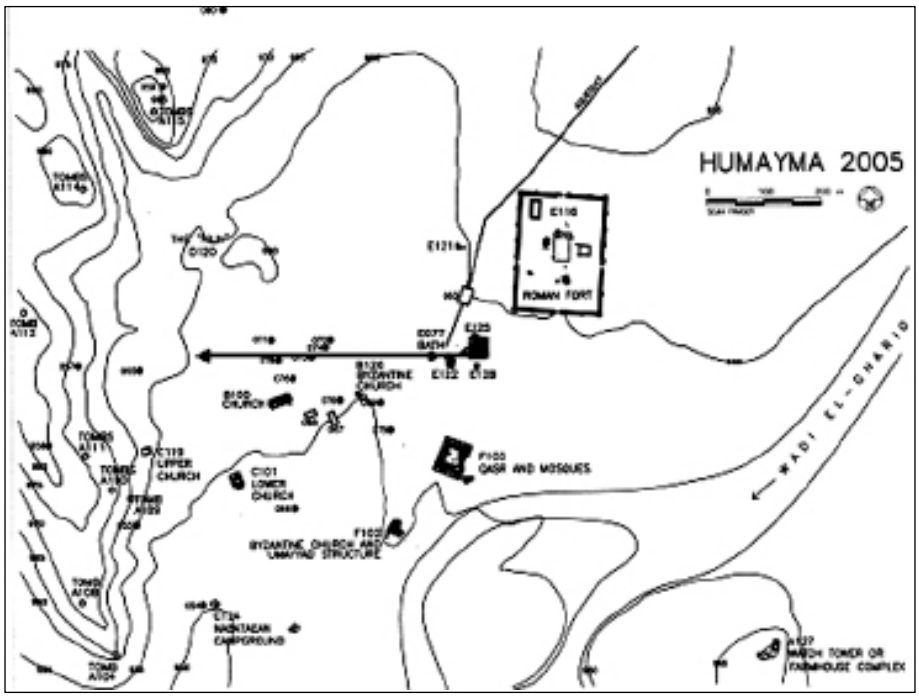
hill behind the shrine, the craggy hill of the foundation myth, has a notch in its top, a notch which the project geologist assures me was probably there 2000 years ago (G. S. Baker, personal communication, June 2002). It seems quite possible therefore that the betyl in Ḥawāra's shrine may represent the god who lived in the local notched mountain, the god who sent the runoff water that made life possible on the desert below.

Support for this theory comes from the orientation of the shrine (FIG. 4). Based on architectural reconstructions we know that people entering the shrine's *temenos* and starting down the processional way would have had a clear view of the craggy hill with the notch (FIG. 5). Moreover from analyses of freestanding betyls from other Nabataean sites, we know that the Nabataeans frequently oriented their betyls so that a worshipper could visually associate a standing stone with a particular hill (Avner 1999-2000: 107-8). It is thus reasonable that the betyl in Ḥawāra's shrine represents the god of the craggy hill against whose flank Aretas had established his town. Finally, as to the name of the god worshipped in this shrine, the betyl itself is unlabelled, but a Nabataean inscription carved into the flank of the hill by a self-declared "servant of 'Al-HWR" informs us that the god "HWR" was worshipped in this town (Graf 1992). In summary, therefore, there

5. E125 shrine precinct facing west (Computer reconstruction by Chrysanthos Kanellopoulos and Platon Konstandopoulos; funded by ASOR Harris Grant).

was a Nabataean god "HWR", whose name was probably vocalized as Ḥawāra.[7] This god was worshipped in the town of Ḥawāra in a form reminiscent of the local hill and in a shrine oriented on that hill. Given the god's name, the foundation myth's emphasis on the craggy hill, and the hill's connection with the runoff, it is likely that Ḥawāra was the patron deity of this Nabataean settlement.

The Nabataeans naturally would have wanted to remain in the favor of the craggy hill's god both



4. Orientation of the E125 shrine.

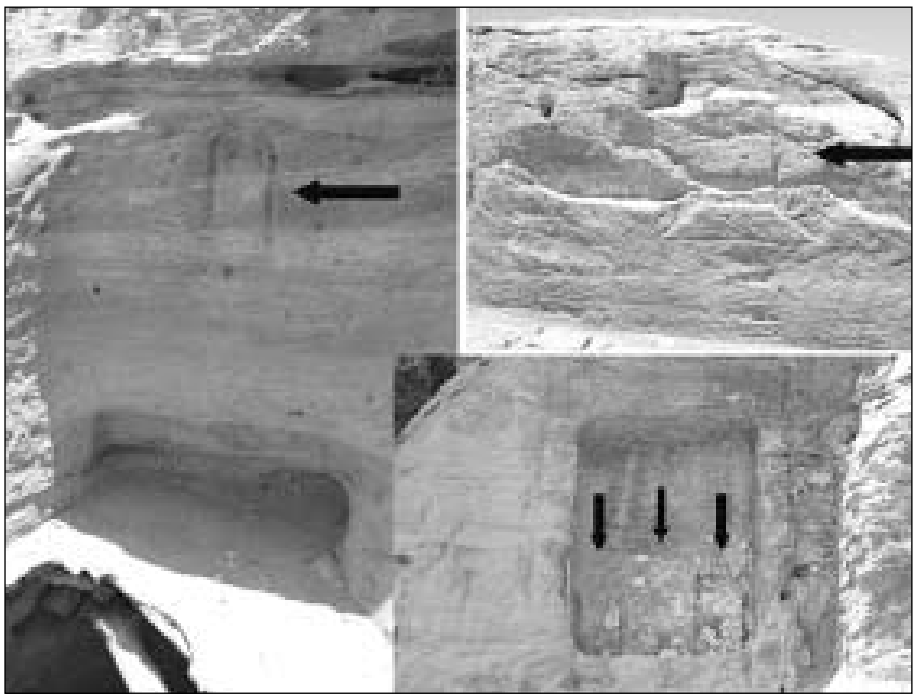
[7] It is also possible that HWR is an abbreviation for "Dushara who is at Hawara" (cf. Graf 1992: 75).

when founding their settlement and throughout its existence. Such divine favor would have been necessary to ensure their water supply. Moreover, because Nabataean society was polytheistic, there were probably many other gods whose favor the local inhabitants would have wanted to maintain. Thus, when constructing their manmade structures, Ḥawāra's Nabataean townsfolk made sure they tapped into both the natural and divine assets of the local environment by carving images of gods or paraphernalia associated with divine worship into the cisterns, dams, and quarries of their new town (FIG. 6). Thus in the foundation and maintenance of Ḥawāra's Nabataean settlement, natural resources, human ingenuity, and divine support were all completely intertwined.

Roman Ḥawāra

Neither the historical nor the archaeological evidence transmits the circumstances under which the Nabataean period at Ḥawāra came to an end. Perhaps the Roman military attacked and damaged the town, or perhaps an earthquake had damaged the town, or perhaps this town remained unscathed at the end of the initial annexation. Whichever of these is true, however, is largely inconsequential compared to what happened after the annexation, when the Romans built two primary forts in Arabia: one at the capital of Bostra to maintain Roman authority over the northern half of the province, and the other at Ḥawāra to control the southern regions and the incense routes. Even if Nabataean Ḥawāra were not in ruins when its Roman garrison arrived, it soon would be because in the process of building a stone fort able to house 500 soldiers, the Romans took their building stones from the pre-existing Nabataean structures. In essence, the Romans dismantled the Nabataean town to build the Roman fort. Consequently all that remains *in situ* of the Nabataean town's ashlar buildings are just the bottommost courses of stones, buried deep beneath the soil or under Roman buildings (FIG. 7).[8]

On the one hand, the robbing out of the extant civic structures in order to build a military fort could be dismissed as practical: the Romans needed to build a large fort quickly and it was simply easier to use nearby extant building materials rather than having to cut new stones from quarries in the hills. On the other hand, however, the prioritizing of the fort over the town was clearly the act of a dominating force. Moreover the fort was clearly meant to dominate the settlement in other ways as well. For one thing, consider the size of the fort whose walls towered over the settlement. Note, too, how the fort's height and the impenetrability of its walls was reinforced by the fort's placement on a small



6. L: altar or betyl carved over cistern; RT: betyl carved at quarry/religious site; RB: *aediculum* containing 3 betyls carved into hill.

[8] Nabataean mudbrick walls, presumably from less important buildings than the ashlar blocks, survived the transition with less damage and were often reused in later period structures.

7. L: Nabataean ashlar wall beneath crude Roman wall in E125; R: Nabataean leveled walls south of Roman Bath E077.

ridge (above the floodplain) and slightly northeast of the old town center so that its walls could be seen in three-quarters view (cf. Oleson, this volume).

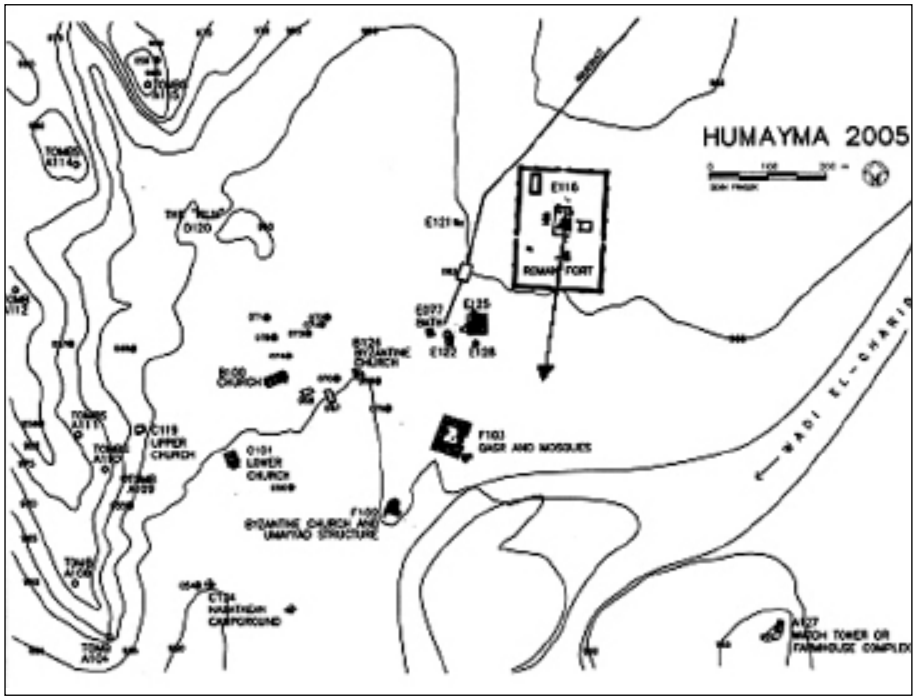
The fort's walls, which enclosed a garrison of 500 soldiers, would have also served to remind Ḥawāra's civilian inhabitants that in many ways the garrison comprised a separate, distinct subgroup. Moreover, this military subgroup was originally probably meant to be viewed as the site's most important community. Consider first the water. John Oleson has estimated that the water delivery system at Ḥawāra, as built by the Nabataeans, would have supported a permanent population at the site of ca. 700 people (Oleson 1997: 177). Suddenly in the early second century AD, with the imposition of the 500 man garrison, Ḥawāra's military populace took up more than half of the available water supply. This meant both that in the Roman period there would have been more soldiers than civilians living at the site and that, because of the garrison, the size of the civilian populace would never have been able to re-achieve its pre-annexation potential. The garrison's dominance over the site's water supply was furthermore architecturally reinforced by a conduit, which funneled water out of the aqueduct before it reached the civic population (Oleson 2007b: 240). Even in the community, the bronze stop-cock which controlled the water supply for the Roman period bath-house (E077), reminds us that Roman officials probably would have maintained some control over everyone's access to water in the garrisoned town (Oleson 1990: 161, 2004: 357).

Another symbol of the military community's supremacy was, of course the quality of its buildings. The best stones had been used in the military structures, leaving the new civilian community to make do with earthen architecture and military rejects. Moreover, the nicest house in Roman Ḥawāra was located inside the Roman fort. The elegance of this house, and the sophistication of its owner, the Roman commander, was signified by its mosaic floors — unparalleled in the Ḥismā — and a room heated by a hypocaust (FIG. 8, Oleson *et al*. 2003: 43-45; in press). Visitors to this house would have left in no doubt that the fort's commander was the most important person in the Roman period settlement.

Thus both in their appearance through their control of natural resources, the military constructions at this former Nabataean town could be seen as symbols of Roman dominance over the native population. Moreover this dominance extended beyond the human realm into that of the divine. Roman tradition attributed the Romans' success in conquering and ruling other peoples to the support they received from their gods (e.g. Livy, *ab urbe condita*; Vergil, *Aeneid*). Thus each military unit had sacred symbols (representing the soldiers and empire), which must be cared for and protected

8. Mosaic floors in the commander's house (*praetorium*) inside the Roman fort.

at all cost (Watson 1969: 127-31). When the military units were not marching, these sacred symbols were stored in an *aedes* (shrine) at the center of their fort. Because Roman forts were built to standardized plans we know that this *aedes* was located in the center of the suite of rooms at the back of the *principia* (headquarters building) (Johnson 1983: 111-7). For reasons of maximum safety, the *principia* and the *aedes* were located in the center of the fort, but, for religious reasons, there was also a direct line of sight between the *aedes* and the front gate of the fort. Because Roman encampments (both permanent forts and marching camps) were always positioned so as to face the enemy (Pseudo-Hyginus, *de munitionibus castrorum*, 56), this meant that the symbols of the soldiers' divine support always stared out the front gates of their encampment at their enemies (Martin 1969: 258). In the case of Ḥawāra (FIG. 9), it should be remembered that the Roman fort was built immediately



9. Orientation of the *aedes* in the Roman fort.

after the annexation of the Nabataean Kingdom. Whether or not the garrison had any reason to fear the local inhabitants, we do not know. The garrison, however, must have felt safe in a fort, which dominated the local landscape, and with the support of their regimental gods, who helped them to watch over that landscape.

The symbolism appropriate at the time of the annexation, however, was not the same symbolism that was appropriate some decades later. The Nabataeans had become Romans and Ḥawāra's garrison was probably composed of soldiers who had now lived in the Roman Province of Arabia for some time, or had been born there. The soldiers at the fort now seem to have wanted to be seen not so much as dominators as co-members of the local community. Thus in the late second or early third century the civic shrine in E125, which like other Nabataean stone structures had been leveled for its building blocks, was rebuilt with the support of Ḥawāra's garrison (FIG. 10). At the center of the rebuilt shrine's *naos* stood the betyl representing the town's Nabataean tutelary deity. Next to this betyl was placed an altar whose inscription explicitly tells us that it was set up by the soldiers stationed at Ḥawāra (Oleson *et al*. 2002: 112-6, 2003: 47-8). The inscription also tells us that the soldiers were calling upon their regimental deity, Jupiter Ammon, to protect the emperors and hence the empire.

It is interesting that this altar on the one hand towers over the betyl but on the other hand did not displace the betyl from the focal point at the center of the *naos*. In the placement of these two symbols of divine favor I believe we can see a message that

10. *Naos* of the E125 shrine (Computer reconstruction by Chrysanthos Kanellopoulos and Platon Konstandopoulos; funded by ASOR Harris Grant).

concordia (harmony) between the soldiers and civilians is now more important than dominance by one group over the other. The third century inhabitants of the site (soldiers and civilians together) are acknowledging that their prosperity now comes both from the town god, the god of the mountain, and from the tutelary deity of Ḥawāra's military garrison. Significantly a pair of mid third century coins from Bostra, the site of Arabia's other major garrison, convey exactly the same message by showing Jupiter Ammon (patron deity of the legion) shaking hands with the Tyche of Bostra (the city goddess of Bostra) (Kindler 1983: nos. 48, 56). Around the coin an inscription reads *CONCORDIA BOSTRENORVM* (the harmony of the Bostreans). Thus the coin issued by Bostra and the civic shrine at Ḥawāra conveys the same message of solidarity. Ḥawāra did not mint coins, but if it did, one suspects that contemporary issues would have read *CONCORDIA HAWARENORVM* (cf. Reeves, in prep.).

Byzantine Ḥawāra

It is thus clear that from the Nabataean to the early Roman to the late Roman periods, the physical focus of the site shifted, and these shifts were to a large degree dependent on the religious beliefs of the site's inhabitants. In the Byzantine period, the focus of the site shifted again, and again the shift had much to do with religious values and orientations.

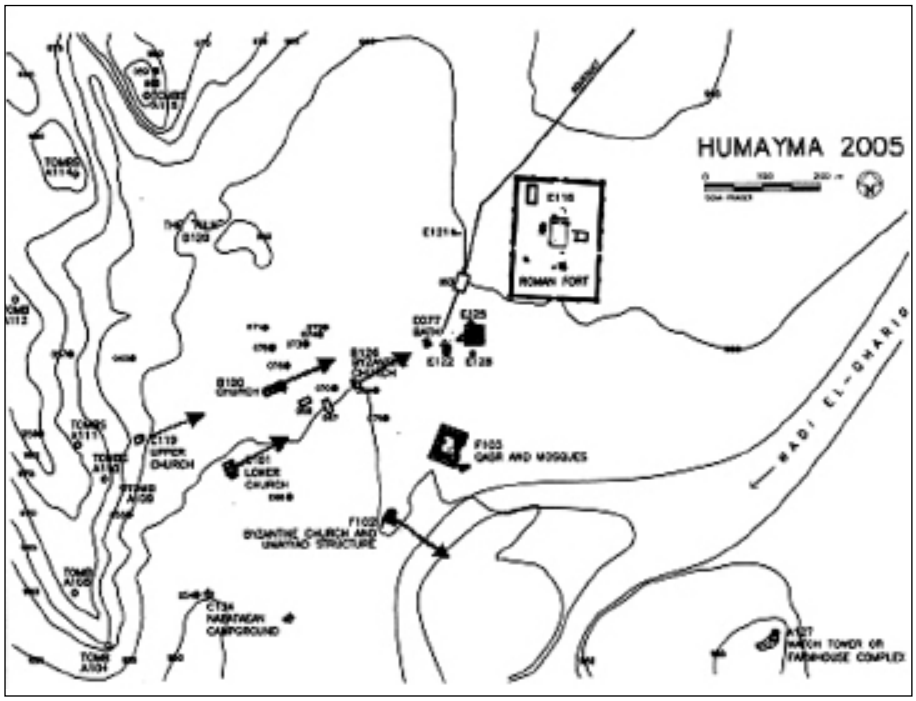
One of the most important changes, given the history of the site so far is that the civic shrine in E125 did not survive into the Byzantine period. The shrine had been abandoned in the late third century after the departure of the Roman garrison and by the time another (smaller) garrison returned in the early fourth century, the walls of E125 had collapsed and the shrine was buried. Interestingly, there was no attempt to dig out the shrine. Either the fourth century inhabitants of Ḥawāra did not know of the shrine's existence or they did not care. By this time, due to Constantine's reforms (Helgeland 1985: 814-5), Christianity was almost certainly gaining strength with the military inhabitants of the region (and in a garrisoned town probably with the civilian inhabitants as well). At al-Lajjūn, for example, where a new legionary fortress and exterior temple were built ca. 300AD, the temple was quickly abandoned even though the fort remained in use (Parker 1991: 134). Two hundred years later,

ca. 500AD, a chapel would be inserted into the fort (Parker 2007: 254). Yotvata's fort apparently received a chapel even sooner, in the first half of the fourth century (Davies and Magness 2007).

As to the Christian population at Ḥawāra in the fourth century (both military and civilian), we do not know yet how large it would have been or where they would have worshipped (Oleson 2007a: 453). As early as the fifth century, however, churches started to be constructed at Ḥawāra and, by the end of the seventh century the small town contained at least five churches (Schick 1995a-b; 2001). During this same period, the military importance of Ḥawāra had declined. In the early fifth century the fort was abandoned (Oleson *et al*. in press) so if the unit of *equites sagittarii indigenae* mentioned by the fifth century *Notitia Dignitatum* (Seeck 1876: *Oriens* 34.25.73) was still extant after the early Byzantine period, it was probably as a militia living in the town. In any case, the military insignificance of this site by the end of the Byzantine period can be surmised by Ḥawāra's omission from the records relating to the Islamic invasion (Schick 2007). The de-emphasis on the fort through the Byzantine period is also clearly shown by a shift in the civilian population away from the fort and back in and around the concentration of Nabataean cisterns on the west side of the site.

Although the population shift away from the east side of the site is in itself interesting, what is even more interesting is the orientation of Ḥawāra's churches, which very clearly indicates that the spiritual focus of this Byzantine period town was quite different than it had been at any point in its past. For the first time, all new religious structures at this site turned their back on the craggy hill and chose to face the open expanse of desert (FIG. 11).

Today it may seem relatively inconsequential that the five Byzantine churches constructed in Ḥawāra all have eastward facing apses given that the norm is for churches to be oriented to the east.[9] It must also be remembered, however, that up until the early fifth century, the eastward facing apse (and indeed the apse itself) was not yet universal. Instead early church builders sometimes oriented their churches differently in order to take in aspects of the local setting (e.g. in a practical way by reusing the foundations of earlier buildings or in a spiritual way by fostering pre-existing cult traditions, Finney 1997: 1-2; Gamber 1993: 164-5; Landsberger 1957: 197, 201; White 1990: 21-22, 111-18). Yet, by the fifth century, as a result of the growing standardization of Christian practices, it had become almost universal for churches to have apses on the east. Moreover, the reason for orienting the churches in this way itself reflected stan-



11. Orientation of Byzantine churches.

[9] The exact orientation was probably towards the rising sun on the day a church's foundation was laid (Dinsmoor 1939: 101).

dardization, this time as regards prayer practices.

Back in the early years of Christianity, most, but not all, Christians had probably faced east when praying (Lang 2004: 39-40). In response to different prayer practices, many Church leaders by the second century were arguing that all true Christians needed to face east while praying (Lang 2004: 42ff.). For example, Origin in the early third century argued, "…that the direction of the rising sun obviously indicates that we ought to pray inclining in that direction, an act which symbolizes the soul looking towards where *the true light* rises" (*De oratione* 32; translation from Lang 2004: 46). Similarly the authors of the early fourth century Syrian *Didascalia Addai* proclaimed: "The apostles therefore appointed that you should pray towards the east, because… [when Christ returns] he will appear suddenly from the east" (canon 1 extract; translation from Lang 2004: 48). These extracts seem to reflect attempts by Church leaders to standardize Christian practices and to link explicitly Christian belief with Christian conduct. In particular, as regards the direction proscribed for prayer, the Church Fathers were probably specifically interested in solidifying a common sense of Christian identity, which would be distinct from Jewish and pagan identities (Lang 2004: 40-41).

Although the Byzantine era's newly standardized Christian practices had nothing to do with Ḥawāra *per se*, the effect they must have had on ancient communities, such as Ḥawāra, would have been significant. In the fourth century Christian leaders gained control of the vast and formerly polytheistic Roman Empire. Throughout the expanse of this empire every individual community had been accustomed to worship the gods who lived in their local landscape. Thus, a major consequence of dictating a universal (not local) orientation for true Christians to pray in would have been the elimination of all of the local focal points for spirituality. Instead of praying to gods who lived in the local landscape, Christians went into sealed churches, looked through windows at the eastern sky (Lang 2004: 82-83), and focused their minds on a universal, otherworldly God. Again, in communities with pagan traditions stretching back hundreds of years, a universal, transcendental focal point for prayer probably should be seen as a way of solidifying a distinct identity for Christian inhabitants. In this regard, it should also be noted that it was in the fourth century that the Latin word *paganus* (English "pagan", meaning "someone from a rural community") was being used to classify Christianity's opponents (O'Donnell 1977).

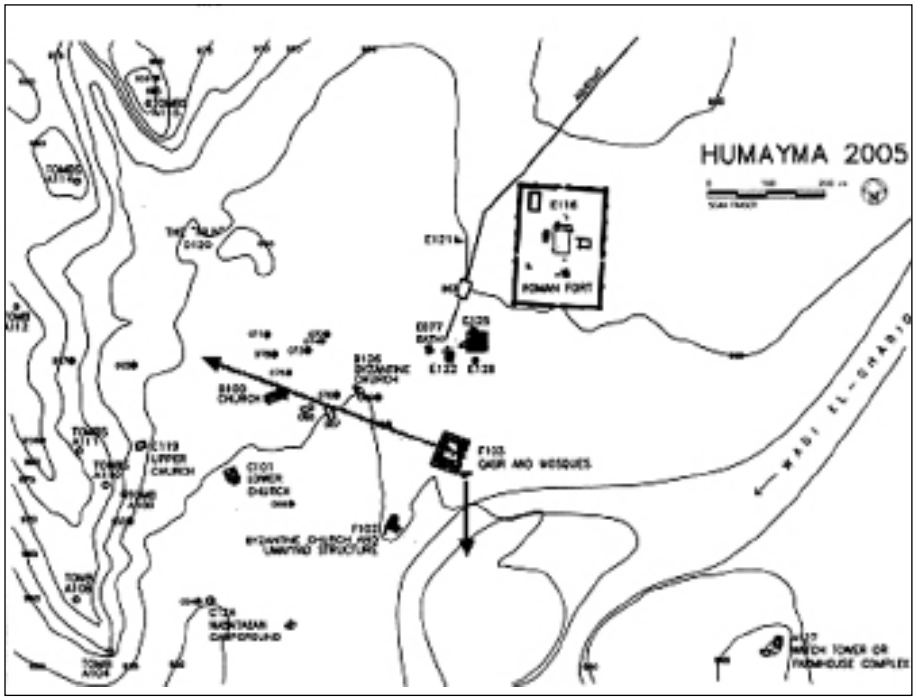
At Ḥawāra, the Byzantine inhabitants must have known the importance of the local hills in supplying runoff water because they built their churches in the midst of the ancient cisterns. They also likely knew the previous spiritual connection with the craggy hill because it was around the same time that Ḥawāra's churches were being built that Stephen of Byzantium was adding Ḥawāra's foundation myth to his encyclopedia. Hence even though Ḥawāra's Byzantine churches faced east because almost all Christian churches of that time faced east, it is likely that the local congregations knew that to please God and to achieve salvation they must put aside their ancestors' reverence of the craggy hill. The churches' orientations reinforced the official message that salvation depends not on peculiarities of local landscapes but on one's relationship with a universal, all encompassing god. Thus, Ḥawāra's enclosed churches sealed in the faithful, blocked off their view of the local environment, and focused their devotion in an universally symbolic direction.

Early Islamic al-Ḥumayma

Just as the Christian religion changed the religious orientation of Ḥawāra in not only a spiritual sense but also in a very physical sense, so to did the arrival of Muslim inhabitants. In the late seventh or early eighth century, ʻAli bn ʻAbdullāh purchased the village (now called al-Ḥumayma) and built a qaṣr ("large residence") and mosque for his extended family at its southeastern edge, just above the wadi (Foote 2007; Schick 2007). Why the family chose to build in that part of the site is not known. What is clear is that the qaṣr and mosque, although humbler than the desert estates of other Umayyad-period elites, were the most impressive structures on the site at that time. Certainly these two interrelated buildings were much larger and better constructed than other contemporary domestic structures built into the ruins of churches (e.g. B100, Schick 1995a: 337) and older houses (e.g. E122, Oleson *et al*. 1999: 426-7). It is also interesting that the site's new owners deliberately sought to isolate themselves from the other residents by placing not only their mosque (which was probably private) on the eastern side of their residence, but also the entrance to the residence as well.

Given the variations in the extant Umayyad period quṣūr, there does not seem to have been a general rule as to which side the entrance should be on. At al-Ḥumayma, the choice of an eastern entrance is particularly interesting, given our previous discussion of views, because it gave the qaṣr a hilly backdrop to the people approaching its main entrance (FIG. 12). Perhaps this was simply for beauty's sake, as the local hills were the most impressive backdrop for a building in that location. But note, too, that the mosque and the qaṣr, although built as a unit, did not share the same orientation. The mosque was oriented north-south following a religious tradition common in early Islamic mosques in the region (Foote 2007: 463). In contrast, the axis of the qaṣr seems to be deliberately turned so as to provide it with almost the same backdrop as had been selected for the Nabataean shrine centuries before (cf. FIG. 4). Again, perhaps this was for aesthetic reasons, but perhaps it was also for symbolic effect. The hills at al-Ḥumayma were typical of those in the early Islamic ash-Sharā region running from Petra south to ʻAqaba. According to the early Islamic historians, ʻAbdullāh bn al-ʻAbbās, son of the Prophet Mohammad's uncle and former patriarch of the Abbasid family, had had a vision that the first ʻAbbasid caliph would come from the ash-Sharā district of southern Jordan (Schick 2007). If this story was indeed known in the seventh century, al-ʻAbbās' descendents may have wished their visitors to be impressed by al-Ḥumayma's hills, which are so characteristic of this region of ash-Sharā.[10]

Thus, for aesthetic and perhaps symbolic reasons, the Abbasid family chose the local hills as the backdrop for their residence. The spiritual orientation of the family, however, was clearly on Mecca. The *miḥrāb* in the mosque pointed southwards to Mecca and we know that various patriarchs of the family made yearly pilgrimages to Mecca where they stayed for one or two months (Schick 2007). This reflects the piousness of the family and especially of its various leaders. This piousness is also reflected in a daily ritual said to have been carried out either by the first patriarch to live here (ʻAli bn ʻAbdullāh) or by his son (Muhammad) (Schick 2007). Apparently this head of the family carried out so many *rakʻah*(s) (prayers) that he developed calluses on his forehead, and hence was given the nickname "the possessor of calluses". The early Islamic historians tell us that these *rakʻah*(s) included two he performed each day in front of each of the 500 olive trees in his garden at al-Ḥumayma. This was an act of extreme piousness and the location he chose to perform it in is presumably one in which



12. Orientation of the Abbasid family's qaṣr and mosque.

[10] This story comes to us from authors writing in the ninth and tenth centuries; i.e. after the Abbasids' victory (Schick 2007). Neither Foote (2007) nor Schick (2007) believe that the Abbasid family had pretensions for rule when they first settled at al-Ḥumayma.

he felt close to his god. His descendents may similarly have felt a divine closeness in al-Ḥumayma's olive grove, given that they chose that location in which to hide the sacred yellow scroll prophesizing their family's political dominance (Schick 2007).

Conclusion

An olive grove in the desert is a miracle. A permanent settlement in the desert is a miracle. That the head of the Abbasid family prayed in his orchard, as well as in the mosque, showed that he recognized the miracle of al-Ḥumayma's local environment, just as the original Nabataean settlers had. Religious traditions dictated how each of al-Ḥumayma's successive population groups would react to that miracle. Some groups associated their settlement's prosperity with a local deity; other groups with a universal deity. Still, all groups probably would have agreed that nothing could grow or prosper at this site (including themselves) were it not for divine benevolence. When discussing the physical appearance and character of an ancient settlement, the divine influence is often overlooked. I started this paper by saying that a civic landscape is a product of natural, human, and divine influences. As I hope I have shown, in order to understand the nature of al-Ḥumayma's successive civic incarnations, natural, human, and divine factors must all be considered.

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