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Imperial Transitions and Peasant Society in Middle and Late Islamic Jordan¹

“I received a letter from the Qadi of Adhri‘at, sent from ‘Ajlūn on his return home. In it he said ‘everyone from the village is going back, as it is now safe, since Timur and his forces have finished their pillaging and have finally withdrawn. No one stayed in Adhri‘at this whole time, while Timur’s men stole all the grain stored in the wells and our supplies and goods. Many people in the region perished. Take, for example, the village of Ḥubrāṣ, where 450 people were massacred. And in another village 51, and in yet another all the sheep and goats and plow animals were taken away’ (Transmitted by Ibn Qadi Shuhba 1997: 181; translation mine).

Ibn Ḥijjī, a Damascene scholar, was home visiting family in Ḥisbān the spring of 1401, when he received this letter from a colleague based in northern Jordan. The Syrian historian leads us to believe that temporary abandonment of the village was one way the people of Adhri‘at survived the Timurid invasion; it took them several years to fully recover, but they did return to their village and rebuild (Ibn Ḥijjī 2003: 498).

Many people “crossed Jordan” in the Middle and Late Islamic periods, which correspond, for the purpose of this paper, to the thirteenth through early twentieth centuries AD. They came and went, their presence fortunately not always as damaging as the events of 803AH/1401AD. In the Mamluk period these included Egyptian troops and officials of the state (primarily managers of *iqṭā‘āt* and *awqāf*), as

well as Muslim pilgrims (such as Ibn Battuta, during his “Holy Land tour” of 1330-1332²), taking full advantage of increased security and imperial improvements in transportation infrastructure. In the Ottoman era, particularly during the Tandı̄māt-inspired land reforms of the 1860s, tax collectors and Palestinian and Syrian merchants came to Jordan with the intent to stay for a while, and pilgrims from neighboring regions made frequent visits to local Şūfī shrines and passed through en route to the Ḥijāz, as the imperial state reasserted itself on Jordanian soil. Throughout the political, military, and economic upheavals that often accompanied these movements of people, and particularly during the Mamluk-Ottoman transition of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Jordanian village culture demonstrated a remarkable resilience.

This resilience is amply documented historically and anthropologically. Let us consider first family names. Jordanian *nasab(s)* are a staple of Syrian biographical dictionaries, *waqfiyyāt*, and chronicles of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, indicating the degree to which the peoples of Transjordan participated in the cultural, intellectual, economic, and indeed political life of the time in southern Syria. To cite examples from northern Jordan, Malkawis and Hubrasis made academic careers in Damascus, Jerusalem, and Cairo and were active in Şūfī organizations outside their home towns.³ Most notably, these networks were active

¹ We would like to express our thanks to Dr. Fawwaz al-Khrayshah of the Jordanian Department of Antiquities and Muhammad ‘Abdallah al-Mubaydin, General Director of the Endowments Ministry for their cooperation and assistance in the “mosques” project of the 2006 field season. We are also grateful to ACOR and the Municipalities of al-Kafārāt and al-Shoulla for supporting our project. For published reports on the NJP, see Walker 2005 and 2007a-c; Walker and Kenney 2006; and Walker *et al.* 2008.

² In Jordan he visited the shrines of Abū ‘Ubayda ibn al-Jarrāh and Mu‘ādh ibn Jabal, both Companions of the Prophet who died in

Jordan during the Conquests (Ibn Battuta n.d.: 45). Of course, Jordan was an important religious corridor, as the principle ḥajj route from Damascus to Mecca ran through its interior; its security was of importance to the imperial state.

³ The complex meanings of *nasab(s)* in the Mamluk period is considered in Ayalon 1975. For examples of entries of ‘*ulama* with Jordanian *nasab(s)* found in contemporary biographical dictionaries, see Ghawanmeh 1982: 169-200. For a full discussion of this topic, see Walker 2008.

during the periods of greatest political turmoil.

An analysis of economic documents of the late Mamluk period is particularly informative about the strength of local communities in the face of financial collapse. The results of recent research on the economic challenges to the Mamluk state suggest that a fluid administrative structure, combined with political instability (characteristic of Mamluk political culture), resulted in a large degree of local autonomy (Walker 2003). To cite one specific example, the collapse of the feudal *iqṭā'* system of land tenure in the late fourteenth century pushed the Mamluk state to the verge of bankruptcy. To solve its financial problems, much state land in Jordan was transformed into *awqāf* (religious endowments) by the sultan and Jordanian farmers, which had the effect of giving *waqf* managers a freer hand in managing local farmland for profit, while also creating a new landed, “middle-class” among Jordanians. This process promised some degree of financial solvency and short-term security, particularly for local land-owners, as well as support for the mosques that provided important community services, such as public education (Walker 2004 and forthcoming). Moreover, contemporaries credited the creation of endowed rural estates for helping local communities survive the worst of famines during this period (al-Maqrizi 1994: 53).

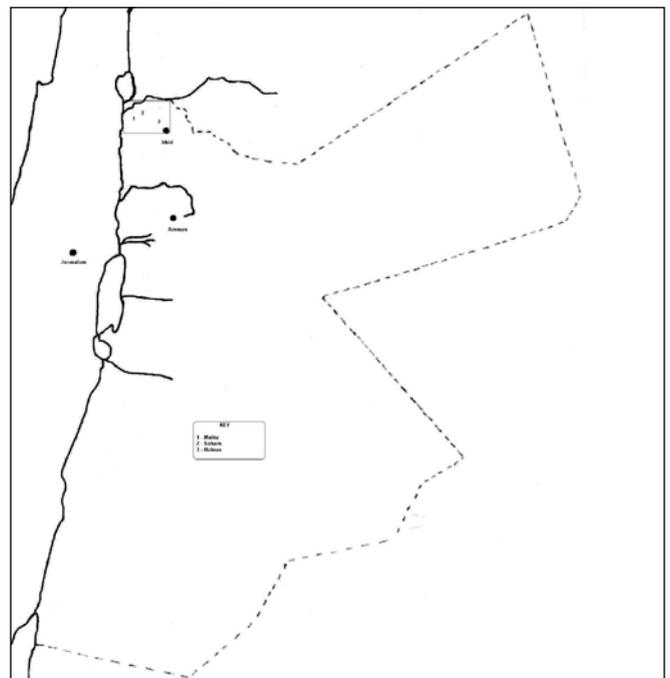
Archaeological data on rural settlement in the late Mamluk period is harder to interpret. The apparent abatement in large, permanent settlements in the fifteenth century was long attributed to demographic decline, the result of armed conflict and climate change. A more recent, revisionist understanding of the demographic transformations that accompanied the collapse of the Mamluk order posits, rather, economic reorientation (disappearance of large markets and imports) and dispersion of larger towns to smaller villages and hamlets (Johns 1998). The results of archaeological surveys in the plains of central and southern Jordan may indicate such a shift of settlement; however, it is far from clear that this is the pattern for the hill country of the north, where historical sources suggest greater continuity of settlement (Walker 2004).

The Northern Jordan Project

It was with an eye to fleshing out the structure and

character of traditional Jordanian society during this “twilight of the Middle Ages”, and to compare the settlement history of northern Jordan to the central and southern plains, that the Northern Jordan Project was launched in 2003. The NJP is a multidisciplinary exploration of the history of rural society, agriculture, and the physical environment of northern Jordan from Irbid to the Yarmūk River, with a focus on the Mamluk and Ottoman periods (FIG. 1). This region was chosen because there have been fewer surveys there, and practically no excavations, devoted to these time periods, and the region is richly documented historically (if one casts a wide enough net). Rather than the more traditional large-scale surveys of most regional projects, the units of study each season for NJP are individual villages — excavating and surveying in “living” villages — and their hinterlands.

In terms of methodology, the project is heavily historical. While making use of the chronicles and travelers’ accounts that are common to archaeological projects of historical periods, we further engage economic and legal documents that are largely located in the medieval archives of Cairo (unpublished, in hand-written chancellery Arabic, and in manuscript, often scroll, form), as well as government offices in ‘Ammān and Irbid.⁴ These



1. Map of Study Area – the Northern Jordan Project.

⁴ The principle archives used are located in Cairo (Wizārat al-Awqāf and Dār al-Wathā’iq) and ‘Ammān (the Documents and Microfilm Archive of the University of ‘Ammān Library). In addition, this

project has consulted government documents of the late Ottoman and Mandate periods in the Department of Land Surveys in ‘Ammān, as well as the archives of the Wizārat al-Awqāf in Irbid.

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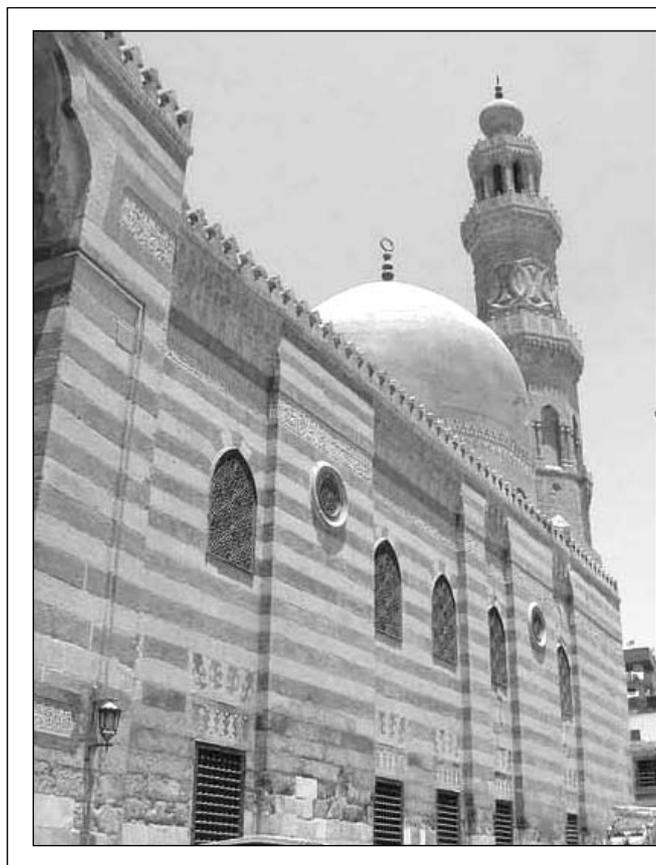
include *waqfiyyāt*, *Shari‘a* court documents (from Jerusalem), and legal texts for the Mamluk period, and tax and land registers and court *sijills* (from ‘Ajlūn) for the Ottoman, as well as non-economic documents that include biographical dictionaries, memoirs, and letters. This historical research is done independently of the archaeological fieldwork but informs the archaeology as appropriate.

2003 Season – Malkā (Walker 2005)

The inaugural season in 2003 was based in the village of Malkā, located about eight kilometers east of Umm Qays and one of the largest villages in the region today. I will quickly summarize the results of that season relevant to the topic at hand. One of the most important market towns in northern Jordan in the middle ages, Malkā was selected for a systematic survey largely because of an important, previously unknown document: a *waqfiyyah* of the Mamluk Sulṭān Barqūq, dated 796AH/1393AD, in which the village, formerly the personal estate of

the sultan, was endowed in its entirety to finance the sultan’s large *madrasah* complex in Cairo (FIG. 2 - Walker 2004: 130, 2005: 71). As elsewhere in the country, this particular sultan made an effort to bring potentially lucrative farmland under his direct control as a *waqf* manager in order to consolidate assets, better manage the land, and revive local industries.

This particular *waqfiyyah* describes an export-oriented economy based on olive oil production, much like Malkā has today — a productive industry that had, nonetheless, been neglected, as some groves had been at that point abandoned, according to the document, and a few of the presses no longer working. Survey that season identified physical evidence of such presses. As was typical for the region, underground caves were frequently modified to serve as industrial-scale olive presses (Schumacher 1897: 180).⁵ Cave 12 functioned in this manner in the fourteenth century, according to ceramic evidence. On the basis of recent calcu-



2. Law school of Mamluk Sulṭān Barqūq in Cairo (left), financially supported by the agricultural fields and orchards of Malkā village in Jordan (right).

⁵ The same kinds of installations were used as early as the Hellenis-

tic period (Sagiv and Kloner 1996: 276-277).

lations, if all six press levers were functioning in this period, and the six hectares of nearby groves planted in olives, the press could have produced some 13,000-27,000 liters of olive oil annually, of which 10,000 would have been surplus to the village's needs. Such a surplus could have generated a profit, in fourteenth-century currency, of 440 dinars annually, the equivalent of 1/3 of an average shipment of Spanish olive oil to Alexandria in 1405 (Walker 2007d: 192-193).

Malkā continued to be a productive and fairly affluent village through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, which differentiates the village from others in the central and southern plains (Walker 2004: 130-131). In fact, sharding and a review of historical sources suggest that the village retained its importance as an agricultural center over the Mamluk-Ottoman transition and throughout the Ottoman period. Although Malkā declined in population after the sixteenth century, it was never abandoned. Its revival in the nineteenth century was the combined results of the local application of *Tandhimāt*-inspired legislation and the arrival of an 'Irāqī shaykh of the Qadariyya Order, who is buried in a cemetery associated with his shrine (*maqām*) in the heart of the modern village. Members of Shaykh Omar's family were among the first to register land, in Malkā and Ḥuwwāra, with the Ottoman authorities in the 1880s, using their newly gained political capital to provide public education and health care in the region, in the absence of state-run facilities (Walker 2007c; Mundy and Smith 2007: 201).

The "Mosques Project" of the 2006 Season

The second season of the NJP in 2006 consisted of a surface survey, combined with ethnography, in the village of Saḥam and excavation in two fields in Ḥubrās, a medieval mosque (subjected to a brief architectural survey in 2003 — Walker 2005: 76-77) and a Mandate-period farmhouse (Walker 2007a, 2007b; Walker *et al* 2008). The potential of places of worship and pilgrimage to illuminate the physi-

cal and functional development of villages was demonstrated for us vividly at Malkā. Therefore one of the goals of the 2006 season was to better understand the origins of the historical mosques of Saḥam and Ḥubrās (Walker and Kenney 2006). It is in the development of their local religious institutions that the autonomy of Jordanian villages in the Mamluk and Ottoman periods is most apparent.

Ḥubrās

Nestled in the rolling hills and olive groves above Wādī Ḥubrās, some sixteen kilometers northwest of Irbid, is the village of Ḥubrās. In the fourteenth century, it was one of largest villages in Jordan, hosting an important farmers' market, as well as home to many successful '*ulama*. In the sixteenth century, it had two mosques and three *zāwiyyah*(s) (shrine-*ṣūfi* complexes). Its fortunes changed over the course of the nineteenth century. Burckhardt, who visited the village in 1812, described Ḥubrās as one of the largest in al-Kafārāt (Burckhardt 1822: 269). By the time Schumacher arrived in 1889, he found a relatively impoverished village with twenty to thirty "huts" incorporating caves, the residents of sharecroppers (Steuernagel 1926: 155);⁶ less than ten years later, on a second visit, he reported a village of forty huts and some 150 residents (Schumacher 1897: 182-183), a situation that had little changed during Steuernagel's survey of 1914 (Steuernagel 1926: 155).⁷ The village experienced its real growth during the Mandate period, when stone farmhouses were built further to the south (FIG. 3). Remains of that village still stand today, surrounding two historical mosques, one built in the prayer hall of the other (FIG. 4). Together they may represent the oldest, continuously used Muslim sanctuary in the country, documenting a history of congregational worship for over 1300 years. For this reason, and its very fragile condition, we are raising money for its restoration.

The original, Umayyad-period, mosque sits at the center of the historical village, now largely abandoned (FIG. 5). It was a small, nearly square

⁶ The village land, largely planted in olives, as today, was first registered with Ottoman authorities in December, 1876, one of the first villages to be registered in Jordan during the *Tandhimāt*. The owners were from the village of al-Rāfid (Mundy and Smith 2007: 79).

⁷ The available written sources are silent about the reasons for the changing fortunes of Ḥubrās in the 19th century, reflected in a

marked depopulation of the village. It is likely, though, that the Christian community described by Burckhardt migrated, as Keraki Christians did for Mādabā in the same period, and it took time for the village to recover demographically and economically (see Burckhardt 1822: 269 for reference to "Greek Christian families" at Ḥubrās).

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3. “Old Ḥubrāṣ” with historical mosques in its center.



4. Ḥubrāṣ mosque of the British Mandate period (left) built inside courtyard of medieval mosque (Umayyad *mihrāb* visible to right).

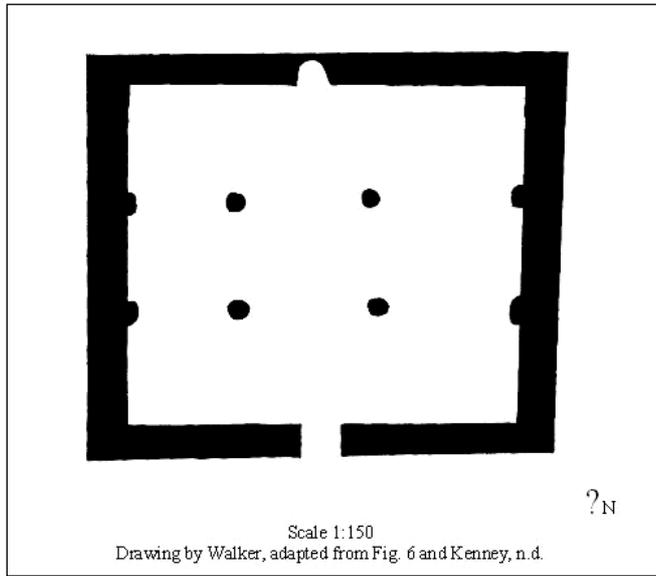
building (ca. 12-15m),⁸ with a roof supported by columns (either Late Byzantine or Umayyad in date⁹ — personal communication, Ms. Maria Elena

Ronza) and, likely, engaged pillars; a floor covered in a simple but beautiful black and white mosaic pavement, made of large (3 x 4cm) limestone and

⁸ The dimensions of the original mosque were indicated by breaks in the masonry of the Mamluk construction: one nearly half-way across the *qibla* wall and the other in the original doorway on the north wall, facing the *mihrāb* and blocked with roughly hewn blocks, apparently during the 13th-century expansion and reconfiguration of the sanctuary. Two building phases are indicated by the style of construction and correspond to these breaks in the masonry of the north and south (*qibla*) walls. Type I (Umayyad) masonry consists of an equal combination of large (75-100cm on each side), well dressed (some nearly ashlar cut and possibly reused) and medium-sized (50-75cm on each side), less finely dressed limestone blocks, incorporating the natural bedrock

and dry-laid. Type II (Mamluk) masonry represents a combination of smaller (25-50cm) blocks of limestone and basalt with chinkstones and earth mortar (Kenney, n.d.).

⁹ The Early Islamic mosque was built directly on bedrock. Excavation has thus far yielded no clear evidence that the sanctuary occupies the site of an earlier church or represents reuse of one, as claimed in earlier surveys (Mittmann 1970: 25). During the Mamluk extension of the sanctuary, relief panels of a basalt sarcophagus were incorporated, face-in, into the walls. Thus, the basalt columns, capitals, bases, and panels, if Late Byzantine in date, were likely removed from the pre-Islamic ruins that surrounded the building site at the time and that are visible in the vicinity even today.

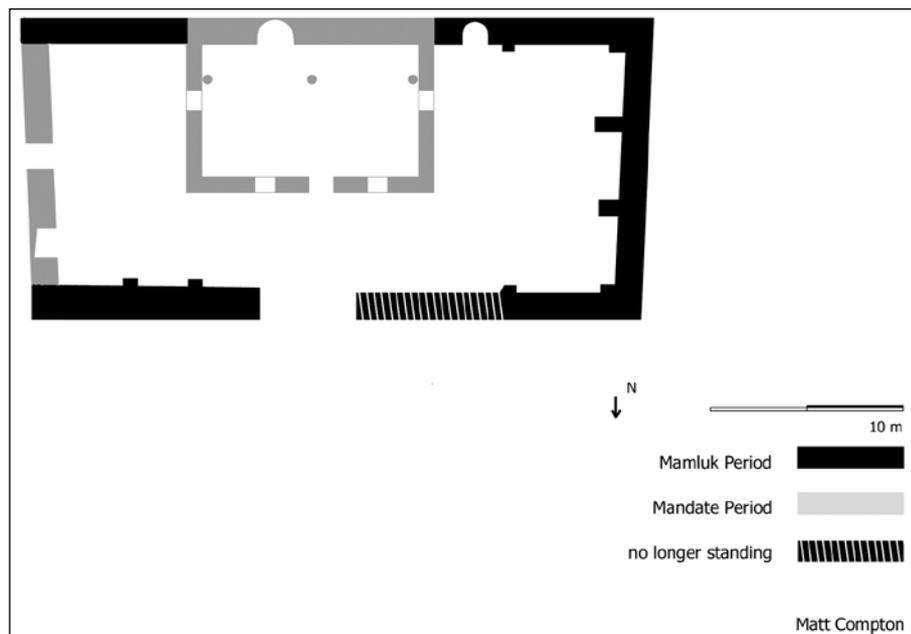


5. Preliminary floor plan of Umayyad mosque at Ḥubrāṣ, based on architectural analysis.

basalt tesserae; and a single *miḥrāb*, 42cm deep at the base and flush with the *qibla* wall at its back. The floor plan is comparable to other early Islamic mosques in rural Jordan and Palestine: as at Umm al-Walid, Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt, al-Qaṣṭal, and Khān az-Zabīb, the interior of the original mosque at Ḥubrāṣ was organized by a system of columns and engaged pillars, likely arranged in two arcades running parallel to the *qibla* wall (Almagro 1992: 352, fig.1). Of these, the mosques of al-Qaṣṭal and al-Ḥallābāt were also floored in large-tesserae mosaics (Tiss-

erand 2005: 49). As for the roofing system of the Ḥubrāṣ mosque, it is not yet possible to describe it with any certainty, but it may have been either vaults or domelets, supported by columns and pillars (Kenney n.d.).

By the thirteenth century the village had out grown this small sanctuary and extended it to the east by some 15 meters, added at least one and maybe two more *miḥrāb*(s), a limestone paved floor, and a system of engaged piers (replacing the engaged pillars and in combination with the columns) to support a cross-vault (FIG. 6). The walls were covered in a lime plaster mixed with wood ash;¹⁰ we promptly sent two plaster samples for C14 analysis, which confirmed a date between 1220-1300AD. An architectural inscription further supports this Mamluk date: according to an inscription on the minaret (now gone but transcribed by Schumacher in the 1880s and a Yarmouk University team in the 1980s), the Mamluk sultan Qalawūn had a minaret added to this mosque in 686/1287 (Schumacher 1897: 183; Ghawanmeh 1986: 59; Obeidat 1996: 22; Meinecke 1992: 65, entry 43). It is not clear whether the minaret was contemporary with or slightly later than the enlarged mosque, however. In plan and construction, the Mamluk mosque belongs to a koīne of medieval mosques in the Irbid and ‘Ajlūn regions (Walker 2005: 76). We have found no evidence of the second mosque mentioned in the sixteenth-century tax registers.



6. Floor plan of Mamluk mosque at Ḥubrāṣ, with 20th-century sanctuary indicated, based on extant remains.

¹⁰ The use of ash in wall plaster is also documented for the Umayyad mosque in the ‘Ammān Citadel (Almagro 1995: 273).

There is some evidence that the medieval mosque remained in use through the nineteenth century, a practice also identified in ‘Ajlūn and as-Salt (Rogan 1999: 36-37). Schumacher (1897: 183; Steuernagel 1926: 156) briefly describes a mosque, information about which was given by the village’s *khaṭīb* upon his visit to the site; whether the preacher was serving this particular mosque is not clear. However, in the early twentieth century Steuernagel describes it as a “beautiful old mosque” now “unfortunately decayed” but with its free-standing minaret retaining a height of twelve meters and capped with the characteristic Ottoman pointed turret (Schumacher 1897: 155-156). According to village memory, the mosque belonged in the late nineteenth century to a larger religious complex, which included the burial place (*maqām*) of one Shaykh Abdulrahmān al-Ḥubrāṣī. Excavation in 2006 of Square A.3, adjacent to the medieval mosque on its eastern face, produced a flagstone pavement constructed with reused pavers, likely removed from an exterior courtyard to the north of the medieval mosque (FIG. 7). Our initial interpretation of this pavement adjacent to the mosque was that it formed part of a late Ottoman complex that contained a public fountain / *sabil*, given the large numbers of jar stoppers excavated there and information gleaned from in-

terviews with local residents, but this is far from certain.

In 1931 the medieval ruins were no longer usable, so the village financed the building of new mosque inside the ruins of the medieval sanctuary.¹¹ It was a small, square, closed mosque (6 x 10m), with a single *mihrāb* and covered by a dirt and thatch roof (FIG. 8). The structure of the interior supporting arches and the exterior staircase of basalt, built into the repaired *qibla* wall, are part of an architectural tradition that is common to the Mandate period in northern Jordan (FIG. 9). The remaining space of the medieval sanctuary was put to use as a *kuttāb* until 1965, when a new village school was built. The smaller sanctuary was used for Friday prayer until 1969, when the minaret collapsed and made the building unsafe. At that point the village asked, through official channels, that a committee be formed to raise money for its restoration; the Endowments Ministry suggested that, given the poor condition of the structure (the roof had caved in a while ago, and the minaret had collapsed) that a new mosque be built directly in front of the old one, with official support.¹² The village decided, instead, to build a new one in the modern neighborhood to the northwest. Only at this point was the mosque finally abandoned, the last call to



7. Flagstone pavement outside and to east of Ḥubrāṣ mosques, view to west.

¹¹ This information was obtained through interviews with elderly residents of the Ḥubrāṣ community (June 2006). See Walker *et al.* 2008 for a preliminary report.

¹² Letter from Ḥubrāṣ village to Wizārat al-Awqāf, now in the Ministry’s Kafr Sūm office, registry #8-63-594, dated November 11, 1969.



8. Interior of Mandate-era mosque, Ḥubrāṣ. Note the low-spring arches and remnants of thatch roof.



9. Exterior staircase of early 20th-century mosque at Ḥubrāṣ – exterior of *qibla* wall.

prayer being heard in 1970. Later that year a paved road was built in old Ḥubrāṣ, and the minaret and remains of the exterior courtyards, as well as many of the farmhouses surrounding it, removed in the process.

Saḥam

The second of our villages in the mosque project, Saḥam, lies close to the Jordanian-Syrian border, 22km NW of Irbid. It becomes historically visible only in the 19th century, in Ottoman documents that record its land, farmhouses, and residents. The

original village stood on the hill overlooking the Wādi Saḥam and along the slopes to its approach. Land here was first registered with the Ottoman state in 1880 by local farmers and sold two months later to the new governor of ‘Ajlūn, Rifatlu Tahir Badr Khan, a Kurd recently arrived from Damascus (Fischbach 2000: 188-190); land continued to be leased by absentee landowners to local residents as late as 1329H/1911AD (Abu al-Sha‘r 1995: 355). Schumacher, in his eyewitness account of this period, describes a rather impoverished village of 80 stone dwellings, and numerous domestically

used caves, housing some 400 residents. Its humble appearance aside, it was the principle settlement of al-Kafārāt District in the late 19th century and was benefiting at the time from capital improvements by the ‘Ajlūnī governor mentioned above, who invested in olive groves and built the village *maḍāfah* (guest house). At the time of Schumacher’s visit, the village already had a public springhouse, which watered the gardens of the wadi below, as well as, he suggests, a mosque (Schumacher 1897: 179–180).¹³

The old mosque at the approach to the Wādi Saḥam was the heart of the Ottoman village. The local community pulled together its resources to build this mosque, as well as that of the public fountain (*sabīl*), for which masons from Safed were hired.¹⁴ The mosque — in terms of its construction, floor plan, and architectural motifs — belongs squarely in the classic styles of the architecture of rural Palestine and Jordan in the Late Ottoman period. The exterior of the *qibla* wall is dominated by a bull’s-eye window, which occupies the space above the *miḥrāb* (FIG. 10); close parallels can be found in late nineteenth-century domestic architecture, the so-called “throne villages”, of Palestine (Amiry 2002: 46, fig. 1 — the house of Abu Qutaysh). In its interior, the mosque is a cross-vaulted sanctuary with a single interior *miḥrāb* (FIG. 11), a form frequently found in the Irbid region in this period (al-‘Awdat 2005); prayers were held indoors during the rainy winter months and in the courtyard outside, which was equipped with its own *miḥrāb*, during the rest of the year. As at Ḥubrās, this mosque was part of a larger ritual complex that included the *im-ām*’s house (which also served as the village school for many years), as well as a cemetery centered on the *maqām*, no longer standing, of one ‘Izz al-Din Tahir Beg Badr Khan, “a holy man from Turkey”, according to local oral sources; whether this “Badr Khan” was the very governor described above is a strong possibility. Although the cemetery went out of use as early as the 1940s (with the expansion of the village), the mosque was maintained for Qur’anic instruction well into the 1960s and for Friday worship until 1976. The subsequent history of this mosque is a beautiful example of local initiative in building and retaining religious spaces.

Likely built in the 1880s, it served the village until 1976, when the building was no longer structurally sound and the local *waqf* office decided to close it. A road was constructed at this time that destroyed the complex to the west of the mosque; three new mosques were eventually built to replace the old one, as new homes were built on the hill above the wadi and along the main road. The village protested the closing of the old mosque and asked repeatedly for monies for its reconstruction.¹⁵ In 1984 the *awqāf* Ministry replastered the interior, and then closed the mosque for good, citing structural weaknesses. There are still popular calls today to reopen the mosque, as it was an important part of the village’s history.



(a)



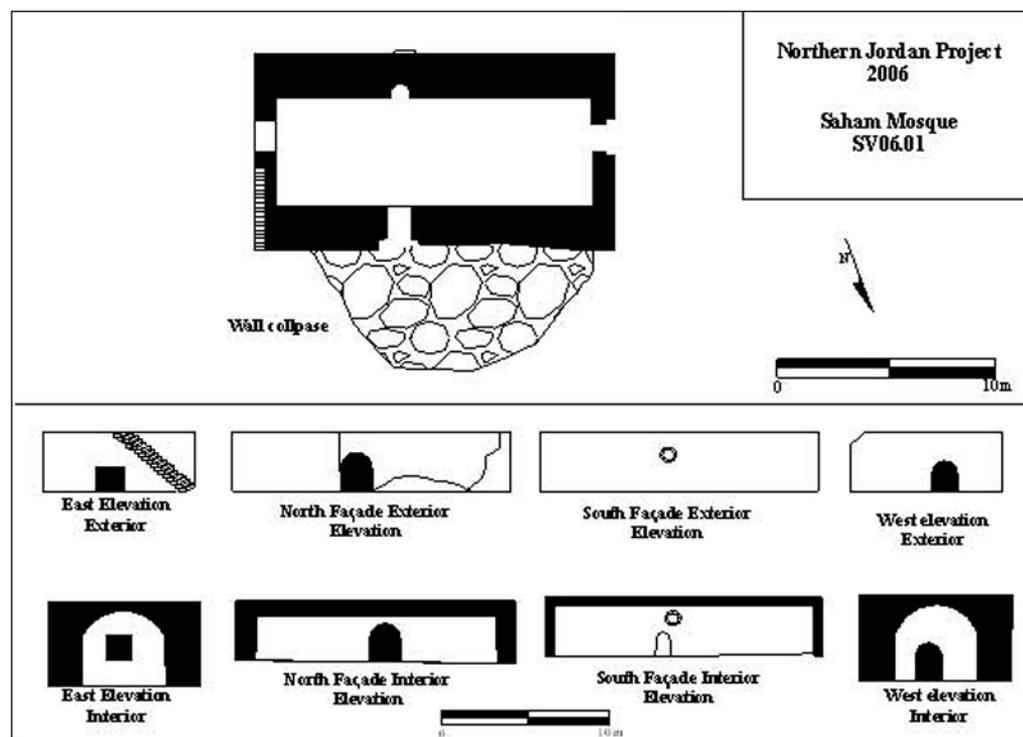
(b)

10. Bull’s-eye windows of Old Saḥam *sabīl* (a) and mosque (b) compared. The *sabīl* may be the springhouse described by Schumacher in his report of 1897, although residents of the village today claim it was constructed in the 1920s.

¹³ According to his account, Saḥam had no mayor but only a *khaṭīb*, who was one of the few literate members of the village. Although a mosque is not described or mentioned specifically, the presence of a preacher suggests that there was, indeed, one in this period.

¹⁴ This information was obtained through ethnographic interviews of villager elders (June 2006).

¹⁵ Several letters exchanged between representatives of Saḥam village and Wizārat al-Awqāf, Kafr Sūm office, from 1966.



11. Floor plan of Saḥam mosque, late 19th-century.

Conclusions

One lesson to be learned from this kind of reading of Jordanian history for the Middle and Late Islamic periods is that the fate of local villages was not necessarily tied to that of the imperial state. Local society demonstrated a great deal of autonomy, during the most secure times, and resilience, during the least stable. In spite of the armed conflicts and political chaos that rocked the Jordanian countryside in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as well as the “benign neglect” of the Ottoman state so often described for the seventeenth through mid-nineteenth centuries, villages in certain regions of Jordan survived quite well on their own. The longevity of mosque use, and local initiative in their maintenance, bears witness to this fact. Thus, historically the collapse of the imperial state did not necessarily result in rural decline in all parts of the country.

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