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Who Owns the Past: Jordanian Archaeological Masterpieces at the International Museums

Introduction

Until the last recent decades archaeologists paid a little attention to the question: who owns the past?. More than fifty years ago most archaeologists working in the Ancient Near Eastern sites came either from Europe or the USA, and their political and economic domination allowed them an almost automated right to acquire antiquities and excavate sites all around this region of the world.

After World War II, former colonies became independent states eager to uncover their own past and to control all matters related to their heritage. As a result of this, several questions arose, such as, should antiquities acquired from western museums during the colonial era returned back to their lands of origin?

Moreover, according to the former Jordanian Bye-laws of Antiquities (earlier than 1. 5. 2004), the excavators who were digging at sites in Jordan have been allowed to share the excavated finds with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. This means, that the excavators acquired their share of excavated objects legally, and were free to hand these objects to their affiliated institutions and international museums. However, this was only stopped only

in May, 2000 upon directions were made by the General Director of Antiquities late Fawwaz al-Khreisheh.

Another factor must be mentioned in this regard, which is, that before the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, the West Bank of Jordan belonged to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Moreover, before the 1967 war started, all non-Jordanian archaeological centers had their bases in Jerusalem. In addition, the Palestinian (Rockefeller) Museum accommodated all objects excavated at the West Bank, and some of the East Bank sites. This means that several colleagues used to storing or exhibiting their finds either at the institutions they belonged to, or at the Rockefeller Museum. Examples might be given from the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Tulaylāt al- Ghassūl, Bāb adh-Dhirā‘ and Rizqā.

In addition, before the end World War I (1916/1917), most of the Arab countries subjugated to the Ottoman reign. During the almost 400 hundred years of Ottoman domination, several explorers, travelers, surveyors and excavators paid visits to this region, and conducted many archaeological fieldworks. As a result of this several archaeological objects were purchased or transported to museums in Europe and

North America, even perhaps, without the permission of the Ottoman governmental offices. In addition, few objects were presented to the kings and rulers of the European countries by the Ottomans, such as the al-Mushatta Façade.

Nevertheless, during the 19th and 20th century's several archaeological Jordanian masterpieces were transported to several international museums and institution either legally or illegally, or even taken by force as a result of the 1967 war. Below, we present a list of only ten examples of such objects.

It is clear that the above listed objects covering a long period of time started from Neolithic to the Islamic periods, and originated from Jordanian sites covering most of Jordan (FIG. 1).

Where are they Now?

It should be noted here, that objects transported to museums in Europe and North America during the last centuries, were not only

Table 1: Showing Some of the Jordanian Archaeological Masterpieces at the International Museums.

No.	Ottoman Period	Agreements	Conflicts/War
1.	al-Mushatta		
2.	Shīhān Stele		
3.	Mīsha‘ Stone		
4.		‘Ayn Ghazāl Statues	
5.		Tall as-Sa‘īdiyya Jewelry Box	
6.		Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl Chalcolithic Fresco	
7.		Bāb adh-Dhirā‘ Pottery Pots	
8.			Bāb adh-Dhirā‘ Pottery Pots.
9.			Rizqā Idols.
10.			Dead Sea Scrolls.



1. Map of Jordan.

originated from the Arab lands, but several masterpieces of art and archaeological objects were also transported from other parts from the world. For example, the marble sculptures from the façade of the Parthenon, the great fifth century BC temple that crowns the Acropolis in Athens was taken to the British Museum and the Egyptian Museums in Berlin holds the famous bust of the Egyptian queen Nefertiti.

To discuss, we present below ten examples of archaeological masterpieces which are they either stored or displayed at several international museums or institutions.

Table 2. Museums Accommodating Jordanian Archaeological Masterpieces.

No.	Masterpiece	Museum	Figure
1.	al-Mushatta Façade	Pergamum/ Berlin	2, 3
2.	Shihān Stele	Louvre/Paris	4
3.	Mīsha' Stone	Louvre/Paris	5
4.	'Ayn Ghazāl Statues	Louvre Paris+ British Museum/London	6
5.	Tall as-Sa'idiyya Ivory Cosmetic Box	British Museum/ London	7
6.	Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl Wall Paintings	Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome/ Jerusalem	8
7.	Bāb adh-Dhirā' Pottery Pots	Smithsonian/ Washington	9
8.	Bāb adh-Dhirā' Pottery Pots.	Rockefeller- Palestinian Museum/ Jerusalem	10
9.	Rizqā Idols.	Rockefeller/ Palestinian Museum/ Jerusalem	11
10.	Dead Sea Scrolls	Shrine of the Book/ Jerusalem.	14

Qaṣr al-Mushatta Façade

During the Umayyad Period (661-750 AD) Jordan continued to prosper, as was the case during the Byzantine Period (324- 636 AD); this is due to the fact that it was in a short distance to the capital Damascus and locates on the pilgrimage route from Bilād ash-Shām to Mecca. The ma-

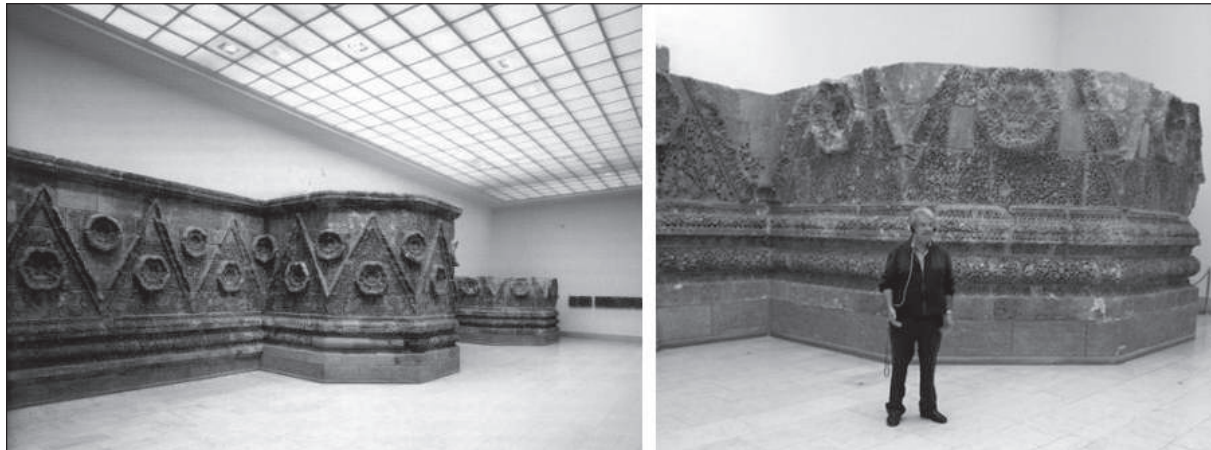
jan Byzantine/Classical sites in Jordan such as Amman and Jarash continued to be occupied, and the Umayyad Caliphs constructed a number of castles and palaces in the desert, at many areas, one of them was Qaṣr al-Mushatta.

Qaṣr al-Mushatta had been built by the Caliph Walid II around AD 743-744, although it was never completed, but it has been considered to be the largest Umayyad Palace in Jordan. Today, it locates just to the north of the Queen Alia Airport's north runway, and about 32 kilometers southeast of the Capital Amman. The palace is surrounded by a square enclosure wall measuring 144 meters on each side, having 25 semi-circular towers. As a matter of fact two of them, which were built at the southern entrance of the building of the palace, are hexagonal in shape.

The building has an entrance gate in the southern façade, which was decorated with carved stonework. The only remaining evidence are some pieces of carved stone with floral, animal and geometric motifs. Most of the ornate carving were sent to Berlin -as a gift from Sultan Abdul Hamid to the Kaiser Wilhelms II after his visit to the Holy Land in 1898, and it can be seen today at the Museum für Islamische Kunst at the Pergamum Museum- Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Indeed, many thanks are due to the colleagues of the Museum für Islamische Kunst for keeping this masterpiece of art safe for over



2. Qaṣr al-Mushatta, Aerial Photo.



3. Qasr al-Mushatta Façade at the Pergamum Museum/Berlin.

one hundred years, and for presenting it to millions of visitors from all the world.

Shihān Stele (Musée du Louvre, AO 5055)

A carved basalt stone was found at Rujm al-‘Abd, located between Dhībān and Shihān, in 1851 (Pritchard 1954: 2269). In 1964 it was transferred by R. Dussaud to the Louvre Museum in Paris.

The relief carved into the stone represents a male figure standing in profile. It has been interpreted as a god, a warrior, or a king. The figure is 103cm high and 58 cm wide, wearing a short skirt with a belt at waist, and a scroll head-dress which resembles these hic appear on the Hittite seals (Tufnell 1953: 161). The figure is holding a javelin, 60 - 70 cm in length with a leaf-shaped blade, and the javelin is pointed down-wards. Parts of the legs of the figure are missing because the lower part of the stone is broken.

Albright dated this relief to the last phase of the Early Bronze Age *ca.* 26th-23rd century BC, noting Egyptian influence (Albright 1961: 79). Tufnell considered it to be from the EB-MB Age, and she dated it to *ca.* 2700-2000BC, comparing the style of the javelin to others which have been found at Jericho, Tall Bayt Marsīm, Tall ‘Ajjūl and Tall ad-Duwayr from the EB-MB period (Tufnell 1953: 166). Matthiae (1962:80) thinks that it is from the MBIII period, comparing it with others found at Tall

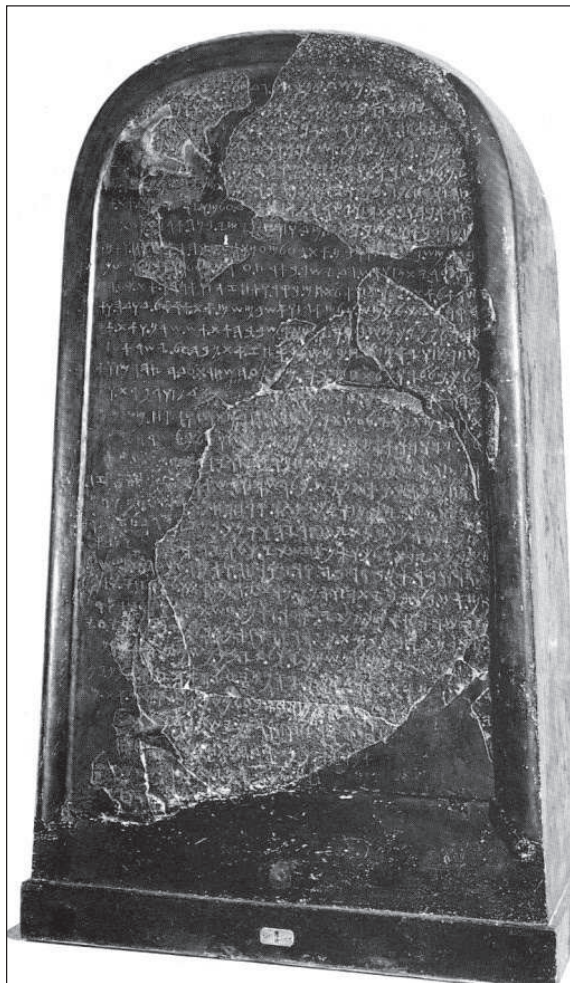


4. Shihān Stele (Musée du Louvre, AO 5055).

Bayt Marsīm and Tall Balāṭa. Finally, Alt (cited in Matthiae 1962:80) referred it to the 12th century BC, which seems to be more acceptable than the previously suggested dates. Unfortunately, no ceramic evidence is available from the site of the discovery.

Mīsha' Stone (Musée du Louvre, AO 5066)

In 1851, the Church Missionary Society (CMA) started its missionary activities in Palestine by sending F.A. Klein to Jerusalem. Klein was German but had grown up in Strasbourg, a French city located in the province of Alsace on the French-German borders. Klein's first travel through Transjordan was in 1868, as he visited many cities, towns and villages, but in his first reports there was no mentioning for a visit to Dhībān and the discovery of the Mīsha' Stone (Graham 1989:49). However, in this trip his protector in this trip was Sattam son of Shaykh Fandi al-Fayez (سٹام فندی الفایز). Klein and Sattam visited in August, 1868 the tribe *Bani Hamidi* was encamped in Dhībān. During that stay the sheikh of Bani Hamidi expressed his well to show Klein an inscribed



5. A Reconstructed copy of the Mīsha' stone.

stone which is only about ten minutes walk from the Bedouin camp. As they arrived there, Klein started measuring the stone, examining it and made a sketch of it. Klein described the stone as the following: "a basaltic stone, exceedingly heavy, with a thirty four line inscription facing upward" (cited in Graham 1989: 50). It has been cited that four men turned the stone over but found no inscription, rounded at both the top and the bottom, measuring 113cm in length, 70cm in width and 30cm in thickness. In addition, since it became dark Klein could not copy the inscription except of few words from several lines at random (Petermann 1870: 640).

After Klein's return to Jerusalem, he reported to the German Prussian consul in Jerusalem (H. Petermann), and to three others about the stone. On August, 29, 1868, the German consul wrote to Berlin inquiring whether the director of the Royal Museum was ready to pay 100 napoleons to acquire the stone and he was positively answered.

The news about the Mīsha' inscription spread all over the European missions in Palestine (the British and the French) and it has been mentioned that the French knew about it in spring of 1869. The French consul Clermont-Ganneau assured that he had known about it long time ago before Klein. Clermont-Ganneau was the first person responsible for the first public announcement of the stone, and that was on October 20, 1869.

After receiving the positive answer, the Prussian consul in Jerusalem, Petermann, asked Klein about the best course of action to take regarding the stone. Klein contacted Shaykh Bani Sakhir Fendi al-Fayez and asked his help to acquire the stone. For his bad luck, Fandi al-Fayez left to Damascus, and after his return back home. Moreover, it seems that Petermann did not give up. Thus, and in March 1869 he asked an Arab teacher (Saba Qa'war سابا قعوار), who was known to the bedouin to leave to Dhībān. He informed him that he will pay the demanded amount of money (100 napoleons) in

installment, 50 napoleons at first and the rest as soon as the stone will arrive to Jerusalem. This messenger returned back to Jerusalem and informed Petermann that the *Bani Hamidi* had hidden it from him first, but as they showed to him they raised the price to 1000 napoleons.

It seem that in spring 1869, the British Captain Charles Warren and the French Clermont-Ganneau knew the results of the German- Bani Hamidi negotiations. It has been published that “... *the Frenchman asked Warren if he knew of such an inscribed stone, and Warren replied that he did, but that he had stayed out of the matter, since the Prussians were busy with it. Clermont Ganneau noted later that he approved of Warren's reserve in the matter and acted similarly*” (Graham 1989: 57).

Both were surprised that the Germans and up to that time did not do an impression of the inscription. This invited Clermont-Ganneau in determining to obtain this inscribed stone and a squeeze of the inscription. To do so, he sent three Arabs to Dhībān and received people of *Bani Sakhir* and the result was obtaining the impression of the stone. By the end, Clermont-Ganneau obtained a squeeze of the inscription and paid from 400 *mejidiyes* for Shaykh ‘Īd al-Fayez (Graham 1989: 60).

In mid October 1869 Saba Qa’war appeared in the Prussian Consulate in Jerusalem announcing that the Shaykh of Beni Hamidi namely (Ahmed Bin Tarif) had agreed to sell the Stone to him for 120 napoleons. Saba Qa’war left with the sum to Bani Hamidi, and the *Shaykhs* agreed to release the stone to him for the agreed-upon price. At this point, a problem arose: Shaykh Qablan (الشيخ قبلان) of the ‘*Adwan* tribe and through his territory the stone would have to be taken refused to allow passage to the stone. To solve the problem the The Prussian’s consul found himself obliged to ask for a help from the Ottoman *wali*’s in Jerusalem, Nablus and Beirut will for interfering in guaranteeing safe passage for the stone. Afterwards, news arrived to the Prussian Consulate that the stone

had been destroyed by Bani Hamidi. After that the Prussian Consulate took no further interest in claiming the stone.

It seems that Clermont-Ganneau refused to think that the stone had been destroyed, and began reading the inscription from his impression. Actually, on November 25, 1869, E. M. Comte de Vogüé arrived in Jerusalem, discussed with Clermont-Ganneau about his latest interpretation of the text inscribed on the stone. de Vogüé declared himself ready to help in arranging the publication of the results of Ganneau’s study of the inscription. In the meantime, Clermont-Ganneau contacted Warren and asked him to forget about the story of Shaykh ‘Īd al-Fayez, that the stone had been destroyed. But instead, Warren assured him the destruction. Several meetings and consultations were held amongst Clermont-Ganneau and Warren during the first half of January 1870, and on the 15th of the same month Warren and Clermont-Ganneau received excellent squeezes of the two largest fragments, in addition to small fragments of the stone, which some of them were inscribed. Nevertheless, all the fragments were purchased by the French Clermont-Ganneau who was the one to read and interpret the text inscribed on the stone. Clermont-Ganneau kept all the stone fragments and the squeezes at the French consulate in Jerusalem and then transported to Paris, where he reconstructed and translated the text of the inscription. Several scientific publications were published by Clermont-Ganneau (1870A, 1870B, 1870C, 1876, 1887).

The story of the Mīsha‘ Stone’s discovery and interpretation during the second half of the nineteenth century is full with evidence that there was a big awareness that this archaeological feature would be of great significance to scholarship. As it was expected from the beginning, that the inscription will add more information the study of the history, ethnography, geography, mythology, linguistics and paleography of Jordan.

Finally, three European nations were in-

volved in the matter of Mīsha‘ Stone discovery and study. This may reflect the dangerous consequences of politicizing archaeology and added fuel to the debate over the accuracy of the historical narratives in the Bible.

‘Ayn Ghazāl Statues

Two caches of MPPNB (Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B *ca.* 7250-6500BC “Uncalibrated Date”), lime plaster human statuary were revealed at the site of ‘Ayn Ghazāl in 1983 and 1985. Details of their construction techniques and form have appeared in several studies (Grissom 2000; Grissom and Tubb 1995; Schmandt-Besserat 1998; Tubb 1985). Based on the stratigraphic location of the two caches, it seems that the 1983 one could be older than that one from the 1985. However, the radio carbon dates obtained by analyzing charcoal chunks from two deposits do not show a big difference in age. These are as follows:

The 1983 cache dates:

6750+/-80BC (Uncalibrated) = 7723+/-122BC (Calibrated).

6710+/-10BC (Uncalibrated) = 7654+/-121BC (Calibrated).

The 1985 cache dates:

6570+/-110BC (Uncalibrated) = 7580+/-110BC (Calibrated). (Grissom 2000:26) stated that the 1985 cache was buried after the above mentioned date.

The two caches include about 32 pieces as the following: 15 full sized statues standing to about 1m high; 12 one headed busts; 3 two-headed busts and two fragmentary heads (Schmandt-Besserat 1998: 1-2). Also they seem to belong to the same conditions of the archaeological contexts, in other words, each was laid in a pit dug on purpose for their deposit. Both were buried under the floor of a long abandoned house and their general orientation was east-west, except for the bust in Cache 1 which they were placed crosswise below the statues.

Although they are different in date, separated by approximately two or three hundred

years, but they have many things in common such as the location, material, technique, style and orientation.

A brief description of each cache is presented below separately.

The 1983 Cache

This cache was uncovered in a pit dug under a floor of an abandoned house in the Central Field of ‘Ayn Ghazāl. It consists of 25 pieces including (13 standing statues and 12 one-headed busts). It seems that they were in condition when they were laid in the pit. They were built by building up by coating an armature of reeds by lime-plaster. They are flat and almost of two dimensions. The back is almost straight and their thickness is ranging between 5cm and 10cm.

It has been suggested that the statues from both caches were placed in an upright state except for one of the two-headed bust (Cache 2) that has a rounded bottom. In this cache, the genitalia is shown perhaps only in a single example and was depicted with pudenda and the female holding her breasts.

The representations of the members of the statues are different in size from one to another, for example the head has been emphasized and represents two-fifths of the total size of the first cache; and the neck is oversized. The facial features are striking and the eyes were decorated by adding a line of bitumen.

The tall of the standing statues of the 1983 cache is ranging about 84cm compared to 100 cm in the 1985 cache. Also the height of the busts ranged 35cm in height, while it measures *ca.* 88cm in the second one (Schmandt-Besserat 1998: 3).

The Department of Antiquities of Jordan signed an agreement with the British Museum to reconstruct and restore this cache of statues. Fortunately, several statues were reconstructed and some of them are on display at the Jordan Museum in Amman, and the Museum of Jordanian Heritage of Yarmouk University in Irbid.

In the meantime, and according to the agreement, two statues were presented, and currently on display at the British Museum. Moreover, the work on this cache still unfinished due to the less of financial resources and still in London.

The 1985 Cache

This cache of statues was observed in the upper profile of the bulldozer cut in the Central Field during the last days of the 1984 season of excavations. Based on an agreement signed with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, it was only block-lifted in 1985 and then transported



6. The 'Ayn Ghazal Statue on loan at the Louvre Museum.

to the Smithsonian's Museums in Washington D.C. in the United States for digging, reconstructing and conserving (Grissom 2000). The reassembled cache consist of five statues two of which representing standing males, three two-headed busts and three plastered faces (Grissom 2000). In addition, unattached fragments including two other heads are recognized.

Luckily, the 1985 cache of statues was completely restored by the Smithsonian and all reconstructed ones were returned back to Jordan and are on display either at the Amman Citadel Museum or at the Jordan Museum, in Amman. To mention, the Jordanian Government signed an agreement with the Louvre Museum which allowed the museum to have one of the statues on loan for a long period of time.

The analytical study indicates that they were made of local lime-plaster. Reeds were bounded with unspun cordage in bundles that assembled together forming standing statues or busts figures. It seems that the statues were laid horizontally during the fabrications, and they were made in stages by adding the lime plaster to the reed-bundles. Also, it may be that to finish the complex of standing statue, legs were made separately and joined to the rest of it. Grissom thinks that they may have been accessorized with wigs, clothing or other material to give them human appearance (Grissom 2000:25). Also, the eyes bear traces of black bitumen decoration to give them more attention.

The excavated 'Ayn Ghazāl statues are considered among the world's oldest known large-scale statues and dated to the seventh millennium BC (uncalibrated). In fact, the meaning of these statues still unclear due to the fact that they were deposited in pits when no longer wanted for their original purpose. In addition no more of this type of statues has been excavated in contexts dated to a period later than the PPNB in general to help in understanding their function. Moreover, people built them up were preliterate to leave us something written about them explanation.

Apparently, (Schemandt-Besserat 1998:10-11) discussed the function of these statues thoroughly and questioned three possibilities: Gods? Ancestors? or Ghosts? She concluded “Based on iconography, the ‘Ayn Ghazāl “monumental” statuary may well have featured mythical protector figures, responsible for life and fertility. The ‘Ayn Ghazāl statues are testimonies to the everlasting endurance of symbolism. The symbol of motherly nourishment may be viewed as a creation typical of the beginning of agriculture” (Schemandt-Besserat 1998:14).

In this regard it should be noted that the first discovery of similar statues was recognized at Jericho (Garstang 1935). Also, plaster fragments of statues were encompassed at Nahal Hemar Cave to the southeast of the Dead Sea (Bar-Yosef and Allon 1988).

Tall as-Sa‘īdiyya Ivory Cosmetic Box

Tall as-Sa‘īdiyya is a large double mound occupying around 10 hectares, located in the central Jordan Valley, approximately 2km. east of the Jordan River, on the south side of Wādī Kufranja. The east is higher than the western one and measuring 40m above the present surrounding plain level. Based on the results of surveys and excavations conducted at the site



7. Late Bronze Age Ivory Cosmetic Box excavated at Tall as-Sa‘īdiyyah and on display at the British Museum.

it has been decided that it was continuously occupied from the Chalcolithic to the Byzantine periods (Tubb 1997: 452; 1991:181-194). However, the archaeological excavations conducted between the years 1964 and 1967 by the University of Pennsylvania Expedition (Pritchard 1980; 1985), and between 1985 and 1992 by the British Museum expedition yielded a variety of archaeological items indicate society's affluence. One of these finds is an ivory cosmetic box found inside a bronze bowl and dated to the Late Bronze Age (Philip 1991:105, Fig. 127).

This ivory cosmetic box was given to the British Museum expedition as their share of the finds excavated at the site. In other words, it has been legally handed over to the museum and became part of its archaeological collection.

Tulaylāt al- Ghassūl Wall Paintings

The famous Chalcolithic site Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl is situated at the southern end of the Jordan Valley, about 6km to the east of the Jordan River and 5km from the northeast corner of the Dead Sea. It lies 290-300m below the sea level (Hennessy 1997:161) described the site as follows: “When the site was founded, the area was swampy and settlement was made on a sand bank in the midst of slow-moving fresh water. It was surrounded by a rich growth of reeds, mosses, alder, and sedge”.

The archaeological excavations conducted at the site indicated that it was occupied dur-



8. Wall painting from Tulaylāt al-Ghassūl left back in 1967 at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Jerusalem.

ing the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods (*ca.* from 4500 to 3500BC). It was a very large settlement during the Chalcolithic period and occupied an area of approximately 20-25 hectares (Hennessy 1989:230-241).

Walls were often plastered and painted, more than twenty replasterings and repaintings were counted on some walls. The paintings represent drawings of stylized human and animal representations, stars and geometrical designs (Mallon, Koeppl and Neuville 1934: Pls. 66-71; Koeppl 1940: Pls. 5-8; Cameron 1981). These wall painting were first uncovered during the 1929-1938 excavations conducted by the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome (known as the Franciscans). They transported part of these wall paintings to their residence at their institute in Jerusalem, meanwhile the rest was taken to Amman and at present on display at the Jordan Museum.

The Jerusalem wall paintings collection include one of the most beautiful representations, which is the colored star surrounded by stylized human, animal and geometric figures. Unfortunately, and as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war it has been left back at the Pontifical Institute building in Jerusalem (Jehad Kafafi: Personnel Communication). Thus, it is a Jordanian property and has to be return to Jordan.

Bāb adh-Dhirā‘ Pottery Pots

The Early Bronze Age site of Bāb adh-Dhirā‘ is located on the plain southeast of the Dead Sea, exactly in the *Lisān* area. It has been occupied for over one thousand year and the site consists of two part: the walled city and the cemetery. The site was visited , surveyed and excavated by many individuals and institutions. The excavations undertaken by Paul Lapp (1965-1967) concentrated on the cemetery, but also several trial trenches were dug inside the walled city (Schaub and Rast 1989). More excavations were conducted by Walter Rast and Thomas Schaub (1975-1981), and the results of the fieldworks indicated that the site

was first occupied during the Early Bronze Ag I and continued up to the end of the EBIII when it was destructed. However, the site was reoccupied during the EBIV returning to village life (Schaub 1997: 249; Rast and Schaub 1981).

As a result of these excavations at Bāb adh-Dhirā‘ a large quantity of pottery pots and other archaeological objects were encountered, especially in the grave-yard. In addition, a large quantity of the Bāb adh-Dhirā‘ pottery assemblage was illegally excavated by the treasure hunters and smuggled outside Jordan, especially to Israel. Apparently, and after re-evaluating the problem, we have identified two collections of this repertoire;

1. An assemblage which has been given to the excavators, as their share, according to the Jordanian Antiquity Bye-Law and they were on display at the Smithsonian Museum.
2. The collection left back at the Palestine (Rockefeller) Museum in Jerusalem as a result of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. It is obvious that this assemblage is a Jordanian property and Jordan must acquire it.

As regard to the Bāb adh-Dhirā‘ pottery pots



9. A reconstructed Bāb adh-Dhirā‘ tomb at the Smithsonian Museums in Washington.

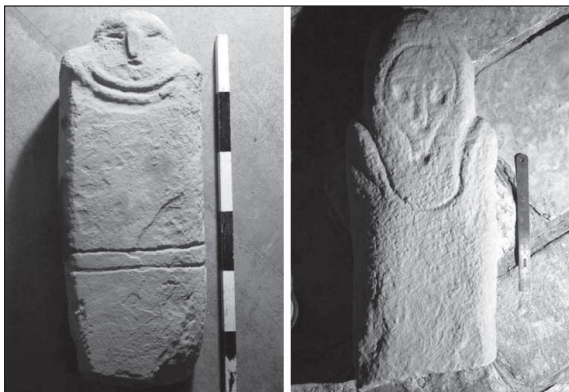


10. A general view of an excavated tomb at Bāb adh-Dhirā' with *in situ* pottery vessel.

excavated found by the illicit excavations and smuggled to the black market, alas we cannot claim it back, but we must try our best to stop such illegal excavations. In fact, it is not only the site of Bāb adh-Dhirā' that has been robbed by the treasure hunters but also many other sites in the region such as al-Naqi' at Ghawr aṣ-Ṣāfi.

Ancient Arabian Ancestor Idols from Rizqā

The site Rizqā is located in the extreme southern side of Jordan, south of the city Aqaba, around 3 kilometers from the Saudi borders, and approximately 18 kilometers south and slightly west of Wādī Rumm. The site was surveyed and sounded by a small team led by Diana Kirkbride during the sixties of the last century (Kirkbride 1969A: 116-121, 1969B: 188-195). Kirkbride mentioned that she recognized in the center of a wide valley lined by cliffs of shape and color lay a large circle out-



11. A male and a female representation found at Rizqā. Two carved sand stone slabs.

lined by a wall of long thin stone slabs mostly buried by sand, some of which were carved in a shape of human faces (Kirkbride 1969A:117). The circle was about 20 meters in diameter, and almost oval in shape. Several burials surrounded and surmounted by stones were found in the vicinity of the circle.

As a result of the excavation operation done at the site, Kirkbride uncovered a pre-Islamic sanctuary, which was completely destroyed by a war. In addition, it has been suggested that after the destruction of the sanctuary, the devotees of the sanctuary came back and tidied up the smashed remains and arranged them in a proper way. However, it seems that after a period of time the sanctuary had been neglected and the upright slabs were used as a quarry for burials. (Kirkbride 1969A:121) assumed that these carved figures "... were memorial to the dead erected in a special, probably tribal sanctuary". The carved representations belonging to males and females. One of the figures shows a female with a spindle lying between her breasts.



12. A woman with her spindle.

Actually some of the uncovered slabs were inscribed by Thamudic inscriptions, which perhaps indicate that the sanctuary belonged to a Thamudic tribe (Kirkbride 1969B: 192) argued that those inscribed slabs were inscribed after the destruction of the sanctuary and they have to do with the individual burial cairns, which post-date the destruction.

The Thamud tribe lived in these deserts of Arabia from about the fifth century BC.

The aim of this paper is not to discuss those above mentioned idols, but to shed light on that they were taken to Jerusalem before the Arab-Israeli war in 1967 and left at the Rockefeller/Palestine Museum in Jerusalem. It might be announced that due to the fact that they were excavated at a Jordanian site, Israel has to give them back to Jordan.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

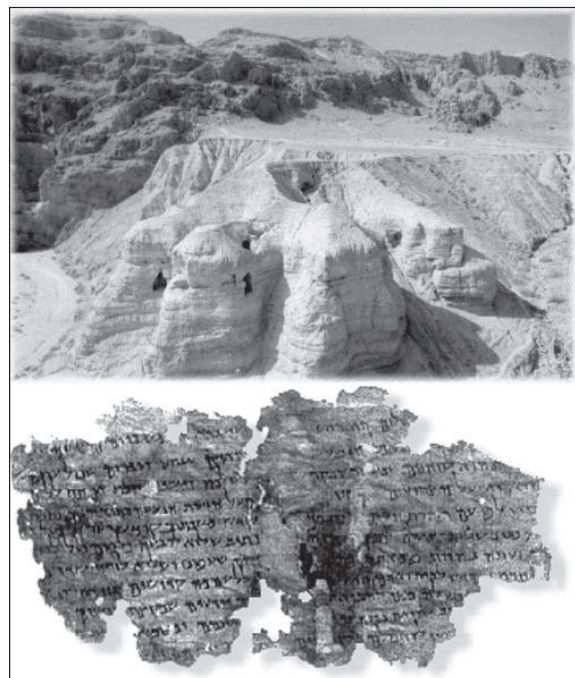
The term “Dead Sea Scrolls” is assigned to the documents and literary texts uncovered at sites extending on the western shore of the Dead Sea. These texts were written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. The first scrolls were found at Qumran by the bedouins “Ta’amrah” and appeared in the summer of 1947 in Bethlehem. Excavation operations in Cave 1 started in February 1949 (Wise 1997: 118), but resumed in 1952 after the West Bank of Jordan united with the East Bank and formed the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Caves 4 and 11, which was uncovered and excavated in 1956 yielded some of the most im-

portant and complete scrolls. Actually, it is not our aim to discuss the content of the scrolls, but to mention the role that Jordan played in discovering and studying them. Our main source of information about this subject is the publication of the late Mahmoud al-‘Abidi, then assistant to the General Director of Antiquities in Jordan (al-‘Abidi 2010); (al-‘Abidi 2010:270-285 Arabic) mentioned the Jordanian Government paid around fifteen thousand Dinar for acquiring the uncovered scrolls for the Palestinian Museum in Jerusalem. In addition, the Jordanian Government invested a lot of money for excavating the caves of the scrolls, and buying several logistics to preserve them in a very good condition. Moreover, the Jordanian army helped a lot in searching caves that might contain scrolls. In addition, the Jordanian Government formed a scientific committee to study the texts of the scrolls. But the most important issue is that the Jordanian Government issued a law based on the Jordanian Antiquities By-law no. 33 issued in 1953 that the “Jordanian Government has the right to compensate all the Dead Sea Scrolls and all site in which they were uncovered or to be uncovered”.



13. A Thamudic inscription uncovered at Rizqā.



14. A general view of some of the Qumran caves.

Unfortunately and as a result of the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem in 1967, Israel and by force put its hands on the scrolls. This deed was completed by building up a special museum for them, namely: “Shrine of the book”. Thus, and due to the facts mentioned above, it might be argued that property of the Dead Sea scrolls belongs to Jordan and not to Israel.

Conclusion

We think that for the time being one should ask how and why these archaeological masterpieces were taken out of Jordan and brought to European and American Museums, before we ask to bring them back home. As a matter of fact, to answer this question we should know that not all of these objects were stolen from Jordan, but they were removed in different ways: governmental agreements, presents, trade, treasure hunters and war.

1. Archaeological objects taken during the Ottoman reign over Arab countries (before 1921); examples are the Mīsha‘ stone and the al-Mushatta Facade.
2. Archaeological objects taken outside Jordan according to agreements: ‘Ayn Ghazāl Statues, Tall as-Sa‘īdiyya jewelry box, and several other objects.
3. Jordanian archaeological objects that were on display at the Palestinian Archaeological Museum (Rockefeller Museum) in Jerusalem before the 1967 war (Dead Sea Scrolls, Rizqā Idols, part of the Tulaylāt al- Ghassūl fresco, and some other pottery objects from Bāb adh-Dhirā‘).

This paper aims, first, to present archaeological information about those masterpieces and their values as a part of Jordanian heritage. Second, it will raise a discussion about what is better for Jordan: to ask international museums to give those objects back to Jordan or to keep them on display for a large universal audience. If they are returned, a solution of which the author is not in favor, are we capable of protecting, conserving and maintaining them for the

generations to come? However, we stress here that those masterpieces were left at the Palestinian Museum in Jerusalem must returned back to their original country, Jordan.

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