OUR ANCESTORS WERE BEDOUIN

MEMORY, IDENTITY, AND CHANGE: THE CASE OF HOLY SITES IN SOUTHERN JORDAN

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Päivi Miettunen

Helsinki 2021

Our Ancestors Were Bedouin – Memory, Identity, and Change: The Case of Holy Sites in Southern Jordan
Päivi Miettunen

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ABSTRACT

My study concentrates on three concepts: memory, identity, and change. I study the concept of memory in the formation of a communal identity. Individual experiences and emotions are given interpretation and meaning on the basis of the individual's own sphere of knowledge, taught, and transmitted by his own culture and society. This memory then becomes the shared idea and ideal of the community, and when transmitted to the next generations it overcomes the boundaries of time. In this process, the memory, therefore, at the same time defines and is defined by the community itself. What people call "change" can be considered a constant process of remembering and forgetting.

The state of Jordan has created a national identity where the Bedouin past and culture are symbols promoted by the state. At the same time, the government has worked on the modernization of the Bedouins: the nomads are being sedentarized, while secular and religious education, modern technology, and health care are available even in those areas that in the past used to be the most dangerous peripheries. These processes have also influenced the identity of the inhabitants of southern Jordan in the last few decades, yet despite all the changes, the most prominent factors in their identity continue to be their tribal heritage and being a Bedouin.

I am approaching these concepts through the case of the local "saints" (*awliyā'*). In the everyday religion, these holy men and women have assumed an important role: people address the saints in order to gain health, wealth, rain, fertility, and protection, among other things. I have conducted fieldwork in southern Jordan and located multiple holy sites, many of them uncharted until now. Recording folklore and old memories of the sacred places while also observing the religious practices and everyday life of the local people have been the goal of this work.

When studying the local traditions of holy places in Southern Jordan, it is evident that the older ones are being forgotten. But what is replacing them, and how does this change affect the identity of the local people? When such places lose their significance, what effect does it have – or, perhaps, is it a result of a change that has already taken place – on the identity of the people? One topic of special interest is the role of women, as they have played a very active part in many of the old traditions and rituals. Another central issue is that of tribal integrity and identity, as many of the sacred places are strongly connected to the past of the tribes, with various saints being ancestors and earlier leaders. Comparing

the change in Southern Jordan to processes that are taking place in other parts of the world has provided a framework for this research.

This work comprises a case study of change in action, showing on a local level how a community reacts to new ideas in numerous ways, for example, by returning to its own roots on one hand and embracing the contemporary global scene on the other – even to the extent of reinventing its own past.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The following work is an edited version of my doctoral dissertation, released in 2013 in the E-thesis service provided by the University of Helsinki. I am very grateful for this opportunity to now publish my work in the *Studia Orientalia* series. Based on comments and recommendations from the reviewer, some changes and additions have been made.

As a young student, I climbed up the arduous path to the Mountain of Aaron for the first time in 2000. I could not have guessed then that I would return to make that journey again – and again – during the following decade and that eventually it would lead me on a longer journey through the cultural, spiritual, and geographical landscape of southern Jordan. Today, I have the opportunity to thank all those people without whom I would never have been able to reach the peak.

I would like to thank my supervisors, Professor Emeritus Tapani Harviainen, Professor Hannu Juusola, and Professor Emeritus Heikki Palva. Their support and encouragement have been invaluable during my work. As they all have different expertise and foci of interest in their research, I have received comments and ideas from multiple perspectives, thus giving me the possibility to look at my work from various angles.

My uttermost gratitude goes to my pre-examiners, Dr. Géraldine Chatelard and Dr. Andrew Petersen. Their works have been important sources for my research, and I appreciated their in-depth knowledge of the region even before they kindly accepted to read my thesis. Therefore, their comments and feedback were much welcomed and anticipated. I am grateful for their constructive criticism and suggestions, which helped me to improve my work. I also wish to thank Margot Stout Whiting, who not only corrected my English but offered her own insight on various topics in my work. Needless to say, any remaining mistakes, misunderstandings, or shortcomings are my own.

I thank Professor Emeritus Jaakko Frösén, the director of the Finnish Jabal Haroun Project (FJHP), and Docent Zbigniew T. Fiema for all their support. Docent Fiema also read and commented on Chapter 6, for which I am very grateful. My gratitude also belongs to the whole FJHP tribe. What I learned from them and experienced with them will never be forgotten.

The PhD seminar arranged at my department gave a great opportunity to meet other colleagues during the often very lonely writing process. I wish to thank all the participants of the seminar for the interesting meetings and discussions.

Sometimes even a short period can be a turning point in research. For me, such a moment took place during the Nordic PhD Workshop in Cairo and Alexandria in June 2–8, 2008, organized by the Nordic Society for Middle Eastern Studies. I give my warm thanks to Professor Knut S. Vikør, Professor Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, and to all participants of the workshop for their insightful comments, ideas, and criticism that helped me immensely to refocus my research. I also want to extend my thanks to the participants of the international conferences where I have presented research papers, especially the Nordic conferences in 2007, 2010, and 2013. The interest shown in my research by audiences greatly encouraged me in my work.

I am grateful for several foundations that have supported my work financially. With grants from the Research Foundation of the University of Helsinki, the Finnish Cultural Foundation, and the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, I was able to focus on my research full-time. The Foundation of the Finnish Institute in the Middle East granted me two travel grants, with which I could conduct my fieldwork in southern Jordan. During my time in the Middle East, I have also been able to stay at various institutes. When visiting Damascus, I had the opportunity to reside at the Netherlands Institute for Academic Studies while spending my days reading in the libraries of the Danish Institute and Institut français du Proche-Orient. The American Center for Oriental Research was my base when staying in Amman. Their library containing collections on Jordanian history and culture was a true cave of treasures for me. I am truly grateful for having all these possibilities.

I am greatly indebted to my family and friends. They have patiently understood my passion for research, giving me space to work and concentrate, but also offering help when I have needed it. They encouraged me and urged me forward when I hesitated. They also persistently kept me aware of the world outside research. To Janne and Petra, and to my friends – Johanna in Finland, Riggs in Texas, and Shona in Jordan – thank you.

أشكر شعب جنوب الأردن .الناس الذين استقبلوني في ديارهم وحدثوني عن حياتهم.
من دون هؤلاء الناس هذه الدراسة لا وجود لها. وجه امتناني الخاص إلى أبو شاهر
و أم هيثم وام شادي وإلى عائلاتهم الذين علموني معنى كرم البدو الحقيقي.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and the aim of the work

لبيت تخفق الأرواح فيه أحب إلي من قصرمنيف
ولبس عباءة وتقر عيني أحب إلي من لبس الشفوف
وأكل كسيرة من كسر بيتي أحب إلي من أكل الرغيف
وأصوات الرياح بكل فج أحب إلي من نقر الدفوف
وكلب ينبح الطراق دوني أحب إلي من قط أليف
وخرق من بني عمي نحيف أحب إلي من علج عنوف [1]

The above lines belong to a poem attributed to Maysūn, the Bedouin wife of the first Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya, in the seventh century.[2] Almost fourteen centuries later, the words still reflect many of the stereotypical ideals of Bedouin life and its principles, such as freedom, simplicity, kinship ties, and pride. However, despite the continuity, change is an inevitable aspect of all living communities. During the last decades, even the Bedouins have had to adapt to the ways of modern life. The process of change in the traditional lifestyle has been studied by sociologists and anthropologists throughout the world in various communities – including among the Bedouin tribes. This work is a study of the various tribal societies of southern Jordan, and it participates in the discourse on the effects of change on the identity of both individuals and communities. However, the focus will be on two aspects of the traditional culture, namely, holy sites and the veneration of local saints.

In 2000, I became a member of the Finnish Jabal Haroun Project,[3] which excavated a Byzantine pilgrimage center and monastery on Jabal Hārūn between 1997 and 2007. This place, Aaron's Mountain, is where – according to Jewish,

---

[1] The home that the winds flutter I love more than the lofty palace.
To wear a cloak and be of good cheer I love more than fine robes.
To eat crumbs in the corner of my home I love more than eating soft loaf.
The sounds of the wind in every direction I love more than beating of the tambourines.
The dog that barks at everyone but me I love more than a pet cat
And the breaching of my uncle's lean sons I love more than a rough uncouth man. (Nöldeke 1890: 25)

[2] Unless otherwise stated, all dates in this work are given in CE.

[3] <www.fjhp.info>

Christian, and Islamic tradition – the high priest Aaron, the brother of Moses, died and was buried. While the project focused on the ruined monastic complex, there are also other sites on the mountain. On the highest peak stands an Islamic shrine which is believed to house the tomb of Aaron. The shrine has been a center of veneration, especially for the inhabitants of the Petra region, and a rich tradition of beliefs, rituals, and legends are connected to both Hārūn and his tomb. I soon became more interested in this tradition, and eventually it turned into the topic of my Master's thesis (Miettunen 2004).

Two observations briefly presented in my MA thesis drew my attention and gave a starting point for more detailed research:

1. Aaron's tomb is not the only holy site in the region. Several other sites were mentioned by the local people, and it seemed very likely that many others existed. To understand the full meaning of the tradition, it was, therefore, important to find as many of these holy sites as possible, and gather oral information concerning the rituals and beliefs related to them.

2. The traditions connected to the holy sites seem to be going through a drastic change due to both secular and religious reasons. With sedentarization and an increased level of education, knowledge about the scholarly interpretations of Islam is growing, and a different form of religious behavior is slowly replacing the local popular traditions. It is especially interesting to see how this affects the role of women in religious activity. In the folk religion, women often have a more active and outgoing role in the cult, while the scholarly religion tends to limit their activities to the private sphere. Moreover, many of the local saints are respected tribal ancestors – ancient *sheikhs* and grandfathers (*judūd*) of the families who are still living in the region. It could be expected that the changes of attitude toward the tombs of these ancestors, once venerated by the tribes, would affect the interpretation of the past as well.

Based on these two initial observations, my work evolved into a multifaceted study of the cult of ancestors and saints as representations of communal memory and group identity. My goal is to analyze the effect of change on this particular aspect of the local society. The research has required applying theories and methods from several fields to build as thorough an image as possible of the saint cult in the region. Theories of the sociology of religion, fieldworking methods of anthropological research and even the basic methodology of archaeological surveys have been used during the course of this work. Despite the number of tools used, it is not my attempt to form new theories. Instead, this is a cultural study of southern Jordanian society, where similar studies from different areas, as well as various theories from other fields, have been applied to explain and

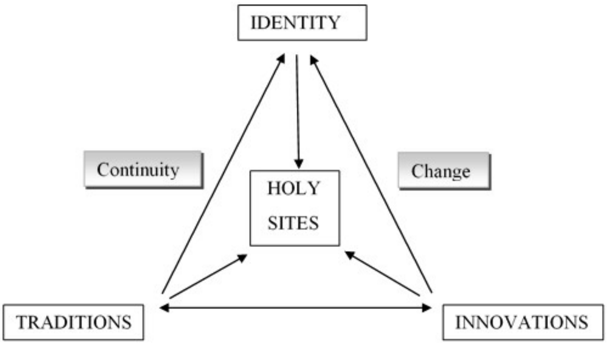

Figure 1 The basic concepts and their relations

understand a specific phenomenon: the change and continuity of identities as shown from the point of view of the tradition of holy sites.

Culture is shaped by traditions and innovations. Traditions are the preserving force in the human community, the things that have been learned from earlier generations and accepted as the norms of everyday life. The innovations are novelties: new thoughts, methods, and ways that are introduced to the community and are either accepted or rejected by it. The process of acceptance or rejection is rarely simple and smooth, especially if the innovations are clearly in contrast with the traditions, but once an innovation has been accepted, it gradually becomes part of the tradition. A change has taken place. Thus, traditions and innovations are in constant interaction with each other. Similarly, identity is based on this interaction. The community forms its own identity on the basis of the common traditions. At the same time, it is constantly affected by the innovations, changing in the process as the traditions change. The veneration of ancestors and other holy sites is part of the tradition of the region, and as such represents an element of the group identity – the system of belief shared by the community. In this work, this tradition of sacred places is studied separately, as a center of focus, but also as part of the belief system as a whole. As Bronislaw Malinowski (1969: 26) points out: “the ritual performance can not be fully understood except in relation to the pragmatic utilitarian performance in which it is embedded, and to which it is intrinsically related”. The saint tradition is looked at from the viewpoint of all three corners of the triangle, by discussing the role of the saints and the cult of saints as part of the local culture and identity, but especially in relation to modern life and how changes in the society have affected the old practices and beliefs.

1.2 Outline of the work

In my study, the cult of saints is approached from varying angles, with each chapter concentrating on one aspect. Chapters 2 through 5 are descriptive texts where the full methodological, theoretical, historical, theological, and geographical frames are established. In Chapter 2, I begin by going through the earlier research related to both Bedouin and local culture in the past. I include and describe the most influential sources that contain information on the cultural aspects and the belief system. The earliest sources related to the topic are from the nineteenth century, thus providing a written historical dimension. More recent studies, on the other hand, represent a view of the traditional culture under change. After the introduction of the written evidence, I turn to the oral and material sources and describe my own methods and the process of fieldwork conducted in the region. In addition to this information, I wish to raise a few questions concerning the validity of the chosen methods, as well as the problems and possible effects of the different chosen or existing variables (especially gender) on the outcomes and data gathered during the course of the fieldwork.

In Chapter 3, I move on to present the theoretical frame. The focus is on defining and explaining three aspects that together represent the theoretical core of this work. The first aspect is memory, especially the concept of communal memory. An important theme is the concept of *the chain of memory*, a term defined by French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2000), whose work has had great influence on my research. The chain of memory represents a communal approach to defining religion and religious behavior. The theory offers tools for studying the whole concept of change within the community, including the idea of communal memory, and transitions of rituals and belief. The second aspect is identity, including its various forms, such as religious, national, or ethnic identities. The discussion focuses on how communal memory shapes identities. Finally, the third aspect is change: the interaction of innovations with the tradition and how identity is affected by change.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to the tradition of "saints" (*awliyā'*) in the Islamic world. Starting with a brief introduction on the evolution of the concept and the terminology, I first concentrate on the different views represented by various Islamic scholars. Various Islamic schools of thought have had opposing opinions concerning the tradition, and the voices both for and against the veneration of saints are discussed. Together with the mystic interpretations of the Sufi orders, I also discuss the living traditions of the saint cult in the Islamic world, including the political importance of these traditions. I will also address the problematics of the concepts of "magic" and "miracle" – the borders between the unaccepted and accepted elements of religion.

Chapter 5, the last of the chapters providing background information and the basic framework for the study, turns the attention to the actual region of this research: southern Jordan. I describe the geographical setting as well as the history of the area in relation to the larger historical frame, including the formation of the modern Jordanian state and its effect on the southern region. Naturally, it is the tribal society that forms the main focus. The tribes of the region, their past and present, and their relations to each other and to outsiders are introduced in this chapter.

As noted in Chapter 4, the topic of the popular beliefs and tradition of saints in the Islamic world has been broadly studied in the past. However, there has been no thorough research focusing on the beliefs and identity of the Bedouin of southern Jordan. There are mainly brief notes and observations, found among other information in the writings of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century travelers and scholars, as well as studies concentrating on smaller geographical areas. My fieldwork attempts to fill this knowledge gap by providing information on both the holy sites as material entities – many unknown or only partially studied until now – and the disappearing knowledge of folklore and local beliefs related to these sites. Due to practical reasons, much of my data has been collected from the Petra region, but for comparative study and to gain a broader overview of the topic, I have gathered material from several points in southern Jordan. However, before it was possible to discuss the holy sites in relation to the identity and changing traditions in the region, the sites first had to be found. Chapter 6 is a detailed description of the material evidence related to the holy sites. I describe the process of the survey and provide a list of all the sites I was able to locate. Included in the list are both the sites I have personally visited and the sites that I have only oral or written evidence on. The chapter finishes with an analysis of the site typology.

While Chapter 6 focuses on the material evidence, the topic of Chapter 7 is ritual and belief. I do not wish to write a mere list of rites and myths, but instead present the systematic categories of the religious practices connected to the holy sites in the local communities. By taking a more functionalistic approach, I study the cultic and ritual roles of the holy sites in the whole culture, as part of the local tradition.

After establishing the framework as laid out by earlier research and presenting the material from my own fieldwork, Chapter 8 concentrates on the theoretical questions related to identities, modernization and religious practices. The main topics discussed in this chapter are: what changes have taken place in the religious thought and practice in the region, are these changes reflected in the identity of the individuals within the communities, what aspects are used overall in building these identities, and what are the different approaches in coping with the change?

Chapter 9 is a short epilogue for the whole work. It concludes this study with a summary of the main topics and thoughts raised in the chapters. I also briefly discuss the questions that could be answered by further research.

1.3 Notes on language use and transcription

Even though this study is not a linguistic work, it would be impossible to continue without paying some attention to the use of Arabic language and words. After all, spoken language is the means by which people mostly communicate with others within and across the communities. The way they express themselves in various situations also reflects their identity and how they want to be seen by others.

In Jordan, the dialects fundamentally represent the socioeconomic status of the speaker. We thus have the distinction between the city dwellers, the rural farmers and the Bedouin. In a study conducted in Amman, it was evident that the urban speakers chose or discarded aspects of the different dialects brought into the city by the various groups, based on what connotations they placed on each aspect (Holes 1995: 270).[4] A good example would be the development of the different reflexes of *qāf*. In the Amman dialect, the most prominent reflex was the typical urban glottal stop /ʾ/. However, the Bedouin reflex /g/ was also common, especially among the young men to whom this form represented masculinity and power. Finally, the rural reflex /k/ of *qāf* was losing ground, being clearly regarded of lower status than the two other reflexes (Holes 1995: 278).[5] Thus, even though the city dialects have the highest status, the dialectal forms attesting Bedouin origins have a certain prestige even in the urban communities. The rural dialects seem to have become linked with a lower status of the speaker.

This example clearly shows the conscious choices made in speech to express identity and status. The choice not only occurs between different dialects, but also in choosing between a certain dialect and a more literary level of Arabic, Standard Literary Arabic being the most formal way and also indicating a high level of formal education. Language use as an expression of identity is an interesting subject and would require a more detailed study and level of focus that cannot be provided within the frame of this work.

---

[4] Comparisons are made with Bahrain, where the main division is sectarian (Sunni/Shīʿa), and with Baghdad, where the speaker's style reveals his religion, namely, whether he is Muslim, Christian, or Jewish.

[5] Palva (1984: 364) notes that the reflex /g/ has, in fact, been the dominant one in the village and town dialects of Jordan, as well as in the agricultural communities of the Jordan Valley. This feature points toward the fact that the people of the region are mainly of Bedouin origin and have relatively recently become sedentarized. The rural reflex /k/ apparently originates mainly from Palestine, having arrived with the refugees who have settled in Amman and its surroundings.

However, the question of language variation and the choice of words is a topic that requires a brief explanation. In southern Jordan, the differences between the dialects are more subtle than in Amman, but nevertheless a variety of dialects also exists in the region studied. Some differences in the dialects spoken by the local groups, especially the vocabulary used, may therefore be related to conscious choices of expressing identity. The local inhabitants recognize these difference and also make a distinction between the "farmer" and "Bedouin" dialects.[6] In 2005, young men from both the Bedūl and ʿAmārīn tribes told me that the people of the nearby village of Wadi Mūsā do not understand all the vocabulary that their tribes used. The Bedūl dialect seems to be considered as particularly different from the others. In 2005, a man from Wadi Mūsā based the theory of the Bedūl being of Jewish origin on the fact that their dialect is closer to the dialects spoken west of Wadi Araba than to the language used in Saudi Arabia, as has been attested by Raslan Bani Yasin and Jonathan Owens (1984: 228) in their study of the Bedūl dialect. The similarities with the dialect of the Negev Bedouin are pointed out. On the other hand, Heikki Palva (2008) notes that the dialects of Arabia Petraea are more similar to the Negev dialects, and in some ways also to the Hijazi dialects, than to the Anazi and Shammari dialects of the North Arabian Bedouin.

Another common choice in the recorded material is the choice of registers. The local dialect is the native language of the speakers, learned in childhood. For many of the older informants who have not received any formal education, it is also the only language they can speak. The younger people, on the other hand, have also learned literary Arabic at school, and they can choose to speak one or the other – or a variant that contains characteristics of both. A very typical situation is when the speaker uses the dialect in an informal conversation, but when the recorder is turned on, he or she chooses to use more formal speech. Some informants who have a university-level education may predominantly use a formal register. This variety of forms in the material creates another challenge in the already existing task of choosing the transcription method for the Arabic in this study. I have chosen to use two styles: simplified transcription, where diacritics and the lengths of the vowels are not marked in any way, and a more exact method of transliteration, where the phonology is followed as closely as possible. The basic division is as follows.

---

[6] In 2011, a two-year-old girl in the village of the Bedūl tribe was learning to speak. Her father belonged to the tribe, but her mother was from further north and was considered a farmer. The women in the family were especially amused by her way of saying *maddī* 'I do not want' "in the way of the farmers". *The Bedūl say mā wuddī.*

Written in simplified form:

- Arabic names and loanwords commonly in use in the English language (for example, *sheikh, imam, caliph, henna, wadi*)
- Names of rulers, countries, cities and other geographical entities that have a relatively standardized form in English (for example, *Hussein bin Talal, Abbasids, Jordan, Amman, Aqaba, Wadi Araba*)

Written in transliteration:

- Arabic words not commonly known in English (for example, *dīra, awliyā'*)
- Tribes
- Names of local people and places often appearing in dialectal form
- Any quotations from oral sources, including the words listed in the "simplified form" list if they appear in such a quotation

Direct quotations from written sources have been left as they are. Clearly, some of the choices between a simple form and an exact transliteration are somewhat arbitrary, especially when choosing which names could be considered "relatively standardized forms" in English. It may be confusing to use different variations of the same name when they appear alone, on one hand, and when they are presented in the spoken material, on the other. However, using full transliterations would nevertheless require some compromise, as the standard forms and the dialectal variants would not be the same. I have, therefore, made the decision to concentrate on the transliteration of the spoken variation of the Arabic language in southern Jordan, presenting the local terminology and nomenclature as they appear in the oral sources. When different forms of pronunciation are present in the spoken material, it has been my conscious attempt to choose the one that typifies the dialect spoken in that region, thus, I hope, presenting the local variants.[7]

The following system has been used as the basis of transliteration of Arabic in this work:

---

[7] A typical example when the choice has been made in favor of the common local variant is when the speaker shifts toward standard literary Arabic. This often happened in more formal interview situations.

ʼ, ى, ا	ā	ب	b	ت	t	ث	th	ج	j	ح	ḥ
خ	kh	د	d	ذ	dh	ر	r	ز	z	س	s
ش	sh	ص	ṣ	ض	ḍ[8]	ط	ṭ	ظ	ż	ع	ʻ
غ	gh	ف	f	ق	g (q)	ك	k	ل	l	م	m
ن	n	ه	h	ي	y, ī	و	w, ū	ة	a, at (st.c.)[9]		

In addition, the long vowels ē and ō appear in the spoken language, replacing the diphthongs *ay* and *aw* respectively. In the Bedouin dialects, the diphthongs still exist, and both variants may appear in speech side by side. In the dialect of the Bedūl, the long *-ā* at the end of nouns has a tendency to shift toward *-ī*. For example, the name of the town Wadi Mūsā is pronounced *Wādī Mūsī*. A third characteristic worth noting in the transliteration is the presence of the epenthesis. According to the description of Bani Yasin and Owens (1984: 209), epenthesis occurs – among other times – "between the first and second elements of any three consonant sequence, where final and initial pauses count as consonants." I have chosen to mark the epenthetic sound with *ə*, for example, in Umm əDfūf (*Umm Dufūf*). No system is perfect, however. There are several aspects of the dialects, such as stress and pharyngealization, which are not treated at all. Nevertheless, I believe that the chosen system offers enough accuracy to represent the oral material in the context of this study.

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[8] In spoken language, there is no separation of *ḍ* and ż. The common form is marked as *ḍ*.

[9] Also *e* in spoken language.

2. SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Written sources

The written sources described in this chapter are primarily studies related to the nomadic cultures and folk beliefs in the Middle East. The theoretical works will be discussed in Chapter 3. It is not my intention to make an exhaustive list of all the ethnographic work read for this study, although the topic has been of great interest to anthropologists and sociologists alike, and there are a number of existing studies available. Instead, I wish to introduce the ones that have proved most influential in the course of my own work.

The first group of literary sources used in this study consists largely of the accounts of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western travelers and researchers. They include broad ethnographic surveys of large geographical regions, but also in-depth studies of small communities. The founding of the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1865 resulted in an extensive geographical survey in Palestine and Transjordan. In the next decades, a growing number of visitors and scholars traveled in the region. In addition to the research-oriented academics, there were also a number of Christian pilgrims and missionaries, touring the famous biblical sites in the region. Finally, there were the wealthy upper-class "tourists". All groups wrote accounts, articles, journals, and books about their experiences and observations.[10] Although these publications are of varying quality, and must naturally be treated with a critical approach, they nevertheless present valuable first-hand experiences and observations.

The major contribution of these accounts to this work has been providing essential historical information on traditions and communities in the past. I have used the data presented in them for comparison and sometimes as a guide for asking certain questions or when trying to find certain features. These questions sometimes created a lively discussion when the informants in return asked where I had obtained my information. The fact that the knowledge had been written down by European researchers more than a hundred years ago was clearly a surprise – but mostly a pleasant one.

On the other hand, these early texts stand as reminders of the passing of time. They prove how short a time frame may be needed for a tradition or belief to be forgotten – as an active practice, and even in the memory of people. That some of these forgotten memories have survived in the written notes of Western travelers also enhances the awareness of all the information that has not been recorded and is now irrecoverable. Still, they are also important sources in an attempt to trace the patterns of communal memory.

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[10] According to Ben-Arieh (1983: 15), more than 5,000 accounts of the region were published between the years 1800 and 1878.

Alois Musil was born in 1868 in Moravia, which today is part of the Czech Republic but at that time belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He studied theology and was consecrated as a priest in 1891. In 1895, he received his PhD in theology and decided to travel to Jerusalem, where a French Dominican institute had recently been opened. During his life, he made altogether eight trips to the Middle East, and each journey provided information about the history and culture of the region. One of his earliest notable finds was the early eighth-century Quṣayr ʻAmra, built in what today comprises the eastern desert of Jordan. However, it is his ethnographic research that provides detailed data about the life and culture of both Bedouin and settled people of Transjordan at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1906, he surveyed the area between the Egyptian and Turkish borders, publishing detailed maps of the region, including the area of Wadi Mūsā and Petra. In 1907–1908, he published altogether four volumes of his study, called *Arabia Petraea,* containing descriptions of his journeys between 1896 and 1902. The first volume, *Moab,* is mainly a travel diary of places along his route in the biblical area of Moab (between Madaba and Karak). The second volume, *Edom,* is a similar description of the region south of Karak to Aqaba, and to Gaza across the Negev. The third volume is of special interest. *Ethnologischer Reisebericht* gives a list of local tribes and subtribes, as well as their traditional areas, and provides data about various aspects of the culture, including magic, saints, and holy sites. Another detailed ethnographic work is "The Manners and Customs of the Rwala Bedouin", published in 1928 (Žďárský 2019).

Antonin Jaussen (1871–1962) was another scholar with a theological background. Born in the Ardèche in France, he later became a priest in the Dominican order. He studied and later taught as a professor at the l'École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem from 1890 until 1928. His major contributions include an archaeological survey of North Arabia, conducted between 1907 and 1910 together with another priest, Raphaël Savignac. Their observations were published as *Mission archéologique en Arabie,* whose four volumes include a thorough description of the area of Madā'in Ṣāliḥ (مدائن صالح), as well as a survey of the desert castles in Transjordan (Graf 2005). Jaussen's other contribution, frequently referred to in this work, is his ethnographic study *Coutumes des Arabes au Pays de Moab,* originally published in 1907. This book also contains a list of the tribes inhabiting the region, but it is his description of the varieties of local folk religion, including the saint tradition and holy sites, that has been of special interest to me. During World War I, Jaussen became involved in wartime politics. The French nominated him as an intelligence officer in the Levant, and his extensive knowledge of the region was equally utilized by the British.

Tawfiq Canaan (1882–1964) provides one of the most thorough studies on the subject of the popular veneration of saints. He also visited Petra briefly and made observations about the local beliefs in the late 1920s. Born to a Christian family living in Beit Jala, he worked most of his life as a medical doctor in Jerusalem, but gradually he developed a growing interest in the local folklore and popular religion. He made several trips to the Palestinian countryside, gathering information about folk medicine, etiology, and demonology. He also compiled an extensive collection of magical objects, such as amulets, some of which are still kept at Bir Zeit University. Several of his articles were published in the *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society*, established in 1920, and he was also a member of the American Schools of Oriental Research. His study on Palestinian saints and shrines, published in 1924–1927 under the title *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine*, is still among the most extensive studies on this subject (Nashef 2002). The work was based on the earlier research of the German scholar Paul Kahle, whose survey was published in three parts in *Palästinajahrbuch des Deutschen Evangelischen Instituts für Altertumswissenschaft des Heiligen Landes zu Jerusalem* in 1910–1912.

Edvard Westermarck (1862–1939), a Finnish sociologist, is most widely known for his studies on marriage, morality, and taboo. His theories were based on the evolutionist school of thought, nowadays mostly outdated. Nevertheless, his works *The History of Human Marriage* (1891) and *The Origin and Development of Moral Ideas* (1906, 1908) are still considered fundamental contributions to the study of social anthropology. Equally acknowledged – and for my own study more influential – are his observations from his nine-year-long stay in Morocco. *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, published in two volumes in 1926, contains several chapters on the topic of *baraka*, as well as detailed observations on magic, spirits, and saints (Pipping 1982).

Another Finn, **Hilma Granqvist** (1891–1972), planned initially to conduct biblical study and traveled to Palestine in order to undertake comparative research based on the lives of the women in the village of Arṭās near Bethlehem. Her focus changed during her stay, resulting in an extensive investigation of everyday life in a peasant community, including topics such as kinship, childhood, marriage, and death. It also provides information especially on women – material that had been largely missing in the ethnographic work of male authors. In addition, her photographic material represents a major contribution to the development of visual anthropology (Seger 1987: 13). Results of her three-year-long period of fieldwork include *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village* (two volumes, 1932 and 1935), *Birth and Childhood in an Arab Village* (1947) and *Muslim Death and Burial* (1965), of which the last has been of special interest for my research.

The other group of written sources discussed here consists of more recent studies focusing either on the modern nomadic cultures and the changes taking place in their ways of life, or on the modern practices related to the popular cult of saints in the Islamic world. They offer a synchronic comparison for the questions concerning change in a traditional society. The timescale in this group is still broad, with the "modern" consisting of studies made in the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century. A central element in many of these studies is the change and development of traditions.

Lila Abu-Lughod is a Palestinian-American scholar and professor at the University of Columbia. In the late 1970s, she went to live with the Awlād 'Alī tribe in Egypt, and she has written several books and articles from the material she collected during her two-and-a-half-year stay there. Her two studies concerning the traditions of the tribe are *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (2000) and *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories* (1993). Her work concentrates on women and has been considered a contribution to the field of feminist ethnography.

Other substantial works focusing on the Bedouin tribes of the region include studies of oral history and identity among the Balga tribes of Central Jordan by Andrew Shryock (1997), William Lancaster's fieldwork among the Rwala in the 1970s and 1980s, and Donald Cole's research on the changing tradition in Saudi Arabia, especially among the Āl Murra Bedouin of the Empty Quarter. Finally, online databases, surveys, and maps should be mentioned as useful sources in providing data on various locations while doing my own material survey. The Middle Eastern Geodatabase for Antiquities (MEGA) stores archaeological information, while Wikimapia offers a new kind of source in the world of social media.[11]

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[11] <www.wikimapia.org> Like Wikipedia, Wikimapia is an open platform that can be freely edited by anyone and is thus not an official source. The local people have added much personal information to the map, including areas of tribal ownership, and even owners of individual houses in the villages.

2.2 The fieldwork process

2.2.1 Methods

The written works are essential historical, comparative, and informative sources. However, the main data comes from my own fieldwork conducted in Jordan. Since I have several subtopics in my research, I had to apply different methods for each of them. First of all, I was studying the sites themselves as material entities, mapping and describing them in detail. For this, I applied the method of archaeological surveys, as it enabled me to concentrate on the material evidence for human activities at the sites. The survey process is described in detail in Chapter 6. Secondly, I was recording folklore – the tales, myths, history, rituals, and practices connected to the sites. In this part, the best methods have been informal interviews. Finally, I apply the above data to the aspects of identity and change in the society. In this part, interviews and participant observation have been the main methods. Combining the data gathered with the various methods listed above is the final task, which again offers new challenges, especially when visual evidence does not necessarily coincide with the oral data.

Since my first stay in Petra in July–August 2000 with the FJHP excavation team, I have visited the region several times. I participated in the FJHP field seasons of 2000, 2002–2003, 2005, and 2007, each ranging from three to seven weeks in length. In 2002, 2005, 2009, and 2011, I was in Jordan concentrating solely on my own project. The length of the personal field seasons ranged from two weeks to four months, and altogether I have spent approximately one year in the region. During the season of 2005, I also spent one week in Damascus, studying at the library of the IFPO (Institut français du Proche-Orient), and another week in Amman at the ACOR (American Center for Oriental Research). In 2009 and 2011, I returned to the ACOR for a few days.

I had originally defined the geographical boundaries of my study in the following way: the northern border runs from the southern edge of the Dead Sea along Wadi al-Ḥasā, turning south to Mudawwara. In the south and west, the area is limited by the state borders with Saudi Arabia and Israel. Thus, the area includes parts of the governorates of Ṭafīle, Maʿān, and Aqaba. After my field season in 2005, it became clear that, given the time period and scope of this work, this area was too large to be studied in detail. As a result, I chose to concentrate on several smaller regions, represented by some of their inhabiting tribes. The areas and the tribes are: Wadi Mūsā and the Liyāthne; Umm Sayḥūn/Petra and the Bedūl, Bayḍā' and the 'Amārīn; Northern Wadi Araba and the Sa'īdīyīn;[12] the Shāmīye and Karāshīn in Ma'ān; and finally the Zelābiye in Wadi Rum. Additional information was collected in passing from the inhabitants of Rājef, Mudawwara, and Ḥumayma. My main base was always the village of Umm Sayḥūn (ام سيحون), about two km north of the ancient city of Petra. This naturally creates a situation where the Bedūl, and to a certain degree, the Liyāthne and 'Amārīn, are the main sources for most observations, while the other tribes mainly appear in interviews concentrating on the holy sites and traditions. However, even though this study does not pretend to offer a full view of the lives, traditions, and practices of all inhabitants of the region, there are certain patterns that emerge from the study and from studies of other regions where pastoralism has been the main basis of the economy. I try to trace these patterns by using the methods mentioned above.

It is too easy to see methods as ready-made tools, when in fact these tools really have to be reconfigured, fixed, and evaluated again and again. When choosing the right methods, the local lifestyle and nature had to be thoroughly considered. Working in a tribal society is to work with a network of contacts that slowly expands. I had the opportunity to start with the contacts I had from the Finnish Jabal Haroun Project. Working with the local people in the archaeological excavations actually proved to be a very effective method of establishing a network of contacts. In addition to interaction during working hours, I also spent a large part of the free afternoons and evenings with the local workers who were camping on the mountain, creating a natural setting for learning the local dialect, for informal discussions and even for more formal interviews. Although the majority of the workers came from the Bedūl tribe, members of other tribes from the region, such as the 'Amārīn and Sa'īdīyīn, were frequently employed as well.

Gradually, the men who were working on the excavation site were also willing to introduce me to their families. When I started my research in 2005, it was my plan to live in the residence that was frequently used by various foreign excavation teams, including the FJHP group, but only a few days after starting my work I was invited to stay as a guest with a local family living in the same village. This family were of invaluable help during my study, offering information and contacts – and a place to stay during every visit. As a "member of the family", I was able to observe the local culture and everyday life in detail. I participated in weddings and other celebrations, traveling with the family members several times to Wadi Araba to attend traditional weddings. The daily tasks observed varied from traditional skills, such as breadmaking and goatherding, to interaction with foreign tourists. With the assistance of the family, I had the opportunity to expand my contact network, using each occasion to find potential informants and study the dynamics in and between families and tribes.

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[12] This region actually consists of several stops in and outside the actual Wadi Araba basin. The places visited include Grēgra (Qurayqira), Umm Mathle (Umm Mithla), əDlāgha (Dilāgha), and al-Farsh.

Most of my interviews are semi- or unstructured and were recorded either on a minidisc or digital voice recorder. I had no defined schedule for the interviews, as new informants were introduced to me along the way. Setting up any planned hours for interviews proved to be rather useless, and it was often easiest to simply walk into houses to visit and see if people happened to be available. Managing to interview only one person at a time also proved often quite difficult to accomplish. Other people would join in, and the interview would be interrupted with the traditional exchange of greetings, after which the others would freely join in the conversation. Thus, a typical interviewing situation was constantly fluctuating, with people joining in and others leaving – at times even the original informant might leave, but the conversation on the topic would continue. Some of the best material came from unplanned gatherings of people. At times, I would simply listen to whatever was being discussed, making notes later. On some occasions, I would present a question and then listen to the group discussing the topic.

Considering the cultural setting, I came to the conclusion that it would not have served any purpose to force closed sessions for the interviews. However, I did test an acculturated form of formal group interviews on a few occasions. Collecting a small group of 4–5 people from the same gender and age group, I would ask the participants questions which they could discuss among themselves, only guiding the discussion with additional questions if needed. Some of these group interviews were formed quite naturally during the excavation season, when the younger men would be gathered in one place and older, married men could be found sitting in another location. I also managed to record a group interview of young Bedūl girls. In most cases, however, the recorded group interviews consist of mixed groups of people. It should also be mentioned that a significant amount of recorded material consists of singing. This was recorded at weddings, but also at private occasions. Women and girls especially tended to be more open to the idea of singing songs, rather than being asked intrusive questions. Thus, some of my interviews began with the recording of traditional songs, then initiating a discussion about daily life, and gradually shifting toward more personal issues. This type of slow-paced method required a lot of time, which was not always possible. Although they do not form part of the source material of my study and thus cannot be discussed here in detail, the songs are nevertheless valuable data of a local living – and, in some areas, also a dying – tradition.

Excluding the musical material, I have recorded interviews with a total of 38 people: 23 men and 15 women. Six are with members of the Liyāthne tribe, 20 Bedūl, one ʿAmārīn, four Zelābiye, three Saʿīdīyīn, and four from Maʿān.[13] Equally important are the written notes, where a number of people appear as sources of information, with some appearing also in the recordings or in more than one conversation. Among the Bedūl, I had three key informants, one man and two women, whom I consulted frequently on various topics. Because some of the people interviewed appeared uncomfortable at the thought of having their names published, I have anonymized all informants, except for the scholarly sources who publish under their own names.

Due to the nature of this research and its goals, I have chosen to divide the informants into groups, presenting the group titles as the source. Thus, I have groups of men and women (M and W, respectively) and groups according to age. The second division, into age groups, works best with the Bedūl informants. With the other tribes, it may seem a bit arbitrary but can still be taken as an estimate. The first generation (1) consists of older people with adult children who have lived most of their lives in the traditional society. The second generation group (2) is formed by adults who are or have been married. Among the Bedūl, they would have been born into the traditional way of life, but were exposed to a modern lifestyle at an early age. The third generation (3) consists of young people who are not yet married and who, among the Bedūl, were born after the tribe was relocated to the village of Umm Sayḥūn. The focus is on exposure to the traditional life, on the one hand, and modern life, on the other. Among other tribes, of course, this ratio is different. For example, the young people in Wadi Araba still mostly follow the traditional lifestyle. Nevertheless, my overall attempt is to see the difference and changes in attitude and thought between age groups and genders. For the sake of clarity, the informant's tribe – and, for the recorded material, an identifying number – has been added. Thus, for example, a "15M1 Bedūl" would stand for informant number 15 in the recorded material, a first-generation (old) man of the Bedūl tribe. Group interviews do not differentiate between individuals, and they have been marked with "G". For example, "21WG3 Bedūl" means a group interview of young girls from the Bedūl tribe. Written field data have not been individually numbered.

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[13] These numbers refer to the main speakers in the recordings. As mentioned above, the interviews were not closed situations: other people would often be present during the interview, occasionally also commenting on the topic of discussion. In some interviews, I was also accompanied by a guide and/or translator, marked (T) in the list of interviews in the bibliography.

2.2.2 Readjusting the tools: Problems of methodology

It is obvious that even the most secluded society is not a "laboratory" where only specified, isolated issues can be studied without any interference. We as scholars are studying a complex human society where an almost infinite amount of variables affect the result. Even with that in mind, however, a large number of specific questions still remain. In Western society, structured forms and interviews are common methods of conducting sociological surveys. Advances in technology enable us to produce and answer polls and questionnaires over the Internet. Naturally, interviews have been seen as an effective way of gathering information from communities and groups. Surveys from which precise quantitative data can be compiled are often viewed as more reliable and objective than descriptive, unstructured interview materials. On the other hand, structured interviews concentrate on clearly defined issues, and there is always a danger that some valuable information may be left out if the researcher has not thought about the option beforehand. When I was doing my informal interviews, the people often shared information I probably would not have come across in a structured interview – although there are also important topics that neither the interviewed nor the interviewer notice. Charles Briggs (1986: 2–3) argues that interviewing is not as conclusive in non-Western societies. Local traditions may use other *metacommunicative* methods, unknown to a Western researcher. Trying to interview people who are totally unfamiliar with this kind of communication event may cause various setbacks to the research. A researcher may try to ask a question which the informant interprets in his or her own way, and the matter remains unsolved.

Other issues are closely related to this problem. In an interview situation, both sides assume certain roles as interviewer and interviewee, and both have certain assumptions regarding these roles and how they should be enacted. Thus, the interview is never a natural situation. I noticed during my research how the microphone always altered the performance. The most common reaction from the informants was to use more formal language. A story told to me when the recorder was on might be the same story told to fellow workmen after work while sitting by the fire, yet it was totally different in language and form. Many people were naturally very reserved when the microphone was on, and lively conversation on the topic began only after it was turned off.

Even without fear of a technical tool, different prohibitions and questions of trust can also prevent people from telling what they know. There are several reasons why information may not be revealed to the researcher. One example is magical formulae, which cannot be uttered aloud if there is no real need for them.[14] Many people living in more remote areas are naturally suspicious about strangers and are not willing to share information concerning their holy places. Some knowledge has simply been forgotten, and finally there is the growing negative attitude toward old holy sites. Thus, even though a person may be aware of traditional holy sites in the area, he may refuse to acknowledge the existence of such pagan practices.

Probably the most complex challenge in collecting oral material is probably finding the right question – or rather, formulating the question in such a manner that the interviewer and the informant both have the same understanding of what is being asked. Different results are received depending on the words used in the questions. When I started with asking about *al-awliyāʾ*, in many cases the outcome was not what I had expected or hoped for, as this concept depends greatly on the view of the informant. A more educated person, cognizant of the teachings of scholarly Islam, may view only Jabal Hārūn as a *walī* while other sites are purely pagan and should be forgotten. Finally, asking about places where people used to visit or still visit does not necessarily reveal any clearer results. Although *ziyāra* does have a certain connotation, referring to visits to holy sites, it could also be understood simply as a visit to a family cemetery to remember the deceased.

In every case, silence, denial and even direct misinformation are also information. Understanding whether silence is a sign of lack of knowledge on the matter, the uneasiness of the informant, a statement or something else is then left to the researcher to interpret. Without doubt, language skills play a crucial part in interviews. In the beginning, when my abilities to communicate in Arabic were limited, the informants often used very simple expressions – or switched into English. It is clear that when my own skills increased, and I became able to speak the local dialect, the informants also responded in a more relaxed manner.

The matter of communication and interpretation brings us to one more aspect of data collection and analysis that I believe requires much more attention in the description of the research project. I am referring to one variable in the research that is not related to the topic and thus creates the largest aspect of subjectivity in the result – the researcher. Studying living human communities includes the researcher as a part of the research, not just a detached, objective observer. The researcher is in constant interaction with the subjects of research, and the way he or she interacts does have an effect on the work. Thus, in order to be fully able to evaluate the results of the research and the theories drawn from the observations, the researcher should also provide information about him- or herself as an active subject during the fieldwork.[15] (Powdermaker 1966: 9.)

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[14] I came across this issue when interviewing two men in Pogradec, Albania in April 2003. The informant refused to speak aloud protective words against the Evil Eye. As the magic in question was protective and not harmful, the reason for this refusal may have been that using the magic “in vain” could have diminished its power.

Participant observation in the field is today acknowledged as a fundamental part of any anthropological study (Emerson 1981). The definition of fieldwork as the "use of a person as the research instrument" (Goslinga & Frank 2008: xii) is telling. Even the title of the method "participant observation" contains a fundamental problem: the person doing the research is at the same time both a participant and an observer. How can one observe when the observer is also a subject immersed in the life and thought of the people he or she is supposed to be observing?

Immersion of course always has limits. The researcher is an outsider, although the research process allows him or her to become an "insider" under certain conditions. Graham Harvey (2003: 141–142) distinguishes between the old "colonialist-researcher", who wields the power of knowledge, imposing his research on the people he studies, and the "guest-researcher", who acknowledges the knowledge of the researched, waiting to be invited to participate and assume the role of a person learning, not the one who knows. This role involves the responsibility of accepting the fact that the researcher also changes his subjects of research, but at the same time also allows himself to be changed. But how immersed should the participation be? Should the researcher attend a pilgrimage to a holy site in order to thoroughly understand the nature of the tradition? Should a person studying monastic life live for a while as a monk to complete his research? What if he decides to become a monk in the end – would that distort the objectivity of his research?

However, if we consider our own daily behavior, the method of participant observation does not seem so different from normal human interaction with the surrounding reality. After all, a human being is an individual participating in the world as an active subject and yet also capable of becoming an observer and studying the world around him (van Baal 1971: 221). Even without going deeper into structuralist analysis – such as presented by Lévi-Strauss, for example – it is evident that *sense-making* happens on a daily basis in human communities. Categorization and creating structures out of the perceived are not privileges of researchers alone. With this in mind, the dichotomy of participant observation becomes plausible. The phases of immersive participation and detached observation follow one another in the course of the fieldwork. Full detachment from the region also offers an opportunity to make observations, although this requires more dependence on memory.

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[15] "A scientific discussion of fieldwork method should include considerable detail about the observer: the role he plays, his personality and other relevant facts concerning his position and functioning in the society studied" (Powdermaker 1966: 9).

The idea of extended fieldwork has been quite soundly established in anthropology. In order to become acquainted with the community being studied, the scholarly norm calls for lengthy periods of observation. However, despite frequent visits to Jordan, time has always been a rare commodity for me. My longest continuous stay was four months in 2005 – a very short time to conduct extensive anthropological fieldwork. Of course, by that time I had already partially solved many of the questions that fieldworkers face when they initiate research: I had established contacts during excavation seasons on Jabal Hārūn, and even though my skills in Arabic were still rudimentary, I was able to communicate on a basic level. I believe my high level of participation also partially compensated for the lack of time. I was fully present in the everyday life of the community. My rhythm followed the rhythm of the family, visiting the sick, attending dinners, weddings and engagement celebrations, fasting during Ramaḍān and spending days in little souvenir tents and stalls when the people were selling necklaces and tea to passing tourists. The periods of detachment followed the periods of participation, when I traveled away from Jordan. Returning to the region on an almost annual basis for a period of 11 years, first as a member of the excavation team and later when doing my own fieldwork, enabled me to follow the tracks of change taking place in the community.

When participating in the daily interaction of the community, the researcher also inevitably becomes aware of the wide range of human activity. Even if people at first were to try to create a formal persona, it is not possible to keep that up for long. During my own fieldwork periods, I never felt deliberately excluded from any family activities or the daily life of the village. Thus, I would also see and hear a lot of sensitive things. Gossip would bring to my awareness issues of family disputes, mental and physical problems, feuds, and secret romances. Even without staying long periods of time in the region, bonds of friendship were formed. Without doubt, these equally have an effect on the research, at least raising the question of ethics.

Robert Janes (1961: 447) noted the difference between participant observation and an interview. In the latter, both sides have a clear understanding of the roles they have in the situation. The interviewed person knows that the interviewer is looking for information and anything the informant says will be used as such. Thus, the amount and quality of information delivered is fully under the consideration of the informant. In participant observation, however, the people observed are not always aware that their behavior is being studied. Even though they may know that the person staying with them is doing research, they may not realize that a random conversation or action can also be treated as information. This problem leaves the researcher with a heavy responsibility regarding what he or she chooses to use as information. I have personally tried to maintain as much anonymity as possible, although I am sure that people familiar with the tribes discussed will recognize individuals and families. Also, if I have had any doubt whether some information has been revealed to me confidentially as a friend, rather than as an academic researcher, I have chosen to withhold the information.

One more caveat in the issue of methodology needs to be addressed in detail. All societies are built upon hierarchies. Roles and organized relationships are based on education, profession, descent, gender, age, marital status, number of offspring and ethnicity, among other things (Golde 1986: 7). This system dictates the interaction between all the members of a community. A researcher doing fieldwork cannot fully escape these boundaries of the prevailing system. He must eventually make choices on how to respond to the status imposed on him. He can try to deviate from it in order to be able to make observations from a wider view, but at the same time he risks his opportunity to participate in the community life. Or, he can accept the status, becoming immersed in the communal life, but thereby losing some of the freedom of an academic observer. Sometimes immersion proves to offer better access to the studied community, while at other times the topic of research requires detachment, remaining at a distance from the communal hierarchy. In many cases, the researcher has to balance between these two poles throughout the fieldwork. In addition, the hierarchies of his own society, the status he has there and the change he experiences when entering a new community affect his values and ways he structures the world around him. This problem has been acknowledged in anthropological research, where one status seems to be of special interest, and its impact on the fieldwork conducted in traditional societies is indisputable – that being the status of gender.

2.2.3 A woman in the field: Does gender matter?

> [T]he structure of information flow between the men's and women's worlds was not symmetrical. Because of the pattern of hierarchy, men spoke to one another in the presence of women, but the reverse was not true […] A conspiracy of silence excluded men from the women's world.
> (Abu-Lughod 1988: 23)

In 2005, a man working in the FJHP excavation site invited me to visit his family after the season. I accepted the invitation and traveled the 20 km distance from

Wadi Mūsā south to the village of Rājef by a local bus. I spent a weekend in the village, taking the opportunity to talk with the villagers. During a discussion with an old woman in her house, I mentioned that I was living in the Bedūl village. The woman was shocked to hear that I had traveled all the way from Umm Sayḥūn to her village all alone, leaving my family and not even having a male guardian with me. I decided not to reveal how far away my actual family really was.

This event is an illustrative example of situations where the researcher realizes that she is not the only observer: the people she is observing are also observing her. They study her behavior, assess her values and classify her on the basis of their own experience and culture. In a traditional society where different rules and taboos limit the everyday interactions between the sexes, the question of gender is almost impossible to ignore – and it has not been ignored. In the last decades, the issue of gender has been widely discussed in anthropological research. Women's accounts are by no means absent in early accounts either. Among the Western travelers of the last two centuries, there were already notable women, such as Harriet Martineau in 1848 and Gertrude Bell in 1900, who published material on their journeys.

As the number of female academic researchers has increased, they themselves have been bringing up the topic of gender in their work (Abu Lughod 1988; Golde 1986). The problem of bias has not only affected women, and men have also addressed the issue, often mentioning it in their work. It has been seen as a limitation (Cole 1975) but also as a simple fact of the existing reality.[16] Men have also taken an interest in the question of gender, distancing themselves from the old school, which has been accused of androcentrism. This approach saw reality as perceived by men, setting this reality as standard and the norm. Women, unless simply seen as objects of men's actions, were not part of the norm and were mainly studied in relation to their gender (Keinänen 2010: 10; Tiffany 1978: 39). Today, research may equally look at men's point of view as a gender study (Juntunen 2002). At the same time, the boundaries of gender are being consciously crossed and studied (Schilt & Williams 2008; Gurney 1985; McKeganey & Bloor 1991).

Studies also present different methods to overcome the limitations. One method is to do fieldwork as a couple, which allows both members of the team to concentrate on their own gender respectively (Fernea 1989; Wax 1979). There are also instances of using "native" ethnography, where the researchers themselves represent the same ethnic or social group they are studying (Leibing & McLean 1986: 11).[17] Still, none of these methods can guarantee that the fieldwork will succeed as planned. Interaction consists of a number of variables. Gaining trust and overcoming suspicion, prejudice, and even jealousy and dislike are issues that take time to solve and will be encountered over and over again during the course of the work.

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[16] Shryock (1997: 2–3) challenges the views of subjective ethnography, reminding that the researcher is and remains an Other among the researched, no matter how much integration is attempted. I do not object to this view; no amount of immersion will enable the researcher to really "go native" – and it is not the aim of the fieldwork either. It is also clear that some topics require less participation and much more observation and formal interviews. While acknowledging the role of the researcher as a subject, I hope to not draw the focus away from the objective research itself.

A lone male fieldworker may not meet with restrictions in public interaction, but being perceived as a possible threat, the private world may be harder for him to penetrate. On the other hand, it has been claimed that the reason why women may have easier access to information is because they are seen as powerless and nonthreatening (McKeganey & Bloor 1991: 196). I believe this is an oversimplification of the issue. With her behavior, a woman scholar traveling alone – no matter how well she tries to adjust to the local life – challenges the existing norms of the traditional society she is studying, and she may be seen as a threat to the traditions of the community. Such a woman is an anomaly that has to be resolved by the people who are being asked to accept her into their midst. In many cases, a foreign woman is – out of courtesy – counted as a man, which sometimes gives her more freedom and access to peek into the worlds of both genders, but without full entry into either. This courtesy is probably more often offered to tourists and visitors who stay in the community for only a short amount of time.[18] Women anthropologists who remain with the community for an extended period are integrated differently. Scholars coming alone have often been "adopted", and they have lived as daughters in the family (Abu-Lughod 1988; J. Briggs 1986). This kind of arrangement results in the women being expected to abide by the social norms and rules of the community, which in turn may limit their opportunities to do full-scale academic research – or even further it, depending on the goals of the work.

When I accepted the offer to stay with the local family, I also had to adjust to the new status I had. I lived as a guest and, unlike Abu-Lughod, I was never woken up in the middle of the night to prepare tea and food for newly arrived male visitors (Abu-Lughod 1988: 15). I was not restricted in traveling where I wanted, but no doubt there was gossip going around about my comings and goings. In terms of family honor and interaction, however, I was often treated as a daughter. The members of the family were concerned about my safety, and they tried to help me in any way they could. When I left the village to travel around the region they would call me, ensuring that I was safe. Although the region in general could be considered very secure, I was not totally unfamiliar with the negative realities of fieldwork either. While protectiveness and paternalism represent the well-intentioned aspects of the issue, the other side of the coin reveals various problems, ranging from uncomfortable innuendo to devaluation and harassment. Full detachment from the situation and displaying only the role of academic scholar seemed to be the best solution for me, though not a universal one.[19]

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[17] Abu-Lughod (1986: 13) also acknowledges her ethnic and religious background as a factor affecting her fieldwork situation.

[18] I witnessed cases where the local guides brought tourist groups as guests to wedding celebrations in Petra. On such occasions, the women in the group were also invited to the men's side. This courtesy was also extended to the members of the FJHP team when they attended some weddings.

Another important aspect within the community is the question of age and family, an issue also raised by Abu-Lughod (1988: 16–17). Being far past the age when the women of the community marry and have their first children put me in an ambiguous position. Neither the unmarried girls nor the married women saw me as someone who could be equated with their group. Interestingly though, as a foreign woman I was sometimes trusted to accompany the girls on shopping trips to town or asked to take them with me when going on my field trips – a possibility that the girls often exploited to the fullest. During the 11 years of my recurring visits to the region, my status changed. Starting as a *bint* (girl), then turning into a *sitt* (madam), and finally becoming *umm* (mother), I journeyed through the different groups in the community. During the first years, I was seen mainly as a member of the excavation team and, as such, I was able to communicate openly with the local men who worked in the project. I would also continue to observe the men after the excavation season, when many of them returned to Petra to work with the tourists. In this setting, I was also introduced to their families and thus became acquainted with the women. Gradually, the interaction with men – especially with ones not related to the family I was staying with – decreased, and the time spent with the women increased. "Choosing my side" was also a conscious choice. Although it limited the breadth of observation, I believe it added to the depth.

We are often reminded of the political, religious, and ethnic partialities of nineteeth- and early twentieth-century Orientalists and travelers. However, we should be equally disillusioned with modern ethnographies. The researchers write their accounts on the basis of how they see and experience the existing reality. With this truth of the practical reality in mind, I next turn my attention to the theoretical questions and definitions.

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[19] Gurney (1985) discusses this problem in detail in her paper, although her examples are from modern Western society.

3. THEORETICAL FRAME

3.1 A word on religion

When studying a religious system of belief and practice, the first question to be answered is what exactly is being studied? “What is religion?” seems to be a simple question to be answered in terms of common sense, but in academic discourse it has proven to be an extremely elusive topic. There is, for example, Durkheim’s idea of religion:

> Originally, it extended to everything; everything social was religious – the two words were synonymous. Then gradually political, economic and scientific functions broke free from the religious function, becoming separate entities and taking on more and more a markedly temporal character. (Durkheim 1984: 119)

If such an inclusive understanding is chosen as the basic definition, it very easily creates a counterargument: what is not religion? The distinction between religious and secular seems to be a creation of modern Western society, where religion is seen as being a separate class, different from other aspects of culture and behavior.[20] Religion has ceased to be a natural dimension of everyday reality, turning into an individual conscious choice (Hanegraaff 2000: 302). It could be even argued that the whole concept of religion is an invention of the modern West (Kippenberg 2000: 223, quoting Mark C. Taylor). In traditional societies – as Durkheim suggests – such a distinction simply does not exist: everything is religion or religion is in everything.

On the other hand, if exclusive criteria are applied to define religion, the traditional societies also lose their all-religious essence. They, too, seem to possess various cultural aspects that are not directly related to the religious. The whole concept of religion has been framed and reframed by Western scholars, each scholar emphasizing a different aspect. While Durkheim took the social dimension as the main function of religion, others have approached the topic, for example, from the symbolic, unconscious, ritual, or sacred dimensions (Penner 1985: 4; Paden 1992: 70).

However, constant reevaluation of what is included in the religious tradition would not be very fruitful in this study. It is not my intention to get bogged down in this scholarly debate, as it would take me very far from the original focus. A simple starting point is needed in order to form the boundaries of the phenomena being studied. It does not give a universal definition, but it provides an understanding what is in question. Thus, I will frame the concept "religious" in a very generic definition: humans interacting and communicating with entities that are not bound by our physical reality, and denoting places of special meaning for these entities (Hervieu-Leger 2000: 39). The beings belong to the realm of the supernatural and the transcendent, the places in the sphere of the sacred – or cursed. Rudolf Otto's *numinous* and Mircea Eliade's *hierophany* both denote such places and entities, as well as to experiences related to them. However, the angle from which I have chosen to approach this interaction in my work is the social. Social action – collective behavior – forms the bridge from religious behavior to the nonreligious, manifesting the channels through which the sacred interacts and intertwines with the profane, forming and shaping the communal identity.

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[20] Sullivan (1996: 134) uses the term “disestablishment of religion”.

Although the Durkheimian approach already considers religion to be essentially about the social, it is clear that it does not explain everything. Asceticism, mysticism, and various individualistic forms of religious behavior can be found even in the most traditional communities (McGuire 2008: 177). I am well aware that the social dimension I have chosen will not be able to capture every aspect of the tradition. However, despite these shortcomings, a large variety of tools are available to study the social aspects of the religious tradition. One of the recent theorists is Danièle Hervieu-Léger, whose definition of religion reflects that of Durkheim; the following represents the social dimension of my study:

> Religion is an ideological, practical and symbolic system through which consciousness, both individual and collective, of belonging to a particular chain of belief is constituted, maintained, developed and controlled.
> (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 82)

Another question of religious belief requiring attention is the concept of *popular religion*. Scholars of religion have always been aware of the plurality within the religious traditions. The variance seems to be most visible in those religions that have produced written texts which have received a holy status, standardizing the religious belief, ritual, and theology. Yet, people always seem to follow these rules in their own ways, interpreting the tradition in their daily lives. To categorize this gap between the daily reality and authoritative texts, scholars have created terms such as "popular" or "folk" religion, on the one hand, and "scholarly" or "elite", on the other. But even this does not fully explain the wide range of religious thought. Even the dogmatic texts are not monolithic – it is attested in the varying interpretations of sacred scriptures, resulting in segmentation and the formation of new denominations. The problem of using terms such as "popular" and "scholarly" may result in unintentional valuation of the religious practices, dividing them into "high" and "low" religion. Thorbjørnsrud (2001: 217) has claimed that while such discussions do frequently take place within the religions themselves (e.g., questions of heresy, orthodoxy, and orthopraxy, among others), the scholar studying this process should not take sides or get involved in these debates, and only document them.

In order to avoid this kind of valuation, I have chosen to use a term coined by Meredith McGuire (2008). Her term *lived religion* comprises the whole range of religious belief and practice as it is enacted by people in reality. Thus, it includes all aspects of religiosity, from the most fundamentalist belief where the basis for every form of behavior and conduct is sought from the holy scriptures and their scholarly explanations, to the systems of belief where the texts play a much smaller role and the local tradition and interpretation are more important. Lived religion, therefore, gives space for studying religious behavior in all its manifestations in the living community, even though the term does not offer a simple escape from the existing dichotomy between the written authoritative ideas and practices of everyday realities. On the other hand, because it does not carry the connotations of the other terms, it hopefully avoids falling into the subjective theological debates taking place within the religions. Still, I occasionally use the terms "folk" or "popular" for religion when attempting to express the views of the people themselves in their own debate concerning "right" and "wrong" practices.

3.2 Memory

Memory is what enables human beings to create traditions, interpret the past – and form religious beliefs and rituals. It is, therefore, not surprising that memory has intrigued scholars of anthropology and sociology in their study of human cultures. This concept of memory – like other things involving humans – can be studied on different levels. A recent approach offers a cognitive dimension in the study of religions and focuses especially on the universal patterns of human behavior. The cognitive approach is aware of the "specialness" of religion in its inclusion of a supernatural reality and the sacred, but at the same time it sees religious behavior as similar to any other human behavior.[21] Thus, *how* humans do things always belongs to the range of a natural behavioral repertoire, which can be traced to biology and evolution. The universals we find in the cultures and religions around the world are there because human brains are similar everywhere and, therefore, produce similar patterns. Variation, on the other hand, is created by the differing contexts and surroundings in which the universal behavior becomes manifested (Sørensen 2005; Paden 2001; Boyer 1992). William Paden (2001: 281), for instance, calls the universal elements "grammar of behavior".

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[21] This, of course, is also the basis of my approach: religion is unlike anything else in its inclusion of the supernatural, yet in its social aspect it is like any other interaction in human communities. It is the intersection of these two elements that I am interested in.

Paden (2001: 287) uses the example of periodic festivals. In practically all communities, festivals can be found where the people mark time with celebrations. However, the ways in which time is celebrated and what moments in time are given a special meaning differ in each culture. For instance, the environment, the economy and living conditions can be seen as underlying elements that cause the variation. The human brain and biology produce the presence of the universals, but the environment is the main factor in causing them to be expressed differently.

Based on the idea of the universal aspects of the human brain, it sounds plausible that there are elements in behavior that are optimally memorable and easier to acquire – in other words, they have a better *survival value* (Boyer 1992: 32, 40). Human beings have a natural understanding of what the world is like. This understanding – or *intuitive ontologies*, to follow Pascal Boyer – forms the basis of empirical knowledge and is used in everyday interaction with other humans and the environment. It is intuitive to assume that the person sitting nearby also needs to eat and drink to stay alive and that he has thoughts and goals. What is not intuitively natural is to assume that he could read my thoughts or create things out of thin air. However, religions are full of ideas that violate the basic set of expectations on how the world works. Boyer (1992: 52) argues that in order for a religious idea to be remembered, the violation of the intuitive ontologies needs to be as minimal as possible, or there needs to be an "explicit violation of some intuitive principle and implicit confirmation of other intuitive principles." In other words, the idea needs to be "normal" in every possible way, except in something that makes it stand out and be remembered. Such counterintuitive ideas have a mnemonic advantage in the community (Boyer 1992: 45; Lawson 2000: 347; Sørensen 2005: 473). Thomas Lawson (2000: 345) gives an example of such minimal violation, differentiating between a person as a biological, physical, and intentional being and an ancestor or spirit as an intentional and living being that does not have a physical body. As a whole, ancestors and spirits may be attributed a number of abilities not typically possessed by people, but their actions, goals, and behavior are still familiar and "normal". The ordinary intuitions tend to override the abstract forms of ideas.

What experiences become "memorable" and will be stored in memory is also a major question in the work of Harvey Whitehouse (2000). Whitehouse suggests that the ways in which the human brain works may, in fact, cause variation to take place. In other words, the different cognitive processes of memory store the results of different behavior. His theory is based on two types of memory: semantic and episodic. Episodic memory stores specific experiences of the past. They may be personal experiences or events related by others, but they often involve highly emotional aspects or counterintuitive elements, as presented by Boyer. A typical example of this is the question "Where were you when Kennedy was shot?" – or, for the younger generations, "Where were you on 9/11?" These are flashback memories of single events which remain in the mind because of the high degree of emotionality involved with them.[22]

Semantic memory is based on episodic memory, but instead of storing single events, it stores general schemas and decontextualized knowledge. It includes knowledge of everyday processes: how to drive a car, use the washing machine, or behave at a formal dinner party, even when no specific memories of such events remain. Knowledge of all this is based on actual personal experiences, but through repetition and learning general knowledge becomes part of the semantic memory instead.[23]

Based on these memory types, Whitehouse argues that there are also two types of religious conduct. The doctrinal mode of religiosity is based on frequent repetition, codification, and an overall doctrinal system of ritual and dogma – a system formed and supported by holy texts and theological writings. Systematization and repetition enable knowledge to be stored in semantic memory. The doctrinal mode also establishes the need for dynamic leadership (to teach and transfer the knowledge), and demand for orthodoxy and frequent checking of "correct" practice, in turn increasing the need for centralized authorities but also allowing for anonymity of the participants. Doctrinal rituals have a low level of emotional arousal, but they are spread effectively and quickly. In comparison, the imagistic mode is based on episodic memory. Infrequent rituals involving a high level of emotionality, spontaneity, lack of centralization, and orthodox dogmas all resulting in localized practices, group cohesion, and difficulty of spreading the belief are typical aspects of imagistic religiosity. The modes do not exclude each other, but they may both exist in the same tradition. However, Whitehouse does see the religions of traditional societies as more imagistic, while Christianity, Islam, and Judaism – as typical "religions of the book" – represent more doctrinal aspects.[24]

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[22] Bahna 2015 discusses the formation of such memories, especially false memories. They are events a person has heard of but which involve so great an emotional charge that they become part of the person's memory of his own past. In other words, he assumes a memory of another person as his own. Such highly charged memories often involve supernatural elements (for example, seeing a ghost or an angel).

[23] A third type, called motoric memory, may be related to semantic memory in its formation through repetitive practices. This is the memory of physical actions remembered by the body, such as riding a bicycle, which is said to be impossible to forget once mastered. In the religious sphere, the motoric memory stores ritual actions that are regularly repeated and often learned by doing (for example, making the sign of the cross among Orthodox and Catholic Christians, or the *rakʿāt* of Islamic *ṣalāt*). (Sjöblom 2010.)

The idea of the imagistic mode could be compared with Boyer's idea of ritual behavior. People rarely have a systematized model of their religion in their minds. Instead, the experiences they have are bound to be fragmentary, consisting of unconnected events, and incidents that often contain highly emotional or unexpected details. Thus, when asking about a ritual, the reply is likely to contain information about the purpose and examples of the miracles and other effects of the ritual, in other words, events that would be stored in the episodic memory. Boyer (1992: 39–40) warns against the theologistic fallacy of assuming that religious beliefs form a coherent system. People acquire religious ideas in an inconsistent, nonsystematic manner. Equally, the typical purpose of religious activity is not coherence but a specific need and goal. McGuire (2008: 15) also notes that lived religion by nature is based on practice rather than ideas, thus requiring practical coherence that makes sense in the individual's everyday life, even though it may seem totally illogical from a more dogmatic point of view. Boyer (1992: 52–53) concludes that instead of trying to find coherence where there is none, attention should be turned toward the processes of the mind, intuition, and ontological assumptions, which govern all human behavior.

In contrast to this, the doctrinal mode of religiosity seems to produce a different approach. While the imagistic mode reinforces spontaneous ritual activity responding to acute needs and having specified goals for action, the rituals of doctrinal religiosity are regular and scheduled. Marshall (2002: 376) connects the rise of such recurrent and "impractical" ritual behavior with urbanization, modernization, and Westernization. He also refers to Durkheim's notion of ritual behavior being less frequent among "primitives" than in "advanced" societies.

The common factor in all these processes is memory. The act of remembering and its inevitable counterpart, forgetting, are present in all human interaction and behavior. Remembering and forgetting are not a mere random process. Instead, these can be a very conscious action: we choose to forget one thing and we choose to remember something else. The choice of what is being kept and what will be thrown out is often based on an evaluation of what is or would be important for the individual or the whole community. Both things learned from others and experienced personally are stored in memory in order to enhance the ability to act in similar situations in the future. Thus, it is very likely that an individual will try to remember those things which he considers useful and significant for his future wellbeing.

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[24] This is a very limited description of the theory discussed in detail in Whitehouse (2000); see also Sørensen (2005: 477–478), Whitehouse & Laidlaw (2004), Whitehouse & McCauley (2005). Even considering the critique it has received, the theory offers a new tool for studying the changes that take place in the religious practices of a community.

3.3 Identity

It is the individual who remembers – and forgets – and who gives meaning and interpretation to memories, based on the individual's own sphere of knowledge that has been taught and transmitted by his own culture and society. Experiences shared by several individuals, however, create shared memories that form a bond between them. This shared memory has been defined in various ways, from Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "dammed up force of our mysterious ancestors within us" (Olick & Robbins 1998: 106) presented in 1902 to terms such as "social", "public", "popular", and finally "collective" memory (Hoelscher & Alderman 2004: 349). Groups form mutual interpretations of their common experiences and memories, eventually creating a communal past on which the new generations in turn base their experiences. Social memory thus becomes the shared idea and ideal of the community.[25] When transmitted to the next generations, it overcomes the boundaries of time. In this process, memory is essentially the factor which at the same time defines and is defined by the community itself.

A religious experience is not an exception to this. Symbols and explanations are drawn from what we know and see around us, and these familiar aspects in myths and legends can help people to understand and relate to them. Hervieu-Léger presents a model of religion as a "chain of memory", with the chain being composed of the members of religious communities. These individuals form a memory link between the past, present, and future. Hervieu-Léger sees religions as a collective memory, a shared understanding of the nature and meaning of the various religious aspects (for example, rituals and myths). Her theory takes memory as a central point of religious behavior.

Yet, even shared experiences do not always result in shared meanings. It is not only a matter of what is remembered and what experiences of the past exist, but how they are interpreted. Two separate groups, both involved in a war with each other, share the same events and experiences. The outcome may be given very different interpretations and meanings, depending on whether the group won or lost the war. The meaning-making of the two groups will very likely take different paths in creating their respective communal memories of the events. Creating meaning is of crucial importance in the formation of identity. It could be compared to any language system: a word and the actual concept it symbolizes have no connection until one is created. To someone who does not speak the language in question, the word is only a combination of sounds without meaning. Similarly, the shared understanding of the past and the surrounding context that the communities produce also creates meanings (Paden 2001: 285).

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[25] This concept was created by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s and is still used, even though it has also been debated.

In this way, the people draw upon the communal memory in defining their identities. Collective memory also becomes connective memory, and in this process a common identity is born. The "chain" means that this shared identity spans many generations and is being transmitted not only via oral teaching but also in practice with examples of action and behavior. This chain creates a feeling of cohesion, a sense of belonging and identity. (Hervieu-Leger 2000: 124–125.)

The identity process takes place in relation to others, with different situations producing different outcomes (Anttonen 2003: 52). Thus, while collective memory is essential in the formation of identity, a common experience is not the only thing in it. What is even more important is the shared sense of the relevance and meaning that the community gives to the experience (Bellehumeur et al. 2011: 198). In other words, a shared past, shared values and shared emotions are all important in the formation of identity. Christian Bellehumeur et al. (2011: 197) describe these three components of the identification process with the terms *cognitive*, *evaluative*, and *affective*. The cognitive element includes the cultural narratives of the community, and the process by which they are remembered and discussed within the group. The evaluative element, or collective self-esteem, involves both the positive and negative values attached to events and experiences related to the group, and the affective element is related to the emotional attachment felt by the individual toward the group. Based on their study on Catholic youth, they argue that in the identity process, the evaluative and affective elements actually play a larger part than the cognitive components. In other words, shared values and emotional attachment are more important than the actual events that took place in the shared past (Bellehumeur et al. 2011: 206).

Despite the components involved in the process, however, once a feeling of cohesion and shared identity has been formed it needs to be maintained by the community. A universal method for identity preservation and revitalization is ritual, which can be seen as a public expression and confirmation of identity.[26] As a universal behavior, ritual may be related to any aspect of life. Most often, however, it is connected to religious identity, which itself is a type of collective identity (Bellehumeur et al. 2011: 196). For Durkheim (2001: 313), the main function of ritual is to keep alive the essential elements of identity and prevent shared memory from being forgotten. Through ritual, the community strengthens its cohesion and establishes boundaries, announcing its identity in a public act. In the same way, ritual may be used for preventing conflict (Hermanowicz & Morgan 1999: 199).[27]

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[26] Marshall (2002: 360) describes ritual as a means of social bonding.

Ritual has been traditionally seen as action that is separate from the sphere of normal or mundane activities.[28] Durkheim (2001: 236) speaks about the aspect of the profane, which must be kept away from the sacred, thus creating taboos and rituals of preparation that separate sacred ritual from the everyday world. Joseph Hermanowicz and Harriet Morgan (1999: 198), however, argue that a large part of ritual activities are, in fact, based upon everyday behavior. They distinguish between three types of rituals through which identities are maintained: *transformation, suspension,* and *affirmation*. The rituals of transformation include activities where changes in the lives of individuals or in society are ritualized. These have traditionally been among the main foci in the study of rituals. They have been studied as rites of passage or transition rites, and they include occasions such as initiations, weddings, funerals, or graduation. Transformation rituals confirm and strengthen the existing hierarchies of the community, while suspension rituals create a space where these hierarchies and divisions are set aside for the duration of the ritual activity. They enhance the feeling of communal identity, sometimes even inverting the existing roles and hierarchies. The suspension also includes normal activities, where the normality is often highlighted by *suspending* the existing hierarchies and norms. Carnivals, periods of fasting, and office parties are all rituals of suspension. Finally, rituals of affirmation lift up normal activities, highlighting their sacred qualities and heightening awareness of the community's ideals of daily life. These rituals indicate what kinds of practices and behavior are valued by the community. For example, the sanctity of the family is confirmed and affirmed in Mother's Day celebrations as well as at the Shabbat dinner, with the latter especially also stressing the sacred value of food and a communal meal. (Hermanowicz & Morgan 1999: 209–211.)

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[27] The definition in jest of the Football World Cup as "ritualized tribal warfare" could belong in this category. The concept of secular sacred rituals abundant in the West includes traditions such as sports, rock concerts, and other mass events, which present various aspects strongly connected to religious experience in their use of established symbols and rituals promoting belonging and communality. See, e.g. Augé 1982.

[28] See, e.g. Eliade 1959.

Of course, ritual is not the only way in which communities express their identities. Material culture, art, and other objects created by the group all reflect shared values and aesthetics. Fashion and clothing can be used to express belonging and attachment. When contrasted with others, all these symbols may also be used as a conscious symbol of nonbelonging and distinction – identity is not only about who is included but also who is excluded (Cerulo 1997: 396; Todd 2005: 436). What the society chooses to present about itself in visible forms to outsiders reveals its tendencies and values. Having a material heritage is a way of being visible (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995: 133).

In any community, there exist a number of social spaces, based on age, gender, class or profession, to name just a few. Starting from childhood and throughout life, an individual will communicate within several spaces, absorbing and sharing the essential categories of memories and practices of each. Through this interaction with others, the individual actually creates several identities, not just one (Assmann & Czaplicka 1995: 129). There is an ongoing debate whether these elements should be considered identities as such at all. Todd (2005: 434) discusses the theory of Bourdieu, who calls them *habitus*. Instead of being identities themselves, these self-categorizations and values are the subcategories upon which the identities are constructed. But, regardless of the categories chosen to represent the idea, multiple sets of behavior and belonging are always present in the mind. In everyday interaction, these different identities are likely to be somewhat intuitive, with certain identity surfacing in certain situations and in groups where the shared memories belong. The different categories coexist, sometimes overlapping, sometimes being totally separate (Todd 2005: 436). It is only when the identities start to contradict each other, or when one identity becomes questionable in relation to another, that internal discord and conflict are born and need to be resolved in some way. At times, the different identity categories may coexist even with reciprocal tension. Very often, however, the existing meanings and interrelations are radically altered. Joy McCorriston (2011: 55–57) notes how certain elements resist change, even when they become nonfunctional, citing pilgrimage as an example of such metastructure. She underlines the fact that pilgrimage is neither rational nor rationalized by the people who engage in it, thus reflecting the views of McGuire on lived religion. It is something that has always been done, and by doing it people unconsciously reproduce the framework that defines their actions.

3.4 Change

As it is individual memories that form collective memory, it is eventually affected by the choices made by the members of the community. A living community would also be constantly redefining itself through its social memory. What is called “change” can be considered to be a recurrent process of remembering and forgetting. In other words, when some aspect of culture has changed, it means that a certain memory has been forgotten. Another memory – different and new – has replaced it and now forms part of the active memory. Eventually, when the replacement of a certain shared memory has taken place in the minds of a group of individuals, the new element will then become part of the communal memory and shape identity.

The only cultures that never change are extinct cultures. At any given time in any given place, groups, communities, and societies undergo changes; when looking at the continuum, cultures can be seen to be in constant motion. Traditions are based on the communal memory: it is the essence of the community, the web of belief, behavior, and conduct that makes the community – or the way “things have always been done”. Innovations, on the other hand, are new ideas and systems that often originate from outside – although the trigger can rise from within the community – to bring change to the tradition, for better or worse, depending on the subjective perspective of the viewer. Although opposed at first, they eventually become part of “how things are done”, and they may themselves be replaced by innovations that become tradition. The readiness with which new concepts are accepted within the community is usually connected to how close they match the existing identity. New ideas are always evaluated on the basis of the prevailing interpretations and values (Sørensen 2005: 482).

Studying change in contemporary society inevitably brings us to the question of modernization. Being one of the main foci of the study of sociology, it is impossible to discuss this concept in depth here. In general, however, modernization can be seen as a change of unprecedented scale, affecting all aspects of the community. What is known as modernization is also a continuation of the constant motion of cultures taking place throughout history.[29] This change can be studied on several levels. Modernization in history can be seen as advancing in waves, with some developing societies just stepping into the process, while the Western world is already going through another stage, on one hand defined as postmodernism and on the other as radical modernity or high modernity (Martinelli 2005: 96). Thus, while all societies today are affected by each other in the process of globalization, modernization cannot be viewed as a linear process which occurs in the same way in every region. The local past plays a large role in the factors affecting development. Joseph Tamney (2007), who has studied the case of Malaysia, defines modernization in this region with five variables:

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[29] “Modernity is a process with no end that implies the idea of permanent innovation, of continual creation of the new. Living in the present, it is oriented toward the future, avid for novelty, promoting innovation” (Martinelli 2005: 5).

1. technological development,
2. societal expansion and increasing population density,
3. structural differentiation,
4. cultural fragmentation (pluralism), and
5. individuation.

The first two are related to more complex societies and the advance of science. Bruce Lawrence defines these changes as modernity:

> the emergence of a new index of human life shaped, above all, by increasing bureaucratization and rationalization as well as technical capacities and global exchange unthinkable in the pre-modern era. (Lawrence 1989: 27)

Modernization not only affects material reality. Changes in human thought and interaction probably have a more powerful impact on cultures. These are represented by the last three variables in Tamney's model. Those who favor the traditional lifestyle and oppose modernization object mostly to the last three of these components. According to Lawrence, these effects of mind are part of modernism:

> the search for individual autonomy driven by a set of socially encoded values emphasizing change over continuity, quantity over quality; efficient production power, and profit over sympathy for traditional values. (Lawrence 1989: 27)

It is especially in the field of religion where the new wave of modernization has turned out to be a challenging topic. The early theorists who heavily influenced the development of the field, including Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim, discussed at some level and from their own personal viewpoints the role of religion in modern societies and the assumed result of the modernization process: the secularization and decline of religions. During the last three decades, the tide has been turning within the field. It has been acknowledged that religions are not in the process of disappearing or becoming totally marginalized in the near future. The rise of fundamentalism and religious conservatism, as well as the emergence of new religious movements (earlier referred to as *cults* or *sects*), among other things, has shown that although modernization does have a significant impact on the role of religion, it does not make religion obsolete. On the contrary, this process creates a new kind of pluralism and metamorphosis of old structures. Modernization in terms of religion cannot be explained in relation to secularization alone.

On the individual level, there are various ways to adapt to modernization, but despite one's choice – whether an individual opposes or accepts the new ideas and systems – there is always a need for explanation, reinterpretation, and reconstruction. As religion is not a separate entity existing apart from the rest of the culture but included in it, this reconstruction – sometimes also the deconstruction of myth and the sacred – can lead to the reconstruction of the past, giving birth to new interpretations. At the same time, it also brings out the voices of those who wish to keep the tradition despite prohibitions, equally trying to find legitimacy for their practices. In terms of remembering and forgetting, this process is not always a straightforward movement of forgetting the past and remembering the new. Based on the dynamics of memory, I find four major ways in which change takes place:

1. Refusing to forget

This approach mainly refers to rejecting new innovations or changes and keeping the memory of the past. It may be that the surroundings of the community have not changed enough to give room for new manifestations of behavior. The people would still have a connection to the past and the meanings they have given to it collectively, making them reluctant to accept any changes in their lives. Thus, it would be the new innovation that is considered unnecessary and is, therefore, forgotten – or rather, it never becomes part of the active memory of the people. Instead, the old tradition continues to be remembered. The new practices may also become partially or fully assimilated in the old set of practices while the meanings and identity remain unchanged. (Todd 2005: 429.)

2. Internally instigated change

Internal change involves forgetting the past and remembering the new. Sometimes changes are accepted eagerly – even sought after, like when one is given an opportunity to decrease their workload or gain more prestige and wealth. People may see the change as profitable for their future and find the benefits greater than the loss (Anttonen 2003: 54). Thus, while a change in surroundings can be a cause for change to take place in the community, the inclination to accept the change nevertheless comes from within the community and is self-imposed.

As time passes, the events of the past will be revalued in relation to prevailing situations. It is quite natural for members of the community to give higher importance to positive experiences, while negative events are more easily forgotten or accorded more positive meanings. Difficulty and failure are more easily forgotten or reinterpreted than success and glory, as remembering the "good old days" rather than the bad ones enhances the self-esteem of the community (Bellehumeur et al. 2011: 201). Identity, however, reflects not only the interaction between the members of the group but also interaction with other groups. What kinds of symbols and elements the group chooses to use in order to present itself in interaction with outsiders is an important part of expressing its own identity. In this process, groups tend to favor those elements of their identities that enable them to be seen in a positive light by others (Bellehumeur et al. 2011: 208). The process may take a long time, involving detachment from the living past, which then turns into history, no longer part of the lives of the people.

3. Externally instigated change

Similar to internally instigated change where the past is forgotten and the novel is remembered, change is imposed from outside in this type. If the past is reinterpreted and memories are remembered or forgotten, the inevitable question is, who controls the collective memory? It has already been stated that the wellbeing of the community and individuals is an important element of identity formation. In addition, positive image in relation to outsiders is another important aspect in this process. There is always power involved: the power of individuals who decide what the agenda is for reaching a state of wellbeing, and the power of the outsiders judging the image of the community.

Memory is a natural instrument of control (Hoelscher & Alderman 2004: 349). Many times, externally instigated things and ideas are not as easily accepted. They may be imposed by an alien ruler, or they are simply seen as a threat to the morality, lifestyle or belief system of the community. This may involve a process of power struggle, where the external element eventually becomes more dominant and acquires access to the shared memory, eventually controlling it. National identity, for example, could be seen as a product of "natural continuity and conscious manipulation, achieved via commemoration, ideology and symbolism" (Cerulo 1997: 390–391).[30] Among small ethnic minorities and indigenous groups, the struggle to control identity and their past also becomes intertwined with struggles over political power and economic resources; at the same time, maintaining identity becomes a duty, obligated by the past and the ancestors (Anttonen 2003: 54, 63).

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[30] Olick and Robbins (1998: 118) give an example of nation-building in nineteenth-century Germany, where the national identity was formed by assimilating the numerous regional identities into one.

4. Reversion

In the case of reversion, the innovation is rejected, but instead of maintaining the existing tradition it becomes idealized and reformed. The rejection results in turning to a memory of much older traditions – or allegedly older traditions – whence meaning, dignity, and honor are then sought. One possible element in reversion is that the past where people return has not been a living past for a long time, but it has already turned into history whence it is revived and recreated into a living reality. In secular form, it may be manifested in returning to practices that had already become obsolete, or a revival of crafts and arts that were no longer practiced. In religious forms, it can be observed in the revival of ancient religions (neo-paganism, among others).

One of the most visible forms of religious reversion is fundamentalism. In relation to Lawrence's division of modernization into modernity and modernism, fundamentalists can be considered as participating in the former but resisting the latter (Kippenberg 2000: 234). Kippenberg's definition of fundamentalism is based on Christian communities:

> fundamentalists belong mainly to the white Protestant Anglo-Saxon middle class, which was once proud of its particular ethos. For this group, hard work, diligence, modesty, chastity, and frugality were the will of God. But with industrialisation, bureaucratisation, urbanization, and science, all of these virtues lost their high status. With this loss, the Protestant group disintegrated into factions, each with different visions of the future (Kippenberg 2000: 234)

Riesebrodt (2000: 275) sees fundamentalism as a product of modernity, a reaction to the modernization process. Martinelli (2005: 22) also sees modernization as an ultimately contradictory phenomenon, with processes of change creating traumas, in return resulting in tensions and conflicts of high intensity. Fundamentalism often arises from feelings of marginalization and disappointment in the modern world, creating a dramatic crisis in the lives of people. The problem comes from the inability of the emerging modern nation-states and new political systems to acknowledge and integrate traditional groups. These groups become defined as backward communities, and feelings of displacement and disrespect in turn create a threat. (Riesebrodt 2000: 238.) As a result, people reject the change and instead turn toward the past, reinventing it as a "timeless, unchangeable, fixed eternal truth" (Riesebrodt 2000: 271–272). The modern world is then evaluated against this idealized past. It creates a new group identity, based on shared values and a feeling of regained respect (Riesebrodt 2000: 286).

Naturally, all these approaches may exist and be present at the same time. Individuals may react to the same change in a variety of ways, thus creating differences within the community. Changes may also act as inspirations for more changes: once some have been accepted, they in turn can cause other changes to happen. Eventually, the connective aspect of social memory and common identity are also affected (see Assmann 2006). Changes may cause some niches of old memories to remain unfilled while new niches are created when new memories are formed. These new memories replace the old ones, even though the content may be different in type. However, Hervieu-Léger (2000) argues that in modern societies, nothing replaces the forgotten, and this is especially relevant in relation to religious behavior. According to her theory, modern secular society is suffering from "religious amnesia". This state prevents the upkeep of the chain of memory, which is then broken. Her thought reflects Weber's early ideas of *disenchanted society*, a view of the modern world as a place where events have lost meaning and significance and simply happen or are (Kippenberg 2000: 242). The vacuum in the tradition has not been filled with secular rationalism, but new religious patterns are sought in order to fill the gap.

A similar shift has been noticed in nonreligious traditions as well, creating the concept of "social amnesia" (Olick & Robbins 1998: 116). The problem with memory in any society is that it cannot preserve the past. Typically, oral societies have knowledge of the events of the past reaching back no further than three or four generations or about a hundred years (Assmann 1995: 129). As time passes, the knowledge of the concrete events disappears while new knowledge replaces it in memory. There is, nevertheless, a difference between history and the collective memory of the past. Oral societies do not look into the past to find timelines and dates. Instead, the past is living reality. It is used to give meaning to the present situation, and also to determine paradigms of behavior based on examples in the past. At the same time, the past is also interpreted in relation to the present, with new meanings and interpretations given to past incidents on the basis of the situation in the present. In this way, past and present are always connected. When literate cultures become detached from this living past, the process creates a different understanding of history in modern societies. Pierre Nora (1989: 7) expresses the current situation: "we speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left". This is not because the modern societies cannot remember the past. On the contrary, in literate communities, the events of the past are being recorded and every detail documented with more accuracy than any oral society could – or would. The written past becomes history, a document of memory that has already been lost, yet at the same time history becomes detached from the value and meaning that are so essential a part of the communal memory (Nora 1989: 11). Olick and Robbins (1998: 112) argue that collective memory itself is shaped by history and not an alternative to it. Thus, the social memory would be "history given meaning".

Modern communities look into the future with hopes of constant progress and development. Attempts to live according to the traditions of the past are seen as backwardness, even degeneration, but at the same time identities still continue to be constructed from the communal memory – only the memory of the past has become detached from the present and fragmented. The elements used in forming modern identities are chosen symbols: monuments with high emotional value, solemn places and concepts attended and admired – but not lived in. Nora (1989: 7) calls these elements *lieux de memoire*, or places of memory, contrasting them from the living past of *milieux de memoire* where traditional societies live. Places of memory, Nora (1989: 12) argues, are formed when the memory of the past disappears and becomes an object of critical history instead. Such monuments of the past have special importance in the formation of national identity, but they are also used by smaller groups in their struggle to maintain their own identities.[31]

The past is always constructed and reconstructed to respond to the requirements of the present (Anttonen 2003: 55). From the living society, it is often difficult to see the evolution of practices through the interplay between continuity and change. From the community's point of view, the conditions of life may change, but the tradition is immutable. Communal memory leads from the past to the present and finally to a future as it has always been (Rüsen 2004: 139). This eternal identity offers security and stability to the community. However, for the researcher, the perception of cultures as dynamic structures, shaped by individuals and communities themselves, makes it possible to avoid the fall into reification and instead observe the nature of motion and reinterpretation taking place within and between societies (Anttonen 2003: 49). Not even the cognitive approach sanctions the essentialist view on cultures. Though the universal aspects of behavior can be acknowledged as something essentially or biologically human, the infinite expressions of the behavior, caused by all the variables of the surroundings, do not allow the viewing of a culture or community as essentially and invariably something only based on what they have been at one point in time and space. Therefore, if all local practices are expressions of universals, what were the factors that caused them to be different, and what factors in turn cause them to change into something else? The next chapter will focus on the tradition of saints in the Islamic world as a manifestation of the local identity and culture.

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31 Olick and Robbins (1998: 125–126) use the term "heritage site".

4. OVERVIEW OF THE SAINT TRADITION IN ISLAM

In the previous chapter, the concept of religion was discussed with a strongly functionalistic approach. The communal aspect of the religion also plays a role in the formation of group identity. However, the aspect of religion that is the main focus of this research has so far been addressed in very vague terms. I have used words such as “saint”, “ancestor”, and “holy site” to define the topic, but the phenomenon requires a closer look. In this chapter, I study the concept of saints and various aspects of the veneration of saints and holy places in the Islamic world. My goal is to present both the variation and the similarities within the tradition as part of the wider cultural and historical frame.[32]

4.1 Evolution of belief

> Of course the radio says that everything comes directly from God. But just as the king has his ministers, God has his. If you need a paper from the government office, which is better? Do you go straight to the official and ask for it? You might wait a long time and never receive it. Or do you go to someone who knows you and also knows the official? Of course, you go to the friend, who presents the case to the official. Same thing... if you want something from God.[33]

The Arabic word *walī* (ولي) can be translated in a number of ways. A *walī* can be a friend, ally, benefactor, patron, protector, or sponsor. The word is also used for the representative of the bride in the signing of the marriage contract. Nothing in the word denotes distinctive sanctity or holiness, and yet it is the word that is commonly translated as ‘saint’. For Christian saints, a different word, *qiddīs* (قديس), is generally used; this word derives from the root *qadusa* ‘to be holy’. Thus, when applying the term ‘saint’, it should be kept in mind that there are distinct differences between the concepts of sainthood in Islam and Christianity. One major difference is the lack of a centralized canonization process in Islamic sainthood. The sanctity of a person is, in many instances, determined by the popularity of the saint among the people. Although there are popular holy sites that attract pilgrims from far away,[34] most saints in the Islamic world are very local, and the veneration of a certain saint may be limited only to the inhabitants of one village, or to the tribe of which the saint was a member (Taylor 1998: 83). However, there are also similarities that support the use of word 'saint' as a translation for *walī*. Regarding a holy person, he is thought to be *walī Allāh*, a friend of God, someone who is especially close to God. This exceptional relationship makes the person holy.

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[32] This chapter will mainly discuss the Sunni tradition. Although the Shia tradition is in many ways similar, it also has a lot of differing approaches.

[33] A Moroccan viewpoint quoted in Eickelman (2002: 274).

The Qur'ān does not discuss the concept of saints, nor is there any clear indication of the roles and abilities of such persons. The two common verses quoted in connection to the topic of the *walī Allāh* are:

> أَلا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّـهِ لا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ولا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ
>
> Unquestionably, [for] the allies of Allah there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve. (10:62)[35]
>
> إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّـهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ
>
> Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger and those who have believed – those who establish prayer and give zakah, and they bow [in worship]. (5:55)

The Prophet himself emphasized the greatness of God alone above all men, including him:

> Say, "Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?" (17:93)

Thus, the Islamic concept of saints evolved over a longer period. There is little doubt that the "friend of God" idea was influenced by the earlier traditions. Holy sites and centers of pilgrimage have existed in the region since pre-Islamic times, and archaeological evidence dates even from the Neolithic period.[36] A pilgrimage center before the advent of Islam, Mecca was used actively by the townspeople and surrounding tribes alike. In addition to Mecca, a number of other sanctuaries are known from the same period (McCorriston 2011: 1). As the early conquests expanded the area of Islamic rule, the conquerors came in contact with various traditions, including rituals of veneration practiced by the people. In Egypt, for example, numerous sites were connected with specific deities, and celebrations and processions were held in their honor annually (Hallenberg 2005: 206). Christianity had also shown growing interest in holy sites. The martyrs, ascetics, and heroes of the Early Church became the first saints of the Byzantine era, and the legends of Christian heroes merged with much more ancient traditions. An example is the cult of Saint George, who became a popular saint throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. He was venerated by the Copts in Egypt as Mari Girgis (Hallenberg 2005: 210), but he was also an important saint in the Syro-Palestine region. In this region, he came to be known as Khiḍr 'Green', and subsequently he was identified with another saintly figure, the biblical Elijah or Mar Elias (Haddad 1969: 26).[37] In the Maghrib, the Arab conquerors met with old Berber traditions.

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[34] For example, the annual *mawlid* celebration of al-Dasūqī in the village of Dāsūq attracts thousands of pilgrims every year (Hallenberg 2005: 18.). Wallin (2007: 281–297) visited the *mawlid* of al-Badawī in Ṭanṭa in 1844 and gives a vivid description of the combination of piety and carnival. In Palestine, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the *mawlid* festivals of Nābī Mūsā near Jericho and Nābī Rūbīn in Jaffa were similar events, drawing people from surrounding towns and the countryside (Canaan 1926: 140). McCorriston (2011: 39–41) describes Qabr Nabī Hūd in Hadramawt, Yemen, where a large annual pilgrimage lasts for several days, and also includes a market fair, with the townspeople and the Bedouin gathering to exchange their own products. En route to the main site, the people also visit other shrines.

[35] For all English quotations, I have used the Saheeh International translation.

[36] See McCorriston (2011) for her study of Neolithic religious sites in Yemen.

Doubtless these traditions both collided and interacted with the emerging Islamic theology. Legends and myths of Christian and Jewish origin were also included in the tales of prophets, the *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*. The most famous of these compilations were written by al-Kisā'ī, al-Tha'libī (*Arā'is al-Majālis*), and Ibn Kathīr. In addition to the prophets, Islamic figures such as the Prophet's companions and early martyrs came to be venerated.

However, it is due to the mystic philosophy within Islam that the tradition of saints became such a visible part of the medieval Islamic world. The idea of the "friend of God" had become established by the end of the eighth century, but in the eleventh century al-Ghazālī brought elements of Sufism and the mystical love of God into Islamic orthodoxy. The cult of saints had spread mainly through the Sufis, but gradually it was acknowledged by many scholars (*'ulamā'*) (Wynbrandt 2004: 113). The Sufi orders became widely popular throughout the Islamic world. For example, it has been estimated that 60–80% of the Muslims in Africa between the sixteenth–nineteenth centuries were members of some Sufi order (Hallenberg 2005: 20). The influence of the orders declined in the twentieth century, although in Morocco and Egypt they continued – and still continue – to play an important role.

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[37] In his article, Haddad (1969) argues that these later saints are all a continuation of the cult of Baal in the agricultural communities of the ancient Levant. According to him, they all represent similar elements, such as fertility (vegetation and spring), death, resurrection, and war (fighting ancient monsters).

One of the central concepts within the tradition is the idea of *tawassul*. Often translated as ‘means’, the term implies a petition or fervent plea. In the case of saintly tradition, it is an attempt to seek an intercession and a way of petitioning God through addressing those who are close to him (i.e. *awliyā’ Allāh*). Belief in *tawassul* is generally legitimized with the verse from Ṣūrat al-Mā’ida:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّـهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

> O you who have believed, fear Allah and seek the means [of nearness] to Him and strive in His cause that you may succeed. (5:35)

This verse is sometimes interpreted as clear encouragement for any pious Muslim to visit saints’ tombs. After all, if one wishes to be closer to God, it would be a natural choice to seek the way through those who already have succeeded in this (Quinn 2004: 16).[38]

Tawassul is the way for *tabarruk*, or seeking blessing. *Baraka* is the fundamental essence of the saints – both living and dead – and their shrines. Canaan (1925: 177) quotes Kahle when he describes it as “a benevolent power which radiates from the holy place to everyone who comes in contact with it”.[39] Christopher Taylor (1998: 54) compares it with the concept of *praesentia* in Christianity. *Baraka* is not restricted only to the body of the saint, but radiates toward everything within the area of the saint’s tomb or shrine. In order to receive *baraka*, the best way is to be in close contact with it. For example, drinking from a sacred well or taking home a piece of cloth that covers the cenotaph of the saint are believed to be effective ways for gaining *baraka*. The benevolent power is also contagious enough to be transmitted to a person who is simply touching the tomb or the cloth covering it (Canaan 1925: 178). Usually the *baraka* of a saint cannot be observed with one’s normal senses, but sometimes it may be noticed, for example, in the appearance of light or a pleasant smell (Taylor 1998: 55).

Although God is seen as the ultimate source of the saint’s *baraka* and the saint himself is only the mediator in the process, the relationship between God and the *walī* is often considered to be reciprocal. Due to their unique relationship and mutual love, God listens to the requests of the saint and fulfills them (Reynolds 2007: 197). The power of these requests is then manifested in miracles (*karāmāt*) performed by the saint. These *karāmāt* include the supernatural characteristics of the saint himself, such as telepathy, teleportation or knowing things about the future. More common however, are the miracles that happen to the people who visit the saint: the sick are healed, women's fertility is restored and other requests of the people are fulfilled.

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[38] Quinn (2004: 16) explains this further in a quotation by an Indonesian pilgrim: “If I did not ask God, or His saints, for the things I need, wouldn’t it be an act of arrogance on my part? By asking God for wealth, good health and a beautiful wife I am doing no more than acknowledge that God is all-powerful and the source of all things. As a good Muslim surely this is what I should do.”

[39] Kahle (1911: 104): “Es ist die wohltätige Kraft, die der Heilige ausstrahlt auf Alles, was mit ihm in berührung kommt.”

For *tabarruk*, a visit to the holy site is usually made. The holy shrine (*maqām*) itself is quite often a single vaulted room with the tomb inside. The most notable feature in the building is often the dome (*qubba*). In the simplest form, the tomb may only be marked by a pile of stones, while the most extensive complexes may contain courtyards with several rooms for various purposes. In the survey made by Canaan (1924: 47) in Palestine, the most extensive one was the *maqām* of Nabī Mūsā, located 8 km southwest of Jericho. This vast multidomed complex contains a large central courtyard, divided by a wall into two sections and surrounded by a mosque, the shrine, the custodian's house and over 120 rooms used as a hostel for pilgrims. In shrines in general, niches and platforms for burning incense form an important part of the interior. Some shrines have been decorated with red dye, and depending on their importance, there may be reed mats or even carpets on the floor. Inscriptions with prayers, quotations from the Qur'ān, or information about the builder may also be written on the walls. (Canaan 1924: 12, 15, 18.) Outside the buildings, trees, springs, and caves may also be connected to the shrines. According to an esoteric interpretation of the shrines presented by Cyril Glassé (1989: 343), the structure of the building symbolizes a bridge between heaven and earth. The cubic shape of the shrine represents earth and the sphere of the dome symbolizes perfection – and thus heaven. The octagonal drum creates a link between the dome and the room. The whole structure thus symbolizes the saint as the mediator between man and God.

The visit or *ziyāra* may consist of *du'ā'* prayers for making one's request, the bringing of votive gifts and food to the shrine, tying rags or swearing oaths. An animal may be slaughtered as an offering either at the site or after the visit. A visit may be performed privately, but it is common to visit shrines in a group. According to Taylor (1998: 62–63), visiting the tombs became an increasingly popular religious practice performed in large groups during the thirteenth century. This new wave of interest was born in Egypt, and Taylor also relates it to the growing influence of Sufi philosophy. Sufi orders (*ṭarīqas*) organized weekly visits and larger annual festivals, *mawālid*, to the graves of the saints. The popularity of the tradition is attested in a new type of literature, guidebooks that were written about the holy sites and intended for pilgrims. Most of these guides were written for the Cairo Necropolis (Qarafa) (Taylor 1998: 70). Canaan (1925: 178) also mentions guidebooks for holy sites in Hebron and Jerusalem.

Men and women from all social classes joined in the visits, and they were seen as important social events – though also claimed to be immoral by others.

The *mawālid* which marked the birthdays and memorial days of prophets and local saints became among the most visual expressions of saint veneration. The annual celebrations expanded into large carnivals with processions, competitions, fairs, and various performances. They mushroomed throughout the Muslim world, with their customs and rejoicings spilling over into the official festivals. The most famous of these celebrations is the anniversary of the birth and death of the Prophet Muḥammad on the 12th of Rabīʿ al-Awwal, the third month of the Muslim year. Despite the opposition of theologians, the Mawlid al-Nabī was probably introduced in the early thirteenth century and it eventually become a semiofficial festival in many countries, even competing with the two official Islamic feasts in popularity (Lazarus-Yafeh 1978: 53).

4.2 Saintly hierarchies

There are various ways to classify different saints and their shrines. Andrew Petersen (1996: 97–99) divides the holy sites into three groups based on their sphere of influence. First, international sites are known across geographical and even religious borders. Saints connected to them were often central religious figures, and their status is widely accepted. In some cases, different religions acknowledge the same saints and shrines, while sometimes the sites differ although the saint is the same person. For example, the tomb of Moses can be found both on Mount Nebo in Jordan and near Jericho in Palestine. The second group contains so-called national sites. These sites are well known within one country or one ethnic group, but outside these they are mostly unknown. The local sites form the third and the largest group. They include a wide selection of smaller local *awliyāʾ*, mostly known within one village community or tribe.

A more traditional classification is based on the role of the saints. The most important ones are the prophets and messengers (*anbiyāʾ* and *rusul*). According to the tradition of Islam, Muḥammad was preceded by either 24, 124, or 124,000 prophets. The messengers, on the other hand, were the ones who brought the Book to their people (Hallenberg 2005: 154). The saints connected to the biblical tradition are a well-defined group of characters who are usually rather widely known, and often venerated across geographical and religious borders, as Christians, Muslims and Jews alike may have religious traditions connected to them. Many also belong to the *anbiyā*, and are therefore among the most important saints. The Qurʾān lists altogether 25 prophets: Ādam, Idrīs, Nūḥ, Hūd, Ṣāliḥ, Ibrāhīm, Ismāʿīl, Isḥāq, Yaʿqūb, Yūsuf, Ayyūb, Shuʿayb, Ilyās, Hārūn, al-Yasaʿ, Mūsā, Lūṭ, Dhū al-Kifl, Dāwūd, Sulaymān, Yūnus, Zakariyā, Yaḥyā, ʿĪsā, and Muḥammad. The difference between the prophets and the other saints is fundamental. The status of the prophets is based on revelation: they received the word of God and distributed it to a wider audience.

The other saints have received no revelation, but they act on inspiration instead, and serve as models of perfect submission to the divine laws (Cornell 1998: 274). To this type of sainthood, three paths can be seen: moral, intellectual and emotional. Moral sanctity is gained through asceticism, martyrdom, and spiritual and physical purity, whereas the intellectual saints were famous for their intelligence and wisdom. They are the teachers and mentors who spent their time learning and seeking understanding of the divine law. These saints also often possess supernatural powers of the mind, such as clairvoyance or a proclivity for prophetic visions. The saints with an emotional character, on the other hand, are known for their compassion and perfected love. These paths may overlap, and different groups may emphasize different aspects of a certain saint. (Cohn 1987: 5–6.)

The companions of the Prophet, al-Ṣaḥāba, form an important group of saints from early Islamic history. The companions were the people who met Muḥammad when he was still alive and received his message, becoming Muslims. The most important ones are those closest to the Prophet, including members of his family and his most trusted friends and disciples, especially the Muhājirūn, those first converts who accompanied the Prophet in his Hijra from Mecca, and the Anṣār, who welcomed him in Medina. Some of the companions can also be counted among the martyrs or the Mujāhidūn of the early period, also venerated as saints.

The classification of various saints has been discussed in great detail in the Sufi texts. The idea of Sufi sainthood was based on the Neoplatonic concept of the "Perfect Man", a person who has a direct connection with the Divine. There was one such perfected leader for each era who received the divine essence, or Nūr Muḥammadīya. This light was the first thing that had been created before the creation of the world. It became the soul of Prophet Muḥammad, and this essence was passed down along the line into the saints of each era (Hallenberg 2005: 166). Although the classification continued and became more refined, the saintly hierarchy had been established by the eleventh century. According to al-Hujwīri, there is in every era a "divine court", which is divided into 300 *akhyār* 'outstanding', 40 *abdāl* 'substitutes', 7 *abrār* 'devoted', 4 *awtād* 'stakes', and one *quṭb* 'axis' or 'pole' or *Ghawth* 'source of help'.[40] In addition, there are 4,000 *awliyā*ʾ who are hidden both from each other and from mankind. The *abdāl* live in Syria, and each time one of them leaves the physical world he is replaced by another until the Day of Judgement comes. Out of all the *awliyā*', four founders of Sufi *tariqas* have received the title "the four poles" (*al-aqṭāb al-arbā*'*a*). These four are Ibrāhīm al-Dasūqī (*c.*1235–1296), Aḥmad al-Badawī (*c.*1199–1276), Aḥmad b. 'Ali al-Rifā'ī (1106–1182), and 'Abd al-Qādir Jilānī (1088–1166). Although the saints represent different directions, the concept of the four poles was apparently introduced in Egypt.

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[40] The numbers in each group, as well as the combination of this "court", varies in different sources. See Hallenberg (2005: 154–164) on these sources and details of the development of this tradition.

The idea of divine essence exists in many forms in the Islamic world. In Morocco, the concept of inherited sanctity is well attested. Westermarck (1916: 7–10) explains two types of saintly families: the *shurafa* are descendants of Prophet Muḥammad, following the male line from his daughter Fāṭima. However, although all the Prophet's descendants received part of the *baraka* that was transmitted through his line, only very few possess so much of the blessing that they are regarded as saints. The other group consists of descendants of saints who were not of the family of the Prophet but received *baraka* in some other way. They are called *murābiṭīn*. Just as with the *shurafa*, only a small number of them have enough *baraka* to become actual saints.

Thus, while no universal saintly classification exists, the Sufi writers established various hierarchies for different types of saints. These hierarchies were then utilized and shaped in the lived religion of the people. The prophets and messengers are the most respected saints, followed by the companions, martyrs, and Sufi leaders. On a more local level, the descendants of the Prophet and families of notable historical saints are still held in high esteem, even though very few of them rise to the level of sainthood themselves. In the classification of Canaan (1927: 45), another class called *a*'*jām* appears, meaning 'Persian' or 'foreign', although according to Canaan, none of the saints of this class originate in Persia. This is the most contradictory group of saints, venerated in some places and despised in others. Unfortunately, Canaan does not provide any extended information concerning this group.

Canaan (1927: 49) also devised another classification based on the origins of the saint. The first group, historical characters, contains saints from biblical and Qur'ānic tradition, as well as from later Islamic history. The second group of saints consists of those holy men and women whose descendants are still living. In the third group, Canaan has listed the dervishes (*darāwīsh*) and saints of unknown origin. It seems possible that many of those saints whose origin is unknown are actually continuations of a much older tradition; the shrine of the saint may be built on an ancient place of worship, or even the saint himself may have distinct characteristics of an earlier divinity (Canaan 1928: 53–55). Hallenberg

(2005: 206) also discusses the possible continuation of an ancient Egyptian cult in the character of al-Dasūqī.

4.3 Voices against the tradition

Despite the popularity of the tradition of saints, it has not been unanimously accepted within Islam. Opposing the tradition has been common to the *tajdīd* movements. The focus of these Islamic "renewals" has been to purify the religion from the accumulated un-Islamic aspects (*bidʿa*, or 'innovation') and return the faith to its most "pure" form, as it was thought to exist during the time of the Prophet and the Righteous Caliphs. Thus, venerating saints and visiting their tombs have been seen as relics from the Jāhilīya and, as such, not part of Islamic practice. The ḥadīth often quoted in connection to the tradition of visiting holy sites is from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (vol. 2, no 281):

> Narrated Abū Hurayra: The Prophet said, "Do not set out on a journey except for three Mosques, i.e., al-Masjid-al-Ḥarām, the Mosque of Allah's Apostle, and the Mosque of al-Aqṣā."

The most influential authors on the topic are Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim. In his writings, the thirteenth-century Syrian Ḥanbalī jurist Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328) strongly opposed the tradition of pilgrimages to tombs. He was an adversary of al-Ghazālī, even speaking out against the pilgrimage to the Prophet's mausoleum in Medina (Wynbrandt 2004: 113). His student, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya (1292–1350), also followed his ideas, equally targeting the thought of al-Ghazālī (Taylor 1998: 169). They referred to the *tābiʿūn*, the second-generation transmitters of traditions, especially Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī (d. 714/715), Abū ʿAmr ʿĀmir ibn Sharāḥīl (d. *c.*728), and Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn (d. 728), all of whom abhorred the practice of visiting graves (Taylor 1998: 193). While they acknowledged the prophetic tradition of the three mosques, the *awliyāʾ* were not considered to be part of Islam. They were not mentioned by the early generations, and the traditions related to them often contained elements of pre-Islamic idolatry. Ibn Taymiyya and Ibn Qayyim rejected all mosques that were built on top of tombs; according to them, even the grave markers were against the law (Taylor 1998: 174, 183). They did, however, define a "lawful *ziyāra*" (*al-ziyāra al-sharʾīya*). Visiting the tombs was not banned as such, since they could remind the visitor of the hereafter and the shortness of life. Only making the tombs the sole object of travel and veneration was strictly condemned (Taylor 1998: 189, 193). However, despite his opposition toward certain practices he considered pagan, Ibn Taymiyya did not oppose Sufism if it was practiced in an orthodox way. Apparently Ibn Taymiyya was himself initiated in the Qādirīya order.[41]

Interest in the teachings of these conservative reformists was greatly revived by Muḥammad ibn ʻAbd-al-Wahhāb in the eighteenth century. Though his followers called themselves *muwaḥḥidūn*, they soon came to be known as "Wahhabi". Born in al-ʻUyayna (*c.*1703), he was driven by a mission to restore the strict monotheism of early Islam. Opposing Sufism, he denounced the idea of any intermediaries – be they saints, prophets, or angels – between man and God.[42] To demonstrate his opposition, he chopped down the sacred trees of ʻUyayna and destroyed the local saint's tomb which had been a center of pilgrimage (Wynbrandt 2004: 114–115). In his opinion, all domed shrines and mausoleums were un-Islamic, and in 1803 he destroyed such buildings during his attacks in the Hijaz (Wynbrandt 2004: 138). At this time, even the continuation of the Hajj was at a stake. Although Muḥammad ibn Saʻūd performed the pilgrimage, the atmosphere was threatening as entrance was not permitted to anyone who was considered heretical. This also included traders (Burckhardt 1983 [1822]: 149).

Although the Wahhabi raiders were defeated, the ideas lived on. Almost a hundred years later, when Ibn Saʻūd (King ʻAbd-al-ʻAzīz) needed a fighting force for his campaign, he settled the Bedouin into new communities, forming the "Brethren" (Ikhwān) army that embraced Wahhabi teachings fervently. By 1915, more than 60,000 men were living in these new agricultural settlements. The traditional raiding was at the same time replaced by state-sanctioned *jihād*, which became a powerful political tool (Wynbrandt 2004: 172). The relationship between Ibn Saʻūd and the Ikhwān became tense over the next decade and led to an open rebellion. The members of the Ikhwān army saw Ibn Saʻūd's implementation of Islamic law as too lax, and they used both political and physical activity to achieve their fundamentalist goal. Although the rebels were defeated, the Saudi regime nevertheless adopted Ḥanbalī law and the strict interpretation of the Ikhwān on matters related to *bidʻa* (Wynbrandt 2004: 184).

While the new wave of Islamic revival movements emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, contemporary Salafism takes the demand for the purification of the religion even further. The writings of Ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Taymiyya, and Ibn Qayyim are applied in the doctrine of the Salafi movement, and similarly to Wahhabis, the Salafis also reject the innovations in religion and strive toward purification of the Islamic faith (Wicktorowicz 2000: 219). For this reason, the saintly tradition and visiting holy sites are not supported within the Salafi movement.

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[41] See Makdisi 1973.

[42] This was also noted by Wallin (2007: 469) during his journey to Najd in 1848–1849. In other regions, he traveled under the name ʻAbd-al-Walī, but for his visit to Najd his friend had recommended that he change his name because the Wahhabis did not believe in saints. Therefore, he assumed another name, ʻAbd-al-Mawla.

4.4 Using sacred power for secular means

Islam is often said to be the religion that encompasses all aspects of human life. It is therefore no surprise that the saints and holy sites have been used as various representations of secular power as well. Religion, the state, government, and ownership are often closely connected and the politicization of religious traditions involves all of them. Political control of a religious site or idea is a strong symbolic statement which can be used in influencing or reshaping the community, even the identity of groups. If culture and tradition are something shared by a certain group of people, the possession of culture becomes a critical question when defining the boundaries of identity (Anttonen 2003: 54). For example, Petersen (1996: 64) claims that the reason for the tradition of visiting tombs and cemeteries becoming so widespread and popular should be traced to the end of Fatimid rule in Egypt in 1171. The country was in the middle of a Sunni restoration process where the Sunnis were trying to regain the land both mentally and physically. A similar process can be seen in the Levant. A very active period of constructing holy places was during and after the Crusader period. The crusaders themselves built a number of shrines and churches, and after they had been forced to leave the country, several Islamic shrines were built or reconstructed by the Ayyubids and Mamluks as a sign of a spiritual reclamation (Petersen 1996: 112; Petersen 1999: 126).

An example presenting the strengthening of a national identity via a religious tradition related to a holy site can be found in the Palestinian territories. It shows how the political situation can actually increase the interest in religious tradition, in this case a pilgrimage to the tomb of the saint. The shrine of Nabī Mūsā situated near Jericho has been a site of spectacular annual visits from nearby cities and villages, including Jerusalem, Hebron, and Nablus, and it has also been visited by several nomadic and seminomadic tribes of the region. Canaan (1926: 117–138) describes such a visit in the 1920s, but as he witnesses the event he concentrates purely on the process and visual representations.

A more detailed analysis of political issues behind religious pilgrimage has been made by Roger Friedland and Richard Hecht (1996). According to them, Ḥajj Amīn al-Ḥusaynī, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in the 1920–1930s, used the Nabī Mūsā pilgrimage for political means. He wanted to promote Palestinian nationality and political identity, and the pilgrimage played a critical role in this. To achieve his goals, he chose a universal saint who could not be claimed by any tribe or family. Moses was a prophet, and since he was also revered by the Christians, he would represent all Palestinians. However, the time of the pilgrimage coincided with Easter and the Pesach celebrations of the Christians and Jews of Jerusalem, and the three processions took place almost simultaneously. Among the Muslims of the area, the pilgrimage was already known and had been practiced for centuries. The peasant society was still influenced by the old Sufi tradition prevalent in the region, whereas the urban dwellers had already become familiar with the reformist tradition. Thus, the Mufti first had to settle disputes between those holding the traditional view and the reformists, who saw the popular practices as un-Islamic.

The people attended the pilgrimage carrying local community flags. The Hebronites, for example, are mentioned as entering through the Jaffa gate shouting political chants: “Zionism has no place here” and “We are the army of God, the youth of the country” (Friedland & Hecht 1996: 99). The tradition of pilgrimage to the tomb of Moses declined slowly after 1936, and during the time of Jordanian rule (1948–1967) it was even suppressed. In 1987, it was revived by the Palestinian authorities, and political pilgrimage experienced a brief period of blossoming in the 1990s. Nationalistic ideology was integrated into the spiritual celebration again, and the first year the event drew about 15,000 participants, with the young people carrying symbols of Islam and nationalism, including Palestinian flags, pictures of Yasser Arafat, and nationalistic banners instead of the old tribal and family symbols (Friedland & Hecht 1996: 110).[43]

The shrine of Nabī Rūbin in Palestine is also an example of “spiritual reclamation”. Before 1948, every August the saint’s festival gathered more than 30,000 participants from the Coastal Plain, especially from the cities of Jaffa, Ramla, and Lydda. After the 1948 War, the shrine and the surrounding village were abandoned. In the 1990s, however, the grave was adopted by the Jewish tradition. The shrine had contained a green cloth with the words “There is no God but God and Rūbin is his prophet”, but it was replaced with a red one, where the words “Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might and the first fruits of my vigor” (Gen. 49:3)[44] were written. (Benvenisti 2000: 274–275.)

However, despite the predominance of the political aspect in the representations of power where holy places are involved, other kinds of power relationships are also involved in the tradition. Women, for example, use the holy sites and the power of saints in various ways – even for resistance. In many traditional communities, visiting a holy place has given women an accepted reason to escape from the confines and expectations of the society. The celebrations and visits are moments of independence and equality, during which women are allowed more freedom than on normal occasions (Tapper 1990: 248). For example, the annual celebration of Nabī Rūbin was so important that a woman could tell her husband: "Either you take me to Rubin or you divorce me" (Canaan 1926: 140). In Morocco, the tombs of the saints form common meeting areas, similar to the public coffee houses and clubs of the men. The holy site forms a public place permissible for women, a place where they can meet friends, drink tea, and wash clothes. The unchallenged power of the sacred ground becomes a platform for women's resistance to the dominant patriarchy. This is especially attested in cases where an unwilling bride seeks shelter through the saint: she cannot be forced to marry if she is under the saint's protection (Platt 2010: 198).

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[43] This new pilgrimage tradition was described by Aubin-Boltanski (2005). See also Halabi (2009).

[44] English quotations from the Bible are from the New Revised Standard Version.

4.5 Saints of the people – and the elite?

4.5.1 Separating magic and miracle: Theory and theology

The saint tradition is often labeled as "popular belief". Popular religion, then, is contrasted with the "scholarly" religion, or the religion of the elite that has the authority to dictate the dogmas of the system. Yet, the reality of this dichotomy can be questioned. The contrast appears to be rather between two interpretations of what can be seen as tradition. At one end, there are the groups such as the Wahhabis, to whom every aspect of religion that is not included in the Qur'ān and Sunna is *bidʿa*. At the other end, different interpretations can be seen, for example, in the medieval Sufi texts. The discussion continues today even on the Internet, where various traditional scholars take objection to the Salafi interpretations.[45] Throughout history, both interpretations have been represented in scholarly literature, and both have also found popularity among the people. Even some of the conservative writers (for example, Ibn Taymiyya) accept certain traditions. In such cases, the state of mind and pure intention justify one's behavior. Ibn Taymiyya's idea can be seen to be a reflection of the ḥadīth relating the words of the Prophet:

زَارَ النَّبِىُّ صلى الله عليه وسلم قَبْرَ أُمِّهِ فَبَكَى وَأَبْكَى مَنْ حَوْلَهُ فَقَالَ اسْتَأْذَنْتُ رَبِّي
فِي أَنْ أَسْتَغْفِرَ لَهَا فَلَمْ يُؤْذَنْ لِى وَاسْتَأْذَنْتُهُ فِى أَنْ أَزُورَ قَبْرَهَا فَأُذِنَ لِى فَزُورُوا الْقُبُورَ
فَإِنَّهَا تُذَكِّرُ الْمَوْتَ

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[45] See, for example, the As-Sunnah Foundation (2011), where the Salafi doctrine is very strongly refuted. The Foundation itself has affiliation with the Naqshbandī Ḥaqqānī *ṭarīqa*.

> The Apostle of Allah (PBUH) visited the grave of his mother and he wept, and moved others around him to tears, and said: I sought permission from my Lord to beg forgiveness for her but it was not granted to me, and I sought permission to visit her grave and it was granted to me. So visit the graves, for that makes you mindful of death. (ibn al-Hajjaj; bk. 11 num. 135)

Is the person visiting the grave addressing God or the saint? Is the purpose of the visit a personal reminder, a pious supplication, or celebration and entertainment? Defining the "right state of mind" parallels the discourse addressing the differences between magic and miracle, religion, and superstition. The definitions attempting to describe the difference between religion and magic often seem to define the boundaries between popular belief and scholarly theology. Magic certainly has aspects that are often attributed to the popular religion. But, what does this difference tell us?

Certain definitions seem to crystallize the concept of the magical, often contrasted with the religious. Magic is manipulative action where the goal is short-term personal gain. Intricate knowledge is needed to perform the magical action correctly. In moral terms magic in Islam is secret, private, and forbidden, or at least considered sinister and immoral by many believers. All this is directly opposite to what religion represents: an accepted collective and symbolic system of solidarity and public rituals that also often defines and preserves the moral code (Versnel 1991: 179). The exclusive definitions have focused on the dichotomy and contrasted magic with the prevailing religious system, while more recent discussion has taken new paths, presenting different ways of observing the two concepts in an inclusive manner.

Belief in causality is another important aspect. With magic, there is no logical causality, as no verified connection exists between the magical ritual and the believed effect. It is based on the firm belief of those who practice magic, who do not have doubts about the magic itself. Instead, if the spell fails, the details of the process may be questioned: were the ingredients correct, or was the incantation uttered exactly as it should have been? Failure can be explained in many ways, but causality itself is not doubted. In a religious prayer, there is no such expectation of causality. A person praying is the supplicant, not the active agent in the event. A plea uttered in the prayer can be either recognized or rejected by the deity or other supernatural subject, and this result cannot be altered by the person himself (Versnel 1991: 178–179). In popular religion, however, the difference may not always be as clear.

Jesper Sørensen (2007: 188) states that magic is simply one aspect of the broad concept of religion. Magic is the creative force that provokes and challenges the institutionalized and symbolic structures of authorized religious activity by creating a spontaneous and chaotic choice, reinterpreting the rituals and symbols and bringing the meaning and goals closer to the concrete needs of an individual. This is a dynamic process that in turn creates counteractions from the side of the authorized religion. Innovations can be incorporated into the dominant system, or they can be rejected, again creating certain countermeasures – for example, new rituals that offer protection from the feared magical powers. Innovations can also simply be marginalized and left alone as long as they do not rise to become a threat to the system.

According to Sørensen (2007: 188), alternative ritual systems are more of a rule than an exception in societies. People fluently utilize various available options, either offered by institutionalized rituals or less accepted "popular" ones. Their choice depends on their personal needs and goals – whether they are more concrete (finding a cure for an illness or conceiving a child) or more abstract (personal salvation, praying for the wellbeing of the nation). To an individual, the means is not as important as the ends.

Bailey (2006: 5) challenges the old categorizations and systematized definitions and calls for a more cultural approach. There can be a comparative aspect, but the concept should be studied within the cultural context itself: How do the people in a certain culture or at a certain time define magic and ritual? What do they regard as an accepted form of belief and why? It is quite clear that in various cultures, the line between religion and magic has existed, but very often the difference has been defined by the dominant party, thus creating the barriers. "My miracle is your magic" is not so far-fetched a saying after all. There are cases of harmful and sinister actions that fit well with the traditional definitions of magic, but a lot of material falls into a grey area. That is where the cultures define their barriers: what is accepted and what is condoned and banned. A lot of things may also be tolerated for various reasons, even if not fully approved.

Taking Bailey's culture-sensitive approach as the starting point for trying to define the concept of magic and superstition in Islamic society, we should find answers within the culture. It is quite clear that Islamic culture has seen and acknowledged certain differences. Ibn Khaldūn writes in his *Muqaddima* about various sciences, listing the science of magic among them, with one chapter dedicated to sorcery and talismans and another chapter to the science of letters.[46] To him, magic is real, but it is always black: it is harmful, and evil spirits and demons are invoked with magical spells to aid the magician. Ibn Khaldūn (VI: 27) divides magic users into two groups. The powerful individuals, the sorcerers, can create magic with the power of their minds, while the other group needs various material components and tools such as talismans and amulets for their magic to work. He also lists illusionists, who are simply tricksters practiced in sleight of hand and, therefore, not real magicians. Sorcery is unbelief as it draws the person away from God and into veneration of devils and entities of the material world. This action, according to him, is punishable by death. The exception to this is the so-called "Evil Eye", since the possessor of the Eye cannot control it and is not, therefore, responsible for the bad things it causes. The correct way to ward off both magical spells and the Eye is with the word of God.

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[46] Ibn Khaldūn also writes chapters on the "Knowledge of Angels", "Knowledge of the Prophets", "The Science of Sufism", and "The Science of Dream Interpretation".

The ultimate difference is found in the way that magic and miracle are contrasted. Scholars see magic as the total opposite of the *karāmāt*, which are performed by prophets and Sufis. The prophets are the direct "vessels" of divine power, which enables them to do miraculous deeds with the power given to them by God. The Sufis, on the other hand, represent individuals who through meditation and asceticism are trying to return to the origin of all being, thus withdrawing themselves from the material world and its temptations. Their supernatural deeds, therefore, cannot be of evil origin but purely divine and good. Their abilities derive from their higher understanding of the universe and its unity – their closeness to God. This explanation again reflects the Neoplatonic idea of the Perfect Man and the One as the ultimate source of everything.

4.5.2 Combining magic and miracle: The dynamics of living traditions

Despite the strict divisions established in the text, miracle and magic have not always been very far from each other in lived religion. In addition to the human saints, there are also other types of intermediaries in the world. The Qur'ān recognizes supernatural creatures such as angels and jinns. Various demons and spirits inhabit the world, together with humans and animals. Spirits may haunt cemeteries, springs, and houses. In fact, every place has been thought to have its spirit owner. In Morocco, they were called mwālīn l-mkān, or "Masters of the Place" (Westermarck 1926: 295), and in Palestine "People of the Earth".[47] Although these beings were usually feared and avoided, there were also occasions when their aid was sought. An example of a special relationship between humans and spirits is seen in the zar cult, which exists in Egypt and Sudan but is also known on the Arabian Peninsula and in Iran. When a person is thought to be possessed by a spirit, the purpose of the cult is not to attempt to drive out it out but rather appease it (Natvig 1988: 57). Coming to terms with the possessing spirit often involves annual ceremonies.

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[47] Granqvist (1965: 29) does not provide the name in Arabic. Friedland and Hecht (1996: 113) mention the name "Rulers of the ground" (*muluk al-ard* or *maleika*). Permission to pitch a tent on their land always had to be sought.

Harnessing the powers of demons for magic is another occasion where spirits are addressed. A common way in the Islamic magical tradition is to combine Qur'ānic phrases with magical formulae, material ingredients, and physical actions. The quotations from the Qur'ān are usually unrelated to the magical ritual if they are read in the original, but taken out of context they do share a level of similarity with the topic. Islamic authors such as Ibn Khaldūn strongly oppose this usage of holy texts, since the power of magic comes from demons or spirits and not from God.

People have also seen sanctity in the surrounding nature: a tree, well, rock, or some other element in nature may have anomalous features, leading to it being seen as a manifestation of transcendence. Occasionally such places have been related to demons and thus may have been both feared and revered. At times, such places have been sanctified. Westermarck (1933: 94) suggests that the various saints in Morocco bearing a name like Sīdī al-Maḥfī ("My Lord the Hidden/ Unknown") often indicate a site like this. The attribution of human characteristics to inanimate objects is attested even in the case of the Kaʿba. Ibrāhīm Rifʾat, who was the *amīr al-ḥajj* in 1903, 1904, and 1908, records many popular references to the Kaʿba. According to him, the people call the Kaʿba "a little girl" (*al-bunayya*), and the Bedouin swear oaths in the name of "the Lord of this Little Girl". Another Bedouin belief is that the Kaʿba is a woman who anoints her hair. Ibrāhīm Rif'at mentions a woman making an oath to the Kaʿba, saying: "If rain comes to our territories I will bring you a leather container full of clarified butter for anointing your bangs" (Young 1993: 295).

4.6 Discussion

The cult of saints, including visits to the tombs of pious men and women, is still alive and popular throughout the Islamic world. Examples given from Morocco, Palestine, Indonesia, and Egypt, among others, attest to the vigor of the tradition. In addition, even though the popularity of the saints is very often manifested among the rural population, the saints themselves and the tradition following them are by no means limited to the poor and uneducated. On the contrary, many saints in Morocco, for example, were literate and of urban origin, and many of the traditions related to the saints, including the *mawālid*, have been promoted and sponsored by Sufi schools of thought. Also in Palestine, before the rise of the Salafi movement, Sufism had an important role in the popular religion.

Therefore, it is not surprising to see that the voices speaking for the survival of the tradition are also numerous, even leaving the opposing views in the minority.

Even though the purpose of visiting graves may originally have been to be reminded of one's own mortality, the holy shrines today are also places to celebrate life. They are sites for great festivals but also quiet locations of daily life. They may be places of divine power, but they have also come to symbolize secular power: politics and resistance. Yet, the focal point is always the saint. A saint may be called various terms and names, depending on his role and personality, but he is always *ṣāliḥ* 'pious', a paragon for other humans in his relationship with God. Because of his piety, he is capable of channeling *baraka* to other people. Through him, the sacred is manifested on earth.

5. ALLĀH, AL-MALIK, AL-WAṬAN: CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY

> Then came Sharīf ʻAbdallah and Sharīf Ḥusēn ibn ʻAlī from Saudi Arabia, the leader of the Arab revolt, with the English. The Turkish left and went back until they reached Istanbul. The English remained here, in these lands. The English controlled Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, the English soldiers controlled it all. There was one, called Bīg [Peake] Bāsha, an Englishman, who came to Jordan and was the leader of the army, before Glubb. He came to the Bedūl here in Petra. He got acquainted with them, and he helped them, and he told them: "Your origin is from the Jews, from Israel." And they made a party for him in Petra and prepared a big mensaf, like for the Bedu. After, Bīg Bāsha, he went and came one called Glubb. He was the commander of the army of Jordan. He had an assistant called Broadhurst, an Englishman, with Glubb. He was in Amman, in the capital there. They were in Amman, with King ʻAbdallah I. Emir, not king, but Emir. The Emirate remained until 1965. Then he became King ʻAbdallah […][48]

My study revolves around notions of identity – identity as composed of intertwined elements all creating an image of an individual or a community. This chapter attempts to explore the elements that shape identity in Southern Jordan. When talking about the local society, I find three major aspects that have a role in the construction of identities: the tribal or local identity, the state or national identity, and finally religious identity. These cannot be separated, as they are all dynamic elements of the whole, yet each aspect provides a slightly different angle. Starting with the local, then moving on to the national and finally looking at the religious, I discuss these identities, tracing the basic elements they are composed of, the external and internal factors that have molded them both historically and today, as well as the interaction among the three. This idea is partially based on the theory presented by Schneider (1969: 123–124). According to this theory, kinship, nationality, and religion all share ontological characteristics. All three are similar in their attempt to create enduring solidarity and unity, as well as in their development and exploitation of various symbols. Kinship is here represented by tribal and local bonds, while religion can be studied from national and local – and also global – points of view.

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[48] Part of the history of Jordan, told by a local (29M1 Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 2011).

5.1 Tribal identity: The people of southern Jordan

5.1.1 Tribal society

Tribalism is the foundation upon which the nation was established in the formation of Transjordan. Even today in modern Jordan, the society could still be defined as tribal, including the farmers living in villages as well as the people residing in towns. Tribes have been the basic units of power, and throughout the history of Transjordan, up until the Mandate period, the tribes fought over control of the land. The system was multifaceted, containing tribal confederacies with different types of partnerships that involved nomadic tribes, semisedentarized Bedouin, farmer villages, and urban centers. Thus, it is nearly impossible to understand the Jordanian identity without knowledge of the tribes and the role they have played in its history.

A tribe itself is a system that eludes a universally applicable definition. Based on evolutionist theories, tribalism has often been seen as an intermediary stage between a band and a state. Thus, it is regarded as ignorant, primitive, and breaking down development – the same ideas that are also associated with nomadism (Eickelman 2002: 116). These patterns of thought will be revisited later, as they have not only affected Western academic discourse of the past, but traces can also be seen in modern state ideologies. To discuss the concept of tribal identity, however, I define tribalism on the basis of traditional segmentation theory. Though not universal for explaining tribalism on a global scale, it does offer a solid foundation for understanding tribalism in Jordan. Underlying it is the idea of communities (clusters), which consider themselves as having shared lineage, kinship, or similar ties that bind the community together. The different segments form larger clusters, again based on more distant lineage. (Eickelman 2002: 120–126; see also Abu Lughod 1989: 280–287.)

Actual blood relations are not the only ways of forming lineages. There are various ways in which the segments of the society are tied together into clans and tribes, but a common case is the kinship system, either imagined or biological. Sharing the same genes is not always the main defining element in the formation of tribal identity, as kin may also be adopted. The strategy of adoption may even extend to the past, where a group seeks shared ancestry. These fictive kin groups possess group identities that are as equally strong as the genetically connected ones (Martin 2001: 295).[49] Different segments are bound by their inner cohesion, as the group is expected to support its members – and vice versa. The different groups and their members share this inherent system of honor and mutual assistance. The ideals of integrity and independence do not give room for the use of force in trying to persuade the members of the group. The tribal ideology emphasizes political and individual autonomy and egalitarianism. Because of these values, mediation and negotiation play an important role in both inter- and intratribal relations. (Eickelman 2002: 122–123.)

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[49] Compare with the following definition: "What traditionally makes a person belong to a tribe is not merely successive degrees of genetic relationships – which, after all, every family in the world has – but rather that a person and his/her tribe think the same way; believe in the same

In the Middle Eastern setting, the word "tribalism" is often connected to and – in everyday discussion – even equated with nomadism and the Bedouin. As discussed above, tribalism exists in all types of economies, whether the communities are sedentary, semisedentary, or nomadic. Jordan is an example of a state where tribalism permeates the whole society. Thus, for this study, I define tribalism as a socioeconomic structure, from which derive specific systems of justice, leadership, and moral ethos. However, when studying southern Jordan it is also important to understand tribalism as an integral part of Bedouin society and identity. The Bedouin have been traditionally classified into three groups. The camel-herding tribes, with their great mobility, have been considered to be the "noble" or "true" *Badu*. The *Shuwayya* (or 'small') are the tribes who depend on flocks of goats and sheep. As these animals cannot move far away from water sources, the migratory patterns of these tribes are different and mobility restricted. Finally, there is the group of *Ru'ā*, or 'herdsmen' who have depended more on agriculture, sometimes also building permanent villages. Their economy can be described as transhuman pastoralism.

Traditional means for gaining wealth among the more mobile Bedouin have also included raiding. Tribal raiding is a way of distributing wealth, and in times of drought, it may have been the last means of survival. Thus, it has always played an important role in the Bedouin economy (Thomas 2003: 550). The settled communities have naturally been vulnerable to raids. As a result, the sedentary and semisedentary communities paid *khūwa*, or protection money, to the Bedouin who controlled the area. Examples of such fees, as listed by Musil from the Petra region, include three measures of barley from each tent, paid by the agricultural Liyāthne, while the townspeople of Maʿān provided for a band of sixty Ḥuwayṭāt warriors a pair of red boots and two cups of coffee each (Musil 1908: 52). Due to their mobility, their knowledge of the region, and their seasonal migration, the Bedouin have also engaged in smuggling as a means of livelihood.

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principles; assimilate the same values and ethos; act according to the same unique rules and laws; respect the same hereditary Shaykh; live together; migrate together; defend each other; fight together, and die together" (bin Muhammad 1999b: 13).

The "Noble Bedouin" has often been the focus of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western ethnographies, even to the point that the smaller sheep- and goat-herding tribes or the ones practicing farming have not been considered to be Bedouin at all. But there has always existed the notion of "mobile Bedouin" (*badū raḥḥāl*), implying that there are also Bedouin who are not as mobile (Cole 2003: 237). All in all, the word "Bedouin" has denoted a way of life based on a specific economy and ecology, linked to the basic unit of a family household and its herds (Cole 2003: 239). A decline in number of nomadic pastoralists has taken place throughout the Middle East, starting from the eighteenth century and accelerating after the Second World War. In Saudi Arabia, for example, 40% of the population was nomadic at the beginning of 1950s, while only two decades later the number had fallen to 11%. In Libya, the percentage fell from 25% in 1962 to 3.5% only eight years later. In Jordan, the British estimated more than half of the population as nomadic or semisedentary pastoralists in the 1920s. Today, approximately 4–5 thousand still maintain the nomadic lifestyle, although at least 25% of the population is of Bedouin origin. (Eickelman 2002: 68.)

To summarize, a tribe is a social organization. When we talk about the pastoralism of peasants, we talk about economy instead (Kressel 1996: 129). On the other hand, both tribes and peasants can be included in the sociopolitical category, with peasants denoting a different type of social organization than tribes.[50] Thus, we see the fluidity of the terminology even in anthropology. We can say that pastoral nomads are often tribal, but so are some peasant communities – as is the case in Jordan. If we define the Bedouin as tribal nomadic pastoralists in the desert, we can see that there are very few people left who do fall into this definition. Still, a large number of people continue to define themselves as Bedouin, even when they live in concrete houses and their flocks are no longer their prime source of income. Being a Bedouin has ceased to denote a way of life, but it has become a cultural identity. Tribality still remains an important element in the identity of these people, even though it seems to be redundant and – as I will argue later on – also an unwanted element in the modern state and national identity of Jordan (Kressel 1996: 133). However, even though tribalism continues to play a significant role in the formation of this identity, it does not alone explain it. The word "tribal" will, therefore, be used in connection with the social and cultural organization, the system of kinship and interaction. Bedouin, on the other hand, will be discussed as an imagined identity, the way the people define themselves and an identity they continue to create and recreate in the discourse of modern society.

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[50] Lancaster and Lancaster (1996: 389) discuss the difficulties of definition, which even the members of the society do not always see as being clear when defining themselves to outsiders. When I was interviewing the Liyāthne, for example, some defined themselves as *bedu*, while others used the term *fallāḥ*.

5.1.2 Local narratives and tribes of Southern Jordan

The Hashemite kingdom of Jordan has a total area of 89,342 km². The two southernmost governorates, Aqaba and Ma'ān, comprise together over 40%, almost 40,000 km² of the total size. While the population of the whole country is estimated to be about 6.5 million (2011 estimate), less than 250,000 of the country's population live in the southern governorates. More than one third of the inhabitants live in the city of Aqaba by the Red Sea (2010 estimation of 103,000 inhabitants), and about 30,000 people in the city of Ma'ān. Other major towns and settlements with a long history include Shawbak and Wadī Mūsā (Eljī in the past) near the ancient ruins of Petra. All the towns have been growing rapidly, and several new settlements have been created in the last decades as a means to sedentarize the local nomadic tribes. In the 2004 census, the population of Jordan living in urban areas was already 83%. (Jordan Department of Statistics 2012.)

The geography of this region is quite varied. Striking differences in elevation create zones with differing weather and precipitation patterns (Henry 1982: 418), and the region can be divided roughly into three larger geographical areas. Starting from the southwest border between Jordan and Israel, the first of the three regions is commonly known as Wadi Araba. The valley (*wadi*) is 163 km long and it forms part of the Great Rift system, extending from the Dead Sea south to the Gulf of Aqaba. Along the way, the elevation gradually rises from 396 m below sea level near the Dead Sea to 200 m above sea level near Gharandal, tilting down again toward the Red Sea and reaching sea level at Aqaba. Due to its character, the area is prone to tectonic activity.[51] Numerous *wadis* discharge into the valley, creating wide fans and channels on the bottom. The water carries soil from the higher regions, which forms thick layers of sand and gravel (Kouki 2012: 60). The average annual rainfall is around 50 mm.[52]

The elevation rises rapidly to the east of Wadi Araba, forming a narrow rugged and eroded escarpment with peaks rising approximately 800–1000 m above sea level. Moving toward the east, there are narrow valleys forming even ground around Petra and al-Bayḍā' before the slopes of the Shara mountain range, which reaches the height of about 1300 m above sea level, the highest peaks being over 1700 m (Kouki 2012: 58). From this point, the land slopes gradually downwards toward the east, where the hilly high plateau turns first into isolated hills and finally into the flat limestone and flint steppe of the Syro-Arabian desert. The depression of Wadi Sirhan along the eastern border of Jordan is only about 300 m above sea level. This wide formation has been a major route from the area of Nejd into the region (Casto 1938: 122). In the south, the vast Hisma basin makes up a large part of the cand extends into the southern areas of Jordan. The vegetation of the region includes both Mediterranean, Irano-Turanian, and Saharo-Sindian zones, depending on the aridity (Henry 1982: 41). The climate is typically hot and dry, with annual rains coming in the cooler winter months. The Shara mountain range forms the main watershed, with wadis running toward both the east and west on the slopes. In some areas, the annual rainfall allows small-scale farming, and the structure of the mountains with sandstone layers under the porous limestone forms pockets of water, creating perennial springs that have been used by the local people (Kouki 2012: 56). Most of the region may be defined as *bādiya*, or arid steppe, where transhumant pastoralism has been the main pattern of subsistence.

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[51] Wadi Arabah Project. <www.wadiarabahproject.man.ac.uk/menu/Geology/geologyframe.htm>

[52] Wadi Arabah Project. <www.wadiarabahproject.man.ac.uk/menu/florafauna/floraframe.htm>

A multiresource economy has been typical of the majority of the communities in southern Jordan. Along the slopes of the Shara Mountains (*Arabia Petraea*), the perennial springs and annual rains have allowed herding of goats and sheep, while the people living in the arid regions of Wadi Araba and the eastern steppe (*Arabia Deserta*) have traditionally been nomadic camel herders. Most tribes have also cultivated small areas of land on a seasonal basis, growing especially wheat and barley. Small-scale trade has been practiced, especially in Maʿān, where the Hajj pilgrims have been an important group of customers for local products, but Aqaba by the Red Sea, as well as Ṭafīle and Karak in the north, have also been trading goods with local tribes. Today, there are three main routes through the region. The oldest route is the ancient King's Highway, which follows the western edges of the plateau and runs north-south through the main towns of the region. At Ra's al-Naqb, it meets the more modern Desert Highway, which goes all the way to Aqaba. The third route runs along the Dead Sea and the bottom of Wadi Araba.

When trying to reconstruct the history of the tribes and the chronology of events in the region, it must be kept in mind that these communities have traditionally maintained all information in oral form. The poems and stories of the old times carry in them memories of history, but they do not represent events in chronological order, nor do they even attempt to give a historically accurate account of the past. The poetry has been composed by the people for their own people, in praise of the tribal ethos, namely, the honor, pride, and prowess of the great leaders of that particular tribe. Attempts to combine the oral traditions of different tribes in order to create a chronological and objective unified narrative of the region have proved to be very difficult, not only because of the conflicting details of the collected stories but also because of the local nature of the stories. The tribal tales challenge the "truths" of the neighboring tribe, subtribe, or the state, and they are meant to be shared only by the tribe who owns that particular "truth" (Shryock 1996: 38).[53]

At the same time, great respect exists among the Jordanian tribes toward the written sources and textual material describing the history of the region. In southern Jordan, the written accounts of the Western travelers appear and increase in number throughout the nineteenth century. These accounts offer glimpses of a turbulent era of tribal warfare and shifting alliances. After the inclusion of Transjordan within the British Mandate for Palestine in 1921, the British officers attempted to understand the local society and tribal culture in depth. This gave rise to research that focused on topics such as kinship, leadership, land use, and seasonal migration. One of the most appreciated sources of that era was written by Frederick Peake, the Commander of the Arab League from 1920 until 1939. His *History and Tribes of Jordan* is one of the main sources for the tribal history of Jordan, but even Peake collected his history mainly from oral sources (Thomas 2003: 545). By including certain pieces of information in his documentation, he made the chosen oral story the official truth.

Even when it comes to tribal divisions based on subtribes and families, it can be seen that the lists provided in different sources do not always coincide. Comprehensive records of tribes are bound to be somewhat arbitrary, since tribal alliances are formed and abandoned. When a family grows large enough, it becomes a new subtribe, and families move away and settle in the areas of another tribe, gradually becoming part of it. Similarly, marriages give rise to new tribal unions. The modern state has established a systematization of the tribes for official records, but the dynamics of the traditional tribal connections are bound to become simplified in the process.

The histories tend to focus on the actions of the large tribal confederations and their powerful leaders. In Southern Jordan, such a confederation was formed by the Ḥuwayṭāt. In the nineteenth century, most of the smaller tribes, villages, and towns of the south were either allied or paid tribute to the **Ḥuwayṭāt**. The tribe itself traces its origins to the Banī ʿAtīye, from whom they gained independence by the seventeenth century. The tribe moved inland from Aqaba, branching out there. One subtribe, the Ibn Jāzī, then settled further north, while the ʿAlawīn and ʿImrān remained around Aqaba. (Shoup 1980: 85.)

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[53] See Shryock (1997) for a detailed discussion on the challenges of turning tribal oral histories into literary form.

Until the late nineteenth century, the Ottomans had left the area of Transjordan mostly alone – especially the areas controlled by the powerful tribal confederations in the south. Though nominally belonging to the regime, little effort was made to extend formal rule over the area. A new Hajj route had been created between 1520 and 1566, replacing the old passage that followed the ancient King's Highway with a new one that crossed the steppe further toward the east (Shoup 1980: 45). Outside the pilgrimage season, the same route functioned as a caravan road for merchants. The last resting station was the town of Maʿān, which became the center of the Maʿān district, the seat of the district governor and a camp for a small garrison. To protect the pilgrims, a chain of towers and forts were built along the route, but even their sphere of influence did not extend far from the buildings. Instead, the officers paid gold to the local Bedouin in return for safe passage through their lands.

The first decade of the nineteenth century was marked by constant warring with the Wahhabis. During the next decades, the political interests of the Ottoman Empire and Egypt caused the power balances to change several times, but they also created periods of relative peace. The Wahhabis started their expansion northwards from the Arabian Peninsula in the late eighteenth century, raiding and also occupying large areas in Transjordan. In 1815, the ruler of Egypt, Muḥammad ʿAlī, started a successful military campaign to subdue the Wahhabis. Nominally a vassal of the Ottoman Empire but in practice acting independently, he declared war on the Ottomans in 1831 and defeated their army at Konia. As a result, Palestine and Syria were brought under Egyptian rule. Muḥammad ʿAlī's son Ibrāhīm tried to integrate the Bedouin into the governmental system, but the *sheikh*s opposed his attempts. Finally, in 1834, revolts broke out in Transjordan. In 1840–1850, after an era of raids between the southern tribes led by the Ḥuwayṭāt and the Majālī Confederation of Karak, the tribal feuds apparently ceased (Russell 1993: 25; Simms & Russell 1996: 3.16–18).[54] However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the fighting continued. The new land laws of 1858 guaranteed the tribes themselves ownership of the territories. The *sheikh*s were granted the right to collect taxes from their own tribes, which gradually brought them closer to government control (Bienkowski 2001: 34).

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[54] Wallin (2007: 412–415) traveled across Wadi Araba and passed through Gharandal and əDlāgha on his way to Maʿān in 1845. He met members of the Ḥuwayṭāt, and he also mentions unnamed seminomadic Bedouin living along the slopes of the Shara Mountains. According to his letters, a battle had been taking place recently, involving the Ḥuwayṭāt on one side and the ʿAnēze, Bani ʿAdwān, and others on the opposing side.

Ibrāhīm Pasha's rule in Syria and Palestine quickly attracted European attention. Concerned about the weakening of the Ottoman Empire and its effects on Europe, the major powers formed a coalition against Ibrāhīm and forced him to retreat. With the help of the foreign presence in the area, the Ottomans started concentrating on economic and administrative reforms, which also included establishing control over the regained areas and their nomadic tribes. The situation seems to have been especially tense during the 1880s and early 1890s. In 1893–1894, the Ottomans started garrisoning the towns in southern Transjordan. Troops and civil officers were sent to southern towns, including Karak and Shawbak. As a result, the Ibn Jāzī, led by their *sheikh*, ʻArar, rebelled. The rebellion was quickly suppressed by the Ottomans and control over the area was tightened. The region was gradually pacified after the establishment of the Desert Patrol in 1930. (Russell 1993: 27.)

Today, 20 tribes are listed by the 1986 Electorate Law as part of the Ḥuwayṭāt: al-Maṭālga, al-Tawāyha, al-Samayḥīyīn, al-Rashāyde, al-Muṣabbeḥīyīn, al-Sulaymanīyīn, al-Marāʻye, al-Zawāyde, al-Zelābiye, al-Ṭagāṭaga, al-Darāwishe, al-Damānīye, al-Hadbān, al-Buṭūnīye, al-ʻOṭūn, al-Najādāt, al-Rubaʻye, al-Saʻīdīyīn, al-ʻAmārīn, and al-Ahaywāt (bin Muhammad 1999b: 10).[55] Being included in the Ḥuwayṭāt probably derives from the historical alliances made by the smaller tribes, although many of them aspire to maintain their own tribal narratives of ancestry and origins. Still, the alliance with the most influential tribe of the south continues to have importance even in modern politics.

Al-Bedūl is a small tribe whose members reside in two locations in Southern Jordan: in and around the ancient city of Petra and in the region of Ḥumayma. The subtribes of Bedūl are al-Fugarā' (الفقرا), al-Judēlāt (الجديلات), and al-Muwasā (الموسى), with the last further divided into al-Jamada (الجمده) and al-Samāḥīn (السماحين) in Petra.[56] The tribe has been mostly pastoral, although they have also practiced seasonal farming. Due to their economy, they have not been very mobile. The seasonal migration was described by Canaan:

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[55] The first 14 were listed by Oppenheim (1943: 300) under Ḥuwayṭāt ibn Jāzī, al-ʻUṭūn and al-Najādāt under the ʻAlāwīn, and al-Rubaʻye as a sub-tribe of the ʻImrān, while the last three were not listed as part of the Ḥuwayṭāt at all. On the other hand, both bin Muhammad and Oppenheim consider the Bedūl as part of the Ḥuwayṭāt, even though they have not received official status.

[56] The name البدول appears transcribed in different texts in several forms: *Bidul*, *Bedun*, and even *Bodoul*. In the spoken dialect, the name is often pronounced *al-əBdūl*. The same list of subtribes was given to me by my informants in 2005. See Russell 1993 for an analysis of the tribe's genealogies.

> In the winter season they spend between two and three months in the caves of Petra; in the spring they encamp around the wadis, while the summer is spent at the tops of the high mountains of Petra or on one of the surrounding ridges. (Canaan 1929: 216)

The Bedūl tribe had the distinctive habit of using the ancient rock-cut tombs of Petra as their homes. The caves provided them shelter and cover during the cool winter months when they stayed in Petra. The economy was based almost exclusively on herding goats and a few camels. It seems, however, that during the nineteenth century, the Bedūl had a certain amount of power in the region. The tribe was allied with the ʻAlāwīn branch of the Ḥuwayṭāt, who in turn were supporting Egypt. A character that appears in the accounts of Western travelers in the first half of the nineteenth century is Sheikh əMgaybal Abū Zētūn of the Fugara branch. He had firm control over the area until the time of his death in 1842 or 1843, after which his nephew Sheikh Sulayman took power. (Simms & Russell 1996: 3.12.)

This period of prosperity ended when Egypt's control over the area declined and the Ottomans tightened their own control. An important factor was also the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869, after which the Egyptian Hajj was diverted to the Red Sea – taking away major income from the land route. The ʻAlāwīn had lost their main political ally, whereas the other branch, the Ibn Jāzi, who had been seeking the support of the Ottomans, were now in control of the region. This seems to have been a harsh blow to the Bedūl. At the end of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century, the Bedūl were living in very poor conditions. Their number had decreased, and the tribe had only about 150 members (McKenzie 1991: 139). Hornstein's (1898: 101) description of a "…miserable-looking family, with hardly any clothing on…" probably sums up very well what visitors saw. In 1918, the Bedūl were reported to be starving because of Ottoman raids, and in the 1920s and 1930s because of serious droughts. (Simms & Russell 1996: 3.23.)

With the acknowledgement of Emir Abdullah, the tribe continued to live in Petra. When old feudal system was abolished in 1933, the land was parceled out to individuals. This was part of the great land reform executed by the British in Transjordan. Heavily afflicted by the droughts and famines at the beginning of the decade, even the most traditional pastoralists such as the Ḥuwayṭāt began to cultivate their lands (Alon 2009: 125–126, 128). With the privately allocated land, the members of the tribe began to establish gardens and cultivate crops in the Petra area. The areas of Wadi al-Sēgh, Wadi Abu ʻOllēga, Ṣabra, and Fustūḥ al-Nabī Hārūn, all in and around the Petra Valley, became agricultural areas. Starting in the 1960s, the people started adding windows and doors to their home caves, as well as building additional rooms, walls, and gardens. During the same decade, a small health center, a school, and a mosque were established in empty caves as a benefaction from King Abdullah. (17M1 Bedūl, Umm Sayhūn 2007.)

In 1984, the tribe was relocated to the village of Umm Sayḥūn north of the Petra Valley, out of the way of the growing number of tourists. The original plan had 120 households, and the buildings of the new village were arranged in oval groups, with each circle intended to be inhabited by one family. This design recalls the arrangement of tents in large Bedouin encampments, acknowledging cultural relationships and kinship ties (Angel 2008: 103). Still, the relocation soon brought forth new problems. The area was not large enough to sustain the rapid expansion of the population. In 2000, the population had risen to 1,300, and only six years later it was estimated to be between two and three thousand. The lack of space was already causing tension in the early 1990s, when talks with the royal family resulted in the establishment of agricultural land, the extension of the village 1 km northward, and permission to establish commercial enterprises in their original places in Petra and maintain the gardens in Wadi al-Sēgh (Angel 2008: 45). The village has continued to grow rapidly, and various elements of modern technology are being implemented at a fast pace. While some of the members of the tribe still reside in tents on the fringes of the national park and in Bayḍā', most now live in permanent houses and are dependent on tourism as their main source of income.

The Bedūl have frequently attracted the interest of Western researchers. The tribe has inhabited the area that has become a center of both tourist and archaeological activities, making them easy to find and approach. They have, therefore, become a focus of various studies, ranging from ethnoarchaeology of pastoralist activities and food production methods and the use of space and housing in the old caves to modernization and tourism (Simms & Russell 1996; Bienkowski 1985; Simms & Kooring 1996). However, throughout history perhaps the most popular topic has been the question about the origin of the tribe. The story relating their origin has been often quoted in many papers, though it was originally told by a member of the Liyāthne tribe – the neighbors and often rivals of the Bedūl.

> When Moses and the Israelites surrounded Petra he declared war against the inhabitants and conquered and slaughtered them all except twelve who hid themselves in a cave on the top of the mountain Umm el-Biyārah. Moses ordered them to come down. They answered "innā abdalnā yā nabiy allāh" We have changed, O prophet of God. "What have you changed?" asked Moses. "Our religion; for we accept yours", was the answer. Since that time they are known as Bdūl.[57] (Canaan 1929: 216)

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[57] The root بدل means 'to change'.

While movement from one geographical location to another is generally a necessity in nomadic communities, the question of local origins is an important issue in the Petra region. The idea of the Bedūl being Jews is found in the opening quotation, an account of the past as told by an old Bedūl man. It is an example of the influence of Peake's account, itself based on the old oral narratives. As the ancient city of Petra was traditionally connected with the Exodus, the earliest documented narratives related to the people living in the area discuss their relationship to the Israelites. In 1843, the Bedūl told John Wilson (1847: 352): *nahnu auládBeni-Israyen*. This term is found as early as the thirteenth century from the description of the travels of Sultan Baibars. In 1276, he traveled from Cairo to Karak and passed through Petra. The name Petra does not appear in the text, but the expression "cities of the Children of Israel" is used (Zayadine 1985: 173). Moreover, the *Bene Israel* were thought to have carved the facades and created the city in the ancient past. As a result, the Bedūl used this name to claim their native roots in the place that was still their home, although it is not to say that they were Jewish (Russell 1993: 17).

The Bedūl is not the only tribe claiming to have lived in the area since ancient times. The Christian families of ʻAkasha, Bawālasa, Masāʻada, and Zayadīne, who used to live in the region before the advance of Wahhabi ideology and Ikhwān raiders pushed them to settle further north in Karak, also claimed to have been descendants of the Christian Nabataeans (Al Salameen & Falahat 2009: 7). In recent decades, the view of Nabatean origins has spread in the region with the increasing knowledge of the ancient history of Petra, replacing the Egyptians and "Children of Israel" in the narratives.

The inhabitants of the modern town of Wadi Mūsā, **al-Liyāthne**, also believe that they have been living in the region since at least the Middle Ages, and possibly even earlier (6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002). The tribe has lived in and around the village of Eljī (modern Wadi Mūsā), and they have generally been considered farmers (*fallāḥ*) by the surrounding tribes. The tribe is divided into four subtribes: Banī ʻAṭā', al-ʻAlāyā, al-ʻUbēdīyīn, and al-Shrūr (1M1 Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002). The subtribes are divided into families, which are:

- Banī ʻAṭā': Falāḥāt, Farajāt, Salāmīn, and Fudūl
- al-ʻAlāyā: Nawāfle, ʻAmārāt, Hamādīn, Shamāsīn, and Masā'da
- al-ʻUbēdīyīn: Ḥasānāt, Hilālāt, Naṣarāt, Ṭuwēsāt, and Mashāʻle
- al-Shrūr: Suʻēdāt, Khilēfāt, Khalēfe, and Ruwāḍīye.[58]

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[58] Both Canaan (1929: 215) and Oppenheim (1943: 287–288) exclude the Masā'da and Fudūl and describe the Hamādīn as a subfamily of Shamāsīn. Musil (1908: 57–58), on the other hand, only has al-ʻUbēdīyīn and al-Shrūr listed as subtribes. Al-ʻAlāyā and the families it is composed of

The Banī ʿAṭāʾ and Hilālāt families are considered to be of a different lineage than other Liyāthne families, the former being an offshoot of a tribe called Banī Judhām, and the latter originating in Egypt (Canaan 1929: 215).

The Liyāthne have possessed a good location for extensive farming, as the local springs, especially the Mūsā spring (ʿĒn Mūsā), supply perennial water. They have also been able to sell their products to traveling pilgrim groups and the other towns in the region, such as Maʿān and Karak. The town itself is named after the dry canyon of Wadi Mūsā, which runs east-west, dividing the settlement into two sections. The southern part belongs to the Banī ʿAṭāʾ, whereas the ʿAlāyā and ʿUbēdīyīn live on the northern side. The Shrūr did not usually live near Eljī, but they controlled the area south of Wadi Mūsā, also including the village of Ṭaybe. The Bedouin characteristics of the Liyāthne included the use of goat-hair tents as their dwellings and the herding of flocks of goat and sheep. In the summertime, the tents were pitched in the vicinity of the town. The few stone buildings were used as dwellings only by the poorest of the tribe and otherwise employed as storehouses. (Canaan 1929: 196.) In the winter, the families moved their tents to warmer regions. The subtribes have traditionally lived in their own territories, both in Eljī and in their winter camps, which were located around the surrounding springs (for example, at Bayḍāʾ, Ṭaybe, and ʿĒn Amūn).

The tribe paid tribute to the Ḥuwayṭāt Ibn Jāzī and profited from their connection when the control of the region shifted from the ʿAlāwīn to Ibn Jāzī. Though the Hijaz railway brought some economic profit to the Liyāthne, they also suffered from the droughts of the early twentieth century. The Liyāthne also had the advantage of being situated right in front of the entrance to Petra with direct control over the tourist trade. In 1925, the first tourist camp constructed by Thomas Cook and Sons was established, and in the 1930s, the camp was moved next to Qaṣr al-bint. This increased the tension between the Liyāthne and Bedūl, and as a result of these tensions, police were stationed in Petra in the late 1920s. (Simms & Russell 1996: 3.26–27.) A school was established in Eljī in 1927, but despite all the progressive projects, the Liyāthne were not always very accepting. In 1926, they revolted when telephone lines were built to Maʿān. The people feared that the modernization would bring the Zionists, thus forcing them to lose their land (Shoup 1980: 57). Canaan (1929: 200) makes a note of the poverty of the Liyāthne still in 1930.

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today, except for Masāʿda, are listed under ʿUbēdīyīn, while the families of Banī ʿAṭāʾ are under al-Shrūr. The most recent list presented in the text is based on the interview with Hani Falahat in 2002.

The last decades have been a period of increasing tourism. The town of Wadi Mūsā has grown into a tourist center with numerous hotels and souvenir shops, and the people have settled down permanently in modern houses.

Al-ʿAmārīn is a tribe residing north and northwest of Petra. They have settled especially around the Bayḍāʾ area, where they have both traditional encampments and permanent housing, often simply referred to as *waḥadāt* 'units' or *iskān* 'settlement'. Many families also live along the road leading down to Wadi Araba, and some members of the tribe live in and around the village of Qurayqira (Grēgra). While their economy continues to be based on goats and some agricultural projects, and part of the tribe still lives in tents, the families who reside near the ancient site of Bayḍāʾ have also become increasingly involved in tourism in the past decades.

The tribe consists of the ʿIyāl ʿAwwād, al-Shūshe, ʿIyāl Ḥamīd al-əGmūr, al-Ḥasasīn, and al-Bakhēta (Sajdi 2011).[59] The ʿAmārīn consider themselves to be descendants of the Banī ʿAtīye, moving from the Hijaz into Palestine and staying near Gaza until they were forced to move east across Wadi Araba.[60] In the nineteenth century, a member of the tribe, a certain ʿAwwād, bought land in al-Bayḍāʾ and was later followed by many of his relatives, whose descendants still continue to live in that region (Sajdi 2011).

Al-Saʿīdīyīn are a traditional camel-herding tribe whose tribal lands (*dīra*) extended through the Wadi Araba region, from the southern end of the Dead Sea all the way to Raḥma. From there and down to Aqaba is the area of the Aḥaywāt tribe. The Saʿīdīyīn also encamped along the slopes of the Shara Mountains during the summer. (23M1 Saʿīdīyīn, Umm Sayḥūn 2011.) The organization of the subtribes and families of the tribe was slightly vague. Oppenheim, Musil, and Stillelson all provide differing lists.[61] The tribe has approximately 15 branches, of which eight were listed to me: the ʿIyāl Mufarrej, Ramāmne, ʿAwnāt, Darāfga, Ḥamāyta, Ruwādiye, Zuwāyde, and ʿIyāl Ḥasan (23M1 Saʿīdīyīn, Umm Sayḥūn 2011).[62] In a story of their origin, the Saʿīdīyīn were related to the Ḥuwayṭāt, the ancestral founder Saʿīd having been the son of Suwēʿid, the son of Ḥuwayṭ (Hillelson 1939: 126). Their origins have also been connected to the Shammar tribes of the Arabian Peninsula (Sajdi 2007).

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[59] Musil (1907: 59) lists only the first three, and a fourth subtribe named al-Ghufīsh. Bille (2008: 47) comments that there are ten family lines altogether, of which the major three are "Hmeid, Awath, and Bekhit".

[60] As with a lot of Bedouin history, the exact dates are often difficult to establish. The move north from Hijaz is probably related to the great tribal migrations of the seventeenth century (Shoup 1980: 46).

[61] Oppenheim (1943: 19) gives only the names of three subtribes: Srūrīyīn, Zewāyde, and Ibn Mufarrej. He is also the only one who lists the Rwājfe under the Saʿīdīyīn, noting that this tribe lives under their protection in Rājef. Hillelson (1939: 124) lists the Hamāyita, Ramāmna, Madhākīr, and Rawāyda. Musil's list (1907: 46) has two subtribes: the Sawārye and Qabāle, with 13 families listed under them.

[62] Only five names coincide with Musil's list of 13.

The traditional economy of the tribe was based on camel herding, with little or no farming. The camels enabled good mobility and made the tribe wealthy. They were apparently brought under government rule relatively late, with the tribe paying taxes to the state only since 1928. Hillelson (1939: 125–126) already notes their increasing poverty in 1939, mentioning also the fever epidemics spreading from the lowlands of al-Ghōr. The tribe still continues to live in Wadi Araba and the slopes of the Shara range, but their location has caused them to be "caught between borders" after the founding of Israel. As there are no attractions and sites of interest in the region, little attention has been given to the Wadi Araba tribes. Like the ʿAmārīn – and even more so – many still live in tents and own goats and camels, but the old pastoral lifestyle often continues mainly because of poverty and having no other opportunities.[63] Several settlements have been built in Wadi Araba and along the Shara slopes. These include villages such as Grēgra, əDlāgha, Gharandal, Rīsha, and Raḥma. The Saʿīdīyīn that have settled in the town of Rīsha have some collaboration with the tour guides working in Wadi Rum, providing camel safaris (Chatelard 2006: 724). Young men also come to Petra, working with the Bedūl in their businesses or on archaeological excavations.[64]

The **Zelābiye** and **Zewāyde** live in the area of Wadi Rum. They derive their origins from the ʿAnēza Confederation. The groups moved to the region either at the end of the nineteenth century or in the 1920s, asking for protection from the Ḥuwayṭāt.[65] They were given permission to use the area and the wells. The tribes continue to maintain the tradition of their origins, even though they are nowadays counted among the Ḥuwayṭāt. Although a perennial spring located in the Wadi Rum has provided a natural gathering place for the families, it was only in the 1970s, following the government incentive, that the Zelābiye began to settle in the valley (Chatelard 2003: 140). Gradually the village has grown into a community of over 2000 people (Jordan Department of Statistics 2019). The Zewāyde, on the other hand, settled further northeast, in the area of Dīse, where agricultural projects were being launched to help the Bedouin toward sedentarization (Chatelard 2003: 150). While agriculture profited the Zewāyde, the Zelābiye continued their pastoralist way of life. The scales turned with the increasing tourism in Wadi Rum. The Zelābiye were now at the center of tourist activities, and while many members of the tribe still continue to live in tents outside the town, most of the men are now involved in tourism.

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[63] Bocco & Chatelard 2001.

[64] While the Bedūl, ʿAmārīn, and Saʿīdīyīn have a lot of contacts, the last were often described as being more suspicious and less open toward strangers.

[65] The earlier date for arriving in the area seems plausible, as Musil (1907: 54) already listed the Zewāyde, including their subtribe Zelābiye among the Ḥuwayṭāt Ibn Jāzī. He also gives the name of their watering place: Iram.

Maʿān is an oasis and old nexus of trade between Syria, Egypt, and the Hijaz. Its great importance derives from its status as the last resting station along the Hajj route before entering the Hijaz. Trade caravans came from as far away as Palestine, but the local villages and Bedouin also produced food and items for sale to pilgrims. In 1898, Maʿān was the only southern town to receive the status of *baladiyya* during the Ottoman period (Reimer 2005: 194). The town is divided into two sections. The northern half is called Maʿān al-Ṣaghīre or Shāmīye, and the name al-Maghāra is also used. The tribes who have lived in the northern half include ʿIyāl al-Ḥeṣān and al-Qarāmse. The southern section is known as Maʿān al-Maṣrīye, Maʿān al-Kabīre or Ḥijāzīye. It is dominated by two tribes, the Tahāta and Karāshīn. (16MG2, Maʿān 2007.)

5.1.3 From pastoralism to tourism: Adaptations in economy

Tourism as a new source of income has affected many of the tribes in Jordan in the past decades. It has largely replaced pastoralism, agricultural projects, the army, and day labor as means of livelihood, especially in the Petra region and Wadi Rum. The tribes living on the fringes of the central tourist attractions (such as the ʿAmārīn in Bayḍāʾ and the Zewāyde in Dīse) have also been making attempts to attract more tourists to their areas. Finally, there are areas without touristic activities, mainly due to the lack of notable sights of interest (for example, the whole Wadi Araba region); these have become or remain peripheries, with their tribes lagging behind in economic development. While tourism and business have opened access to wealth in the society, they have at the same time forced people to reevaluate their traditional identity and values. Especially important has been the question of combining tourism and the system of tribal honor.

For most of the tourists, the experience they seek is colored by a Neo-Orientalist vision of the Bedouin and desert. The ideal is based on the organic model, where Bedouin are seen as something unchangeable, due to the natural essence they possess (Layne 1989: 25). The Bedouin themselves have learned that if they wish tourists to come, they need to create that experience – whether it is realistic or not (Chatelard 2005: 5). The Bedūl, for example, have not traditionally been camel owners, since their way of life was based on herding goats. With the increasing number of visitors coming into their areas, however, the Bedūl have also purchased camels – because that is what the tourists expect to see (Cole 2003: 255).[66]

One of the most important values of the Bedouin ethos is hospitality (*karam*). It is often related to the harsh life on the arid steppe, where travelers were given food and shelter. A host on one occasion might be the one in need of aid some other time. Thus, hospitality is not simply an altruistic act of grace but a system of reciprocity. At the same time, it offers the opportunity for increasing honor and prestige – both for the individual and for the whole tribe, in whose name the hospitality is offered (Chatelard 2005: 31). It has also enabled a ritualized inclusion of strangers into the private sphere of the home. The stranger becomes a guest and also an audience for the ideal hospitality offered to him, sheltered from the less ideal realities of the host (Shryock 2004: 37). In this traditional system, talking about payment and money would have been dishonorable.

Tourists, of course, cannot participate in the traditional system of reciprocal hospitality. Instead, they pay for the services offered to them. Although for the younger members of the local tribes the question of money is no longer as controversial as for the older generations, the aspect of honor still remains an issue.[67] Géraldine Chatelard (2005: 31) notes a continuation of the old model: *karam* is still offered out of free will, not because the host needs the money but because he wishes to extend his hospitality to his guests. However, the traditional hospitality is still related to the house: only a limited number of guests are invited into this private space.[68]

The question of women's participation in tourism is connected to the same discourse on spheres of public and private. In the pastoralist economy, the women possessed certain independence and their work was essential for the survival of the family unit. In addition, the women would produce goods, such as dairy products and woven rugs for sale, thus providing the family with some additional income. Abu-Lughod (1990: 49) notes the change in attitudes with the change of the economy and sedentarization among the Awlād ʻAlī of western Egypt. The young women are more dependent on their husbands and male relatives in getting things they want or need, becoming more like housewives confined within the walls of the house. Chatelard (2005: 33) has observed a similar shift taking place in Wadi Rum, where the men are increasingly involved in business with Western tourists but at the same time keeping the women detached from this world, confined to the private sphere of life. Many of the men prefer to keep women ignorant, shifting the balance of power as they have the authority and role of provider. On the other hand, there also seems to be a more recent tendency among younger couples to move back to the encampments, away from town. The men drive daily to work with the tourists, taking the children to school at the same time. The women again have the opportunity to participate in the domestic economy, and they may also prepare meals for the tourists (Chatelard 2006: 725). This type of shift may be related to the changing numbers of tourists and the fluctuating income from business. A home in a tent provides a "safety net", an opportunity to return to a pastoral economy when the tourism economy fails.

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[66] Chatelard (2005: 9) also gives an example from Wadi Rum, which in guidebooks is presented as the perfect image of a pristine desert. The village where the Bedouin actually live today is seen as an unwanted detail and visitors are advised to avoid the place.

[67] The Bedouin are often disinclined to state an exact sum for a service, even when they do have such in mind. "It's up to you" is a common response to a question about cost.

[68] Bille (2008: 77–79) also discusses the sanctity of private space and hospitality.

The ʿAmārīn who live in al-Bayḍā' have been able to benefit from their location, which attracts occasional tourists from Petra on day trips to see the Little Petra site. In addition to the souvenir stalls at the entrance to the Sīq al-Bārid, the ʿAmārīn have also established tourist camps, which offer Bedouin-themed programs for visitors. There are dinners and music and dance performances, and a chance to sleep in a well-furnished tent. I observed two of these "Bedouin nights" in 2005. At both of these events, the program, including the dinner, was organized mainly by young men. At one, there were some women baking bread, but they remained in the background throughout the night. When the guide pointed out the baking, the tourists came to take photographs. The women seemingly found this situation awkward and uncomfortable.

It is the Bedūl who seem to be the most open toward women participating in the tourist business. This is known to the other tribes in the region as well. In 2005, I was told by a man from Wadi Mūsā that the Bedūl are not real Bedouin because they allow their women to work with the tourists. There has clearly been an increase in the number of women working in tourism. During my first visits to Petra starting in 2000, mostly older women and young girls could be seen in the Petra Valley, selling necklaces and small pieces of colorful sandstone. Recently, several Bedūl families have built more permanent souvenir stalls and cafés inside the Petra area, and a few men have brought their wives and other female relatives to help in these stalls. In the family where I stayed, most women were actively participating in preparing meals for tourist groups, and some of them were also selling souvenirs and tea in a stall. On the other hand, offering rides on camels and donkeys in Petra, as well as guiding groups into the desert,[69] is almost exclusively the work of men.

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[69] Chatelard (2005: 219) discusses the change in terminology among the Bedouin of Wadi Rum. The word "desert" (*ṣaḥra*) has become common when people talk about taking tourists on

To me, two factors seem very plausible explanations for this. First, the Petra Valley is the ancient home of the tribe. One family has established their souvenir stall and tea room in the very same cave where they used to live before moving to the village. An old woman sells her necklaces in front of her old cave, though she has no means to establish a stall there. Thus, when the women come to work in Petra, they are still "at home". Unlike in Wadi Rum, there is no similar clear separation between the private sphere of home and the space where tourists are. Secondly, about a dozen Western women have married a Bedūl man and settled in the village. Although the number is small and several of the women did not choose to stay, many of them actively participated in the creation and establishment of tourist businesses with their husbands. Their language skills and knowledge of bureaucracy have probably been an important asset in planning and marketing. On the whole, having Western girlfriends has become more common among the young Bedouin men in the areas where tourism plays an important role in the economy, such as Petra and Wadi Rum. "Fishing" – with the fish being young and sometimes also older female travelers – is a pursuit of unmarried young men, who see it as little more than a bit of entertainment, if not an opportunity to move to Europe. In contrast to this trend, the few women who have chosen to live with the Bedouin have accepted the lifestyle and norms of the tribal society, but at the same time they have also provided a different model to the local people.

5.2 National identity: The narrative of the Jordanian state

Any modern nation is fundamentally an "imagined" community (Anderson 1996: 6). In order for a nation to exist, it must have a "heritage", a narrated common past that unifies its inhabitants and creates a sense of identity (Layne 1989: 34). Kimberly Cavanagh (2006: 39) states that the national identity is composed of distinct elements such as national narratives, a foundational myth, the inventing of traditions, and timelessness. At the same time, however, states today are under constant pressure to develop, modernize, and keep up with the speed of global change. This ambivalent situation also characterizes the national discourse of Jordan (Adely 2004: 363). Throughout its existence, the state of Jordan has been described as "not being a nation" or being an "artificial entity" which was only created to serve the political interests of Britain in the Middle East (Oren 1990: 171). Although the area became strategically more significant

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guided tours around the region. Yet, the area has not been traditionally called a desert by the local Bedouin. The geographical name is "steppe" (*bādiya*), while the word used for the undomesticated area, the place where the tents are, as opposed to the permanent houses, is *al-barr*.

after 1924, it was still seen by the British as a mere buffer state against the expansionist interests of the Saudi regime (Alon 2005: 220; Casto 1938).

Choosing Bedouin heritage was a conscious detachment from the identities of the other nations of the region: Syria was promoting its urban identity, and Palestine was basing its identity on rural village culture. The steppe and the nomads thus became the foundation of the Jordanian narrative. This is also the basis of the dual attitude of the state toward Bedouin culture, on one hand, and of the Bedouin toward the state on the other. Indeed, the tribal communities themselves had shown little interest in the state. They had no respect for geographical boundaries or the nation as it was understood in modern Western rhetoric (Thomas 2003: 555). For the British and Emir Abdullah, in order to create an independent and modern Jordanian nation it was imperative to incorporate the tribal communities and make them accept the state and government. Although the process of modernization of the nomadic tribes has often been seen as a development launched during the British Mandate, the foundations of this process were already laid under Ottoman rule. The Ottomans themselves may have borrowed colonialist methods from the Western world in an attempt not to become a colony themselves and as a response to the growing pressures of the West (Deringil 2003: 311–312). Starting with military reform already in the late eighteenth century, reorganization – also known as Tanzimat – began in 1839 as an attempt to modernize the outdated systems prevailing in the state structures. For the region of Transjordan, perhaps the most visible changes were related to land ownership and provincial administration (Rogan 1999: 5).

Although military power as a show of force was also used in an attempt to pacify the southern regions, it was not included among the main tactics for control used by the regime. The Ottoman means were very similar to the methods used by the British officers in the Mandate a few decades later: giving the tribes the right to maintain old systems of power and offering tribal leaders subsidies and honorary titles in return for their loyalty (Alon 2005: 218). With the regime in need of all possible support, the Bedouin were now to be saved from their savagery and made useful to the modern state; tribes were transformed into an armed force that could defend their land against possible attacks by the Western powers (Deringil 2003: 322).[70]

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[70] In Libya, the Ottomans managed to mobilize the Sanūsī sheikhs. In the Hijaz, the governor Osman Nuri Pasa stated six priorities: establishment of administrative and political divisions, construction of government buildings and military establishments, courts of law, education and progress in trades and professions, increasing revenues, and building roads, all in order to bring the Bedouin under control and civilize them so that they would not continue to live according to their "savage customs", which are against Sharīʿa and modern laws (Deringil 2003: 327).

The initiatives started by the Ottoman rulers were short-lived, and especially in the regions of the Hijaz and Transjordan eventually turned against them. The Young Turk ideology tried to appeal to Islamic solidarity and unite the nations under Ottoman rule against the common non-Muslim colonial threat. At the same time, it also replaced Muslim identity with a nationalist secular identity, thus giving a starting point for Arab nationalism – and helping the colonial powers in their aspirations (Deringil 2003: 341; Wynbrandt 2004: 175).

The British continued the practices already started by the Ottoman regime. In the beginning, they did little to impose direct control on the southern regions. British rule could be described as "a game of compromise, bribery and conciliation" (Thomas 2003: 546). In the northern parts of Transjordan, Ottoman officers had discarded the old territories, claiming all uncultivated areas as property of the state. In these areas they settled farmers, and after 1851, colonies inhabited by Circassians and Chechens were established in Amman and Jerash (Shoup 1980: 46). The Bedouin population naturally opposed this process, attacking the settlers, but this only launched a series of counterattacks from the Ottomans. Finally, the Bedouin began to register their tribal lands as cultivated areas – and as they were now forced to start farming this land to ensure their legal claims, the process of sedentarization slowly began to take place among the nomadic tribes in the northern part of Transjordan. The Bedouin of the south were still mostly unaffected by these reformations. The change took place in 1923 when the *dīras* of the south also became state-owned (Chatelard 2003: 150). Restriction of movement in frontier areas, prohibiting raids, and allocating land for cultivation gradually created challenges for maintaining the nomadic lifestyle. The borders severed the connection between the traditional grazing grounds of the tribes. Cultivating the land in order to keep it a tribe's property compelled the members of the tribes to choose either nomadism or sedentarization (Thomas 2003: 560). The process was further quickened by food shortages and depression following WWI. The tribes and their flocks suffering from drought and starvation turned toward the colonial powers for help (Thomas 2003: 544). In 1936, the official camel-herding tribes were given a special position in the country, and they were administered under "Bedouin control laws" while the other citizens were placed under the civil law of the state (Shryock 1995: 328).

The national ideology of the Jordanian state was shaped by a mutual compromise between the tribes and the royal house. This tie was strengthened with the establishment of the Desert Patrol in 1930. The new unit was a result of the raids made by the Ikhwān warriors, who were attacking across the border from the south. While the tribes in Transjordan were restrained from counterattacking, the British tightened their control in the border region. When John Glubb was sent from Iraq to solve the problem of the raids, he soon became the undisputed authority in the desert with his diplomatic and mediation skills. The members of the Desert Patrol were recruited from the local Bedouin, who knew the steppe and were given the opportunity of military training, modern weapons, cars, and a salary (Alon 2005: 224–225). A military career remained an important source of income among the Bedouin until modern times. Being a soldier was seen as an honorable occupation, and it was therefore a highly sought-after career. In 1965, it was estimated that 70% of the young Bedouin males were serving in the army (Shoup 1980: 107). The Bedouin were also seen as loyal defenders of the throne and a force on which the king could rely.[71]

Compared to many other regions in the Middle East, the integration of the tribes into the modern state system was accomplished with much better success. The nomads in Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, in comparison, were mostly subjugated and marginalized, both politically and culturally. But although the bond between the tribal leaders and the king was established at an early phase, the Bedouin-based state ideology took a long time to evolve. The first turning point was the creation of the state of Israel. Jordan was still a developing country with a population of about 500,000 when it received an influx of Palestinian refugees that equaled 60% of the existing population (Baster 1955: 35). The annexation of the West Bank in 1950 increased the Palestinian population in Jordan by almost 850,000.

Even though the tribes of Transjordan had always been under the special protection of the royal house, the Palestinians had many advantages during the first decades. The king emphasized his commitment to the Palestinian question, and unity – "two people, one nation" – became one of the leading slogans of the state. As the state jobs were mostly allocated to the Bedouin, the Palestinians started establishing the private sector. Still, the identity of the West Bankers remained different from the people of Transjordan. The Palestinians remained attached to the villages of their origin, and dissatisfaction toward the king and his policies increased until it culminated in the Black September of 1970. The armed conflict lasted until July 1971, leading to the expulsion of the forces of Palestinian resistance. (Brand 1995: 52.)

In 1988, Ariel Sharon, then Minister of Defense of Israel, made his famous statement: "Jordan is Palestine." This recalls the much older rhetoric that was used to define Palestine decades earlier: the country was seen as "a land without a people", or even without having a history of its own (Muir 2008). Now Jordan was only seen as a place where the Palestinians lived as refugees. King Hussein reacted to this statement quickly, declaring that "Jordan is *not* Palestine" (Layne

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[71] Bocco & Chatelard 2001.

1989: 27–28). The need to be distanced from the Israeli rhetoric gave room for Jordan's "East Banker first" policy. This policy had already emerged in the wake of the events of Black September, giving a conscious preference to Transjordanians when hiring workers for the public sector and in turn alienating the Palestinian population even further (Brand 1995: 53). Nevertheless, the economic shift toward the private sector had benefited the Palestinians more than the Transjordanians, who had already been inclined toward the public sector.

The 1970s and the 1980s were also a period of active building of the national identity, which was even consciously based on the Bedouin heritage. The Bedouin image was invoked for the use of the tourism business, but the values, symbols, and entire concept of the Bedouin origins of the nation were widely promoted in the literature and national imagery (Alon 2009: 157). Yet, even the old ties between the monarchy and tribes had become problematic. The 1980s saw a new trend in internal relations, as riots broke out in tribal areas that had been seen as loyal to the throne. With the increasing anti-government feelings among the Bedouin, the king could no longer fully trust in the support of the tribes (Brand 1995: 54–55).

The last three decades have given rise to the new urban elite, representing a new Jordanian identity. During the reign of King Abdullah II (1999–), this new alliance has been reinforced, and the old system of cooperation between the king and the tribes has become less important (Chatelard 2003: 152). Nevertheless, it should be noted that a large part of this urban elite also has a tribal background. The leaders of the old powerful tribal alliances have built houses in Amman, and their families have become urbanized. The tribal nation still exists, even though it is changing in form and moving from the steppe to town.

5.3 Religious identity: Islam in Jordan

Just as the state of Jordan grounds its national narrative on tribalism, at the same time it relies upon Islam as the source of political legitimacy. The religious authority of the royal house is based on two factors: the lineage of the family and their traditional role as guardians of holy cities. The Hashemite family is part of the Quraysh tribe, and King Abdullah II is a descendant of the Prophet through his grandson al-Ḥasan. The same family controlled Mecca for more than seven centuries, from 1201 until 1925. The family also considers itself a "guardian of the Islamic faith and the holy city of al-Quds al-Sharif".[72] The royal house has made several restorations of al-Aqṣā Mosque and the Dome of the Rock during the twentieth century. The direct connection to the Prophet and to the three holiest cities of Islam was further strengthened by an aura of martyrdom when the first king, Abdullah I, was assassinated in al-Aqṣā in 1951 (Wiktorowicz 1999: 679–680).

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[72] The Royal Hashemite Court. <www.kinghussein.gov.jo/islam_restoration.html>

The intricate balance between the tribal notion on one hand and the religious base on the other is a curious mixture, as tribalism is often equated in urban speech with (religious) ignorance and disorder (Shryock 1995: 326). Although the moral values of the Bedouin are at times seen as fundamentally Arab (or Muslim) values, they are simultaneously considered as un-Islamic in promoting blind allegiance toward kin, no matter what the situation (Layne 1989: 26). Interestingly, the connection between the sedentarization of the Bedouin and religious revival is well attested in history. These elements were both present in the Sanūsīya movement of Libya and the Wahhabi ideology in Saudi Arabia (Cole 2003: 241).

As a whole, about 92% of Jordan's inhabitants are Sunni Muslims, with the Ḥanafī school of law being the most important. Though there is freedom of religion, the state controls the religious buildings and the teaching of Islam in schools and mosques, mainly through the Ministry of Awqāf and Religious Affairs. The imams of the mosques are employed by the government and receive their wages from the Ministry. Recently, there has been a growing tendency to hire moderate imams (Wiktorowicz 1999: 686). The Ministry also controls all the main Islamic holy sites in the country, which include 20 shrines dedicated to the *Ṣaḥāba*, *Anṣār*, and other notable people of Isamic history, 15 shrines dedicated to the *anbiyā'*, and a number of historical sites, such as battle locations. Caretakers of the shrines are also state employees. Visiting these acknowledged shrines is encouraged but other places are not recognized. The celebration of *mawālid* has also been prohibited, though celebrating *mawlid al-nabī* has been allowed (Shimizu 1989: 67).[73]

The Sufi orders that used to be the most important element of expressing personal piety in large areas of the Islamic world in the past have left almost no remaining evidence of being present in Jordan. It may be that during the formation and expansion of the Sufi philosophy, the area of Jordan was largely inaccessible – or perhaps in the case of southern Jordan too sparsely populated and the tribes too mobile – to allow Sufism to put down roots in the area (Shimizu 1989: 65).[74] Toward the end of the Ottoman regime, some Sufi *sheikhs* moved into the area of Transjordan but settled in the towns and villages, such as Salt, Amman, and Karak. More activity has been seen after 1940; among the earliest was the establishment of a meeting place (*zāwiya*) of the ʿAlawīya Darqāwīya order in Kufr Yūbā near Irbid, while an increasing number of others have been supported by refugees of Palestinian origin. There is also activity by Jamāʿat Tablīgh, a movement which came in 1964 from India and focuses mainly on grassroots missionary work (*daʿwa*). Today, many of the major Sufi orders seem to have a presence in Jordan, with their zawāya concentrating in Amman and other northern cities. Only one zāwiya exists in southern Jordan, that of the Fīlālī branch of the Shādhilī order in downtown Maʿān (Abu Hanieh 2011: 136). The sheikhs of the orders are mainly of Palestinian or Syrian origin.[75] All in all, there seems to be little evidence for the influence of Sufism in the southern regions in the past (Shimizu 1989: 64). I brought up the topic of *taṣawwuf* and Sufi orders in some informal conversations during my time in Petra, but in all cases the people present (middle-aged or older Bedūl men and women) seemed to be unaware of the term or its meaning.[76]

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[73] I do not know how common the celebration of the Prophet's birthday is in the country. The Bedūl did not celebrate any birthdays, not even that of the Prophet.

[74] Walker (2008: 217) notes the scarcity of scholarly research on Sufism in Jordan. She notes that there were Sufi networks in the region already documented in the sixteenth-century tax registers. However, this probably only included the northern and central parts of modern Jordan, the south and east having been mostly outside any state control.

The emergence of movements aiming toward the revival of the Islamic faith since the 1970s has had an effect on Jordanian religiosity as well. As a whole, a more conservative approach to Islam is seen to have become more prominent in Jordan in the past two decades.[77] Of the Islamic movements, the Muslim Brotherhood is the largest one, and it is also allowed by the state to operate officially. It has its own political party, the Islamic Action Front, which has had its strongest support from Jordanians of Palestinian origin. The party, however, boycotted the elections of 2010. Finally, there has been Salafi activity in the country since the 1970s, when the first generation of teachers went to study in Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. The movement is not a unified institution, as it has no official status in the regime and it relies upon informal social networks in attracting new members and informing them about activities. Only a small Salafi NGO, the Quran and Sunna Society, has received formal status, in 1993. Most of the activity involves meetings at the homes of Salafi scholars; while there is no central leader, the followers may attend lessons by various scholars who specialize in different topics. The Salafi groups are heavily concentrated in the Zarqa area and Amman, but followers are said to exist everywhere in the country (Wiktorowicz 2000: 233).

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[75] See Abu Hanieh 2011 for a detailed list and history of Jordanian Sufism.

[76] Rami Sajdi interviewed a man from Wadi Araba whom he calls a "shaman" (*faqīr*). The person mentions the "four poles" (see Ch. 4.2), calling them Al Rifai, Al Dasouqi, Al Jilani, and Al Sayyed Ahmad. Thus, there seems to be some amount of knowledge of Sufi mysticism in the region. Sajdi himself does not mention Sufism in the context, but talks about Bedouin shamanism instead <www.acacialand.com/shamans.html>.

[77] The concept of "conservative" here refers to the notion of *tajdīd*, or Islamic renovation, involving a return to the origins of the faith, with memory and identity built upon the knowledge of these origins.

It is an interesting paradox that the criticism presented by the Islamist movements toward the regime is based on the same ideas that the royal house uses to legitimize its rule. The peace treaty with Israel and various projects of modernization deemed by the Islamists as Westernization have been strongly opposed by various groups. The teaching in the mosques and schools but probably also the influence of Islamist movements and Sufi orders in the north together create a new understanding of Islamic identity. What is interpreted as being proper and within the Islamic tradition is constructed by the people based on what they learn and observe, and these interpretations have been taking new forms throughout the region (Adely 2004: 362). Adely (2004: 355) has argued that schools and modern education have given the Jordanian people not only greater access but also greater control in constructing religious identity.

5.4 Defining identities

This short introduction to the aspects of identity in Jordan today and in the past shows the interaction on local, national, and global levels. The Jordanian state builds its identity on the foundation of tribalism, Pan-Arabism, and religious legitimacy. All aspects are integrated into the Jordanian national ethos, which has attempted to unify a very fragmented society. History has proven that the kingdom of Jordan has managed to survive several periods of crisis and even strengthen the society. As recently as the 1990s, it was widely suspected that the country would fall into disarray after the death of King Hussein (Shryock 1995: 355). To the surprise of many, Abdullah II's rise to power took place without major problems. Even the Arab Spring has so far been unable to shake the realm the way it did many other Arab countries. It seems that for a nation that is "not a nation", Jordan has been able to create a very strong national identity.

Is it possible to combine the national – or even global – with the local identity? International affairs, politics, and the economy have always played a role in the local sphere. The importance of various tribal confederations and their level of influence in the region have been affected by interaction with foreign powers, as has been shown by the examples of the Ottoman and Mandate-era politics. In more recent times, the Palestinian question and Pan-Arabism have both had a prominent place in the national discourse. In addition, with tourism becoming increasingly important to the southern tribes, it has been necessary for the local identity to recreate itself to serve the interests of a new economy.

On the national level, the state has been very receptive in adopting various elements of the Bedouin culture. As part of creating a national heritage, Jordan has incorporated the Bedouin into the state narrative, forming a unified identity where the Bedouin past plays an important part. This conscious nation-building has also been a reaction to Palestinian politics, not to mention the aspect of promoting tourism. In the tourist business, the Bedouin must offer visitors a glimpse of Otherness which the tourists expect to see, and keep many aspects of their own reality away from the tourists' gaze (Chatelard 2005: 2). Only certain aspects have been selected and accepted into the modern Jordanian Bedouin heritage: arts and crafts, such as coffee pots or camel saddles, have been turned into material symbols of the nation, and the ancient Bedouin values of generosity and hospitality are now part of being Jordanian.

However, there are also aspects that have not been accepted: the idea of group solidarity (*ʿaṣabīya*) itself has become a symbol of backwardness and ignorance, representing forces opposed to development and modernization. Even the positive values of assistance and mediation have become disincentives. The concept of personal connections (*wāsṭa*) is still well known in modern politics. Individuals possessing wealth and status are expected to help the members of their tribes by using their political influence. In the past, this was shown in the form of aid, where the powerful individual offered food, lodging, and security to those in need. In more recent times, for individuals in the various tribes, this has been a means of getting their voices heard in the society and obtaining a job, education for their children, or other commodities (Shryock 2004: 54–55). In modern politics, however, *wāsṭa* is simply an outdated system of nepotism and bribery.

The national ideology has little room for conflicting tribal histories or stories of past glories, warfare, raids, and heroic leaders. The localized identities cannot be included in the narrative of the modern state, where Bedouinism has become a shared source, a representation of the nation as a whole (Layne 1989: 35). Jordan is one big tribe with the king as the father figure, the *shēkh al-mashāyikh*. On the other hand, Bocco and Chatelard (2001) have claimed that the nationalization of the Bedouin identity has at the same time kept local identities alive.

This dichotomy in the approach toward tribal traditions is the reality in which the modern Bedouin of southern Jordan live. But they should not be viewed as mere observers or passive recipients of externally generated values. The tribes have been active participants in the course of history, and no political actor in the region has been able to ignore their influence – though the tribes themselves may have been able to ignore foreign rulers at times. In order to consolidate any political control, the rulers have had to negotiate with the tribes, appease them, and seek their support. The tribal leaders have enjoyed a special relationship with the royal house, and the mutual support and interdependence has maintained cohesion within the society. Therefore, it would be totally misleading to think of the tribes as simple pawns. Tribal pride still plays a strong role in local identity, even though the national and the global levels both have an effect on the people today.

Although the formation of Jordanian identity and the changes in tribal society, economy, and values have been the focus of recent studies, less attention has been paid to the topic of religious identity. I have only very briefly touched upon the concept, describing the general situation at the state level. There are notions of Jordanians being mainly Sunni Muslims, with specific studies concentrating on the development of revivalist Islamic movements (Wiktorowicz 2000), but the fact of the majority of Bedouin being Muslim is seen as so self-evident that it is rarely noted. Yet, by overlooking what is taking place in the lived religion in the region, the dynamism and expressions of past traditions and changes in thought may pass unnoticed. While Islam is part of the national ideology and regulated by the state, and the royal line is legitimated by their lineage that combines the tribal element with the religious, as the local tribal narratives have become redundant, so may have the local religious traditions.

Shryock notes a similarity between the Western academic approach to Islam and nationalism. Both are mainly studied on the basis of high values, with the ideal type being based on literary sources constructed by the political and religious elite. The study of popular religion, then, is "forced into the backwaters of Orientalist scholarship" (Shryock 1995: 326–327). Perhaps it is then time to bring it back to the forefront and study the various forms of lived religion – whether approved or opposed by the elite – together with the various forms of localized identity. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that there exist a number of ways to "live" a religion. The Salafi movement, for example, is equally a "popular religion"; many of its teachers have not had any formal training, and thus do not represent what is traditionally considered the religious elite. These teachers focus on religious questions during their free time and often have completely mundane jobs. The movement also has strong support from the population in certain areas (Wiktorowicz 2000: 225).

The evidence presented so far gives a rather solemn view of the history of Muslim identity in Jordan. In contrast to many other regions, including the surrounding areas of Syria and Palestine, the presence of Sufi orders has been found to be very small-scale and relatively recent. While Sufi *ṭarīqas* were shown to have been major agents in the maintenance of the tombs of the *awliyā'*, as well as in organizing local pilgrimages and *mawālid* in many other regions (for example, in Morocco, Egypt, and Palestine), there seems to be little evidence for such activity in Jordan. In addition, in the case of southern Jordan, the presence of the Wahhabi movement and the Ikhwān activity along the border have been notable on several occasions in the past. Burckhardt (1983: 433) notes the situation in Wadi Mūsā among the Liyāthne: "Like the Bedouin and other inhabitants of Shera they have become Wahabis, but do not at present pay any tribute to the Wahabi chief." The Wahhabis' strict approach and fundamental interpretation of Islam resulted in an extremely negative attitude toward the veneration of saints and holy sites – to the point that saints' tombs were destroyed.

From the more recent period, there is the general observation of Jordan becoming more conservative, with evidence of wide support for Islamist movements, especially the Muslim Brotherhood but also various unofficial Salafi groups. Altogether these observations about the religious history of Jordan do not offer much support for finding localized religious practices and traditions from the southern area. In the next two chapters, however, I focus on the lived religion on the local level and prove as misleading the tentative hypothesis of the lack of local traditions.

6. THE HOLY SITES IN SOUTHERN JORDAN: A MATERIAL APPROACH

Before combining the question of the three theoretical aspects discussed in Chapter 3 – memory, identity, and change – it is necessary to take a detailed look at the traditions of popular religion in the region and examine both the material and oral evidence around them. In the previous chapter, I introduced the people of the region, framing what is known of their recent past. The tribal character of the area is evident, and the Bedouin identity strongly defines the mentality of the inhabitants. The geography of the region defines their livelihood, with the mountains, the arid steppe, and the deep Araba Valley dominating the scene. What, then, does the sacred landscape of Southern Jordan look like? I have already discussed the Arabic concept of sainthood and saints (*awliyāʾ*) as seen by Islamic scholars and among the people, going through the major studies dealing with this topic. Since most of those are based on urban or rural culture, how do they compare to the nomadic setting of southern Jordan? This chapter introduces the results of my survey of the holy sites in southern Jordan, concentrating on the material sources.

6.1 Methods and sources

A number of individual sites have been included in the descriptions of recent archaeological surveys and ethnographic studies, and there are also notes from various nineteenth-century travelers mentioning such sites. Several places have been included in studies of the towns of Wadi Mūsā and Maʿān, but to my knowledge there has been no previous attempt to establish a sacred topography of the whole region. The picture has been drawn during several visits to the area. My original attempt was to make a systematic survey, but it soon turned out to be beyond my resources and time frame. Therefore, I have concentrated on a few areas within southern Jordan and included the material collected from each of these subregions, combining them to form a wider picture. I cannot say that I have been able to find every known site, but I believe that the material nevertheless represents the region and provides a wide range of information concerning the sacred places of southern Jordan.

In order to fully understand the character of the sites, it has been my attempt to personally visit as many places as possible. The majority of the sites are situated in remote regions, far from major roads. Most places, however, could be reached by car, although the roads were rarely paved ones. In a few cases, the path could not be used by motor vehicles, and the sites were only accessed by other means: camels, donkeys, or on foot. On every trip, I was accompanied by a local guide or driver. Part of the information was already collected in 2002 when recording material for my Master's thesis. At that time, I was able to visit the places situated in Wadi Mūsā. The main survey, however, took place during my main fieldwork period in 2005, when I made several 1–4 day journeys to other regions. Thus, I traveled several times to al-Bayḍā', three times to Wadi Araba, twice to Wadi Rum (the second visit including a trip further east along the desert road to Mudawwara), once north to Wadi al-Ḥasā', and once south to Quwayra. In August 2007, I surveyed the sites in Ma'ān. My fourth survey visit took place in September 2009. My main focus during this brief visit was to travel to the area of Suffāha in the north, which I managed to do. Finally, in November 2011 I again studied five places I had already visited before, making further notes and taking exact location measurements. In addition, I was finally able to locate Site 31.

Information about each place has been collected from all available sources, written and oral, and it is discussed in more detail in the respective site descriptions. These begin with a general overview of the location and appearance. I have provided some coordinates, mostly for well-known places and natural formations, but in order to respect the private tombs and cemeteries I have decided not to include the exact coordinates for every site. The introduction is followed by a list of sources – both textual and oral – that mention the site. Third, a more detailed presentation of the site is provided, including the material structures, possible evidence of visits, relation to the surrounding area, and earlier occupation. If there is any information concerning the character of the saint – to whom the tomb belongs, if the site is a grave – or other history or mythic history related to the *walī* and the tribal relations to the site, those are discussed last. Naturally, all the material observations are based on data that is visible on the surface and can be studied without disturbing the site. Except for the first site where I have participated in the formal excavation project, no intrusive methods have been used. The work on the sites consisted of observing both the site and its environs, writing a thorough description of the site, and taking photographs. I have tried to divide the sites into groups based, for example, on location, relation to other sites, the sources, and whether I was able to visit the site or not. While some groups – for example, the sites located in one town – form a more logical set, many of the groupings are somewhat arbitrary.

6.2 Description of sites

1. Jabal Hārūn (N30.316543, E35.406529) جبل هارون

The Mountain of Aaron is the most well-known holy site in the whole region. It is situated approximately 5 km southwest of the ancient city center of Petra. Rising approximately 1327 m above sea level, it is the highest point of the Shara mountain range, and its location on the eastern edge of the Rift Valley makes it a prominent sight from all directions. It is easily visible when looking east from Wadi Araba, and also when coming down to Petra from the eastern high plateau. There are several routes to the mountain, including Naqb al-Rubāʿī, a camel trail that leads up from Wadi Araba, close to the foot of the mountain; a trail also comes down from the Petra Valley. Traditionally, donkeys have been the most common means of transportation, although some people have also used horses and camels. In the late 1990s, a dirt road accessible to cars was extended to the foot of the mountain on the western side, where a narrow, switchback path starts rising up. This shortcut, known as *darb al-magraba*, is used by people traveling on foot. The main route, called *darb al-nabī Hārūn*, is primarily used by those who are riding. This route is a longer one but accessible to animals. The trails lead up to a wide, high plateau where a large architectural complex covering about 3000 m^2 is situated. Two higher peaks rise from the plateau, and a small building stands on the northeastern peak, some 70 m above the plateau.

Of all the sites listed in this chapter, Jabal Hārūn is by far the best-documented one. Starting with the Jewish historian Josephus in the first century, there are numerous texts describing the location, including the Petra papyri found in 1993 in the church in the city center of Petra. Several sources from the Crusades, as well as Jewish and Islamic texts, also mention the place.[78] Although the site was known, the area was little visited until the nineteenth century, when Western travelers, explorers, and Orientalists began to study the region. The first one to visit the ancient city of Petra was the Swiss explorer Johann Burckhardt, who was able to enter in 1812 disguised as a Muslim and insisting on wanting to sacrifice a goat to the prophet Hārūn (Aaron). After Burckhardt, tourism and research work grew slowly during the nineteenth century, and an increasing number of visitors managed to see Jabal Hārūn and publish their observations.[79] Finally, the twentieth- and early twenty-first-century sources concentrate especially on the archaeological remains. Peterman and Schick (1996: 473–479) made a brief survey of the large complex on the plateau, and Lindner (2003: 177–200) surveyed the mountain in more detail, describing the various archaeological remains. The most extensive material concerning the ruined complex and also the surrounding area comes from the work of the Finnish Jabal Haroun Project.

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[78] Eusebius (2005: 165) lists Mount Hor in his Onomasticon. A major crusader source, *Historia Hierosolymitana* by Fulcher of Chartres (1059–1127), includes a description of the mountain (1969: 147). In 1217, Magister Thetmar visited the region during his pilgrimage in the Holy Land (Thetmarus 15:10). Islamic sources include the *Murūj al-Dhahab* by al-Masʿūdī (1964: 49) and the works of the Arab chronicler al-Nuwayrī, who documented the voyage of Sultan Baibars and included a description of his passage through Petra. (Zayadine 1985: 173.) For a more detailed list of historical sources mentioning the Mountain of Aaron, see Frösen & Miettunen 2008.

Upon arriving atop the mountain and after a short walk to the northern half of the plateau, the most visible structure is that of the Byzantine pilgrimage center, excavated by the Finnish Jabal Haroun Project since 1997. The site is in ruins, but it is possible to see the large church in the center, with a smaller chapel on its northern side. South of the church is the entrance to the site and small rooms possibly related to monastic life. The northern side is a complex of small rooms around a central courtyard, and it may have been the hostel for pilgrims. The oldest part of the structure is on the western side of the complex (Fiema 2008: 90). Large stone blocks were used to construct a structure that precedes the Byzantine complex. The massive elements of the western building clearly differ from the worked sandstone walls of later buildings, although it has been altered and integrated into the surrounding Christian structures. As the building continued to be in use throughout the occupation of the Byzantine complex, only suggestions can be made regarding its original function. Other finds – including several cisterns – dating to the Nabataean-Roman period prove activity and human presence on the mountain prior to the Christian era, and the cultic importance of the mountain may thus precede the Judaeo-Christian tradition.[80]

Continuing past the ruins toward the northern peak, a path leads to the recently restored steps. At the foot of the peak, below the first steps, lies a large underground cistern. The vaulted room still collects water and has been in use recently. Other structures related to collecting and directing the flow of water can also be found on the mountain: there is another cistern inside the pilgrimage center, with a water channel carved into the side of the rock that probably leads toward the cistern. A third cistern can be found toward the southern side of the plateau. The stone steps lead from the plateau up to the summit, all the way up to the shrine, which is a small (approximately 10 x 8 m) whitewashed stone building with a semicircular dome. The door is on the eastern side at its northern corner and has a plate with an Arabic inscription attached above it. The small room inside the building is vaulted, and the interior is very simple. When entering the shrine, the most notable feature is the cenotaph situated on the southern wall, right after the entrance. This is an approximately 1.2 m long stone structure, plastered on top and with four pillars at the corners, most of which can be identified as being in secondary use. Two are made of marble and have probably been originally chancel screen posts in some earlier structure. The front face of the cenotaph contains another Arabic inscription, and in the corners various graffiti in Hebrew and Greek letters are still visible. Part of a pillar base, approximately 70 cm high, stands between the cenotaph and the mihrab. The eastern half of the room contains a multicolored *opus sectile* floor, part of which has been restored. A round obsidian plate, approximately 25 cm in diameter, is attached to the eastern side of the north wall. On the western side, a low platform contains material for burning incense. As can be seen from this description, the interior of the shrine is quite simple, the most notable element being the cenotaph. When I first saw the cenotaph in 2000, it was covered with a green cloth. Some torn pieces of red cloth were tied to the covering, but in 2004 these pieces were gone. The covering for the cenotaph has probably been changed periodically, as some travelers describe it as being red (Stephens 1837: 73)[81] or white (Morris 1843: 137). No other decorations can be seen in the room, but many earlier visitors (Robinson 1930: 258; Stanley 1852: 86; Crosby 1851: 216) have seen ostrich eggs, glass beads, and other votive offerings, although in 2002 the local people no longer recognized the tradition of ostrich eggs. Another feature is the pillar base, of which Stephens wrote:

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[79] See Miettunen 2008 for detailed information concerning the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century visitors and their published material.

[80] Lindner (2003: 200) suggests that a Nabataean temple stood on the summit. See also Lahelma & Fiema 2009.

> At its [the cenotaph's] head stood a high round stone, on which the Mussulman offers his sacrifices. The stone was blackened with smoke; stains of blood and fragments of burnt brush were still about it... (Stephens 1838: 73)

Despite the dominant presence of the decorated cenotaph, it is not the actual tomb. The underground vault is where the body of Hārūn is believed to rest. The stairway down to an underground grotto extends underneath the platform. Downstairs is a narrow plastered vault with niches where incense and candles have been burned. The ceiling has been blackened by smoke. The ashy surface is covered with white hand imprints and writing, mostly in Arabic. In one part, the plaster has fallen away, exposing Hebrew inscriptions on the wall beneath. The vault ends in a thickly plastered wall, in front of which two old metal doors hang from the ceiling. Today, thick stucco covers the tomb, and the iron doors, apparently once used as a barrier, are now loose and rusty. This grotto has very likely been part of an earlier structure and integrated into the shrine.

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[81] Luynes (1874: 277) also saw the red covering and a dusty turban.

A similar description can be found in the notes of various explorers. The shrine has been restored several times, and various alterations have taken place. The latest construction work was done at the end of the 1990s. Several theories have been presented concerning the original construction of the shrine. Some hint can be found from the Arabic inscriptions, with the one above the doorway reading:

> In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Was renewed the construction of this blessed martyrium in the days of our lord, the sultan al-Malik al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun in the administration of his son the exalted master, al-Sham'ani. May God, the Exalted, aid both of them, at the beginning of the year nine and thirty and seven hundred. By the pen[?] of Muhammad al-Badawi. (Schick 2010: 786)

Nevertheless, the shrine must be from the post-Crusader period, and it was erected over an earlier structure, probably a Byzantine-era Christian church. Peterman and Schick also noted the outlines of this building still visible around the small shrine, but in the latest restoration work a large platform surrounding the building was added, thus concealing the area. Still, the secondary elements found in the shrine prove the earlier Christian presence on the site.

The shrine is guarded by members of the Bedūl tribe, on whose traditional territory the mountain is located. However, all the Bedouin, farmers, and townspeople from the nearby region have visited the site. According to the custodian of the shrine in 1907, "from two to three hundred come up to this mountain to sacrifice every year; from Shaubak, and Ma'ān and Alji; many from Alji. No one, however, from across the 'Arabah, and only occasionally one from Kerak" (Crawford 1930: 261). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the mountain has mainly been visited by tourists, who spend a longer time in Petra exploring the area. Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Samaritans have all been seen visiting the site.

In the Bible, Aaron (Aharon) is the son of Amram and Jochebed, and he belongs to the tribe of Levi. He had a little brother, Moses, and an older sister, Miryam. Aaron was married to Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, and they had four sons: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. His importance in the Judaeo-Christian tradition comes from his status as the High Priest of Israel, ordained by God. In the Islamic tradition, Hārūn is first and foremost a prophet (*nabī*) who worked together with his brother Mūsā.

Jabal Hārūn has been connected to Mount Hor, the place where the story of Aaron's death takes place, as described in Numbers 20:23–29. In addition to this, there are only three other passages in the Bible that talk about the death of Aaron: Numbers 33:37–39, Deuteronomy 32:48–50, and finally Deuteronomy 10:6, where the place of his death is called Mosera. The first literary source in which Mount Hor is located near the city of Petra is *Jewish Antiquities* by Josephus.

> After a purification held in such wise in consequence of the mourning for the sister of their chief, he led his forces away through the desert and came to a place in Arabia which the Arabs have deemed their metropolis, formerly called Arce, today named Petra. There Aaron ascended a lofty mountain range that encloses the spot, Moses having revealed to him that he was about to die, and, in the sight of the whole army – for the ground was steep – he divested himself of his high priestly robes and, after delivering them to Eleazar his son, upon whom by right of age the high priesthood descended, he died with the eyes of the multitude upon him... (Josephus IV: IV, 7)

The Christians kept the tradition alive, and the monastic complex was built on the mountain in the late fifth century. Finally, the Islamic shrine was built on top of the Christian church in the thirteenth century. However, the earlier structures dated to the first–fourth centuries prove that the mountain was used in the Nabatean period, and it is very likely that the mountain has been a religious site where cultic practices continued even after changes in religion.

North of Jabal Hārūn

2. Jabal Gārūn (N30.36626052885645, E35.41923904441895) جبل قارون

The mountain of Gārūn lies about 5.5 km north of Jabal Hārūn. The highest point is approximately 1200 m above sea level, making it one of the prominent peaks in the mountain range. There is a very good view down to Wadi Araba. Jabal Hārūn and the shrine on top of the summit are also clearly visible from the site. A dirt road leads to the mountain and the site can be reached by car, but there are also several smaller paths to the peak. I visited the place twice, first in 2005 via a footpath starting from the Sīq al-Bārid in Bayḍā’, and the second time in 2007 by car.

Jabal Gārūn is mentioned briefly in the archaeological survey of Manfred Lindner, who studied the ancient structures on the mountain. The place has also been listed in MEGA-Jordan with a reference to Lindner’s survey, and a short record was made in the DAAHL database in 1994. These sources, however, concentrate mainly on the Nabataean remains. The information concerning the more recent tradition was collected from the local people. The informants were three men and two women from al-Bedūl. The men were interviewed on Jabal Hārūn in August 2007 and the women in Bayḍā’ in September 2007.

Lindner's study includes the following information concerning the archaeological remains:

> An old path leads up to Djebel Qarun, with the ruins of a small building, a stone basin and stairs going up to it. Washed down the slope are so many Nabataean sherds, including lamp fragments and painted pottery, that a Nabataean mountain sanctuary or shrine can be assumed.
> (Lindner 1986: 291–292)

The stone basin and the stairs mentioned by Lindner were clearly visible in 2005, but by 2007 the basin had been filled with larger stones. Wall lines can be seen in the ground, and various architectural stones, including door jambs and lintels, lie scattered around the site. Large quantities of pottery sherds, dating to the first and early second century CE are also scattered on the surface.[82] The stones from the earlier building have been reused, and a low, wall-like structure was built around the basin. There is no clear evidence of any tomb. In 2007, the remains of two fireplaces were visible inside the low wall, but apart from them there were no signs of recent human activity. My informants also asserted that the site is no longer visited.

According to the local tradition, the place is related to Nabī Gārūn.[83] It was called both *maqām* and a grave (*qabr*), although there was some disagreement concerning the latter, as not all agreed that the place was his tomb at all. There seem to be two separate traditions related to the identity of Gārūn. One, apparently a local belief, states that he was the brother of Hārūn. According to the second tradition, he is believed to be a non-Muslim, a rich Egyptian merchant unrelated to Hārūn.[84] The members of al-Bedūl related part of an Islamic legend in which 60 mules were needed to carry just the keys to the chests containing his immense treasure. The second tradition reflects the story of the Qur'ānic tradition:

> Indeed, Qarun was from the people of Moses, but he tyrannized them. And We gave him of treasures whose keys would burden a band of strong men; thereupon his people said to him, "Do not exult. Indeed, Allah does not like the exultant. But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters." He said, "I was only given it because of knowl-

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[82] Yvonne Gerber, personal communication, November 2005.

[83] He was referred to as both *nabī* and *walī* by some women, but the men only called him by his name.

[84] Told by a Bedūl guide in 2005.

> edge I have." Did he not know that Allah had destroyed before him of generations those who were greater than him in power and greater in accumulation [of wealth]? But the criminals, about their sins, will not be asked. So he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, "Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qarun. Indeed, he is one of great fortune." But those who had been given knowledge said, "Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better for he who believes and does righteousness. And none are granted it except the patient." And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves. (28: 76–81)

In the Bible, Qārūn is known as Korah, the son of Izhar, and the cousin of Moses and Aaron.[85] He rebelled against Moses, and as a punishment he and his two companions, Dathan and Abiram, together with their families and property, were swallowed by the earth that split open beneath their feet. (Numbers 16:1–40.)

How did Korah/Qārūn end up in this region? There seems to be no known tradition outside the area that places the events of his rebellion in the vicinity of Petra. The biblical story takes place before the Israelites enter Edom, when Aaron is still alive. The Qur'ān does not say anything about the setting, but since Qārūn has been described as an Israelite who has given his services to the pharaoh, it seems that the scene takes place in Egypt. Probably the rhyming pair of names – Hārūn and Qārūn – inspired the birth of this tradition of two mountain peaks standing in close proximity to one another. Both mountains have remains of possible sanctuaries dating back to the Nabataean period, and Jabal Hārūn has been connected to the death of Aaron at least since the time of Josephus. The similarity of names may have also resulted in the two cousins becoming brothers.[86]

3. Aḥwar (N30.46034, E35.45523) and Ḥawra (*c.*N30.492, E35.468)[87] احور وحوراء

Another 10 km NNE from Jabal Gārūn lies the site of Aḥwar, with Ḥawra located approximately 3.5 km NNE of Aḥwar. Both are situated on al-Suffāha massif, a long narrow plateau along the mountain range facing Wadi Araba. Ḥawra remains slightly lower, at 1170 m above sea level, while Aḥwar rises to an elevation of 1390 m, offering excellent views down to the Rift Valley and even south toward Jabal Hārūn. There is a dirt road leading up to the site of Aḥwar. I used this route, visiting the mountain in 2009 by car. The road was badly damaged and difficult to travel, and the choice of ascending the mountain from the southern side by donkey would have probably been a better option. I managed to visit only the site of Aḥwar, as I heard about Ḥawra later and thus did not have the opportunity to see it.

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[85] This was acknowledged in Ibn Kathīr (Ch. 28) with the words of Ibn 'Abbās: "He was the son of his paternal uncle."

[86] There is also a third tradition related to the name Qārūn: in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist* (Ch. 8, Section II) a *jinn* named Qārūn is listed as one of the 70 demons in the service of Sulaymān (Solomon). None of my informants, however, referred to this particular tradition.

[87] This coordinate is an approximation, taken from the map of Lindner (2003).

Lindner (2003: 228) surveyed the archaeological remains on Jabal al-Suffāha in 1994–1997 and recorded the sites of Aḥwar and Ḥawra. In addition, Fawzi Zayadine has studied the region and discussed the sites briefly. Among the locals, information concerning the sites came from a man from al-ʻAmārīn in Bayḍā' (recorded in 2005), three men from al-Bedūl (recorded on Jabal Hārūn in August 2007), and one man from al-Bedūl (recorded in Umm Sayḥūn in October 2009). However, only the last informant also mentioned the site of Ḥawra; the others spoke solely about Aḥwar.

Lindner found at Aḥwar potsherds dating to the Late Iron Age, Nabataean, Roman, and Islamic periods. He also suggests that there was an ancient sanctuary there. A similar theory was presented by Zayadine, who suggests that the site had been a center of worship, probably connected planets and especially Jupiter.[88] Today, a ruined structure can be seen on top of the mountain. Lintel stones and other architectural stones lie scattered around the area. In a manner similar to Jabal Gārūn, the stones have been reused, and a low wall, about three to four courses high, has been built to create a small open courtyard. It seems, though, that the wall line follows at least partially the shape of an earlier structure. On the southern side, the wall creates a small round niche, apparently a *miḥrab*, also noted by Lindner. A long wooden beam, possibly originating from the earlier structure, lies beside the niche, and outside the southern wall a few meters from the niche, a stone pile four courses high has been erected. On a small flat stone inside the walled area, there were remains of burned incense. Nearby, one stone was found with a short inscription containing a personal name and the date April 18, 2008.

According to the informant from Bayḍā', the place is a *magām* and *gaber*. The structure is a mosque, and inside the mosque there is a tomb which is older than the building surrounding it. As the whole interior is full of collapsed stones forming arbitrary piles, it is difficult to determine an exact location for any possible grave. Lindner calls him a *sheikh*, but the local informants refer to the place only as "Aḥwar". His exact identity seems to be unknown to modern inhabitants, but he does have a sister, Ḥawra, whose tomb lies in the same Suffāha area. Lindner (2003: 228) records the local ʻAmārīn guide as calling her *hora*

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[88] Personal communication, Dr. Zayadine, August 14, 2007.

sa'uwa.[89] A Bedūl informant speculated that the place could be originally a tomb of al-Jahalīn, a tribe which lived in the area in the past.[90] After them, it was inhabited by the Zewāyde tribe, and in recent times several groups have camped in the vicinity, including people from Shawbak and Saʿīdīyīn, and even some families from al-Bedūl.[91] All in all, the archaeological remains in the area, and the ruined structure on the site itself, as well as the peculiar nature of the "twin saints" buried in close proximity to one another, point toward an ancient origin of this site.

4. Jidd al-Rafāyʿa (Abū Ḥmēdi) and əḤmēdi جد الرفايعة وحميد

This site is situated on a large cemetery in Bayḍā', about 6 km north of the ancient center of Petra at an elevation of 1055 m above sea level. The area has several archaeological sites. The majority of the archaeological remains are Nabataean, including the Siq al-Bārid, or "Cold Canyon", also known as "Little Petra" because of the Nabataean tombs cut into the walls of the gorge. A small village was excavated by Diana Kirkbride starting in 1958, and the oldest remains were dated to the early Neolithic (Natufian) period. The village and the holy site are both situated on a larger plain surrounded by mountains on three sides. A *wadi* runs through the plain, and both the ʿAmārīn and Bedūl pitch their tents along the *wadi* in the summer months. The paved road runs very close to the site, but small hills in the area known as Umm Qussa, one of them nowadays often called Jabal Batrīsia,[92] hide the site from view. I already heard about the place in 2005, but found out the exact location only when I was leaving the country. Therefore, I had to wait until 2007 until I was able to visit the site. In 2011, I briefly returned.

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[89] This transcription does not give a very clear picture of the name for the place that the guide used: *hora* is probably a dialectal form of *Ḥawra*, while *sa'uwa* remains a question. It could be *ṣuwwa*, a stone mound.

[90] Al-Jahalīn were actually originally a Negev tribe, with their central grazing areas near Tell Arad and their *dīra* extending east toward the Dead Sea. Al-Suffāha is almost 90 km south of their area, but it could be possible that a more southern branch may have spent summers up in the mountains on the other side of Wadi Araba. In the 1950s, they settled in the Jordan Valley, continuing their seminomadic lifestyle. After the Six Day War, they moved to live near the modern settlement of Maʿale Adumim until they were resettled in the town of al-Jabal near Abu Dis in 1998. (Hunayti 2008.) Robinson (1848: 535) visited Petra with Jahalīn guides in 1838.

[91] The Zewāyde are a subtribe of both al-Saʿīdīyīn and the Ḥuwayṭāt Ibn Jāzī. It is not clear which one is in question here, but Oppenheim (1943: 301) states that the subtribe of Ibn Jazi had the summer pastures in the Shara Mountains.

[92] This is an interesting example of how place names are formed and how a new name can become common in a short period. Dr. Patricia Bikai, the Associate Director of the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman (1996–2006) conducted excavations at this site from 2003.

The site is mentioned by Canaan (1929: 208), but the description is very brief and somewhat vague. It seems that Canaan did not go to Bayḍā’ himself, only relying on what information he was able to gather during his short stay in Wadi Mūsā. My information concerning the place comes from an interview with a man in Bayḍā’ in 2005 and another with a man of al-Bedūl in Umm Sayḥūn in 2011.

The cemetery is nowadays used by both ‘Amārīn and Bedūl. The western side of the area looks older, and this is also where the tombs in question are located. There are modern-looking graves on the eastern half of the cemetery. Canaan (1929: 208) speaks of “The maqām, in which there is a tomb”. Two tombs in the cemetery are distinctly noteworthy, and apparently they belong to Jidd al-Rafāy‘a (Abū Ḥmēdi) and əḤmēdi. They are both composed of stone boulders that have been piled into large cairns about four courses high. The cairns stand a short distance apart in the southwest corner of the cemetery. There are also traces of a third stone mound beside the eastern tomb, but it is lower and less well preserved. No visible traces of recent visits could be detected.

Canaan states that Abū Ḥmēdi is the ancestor of the ‘Amārīn. In Bayḍā’, however, I was informed that this is not the case. Jidd al-Rafāy‘a and his son are both ancestors of the Rafāy‘a, a tribe that nowadays lives at Khirbet Bīr al-Rafāy‘a near Shawbak. Oppenheim (1943: 285) also lists this as their home. According to tribal history, this tribe did live around Bayḍā’ in the nineteenth century, but upon the arrival of al-‘Amārīn in the region, a conflict arose. In the course of the struggle, the Rafāy‘a were forced to retreat and move north, where they remained (Sajdi 2007). Canaan (1929: 197) mentions that the Liyāthne of Wadi Mūsā also visit the maqām occasionally, but when I asked members of the Liyāthne about this site in 2002, they seemed to be unaware of it. In the past, however, some families of Liyāthne – namely, from Bani ‘Atā, ‘Alāya, and ‘Ubēdiyīn – have encamped in the area of Bayḍā’ in the winter, so they may have visited the tombs during their time in the region. This tradition was probably forgotten when they settled in the town of Wadi Mūsā.

5. Gubūr (əRjūm) ‘Iyāl ‘Awwād قبور عيال عواد

Leaving Petra toward the west, the land descends steeply down to the Rift Valley. The graves of the children of *‘Awwād* are situated approximately 10 km northwest of the ancient city center, at the bottom of Wadi Araba. Nearby is the well of Bīr Madhkūr and a natural spring, which provide sources of water for an area that otherwise is extremely arid. To the north is the passageway of Wadi Namala, and to the south another riverbed, Wadi Abū Khusēba, both offering a route up into the Shara Mountains. The area was inhabited in ancient times, and numerous archaeological remains can be seen. These remains include a rectangular fortress and a possible pool, among others, the majority dating to the Nabataean, Late Roman, and Early Byzantine periods. Surveys and excavations have been conducted in the area, the most recent being the Bīr Madhkūr Project as part of the Wadi Araba Archaeological Research Project.[93] Bīr Madhkūr is considered one of the main stations along the trade route between Petra and the Mediterranean coast. Threshing floors and ancient field walls attest to the agricultural activities in the area (Smith 2005: 63). Today the area is inhabited seasonally by the local Bedouin, who pitch their tents along the *wadis*. The site is in use especially during the winter months, when it is warmer down in the valley. I visited the area in 2005 by camel, although Bīr Madhkūr can also be reached by car.

The cemetery of ʻIyāl ʻAwwād is one of the well-known sites in the region. It was known to most of the Bedūl, ʻAmārīn, and Saʻīdīyīn whom I spoke with. The small ethnology museum in Bayḍā' mentions it, and Marguerite van Geldermalsen (2010: 86–91) also includes a description of her visit to the site. My recorded material comes from interviews with two Bedūl women in Bayḍā' in 2007, three Bedūl men on Jabal Hārūn in 2007, and a Bedūl man in Umm Sayḥūn in 2011.

There are a large number of graves in the cemetery, so it has been in use for a long time. Some of the tombs are barely visible, but many have been marked with standing boulders and stone circles. A few were larger piles of stones, while three larger cairns were clearly distinguishable from the smaller tombs. One was already slightly ruined, as the stones have fallen down, but it still had a stick with a faded white cloth placed among the stones. The second stone cairn seemed to be in good condition, but had no visible signs of visits. The third large stone cairn was piled carefully. Several large branches and sticks were placed leaning against the structure and between the stones with strips of white and green cloth tied to them. There were also ashy spots, plastic bottles, and traces of burnt incense around the place. The ash was mainly centered on a low, flat surface built of stones that had been raised in front of the third grave, resembling an altar. A similar stone platform had also been erected against the second cairn. If there was one in front of the first cairn, it had been buried under the fallen boulders. These remains attest to human activity in recent times. I was also told by my guide that old coins are thrown into the grave, but I did not notice any.

ʻIyāl ʻAwwād is a subtribe of al-ʻAmārīn. The tombs belong to the tribe's ancestors, the most notable being ʻAwwād himself, a man of great abilities. Another name often mentioned was Sālem ibn ʿAwwād. It is difficult to establish his exact dates, but people vaguely answer *gabel mītēn sane* 'before 200 years' to questions of when he came to Bayḍā'. According to the legend, he bought land in the area for the price of ten goats and a gun. Musil (1908: 59) already lists the subtribe of ʿIyāl ʿAwwād in 1908.

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[93] WAARP <home.gwu.edu/~amsii/wadiarabaproject/bmp/bmp_about.html>. See also Smith 2007 for more detailed information concerning research on the ancient history of the Bīr Madhkūr area.

South of Jabal Hārūn: Petra / Ra's Al-Naqb

6. Faraj Ḥasane فرج حسن

Ascending back into the Shara Mountains and Petra from the south side, a route goes through the area of al-Ṭbētab just before entering Wadi Sabra. Sabra itself is a long *wadi* that provides passage from Petra toward the south, and it may have been one of the satellite towns of Petra. Today the area has seasonal inhabitants when local Bedouin pitch their tents in the *wadi*. I visited al-Ṭbētab in 2005 by camel.

Magbarat al-Ṭbētab is situated at the foot of a mountain. Several tombs can be seen, but most are badly preserved and partially covered by accumulated soil. Several erected stones still stand, marking the tombs. Some have been marked by flat, round stones or slabs that encircle the area of the grave, while others have larger boulders piled over the tomb. Partially buried beside one tomb was a broken wooden stick, probably used by visitors for tying strips of cloth. There were no signs of recent visits and the cemetery looks abandoned.

The identity of Faraj Ḥasane is unknown and it was not possible to identify his tomb in the cemetery. He is not found in any of the written sources, and the site was mentioned only by my guide, a man from al-Bedūl. He may be related to the Saʿīdīyīn, as I have encountered names such as Faraj, Mufarrej, and Farrāj among them. Equally, the cemetery may belong to some other tribe who has moved to a different region and thus abandoned the site.

7. Al-Bawwāt (Al-Fugarā') (N30.30129, E35.46326) البوات / الفقراء

A touristic "Scenic Road" starts from the town of Wadi Mūsā and runs along the western edge of the high plateau, winding south toward Ṭaybe and al-Rājef. Several high-end hotels have been built along the road, offering good views down to the Petra Valley and toward the Shara Mountains and Wadi Araba in the west. A few hundred meters south of the modern Marriott Hotel lies the site of ʿĒn Amūn. According to Musil, the Khilēfāt and Saʿēdāt families from the Liyāthne subtribe of al-Shrūr lived around the spring, but it has been an important source of perennial water for other inhabitants of the region. The water is used for agriculture, and there are both ancient and modern terraces built on the slopes for fields and gardens. Some Bedūl families also pitch their tents nearby. The site of al-Bawwāt is situated near the spring, right on the western side of the Scenic Road. There is a direct view across the valley and to Jabal Hārūn almost straight to the west.

Al-Bawwāt is one of the well-known sites in the region. Musil (1908: 330) and Canaan (1929: 207–208) both list it among the sites visited by the Liyāthne and it is still known to the tribe (Al Salameen & Falahat 2009: 189). The site was also generally known to the Bedūl and ʻAmārīn. Specific information comes from a man from the ʻAmārīn, interviewed in Bayḍā' in 2005, and from two Bedūl, a man interviewed in 2009 and a woman in 2011 in Umm Sayḥūn. I also discussed the place with Hani al-Falahat in 2002 in Wadi Mūsā. I visited the site twice, in 2005 and again in 2009.

The site is a small cemetery where most tombs are simple and not well preserved, being visible only by stones erected to mark the place. They are situated around a central structure, where a 5–6-course high and two-course wide rectangular stone wall creates a small enclosed space. The lowermost course is barely visible above the ground. The doorway is in the northern face of the wall, with an elongated stone serving as a lintel. There are also two square spaces on the inner face of the western wall, blocked by smaller stones, which may have served as windows or small niches. On the outer face, there are two large round stones, possibly old grinding stones or column drums, which are in secondary use as part of the wall structure. Two tombs can be seen inside the enclosure, built of stone boulders and forming small mounds. The smaller one is situated close to the entrance while the larger tomb is in the center of the rectangle. There is also a stone cairn outside the enclosure on the western side of the wall and a fourth one marked by a low stone mound a few meters toward the north. The site seems to have be frequently visited, since numerous signs of human presence can be seen, concentrated in and around the rectangular structure. White cloths have been wrapped around sticks and placed between the stones in many places on top of the wall. Some of the rags were worn, but some were still white and seemed to be relatively recent. There were ashy spots outside the square, and the stones have been blackened in many places inside the walls and over the central tomb and the western cairn. The stones of the central tomb also had layers of ash on them, indicating the burning of incense. Other remains include glass and plastic, apparently very recent.

There seem to be slightly varying traditions concerning the history of the people buried at the site. According to the Liyāthne tradition, "This area was inhabited by the el-Fuqara -tribe whose members were well known for curing diseases. They died because of drought and were buried in this area" (Al Salameen

& Falahat 2009: 189). Al-Fugarā' is a subtribe of the local Bedūl tribe, but its members did not consider the site to be their own. In general, al-Fugarā' seems to be a more commonly used name for the site by both Musil and Canaan[94] in the past and by present informants. However, at least the Bedūl also recognized the name al-Bawwāt. Apparently the name al-Fugarā' does not refer to any specific family but more generally to a group of religious people. The Bedūl informants stated that the people buried at the site were originally pious men from Ghōr al-Ṣāfī. A tribe called 'Uwēnāt was mentioned; according to the informants, their descendants nowadays inhabit the area of Qaṭrāna. I was not able to verify this, but Musil (1908: 69) lists a tribe of el-'Awene as a subtribe of the Ghawārne. Curiously, another tribe called el-Bawwat is also listed by Musil among the Ghawārne tribes.

8. Khabbān al-Nabī خبان النبي

From the village of əDlāgha, a paved road winds down toward Wadi Araba. Slightly above this road at the upper end of Gā' al-Sa'īdīyīn lies the *magām* of Khabbān. The tomb is located on the top of a small hill. Traces of some other graves can be seen further down at the foot of the same hill, marked with some stones and only faintly visible. The main grave is a pile of stones where boulders have been placed on top of each other to form a narrow ridge. Other boulders are lying beside the ridge – either supporting it or having fallen down from the top. A single piece of a broken wooden stake with white rags wrapped around it has been erected between the stones in the center of the ridge. A hole has been excavated in the mound – perhaps in an attempt to find treasure. There was also a very large amount of sea shells in and around the stone mound.

The grave is not very well known. None of the local informants seemed to have heard of it. The information came from a man from the Bedūl tribe, but apparently it has been visited by al-Sa'īdīyīn. It is very peculiar that the person buried there was called *nabī*, as there is no prophet of that name in the Islamic tradition. A clue may be found in his name Khabbān, which could be related to the word خب, meaning 'impostor'.

9. Ṣabbāḥ, Aḥmad, and Ghannām صباح احمد وغنام

Bīr Ḥamad is a perennial spring located about 6 km southwest of the village of əDlāgha, slightly south of the paved road that leads to Wadi Araba. The spring belongs to the Saʿīdīyīn who live in the region, especially during the summertime, with some of them still moving back to the milder climate of the Rift Valley in the wintertime. Their cemetery lies close to the well, on the slopes, and at the foot of a small hill.

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[94] In the next issue of the periodical, Canaan (1930: 179) adds a footnote: "The awliyā buried at the sanctuary of al-Fuqarā at 'Ēn Amūn are also called el bauwāt. I could not find any explanation for this expression."

Most of the tombs are very simple, marked only by an erected stone. At the foot of the hill, there are two larger tombs. The one closest to the road is a hollow cairn with a boat-shaped wall of boulders, about 3–4 courses high surrounding the grave. Ashes of burned incense remain on both sides of the tomb on small stone slabs, and some of the boulders in the wall are also darkened with fire. Two broken sticks were placed at the front between the stones, one bare and the other wrapped with white cloths. A hole has been dug in the ground at the head of the tomb – again an apparent attempt to find treasure. The name Ṣabbāḥ has been roughly incised on the surface of a large boulder on the front of the tomb. The second tomb is a round and hollow stone cairn. The wall made of boulders is about 4–6 courses high on the western side, but only 1–2 courses high on the eastern half. There was a bare stick inside the cairn and an inscribed stone on the front of the tomb. A few inscribed letters can still be seen, but the stone is badly eroded and broken, thus making it impossible to read. No other traces of visits could be seen. In addition to these, there are a few very small mounds of stone in the cemetery but no other remains.

Hillelson (1938: 126) mentions Ghannām as the ancestor of the Jabbārīn, a subtribe of al-Saʿīdīyīn.[95] Musil (1908: 329) also mentions the grave of Ghannām, stating that it is located near ʻAjn Ṛarandal. He may be referring to the same site, although Gharandal itself is located toward the west, down in Wadi Araba. There is no information about Aḥmad, a name provided by a Bedūl man in 2005, at the same time as Ghannām. Ṣabbāḥ, on the other hand, was mentioned by a Bedūl woman in 2007 and also by a Saʿīdīyīn man in 2011; he seems to be the most important of the three.

10. Faraj əMfarrej فرج مفرج

The site is located in a cemetery on a wide plain near əMraybet. Most of the tombs are very simple and marked with a single stone, but there were also several with a wooden stake wrapped in white cloths. Incense had also been burned beside many of the graves. The tomb of Faraj is marked with five large slabs forming a curving structure. A large wooden stake stands at the head of the tomb, covered from top to bottom with several layers of wrapped white rags. Small flat stones have been placed beside the grave, and incense had been burned on six of them. Very faded inscribed letters can be seen on one of the slabs.

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[95] This subtribe was not listed by Oppenheim or Musil. My informant from the Saʿīdīyīn tribe did not mention it either.

The site was mentioned by a Bedūl man with whom I visited the cemetery in 2005. In 2011, a man belonging to al-Saʿīdīyīn mentioned that an ancestor of the ʿIyyāl əMfarrej subtribe was buried in əMraybet, which is probably the same place.

Wadi Mūsā

Regarding the town of Wadi Mūsā, formerly known as Eljī, its past and present – as well as the story of its inhabitants, the Liyāthne – have already been discussed in the previous chapter. Several sacred sites important to the Liyāthne can be found outside the city, Jabal Hārūn being the most important. In this section, I describe four sites that are situated within the area of the modern town: al-əḤsēnī, Sajarat ʿAṭāya, al-Jarrāsh, and ʿĒn Mūsā. Great changes have taken place in the recent past in the town, including rapid growth and the increasing importance of tourism. These changes have also affected the holy sites of the town.

11. Al-Ḥasanī (al-əḤsēnī) الحسني

The site is situated in the center of the town of Wadi Mūsā close to an old graveyard, and it is considered to have been of major importance to the Liyāthne and visited by all the families (Al Salameen & Falahat 2009: 188). Musil (1908: 330) mentions it briefly, listing it as one of the saints revered by the tribe. Canaan (1929) describes the *maqām* in more detail. I visited the site in 2002 with Hani al-Falahat, who has also written about the site (Al Salameen & Falahat 2009: 188).

Al-Ḥasanī is the ancestor of al-Ḥasanāt, a subtribe of al-ʿUbēdiyīn. His tomb is inside a small stone building. It may have been built of reused stone blocks during the Ottoman period. The entrance is through an open doorway. The building contains a single vaulted room with a roof made of wooden beams, blackened by fire. The walls have been plastered, but the plaster has fallen off in many places. Opposite the entrance, there is a low, vaulted niche with faint marks above the arch. The marks could be dried henna or even blood. Beside the doorway, there are two places on the wall for burning incense or placing grease lamps. According to Canaan (1929: 207), “the tomb is inside the room close to the door. It is covered with a torn green cloth cover.” Such a tomb was no longer visible in 2002. Instead, the floor was covered with ash, rubble, and garbage. It seems that the place has not been used as a shrine in a long time, although Canaan already notes that the room was kept in a bad condition.

12. Sajarat ʻAṭāya (N30.322498, E35.478329) عطايا

The "Tree of Gifts" is connected to ʻAṭāya, the ancestor of al-Ḥilalāt tribe, which comprised the predominant visitors to this site. According to Canaan (1929: 207), the site was in a cemetery where an *ʻaldah* tree grew over the grave, even though the tomb itself was not visible. There was only a roughly built square wall around the trunk of the tree with a place for burning incense on the southern side. However, according to Al Salameen and Falahat (2009: 190), it was the tree itself that was considered sacred by the local people, as it was inhabited by the *walī*. The tree was shown to me in 2011 by a local taxi driver, who pointed out a large tree growing in an old cemetery and said it was Sajarat ʻAṭāya. A Liyāthne man whom I interviewed in 2011 also gave me directions to the tree.

13. Al-Jarrāsh الجراش

This maqām was also located in the town, but when new buildings were constructed the place was destroyed by bulldozers. Today, there is nothing left of the site. Canaan (1929: 208) describes the maqām as two tombs surrounded by a low wall, with a small and very low door. There was a place for lamps and incense in front of each tomb and a boxthorn was growing between the graves. The tombs belonged to Sulaymān and Sālim, two brothers who were the forefathers of al-Mashā'le, a subtribe of al-ʻUbēdiyīn. The members of the family visited their tombs until they were destroyed (6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002)[96]

14. ʻĒn Mūsā (N30.324443, E35.497807) عين موسى

When descending down toward the town of Wadi Mūsā from the east, the "Spring of Moses" is on the right side of the road. A photograph taken between 1920 and 1933 shows a spring and a natural pool of water with a small stone building in the background.[97] This may be the "vault which is built of rough stones" described by Canaan (1929: 208). Al Salameen and Falahat (2009: 21) also mention a sacred tree that grew inside a small room or covered cave near the Spring of Moses. When the room was damaged, the tree was also uprooted. Later, a large rectangular building was built over the spring. It is made of white stone bricks with windows on three sides and three white domes on the roof. There are souvenir stalls at the entrance, but the interior of the building consists of a single large room with stone pavement and a large rock protruding through the floor in the southeast corner. The perennial spring gushes to the surface from under the rock, with the water flowing into a pool in the center of the room and then out of the building through a channel.

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[96] The site is also listed in Al Salameen & Falahat (2009: 189).

[97] PPOC <www.loc.gov/pictures/item/mpc2004004999/PP/>.

Canaan lists the spring as the property of al-ʿUbēdiyīn and al-ʿAlāya. The sanctity of the site, however, derives from its connection to the tradition of Moses and the Israelites, as related in the Qurʾān:

> And We divided them into twelve descendant tribes [as distinct] nations. And We inspired to Moses when his people implored him for water, "Strike with your staff the stone", and there gushed forth from it twelve springs. Every people knew its watering place.[98] (7: 160)

In the Christian tradition, this place is sometimes connected to the waters of Meribah, where Moses also struck water from the rock:

> The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Take the staff, and assemble the congregation, you and your brother Aaron, and command the rock before their eyes to yield its water. Thus you shall bring water out of the rock for them; thus you shall provide drink for the congregation and their livestock. So Moses took the staff from before the Lord, as he had commanded him. Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, "Listen, you rebels, shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his staff; water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their livestock drank.[99] (Num. 20:7–11)

15. Jabal al-Taḥkīm (N30.344852, E35.598716) جبل التحكيم

The "Mountain of Arbitration" is not in Wadi Mūsā, but about 1.5 km north of Udhruḥ, east of Wadi Mūsā. It is a known historical site related to the event where the Prophet's Companion Abū Mūsā al-Ashʿarī acted as an arbitrator, representing the Caliph ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib at the negotiations with Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān after the battle of Ṣiffīn in 657 CE. These negotiations took place at

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[98] Canaan (1929: 208) tells a local legend, a variant of the same story as told by Liyāthne. Nielsen (1929: 201) also notes that the Bedouin make a pilgrimage to the Spring of Moses.

[99] Since Moses struck the rock instead of talking to it, as God had ordered, both Moses and Aaron were forbidden to enter the Promised Land. The story continues when the Israelites ask for passage through the land of Edom, but their request is refused. Aaron dies soon after this and is buried on Mount Hor. In addition to the place in Petra, other locations have also been connected to the incident. One place is ʿUyūn Musa at Mount Nebo near Madaba in northern Jordan, already described by Egeria in her *Itinerary* in the fourth century: "There, in the midst, between the church and the cells, there flows from out of the rock a great stream of water, very beautiful and limpid, and excellent to the taste. Then we asked those holy monks who dwelt there what was this water of so good a flavour, and they said: This is the water which holy Moses gave to the children of Israel in this desert" (Egeria: 20–21). The third site is located in Sinai.

Jabal al-Taḥkīm (bin Muhammad 1999a: 79). It is a low hill with a ruined stone structure on the top. The ruins on the hill seem to be much older, as the pottery sherds on the surface originate from the first to the fourth century CE.[100]

Maʿān

Maʿān is one of the two urban centers of southern Jordan, and its importance has always been based on its location. Nowadays, the Desert Highway runs past the city, but even before that, Maʿān was a central transport hub. The pilgrim route from Damascus to Mecca went through the town, and it was one of the resting stations along the journey. In 1908, it also became one of the stations of the Hejaz railway. Musil (1908: 56) gives an estimation of 150 families living in the southern half of the town and 100 families in the north. In 2018, the population was estimated to be approximately 45,000 (Jordan Department of Statistics 2018).

Antonin Jaussen, who visited the town at the beginning of the twentieth century, describes three of the town's holy sites in his book. I was in Maʿān in September 2007 and used Jaussen's book as my main literary source. During my stay, I interviewed four men from Maʿān. I made a second brief visit in November 2011 and went through the places again with a local taxi driver.

16. Umm əJdīʿ (N30.207658, E35.743878) ام جديع

Umm əJdīʿ[101] is situated along the edge of the Wadi Shāmīye that cuts through the northern part of the town. It was known and visited by all the tribes of Maʿān. There are ruined walls from older structures, as well as an old garden beside the site. The site itself is part of the eroded riverbed. It protrudes from the southern bank of the *wadi*, curving outwards and forming a small shelter about three meters high. In 2007, the place had clearly been visited, and there were various signs of recent human presence: the ground was ashy, blackened by candles and incense. Patches of henna had been stuffed into the wall, and some of the pieces were still quite fresh. On my second visit in 2011, all these traces had disappeared. The inner face of the site was clean, and I did not note any remains on the ground either.

The informants stated that Umm əJdīʿ was the most important holy site in the town. It was also the place that was known by all of them. Yet, the original identity of Umm əJdīʿ was not very clear. I was told that Umm əJdīʿ was a pious woman who helped the poor and sick. The informants also suggested that her tomb might be on top of the site, but no signs of any grave could be seen. Instead, all signs of visits were under the formation and on its walls. Jaussen was able to record tales related to the origin of the name and the site. According to him, people who went under the formation for shelter started seeing the spirit of the rock manifested in their dreams in the form of a snake or a woman, who told them that she was the waliya (female saint) of the rock. When these incidents continued, the place became a holy site, favored especially by the women of Maʻān.

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[100] Yvonne Gerber, personal communication, November 2005.

[101] Jaussen (1908: 302) uses the form ʿUmm Ǧedeïʾah ʿLa mère de la petite mutilée'. I use the word in masculine form as it was given to me by the informants in 2007. "The mother of a small mutilated one" perhaps refers to the strange shape of this site.

17. Shēkh ʻAbdallah شيخ عبدالله

This site is located on the southern side of the town in an area called al-Ṭōr. The modern bus station is situated nearby, but the site is secluded between private buildings. Originally the tomb of ʻAbdallah was inside a small building or shrine, and it may have looked similar to either the shrine of Hārūn or al-əḤsēni in Wadi Mūsā, although I was not given an exact description of it. This building was destroyed for some reason and no new shrine was ever erected. Instead, the place of the grave was surrounded by a high wall made of concrete blocks; no doorway was left to enable entrance to the enclosure. It seems that the tomb was rebuilt at the same time as the wall was built, as similar decorated blocks surround the elevated concrete platforms of the graves as well as the top of the wall. There are three tombs inside, the largest one apparently that of the *sheikh* and the two smaller ones situated at its foot probably belonging to members of his family. At the head of the largest, a stone with an Arabic inscription has been attached to the rebuilt tomb. The top of the stone has broken off, removing the text from the upper rows. The bottom has been blackened with fire. This stone may be what remains of an earlier structure, a tomb or perhaps a cenotaph. Four rows of text can still be seen, with the fifth row consisting of the number 262.[102] The area inside the walls is very untidy and badly kept. People have thrown garbage inside and it seems to have become a local dump. Some ash can be seen on the ground, but it probably originates from the rubbish and not from visits.

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[102] I am grateful for Ilkka Lindstedt for providing me with the reading and translation of the inscription. According to him, the text reads:

[مد]فون في سنة اتى/التي (?)
عمارة القلاع والبرك
في طريق الحج [م]ن حران (?)
[...ان لله يهدي] [م]ن يشا
سنة 262

Lindstedt's translation is as follows:
1. buried in the year he executed/which (?)
2. the building of castles and water pools
3. on the pilgrimage road from Harran/Hawran (or some other toponym).
4. …[God guides]who He wills (or a similar phrase).
5. The year (1)262 AH

I am also grateful for Robert Whiting for his comments concerning the script and the dating.

According to Jaussen (1908: 297), "Ce personnage monta du désert et vint s'installer dans la ville. Il fit le bien sans se faire remarquer." When he died he was declared a *walī* by one of his parents. Jaussen states that Shēkh ʿAbdallah was the most important *walī* in Maʿān. In 2007, however, Umm əJdīʿ was considered more important. This may be the result of the changes that have taken place in Maʿān. As there is no entrance to the tomb, it is also very difficult to visit and it seems that Shēkh ʿAbdallah has become less important than he used to be in the past.

18. Banāt al-ʿēn بنات العين

It seems that the growth of the town of Maʿān has been quite rapid. New buildings have been erected over and around the old areas. Abandoned ruins can be seen in various parts of the town: along the edges of Wadi Shāmīya in the north but also in the old section in al-Ṭōr and al-Basātīn in the south. The third site described by Jaussen was called Banāt al-ʿēn, "the Daughters of the Spring". There was no tomb, but a simple wall with niches above the running water.[103] He notes that even though the place was called *banāt* ('daughters' in plural), the local people referred to the site as *walīya* in singular. However, he does not give any further details concerning the site, not even the exact location, other than a general reference of it being somewhere in Maʿān.

The spring apparently no longer exists. In 2007, none of the informants were even aware of a place called Banāt al-ʿēn, even though the eldest was about 70 years old. I was taken to two springs, both dried up. One was known as ʿēn əNjaza or ʿēn Jwēzi, but it did not seem to match Jaussen's account. The second, however, did resemble the description. The spring was called ʿēn Swēlem and it had dried up a few decades ago, although the informants could still remember it from their childhood. If the place was the correct one, it seems that the sanctity of this site had disappeared when the spring dried up, or more likely even earlier, as the local inhabitants could not recall the place being of any special importance.

19. Shēkh əMḥammad شيخ محمد

Jaussen does not mention Shēkh əMḥammad in his study, but the local informants in 2007 stated that he was the third important walī in the Maʿān region. His tomb was located in al-Basātīn, the gardens of Maʿān in the old quarter of the town. Thus, the three sites – Shēkh ʻAbdallah, Shēkh əMḥammad, and Banāt al-ʻēn – would have been situated very close to each other in the southern part of the town. Umm əJdīʻ is not very far either, although it is in the northern half. It was common for people to visit the three places, Umm əJdīʻ, and both *sheikhs* on special occasions (such as a circumcision party or after the birth of a new baby), starting with Umm əJdīʻ, then advancing to Shēkh ʻAbdallah and finally going to Shēkh əMḥammad before returning home for dinner.

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[103] Jaussen (1908: 302) states: "un simple mur avec des niches au dessus de l'eau courante".

Shēkh əMḥammad's tomb originally had a shrine, just like ʻAbdallah's tomb. According to the legend, however, he did not like a roof over his grave. The roof was built and rebuilt ten times, and each time it collapsed during the night. Finally it was left as it was, an open room. I was told that this shrine had also been destroyed and even the grave was erased. When I visited the site in 2007, only a faint row of stones and some scattered stone slabs in the ground were still visible and marking the site where the shrine once stood. In 2011, I could no longer locate the place. The local driver did not remember Shēkh əMḥammad either, but he took me to al-Basātīn, which had been rebuilt. At least part of the area had been turned into a park with palm trees, paved pathways, and a children's playground. It is possible that the tomb is now under the park.

South of Ra's al-Naqb

Except for the city of Aqaba, the area south of Ra's al-Naqb in the southern region of Jordan is sparsely populated. The central site is Wadi Rum, with its rocky landscape that attracts climbers and hikers. The local tribes, the Zelābiye and Zewāyde, work mainly in tourism, offering visitors guided tours around the area. Today, the village of Wadi Rum is a permanent settlement with concrete houses, although a few families still continue the traditional lifestyle in the desert. Several other smaller settlements exist around Wadi Rum, including Dīse and al-Ghāl, the border town Mudawwara, and Titin (on the road from Wadi Rum to Aqaba). Agricultural land around the region of Abū Ṣuwwān has also offered the local inhabitants seasonal work in the fields.

Information concerning the sites in this area comes mainly from four men of the Zelābiye tribe from Wadi Rum. I visited the area briefly in 2005, interviewing the inhabitants first and then visiting sites 19–27. Except for a note in a tourist map for Site 20, I have not been able to find any references to these places in any literary sources.

20. Umm əDfūf (N29.590028, E35.62264) ام دفوف

The “Mother of Slopes” lies about 20 km east of Wadi Rum along the road to Mudawwara. The site is located on the western face of a crescent-shaped mountain called Jabal əDfūf. The land around it is a flat and empty sandy plain, but the villages of al-Manashīr and al-Ghāl, as well as irrigated fields, are not far away. A paved road to al-Ghāl runs nearby. Today, the area around Umm əDfūf has been fenced and it belongs to a closed nature reserve. Therefore, it is not possible to go near the site. It is, however, quite visible from a distance.

Umm əDfūf is a high dune of fine windblown sand that has accumulated in a sheltered space on the slope of the mountain. I was told that people have been buried nearby, but I did not see any tombs. It is the dune itself that is considered to be sacred by the local people, who call Umm əDfūf a *welī.* It is probably the most famous site around Wadi Rum; it has been visited from Quwayra, and it was also known in Mudawwara. There is also another sand dune beside Umm əDfūf called *ibenha* ‘her son’, but it is not considered sacred. The site is no longer visited, as the fence prevents it.

21. Al-Maṭālga المطالقة

This site is located in the Wadi Rum Nature Reserve, northwest of Wadi Rum village on the northern side of Jabal al-Barra. The mountain shelters the tombs on the south, but the site is surrounded by an open plain in all other directions: Wadi Umm ʿIshrīn in the west, extending northeast. I visited the site in 2005 and again briefly in 2011. Together with Umm əDfūf, əRjūd al-Maṭālga is the best known holy site in the region. It was frequently mentioned by informants in Wadi Rum, and it is also marked on the Wadi Rum tourist map (Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre).

The tombs of al-Maṭālga form a small cemetery that has apparently grown around the central tomb. The smaller graves are very simple, marked either by large stones or by a simple vertical stone slab. Many are already badly worn and barely visible. The central tomb consists of an irregular-shaped low mound made of piled boulders with three single rows of stones extending east from the central mound. A large patch of dried vegetation and soil covers the top of the mound. Several of the boulders in the mound have traces of burning on the surface or small ashy patches on the top, indicating the use of incense. Some worn white rags were also lying on the ground and between the stones. Other than these, no signs of recent or ancient human activity could be detected on the surface.

According to Oppenheim’s (1943: 300) table, al-Maṭālga is a subtribe of the Ḥuwayṭāt Ibn Jāzi. However, the local informants said that the tombs belong to the Zewāyde family, although all the tribes in the region visited the *magām*. The burial in the central mound belongs to Shēkh əḤmēd, an ancestor and leader of the tribe.

22. Shrēf al-Marṣad شريف المرصد

The long Wadi al-Marṣad is located west of Wadi Rum. It runs north-south between two mountain ranges, the eastern range called by the same name: Jabal al-Marṣad. This alteration of north-south flat-bottomed *wadis* and inselberg ranges, with the highest peaks rising above 1700 m and the lowest points at the bottom of the plain going down to about 800 m above sea level, is very characteristic of the geography of Wadi Rum. The name means a place of observation, a lookout, and the geography of this area does offer good locations for observation – or ambush. The tomb of Shrēf al-Marṣad is on the western side of the plain along the dirt trail leading to Aqaba.

The tomb is a large roundish mound that may have been partially filled with soil and then covered with boulders. Some larger stones can be seen around the mound, possibly indicating smaller graves, but the traces are very faint. There are no material signs of visits other than what appear to be attempts to excavate within the mound itself and beside it. Some boulders have fallen (or been thrown) from the mound, and the soil from inside the tomb has slid down along the eastern side.

The area is part of the *dīra* of al-Gedmān, the subtribe of al-ʻAlāwīn. There are no permanent settlements in the plain, but the Bedouin live in the area seasonally, pitching their tents along the sides of the *wadi*, especially during the spring.

23. Shrēf al-Shyūkh شريف الشيوخ

Located at the southern edge of Wadi Rum and standing on the plain, the site is reachable by a four-wheel-drive vehicle, but there are no marked roads. There is very little remaining of this tomb: a very low mound with a few boulders that have already partially fallen down. Windblown sand has covered the grave in places where stones are missing. The informants remembered that there were trees growing on the tomb, and there was some small vegetation visible, although not quite tree-sized. There may be remains of a smaller tomb beside the larger one, but it was difficult to determine. All in all, there are no surface finds, no signs of visits, or any remains of earlier structures. The place seems to be totally abandoned. The tomb is said to belong to a pious *sheikh* called Zīdān ʻĪd, who was visited by his descendants in the Zelābiye tribe but by other families as well.

24. Al-Gaṭṭār القطار

The site is also in Wadi Rum, approximately 6 km south of Wadi Rum village. The name refers to the mountain, which is known for its spring that provides perennial water for the area. On the eastern side, at the foot of the mountain, a small cemetery can be seen. All the graves look very simple, with only a vertical stone slab or a small boulder marking the places of the tombs. There were also no signs of visits or any remains which could reveal which of the graves might have had special importance. The local guide who was with me could remember visiting the place in the past, but he was unable to pinpoint the particular grave, as he had been very young at the time. The site was also mentioned by one of the older informants in an interview.

25. Abū Ṣuwwān ابو صوان

This site is situated in the area of al-Ṣuwwān, approximately 10 km east of al-Ghāl. Local Bedouin have been living in the area seasonally and the area has been inhabited mostly by the Mazana family of al-Zewāyde tribe. The government has been launching agricultural projects in the region and the fields are still visible, although at least some of the projects were discontinued. The projects provided seasonal employment for the local inhabitants, and grain and flour were also distributed to the families. Without ongoing projects or seasonal work, the area seemed to be mostly desolate when I visited in the autumn of 2005. Tent sites can still be seen on the ground, as indicated by rectangular areas where all the stones have been removed.

What also remains is a small cemetery with about 20–30 graves placed in a row. Some of the tombs may be older, and they have been marked with vertical slabs and small boulders. Other tombs seem more recent, as concrete blocks have been used in enclosing the graves. The cemetery was fenced and it was not possible to go inside. None of the graves seemed to have any signs of visits. Apparently, the holy site itself is a wide field of stone boulders in the vicinity of the graveyard. Some stones have been piled up, but there was no clear indication of the exact location of the *magām*. I was told that the grave of Abū Ṣuwwān was in the center of the field, but it seemed a very unlikely spot for digging a tomb. The highest spot had been marked with white paint, but apart from the color no other traces of human presence could be seen.

26. Rujm al-ʿAṭawī رجم العطوي

This site can be found approximately 20 km west of Mudawwara, slightly off the desert road to Wadi Rum. The only information concerning this place came from the guide from Wadi Rum who showed the site to me in 2005. Rujm al-ʿAṭawī is a rocky hill on the southern side of a wide plateau. The hill differs from the surrounding area in having dark stones that resemble the rocks of Abū Ṣuwwān. The top of the hill is an unevenly eroded rock surface. A heap of stones has been erected on the eastern end of the hilltop and marked with white paint. The heap is also visible from the foot of the hill, but no other traces of visits could be seen. The place is not widely known. The visitors are principally the Bedouin of the Mudawwara region, who visit the site when they pass by during their seasonal migration with their goats and camels.[104]

27. Galʿat Mudawwara (N29.321989, E35.991701) قلعة مدورة

The fortress of Mudawwara is situated near the modern town of Mudawwara close to the Saudi border. The fort is in the middle of a wide plain. Other structures, including wells and two cisterns, are located nearby toward the south. The remains of the old railway station are also nearby. The history of the fortress extends back to the eighteenth century, the estimated time of construction being 1730–1735. The building was reused in the twentieth century, but it was originally the result of the Ottoman government's policy of protecting and controlling the Hajj route from Damascus to Mecca. The first forts were already built in the sixteenth century, and during the eighteenth century, the network of forts was expanded with the fortresses of al-Balqa, al-Ḥasa, al-Faṣṣu'a, al-Mudawwara, and Madā'in Ṣāliḥ built during this phase. (Petersen 2008: 33.) The forts were used by Ottoman garrisons stationed along the route to protect pilgrims. All the forts have a very standard ground plan, which may have derived from medieval caravanserais, comprising a square-shaped building approximately 20 meters on each side with rooms on two floors and a parapet surrounding a central courtyard (Petersen 2008: 32). The fortresses were constructed of local materials, with the fort of Mudawwara being made of sandstone blocks. In 2005, the outer walls of the fortification were in relatively good condition, but the inner structures had collapsed in places, leaving the courtyard filled with stone. Remains of the stairs leading to the upper floor were still visible near the arched entrance. In several parts of the building, there were deep holes in the ground suggesting illegal excavations.[105] Sherds, glass, and iron fragments were lying scattered on the surface.

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[104] Canaan (1924: 73–74) discusses the "Heap of Stones" type of holy site, stating how when one stands at such a spot it is a cause for wonder to look round in every direction and find nothing to suggest the idea of sanctity except mere heaps of stones, which, of course, differ in size and form in different places. He also points out that such heaps may be inhabited by *jinn*. Also mentioned was a heap of stones as a sign of a place where someone had been killed, a practice used by the Bedouin. The name of this site does not seem to indicate such a place, however, since it refers to gifts and offerings.

Mudawwara was mentioned as a *magām* by one informant in Wadi Rum. I visited the fortress in 2005 with a guide who was also from Wadi Rum. The suspected grave is situated in the northwest corner of the fort. The room has also been excavated, and there was a deep hole in the corner. Some fireplaces seemed to exist in the room, but I was not able to study the site closely because of the dense rubble on the floor and numerous inhabited wasp nests on the walls. The tomb was said to belong to a local Bedouin man killed by the Turks and buried under the fortification. His tomb was not among the popular ones and seems to have been visited only by people living in the Mudawwara region. The area belongs to al-ʿOṭūn, a subtribe of the Ḥuwayṭāt ibn Jāzi.

28. Shrēf Sābaṭ شريف سابط

Southwest of Wadi Rum and approximately 10 km north of the Saudi Arabian border lies Wadi Sābaṭ, a flat-bottomed plain surrounded by mountains of very dark color, possibly of volcanic origin. The *wadi* runs from the southeast toward the northwest, providing a passage to the village of Titin and further on to the highway to Aqaba. The character of this site is unclear. It was mentioned by an informant in Wadi Rum and shown to me by the guide from Wadi Rum. There were some vague remains of graves on the southern side of the plain, but there were no signs of any remains other than scattered boulders marking the tombs. Shrēf Sābaṭ may thus refer to the valley itself. As one of the lesser known places, the area has been inhabited by the ʿAmrān but apparently the tribe nowadays resides mainly in Saudi Arabia.

29. Al-Hajfe (N29.47387, E3510067) الهجفة

West of the village of Quwayra, a dirt road runs through wide wadis between the mountains until, after approximately 13 km, it ascends higher. A large, lonely palm tree marks the spot, and there is also an old well nearby. A few hundred meters toward the west, the road reaches the highest point at over 1300 m and starts descending down toward Wadi Araba. The site offers very good views both toward the eastern plateau and to the west all the way down to the Rift Valley.

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[105] It seems that these excavations caused the southern wall to collapse at some later point. The collapse was visible in a picture taken by the Council for British Research in the Levant (accessed 12 June 2013; the link is no longer active).

Al-Hajfe is a very large cemetery that extends over three hills. The third hilltop is dominated by a large heap of stones of a totally destroyed, ruined structure. Large parts of the walls seem to have collapsed inside, forming a very intense stone tumble. Illegal excavations along the walls reveal clear wall lines, but it is difficult to form a concise picture of the complex. Pottery sherds lie scattered on the surface around the structure, but the scatter becomes less dense further away near the graves. On top of some stones lying around the ruins were patches of ash, indicating burned incense, but on the tombs themselves no signs of visits could be detected. It is therefore difficult to determine which tomb or tombs have had special importance. Judging from the size of the site, the cemetery seems to have been in use for a long time. Some of the tombs have already partially disappeared and only an occasional boulder or stone slab reveals the place. Some tombs have been made of stone slabs placed over the grave. Several of the tombs are especially well made: worked stones have been taken from the ruins and reused in building the tombs. They are rectangular in shape and three to four courses high above the surface, with a vertical slab at both ends of the tomb. Some are also plastered over, and some contain inscriptions in Arabic.

The area has been inhabited by al-Gedmān and al-Nejādāt of the ʻAlawīn. In 2005, one tent was pitched near the palm tree, but in 2011 when I visited the site again, the place seemed to be totally empty. The information about the site came from Wadi Rum, and I did not have an opportunity to find out more details concerning the history of the cemetery and the possible *magām* in it. However, the ruined structure confirms that the place has a long history. The location provides a good place for a military lookout, but a mountain sanctuary could also be a possibility.

30. Shrēf Ishhab شريف اشهب

The information concerning this site again comes from Wadi Rum. The *magām* was said to belong to an ancestor of the Zewāyde family, and I was told it was located somewhere east of Ḥumayma. In 2005, I once visited a large cemetery south of the ancient site of Ḥumayma. Some of the tombs looked very modern, but most tombs were marked by a single stone slab, so estimating the age was very difficult. One of the tombs was built of small boulders, forming a very low mound. A broken wooden stake had been erected between the rocks and there was also another piece of curved wood from a palm tree placed under the boulders. Dried grass had been piled on top of the mound, and there were also remains of burned incense on the stones. I returned to the area in 2011 to verify the site, but the Bedūl men living in Ḥumayma had not heard about Shrēf Ishhab. If the tomb described above was the correct place, the directions given in Wadi Rum were inaccurate. It is also possible that Shrēf Ishhab is actually located more to the east, on the other side of the Desert Highway. Either way, this site remains unverified. The name is related to the color grey, perhaps describing the hue of the ground.

31. Al-Marmad (N29.94727, E35.47279) المرمد

This site was mentioned by informants in Wadi Rum in 2005, but I was not able to find the place then. In 2011, as I was traveling to Quwayra, I received directions from two young men of the Bedūl tribe living in Ḥumayma. Al-Marmad is situated about 2 km southeast of the town of Dabbet Ḥānūt, on the eastern slope of the mountain that borders the village from the east. A simple dirt road leads near the site. I could not see any inhabitants nearby, but apparently some families pitch their tents along the *wadi* to the east of the site.

Al-Marmad is a high dune formed by accumulated fine sand along the side of the mountain, similar to Umm əDfūf. Some shrubs and grass are also growing in the sand. The local inhabitants are mainly tribal members of al-Marāʻye, but the dune has also been visited from Wadi Rum. The name may refer to an ashy tone, although the sand is not grey in color, or it may also imply how the site is used. I was told it was employed for healing, and thus it may have been a place for healing eye diseases in particular. Numerous animal tracks lead up to the top of the dune, and there were also some faint tire tracks visible in the ground, but otherwise the place was empty when I visited it.

Sites not seen

In addition to the sites described above, there were several places I did not have the opportunity to visit. These sites will be listed here, starting with the ones that were collected from modern sources – either recorded in interviews with local informants or discussed in a modern publication. Some have also been mentioned in earlier texts. After these, I also include sites appearing only in earlier sources. For these, I could not find any modern verification.

32. Buṭmat al-Minye بطمة المنية

The “Terebinth of Death” is an old tree growing on the top of a hill at al-Minye, southeast of Wadi Mūsā. The tree appears in a story related to the tribal battles between the Banī ʻAṭā and Banī ʻAṭīye in the seventeenth century. However, Buṭmat al-Minye does not have any specific role in the story; it is simply the location where the invaders were driven off. In the tradition, the tree itself was considered to be sacred and there was no tomb or any other structure. It was visited by some members of the Liyāthne tribe, especially by al-Shrūr. (Al Salameen & Falahat 2009: 191.)[106]

33. Zignānat al-Shrūr

This site was another type of sacred tree which grew in Ṭaybe but burned down and no longer exists. It was also visited by al-Shrūr. The site differs from the other places being listed because it was not thought to be inhabited by a *walī* but by evil spirits (*jinn*) who sang in the tree. (Al Salameen & Falahat 2009: 191.)

34. Swēri سويري

Swēri is an ancestor of al-Saʿīdīyīn. Both Hillelson (1938: 126) and Musil (1908: 46, 329) list him as a famous warrior and the forefather of the Ramāmna family. In 2011, I interviewed two members of the Saʿīdīyīn who both recognized the name. However, the older informant told me that the site is no longer visited. The main reason is that the place of his grave, Wadi al-Jerāfi, is apparently now on the Israeli side of Wadi Araba.

35. Al-Walī Ḥmēd Sālem الولي حميد سالم

The information concerning the tomb of əḤmēd came from a Bedūl man in 2005. In 2011, I discussed the site again with members of al-Bedūl and was told that there is no road to the grave. The location of his tomb is somewhere near Gharandal in Mshazza.

36. Al-Ṣkharī قبر الصخري

The information comes from a man from Wadi Rum and was recorded in 2005. The tomb of al-Ṣkharī is near the town of al-Jafr. He was said to be a member of al-Ṣkhūr tribe who died in battle during the time of the Ḥuwayṭāt wars and was buried in the area. The members of al-Skhūr may still visit the place, but outside the tribe he is mostly unknown.

37. Ḥalfe حلفى

The site is located west of Mudawwara, close to the border with Saudi Arabia. The informants in Wadi Rum stated that the site belongs to the Bani ʻAṭīye and is visited by them, but the nature of the site is not clear. It was referred to as Sēl

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[106] I heard the full story of the tribal battle from Hani al-Falahat in 2002.

Ḥalfe by one of the informants. Listed in Wikimapia, Ḥalfe seems to be a narrow gorge that probably has a seasonal stream.[107] The name may suggest that the site was used for making oaths. Note that *ḥalfe* is also the name of a plant (Alfa grass, *Stipa tenacissima*).

38. Al-Jāmiʿ الجامع

The only reference to the site of "the Mosque" is Canaan's (1929: 208) description. He does not give the exact location of this place, but, according to him, Salmān ibn Saʿīd, the father of the *sheikh* of al-Shrūr, was buried there. Thus, the site may have been in or near Ṭaybe. In addition to Salmān, other unnamed pious men were buried outside the building and under a stone mound. Canaan himself could not find any traces of tombs, only the building itself, which he (1929: 208) describes as "an old large and vaulted room, very defective and partly ruined." The room was also used for Friday prayers. Since there is no present-day record of this site, it may already have been one of the lesser known ones during the time of Canaan. The existence of the tombs may have been forgotten soon after his visit, especially if there were no signs of graves above the ground.

39. ʿOmar عمر

According to Musil (1908: 331), this *walī* is located in the middle of the village of Eljī. Canaan does not mention ʿOmar. Nor do any of the modern informants from Wadi Mūsā.

40. ʿAbdallah عبدالله

Musil (1908: 58) mentions the place of the tomb of ʿAbdallah, who was the ancestor of the "Amrani" (ʿAmārīn) tribe. According to Musil, his grave lies in Raḥama. He saw two stone slabs piled with votive gifts in front of the tomb. Since Raḥama was listed by Musil as the westernmost border of the ʿAmārīn territory, Bayḍā' being the southern border, the location may be somewhere in the northwestern part of Wadi Araba, outside the boundaries of my study. Nevertheless, ʿAbdallah was not mentioned in any of the other sources, either textual or oral. For the present-day ʿAmārīn, Gubūr ʿ*Iyāl* ʿ*Awwād* is the most important ancestral site.

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[107] <wikimapia.org/#lat=29.2691047&lon=35.7607555&z=14&l=0&m=b&v=8>, accessed 12 June 2013; the site has since been removed.

Other sites visited

As it was my original plan to study the region south of Wadi al-Ḥasa, I made a tentative visit to the northern side of the research area in 2005. Soon after that, I decided to limit my study to the area south of Shawbak, thus leaving out the northernmost section. There is a concentration of holy sites between Shawbak and Karak, with about a dozen places related to the Bible, the Qur'ān, and the history of early Islam. Below, as a comparative example, I describe three of the sites that I visited. Finally, the last two descriptions are about cemeteries where none of the tombs were considered to be sacred. I visited them in order to compare them to the sites where religious visits were or had been conducted.

41. Farwa ibn ʿImrū al-Judhāmī فروة بن عمرو الجذامي

This tomb is located near the spring of ʿAfrā' close to the southern edge of Wadi al-Ḥasā'. A dirt road that turns off from the King's Highway leads to the place. Piled boulders surround the modern memorial, erected in 1986. The memorial is built of white stones, with a plastered base. It is approximately 3 meters high and stands on a base. A plate with an Arabic inscription in three columns has been attached to the front face of the base, telling about the martyrdom of Farwa ibn ʿImrū al-Judhāmī in approximately 633 (12 AH). He was the ruler of the Maʿān area who converted to Islam, sending a messenger to the Prophet. The Byzantines, however, were warned about this and Farwa was crucified near ʿAfrā' by the Ghassanid king al-Ḥārith. (bin Muhammad 1999: 67)

42. Al-Ḥārith ibn ʿUmayr al-Azadī الحارث بن عمير الازدي

The tomb of al-Ḥārith is by the King's Highway near Ṭafīle. The municipality and a small village have been named after him. The tomb is inside a large modern complex made of white stones with a domed mosque and a minaret. Inside the shrine is the white marble cenotaph, the top of which is covered with green cloth and prayer rugs. His name is inscribed at the head of the cenotaph, with a text from the Qur'ān on the front side. The quotation is from Sūrat al-Raʿd (13:24): سَلاَمٌ عَلَيْكُم بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ 'Peace be upon you for what you patiently endured. And excellent is the final home.' Al-Ḥārith was one of the Prophet's Companions. He was sent by the Prophet as a messenger to the king of Basra, but he was captured and killed by the Ghassanid ruler Shurḥabīl in Ṭafīle. (bin Muhammad 1999a: 62.)[108]

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[108] In the book is an older photograph of the place, showing a simple rectangular one-room building with a cenotaph totally covered with a large green cloth. The large complex has replaced

43. Shēth شيث

A small shrine is located in the town of Ṭafīle. It is a recently restored building with several rooms and a courtyard. I did not see the interior, as the place was closed when I was visiting the site. Shēth is a prophet and the son of Adam and Eve. The shrine in Ṭafīle is not the only site that claims to contain his tomb. Al-Nabī Shayth can also be found in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon.

44. Gubūr al-Wiḥaydāt قبور الوحيدات

This site is located approximately 6 km north of Bayḍā', near the paved road leading down to Wadi Araba. I visited the place twice, first in 2005 with a Bedūl man and woman and again in 2011 with a young man from the same tribe. It seems to be a well-known site, as it was mentioned by several of my Bedūl and 'Amārīn informants. However, I was told that it was not a holy site and therefore not visited by the local people.

This site is a cemetery, expanding over a low hill which appears to be the ruins of some earlier structure. Traces of wall lines are visible in many places in the area, and there were also pottery sherds scattered around the surface, dating back to the second half of the first century and the second century CE.[109] The graves were situated around the ancient structures, some of them also standing partially on top of the walls. Many were only faintly visible above the ground and most were simple tombs, marked with a single stone or stone slabs. There were also a few stone cairns and stone mounds, perhaps suggesting a more important burial. Architectural stones from the ruins had been reused in the tombs.

The origin of the site appeared to be unknown to most. In 2011, a man from Saʿīdīyīn told me that al-Wiḥaydāt was a tribe that ruled the whole region in the time of Jāhilīya. Al-Wiḥaydāt is also a tribe known from more recent history. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, they seemed to be the most powerful tribe in the Negev and by the time of Napoleon's campaigns they controlled the region "between the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea" (Eakins 1993: 75). At the beginning of the nineteenth century, they had been displaced by the Tiyāha and Tarābīn, and the tribe split into two, one part joining the Jubārāt confederation and the other the Tarābīn (Eakins 1993: 76). Musil (1908: 38) also notes that some families of the Wḥēdāt camp with the Tiyāha. Even though the main area of the tribe seems to have been more toward the northwest near Gaza,

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this older building.

[109] Yvonne Gerber, personal communication, November 2005.

if they really controlled the area of Negev all the way to the Dead Sea, it does not seem improbable that they could have also crossed Wadi Araba.

45. əMraybet I and II مريبت

əMraybet is a wide plateau between the Shara Mountains and Wadi Araba. It is inhabited seasonally, mostly by families of al-Saʿīdīyīn. Two of their cemeteries are located only a few hundred meters apart from each other. I visited them in 2011 with a man from al-Bedūl. At both sites, the tombs consist mostly of low mounds made of soil with vertical stone slabs or concrete blocks placed at one or both ends of the grave. At both locations, I also found one tomb that was decorated with white cloths that had been wrapped around a stick, and on one grave there were traces of burned incense.

6.3 Comparative analysis of types

The following table (Table 1 below) presents a brief summary all the sites described above with a compiled list of locations, types, structures, and material evidence.

The list contains altogether 45 entries. Two sites are not holy sites, but are included only for comparative purposes. Three sites are outside the geographical limits of this research, and are used for comparison only. Furthermore, nine sites I have not visited personally, and they will not be included in the statistical analysis. However, I use them in the qualitative discussion if they provide enough information for the purpose of the study. This leaves a total of 31 locations that I have had the opportunity to visit personally and make observations on. At least six of the sites include more than one *walī*, thus increasing the number of individual saints to more than 37.

It is very likely that other sites do exist in this region. Finding them all would have required a systematic survey with prolonged visits to most – if not all – of the settlements in the area and interviewing people from all the tribes of the region, a task beyond the scope of this work. Equally, there is a question of the validity of sites. There is a Bedūl cemetery along the route to Jabal Hārūn. Bille (2008: 110) surveyed the place and noted sacral elements in the tomb that were said to belong to a Bedūl ancestor and pious man (*fagīr*). Curiously, this cemetery was neither spoken about nor shown to me by my Bedūl informants. This raises questions about why something is not revealed, but also about the reliability of oral information. In my list of sites, there are a few that were mentioned by only one informant, and a few where memories concerning the sanctity were very vague and uncertain. Even the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century written accounts must be viewed with equal skepticism, as they were also based on oral sources. On balance, a large number of sites can be studied with greater reliability. The information about them is abundant, and it comes from several separate sources together with the material evidence observed during visits to the sites. Naturally, as there is much more information concerning these sites, they have also been studied in more depth and used in the analysis.

Despite these defects, I believe these sites provide a comprehensive sample of the sacred landscape of southern Jordan, offering a wide range of types and locations as a basis for the theoretical discussion. Compared to the numerous shrines that dot the countryside and cities alike in Egypt, Morocco, and many other regions, the holy places of Southern Jordan are rather simple in character. Nabī Hārūn is the only saint in the region whose tomb is in a whitewashed, domed building, which is so characteristic for the holy shrines in more populated areas. Many of the other sites are various tombs without any buildings. In addition to the tombs, there are several natural sites where some anomalous feature has made the place sacred. The following chart gives a picture of the distribution of site types.

6.3.1 Site types

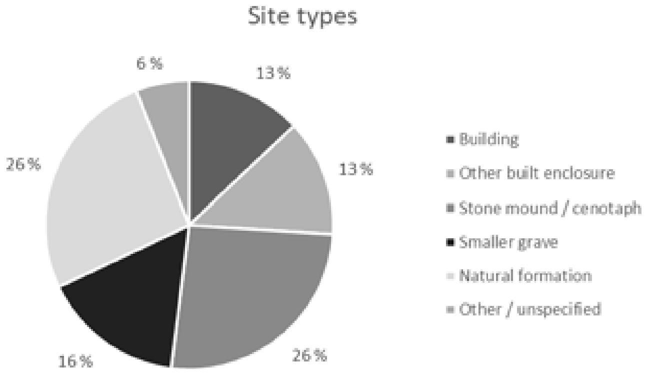

Figure 2 Site types

This type of chart (Figure 2) only provides information on the most prominent feature of the site. In many cases there are several types included, for example, a cenotaph inside a building, stone mounds with a tree or well, a tree and a building. Therefore, the classification is rather arbitrary. It does, however, differentiate

Table 1 Surveyed sites

Key to the table

- *Image*: Figure no. in Appendix II
- *Location type*: T = On the top or upper part of mountain or hill, B = Bottom or lower part of a plain or wadi, U = Urban, within a town or a city.
- *State of Preservation*: P: Preserved/In good condition (structure still intact, only minor deterioration), PP: Partially preserved (most structures still standing, some major deterioration), R: Ruined (structures collapsed), D: Destroyed (site no longer visible)
- *Structures*: Note that the main structure is listed first, and other notable features are listed after it. If there is recorded information about the changes taking place at the site, the present situation will be listed first and what is known of the earlier structures after them in parentheses. B = Building, C = Cenotaph/Constructed tomb, E = Other enclosed space, F = Other natural formation, G = Graveyard, I = Inscription, M = Stone mound, N = Unidentified, P = Plaster (on tomb),

	Name	Image	Type	Location	SoP	Structures	Gender	Human activity	Wali	No
1	Jabal Hārūn	7	T	Jabal Hārūn	P	B,C,R,U,I,P,W	M	A,B,T, (C,V)	I	1
2	Jabal Gārūn		T	Jabal Gārūn	R	R	M	F	I	1
3	Aḥwar & Ḥawra	8	T	Suffāḥa	R	E,R,U,M	M + F	T,B	N?	2
4	Jidd al-Rafāy‘a		B	Al-Bayḍā’	P	M,G,R	M	-	A	2
5	Gubūr ‘Iyāl ‘Awwad	9	B	Bīr Madhkūr	P	M,G,R	M	B,F,C,W,V	A	2
6	Faraj Ḥasane		B	Sabra	R	N,G	M	W?	A	1
7	al-Bawwāt	10	(T)	‘Ēn Amūn	P	E,M,S,U	M	B,F,C,W	A?	1<
8	Khabbān al-Nabī		T	Al-Gā‘ (upper)	PP	M,S	M	C,W,E	?	1
9	Ṣabbāḥ, Aḥmad & Ghannām	11	B	Bīr Ḥamad	PP	M,G,I	M	B,F,C,W,E	A?	3
10	Faraj əMfarrej	12	B	əMraybet	P	S,I?,G	M	B,C,W	A?	1
11	al-əḤsēni		U	Wadi Mūsā	PP	B,U (C?)	M	B,F,H	A	1
12	Sajarat ‘Aṭāya	13	U	Wadi Mūsā	PP	T,E,G	M	- (B)	A/N	1
13	al-Jarrāsh		U	Wadi Mūsā	D	D, (E,S?,T)	M	- (B)	A	2
14	‘Ēn Mūsā	14	U	Wadi Mūsā	PP	W,B, (T)	M	- (B,V)	I	1
15	Jabal al-Taḥkīm		T	Udhruḥ	R	R	M	-	I	1
16	Umm əJdī‘	15	U	Ma‘ān	P	F	F	A,B,F,H	N	1
17	Shēkh ‘Abdallah	16	U	Ma‘ān	PP	C,E,S,I, (B)	M	-	A	1
18	Banāt al-‘Ēn		U	Ma‘ān	PP	D,R, (W)	F	-	N	1
19	Shēkh əMḥammad		U	Ma‘ān	D	D,S, (E)	M	-	A	1
20	Umm əDfūf	17	S	Jabal əDfūf	P	F	F	n/a	N	1
21	əRjūd al-Maṭālga		B	Al-Barra	P	M,G	M	B,C,W	A	1
22	Shrēf al-Marṣad	18	B	Al-Marṣad	PP	M,S?	M	E	A	1

23	Shrēf al-Shyūkh		B	Wadi Rum	R	M /D	M	-	A	1
24	al-Gaṭṭār		B	Wadi Rum	PP	G /D	?	-	A?	1?
25	Abū Ṣuwwān		B	Saudi border	P	G /F?	M	P	A?	1?
26	Rujm al-ʿAṭawī		T	Ṣuwwān	P	F?	?	P	A/N?	1
27	Galʿat Mudawwara	19	B	Mudawwara	R	B,R	M	E,F	A	1
28	Shrēf Sābaṭ		n/a	Wadi Sābaṭ	n/a	F,S	M	-	N?	1?
29	al-Hajfe	20	T	Quwayra	PP	G,C,P,R,T,W,U	?	B,E	A?	?
30	Shrēf Ishhab		B?	Ḥumayma?	PP?	G?	M	B,W	A?	?
31	al-Marmad	21	S	Dabbet Ḥānūt	P	F	?	-	N	1
32	Buṭmat al-Minye		T	Al-Minye	P	T	?	n/a	N	1
33	Zignānat al-Shrūr		n/a	Ṭaybe	D	T	?	n/a (C,V)	N	1
34	Swēri		n/a	Wadi al-Jerāfi	?	n/a	M	n/a (V)	A	1
35	Ḥmēd Sālem		n/a	Mshazza	?	n/a	M	n/a	A	1
36	al-Ṣkharī		n/a	Al-Jafr	?	n/a	M	n/a	A	1
37	Ḥalfe		n/a	Saudi border	?	n/a	?	n/a	?	1?
38	al-Jāmiʿ		n/a	n/a	D?	n/a (B,U)	M	n/a	A	1<
39	ʿOmar		U?	Wadi Mūsā?	?	n/a	M	n/a	?	1?
40	ʿAbdallah		n/a	Raḥama	?	n/a	M	n/a	A	1
41	al-Judhāmī		T	ʿAfrāʾ	P	E,I,M	M	-	I	1
42	al-Azadī	22	U	Ṭafīle	P	B,C,I	M	-	I	1
43	Shēth		U	Ṭafīle	P	B,C,I	M	n/a	I	1
44	Gubūr al-Wiḥaydāt		B	Ṭōr əMdeye	R	G,R	n/a	-	-	-
45	əMraybet I and II		B	əMraybet	P	G	n/a	B, C, W	-	-

R= Ancient ruins (located nearby or site built over older structure), S = Smaller tomb(s) (meaning the structure itself is a smaller tomb, or there are smaller tombs accompanying the main structure), T = Tree or other vegetation, U = Secondary use of earlier materials in the structure, W = Well or spring

- *Human activity*: Material signs attesting visits to the site. Recently observed activity listed first, items listed in older sources but not seen or verified in parentheses. A = Candles, B = Bakhūr (incense), C = Cloths/rags, E = Excavation (grave-robbing), F = Fireplaces, H = Henna, P = Other paint, T = Texts (“graffiti”), V = Other votive gifts (beads, ostrich egg shells, etc.), W = Wooden structures (stakes, poles), - = No signs of visits, n/a = Unknown (not seen)
- *Walī*: Type of saint: A = Ancestor, I = Islamic, characters and events from the Qurʾān or early Islamic history, N = Animism, sanctification of nature
- *No.*: Number of sacred entities (for example, the number of *awliyā*ʾ buried) at the location

between sites with a building or other enclosure forming the boundaries of the site, whatever is inside of it, and between sites where the stone mound or cenotaph stands alone in the open, for example. In this chart, I have also tried to include the original appearance of the site if information is available, even if the site has changed or been destroyed later on. The result shows a rather uniform distribution among open-air stone mounds or cenotaphs, natural formations and buildings, or other enclosing structures surrounding the site. Typically, a tomb is a stone cairn or mound, with graves consisting only of small stones being less common. It is possible that these small graves have been better marked in the past, but have since been abandoned and forgotten – as was the case with many of the graves listed as small. However, if urban sites are excluded from the list, the percentage of sites with buildings decreases notably. All in all, the most typical holy place in the areas without permanent settlements comprised a mound of stones, distinguishable by various signs of visits.

Among the material remains that prove human activity at the sites, the most common are cloths and incense. Strips of cloth (usually white) have been tied on a piece of wood or simply placed between the stones in the mound. Incense leaves ashy spots on the surface of the rock on top of which it is burned. Fireplaces may be evidence of sacrificial meals partaken in honor of a *walī*. This is not always the case, however, as they may just as well have been small fires made by shepherds resting near a site. Other types of material remains, such as burned candles, henna, paint, or inscriptions, are much less common. Erecting small piles of stones has also been a religious act (Canaan 1924: 74). I observed a stone pile in the vicinity of Aḥwar, and a pile may have also marked the locations of Rujm al-ʿAṭawī and Abū Ṣuwwān. Yet, it seems to have been more common to build such piles along the route to the holy place, in spots where the destination is clearly visible. Burckhardt (1983: 420) notes the practice related to Jabal Hārūn: "Upon the summit of the mountain near the spot where the road to Wady Mousa diverges from the great road to Akaba, are a number of small heaps of stones, indicating so many sacrifices to Haroun."

On the other hand, excavations indicating attempted grave robbery as well as garbage thrown on old sites also represent human presence, albeit a less devoted one. It should be noted as well that cloths and incense were also found in the graveyards of əMraybet where no holy sites were said to exist. They are thus used as signs of visits even at ordinary tombs and do not alone indicate sanctity.

6.3.2 Gender

As was expected, the majority of the sites are connected to male *awliyā*ʾ. When Canaan (1927: 3) made his survey in Palestine, he found that about 13.5% of the saints were female. As a comparison, of the sites studied in southern Jordan, only four were clearly feminine, thus representing less than 10% of all the material. In addition, only one of them involved someone who was actually considered a real person. Umm əJdīʿ, as mentioned above, was thought by the modern inhabitants to have been a pious woman, but the earlier legends attest that the site had a guardian spirit whose presence made the site sacred. Banāt al-ʿēn is a spring and not a person either. The third "feminine" saint in my survey was Umm əDfūf, a sand dune near Wadi Rum, and the fourth one was Ḥawra, the sister of Aḥwar. Although the last pair are said to be human beings, they do not seem to be related to any of the present or historical tribes and their origins are shrouded in legend. The number of female sites is thus quite similar to Canaan's survey. He also noticed that although few in number, a large percentage of female saints enjoyed a wide reputation. Similarly, both Umm əDfūf and Umm əJdīʿ are considered to be among the most important sites in their sphere of influence.

6.3.3 Location

In order to better understand the character of the holy sites, it is not enough to study only the material remains of the site itself; the surrounding area and location are just as important. For example, where are the graves situated? Why are the graves located where they are and why were such locations chosen? When analyzing these locations, it is of course necessary to recognize the historical setting and attempt to draw a picture of the location at the time when it was taken into use and also throughout the active period. Very practical reasons may cause the changes that occur in the tradition. There are indications of various sites that have been abandoned because of demographic shifts or political transitions taking place in the region. For example, Sites 4 and 34 seem to have gone through such changes.

On the one hand, there are sites that have held their sacred character even though the descendants of the people buried there are not found in the vicinity. Site 7 (Al-Bawwāt) is one example of the continuation of the cult in such a case. Sites may also predate permanent settlements. After urbanization increased in the region, the holy sites that once were located on the outskirts of towns or villages may have been incorporated into the urban center or suburbs. This can be seen in both Wadi Mūsā and Maʿān. On the other hand, as traditional seasonal migratory patterns have been discarded and communities have moved to a more sedentary life, sites that once were located along the seasonal routes may have now fallen totally outside the sphere of daily or even annual movement. It is therefore clear that what can be observed today does not necessarily provide an answer to the original question: what was important about a location chosen as a site for a holy grave or other sacred purpose? The following chart (Figure 3) shows the general dispersion of holy sites in various geographical locations.

The chart includes both man-made and natural sites. Since many of the natural types of holy sites have unusual features or otherwise stand out from the surrounding terrain, the location itself is a determining factor. Various etiological myths are told in order to explain these peculiar features in nature. Examples include Sites 14 (ʿĒn Mūsā) and 16 (Umm əJdīʿ); the former has been connected to the biblical and Islamic story, and the latter was connected to visions and dreams seen at the site. Similar legends are also related to Site 1 (Jabal Hārūn). However, a large number of natural sites do not have any unusual physical features. Reverence of trees and springs – or more precisely the reverence of spirits inhabiting these environments – is characteristic of an animistic world view. The physical location or appearance may in such cases be of little interest to the believer, and this aspect will be discussed further in the next chapter.

When it comes to man-made structures, the choice of location becomes a more relevant question. Canaan analyzed the sites he studied and concluded that almost 70% of the shrines and other holy sites were situated on hilltops or other elevated

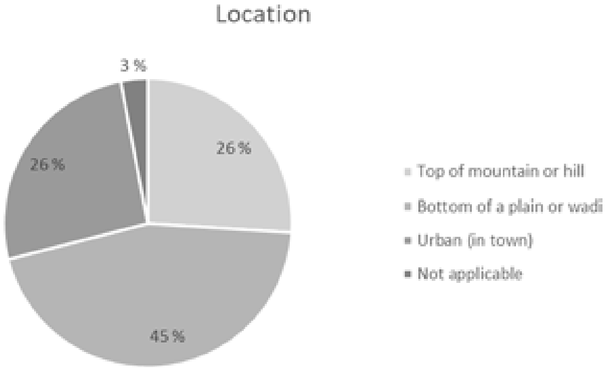

Figure 3 Site locations

areas. In many cases, the site of the holy place seems to have been chosen with visibility in mind. Thus, he states:

> Even such shrines as are built on the sloping side of a mountain, or just above the bed of a valley are so placed that they more or less dominate the surrounding area and are visible from afar. Comparative few welîs are situated in valleys; but if one should be, it is generally found to be in the neighbourhood of the junction of two wâdis or in a place where the wâdi has widened its bed, so that they are seen at a distance from different directions. (Canaan 1924: 3)

The results from the study in southern Jordan seem to support these observations. Of all the sites, 26% were situated on top of a mountain or hill. If only ancestral tombs are taken into account, the most typical location is at the foot of a mountain or hill, overlooking a *wadi*. The junction of two *wadis* or a widened riverbed is a very prominent choice of location in Wadi Rum, but the connection to junctions or passageways can be seen in the more northern locations as well. For example, Site 6 is located along the route from Wadi Araba to Petra via the Sabra Valley, and Site 7 is located by the ancient King's Highway, although it also can be defined as a hilltop site based on its location at the edge of the high plateau, overlooking the mountains toward the west. All in all, it seems plausible that there has been no attempt to hide these places from passersby. Even though the sites could not be seen from far, they were situated in locations with open views. The accessibility today does not reveal the situation in the past. Many of the sites were in remote locations, away from modern roads, although most could be reached by car. However, old paths and travel routes may well have been nearby. Even with the sites in the most remote locations, the difficulty of the journey may have been seen as part of the religious act, so easy access may not have been the main factor either.

An interesting group of sites is formed by the holy places located on top of the mountain range at the edge of Wadi Araba. Sites 1 (Jabal Hārūn), 2 (Jabal Gārūn), and 3 (Aḥwar and Ḥawra) are all found in a row. There may also be a relation among them and Sites 7 (al-Bawwāt) and 8 (Khabbān) as well. Finally, Site 29 (al-Hajfe) can be found in a similar location, on top of a mountain and with a view down both sides, although the view toward Wadi Araba is not as unobstructed as is the view toward the west. The other common feature among Sites 1, 2, 3, and 29 is the proximity of ancient ruins, which attest to a long tradition related to the locations. Thirdly, Jabal Hārūn is visible from both Sites 2 and 3 and also from 7 and 8 – and al-Bawwāt is actually directly overlooking the mountain.

"High places" comprised cultic sites and sanctuaries built by the ancient Semitic peoples on top of mountains and hills. They are mentioned in the Bible several times, sometimes in a neutral or even positive tone, as seen in 1 Samuel (9:22–25), but in an increasingly negative tone in later texts.[110] Nevertheless, this tradition lived on in the region. It was also known among the Nabataeans. One of the known sites in Petra proper is Jabal al-Madhbaḥ, or “the High Place of Sacrifice”, with well-preserved altar structures still remaining on the summit. The continuation of a cult is a common feature in religions, and the sanctity of a site once declared sacred stays unchanged by time, religious authorities, or ethnic migrations. New structures built upon an ancient sacred place often signal a transfer of religious and political control, and as such they may act as a kind of show of force. However, in many cases, the practitioners of the new religion smoothly adopt the old tradition. If the ruins on the sites located on the mountaintops are related to ancient Nabatean cultic practices, the continuation of this tradition does not seem implausible.

The idea of borrowed sanctity can also be applied to the sites around Jabal Hārūn. Burckhardt (1983: 420) noted heaps of stones at locations where the mountain was quite visible and how these spots were used for sacrifice. Thus, a place from which it was possible to see a holy site could gain part of the sanctity of the main location and thus become sacred itself. Visiting this type of subordinate shrine may sometimes be considered to be as virtuous as visiting the actual shrine itself (Crawford 1930: 294). This might be the reason for the locations of al-Bawwāt and Khabbān being chosen. Sites 2 and 3 may have been individual sanctuaries, but since they also have a view toward Jabal Hārūn, they may have been related. This relation would then have become transferred to the modern tradition, in which Hārūn and Gārūn are part of the same biblical and Islamic narrative.

6.3.4 Types of saints

Ancestors – leaders, wise men, and other notable members of tribes – dominate the sacred landscape of southern Jordan. In addition, the number of sites related to natural formations, trees, and wells is also high. The number of sites connected to events in Islamic history or to the characters in the Qur’ān and the Bible increases notably toward the north. However, the question that cannot be answered in this work is whether the percentage of this type of site would remain the same if all the smaller holy sites within the northern regions were included. In a study made in Kufr Yūbā near Irbid, all four sites studied were tombs of the Prophet’s Companions. It must also be noted that the classification of saint types is not always straightforward. Although the historicity of many of the tribal ancestors seems plausible, the origins of some of the sites have been shrouded in mystery and legend. As discussed above, the mountaintop sites along Wadi Araba may have traditions dating back to the Nabatean period or even earlier. The modern stories related to them may therefore be later additions to the tradition. This may have also happened in cases where the natural sites became connected with historical or mythical persons. Some sites were probably originally natural in character, and because of the sanctity of the places people were buried in their vicinity. In time, the sanctity would be transmitted to the tombs. Unfortunately, these kinds of transformations are very difficult to follow without further knowledge.

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[110] In 2 Kings 23:13, Josiah is praised for destroying all the “high places” around Jerusalem.

Trying to determine the age of sites is in many cases very difficult. Jabal Hārūn is the only location where textual and archaeological evidence proves a continuous tradition from the first century CE onwards. In some other places, such as Jabal Gārūn, Aḥwar, and possibly al-Hajfe, the archaeological remains offer some material for trying to understand the past of the site, but in all cases textual evidence is lacking, so their original purpose cannot be attested. Regarding trees, wells, and other natural formations, it is possible that people have considered sites with such features sacred as long as they have known them. Equally, a place loses its sanctity if it is destroyed, as is the case of Banāt al-ʿēn in Maʿān. When the well dried up, the location was relatively quickly forgotten as well.

The ancestral tombs that comprise the majority of the sites are probably not very old as a whole. The oral sources do not usually give time in years but refer to various generations or notable events in history. The more important graves visited by several tribes may remain in active memory longer, but smaller tombs,

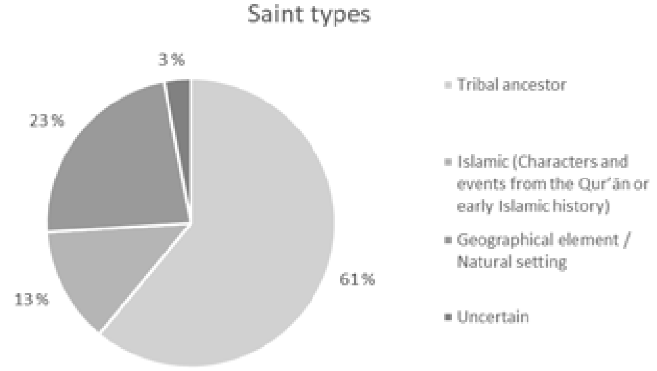

Figure 4 Saint types

important only to a single family or small tribe, may be quickly forgotten when the group moves away from the area. For the older generations and for the more mobile tribes, the knowledge of the local past and a wider region is much more common. The transition from an oral society to a literate one has taken place very recently in the region, and for the younger generations, local knowledge may be very limited. Furthermore, their knowledge of the region outside their own daily experience is less, especially as the tribes have become more sedentary and their annual transitions are no longer taking place with the same frequency as before. Thus, a site located near an old winter camp may be forgotten when settlement is made in the summer area and people no longer move to the other region. When one site has been forgotten and another remembered, it does not necessarily prove that the former is older, although it is possible that the oral history is unable to keep alive sites that are older than the tribal memory. Only the most important and powerful sites remain active, such as al-Bawwāt (Site 7), where there are no ancestors of any of the tribes living in the region today. On the other hand, there are sites that are visited by the living descendants of the person buried there. The ʻIyāl ʻAwwād derive their origins from ʻAwwād, who may have lived at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In 2007, a man of the Saʻīdīyīn told me that Faraj əMfarrej (Site 10) was his grandfather's father. These two examples may demonstrate a general range for the age of ancestral tombs.

7. DIALOGUES BETWEEN THE TWO WORLDS

The selection of sites presented in the previous chapter is quite inclusive and may be partially a result of the variety of the terms used. It ranges from places about which people have only vague memories and where the exact site and the history itself are already mostly forgotten, to sites (like Jabal Hārūn) which are known across religious borders and are famous throughout the region. What, therefore, are these places really, and what makes them different from the others? The opinions of the local people seem to vary greatly. What is a saint's tomb for one person is a remnant of paganism to another and thus not worth mentioning. In Chapter 6, the focus was on material evidence and things I had seen. In this chapter, I focus more on what the people have said about these sites and how the oral information and folklore correspond to the material evidence. What is evident is that these sites have had some kind of significance for my informants, as they have chosen to include them in their answers. On the other hand, silence and denial have significance as well, and also deserve a closer look.

The overview of the *awliyā'* in Islamic theology and popular belief has already been discussed in Chapter 4. There are also numerous studies concerning the traditions and beliefs of the Arab peoples, and they present a large body of folklore from the region – including details of the tradition of saints (Canaan 1924–1927; Granqvist 1965; Jaussen 1948; Musil 1908; Westermarck 1926). I will not try to restate every aspect of the rich folk traditions as described in these studies. Instead, I will concentrate on the oral material and observations recorded in southern Jordan. Naturally, observations related to surrounding regions are included as well whenever they reveal comparative material of interest, such as the presence of a similar practice or the lack of a certain aspect. It is my intention to observe the tradition of holy sites in the context of the local culture as a whole, not separate from the rest of the everyday life of the community but rather seen as one element within it. Therefore, to better understand what is *special*, I believe it is also necessary to discuss what is considered *mundane* – and see whether there is really any difference between the two. Material analysis shows that more than half of the holy sites (61%) are graves belonging to ancestors: leaders, warriors, and other important people. If the tombs of religious and mythological figures are added to the count, the sites related to the dead exceed by far the number of other types. It feels quite natural, then, to begin this survey of local folklore with the dead. How were the deceased – and death itself – perceived in the community?

7.1 Remembering the dead

Death is the last of the great rituals in human life. Stages that guide the individual from this world to the next have been highly ritualized in all societies.[111] The practices of mourning and remembering the deceased offer the living various ways and opportunities for expressing grief and sharing memories. In rural Palestine, the forty days following the burial were the traditional mourning period, which included a series of meals offered in memory of the dead and distributed to everyone present, especially the poor. In the village of Artas, the first funeral feast was offered on the day of the funeral and was sometimes followed by another one. On the next day, two more meals were offered and during the following three weeks, a new feast was prepared each Thursday. After forty days, a large and one of the most important of these meals, known as the "Supper of the Dead", was held. (Granqvist 1965: 87–90, 97–98.) Canaan (1929: 203–204) has a very similar description of these burial feasts among the Liyāthne. A supper was prepared on the day of the death, and after the burial a goat or sheep was slaughtered and cooked near the tomb. On the seventh day after burial, bread was distributed to the poor. Finally, on the fortieth day, a large feast was prepared. Both Granqvist and Canaan mention that a memorial celebration known as "Thursday of the Dead" also took place every spring.[112] The two great feasts of the Islamic calendar, ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā and ʿĪd al-Fiṭr, also include similar practices. During these days, the families visited tombs and cemeteries. Men read the Qur'ān and women also gathered at the cemetery, offering food to people and mourning the dead.

For the Rwala Bedouin, the burial customs were apparently much more solemn. There was no visible mourning or reading from the Qur'ān, and even the work of burying the deceased was preferably given to a *fallāḥ,* if there happened to be one present. One meal was offered on the third day after the burial. They also had the annual "Day of the Dead", called *al-ḍahīye*. On that day, a she-camel was slaughtered in memory of all members of the family who had died in the past year. A meal could also be prepared in subsequent years after the first if the family was camping near the grave on the Day of the Dead (Musil 1928: 672). The Liyāthne of Wadi Mūsā also celebrated *Khamīs el-Amwāt,* "Thursday of the Dead", in the spring. The coming of the day was announced to the inhabitants, and it was celebrated by sacrificing goats and sheep for the souls of the dead (Al Salameen & Falahat 2009: 193).[113]

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[111] On the popular Islamic traditions related to death and burial, see Granqvist (1965).

[112] Canaan (1926: 141) provides some more detailed descriptions of various traditions related to the day. Eggs were dyed and children walked around the village, begging for an egg for the sake of the soul of one's dead. He also noted that the day was most important for the women, who spent it in the company of friends. In Hebron, young girls even danced in the cemetery.

Canaan (1929: 204) calls the older traditions survivals of the ancient practice of giving offerings to the dead. These practices do not seem to differ much from the tradition of visiting the saints' tombs, as described earlier. Granqvist (1965: 151) has also recorded the influence of Sufi thought and tradition. She describes a *dhikr* ceremony performed in honor of deceased men in the village of Arṭās. There was similar enthusiasm on the part of the female members of the community to perform the various stages of remembrance at the graves. While men concentrated on reading holy texts, the women would show their grief in more dramatic ways: wailing, singing, and dressing in soiled clothing, for example. Granqvist relates that the men would often object to this behavior, but the women considered these traditions their right and responsibility. There is little doubt that the gatherings at the cemetery were also social events, where food was enjoyed in a large company.[114]

Material remains left by people at the ordinary grave sites are not described in much detail by the early sources. Granqvist (1965: 62–63) mentions grave goods, including personal possessions that were put into the tomb with the body. Slaughtering and cooking sheep, goats, and camels near the burial site would also leave traces on the ground. Signs of visits to the ordinary tombs from modern times, as attested in the cemeteries visited in southern Jordan, especially the əMraybet cemeteries, confirm similar practices. Even though it does not seem to be a common tradition, the mourners might burn incense and tie white pieces of cloth on wooden stakes on the ordinary graves as well. All in all, there appears to be little difference between an ordinary grave and many of the smaller sites listed in the previous chapter. The ancestors have been mourned and remembered, and people have visited their graves, leaving signs of their visits. Meals have been cooked and eaten at the sites. If we compare the material remains on ancestral tombs listed in my fieldwork to practices performed in ordinary cemeteries, they appear to be very similar. This similarity points toward a continuation of a tradition of the cult of the dead.

Looking at all these examples, a clear difference can also be seen in the evidence: the ordinary dead were at the mercy of God. All the actions performed by living people were done *for the sake* of the deceased. They would pray for God to have mercy on his or her soul. The animals sacrificed for the dead were not offered to them, but the meat was distributed to as many as were available, and especially given to the poor in order to perform a good deed in the name of the deceased. Those who participated in those meals would in fact be enjoying the hospitality of the dead person and in turn say prayers for his or her soul (Canaan 1926: 68). Annual visits to the graves in order to mourn the dead were performed for the same purpose: to keep the memory of the dead alive and increase the number of prayers said for their souls. Thus, all these actions were performed by the living as a favor to the dead. A dead person could not do any favors for the living (Westermarck 1926: 552). There seems to be a connection between this type of tradition and the rise of belief in a reward or punishment in the afterlife: if there was a resurrection, and if the souls were judged and punished or rewarded according to their deeds, every action and every choice made during their lifetime mattered. In the Qur'ān and in the later writings alike, there are vivid descriptions of the Last Judgment, Paradise, and Hell, but in the lived religion people have also been concerned about the fate of souls. The division between the "good" that enter Paradise and the "bad" who are sent to Hell is made according to the basic actions of the individual, whether he or she did good deeds and performed religious duties like prayers, pilgrimage, alms, and fasting. Death is the point where the person can no longer change his lot – at least not by himself. This left the living a great burden: what if the person who died had not been pious enough? The responsibility for assuring that the scales would weigh in favor of the deceased was left to their living relatives and friends, whose task was to perform the various rituals – including prayers, sacrificial meals, and other acts of generosity – to ensure that the soul would be accepted in Paradise.

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[113] This is also mentioned by Canaan (1920: 204). According to him, this day took place on the last Thursday of Ramaḍān.

[114] The communality of such events was also attested by Taylor (1998) in relation to visits to the Cairo cemeteries.

In the lived religion, this tradition runs parallel to and mixes with another type of belief. In the ancient practices of ancestor worship, the dead ancestors played an active role in the everyday lives of their descendants. Stories related to this tradition continue to present this kind of reciprocal interaction, where the dead can be invoked to aid the living or the dead themselves actively meddle in matters of the living. This includes events such as dreams, omens, and visions. With the idea of the belief in punishment or reward after death, the ancestors had a more passive role, being the ones needing help and assistance instead. But some of these ancestors did continue to play a more notable and interactive role. They are known as saints and powerful ancestors who during their lifetime showed special abilities and earned the respect and trust of their tribes and families. In their case, the relationship between the dead and the living continues to be reciprocal. This interaction manifests itself in various forms of ritual and behavior and can be discovered in stories and legends told by the local people.

The view of the cult of the dead is already present in the earliest theories of religion. Herbert Spencer saw the worship of the dead as the "first religion of primitive man". This early belief would then gradually evolve, until the religion reached the state of monotheism (Hamilton 1995: 23–24). Of course, such a view is now outdated and has no place in the recent studies on traditional societies. The belief of the dead interacting with the living exists alongside other interpretations (Jetsu 2001: 254–255). Thus, rather than seeing the different approaches toward remembering the dead as an evolution from the primitive, they should be viewed from the basis of the need and the goal (Boyer 1992: 39–40). In certain aspects, the emphasis should be on the doctrinal approach (for example, the question of resurrection and salvation). In other aspects, the imagistic element may be prevailing. In such cases, the elements of communality, memory, and kinship would be emphasized.[115]

The practices of the modern-day Bedouin of Petra seem to have some similarity to those of the Rwala, but there is also a large influence from a more fundamental interpretation of Islamic theology. As told to me by a Bedūl woman in 2011, only the men go to the cemetery to bury the dead, while the women remain at home. After the burial, there is a meal offered, but excessive expressions of mourning are not socially acceptable. For only men to participate in the burial ceremony is nowadays a common practice in the region. While in many areas women do visit the tombs later on, that does not seem to be the case with the Bedūl. My informant assured me that she herself would never enter a cemetery, even if there were no other people present. Yet, the women of the region have certainly visited cemeteries in the past and the material evidence presented in the previous chapter proves that many of the holy places are still being visited.

This tradition seems to be the most recent addition in the lived religion as represented in my data. According to this line of thought, the living no longer have power to help the deceased. The soul is at the mercy of God; no good deed of a family member can change the verdict of the Almighty. Thus, the ancestors are beyond the help of their descendants. As the living can no longer help the dead, neither can the ancestors help the living. With the increasing knowledge of scholarly Islamic theology, the perception of the holy places is changing. The holy sites become ordinary places that possess no special powers. However, as Granqvist (1965: 148) noted at the beginning of the twentieth century, various perceptions exist side by side, and even if the beliefs are changing, the old practices may still be remembered.

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[115] This was documented by Francis, Kellaher, and Neophytou (2002: 102) when interviewing a Muslim visitor in a cemetery: "We come with the children because they love their grandfather and they must know their family is here as well as at home."

7.2 Secular meets sacred: The celebrations and rituals

> It's holy, it's fun, it's a tour, you can say [...] It's an occasion to have fresh meat, a fresh meal, and it has a nice atmosphere because people offer food to poor people. It's a real celebration.[116]
> (6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002)

Different theories provide a number of tools for approaching the topic of ritual and festivities. Rituals can be seen as a medium for addressing and experiencing the sacred, a communal activity where the focus is on the cohesion of the society or a more personal experience at the cognitive level (Paden 1992: 71). Studies focusing on rituals in secular societies have shown that a ritual act does not have to be connected with religions – unless we choose to define ice-hockey games or transitions of power in politics as religious activity. But whether these rituals are related to attempts to experience the supernatural or to strengthening, establishing, and redefining social structures, they are meant to highlight the important elements of the mundane sphere of everyday behavior. However, preparations precede both religious and secular rituals alike, and in both cases, great effort is made in order to make the occasion memorable.

The aspects of the sacred and the religious experience have already been discussed in Chapter 3. In this section, they form the basis of the frame inside which the social dimension of local ritual behavior is presented in more detail. In the communities of southern Jordan, the holy places and the *awliyā*ʾ play an essential role in some of the celebrations and rituals. On the other hand, there are important celebrations where they seem to have had no role whatsoever. In the following section, I describe the various festivals and analyze the significance of the saints on each of these occasions. There are a number of ways of classifying ritual activity, with many of the categories involving some overlapping. Above I discussed the categories of affirmation, suspension, and transformation, as presented by Hermanowicz and Morgan (1999: 209–211), but here I have chosen to study ritual activities from the angle of more traditional classification. It is not the purpose of this study to provide a thorough analysis of various ritual classifications, and the different categories are here used simply for the sake of typological discussion. My division is based on two criteria: focus on communality versus focus on individuals, on one hand, and cyclical versus occasional rituals on the other.

Perhaps the most studied ritual category is the *rite de passage*, or ritual of transition. Transition rituals are linked to the changes in the life of an individual. They highlight moments of transition, when a person is first removed from the status that he or she earlier held within the community and then transferred into a new role through the stages of the ritual (van Gennep 1965: 11). Many of these types of rituals are often connected to a certain age, and therefore tend to be once-in-a-lifetime occasions.[117]

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[116] This individual was referring to the annual *mōsam* of Nabī Hārūn.

The other type of ritual activity I have chosen to call "communal rites". This does not mean that the rites of passage do not involve the participation of the community – on the contrary. Rites of passage may equally be of major interest to the society as a whole, or at least to certain groups within the community. They symbolize the continuation of life and the continuation of the traditions and rituals of the society, and therefore they are important to all participants. However, in rituals of transition, the focus is on an individual or a select group of individuals who are going through the transition.[118] Many of the communal rites follow a cyclical pattern; thus, the oft-used term "calendar ritual" could be applied in their case. During every ritual cycle, a communal rite is repeated by the community, which comes together in its own social cycle. The communal ritual may manifest itself in various forms, but the main purposes include strengthening the social ties within the group and ensuring the well-being of the community for the coming cycle. It deals with matters that are of great importance to the society as a whole, enabling every member to participate in the common effort (Durkheim 2001: 259).

Thirdly, the category known as "situational rituals" may be discussed. The term "crisis ritual" is also used to describe a situational ritual, although several researchers, including Victor Turner, use "life-crisis ritual" as a synonym for rites of passage. Crisis rituals may often contain a communal aspect. They do not follow the periodicity of the calendar rites, but are performed during times when the group faces a common threat, such as drought, war, or an epidemic. Chapple and Coon (1942) have used the term "intensification ritual" for both situational and communal ritual types, a concept that reflects the function of such actions. However, a crisis ritual may be performed by a single individual or a small group of individuals in times of personal crisis, such as illness, insecurity, or other misfortune.

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[117] This category equals in most aspects the idea of the transformation ritual, as presented by Hermanowicz and Morgan 1999.

[118] See, e.g. van Gennep 1965 and Turner 1977 for a detailed discussion concerning the rites of passage. Some rituals may easily fall into several categories. For example, Turner sees pilgrimage as a rite of transition with three stages, with the person first being separated from everyday life, then joining the communitas of pilgrims, and finally, after the pilgrimage is over, returning to normal life. Turner's views have also been challenged, for example, by Coleman and Eade 2004. However, in analyzing local pilgrimage and communal visits to holy places, my approach is on the social aspect of the ritual. The local pilgrimage is also cyclical in nature, as it is repeated annually.

Thus, we have three categories, as follows:

• Communal rites	Cyclical and communal
• Transition rites	Occasional and individual
• Situational (Crisis) rites	Occasional and communal or individual

7.2.1 Communal Rites

The Islamic calendar has only two notable festivals, both of which are actually related to occasions that are religiously much more significant. The smaller feast, ʿĪd al-Fiṭr "Feast of Breaking the Fast", concludes the month of Ramaḍān, while the ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā "Festival of Sacrifice" is celebrated during the time of the Hajj. Both celebrations manifest the communality of the Islamic rituals, since during Ramaḍān the whole "community of believers" (*ummat al-muʾminīn*) comes together in fasting and feasting. For the rituals of the pilgrimage, even those who do not have the opportunity to join the Hajj will participate in the Festival of Sacrifice.

The old pilgrimage route to Mecca ran through the town of Maʿān, where one of the resting stations was located. This proximity brought the locals into contact with pilgrim caravans and provided them with a way to join the pilgrimage as well. Although there were very likely more such members of the community, I personally met only one older man of the Bedūl who was called by the title Ḥājj. During the period of my research, several people from Umm Sayḥūn did perform the ʿUmra, traveling by bus to Saudi Arabia. Compared to, for example, the tradition in some parts of Egypt and Syria where houses of new *hajjis* are decorated with scenes from the journey after performing the pilgrimage (Palva & Perho 1998: 42), there did not seem to exist any external signs among the Bedouin of Petra; inside, however, the houses are decorated with souvenirs from Mecca.

In 2005, I was staying in Umm Sayḥūn during the month of Ramaḍān, and I also participated in the fasting and the ʿĪd al-Fiṭr. In the family where I stayed, the fast was observed very scrupulously, although some of the younger men who worked among the tourists were not as strict. A simple but filling meal was eaten before sunrise and *ifṭār* began with the offering of dates and lentil soup, followed by meat and fruit. This meal was clearly more festive than everyday dinners, but it was usually enjoyed with the family. An occasional guest was invited to participate, but there was no tradition of communal feasting comparable to the large cities where people gather in restaurants and public spaces for *ifṭār*. On the day of *ʿīd*, the women and girls dressed in their best clothes and the children were given gifts and money. Otherwise, the days of the festival were quite solemn, with the main focus being the *ʿīd* prayers and the feast dinner – also eaten within the sphere of the extended family at home. For the sake of personal piety, some of the members of the family continued the fast for another week after the festival.[119]

In addition to the festivities of the Islamic calendar, the people of southern Jordan have also had other celebrations that embodied both religious and secular ritual aspects. They were cyclical in character, celebrated annually. Like the celebrations of people common throughout the Islamic world, they were also connected closely to the local saints and holy places. In the past, these local festivals seem to have been even more important for the community than the Islamic holidays. The study of the traditions related to the dead revealed that both feasts contained practices related to the ancient ancestor cult, namely visiting graves and communal meals in the cemeteries. Canaan's note about the Liyāthne celebrating their Thursday of the Dead at the end of the month of Ramaḍān also reveals the importance of the old traditions, which may have even surpassed the Islamic ones.

For the inhabitants of the Petra region, especially the Liyāthne, the most important annual feast was the *mōsam* of Nabī Hārūn, celebrated in late summer or early autumn. The following account describing the two-day festival was related by an older woman of the Falaḥāt subtribe.

> We descend from here to Siq, to Petra, and ascend the road of prophet Hārūn. When we arrive there, after we have climbed up, we rest. We cook tea and coffee, and prepare [...] We bring chicken and all kinds of things; we bring there and eat. We pass the time there, sitting by the house [...] The big cooking pot of prophet Hārūn is there, and we cook there in it. Some people bring meat, offering a sacrifice there at the prophet's mountain. They use the cooking pot and make food in it by the fire. Naturally there is no gas or generator or anything except the fire there in nature. We sit around the fire singing in the night, and have fun. In the morning, after sleeping we get up, make tea and breakfast, and climb the prophet's road up to the mountain, to the shrine. We ascend there, light a fire, and put the fire on the rock. Then we put incense on it, and we enter down in the shrine, light a fire, and look around. We stay also there singing and praying. But before we have yet entered into the mosque we purify ourselves. So we pray, and then we go out. We sit a while, passing the time on the mountain, and then we go down, of course. We go down to the tent and sit there, eating breakfast. Then we go home. Everyone comes there to attend the horseracing. They ride horses in a place where there were no buildings. It is called mantigat al-jemēd. Visitors also come to look at the racing. This is how it happens. Later everybody goes home, and of course there is a sacrifice in the night, called ʿasha al-nabī Hārūn (dinner of the

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[119] ʿĪd al-Aḍḥā is also an important feast, but I was not able to be present in the region to make personal observations when it took place.

> prophet Hārūn). Every family makes a sacrifice with their neighbors, and they eat the dinner together. (7W1 Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002)

This story depicts a festival similar to the *mawāsim* celebrated all around the Islamic world. It is a mixture of religiosity and secular merriment, where praying and personal piety is combined with singing, feasting, and racing. The preparations for the celebration start long before the actual event with the making of new clothes, baking, and preparing food. The meal is also offered to the poor, thus uniting all levels of society.

The timing of this annual visit was related to the change of season. It signaled the end of summer, and the season of rain was much anticipated. In fact, the festival itself was a ritual for ensuring the winter rains (1M1, Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002; 6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002).[120] Naturally, annual rains were crucial for both agriculture and pastoralism, and the *mōsam* was a communal act for securing the survival of the community in the coming year. A local song recorded by Canaan (1930: 211) contains peculiar lyrics that talk about the need for rain, but also address Aaron using specific titles.

Hārūni uinnā djīnāk ʿtāš bil-qēz djāđīnā ez-zamā

Hārūni yā nidjm(in) ikbīr yā bū kawākib ʿāliyah

O Aaron we are coming thirsty to you

In the summer heat (we are) driven by thirst.

O Aaron! O great star! O father (possessor) of high planets!

Darb in-nabī Hārūn ʿurdj umalāwi

Hārūn han-nidjm el-kbīr yā bū el-kawākib elʿāliyah

> The way to the (shrine of the) prophet Aaron is crooked and difficult to ascend; Aaron (thou art) the great star! O father of high planets.[121]

The lyrics seem to reflect an ancient belief in the stars and planets (kawākib) as providers of rain. This belief can be found, for example, in the collection of Ḥadīth Qudsī, where the 29th *ḥadīth* states the following:

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[120] Examples of prayers recited to me (3WG1 Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002) include supplications such as *Yā Allāh yā rabbī tirzignā, tirzignā bi-l-ghēth*, and *tirzigna bi-l-neʿme*. Abu-Zahra (1988: 513) translates *ghēth* as 'divine rescue,' *rizq* as 'destined livelihood', and *neʿme* as 'divine blessings.' These words are also commonly used in rain prayers in Tunisia as a supplication for God to send rain.

[121] The transcription of words and the translation are Canaan's.

> Zayd ibn Khālid al-Juhanī reported that the Messenger of God, may God give him blessings and peace, performed the morning prayer in our company at al-Ḥudaybiya after it had rained during the night. When he had finished, he turned toward the people and asked: “Do you know what your Lord has said?” They said: “God and his Messenger know best.” He said: “[God] says: Two of My servants arise in the morning – one who believes in Me and one who does not believe in Me. As for the one who says, ‘It has rained by the Blessing and Mercy of God’, this one believes in Me and not in the stars. As for the one who says ‘It has rained because of such-and-such a star’, that one does not believe in Me but believes in the stars (مؤمن بِالكوكب).”[122]

The traditions predating the Christian structures on Jabal Hārūn have been speculated about by Lahelma and Fiema (2009). They suggest a cult connected to the Nabatean supreme female deity, al-‘Uzzā, who later became assimilated with Isis. Her identification as an astral deity, with a connection to the Morning Star/ Venus, is attested in Classical and Byzantine sources. Nevertheless, the song attests to aspects of pre-Islamic origin still remaining in the local tradition at the time of Canaan.[123] By the beginning of the twenty-first century, this song was already forgotten and all the people interviewed about the topic of the annual pilgrimage said that the songs sung during the visit were similar to the ones that are sung in all celebrations, such as weddings. Although the autumnal visit was apparently of greater importance and significance, there was also another celebration which took place in the spring. Canaan (1929: 210) calls these winter and summer feasts, the one taking place in February, and the other during the grape season. Al Salameen and Falahat (2009: 183) also note the two occasions, connecting them to the ancient practice of celebrating the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. Both times mark the change of seasons and were important for the agricultural and pastoral cycles.

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[122] I am grateful to Kaarlo Yrttiaho for bringing this passage to my attention. Bailey (1974: 588–589) also mentions the use of stars – namely, the Pleiades, Aldebaran, and Betelgeuse – as signs of the rainy season. The most important period of rain was called Wasm al-Thuraya, “sign of the Pleiades”. McCorriston (2011: 44) discusses the connection of mountaintop sanctuaries with rain: the high place was where the people came to petition for rain (*istiqā’*) from the deity of the place. She mentions the grave of Nabī mawlā maṭar “The Prophet Lord of Rain” in Hadramawt as an example of a continuation of this tradition. (McCorriston 2011: 47.)

[123] During the 2003 FJHP excavation season, an inscribed marble slab was uncovered in situ in the floor of the church nave. The slab contains three lines in Greek from Psalm 29:3: “The God of glory thunders, the Lord thunders over the mighty waters” (Frösén et al. 2008: 277–278). Frösén notes that the passage is extremely rarely used in such locations. Although it has been suggested that the slab could be somehow related to the storing of holy water, there also exists an intriguing possibility that the aspect of rain and water related to the mountain may have been carried into the Christian tradition as well.

Apparently, the autumnal feast had more importance for the farming communities. It also marked the beginning of agricultural work, and the Liyāthne would only begin to plough their fields after the pilgrimage, when the leaders of each subtribe started working on their own fields first (Miettunen 2008: 41). For the pastoralists, the spring season brought the families together in their spring pastures, and it marked the time of their large festivals. At this time, many of families would visit their ancestral tombs and arrange their own celebrations (Jaussen 1907: 315). Jennings-Bramley (1906: 26) describes how the Bedouin of the Sinai Peninsula "spend two days there, feasting, racing, dancing and enjoying themselves generally. Men, women and children come, and sometimes as many as 50 or 60 will collect together. They fancy the saint is propitiated by the notice they thus take of him, and takes pleasure in their visit."

In southern Jordan, similar family pilgrimages were mentioned in connection with the Saʿīdīyīn, who visit the tombs in Bīr Ḥamad annually, and the ʿAmārīn who gather at Gubūr ʿiyāl ʿAwwād. Faraj əMfarrej was also mentioned as a location for communal visits (23M1 Saʿīdīyīn, Umm Sayḥūn 2011). In Wadi Rum, however, I was told that there were no special occasions for visiting the tombs of ancestors, but people would visit whenever a need arose. Other communal visits with uncertain timing include the annual pilgrimage of Liyāthne women to al-Bawwāt (Al-Salameen & Falahat 2009: 189). The Bedouin from Mudawwara were told to sacrifice a goat whenever they pass Rujm al-ʿAṭawī during their journeys. The tombs of al-Ṣkharī in al-Jafr and Jidd al-Rafāyʿa in Bayḍāʾ were both connected to their own tribes, but it is unknown whether they have been visited by larger groups or individuals.

Throughout the region, it was also common to offer the first products of the year – whether they were newborn animals, milk, fruit, or grain – to the local saint. For the annual *ziyāra* in Wadi Mūsā, a newborn kid would be chosen in the spring as a sacrifice (*fadū*) for Hārūn and marked with a special cut in the ear. The goat was slaughtered and prepared for the evening dinner after the autumn pilgrimage. In the past, the custodian of the shrine of Aaron would collect the first products of the year from the surrounding areas and go as far as Ṭafīle to gather grain, fruit, and oil from the inhabitants as a gift to the saint (Al-Salameen & Falahat 2009: 187). Similar offerings were given to the shrine of al-əḤsēni. Milk products were first taken and poured on the roots of ʿAṭāya before the people would eat any (Al-Salameen & Falahat 2009: 188, 191). In Wadi Rum (11M1 Zelābiye, Rum village 2005), animals could similarly be dedicated to the ancestors, and milk products were also offered to them, as well as to Umm əDfuf.

7.2.2 Transition Rites

Ṭēr al-hudhud yā ʿarīs
wagga ʿala īdo
w-inta-l-gamar yā ʿarīs
w-iḥna banāt sīdo.[124]

The birth of a new child, especially a male child, has always been of great importance to the family and to the whole community in the region. The new generation ensures the continuation of the tribe; they carry on the name of the family and they will also become providers and caretakers for their parents when they grow old. The number of sons can determine the status of a woman, but they are also important in the life of the man as well. It is not surprising, therefore, that the very first transition – birth and the events related to it, such as joining the child to the community – is an important rite of passage. The newborn is very vulnerable to death caused by either natural or unnatural means. To protect the child from illness and evil, the parents can turn to the saints and ancestors. Among the people in the Petra region, it has been a common tradition to take babies to visit Aaron's tomb soon after birth.[125] This applies to both boys and girls and it is not connected to any other ceremony, although the visit may have been a fulfillment of a vow given by the woman to the saint in order to have a child. Many people even emphasized how important it is that the parents show the child to the saint before he or she is presented to the other members of the family and tribe. The ʿAmārīn have had their own tradition of taking their newborns to visit the cemetery of ʿIyāl ʿAwwād (Site 5) once they reach the age of 20 days (Sajdi 2011). In Maʿān (16MG2 2007), the birth of a child was also celebrated by touring the holy sites of the town. Early in the morning, the family would start by visiting Umm əJdīʿ first, bringing henna, food, and candles and offering sweets to the children of the town. After this, they would proceed to Shēkh ʿAbdallah and finally to the tomb of Shēkh əMḥammad. Those interviewed recalled four to seven cars driving around the town in a procession, visiting each site and offering sweets. After the tour, the family returned home and offered a feast in the evening.

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[124] "The hoopoe bird, oh bridegroom / Guards on his hand. / And you are the moon, oh bridegroom / And we are daughters of his grandfather." A wedding song sung by young girls, recorded in Wadi Araba 2005. The word *sīd* was noted by the informants to be Palestinian in origin. The word for 'grandfather' in the Bedouin dialect is *jidd*.

[125] This was mentioned by several people in the Petra region, both Liyāthne and Bedūl. On 29 August 2007, I spoke with an older man from al-Bedūl who said that he and his wife had taken every one of their ten children to visit the shrine of Nabī Hārūn.

To establish an even stronger connection, the child could be "bound" to the saint. In the Petra region, the formula *maʿalligtak ʿa-n-nabī Hārūn* 'I bind you to prophet Hārūn' could be uttered, thus ensuring the protection of the saint. The children thus put under the prophet's sacred protection were called *muʿallagīn* (7W1 Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002). A child could also be named after the saint, and the names Hārūn and Mūsā have been very popular in the Petra region and as far away as Maʿān.[126] In Wadi Rum (11M1 Zelābiye 2005), children were also named after pious ancestors to gain their blessing. Names such as Zīdān (Shrēf al-Shyūkh, Site 23) and əḤmēd (al-Maṭālga, Site 21) were mentioned as especially favored ones. There is also a reference to pieces of hair cut from a child and placed in the room built near the Spring of Moses, probably for the sake of protection (Al Salameen & Falahat 2009: 191).

The circumcision of boys in the village community was described by Granqvist (1947: 207–209). In the villages and towns, it seems to have been one of the big celebrations, and probably the major one in the life of a young boy. This celebration lasted several days and included feasting, dancing, and a procession. Granqvist also notes that the ceremony could be performed at the tomb of a saint to enhance the sanctity of the rite. Canaan (1926: 142) also writes about this practice in his survey of Palestinian sites, mentioning visits to the holy sites during the procession. In relation to southern Jordan, however, he notes the lack of this tradition when he studied Jabal Hārūn (Canaan 1929: 211). Parallel to his observations, I was not able to find any examples of circumcision ceremonies performed at or including visits to the holy sites by the Bedouin. In the past, it was visibly celebrated among the Bedouin of Petra. It seems that this tradition has changed, and the ceremony itself has become a more solemn and private occasion. During my time in the village of Umm Sayḥūn, I did not see any celebrations of circumcision. Apparently, the circumcision ceremony has been a more important celebration in rural and urban communities. The only information from the region comes from the town of Maʿān. Umm əJdīʿ and the tombs of both Shēkh ʿAbdallah and Shēkh əMḥammad in Maʿān (16MG2, Maʿān 2007) were mentioned as sites where young boys were taken to visit after their circumcision ceremony in a similar manner of procession and celebration as after the birth of a child. In the past, it was an important part of the circumcision day, although the practice is no longer continued. Visiting the tombs was believed to give boys *baraka* for the rest of their lives.

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[126] Doughty (1921: 34) mentions the case of Maʿān, but the people also told me about the tradition in Wadi Mūsā.

Marriage is one of the great rites of transition in the life of an individual, but at the same time it is also a social celebration, joining together the whole community for several days of festivities. The wedding celebrations in southern Jordan last several days, although in modern times the period of feasting has been shortened. I was able to participate in a number of weddings in the village of Umm Sayḥūn, and also in Wadi Araba. Even though a highly ritualized event, the Bedouin wedding celebration appears to be very secular in character. It is the only one of the great rites studied where the holy sites and saints did not seem to play any role.

In the folk tradition, the bride has been often magically protected against the powers of evil. Granqvist describes a pitchfork dressed in woman's clothes that was carried beside the bride as she was taken from her home to the bridegroom's house (Seger 1987: 91). This doll was made in order to draw the Evil Eye away from the bride. According to Granqvist (1947: 200), a similar doll was also used in the circumcision procession to protect the circumcised boys. A doll used in the "Rain Mother" ritual had a different role in the procession, most likely being a representation of the Rain Mother herself, parallel to the processions in various religions where the images of gods or saints are carried.

In southern Jordan, however, no dolls were carried in the Bedouin procession when the bride was brought to her new home. One practice that may be related to the magical protection against the Evil Eye is the make-up of the bride. Her face is powdered pure white, with eyes darkened and lips painted bright red. This extremely peculiar look is unlikely to simply represent ideal beauty, but rather serves as a protective "mask".

The only other marriage ritual I was able to record which may have carried a magical meaning is related to a location in Bayḍā'. There is an old Nabataean cistern nowadays called "The Well of Brides" (*Bīr al-ʿarā'is*). The cistern has been carved into the rock, and a staircase leads down to the level of the water. Over the centuries, soil accumulated in the wide empty space and had almost filled it. Apparently, Diana Kirkbride cleaned the cistern while conducting her excavations at the Natufian site in the late 1950s and it has been again in use, as the water accumulates in the cistern during the winter months. When looking at the walls, a row of hand imprints surrounds the whole cave. The marks are up near the ceiling, several meters above the floor level now that the accumulated soil has been cleaned away. Two members of the Bedūl accompanying me during my visit to the cistern in 2011 told that it was a tradition for brides to enter the cave and leave an imprint of their palm, dyed with henna, on the surface of the wall. I was unable to find out the reason for this ritual. It also appears that the whole tradition was discontinued after the room was cleaned, as it would require a tall ladder to be able to leave an imprint near the ceiling, and on the lower levels no imprints were seen.

The last of the transitions, death and burial, have already been discussed above in relation to the veneration of ancestors. In addition to the living, the power and *baraka* of the holy site were thought to also extend to the ordinary dead buried in proximity to the saint. In some of the cemeteries, such as in Bīr Ḥamad (Site 9) or al-Hajfe (Site 29), it is not always so clear whether the burial site already existed before one tomb became holy or whether it was the tomb of the saint that drew the other burials. On the other hand, there are sites such as al-Bawwāt (Site 7) and al-Maṭālga (Site 21) where the saint's tomb is clearly the central structure, and other burials have been made in its vicinity. In the Petra region, the dead were buried facing Jabal Hārūn instead of Mecca. This was done by all the tribes residing in its vicinity, and Crawford (1930: 292) also notes this tradition among the Ḥuwayṭāt, Nuʿēmāt, Bedūl, and Saʿīdīyīn, as well as the Liyāthne, who had their own cemetery in Wadi Mūsā.

The Bedouin do not celebrate birthdays. Today, the reason for the lack of such celebration is based on religious prohibitions, and it is unlikely that in the past birthdays were even known. However, even though this type of annual festival is not celebrated, there are always special occasions in the everyday lives of people that deserve to be recognized. Small transitions take place and become ritualized within the community, although the transitional characteristic itself is not always clearly displayed. These small events represent an intricate expression of ritual communality even if they do not demonstrate cyclical patterns. Among the Bedūl, a member of the community would occasionally offer a dinner, inviting the tribe or subtribe to participate in the meal. Such a meal may be arranged on special occasions, such as when the individual has been ill and is coming home from the hospital or if someone has returned from abroad. Very often, it is simply a public demonstration of personal piety or generosity. These dinners are usually *mensaf*, the festival meal which demands that the host sacrifice several goats from his flock. These meals did not usually last very long. The food was eaten quickly and after a few glasses of tea or coffee, the guests dispersed. What then ensued among the female members of the host family was a lively discussion concerning the guests: who of the invited men had participated, who had only sent his wife, and who had not arrived at all! There was a subtle air of resentment toward those who had failed to perform their communal duty and participate in this social ritual. I observed a very similar discussion in 2009 when visiting the sickbed of an elderly Bedūl woman. The women who were visiting there were very interested in hearing who had come to see her during her illness and who had not.

7.2.3 Situational Rituals

Rituals of crisis are related to unexpected, disastrous, or dangerous events that affect the whole community, a family, or an individual. Situations falling into this category and presented in this section include drought and danger of famine, illnesses, the death of children or animals, infertility, and fear of natural or supernatural enemies.

Rain and water

For the people of the Petra region, the annual pilgrimage to the shrine of Aaron was one means of ensuring the coming of rain. Sometimes, however, the rains did not come despite the visit. In such cases, another pilgrimage could be arranged to the mountain. The Bedūl (4M1 Bedūl, Petra 2002) did not have their own annual *mōsam,* although some families did participate in the pilgrimage of the Liyāthne, but they would also organize a communal visit if there was no rain. They were sometimes accompanied by ʿAmārīn families from Bayḍāʾ. The journey to the mountain was much more solemn in character than the visit of the Liyāthne, and only when returning did people start singing and shooting. Aaron seems to have been the main provider of rain in the whole region, as praying for rain was not mentioned in relation to the other holy sites. The continuation of the cult and the possible ancient connection between the mountain sanctuary and the rains have already been discussed above. Perhaps in more recent times such a miracle was also seen as being beyond the powers of the ancestors and only possible for a prophet of God. Holy and miraculous springs, on the other hand, are included in my data. The Spring of Moses was thought to have a miraculous origin, and a spring in Maʿān was protected by the "Daughters of the Spring". Bīr Ḥamad was said to have been created only after the ancestor of the Saʿīdīyīn, Sabbāḥ, was buried nearby: there was no water before, but after the grave had been dug a spring opened and is still in use (23M1 Saʿīdīyīn, Umm Sayḥūn 2011).

In the Petra region, the shrine of Aaron was also central in a ritual procession known as "The Mother of Rain" (*Umm al-ghēth*). A crude doll, made of a ladle, pitchfork, or wooden stakes tied in the form of a cross and dressed up in female clothes,[127] is carried at the front of the procession. The participants attending the procession are usually women and children. The procession moves around the village or camp, singing. If there is a saint's shrine on the way, they may stop in front of it. In Wadi Mūsā, the women faced the shrine of Aaron and sang songs toward the mountain. Later, the ritual became part of the annual *ziyāra* and was performed on the mountain during the festival (6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002).

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[127] In Wadi Mūsā, however, the Liyāthne used a male costume for the doll (6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002).

The songs contain prayers asking for rain. From the people interviewed regarding the song, the older women from the Bedūl and ʿAmārīn only remembered the first two lines. The informants from Maʿān and Wadi Mūsā provided whole stanzas, but they also began with these same lines:

Yamm el-ghēth ghēthīnā	O Mother of the Rain, rain upon us
Ballī shwayshet rā'īnā	wet the head of our shepherd

As the procession moves around the area, people donate food to the participants. At the end, the food is prepared and eaten, as well as distributed to others passing by.

"The Mother of Rain", along with songs and the ritual procession, is known throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Musil (1928: 10–13) witnessed the rain procession among the Rwala and in Kerak, and Jaussen (1948: 323–329) in southern Jordan. Canaan (1926: 144–153) describes the ritual as performed in Palestine, and Westermarck (1926: 268–269) has a similar account from Morocco. In Turkey, the doll was called *Yagmur gelini*, or the "Bride of Rain" (Başgöz 1967: 304–306). In Morocco, the names "Bride" or "Bride of Rain" are also known, but the doll was also called *Talġunja*, as it was made of a wooden ladle (*aġanja*), or *morja*, "Mother of Hope". A connection to the local holy places is mentioned by Abu Zahra (1988: 521), who describes a visit to all the surrounding shrines in the village of Sidi Ameur in Tunisia during the rain ritual.

There are various theories on the origin of this ritual. The tradition in the Petra region may be a local continuity. Archaeological evidence suggests Nabataean worship of Isis/Al-Uzza as a water goddess at Wadi Abū ʿOllēqa and on Jabal Hārūn (Lahelma & Fiema 2008: 209–210). Başgöz (1967: 305) also discusses the water ritual in light of descriptions from the ancient world, noting processions held in Egypt and Mesopotamia, where images of gods were carried through the cities. Westermarck (1926: 269) mentions the Berber origins of the rain procession and the magical rainmaking practices in Libya, already documented by Dio Cassius in the third century CE. Abu-Zahra (1988: 522) also notes the similarity between the ancient Libyan goddess Tanit and her ability to make rain, and "Mother Tambu" of the Tunisian rain ritual. In contrast to the ancient goddess, Mother Tambu is the one in need of rain. She is the personification of barren earth, thirsty for the rains to make her fertile again. Finally, Canaan (1926: 144) suggests a Christian origin, with the doll in woman's clothing being a reference to the Virgin Mary. Nevertheless, the need for water is universal to all communities, and droughts have always been events of danger and crisis. Various magical and ritual means of ensuring adequate water have been used throughout the world.[128]

Illness

If the lack of rain was a situation that affected the whole community, there were also more private and personal times of crisis. When asking about illnesses and causes of death, the people had a very nostalgic view about life in the past. Especially some of the elderly men of the Bedūl spoke very highly of the old lifestyle before moving to the village, stating that it was healthier. Similarly, the diet of the past was often considered to have been much healthier than today. The food was said to have been simple and natural, keeping the people in good physical condition. In 2011, I had one discussion with members of a Bedūl family where the less positive aspects of the past life were also mentioned. According to them, people died much younger and very few people lived past the age of sixty. In addition, people died of illnesses that today can be cured. Fever (حمّة), perhaps referring to malaria or typhus fever although it can be a general term for any type of serious illness involving a high fever (Canaan 1925: 197), meningitis (سحاية), and snake bites (صل) were mentioned as the main causes of death in the past. This memory is supported by the official figures. The Bedouin of Jordan suffered from a higher mortality rate and lower life expectancy than the rest of the population. In 1977, 70% of the Bedouin children were still reported as being stunted and 17% wasted due to malnutrition (Shoup 1980: 111). The historical records show repeated occurrences of drought and famine, which also affected the Bedūl until the 1970s. On the other hand, for the semisedentary tribes who were used to a mobile lifestyle, moving from tents and caves into densely populated villages has probably created issues of hygiene and new kinds of epidemics. This may have caused the people to remember the past as being healthier.

When it came to curing illnesses via traditional methods, the means were mostly limited to prayer, magic, and other means of healing that were available in the surrounding nature. There were specialists to whom people turned in case of an illness. Some specialized in humans, but there were others trained in curing animals as well (9MG1 Zelābiye, Rum village 2005). For medicine, various herbs were mentioned, some of them still in use. For example, *maryamīye* (dried sage) was often drunk as an infusion, being said to help against colds or an upset stomach. My hostess made me drink sage tea and eat crushed garlic mixed with yoghurt when I was suffering from a cold. Honey, *zanjabīl* (ginger), and *grunfel* (cloves) were also mentioned as good medicine. Berries, seeds, and leaves of various shrubs and trees growing in the mountains, such as *ʿarʿar* (juniper), *harmal* (Peganum harmala, Syrian rue) and *kharrūb* (Ceratonia siliqua, carob tree or St. John's bread) were also used in medicinal drinks. Cloves were also made into necklaces due to their good scent, and *harmal* seeds could be similarly bound into a necklace or a protective decoration that was hung on the wall of the house or tent.

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[128] See Frazer (1981: 13–22) for examples of different rituals related to rainmaking in various cultures.

Other means of healing included cauterization, which seems to have been a very common procedure. An iron nail would be heated over the fire and then pressed against the skin at the spot where the pain was situated.[129] Infants were sometimes fed burned and ground-up scorpions mixed with milk to protect them from the sting (Shoup 1980: 112), or children were simply allowed to be stung to make them immune, if they survived.[130] Holy texts have also been seen as a strong protection, and were used to protect small children as well. In 2011, a newborn child in Umm Sayḥūn was protected with a piece of paper where passages from the Qur'ān had been inscribed. A piece of garlic was also placed with the text in her swaddling clothes, as well as kohl around her eyes – both traditional magical means of protection against evil. Their use was explained to me in medical terms: the kohl was believed to clean the eye and give long and thick eyelashes. The garlic, on the other hand, was to draw away the yellow hue (neonatal jaundice) from the skin.

Alongside natural medicine and medical procedures, the saints could also be petitioned. It might be a last resort, but it could be used in addition to, or instead of, the other methods. Some sites are connected to both the healing power of the saint and the ideas of natural medicine. One medical practice among the Bedouin was to "bathe" the sick person in warm sand, as this was believed to cure the ailments of the body. Any place with soft sand could work, but in my material there are two places which seem to have been considered more powerful than normal sand: Umm əDfūf (Site 29) near Wadi Rum was the more powerful one, but the other sand dune al-Marmad (Site 31) was also visited for the sake of finding a cure. The sacred power of dunes is not limited to the area of southern Jordan. Serjeant (1971: 74) suggests that this type of sanctification of sand dunes may go back to pre-Islamic times. There are examples from Yemen, where the "White Dune" (Al-Kathīb al-Abyaḍ) at Abyan is a popular center of pilgrimage, and Nabī Hūd has been buried in the "Red Dune" (Al-Kathīb al-Aḥmar).

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[129] This method was described by both the Bedūl and the Zelābiye. I sometimes heard mothers saying it jokingly when they were talking about a misbehaving child. *Kawwīha* 'cauterize them', they would say warningly.

[130] I saw two Bedūl men with scars from such deliberate stings.

Even though most of the holy sites appear to be "generic" in terms of their ability to effect miracles and provide for the needs of the people, there also seemed to be some specialization among the saints. Nabī Hārūn was closely related to the rains and rainmaking, although he could be addressed in any type of crisis, including a need for healing. The tomb of əḪmēd Sālem was said to be a place to visit in case of various illnesses and especially snake bites, while Faraj əMfarrej had the special power to heal the blind. The practice of taking a sick person to a holy site and leaving him or her there overnight was mentioned in several cases. The tombs of the prophet Aaron – al-Fugarā, al-əḪsēni, and ʻIyāl ʻAwwād – seem to have been the most common locations in the Petra region for such healing. On the other hand, if the person was too sick to be taken to any of these places, another person could go instead and visit the saint for the sake of the sick person (4M1 Bedūl, Petra 2002). In Maʻān (16MG2, Maʻān 2007), a tour similar to the ones taking place after birth and circumcision took place if a child became sick. The family would visit the three major holy sites of the town – first Umm əJdīʻ, then Shēkh ʻAbdallah, and finally Shēkh əMḥammad – before returning home. A woman who was sick could choose any one of the saints, but more often she would choose either ʻAbdallah or əMḥammad. The tradition of visits seems to have been different in Maʻān. Young unmarried girls never visited the holy places. Only women did this, after they had gotten married, or young children with their mothers. This kind of limitation has not been mentioned elsewhere.

Defense

Means of healing could involve natural medicine, magic, and prayer. Similarly, the causes for illnesses could be natural or caused by evil. The Evil Eye, malevolent magic, *jinns,* and spirits could cause sickness and other misfortune. In 2002, a local young man working on the excavations at Jabal Hārūn suffered from what appeared to be an epileptic seizure. His friends came to the conclusion that this condition was the result of him sleeping at the wrong time of the day and thus becoming vulnerable to attack from *jinns*. The prescribed cure was to read to him from the Qur'ān. In general, various neurological disorders and mental conditions could be interpreted as work of *jinns* and other spirits. To heal such conditions, a person could also be brought to a holy site and left to sleep there overnight.[131] As the Evil Eye, witchcraft, and *jinns* are all mentioned in the Qur'ān, even people with a more negative approach toward visits to the tombs, divination, or other aspects of old beliefs took these threats seriously. During an informal discussion with a Bedūl family in 2011, however, I was assured that magic and demons should be fought with piety, prayer, and reading of the Qur'ān, not with counter-magic or going to graves.

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[131] Hani al-Falahat (2002) recalled the following incident: "A few years ago I met some people, maybe from the ʻAmārīn. They brought a lady, whom they had tied down with ropes. She was brought on a pick-up, and they wanted to take her to Jabal Hārūn so that she could get rid of her illness. I don't know what happened to her."

Pregnancy and protection

Since conceiving children and thus continuing the family line has been of major importance in the life cycle of the bedouin, infertility has been regarded as a great misfortune. According to the Bedouin, one cause for infertility in women can be an elevated uterus. The healer might feel with her hands that the uterus had risen from its normal position, thus making conception impossible. To cure this condition, she would press her palms on the woman's stomach and push the womb downwards. In addition, the woman would drink herbal medicine to assure the return of the uterus to its normal place. As a result, it was believed that the woman would be able to conceive again.[132] The idea of the moving womb is known from the ancient Graeco-Roman medical sources (for example, those of Galen of Pergamum). This concept was then transferred to medieval Islamic medicine, where the condition known as "uterine suffocation" (*ikhtināq al-raḥim*) was discussed by various physicians, including al-Rāzī in the ninth century. Most often this condition was thought to cause anxiety – or hysteria (Porman 2009).

However, as in the case of illnesses, a woman could also turn to the saints in her search for a solution. For example, in Maʿān, a woman suffering from infertility would visit the site of Umm əJdīʿ. Jaussen (1907: 303) describes how she would "rest in the shadow and rub her body against the stone or with the soil taken from the foot of the rock. She returns to her home with the firm belief that she will be a mother soon". A visit to a holy site could also be arranged if the woman did become pregnant but the children who were born died young, or if the family's cattle were dying.[133] In addition, a holy site was considered hallowed ground, providing protection from any earthly or supernatural danger. Animals and other property could be placed beside the tomb, putting them under the protection of the saint and keeping them safe from theft. A person fearing the dangers of night or being pursued by enemies could sleep beside the tomb or seek shelter within its sphere.[134]

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[132] This was told by a Bedūl woman in Umm Sayḥūn in November 2011. Her mother was an expert at such procedures.

[133] 11M1 Zelābiye, Rum village 2005. He had visited the tomb of al-Maṭālga himself, when his goats started dying in great numbers. He stayed overnight by the tomb with his whole family. He had also visited Umm əDfūf once with the same objective. Al-Marṣad was also one of the places visited by the people of Wadi Rum on such occasions.

Communication with the saints and ancestors was not only supplications through prayer and pleading. People could also negotiate with the saint. In case of an illness or other danger, the family members could address their ancestor, promising to sacrifice a goat or camel, but only if the person recovered (Jennings-Bramley 1906: 134).

7.3 The punishing saints

In contrast to the more benevolent character of the saints, they have another side as well. They not only act as healers, protectors, and providers, but they can also punish and take vengeance. During his survey in Palestine, Canaan (1927: 13–14) noted that the saints can be divided into two groups on the basis of the manner in which they treat transgressors. The local people themselves use the term *ṭawīlīn er-rūḥ* 'forbearing' for the first group of saints. These tolerant saints do not usually respond aggressively toward a person who has behaved wrongly. Sometimes they may remind the person in question, giving him time to correct his ways, and they may show their full power at the moment when people start to doubt their abilities. As might be expected, this group of saints is the minority, and they are usually thought to be less significant. The other group of saints is more respected and feared. This group is known as *nizqīn* or *ḥishrīn*, the 'irritable ones'. Any person who irritates the saint can expect to be punished, usually within three days. The punishment can be very severe and can affect people, animals, and the property of the transgressor's close circle. Paralysis, illness, and even death are often mentioned as outcomes.

As a whole, a saint's punishment can be directed in two different ways. In the first case, it is the *walī* him- or herself who has been offended by someone. The other scenario involves two parties, one party having been treated wrongly by the other and therefore invoking the *walī* to avenge the injustice. The offenses toward the *walī* may be divided into several categories. The usual reason for punishment is general scorn toward the *walī* and his powers, expressed either in words or in one's actions.

> There was a soldier here in Wadi Mūsā who said that the people were visiting an idol [*ṣanam*, 'idol' or 'image'] when they went to Jabal Hārūn. One year

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[134] These practices were described by the Bedouin of Wadi Rum in 2005. Musil (1908: 329) notes how a person being threatened by his enemies could seek protection from Swēri and become invisible to the enemy eyes as long as he remained near his tomb.

> they made the visit and he came with them riding a horse to the mōsam al-nabī. According to the tradition, people do not enter the shrine before they have taken off their shoes, but he entered with his shoes on, saying: “This is just an idol.” When he got out and had just climbed down the stairs he saw that his horse had died. He asked if somebody could carry his saddle back to the village on their donkeys or other animals, but they all refused to carry it because he had acted irreverently toward the prophet. So he had to carry his saddle all the way back to Wadi Mūsā. (1M1, Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002)
>
> A policeman was transferred to Wadi Mūsā from some other place and started working in the area. And there was a holy visit to Jabal Hārūn and he participated with the local people. All the way up to Jabal Hārūn he kept on joking and laughing. When they asked him to go up to the shrine in order to pray, he said: “You are ignorant and you don’t know what you are doing.” And they kept warning him, saying: “Please, stop it, or something bad will happen to you”, but he did not listen. They said that when he came back riding his big horse, it suddenly broke its back when jumping over a small wadi. And when he reached his house he found his oldest son, who had been strong and healthy, dead. (6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002)

A story told by a man from al-Saʿīdīyīn (23M1, Umm Sayḥūn 2011) also talks about a man who decided not to go on the annual visit to the tomb of his ancestor. The informant could not recall the name of the site, but he was probably referring to the tomb of Faraj əMfarrej (Site 10) in əMraybet. As a result of this decision, his goats began to give bloody milk. Only when he took his whole flock with him to the tomb to visit did the goats again return to normal. These examples portray the stories related to neglect or irreverence toward the *walī*, where the wrongdoer is punished almost immediately. It seems to be very common in these cases that the punishment does not strike the transgressor himself directly, but is often directed at his family and property.

Another way of offending the *walī* is to remove or damage the property belonging to the holy site. Cutting branches from sacred trees is a recurring element in the stories. Canaan (1927: 14) includes a description of a man from the village of Liftā who cut a branch from the tree belonging to Shēkh Ḥusēn in Bēt Surīk. When he struck his mule with the stick made from the branch, the animal was hit by a disease and only cured when the man returned the stick to the holy site and asked for forgiveness from the walī. Buṭmat al-Minye (Site 32) near Wadi Mūsā is also known as a tree from which no branches or leaves should be taken, as such an act would be punished by either death or infertility (Al Salameen & Falahat 2009: 191). In 2011, another place called Dḥāḥa near the village was mentioned, which also contained a tree from which no branches were to be cut (28M2 Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2011).

The third kind of punishable offence is entering a holy place in a state – either physical or mental – that is not approved by the *walī*. A woman who tries to visit a shrine in an impure state (for example, menstruating or having given birth recently) will not be able to approach. Punishments for such an act, which are listed by Canaan (1925: 171), include being bitten by a snake, the color of a dome turning bloody, or the sand soiled by the woman's footprints being mixed with water and given to her dead relatives to drink in the afterlife. Thieves may not be able to step inside at all, as is believed to be the case with the shrine of Hārūn. They may come as close as the doorway, but as soon as they try to step inside they will feel as if they are being strangled. They will not be able to breathe as long as they are inside, so they are forced to leave immediately. The feeling passes as soon as they exit the room. (1M1, Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002.)

A nonbeliever entering a shrine is also considered a grave offence, and the fear of drawing the saint's wrath upon the man or woman who allowed such person to visit the holy site was already documented by nineteenth-century travelers. Hornstein (1898: 101) wanted to see the tomb of Hārūn in 1898, but when he tried to find a guide to take him up to the mountain, all refused: "They said if they took us up some evil would assuredly befall them before the year was out." Libbey and Hoskins (1905: 235) faced a very similar situation when they planned to visit the shrine: "the people firmly believe that evil will surely befall, before the year is out, the wretched man who commits the sacrilege of aiding or guiding any stranger to the sacred spot at the top of the mount."

In contrast to their experiences, Burckhardt, who was traveling disguised as a Muslim, was able to exploit this fear of punishment when he tried to enter and see the ancient ruins of Petra. He told the locals that he had vowed to sacrifice a goat for Hārūn, which made his guide lead him into the valley, as "the dread of drawing upon himself, by resistance, the wrath of Aaron completely silenced him" (Burckhardt 1983: 419). These examples attest that both allowing a person unworthy to enter the holy site and restraining a worthy person from reaching the holy site were both seen as punishable acts. Hornstein was trying to find a guide from among the Bedūl, but it is very likely that such beliefs have been common throughout the region. For example, the Liyāthne have had other practices that are related to this fear of punishment, especially in connection to visiting Jabal Hārūn. When someone asks for a ride or wants to borrow an animal in order to get to the mountain, his request cannot be refused, as such a refusal could result in losing the animal that had been requested. Hārūn's name can be applied on other occasions as well and it is not restricted only to the visits or to the transportation to the shrine. When the prophet's name is used in different formulas, such as *bi-ḥaḍḍ al-nabī Hārūn*, *ʿandak al-nabī Hārūn*, or *khāsmak b-al-*

nabī Hārūn, the invitation, request, or service becomes impossible to refuse. By doing so, the offence would be turned toward the prophet Hārūn himself. (M2 Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002 [Hani Al-Falahat].)

Invoking the wrath of the walī has also been a way to seek justice when someone has suffered from the acts of another person. The practices encountered in this region that involve two parties and the saint who dispenses justice include: stealing or damaging property placed under the protection of the *walī*, swearing an oath in his name in order to find a liar or traitor, and asking for help against oppression.

The practice of bringing property, such as goods or animals, into the sacred territory and placing them under the protection of the saint was discussed in the earlier section. Stories warn thieves about the consequences of stealing these goods. Umm əDfūf (Site 20) in Wadi Rum has been seen as a very active protector. A famous story told in both Wadi Rum and Mudawwara talks about a Bedouin who brought camel milk as a gift to Umm əDfūf daily as a sign of his respect. One day his camel was stolen by a thief. The man went to the *walī* to ask for help. As a response, the *walī* raised two strong storms: one was gentle and brought the camel back to the man. The other storm tormented the thief with a wind that stung like nails. (11M1 Zelābiye, Rum village 2005.)

A false oath is not taken lightly, and a common way of finding out if a person has committed a crime is to make him swear an oath in the name of the *walī*. Similarly, if two parties are arguing over a crime and the judge is not able to determine who is guilty, both may be asked to take the oath so that the transgressor will be revealed. Musil (1908: 329) notes that the tomb of Swēri (Site 34) was a place to swear oaths in the case of a dispute. The people went to his grave and placed their right hand on the tombstone, saying: "By the life of Swēri, it is so and so." Musil does not mention what was to be expected if a false oath was sworn, but it is very probable that the people involved would expect the guilty to be punished by Swēri. In Maʿān, according to Jaussen (1948: 311), it was Shēkh ʿAbdallah whose name was called upon when making an oath. If the one who swore was giving a false oath, it was believed that he would die. Canaan (1929: 207) notes that the people of Wadi Mūsā use the *maqām* of al-əḤsēnī in these cases. A false oath in his name is punished within three days. A person accused of a crime may also prove his innocence by placing his right hand on the headstone of the ancestor's tomb and swearing an oath. However, the most powerful oath would be the one sworn in the name of Aaron. Giving a false statement in his name would be punished by illness or even death (Canaan 1929: 211).

This power was sometimes related to the leaders of the tribes as well. Two disagreeing parties gathered at the house of the *shēkh* and were made to swear an oath. The person who had been lying, and thus had given a false oath, was bound to receive an immediate punishment. (6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002.) Among the Liyāthne, this kind of power was related to the leader of al-Shamāsīn, who was also responsible for declaring the annual visits to Aaron's shrine. This connection is seen more directly in a story where the *ziyāra* was declared by someone who did not have the authority to do it.

> Zoghran was a man in Wadi Mūsā. Once he declared the visit to Jabal Hārūn by himself. When the shēkh heard this, he declared that when someone does the declaration while not having the authority, he will be punished for his behavior. Now he was riding a donkey when he said these words and at the same moment when he stopped his donkey, Zoghran slipped and broke his arm. (1M1 Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002)

Finally, a private plea addressing the saint directly, begging him to punish a bad deed, was the final means of an oppressed person hoping for help if earthly judges would not take their case under consideration. In Maʿān, Umm əJdīʿ (Site 16) especially favored by the local women. A woman mistreated by her husband would take a brush and go to visit the *walīya*. As she cleaned the wall with the brush, she begged for the saint to take away her husband. (16MG2 Maʿān 2007.)

The punitive acts described above are by no means arbitrary, as there is a strong sense of justice and rightfulness. After all, the living saints were known as pious, wise, and righteous people who used their skills for the good of their community. These characteristics would then remain even after death. The *awliyāʾ* are the last hope for people who feel that they have been treated unjustly. Trusting in the justice of the *walī*, or knowing that the *walī* will reveal lies and treacheries, reinforces order and provides comfort. In cases where the *walī* is the offended party, the stories emphasize respect toward traditions and maintaining the old practices. The stories where the punished one is a horse or goats or even a son – instead of the transgressor – may bear traces of the old Semitic jurisprudence. The thought of the whole household or even the tribe being held equally responsible for the evil deeds of one member, and thus also subject to punishment, is clearly present in ancient texts, including the code of Hammurabi and Mosaic law. Perhaps the story where the irreverent authority figure lost his oldest son bears a memory of the story of Pharaoh losing his firstborn son. In fact, many of the people receiving punishment in the stories are outsiders.[135]

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[135] As a sidenote, saints have not always been seen as untouchable either. Abu-Zahra (1988: 524) recorded a case in Tunisia where the people turned the saint's coffin upside down and hung the covering cloth outside in the air. If the saint did not answer their prayers, the cloth was torn to pieces. Thus, the saint was expected to uphold his side of the deal or be punished as well.

7.4 Leaders, dreamers, and healers: The people with power

The main attempt of this section is to reconstruct the possible characteristics of the ancestors and saints, comparing the old stories to people with special powers living nowadays. The ancestors that were venerated after their death had also been extraordinary individuals when they were alive. In the past, some of these extraordinary characteristics may have resulted in the person becoming a *walī* after his or her death. The most common word used to describe the people buried in holy sites was *ṣāliḥ* 'pious'. Such devoted piety gave them special powers which they used for the good of their people. 'Awwād, the ancestor of 'Iyāl 'Awwād, is said to have been a judge who had telepathic abilities to bring news from faraway places, telling about the other members of the tribe. He is also said to have been able to light an almond branch with no matches.[136] The descendants of 'Awwād have also been known as people who possess supernatural abilities. Ḥwēmil, əShteyān, and Khadra (two brothers and their sister from the 'Iyāl 'Awwād branch) are believed to be the last of the people with special powers in the region.[137]

Members of the al-Fugarā buried in al-Bawwāt are also said to have been pious men with the ability to see the future in their dreams. Such a person was found among the Bedūl. At the time of my visit in 2002, he lived near the Snake Monument in Petra. His status is related to the prophetic dreams he receives, in which a man appears to him and tells who should visit Aaron's shrine and when. He then informs the people in question, giving them the message to perform the visit. Another of his responsibilities is to declare a visit to the shrine if there is no rain. He also sees the time for this in his dreams, declaring it to the Bedūl, although the people living in Bayḍā' have also often joined the visit. Not all his dreams are related to these visits, as he also receives other kinds of information concerning the future. For example, a clothed woman signifies a good year, while a naked woman is a sign of a bad year. Sometimes the dreams are also related to the future of individuals. (4M1 Bedūl, Petra 2002.)

The people's attitudes toward him seem to vary. I brought him up in an informal discussion with a Bedūl man and woman in 2011. The man had a somewhat skeptical attitude. He believed that no mortal man can see the future, since it is only God who knows what is to come. The woman, on the other hand, commented that the dreams come from God, as the man receiving these dreams is pious. When talking with the dreamer himself in 2002, he brought up an example where he had declared a visit for rain but the Bedūl preferred instead to watch a movie that was being shown in the village on the same night. He went alone, but apparently his visit was enough, as the rains began when he was returning home from the pilgrimage.

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[136] This story was written on a plaque in the small ethnographic museum in Bayḍā' (recorded during a visit in October 2005).

[137] Their story has also been recorded in the ethnographic museum of Bayḍā' and in Sajdi 2011. The siblings died around 1999–2000, and I never had the opportunity to meet them myself. See also the description of the healing methods of an 'Amārīn healer (Bille 2008: 145–148).

Among the Liyāthne, there was also a person who made the official declarations for the annual visits to Aaron.[138] This right passed to him from his father and his grandfather, who were the leaders of the ʻUbēdiye and ʻAlāya. Similarly, the leader of the Shrūr and Bani ʻAṭā made the declaration of visits to his tribes. His decision to visit was not based on dreams, but done according to his own perceptions. As discussed above, these leaders were the only ones who had the right to declare the visits, and others doing it would face punishment. The settling of disputes and dispensation of justice were the other responsibilities of these leaders, and the oaths sworn in their houses had an effect – good or bad – depending on the veracity of the words sworn.

In addition to dreams, there are also other ways to see the future. Throwing stones was a method of divination among the Bedouin of Petra. A person wanting to find an answer to his or her question would address someone with knowledge of reading the stones (*khaṭṭāṭ*). The question could be related to any matter of insecurity, for example, events taking place in the future or asking the whereabouts of another person or a lost item. The stones could apparently be of any number, although for me the process was carried out with seven stones. The stones are thrown in the air and as they land on the ground, the answer is interpreted from the final formation in which they fell.[139] The situation in which the practice was introduced to me was very informal and shown almost in a joking manner.[140] Yet, there were also people present who resented the act, calling it *ḥarām*. As with all knowledge and wisdom, God is often considered the source of all and the only one who can see the future. Attempting to use divination or magic to see things unknown would involve other sources of knowledge, such as *jinns* or demons, thus making the act forbidden.

An older Bedūl woman who knew the art of divination was also skilled in methods of healing and midwifery, including putting back the womb. Rami Sajdi

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[138] I met this person, the *sheikh* of the Shamāsīn family, in Wadi Mūsā in 2002.

[139] Musil (1928: 404) mentions the soothsayers of the Rwala tribe who use seven pebbles in their readings. Their full equipment, however, consists of altogether 23 items, including glass, stone, brick, seashells, and silver. The reading itself was similar: the items were thrown on the carpet and the answer to the question was read from their relative positions. He also mentions the term *khaṭṭāṭa*.

[140] This took place in Umm Sayḥūn in November 2011.

(2011) interviewed a Bedouin healer in Wadi Rum, describing the methods of his work which involve both medical and magical elements. Sajdi uses the word ‘shaman’ when referring to these various people with special powers. Musil (1928: 401) describes an ecstatic ritual of the Rwala seers, which includes clapping of hands, drumming, and the performer entering into a state of trance where he meets an angel or ancestor, from whom he receives information. As there are clear similarities between these practices and those of shamans elsewhere, it seems justified to use this term. The Bedouin themselves use various names. In southern Jordan, a common term seems to be *fugarā* ‘poor’. Musil (1928: 400) states that the Rwala use the term *al-sirrīye*. In informal discussions with the people in Umm Sayḥūn, I was assured that there are also people possessing the Evil Eye, and others who use magic – either harmful or benevolent – in an attempt to control other people. Either way, although such practices were deemed un-Islamic, they have probably been common in the past. All the people with special abilities were already old, and the young people had little interest in such skills and responsibilities. Nevertheless, the knowledge has been there in the past, and the people with these abilities were respected. The topic of the use of magic itself is intriguing but beyond the scope of this work.

7.5 Discussion

I did not present an exhaustive list of all the rituals that appear in the lives of the community. The main daily rituals in the Islamic community are prayers, observed by different individuals with varying frequency. In addition, there are numerous small ritual actions that appear at various points during special moments or everyday life, such as when a child is named or when an animal is slaughtered. Slaughtering an animal can always be interpreted as a ritual sacrifice in the name of God. The codes and etiquette of interacting in everyday life are also filled with ritual behavior. The purpose of this chapter was to raise and highlight the *special* moments – whether private or communal, secular or sacred – that form a contrast to the mundane. Secondly, I wanted to observe the occasions when the holy places and the saints play an important role in the lives of the people, finally putting these two images together to see when, how, and in what situations they overlap.

Some of the holy sites appear many times in the discussion above, while others are totally missing. This, of course, is largely due to the sample of interviews I collected. People knew about the sites that were closely related to them and located in their area, remembering examples and even personal experiences. For holy sites that are found in the lands of another tribe they may have heard of, in many cases they did not know anything else other than the name. As I did not have the opportunity to visit and interview people in all areas, some of the information is very limited and must be taken as such. Nevertheless, the examples presented in this chapter demonstrate the importance of the ancestors and their tombs in the lives of the tribes. The traditions related to the other, less documented ancestral sites (listed in the previous chapter) are probably very similar. On the other hand, there are a number of sites that seem to have already lost their importance in the distant past, or have never been particularly important for reasons which include demographic shifts and the political situation. For example, the tomb of Swēri seems to have had great importance during the time of Musil but is now situated near the Israeli border, making it impossible to visit. As the communities move to new territories and the tribes merge and separate, forming different subtribes, the older ancestors may be forgotten while new holy sites are formed. A few sites stand apart in terms of age, the mountain of Aaron being the most notable one with the greatest importance. Interestingly, the other mountain sanctuaries with ancient origins do not seem to have comparable importance. Legends are connected to them, but pilgrimages or other rituals related to them are not found in my material.

Despite the various shortcomings in the collected data, the material shows clearly that the holy sites and saints have had a visible role in the life of the community. They have been addressed in all three types of rituals: communal, transitional, and situational. The annual festivals held at the holy sites have been major communal events, also attracting people from other tribes and from great distances to attend – if not the religious ritual itself, at least the more secular aspects such as horse and camel racing, dinners, merrymaking, and probably also opportunities for business that followed. Food has always been a main part of any celebration or ritual, and the sacrificed goat or sheep could also be dedicated to the saint. Generosity and offering food to the poor were important aspects that created and supported the communal atmosphere. The men interviewed in Maʿān also remembered sweets being given to children when families visited the holy sites. Thus, the secular meets and merges with the sacred in many rituals.

The Bedouin form a very tight-knit community where the ties within and between the families of the tribe or subtribe form the basis of the society. Many of the rituals are conducted to ensure the prosperity and survival of the tribe materially, but they also act as a means of nourishing, reinforcing, and verifying group ties. Therefore, participating in rituals is not only a privilege and opportunity for a member of the community, but also an obligation. Ancestors were still seen as part of the community, and the ritual of visiting their graves was a similar obligation, performed by the tribe annually as they gathered together in their seasonal migratory cycle. On the other hand, it strengthened the ties among the living but also involved the ancestor, confirming his continuing role within the group. Failing or refusing to perform this duty of participating in the communal ritual involving the ancestor represented a personal offence – and the ancestor's response could be more than mere resentment. Bringing a newborn to visit the holy place to pray for their protection likewise affirmed the connection between the members of the community, whether living or dead.

Even though many of the sites were strongly connected to certain tribes – after all, it was the founder or some other important individual of the tribe whose tomb was in question – the holy sites in general seem to have been viewed, more or less, as a no man's land. If it was the obligation of the descendants of the ancestor to visit the place, anyone from any tribe was free to visit anytime. The saints themselves were thought to be pious and virtuous people, who would help any individual who turned to them in faith and piety, asking for aid. An example is found with the tombs of al-Bawwāt, whose descendants live in a totally different region but whose graves have been "adopted" by the local inhabitants and are frequently visited due to the virtuous character of the saints.

The examples of the stories involving punishment by the saint often involve an outsider, but there are also exceptions. Canaan (1927: 14–15) records a story from Palestine where the saint turns against his own people when they treat a stranger unjustly. Thus, the saint does not always automatically help his own kin; some kind of moral justification must be present.

The old stories about the saints and ancestors came mainly from elderly people. Women were especially thought to be carriers of these traditions and in some cases, such as the Mother of Rain ritual, also the main executors of the rites. Young people very often said they only had vague memories or they did not know enough about the traditions, compared to their parents or grandparents. But even among the older people, there was a growing tendency to question the old traditions. I recorded stories of miracles and various incidents related to the sites, but my informants would often end their narration with bemused comments, such as "nobody knows if that is true or not, maybe it's only a story".

As seen earlier, the veneration of saints in the popular religion is a living tradition in many parts of the Islamic world. Why are these places becoming less important in southern Jordan? In order to find possible answers to this question, I next turn my attention back to identity and memory. How do the people of the region define their identity? How do they choose the aspects that are important for the preservation of this identity, what do they remember, and what and why do they forget?

8. TRANSFORMATION OF THE COMMUNAL MEMORY

8.1 Memory – meaning

> Our ways were nice. We always made coffee […] Every day there was coffee, tea, slaughtering animals, and guests coming and having lunch, dinner, breakfast. Any time someone left his house, wherever he came, he ate. There was none who would not let people eat, drink, and sleep in their home… I mean, our atmosphere was good, our customs beautiful. We respect each other, we help each other. If one becomes tired, others will help him. Like that. If problems arose, we had old sheikhs to whom we went to solve the problems […] (17M1 Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 2007)

It is not so surprising that food so often appears in the memories of the people. Whether a wedding celebration, a pilgrimage to a saint's tomb, an individual holding a feast, or the memories of a child about people visiting holy places, food is always mentioned. Gathering, finding and producing food, preparing food – and ultimately sharing food and eating together are all matters of basic survival and thus elements of universal human interaction. The vast amount of existing rituals of affirmation all around the world involve communal meals, and food being hallowed is an expected result of this universal aspect.

Taking into account Paden's (2001: 287) idea of the patterns of behavior composed of the universal elements dictated by biology and evolution, on the one hand, and of varying elements shaped by the environment and surroundings, on the other, it would be expected to find that the Bedouin possess certain traits that their environment has created. Such traits would include adaptations, such as the Bedouin tent, nomadic pastoralism, and the system of how the delicate ecology of the arid steppe is maintained. Similarly, it is expected that as the surroundings of the Bedouin change, these specific traits would also change. During this process, the specific elements that would have had high "survival value" in the nomadic lifestyle – meaning the behavior and knowledge needed in that specific environment and economy – would no longer be as memorable when other behavioral patterns more optimally suited for a new way of life emerged.

The Bedouin characteristic of hospitality and generosity has often been related to the environment: in the harsh and dry climate, the help of others was essential for survival. Offering food and shelter to a visitor not only represented charity but also the "insurance of the desert". One day an individual might be the generous host and the next in need of help from strangers. This act of hospitality surpassed everything else, even poverty and the seclusion of women. Even the young Bedouin remembered that the guest had the right to enjoy the host's hospitality for three days before he could even be asked about his business. If the master of the house was not at home, the wife could not turn the guest away but invited him to stay, offering him food and drink herself. (21WG3 Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 2011.)

There is no doubt that the expectation for every individual of the tribe to fulfill the duty of hospitality was not always an easy task. For a poor man with a small flock, slaughtering one of his goats for the sake of a visitor could mean a harsh economic blow to him and his family. However, while the official histories talk about poverty, droughts, famine, and epidemics, the living memories of the people are very different. Based on the imagistic model presented by Whitehouse (2000: 10), memorable experiences often tend to concern specific and extraordinary events. Perhaps that is why food is a recurring element in the narratives: if it was indeed scarce most of the time, the moments when food was abundant would remain in one's mind and become part of their happy memories.

In memories concerning holy sites and rituals, the less religious elements – sweets and chocolate, new clothes, fresh meat being served, songs, and camel racing – often tend to be more poignant than the spiritual aspects. When the more supernatural elements are mentioned in the narrated memories, extraordinary events – such as miraculous rains, the sick being cured, fertility being restored, and evil being people punished – appear in the stories. The presence of these elements in the material supports the hypothesis of the lived religion as goal-oriented and practical but an unstructured system, as presented by Boyer (1992) and McGuire (2008). All in all, events stored in episodic memory abound in the material. As narratives, it seems that the presence of rhythmic elements in past episodes were also vividly remembered, even if the rest of the story had already been forgotten. An example of this is the Rain Mother song. Most women, including the older ones, could not remember many of the lyrics and only repeated the refrain "O Mother of the Rain, rain upon us", but as they sang their bodies were moving to the rhythm, as if they were walking in the procession.

8.2 Identity – being

Constructing the Bedouin identity also requires an understanding of tribal thought, already discussed in Chapter 4. To make a summary of the patterns of tribal thought, I have chosen three short memories from my notes to represent the elements of Bedouin identity that seem to surface most often in my material.

> Girls form small circles in front of the audience. They wear a black veil, with a colorful scarf wrapped around the top of the head, like their grandmothers do. The dress, however, is not the typical "fake-sleeve" mudraga of the older generations, but a straight-sleeved embroidered dress, common today. One of the boys, dressed in a long white thōb also sits nearby, pretending to grind coffee beans in the traditional coffee-grinder. The girls begin to sing əhjēni, the style commonly sung by old women at weddings and other celebrations. The girls sit in a closed circle, hands covering their mouths like I have seen the older women perform at the weddings I have attended. The rhythm changes, turning into a faster beat, which leads the girls into dancing dabke in the chain.

Traditional arts, symbols, and material elements all epitomizing "Bedouin-ness" all abound in this description of a video taken in 2005 at a performance at the local girls' school in Umm Sayḥūn. The students were performing a scene from a traditional wedding. At the same time, the description shows how such symbols are bound to change. The form of dance known as *dabke*, for example, was said to be Palestinian in origin, but it has also become part of the living tradition among the Bedūl, performed by men and women alike. Traditional singing can still be heard at weddings, but already the younger girls have difficulties in even understanding what the older women are singing. The coffee utensils, the grinder, the roaster, and the coffee pot are present everywhere as symbols of the Bedouin tradition, even in areas where tea has been and continues to be the most common drink. Instant coffee, known as *nuṣṣ cafē* [Nescafé], which is drunk in the mornings with skimmed milk, has increasingly replaced self-made coffee among the Bedūl. But despite the changes, the symbols are ways in which identity is portrayed and made visible.

> The car ascends slowly the winding road from əMraybet back toward the plateau when the driver – my guide – notices a young man in military uniform signaling to him and stops the car. The man steps into the car, greeting the driver. He glances at me quickly, then averts his gaze and does not look at me again during the rest of the journey. My guide, the older man, starts questioning the young soldier. What tribe was he from? Which subtribe? Had he ever been in Petra? Did he know any Bedūl? Whom did he know? My guide wanted to hear all the names. Before the soldier parted in another direction the two men had talked through kin and connections.[141]

While the first memory depicts the ways in which identity is portrayed and made visible, the second is more about what identity is based upon – and is perhaps the most prominent element of the three. It reflects the importance of community, kin, and all the contacts within and between the tribes. The people of southern Jordan are not bound by one identity. They identify themselves in a number of ways, including national, tribal, and religious aspects. At the same time, other categories – such as gender, age, or social status – also exist. In the case of group identities, of course, an important issue is the question of shared elements that create the feeling of unity and communality. In tribal societies, and especially for the Bedouin, lineage and common ancestry were among the main categories that identify an individual as a member of the group. This idea of ancestry and origin is strong among the Bedouin of southern Jordan as well, and with the changes in recent decades it seems to have become even more dominant in defining the Bedouin identity, which is no longer based on pastoralism and transhumance.

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[141] This set of notes is from my tour of the holy sites with a Bedūl guide in November 2011.

The idea of reciprocal altruism forms an important part of any social interaction. Individuals are concerned about the wellbeing of their kin. There is a permanent relationship among the members of the community, based on mutual dependence and interrelation, and where there is dependence there is always an act of giving and receiving. The reciprocity of offering and accepting is one way of creating internal cohesion. The same type of dependence exists between the ancestors, saints, and the living generations as well (Martin 2001: 301). All members of the community participate in this act, including the dead: they give and they receive (van Baal 1976: 177–178).

Such inclusive elements of the tribal society are very strong. Several social rituals have been discussed in detail, including the annual pilgrimages to the holy sites, taking a newborn to visit an ancestor, and more mundane rituals of offered meals and reciprocal visits. But exclusive elements are equally present in Bedouin culture and thought. How "us" and "them" are contrasted can be seen in various ways. This exclusion has extended even to the afterlife. There are not many descriptions from the past describing the thoughts of the Bedouin on these matters, but what exists presents a very intriguing image of Heaven and Hell. The following quotation is from the Rwala, as described by Alois Musil:

> Paradise is somewhere below ground. There it rains regularly, there is always rabīʿ [spring], abundance, good pasture, xeyr [good things], and there also the moon shines all the time. In paradise all the Rwala live together, are young and never grow older. They can marry there and have grown children at once. Everyone has a big tent, big herds and many children. They raid hostile tribes which have been condemned to hell, where all the enemies of the Rwala are sent. Hell is situated either on the sun or in some other place above the earth. There the sun scorches by the day and night, rains are very rare, the breeding of camels meets with no success, the soil has to be irrigated artificially – and the Bedouin there must work long and hard. They serve the fellāḥin, have to

> obey the government, are conscripted, perform military duty, and Allah himself knows all their torments. (Musil 1928: 673; Palva 1993: 76–77)

The tight-knit Bedouin society with its intricate patterns of kinship and codes of honor and tribal justice does pay a lot of attention to the relationship between "us" and "them", an ally and a foe, a kinsman and a stranger. For the Bedouin, the farmers represent something completely opposite to nomadic society. They are bound to the land and forced to toil and labor for a living, whereas a Bedouin can gather his herds and wander freely. The government was viewed with equal suspicion, as having to deal with government officials usually only meant taxes, military duty, limitations, borders, and bureaucracy. This suspicion toward outsiders is also often present in the stories told about the *awliyā'* and their deeds as the punishers of wrongdoers. Curiously, almost all "villains" of these stories were usually outsiders who transgressed the limit and showed disrespect either toward the saint or toward the local people who revere him or her. Examples seen above include the government officer whose horse broke its back when he was riding and the anonymous camel thief punished by Umm əDfūf with a harsh wind.

The division between kinsman and stranger is also clearly visible in the quote from the Rwala. What is notable in the description of Heaven and Hell is the concreteness of all the details. There is little room for symbolism, eschatological imagery, or even theology – the person's image is drawn directly from his sphere of experience: "good" is represented by everything that is "good" for the Rwala, while "bad", in turn, includes things that the Rwala find unpleasant. Despite the seemingly rather unorthodox aspects in the imagery, Rwala view is based on very universal characteristics in the formation of religious symbolic thought.

The religious realities reflect the mundane realities, with their symbolic representations drawn from the experience base of the individuals forming the religious community. The distinction made between "us" and "others", where the whole tribe of Rwala will be in Paradise and all the others in Hell, is equally an adaptation of a common way of perceiving – defining both the positive and negative traits of a person based not on his individual achievements and abilities but on a number of other variables, such as ethnic background, gender, or social status gained at birth. The mental limitations of the female gender became a topic of serious discussion in the nineteenth century when allowing women entry to universities was under consideration in the West. Western nobility referred to their "blue blood" as the justification for their privileges. To the Rwala member, it was clearly self-evident that his tribe would be the most worthy of entering Paradise (Palva 1993: 77).

Expressing identity in the form of exclusion can also manifest itself in hidden taboos, invisible until the sacred boundary is crossed. The unwritten and often unspoken limits and values of the community are sometimes most visible when someone exceeds those limits. Certain religious aspects may come to light in such a manner. In my fieldwork, I observed such cases a few times. The first example concerns the site of al-Bawwāt near the village of Wadi Mūsā (Site 7). When I attempted to visit the site, young local boys objected very aggressively to my presence there, prohibiting my use of a camera and denying me entry, claiming it to be *ḥarām*. On another occasion, I was not allowed to approach the tombs of ʻIyāl ʻAwwād, the ancestors of the ʻAmārīn. While the stated reason for this was that I had not brought any gift for the saint, it was the presence of a non-Muslim that elicited a reaction against an outsider and incited a sense of respect toward the ancient holy site of one's own community.

In light of these examples, it seems that the religious identity of the Bedouin was closely interrelated with the tribal identity – and religious devotion expressed in the vernacular more often concerned matters of this world than what may wait beyond. Even the ancestors and local saints, those who had already passed away, were not really absent but still continued to be present in everyday life as guardians, protectors, and providers. As supernatural beings, they were considered to be aware of the moral behavior of the people, both setting an example by their piety and devotion but also guarding the spirit of the tribe and punishing wrongdoers (Sørensen 2005: 474). The reasons why people addressed the saints were strongly connected to the daily life of the community. Curiously, in the case of the Bedouin, many early travelers and Orientalists described them as not being particularly religious. This, however, may have more to do with the observer's own perception of what is religion, since many who refer to the religious practices of the Bedouin seem to refer instead to their knowledge of the dogma of scholarly Islam. As Canaan notes:

> they believe in the unity of God and hail Mohammed as the greatest prophet. But very few of them know much more about the teachings of the Mohammedan religion. This is especially true of the Bdūl. I asked five grown up persons to recite the fātiḥah, and not one of them knew it. Only few perform regularly any of the five prescribed daily prayers. (Canaan 1929: 213)

Nielsen goes a step further:

> they [Bedūl] are complete pagans. It is a well known fact that many of the Bedouin are but little affected by Islam. Yet, in general they profess it, know something of its tenets, and observe some of the Moslem rites. These facts hold good in the case of the tribe of the Liāthneh [...] [Yet, the Bedūl] do not

> pretend to be Moslems and know practically nothing of this religion. (Nielsen 1928: 207)

Musil (1928: 389) generalizes from the lack of practices of doctrinal Islam as reflecting all religious behavior: “The Bedouin does not think deeply on religious matters and follows no rules in his religious observance.” But despite this statement, he then continues to write how the Bedouin

> pays heed to internal impulses and dreams which he holds to be signs or warnings sent to him by spiritual beings who wish him either good or ill. He is a firm believer in the existence of spirits and thinks it absolutely necessary to do all that is agreeable and avoid what is disagreeable to them.[142] (Musil 1928: 389)

Donald Cole (1975: 126–129) shares the same idea about the Bedouin in his study of Āl Murra in Saudi Arabia. He writes that, according to various descriptions, the pastoral nomads of this tribe are not concerned about religion. Yet, he also seems to believe that such observations are more likely based on a narrow definition of religion, not on the actual tradition of these people. He describes the religious observance of Āl Murra as simple but all-embracing. The times for prayer give a natural rhythm to their daily life and, all in all, the religiosity of the nomads reflects life in the desert: it is practical, down to earth, and devoid of the refinements of urban theology. Similarly, the Western travelers who visited Petra in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and considered the local inhabitants savages, having no knowledge of Islam, had in their mind the concept of the “civilized” Islam of their own time.

In this study, I have described the practices of the people of southern Jordan concerning the tombs of the saints and ancestors and other holy places visited in times of need, thus showing the Bedouin tradition of the region involving various religious elements. The question of what should be included under the definition of the religious identity of the Bedouin depends again on the definition of religion itself. The annual pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) organized by the Liyathne to the Mountain of Aaron included a horse-racing competition in the village after returning from the mountain. I was told that some people came a long way, from Shawbak or Maʿān, to attend the race, but they did not join the actual pilgrimage (1M1, Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002). Thus, can the competition be seen as part of the religious tradition? It was only organized during the pilgrimage feast, but it is very difficult to find anything religious in a horse race. Perhaps the spiritual element of the pilgrimage became more important when the competitions stopped, after the racing field became part of the new housing development and the people who were only interested in horses no longer came to the festivities. Of course, looking at the social aspect of the religious ritual, horse racing easily fits into the category of conflict prevention, where members of different tribes gathered together under the auspices of the pilgrimage season to participate in a friendly competition. At the same time, the winner brought honor to his whole tribe, with such a positive memory being instrumental in increasing the group's collective self-esteem.

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[142] Wallin (2007: 411) also makes a comment on the religiosity of the Bedouin in his letters, stating that they are not Muslim, Christian, pagan, or anything else. In fact, he thinks that they have no religion at all. His experience in the desert may have been very striking after having spent time in Cairo, visiting mosques and attending *dhikr* ceremonies on a regular basis.

Visits to the holy sites were also social activities, creating a sense of belonging. In the rituals, the tribal ties were strengthened in many symbolic ways: the subtribes traveling in groups, the horse racing representing the benevolent competition between groups, and the whole idea of bringing the tribe together on such an occasion of visiting a saint or an ancestor. Equally, when a new member was born to the tribe, he or she was shown at the shrine or tomb in a symbolic action of linking the chain of generations together.

> Do you know?
>
> The Bedouin are strong like the desert
>
> Soft like the sand
>
> Moving like the wind
>
> Forever free

The last memory is related to the mental imagery and values of the Bedouin. This saying and its variations were quoted to me on numerous occasions by young Bedouin men in Petra and Wadi Rum.[143] Every time, it was said with great pride, whether we were sitting on a thin rug beside a small fire with a black tent behind our back or leaning against soft pillows in a modern living room, watching a Turkish soap opera on satellite TV with a can of Coke in hand.

Freedom in various forms, such as freedom of movement and freedom from external authorities, all prevail in the tribal rhetoric. Even in the above-quoted Rwala concept of Hell, the worst kind of destiny imaginable included serving farmers and obeying the government. The idea of freedom is still strong in Bedouin minds, even though they no longer have the same mobility as before. The connection to the desert still makes them what they are. Tourists also represent a new and different kind of freedom to the young men: an opportunity to gain more wealth and perhaps, finding a European wife or girlfriend, to move abroad. While many Bedūl girls expressed interest in and the importance of education, in the opinions of young men, studying did not seem to offer as many opportunities as working in tourism.

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[143] While I heard it for the first time in 2002 in Petra, variations of this saying still live on and have also been attested in Sinai.

8.3 Change

8.3.1 Modernization in action

Change in southern Jordan has been in many aspects externally instigated through the project of the regime to integrate the people of the South into the new Jordanian state system by enhancing infrastructure. In this process, purely secular innovations have reached the region and an urban lifestyle has become more and more common in an area which in the past had been the periphery, an uncharted region feared because of its warring tribes. The Bedouin inhabited this periphery, and though many regimes may have had an interest in controlling them, very few had the means. In Transjordan, it was not until the end of the Ottoman period and especially the British Mandate when the Bedouin found themselves in the middle of a process of state formation. Modernization was made possible by negotiations with the Bedouin *sheikhs* and allowing their participation in policy-making and tax collection. This also included the formation of the Desert Patrol, consisting largely of camel riders from the local Bedouin tribes and giving the southern tribes the responsibility and right to enforce the law in their own regions. Today, the Desert Patrol have turned into one of the national symbols of Jordan, used in the imagery promoting the country.

When observing the process of modernization in southern Jordan, it is possible to follow each of the variables discussed by Tamney (2007). The first variable, technological development, is perhaps the easiest to detect visually: cars, mobile phones, satellite televisions, and computers have become more and more common even during the last ten years, and the people have been very quick to accept these innovations in their lives. Similarly, health care, education, and transportation form part of the same development. In the modern society, the technological innovations have also pushed aside the saints. When a sufficient supply of water for people, animals, and fields is provided by the government, there is no longer a need to address the saints to prevent droughts. Governmental health care and planned irrigation systems have also removed problems that used to be solved with the help of saints. Television, the internet, and traveling have offered people new ways of spending their leisure time.

Societal expansion and increasing population density are promoted by the health care system and better nutrition. In the past, the Bedouin families may have been large, but infant mortality was also high. Having a large number of children is still seen as a sign of richness and a blessing among the Bedouin, and it is very common to find families with more than ten children. However, the first traces of the trend attested in Western societies are becoming visible: when the education level increases, the average age of marriage and the average age for having children rises as well, resulting in smaller families. The availability of contraceptives and sterilization together with information received from health care workers has opened the opportunity for family planning, an option used by an increasing number of younger couples.[144] Many young men also have problems in gathering enough property to support a family of their own, thus increasing their years as bachelors even further. Knowledge gained in school also seems to be changing some enduring traditions among the community. Some younger men, for example, expressed their awareness of the risks of genetic disorders if the parents were too closely related. Thus, they denounced the ancient tradition of marrying their paternal cousin (*bint ʿamm*), saying it was risking the health of future offspring.

The economy of the nomadic Bedouin is based on scarce natural resources available in the semiarid and arid climate, resulting in a very fine balance where the nomadic yearly cycle makes use of different regions in different seasons in order to prevent the total loss of resources. It has been a government plan to sedentarize the Bedouin tribes, and many new villages and towns have been built for the formerly seminomadic or nomadic communities. As a result, the effects of societal expansion and increasing population density have perhaps been even more drastic in southern Jordan than among the communities that were sedentary long before the modern era. Although southern Jordan is very sparsely populated, areas that are suitable for housing and permanent settlements are not so numerous. As the population increases, it is not always possible to expand the settlement beyond its current borders. Instead, houses are built in the area available within the settlement, which in turn increases the population density. Even though the villages and towns in southern Jordan are still very small, even compared to the larger settlements in Jordan, there are already many new questions that did not arise much before. Water resources are a large issue in an area where water has always been scarce, and the modern settlements utilize much more water than the old nomadic communities. There are also questions related to land use, the utilization of public space, and the accumulation of wealth when the land is owned by a few families, leaving less for others. Unemployment and integration of the youth – problems that many places in the region now face with a large proportion of the population being under 25 – are issues that wait to be solved as well.

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[144] Money was a common issue discussed by younger men and women when they were asked about family plans. Raising children in the modern world is considered to be expensive, and in order to give every child an equal opportunity in the future, a small family of two or three children was seen as a good option.

The third variable, structural differentiation, results in a change in the social complexity, where separate institutions replace the family and clan structures as the systems of contact and relation. The fourth variable, individuation, is also related to this change. It concerns the process by which the needs and aspirations of an individual surpass the needs of the group or family and where the identity of an individual is no longer defined by his role in the clan or community but by his own choices and actions. Transjordanian society has been moving from the basic social formation of kinship toward the second basic formation, kingship. Martin has compared the basic tenets of the two systems, arguing that kinship structure – which involves the ancestors as well as living relatives – is based on mutual dependence and common welfare. Kingship structure, on the other hand, is negotiated and renewed through shows of respect (Martin 2001: 301).

The Bedouin are well aware that their support and cooperation have been crucial to the creation of the nation, and the system has been built upon the system of kinship. But just as in the tradition of leadership in a tribal society, the relationship with the king has been that of negotiating his rule, rather than imposing it. In return for allegiance, the Bedouin have expected favors and influence. With the slow emergence of the urban middle class, the system is changing. It is also the goal of the present king to change the political system of Jordan and introduce a new division of political thought, with the parties being based on their standing vis-à-vis the left or right rather than their tribal and ethnic allegiances.[145]

The fifth variable, cultural fragmentation, creates a society where the community can no longer be defined by single, unifying cultural aspects. Instead, the society becomes a mosaic of ideas, values, worldviews, and aspirations. In modern Western society, pluralism also appears to be a leading issue in religiosity, but this trend may not necessarily follow a similar course in other parts of the world. On the practical level, there are numerous ways in which a religious tradition may change. Minor changes may involve a donkey being replaced with a car or an oil lamp with a candle, but the connected ritual still continues – nothing fundamental is added or left out. Major material changes affect the way the tradition is

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145 Interview with King Abdullah II, *The Daily Show*, 25 September 2012.

manifested within the society; for example, when new buildings were constructed in Wadi Mūsā, the people lost their main gathering place and the site for horse races, thereby altering the character of the annual pilgrimage.

In connection to religious thinking – and especially to the holy sites in the area of southern Jordan – it is not yet so much about fragmentation than about the controversy between the old local ways of lived religion, on one hand, and the dogmatic teachings of Islam as propounded in schools and mosques. In his study of the Negev Bedouin, Aharon Layish (1991: 449–450) has attested that the sedentarization process eventually draws the Bedouin into stricter adherence to Islam. *Sharīʿa* law, prayers, fasting, and other elements of normative Islam have become more important in the lives of the Bedouin. Using the traditional system of arbitration as the means, it has been easier to integrate *Sharīʿa* when the old norms were not distorted too much, but the two are combined.

8.3.2 Breaking the chain of memory

The Bedouin element has always been present in Middle Eastern culture. The interaction among city dwellers, villagers, and nomads has been tumultuous at times, resulting in wars and instability. Concurrently, it has also been dynamic, with trade and contacts creating wealth and economic benefits. The attitudes toward Bedouin culture have reflected this dichotomy. Ibn Khaldūn (II: 4) described the Bedouin as being closer to the natural state of being, and thus less prone to evil, than the sedentary people who live in the midst of luxury and temptation. He also praised their loyalty to the group and their courage, independence, and fortitude; however, he also called them savages, the antithesis of civilized, and people who are liable to plunder and destroy the cultures that they conquer (Ibn Khaldūn II: 25). According to him, the luxuries of sedentary life are the ultimate goal of the Bedouin, and nomadism is only the first stage leading toward civilization. Many Western Orientalists also admired and romanticized the Bedouin culture but at the same time acknowledged the shortcomings described by Ibn Khaldūn. T.E. Lawrence (1935: 26) sums up this idea in his memoirs: “They were as unstable as water, and like water would perhaps finally prevail.”

During the process of modernization, addressing the twofold attitude toward Bedouin culture has become both salient and acute. Many factions have influenced or tried to influence the formation of identities in southern Jordan. But despite all the changes and influences, one of the most prominent factors in their identity still continues to be their tribal heritage, namely, being a Bedouin.

> The customs are the same: the Bedouin were generous in the past, and they are generous today. That has not changed. They are brave, they are not afraid. They can go to the steppe (al-barr) and sleep and stay there like before, without problem [...]
>
> The woman was dressed in a mudraga in the past. Bedouin girls don't wear a mudraga anymore, but we still dress in an abaya, something long [...]
>
> Life has become easier. We like the goat-hair tent, it is lovely, we like to return to the tent, but only for two–three days... We can't live without all these new things: electricity, cars, running water, Facebook [laughter], the Internet [...]
>
> If you ask my grandfather what is better, now or before, he will say before. He was born in the past and lived in the past. But if you ask us, we will say now [...] They lived a hard life, our life is easy. (21WG3 Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 2011)

Based on the interviews and observations during my fieldwork, for the men of the older generation and those who have experienced the hardships of nomadic life, the Bedouin identity is strongly connected to tribal unity and family ties. For the older women, too, the support of female members of the family and the security provided by the tribe are important. Both genders remember the past with a sense of nostalgia – life was better then, when they lived in caves raising their flocks of goats. They may have been poor, but they did not chase after money and wealth like the people do nowadays. They were happy as they were. They made their own choices and their lives were not dictated by the government.

> By God, our life now is miserable. The life of Bedouin was better than today. (19W1, Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 2007)

This longing for the past produces modern manifestations, as it is possible to find satellite TV channels, mostly of Gulf origins, which show programs directed at Bedouin audiences.[146] These feature camel competitions, Bedouin dance, music, and poetry, as well as historical soap operas set in tribal surroundings. Judging from their number, these channels seem to be very popular in the region, including in Jordan. However, despite their longing for the "good old days" the older generations also tend to accept the changes in their lives and the lives of their children, acknowledging the inevitable.

Still, even the younger generation has a strong Bedouin identity. It is based on their heritage and their origin (*aṣl*). Calling oneself something other than a Bedouin would be a shameful act and disrespectful toward the ancestors. The young Bedouin are determined to teach their children their customs as they had been taught them, but they are also well aware that they do not know the life in the steppe like their parents and grandparents did – nor do they feel they need that knowledge any longer. The desert is a place where they can go with their family for short periods of time to experience the past, but they want to be able to return to the modern world where they feel they belong.

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[146] *Al-Amākin* was the most popular channel during my stay.

In terms of cultural symbols, the girls were quite aware that they did not know the old skills, such as baking the flat bread *shrak*, like their mothers' generation. Similarly, for a person working in an IT department, vocabulary related to threshing or other agricultural activities has little or no meaning.

The "language" of a living culture – the symbols, rituals, and patterns of behavior – is constantly reformed to reflect the current state of life. In this process, the patterns of everyday life, including the practices, skills, and religious beliefs no longer carrying any meaning in the modern society, are forgotten. As discussed earlier, the women have often played a very prominent role in the popular religion and they – especially the older women – are also considered by many to be the active keepers of the old traditions. In a society where gender roles are often very strict and the women's role is usually tied to private life (while the men perform the public duties), the popular religion has also offered public visibility to women. The rain ritual was performed mostly by women, but the preparations for visits and pilgrimages to the holy places and shrines have also offered the women a break from the daily rhythm.

When the more scholarly forms of Islamic teachings replace the old popular traditions, the religious role of women becomes more connected to the home and private life.[147] Of course, older people, regardless of gender, are respected as those who know and remember the tradition, but the women clearly are seen in a more prominent role as "the memory of the tribe". This shift is also noted by Joseph Hobbs (1992: 11): "The women in the desert preserve the Bedouin identity [...] when men move to work in towns, they are still Bedouin, but when the women settle down, the identity is lost."

Nevertheless, the traditional roles continue to be the aspirations of the girls: finding a husband to support the family and becoming a wife and a mother are still important concerns in the lives of young Bedouin women. Education is offering new opportunities and some Bedūl girls are studying at the university level, at the same time also becoming aware of the general opinions about the Bedouin. Especially the Bedūl girls I spoke with seemed to be very concerned about the negative notions that others have of the Bedouin. They believe that by educating themselves they will set a new example that will change the old opinions. They want to be able to show that the Bedouin are not an ignorant and uneducated people without culture, while still maintaining their Bedouin identity.

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[147] There are also modern examples of the independent religiosity of the Bedouin women. A middle-aged Bedūl woman told me in 2011 how she had performed the ʿUmra with her mother. They had traveled together by bus to Mecca and back. It was her first visit abroad, and it seemed to be very important to her that she went to Mecca as soon as she could afford it. In comparison, I have not recorded any young Bedouin men mentioning Mecca when asked where they would like to travel if they had money. Their favorite choices include places like Dhahab, Dubai, or Europe.

> People have wrong thoughts about the Bedouin. They think that they have no culture, but on the contrary. A long time ago the Bedouin had poetry, and they had people learning literature, very cultured.
> (21WG3 Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 2011)

At the same time, the Bedouin do not see all the new elements as contradicting the old traditions. The informants often referred to the "customs and traditions" (*al-ʿādāt wa-al-taqālīd*) of the Bedouin. Aspects listed among these traditions include generosity (*karam*), respect toward the family, helping each other, and honesty, as well as modesty in dress and behavior and the separation of men and women unless related. (21WG3 Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 2011.) All these elements were equated with Islamic values. As my informants emphasized, the Prophet himself was of Bedouin origin.

There are also attempts by the local people themselves to document their local histories (Shryock 1997). Al Salameen and Falahat have been collecting ethnographic information from the inhabitants of Wadi Mūsā about the past traditions in the Petra region. But while they find it important to preserve the memory of these traditions, they see such practices as belonging to the past and not something to be continued in a modern Islamic society. Rami Sajdi has a different approach in his work: his ethnographic material also includes interpretations of the old traditions seen in a new light, especially New Age ideas such as ley lines or concepts of Indian religions, like *kuṇḍalinī*.[148] There is an approach using syncretistic mysticism in these interpretations, an attempt to introduce the oral traditions of the Bedouin to the wider public.[149]

What has enabled the Bedouin of Southern Jordan to maintain their identity and sense of "Bedouin-ness", despite the many changes taking place in their lives? An important choice that the regime made was not to marginalize the Bedouin in terms of group ideology or politics. Instead, building upon existing relationships and ties between the tribes and the royal house, the Bedouin were included in nation-building and the public sector from the beginning. The Bedouin ethos was adapted by the state to be made part of the national narrative, and then returned to the Bedouin as their own story (Alon 2009: 156–157). This ethos has served as a matter of pride and dignity to the Bedouin, not as a route to displacement. In terms of economy and education, the situation was different and is only slowly changing, but in order to change their economic or educational status, the Bedouin do not feel that they must lose their identity. On the contrary, the young people are proud to show that they can be part of modern Jordan and still remain Bedouin. Thus, looking at the national imagery and the local perceptions, the Bedouin, though marginalized in terms of schooling and wealth, are still a major element of the identity of Jordan. The young people who are better aware of the more negative attitudes toward the Bedouin are also trying to change the perception of outsiders by their own example, rather than trying to hide their identity.

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[148] This is a Sanskrit term from the yogic and tantric traditions of India. It is described as "the divine female energy that lies dormant within every human body". This energy is often depicted as a coiled, sleeping serpent. Though originally a Hindu concept, it has also become known in the Western world. (Urban 2005.)

[149] See Sajdi 2007. Bille (2008: 211–212) also addresses the problematics between the modern interpretations and local practices.

8.3.3 Deconstruction and reconstruction of the sacred

Consequently, the possibility of retaining the sense of dignity and honor in this identity may also have allowed the Bedouin to be less radical in terms of religion. While the more conservative Islamic interpretations are gaining strength, the bases of Jordanian radicalism, Salafism, and jihadism are concentrated in the North. As the study by Wiktorowicz attests, these movements are most popular in the Palestinian residential areas.[150] The Palestinians as a group have been more marginalized identity-wise, although they have been able to contribute to economic growth and the creation of the private sector. While the Bedouin were involved in the public sector, serving in the military and having the leaders of the tribes present in the centers of power, the Palestinians, though active in the private sector, were more on the margins of the public sector. Palestinian identity continues to be strongly connected to the place of origin and home village in Palestine. When asked where they are from, many Jordanian Palestinians still give these places as their first answer. Their relationship to the Jordanian state thus contains elements that Transjordanians do not have.

The Bedouin are renegotiating their identity in a way that allows them to retain their "Bedouin-ness" while getting rid of things that they find outdated or shameful. Like ignorance and illiteracy, holy sites belong to a slightly uncomfortable reality of memory, the past of being tribal, which has no room in today's nation-state. Saints and ancestors are no longer seen as part of the modern Bedouin identity, and new elements of religious practice have replaced many of the older ones. Religious identity is therefore moving from the local group identity of the past toward a sense of belonging to a national and even international Islamic community (*umma*). There is no doubt that the Bedouin of the Petra region today know more about the scholarly teachings of Islam than they ever did before. This is due to the reasons already stated earlier: with schooling facilities, the people have become literate and they can study the Qur'ān; the educational system teaches religion in a similar manner throughout the country. Moreover, as there is a mosque, there are also imams and educated religious advisors teaching the people in the region. The Islamic tradition learned in schools and mosques is more doctrinal than the imagistic lived religion of the past.

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[150] Wiktorowicz (2000: 233) mentions especially Zarqa but also Salt as important bases of the Salafi movement. Both are areas with a large percentage of inhabitants of Palestinian origin.

In southern Jordan, condemnation of visits to the saints and the tradition connected with them is transmitted in the teachings in the mosques, but there are also more direct ways of breaking the continuity. The cult of Hārūn was greatly affected by an active teaching against the *ziyāra* carried out by local religious authorities from the 1980s onward (1M1, Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002; 6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002). This may reflect the increase of more conservative values in the local religiosity. On the other hand, changes taking place in the views toward old places of importance and identity may also attest to shifts in power relations and political control.

More recent events in which politics may have played a significant role in the religious culture can be seen in the town of Ma'ān. When I was looking for holy sites in and around the town, I was shown the tomb of 'Abdallah. In the past it was situated inside a small shrine, but the building had already been destroyed some decades ago. Today only the enclosure wall, without any gate, surrounds the tomb. Just like the tomb of 'Abdallah, Sheikh əMḥammad's shrine has also been destroyed. Even the grave was gone and only a faint row of stones in the ground marked the site when I first visited. When I returned six years later, I could no longer even find the stones. My informants told me that the government was behind both activities, but the reason remained unexplained (14G2 Ma'ān 2007). Perhaps they are related to the upsurges of resistance in the town and used as part of the government's response. It is also possible that the growing conservative tendencies in religious thought, including influences from across the Saudi border, may have resulted in the destruction of such "pagan" sites.

The shrine on Jabal Hārūn, on the other hand, was one of the building projects initiated by Sultan Baibars in the thirteenth century. He reconstructed a number of shrines in addition to establishing many military fortifications in places like Shawbak and Kerak. These projects were a political response to the crusaders, sending a message that the land was being reclaimed (Petersen 1996: 112). The small shrine of Nabī Hārūn was built on top of an earlier structure, a Christian church. The whitewashed dome that covers this shrine is clearly visible from afar, especially when approaching Petra from the west from the direction of Wadi Araba, but also when traveling the King's Highway. It is quite evident that this visibility was not intended to be only a religious symbol but also a political symbol.

Today, Jabal Hārūn is an example of the recent identity shift. The site was earlier under the auspices of the Ministry of Antiquities, as it was apparently seen more as an archaeological site. However, the mountain being taken under the control of the Ministry of Awqāf, Islamic Affairs, and Holy Places is an indication of the growing importance of the site as a national religious monument. In the late 1990s, the shrine and the stairs leading up to the peak were renovated and restored. The work was organized and funded by the Ministry of Awqāf, though the Department of Antiquities was also involved in supervising the work. During this restoration, a platform was built around the shrine, covering almost completely the visible remains of the Byzantine church that had stood on the peak. After the restoration had been completed, non-Muslim visitors were no longer allowed to enter the shrine, although it was still possible to climb up and stay outside on the platform or on the roof of the building.

Pilgrims and tourists have still been coming from all over the world. All in all, it is certainly secular tourists who form the largest group of visitors that climb up the mountain. While some of the tourists may have religious interest in the place, most are attracted by the scenery or history, getting exercise, or simply having an adventure. Domestic pilgrimage still takes place as well, including groups from Amman who have visited the shrine. In 1997, the Finnish team working on Jabal Hārūn noted a group of Hasidic Jews who came to celebrate the memorial of Aharon, and on August 28, 2003, again during our field season on the excavations, there was a large group, apparently Samaritans, who conducted a ceremony on top of the mountain. It seems, however, that the Samaritans have a longer tradition of this pilgrimage; in the 1950s they visited the shrine for the first time in 500 years (Pummer 1987: 10).

The Ministry of Awqāf has taken a more prominent role in supervising Jabal Hārūn, and it has even been added into the list of national religious sites. Meanwhile, the importance of the religious authorities has increased, and their teaching of Islam in the mosques and schools has affected the views of the people of the Petra region. Thus, the annual pilgrimage tradition has also been deemed un-Islamic. Curiously, the importance of Jabal Hārūn in the local tradition has waned while it has become a more important site in the national religious ideology. While 80 years ago the people could call Nabī Hārūn "father of high planets", both the Liyāthne and Bedūl today are well aware of the prohibition against visiting tombs. The *ḥadīth* (Al-Bukhārī, vol. 2, no. 281) of the three permitted locations of pilgrimage – al-Aqsā', al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, and the Prophet's tomb – was mentioned to me on several occasions. Based on this, the locals stated that no other shrine or tombs should be venerated or treated as an object of pilgrimage. Increasingly, such practices are viewed as pagan and belonging to the past, when the ancestors of the now-living people were ignorant and unaware of what was "true" Islam. These practices, they claim, are now history and no longer done.

This particular point of view was attested quite well during my conversation with the Ruwājfe workers from the village of Rājef during our field season on Jabal Hārūn in 2005. When asked if there were any other graves of *al-awliyā*' than Nabī Hārūn in the region, they denied that such places existed. Only when I asked directly, using the names of some sites, did they admit to those places; yet, they still maintained that they were only remains of old beliefs, no longer having a living connection. But even though I was told that nobody visits these places anymore, at several there was evidence of the recent presence of people. Naturally, a charred area on the ground or a broken shoe left behind do not prove a religious visit – a local goatherd could have stopped there and built a small fire. Still, many of the sites are situated in a very remote areas, away from roads; they are not places that one would simply pass by. Furthermore, large bones scattered around the fire can attest to a group meal, and religiosity is suggested when a visitor leaves a white piece of cloth at the place or burns incense in front of the tomb.

The fervent denial of these places is not always connected to the conservative opinions of the informant. Many local people probably also wanted to protect these places, as several sites showed signs of attempted grave-robbing. Some tombs had been dug open, leaving large holes in the ground. Thus, many informants were simply trying to keep their holy places safe from violation. A foreigner asking about and being aware of these places was already quite suspicious. Finally, there were a lot of sites that were only mentioned by the older people, and even the oldest generation sometimes remembered their existence very vaguely. It is not surprising that the younger people would not have been even aware of these places.

As a whole, most of those who condemned the tradition of visiting the graves of saints and other holy places were men who regularly attended the Friday sermons at the mosque. On the other hand, not all men who had a pious reputation spoke against the tradition. The women did not usually express very strong opposition toward the tradition itself, but tended to be more suspicious and also very protective about the holy sites.[151] The people of Wadi Mūsā introduced me to a local saying: *Inshi ʿāda wa-lā tigṭaʿ ʿāda* 'Begin a tradition, but don't cut a tradition'. With this they show their acceptance and approval of new traditions that are being introduced to their society, but at the same time they demand the right and freedom to continue their own old traditions (6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 2002).

The state policy is not definitively against visits to holy sites either. A contemporary Jordanian Shafi'i scholar of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, Ḥasan ibn ʿAlī al-Saqqāf, has given a *fatwā* which was also included in the publication of Jordan's official holy sites. The *fatwā*, dated 11/1/1416 AH (6 September 1995) states that *ziyāra* is acceptable for three reasons:

1. God praised the people who erected a mosque on the Cave of Sleepers (18:22).
2. According to a ḥadīth, the Prophet has said: A Garden of heaven separates between my grave and my pulpit. This can be understood in such a way, that as the pulpit is situated in a mosque, a prayer by a grave inside the mosque is also accepted.
3. A long and respectable tradition connected to visits on tombs already exists. These include the tombs of the Prophet, Abū Bakr, and 'Umar in al-Medina.

The *fatwā* also states that "the tombs and mosques of the Prophets and the Companions, the Righteous and the Scholars are sacred and blessed places, where God answers prayers" (bin Muhammad 1999a: 22–23). This common idea can be found reflected in the ideas of the local people supporting the tradition in southern Jordan: the saint himself is not capable of performing any miracles but only acts as a mediator, while God is the ultimate source of everything. This view represents a middle way between the strict denial of anything related to the saints and holy places, on one end, and the vernacular thought of saints as active perpetrators and sources of miracles and blessings, as well as direct objects of visit, prayer, and reverence, on the other. For the people of the older generations, the traditional perspective is often closer to their view and deeply embedded in their religious thought – with the relation to the saint starting soon after birth, when the newborn is taken to the holy place to be presented first to the saint or the ancestor. Of course, the *fatwā* only refers to prophets, companions, and other renowned religious figures. The local ancestors and small sanctuaries are not part of them, nor do they appear on the national list of holy sites.

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[151] Hilma Granqvist (1965: 53) writes about similar issues when she describes the traditions related to burial and mourning in the Palestinian village of Arṭās in the 1920s. The men spent the time at the grave very solemnly, reading the Qur'ān, while the women would express their mourning very loudly and violently. The pious men objected strongly to such public displays, but the women themselves were proud of their expression.

Could the local holy sites be nowadays defined as *lieux de memoire*, as presented by Nora (1989)? This definition would require the places to be elevated as symbols of emotional value after the living connection to them has been lost. They would be monuments representing the fragments of the past still remembered and thus offering a new sense of belonging and coherence. But that is not what the sites are. For some of the people – especially the older generations – the holy sites are still part of the living tradition. They affirm the web of kinship by including the ancestors and saints in the communal life. For the younger generations, the sites have lost this role as a living past. They have no symbolic value either; they are simply tombs of some person in history no longer present in their memory. For them, it is the ideal, the concept of origin and ancestry itself, that has more importance than the material sites. Thus, while they still respect the traditions and their ancestors, they have no need to show it in practice.

> When people pass the tombs, they say "al-salāmu ʻalaykum", but they don't think that the place has importance for them. If they want religion they go to a mosque instead. (12M2 Zelābiye, Wadi Rum 2005)

For the older generation – as well as for the decreasing number of younger Bedouin who still continue the traditional lifestyle – life on the steppe is still a "living past". They possess a good understanding of their environment, knowing it in detail. In comparison, the young urban people have become more detached from this environment. For them, the living past has turned into history, a nostalgic memory from the stories of their grandparents. Thus, when trying to find possible *lieux de memoire* in the modern urbanized Bedouin culture, the first to be named could be the steppe, the *bādiya* itself. This is where both the young and old go in order to experience the life of the past. Having a small home in a cave or a tent in the open offers the people a glimpse of the freedom and the simple life their ancestors lived. It is filled with nostalgia and emotion, but it is not a place to stay, only to visit for a night or two.

The narratives often work in a way to change the memory to a desired end, as was the case with the etiological myths of the Petra region, replacing one origin with a different, more historically accurate one. But despite the source, the means, or the end, remembering is a matter of relevance. Tribal communities are societies of memory, and although the basic knowledge essential for survival can be traced to the distant past, the memory cannot store history. New narratives are being created and old ones discarded constantly, as is the process in a living culture where innovations replace traditions and become traditions in turn.

Education has turned Bedouin communities into literate societies where the oral tradition has less importance. The young Bedouin already live in a very different reality than their parents, and they in turn also make choices about what they find important to remember and what they will forget.

9. “OUR ANCESTORS WERE BEDOUIN”

The events of the Arab Spring have brought especially the urban youth into the focus of academic discourse. What has happened in the cities and on the virtual platform of social media has been both sudden and widespread. What I have wished to do is to also bring into the discussion the topic of small communities, where changes in the past few decades have also been relatively rapid and the new way of life has caused many transformations in the old traditions and lifestyle. In this work, I have attempted to trace the elements of change by using the traditional holy sites and the veneration of saints and ancestors in southern Jordan as an example. This led me to take a long tour of the topics of identity, memory, and religious traditions in an attempt to understand the formation of identities in the modernizing world. In order to create a wider image of the phenomenon, I have sought various methods and theories that attempt to explain these processes, crossing between different disciplines along the way.

I started with the theories of social sciences and the study of religions, including the recent discourse on the cognitive approach to religious behavior and remembering as based on universal elements modified by the local environment, as well as a more traditional social and communal approach. Both discuss the role of memory in the formation of certain behavior. I continued to discuss the role of saints and holy places in the lived religion of the Islamic world. After these two general introductions, I moved to Jordan, outlining the past and present of the tribal society as well as the process of the formation of various identities: tribal, national, and religious. The religious tradition was then looked at even more deeply in the context of holy sites and the various practices and beliefs related to them. Finally, I combined all these topics and studied them in the context of southern Jordan, concentrating on the concept of memory in the formation of a communal identity. Individual experiences and emotions are given interpretation and meaning on the basis of the individual’s own sphere of knowledge learned from the older generations of the community through teaching or observation.

The Jordanian government has created a national narrative where the Bedouin past and tribalism are promoted symbols of the state. This imagined identity does not always coincide with the material reality. Statistics reveal that the Bedouin have had – and still in many cases have – lower average wages, less education, more children, and more cases of malnutrition than Jordanians on average. As a result, the government has worked to bring the Bedouin up to the same standard of living as the rest of the population: the nomads are being sedentarized and given secular and religious education. Moreover, modern technology and health care are offered even in the areas that in the past used to be the most dangerous peripheries. These processes have also influenced the identity of the inhabitants of Southern Jordan.

I discussed the holy sites and the veneration of ancestors and saints in southern Jordan as part of the local religious identity, but also as examples of the changes that are taking place in the formation of identities. As physical entities, the sites themselves give a picture of the sacred landscape of the region. The transformation is leading in two directions: the locations are losing importance in the local religious tradition and being forgotten and even forbidden, yet, at the same time, certain places, such as Jabal Hārūn, have become more important in the national religious identity, having been transformed from an ancient site into a sacred location controlled by the Ministry of Awqāf.

Religious and tribal identities have been intertwined, with the holy sites playing an important role in rituals that enhance and promote the communal aspects of Bedouin society. In these rituals, the people not only celebrated the saints and ancestors but also celebrated themselves – the past, present, and future of the tribe, and the continuity of life and memory. The annual visits to the tombs of ancestors or important saints, performed in tribal groups, as well as rituals related to birth and fertility, all connected the living and the dead as community. The newborn were first shown to the ancestors, while the saints granted their protection to the members of the tribes and oversaw the wellbeing of the people living in the region. While ancestry and genealogy continue to play an important role in Bedouin identity, the worldview is changing. The national discourse promotes "Bedouin-ness" but discards elements that are seen as backward and pagan. The young generation is participating in its own way in this discourse. While being Bedouin is still a matter of pride and honor, there is a need to prove that the Bedouin, too, can be part of the modern nation. At the same time, the wider Islamic identity is overthrowing the old religious identity. The tombs are seen as aspects of backwardness and paganism and thus discarded.

How much can a community "lose" from what it is defined to be before it ceases to possess its identity? Is there a difference between the identity that is based on living reality and identity that is based on written, "official" history? Modern societies tend to place more value on history as being more rational and logical. But, if we accept the claim that all identities are invented in one form or another, we also need to accept that the cultures have no minimum standards either. Identity is the meaning-making of the living communities. No static community exists. Identities possess no list of qualities other than what the people give to themselves – and even those qualities change over time (Anttonen 2003: 59).

The tribes of southern Jordan are not a living museum of ethnographic material. They are dynamic people who have been able to combine various forms of livelihood, shifting from nomadism to semisedentary or even sedentary farming, and back to nomadism, according to the available natural resources. Today, they have found new ways of living with the growing tourism, utilizing their innate knowledge of the harsh arid regions as well as their old traditions, from cuisine to traditional songs and dances. But they are also changing. Although some of the changes come from the outside, it is the people who choose to embrace these changes – with more or less success. Skills necessary for the traditional life are no longer needed. The young generation is more skilled at social media than milking and shearing goats, but their identity is built upon their past, which they respect and follow.

The old Liyāthne saying about "creating a tradition and not breaking a tradition" carries the meaning of identity-building. Accepting the new is easier when it is built upon the old, not replacing it totally. The communal memory of the past is the foundation of belonging and self-esteem, looked at from within the community but also reflected against the views of outsiders. It would be expected that when identity is built upon memories of negative value – such as feelings of marginalization, resistance, and defeat – the result is different from the case where positive aspects prevail. This takes us back to the universals of cognitive processes and the differing outcomes created by differing environments. Doing a comparative study of Bedouin and the ways in which they have been included or excluded from nation-building in various countries might provide new information about the role of the environment in the cognitive processes related to identity formation. In the case of southern Jordan, the people are witnessing the reshaping of identity through the national ideology. On the other hand, they see the Bedouin values being placed on a pedestal, yet at the same time elements are being removed from this ideal. This dichotomy is stressed by Ghāzi bin Muḥammad (1999b: 29):

> Tribes without their tribalism; the Arabs in the desert, rather than the desert in the Arabs – will personify and manifest the very essence of Islamic virtue [...].

I would like to conclude this work by giving the last word to an elderly woman of the Liyāthne tribe from Wadi Mūsā. Her short story represents very well the various forms of change that are taking place both in the society and in the religious tradition. This is where the chain of memory breaks.

> My mother gave birth to me and then maybe 18 years passed when she did not conceive – it finished: she did not get more children, there was only ʻAbbās.

> But finally after 18 years she became pregnant. She was already an old woman and her head was totally white. So she gave birth to Ṣāleḥ, and she was very delighted, yā wijh-Allāh. But since her breasts did not produce milk anymore the wife of ʿAbbās nursed him. And she [the mother] declared: "By God, today God has given me this boy. Tomorrow I die, and they read the Qur'ān by my head. And I bind you to the prophet Hārūn." Anyway, she gave birth to Sāleh and they visited the prophet Hārūn until she died, God have mercy upon her, and after her death Ṣāleḥ – shame on him – probably did not visit the prophet Hārūn anymore. (3WG1 [Two women] Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 2002)

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2M3, Bedūl, Petra 9/9/2002
3WG1 (Two women) Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 9/9/2002 (T)
4M1 Bedūl, Petra 9/10/2002 (T)
5M2 Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 9/10/2002
6M2 Liyāthne [Hani Falahat], Wadi Mūsā 9/10/2002
7W1 Liyāthne, Wadi Mūsā 9/10/2002 (T)
8M1 ‘Amārīn, Bayḍā’ 9/5/2005
9MG1 (Four men) Zelābiye, Rum village 9/10/2005 (T)
10W1 Saʿīdīyīn, Wadi Araba (Umm Mithle) 9/14/2005
11M1 Zelābiye, Rum village 10/1/2005
12M2 Rum 10/2/2005
13W1 Bedūl, Bayḍā’ 8/18/2007
14G1/2 (A mixed group of people), Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 8/18/2007
15MG2 (Three men) Bedūl, Jabal Hārūn 8/19/2007
16MG2 (Four men), Maʿān 9/1/2007
17M1 Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 9/2/2007
18W1 Bedūl, Bayḍā’ 9/2/2007
19W1, Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 9/2/2007
20M1 Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 10/7/2009
21WG3 (Four girls) Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 11/18/2011
22G1/2 (Two women, one man) Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 11/18/2011
23M1 Saʿīdīyīn, Umm Sayḥūn 11/19/2011 (T)
24WG1/2 (Three women) Bedūl, Umm Sayḥūn 11/19/2011
25W1 Bedūl, Petra 11/21/2011
26M3 Bedūl, Petra 11/21/2011
27M3 Saʿīdīyīn, Petra 11/21/2011
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APPENDIX I: MAPS

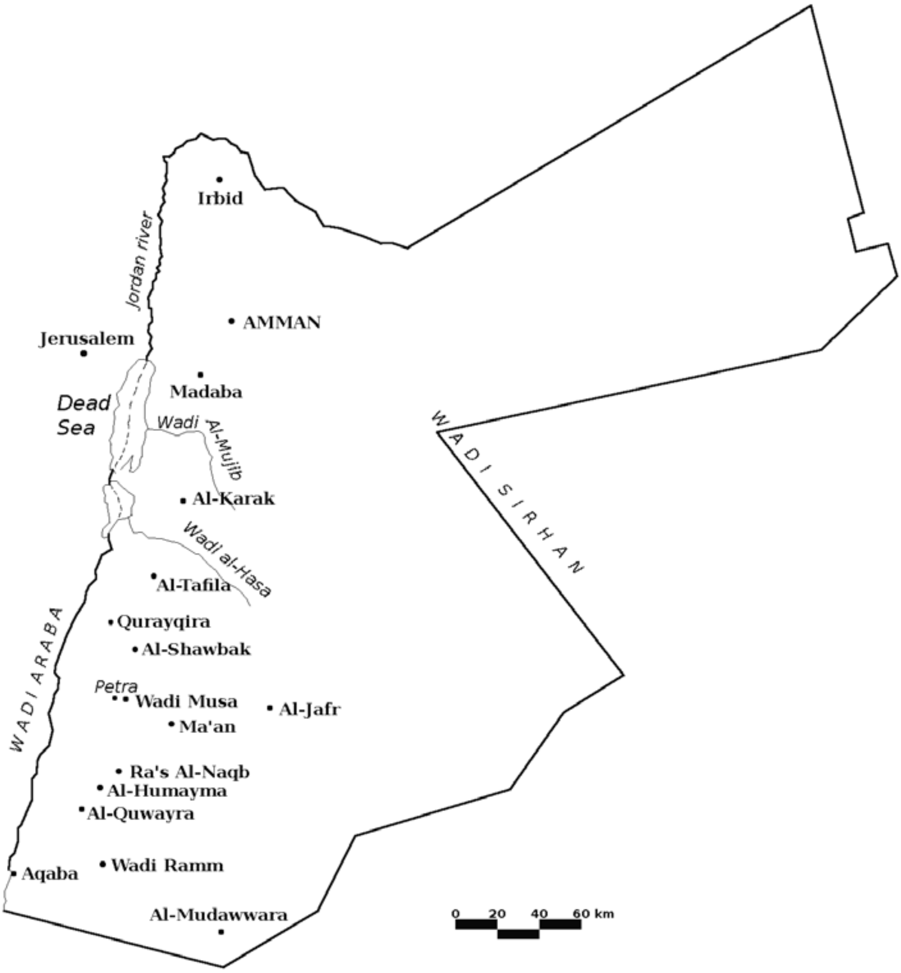
Irbid
Jordan river
AMMAN
Jerusalem
Madaba
Dead Sea
Wadi Al-Mujib
Al-Karak
Wadi al-Hasa
WADI SIRHAN
Al-Tafila
Qurayqira
Al-Shawbak
WADI ARABA
Petra
Wadi Musa
Al-Jafr
Ma'an
Ra's Al-Naqb
Al-Humayma
Al-Quwayra
Aqaba
Wadi Ramm
Al-Mudawwara
0 20 40 60 km

Figure 5 Map of Jordan

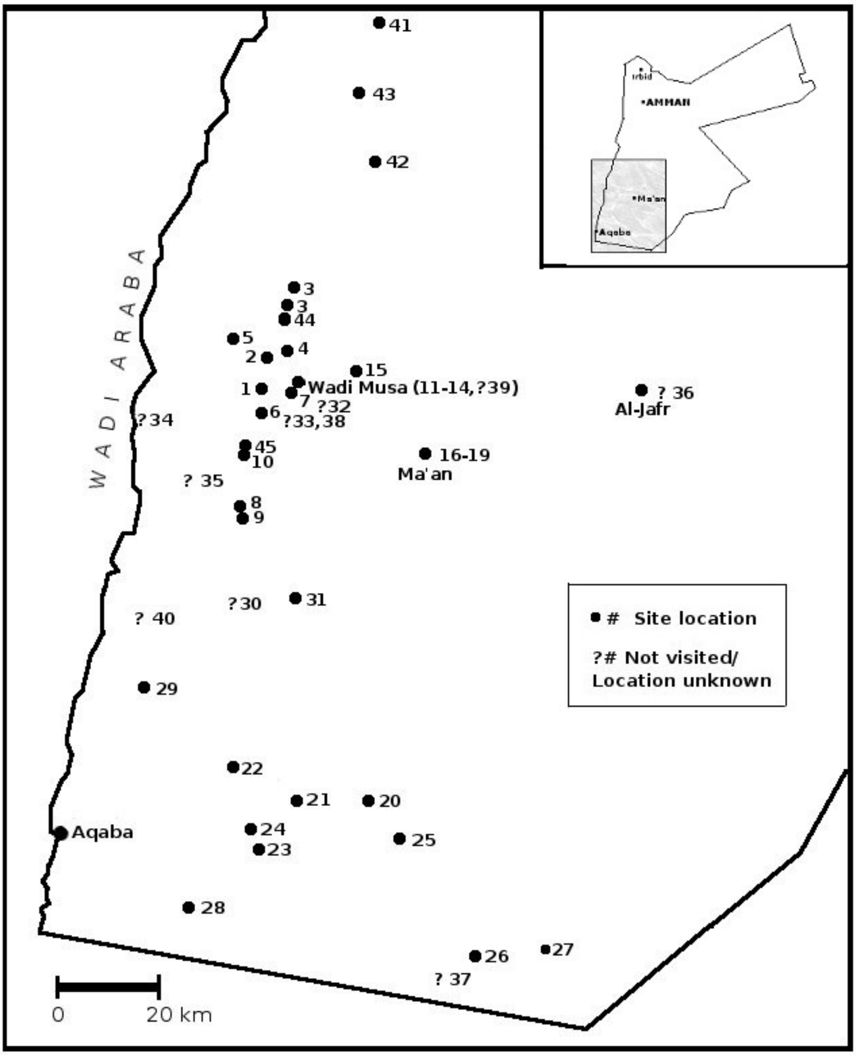
41
43
42
WADI ARABA
3
3
44
5
2
4
15
1
Wadi Musa (11-14,?39)
7
?32
6
?33,38
?34
? 36
Al-Jafr
45
10
16-19
Ma'an
? 35
8
9
?30
31
? 40
29
22
21
20
Aqaba
24
23
25
28
26
27
? 37
0
20 km
Irbid
AMMAN
Ma'an
Aqaba
● # Site location
?# Not visited/ Location unknown

Figure 6 Distribution of sites

APPENDIX II: IMAGES OF SITES

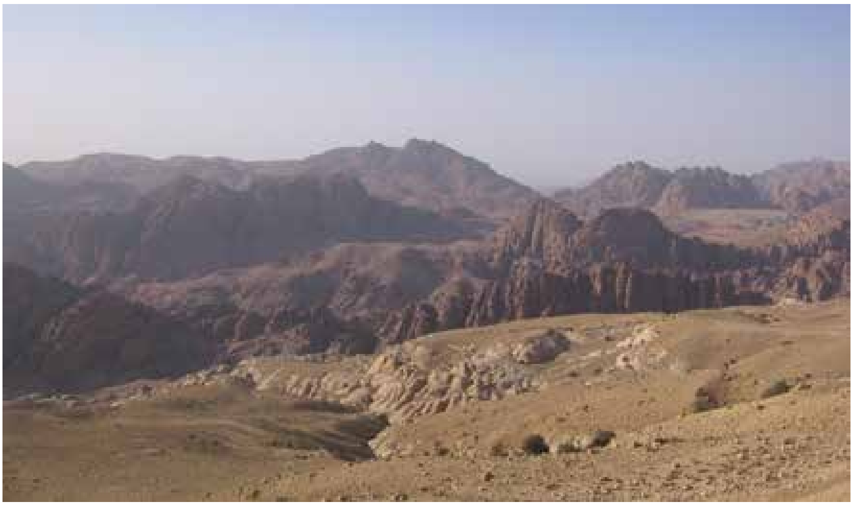

Figure 7 Jabal Hārūn, view from ʿĒn Amūn towards west (Site 1, August 2004) [152]

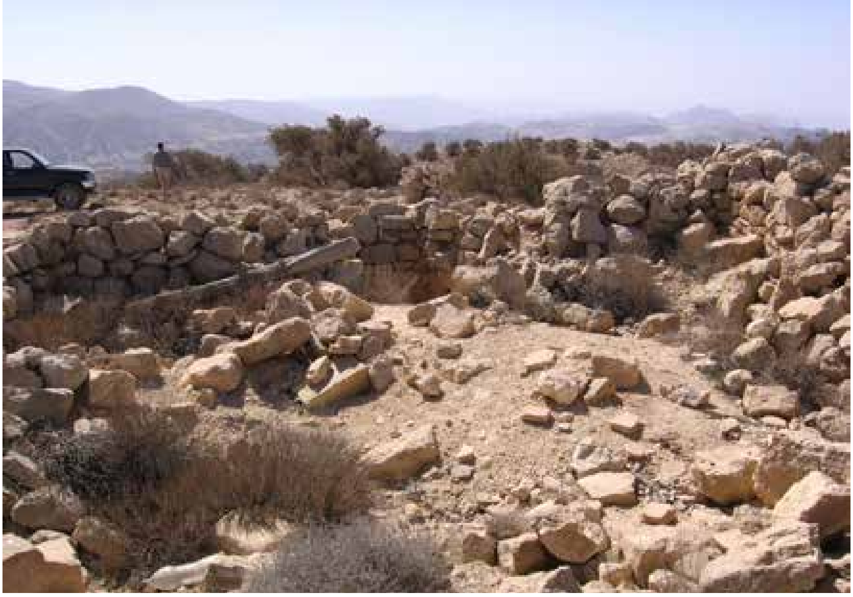

Figure 8 Aḥwar (Site 3)

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[152] Unless otherwise stated, the photos were taken by the author in October 2005.

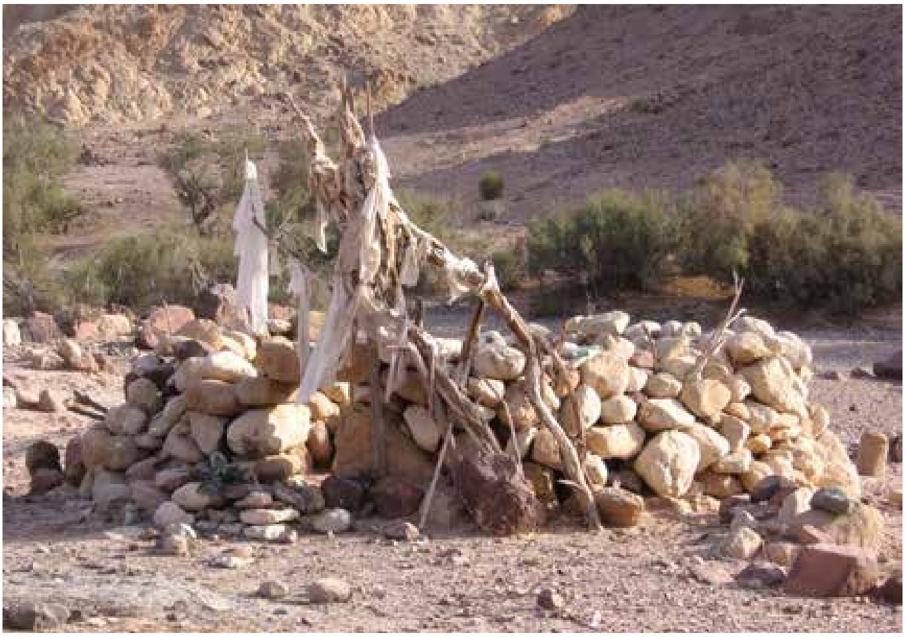

Figure 9 Gubūr ʿIyāl ʿAwwād (Site 5)

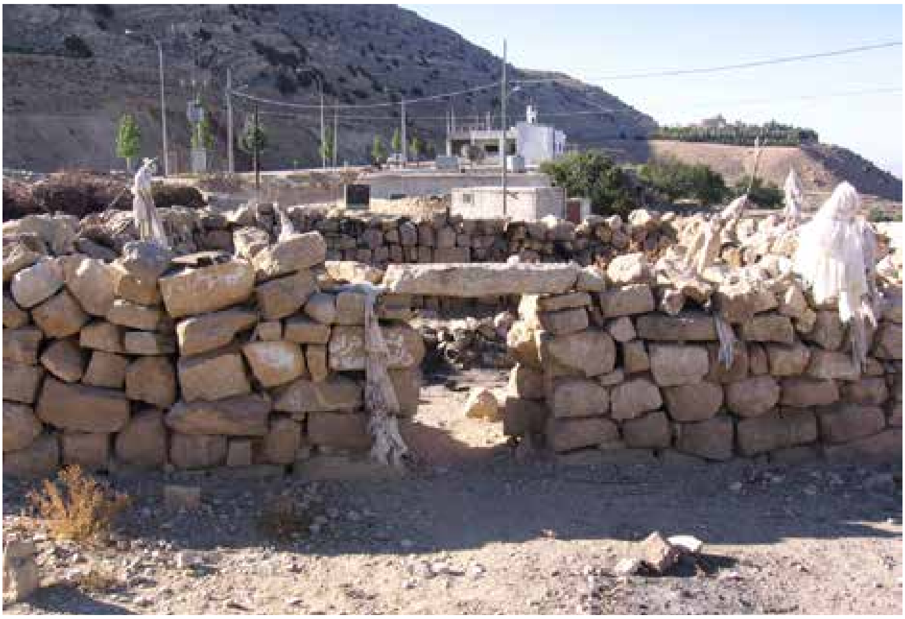

Figure 10 al-Bawwāt (Al-Fugarā) (Site 7)

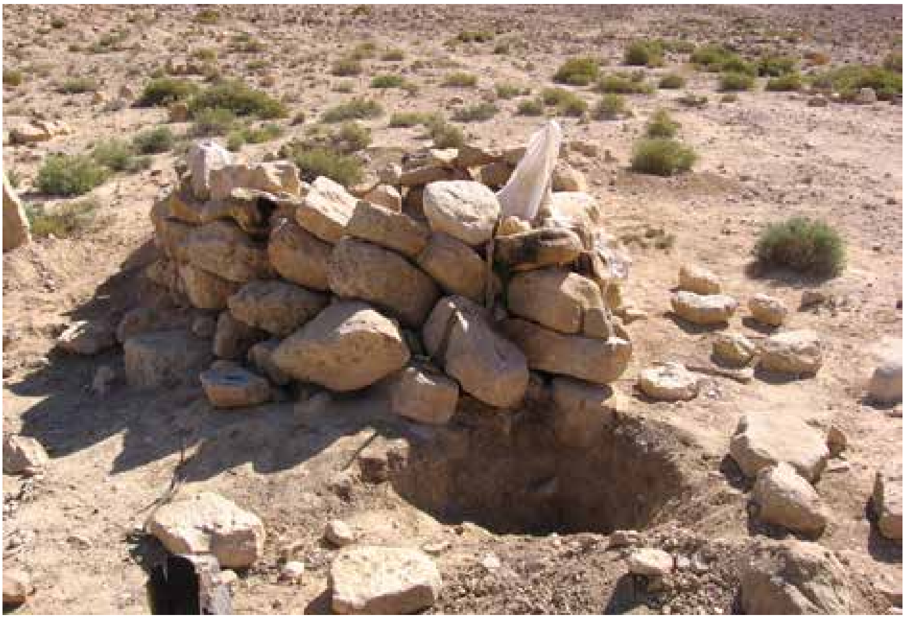

Figure 11 Bīr Ḥamad (Ṣabbāḥ, Aḥmad, and Ghannām, Site 9)

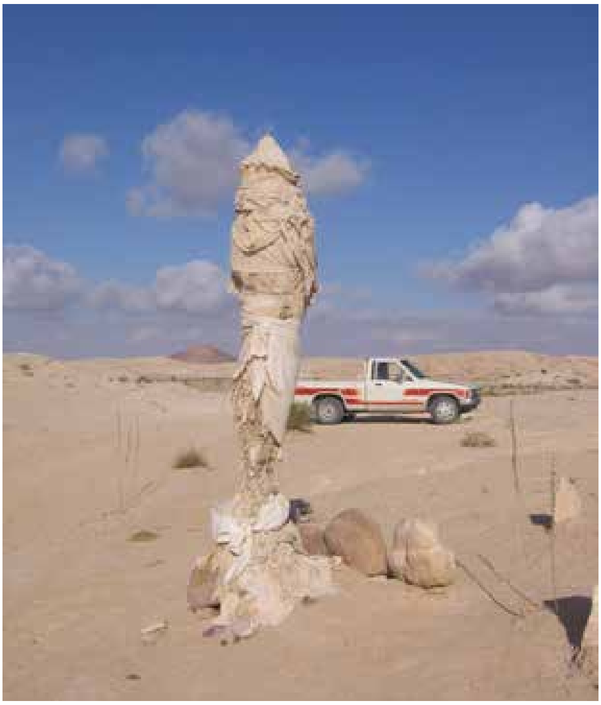

Figure 12 Faraj əMfarrej (Site 10)

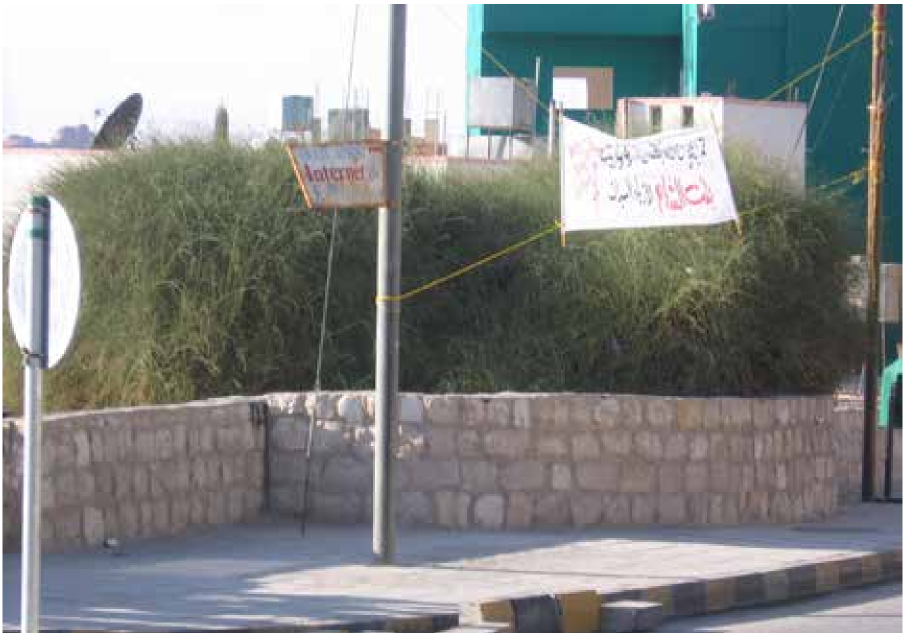

Figure 13 Sajarat ʿAṭāya (Site 12)

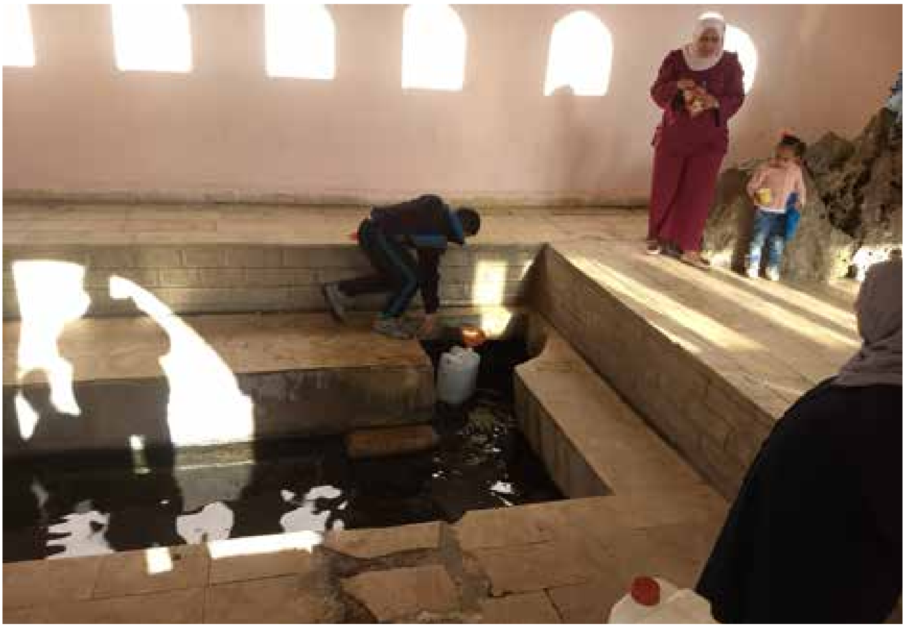

Figure 14 ʿĒn Mūsā (Site 14, photo by Janne Hägglund, September 2018)

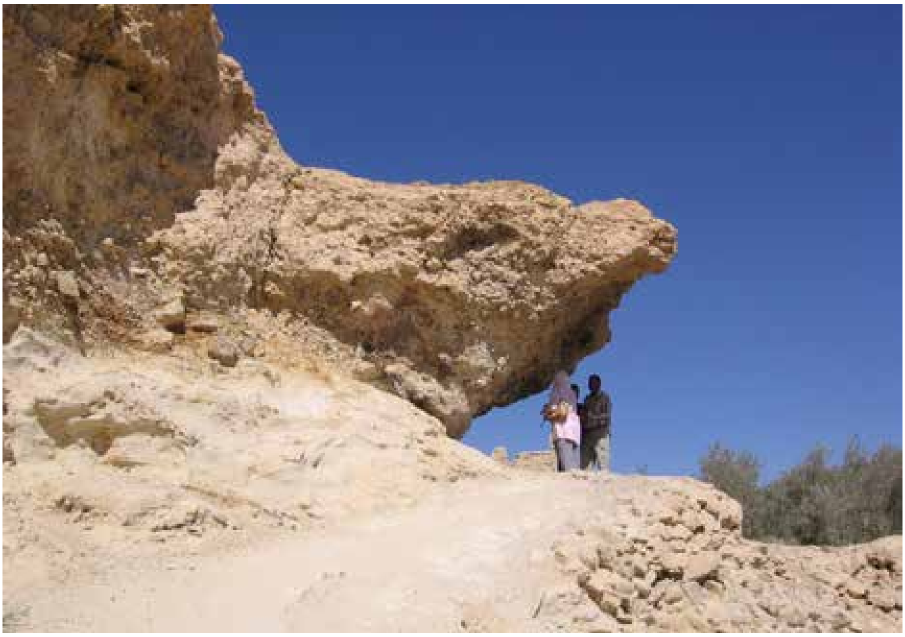

Figure 15 Umm əJdīʿ (Site 16, September 2007)

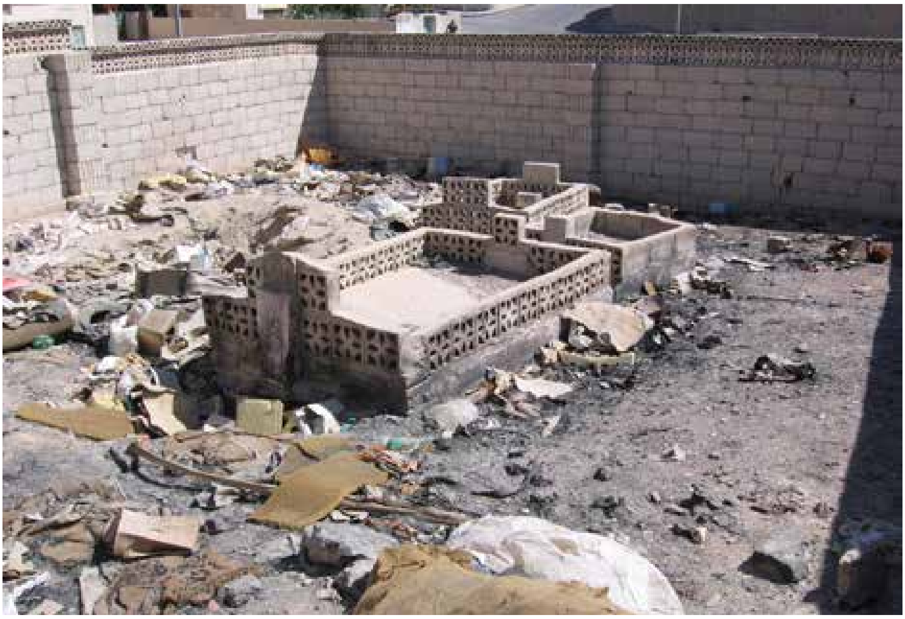

Figure 16 Shēkh ʿAbdallah (Site 17, September 2007)

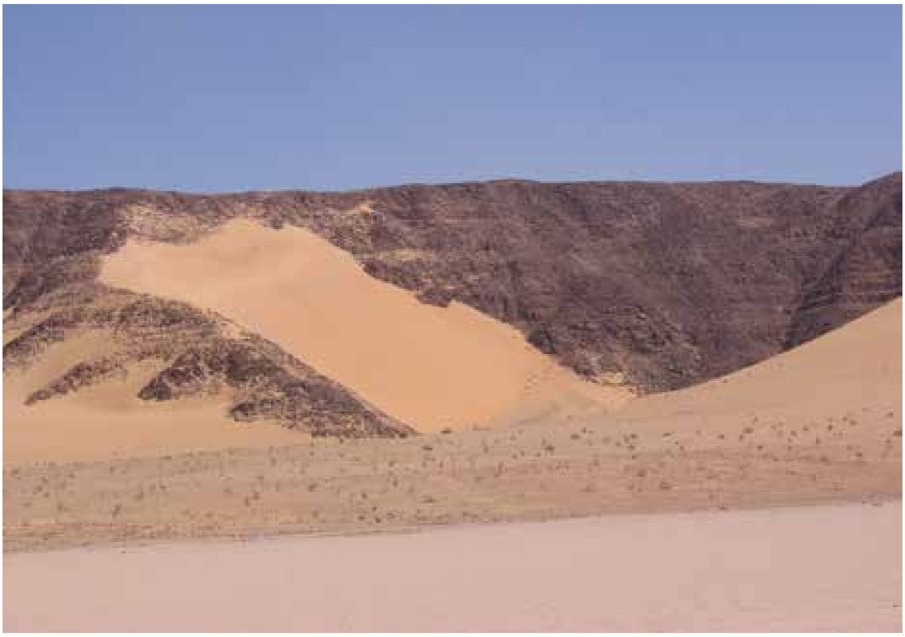

Figure 17 Umm əDfūf (Site 20)

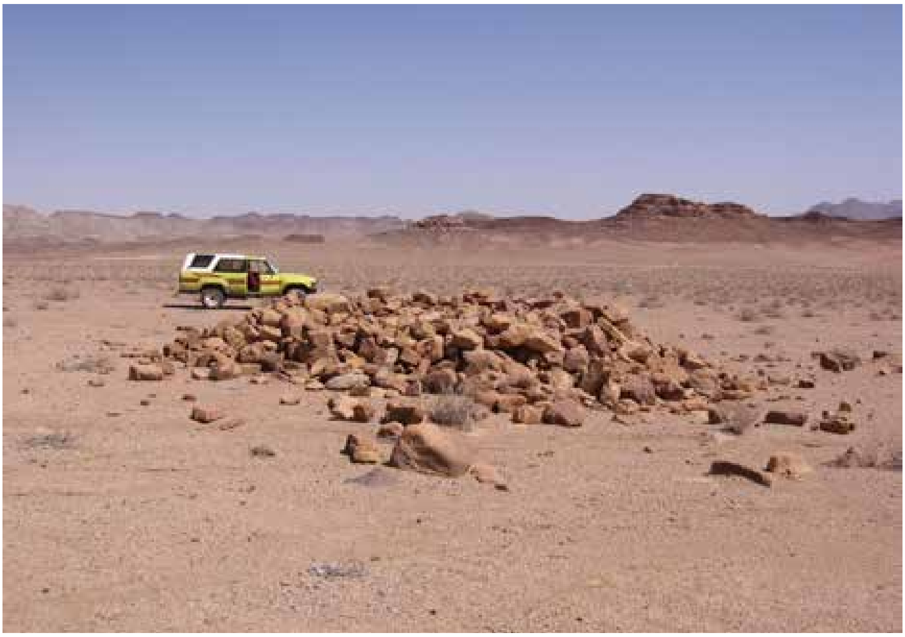

Figure 18 Shrēf al-Marṣad (Site 22)

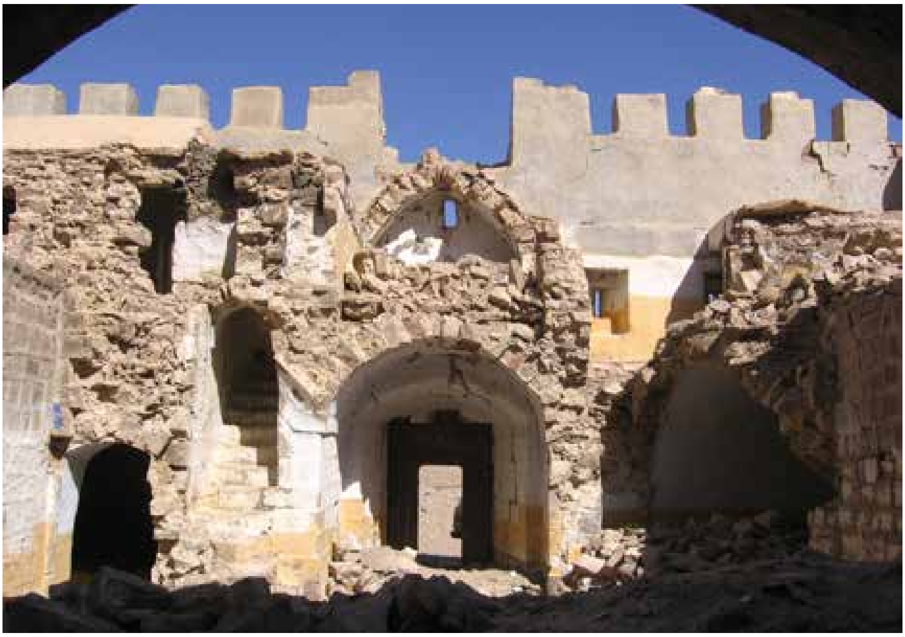

Figure 19 Gal‘at Mudawwara (Site 27)

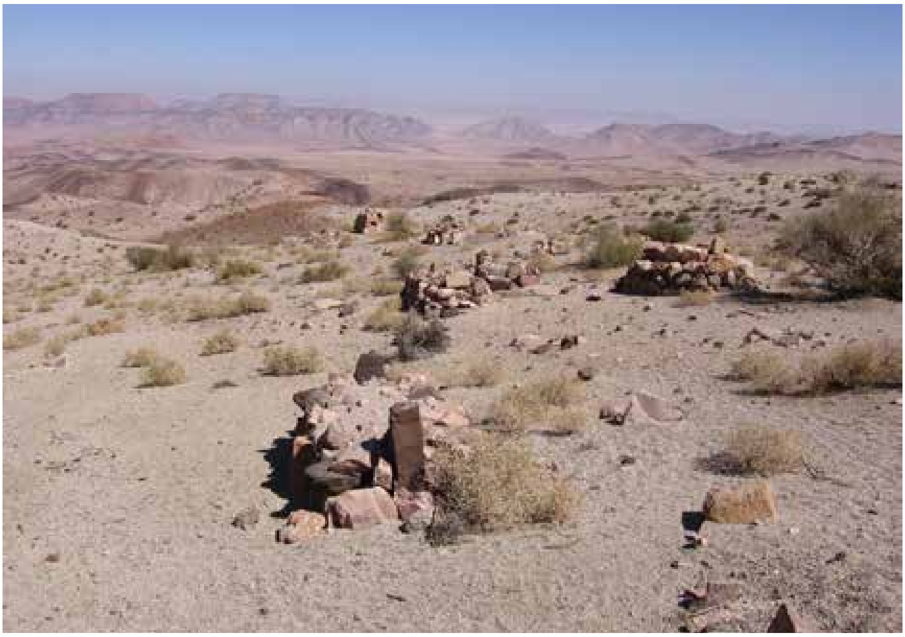

Figure 20 al-Hajfe (Site 29)

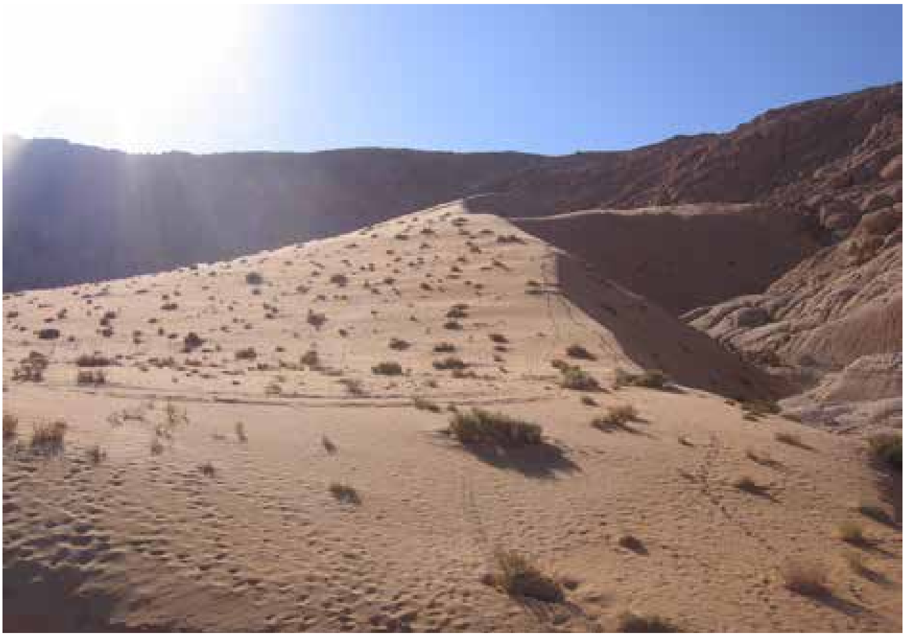

Figure 21 al-Marmad (Site 31, November 2013)

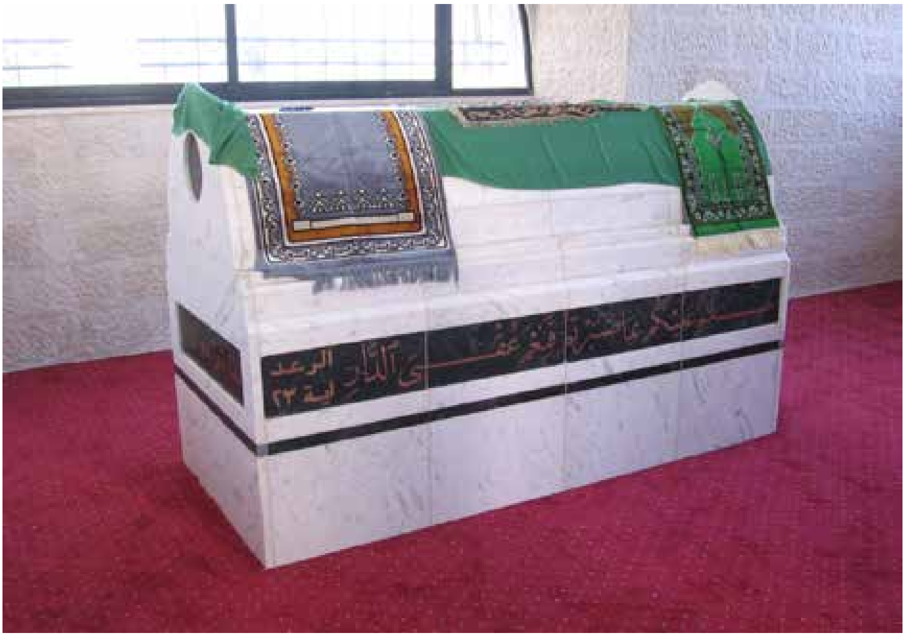

Figure 22 al-Azadī (Site 42)

APPENDIX III: VOCABULARY

al-Anṣār	الأنصار	‘Helpers’. People of Medina who helped the Prophet and his followers after they ecaped from Mecca.
‘Aṣabīya	عصبية	Sense of solidarity and unity. Often referred to in a tribal context.
Aṣl	اصل	Origin or descent, especially in reference to noble lineage.
Bādiya	بادية	Semi-desert, steppe. The traditional area of the Bedouin.
Baraka	بركة	‘Blessing’.
Bid‘a	بدعة	‘Innovation, novelty’. For traditionalists, also the heretical elements of modernization.
Da‘wa	دعوة	‘Summon, invitation’. Spreading the message of Islam, to both Muslims and non-Muslims.
Ikhwān	إخوان	‘Brothers’. The religious militia of ibn Sa‘ūd, composed of members of Bedouin tribes.
Jāhilīya	جاهلية	‘Ignorance’. Refers primarily to pre-Islamic Arabia, but can be used of any period when people are not following the tenets of Islam and/or are unaware of them.
Judūd	جدود	‘Grandfathers, ancestors’.
Karam	كرم	‘Generosity’. Hospitality and mutual generosity as the basis of the system of honor and respect.
Karāmāt	كرامات	‘Favors, gracious deeds’. The acts of God through his saints, ‘miracles’.
Maqām	مقام	*Magām* in Bedouin dialect. ‘Place, location’. Tomb of a saint, or other holy site.
Mawlid	مولد	‘Birth’. A carnival and celebration, especially for the birthday of Prophet Muḥammad, but also for other notable Islamic figures and Sufi saints.
Mawsim	موسم	‘Season’. Holiday, festival season.
Al-Muhājirūn	المهاجرون	‘Emigrants’. The first Muslims who followed Prophet Muḥammad from Mecca to Medina.
Nabī	نبي	Pl. *Anbiyā*’. Prophet in the Islamic tradition.
Qabr	قبر	*Gaber* in Bedouin dialect, ‘tomb, grave’.
Rujm	رجم	Stone heap, cairn.

Rasūl	رسول	Messenger of God, Prophet.
al-Ṣaḥāba	الصحابة	'Companions'. Those who saw Prophet Muḥammad, believed in him and died a Muslim. Most important groups were *al-Muhājirūn* and *al-Anṣār*.
Ṣāliḥ	صالح	'Pious, virtuous'. The definitive characteristic of a *walī*.
Tabarruk	تبرّك	Seeking blessing (*baraka*).
Tajdīd	تجديد	'Renewal'. Islamic revival, purification of the society and religious thought.
Ṭarīqa	طريقة	'Method, way, path'. Schools of Sufism.
Taṣawwuf	تصوّف	Sufism.
Tawassul	توسّل	'Petition'. Attempt to seek an intercession and a way of petitioning God through a *walī*.
Walī	ولي	Pl. *Awliyā'* 'Friend, benefactor'. Islamic saint.
Wāsṭa	واسْطة	'Intercessor, intermediary'. Using connections for personal benefit.
Zāwiya	زاوية	A Sufi lodge.
Ziyāra	زيارة	'Visit'. Visiting holy sites, such as tombs of saints.

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