ABSTRACT

WALLER, KIRSTYN TAMBRA. Cultural Contact, Identity, and the Small Finds: An Interdisciplinary Case Study for Historicizing and Interpreting Jordan’s Classical Heritage. (Under the direction of Dr. S. Thomas Parker).

Recent cultural heritage initiatives and development plans in Jordan have demonstrated an increased focus on cultural identity and continuity in the last few decades, directly opposing more traditional models of engaging with archaeological collections that are rooted in the legacy of colonial control and early days of nation-building. However, these models have dealt primarily with modern histories and do not often incorporate the region’s classical past (Hellenistic-Byzantine periods). This thesis proposes a theoretical and practical framework for engaging contemporary communities with Jordan’s classical past and archaeological resources by using the small finds collection from the Roman Aqaba Project as a case study for potential routes forward in public interpretive practices and published archaeological reports. In doing so, it reexamines the history of the Nabataeans, focusing on cultural formation, conceptions of ancient identity, and the diversity and hybridity of social practices, as preserved in the material record. The final chapter serves as an interdisciplinary applied development plan for utilizing the collection from Aqaba to fill the interpretive gaps in museum development in the region.
DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this thesis to my loving family and friends, all of whom played an integral role in the completion of this project. I am forever grateful for the encouragement, support, late night phone calls, and the humor that you all provided at every step of the way.
BIOGRAPHY

Kirstyn T. Waller, known affectionately by friends and colleagues as “Kay,” was born in Charlottesville, Virginia and has lived throughout the states of Virginia and North Carolina. She received two undergraduate degrees from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, one in Archaeology and the other in History. While an undergraduate, Kirstyn developed a strong interest in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire and in the political and cultural implications of archaeological interpretations in the Mediterranean and the Levant. She spent two field seasons volunteering and getting research and class credit at the Huqoq Excavation Project before turning her focus to the archaeological resources of southern Jordan. For the last two years, Kirstyn has been earning her M.A. in Public History from North Carolina State University, where she has focused on historicizing cultural heritage and Roman archaeology, earning a 4.0 in the program. Kirstyn has been working over the last two academic years to co-publish the small finds from the Roman Aqaba Project, forthcoming in the second volume of the project’s final report. She presented her findings at the American School of Overseas Research’s 2020 Annual Meeting.
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I would like to start out by formally thanking my thesis advisor, Dr. S. Thomas Parker for his guidance throughout this process and for allowing me to work with the recovered objects from the Roman Aqaba Project. Most importantly, I would like to thank him for his willingness to take a chance on a public history project set within the ancient world. I could not have completed this thesis without his support and his willingness to talk through big ideas with me, always offering suggestions for how to ground those ideas in existing scholarship. I would like to also express my gratitude to Dr. Alicia McGill and Dr. Tate Paulette for serving on my thesis committee. Their suggestions and advice helped me reframe my research questions and perspective on multiple occasions, especially when I was feeling stuck in the writing process. I owe each of you much gratitude, and it has been a privilege to work with you during my short time at N.C. State.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

An increasing number of archaeologists and heritage scholars have approached the topic of revitalizing the use of classical archaeology in Jordan over the past two decades. These efforts have emphasized the necessity for more responsible interpretation, protection, and utilization of Jordan’s archaeological resources.\(^1\) Recent interpretive plans in southern Jordan have demonstrated an increased focus on cultural identity, local continuity, and subjectivity, shifting away from the grand narratives that are traditionally rooted in the region’s legacy of colonial rule and the early days of nation-building.\(^2\) Unfortunately, this process has remained a largely Western phenomenon without sufficient inclusion of local populations.\(^3\) Further, these recent interpretive developments have focused largely on incorporating modern histories into interpretation rather than critically engaging with new frameworks for making the classical past more relevant to modern populations.\(^4\) Thus, archaeological parks dating to the region’s classical periods, including the Hellenistic (333-36 BCE), Roman (63 BCE-324 CE), and Byzantine (324-636 CE), as well as their accompanying collections, have been largely dismissed in recent years,

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\(^1\) Bert de Vries, “Archaeology and Community in Jordan and Greater Syria: Traditional Patterns and New Directions,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 76, no. 3 (September 2013): 137.


\(^3\) Alan H. Simmons and Mohammad Najjar, “Joint Custody: An Archaeological Park at Neolithic Ghwair I, Jordan,” *Near Eastern Archaeology* 76, no. 3 (September 2013): 178.

with scholars and certain local communities viewing these spaces as playgrounds for Western visitors and national elites.\(^5\)

The goal of this thesis is two-fold; I primarily propose a new theoretical and practical framework for engaging contemporary communities with the classical past (Hellenistic-Byzantine periods) and archaeological resources in Jordan, using the small finds from the Roman Aqaba Project as a case study in creating a development plan for archaeological sites and on-site museums, particularly in cases of continuous occupation in the context of modern urban development. My secondary objective is to provide a more nuanced understanding of the formation, cultural identity, and diversity of the Nabataeans so that future interpretations might more successfully highlight the hybridity of ancient identity construction as opposed to emphasizing Western colonial powers or distinctive national or ethnicity based characteristics.

A number of archaeologists and heritage scholars have engaged with similar matters related to emphasizing cultural identity, hybridity, and continuity in the material record throughout the last decade, attempting to determine the role of public archaeology, proximate communities, heritage scholars, and government entities in preserving and protecting a region’s archaeological resources.\(^6\) The post-processual movement within archaeology has demonstrated the power of archaeological collections in nuancing interpretations of the past in a way that meaningfully engages host communities while promoting the tourism sector. Thus, creating new approaches to interpreting and presenting classical archaeological collections can be instrumental in promoting conservation, preservation, and meaningful educational experiences.


\(^6\) de Vries, “Archaeology and Community in Jordan and Greater Syria”: 132.
In constructing my argument and case study, I engage with both the traditional and evolving interpretations of the Nabataeans, illustrating the longstanding cultural impact of this people as an ethnicity and as a political and cultural entity. I utilize an anthropological approach to interpret the social and economic functions of small finds collections, arguing that this category of inquiry has potential to fill in gaps regarding cultural hybridity, community, and daily life in the ancient world, addressing the divide between modern populations and the world of the Nabataeans in southern Jordan. This discussion is framed within the context of contemporary politics and development in the region, focusing on aspects of the archaeological record that demonstrate cultural convergence, the movement and adaptation of populations, and the construction of cultural and individual identities. After contextualizing the importance of the ancient Nabataeans to contemporary heritage and post-colonial studies, I provide a development plan for utilizing the collection from Aila to fill the interpretive gaps in museum development in the region.

Terminology

Before moving forward, it is essential to provide an explanation for some of the terminology used throughout this thesis. Terms like ‘Middle East’ and ‘Transjordan’ have been imbued with political meaning over the last several centuries. For this reason, I primarily refer to the region highlighted in this thesis as the Levant, referring to the mass of land on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, i.e., from the southern edge of modern day Turkey, southward through the modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Jordan, and northwestern Saudi Arabia to the northern edge of Arabian Peninsula, and Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula (fig. 1). The southern portion of this range encompasses Nabataean kingdom. When annexed to the Roman Empire in 106 CE as the Provincia Arabia, it became one of the frontier provinces of the
Roman Empire, so I also use this Latin name in reference to the southern region in antiquity. In instances highlighting the British colonial Mandate in the early days of nationhood, I use the term “Transjordan” to distinguish between the region after Ottoman rule (1517-1918) but prior to the creation of Jordan as a modern nation state in 1946. Likewise, in instances highlighting the modern political context of the region at large, particularly encompassing the neighboring Mediterranean territories, I use the term “Middle East.” I utilize these terms for the sake of consistency and clarity, hoping that eventually we can move past such loaded and Eurocentric political terms.

Similarly, throughout this thesis, I sometimes use the name Aqaba to refer to the subject of my case study, and, at other times, I use the Latinized name of the port of Aqaba from antiquity, Aila. I refer to the site as Aqaba throughout the development plan and in describing current interpretive conditions to differentiate between the modern city, as it functions in the twentieth century and beyond, and the ancient port town, which I discuss in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis.

Outlining the Need of Improved Archaeological Interpretation and Display

Jordan’s classical past can be utilized in interpretive practices to promote sustainable preservation, community engagement, and the conception of the historical landscape as an empowering and instrumental force in shaping contemporary communities. However, for Jordan’s rich history to meet this outcome, existing frameworks for interpreting the classical past are in desperate need of a standardized revitalization. Thus, I recommend a more effective

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8 For an early discussion of the terms Near East and Middle East, see Roderic Davison 1960 “Where is the Middle East?”
9 The ancient site from the Islamic period has also been phonetically translated from Arabic to ‘Ayla,’ so I use the Latinized ‘Aila’ spelling for the sake of consistency.
incorporation of multi-vocal perspectives into interpretation, a more nuanced narrative regarding
the ancient inhabitants of the site over time, active engagement with the nation's colonial and
nationalist past, and the development of educational programs based on more responsible
archaeological interpretations of small finds collections that can be incorporated into the national
curriculum and offered to local and foreign audiences.

At the most fundamental level, heritage studies in Jordan have highlighted the power of
archaeological resources in enhancing both schoolchildren’s and adults’ understandings of the
past while encouraging participation and popular interest in the nation’s preservation
initiatives.\textsuperscript{10} Arwa Badran has written extensively about the positive changes that have resulted
from including classical archaeological resources in Jordan’s school curriculum and museum
programming.\textsuperscript{11} The rich material remains throughout southern Jordan have been instrumental in
encouraging guests to conceptualize the “past as a rich resource,” while educating guests at
archaeological parks about the lives and practices of historical populations.\textsuperscript{12} Within this context,
more responsible interpretation of classical resources can be beneficial in promoting local
preservation and meaningful educational experiences.

Much of Jordan has undergone rapid development in the last few decades, underscoring
the urgency of protecting cultural resources in light of economic and development threats. As a
result of these development initiatives, many of the classical archaeological resources in
developing towns and cities have been preserved as marketing tools to promote foreign visitation

\textsuperscript{10}Arwa Badran, “The Excluded Past in Jordanian Formal Primary Education: The Introduction of Archaeology,” In
\textit{New Perspectives in Global Public Archaeology}, eds. Katsuyuki Okamura and Akira Matsuda (New York, NY:
\textsuperscript{11} Badran, “The Excluded Past:” 212.
\textsuperscript{12} Badran, “The Excluded Past:” 203
to archaeological sites.\textsuperscript{13} Despite living in direct proximity to these sites and collections, a large percentage of local community members have noted that existing interpretations at the more developed sites, such as the Amman Citadel and Petra, seem to exclude locals from their considerations.\textsuperscript{14} This exclusion is harmful to sustainable interpretive practices, as these structures and collections have the power to shape popular conceptions of the classical past as they are built into the lived environment of contemporary populations.\textsuperscript{15}

Recent studies in archaeology and pedagogy suggest that deploying classical archaeology in the form of accessible, multivocal educational programming benefits local student learning outcomes and promotes a community-based model for continuing the development of Jordan’s tourism sector.\textsuperscript{16} Abu-Khafajah has noted the symbolic power of classical remains on display in Amman (the capital of modern Jordan) as not only an ideological archive of shifting narratives, but as a contemporary reminder of the distant and recent histories that have shaped the landscape of Jordan across multiple generations.\textsuperscript{17}

Other scholars have noted the close-knit relationship between proximate communities and advocating for archaeological justice and sustainability; local populations often possess the specific knowledge necessary for providing more thorough, responsible, and provocative interpretative practices related to archaeological parks and collections.\textsuperscript{18} The inclusion of

\textsuperscript{13}This excludes the TWLCRM, which is limited to a very select portion of the Petra city complex; Shatha Abu-Khafajah and Rama Al Rabady, “THE “JORDANIAN” ROMAN COMPLEX: Reinventing Urban Landscape To Accommodate Globalization,” \textit{Near Eastern Archaeology} 76 no. 3 (2013): 187-190.


\textsuperscript{17} Abu Khafajah and Al Rabady, “The “Jordanian” Roman Complex: Reinventing Urban Landscape To Accommodate Globalization,” \textit{Near Eastern Archaeology} 76 no. 3 (2013): 186.

proximate community members in interpretation not only benefits the interpretation itself, but it also encourages local involvement in preservation while contributing to a more sustainably operated tourism sector that relies less on Western scholarship and economic initiatives. In incorporating multivocal perspectives in the form of public archaeology initiatives and anthropological practices at every level of planning, excavating, and interpretation would serve to reallocate power and funds back into the hands of local communities by reframing interpretation as an ongoing dialogue that relies on the expertise of regionally based experts, with more locals trained in higher-level interpretive positions. The importance of the local community in the excavation and presentation of artifacts is further essential in situations where conflicting interests arise between different stakeholders, often highlighting existing tensions related to the values of heritage, economic development, and tourism appeal at a given site.

Contemporary Context

Aslan notes in his study of heritage practices and development at Petra that, for one to be in line with current conservation practices, he or she must consider present day socio-economic conditions, cultural values, and urban development as it affects historically contested territories, as many sites throughout the region, including Aqaba, are valued for the revenue that they generate for local populations. However, prioritizing economic interests in the case of several sites has led to infrastructural failure and irreparable damage to the archaeological record, primarily in the form of overcrowding, congestion within the modern city, and damage to the

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20 Tuttle, “Preserving Petra.” 15.
22 Petra, being the most easily identifiable; see Tuttle 2013.
Further, prioritizing economic growth as a primary advantage of preserving antiquities is detrimental when responsible preservation practices contradict potentially more lucrative opportunities of development, as has been the case in modern day Turkey’s dam construction that has destroyed thousands of unexplored archaeological sites and resources.\(^\text{24}\)

Since 1994, Jordan’s tourism has fluctuated significantly after its dramatic increase following the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty, with strict travel precautions currently in place following the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.\(^\text{25}\) For this reason, contributing to a narrative that highlights alternative values and justifications for preserving the past, such as communal and symbolic importance, as opposed to primarily economic based preservation initiatives, is essential for further development of the young nation’s antiquities practices.

Within the context of clashing preservation priorities and economic values, Arab development is full of paradoxes and contradictions. It is usually associated with quickly built developments, slums, and new construction, but a number of the contemporary issues facing development in both the urban and tourism sectors relate to the engagement of the Arab world with Western ideals and neoliberalism, which tie directly into archaeological practices and their relationship to tourism and development. There have been several publications in recent years related to the contemporary Arab identity and how Jordanians can productively respond to a history that is so obstructed by colonial influence and Western narratives.\(^\text{26}\) Thus, these populations are often tasked with balancing conflicting ideologies that are rooted in conceptions

\(^{23}\) Aslan, “The Cultural and Heritage Management of Petra:” 378


of modernity versus tradition, with these values constantly and visibly evolving in the nation’s presentation of its archaeological and historical resources.

Yasser Elsheshtawy outlines the parallels between the current state of flux being experienced among contemporary Arab communities, the events of the twentieth century, and the political climate of the ancient Mediterranean world. In constructing a community based model, we must engage with the past in a way that highlights that similarity, making the historical narrative feel more applicable to modern populations for reasons beyond economic gain. This task is particularly urgent in the context of communities with direct connections to the classical past, as occupants of southern Jordan have consistently found themselves in moments of cultural assimilation, resistance, and transformation, with new cultures interacting and being forged at different localities. These transformations are immediately observable within the material record, effectively illustrated by archaeological small finds collections. Small finds consistently offer insight into adopted and rejected practices, as well as merging material and symbolic significance at times of transition and cultural contact.

With consistent pressures from external forces, cultural contact, and conquest having contributed to the trajectory of indigenous practice within region, it is irresponsible to ignore these parallels between the present and the classical past. Thus, despite this thesis’s focus on regional variation and individual practice, I stress a degree of continuity and likenesses that can be observed both in modern cities and in the ancient material record, particularly within the small finds. These ancient communities shared similar desires for survival, creativity, worship, and

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artistic expression through their material remains, which can be observed in the meaning-making activities and ideals of contemporary communities, whether intentionally or otherwise.\textsuperscript{30}

The dominant discourse in the region, highlighting Arab and Muslim identity and modern history, certainly offers merit in terms of communicating a unifying image of Arab nations over the last several centuries. However, earlier classical cultures contained elements that continued well into the later periods that have been both highlighted and weaponized at the national level. Both the classical history of Jordan as well as the regional post-conquest identity were seized by government entities in an attempt to gain control over the national narrative and identity building processes, thus the story of the Nabataeans inherently involves the construction of modern Arab identities. For this reason, although my analysis centers primarily around the Nabataeans, I naturally engage with the changing population over time, as this vital context provides a more holistic means of understanding the ancient occupants of the region. This ongoing reconfiguration of identity, control, and resistance has defined the history of Jordan since antiquity, and framing this classical culture within the context of hybridization and converging cultural practice is essential for empowering the population of Jordan to take control of this national narrative.

**The Nabataeans**

Since the primary objective of this thesis stresses the importance of classical history in long-term meaning making processes, some justification for the selection of the Nabataeans and this specific period of history is necessary. The Nabataeans provide a particularly challenging case in terms of determining their exact position within communities and contemporary heritage.

and preservation practices. Overviews dealing with ancient ethnicity, community, and identity are often broadly situated, offering vague accounts of the struggles that scholars face when attempting to trace the historical continuity of ancient cultures that existed prior to modern conceptions of nation and geographical location. The tendency to treat the Roman Empire as a monolithic entity, indicative of either Roman or non-Roman practices creates a false binary that does not account for the diversity of what it meant to be Roman and the broad range of populations existing within the sweeping Roman Empire. This phenomena is particularly pressing in the eastern provinces, which share a long history prior to the classical millennium, including continuous cultural contact with neighboring peoples and many episodes of external invasion and conquest. The classical millennium was merely a continuation of this history but now including the enduring effects of Hellenization with its the adoption and/or exclusion of new cultural influences, ranging from the administrative down to the personal level.

These multi-faceted cultural influences and fusions are evident within the Nabataean population, as this group was spread across space and time, and conceptions of what it meant to be Nabataean varied depending on the individual or community. Some of the Nabataeans configured identity in terms of geography, others in terms of kinship, and there was an entire air of contested identity based on sedentarization versus a nomadic lifestyle. The Nabataeans represent a controversial period of the nation’s past that engages with questions regarding the formation of local identity over a long period of time, from before, during, and after Roman conquest. This group lies directly at the junction of “Hellenization,” “Romanization,” and local Arab culture, underscoring the importance of studying the material evidence of the Roman

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32 This view has been largely abandoned in the scholarship of the last century.
33 Anderson, “Identity Crises:” 121.
empire, in addition to relying on textual accounts of how ancient peoples viewed themselves and the world. Material culture is also central when studying the Nabataeans, as no Nabataean literature has survived into the present, and the epigraphical evidence and few scattered papyri that remain are insufficient in producing adequate conclusions regarding Nabataean identity and tradition. Thus, the few preserved ancient sources that reference the Nabataeans were written from an outside perspective, offering very little insight into how this group may have thought about themselves. In this regard, we are left primarily with material culture to produce a more holistic picture of life in the newly annexed Nabataean kingdom.

**Aqaba as a Case Study**

Our modern understanding of the Nabataeans is predicated, in part, on the intrinsic link between an ancient population and the land that they inhabited, and thus an intimate understanding of the landscape that they might exploit for agriculture, grazing, resource extraction, production, consumption, commerce, and security. This understanding underscores the importance of selecting a case study that demonstrates continuous occupation, centering the notion of “place” within contemporary interpretations, as is the case at the selected site of Aqaba (Roman Aila).

The existing tensions between modern values, ancient history, economic development, and preservation all play out at the selected site of Aqaba. Aqaba’s accessible location at the northern tip of the Red Sea, as Jordan’s only access to the sea, and its proximity to major tourist attractions in Jordan have led to its rapid development since the creation of the modern nation state. Some scattered references in documentary sources permit reconstructing parts of Aila’s

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own history as well as that of the Nabataean kingdom during antiquity, particularly at moments of transition or contact with other cultural forces. Aqaba’s continuous occupation since the first century BCE has allowed for a holistic analysis of the site as it functioned as a major port of the Nabataean kingdom and then as an international port and major military base of the Roman Empire until its surrender to Islamic forces in 630. Its economic prosperity continued well into the Islamic centuries.

This long term occupation, illuminated by archaeological fieldwork within the city, the rapid infrastructural development, and the presence of an archaeological museum with an existing collection that highlights the recent history of the region make this an ideal site for a case study. Further, the extensive collection of registered small finds retrieved by the Roman Aqaba Project, representing each of these periods of occupation but not included in the public-facing archaeological interpretation on site at the museum or archaeological park, further solidify the utility of Aqaba as a case study with limitless potential. This particular landscape created and reinforced practices and cultural identities, strengthening the link between modern and ancient communities in the region and further demanding the involvement of communities living within proximity of archaeological sites when constructing more responsible and personally significant interpretations.

**Small Finds**

The small finds from Aila are uniquely situated to shed light on many of the different factors highlighted above. Their utility is largely due to the diverse range of finds included in this category and the fact that most of the finds from Aila have a secure archaeological context, aiding in their interpretation. The small finds have historically been a ‘catch all’ category for
finds once deemed too insignificant, or small, to contribute to significant interpretation. These views have been challenged in the last thirty years of scholarship, although approaches to studying small finds at many sites still leave much to be desired in terms of function and implication. In any case, the small finds offer insight into a number of significant categories related to identity, relationships, and socio-economic practices within the ancient world, and thus can be utilized to parse out more thorough and resonating interpretations of ancient populations.

A major concern within archaeological tourism and heritage development in Jordan has been the use of massive public architecture and famous sites like Petra, Jerash, and the Amman citadel to bolster the national image and provide event spaces for local and international elites. One of the major benefits of the small finds is that they focus the narrative onto individuals and non-elite people and practices, often with less abstract and grand interpretations than these large, public architectural works seem to communicate. Small finds collections can provide an integral aspect of breaking away from these top-down narratives, offering more nuanced interpretations of the ancient world and its relationship to modern communities.

Many of the definitive works on small finds and social theory have derived from other parts of the world, with different temporal and spatial foci. Many of the existing small finds typologies that deal directly with cultural identity, at least from historical periods, derive from Prehistoric archaeology has relied upon these finds for decades, often applying a more theoretical framework to the interpretation of artifacts, see Margaret W. Conkey and Joan M. Gero. “Tensions, Pluralities and Engendering Archaeology: An Introduction to Women and Prehistory,” in Engendering Archaeology (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1991): especially page 32.
more modern contexts where more readily identifiable categories for the function of objects exist. Many ancient collections simply ignore facets of identity studies, or avoid sorting small finds into definitive categories that cannot be corroborated through direct textual evidence. This is quite challenging in most cases, considering the sparsity of ancient written sources, especially from within the Nabataean kingdom. Despite the challenges present in applying categories and function to small finds, critically engaging with the context of these items as they may have been utilized in antiquity is essential in producing more meaningful interpretations - at both the analytical and public-facing levels. These finds provide valuable insight into the lives and practices of individuals, exploring daily life and habits, artistic preferences, and, as highlighted throughout this thesis, cultural contact and identity building practices.

By engaging with the social and cultural implications of small finds collections, a revitalized tradition of public-facing archaeology is possible, as these finds often resemble the categories most familiar, intimate, and meaningful to modern populations, thus encouraging communities and individuals to better orient themselves in their own worlds and environments. The need to prepare and consume food, to make and wear clothing, to manufacture personal items, such as fine jewelry, to perform acts of ritual and recreation; these are all categories represented within small finds collections. They all reflect a sense of continuity between the past and present that motivates communities to cherish and protect their pasts for reasons beyond simply economic gain. Small finds collections do not force modern audiences to stretch their imaginations to find some semblance of inspiration in the tales of the past- they instead beg the questions of change and continuity over time, highlighting the ability of the material record to

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shape and reflect our own time. Thus, these collections are well situated to improve interpretive approaches in Jordan, especially for the local population.

**Interdisciplinary Evidence and Discussion of Sources**

Contemporary archaeological interpretation gives way to interdisciplinary theories and methodologies, spanning across tourism, urban development, public history, heritage studies, etc. The interdisciplinary sources utilized for recreating an accurate picture of the past within archaeological inquiry have long been accepted by archaeologists. However, the wide span of disciplines impacted by archaeological practices are all too rarely studied in conjunction with one another. Ironically, within each field, there seems to be a growing concern and appreciation for the information that can be gleaned from borrowing interdisciplinary approaches. One need not look further than recently published field reports to find discussions of public engagement for the sake of funding, or recent development/tourism plans that consider the utility of incorporating a region’s past into development initiatives.42

This thesis draws from a wide range of source materials, but its focus on historicizing heritage, place based learning and experiential pedagogy, and contemporary engagement with symbolism and hybridized identity construction from the past place this project’s primary contributions within the field of public history. The framework utilized throughout this project seeks to diversify the historical record in ways that can be more readily applied to interpretation and development/display practices. In nuancing the historical traditions of ancient history, this thesis provides useful approaches for public historians to conceptualize the distant past in meaningful ways for contemporary and future populations by emphasizing pedagogy, genuine multivocality, community engagement, and the political connotations of one’s work. This

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framework should be used as a jumping off point that can be implemented across varying geotemporal contexts, constituting this project’s primary contributions to the field of public history.

Failing to consider the way each facet of public historical and archaeological interpretation interacts with, reinforces, and informs one another ignores a central component in modern relationships to the past, especially in the case of ancient histories that have been molded, weaponized, and misunderstood over the last several centuries. Among the goals of this thesis is to highlight the intersections between responsible archaeological interpretation, fieldwork, and public engagement while emphasizing the real world applications of these practices. For this reason, the sources consulted in researching and planning this thesis represent a plethora of disciplines that can no longer function as separate entities if we, as practitioners of the past, are to engage seriously with the sustainability and present day utility of archaeological interpretive practices. I consult sources ranging from the field of critical heritage studies to archaeological field reports, also engaging with historical monographs and conference proceedings on theoretical Roman archaeology and public history—If this makes a small contribution to scholars’ understanding of these disciplines as interconnected, and this conception benefits future archaeological endeavors, I will consider this thesis to be a success.

**Overview of Chapter Organization**

Chapter two provides an introduction for the theoretical models and terminology used throughout this thesis. Further, this chapter historicizes heritage practices that have contributed to the current climate of interpretive, archaeological, and heritage traditions in Jordan in addition to providing a historiography of archaeological models and museum practices, highlighting the

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interconnectedness of their epistemologies and politics. This chapter also emphasizes the need for a reintegration of the classical past in mainstream heritage practices in the Levant.

Chapter three provides context for the Nabataeans as a political, socio-economic, and cultural entity. This chapter establishes the importance of critically engaging with the history of the region in order to contribute to more nuanced and productive interpretations, particularly surrounding concepts of ancient identity and cultural contact. This chapter also engages with current debates surrounding the nature of “Hellenization” and “Romanization” in the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, highlighting the contributions, problems, and potential routes forward that diversifying interpretations of the past, utilizing the small finds from various excavations, can provide.

Chapter four is structured as a case study of the ancient port site of Aila. This chapter justifies the selection of Aila as a relevant case study on the basis of its long term occupation, active archaeological museum, and extensive collection of small finds. After establishing the context of the site in terms of both historical development and its modern day population and interpretive practices, it provides a critical overview of the different categories of small finds excavated at Aila and the role they can play in future interpretive models.

Chapter five is a proposed development plan for on-site archaeological museums, primarily focusing on the Aqaba Archaeological Museum. I incorporate visitor data and critical museum theory to provide tangible advice for museum professionals and future archaeologists hoping to contribute to the improved models of interpretation emphasized throughout this thesis. I conclude by weaving together the historiographical context, the potential routes forward within Nabataean material culture, and the urgent need for new approaches to understanding ancient
identity within small finds collections, all within the context of the modern history of studying and displaying antiquity.
CHAPTER 2

Historiography and Review of Archaeological and Interpretive Practices in Jordan

Interdisciplinary Impact of Archaeology and Politics

The archaeological exploration of Jordan has steadily evolved throughout modern history, as have the management and display of the nation’s archaeological resources. There have been few holistic or authoritative studies on the epistemology of material culture in transforming long term attitudes toward heritage within the scholarship of the Middle East at large; Hodder’s 1989 article is still probably the most thorough and often cited. This historiographical perspective is vital to understanding the development of the landscape as well as the legal structures in place surrounding antiquities and archaeological governance that have impacted and contributed to interpretations throughout the years, including current practices of cultural heritage management in Jordan. In order to contextualize the importance of historical context in transforming archaeological practice and thus move forward with new theoretical and multi-vocal interpretations, I offer a brief overview of the archaeological, theoretical, and display practices within Jordan and surrounding regions.

Development of Archaeological Inquiry and Cultural Resource Management in Jordan

The historical presence of foreign scholars, government entities, and international organizations have had a major impact on the legacy of historical interpretation throughout the Levant. Current interpretive practices in the region are directly tied to the historical trajectory

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44 For a full historiography of material culture in ancient contexts, see Hodder 1989; Richard Hingley and Steven Willis, *Roman Finds: Context and Theory: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of Durham*. (Oxford: Oxbow, 2007). 4 Lynn Meskell’s edited collection (1998), *Archaeology Under Fire* is a more recent (although now also dated) publication relating to the heritage practices of the Middle East.

45 Numerous studies have been dedicated to the relationship between archaeology and nationalism, most famously by Bruce Trigger (1984) and Diaz-Andreu (2007).
of Western archaeology, and, subsequently the display, interpretation, and political propaganda of the classical past.\footnote{46} Further, the politics of European history have long favored the heroic tales of military conquest and the “great men” of the Roman world, and it was not until the last century of studying the classical periods that any real focus has been applied to the social and cultural history of the Roman world. Given this trajectory, it is important to understand the colonial and nationalist traditions embedded within the development of archaeological research and interpretation in Jordan if we are to successfully revitalize Jordan’s relationship to its classical history.\footnote{47} Although Jordan and its surrounding regions have a long and complicated history of pilgrimage and tourism, I focus the majority of this chapter on the last century, offering only a brief overview of the early exploration of Jordan’s historical sites.

**Early Antiquarian Interest in the Levant**

The earliest antiquarian exploration in Jordan was primarily conducted by curious travelers and religious pilgrims who were interested in retracing stories from the Bible. Although Jordan sparked curiosity with its connections to biblical stories, its archaeological landscape did not foster much foreign interest until the twentieth century.\footnote{48} The construction of the “ancient Middle East” as a concept emerged during the nineteenth century, when the ideological underpinnings of constructing a narrative linking the present to the ancient past truly began to

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\footnote{47} However, interest in ‘Jordanian’ antiquities far predates the last century, with early references to Biblical pilgrimages in the Byzantine period; S. Thomas Parker, “Aila in Ancient and Medieval Sources” in *The Roman Aqaba Project* Vol I, eds. S. Thomas Parker and Andrew Smith, (Boston: ASOR, 2014), 15-18.

evolve, encouraging more widespread interest in the region.\textsuperscript{49} Additionally, the messages imbedded within Roman colonialism and expansionism in the East were certainly not lost on twentieth century audiences, especially as British and other European powers noted the utility of an ancient narrative to promote assimilation of the region into a centralized empire.\textsuperscript{50}

After the Muslim conquest in the seventh century, many eastern territories lost their appeal as Christian pilgrimage locations. Up until the last years of the Ottoman regime (1517-1918) in the Levant, much of the region surrounding and including Jordan was deemed too dangerous for most foreign visitors.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, for much of the period between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, Jordan temporarily lost its association with the other geographic regions that had gained mass tourist appeal through recognition as Biblical or Holy land.\textsuperscript{52} The Islamic world simply had no place within dominating Western ideologies related to exploration of Christian and Jewish religious heritage, and the Levant was largely recognized as a vast barren desert in contrast to the “treasures of the orient” being unearthed in Egypt during the reign of the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{53}

Because of the Western perceptions that Jordan was lacking in “relevant” material culture, the Napoleonic expeditions, which sparked much of the foreign interest in the scientific exploration of the region, largely remained on the outskirts of Jordan. In 1812, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt travelled the region to map and draw Biblical and classical landmarks, which led to


\textsuperscript{51} Henry Maundrell, A Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem at Easter. A.D. 1697. First American edition, (Boston: Simpkins, 1836), 139.

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.

the “rediscovery” of Petra by Westerners, eventually revitalizing global interest in Jordan’s tourism economy. After Burckhardt’s discoveries were confirmed, Petra became one of the only major sites travelers visited in the region. Nonetheless, the influx of foreign travelers piqued local interest and encouraged continued exploration by foreign scholars and visitors, including an increased interest in archaeological sites. Above all was the discovery of the Mesha Stele at Dhiban in 1868, which caused enormous excitement among biblical scholars and thus the general public in the West. Further, the nineteenth century marked a moment in which concepts of globalization and investment in new technologies really solidified in Jordan, ushering in a new wave of Western professionals with specializations in academic fields.

The Last Century of Archaeological Inquiry

The next major shift in archaeological practices and governance in Jordan took place after the First World War, with Britain gaining direct control over Palestine and Transjordan. Shortly thereafter, the British authorities developed separate entities for maintaining antiquities in Palestine and in Jordan, with the latter’s antiquities department situated in Amman. The next decade brought with it the Italian Archaeological Mission’s excavation of the citadel in Amman, and the first archaeological excavations of Petra and Jerash, as well as the archaeological survey and excavation of Bronze Age sites near the Dead Sea. The excavation of these sites would have a long-lasting impact on the construction of regional typologies and on refining scholarly interest in the region.

55 Van Der Steen, "The Archaeology of Jordan:153
56 Van Der Steen, "The Archaeology of Jordan:154
57 Van Der Steen, "The Archaeology of Jordan:158
Prior to the 1920s, there were no formal antiquities laws regarding the housing, collection, or display of Jordan’s classical antiquities.\(^{58}\) Thus, early collecting practices consisted of Western archaeologists sending display-worthy finds back to their home countries, while antiquities collection within Jordan consisted of local individuals displaying objects found on or near their private properties.\(^{59}\) In both cases, access to such finds was limited to elite audiences. Following the addition of “Transjordan” as the Mandate under British control, an increasing number of Western scholars took interest in the antiquities of the region.\(^{60}\) Numerous contemporary scholars have written about the early practice of archaeology in Jordan as a thinly veiled method of displaying and enforcing colonial control.\(^{61}\) This is particularly evident in the systematic exclusion of Arab-Islamic history from the nation’s first archaeological museums and government-led excavations.\(^{62}\) This period is also defined by the appointment of British archaeologist George Horsfield as the new nation’s Director of Antiquities in 1928, marking a transition toward the systematic excavation and preservation of classical period sites.\(^{63}\)

Horsfield was part of a new wave of European archaeologists who were interested in shifting away from Jordan’s Biblical history, emphasizing instead the monumental architecture and fine craftsmanship of the Nabataeans, a tribally structured Arab group that settled into central and southern Jordan and neighboring lands during the classical period.\(^{64}\) This moment marked a newfound emphasis on establishing a grand narrative, as archaeologists were preoccupied with tracing cultural origins and, ultimately, the ethnic and cultural descendants of

\(^{58}\) Badran, “Archaeology, Museums, and the Public:” 613.
\(^{60}\) Eveline J. Van Der Steen, “The Archaeology of Jordan: A Condensed History.” *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies* 7, no. 2 (2019): 158; I apply the term ‘transjordan’ in this case, simply because it was the terminology used by the English at the time of this acquisition.
\(^{61}\) Maffi, “The Emergence of Cultural Heritage:” 5.
\(^{62}\) Maffi, “The Emergence of Cultural Heritage:” 11.
\(^{63}\) Van Der Steen, "The Archaeology of Jordan:” 158.
\(^{64}\) Van Der Steen, "The Archaeology of Jordan:” 158.
ancient civilizations. Gordon Childe was among the most famous of the “Cultural Archaeologists” of the early twentieth century. Childe is credited for his application of a materialist framework to prehistory, emphasizing socio-economic themes in relation to change over time. Thus, Childe indicates a marked moment in the history of archaeology in which new, more systematic research models were beginning to emerge. However, it is also worth noting that Childe has received much criticism in the last few decades for over emphasizing racial character in certain cases, including his publications related to progress in the material record and the longevity of European achievement.

Theoretically, this period was fueled by an increased interest in prehistoric archaeology, and new contributions in terms of ideology, methodology, and research were implemented within the field by international archaeologists. The types of inquiries accompanying prehistoric archaeology led to a greater degree of categorization based on regional variations, stressing the organization of like objects that could be associated with a specific cultural group, proving vital in analyses of material culture. This moment marked a newfound emphasis on continuity, as archaeologists were preoccupied with tracing cultural origins and, ultimately, their ethnic and cultural descendants.

Not only were methodologies quickly changing, but the cultural-historical archaeology that had defined the field of through the 1930s was seeing a thematic shift toward social and

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65“Civilizations” is a politically loaded term, encapsulating the Westernized essence these early archaeologists were seeking; Badran, “Archaeology, Museums, and the Public:” 614
66 Bruce Trigger, Gordon Childe; Revolutions in Archaeology. (London: Thames & Hudson), 1980, 169.
68 Badran, “Archaeology, Museums, and the Public:” 614.
69 Willis and Hingley, Roman Finds and Context, 3-9
political archaeologies, accompanied by studying more closely human’s interaction with their environment. The next twenty years witnessed a turn away from the artifacts that had defined cultural archaeological practice and there was a new focus on the landscape itself.\textsuperscript{71} In turn, excavation methods became more systematic during this period, with leading figures like Grahame Clark emerging as a figurehead to the “new archaeology” (i.e., processual archaeology) of the 1950s and 1960s.\textsuperscript{72} The processual archaeology of the 1960s emphasized a break away from antiquated approaches of doing archaeology, and it was characterized by an emphasis on the scientific method, the construction of chronological data at archaeological sites, and the objectivity of archaeological conclusions.\textsuperscript{73} Processual or “new” archaeology was largely a top-down model, but many of its core tenets engendered the later frameworks for incorporating Neo-Marxism, postmodernism, and sociocultural anthropology into archaeological interpretation.\textsuperscript{74}

These developments coincided with the influence of structuralist schools of thought, stressing that earlier models did not account for the cultural values embedded in the experiences and social history that shaped the material record. Lewis Binford and his contemporaries shifted the focus toward relativism within archaeological interpretation, advocating for a more anthropological approach toward understanding the similarities and differences of artifacts as indicative of one’s culture and interaction with the physical environment at a given time.\textsuperscript{75} This approach utilized scientific method and testing\textsuperscript{76} to more precisely understand the geotemporal distribution of artifacts as applied to cultural typologies. Binford’s era of archaeologists brought

\textsuperscript{71} Badran, “Archaeology, Museums, and the Public:” 615.
\textsuperscript{74} For the most authoritative discussion of post-processualism as it relates to public archaeology see Shanks and Tilley 1992.
\textsuperscript{75} Badran, “Archaeology, Museums, and the Public:” 615.
\textsuperscript{76} Read: radiocarbon dating and seriation.
forth the systemization of excavation that was emphasized and supported by the utilization of empirical archaeological data to create a cohesive, authorized narrative that was still primarily ethnoarchaeological by nature.\textsuperscript{77}

The late 1970s to 1980s ushered in a new group of post-processual archaeologists, dedicated to reconstructing cultural meaning making processes.\textsuperscript{78} Post-processual archaeology was a development within archaeological theory that emphasizes cultural relativism, subjectivity, and structuralism. Robert Preucel describes it as “advocat(ing) alternative interpretive perspectives, especially those encompassing questions of meaning, history, politics, and practice.”\textsuperscript{79} With an uptake in questions regarding archaeologists’ ability to accurately reconstruct the values embedded into the past, there was an increased interest regarding the nature of subjectivity within the field.\textsuperscript{80} After several decades of scholars’ preoccupation with recreating objective truth, this was a large shift in which the subjectivity of interpretation was not only highlighted, but emphasized.

This period, often defined by its roots to post-modern ideology, ushered in a movement away from tracing ethnic continuity within the material culture, instead focusing on recreating and defining “webs of culture” at a much more general level.\textsuperscript{81} One of the defining works of this period dealing with the region is Edward Said’s \textit{Orientalism}, calling for a critical reengagement with Western portrayals of the East, and how Western scholarship was engaging with notions of otherness, explicitly linking the use of applying labels to Middle Eastern culture with attempts to confirm colonial discourse that was historically rooted in the opposition between East and

\textsuperscript{77} Badran, “The Excluded Past:” 200.
\textsuperscript{78} Ian Hodder (eds). \textit{Interpreting Archaeology}, especially the first chapter.
\textsuperscript{80} See Shanks and Tilley, 1992.
\textsuperscript{81} Hodos, \textit{Local and Global Perspectives}, (Routledge: 2010): 8
West. This work is a core tenant within postcolonial scholarship, as it engages with the power dynamics at work in the representation of the East in the orientalist studies of the previous generations. While this work did not emerge from archaeological scholarship, it had a reverberating effect on how scholars throughout different disciplines thought about Eastern and Western representation. Further, its criticism in later years related to Said’s portrayal of the East as constantly under threat of Western forces and practices contributed to archaeologists’ and historians’ understanding of the East as a less submissive historical force than what Said portrayed. This tension is particularly evident at sites like Aqaba, that have had continuous occupation for thousands of years. In these cases, certain archaeological interpretations have to be selected over others. This prioritization of certain narratives, although in many cases essential, has led to a number interpretive challenges, as political entities, archaeologists and heritage professionals, and local populations often find themselves with different objectives.

The official recognition of both Jordan and Israel as independent legal entities in 1946 and 1948, respectively, also brought about a series of changes, especially in terms of the legal management of antiquities. In addition to these new sovereign governments, the Annual Department of Antiquities of Jordan was founded to report on recent archaeological research in Jordan. Notable discoveries in the West Bank, then under the jurisdiction of the Jordanian Antiquities Department, further solidified Western interest in the region. Unfortunately, these discoveries also exacerbated the rising tensions between the Palestinian Archaeological Museum and Jordan’s Department of Antiquities. Tensions between Jordanian and Israeli forces would

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only grow over the next few decades, in light of competing political, territorial, and economic interests. After the 1967 Six-Day War resulted in the abrupt “closing off” of archaeological projects in Arab nations for Americans studying at what is now the W.F. Albright Institute in Jerusalem, institutional leaders were eager to find a solution for continuing work in the region.85 These events resulted in the foundation of the American Center of Research in Amman in 1968.86

The 1980s marked an increased interest in the medieval period sites, from the Islamic conquest of the seventh century to the modern period. These interests impacted the scholarly treatment of Aqaba, with Donald Whitcomb focusing on the Islamic Qusur of the desert and its legacy on the region’s local heritage, which was politicized as a means of promoting a distinctive sense of Muslim continuity.87 The Hashemite family utilized this popular archaeological interest in the 1980s, with the Hashemite prince commenting, “We should promote research that concentrates on typical Jordanian characteristics,” as a response to the increasingly politicized archaeology happening within Israel’s Antiquities Authority.88 Thus, the role of archaeology as a nation-building tool in Jordan was officially proposed by a member of the royal family, and it relied specifically on the grandeur of a classical past, presented without a critical framework, often at the dissatisfaction and frustration of regional occupants.89

The 2000s and the Current State of Scholarship

Scholarly interest in the modern period became more fully solidified 2005, and recent years have demonstrated an interest in contemporary and living history. Interest in these later

87 Van Der Steen, “The Archaeology of Jordan:” 160.
89 Maffi, “The Emergence of Cultural Heritage:” 5
sites have illustrated a picture of cultural continuity, more than highlighting a history of subjugation, which has been used in empowering ways for a number of communities. Examining these recent histories in light of the long term legacies of these sites that are rich in archaeological resources highlights the cultural continuation of the region and efforts of local populations to democratize power related to their heritage despite pressure from external forces.  

Within this framework, the 2010s ushered in an increased interest among heritage scholars and archaeologists in preserving tangible heritage and implementing economic tourism plans that would allow the government to benefit financially from these rich archaeological resources.  

ACOR’s Sustainable Cultural Heritage through engagement of Local Communities Projects, as well as the support from the Ministry of Tourism and Department of Antiquities, have offered opportunities for select regions within Jordan to develop their tourism sector, which has led to its own set of issues in the last couple of decades. An excellent example of a community and heritage based tourism development initiative can be found in the Temple of the Winged Lions at Petra.  

Recent years have lent more room for interdisciplinary studies, applying a diverse range of lenses to interpretation, whether sociological, psychological, or fundamentally rooted in critical heritage studies or public history. Wider access to archaeological resources through mapping software and drone imagery has also created a diverse and far reaching community of heritage professionals and casual consumers of historical content with vested interest in the

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91 Van Der Steen, "The Archaeology of Jordan:" 162  
tourism development and heritage practices of Jordan as a sovereign nation, but also as a region consisting of small communities with individual needs.\textsuperscript{93}

The universities in Jordan have contributed countless studies to the archaeological resources and critical heritage studies of the local climate in Jordan in the past 20 years, and further partnerships with these organizations can allow a larger pool of interested observers to take part in the shared past and classical legacies of the region. The increasing interest of local archaeologists, community members, and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities in matters of critical heritage studies and community-based archaeology projects will contribute to more inclusive and nuanced interpretations and a more holistic preservation of the nation’s rich historic and archaeological resources and cultural heritage. Specifically tailored archaeological collections can help bridge the discrepancy between archaeological data, museum displays, and heritage production, aiding in further collaboration and productive interpretations of a shared past.

The evolving nature of archaeological management in Jordan emphasizes the dominant trends over the last thirty years, as scholars have continued to move past earlier scholars’ emphasis on grand narratives associated with the classical past in constructing the current authorized heritage discourse.\textsuperscript{94} These efforts have been effective at increasing awareness within


\textsuperscript{94}‘Authorized heritage discourse’ was coined by Laurajane Smith in 2006, and has become a way of understanding the different values that are present in preserving a specific heritage. This tension often plays out in the form of local versus national forces prioritizing different values within a shared heritage (although I make the argument that these forces are far from operating as a dichotomy), and the interpretation that makes its way into mainstream understandings becomes the authorized heritage discourse. A given authorized heritage discourse has a specific political history and pretext, and it exists in a constantly liminal space, both reflecting and shaping popular perceptions of cultural heritage; Laurajane Smith (2006) utilizes this term in \textit{Uses of Heritage}, offering extensive explanation and examples for its application, particularly pages 29-42. Authorized heritage discourse is situated comfortably within the intersection between archaeological interpretations, community values, and tourism development, as it highlights the ways in which the past has created the contemporary landscape, while offering some sense of hope that as alternative models of preserving heritage arise, a more multi-vocal approach to studying the past can be implemented. It also illustrates the contested nature of heritage studies, as different stakeholders prioritize different components of a shared past.
the scholarly community surrounding the complexity of Jordan’s heritage practices, namely the importance of preserving Islamic archaeological sites and historic neighborhoods facing development threats. However, this shift toward integrating more modern histories into the authorized heritage discourse have largely disregarded the benefits of preserving the nation’s classical past, rather than engaging critically with ways to incorporate classical archaeological resources into educational practices, tourism initiatives, and, ultimately, empowering local communities.\textsuperscript{95}

**Development of Museum Interpretation, Display, and Programming**

Field research and public presentation are only a small portion of the transforming ideological landscape of Jordanian antiquity governance. The legal structures in place have had a profound impact on how archaeological resources have been managed, displayed, and incorporated into educational or public-facing programming. These structures have impacted archaeological methods in the region at every single step of the process, from initial surveying and obtaining permits to creating archaeological displays or leading guided tours at developed sites for tourism. Arwa Badran provides an excellent model for analyzing the “intersection of the three disciplines, archaeology, education, and museums, within the Jordanian context over the past 100 years,” examining the scope of globalization and its impact on the interplaying forces of neoliberalism and regionalism.\textsuperscript{96} She highlights the exchanges that emerge between international and Jordanian archaeological and educational practices, centralizing “local vs. international” measures for educational archaeological engagement in the trajectory of museum practices.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{95} This is partly to do with community-lead initiatives that have emphasized local populations’ interest in more recent histories. While this work is certainly essential and beneficial to communities, it is worth considering alternative routes forward and where the classical past fits into this picture.
\textsuperscript{96} Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 614.
\textsuperscript{97} Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 614.
Following a similar model, the remainder of this chapter attempts to highlight the national authorized heritage discourse as it has evolved in the 20th and 21st centuries, further historicizing the disciplinary shift from the big picture and top-down archaeologies prioritized in the early days of excavation and display toward the emerging focus on community based histories, told through archaeology. The latter of these often illustrates an indifference or even an outright rejection of the classical past, and in turn, the rich archaeological resources in the region are not utilized to their full, educational potential. This is not to promote the abandonment of all archaeologies dealing with big-picture questions and themes. Rather, this section highlights the historical scholarly conditions and display practices that have produced current interpretive trends taking place throughout the region. I conclude this section by describing successful, recently implemented museum programming models that highlight a public desire to engage with these resources in a more personal way, that is equally productive for decolonizing archaeology. However, an understanding of the colonialist foundations of antiquity governance in Jordan and the misuse of these resources is essential for approaching contemporary antiquities development.

Museums throughout the Mediterranean and Levant have played a major role in constructing perceptions of both the “ancient Middle East” and forming cultural conceptions of the region as it has changed over time.\textsuperscript{98} The long history of museum development and its direct relationship to colonization and state formation has been discussed elsewhere.\textsuperscript{99} However, the role of museums in forming public opinions, controlling social attitudes and perceptions, and establishing control over the historical narrative should not be understated, especially in cases of state formation and changes in regime. Despite the long history of museum development in the Mediterranean at large, Jordan follows a unique trajectory in its formal treatment of antiquities.

\textsuperscript{98} Collins, \textit{Museums Displays}, 16.
\textsuperscript{99} Michael Shanks and Christopher Y. Tilley, \textit{Re-Constructing Archaeology}: 68.
Lankaster Harding’s early (1967) volume describes the shift in which archaeological finds shipped to Western institutions and the private archaeological collections kept in individual’s homes in Jordan shifted to state ownership, as the 1920s ushered in new antiquities laws, discussed above.  

Since the majority of early collections were simply items that local residents retrieved from their properties, the shift toward formal educational institutions used for displaying these objects represented a greater measure of state control over the narrative that could be displayed and discussed in Jordanian contexts. Elena Corbett identified a distinct connection between traditional iconography and the Hashemite production of legitimacy through direct control of antiquities. However, unlike surrounding nations, Jordan did not begin formalizing public museums until the 1950s.

In the late 1920s, foreign archaeologists established the first public archaeological collection in Jerash, featuring the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine remains in the city. These early displays contributed to the perceived dichotomy between “civilized Greek and Roman culture” and the ambiguous “Orient,” with very little focus placed upon the circular nature of cultural relationships, with different aspects from various cultures impacting each other in consistent and long-lasting ways. The early display in Jerash set the tone for the public archaeological practices that have emerged in the last few decades, as well as the standard practices that are often associated with modern museums in the region, primarily dedicated to

102 Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 614.
103 Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 623.
housing precarious and valuable artifacts. Almost a full thirty years later, the Department of Antiquities, under British control, founded the Jordan Archaeological Museum on the Citadel at Amman. This museum served as a crucial building block for establishing Jordanian national identity, enforcing the status of Jordan as an independent nation across the world stage. In a similarly symbolic act of nation building, the Department of Antiquities made the newly established National Archaeological Museum their first permanent headquarters.

The new museum atop the Amman Citadel led to the formation of the Society of Jordanian Culture chaired by Crown Prince Hassan. The society was concerned with developing a tourism plan that would eventually be incorporated into the Japanese funded “Tourism Sector Development Project” used to construct a national history of Jordan, based on the international standards of the time. In 2002, the new “National Museum” located in downtown Amman attained financial autonomy as it was tasked with the storage and protection of the nation’s lore and material culture. The museum is still in operation today, despite political infighting related to the presentation of Jordan’s past, particularly from more recent periods. The National Museum is organized to tell a complete history of Jordan through its different phases of occupation, starting with prehistory. Interestingly, the classical period receives its own exhibit floor.

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105 Bassey Andah, The Ibadan Experience to Date. In C.D. Ardouin (ed.) Museums and Archaeology in West Africa, pp. 12-23. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); although Andah is treating museums in West Africa, he expands on the essence of the colonial museum, calling upon relevant examples from Arab nations.

106 Worth noting is that prior to 1967, the “national museum” was considered to be the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem; the Citadel museum was considered a satellite location prior to the Arab-Israeli War.


dedicated to recounting the lives and practices of the Nabataeans both prior to and after their absorption into the Roman empire.\textsuperscript{111}

One of the primary concerns of the early museum entity was to provide the greater public with access to their regional antiquities, hoping to instill a sense of cultural individuality and pride, through their continuity of occupation in the land. Although the region was inhabited by a diverse population, early museums usually sought to emphasize the past achievements of the Nabataeans as their Arab identity reflected that of modern Jordanians. This remained the authorized heritage discourse, despite the cosmopolitan nature of the ancient world, with the Nabataeans occupying only the southern half of Jordan, while a Semitic-speaking majority occupied the Decapolis cities in the northern half. The symbolic value of archaeological resources has been a key component in modern nation building, especially when traceable to a famous ancient culture that once shared a region’s geography.\textsuperscript{112} However, the early days of preserving this legacy created a version of ancient history which modern communities simply could see themselves within, or that is actively associated with politicization and legitimization at times of turmoil, conquest, and national instability. The ideological risks of providing a multivocal narrative during the early days of nation building, in addition to the museum’s perceived mission to simply house and display antiquities to passive guests, hindered the long term development of museums as educational resources and heritage building institutions in the greater Levant.

\textsuperscript{111} Alamri and Kafafi, “The Jordan Museum,” 105. This is likely to characterize the distinctiveness of Jordanian, Arab identity.

Fortunately, the 1950s marked a wide range of new museological research and a disciplinary shift in which public outreach and improved accessibility were at the forefront of the conversation. Following the British Mandate period (1918-1946), this shift was contemporary with the newly systematized and methodical approaches to archaeology that were becoming popular in this period, as noted above. Both excavation methods and public engagement with archaeological resources fundamentally changed during this period, especially in legal terms. In the 1960s, the Bureau of Tourism merged with the Department of Antiquities, forming the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, in what was arguably the first formal moment of heritage tourism development in Jordan. This new legal entity was tasked with managing and developing archaeological resources in the region for tourism purposes, primarily seeking the economic benefits of tourism development.

Although these legal shifts occurred following the Second World War, it was not until the 1970s when museums’ primary undertakings truly came into question. At this time, the implications and ethical concerns related to preserving and displaying the past became more prominent, as objectivity and power dynamics of knowledge were receiving widespread critique. A large number of scholars have identified this moment as the “paradigm shift.” The primary significance of the paradigm shift was the transfer of power from the museum entity to the museum guest, creating a forum of interpretations, rather than providing the guest with a conclusive picture of the past. Paul Collins describes the paradigm shift as a moment in which “the primary function of museums was becoming apparent: they were no longer viewed solely as

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114 Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 621.
116 Ien Ang. “What are museums for?” 1-5.
collectors but rather as educators, places where people gathered for debate.”

The most significant thing about this shift was perhaps the newfound autonomy of museum visitors when engaging with archaeological displays. Badran describes this paradigm by noting that it was a moment in which “education was gradually being acknowledged as learner-centered rather than subject-centered.” This new emphasis on active learning took place alongside archaeologists’ and heritage professionals’ increased focus on using archaeological data to encourage individual identity building, through the strides being made within post-processual archaeology.

Despite the nearly one thousand year old tradition of learner-centered educational practices in the broader Middle East region, the advancing museum theories of the paradigm shift were relatively slow to take off in Jordanian museums. This was largely due to the vested interest of government entities, who now maintained control over the majority of museums, in trying to mimic and uphold Western museum traditions. Further, the general conception of museums and their function throughout the Middle East seemed to center around the role of the museum as a storage facility, dedicated to preserving and collecting artifacts, rather than utilizing their unique educational qualities. One of the primary problems with the use of the colonial style museums in the context of newly developed nations was the complete separation of the artifact from the landscape, as well as the almost exclusive appeal to foreign visitors, rather than appealing to the local population. This of course had strong political ramifications, but it also impacted the framework in which museological development could occur in Jordan.

117 Collins, Museums Displays, 20
118 Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 619
In the 1990s, the Department of Antiquities introduced the Archaeological Awareness Division to address their stated mission and growing concern with the public awareness of antiquities. The primary objective of this new division was to travel to different schools, giving lectures about ongoing excavations and the archaeological resources of the region, aiming to inspire preservation efforts, with no real emphasis on interpretation or the relationship between the past and present. Within the next decade, the antiquities department began publishing an annual report, *Athar*, aimed at educating the general public about new sites and ongoing excavations. This publication provided a larger portion of the general public with greater access to archaeological information, but the circulation of this information could not make up for the lack of attention given to educational programming that has continuously been overlooked in the region’s archaeological collections and site development.

The vast majority of archaeological museum and tourism development still centers around foreign interest or recent histories, with very little scholarship surrounding how to bridge this gap more effectively and utilize archaeological resources to benefit local communities. However, the contemporary state of scholarship includes several successful studies that have taken place in diverse contexts throughout the Arab world. Each of these studies have indicated the resonance of archaeological resources as tools of pedagogy, especially in supplementing the traditional classroom experience, or visitation to sites lacking accurate and thorough representation. Additionally, research polls consistently demonstrate the trustworthiness the majority of the public accredits to museums. Unfortunately, there is little

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121 Badran, “Archeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 621
122 Abu-Khafjah highlights that *Athar* was still widely perceived as an attempt of the government to make more money in Meaning-Making Process of Cultural Heritage in Jordan: The Local Communities, the Contexts, and the Archaeological Sites in the Citadel of Amman, (see especially) page 190
124 John Dichtl, “Is the information provided by _ trustworthy,” AASLH Poll Results from February 2018: https://aaslh.org/most-trust-museums/.
research regarding how these statistics apply to archaeological sites, or museum collections that are predominantly composed of archaeological resources and artifacts. Nevertheless, the increasing corpus of literature related to archaeological presentation in Jordan has demonstrated the power of these resources in communicating abstract and complex ideas to a variety of audiences. Additionally, the majority of recent scholarship related to tourism development in Jordan has come from the field of architecture and inherently deals more with the complexities of urban planning than directly engaging with the shortcomings of tourism development in museums and archaeological sites. The main contributions of this wave of scholarship primarily relate to economic factors, motivations for preservation and development, and massively increased interest in real estate development pressures coming from the private sector.

There have been a number of public programs implemented throughout the region, but mostly aimed at tourists, or incorporated into cultural celebrations or events, not including the full educational or heritage-based benefits that these resources can provide. For example, the Roman Army and Chariot Experience at Jerash and the Petra by Night tour, each of these examples primarily targeted at generating revenue. Other object based programming that has proven successful, especially in recent years, is online classrooms on artifact handling. Although these programs have been slow to take off in Jordan, digital collections will often post follow-along instructions and interactive exhibits, usually a range of small finds, which ask users to answer questions related to the form or function of an artifact. One of the major heritage developments in the nation, the Historical Passageway within King Hussein’s Gardens in

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125 Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 617
127 Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 622
128 UNC RLA and FutureLearn are popular examples.
Amman, is perhaps the most notorious interpretive model undertaken in the last two decades, as it attempts to synthesize the history of Jordan into a cohesive and linear narrative. This passageway represents efforts on behalf of the government to engage interested tourists in modern connections to the classical past, but its political connotations, lack of engagement with relevant or topical narratives, and the fact that it was developed with foreign tourists in mind detract from its ability to utilize fully the rich archaeological artifacts it features. These programs are all fundamentally top-down in their approach because of the nature of antiquities governance in the region. As Rami Daher observes in his critical study of Jordanian economic tourism development, these top down approaches are extremely isolating to the host communities.

The surrounding communities of these public archaeological sites are often considered uninterested parties at best, and at worst, active threats to the development and protection of the sites. Bert de Vries notes the “disconnection between the people of past cultures and the people living on the land,” with government entities and scholars alike viewing contemporary communities as “ignorant mismanagers of the decaying remnants of the glorious past.” As noted above, several projects, including the Temple of the Winged Lions Cultural Resource Management Project, aimed to engage the proximate community in the development, management, and preservation of the archaeological site. However, these projects only emerged in the last couple of decades, attempting to address the century-long exclusion and

130 Daher, Geographies and Neoliberal Urban Transformation in Arab Cities Today, 30-33.
alienation of communities from their own resources. Due to the nature of the international teams
digging within the region, local involvement has been limited in multiple capacities, as
community members are often used as an inexpensive workforce, tasked with labor-heavy duties
such as removing rubble from the excavation, while still not being trusted with any serious
engagement or authority over the work being conducted. Thus, forces working within the system
of antiquities governance within Jordan, such as the TWLCRM, are essential for engaging
communities in a sincere way, especially where classical period and other ancient artifacts are
involved.\textsuperscript{134}

Projects such as the Temple of the Winged Lions have proven successful, working
alongside the Department of Antiquities to implement, at the very least, short term programming
and preservation as well as local employment. A variety of other entities including UNESCO and
the local Friends of Archaeology and Heritage volunteer organizations have also been quite
successful in engaging the public sector with archaeological resources as educational and identity
building tools.\textsuperscript{135} These programs have often paired with the national curriculum, providing
schoolchildren the opportunity to visit sites and hear from archaeologists about the type of work
being conducted to preserve the past, providing students with the opportunity to observe for
themselves the richness of the archaeological record in the region.\textsuperscript{136} Unfortunately, these types
of projects are largely absent from engaging with adult audiences, and the ones targeted at
schoolchildren, although on the rise, are still relatively minimal.

In terms of archaeological museums, these spaces have remained largely underutilized, at
least in terms of the classical past, even after the paradigm shift in the 1970s (supra). The

\textsuperscript{134} Tuttle, "Preserving Petra Sustainably.
\textsuperscript{135} Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 623,
\textsuperscript{136} For more information on these organizations see Badran, 2013. “Engaging Young People in Their National Tangible and Intangible Heritage in Jordan: UNESCO Project – Phase II. Amman:” UNESCO.
Department of Antiquities controls over half of the eighteen archaeological museums in Jordan, and these are the primary public-facing institutions which we might associate most tourism programming and display.\textsuperscript{137} The nature of these programs usually rely on guided tours scheduled by interested parties without a previously established tour schedule or any options related to the nature or content of the tour.

Jordan’s National Museum is among the cultural institutions known for consistently underutilizing its rich and extensive classical display, as it is also intended primarily for international audiences. Founded to develop a formal, linear progression of the region’s history, the National Museum pays a significant amount of attention to the classical period, attempting to stress some sense of cultural continuation, predating colonial conquest and control. In terms of featuring the Nabataeans, the museum stresses their distinctiveness through art, architecture, and religion.\textsuperscript{138} Additionally, it primarily focuses on the formation of Petra and its key role in preserving the iconography of the Nabataeans, with little interpretation regarding why this matters to modern populations, or making connections explicit between this ancient culture and its long term impact on the region. Instead, they focus on Nabataean distinctiveness, especially as it fits into conceptions of national identity and pride.

In stressing this cultural distinctiveness, these artifacts lose their power in communicating social practices and cultural hybridity. However, the museum is effective in demonstrating cultural perseverance and regional variation despite “Romanization” through this decision to highlight the cultural “otherness” of these early Arabs. The museum then showcases the cities of the Decapolis to demonstrate Greco-Roman influence in the region, giving the visitors the opportunity to compare and contrast the hybridity of Roman/Nabataean culture in comparison to

\textsuperscript{137} Badran, “Archaeology Museums and the Public in Jordan:” 623,
\textsuperscript{138} Alamri and Kafafi, “The Jordan Museum,” 105.
other prominent sites, founded soon after the Romans took control of the region. In this context, archaeological museums and collections in Jordan are in dire need of metrics for measuring success, as well as better integrating material culture to illustrated its utility and function and, thus, its relevance to contemporary community members. Where the these programs are already in place, a standardization of interpretive practice and programming offered would greatly aid in the impact of Jordan’s archaeological museums, especially those in or near archaeological parks, where the surrounding location plays an important role in the interpretation and educational process.

Improved infrastructural measures would support future efforts to create meaningful engagement with antiquities, as well as aiding the community in meaning making practices, through responsible and creative interpretation of archaeological resources throughout the region. Developing new, unique educational experiences through engaging interpretive collections in these spaces will create a wide range of opportunities for local communities in terms of preserving and caring for precarious artifacts, while continuing to boost revenue from the tourism and museum sectors. Thus, creating a development plan with these different variables in mind can help produce a meaningful, interpretive experience to ultimately engage local communities directly with the legacy of the classical past, rather than neglecting it.

**Interdisciplinary Implications and Routes Forward**

Since the 1990s, the development of spaces in Jordan, as influenced by foreigners and neoliberal values, has coincided with the “demographic and economic upheavals caused by the

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139 Alamri and Kafafi, “The Jordan Museum,” 106; worth noting is that the authors refer to this section of the museum as treating the “League of the Decapolis,” a notion that has been disproven since S. Thomas Parker’s (1975) critical engagement with the categorization of the cities of the Decapolis as a “league.” The outdated terminology deployed in this public-facing context demonstrates the general disconnect between mainstream interpretive and display practices and long-standing scholarship.
Iraq War, the end of any real Arab-Israeli peace process, and the global economic downturn,” resulting in “the tangible, intangible, and indiscriminate dislocation and alienation of large segments of the Jordanian population.” As Abu-Khafajah and Al Rabady observed, these national practices are beginning to address globalized issues, so there is increasing tension building between the colonialist legacy of the region, nationalism, and neoliberal development objectives. Despite the colonial legacy in the region, there is a newfound emphasis on public archaeology and museum engagement throughout the Arab world and beyond to address some of these tensions. Many of these successful initiatives have inspired local professionals and foreign scholars across disciplines to continue collaborating in creative ways, which will undoubtedly impact the future trajectory of local belief systems and long term project development. These interdisciplinary interpretations have the potential to engender positive and productive change in the cultural fabric and preservation of heritage within Jordan and beyond.

Current museum and heritage professionals are thus tasked with making pre-existing collections that have historically lacked interpretation both exciting and relevant to communities, while operating within the parameters of often outdated conceptions of displaying the “Ancient Middle East.” However, at this point it is necessary to assess whether or not the local tradition is developing in its own right, apart from its Western influence, and how the classical past fits into this newly emerging picture. What better way to address these questions than by turning directly to the documentary and material records.

140 Corbett, Hashemite Antiquity and Modernity: Iconography in Neoliberal Jordan, 165
CHAPTER 3

The World of the Nabataeans: Approaches to Understanding Identity Practices Throughout Jordan’s Classical Past

Diversifying the Historical Record in the Case of Identity

The primary goal of this chapter is to provide an overarching context of the cultural importance of the Nabataeans and other ancient occupants at Aila in antiquity and to apply that history to more compelling and productive contemporary interpretations. I situate Nabataean history within ongoing debates related to cultural contact and colonization, stressing elements of hybridity, the continuity of cosmopolitanism in the ancient world, and the importance of studying the Nabataeans (and other ancient cultures annexed into the Roman empire) in their own right, apart from their contributions to Western civilization. By emphasizing these different elements and their relationship to material culture, I lay the groundwork for the following chapters, providing potential routes forward for heritage practitioners and archaeologists. By offering context, highlighting central themes of ancient identity, and engaging with the theoretical and critical framework applied throughout this thesis, this chapter serves as a contextual underpinning for the case study and development suggestions that follow.

Within this scope, although this historical overview aims to be accurate and thorough, it is by no measure an extensive or exhaustive history of the Nabataeans. Rather, in examining primary sources on the Nabataeans such as textual evidence, epigraphy, and material culture, I seek to place this chapter within contemporary scholarship related to the legacy of imperialism in the ancient world. In other words, how did this legacy play out in the historical and archaeological record, and, more urgently, what are its implications for contemporary
populations, archaeologists, and heritage practitioners working in Jordan?\textsuperscript{144} In establishing this framework, I directly engage with the concepts of local identity, postcolonial archaeology, “Romanization,”\textsuperscript{145} “Hellenization,” and the longevity of indigenous character and practices, if such categories existed, throughout the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. This postcolonial framework is essential in connecting the interpretations of the past to the trajectory of heritage practices in Jordan, as these colonial encounters are in many ways the discursive predecessors of archaeologists’ antiquarian interests and current critical reevaluations.\textsuperscript{146} This connection is noteworthy because of the colonial tradition of archaeological interest and display in the region, utilizing the Roman and Greek pasts to better justify early days of intervention, occupation, and colonial control, impacting the long term tradition of contemporary display practices in the Mediterranean and Levant. In this respect, contemporary practices are inherited from early these antiquarian initiatives in the region, with strong ties to colonialism and Enlightenment ideals.

This chapter presents the history of the Nabataeans from the first historical references to the Roman annexation of Nabataea as the \textit{Provincia Arabia} and well beyond the Roman conquest. This extended history emphasizes the placement of the port of Aila in Jordan as a crossroads of the ancient world, a ground for merging cultural contacts and exchange, and a site of great economic and communal interest throughout antiquity. Placed at the junction of Eastern and Western political powers and resources, Aila, and the \textit{Provincia Arabia} at large, housed a culture of exchange, cosmopolitanism, and cultural movement. In short, evidence of a number of


\textsuperscript{145} This chapter seeks to problematize the loose application of concepts like Romanization and Hellenization to the ancient world, hoping to instead focus on changes in the material record over time that reflect local and popular practices, despite conceptions of assimilation and colonial rule.

\textsuperscript{146} Michael Dietler, \textit{Archaeologies of Colonialism: Consumption, Entanglement, and Violence in Ancient Mediterranean France}, (University of California Press, 2010), 48.
diverse ancient cultures appears within this region, revealing far more than simply “indigenous” and “Roman” forces preserved in the material culture.

**Definitions of Ethnicity and Hybridity**

Ancient markers of identity and ethnicity can be difficult to reconstruct alongside historical events; this is partially because of the difficulty in assigning ethnicity-related significance to the material world. In most cases, conceptions of cultural identity go much deeper and are significantly more complex than shared craft or consumption practices.\(^{147}\) Further, taking textual evidence alongside material culture further complicates this picture, as textual sources often contradict material evidence, or tend to stress the dominant powers’ conceptions related to the significance of different cultural institutions or practices. In many cases, we must rely on external sources and dominant accounts related to ‘other’ peoples to recount ancient conceptions of these categorizations. Thus these external factors are inevitably more reflective of difference than of likeness.\(^{148}\) Further, the fragmentary nature of source material becomes exceptionally difficult when reconstructing the lives of the Nabataeans, since all the ancient textual sources (excluding epigraphy) related to the Nabataeans were produced by external entities.\(^{149}\)

Because of the reasons outlined above, establishing a working definition of ethnicity is necessary for maintaining clarity and consistency. Drawing from Lomas, Gardner, and Herring’s edited volume related to ethnicity in the ancient world, I utilize the following definition when applying the term identity: “shared mythology or genealogy, common language, common ethnic

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\(^{147}\) Corinna Riva, “Ingenious Inventions: Welding Ethnicities East and West” in *Material Culture and Social Identities in the Ancient World* eds. Hales, Shelley and Hodos, Tamar (pp.79-113), (Cambridge University Press Editors, 2010), 79-84.


\(^{149}\) Robert Wenning, “The Nabataeans in History,” in *The World of the Nabataeans*. Volume 2 of the International Conference The World of the Herods and the Nabataeans held at the British Museum, 17-19, (April 2001), 25. Wenning goes into depth describing that our existing model of Nabataean history is perhaps more accurately understood as a history of the relationships of the Nabateans to the Greeks, Romans, and Jews.
name, and shared social structures, religion and material culture.” I do not mean to suggest that each of these factors remained consistent or indicative of the Nabataean identity over every period of history represented. On the contrary, components of ethnic and cultural identity changed over time, transforming in significant and archaeologically/historically visible ways. These cultural transformations and interactions with the surrounding Levant are precisely what makes this specific group such a relevant, complex, and applicable group to study within postcolonial contexts.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, is often defined by its ability to transform over time and to supersede different linguistic or material traditions. Robert Jenkins includes, “cultural differentiation, shared sets of cultural meaning reproduced by social interactions, flexibility, and collective and individual in constant dialogue with the internal and external” in his definition of what constitutes ethnicity as it relates to cultural identity. Although both of these working definitions imply similar categories for thinking about cultural production in the ancient world, where possible, I apply the term identity rather than ethnicity, as it implies a more socially constructed and reproduced conception of social practices and their implications in ancient identity building. Further, interactions with the Romans actively contradict conceptions of homogenous assimilation as interacting political entities in the ancient world often instilled new conceptions of cultural identity that were less rooted in ethnicity or likeness, as conquered territories were still culturally distinct and were certainly not forcefully stripped of their regionally specific practices. For this reason, the conception of “hybridity” as a category of

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150 Lomas, Gardner, and Herring, Creating Ethnicities & Identities, 2.
151 Richard Jenkins, Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations, (SAGE Publications, 1997), 40.
archaeological analysis has become widely accepted, growing increasingly popular in postcolonial studies.\textsuperscript{152}

Engaging with the concept of hybridity allows us to move forward in examining the ancient world at moments of cultural contact. Emerging scholarship over the last ten years has emphasized that traditional models of studying the ancient world rely too heavily on arbitrarily constructed categories of regional difference, rather than engaging directly with the longstanding cosmopolitan nature of the ancient world, and the impact that living within a large, expansive, and diverse empire would have had on ancient cultures. Thus, even in attempting to break away from colonial conceptions of assimilation and the adaptation of Roman and Greek ideals, there is still an implicit assumption that indigenous and Roman forces existed in sharp contrast, and the eventual domination of Roman-type artifacts in the material record was somehow inevitable, without critically engaging with questions of why certain aspects of converging identities would have taken place or how merging social practices and conceptions of identities play out in different geotemporal contexts.\textsuperscript{153}

As Pearson notes, “The tendency to view the growth of Roman power as a continuous, progressive force on the landscape makes it seem almost inevitable that the Romans would soon absorb Nabataea. This outlook, though, is dangerously teleological. From the perspective of Near Eastern populations, the veneer of Roman control appeared in many areas to be just that—simply a veneer, both subject to exploitation and leaving openings for the kind of regional power struggles that had persisted for centuries.”\textsuperscript{154} These biases are particularly harmful when

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{152} Dietler, \textit{Archaeologies of Colonialism}, 28.
  \item\textsuperscript{153}Michael Rowlands and Peter Van Dommelen. \textit{Material Culture and Postcolonial Theory}. Taylor & Francis, 2009, 20-23.
  \item\textsuperscript{154}Jeffrey Eli Pearson, \textit{Contextualizing the Nabataeans: A Critical Reassessment of their History and Material Culture}, (UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2011), 42.
\end{itemize}
studying Roman expansion, in which the movement of ideas over varying contexts was just as expansive as the movement of raw materials themselves.\textsuperscript{155} Examining hybrid practices inherently relies on material culture, seeking explanations for the practices that emerge within the daily lives of communities living in close proximity within colonial contexts.\textsuperscript{156} Van Dommelen defines hybridity as more than simply “the mixing of unlike things, but as an example of how a common sense of spirit substance may be objectified in different locally specific embodiments and object forms, depending on perceptions of their different efficacies.”\textsuperscript{157}

Hybridity not only reiterates the importance of the material record in reconstructions of ancient identity and community building practices, but it also showcases how different individuals interacted and communicated with one another, and how those interactions played out across different contexts, cultures, and traditions.\textsuperscript{158} Viewing local forces and Roman powers as constantly working against one another diminishes the multiplicity that would have been present in constructing ancient identities. Not only is this false binary reductive, but it implies that local case studies are somehow immune to the overarching forces that were being enacted throughout the empire.\textsuperscript{159} It is perhaps more productive to conceptualize these localities and case studies within various provinces or people groups as microcosms at which these powers were in many ways playing out on a smaller scale, often with vastly different outcomes.\textsuperscript{160} With this in mind, we can turn our attention to moving past our own preconceived notions of identity and ethnicity to focus on how these categories played out in the ancient world. Rather than focusing

\textsuperscript{156} Michael Rowlands and Peter Van Dommelen, \textit{Material Culture}, 28
\textsuperscript{157} Rowlands and Van Dommelen, \textit{Material Culture}, 25
\textsuperscript{158} Rowlands and Van Dommelen, \textit{Material Culture}, 23
\textsuperscript{159} Rann Boytner, Lynn Swartz Dodd, and Bradley J. Parker, \textit{Controlling the Past, Owning the Future: The Political Uses of Archaeology in the Middle East}, 26.
\textsuperscript{160} Dodd, Boytner, and Parker, \textit{Controlling the Past}, 24-26.
on the polarities of Roman conquest and local resistance, we can understand the eastern provinces through their interactions with other powers and their visibility and continuous reinvention within the archaeological record, despite innumerable challenges.

Evolving Overview of the Nabataeans:

Nabataean culture thrived from between 312 BCE to the third century CE, spanning from the Hawran in southern Syria to the Hejaz in the northwestern Arabian Peninsula (fig. 2). This occupation consisted of large portions of the Southern Levant, including the Negev, Sinai, and large stretches of modern-day Jordan. In addition to occupying this extensive territory, the Nabataeans played a major role in the economic and cultural production of the ancient world while also contributing to the formation of modern Arab identity, especially from secular perspectives.

Because of the fragmentary evidence related to the Nabataeans, there is much debate regarding their origins and precise self-identification, apart from historical references written and circulated by foreign forces. The nature of the search for Nabataean self-conception centers around the philology of Nabataea and the words used to describe this people, and whether or not they are best understood as a political, ethnic, or cultural group. However, the formal consensus remains that this group was likely Arab in ethnicity, settling in Jordan at an unknown moment in time, prior to the first century. Several scholars have argued that the Nabataeans

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161 Although, Nabataean personal names and traces of spoken language likely survived into the 6th century.
162 See Bowersock’s Roman Arabia (1994) for a more detailed account.
164 See section below for a more detailed discussion of the historical sources.
166 Diodorus refers to the Nabataeans as Arab in section 19.94.2-95.2 of his Library of World History.
were descendants or assimilators of the Biblical Edomites. However, it is more widely accepted that the Nabataeans were a migratory group from the Northeastern Arabian Peninsula that arrived in Southern Jordan by the fourth century BCE. Thus, although they reached their height around the first centuries BCE and CE, Nabataean identity was well defined and established prior to the onset of the Roman period, albeit diverse and cosmopolitan. Certain details surrounding the exact origin or the nature of the early Nabataeans remain murky at best, but Negev’s study of their Aramaic script and Graf’s analysis of the distribution of Nabataean inscriptions demonstrate major differences among different Nabataean groups, usually reflective of regional variation and local kinship networks. Further, it seems that the Nabataeans themselves, at least to some degree, did not conceptualize themselves as an ethnicity, prioritizing instead their familial and social ties.

The Nabataeans had a centuries-long acceptance of multiple practices borrowed from surrounding cultures that did not detract from their ability to establish distinctive political powers and widespread economic control of the movement of goods between the east and the west. This view is certainly supported by the evidence at Aila, with its wide variety of cultural contacts represented throughout the site in the form of epigraphy, small finds, and the raw materials exported from hundreds of miles away, as early as its earliest phased strata, which is identifiably

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169 Graf, “Nabataean Identity and Ethnicity:” 146: the ‘Nabataean’ Aramaic script also shows significant regional differences, serving as a further reminder of the nuances surrounding the study of ancient identity or the concept of ethnicity in the ancient world.

169 Graf, “Nabataean Identity and Ethnicity:” it is important to note, however, that this argument relies on epigraphy and a study of ancient literacy and writing and does not account for spoken language or other measures of ethnicity.

Nabataean. This important role in the movement of goods must have been centuries in the making to have obtained such prominence leading into the Roman period.

**Historical References and Early Evidence of the Nabataeans**

The first historical reference to the Nabataeans was in 312 BCE, when Hieronymus of Cardia, a general and historian under Alexander the Great, writes that an Arab tribe with strong trade influences refused to recognize the sovereignty of one of Alexander’s successors, Antigonus, who had acquired a large portion of the region in that same year. This early account is important, as Hieronymus was writing as a contemporary to these documented events and was directly familiar with the region and the Nabataeans after serving as a superintendent of the asphalt extraction from the Dead Sea. Although Hieronymus’ history is lost, Diodorus Siculus in the late first century BCE adapted much of this account into his early history of the region, referencing these previous historical records.

Further highlighting the role of the Nabataeans’ in terms of a longstanding tradition of cultural exchange with surrounding regions, Josephus’s *Antiquities* provides another early reference to the Nabataeans, acknowledging the appointment of Aretus I, who was the first officially recognized king of the Nabataeans. Josephus’s account outlines the vast territories that were occupied by the Nabataeans, who had set themselves apart from other indigenous groups through their prominent wealth. He notes that despite various Hasmonean conquests east of the Jordan Rift, the Nabataeans retained control over much of that region not under the

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171 Dolinka, *Towards a Socio-Economic History of Nabataean Aila*, 30-36
172 Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 2.48, 54.3; 3.43.4-5; 19.94-100.
173 Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, xviii 42, 44; xix. 100
174 Worth noting is that although Diodorus is writing around 30 BCE, much of his account reflects the Nabataeans from earlier periods.
175 Pearson, *Contextualizing the Nabataeans*, 1.
176 Jospehus, Antiq. Xiv: 18; cf. xiii:396)
rule of the Hasmoneans based in Judaea. Some degree of cultural interaction between the Herodian and Nabataean kingdoms is demonstrated by the Jewish tomb at Hegra dated to 42-43 CE and the archive of Babatha, demonstrating that the Khirbet Qazone Nabataean cemetery, located near the Dead Sea, contains ‘Qumran type’ graves, located on either side of the Dead Sea, sharing the same styles and features across both territories. Wenning notes that these archives can be interpreted as indicative of the liminal nature of regional borders and their dependence upon cultural contacts and economic alliances.

Finally, it is worth noting the Ptolemaic cultural influence on the Nabataeans, as illustrated in the architectural traditions at Petra, observed by Judith McKenzie. The Ptolemaic kingdom would have relied on the Nabataeans for access to Far Eastern trade, while the Nabataeans relied on the Ptolemaic presence at Alexandria for connections to the greater Mediterranean. McKenzie notes numerous parallels not only in the rock-cut monuments of Petra, but in the artistic traditions at Khirbet et-Tannur, with the zodiac from the site’s sanctuary mirroring the iconographic traditions of the Ptolemies, despite the prominence of these motifs in Classical tradition. The material evidence at Aila demonstrates strong connections to Egypt, with a large quantity of alabaster imported from Egypt, semi-precious stones, and a small faience statuette with (illegible) hieroglyphs on the figure’s surface. Additionally, Joseph Patrich has further illustrated these cultural connections in his published analysis of Nabataean column

177 Jospehus, Antiq. Xiv: 18; cf. xiii:396)
178 Katharina Galor, Jean-Baptiste Humbert, and Jürgen Zangenbe, 2006.
183 This object might represent a Ptolemaic king or a ushufiti.
capitals, noting a distinctiveness to the ‘blocked-out’ style that was in use in parts of the Nabataean kingdom that is similar to examples from Egypt and Cyprus.\textsuperscript{184} This cultural alliance would have proven mutually beneficial to the Nabataeans and the Ptolemies, further demonstrating the strategic adaptation of the Nabataeans through cultural contact with significant regional powers.

The Nabataeans more thoroughly saturate historical literature from the first century BCE onward. There was increased interest in the Nabataean kingdom among external forces, both because of the Roman emperor Augustus’s mandated exploration of the Arabian peninsula in 25 BCE and the succession of Aretus IV in 9 BCE, leading to a power struggle over kingdom-wide rule of the Nabataeans.\textsuperscript{185} Although the Roman expedition into the southern Arabian Peninsula at this point resulted in failure, the exploration of this region under the reign of Augustus resulted in much of the information that was known about Nabataean culture at the time, as demonstrated by Strabo’s detailed account of the Nabataeans in the early first century CE.\textsuperscript{186}

The Nabataeans were not only recognized by these foreign powers, but early epigraphical evidence also sheds light on their self-identification as a political group, although the plurality of epigraphical evidence implies that the Nabataeans did not regard themselves in terms of shared ethnicity.\textsuperscript{187} Fahad Mutlaq Al-Otaibi emphasizes instead the cultural achievements of the Nabataeans as a distinctive political entity, highlighting their administrative organization, their instatement of a political capital at Petra, their minting and circulation of distinctive currency,

\textsuperscript{185} Pearson, \textit{Contextualizing the Nabataeans}, 34.
\textsuperscript{186} Strabo 16.4.22; Pliny NH 6.32.160-1; Res Gestae 5.26; Josephus AJ 15.317; and Dio 53.29.3-8.
\textsuperscript{187} Graf, “Nabataeans under Roman rule (After AD 106):” 145; Graf, “Nabataean Identity and Ethnicity: The Epigraphic Perspective,” argues that although ethnicity is not an applicable category for a group this diverse and expansive, we can turn to shared culture for some understanding of shared identity. Graf, \textit{Nabataeans Under Roman Rule}, 176-182.
and, finally, their monumental public architecture. Additionally, Nabataean coinage from the first century onward contain inscriptions in their own language under the rule of Aretus IV (9 BCE-40 CE), demonstrating internally recognized autonomy. This early numismatic evidence and material culture are important for contemporary researchers to get an idea of the Nabataeans’ cultural conceptions of themselves and how their kingdom was organized, especially considering that they did not leave behind any surviving literary history.

The second century BCE also witnessed the production of the first identifiably Nabataean material culture, most notably coins and pottery. These artifacts, when taken with epigraphic and textual evidence, imply that some sense of ‘Nabataean’ distinctiveness was manifesting in the material record during this period. The Nabataeans continued interacting with their regional neighbors after falling under indirect Roman control after Pompey’s annexation of Syria in 63 BCE. Given that the Nabataeans were forced to maintain strong ties to Roman political forces following the Roman governor of Syria’s invasion of Nabataea, the cultural distinctiveness that appears in the material record at this time is noteworthy. The Nabataeans were not limited by exposure to only Greek and Roman forces, nor to their regionally specific preferences or strong connections to the kingdom of Judaea. The interactions of ancient peoples living within close proximity of one another throughout the Levant played a major factor in the early construction and long term evolution of Arab culture.

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188 Al-Otaiby, Emic Perspective, 293.
189 Al-Otaiby, Emic Perspective, 293.
191 These scattered bits of evidence hardly produce substantial conclusions related to these two kingdoms in relation to the full measure of cultural influence on one another. However, it is certainly worth noting these important political and cultural relationships as having the potential to impact the hybrid identities that were being formed throughout the early days of Nabataean settlement.
Locating Nabataean Culture in the Material Record

Because of their impressive architectural achievements, the Nabataeans became increasingly visible in the material record during the first half of the first century CE. Our knowledge of this period can be largely credited to the fact that the Romans had vested interest in the Nabataean kingdom during this time, because of the appointment of Aretus IV, who would be the longest serving ruler of the Nabataeans. Supposedly, the accession of Aretus went against plans to incorporate parts of the Nabataean kingdom into the kingdom of Herod, at least according to Josephus’s account. This period also marked the Nabataeans’ monumental architectural achievements, as they were rapidly building and expanding within their capital at Petra. It is worth noting that Petra was already considered an early site of great importance, listed alongside Alexandria in the Moschion inscription from the second century BCE. Further, with its central location to the incense and textile trades, as well as its proximity to a number of natural resources and the existing perception of Petra as a great Hellenistic city and territory, surrounding powers would have considered this land to be, in short, worth conquering.

According to Strabo, there were many Roman citizens and “other foreigners” living in Petra at the time of Rome’s Arabian expedition from 26-24 BCE. Although their precise relationship to surrounding territories, including the Romans, remains ambiguous, the diversity of occupants at Petra further demonstrates early cultural contact and cosmopolitanism in Nabataean contexts. Also worth noting is the Nabataean involvement in Gallus’s 25 BCE expedition, supplying 1,000 Nabataean troops and a Nabataean administrator (Syllaeus) as a

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193 This assertion is based on monumental architectural achievement, although the dates of Nabataean construction are somewhat contested based on a lack of conclusive evidence regarding this first century date of construction.
194 Pearson, Contextualizing the Nabataeans, 42.
196 Pearson, Contextualizing the Nabataeans, 49.
197 Strabo 16.4.21.
guide into *Arabia Felix* (modern day Yemen).\textsuperscript{198} The convergence of Roman and Nabataean forces is further demonstrated in this account by Gallus’ force settling into the Nabataean port of Leuke Kome (likely near the Gulf of Aqaba) for the winter of 26-25 BCE.\textsuperscript{199} It seems likely that this moment would have further solidified a convergence of cultural contact, as Arabia served as an entry point for the Roman Empire, with its numerous ports, including the port at Aila, facilitating the movement of information, people, and goods across Syria, Judea, and Jordan.\textsuperscript{200}

According to Murphy and Poblome, the first century marked a departure from earlier art styles, as Nabataean art took on more abstract forms, with exaggerated and unusual features.\textsuperscript{201} The unique styles that appear in the Nabataean kingdom adopted elements from throughout the wider Mediterranean, including surrounding Near Eastern cultures.\textsuperscript{202} Additionally, Schmid observes the presence of Hellenistic styles in the construction of Nabataean material traditions, noting that they likely borrowed from the dominant cultural preferences of the time, configuring their own variations of styles that also drew from their significant trading contacts including Rhodes, Kos, Priene, Milet and Delos.\textsuperscript{203} Architecture at both Petra and Khirbet al-Tannur demonstrates more ornamental preference and are also usually larger scale than those of earlier traditions, including the construction of Nabataean temples in the first century BCE.\textsuperscript{204} These stylistic changes are often attributed to Nabataeans moving away from Hellenistic influence as they develop more solidified artistic traditions in their own right.\textsuperscript{205} Most importantly, however,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{198} Strabo 16.4.23
\item \textsuperscript{199} Strabo 16.4.24
\item \textsuperscript{200} Bowersock, *Roman Arabia*, 2
\item \textsuperscript{201} Elizabeth Murphy and Jeroen Poblome, “From Formal to Technical Styles” *American Journal of Archaeology* vol 121, no. 1, (2017): 62.
\item \textsuperscript{202} Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire*, (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), xxxvi.
\item \textsuperscript{203} Schmid, *The Nabataeans: Travellers between Lifestyles*, 371
\item \textsuperscript{204} Schmid, *The Nabataeans: Travellers between Lifestyles*, 382.
\item \textsuperscript{205} Schmid, *The Nabataeans: Travellers between Lifestyles*, 377-382 discusses the construction and architectural characteristics of Nabatean temples in more detail.
\end{itemize}
is recent evidence that the Nabataean temple at Khirbet al-Tannur may not have been constructed until after the Roman annexation of 106 CE, flourishing into the second century, further solidifying the cultural strength of the Nabataeans, especially in regards to religion, for some time after their absorption into the Roman Empire.\(^{206}\)

As a number of scholars have pointed out, distinctive and longstanding Nabataean traditions were in place even in periods where Greek and Roman influences are most prominent.\(^{207}\) Others have argued that these changes were actively anti-Roman in nature, with increasing pressure from Nabataea’s relationship with the Romans as a major factor in the development of more culturally autonomous artistic and social traditions, including certain changes to the material culture (e.g., Nabataean coinage).\(^{208}\) Throughout their occupation in Jordan, Nabataean practices retain several aspects of cultural distinctiveness, with regionally specific artistic forms and styles often coined in popular scholarship as “simplified” in contrast to the Greco-Roman forms.\(^{209}\) Based on the proximity of the Nabataeans to popular Greek and Roman art forms and practices,\(^{210}\) it is reasonable to assume that the elements they chose to include or disregard in their production and social practices could have been, in many cases, intentionally rendered and culturally significant.

**The Nabataeans and Roman Annexation**

Unfortunately, despite their impressive cultural achievements, there are significantly fewer textual sources treating the Nabataean kingdom following the death of Aretus IV in 40 CE. Thus much of our knowledge from this period relies on archaeological and epigraphic evidence.


\(^{207}\)Joseph Patrich, “Nabataean Art between East and West: A Methodical Assessment,” In Politis 2007; Graf “Nabataeans under Roman


\(^{210}\)As evidenced at Petra and Khirbet al-Tannur.
Further field research is still necessary to understand the period directly prior to Roman annexation, as many of the details surrounding the specific nature of Nabataean settlements and their resistance to Roman powers remains unknown. However, their economic and trade-based knowledge that persists into Roman annexation indicates a continued reliance on their ability to foster and maintain important connections and trade relationships, especially with the Parthians in the East.211 The author of the Periplus references the Nabataean port of Leuke Kome, where the commodities would have been funneled through the heart of the Nabataean kingdom at Petra before reaching the rest of the Mediterranean; this serves as a strong example of the continued importance of Nabataeans and their relationship to large-scale trade throughout the Mediterranean during this period.212 In the next (i.e. c. 1st CE) century, Strabo describes a revitalization of the frankincense route that resulted in immense wealth for the Nabataeans, as well as amplified cultural production, resulting in their increased cultural presence within the southern Levant.213

Wenning notes that after the annexation of 106 CE, this history “is no longer a history of the Nabataeans, but of the Roman Provincia Arabia.”214 This reading unintentionally treats the formal transition of administrative and economic power under Roman rule as a symptom of Rome’s inevitable cultural absorption of the Nabataeans, who occupy the position of a passive or simplistic client state. Rather than viewing Roman annexation as a moment of irreparable rupture and disjunction, it is worth emphasizing the new forms of hybridization and Nabataean identity that were created at this time and consolidated throughout the following centuries.

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211 Dio 48.41.5 for earlier (c. 40 BCE) political instance of Nabataean-Parthian relationship.
There is no scholarly consensus regarding the precise nature of the Roman annexation of Nabataea; in short, it remains unclear as to whether or not Roman occupation was established through force or military expedition. The absence of records indicating a violent conquest has led many scholars to believe that it was a peaceful transfer of power, despite an increasing body of contrary evidence. Alternate accounts present conflicting views as to whether this process was peaceful or if the Romans were met with conflict, and the resolution of this debate would have drastic implications on the nature of cultural contact and the exchanging of cultural values and practices at the time of annexation.

Ammianus (14.8.13) is the most well-known ancient reference related to the annexation of Nabataea into Roman rule, and it pertains specifically to Petra; he wrote in the late fourth century CE that “Trajan, who, by frequent victories, crushed the arrogance of (Arabia’s) inhabitants when he was waging glorious war with Media and the Parthians,” implying some sense of military dispute based on the choice of words within the passage. Schmid explores the possibility of conflict between Nabataeans and Romans by critically evaluating archaeological evidence in the context of ceramic analysis, arguing in favor of destructive, armed conflict in the archaeological record at Petra, Khirbet edh-Dharih, and west of Wadi Araba, where there is evidence of destruction dating to the beginning of the second century. Further evidence at Aila

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216 Martha Joukowsky, M. S. Petra Great Temple Volume I-III: Brown University Excavations 1993-1997, (Providence, Rhode Island: E.A. Johnson Company, 2017): 396: Upon discovery of a hoard of ballistas in the temple floor at Petra, Joukowsky sheds light on the ambiguity of the archaeological record in this regard, noting, “There is no way of knowing whether the temple was bombarded or if they used these ballistas as floor fill, because they are lodged into the ceramic tiles, seemingly packed in by mortar,” which hardly paints a clearer picture of the nature of annexation.

217 Ammianus Marcellinus 14.8.13

suggests that the site’s northern domestic areas (termed B, M, and O, by the excavator) show signs of abandonment at the turn of the second century, with some evidence of architectural collapse and subsequent abandonment.\textsuperscript{219} Some scholars, including Philip Freeman, argue that the annexation of Arabia was followed by five to eight years of unrest, with the first milestones of the \textit{via nova Traiana} dating to 111 CE and epigraphic examples from 111-114 CE describing Arabia’s ‘provincial conditioning.’\textsuperscript{220}

Contrary evidence includes Trajan’s failure to include \textit{Arabicus} among his formal military accomplishments, as well as the coins minted following annexation, reading \textit{Arabia adquista}, rather than \textit{Arabia capta}.\textsuperscript{221} However, this argument is primarily one of silence, reading the lack of official or definitive sources of resistance as indicative of no such resistance being present. Thus, without sufficient evidence promoting this claim, it remains ambiguous as to whether the Romans were met with resistance when annexing the Nabataean kingdom. Further, despite new evidence and renderings of the Roman annexation of Nabataea pointing more definitively toward Nabataean resistance to Roman occupation, it is still difficult to gage the measure and scope of this resistance.

This evidence seems to suggest that the Roman annexation of Nabataea was a slow and gradual process, and that the Nabataeans were far from being passive or fully compliant in the economic and administrative changes that they were facing, whether adopted practices came from a place of necessity, a desire for status in an encroaching imperial entity, or a matter of convenience. Whether annexation was violent or otherwise, the Nabataeans had a well-
established and autonomous cultural and economic tradition in their own right. Trajan’s integration of 5,000 Nabataean soldiers into his campaign against the Parthians solidified an official administrative assimilation of the Nabataeans into the Roman world, leading to the Romans enacting new programs for public programming and local efforts to replicate Roman styles of architecture and public works into the fabric of provincial life.

**Hellenization, Romanization, Post-Colonial Archaeology and Interpretive Implications**

The discussion above contextualizes the history of the Nabataeans within their cultural interactions and exchanges of material practices with external and internal forces, however, in order to further analyze the nature of cultural exchange, an overarching discussion regarding the “Hellenization” and “Romanization” of the Nabataean kingdom is necessary. Much discussion surrounding this topic has been largely limited to themes of ethnic or cultural fusion, often centering around life in the Eastern provinces immediately after the annexation of 106 CE. This account rarely takes into consideration the much slower process of interacting, accepting and resisting surrounding political forces, including although not limited to the Romans, as demonstrated in the section above. In short, this process was much more complicated than simply a pre and post Roman cultural identity. In many ways, the longevity of this cultural hybridity is in and of itself telling, as it highlights the cosmopolitan nature of the ancient occupants at Aila, rather than emphasizing the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized. While these relational power dynamics are certainly an important context to consider, applying a post-colonial framework to interpretations of the past helps decentralize the role of coercion and domination in cultural development and contemporary interpretation.

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222 Dio 69.13.2.
This reading is continuously complicated by the impact of Greek culture and, broadly speaking, “Hellenization” on the Nabataeans, as well as by interactions with the Ptolemies in Egypt and the kingdom of Judea.\(^{225}\) It is important to approach the topic of “Romanization” in light of other influential cultural forces that were at work in the construction of ancient identity and cultural exchange, rather than treating indigenous or local character as a stagnant or inevitable category of analysis at moments of encounter.\(^{226}\) Because of the longstanding tradition of combining and converging cultural practices, it becomes increasingly difficult to argue in favor of a “Romanization” in its most strict sense which treats the intensification of Roman tradition in the material record as necessarily predating widespread imperial absorption. The implications underlying such assertions are precisely why ancient historians and archaeologists are still actively attempting to move away from “Romanization” as an analytical category.

The view of Roman characteristics and culture as inherently dominant has continuously played out in scholarship, impacting contemporary treatment of power, assimilation, and identity. Thus, the treatment of these issues in the ancient world have impacted contemporary political understandings of the roots of colonialism in its historical context as they have changed over time. As Lynn Meskell notes, “The past is not a static, archaic residue, rather it is an inherited artefact which has an active influence in the present through the interplay of popular and officially inscribed meanings. Constructions of identity for colonised groups inevitably entail

\(^{225}\) Once Nabataean settlements become more recognizable in the archaeological record, the Hellenistic influence becomes more noticeable and prominent, as evidenced by the late monumental architecture of the Nabataeans, with structures like the Khazneh at Petra demonstrating an Alexandrine style. Additionally, the Nabataeans’ adoption of different Hellenistic social practices is evidenced in the culmination of banquets honoring and celebrating leaders, although these services took place within existing Nabataean social dynamics and structures. Wenning notes the significant increase of wealth and status based recognition that the Nabataeans were receiving at the time, noting Aelius Gallus’s Arabian expedition, the newfound vitality of the frankincense route in the early half of the first century BCE, and Strabo’s account describing the Nabataeans’ built structures and exhibitions of wealth in foreign political exchanges as evidence of their newfound cultural status and official recognition.

a complex interweaving of past and present, which in themselves rely on the discourses of alterity, authenticity and origins… Alterity need not have a negative face. Rather it can have a positive impact on situating the self in a multicultural present. In our own society, difference can also be domesticated, embraced and steeped in nostalgia.”227 This quote implies that although treating topics such as assimilation and colonialism is steeped in political implications, these histories can also be used to centralize a more empowering narrative of contact and survival in the material record that is less rooted in ethnic distinctiveness and cultural divisions. In the case of the Nabataeans, and many other ancient groups, this intermingling of identities and practices went far beyond imitation and could have represented a range of values, from geographical convenience to economic strategy and survival.

Although there is much debate regarding the degree and nature of “Hellenization” and “Romanization” that impacted the Nabataeans’ cultural formation, there is an ever increasing body of evidence emphasizing the development of locally rendered, hybridized regional styles developing alongside forging cultural contacts.228 The picture of converging or hybridized identities in the ancient world is further complicated by the difficulty in determining how many of the seemingly “Romanized” decisions were being mandated from the capital at Rome versus how many of these changes were being advocated for and enacted by local cultures, eager to participate in, and benefit from, the Roman imperial system.229 For instance, the importation of

229 Lomas, Gardner, and Herring problematize scholarship’s treatment of Romanization, as it tends to treat the Roman annexation as a top-down force, irreparably absorbing smaller territories into its zone of influence. To fully assess the historical role of the Nabataeans in relation to constructions of collective and individual identities, it is necessary to contextualize the Nabataeans as an autonomous political entity capable of generating these strong social and cultural ties. However, even within this reading, it is important to acknowledge the strategic importance of creating these local and individualized identities as they promoted the imperial agenda of the Romans and could
marble into eastern Roman territories, such as the Eastern Roman Baths at Gerasa, would have been a cumbersome and expensive endeavor; one that could have been motivated by either a Roman desire to demonstrate the reaches of their expanded empire or by the local population’s desire to boast their local resourcefulness and demonstrate their important political connections in the central powers in Rome.  

Nabataean Forces at Work Throughout the Empire

For a reconceptualization of the Nabataeans within the Roman empire to emerge, it is important to acknowledge local forces impacting the surrounding empire, rather than the Nabataeans simply incorporating aspects of surrounding political cultures. Thus, the remainder of this chapter examines Nabataean practices enacted in varying contexts throughout the empire. The Nabataeans actively influenced the central parts of the empire, as evidenced by archaeological finds throughout the empire in the form of altars and inscriptions. It is also worth noting the burial of the Roman governor of Provencia Arabia, Sextus Florentius, as well as the co-called “Roman Soldier Tomb,” demonstrating a degree of symbolic significance between these two important groups. The interactions that produced hybrid cultural identities were far from being simple, peaceful exchanges of ideas; they were often rooted in necessity, inherently interacting with notions of wealth, status, and otherness. It is hardly novel to consider

later be used as post-colonial justifications for cultural interference. Although these acts of cultural autonomy and resistance were certainly empowering and significant, it would be irresponsible to ignore the use of this narrative as a potential tool for control.

230 Khaled Al-Bashaireh Thomas M. Weber-Karyotakis, Nizar Abu-Jabur, and Thomas Lepaeon, “Marble Sculptures from the Great Eastern Baths of Gerasa (Jordan): The Sources of the Marbles,” Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research (2020) 348; Certain scholars (most prominently Fergus Millar 1993) have turned to epigraphy and the spread of Greek and Roman as official administrative languages in the Eastern provinces; Warwick Ball (2016; Rome in the East, xxxii) notes regarding the spread of Greek and Latin throughout the Levant, “Like the use of English throughout the world today, the use of a particular foreign language carries a certain cachet, as a language of fashion, of internationalism.”


232 Ball, Rome in the East, 77.
the major role that the Roman army played in “Romanization” processes, spreading their language, practices, and material culture throughout the Mediterranean. However, records related to the Roman army stationed in Arabia are fragmentary, at best, so it is impossible to know the extent to which the army was involved in the creation of practices and styles throughout the province.

Another testament of Nabataean influence and longevity is evident in the persistence of Nabataean inscriptions into the fourth century and the continued use of Nabataean names, into the sixth century CE, despite the officialized Greek and Latin languages dominating written records after the annexation of the Romans.233 Further, many of the gods worshiped throughout Nabataea had a strong local identity and represented a variety of local priorities and values, especially prominent at Petra and the smaller scale village at Oboda.234 These local religious variations are reflected in art and iconography, as well as in cultural practices and small industry, with local variations of Roman styles carried out within the provinces, likely by locals rather than those trained in the West.235 Each of these practices is well demonstrated within small finds collections, as discussed in the following chapter. There is much debate regarding the convergence of cultural practices and traditions within the ancient world, especially in framing locality and “Romanization” as dichotomous forces.236 However, each thread of evidence implies that cultural contact was not simply an act of passive assimilation, but a conscious adaptation, reconfiguration, and, at times, outright rejection of imposing external forces, particularly in reference to pervasive Roman forces.

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233 Graf, “Nabataean Identity and Ethnicity,” 146-152
235 Ball, Rome in the East, 240.
236 See Millar (1993) and Ball (2016) for arguments on either side of this debate.
The Nabataeans in Modern History

The Nabataeans were largely ignored by scholars prior to an increased interest in the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire in the nineteenth century. Even so, it is worth noting that, aside from Petra, the Nabataeans received relatively little scholarly attention in terms of their important contributions to the Mediterranean and Arab worlds until the late twentieth century. Early works including Domaszewski and Brünnow’s Die Provincia Arabia and Jaussen and Sauvignac’s Mission archéologique en Arabie are still central texts in Nabataean scholarship as they recorded much evidence that would soon be lost in light of modern development.\(^{237}\) However, the vast majority of modern scholarship related to the Nabataeans comes from archaeological excavation and the formal analysis of material culture and remains. P.J. Parr’s 1963 conference paper for the Eighth International Congress of Classical Archaeology in Paris was one of the earliest syntheses offered related to the Nabataean production of material culture and artistic tradition, and several scholars have attempted to retroactively fill in Parr’s large gaps in evidence, Stephan Schmid being the most notable. In terms of historical overviews, Bowersock’s *Roman Arabia*, published in 1983 remains one of the most comprehensive and informative works about the history and culture of the Nabataeans.

Despite this modern treatment, there are still only a handful of ethnographic studies related to the role of Nabataean history in shaping modern Arab identity. Further, the diversity of ‘descendent’ groups makes it difficult to create a holistic picture of Nabataeans in mainstream culture; certain groups claim direct ethnic ancestry through DNA testing, and the Bedul Bedouin at Petra publicly promote their connection to the ancient occupants of the site.\(^{238}\) This glimpse

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into contemporary local attitudes comes from a variety of diverse and interdisciplinary sources, including proposed development plans, architectural studies, personal memoirs, and travel advertisements, rather than a standardized ethnographic practice put in place by archaeologists or heritage scholars working with the nation’s cultural resources.\textsuperscript{239} The absence of a synthesized reading of this literature further highlights the need of interdisciplinary approaches to responsible interpretation expanding far beyond the artifacts on display.\textsuperscript{240}

**Reevaluating the Historical Application of the Nabataeans to Interpretive Practice**

Although their relationship to the Romans would have, in many cases, been mutually beneficial it is reductive to think of the Nabataeans simply in terms of their role first as a client state and then subjects of the Roman empire. The Nabataeans have played a major role in the trajectory of modern history, especially in regard to the development of Arab culture in the region. As new studies of the Nabataeans emerge and new evidence is unearthed, it is becoming increasingly important to understand this group of people as constantly reconfiguring their cultural identities and to continue questioning the degree of their cultural diffusion and, more importantly, why it took place. Applying a more critical historical framework to modern interpretations and displays of ancient identity and its reconfiguration over time is vital to our ability to implement more effective approaches to communicate and to empower modern populations through their regional histories. These interpretations cannot rely simply on direct ethnic ancestry or shared continuity of occupied land, but rather in the conceptions of kinship,

\textsuperscript{239} Bernbeck, “Heritage Politics,” 163.
\textsuperscript{240} This project was limited in obtaining more direct engagement with host populations due to travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 Pandemic that prevented the author from collecting her own survey data.
community, exchange, and survival that have impacted the long term trajectory of the region’s history, placing heritage within its long term historical context.\textsuperscript{241}

The nature of this evidence calls for a critical re-evaluation of interpretive models for presenting the history of the Nabataeans as active political and cultural forces in the ancient Mediterranean, extending after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom as the \textit{Provincia Arabia}. The nature of evidence from the Roman Aqaba Project, as explored in the rest of this thesis, lends to more conclusive and substantial interpretations related to the classical period onward, contributing to both the interpretive goals highlighted above and the proposed routes forward for interpreting small finds. Finally, because of the Nabataeans’ economic importance and their well-established contact with the Romans from the first century BCE, this group was well-positioned to produce their own long standing legacy, as their economic contributions and control over the movement of aromatics from east to west have been central in understanding the consumption dynamics of the ancient world. However, in moving forward, we can conceptualize evocative and empowering narratives that highlight the cultural contributions and accomplishments of the Nabataeans in their own right, apart from their longstanding importance related to Roman economic endeavors. This group of people, who created a significant relationship to Rome and the Western world, brought the same level of ingenuity, autonomy, and craft to the social life at Aila. These accomplishments are further explored and elucidated in the following chapter.

\textsuperscript{241} This practice has been termed “historicizing heritage;” see Cathy Stanton (2006), McGill (2021), and Bissell (2007) for examples within public history.
CHAPTER 4

Small Finds as a Potential Route Forward: Aila (Modern Aqaba) as a Case Study

Contextualizing the Importance of Small Finds

As observed in the prior chapters, existing interpretive models dealing with Jordan’s classical cultural resources have been relatively ineffective. Even in recent years, public programming and antiquities development in the region have left a large proportion of community members feeling disjointed from the past or feeling as though the government promotes an authorized heritage discourse that is simply not relevant or applicable to the majority of community members.\(^{242}\) Revitalizing cultural heritage initiatives in the Middle East remains a remarkably pressing issue, as economic development, climate change, looting, and vandalism continue to pose a threat to the continued survival and long term preservation of antiquities in the region.\(^{243}\) We must challenge existing models in a meaningful and productive way if we are to move forward with ethical preservation and heritage practices in the region.

Archaeological small finds collections can be particularly powerful in communicating the relevance of the classical past in widely understandable terms and formats, while decentralizing the interests of local and national elites or foreign scholars. This work is essential if we are to establish permanent and responsible interpretive heritage practices in Jordan rooted in values-based rather than economic-based preservation. Applying post-colonial interpretations to the categories represented in small finds collections and accessibly historicizing the legacy of historical and archaeological interpretation are both necessary steps for refining local attitudes


toward antiquities in Jordan while highlighting the changing perceptions of cultural identity, thus impacting the relationships between contemporary communities and cultural heritage at large.\textsuperscript{244}

This chapter critically engages with longstanding archaeological and public-facing interpretations at the port of Aqaba (Roman Aila), centralizing material culture in contemporary engagement with the classical past. In doing so, I critically present and engage with select categories\textsuperscript{245} of small finds excavated from the Roman Aqaba Project, offering examples of catalogued objects and potential interpretive routes forward for placing these finds within public discourse, education, and identity building practices. This chapter is organized by category and then by distribution and context of the small finds, combining evidence from ancient Aila with regional comparisons and secondary resources about small finds, social practices, and patterns identified and studied throughout the region.

**Material Culture and a Socio-Cultural Reading of the Small Finds**

As established in the previous chapter, material culture is one of the most significant categories of inquiry when studying ancient identity, whether in a political, cultural, economic, or ethnic contexts.\textsuperscript{246} This is particularly true in the case of the Nabateans, where most of the internal documentation (mostly epigraphic) that survives is either too sparse to reconstruct or emerges in too diverse of contexts to promote a conclusive or holistic picture.\textsuperscript{247} Despite the lack of documentary evidence, turning to the material culture of specific sites within the larger context of the eastern Roman empire helps elucidate issues related to identity and cultural

\textsuperscript{244} Buccellatti, “Presentation and Interpretation of Archaeological Sites:” 152-157.
\textsuperscript{245} Textile production, items associated with dress, bone working, and food processing items; my rationale for including these categories is explained below.
\textsuperscript{246} Gruen, Cultural Identity; 122.
\textsuperscript{247} Ball, Rome in the East, 239-240.
practices in the ancient world, affecting both scholarly interpretation and public perception of the region’s history.

**Limitations of Material Culture**

It is worth qualifying that the material record is far from being infallible; a number of misconceptions can arise when treating the material record as in some way objective or immune to bias. The most obvious of these potential pitfalls is that the material record does not present a full picture of life in the past; this is especially true when treating small finds that are often fragmentary, ambiguous, and scattered throughout a given site, lending to a number of contradictory conclusions to be drawn. Further, relying too heavily on the material record without considering the overarching systems and contexts at work in their formation and deposition oversimplify ancient interactions, ignoring the political and cultural forces that contribute to power imbalances and certain trends.

Finally, overemphasizing material culture as a category of inquiry into the past may lend to the conceptual separation between the object itself and the use of the object in practice; a tendency with a major stranglehold over small finds reports of the twentieth century. For the reasons highlighted above, I have selected a case study supported by textual evidence, with secure archaeological contexts, and contemporary heritage management practices, providing multiple vantage points for better understanding the small finds from Aila and their utility as contemporary educational and public-facing resources. Further, the selected case study of Aqaba illustrates the complications that can emerge between the contemporary community of a rapidly

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251 As demonstrated in early field reports treating the materials of small finds or mapping their frequency at a given site, rather than offering an interpretive reading of the objects’ use and significance.
developing city and its ancient past, as preserved at the archaeological park and local archaeology museum.

I do not assert that the small finds from Aila allow full resolution of ongoing debates related to assimilation or the more pressing forces of “Hellenization” and “Romanization” (as discussed in chapter three), however aspects of these and other overarching questions within archaeological interpretation will surface throughout this chapter; especially considering the cosmopolitan nature of Aila in the ancient world. This analysis offers more than just an overview of the hybrid identities of the past. It aims to highlight routes forward within interpretation for engaging with the material record in more meaningful ways, highlighting the practical and symbolic functions of small finds in a culture of frequent encounter.\(^{252}\) The small finds demonstrate a number of values, spanning from questions related to the nature of the Roman economy to the symbolic value embedded in domestic spaces and production areas.\(^{253}\) Thus, an examination of small finds, the categories they represent, and the insight they can provide is a practical approach for moving toward more meaningful engagement with Jordan’s classical past and public-facing archaeological resources.

**Nabataean Identity and Ethnicity within Studies of Material Culture**

The continuation of Nabataean culture following the Roman annexation implies “that the subordinated Nabataean people did not just disappear but had the tenacity to adapt to their new circumstances and thus were able to continue to express many of their remarkable cultural values.”\(^{254}\) As Corinna Riva (2010) has observed, material culture is the most representative

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\(^{253}\) Penelope Allison shows how they elucidate gender and family; Stephanie Hoss looks at how social practices at large demonstrate industry and cultural contact and transport; Nina Crummy’s timeless typology highlights the intersection between small finds, material value, and symbolic acts within frontier zones.

\(^{254}\) Konstantinos D. Politis, eds. *World of the Nabataeans*, (Franze Steiner Verlag Stuttgart: 2007), 199.
evidence modern scholars have for understanding the non-Greek and non-Roman perspective, especially when considering the dynamism of ancient ethnicity, community, and social culture. Longstanding Nabataean traditions were in place long before contact with the Romans, as evidenced in the material and historical records. These small technologies are indicative of the ways that early Nabataean influences converged with Roman practices and produced certain components of hybrid identities, with the classical periods continuing or perhaps even accelerating movement of ideas, innovation, and technologies, rather than just the transport and movement of goods that had always characterized the region at least since late prehistoric times. These cultural convergences began from the foundation of Aila in the late first century BCE and continued into the Roman period, illustrating diachronically the renegotiations of power and identity visible in the material record.

Scholars have long explored the relationship between expressions of social identity and material culture. However, for the purposes of this chapter, we must understand objects and their archaeological contexts in reference to their contributions to culture, symbolism, and shared values. Shanks and Tilley describe the material record as the physical manifestation of social being, emphasizing the connections between the physical world and cultural practice, attributing cultural and symbolic value to the archaeological record. Further, Michael Rowlands and Peter

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255 Riva, “Ingenious Inventions:” 81.
256 Riva, “Ingenious Inventions:” 80.
257 Primarily Ptolemaic and Hellenistic; for full discussion refer to chapter 3 of this thesis.
260 Material culture studies have further been impacted by the modern lenses of neoliberalism and globalization, emphasizing the homogeneity of cultural contact in the ancient world at times of imperial expansion; Hodos, “Local and Global Perspectives,” 23.
van Dommelen observe: “All kinds of portable and fixed types of material culture that make up people’s material life worlds are thus meaningful in people’s activities and houses, and specific household items are therefore no less significant than field systems, artisanal workshops, or even industrial activity areas.” This quote demonstrates the power of the material record in elucidating personal aspects of ancient peoples’ lives, centralizing those of ancient daily practices alongside larger scale production and overarching systems of organization. Instead of thinking about the convergence of customs as indicative of cultural homogeneity, the sweeping expansion of empire into the Levant highlights multiplicity throughout the Roman empire, with different groups adopting strategic aspects of Roman culture. These specific cultural convergences that relied on the reconfiguration of practices in contexts of encounter are particularly prominent within small finds collections, and this degree of cultural hybridizations becomes more evident when considering sites of continuous occupation and unique convergences of cultural contact, such as the port of Aila.

The Role of the Small Finds in Evolving Interpretations

Despite nearly a century of scholars treating small finds collections as miscellaneous subsets of larger data collections, these finds can serve an essential purpose in restoring agency to the individual lives of the past that are often not represented in textual sources. Small finds collections are reflective of social activities and daily behaviors embedded in the material record, and are thus indicative of bodily experience, identity, religion, and the social usage of space and artistic preferences. Kelly Spradley notes that understanding “identity requires the study of

261 Rowlands and Van Dommelen, Material Culture, 22
262 Primarily language and architecture: for a more thorough discussion of specific elements, see Ball, Rome in the East 227-240
263 Penelope Allison, Archaeology of Household Activities, (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1999), 181.
objects used on a daily basis.”

In this regard, small finds is a remarkably important category of inquiry.

This greater significance gets lost when scholars avoid engaging critically with the function of small finds or their implications for contemporary populations, focusing instead on the raw materials or quantifiable data produced within this category. Exceptional finds and frequently studied categories like ornamentation and religious/sacred objects are not the only objects imbued with sufficient symbolic power to elucidate the values of their former users, as each facet of an individual’s daily life reflects some display of one’s identity or self-conception, although somewhat less consciously in the case of several categories.

Finally, the vast scope of Roman archaeological resources, documents, and reliance on literary evidence have created a climate in which existing methodologies for studying these categories must be reappraised in order to, as Penelope Allison puts it, “unpeel the layers of assumptions built into Roman studies.” Since contemporary studies of small finds run the risk of reinforcing outdated and unhelpful models, a direct engagement with small finds as they were utilized by ancient populations (in light of their relationship to modern populations and host communities) and the historical interpretations of these collections in the past are all essential facets moving forward with applied and multidisciplinary interpretations of the archaeological record.

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266 Penelope Allison, *Archaeology of Household Activities*, 202; Further, because of the variation within these collections and the necessary context required for producing responsible interpretations of the objects, studying small finds in the context of specific case studies and locally derived data sets, rather than treating them in comparison to overarching quantifiable distribution trends throughout the empire, is ideal for promoting an emphasis on cultural production and identity building within the material record.
Aila as an Evolving Cosmopolitan Port on the Red Sea

Aila was a port founded by the Nabataeans and remained occupied well beyond incorporation by the Roman Empire and into Early Islamic period. The site was a transfer point between ships traveling on the Red Sea and caravans moving overland to the Mediterranean littoral. Aila’s regional environment provides insight into the types of materials locally available and imported from hundreds of miles away. Situated on the short land bridges connecting Africa and Asia, as well as the Mediterranean and the Red Seas, Aila was a coastal oasis in this hyper arid environment. Despite a few natural obstacles including strong northerly winds, sailing hazards in the narrow Gulf of Aqaba, and frequent earthquakes, the site prospered for several centuries.

A few rather laconic documentary sources offer some detail about ancient life at Aila, but the regional environment and material culture of the site offer explanations for the port as economically thriving and culturally cosmopolitan center, albeit relatively modest in size compared to other contemporary ports. Throughout its long history, Aila was a major site of import and export for the Roman empire. It also boasted a major military base by the turn of the fourth century and it was a major stop for pilgrims traveling to Mount Sinai in the Byzantine period. Much like Petra, the diversity of the population traveling through or residing in Aila as well as its status as a nexus between the East and the Roman world contributed to the wide range of materials yielded from excavation.

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268 Parker, Preliminary Report, 25.
Historical sources attest that Aila was an important economic commercial center, even prior to Roman annexation, although many details of its economy and its relationship to the wider imperial economy remain ambiguous.\textsuperscript{270} Serving as further testament to its importance in the ancient world, several preserved maps and travel itineraries from the Roman and Byzantine period include Aila. It is also listed as a Roman legionary base in the Notitia Dignitatum, detailing the placement of Roman military units in the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} centuries.\textsuperscript{271} A number of bishops of Aila are attested from the early fourth century onwards. One need not look further than the historical record to recognize that Aila was considered an important locale for centuries while the port was active, bearing significant weight on the degree of external cultural influences one might expect to find at the site.

There is a long history of archaeological investigation in the region. This includes evidence from the Prehistoric periods, the Early Bronze Age, Iron Age,\textsuperscript{272} Classical, and Islamic periods. The latter are still highly valued in modern day Aqaba. As mentioned in chapter two, Nelson Glueck was the first American archaeologist to conduct excavations near Aqaba at Tell el-Kheleifeh in 1938-1940.\textsuperscript{273} This yielded important evidence of the late Iron Age and Persian periods (8\textsuperscript{th}-5\textsuperscript{th} centuries BCE). Glueck also first identified the Nabataean presence at Aqaba.

\textsuperscript{270} Pliny 12.32.64-65 refers to Aila as a town; Strabo 16.2.30 refers to it as a city; Claudius Ptolemy refers to Aila as a village (Geography 6.5); However, the placement of the Via Nova Traina in the first ten years after Roman annexation indicates the degree of Roman imperial interest in the port of Aila, regardless of its classification as a city or a town.


\textsuperscript{273} Achievement of Nelson Glueck, GE Wright, 98; Glueck never published a formal excavation report, but for a recent reappraisal of Glueck's excavations, see Pratico, 1985; Thomas Parker, “Introduction: Previous Archaeological Research” in The Roman Aqaba Project Vol I, eds. Thomas Parker and Andrew Smith, (Boston: ASOR, 2014) offers a convenient and comprehensive summary of the historical sources through the Medieval period: 20-22 for a full overview of excavation at the Port of Aqaba.
Almost 30 years later University of Chicago’s Donald Whitcomb directed six major excavation seasons at Aqaba, identifying Early Islamic Ayla, a walled town close to the modern beach that thrived from the mid-7th to 11th centuries, focusing on desert subsistence technologies. The Chicago excavations contributed much to our understanding of Aqaba in the Early Islamic period, in addition to contributing to scholars’ spatial understanding of the site’s organization. S. Thomas Parker’s 1994-2003 excavation at Aila (the Roman Aqaba Project, henceforth “RAP”) produced our most comprehensive understanding of the site’s diachronic occupation, including evidence from the Nabataean, Roman, Byzantine, and Early Islamic periods. This project’s regional survey of the southeastern Wadi Araba, a major travel route extending from Aila to the Dead Sea, produced evidence from 334 sites ranging from the Prehistoric to Late Islamic periods, illuminating Aila’s regional context. More recent excavation by another international team has focused on excavation of the Late Islamic castle and its environs farther down the coast about 1 km south of Early Islamic Ayla.

In addition to illuminating the economy of the port at Aila, the RAP excavations yielded much evidence pertaining to regional conditions and social practices, with aspects of the latter category identifiable within the small finds collection. Unfortunately, the RAP excavations were unable to access Aila’s ancient harbor or its urban center due to modern development. Thus, much valuable evidence to understand parts of Aila’s history is lost; however, available evidence still illuminates much about the nature of life at a port site over the entire first millennium CE. Thus, this corpus of evidence serves to illustrate meaning through interpreting material culture.

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https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/aqaba-project (all articles and field reports linked here)

S. Thomas Parker and Andrew Smith (eds). *The Roman Aqaba Project Final Report Vol I*. Boston: ASOR, 2014. The objects recovered from this project are the subject of the later analysis.

and how these objects can be used to engage more directly with modern audiences. This thesis will focus primarily on the Nabataeans of Aila, both before and after the imposition of direct Roman rule, i.e. from the late first century BCE to the fourth century CE.

Like many of the archaeological sites associated with the Nabataeans, the items recovered at Aila represent a number of cultural influences from long standing Near Eastern tradition, as well as from the Greek and Roman world. The wide range of materials, preferences, and local industrial practices reflect the development of Aila as influenced by several different cultures that were embodied in the shifting identities of the Nabataeans. Aqaba’s continuous occupation over the centuries plays a major factor in the nature of the diverse material remains. However, it also implies the significance of the site as a representation of cosmopolitanism and hybridity from the site’s foundation, demonstrating a working knowledge and engagement with local resources as Aila’s ancient occupants sought to adopt, retain, and reject distinctive sets of practices.

**Spatial Layout and Evidence at Aila**

The excavations at Aila produced expansive material evidence representing the seven centuries of Roman occupation at the site. The classified small finds include items from each period listed above and highlights the diachronic changes observable in the material culture. Primarily recovered from domestic contexts, dumps, and the religious complex, approximately 6,619 unique objects were catalogued, with multiple data entries containing several objects found within a single and related context. Highlighting the intersecting facets of status, culture, and social identity, the small finds provide information about a range of experiences at Aila, operating within a three-tiered economic model with objects intended for daily use and

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278 Approximately 9,000 objects in total, including assemblages composed of multiple fragmentary pieces.
subsistence activities, mid-range consumer goods, and objects signifying more substantial wealth within Aila.\textsuperscript{279} The majority of Nabataean finds appeared contexts dating to the Late Roman period and later, and are thus likely residual, making the exact moment of their arrival at Aila somewhat of a mystery. Thus, this analysis relies on stylistic qualities and \textit{comparanda}, context of deposition, and secondary literature on the specific function of artifacts and their qualities, functions, and materials to determine their precise role at Aila. Of the 15 excavation areas exposed during the project, I will be focusing primarily on Areas B, M, O, J, and K.

Areas B, O, and M represent early (i.e., 1\textsuperscript{st} to 3\textsuperscript{rd} centuries CE) domestic occupation at Aila. They are primarily domestic structures with limited evidence of industrial activity. Area J is one of Aila’s public spaces, as evidenced by the monumental public structure (probably a church) dating to ca. 300 and a major segment of the Byzantine city wall, erected around the turn of the fifth century. The putative church largely collapsed in the earthquake of 363 CE. Portions of the now ruined structure were inhabited by “squatters” until the building’s final abandonment, then used as a dump in the fifth century. Area K, located just inside the city wall, yielded evidence of continuous occupation from the 1\textsuperscript{st} to the 10\textsuperscript{th} centuries, dating as early as the Nabataean/Early Roman period at Aila. With spatial context established, the rest of this chapter is organized by different categories of material culture, dealing with the distribution of small finds, sorted first by object type, with a secondary classification by material, symbolism, and function.

\textsuperscript{279}Mostly determined by imported material, semiprecious stones, gold jewelry, and small sculptural items; The goal of the selected categories follows select development goals posed by Paul Collins (2018), aiming to “make connections between past and present meaningful, without diluting or confusing the narrative.” This is of course quite a challenge, as an existing hybridized Nabataean tradition predated the regime changes and colonial dissemination at Aila, all representing movement, flexible borders, and constantly shifting modality and ethnic groups.
Methods for Studying the Small Finds at Aila

As Spradley observes, “Objects take on different meanings based on a number of factors: who is using them, under what circumstances they came to belong or be used by a certain person, or even the prevailing social conditions of the time.”\textsuperscript{280} Despite the multitude of potential variations, there are several judgment calls necessary to determine the most likely use or meaning of a specific artifact. For instance, distinguishing between objects that are intended to be decorative, ornamental or symbolic versus objects that serve a clear functional purpose provide a fairly straightforward example of applicable modern interpretations that can be made fairly confidently.\textsuperscript{281}

Further, when an object illustrates multiple possible interpretations or categories of use, it most likely served two intertwined functions that can be equally as expressive about an artifact. An example is a decorative military weapon designed for battlefield efficiency but also to demonstrate high status or rank. Allason-Jones created an identification method based on six factors for accurately mapping, analyzing, and discussing small finds that will be applied throughout the remainder of this chapter.\textsuperscript{282} These categories are appearance, construction, function, design, significance, and context.\textsuperscript{283} With identification and analysis of the RAP small finds completed, I focus primarily on the latter two categories.\textsuperscript{284}

Stephanie Hoss and Alissa Whitmore note that “social practices can best be identified within archaeology by turning to the small finds.”\textsuperscript{285} Due to the diverse range of materials included in this corpus of evidence, I only include certain categories of finds in this analysis. The

\textsuperscript{280} Spradley, “Small Finds,” 106.
\textsuperscript{281} Spradley, “Small Finds,” 106.
\textsuperscript{282} Lindsay Allason-Jones, \textit{Artefacts in Roman Britain: Their Purpose and Use}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 1.
\textsuperscript{283} Allason-Jones, \textit{Artefacts in Roman Britain}, 1.
\textsuperscript{284} See Gregg and Waller, “Small Finds Chapter” in RAP volume II (no page #).
\textsuperscript{285} Whitmore and Hoss, “Introduction,” 1.
categories included are selected in part because of their placement within known typologies from Crammy, Allison, and Allason-Jones, as this chapter hopes to address a diverse range of questions regarding ancient identity building practices. However, many of the objects included likely served multiple functions throughout antiquity and an object’s actual use may have changed drastically over time.\textsuperscript{286} The multifunctionality of objects has resulted in a fluid categorization of these finds, fitting into what Penelope Allison termed “fuzzy categories” in her reconstruction of gendered spaces at Pompeii.\textsuperscript{287}

Acknowledging the limitations and absence of definitive small finds typologies, I draw from categories of prior critical inquiry into the practical use and significance of finds.\textsuperscript{288} Thus, I include only select categories from the Roman Aqaba Project, including textile production, dress, bone working/iconography, food processing, and the convergence of these practices with raw materials and their relationship to ancient daily practices. Further, these selected categories intentionally draw from examples that have been successful at communicating meaning in contemporary museum settings.\textsuperscript{289} Thus, the categories of small finds highlighted below are designed to apply to heritage preservation and the contemporary needs of modern Aqaba and the surrounding region.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{287} Penelope M. Allison, \textit{People and Spaces in Roman Military Bases}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 44-56.
\item \textsuperscript{288} See explanation above: Crummy 1983; Allason Jones 2011, Allison 2015
\item \textsuperscript{289} See chapter 2 for a more in depth description of said programming; this criteria is based on other studies of collections and their ability to meet designated learning outcomes related to identity.
\end{itemize}
Textile Production

Textile production at Roman sites has often been used to gather insight into domestic spaces in the ancient world, especially in relation to women and children.\textsuperscript{290} This category of finds is well suited for establishing easily understandable links between past and present, as these objects usually have a distinct and well-demonstrated purpose (table 1).\textsuperscript{291} Areas B, M, and K contained a large percentage of items related to textile production at Aila.\textsuperscript{292} These include weaving paddles, textile fragments, needles, spindle whorls, and weights. The textile related finds in these areas represent almost 70\% of those uncovered from the entire site. The large number of these goods in relation to the domestic use of these areas from the Early Roman to the Early Byzantine occupation is relatively unsurprising and lend to the interpretation of these objects as significant within ancient household practices.\textsuperscript{293} Objects related to textile production are present in the earliest strata. However, these objects increase in the Late Roman and Byzantine periods, possibly reiterating their practical value in Roman domestic spaces. The recovered finds from Aila, taken alongside gendered classifications of other small finds, offer potential evidence of gendered practice over time, set within the context of the local, small-scale textile production.\textsuperscript{294}

A more critical public presentation of textile production could engage with conceptions of family life in the ancient world, centralizing the organization of domestic space in determining interpersonal values among the ancient occupants of Aila and other locales. Although specific

\bibitem{290} Allison, “Characterizing Roman Artifacts,” 119; the act of weaving was often carried out in domestic contexts by women and children, although there were certainly examples of men repairing their own uniforms at Hadrian’s Wall.\textsuperscript{290}
\bibitem{291} Whether intended to meet larger demands of textile production, or for family or soldier usage; Allason-Jones, \textit{Artefacts in Roman Britain}, 84.
\bibitem{292} Refer to Table (X) for specific totals and site distribution.
\bibitem{293} Allason-Jones, \textit{Artefacts in Roman Britain}, 84.
\bibitem{294} Allison, “Characterizing Roman Artifacts,” 119.
renderings of how domestic spaces at the port of Aila contribute to shared values throughout the empire remain unclear, especially in relation to age and gender, these concepts may allow a more nuanced and diverse picture of the Roman world, further humanizing the ancient occupants of the site, and allowing contemporary communities to place themselves more effectively into the mindset of ancient family units, working cohesively to construct and repair the family’s clothing. This apparent family-centered model of production is particularly interesting given Aila’s proximity to empire-wide trade and production, especially in light of well-attested Nabataean textile production. Without the necessity for local textile production present, the decision to continue operating this small-scale, family centered model of production, as opposed to purchasing textiles from local, specialized craft-people or state-owned textile factories (as were utilized in the empire for military and consumption demand), is indicative of the cultural value attributed to this shared practice. Further, the quantity and distribution of these finds when taken with other goods related to production and domestic practice, suggest that textile production is one of several possible windows into daily life and thus cultural development at Aila.

**Items Associated with Dress: Fibulae, Brooches, and Personal Adornment**

Jewelry and ornamentation are perhaps some of the most obvious categories of finds to analyze when engaging with conceptions of cultural identity within material culture, primarily because these goods are usually determined to be aesthetically pleasing based on reigning cultural standards. Further the consumption of decorative or leisure items is usually indicative of a specific cultural preference, albeit, often an elite one.

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The brooches and *fibulae* from Aila reflect a broad range of styles. However, most of these fasteners are characterized by their curved bows and are thus difficult to date closely because of the extended period of use for this type. We know much about different forms and functions of the *fibula* as a clothes fastener, due to detailed published typologies from funerary contexts and sculptural depictions.\(^{297}\) The brooch or *fibula* is also an example of an object serving dual functions, with symbolic significance as well as practical utility, as these ornate pieces secured clothing but also reflected gendered styles, emotional sentiment, and decorative preference.\(^{298}\) Several *fibulae* at Aila come from domestic contexts,\(^{299}\) split between Area M and Area B, while the remaining fibulae and brooches were excavated from Area J, after the construction of the “church,” dating to the end of the Late Roman period (ca. 300 CE) (table 2).\(^{300}\) Only one derives from a secure Nabataean context, but the styles represented are found throughout far ranging and diverse localities across the empire. Allason-Jones notes that because different social groups and cultural identities throughout the Mediterranean and Levant have distinctive preferences for the styles and technology of brooches, they are likely indicative of symbolic and artistic preference beyond what is visible to contemporary excavators.\(^{301}\) Further,

\(^{297}\) See https://www.forumancientcoins.com/numiswiki/view.asp?key=Bow%20Fibula for a comprehensive and working catalogue of fibulae from different Roman sites.


\(^{299}\) The funerary contexts at Aila (Areas A and M) are all but devoid of associated artifacts, sharply contrasting with common practices of the 4th and 5th century practices of comparable sites; the Nabataeans are thought to have had strong associations between the flesh and soul, with the soul ascending to the afterlife once the body has decomposed. Although, many of the tombs at Petra would have been looted in antiquity, relatively few funerary goods have been excavated from the Nabataean capital. Thus, there was likely more of a preference surrounding where the body of the deceased was placed, rather than the goods with which it was associated; Perry, Megan A. (2005) “Life and Death in Nabataea: The North Ridge Tombs and Nabataean Burial Practices.” Near Eastern Archaeology, Vol. 65, No. 4, Petra: A Royal City Unearthed, pp. 265-270. The American School of Oriental Research; Ewert, Courtney Dotson. (2017) “Nabataean Subadult Mortuary Practices: Appendices I-V.” Thesis submitted to the faculty of Brigham Young University.

\(^{300}\) Refer to Table (X) for specific totals and site distribution.

\(^{301}\) Allason-Jones, Lindsay. *Artefacts in Roman Britain*: 11.
analysis of large, expensive grave monuments and gendered typologies from *fibulae* from the lower Rhine, Gaul and Trier suggests certain *fibulae* as a symbol of status, particularly among Roman matrons.\(^{302}\) Worth noting is the absence of a definitive “Nabataean” style of fibula, despite several of these object types emerging at various Nabataean sites.\(^{303}\) Thus, although the Nabataeans were encountering and utilizing this Roman technology, there was no apparent attempt to differentiate between Roman and indigenous clothing-fastener styles.

The examples at Aila are usually more practical in function, with only a few ornamental *fibulae* recovered from excavation. However, the prominence of the “cross-bow” type, dated to Roman period (early examples have been dated to the second century CE),\(^ {304}\) and in use well into the fifth century, bears strong association with the Roman military.\(^ {305}\) Thus, some degree of status and/or occupation may be conveyed to contemporary audiences through presenting alternative possibilities related to the original wearers of these objects, connecting to larger themes of military presence and flaunting status through material culture.

In addition to these more functional pieces, perhaps the most noteworthy ornamental find classified as a *fibula* at Aila is a bronze grape leaf, with a detailed rendering of the leaf’s veining and stem still intact (fig. 3). Another example of a grape-leaf design is attested at Khirbet edh-Dharih from lamp handle dating to the second century.\(^ {306}\) Two other leaf ornaments emerged at

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\(^{305}\) Bojovic, Dragoljub. *Rimske Fibule Singidunuma. Muzej Grada Beograda Serija - Zbirke i Legati Katalog XII*. (Belgrade, 1983), XXXIV.

\(^{306}\) Villeneuve and Al-Muheisen 2002: 83, no. 114. From the Great Temple at Petra, were two bronze leaf elements (neither a grape leaf) but their function there is unknown: see Joukowsky 1998: 308 nos. 96-M-6; 96-M-15.
the so-called “Great Temple,” at Petra; although neither can be definitively categorized as a “grape leaf,” these jewelry items demonstrate a fine level of detail and artisanship.\textsuperscript{307} This vegetal motif is perhaps best understood in comparison to other finds from Aila; with a decorative cosmetic stick, a bronze fragment, and a leaf-shaped pendant spread across Areas M and J, all painting an interesting picture of vegetal patterns within Nabataean and Roman stylistic preferences. The Nabataeans incorporated these vegetal patterns into their pottery traditions, with floral and vegetal motifs remaining characteristic of Nabataean painted fine ware pottery from the first century BCE onward.\textsuperscript{308}

These vegetal patterns are also prominent in Islamic art throughout the region, with architecture, textiles, and paintings bearing ornate vegetal patterns and geometric designs.\textsuperscript{309} In addition to these items of personal ornamentation, a marble relief sculpture bearing a vegetal motif also appeared in excavation—four fragments of white marble from Area K, lacking a secure stratigraphic context, bear visible relief decoration of vegetal leaves and vines. Their surface damage and lack of secure context makes more precise identification difficult. However, these intricate foliage patterns are paralleled at the Mountain of Aaron, on a large marble slab, emphasizing the use of this motif within a religious context.\textsuperscript{310}

Although these motifs span across different mediums, the importance of vegetal patterns at sites in southern Jordan prior to, during, and long after the Roman era provides insight into


Nabataean tradition and preferences even when converging with materials\textsuperscript{311} and stylized forms of the Romans or Greeks. Nabataean preference for aniconic imagery within certain contexts in art has been compared to the distaste of figural production common among the ancient Israelites and ancient Arabs, both within or without Islam.\textsuperscript{312} While there is clear evidence of figural motifs and iconic figures spread throughout the finds at Aila, some preference for floral and vegetal motifs clearly persisted in the material record. Thus, a cultural perspective in addition to a socio-economic reading of these finds is certainly worth further exploration in public presentation at the Aqaba Archaeological Museum.

The final category of personal ornamentation worth mention is bells in jewelry and personal adornment. Bells are often cited as examples of ancient ornamentation that are distinctly non-Roman in origin.\textsuperscript{313} Two bronze bells\textsuperscript{314} appeared in excavation, most likely ornamental charms from pieces of jewelry. Several authors note that bells were a common decorative element associated with jewelry from the fourth century BCE, particularly in Arabia. Bells apparently had an apotropaic function in Nabataean culture, making their continued use into the Roman and Byzantine periods quite telling in terms of enduring indigenous tradition in the construction of long-term hybridizing identities.\textsuperscript{315} The bells from Aila almost certainly reflect a more indigenous or provincial style, which could indicate the longevity of local religious and/or folk tradition, or at the very least a longstanding aesthetic preference for these pieces.

\textsuperscript{311} Read: marble.
\textsuperscript{312} Riva, “Ingenious Inventions;”; Sam Callahan, \textit{Aniconic Expression of Worship Practices in the Architectural Details of the Nabataean Column Capital}, (University of Oklahoma, 2014).
\textsuperscript{313} Allason-Jones, \textit{Artefacts in Roman Britain}, 208.
\textsuperscript{314} Obj. #2466, from a 3rd century context in Area M, with its small size and visible suspension loop and corroded clapper is most likely a charm on a necklace or bracelet. Likewise, Obj. #3937, from Early Byzantine wall tumble in Area J East, is slightly larger, but still small enough to comfortably fit within its identification as a small, personal ornamental piece.
Bone/Ivory Working and Industry

Turning first to bone working as industry at Aila, excavations yielded approximately 50 objects that were catalogued as ivory, with 249 classified as worked bone. A large percentage of these finds date to the late third/early fourth centuries (tables 3 and 4). However, most such evidence appeared in secondary contexts, i.e. Byzantine dumps just outside the city wall but there are multiple examples dating to earlier periods as well.\textsuperscript{316} The large quantity of evidence indicates the local presence of a workshop specializing in bone and ivory carving. In many cases, these bone and ivory finds depict iconographic features and styles representative of a larger bone working tradition throughout the Near East, particularly in Egypt and at Ashkelon in southern Palestine.\textsuperscript{317}

Bone/Ivory Working and Consumption

There is a wide range of iconographic evidence at Aila in the form of crudely worked bone, however, most noteworthy are several figural elements. The first of these pieces bears a common motif throughout the Roman world— an image of the “toilette of Venus,” stylistically dated to the third or fourth century, but representing an unusual rendering of features (fig. 4). A similar bone rendering from Alexandria in Egypt, also dated to the fourth century, demonstrates the widespread usage of this motif throughout the eastern provinces\textsuperscript{318} while an almost identical piece also appeared from Palatine East, just outside Rome.\textsuperscript{319} The widespread use of this motif is rather telling about the cultural fusion present at Aila, as well as other sites in Southwest Asia. The form itself has a long history of use in Hellenized contexts, originating from stylistic

\textsuperscript{316} Specifically, 16\% of bone finds are from Late Roman contexts or earlier.
\textsuperscript{319} St. Clair, A., Evidence for Late Antique Bone and Ivory Carving on the Northeast Slope of the Palatine. (Dumbarton Oaks Papers volume 50, 1996): 221, Plate 22.
elements of Hellenistic paintings that spread slowly but consistently to other artforms. This archetype has strong associations with the Cult of Aphrodite, with numerous examples throughout Greco-Roman Egypt, spanning across multiple materials and slight artistic variations, where a more refined bone working tradition may be expected. However, the specific example of Aila’s crude and elongated form almost certainly implies local production, whether illustrating a lack of artisan skill in mimicking popular trends or a local regional preference.

The second relief inlay plaque from Aila, identified as Alexander the Great, slightly predates the Venus inlay (fig. 5). Alexander’s image on decorations or furniture is common in the Hellenistic tradition, but the Alexander at Aqaba is much flatter and depicts broad and exaggerated facial details when compared to other examples of Alexander in the parallels noted in burials at Vergina. This could be interpreted as a lack of technical skill by the artist, but it could also be interpreted to represent a distinctive regional artistic tradition at Aila, especially considering the figure’s unusually rendered large eyes and the easily replaceable and inexpensive use of bone as an artistic medium. Thus it is unlikely that these details exaggerated by mistake.

There is comparable evidence throughout the Levant to suggest that local populations often intentionally excluded “Romanized” practices for the sake of preserving their own tradition or unintentional preservation through tradition and ease. McKenzie (1988, 2003) demonstrates sites such as Petra having impressively fine-tuned craftsmanship, incorporating in many cases,

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322 E. Borza and O. Palagia. “The Chronology Of The Macedonian Royal Tombs At Vergina.” (Semantic Scholar, 2007): 94-101; worth noting is that the Vergina examples are from an elite funerary context, where some difference is to be expected. However, the tomb indicates the importance of Alexander’s image in serving an apotropaic function; The Aqaba Alexander’s large eyes are the most compelling feature for the classification of these facial variations as intentional, given the widespread nature of these disproportionate features rendered onto the faces of (often elite and male) figures. For more discussion of these facial variations, see Marangau’s 1976 volume.
323 Gregg and Waller, “The Small Finds.”
324 For further discussion of indigenous variations of figural elements, see Marangou’s 1976 volume.
Greek and Roman styles, whereas adh-Dharih and Khirbet at-Tannur both draw heavily on their Syrian and Mesopotamian predecessors for inspiration. These examples are interesting as their proximity to the capital at Petra would suggest that the ancient occupants of the site would have been well aware of the trends and styles circulating at other Nabataean sites within the Roman empire. Aila’s well attested interaction with the capital for economic purposes and their direct connections to Roman Egypt (and thus the empire at large) through economic interactions, implies a similar level of knowledge related to the widespread artistic practices spreading throughout other parts of Nabataea. Thus, the exclusion of these “Romanized” styles at the regional level can certainly be read as an intentional exclusion or as indicative of distinct cultural preferences or existing tradition.

Further, the very use of bone depicting these Hellenistic motifs is imbued with symbolic social and political meaning. For example, in Britain prior to the Roman period, there is very little evidence of a bone working tradition in Romano-British contexts before its popularization during the Roman period. In contrast, provinces throughout the Near East indicate a longstanding pre-Roman tradition of bone working. This indigenous bone working tradition is present within the Nabataean kingdom, with the bone working industrial area at ez-Zantur in Petra in the early first century. Additionally, Schneider and Studer have detailed the prominence of local variation and specificities observable within bone working evidence throughout the Levant, noting the symbolic importance of bone sourcing and its relationship to specific iconographies.

Schneider & Studer “Camel Use in the Petra Region, Jordan.”
into bone, and the local renderings of popular Greco-Roman motifs all demonstrate hybridization within the material record. The local variation at Aila, as well as its ancient occupants understandings of artistic practices throughout the empire, harken back to Near Eastern tradition while incorporating key components of Western craft specialization, iconography, and technique.

In terms of practical implications, several of these finds were identified as decorative furniture inlays, catalogued elsewhere as indicative of conspicuous and highly valued leisure activities, especially in Romano-British contexts. The obvious implication of finds representing leisure activities is that the population at Aila clearly had some taste for leisure products, and the economic resources necessary to make that preference a practical reality. Also speaking to these recreational preferences at Aila, there were nine bone gaming pieces of the 41 total game pieces catalogued at Aila. Of the nine, four definitively dated to the classical period. Allason-Jones has written extensively about gaming pieces as a symbolic representation of the human need for entertainment. The common presence of small bone disks used for board games throughout Romano-British contexts and the popular renderings of bird motifs on children’s toys excavated at Roman Chester, both present at Aila shine light on the convergence of popular entertainment practices and local consumption played out at the port.

**Food Production**

A variety of hand tools appeared in excavation, representing a wide range of source materials, technologies, and contexts. The largest grouping of hand tools appeared in Area J (East), likely reflecting the activities of later occupants living in the partially ruined building.
after its 363 destruction, but harkening centuries’ long tradition of grain processing in the ancient Near East. Hand tools related to food preparation, usually in stone, are ubiquitous throughout the Levant, dating back to the Stone Age. Despite certain classification challenges imposed by the continuity of these technologies, their long term uniformity through space and time, despite regional variations, is truly remarkable and reveals a preference for these early practices, despite evolving technologies over time. The longevity of these practices is particularly noteworthy in regards to the advancement of these technologies alongside developing culinary and social practices. These items usually appear far from their place of production and remain in use for several generations. Area B, O, and M, all contain Nabataean evidence related to hand tools and food production, with many of these objects in secondary contexts. However, there are distinctions between different types of grinding tools, with many of the Aila examples reflecting rotary querns similar to those of Roman origin, and others illustrating not only indigenous styles, but locally rendered materials that at the very least demonstrate an intimate knowledge of the land and its resources.

As noted above, it is often difficult to differentiate between different stages of hand tool technologies and development. However, it is certainly worth highlighting this category of artifact in light of the successful Roman oven experiment at the Jerash Archaeological Museum, and the immediately recognizable forms and figures of these finds to contemporary audiences and viewers. Artifacts such as lamps, hand tools, and storage vessels have long been studied in

334 Willing and Pemberton, “Mortaria From Ancient Corinth,” 556.
335 Margaret Alice Murray and J. C. Ellis. *A Street in Petra.* (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt and B. Quaritch, 1940), 16.
336 Badran, “The Excluded Past,” 212
respect to current attitudes toward their symbolic and practical functions. Comparable studies in Egypt and the southern Levant have demonstrated that a number of these vessels and tools were never intended to serve a practical purpose and did not show any visible signs of wearing or of frequent use. Further, rotary querns were often recycled into grinding stones or hearth stones, illustrating the value of the raw material and underscoring the possibility that these items may have been valued in and of themselves, despite their practical function. For instance, 36% of hand tools (grinders, pestles, hammerstones, and pounders) and 59% of all millstones are of basalt. These percentages are striking, as Niemi notes that basalt would have been transported to Aila from at least 30 km away, if not further. This preference for basalt remains mysterious, with other raw materials within this category of finds much more readily accessible, such as coquina and sandstone. Thus, it is clear that geological convenience was certainly not the only factor at work in the selection of raw materials at Aila. In addition to this symbolic value, the majority of examples at Aila show evidence of wear, caused by their frequent use in antiquity; the use of these technologies to produce and supply the local population with food is in and of itself a testament to the cultural importance of the objects and remains a recognizable and important practice among contemporary populations.

**Interpretive Engagement with the Small Finds**

While the examples illustrated above both from Aila and throughout the Levant make it difficult to create a conclusive image of changing cultural identities, the diversity of these finds in their various contexts present a nuanced and more accessible version of ancient history with

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338 Allason-Jones *Artefacts in Roman Britain*, 174.
339 Tina Niemi, “Regional Environmental Setting”; The closest source was located ca. 100 km north of Aila.
340 This preference could have something to do with the different materials’ efficiency at grinding down raw materials.
341 These likely came from outcrops in Wadi Mubarak, only 10 km south of Aila.
the potential to resonate with contemporary audiences. These variations also serve as a reminder to the reader not to view all components of an ancient culture’s conception of self or identity as homogenous or monolithic but instead to embrace the cosmopolitanism and hybridity represented in the material culture as indicative of the fluidity of these categories in antiquity.342

The location of Aila as a nexus connecting between the Levant, the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, the Red Sea littoral, and the Mediterranean make it particularly difficult to measure the extent or nature of influence within its cultural bounds. Aila’s ancient occupants were likely constantly interacting with competing, longstanding traditions and regional powers, reconfiguring their own conceptions of identity as indicated by their material culture. Anderson argues that in order to present confident interpretations related to Nabataean cultural identity, archaeologists must understand their traces in the material record as a hybridization of multiple cultures, exchanging meaning, practices, and material over an extended period of time. Finally, scholars must incorporate matters related to cultural identity and social relationships into the public discourse surrounding the small finds collections of Jordan by focusing on aspects of daily life and human interactions with the material world, highlighting a familiar and nuanced historical narrative in the area. Post-colonial archaeological interpretation and emphasis on meaning-making practices can help produce more sustainable approaches to preservation and public display, enacted at a local level.

The need for effective interpretive readings of ancient collections and an emphasis on the utility of small finds as collective heritage resources is especially pressing in light of current threats to heritage sites, including rapid development and widespread looting, that has been

342 Anderson, “Identity Crises:” 123.
escalating in recent years throughout Jordan and Palestine.\textsuperscript{343} Small finds have been especially susceptible to these practices, further illustrating the need to incorporate these finds more effectively into interpretations beyond their simple economic value or tourism appeal. Renfrew and Bahn (1991) warn against the dangers of misapplying modern values and cultural meaning to the past and exaggerating the implications of these often frustratingly ambiguous collections.\textsuperscript{344} These cautions are not without merit but are still rooted in a false binary between objective and subjective data collection, treating a lack of conclusive evidence as a reason not to further engage with an object’s meaning or utility.

Despite the absence of an all-encompassing and easily identifiable “truth” in the material record, the small finds shed light on the actions, behaviors and preferences of the time they were produced, used, and discarded. Although the meanings of objects are subject to change over time, small finds reports must be willing to adapt to new data and theoretical models for locating cultural identity within the material record.\textsuperscript{345} These evolving interpretations are precisely why heritage practitioners must actively engage with the historiography of heritage alongside interpretation in improving and implementing effective future antiquities development, if these legacies are to be challenged and current practices improved.


\textsuperscript{344} Lucas, “Interpretation in Contemporary Archaeology,” 39, 42.

\textsuperscript{345} Lucas, “Interpretation in Contemporary Archaeology, 43.
CHAPTER 5


Goal and Scope of the Development Plan

This chapter offers suggestions for how to practically apply the categories discussed in the previous chapters to responsible interpretive practices at sites in Jordan and throughout the Middle East. I continue using Aqaba as a case study, outlining evidence from the small finds collection in regards to current interpretive practices and potential routes forward for responsible archaeological development and public-facing programming. I conclude by offering suggestions for measuring visitor outcomes and situating these suggestions within the historiographical and theoretical frameworks highlighted throughout this thesis.

Introduction to Development of Small Finds at Aqaba

Archaeological sites throughout southern Jordan have inherited a complicated and exclusionary narrative, that has been continuously politicized by colonial forces, government entities, and foreign scholars. Through its own history of political upheaval and the reconfigurations of local identity, Roman Aila embodies this history of tension and constant liminality. Despite natural challenges and intermittent security threats from all sides, the site prospered for many centuries. Most small finds of the classical period retrieved by the Roman Aqaba Project appeared in domestic spaces, social gathering points, and the putative church near the city wall. Much of the classical artifact collection is currently stored with the Department of Antiquities in Jordan (in Aqaba and Amman) or in NC State’s Archaeological Laboratory and

346 Thomas Parker, “Introduction,” in The Roman Aqaba Project Vol I, eds. Thomas Parker and Andrew Smith, (Boston: ASOR, 2014), 5; for further information, see chapter 5 of this thesis. STP- is this not chapter 5?
Repository.\textsuperscript{347} It has undergone little to no public interpretation apart from lectures to popular and academic audiences and occasional stories in popular media.

**Current State of Interpretation at Aqaba**

Currently, the majority of interpretation offered on site at Aqaba is rather passive by nature, with signage offered in both English and Arabic and museum labels that include a basic title and approximate date for artifact assemblages.\textsuperscript{348} The museum itself has been operating sporadically and at limited capacity since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it generally operates between three to six hours on weekday mornings.\textsuperscript{349} Established in the 1990s, the museum has a few classical assemblages and Bronze Age artifacts from the earliest surveys at Aqaba, but the majority of the museum is dedicated to modern history, starting with the Muslim Conquest of the seventh century, with the museum building itself representing a significant moment of modern history as it was briefly the home of Sharif Hussein bin Ali, the leader of the 1916 Arab Revolt.\textsuperscript{350} The use of this historic house as a museum building, as such, bears significant political implications; housing antiquities within the former home of the great grandfather of the current king of Jordan deeply intertwines the nation’s contemporary display practices with the construction of national identity, legitimizing the role of the current royal family within that tradition. There is little written about the actual museum, and it is considered to be somewhat off the beaten path according to available visitor data.\textsuperscript{351} The general consensus

\textsuperscript{347} Some materials remain scattered across various university in the US while undergoing analysis for academic publication. All will be returned to NCSU after final publication.


\textsuperscript{349} Espacio Visual Europa (EVE), “Museos de Jordania:” https://evemuseografia.com/2015/07/31/museos-de-jordania/


\textsuperscript{351} Aqaba Archaeological Museum Reviews (accessed 2021): https://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g298101-d7679274-Reviews-Aqaba_Archaeological_Museum-Aqaba_AL_Aqabah_Governorate.html#REVIEWS
among museum and archaeological park visitors seems to reflect apathy toward the collections, and no clear take-away in terms of the interpretation. Several recent reports on development in the region stress the absence of roads that are friendly to tourists or that could even support large numbers of visitors were tourism initiatives to prove more effective in the future.

These interpretive shortcomings at the archaeological park and collection at Aqaba is largely a result of the longevity of occupation at the site. Certain narratives have to be selected over others, which grows increasingly complicated in light of the site’s history stretching over six thousand years and the many cultures represented within that history. Recently, a comparable archaeological park at Pella (modern Tabqat Fahl) in the Jordan Valley has been experimenting with new interpretive models, stressing the importance of “consistency and coherence” in determining a group of established goals and themes at the outset of the planning process. Consulting local populations to determine long-term goals represented within each distinct period of the site’s history is beneficial for establishing a relevant and productive narrative that highlights continuity while nuancing understandings of cultural convergence at times of resistance and cultural expansion.

**Contextualizing Host Communities and Development Initiatives**

This effort to determine thematic consistency should reflect local values and interests of proximate communities. Rather than only highlighting the most remarkable or potentially lucrative findings within the ancient city, heritage practitioners should involve local community

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355 For instance, technological ingenuity in a hyper-arid environment from pre-historical periods, hybridity as represented in the classical periods, religious developments after the Muslim conquest, etc.; it is worth noting that this process will likely include decisions related to the exact nature of multivocality and how these different values interact with one another in an organized exhibit space.
stakeholders in developing key themes and display objectives.\footnote{This is not to say that a site’s most ‘most remarkable,’ large scale, or academically oriented features should not be highlighted and displayed in specific contexts. Rather, these features should not overwhelm development initiatives and must be developed with local interests and potential development risks to the local community in mind.} As the former director of the TWLCRM has noted, tourism throughout the entire Levant is rather precarious, with periodic political upheaval and natural disasters severely impacting the tourism sector of affected nations.\footnote{Tuttle, “Preserving Petra:” 7.} For instance, the Persian Gulf War (1990-1991), the Iraq War (2003-2011), the Arab Spring (2010-2012), and most recently, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have all highlighted the instability of Jordan’s tourism industry as it relates specifically to foreign visitors.\footnote{Tuttle, “Preserving Petra:” 7.} Further, numerous studies have demonstrated the social problems that arise when interpretive efforts prioritize economic prosperity over community cohesion; Abu-Khafajah and Rabady’s study of developing Amman demonstrates local hostility among community members regarding the use of the Roman remains at the citadel for fundraising and other government sponsored events.\footnote{Abu Khafajah and Rama Al Rabady, “The Jordanian Roman Complex:” 186.} Additionally, Abu-Khafajah emphasizes the role of classical remains in exacerbating class differences, with interviewed community members recognizing archaeological parks as valuable and worth preserving but primarily operating as event spaces for cultural elites.\footnote{Abu-Khafajah, “Meaning-Making Process:” 193} Thus, establishing reliable infrastructure that involves placing local community members in decision-making, research positions, and educational programming is essential for the viability of interpretive planning and further development.

\section*{Suggestions for Routes Forward}

The standardization of community archaeology in the region is essential if we are to meet local objectives more effectively. A number of specific projects have introduced community
archaeological standards into their long-term practices, but these cases are still often exceptional. For instance, the TWLCRM has funded specific positions dedicated to training the Bedul Bedouin community living in and around Petra in archival practices, research methods, and the publication of legacy projects related to the temple structure. Following this lead, a growing number of scholars have begun engaging more fully with community archaeology and multivocality, but the legacy of colonialism and archaeological research for research’s sake are still overwhelmingly prominent in the field, despite collective efforts to change these attitudes.

After engaging community members and determining a group of representative themes, it is important to apply a more critical framework to the interpretation of the classical objects on display through clear interpretive signage, organization, and engaging programming. In Jordan’s case, archaeological resources have a long history of use as legitimizing tools and government propaganda; this legacy is largely because of archaeology’s power in presenting intangible concepts as tangible realities. Because of the mass disillusionment regarding the political interpretations of classical collections and the discourse of legitimization surrounding the royal family, the interpretations at Aqaba and contemporary sites have focused primarily on Islamic and modern histories in recent years.

This shift toward modern history has its own set of political implications in addition to its community oriented objectives; it is certainly at work in the legitimization of the royal family and in the centralization of Muslim heritage in both preservation initiatives and the scope of

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362 de Vries, “Archaeology and Community:” 137.
364 As analyzed in the introduction of this thesis.
archaeological research questions. Because of the rapid development that has taken place in Jordan, a large number of city planners and anthropologists have dedicated much of their attention to preserving the character of the historic neighborhoods that are threatened by rapid development. In terms of the authorized heritage discourse instilled in archaeological collections, contemporary national character is still a predominant feature. Museum professionals in the region often only utilize Bronze Age, Iron Age, and classical materials to emphasize a linear progression, creating a major ideological separation between contemporary viewers and the deep history of the material culture of the region.

Other institutions in former Ottoman territories have taken a similar approach, with the often cited archaeological collection in Ankara, Turkey presenting classical history as a stepping stone on the nation’s path toward religious and ethnic consolidation. In contrast, the Archaeological Museum at Amman offers very little interpretation of the artifacts from the classical period or earlier, aside from labels listing their approximate dates and the regions from which they were excavated, with more detailed captions available only for select finds. What these different on-site collections have in common is that none of them offer sufficient interpretation related to thematic priorities in the region over time, nor do they provide nuance for the different moments of cultural exchange, acts of resistance or cooperation, or the diversity, social practices, and hybrid identities evident within the material culture itself.

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366 Rami Daher, "Chapter 1. Reconceptualizing Tourism in the Middle East: Place, Heritage, Mobility and Competitiveness" *Tourism in the Middle East*, edited by Rami Farouk Daher, Bristol, (Blue Ridge Summit: Channel View Publications, 2006): 44.
369 Badran, “Archaeology, Museums, and the Public:” 624.
Material Culture in Evolving Interpretations and Display Practices

The artifacts themselves transcend boundaries between ancient and modern populations, as the categories selected and highlighted in the previous chapter are often familiar objects to modern audiences, demonstrating subsistence activities such as storage, processing, preparation, serving, and disposal of food, the utility of household spaces, leisure activities, adornment, and craft production.370 Thus, on-site museum collections have potential to be particularly powerful in communicating complicated and empowering narratives related to this specific landscape and its populace over time through comfortable and familiar mediums. Additionally, these objects can serve as what Julia Rose calls “points of entry” for engaging audiences with the painful and complicated reality of the nation’s colonial past, while demonstrating a sense of connectivity to former occupants of the region.371 As one of the organizers of Yale’s gallery’s Dura-Europos collection notes, viewers should be able to visit ancient collections and “see objects of daily life that are immediately recognizable to modern eyes, including items of clothing and jewelry, writing implements, tools, musical instruments, pottery and glass vessels, and children’s toys,” many of which are explored in the previous chapter.372

Displaying small finds in a non-linear fashion that highlights moments of fragmentation, continuity, and hybridity in the material record while offering interpretive signage that directly addresses the use of these objects in the modern period would produce more responsible and engaging on-site interpretations.373 For instance, Moser stresses the use of thematically organized and idea-based oral histories incorporated into the community archaeology research project and

370 Jain, “Museums and Museum-Like Structures:” 50; for explanation on the specific categories and values represented by the classical collection from Aila, refer to the previous chapter of this thesis.
373 Kezer, "Familiar Things:” 107-108.
object presentation in Quseir, Egypt.\textsuperscript{374} Also in Egypt, Wendrich has demonstrated success in fostering community collaboration while promoting the national tourism industry. Working with the Eastern Desert Antiquities Project, trained archaeologists partner with Ababda nomads to explore themes of ecotourism and conservation work, primarily focusing on the physical landscape rather than attempting to historicize the remains.\textsuperscript{375} Examples from Hadrian’s Wall have demonstrated the success of organizing artifacts by category, rather than by typology, providing chronological context, but situating the interpretation between key themes of “religion and the construction of Hadrian’s Wall.”\textsuperscript{376} At Dura Europos, the exhibit planners created a distinct thematic installation of select finds from the recovered collection, now placed in the Mary and James Ottaway Gallery of Dura Europos at Yale. This installation features Daily Life, Religion, Military, and Funerary finds as the major interpretive themes, emphasizing the ways in which these select categories overlapped in the material culture.\textsuperscript{377}

Turning briefly to European models, the Roman exhibit in the Museum of Scotland has undergone critical reappraisal in the last two decades, working toward a model in which the artifacts are treated as story-tellers, each thematically grouped and accompanied by a brief historical blurb that outlines that use, influences, and historical period of the artifact.\textsuperscript{378}

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\textsuperscript{375} Willeke Wendrich, “Archaeology and Sustainable Tourism in Egypt: Protecting Community, Antiquities, and Environment:” 184-190. This model should be taken with caution, as it was adopted in an effort to avoid competition with the pyramids and thus does not fully utilize the educational value of the landscape or the ‘lived exhibits’ promoted; it has, however, been very successful in fostering community engagement while bolstering national tourism initiatives.
\textsuperscript{377} Brody and Hoffman, Dura-Europos: Crossroads of Antiquity, 218.
\textsuperscript{378} Clarke D. & Hunter F. “Representing the Romans in the Museum of Scotland,” \textit{Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal} 0 (2001), 3-4.
\end{flushright}
exhibit planners note that “presenting these (objects) thematically rather than in linear fashion helps push back against the idea of progress as a centralizing organizational factor.” In each of these cases, the material culture is treated with primacy, emphasizing the lives of the artifacts from their use to their deposition, and their eventual placement and study in contemporary scholarship.

In addition to optimizing the collection display and passive interpretive practices, successful models of communicating the relevance of classical collections have been overwhelmingly successful within recently implemented programming at other museum institutions in the region. For instance, the Jerash Archaeological Museum is leading the way in educational programming, with hands-on activities related to educating audiences about social history and everyday ancient practices, such as baking bread in a replica of a Roman period oven. Additionally, the museum in Jerash has been successful in encouraging guests to study artifacts closely, creating individual kits for visitors to take home and use to recreate the information they learned during their time at the museum by drawing or painting a select list of artifacts, describing pottery, and being guided through the steps of fastening a Roman toga. Other groups have introduced programs designed to teach visitors about the basics of excavation, while recent UNESCO efforts have focused on engaging community members to preserve and reflect on their own artifacts and stories, focusing on both the tangible and intangible components of forming identity. Each of these examples highlight successful attempts to

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379 Clarke and Hunter, “Representing the Romans,” 3.
380 The Eastern Desert Antiquities Project is the exception, as it does not highlight artifacts, but it thematically treats the landscape, with no particular interest in establishing a linear or progress based narrative. Despite its obvious differences, the project’s measurable success, community implemented learning outcomes, and senses-based model warranted discussion in this chapter.
381 Badran, “Archaeology, Museums, and the Public:” 624.
382 Badran, “Archaeology, Museums, and the Public:” 626.
383 Badran, “The Excluded Past:” 209
integrate the classical past into hands-on educational activities that have proven beneficial to the long-term preservation and documentation of different communities within the region.

Although many of the materials are housed off site from the archaeological museum at Aqaba, there are various routes forward for incorporating these finds into public interpretation and program development. Other models at Hadrian’s Wall and at the Museum of Scotland have supplemented an absence of material remains with detailed artist renderings of collections, with kiosks programmed to display 3D models of the excavated artifacts.\textsuperscript{384} They utilize the absence of the physical collections to educate guests about archaeological storage and antiquity laws, engaging with larger questions related to what constitutes culture and who owns heritage.\textsuperscript{385} Further, the Museum of Scotland provides detailed reconstructions of ancient finds using modern materials that have no risk of being confused with the originals, and instead, ask viewers to think critically about contemporary materials and the sources utilized in constructing our own consumer goods, tools, and objects of daily use.\textsuperscript{386} In a similar vein, but more regionally specific, James Mason recreated Nabataean fine ware pottery with designs developed by Khairieh ’Amr, imitating the ancient vessels and selling them outside of Petra, but clearly distinguishing these goods from the real thing. This practice ended years ago, but, similarly, allowed visitors at Petra to conceptualize the creation and market industry of Nabataean fine ware, further obscuring the separations between past and present.

**Application of Popular Models to the Evidence at Aqaba**

As explored in the previous chapter, the finds from the Roman Aqaba Project are well-situated to provide insight into familiar daily practices that can be presented to contemporary

\textsuperscript{384} Clarke and Hunter, “Representing the Romans,” 9.
\textsuperscript{385} Clarke and Hunter, “Representing the Romans,” 9.
\textsuperscript{386} Clarke and Hunter, “Representing the Romans,” 9.
audiences. Categories of dress, textile production, iconography, craft, consumption, and food production can all be thematically organized in ways that paint a more diverse and applicable picture of the past. Beyond simply utilizing these objects to learn more about the context and historical periods in which they were created, viewers should be able to utilize these objects to gain a sense of connectivity to the past. Although these objects may not be readily accessible to the public, incorporating an online component to the museum promoting more widespread access to the archaeological resources at Aqaba would certainly be a reasonable step to take in the direction of more engaging programming; this could involve a digitized collection, public interest pieces, and even contributions to artifact search engines.

The archaeological museum and park at Aqaba could partner with community members to establish select values, and implement the collection accordingly. Because the archaeological museum is on-site at Aqaba, professionals could combine aspects of place-based learning and environmental tourism with the values embedded into the material culture at Aila, such as the configuration of household units, the familiar practices of food production, and the diverse gendered and craft production taking place on site. The museum could utilize its unique placement between ancient and modern history to contextualize some of the heritage based concerns that have been inherited from the colonialist and nationalist past, highlighting the absence of key artifacts as an opportunity to educate community members on the practical aspects of excavation and antiquities movement and storage.

Borrowing from the model from Dura Europos, even if the entire collection is not included in interpretation, selecting key categories explored in the previous chapter, and providing interpretations for how key categories played out alongside one another (i.e. fibulae and death practices, household unit organization and food and textile production) could be quite
effective in revitalizing public interpretations at Aqaba. Developing the archaeological collection could coincide with standardizing ethnographic research and obtaining visitor data that can later be curated and/or analyzed, thus centralizing the role local workers on site can have in long term data preservation and awarding community members’ interactions with the classical past more centrality within continued preservation and heritage development.

**Measuring Successful Outcomes**

Finally, incorporating visitor evaluation and observable outcomes is pivotal in creating a sustainable interpretive plan, as gauging visitor engagement with selected themes is the only way of determining success from a grassroots perspective.\(^{387}\) Relevant visitor studies are sparse in terms of analyzing Jordanian heritage interpretation and educational materials; as Abdelkader Ababneh, one of the archaeologists at Pella, has noted, the bulk of published research on heritage interpretation has “been conducted in North America.”\(^{388}\) Further, visitor evaluation and assessment is necessary for standardizing interpretive practices throughout the region, as assessing archaeological parks and their on-site museums relative to one another produces a more holistic picture of the region’s developing interpretation and cultural heritage initiatives.

**Development Conclusions**

These suggestions are only the first step in working toward a more holistic and responsible interpretive tradition related to the classical past in Jordan and surrounding regions. The past has played a major role in shaping the current political and historical landscape of the Middle East, as well as the different practices represented in the material culture. This continuity through disjunction, conflict, and political upheaval can serve to present complex ideas of

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\(^{387}\) Tuttle, “Preserving Petra:” 15.

cultural liminality while promoting local interest in the region’s sustainability and preservation efforts. Utilizing a community approach, clear and cohesive goals, and collected visitor data, interpreters should engage with nuanced understandings of the classical past as it fits within this complicated history of regional change and subjectivity. Thus, interpretations should address both contemporary and historical matters, showcasing the unique experiences embedded into the landscape of Jordan’s natural and cultural resources.

Concluding Remarks

The collections and displays that current heritage professionals in Jordan have inherited provide serious challenges in terms of moving forward within the nation’s current political context. Despite the potential of archaeological collections and projects to serve as educational tools, galleries and museums throughout the region have historically followed the Western tradition of selecting a small sample of aesthetically pleasing visuals that can accompany the dominant interpretive narrative. In the last few decades, an increasing number of those working in cultural resource management have taken on grassroots approaches within their methodologies, critically engaging with contemporary heritage preservation practices. This is not only an international or a Western trend, but grassroots archaeology has been a major focus in Jordan’s heritage initiatives over the last several decades. Because tourism development, urban planning, archaeology, and public history have all evolved separately, there is not much infrastructure in place or standardized theoretical models regarding how to engage with responsible classical archaeological interpretations that benefit the local community while keeping tourism development and exhibit planning in mind. Thus, the contemporary challenge

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facing heritage professionals is to create well-rounded and inclusive exhibit spaces that represent multiple perspectives, despite these inherited interpretation and display challenges.

Alison Mickel has produced a corpus of literature advocating for the involvement of host communities in informing archaeological interpretations, while Arwa Badran has engaged extensively with archaeological data as it relates to schoolchildren, curriculum, and museum education. This thesis combines elements from both of these disciplinary frameworks in order to shift the overarching focus within archaeological development toward engaging host communities at large, creating contemporary interpretations that are both educational and personally meaningful. As the third chapter of this thesis demonstrates, the process of selecting which narratives to prioritize from the material record is not as straightforward as one might wish, thus, engaging with the complexity and convergence of different cultural influences, post-colonial conceptions of identity, and moments of juncture and diffusion within the material record can serve as an effective starting point in piecing together a narrative that better meets desired interpretive goals.

Museum displays in the twenty-first century should seek to engage with matters that are both contemporary and historical in nature, showcasing the unique and diverse experiences embedded into the landscape through cultural preservation and longevity. Instead of looking to the past to illustrate modern values, we must seek to find aspects of the past that are preserved in the material record with which contemporary audiences can resonate.392 These values are best illustrated in cultural anthropological readings of the material culture, emphasizing identity making practices in the material record as the mark of communal, individual, and cultural production and reinvention over time.

Community-based approaches and social interpretations of collections have proven successful in various contexts; Paul Collins has noted the efficiency of community archaeology and the role of these projects in helping produce and provide public interpretations of archaeological practices and identity in more meaningful ways.\textsuperscript{393} Despite the recent uptake in heritage scholarship, many museum displays in Jordan and abroad have simply remained stagnant, despite receiving more critical engagement from scholars.\textsuperscript{394} This is in part because of limited funding, but also because a large number of professionals have simply begun conducting ethnographic work designed to preserve intangible heritage and the current cultural climate of modern neighborhoods that are susceptible to gentrification.\textsuperscript{395} Although this work is essential, disregarding the classical past and its vibrant range of interpretations and implications is not a sustainable model for understanding the history of the region or its change over time.

This absence of critically presented classical period history is especially pressing in terms of constructing modern heritage in Jordan, as the history of the Nabataeans has been weaponized and/or embodied by a number of competing groups, especially where economically driven tourism endeavors are concerned. Further, this history is in many ways a lived reality for communities living within proximity to sites, as archaeological remains are physically and ideologically embedded into the landscape of modern Jordan. Thus, despite a widespread disillusionment among Jordanian Arabs about the official uses of the Nabataean past, several scholars have noted that “Many modern Jordanian Arabs are proud to identity with the

\textsuperscript{393} Collins, “Museum Displays,” 22.
\textsuperscript{394} In contrast, the fields of anthropology, urban planning, and architecture have all begun engaging critically with what modern populations want to see preserved in the material record; these results have largely highlighted the importance of modern history in light of contemporary skepticism regarding the classical past; thus, new frameworks are essential in revitalizing the narrative surrounding the classical past, making it feel more relevant and meaningful to contemporary populations.
\textsuperscript{395} Daher, ”Chapter 1. Reconceptualizing Tourism,” 41.
Nabataeans as being their ancient ancestors.” Thus, the task is not necessarily to spread awareness about the richness of this history as it is applied to modern populations, but to fundamentally re-assess how this information is presented based on its position within contemporary society and implement sustainable approaches for preserving and presenting this past that can derive meaning from local context and community engagement. This meaning-making process engages with matters of ethnicity, culture, and the unintentional act of past populations to ‘be remembered,’ thus requiring a responsible and accurate interpretation of historical change over time which engages with the social and political climate in which those interpretations were produced.397

The past has played a major role in shaping the current political and territorial landscape of the Middle East, as well as the different traditions and subsistence practices that continue to thrive in the living memory and cultivation of the region, both within Jordan and the surrounding region. Because of the key role cultural liminality and transformation have played in the development of modern Jordan, as well as in the surrounding regions, these tenets should be central in how collections are organized and displayed and how museum professionals engage with heritage preservation initiatives. These categories highlight an important sense of connectivity to the past for contemporary populations, without over-emphasizing culture distinctiveness or direct ancestral inheritance of the land. Such focuses on continuity and convergence despite opposition and oppression have already proven successful in several cases, as is demonstrated by the small finds on display at Dura Europos and the successful ancient

397 Antonaccio, “(Re)Defining Ethnicity.” 37-44.
collections at the Jerash Museum, the new Petra museum, and the very nature of the changing attitudes within the field of archaeology itself.\textsuperscript{398}

This thesis has placed contemporary heritage preservation into the long and complicated history of identity reconfiguration in Jordan and the modern Middle East. Traditional interpretive practices have often proved isolating and economically driven, leaving a majority of rural populations out of both the planning process and the displays and programming in the region. Further, these practices have often promoted a colonialist or nationalist narrative that has actively isolated or negatively impacted rapidly developing communities living in close proximity to archaeological sites.\textsuperscript{399} Economically driven tourism practices are often unsustainable and have created tensions and infrastructural problems in Jordan over the last several decades, especially evident at large sites like Petra, where several scholars have begun implementing grassroots projects to include heritage initiatives in their research goals.\textsuperscript{400} Likewise, heritage scholars and archaeologists are increasingly aware of the political implications of their work and must continue to engage with the practical aspects of how their work gets applied and utilized in contemporary discourse and political propagandization.\textsuperscript{401} These various fields have developed their own approaches to dealing with contemporary political taboos and national traditions; however, a critical engagement with these interdisciplinary methodologies alongside effectively implemented heritage and interpretive models is essential to revitalize the use the classical past in contemporary development and discourse.

\textsuperscript{398} Explored more in the previous chapter.
\textsuperscript{399} Alison Mickel, “The Proximity of Communities to the Expanse of Big Data,” 552.
\textsuperscript{400} Aslan (2007), Tuttle (2013), Corbett and Green (2017).
The focus within this thesis on place based and experiential learning, continuity and symbolism in the material record as it plays out within the modern world, and contemporary public engagement with historical source material situate these suggestions primarily in the field of public history. Other scholars have attempted to historicize heritage in various contexts, lending crucial insight into the ways that heritage interpretation has played out over the years. An interdisciplinary approach to determining the role of archaeology within contemporary development, tourism, and preservation practices is essential moving forward if the classical past is to remain relevant to those it can most effectively impact. These concepts can and must be used by ancient historians, anthropologists, and public archaeologists in proposing interdisciplinary approaches for engaging with a long durée of a transforming historical landscape. Continuing this tradition of highlighting the historiography of heritage practices as it relates to the historical and archaeological record and its presentation is essential for understanding current interpretive trends and applying realistic and productive routes forward.

402 Hancock, 2008; Stanton, 2006; McGill 2021, Lafrenz Samuels, 2018.
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APPENDICES
### Table 1

**Textile Production Distribution by Period**

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**Fibula Distribution by Period**

*Survey Total Excluded*

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Appendix B: Figures

Figure 1

Map of the Levant

Figure 2

Map of Nabataean territory at its height
https://books.openedition.org/ifpo/4896
Figure 3

Grape Leaf Fibula, Obj. #2130
Figure 4

Venus Inlay, Obj. #1402

Figure 5

“Alexander” Inlay Plaque/Furniture Mount, Obj. #2999
Figure 6

Millstone, worn through center, Obj. #6366

Figure 7

*Mortaria*, major wearing on surface, Obj. #6367