ELENA CORBETT, *Competitive Archaeology in Jordan: Narrating Identity from the Ottomans to the Hashemites* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 2014). Pp. 306. $55.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781477309902

REVIEWED BY KIMBERLY KATZ, Department of History, Towson University, Towson, Md.; e-mail: kkatz@towson.edu
doi:10.1017/S0020743816000933

Elena Corbett opens her *Competitive Archaeology in Jordan: Narrating Identity from the Ottomans to the Hashemites* with King Abdullah II's ascension to the throne in 1999. In linking the king to the Hashemite dynasty, as well as to images and sites of antiquity, this monograph on Jordanian identity explores both modernity and the country's archaeological heritage. The preceding century and a quarter were marked by competition as foreigners sought to identify and claim territory based on the area's archaeological past. That competition began in the late Ottoman period, approximately four to five decades before the emergence of a Hashemite state in what became known as Transjordan (and neighboring Palestine). The title of the book, then, is a bit confusing because the Ottomans did not "narrate identity" in Jordan. The waning Ottoman state left a cultural vacuum filled by the British and the Americans who exerted a strong influence in the construction of Jordanian identity. British and American efforts to develop the science of archaeology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries did as much to carve out their own global positions as it did to create local identities for post–World War I Palestine and Transjordan.

The Ottomans fought to remain relevant as the European colonial powers, and the Americans, encroached on the remaining part of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans had tried to reform themselves (Tanzimat) as a means of confronting European challenges. They also began to strengthen their identification with Islam, in part through the significance of Jerusalem and the Hijaz, both of which Corbett connects to the Hashemites; the Hijaz is part of their origins narrative as the founder of the dynasty came from Mecca. The Hashemites would use Jerusalem to reshape national identity during the expansionary phase after obtaining their independence. Yet, Corbett also shows how the Ottomans made the same efforts as the Europeans to highlight their historical and cultural supremacy, via a Helleno-Byzantine heritage, which thus tied them to the same epistemological message as their European competitors. This message revealed the complexity of Ottoman society, but may have undermined the empire's sultan-caliph for prominently promoting a Christian identity.

By delineating the forces at work in the archaeological competition, Corbett demonstrates how the eastern Mediterranean, both Transjordan and Palestine, were inscribed with different narratives prior to World War I. A consistent thread throughout Corbett's book is that while official narratives—European, Ottoman, Hashemite, or Zionist—may change, the perceptions of territory by those inhabiting it prevail, "informed as they are by the shrines, monuments, ruins, artifacts, and natural phenomena to poetry, legend, scripture, and genealogy enshrined in both oral tradition and various genres of texts" (p. 57). The power of local inhabitants to shape their own narrative is well exemplified in her discussion of local poetry by Transjordanian poet Mustafa ʿArar and the oral history account about the archaeological site at Dhiban (Chapter 5). What is less plausible is that the future Transjordanians were embroiled in the debates that emerged in the popular journal *al-Muqtataf*. This is a tenuous connection. For Chapter 3, in which she notes that the most advanced archaeology at the end of the 19th century was found in Egypt and Iraq, her use of *al-Muqtataf* dissipates the connection to Ottoman Transjordan and may be more suppositional than factual. While Corbett does give a thorough and valuable explanation for alternative ways in which literacy occurred, e.g., listening to someone read in a town square or a cafe (Ami Ayalon, *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900–1948*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004, 143), it may be difficult to extrapolate this to Transjordan, which did

not have the same level of urban development or educational infrastructure as Palestine by this period.

In Chapter 4, Corbett begins to clarify the beginning of the Transjordanian state, under a British Mandate, while identifying her main framework of a Palestine Core and Transjordan Periphery. The excavations of American archaeologists William Foxwell Albright in Jerusalem and Nelson Glueck in Transjordan formed the bases of Corbett's interpretive model of core and periphery. Whereas the British created the borders for and promoted the notion of an ancient Israelite homeland in the 19th century, the Mandate opened the door for Zionist Jews to redeem the land, based on Zionist ideology, in the 20th century. By the 20th century, Arabs began to employ intellectual and archaeological strategies to contest the colonial-imposed borders and Zionist goals. Transjordan devised its own narrative from which to interpret its archaeological heritage along the lines of a pan-Arab/Semitic view of history that included both Arabs and Jews as Semites.

Corbett's research shines in the analysis of the Hashemite leaders' attempt to transform the state from periphery to core in Chapters 5 and 6. The Hashemites turned to the tools of modern statehood to represent their archaeological heritage, that of Jerash and Petra, both to the population and to the world at large: among them postage stamps and bank notes, as well as school textbooks. Jordan issued its own currency only after independence, with the first series appearing in 1949. Until the 1948 war, sites from Jerash and Petra served to constitute a Transjordanian core. Corbett has considerably more source material to work with after 1948, which she deftly contextualizes in Chapter 6 to examine the complex story of Jordan's expansionary project to engulf Palestine, the former core. Despite some overlap with my work on Jerusalem (Kimberly Katz, *Jordanian Jerusalem: Holy Places and National Spaces*. Gainesville, Fla.: University Press of Florida, 2005), in terms of examining how the kingdom's leaders brought Jerusalem into the national narrative, Corbett's archaeological approach adds fresh perspective through which to view source materials. As scholars familiar with the state of Arab archives are aware, the limitations are great and the resources are few. Examining the existing material from a number of perspectives can only deepen our understanding of how (Trans)Jordan's rulers created a national identity both when colonial rule prevailed and following independence.

Corbett reminds us that, with regard to history and archaeology, "the necessity to define and consciously justify the universal value of antiquities" remains present (p. 170). During the 1948 war, Jordan sought to save the Holy City, which became part of its pan-Arab narrative. And shaping its national identity around the significance of Jerusalem also reaped economic gains until 1967 by promoting tourism to the Holy City. After 1967 Jordan, now without Jerusalem, had to "Return to the Core," the title of the final chapter of the book. While "tribal" and "Bedouin" were touchstone signifiers in the discourse on identity in post-1967 Jordan, King Hussein turned to a renovation of Muslim shrines to bring religious heritage back into public focus. The tombs of the Companions of the Prophets are both pilgrimage and tourist sites and are referenced in textbooks, just as the archaeological and historic sites relied on during the earlier period were weaved into the school textbooks and discussed in the pages of *Competitive Archaeology.* A spate of new museums, including the National Museum, the Historical Passageway (linking the prehistory of Jordan to the modern state), along with the completion of al-Maghtas (the Bethany Baptism site), recognized and accepted by UNESCO and the Vatican, all bring together various periods of Jordan's history, heritage, and archaeological sites to reclaim Jordan's past in the present. With this, Corbett brings the story of archaeology and the Hashemite narrative full circle.

Elena Corbett has written a sophisticated narrative of Jordan's archaeological and cultural heritage. The argument that Jordan had no "comprehensive narrative of great ancient civilization upon which it could draw to demonstrate the historicity of its modern borders" (p. 208) has limited Jordan's formation of a deeply textured modern narrative. This author, however, begins the process

of weaving a complex story of how the institutions of the Mandate, especially archaeological, emerged following the great rivalry by the Europeans. This rivalry sought ultimately to push the Ottoman Empire out of the region. The labyrinthine details lead the reader into avenues that at times seem tangential, but ultimately prove to be part of a larger constellation of historical moments that Corbett expertly sharpens into focus. Her vast knowledge of archaeology and prehistory saturates her analysis, especially in the early chapters where she delineates the complex stories of the biblical past in today's Palestine and Jordan, and how archaeologists uncovered them. A valuable addition to Jordan studies, *Competitive Archaeology in Jordan: Narrating Identity from the Ottomans to the Hashemites* weaves those stories into the changing national narratives of Jordan across its modern history.

KAMRAN SCOT AGHAIE AND AFSHIN MARASHI, EDS., *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 2014). Pp. 380. $55.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780292757493

REVIEWED BY FAKHREDDIN AZIMI, Department of History, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Conn.; e-mail: fakhreddin.azimi@uconn.edu
doi:10.1017/S0020743816000945

Desired belonging to a culturally demarcated space as the basis of legitimate entitlement to political self-rule is emblematically associated with nationalism, as are selective remembering and forgetting, real or assumed enemies, and narratives of victory or humiliation. Nationalism continues to be an important subject of exploration, and the ideas of a number of its theorists, including Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, and Tom Nairn, and a few of its postcolonial interrogators, remain pertinent. According to Gellner, since the 17th century a cluster of economic and scientific changes have transformed the world and the role of culture in human life. The expansion and spread of literate "high" culture, replacing "folk" cultures, engendered nationalism and nations, resulting in the congruence of the boundaries of the cultural with the political community. According to Anderson, Enlightenment and revolutionary movements destroyed the legitimacy of hierarchical dynastic realms and the sovereign state became the emblem of the free nation. This process involved the heightening of a longing for connectedness, community, and solidarity with others of one's own kind without ever meeting or knowing them.

Originating from a 2010 conference at the University of Texas at Austin, *Rethinking Iranian Nationalism and Modernity* seeks to transcend "the received historiographical tradition" informing the study of Iranian nationalism in favor of new approaches that encourage innovative explorations, comparative perspectives, and a rethinking of that historiography (p. ix). The book comprises fifteen chapters divided thematically into three parts. The first, entitled "Orientalism, Modernity, and Historiography," begins with Marashi's discussion and brief assessment of four "paradigms" in the study of Iranian nationalism; these he identifies as revolving around historical sociology, the cultural or linguistic turn in the humanities, the Habermasian public sphere approach, and the postcolonial one. Marashi advocates "a radical rethinking of traditional disciplinary paradigms of the humanities and the social sciences" (pp. 3–4), and remarks that "Iran's history seems to reveal to theories of nationalism the limits of the established paradigms of nationalism" (p. 20). Here an adequate discussion of what accounts for Iran's specificity would have been in order. Marashi questions "the 'universalist' claims of European social science," and cautions against "uncritical engagement" with them (p. x). While any uncritical engagement is to be derided, one wonders whether the geographic provenance of the social sciences can justifiably be seen as detrimental to their epistemological status, and whether theories and concepts are to be regarded as irredeemably culture dependent.