

Legitimizing Jordan as the Holy Land: Papal Pilgrimages—1964, 2000

KIMBERLY KATZ

Pope Paul VI's journey to the Holy Land in 1964, the first papal pilgrimage ever, took him to many Biblical sites, most of which were then under Jordanian control. The historical period leading up to this tour saw subtle political jockeying between Jordanians and Palestinians regarding their respective national standing in the Holy Land. In the year 2000, a Jubilee Year on the Catholic calendar, John Paul II made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, only the second ever by a pope. In the thirty-six year interim, much had changed in the region—politically, geographically, and nationally. In 1967, three years after the first papal pilgrimage, the region's national borders were re-defined as a result of the June War. The Hashemite Kingdom lost Jerusalem—the core of Jordan's claim to the Holy Land—as well as the West Bank, to Israel's occupation. In the wake of that situation, a new competition emerged, this time among Jordanians, Israelis, and the Palestinians, represented by the Palestinian Authority since its establishment in 1994, over claims to the Holy Land.

Jordan, a country with few previously-shared traditions, engaged a new historical and geographical situation after the 1948 War, in addition to being faced with the absorption of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees. Having fallen under Jordanian control during the 1948 war, Jerusalem and its holy places played an important role in Jordan's construction of its "self-portrait" during the nineteen-year period in which the Holy City was part of Jordan.¹ In the Muslim world, control over Jerusalem, the third-holiest city in Islam, allowed King Abdullah and later his grandson, King Hussein, to demonstrate both Jordanian sovereignty and Hashemite legitimacy over a greatly venerated Islamic city. The Hashemites, claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad, had lost the holy cities of Mecca and Medina to the Saudi family early in the twentieth century. They could certainly claim compensation for their loss a couple of decades later with their capture of the Old City of Jerusalem in 1948—or as recorded in Jordanian historiography, their "saving Jerusalem from falling under Zionist control." The al-Aqsa Mosque, the al-Buraq site, and the Dome of the Rock are all sites

associated with Muhammad's "Night Journey and Ascension to Heaven," recorded in Qur'an 17:1, and appearing in many *hadiths* (sayings of the Prophet). One also finds reference to these *hadiths* in King Abdullah's memoirs, an effort to tie the modern Hashemites' claim for religious legitimacy beyond their ancestral birthplace in Mecca, just as their ancestor Muhammad's prophetic legitimacy includes the Holy City of Jerusalem.² The presence of Jerusalem's Christian holy places now in Jordan afforded the kingdom's leaders an opportunity to assert their position in the city by claiming to serve as protectors of sacred Christian sites. In the intervening period between the two papal journeys to the Holy Land, Jordan was forced to re-make a collective identity through the promotion of sites found within its shrunken post-1967 boundaries. During these two landmark papal pilgrimages to the Holy Land, the Jordanian authorities represented holy sites as symbols of national identification—discursively in official speeches and visually on cultural markers, including tourism promotional materials and postage stamps. While other factors and social groups certainly influenced the project of identity-building in Jordan during this period, they remain outside this article's focus.

The papal tours exacerbated existing political tensions in the region. The pope faced competition between national groups in the 1964 visit with Jordanians and Israelis, and in the 2000 visit with Jordanians, Palestinians, and Israelis, each vying for papal authentication of its position in the Holy Land. The polemics of both papal pilgrimages inspired the themes argued in this study: a visit by a pope to the Holy Land authenticates Christian sites traditionally deemed holy, as well as sites newly conceived of, discovered, or re-discovered, thereby impacting nation-building efforts focused on sacred Christian sites. Both in 1964 and in 2000, Jordanian authorities promoted, or alternatively, re-invented a number of religious sites as national treasures through representational images and official discourse, intending to convey the message that Jordan was indeed the historical Holy Land, although not specified as solely Muslim or Christian.³ Muslim holy places received their proper due by

Jordanian officials, and the 1990s witnessed an extraordinary Jordanian effort to promote Islamic sites. The effort was marked mainly by newly renovated “tombs of the Companions of the Prophet” (*maqamat al-sahaba*) and a campaign to increase public awareness about these sites.⁴ They were matched, or in some cases superceded, only by the Hashemite involvement in the restoration of the Dome of the Rock in the early 1990s. That said, this article concentrates on Christian sites located within the borders of Jordan, focusing on the kingdom’s intentions to consolidate its “Holy Land” national identity during the two papal visits to the region.

Regional political themes, in fact, dominated the discussion of both papal journeys to the Holy Land. The year of the first papal pilgrimage saw the birth of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) created in Jerusalem under the sponsorship of King Hussein, as the Holy City was then under Jordan’s political control.⁵ The emergence of the PLO marks a turning point in Jordanian-Palestinian relations as the competition between Jordanians and Palestinians for political legitimacy became more prominent, especially with regard to their respective claims to Jerusalem. The second papal pilgrimage came approximately at the same time as the “Final Status Negotiations” of the Middle East peace process were scheduled to begin, a process intended in part to solve the political status of Jerusalem.⁶ Each national group made its claim on the Holy City part of the political landscape, which the pope could not avoid seeing. Jordan’s “historic role” in Jerusalem was identified in the 1994 Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty.⁷ Israel used its physical presence as occupiers in the eastern part of the city to substantiate its historic claim to Jerusalem. Finally, the Palestinians had their own centuries-old historic claims to the Holy City to serve as the basis for their contemporary political claims to Jerusalem. These factors all necessarily increased the potential for political disputes when the pope visited the Holy City.

A journey replete with symbolic attributes even prior to departure from Rome, the 1964 pilgrimage was promoted by officials as the first to the Holy Land by a pope since the days of St. Peter. For Jordanians, the reach back into ancient Christian history provided an added legitimacy to a visit already imbued with a sense of religious validity. Beyond the celebrated pilgrimage, the pope was scheduled to meet with the Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople (the patriarchate of primacy in the Orthodox Church), who arrived in the Holy Land from Turkey. Such a meeting between the two highest religious officials of the two largest churches in the world had not occurred since the 15th century.⁸ Taking place in Jordanian Jerusalem, hosted by His Majesty King Hussein, this highly publicized meeting between the Catholic pope and the Orthodox patriarch illus-

trated, at least to Jordan, the country’s importance in Christian religious affairs. Throughout and following this visit, Jordanian officials linked the notion of the Holy Land and the holy places, validated by the person and office of the pope, to the young Jordanian state. The benefits of the meeting for the kingdom—religious, political, touristic, and national—would become evident.

Despite the pope’s impassioned insistence that this was solely a pious journey, the visit spanned the Jordan-Israel border and raised political questions.⁹ During the visit the pope spent most of his time within the borders of Jordan, visiting holy sites, both Christian and Muslim, in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, and at the Jordan River, limiting his East Bank stops to Jordan’s capital of Amman. Paul VI crossed over into Israel only for a period of about 12 hours. While the pope did travel to holy sites in Nazareth—the most significant Christian pilgrimage site within Israel’s pre-1967 borders—and met briefly with Israeli officials, he did not mention the word Israel during his trip and stayed away from Jewish holy places, a scenario that would be completely altered during the 2000 trip.

Even the location of the pope’s arrival was plagued with political overtones as King Hussein, according to political protocol, received the pope in Jordan’s capital of Amman rather than in Jerusalem, the Kingdom’s “Spiritual Capital.” The king had often stressed that title for Jerusalem, “Spiritual Capital of Jordan” indicating its status in the kingdom as religious rather than political. Amman had served as capital city of Transjordan from its earlier days under British mandate and any consideration to change that when Jordan took control of Jerusalem after 1948 would have had grave consequences. Such a move would have required relocating the center of government, but more importantly, it would have implied that any sense of communal identification with East Bank national sites that King Abdullah had created for Transjordanians during the Amirate period was now discredited in the face of a rival (some might say Palestinian) city.¹⁰

Jerusalem’s political, religious, and cultural significance underscored the competition between the holy city and Jordan’s capital city.¹¹ King Hussein’s reception of the pope in Amman was an example of the national contestation between Transjordanians and Palestinians over geo-national space—in this case, Jerusalem, a holy city—and the legitimacy of those ruling over it. Beyond Jerusalem’s great religious significance for both Muslims and Christians, some Palestinians saw legal justification for making Jerusalem Jordan’s capital as the kingdom’s constitution permitted changing the capital under special juridical circumstances.¹² To combat any ill feeling by the Palestinians regarding the promotion of Amman at Jerusalem’s expense during the pope’s visit, the king

made frequent reference to the Palestine problem. He used the occasion to comment during a press conference about the injustices that had occurred as a result of the occupation of Palestine, the overwhelming number of refugees that resulted from that situation, and Israel's exploitation of Jordan River waters. He may also have chosen Amman as the welcoming place for the pope in order to extend the Holy Land theme east of the Jordan River. The geographical extension of the Holy Land is usually put forth by Jewish religious ideologues seeking to control all of the Biblical "Land of Israel," but the Jordanian authorities would also employ it during the 2000 papal visit to Jordan, albeit with a more "Christian" than "Judeo" outlook. Finally, King Hussein may have wished to downplay Jerusalem's political value. For several years, he had been glorifying Jerusalem as the Kingdom's "Spiritual Capital," therefore, he could hardly reverse this claim by politicizing the Holy City with diplomatic protocol, as it would have diminished his legitimacy as sovereign over and "Protector of the Holy Places." Jordan's ruler did not accept the visit simply as a spiritual one—politics and religion were difficult to separate during this visit.

As the pope traveled throughout the country, he became something of a spectacle for Jordanians on both the East and West Banks, which had been politically and legally unified in the kingdom since 1950.¹³ While the pope was making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, huge crowds of both Christian and Muslim Jordanians were making a kind of pilgrimage to the pope—although likely much of this was staged by Jordan's officials—to look at him as he passed through their towns and villages and the holy sites. Jordanians held signs as they stood in the streets paying respect to the pope next to large banners that read "long live the King, long live the Pope" and "Jordan welcomes His Holiness to the Holy Land," among other slogans hung by the government.

All *official* accounts of the visit in the newspapers illustrate how the crowds were welcoming the pope to Jordan. Some newspapers, however, carried articles that may offer another interpretation as to which country the crowds were welcoming the pope.¹⁴ An example is an editorial in the Jerusalem-based, palace-sponsored newspaper, *al-Jihad*, already openly critical of government policies in 1960, alluding to a fundamental dilemma that Jordan had tried to silence both in practice and in law.¹⁵ The *al-Jihad* editorialist used the occasion of the pope's visit to raise, indirectly, the Palestinian issue, and thus, question the official attempt to construct a distinct Jordanian national identity.¹⁶ He writes very candidly about the Zionist imperialists' separation of a united Palestine into the State of Israel and another territory, which is not Jordan but Palestine, in the political imagination of the author. He begins the piece de-

claring, "We must make them listen to us while our country is swarming with delegations...pilgrims, visitors from countries everywhere, with journalists and correspondents and other media representatives."¹⁷ The editorialist welcomed the pope to the Holy Land by making reference to the persons and events that signify that area as holy, but he never so much as mentions Jordan at all in this piece. He describes the same sites that are highlighted in Jordan's tourist literature as being part of Jordan to make the tourist or pilgrim—in this case the pope—aware of the political problems in Palestine.¹⁸ Although when *al-Jihad* had been openly critical four years earlier its palace funding was cut off, there was no evidence that this was the case following the publication of this 1964 editorial. Confident that the papal visit authenticated Jordan's position as "the Holy Land," the king and the government, it seems, were not threatened by this editorial and allowed its publication.

On the occasion of the pope's visit, Hussein set out to seal his position as both national ruler and "Guardian of the Holy Places" as the postal ministry "stamped" the nation with papal legitimacy. Jordanian postage stamps, issued to commemorate the papal pilgrimage, linked four holy sites, two of them Islamic and two Christian with the likeness of Hussein and Paul VI, each one above his respective holy site.¹⁹ They imply that the pope, as head of the Vatican state and spiritual leader of Catholicism, exemplifies the role of King Hussein as ruler of Jordan and possibly as spiritual leader of Islam because of his prophetic lineage, coupled with his rule over one of Islam's holiest sites. By 1964, the king had appeared on many stamps and holy places had also appeared on several stamp series. The visit by the pope, however, marks the first time that King Hussein appears *with* the holy places on the same stamp, sealing his relationship as national ruler over the country and the holy places.²⁰ By announcing in his speech upon the pope's departure that he was the "Protector" of the Christian holy sites, the king issued a formal pronouncement to the pope and the Christian world about his and Jordan's position regarding both Muslim and Christian holy places.²¹ Hussein's image, appearing with the holy places on postage stamps to commemorate the pope's visit, reinforced his and Jordan's "self-portrait" to the Jordanian population and to the world at-large.²²

The papal pilgrimage traversed the Jordan-Israel border, opening a space for political controversy at a state-to-state level, between Jordan and Israel, as well as at the local level. In a *New York Times* article, King Hussein stated that he saw no room for improvement of relations with Israel, saying that the Palestine issue was "a matter of injustice. And until there's a just and honorable conclusion to this problem I hardly see how relations could be improved."²³ The king addressed a num-

ber of issues, such as Palestinian refugee rights and Israel's diversion of Jordan River waters, to appeal to the "conscience of the Christian world."²⁴ The international and domestic issues were nearly the same for Jordan. Officials thought that one problem (the refugee issue) might be solved by addressing the other (Israel's unjust policy of not allowing Palestinian refugees to return to their homes within Israel, as was called for in UN General Assembly Resolution 194).²⁵ In Israel, the pope's visit received official attention and welcome, but Israel's chief religious official shunned the papal reception. Just as Jordan's officials considered the visit a legitimizing event, so too did the chief rabbi of Israel. He refused to participate in Israel's welcoming delegation for the pope's visit unless there would be a gesture by the pope of some kind of reciprocal visit for Israel's highest religious official.²⁶ At that time the Vatican did not recognize Israel, so a papal gesture whereby the pope would host the chief rabbi would not be forthcoming. By his absence, Israel's chief rabbi indicated that he felt the pope's visit undermined Israel's position in the Holy Land.

The pope's visit to Jordan served as an occasion for Jordan's tourism officials to promote religious tourism to the country and enhance its self-image as "Guardian of the Holy Places." The tourism sector aptly appropriated the person of the pope as a symbol for representing the Holy Land, thus authenticating the kingdom's "Holy Land" status. A few months after the pope's visit, Jordan participated at the 1964-1965 New York World's Fair, primarily exhibiting reproductions of holy places which had been imagined nationally and displayed internationally. With an abundance of publicity surrounding the papal visit, Jordan's representation of the country as the Holy Land did not fall on deaf ears. By the end of January 1964, *The Jerusalem Times* reported that tourism to the Holy Land was expected to increase following the pope's pilgrimage earlier that month.²⁷ In March of that year, King Hussein inaugurated the new Hotel Jerusalem Intercontinental, foreseeing that tourism was on an upswing and a flurry of activity was drawing tourists to visit Jordan, the Holy Land.²⁸ The newspaper again reported on the pope's trip in April 1964, remarking that tours of the Middle East were changing their focus in the wake of the pope's historic pilgrimage. Tour agencies highlighted Paul VI's pilgrimage as the model for would-be pilgrim-tourists who might want to trace the pope's steps, just as the pope had traced the steps of Jesus and other Biblical figures.²⁹ The results for tourism were staggering as the number of visitors increased significantly in the two years following the pope's visit, correspondingly increasing the national income.³⁰ The Holy Land and Jordan were becoming synonymous for many beyond Jordan's borders. The tourism arena proved a

fertile ground in which Jordan could inscribe, or re-inscribe, sites of religious importance with national meaning. After Paul VI's visit, tourism increased as his presence cemented the association of Jordan with the title of Holy Land, a title whose symbolic value was prominent in promoting the kingdom's self-image.³¹ By targeting the papal pilgrimage for touristic promotion, Jordanian officials exploited tourism to the kingdom by promoting symbols of religion as symbols of national identification.

During the twentieth century, archaeology, regional wars, and peace treaties have re-defined the "national" sacred geography of the Holy Land. The 1948 war divided Jerusalem between Jordan and Israel with the most significant holy places falling within Jordan's borders. Following the June 1967 War, Israel has taken control of Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank holy sites, some of which have now been turned over to Palestinian control.³² Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, and Israel have all configured their post-1967 national identities to represent their respective national images as "the Holy Land." This has been most evident during the visit of Pope John Paul II to the region in the year 2000, despite a border scheme that divides peoples into different nation-states each led by a different government.

During Pope Paul VI's pilgrimage, there had been no one to contest Jordan's claim for control over the holy places. Even the State of Israel at the time, with its reliance on being "God's Chosen People" in the Promised Land (even if that did not include all of the "promised" land) could not dismiss Jordan's self-representation as the Holy Land, for Jordan administered all of the most important holy sites. This did not prevent Israel from displaying abroad Dead Sea Scroll material that it had obtained through covert means under the title "Treasures of Israel the Holy Land." Israel and every other country, including the Vatican, could and did reject Jordanian sovereignty over the holy places in 1964. They could not, however, reject the reality that by 1964, nearly all of the traditional Holy Land sites had been located within Jordan's borders for 16 years. Despite international opinion which rejected Jordan's self-proclaimed legal standing with regard to the holy places, high level visits such as the pope's, conducted under official Jordanian hospitality, validated the kingdom's self-image as the Holy Land.

All of the sites that Pope John Paul II visited in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan during his Jubilee Year Holy Land pilgrimage had not been on the itinerary of his predecessor. Not only had Pope Paul VI not visited those sites; they were not developed for pilgrim or touristic, let alone national, purposes at the time. For example, the baptism site at Wadi al-Kharrar on the East Bank of the Jordan River, the kingdom's most promi-

nent “Holy Land” site during the 2000 papal pilgrimage, had only been excavated in the 1990s. John Paul II began his visit in Jordan at Mt. Nebo, the site where Moses is said to have looked into the Promised Land and later died. The pope’s prayers on Mt. Nebo were followed by a drive through the streets of Madaba, where the remains of many Byzantine churches are found. His final stop in Jordan on the last of his two-day visit in the kingdom took him to *al-Maghtas* at Wadi al-Kharrar, the site claimed by Jordanian archaeologists and the Jordanian government as the authentic baptism site of Jesus. The sites common to both papal visits are primarily those sites on the West Bank (including Jerusalem) that have long been equated with the traditional image of the Holy Land, and were under Jordanian control from 1948-1967. Despite the fact that the holy sites in Jordan that Pope John Paul II visited in the year 2000 were undiscovered, unknown, or simply not promoted during the 1964 visit, and despite the fact that the Jerusalem/West Bank holy sites were no longer within Jordan’s borders, the kingdom billed itself as the Holy Land during the Jubilee Year papal pilgrimage.

Jordan’s year 2000 claim to the Holy Land had an altogether different basis than that in 1964. While the early visit, and the early claim to being the Holy Land, was based on both Muslim and Christian sites, Jordan’s more recent claim is primarily based on Christian sites alone, an unusual position for a country with an overwhelming Muslim majority population. As mentioned above, Jordan’s leaders have made considerable efforts during the past decade or so to discover, authenticate, and promote Muslim holy sites, namely tombs of the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (*maqamat al-sahaba*).³³ These sites, while perhaps important to Muslims, or at least to the Jordanian government that promoted them, offered little to the Catholic pilgrim during his short stay in the Jordanian Holy Land.

Many months prior to the pope’s arrival in 2000, the Jordan Tourism Ministry, with its mandate to advocate for the country at home and abroad, began promoting the papal tour to Jordan’s holy sites. Prior to the 1964 visit, organized tourism in Jordan had been in its infancy and thus no such efforts had been made at that time. For a few decades after 1967, the ministry had been promoting East Bank, primarily non-religious, sites and cities to lure tourists to the kingdom. Petra, Jerash, the Desert Castles, and other archaeological sites had become the focus of touristic promotion since the 1970s, as the realization became undeniable that the holy places and holy cities of the West Bank were lost to Jordanian tourism. Triggered by the pope’s scheduled visit in the year 2000, the ministry and local Catholic Church leaders in January 2000 announced a series of pilgrimages to sites that had been confirmed by the Vatican as “offi-

cial” sites for the Christian pilgrim to Jordan.

The Tourism Ministry brochure promoting these journeys—which continued throughout the year 2000—identified Jordan as “The Sunrise of Christianity,” implying that Christianity’s earliest roots are located in Jordan.³⁴ Perhaps for the Jordanians the most important of these pilgrimages was set for *al-Maghtas* (known to Christians as Bethany Beyond the Jordan), or Wadi al-Kharrar, the site where Jesus was baptized. The other locations on the pilgrimage schedule in 2000 were: Anjara (local shrine at the Roman Catholic Church), the Citadel, Amman (church remains from the Byzantine era), Tel Mar Elias (Shrine of the Prophet Elijah), Mukawer (the site where John the Baptist was beheaded), and Mt. Nebo. While the Vatican has “certified” that all six of these sites are part of the Christian pilgrim’s route in Jordan, the pope only visited *al-Maghtas* and Mt. Nebo.³⁵ Not only had the Vatican “authenticated” those two sites, but the pope himself also traveled to them during his pilgrimage, adding another level of legitimacy to these holy places, Jordan’s national treasures. As a result, *al-Maghtas* and Mt. Nebo continue to receive more emphasis in touristic promotion.

The repeated mention of Vatican approval of Jordan’s holy places in the daily Jordanian newspapers during the months leading up to and following the papal visit suggests a sense of uncertainty by the Jordanians vis-à-vis their claim that Jordan is the Holy Land. Further, this reliance on Vatican authentication of Jordan’s holy places is de-valued by the fact that the majority of Jordan’s Christians are Greek Orthodox and do not defer to the pope in Rome, although many of them did participate publicly in the pope’s visit. In 1964 the kingdom had a surety of position regarding its “Holy Land” claim, as Jordan controlled not only Christian sites but Muslim sites, as well, thus making its claim more “natural” and appealing to its predominantly Muslim constituency and to the Muslim world at large. By the year 2000, the self-image Jordan had long been projecting was related to ancient history and archaeological sites. In order to compete in the regional tourism industry, maintain regional political and religious importance, and regain a sense of “holiness” that had dissipated since Jordan’s official announcement to relinquish control of Jerusalem’s Muslim holy places to the Palestinian Authority in 1999, the kingdom identified, excavated, renovated, promoted, and represented sites referred to in the Bible as part of the Jordanian national heritage and Jordan’s national treasures.³⁶

Jordan’s newspapers were filled with articles that reinforced Jordan as the “Holy Land,” or part of it, adding that the government was taking great pains to propagate it as such. *Al-Ra’i*, the main Jordanian daily representing official discourse, began publishing articles

to promote the pope's visit as early as September 1999. These articles became more frequent after the millennium celebrations and John Paul II ushered in the new year as a Jubilee Year. A 16 January 2000 article in *al-Ra'i*, appearing one week after the first of the communal Christian pilgrimages took place in Anjara, attests to the efforts taken abroad to promote the country as the "Holy Land." The article quotes Father al-Far, director-general of the National Higher Committee for the Third Millennium Celebrations in the District of Madaba,³⁷ saying that "Jordanian diplomats have succeeded in representing Jordan as part of the Holy Land, [a title] that Israel had been exploiting for a long period of time to attract religious tourism." The pope's visit to the kingdom's holy sites, especially *al-Maghtas*, had its legitimating effect, but this legitimation was furthered on a national level when King Abdullah II chose the baptism site as the location for the celebration of Jordan's National Arbor Day (*Id al-Shajara*).³⁸

As the traditional baptism site is located on the West Bank side of the Jordan River at Qasr al-Yahoud (Palace of the Jews), Jordanians took the pope's visit to *al-Maghtas* at Wadi al-Kharrar, on the East Bank side as a coup, giving something of a seal of approval to their site. The notion that Jordan's baptism site is religiously genuine is disputed politically, certainly by the Israelis, but also by the Palestinians located on the other side of the Jordan River. While competing with the Israelis for recognition of the West Bank site as "Palestinian," the Palestinian Authority also found itself embroiled in an authenticity dispute with Jordan. The contestation existed on a national and political level as well as a religious level, with officials of the Latin Rite in both Jerusalem and Amman trying to prevent a dispute between Jordan and the Palestinians. Jerusalem's Latin patriarch attempted to remain neutral as to whether the legitimate site of the baptism is in Jordan's Wadi al-Kharrar or on the West Bank of the Jordan River, at Qasr al-Yahoud, under Israeli occupation, but also claimed by the Palestinian Authority as a Palestinian national site. The patriarch's neutrality elicited a reply by the Latin vicar in Amman who "stepped in with a clarification statement...to avoid that the Patriarch's neutral stand be interpreted against Jordan's claim of hosting one of Christianity's holiest sites."³⁹ Akel Biltaji, Jordan's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities at the time, claimed a Jordanian victory from the pope's visit to the now rival baptismal site at Wadi al-Kharrar, which he saw as "a confirmation of the baptismal site...the authentic site."⁴⁰ Emerging primarily between the Jordanian and Palestinian tourism ministers, the dispute had the potential to strain relations between the two national groups. Although religious leaders tried to dismiss the competition over the sites and inspire inclusivity rather

than exclusivity, the competition continues for national possession of the baptismal site. For Jordan, however, there is no dispute. The Wadi al-Kharrar site, identified and excavated by Jordanian archaeologists and stamped with papal approval, is "the real thing."

To visually convey Jordan's position regarding the baptism site, the Jordan Ministry of Post and Communications issued commemorative stamps in honor of the pope's visit to the kingdom and to commemorate the third millennium. Of the three stamp series issued, the first two issues included some expression of *al-Maghtas*, either in words or images.⁴¹ The third millennium series, the first official cultural marker of the new millennium in the kingdom to project this theme, carries the slogan, "Jordan, The River & The Land of the Baptism." The same slogan also appeared later on a promotional brochure called "Biblical Sites of Jordan," published by the semi-governmental/semi-private Jordan Tourism Board, suggesting that the validity of the baptism site was accepted in both the public and the private sectors. The other stamp in the series still bears this slogan but also has a picture of the Jordan River near the site of *al-Maghtas*, with reproductions of sixth century Byzantine mosaics that appear in some of Madaba's archaeological remains. This series also produced a special collector's sticker that included a portrait picture of Pope John Paul II overlooking an image of John baptizing Jesus at the East Bank baptism site with a white dove in the center of the stamp, again conveying an aura of papal approval of the site. The final issue in the series bears the image of the Jordan River, Bethany Beyond the Jordan, i.e., the baptism site itself. The pictures of both the pope and King Abdullah II on the stamps, in addition to Jordanian and papal flags, reify the papal authentication of the site and thus Jordan's claim as the Holy Land.

The intention of the Postal Ministry to connect the 1964 and 2000 visits, in addition to the Hashemite Jordanian and Catholic leaders, with the Muslim and Christian notions of the Holy Land, became evident in the last of the three stamp series issued for the occasion. The series titled, "The 36th Anniversary of His Holiness Pope Paul VI visit to HKJ and the Holy Places" carries a photographic image of both King Abdullah II and Pope John Paul II flanking an artist's rendition of Jerusalem's holy places, the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher.⁴² In the center of the stamp is a copy of a limited-series medallion, issued on the occasion of the 1964 papal pilgrimage, carrying images of Hussein and Paul VI on one side and the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher on the other. It is likely unclear to most people viewing the stamp what this circular item in the center of the stamp might be—so few medallions were minted and distributed at the time that very few people had the opportu-

nity to see it when it was issued and afterward. The medallion's reproduction on the stamp is quite small, to the degree that the profile images of King Hussein and Pope Paul VI are nearly indistinguishable, although in light of the occasion certainly one might make an educated guess.

Jordan has been geographically disconnected from Jerusalem since 1967. The city's holy places, however, depicted on the commemorative anniversary stamp series, continue to represent the kingdom in its self-definition as the Holy Land, a definition that included the representation of both Christian and Muslim sites. One might link Jerusalem's holy places, sites no longer under Jordan's political control in 2000, to the 1964 visit, as they were the focus of the Holy Land papal pilgrimage at that time. Does their presence in Jordan's official discourse, on stamps for example, imply reluctance on behalf of the Hashemite king to relinquish control over Jerusalem's holy places a short time after his announced intention to defer to the Palestinians on such matters?⁴³ This illustration represents ambiguity in Jordan's self-portrait in the year 2000, as this predominantly Muslim country grappled with a self-image as a "Christian Holy Land." Those holy places that Jordan promoted during the 2000 visit are absent from the anniversary stamp. This omission detracts from the message Jordan had been trying to convey throughout the Jubilee Year pilgrimage—that despite the historical, geographical, and political changes that had transpired since the first papal pilgrimage in 1964, Jordan may be other things, but it is still, or once again, the Holy Land.

The discussion of the 1964 visit is necessarily richer in its historical context, as the analysis of the event has the benefit of decades of hindsight that the 2000 visit lacks. The 1964 papal pilgrimage was very early destined to play an important role in 2000 in Jordan's unfolding self-representation. The 1964 visit was symbolic during the Jubilee Year visit not solely for it being the first papal pilgrimage ever, but for the legitimizing effect it had for the country in terms of continuity among Jordan's kings. Jordan's King Hussein died in 1999, having led Jordan for more than 45 years through several wars, and even a peace treaty with long-time enemy Israel. But in 2000, the 1964 papal pilgrimage could serve as a reminder to Jordanians of the young king who had welcomed Pope Paul VI, and could serve as a model for the potential that his son has as heir to the throne of Jordan. During their September 1999 visit to the Vatican, King Abdullah II and Queen Rania visited the olive tree that King Hussein had given Pope Paul VI in 1964.⁴⁴ The 36th anniversary postage stamp is a striking visual attempt to link the two papal visits and thus confer authenticity and legitimacy to Jordan as host for the Year 2000's "Great Pilgrim." Finally, the Greater Am-

man Municipality, which was responsible for decorating the city with banners to honor the "Great Pilgrim," included the slogan, "From al-Hussein and Paul VI... to Abdullah II and John Paul II." At the same time, photographs of King Hussein and Paul VI appeared next to those of Abdullah II and John Paul II in the daily newspapers.⁴⁵ The two visits, however, had very different travel programs that affected the way Jordan represented itself as the Holy Land.

The papal pilgrimages to Jordan in 1964 and 2000 impacted Jordan's efforts to construct its national self-image and highlight the complexities of Jordan's nation-building project in both the second decade of its independence and as the world entered the third millennium. A consideration for the cultural products generated in Jordan leading up to, during, and in the wake of these two historic visits sheds light on Jordan's historic and contemporary "self-portrait" as the Holy Land. These cultural products also help us understand why that self-portrait persisted, or recurred, despite the regional re-configuration of national borders. In 1964 King Hussein billed himself as the "Guardian of the Christian Holy Places" in the Holy Land. He also sought distinction in the Islamic world by serving as "Protector of the [Muslim] Holy Places." Jordan was brimming with holy places, especially those that had traditional standing as Holy Land sites. The king and the government appropriated these sites to promote an all-encompassing vision of "Jordan, the Holy Land," a title that appeared frequently from 1948-1967. In the year 2000, Jordan was re-defining itself once again as the Holy Land after a long period of trying to re-make its image based on prominent East Bank sites such as Petra and Jerash. This time, however, Jordan's conception of what the Holy Land meant had changed as a result of the geographical changes in the region. Jordan had ceased to control the holy places in Jerusalem and throughout the West Bank, following Israel's occupation of the territory in 1967, although Jordanian administrative and symbolic control of those holy places has lasted for several more decades. Established in 1994 and representing the Palestinian people, the Palestinian Authority has emerged as an internationally recognized political player with valid claims to (at least) part of the Holy Land. While Islamic sites and Islam's place in the kingdom have not been downplayed in recent efforts to promote the country as the Holy Land, the Christian sites and Christian figures have received a newfound prominence in Jordan, based largely on the Jubilee papal pilgrimage. The Christian landscape in Jordan has allowed the country to compete with the Palestinians and the Israelis for sacred geography, making the kingdom's claim to the title "the Holy Land" legitimate.

NOTES

¹The term “self-portrait” in this context is taken from Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), Chapter 7. For more on how this is considered in the Jordanian context, see Kimberly Katz, “Holy Places and National Spaces: Jerusalem under Jordanian Control,” (Ph.D. diss., New York University, New York, 2001).

²King Abdullah, *My Memoirs Completed*, (New York: Longman, 1978).

³Neil Asher Silberman and David Small, eds., *The Archaeology of Israel: Constructing the Past, Interpreting the Present*, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

⁴See *Holy Sites of Jordan*, (Amman: Turab Publishing, 1996). The role of the Muslim holy places in recent nation-building efforts in Jordan warrants a separate study.

⁵While some historians suggest that the creation of the PLO was solely Egyptian in design, others argue that King Hussein was so confident of his role in and legitimacy over Jerusalem and its holy places that he sponsored the conference in April that year, when the Palestine Liberation Organization was founded. The PLO position at that time was to recover the lands taken by the Zionists, not those under Jordanian rule. For a fuller discussion of the historiography of this subject, see Katz, “Holy Places and National Spaces.”

⁶The peace process was far off-track by 1999, its scheduled date for the start of final status negotiations. By September 2000, the al-Aqsa Intifada had broken out following then-opposition Israeli leader, Ariel Sharon’s visit to the platform in the Old City of Jerusalem where the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque stand, accompanied by hundreds of Israeli soldiers. Sharon’s visit to the site—the last straw for the Palestinians after seven years of the failed Oslo Process, which brought little tangible benefit to them—not only brought violent Palestinian resistance and Israeli counter-violence, but was soon followed by Sharon’s rise to the premiership and the near-death of the peace process. At the time of this writing, American President George W. Bush has begun to try to revive the peace process with what has become known as the “Road Map.”

⁷The 1994 treaty laid out Israel’s recognition of Jordan’s historic rights in the Holy City and, in particular, its supervision and protection of the Islamic holy places located there. In it, Israel agreed to “give high priority” to Jordan’s historic role in Jerusalem when Israel set out to negotiate the permanent status of the city with the Palestinian Authority. The treaty is found in *Ma’arikat al-salam: watha’iq urduniya (al-masar al-urduni-al-isra’ili) min mu’tamar Madrid ila ilan Washington* [The Battle for Peace: Jordanian Documents (The Jordanian-Israeli Track) From the Madrid Conference to the Washington Declaration] (Amman, 1994).

⁸The patriarch in Turkey (Constantinople) is considered the highest Orthodox official, figuratively, although all Orthodox patriarchs have the same standing. In addition, the pope met in Jerusalem with other Orthodox patriarchs, including the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Armenia.

⁹A *New York Times* article from 3 January 1964 reiterates the

expected politicization of the papal visit.

¹⁰Most of the literature on this subject suggests that Jerusalem was almost completely neglected by the Hashemites and the Jordanian government during the 1948-1967 period. This author does not entirely dispute this but offers evidence elsewhere that Jordan invested in the Holy City for national purposes, i.e. identity building. See Katz, “Holy Places.”

¹¹Naim Sofer, “The Political Status of Jerusalem in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 1948-1967,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Volume 12, No. 1 (January 1976): 79.

¹²Both the 1946 and 1952 constitutions include a clause proclaiming the capital of the kingdom to be Amman, “but it may be changed to another locality by a special law.” An English translation of the constitution is found in M. Khalil, *The Arab States and the Arab League: A Documentary Record*, Volume I Constitutional Developments, (Beirut: Khayats, 1962), 43 and 55 for the quoted clause; the Arabic original can be found in *Majmu’at al-qawanin wa-al-anzima* (Collection of Laws and Regulations), Volume I, (Amman: Jordanian Syndicate of Lawyers, 1957). See also the section titled “The Demand to Make Jerusalem the Capital” in Naim Sofer, “The Political Status of Jerusalem,” 84-86.

¹³The text of Jordan’s “Unification of the Two Banks” in April 1950 can be found in M. Khalil, *The Arab States and the Arab League*, p. 54.

¹⁴The newspaper article discussed here may have reflected the voices of many discontented Palestinians in Jordan at that time; however, few printed items were found to directly support that notion. The article should not be used to generalize across the entire Palestinian population living in Jordan then.

¹⁵In 1950, Jordan enacted legislation to erase Palestine from Jordanian parlance. Palestine, at least that part which was incorporated into the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, ceased to be Palestine. For Jordan, Palestine was the area that was occupied by the Zionists and became the State of Israel. In Jordan the area of central Palestine was now called the “West Bank.”

¹⁶All references to the article here refer to the 7 January 1964 edition of *al-Jihad*.

¹⁷*Harri bina...wa-biladuna tu’ju bil-wafdin...hujaj, za’irin min mukhtalaf al-bilad...wa-bil-sahafiyin, al-murasilin li-subuf biladhim...wa-bi-sa’ir rijal al-a’alam*

¹⁸An example of this description is “light of guidance and peace, the Night Journey of the Prophet, Muhammad, the birthplace of Jesus and the path trod on by many of the Prophets...”

¹⁹The Dome of the Rock, the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, respectively. Incidentally there was also a stamp issue that reflected the meeting between the pope and the patriarch of Constantinople, both of whom flank the king on a background of the Muslim holy places on the *al-Haram al-Sharif* (the Noble Sanctuary).

²⁰The stamp series had strong reverberations in Italy as well. The Jordanian newspaper, *al-Jihad*, reported on 4 April 1964 that the Jordanian-issued stamps entered the Italian market on the same day as they did in Jordan and were sold for nearly ten times their face value. The images on the

stamps were not limited to Jordan's internal market nor just sent abroad on mail; they received mass consumption in the Italian market. An explanation for Italy's interest in the Jordanian-issued king/pope/holy places stamps is a topic for another article. *Al-Jihad* reported on the same day that the Vatican had also issued a stamp on the occasion of the pope's visit to the Holy Land, although apparently the king did not appear on the Vatican stamps with the pope, as the intended meaning was probably different.

²¹The king's speech is reprinted in *al-Jihad*, 7 January 1964.

²²See note 1.

²³*New York Times*, 3 January 1964.

²⁴*New York Times*, 3 January 1964. The diversion of the Jordan River was a project that Israel had been engaged in since the beginning to mid-1950s. The Arab states vehemently opposed the project as they claimed that it would deprive the Arab states surrounding Israel of adequate water resources. This subject was the stated reason for the convening of the Cairo Summit Conference in January 1964, less than 10 days after the pope's pilgrimage to the Holy Land. For more on this issue, see Leila S. Kadi, *Arab Summit Conferences and the Palestine Problem 1936-1950, 1964-1966* (Beirut, 1966), especially Chapter VI.

²⁵UN General Assembly, Resolution 194, 11 December 1948.

²⁶*New York Times*, 2 January 1964.

²⁷25 January 1964.

²⁸*The Jerusalem Times*, 21 March 1964.

²⁹*The Jerusalem Times*, 4 April 1964.

³⁰Tourism in Jordan increased by 111,500 people in 1965 and again by the same number in 1966. See Jordan, Department of Statistics, *Iqtisadiyat al-siyaha fi al-Urdun, 1950-1976 (Statistics of Tourism in Jordan, 1950-1976)*, prepared by Fawzi Sadiq, Jordanian Department of the Economy, 1978.

³¹Conversation with Ghalib Barakat, former Jordanian Minister of Tourism, 21 April 1999 in Amman, Jordan.

³²At the time of writing, many of the Palestinian territories have been subject to Israeli re-occupation during the al-Aqsa Intifada, which broke out in September 2000. So often have Israel's forces entered and exited areas that during the Oslo Process had been transferred to Palestinian Authority control that it is difficult to say at present what holy sites are under whose control.

³³See note 4.

³⁴The brochure is titled "The Sunrise of Christianity, Jordan 2000."

³⁵The Vatican "certification" for the Citadel as one of the holy places for Christians to visit came much later than the other five sites.

³⁶In August 1999 King Abdullah II and Jordan's prime minister publicly announced Jordan's intention to cede their "traditional" rights over the holy places to the Palestinian Authority when the "time was right." *Jordan Times*, 20 August 1999.

³⁷*Al-Lajna al-abliya al-'alya lil-ibtifalat bil-alfiya al-thalitha lil-milad*.

³⁸"Special Prayers on Mount Nebo during the pope's Visit," *al-Ra'i*, 16 January 2000, p. 32.

³⁹*Jordan Times*, 14 March 2000.

⁴⁰*New York Times*, 22 March 2000.

⁴¹The first was "The Third Millennium," the second "The Pope's Visit to Jordan: 36th Anniversary," and the third "The Pope's Visit to Jordan."

⁴²HKJ=Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

⁴³See note 36.

⁴⁴*al-Ra'i*, 19 September 1999, p. 1.

⁴⁵*al-Ra'i*, 21 March 2000, p. 30.