"MAKE THE PAST COUNT … MAKE TOURISTS FEEL AT EASE": JORDANIAN HERITAGE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

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INTRODUCTION

This research is part of a wide scale study that investigates the way Jordan is presented by the Government for touristic purposes. This part of the study weighs the Government's perception of, and attitudes towards, the time and the place of Jordan against that of the Local community. In this part of the study, the Government's points of view are explored through examining the agenda of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA): its official web site and the levels of intervention conducted by the Department of Antiquities (DAJ) in some archaeological sites.

The local community's points of view are explored through in-depth interviews conducted by the author with members of the local community of Amman, the capital of Jordan, who live and work in places adjacent to tourists' destinations and archaeological sites. For the purpose of this part of the study, fifteen members of the local community were interviewed regarding an archaeological site located in Suwaifyyeh, a district in Amman. In general, the respondents were asked about the adjacent sites: if they visit them, what they like/ dislike about them, what the site mean, if at all, for them, and what they think about the levels of intervention conducted in them. Besides, for the purpose of this part of the study, two focus groups, each consisted of ten students from two different public universities in Jordan were conducted to examine the MoTA's web site contents of maps.

The accounts delivered by the respondents (the local community and the focus groups) are presented in this research using false names, to protect the identity of the respondents. The age and the gender of the respondents are real as they might provide cues for further studies concerned with people's perceptions of archaeological sites. The in-depth interviews were conducted in Arabic: the official language of Jordan. They were taped, transcribed, and translated to English by the author, with invaluable help of her colleagues, whose intention was to capture the meaning of the respondents' words rather than to provide a 'soulless' translation of the interesting accounts.

'FABRICATING' JORDAN'S TIME AND PLACE TO FIT TOURISTS

The time and space of Jordan are carefully presented to tourists through many ways. This section explores the symbolic presentation of Jordan by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) through photos and maps provided in its official web site. This presentation provides a framework for the tourists' experience through which they perceive what Jordan is. Harvey (1990: 216) recognises the mechanism through which time and place are manipulated to create new meanings in post-colonial contexts, such as Jordan, as the following: "modernization entails, after all, the perpetual disruption of temporal and spatial rhythms, and modernism takes as one of its missions the production of new meanings for space and time in a world of ephemerality and fragmentation". In the process of marketing Jordan as a tourist destination, the Government emphasised specific times, places and images of Jordan and marginalised others to serve the tourism agenda and to "… make the past count, they [the Government] just wants to make the tourists feel at ease" (Abu-Hazem, 45 year-old-male).

Desiring Jordan: 'Harem' and Tourism
Compromising Jordan's Islamic and Arab identity for tourism purposes is increasingly explored (Addison 2004; Al-Mahadin and Burns 2007; Al-Mahadin 2007; Hazbun 2002). Al-Mahadin and

Burns' (2007: 139) study: *The Portrayal of the Arab World in Tourism Advertising* demonstrates "the reduction of the number of directly Arab or Middle Eastern cues in advertising discourse" related to tourism in the Arab World. For example, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Jordan (MoTA), in its official web page in 2003, shows only one photo, among its twenty seven, of a clearly defined Jordanian (Al-Mahadin & Burns 2007: 139). In 2009, the photo noted by Al-Mahadin and Burns (2007: 139), and shown in figure 1, still represents the only cue to Jordanian character in the Ministry's advertisement (see http://www.mota.gov.jo; accessed 12th February 2009).

This photo is of a woman dressed in a traditional costume, and posing in an archaeological site. One can draw on Al-Mahadin and Burns' (2007: 139) note explored above to suggest that such a photo is 'fabricated' to convey a peaceful and romantic image that contradicts the stereotypical one of the region as being violent, insecure and full of terrorists. Furthermore, drawing on Edward Said's (2003) exploration of the East's image as represented by Western literature and paintings since the 18th century (in essence, Orientalism), one can also establish a resemblance between this photo and the Orientalist paintings. These paintings depicted, among many aspects of life in the Arab World, women, and presented them as exotic and suppressed subjects: harem. Such paintings influenced the European mind and encouraged their visits to the Arab World in the 18th and 19th century. One of these paintings is shown in figure 2. The pose as well as the background (romantic architecture featuring an arch) in both images (figures 1 & 2) invite the viewer to an unchallenging and pleasant experience in the context of their settings. Therefore, the way Jordan presents itself for Western tourists is very similar to the way Western scholars used to present the Orient during the 18th and 19th centuries. Consequently, "the modern Orient…participates in its own Orientalizing" (Said 2003: 325). The symbolic presentation of tourism in this photo provides a framework for the tourists' experience through which they perceive what Jordan is.

Figure 1 Jordan as represented in the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities brochures; source: http://www.tourism.jo/Home/index.htm accessed 12th March 2009.

Figure 2 An orientalist's painting for an Arab woman dated to 1860 ; source: http://alloilpaint.com/orientalist/b46.jpg accessed 12th March 2009.

'Fabricating' the Map: Including a Past and Excluding Another

Tourism in Jordan, among other aspects of life, is Western-oriented. The Jordanian Government's attempt to be identified with the West is considered as unprecedented. In Addison's (2004: 246) words: "as countries worldwide scramble to identify themselves with American interests, the Hashemite regime in particular has worked overtime to configure itself as a secular, Western-identified state" (see also Al-Mahadin 2007: 313). In this sense, tourism in Jordan is engineered to "make Western tourists feel at ease" (Maffi 2002: 220). Every effort is made to "distance the state from things Islamic and from the particular fragrance of danger they seem to carry [in order to create] a landscape as free as possible of any hint of threat or discomfort" (Addison 2004: 245-246). Addison (2004) explores this 'fabricated' landscape by studying the tourist signs on the main highways in Jordan:

> On these main arteries there are eighty-four brown tourist signs: twenty-seven direct the traveller to nine specifically Christian historical and pilgrimage sites; nine point to two Islamic historical sites. In the immediate vicinity of these same roads (less than twenty kilometres from the main road), however, there are three monumental early Islamic sites (Qasr 'Amman, Qasr al-Mushatta, Qasr al-Qastal), several more historically important and visually interesting sites (e.g. Umm al-Walid), and thirteen Islamic holy sites that are unsigned. There is also some indication that Islamic sites which were once signed are no longer to be so (Addison 2004: 235).

Addison's (2004) study demonstrates Jordan's attempts to compromise its Islamic and Arab character in order to provide a peaceful landscape for Western tourists, especially since Islam is continuously associated with terrorism in Western media. Addison (2004: 238) adds to her observation that "not a single sign for any of the thirty-eight Muslim holy sites is visible on the highways [investigated]". Even for the World Heritage Site (WHS) of the Umayyad palace of Qusair Amra, the signs are oddly placed, misleading, and hardly of any help for those who are not familiar with the road to this World Heritage Site (Addison 2004: 234-235).

Investigation of the maps the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities provides in its official web page leads to similar results of those provided by Addison's "Road's to Ruins". The web site provides to kinds of maps; the Historical Sites and the Religious Sites. Two focus groups, each consisted of ten university students were conducted to examine these maps in two different sessions. The students were studying different fields such as Maths, Architecture, Sport, Literature and Engineering, and in different stages of their studies.

The first map examined was of the Religious Sites' map (see figure 3). Not one single Islamic site was marked, as all the sites on the map were Biblical. Therefore, the names of the sites were unfamiliar for the twenty students (ten for each focus group), except for two students who studied the ancient history of Jordan and were able to recognise some of the sites. One of the students wondered: "why can't I recognise any of the names in this map? … Are these places in Jordan? Are you sure?" (Esam, 23-year-old male).
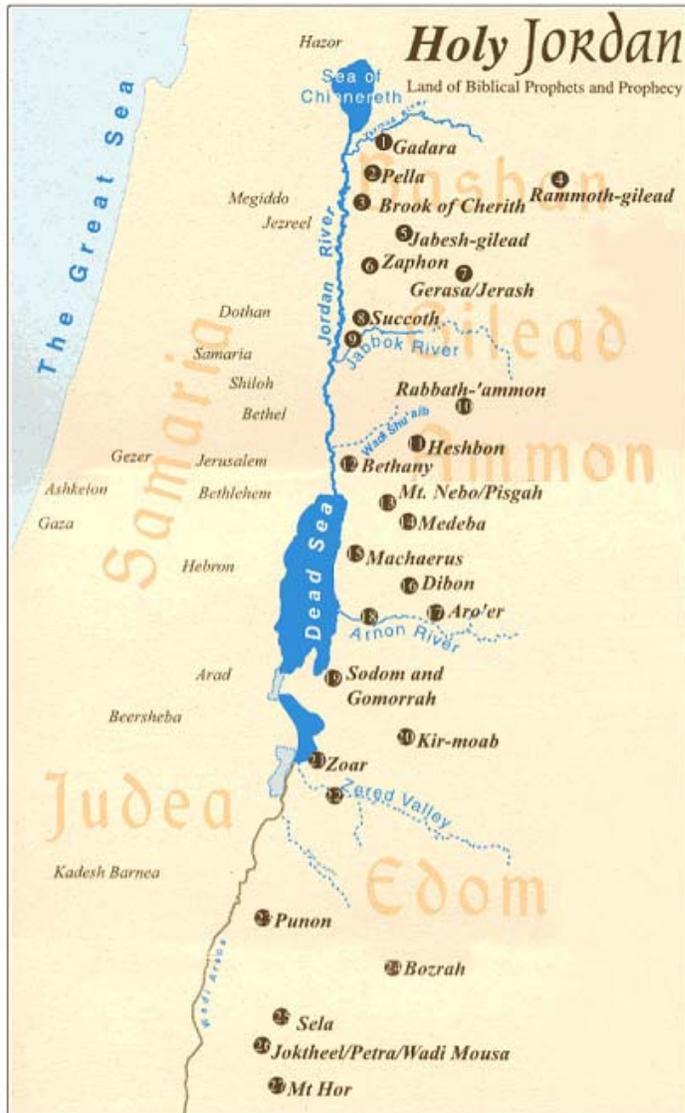
Figure 3 The religious map of Jordan; source:
http:www.tourism.jo/Inside/ HolyMap.asp; accessed 3rd April 2009)

While the author expected the members of the focus groups to comment only on the strangeness of the names, they surprised her by asking questions, such as "if this is the Holy Jordan then why don't we study these places in school?" (Heba,19-year-old female). In addition, Ibraheem stated, "Holy! … they mean like related to religion? … but if it is so then why did not they mark the Yarmouk river or Mo'ta site (in reference to two famous battles that marked the spread of Islam in the region). At least these sites we studied in the school" (Ibraheem, 22-year-old male). Another student wondered: "why the Islamic shrines are not in this map, are you sure there is not any other map for Islamic sites. I'll check and let you know" (Ali, 22 year-old male).

The comment delivered by Ali above suggested that the Arabic version of the MoTA's web site might include different places that are relevant to the current culture of Jordan. However, the

Arabic version's map was the same investigated in the focus groups, without even translating the names of the sites to Arabic. Indeed, for the MoTA, Holy Jordan is the "Land of Biblical Prophets and Prophecy". This is clearly demonstrated by the photo provided in the web page of the Religious Sites' map. The photo is of an orientalist painting that shows Saint Peter's head, offered by Salome, with the statement: "Land of Biblical Prophets and Prophecy" provided under the photo (see figure 4 below).
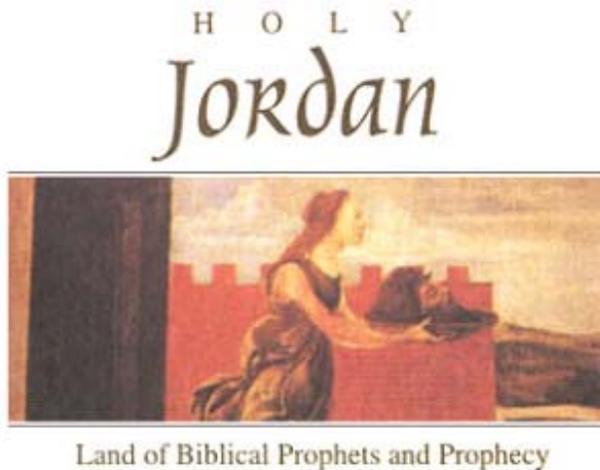

Figure 4 Jordan as the Land of Biblical Prophets and Prophecy;
Source: http:www.tourism.jo/Inside/HolyMap.asp; accessed 3rd April 2009.

Therefore, Holy Jordan excludes the past that is not Biblical; mainly the Islamic past that is closely relevant to people's current culture and way of life. The members of the focus groups of this study felt alienated by the map and the unfamiliar names of places. The students rejected the map as being representative for the Holy Jordan as they perceive it. They demanded that this map should be replaced with an inclusive and 'realistic' one.

The next map examined by the focus groups was the Historic Sites' map provided in the MoTA's web site. The map, shown in figure 5 below, includes fourteen sites. The first note delivered by the first focus group who examined the map was made by Ahmad, a 24 year-old male. Ahmad commented "Qusair Amra … I've been there this winter holiday and read in a sign there that it is, like Petra, important for the UNESCO (in reference to Qusair Amra as a World Heritage Site). It is not [marked] in this map, is it?". The absence of Qusair Amra, and other Umayyad palaces, dominated the discussion of each focus group. During this discussion, the students kept discovering the absence of the Umayyad palaces, which are scattered in the Jordan desert, from this map. These palaces are popular among the members of the two focus groups of this study, as 17 out of the 20 members visited them during their school trips. Again, the students felt alienated by the map.
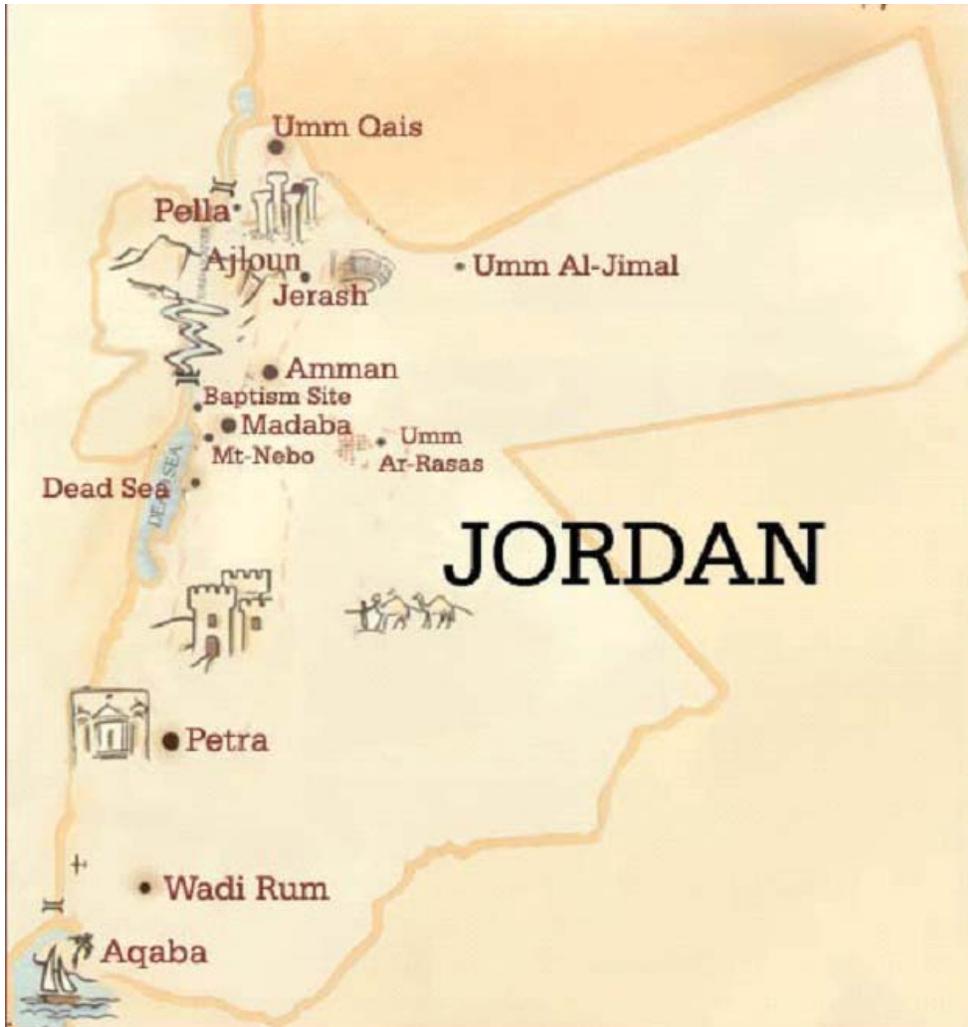
Figure 5 The historical sites' map of Jordan; source: http:www.tourism.jo/Inside/ HolyMap.asp; accessed 3rd April 2009.

Ahmad's comment mentioned above emphasised Qusair Amra as World Heritage Site (WHS). It was nominated as such, together with the archaeological site of Petra in the year 1985. Therefore, it is strange for such an internationally recognised monument to disappear from the Historical Site's map of Jordan. Moreover, the absence of Qusair Amra is highlighted by the presence of Umm Ar-Rasas. Umm Ar-Rasas is a town dated back to the Roman period, and well known for its Byzantine churches and outstanding mosaic floors, and was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2004 (UNESCO 2006). As this state of Qusair Amra and Umm Ar-Rasas was explained to the members of the focus groups, a 20 year-old-female student, Reham, summarised the members' questions about the absence of Qusair Amra dispite its status as the following:

> Why would Qusair Amra, that was inscribed as a … [WHS] nineteen years before Umm Ar-Rasas, be deleted from the map? … I would accept it if the opposite happened. It would seem more natural to forget to mark the new [inscribed] place. If you remember the map we discussed last week (in reference to the Religious Site's map), we had the same issue, right? Only places that are associated with the Bible were put on the map … In this map

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they (in reference to the Government) still dream of the new millennium's millions of tourists who were supposed to come and visit Madaba and the Baptism site. The rest does not matter for them, even our history vanished from this map, at least they should have marked Ma'an (in reference to the city of Ma'an in the southern part of Jordan, that witnessed crucial political developments, and marked the modern history of Jordan as a Hashemite Kingdom) (Reham, a 20 year-old-female).

Therefore, historical Jordan, according to this map is Greek, Roman and Byzantine. Even the sites that are relevant to Jordan's recent history, as Reham noted in her remark about the absence of the city of Ma'an from the map, were marginalised. Only specific times and contexts of the past were selected, highlighted and represented in this Historical Site's map of Jordan that is "tailored for the tourists … the foreign tourists" to use the words of Adnan, a 25 year-old male who participated in one of the two focus groups of this study.

THE 'HUNT' FOR THE 'WOW' FACTOR: THE LOSS OF CULTURAL CONTINUITY

The interest in specific times and places of Jordan is subject to a further selection process. In this process only sites with special characteristics: mainly aesthetic and artistic, or what is referred to as the 'wow' factor, are conserved. Along this process, not only specific times and places were marginalised, but also local communities who live in these places and have their own culture and identity. The following sections examine the history of this process of selection (inclusion and exclusion) through case studies. Some of these case studies are explored through literature provided by other researchers, while one of these case studies is based on in-depth interviews conducted by the author with the local community Amman.

The Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the 'Wow' Factor

In 1924, the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DAJ) was established under the supervision of the British Mandate as an independent entity (Costello & Palumbo 1995: 547), and in 1967, the DAJ was designated as part of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA). The implication of considering the DAJ as part of the MoTA rather than the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Culture is evident in the tourism-oriented approach to material of the past the Government asserts.

Besides the DAJ and the departments of archaeology and architecture in the Jordanian universities, material of the past in Jordan is of great interest for foreign agencies. This interest started with Biblical archaeology project in the region, as demonstrated in chapter 3. Since the early 20th century, many foreign academic agencies, such as the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR), the French Institute of Archaeology of the Near East (IFABO), the Council for British Research in the Levant (CBRL) and the German Archaeological Institute in Jordan (DAI) have conducted excavations and conservation projects in archaeological sites all over Jordan. Their work is monitored by the DAJ through 'delegates' who supply regular reports that mainly describe the nature of this work and its results (Antiquities Law 1988: Article 3).

Having the ultimate authority for "identifying, recording, evaluating, and managing the Kingdom's archaeological sites" (Costello & Palumbo 1995: 548), the DAJ started its work, since its establishment under the British mandate, with special interest in monumental sites such

as Petra, Jerash and Karak (Costello & Palumbo 1995: 547; Palumbo *et al.* 1993: 70). The emphasis on the 'wow' factor in ancient sites, represented by monumentality and aesthetic value, was in most cases at the expense of other values of that past. Not only was the recent past neglected, but also the contemporary local communities were dislocated and marginalised.

A prominent example of this 'blind' interest in the ancient, mainly Classical, past, is demonstrated in the Government's decision to demolish the lively Ottoman village of Umm-Qais in 1967, in order to facilitate the archaeological excavation of the Greek, Roman and Byzantine archaeological sites in the village (Daher 2000a: 37). Although this decision was reversed under pressure from local and international architects and anthropologists interested in the village, the inhabitants were forced eventually to evacuate their village in order to 'facilitate' the professionals' work in the archaeological part of Umm-Qais in 1976 (Daher 2000a: 38).

This case demonstrates the perception of archaeology as a 'scientific' field that is divorced from contemporary social and cultural contexts. Furthermore, the interest in Classical cultures and their monumental and aesthetically valuable remains, demonstrates the influence of the art historical value-system in perceiving and evaluating material of the past. The approaches to material of the past in Umm-Qais emphasise the lack of interest in cultural continuity in the village, as Classical archaeology was valued over the inhabitants' way of life because of its monumentality, aesthetic value and ultimately, its capacity to attract tourists.

Umm-Qais is hardly a unique example of sacrificing people's way of life for the purpose of conservation projects. Similar villages in Jordan were conserved and reused as a means for capital accumulation since the 1980s, such as Kan Zaman village near Amman, and Taebet Zaman village near Petra (see Al-Asad 2001: n.p.; Daher 2000b: 110). The promises of 'development' these projects offer to the local communities of the places under 'development' are demonstrated in mundane jobs with very little revenue. In return for these jobs, people gave up their way of life, left their homes, and moved to new housing projects that neglected their style of life (Daher 2000a: 37-39). The lack of genuine development that conservation projects offer to local communities adds to their sense of alienation from such projects and the 'new' heritage that conservation projects produced.

Exclude the Local Community; "Don't Speak Their Tongue!"
As part of a survey of archaeological sites within the urban context of Amman, the author came across an archaeological site that was labelled by the DAJ as "Suwaifyyeh Mosaic Six Century AD" (figure 6). The site was in a densely populated commercial and residential district of Amman, called Suwaifyyeh. Although the author is Jordanian, whose first language is Arabic, she hardly noticed that the sign was written in English. As most of the scholars in Jordan, the author is accustomed to the regular use of the English language that she hardly noticed the absence of the Arabic text from the sign. The language issue was brought to the author's attention by members of the local community of Suwaifyyeh when she approached them regarding the site. The local community has the 'fresh eye' that is capable of recognising things scholars take for granted.

This very important issue was made by a shopkeeper whose shop is nearby the site: Abdelhameid. Abdelhameid recommended the author when she asked him if he ever visited the

site to "read the sign". Abdelhameid's argument continued as the following: "Did you read it [the sign]. It is in English in case you did not notice. Only English. No Arabic text even to tell us to keep away … now what does this mean? You are the expert, you should know … It means they (in reference to the DAJ) don't care about us, they don't want us to be involved, they say: don't speak their language, they don't matter" (Abdelhameid, a 65-year-old male).

Figure 6 The sign that indicates the Suwaifyyeh chapel; source: the author 2004

This issue was pointed out by six out of the eight respondents the author interviewed in Suwaifyyeh. Excluding the Arabic language from the sign annoyed the respondents because it excluded them. It excluded the official language of the country; the Arabic language. The sign sent implicit message about the audience of the sign; whom it is written for.

The other issue about this site becomes evident once a visitor is inside the 'Suwaifyyeh Mosaic Six Century AD'. The sign does not acknowledge the fact that the mosaic is only part of a chapel that is dated to the 6th century AD. It is left for the visitor to figure out the nature of the archaeological site, which can be a challenge unless the visitor is an archaeologist, or familiar with some of the architectural elements of the churches. Besides, a visit to the 'mosaic' shows that the intervention levels conducted in the site neglected the architectural features of the chapel and focused on the "wow factor" as Addison (2004: 235) puts it: the mosaic floor (figure 7).

Chapels are usually designed to be entered from the South or the West, as the altar is always located in the apse at the East end of the chapel (Fletcher 1992: 286). However, the structure built over the remains of Suwaifyyeh Chapel, as part of its conservation process, is designed to be entered from the North East; where the apse is located. Therefore, the nature of the site, its architectural characteristics and its function were completely neglected. The result is a distorted image of what used to be a comprehensive cultural work of art and architecture.

Figure 7 Inside the Suwaifyyeh chapel; source: the author 2004

CONCLUSIONS

The time and the place of Jordan are perceived and approached by the Government as a touristic commodity. This implies a process of 'fabrication' and selection in which every effort is made to provide an image of Jordan that contradicts the stereotypical one of the region. Along the way of this process many times and places that shape an inevitable part of Jordan's cultural continuity and identity were marginalised and neglected. Cultural continuity and identity are hardly on the agenda of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities of Jordan. If this remains the case, Jordan might loose its identity for the money that tourism is to provide.

Although alienated and marginalised by the Government's practices, the accounts delivered in response for this research's questions prove that the local community is mentally engaged with, and deeply interested in, the past. If these engagements and interests are recognised by the local scholars, they can provide a counterforce for the Government's attitudes towards the past: its times and places. This recognition can empower the local community, and contribute to revising the Government's agenda concerned with the past to make it inclusive and respectable to the cultural continuity of Jordan in time and place.

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