As the title implies, *The Aqaba Khans* is an archaeological study on the origin and evolution of khans in Jordan, with a particular focus on the case-study of Khan al-Aqaba, where the author personally co-directed and directed several seasons of excavations. It serves as a model for a historical/archaeological interpretation of Jordan’s khans, in particular regarding the Middle and Late Islamic periods. The book provides a broad and clear history of khans in Jordan, as well as new interesting “food for thought” for further research. The monograph is divided into seven chapters, structured along a chronological line from the origin of khans to the present day, and ends with a repertoire of figures that are discussed in the various chapters. Finally, a glossary and lists of plates, tables and figures - as well as an extensive bibliography and index - are provided.

Chapter 1 offers a broad overview on “pre-Islamic” khans, through a critical discussion on their origins - traced back to the Bronze and the Iron ages - with a particular focus on the development of their physical structure and multiple functions.

The discussion continues in chapter 2, where the history of khans in Jordan during the Early Islamic period is carried on. In particular, there is a detailed discussion of the definition and the development of three main types of settlements (*misr*, *qasr* and proper *khan*) related to the Early Islamic period. It concludes with the analysis of the evolution of the Islamic khans and their historical antecessors, that was initiated in the first chapter.

In both of these two chapters, an overview of the physical and historical-political environment surrounding Jordan’s khans is clearly presented.

All the hypotheses and interpretations are explicitly justified on the basis of a systematic research on the archaeological and historical publications regarding the territories and features related to the main topic of the book. The base on which the historical/archaeological reflections are elaborated is always well specified, with the study incorporating both written sources and archaeological data, which appear constantly intertwined.

From chapter 3, the central “object” of this research begins to take shape. After an introduction to the historical-geographical framework of Jordan during the Middle Islamic period, the attention is focused on what is announced as the only two Ayyubid and Mamluk khans that have been excavated: Dhra’ Al-Khan and Khan Aqabat-Ayla (p. 128). The main focus is on both literary (Western and Arabic, with a particular focus on sources from the Mamluk and Ottoman periods) and archaeological sources from Aqabat-Ayla in order to clarify chronology and characteristics of the extant structures, as well as their functions during the analyzed periods.

The core of the book is represented by chapters 4 and 5. True to its title, chapter 4 deals with the archaeological interpretation of Khan Al-Aqaba, with a detailed presentation of the results.

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of the excavations carried out at Qal’at al-Aqaba from 2000 to 2009, followed by an extensive discussion of the development of Jordan’s khans in the Middle and Late Islamic periods. Combining these archaeological results with the study of written sources, the monograph provides a clear picture of the earliest occupation of the present state of the site of Qal’at al-Aqaba (late Mamluk period), traced back to the 9th–12th centuries. As the author clearly explains (and justifies), the Aqaba case-study represents a model for wider historical interpretations and a significant archaeological observatory for understanding large-scale territories, both because it was the object of modern archaeological excavations and there is an accessible collection of written sources that discuss it. Also, it was a junction area of important trade routes as well as a landmark of the Pilgrimage road in Jordan—at least during the periods analyzed.

Starting from specific historical questions regarding the extent of Crusader control in the area, the abandonment of the Early Islamic city of Ayla and the movement to Qal’at al-Aqaba (p. 200), chapter 4 provides insight into the socio-political and economic aspects of Aqaba, as well as a precise reconstruction of the history of khans in Aqaba and Jordan. The chapter goes through the description of the Qal’at, with a systematic presentation of the topographic (and archaeological) development of the structures revealed by the excavations. At the end (pp. 235–249), there is a detailed summary of the occupational history supported by references to the findings from each phase. Chapter 5 completes the analyses described above by providing a general idea of the findings unearthed during the excavations, with a deeper insight into pottery and coin assemblages. The quantification of the test samples and the contexts of discovery are clearly presented at the beginning, as well as the methodology used in reading and dating them (pp. 251–252). The pottery assemblages are sorted according to a typological classification, while the coin assemblages are ordered by period. The discussion referring to the material culture is supported by an efficient repertoire of tables and plates easy to browse and quick to use. The chapter ends with a final discussion and brief summary of the ceramic finds within the occupational sequence (p. 311) that provides a synthetic and complete picture of the material history of the site.

After the deeper archaeological analysis of the case-study of Aqaba, chapter 6 offers a more general overview of khans from the early Ottoman period to the modern age. Through the study (and the review) of both literary sources and recent surveys and excavations, it illustrates the development of the structures and their functions through time, highlighting that during the Ottoman period most of the khans in Jordan were built on the foundations of the pre-existing structures. It was also during this period that their functions were very flexible, with new services being implemented (e.g. khan Qatrana was used as post office during the 19th century, p. 361).

Chapter 7 concludes the study with a thorough contextualization of all the results and the interpretations obtained, highlighting (and justifying) other aspects of the analyzed topic that were not explored in this book, but which still deserve in-depth analysis.

The monograph is an excellent historical/archaeological work that contributes to the understanding of the origin and evolution of khans in Jordan. Importantly, it provides a key reference for further research on Jordan’s khans (and khans in general), particularly regarding the medieval and later periods.

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