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*A Short History of*  
**TRANSJORDAN**



YUHAN & LAUREN

*By* **Baha Uddin Toukan**  
WITH A FOREWORD BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS  
EMIR ABDULLAH

### ERRATA.

- Title page. For Great "Russle" Street read Great "Russell" Street.
- Page 7. The note "see Chapter IV" in the middle of the page, should be at the bottom of the page and acknowledgements at the bottom of this page should be on page 3.
- Page 8. Line 6 from bottom for "Undoubtedly" read "undoubtedly."
- Page 34. The note on "Al-Salt" in the middle of the page should be at the bottom of page 33.
- Page 30. Line 13, for "Kansuh" read "Qansuh."
- Page 41. Line 11 from bottom, for "disastrous" read "disast rous."
- Page 44. Line 13 for "self-governments" read "self-govern ment."
- Page 19. Line 87 for "Palaesina" read "Palacstina."
- Page 27. Hot torn line for "descendents" read "descendants."





# TRANSJORDAN.

Foreword by H. R. H. the Emir Abdullah of Trans Jordan,

The author brought to my notice betimes his decision to compose this notable work. Its completion marks the realisation of the aspirations of a heart which was moved by the patriotic impulse to make better known to the world the territory of Trans-jord<sup>a</sup>daja-and the landmarks of its history. He has included what tradition has preserved concerning the past of the country as well as what can be stated with certainty concerning its modern history. His zeal in the execution has been as admirable as the conception was excellent. Inshallah (if God will), this publication shall be the prelude to a series of other works of similar character, which will appear in due succession. The career of the author is a matter of pride to me. During the period which he spent in the service of Our Court, he was enabled to acquire an accurate understanding of many affairs of state. No doubt his career will have been similarly enriched by the experience which he has acquired during his stay in London in the service of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

ABDULLAH.

Amman,  
Zil-Hijjah 4th, 1363.  
or  
November 19th, 1944

—x—x—x—

## PREFACE.

A few years ago I collaborated with Colonel F. G. Peake in producing a detailed volume on the history of Transjordan and its tribes. Although the Arabic edition appeared as early as 1936, the English one has never been published. Ever since that date I have been contemplating writing in English, a short history of the country; a task which seems rather difficult, with the present circumstances and world insanity. But it was greatly facilitated by the encouragement and generous help of Brigadier J. B. Glubb, the Officer Commanding the Arab Legion, to whom my gratitude and my thanks are due.

I must also acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr. Emile Mar-morstein who has been kind enough to revise the manuscript and to make some valuable suggestions. My thanks are due also to Mr. C. T. Tower of the Arab Legion staff whose suggestions were very helpful at the early stages of this book.

LONDON. December 29th, 1944.

## INTRODUCTION.

A book on Transjordan, written by one of her sons in excellent English, is most welcome.

Mr. B. Toukan was born there and has been Secretary to H.R.H. Emir Abdullah, so his knowledge of the recent history of the country is first-hand and he brings out vividly the most interesting early history and its reaction on surrounding countries.

The best way of enjoying that country is to travel there oneself, if possible with a historian; this I had the good fortune to do when surveying in Sinai and the Negb, with Aaron's tomb as the land mark, 30 years ago, with Leonard Woolley and T. E. Lawrence. They, as historians, gave a very realistic picture of the Israelites' wanderings whilst we were in the actual land through which they passed.

Mr. Toukan's allusions to the familiar biblical names of tribes and places which he describes revived some amusing and pleasant memories.

The next best thing to travelling there oneself is to read Mr. Toukan's book and it will speed one's desire to go there.

We hardly realise how much interesting history has been packed into that small area by Canaanites, Israelites, Edomites, Nabateans, Romans, Arabs (from the conquest of Mohammad to the wars of Saladin), crusaders with their fortresses, by Turks, by Arabs under Arab and British leadership, Feisal and Lawrence.

The historical account of the last 30 years in which H.R.H. Emir Abdullah has by his wise statemanship and devotion to the Arab cause played a leading role, is of immediate and constructive value.

The Government of Transjordan is unique and devised to meet the traditions and wishes of the people; a very paternal democracy. The proof of the system is in the result, a peaceful period unknown to its neighbours, with steady and slow progress: the help given by Transjordan Arabs in this war in proportion to their numbers, merits a wider publicity.

Mr. Toukan has earned our thanks for writing this book as much as for his valuable work for over two vital years with the British Broadcasting Corporation.

30, Brechin Place,  
S.W.7.

S. F. NEWCOMBE,  
20/11/44.

## CHAPTER I.

### **\*General Description.**

With the arrival of His Royal Highness the Emir Abdullah Bin Hussein in Amman on the second day of March, 1921, after the collapse of the late King Faisal's Kingdom in Damascus, Trans-Jordan, in its present political sense, came into existence. The country enjoys a unique situation, being surrounded on all sides by important Arab countries, viz. Syria from the north, Iraq and Wadi Sarhan from the east, Saudi-Arabia, i.e. Nejd and Hijaz from the south, Egypt from the south-west, and Palestine from the west.

### **Typography and Principal Mountains and Valleys,**

Trans-Jordan, with the exception of the eastern section, has roughly the shape of a triangle, in which a large portion of the central area is a plateau, sloping down eastward to the depressions of Wadi Sarhan and Azraq. Towards the west there is a general rise in altitude before the precipitous descent to the Jordan Valley is reached.

Eastern Trans-Jordan, known as the "Corridor," is shaped roughly like a rectangle, attached to the upper part of the eastern side of the triangle. Part of it is mountainous, sloping down towards Iraq in the east and Azraq in the west.

Mount Tubeiq covers largely the south eastern corner of the country. It consists, mostly, of deep red soft sandstone, passing below into a red sandy clay; hence it appears as a flat tableland considerably dissected and windswept.

West of Mount Tubeiq and Wadi Sarhan, there is a sloping plain, the middle part of which is depressed into a basin with its centre at Juffer mud flat, which gathers the drainage for a radius of 80 kms.; while the drainage on its northern side goes to Wadi Mojib (Ancient Arnon). The drainage channels on the west side of the southern part of this plain all run, with the exception of Wadi Yitm, which flows to Aqaba, into Wadi Jeib, which follows a course between high mountains of the Shera to the Dead Sea. The other important wadis in the south are Delagha, Hesa (River Zered of the Bible), Finan, Dhana and Quweira. The Wadi Hesa possesses the largest flow of water of all southern Trans-Jordan and it serves to irrigate Ghor Al-Safi lands.

The main wadis of central Trans-Jordan are Nemele, Nejdiye, Abu Al-Sekakin, Fedan, Al-Ghoweibe, Dahel, Feife, Heideira, Kerak Ibn Hammad, Mojib, Al-Heidan and Zerqa Ma'in.

The structure and topography of northern Trans-Jordan are dominated by Salt and Ajlun mountains, which are actually the continuation of the main range—starting with Shera mountains in the south—which form the eastern wall of the Jordan depression. The principal wadis from south to north are Shu'aib, Zerqa (Jabok of the Bible), Rajib, Kufringe, Yabis, Ziglab, Taybeh, Al-Arab, Shallaleh and Shomer. With the exception of the last two, which flow in to the Yarmuk River in the north, the rest follow a course westward to the Jordan Valley, serving to irrigate the lands through which they flow.

North eastern Trans-Jordan forms part of a great plain which extends into Hauran in Syria, and eastward to Iraq.

### **The River Jordan.'**

The River Jordan has its origin in the south and west slopes of Mount Hermon in Syria. Its northernmost tributary is the River Hasbani.

The Jordan course runs almost straight southward. After it is joined by its main sources, it enters Lake Huleh, from which it emerges and flows southward into lake Tiberias. From the southern extremity of this lake it continues its flow and is joined soon afterwards by the River Yarmuk (Greek Heiromax); then through the hydroelectric works of the Palestine Electric Corporation, till it reaches its last destination, the Dead Sea, which is about 400 metres below sea level.

The Dead Sea Basin, together with the Jordan Valley, are called locally the Ghor (i.e. depression), over which the mountains of Palestine tower in the west, and the plateau of Trans-Jordan on the east, intersected by deep traverse valleys.

### **Area and Population.**

The area of Trans-Jordan is 90,000 sq. kms., inhabited by about 350,00 souls, of whom the overwhelming majority are Arabs and the rest are minorities, representing Circassians, Shishans, Turcomans and Persian Bahais, who have all become Trans-Jordanians either by birth or naturalization.

A good section of the population are Beduins, nomadic or semi-nomadic. The nomads are gradually changing into semi-nomads owing to the prevention of raids, the Beduin hobby, and the encouragement and help they receive from the authorities to utilize the land and raise cattle. In this connection the achievements of Brigadier J. B. Glubb, the Officer Commanding Arab Legion (locally known as Al-Sahib, the friend) should be mentioned with admiration.

## **Climate,**

The climate of Trans-Jordan is typically Mediterranean, having a rainy season from October to May, followed by a dry rainless summer. On the hills the winter is rather cold and **snow** falls in many areas; while the summer is on the whole **comfortably** cool, excepting the area east of the railway line where the climate is of desert type.

In the Jordan Valley, in winter it is seldom cold enough to freeze, but the summer is terribly hot.

## **Agriculture.**

The country east of the Jordan has had a great reputation for its agricultural wealth since ancient times. The Old Testament describes Mesha, King of Moab (Kerak), as a sheepmaster who "rendered unto the King of Israel the wool of a hundred thousand lambs and of a hundred thousand rams," (IT Kings 3: 4). It is related how the Hogarites who dwelt in Gilead (roughly modern Ajlun District) lost "of their camels fifty thousand,, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand." (I Chronicles 5: 21). Perhaps the cluster of the grapes together with the pomegranates and figs brought by the spies sent by Moses to the land of Canaan were cut from the gardens of Trans-Jordan. The Bible also tells us that Trans-Jordan used to supply ancient Egypt with the necessary ingredients for embalming, namely spicery, balm and myrrh. (Genesis 37: 25).

At present the country does not seem so, prosperous, due, perhaps, to the increase in the population and the rise of the standard of living. Yet its peasantry are a largely self-contained community. Their chief concern is to grow sufficient quantity of cereals for their own consumption, and any excess is sold to pay for their imported requirements.

The cultivable area of Trans-Jordan is small, not much exceeding 4,490,000 dunums (4 dunums - lacre), of which 260,000, lying mostly in the Ghor, are irrigated and the rest is run on dry farming.

The main crops attended to are wheat and barley in the winter, and millet and flax with a small quantity of vegetables in the summer.

In the Salt and Ajlun Districts there is a considerable area planted with vineyards, and the farmers have now started to plant all kinds of fruit trees.

## **Minerals.**

The real wealth of Trans-Jordan in minerals has not been totally explored. Recent investigation, however, has shown that iron ores may be found around Zerqa and south of Petra with

copper ore, in good quantities, in the neighbourhood of Wadi Finan, the smelting of which was carried out in Wadi Dhana as indicated by the burial grounds and large heaps of copper slag. Undoubtedly the ancient Egyptians and Romans made use of this copper, which also gave the Nabateans a powerful basis for commerce. The Khirbet al-Nubas (the ruined place of copper) which lies in this area is a relic of this industry in ancient ages.

Manganese deposits are found in Wadi Dhana; Ochre deposits at Zerqa Ma'in and Wadi Zerqa; phosphates at Ruseifa, Gypsum at Wadi Hesa, Wadi Kerak and Wadi Zerqa.

Petroleum has not been discovered in Trans-Jordan. But recent investigations revealed that there is a seepage of the liquid at Ain Umma, on the east side of the Dead Sea, 5 km. south of Wadi Mojib. This oil, however, has been found to be of asphaltic nature, high in sulphur and contains practically no naphtha.

### **Mineral Springs.**

The country is rich in hot water springs, the most well-known of which are found in Zerqa Ma'in, Wadi Ibn Hammad near Kerak, and in Wadi Afra north of Tafileh. Though Al-Hammeh hot springs in the north-western corner are within Palestine boundaries, geographically they are essentially Transjordanian.

### **Districts and Chief Towns.**

Trans-Jordan is divided into six administrative areas, namely:—

<b>District</b>	<b>Chief Towns.</b>
1. Ajlun District	IRBID, the seat of the District Government. JERASH, Jebel Ajlun, Mafraq.
2. Balqa District . . . .	SALT, the seat of the district Government. Madaba, Zerqa.
3. Kerak District . . . .	KERAK, the seat of the district Government. Tafileh.
4. Ma'an District . . . .	MA'AN the seat of the District Government, Aqaba, Wadi Musa, (Petra) Shobek.
5. Desert Area . . . . .	Extends east of the Railway line excepting the I.P.C. stations at H—4 and H—5 there are no villages there; all inhabitants are Beduins living under tents.
6. Amman . . . . .	besides being the capital of Trans-Jordan, forms with the villages near, it an administrative unit, called Muhafaza.

## Main Tribes.

1. Ajhm District
  - Al-Freihat, chief tribe of Jebel Ajlun Nahiya.
  - Al-Ghazawiya, chief tribe of Al Ghor Nahiya.
  - Al-Batayna, chief tribe of Beni Juhma Nahiya.
  - Al-'Obeidat, chief tribe of Al-Kufarat, Nahiya.
  - Al-Shureideh, chief tribe of Al-Kura Nahiya.
  - Al-'Atum, chief tribe of Al-Ma'ared Nahyia.
  - Al-Nuseirat, chief tribe of Beni-'Obeid Nahiya.
  - Al-Zubiya, chief tribe of Al-Ramtha Nahiya.
  - Al-Rusan, Chief tribe of Al-Saru Nahiya.
  - Al-Azzam, chief tribe of Al-Wustiya Nahiya.
2. **Balqa** District
  - 'Abbad, Al-Adwan, Al-Ajarma, Beni Hamideh, Al-Da'aja, Al-Hadid, Al-Mashalkha.
3. Kerak **and** Tafilelw
  - Al-'Amr, Al-Majali, Al-Tarawna, Al-Hilalat, Al-Hameidat, Al-Kalalda, Al-Obeidiyeen.
4. **Ma'an.**
  - Ayal Ahmad, Ayal Mahmud, Al-Saidiyeen, Al-Nuaimat.
- \* See Chapter IV.
5. Desert Area.
  - Beni 'Atiya, Al-Hajaya, Al-Huweitat, Al-Isa, Beni Khalid, Beni Sakhr, Al-Sarhan.
6. Non-Arab Transjordanians.
  - (1) Circassians: They came from the Caucasus as early as 1877 and founded the settlements of Wadi Sir, Jerash, Na'ur, Suweileh, Ruseifa, and Amman.
  - (2) Tartars: There are ten families of them now living at Wadi Sir. They are not Circassians in origin but it seems that they came with them.
  - (3) Shishan: They arrived in Trans-Jordan from the Caucasus in 1907. They live at Zerqa, Suweileh and Sukhneh villages.
  - (4) Persians: They belong to the Bahai sect; came to Trans-Jordan in 1910 where they founded the village of Adassiyeh.
  - (5) Turcomans: Originally were a Turkish nomadic tribe. They came to Trans-Jordan in 1874 where they settled in Al-Rumman and Al-Hummer villages. In 1935 most them went back to Turkey; a few families elected to remain.

\* For this Chapter, I am greatly indebted to the Report of M. G. Ionides on the Water Resources of Trans-Jordan and their Development, incorporating a report on Geology, Soils **and** Minerals by G. S. Blake.

## CHAPTER II.

### ANCIENT HISTORY.

#### Section 1 - The Hebrew Period.

##### Early Inhabitants.

It is generally an accepted theory that the ancient inhabitants of this part of the world were of the Semitic stock. Although it is still a problem of controversy as to the original home of the Semitic races, yet it is quite agreed that the Arabian Peninsula supplied the fertile crescent countries (i.e. Iraq, Syria, Trans-Jordan, and Palestine) and partly Egypt with their peoples, either by way of conquest or migration on a large scale, due to the increase of population and the limited means of living there. The earliest recorded Semitic move from central Arabia was directed towards Mesopotamia, where the tribes settled and founded a great empire known in history as Babylonia, which developed one of the most ancient and important civilizations in Asia. The second move was the Canaanite tribes in about 2900 B.C., who settled in the northern and western parts of the fertile fringe, to be followed one thousand years later by the Hebrews. Meanwhile there had been a constant gradual flow of Arab tribes, whose complete and quick penetration northward even to Europe, was achieved under the banners of Islam in the seventh century A.D.

The Semitic tribes who had lived in Trans-Jordan were described as giants or "Amalek" as called by the Bible and the Arab historians. -Of them were the Horrites (the mountain dwellers), living on Mount Seir (the Shera mountains of to-day), the Emims in the Kerak, the Zamzummims in Amman (Deut. II), and the Hogarites in Gilead (roughly modern Ajlun District).

Not much of the civilisation of these people is known; but it may be conjectured from the flints found and the remains of stone buildings discovered that they lived in the open, rearing animals and carrying out a crude kind of agriculture. In winter, however, they took shelter in clefts and caves, (Jeremiah 49: 16). They undertook, further, the carrying trade, between different surrounding countries. The Bible alludes to these caravans in more than one place. Joseph, the son of Jacob, was sold to a caravan party transporting goods to Egypt.

Undoubtedly, these caravan parties brought back with them Egyptian civilization and culture as early as this period. This is best illustrated by the Egyptian Saragophagus found at Sehab near Amman, and the Balua Stele discovered near Kerak. The findings in south Trans-Jordan show that the Egyptians had a colony at Wadi Finan to exploit the copper deposits there.

At the eve of the Exodus Trans-Jordan was divided into five kingdoms', corresponding, nearly, to the present administrative districts. The first was Gilead, with its capital at Beth Shan (modern Beisan), covering modern Ajlun District and the adjacent half of the Balqa District up to Salt. The second was the kingdom of Ammon which was confined almost to its capital Rabath Ammon (modern Amman). The third was the Amorite kingdom with its capital at Heshbon (Husban in the neighbourhood of Madaba), and extending up to Wadi Mojib. The fourth was the kingdom of Moab, covering the area falling between Wadi Mojib and Wadi Hesa, with its capital at Rabba, then transferred to Kerak in the time of King Mesha. The last was the kingdom of Edom, occupying the hills on both sides of Wadi Araba and including Tafileh, Shobek and Selah (Petra), and having its capital at Bozrah (modern Buseira village near Tafileh).

### **The Exodus.**

The date of this great historical event has not been definitely ascertained. The Bible, however, gives it 480 years before the construction of the Temple during the time of King Solomon, which makes it 1446 B.C., while certain historians believe it occurred between 1411 and 1375 B.C.

Anyhow the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sinia, three months after their march from Egypt. Their wanderings there lasted for forty years, after which they became strong enough to attempt an advance towards Palestine.

The first attempt undertaken by Moses to enter Palestine was through the Wadi Araba route; but he failed and searched for an entry from the east. As the shortest route from Wadi Araba to the uplands of Trans-Jordan lay through the territory of Edom, Moses requested the permission of her King to pass through, pledging that his people would keep the "King's High Way" and avoid all possible damage to fields or farms or wells. The permission was not granted; so Moses had no other alternative but to turn south and then proceed eastward through Atharim (Wadi Yitm) as far as Mount Hor (Jebel Harun, near Petra), where he made a halt. His brother Aaron died afid was buried in this mountain which has been considered a sacred place ever since.

From Mount Hor the Israelites marched northward, probably following roughly the route of the modern railway line, with the object of avoiding trespassing across the frontiers of either Edom or Moab, and finally arrived at a spot facing Wadi Arnon (Mojib) which divided the kingdoms of Moab and the Amorites. Sihon, the Amorite King, not only prevented them from passing through his domain, but fought with them in Jahaz (possibly Yajuz, northeast of Suweileh). After a great battle the Israelites were victorious and the Amorite kingdom disappeared altogether from history.

*Og*, the King of Gilead, fearing this great Israelite move, advanced against them with his forces at Edrei (probably modern Dera'a). He was severely beaten and his land was occupied and given with the Amorite kingdom to the Children of Gad, Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh (Numbers 32: 33).

One more enemy remained for Moses to get rid of; that was Balak, the King of Moab, who formed a serious obstacle in the way of the Children of Israel entering Palestine, for Jericho was within his domain. At last, he, also, was subdued and so the Israelites could approach Palestine unmolested, as their back at least was safe. Their great leader, Moses, however, was not destined to reap the fruits of his efforts. He ascended Mount Nebo from which he saw Palestine for the first and last time. Soon after he yielded up his soul and was buried in a valley in the land of Moab .. "but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." (Deut. 34:6).

The name Nebo is still preserved in Trans-Jordan, though corrupted into Naba, which is not far from the west of Madaba.

The passage of the Israelite tribes through Trans-Jordan was followed by centuries of trouble and turmoil, the result of which was that Moab regained almost her former territory up to Beth Nimrah (Nimrin of today near Allenby Bridge); while Gilead remained almost entirely an Israelite stronghold. Ammon was able to preserve her existence, while Edom adopted the policy of living peacefully with her neighbours, with the purpose of devoting her efforts to driving away the Beduins who formed a great menace to her integrity.

This state was not destined to continue for a long time, because David, on ascending the throne in 1000 B.C., planned to enlarge his kingdom, on the one hand, and to make the trade routes safe from east to south, on the other. To satisfy his ambitions he attacked and crushed Moab. The kingdom of Ammon, soon after, met the same fate. Edom, though she had lost some part of her territory, succeeded in resisting the attacks of David and his successors. But the consequences were rather fatal to her, for she was so badly weakened that she could no longer repulse the raids of the Beduins, and a time came when, in about 587 B.C., she was overwhelmed by a party of them called the Nabateans, who played a marvellous role in the history of this country. The Edomites were forced to emigrate to Palestine where they came to be known as Idumaeans, from whom came the Herodian kings of Jerusalem.

## **Section 2 - The Assyrians.**

The really determined effort made by the Assyrians to conquer this part of the world was in 846 B.C., during the reign of King Shalmaneser II. This great monarch could achieve no permanent results because his expedition was repulsed by a strong alliance comprising Ben-Hadad of Damascus, the Arabian Chief Gindibub and Baasha son of Rechab of Ammon. After the death of Be.n-Hadad the alliance dissolved, which gave Shalmaneser the opportunity to carry out a new campaign. He entered Damascus, and occupied Ammon, crushing any obstacle that stood in his way.

This triumph paved the way for more important conquests under King Vulnirari (810-783 B.C.). Syria, Palestine and Trans-Jordan, including Edom, not only came under the Assyrians' sway but paid tribute as well; though, as soon as the Assyrians became weak from pestilence and domestic troubles, these countries freed themselves from the foreign yoke.

In 745 B.C., Tiglath-Pileser ascended the Assyrian throne, inaugurating his military career by conquering Syria, Palestine and Trans-Jordan. Sennacherib, the successor of Tiglath-Pileser, was confronted by great troubles with the Beduins of Kedar, whose headquarters were at Aduma (modern Jauf in the desert). However, he dealt firmly with these troubles and also subdued the Nabateans who had started to appear on the horizon of the history of Trans-Jordan. Other serious disturbances were roused by the Beduins between 640-638 B.C., during the reign of Ashurbanipal. The Beduins as a result suffered an overwhelming defeat, and the survivors took refuge in the rocky volcanic mountains of Leja; only to surrender soon after, because of the shortage of water. Their leaders were carried off as captives to Nineveh, where Uaite, their chief, was tied to the city gate by a rope put through his jaw. So terrible a lesson had the Kedar Beduins received that they made no further move during the rest of Ashurbanipal's reign.

## **Section 3 - The Chaldeans.**

Soon after the death of Ashurbanipal in 626 B.C., the Assyrian Empire broke up and fell, and the Chaldean Empire was established in her stead.

The Chaldean monarchs were less fortunate in their imperial policy than their predecessors, for they were confronted by strong competitors, the Egyptian Pharaohs, in the field of domination.

Immediately after the fall of Assyria the Egyptian Army conquered Syria and Palestine, but was soon defeated in 608 B.C., by the greatest Chaldean king Nebuchadnezzar.

The King of Juda attempted to play on the two sides. After he had submitted to the Chaldean king he rose in revolt, expecting help from Egypt. The Syrians, Ammonites and the Moabites seizing this opportunity, raided the land of Juda, under the pretence of being allies of Chaldea, and did much harm. King Jehoiakim died during these affairs and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin who was only to suffer from the faults of his father; for Nebuchadnezzar invaded Jerusalem, and took him with several thousands of his subjects to captivity in Babylon.

Zedekiah was then made King of Juda. He remained loyal to Chaldea for some time only, because when the Egyptian Pharaoh advanced towards Palestine in 590 he joined him together with the allies he had made of the kingdoms of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon. The Chaldean king, on receiving such bad news hastened to Palestine. The Egyptian Pharaoh, after an unsuccessful skirmish with Nebuchadnezzar escaped back to Egypt, leaving behind his allies to suffer their fate. Zedekiah was killed and a large number of the Jews were taken away into captivity in 586 B.C.

#### **Section 4 - The Persians.**

With the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 561 B.C. the Chaldean Empire began to decline until it could no longer hold back the pressure exerted by the Persian forces, who put an end to it in 540 B.C., and who inherited all its dominions. Consequently, Syria, Palestine and Trans-Jordan fell into the hands of a new master.

King Darius (521-485 B.C.) divided up his empire into twenty administrative districts, each under an officer called Satrap. Trans-Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Cyprus formed the Satrapy of Palestine.

This system worked well, preventing any serious disturbances until the invasion of Alexander the Great in the year 333 B.C.

#### **Section 5 - The Nabateans.**

##### **Origin and History.**

About the end of the Assyrian era the Nabateans started to participate in the making of ancient Trans-Jordan history. They replaced the Edomites in southern Trans-Jordan, and built their capital at Selah, a Hebrew word meaning "rock", which was translated into Grefek to "Petra". They founded a great empire extending at one time northward to Damascus, and eastward to the Euphrates, with spheres of influence in the Sinai Peninsula and northern Hijaz.

The history of the Nabateans before the Greeks is still obscure while their origin and descent are a subject of controversy.

Adhering to the theory of the Semitic migration from **central** Arabia to the fertile fringe, which occurred at different epochs, the Nabateans were but one of those waves thrown northward, overrunning the weak and declining Edomites, who failing to resist the pressure of a young and powerful race, gave way.

Some historians amongst whom is Josephus were mistaken in thinking that the Nabateans were descended from Nabajoth, the first son of Ishmael (Genesis 25: 13), because of the similarity of names which is not an accurate scientific basis of judgement. Professor Enno Littmann in his book "Nabatean Inscriptions" gives a long list of Nabatean names of persons which sound Arabic, like: Abda, Bakr, Hanzal, Rajab, 'Amr., 'Omer, 'Omeira, Ka'ab, Mafan, etc. The identity is not only confined to names, but even to linguistic expressions and words. In other words they spoke Arabic dialect, though in their latter period they adopted Aramaic because it was the recognized language of commerce and dealings.

They agree further with the ancient Arabs in their religious culture, both worshipped the same deities such as Allat, Aloza and Dushara. In addition they were mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions as people who spoke Arabic, while the Greeks and Romans called them "Arabs."

The situation of the area in which the Nabateans settled engendered in them the love for commerce and carrying trade, since they were in a position to control all the trade routes from east to west, and from south to north. Diodorus, the famous Greek historian who lived just before the Christian era, spoke of them as people who did not practise agriculture or industry, but lived on trade and cattle rearing from which they made great profits, so that they more than once ransomed their being conquered by the Greek forces with an enormous sum of money and precious presents. He also says that although they lived in the open they had houses hewn in a naturally fortified spot, which, in case of an irresistible attack, they could easily desert carrying with them everything that the enemy might make use of.

Strato, the old Roman Geographer, says that the Nabateans were very energetic and active people. There were no slaves or poor among them, so every one of them had to take a share in carrying out public services such as policing, cleaning the streets, etc. so they had no social classes, nor family distinctions; but were all equal and extremely democratic. Besides this the king was supposed to submit a periodical report of his activities and public expenditure.

Strabo adds that they lived in a city surrounded by rocks. Their laws and regulations were excellent; but the courts were always busy settling disputes that arose amongst foreigners, who were mostly Romans; whereas the Nabateans themselves never used the courts, for every Habatean citizen knew his duties and limits; and so peace was always prevailing in that city of wonders.

The Nabateans, as sober, acquisitive and orderly people managed to escape the evils of the wars and disorders that broke out during the Greek and Roman periods. As allies of the Romans they continued to flourish throughout the first Christian century, forming at the same time a barrier between the Beduins of the Arabian desert and the Roman provinces. Trajan, the Roman Emperor, short sightedly reduced Petra and broke up the Nabatean ascendancy in 106 A.D., but their complete extinction came about when they were entirely assimilated by the Moslem Arabs in the 7th century.

It is not improbable that the Bidul Reduins, who are living primitively in the upper caves of Petra, are remnants of the old Nabateans, though the proofs are still lacking.

### **The Nabatean Deities.**

In their early period the Nabateans worshipped Dushara, the sun god, and Allat, his mother and consort, which was, at the same time, the great mother goddess of Arabia.

Later, when they came into contact with other races, they were influenced by their deities. The different patterns of portrait sculptures, found among the ruins of a Nabatean temple at Khirbet Al-Tannur near Tafileh, reveal a strong Hellenistic influence.

There is no evidence that the Nabateans or a section of them embraced Christianity. The Christian quarter at Petra might have been occupied by Greeks or Romans who were sufficiently attracted by the beauty and prosperity of the city to live there.

### **Petra.**

Petra "The Strong City" as it is called by David (Psalm 108) is a marvellous work of Nature and Man. The different shades of colour of its sandy rocks, its solitude in a barren area, its single long but narrow approach through a deep rock cleft, its numerous temples and tombs, its theatre, thoroughfares and houses cut into the living rock, all these ascribe to Petra characteristics that are found in no other place in the world.

The first man who disclosed the secrets of Petra to the modern world after visiting it in 1812 was the Swiss Traveller John Lewis Rurchardt. Probably other explorers attempted to visit the site after him but failed.

It was not until after the last World War that Petra was actually accessible to every visitor or interested person.

The city is situated northwest of Ma'an. The car does not reach it, but it reaches a village nearby called Elji from which the journey to the site may be made on horseback.

The narrow entrance to the city is called locally Al-Siq, which is very probable a Nabatean word, corresponding to the Arabic word Al-Shiq which means a "Ravine." The Semitists tell us that the Nabatean dialect changed the letter (Sh ) into (S ) wherever it occurred.

The Siq is about 6000 feet long and 20 feet wide in its narrowest parts. In ancient times it was paved, and on one side there are the remains of a channel to lead the water of Ayun Musa (Springs of Moses) into the city. As this channel was liable to be cut off in time of siege, the Nabateans overcame the difficulty by cutting in the rock vast cisterns lined with plaster, and channels were dug in every hill side to conduct the rain water into these cisterns.

The first building that faces the visitor after stepping off the Siq is Al-Khaznah (Treasury); so named because it was thought that the Pharaohs of Egypt had stored their treasure there. It is an extremely large building hewn out of the rock face, and perfectly proportioned. The engineer who designed the building was careful to shelter the face from winds and rain. It is thought that either it was a temple to some unknown deity or a tomb of a great king.

The hills, inside, fall back to form nearly a round space of about a mile in diameter; On the slopes of these hills was the actual city; temples, palaces, private houses, public baths, amphitheatre, streets and markets, all hewn in the rock in beautiful and accurate proportions, of a lovely style that always reveal to successive generations the Nabatean superiority in taste and art. Perhaps it is one of the mysteries of Petra that it cannot be pictured out in words, and a visit to it is a landmark in one's life.

### **Section 6 - The Greeks.**

Alexander the Great of Macedon started his career of conquests in Asia by inflicting a deadly blow against the Persian King Darius in 333 B.C., thus Syria, Palestine and Trans-Jordan came under his sway.

Ten years afterwards, the Great Conqueror died, and as he had no heir his empire was divided up into three parts: the European section was given to Antigonos; most of the Persian Empire including Syria as far as just north of Damascus to Seleucus; and Egypt, Palestine, Trans-Jordan and southern Syria to Ptolemy.

The three kingdoms, thus formed, suffered from an acute rivalry. The Seleucids of Syria, after fighting off the invading army of Antigonos, overran the eastern section of the Egyptian kingdom. In 286 B.C., Ptolemy II invaded Syria as far north as the River Yarmuk. It was this monarch who transformed the ancient Rabbath Ammon (in Amman) to the Hellenistic city of Philadelphia.

In 218 B.C., hostilities between the two dynasties were resumed. The Seleucid army, under Antiochus III, gained a quick victory in north Trans-Jordan and Palestine as far south as Rafah, where it was badly crushed by Egyptian forces led by Ptolemy IV. Thus Trans-Jordan fell again into Egyptian hands. Twenty years after, Antiochus avenged the previous setback and regained Palestine and Trans-Jordan.

### **The Principality of Hyrcanus.**

About this time Hyrcanus, the son of Joseph, a Jew of noble blood, took refuge in Trans-Jordan, escaping from a conspiracy plotted against him in Palestine. Here he established a little principality for himself, building as his residence a castle which he called Sur, just near the modern Grecasian village of Wacli Sir, west of Amman. The ruins of this castle are still seen in that locality and are locally called Iraq al-Amir "The Prince's Cliff."

Hyrcanus ruled his small state for twelve years, after which he was attacked and conquered by Antiochus IV of Syria in 175 B.C.,

### **The Jewish Domination.**

In one of his campaigns against the Egyptians, Antiochus suspected the attitude of the Jews in Palestine; hence they were subjected to his anger and persecutions. In consequence, the Jews rose in revolt, under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus, who succeeded at the beginning in crushing a Greek expedition despatched against him. In the meantime Antiochus was dead and so Judas found himself free to strengthen his situation. However, fresh Seleucid forces were sent against him, and in the battle that ensued Judas himself was killed and his followers scattered, in 161 B.C.

After that incident, Trans-Jordan enjoyed rather a long peace that lasted until 103 B.C., when the Jews, collected their forces again and overran the country, occupying in particular the Greek cities.

These constant wars and troubles resulted in the weakness of the Seleucid kings of Syria whose prestige in the country declined to the extent that the people of Damascus and south Syria voluntarily placed themselves under the rule of the Nabatean kings. The Nabateans remained the overlords of this district until the arrival of the Roman leader Pompey, in 64 B.C.

## **The Greek Cities.**

The old Greeks were not merely absorbed in conquest and domination so much as in colonization. In the country east of the Jordan—mainly in the north, for the south was chiefly subject to Nabatean influence—they founded a number of cities, in which the language, culture and religion were dominantly Greek. Some of these cities, e.g. Pella (modern Tabaqat Fahl, in the vicinity of Jisr Majami), Dion which is believed to be modern Eidun village, were probably founded as early as the days of Alexander the Great; while Abila (Tel-Abil), Gadara (Umm Qeis village), Gerasa (Jerash) and Philadelphia (Amman), were founded at a later period.

### **Jerash.**

The most important of all these Greek settlements was Gerasa. It is suggested that the name "Gerasa" was Semitic in origin, and probably came from the Ammonites, or Ammorites or even from the Nabateans. The exact date at which the Greeks started building the city is still unknown, but most likely it was founded by the Seleucid King Antiochus IV who bestowed his name upon it and became to be known as Antioch instead of the old name, which was revived later by the Moslem Arabs and corrupted afterwards into Jerash.

As a Hellenistic centre, the city enjoyed more prerogatives than any other Greek town in Trans-Jordan, even under the Romans, so that a good part of its Greek community survived throughout the ages, and in the reign of the second Moslem Khalif, Omer, it was decreed, as related by Arab authorities, that they should be treated with toleration and kept unmolested.

At the beginning of the first century before Christy Gerasa fell into Jewish hands, then dominated by the Romans; while a Nabatean community, probably merchants or trade agents, were living there. Hence its monuments do not reveal solely Greek civilization, but Jewish, Roman and Nabatean influences as well.

Old Jerash was surrounded by a great wall, having a regular thickness of three metres, a height varying with the terrain, and a length of 3456 metres. The wall is intersected by a few gateways, the chief one is in the south which is actually a magnificent triumphal arch.

Excavations have been carried out there on a large scale, so that a great number of its monuments are now above ground, namely temples to the various Greek deities, cathedrals,, thoroughfares, Plazas, public baths and fountains, amphitheatres, paved streets with colonnades on both sides, etc. All these show the importance of this interesting city in ancient times together with the degree of civilization it attained.

## Section 7 - The Romans.

### The League of the Decapolit.

With the arrival of Pompey in 64 B.C. peace and order were restored to the country, and a new page in its history was opened. The Roman leader, as soon as he had completed his military activities, set out on his political arrangements. He granted the Greek cities their freedom, which did not imply independence. It meant only the continuance of democratic city government under the supervision of the Roman legate in Syria. This might mark the beginning of the Decapolis, which was essentially a confederation of free cities, the nature and purpose of which are still uncertain as well as the date of its formation. The number of the cities forming the league was not constant at all times, but varied in accordance with circumstances, amounting at one period to eighteen., which number was the maximum recorded.

Judea and the Nabatean kingdoms, though they submitted to Rome, continued as separate entities in varying degrees of vassalage. This organization remained, with slight alterations, throughout the rest of the first century B.C.

### V

### The Herod Kings.

In the year 40 B.C. the Romans made Herod, an Idumaeen Jew who had shown true sympathy with Rome during her difficulties, King of Judea. It was natural then that Herod would side with the Romans during their conflict with the Nabateans. Herod himself, incited by the Romans, led a campaign in 32 B.C. against the Nabateans in which he was defeated, but very soon renewed his forces and utterly destroyed the Nabatean army near Philadelphia. As a result he gained Peraea, which comprised a district east of the Jordan extending from Zerqa in the north to Mojib in the south. No sooner had Herod occupied this territory than he commenced to rebuild the castle of Machaerus (modern Mukawir, near Madaba which had been constructed by the Maccabeans as a stronghold against the Nabatean Arabs, and to bathe in the mineral springs of Callirrhoe (Zerqa Ma'in), in the vain hope of finding a cure for the malady from which he suffered.

Herod the Great was succeeded, after his death in 4 B.C. by Herod Antipas. His wife, the daughter of Aretas IV of Petra (9 B.C.-40 A.D.), on observing the love relations between him and his brother's wife Herodias, obtained a divorce and fled to her father at Petra. This incident together with a frontier dispute led Aretas to wage war against Herod. The latter complained at once to Rome, and the Emperor Tiberius, consequently, ordered his legate in Syria, Vitellius, to march on Petra and depose Aretas for waging war with a Roman vassal. Meanwhile the news were received that the Emperor was dead and so Vitellius went back leaving the Nabatean king unpunished.

About this time Herod retired to Machaerus, with Herodias his sweetheart, and her daughter Salome. John the Baptist who was then preaching in Trans-Jordan denounced this as most scandalous, and as a result he was imprisoned in the fortress, and was, soon after, killed.

In the year 64 A.D. the Jews in Palestine rose in revolt against the Romans. The war lasted six years during which Machaerus was captured and destroyed. After this Peraea was annexed to the Province of Syria.

### **The Province of Arabia.**

In 90 A.D. the Emperor Trajan, carrying out a reorganizing scheme, created the province of Arabia which at the beginning consisted only of Peraea and the Decapolis. In 106 the Emperor for certain reasons ordered his governor in Syria, Aulus Cornelius Palma, to destroy the Nabatean kingdom, which was added to the province of Arabia; but about 358 it was made a separate province under the name of Palaesina Tertia or Palaestina Salutaris.

### **The Byzantine Empire.**

In the year 395 the Roman Empire was divided into the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Roman Empire which became to be known as the Byzantine Empire with its capital at Constantinople. Certainly the Arabian Provinces were part of the Byzantine Empire, and enjoyed a long peace for more than a century, after which hostilities with the Persian Empire were resumed. These hostilities weakened both empires and lasted until the eve of the rise of Islam when both received the same "fate at the hands of the believers of the new faith, around the middle of the 7th century.

### **Results of the Roman Occupation.**

#### **1. Farming.**

Trans-Jordan under the Romans enjoyed a prosperous era despite the constant wars and troubles that accompanied their occupation. Towns and villages sprang up, chiefly, in the north; and most of them were embellished with theatres, aqueducts, temples and colonnades.

Farming developed and took a new form under the Romans. The land was transferred from big to small holdings, with the result that larger areas were utilised, and stone-built farms rose, the relics of which are still seen in the plain east of Madaba such as Al-Yadudeh, Al-Tuneib, Um-Al-'Amad, Al-Rejeeb, etc.

## 2. Roads.

Trans-Jordan, as has been repeatedly stated, was in former days one of the main routes of racial migration and commerce. It was the terminus of three important desert routes, namely, the one starting from Aden, south of the Peninsula, to Aqaba and thence to Petra, and the other two debouched from ports on the Persian Gulf, running across the vast desert to Petra.

Within Trans-Jordan the Nabateans had a net work of roads and subsidiary tracks, the most important of which were two: one leading to the north, and the other to the west into Palestine.

Soon after the destruction of the Nabatean kingdom in 106 and the formation of the Province of Arabia, the Romans commenced building roads that would serve their military, administrative as well as commercial purposes. The main road was that which connected Bostris (Busra Eski Sham in the Hauran) with the Red Sea. It was started in the reign of Trajan and completed in the reign of his successor Hadrian - i.e. in the first decade of the second century A.D.—following almost the alignment of the old Nabatean road. The main places, mentioned by the Romans, through which the roads passed were, from north to south: Chantia (possibly Mafraq), Hatita (Khirbet Al-Samra), Gadda (Khirbet Khaw, near Zerqa), Ruseifa, Philadelphia (Amman), Rab Abatora (Al-Rabba, near Kerak), Thorma (That Ras), Hegla (Ain Nejl, near Shobek), Petris (Petra), Zadagatta (Ain Sadaqa), Haurra (probably Al-Humeima), Wadi Yitm and Haila (Aqaba), where the road split into two, one went across Sinai, and the other went north to Rafah in south Palestine.

The second important road connected Busra Eski Sham with Tiberias, passing through Adrha (Dera'a), Kapitolias (Beit Ras), and Gadara (Um Queis). A third Roman road was built between Philadelphia (Amman) and Jerusalem, taking for the most part the line of the present road.

These roads were perfectly paved to facilitate the running of wheeled vehicles, used by the Romans for their transport. On each side of the road, in addition, there was a line of curbing stones which were almost twelve feet apart, together with mile-stones where necessary. At proper intervals there were also stations for watchmen, overseers and relays of horses. Some authorities state that it was possible to travel on such roads 100 and even 200 miles in twenty-four hours. It is an attribute of the Roman engineers and workmen that the work was so skillfully and perfectly done that many sections of their roads are still existing today in some places together with a number of bridges that are still in use.

### 3. Lines of Defence.

With the object of protecting the veins of commerce and establishing order and security from within and without, the Romans employed two systems of defence lines: the Exterior and the Interior Line. The first consisted of subsidised Beduin Tribes, amongst whom were the famous Ghassanites. These Beduins were practically prevented from penetrating into the cultivable areas, and were supposed to offer volunteers in time of crisis.

The Interior Line was more important and consisted of a series of fortresses and posts, built for the most parts along the line dividing the desert from the agricultural area. The most important of these fortresses and posts, whose ruins are still existing were Qasr Burqa, Al-Azraq, Qastal, Zizia, Um Rasas, Khan Al Zebib, Mahattet Al-Haj, Da'ajaniyah, Odroh, etc. Zizia was rather a town in the Roman days, and many of its buildings remained as late as 1834 when they were raged to the ground by the Egyptian army of Ibrahim Pasha.

The garrisons stationed at these forts and posts were either regular or auxiliary troops. The auxiliary troops were chiefly recruited from the Arab population who had gained a reputation as skillful horsemen and archers.

The style of these buildings varies from pure Roman of Odroh, which was built about 106 A.D., to almost entirely oriental of Quastal which was set up between 400-500. This fact reveals that the Romans were influenced to a certain extent by the art and culture of the Orient, as time went on. It was even related that Trajan employed a number of architects from the Orient in many of his buildings. It was the Damascene engineer Appollodorus who built the great bridge on the Danube, around 105 A.D., and later designed the Forum of Trajan in Rome.

### 4. Christianity.

There is no doubt that a number of Trans jordanians embraced Christianity early in its rise, and they certainly increased on the accession of Emperor Philipus, a Christian Syrian, to the throne of Rome in 243. Subsequent persecutions and intolerance, however, checked the spread of the *new* faith, until the conversion of Emperor Constantine (324-337), who encouraged the greatest number of his subjects to follow his example. So the ruins of the old churches and monasteries that still exist at Hobras, Ajlun, Um-Al-Jimal, Amman, Jerash, Kilwa (top of Mount Tubeiq) and many other places in Trans-Jordan were built after that date. So Christianity, by the time Islam sprang up in Arabia, had been firmly established in Trans-Jordan, not only amongst the settled section of the inhabitants, but even amongst a number of Beduin Tribes, at whose top were the Ghassanites.

## **The Ghassanites.**

The exact date of the Arab migration from-central Arabia northward is not known, but certainly commenced very early. During the Roman period the Arab tribes in south Trans-Jordan became so powerful, especially after the downfall of Petra which formed a block against them,,that they started to endanger security and hamper commerce. This apparently explains why the Romans exerted all efforts to gain their friendship by concluding treaties and agreements with them, and granting subsidies to their important members after the break up of the Nabatean Kingdom.

The first Arab tribe to pitch its tents within the Roman frontiers and to ally itself with Roman government was Tanukh, an offshoot of the great tribe of Quda'a, probably in the third century A.D. Soon after, the Tanukhs were driven out by another offghoot of Quda'a called the Dhajaima, who made their encampment in the rich pastures of Moab and Balqa. The Romans recognized the ascendancy of this tribe over all the Beduins in this area until the coming of the Ghassanites.

The Arab writers, almost, unanimously, agree that the Ghassanites originated in Yemen, hence belonging to Qahtan stock. They made their move northward, probably at the end of the second century A.D., and after wandering here and there, they finally arrived in Trans-Jordan, overthrowing the Dhajaima and settled in their place not before the 4th century.

The Ghassanites distinguished themselves as orderly and efficient people, for as time went by they abandoned their nomadic manners and established a fairly civilised and powerful kingdom under the Roman vassalage with its capital at Busra Eski Sham in the Hauran. The Arab historians mention thirty-two of their kings, while the German scholar Noeldeke, who is considered an authority on the history of these people, states that the Ghassanite kings known to the Romans did not exceed ten in number, beginning with Jabla Abu Shammer (d. about 500 A.D.), and ending with Jabla Bin Al-Ayham, who witnessed the rise of Islam. Hence their reign did not actually last more than 150 years.

The Romans subsidized the Ghassanites and utilized them, to a great extent, in maintaining peace in the desert, and in their conflicts with the Persians and their Arab allies, Al-Manathirah, who had a similar history to that of their kinsmen the Ghassanites. Wars and raids took place between these two rival tribes, as an outcome of the hostility existing between their masters, and fill a long chapter in the history of Arab chivalry and legend.

The Ghassanites reached the zenith of their power in the reign of Al-Harith, around the middle of the sixth century, to

whom was attributed the construction of -Al-Quastal, Zerqa, Mushatta; Hammam Al-Sarkh, Al-Muwaqqar in the Balqa; and Odroh, Al-Jerba and old Ma'an in the Ma'an District. Ruins of all these buildings are still existing.

It is rather paradoxical that these Arabs did not develop a literature of their own, but encouraged poets from other tribes, who especially used to visit them, composing the most beautiful and remarkable poems in their praise. Of these poets, two are worth mentioning: Al-Nabigha al-Thubyani and Hassan Bin Thabit, who became afterwards the poet laureate of Prophet Muhammad.

The Ghassanite kingdom was overthrown by the Moslem invasion of Syria; some of them embraced Islam, while the rest preserved their Christian faith and lived peacefully among their Moslem kinsmen. There are now certain Christian families in Trans-Jordan, Syria and Palestine, who claim descent from the old Ghassanites, a fact which is not improbable.

The last Ghassanite king, as has been stated, was Jabla Bin Al-Ayham, who after embracing the new faith, changed back to Christianity, because of the refusal by the second Khalif Omer Bin al-Khattab to be allowed to preserve his royal prerogatives and to be given special rights and treatment other than what the Moslems received. He, however, fled to Constantinople and lived the rest of his life there. One of his offspring, Nicephorus, ascended the throne of the Byzantine Empire (802-811) as alluded by Professor Finley in his "History of Byzantine Empire."

### CHAPTER III.

## TRANS-JORDAN IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

### 1 - The Moslem Era.

The Arabs, as has been stated, had started their penetratiuu northward long before the rise of Islam. In addition to the Arabs, who made their home in Trans-Jordan at a very early date, like the Nabateans, Quda'a and Ghassanites, the Qureish Tribe of Hijaz, of whom the Prophet Muhammad was a member, made regular mercantile expeditions to Trans-Jordan, Syria and Palestine. The Holy Quran alludes to these expeditions in Chapter 34 Verse 19. Hashim, one of the Prophet's ancestors, died and was buried at Gaza in Palestine, probably during these expeditions, while Abu-Sufyan, a Qureishite also, purchased, according to the Arab historian Al-Balatheri, a farm in the Balqa called Qubbash, which is most likely the modern Qarm al-Kabsh, a place now marked by a few tumbled stones and a carob tree on the Salt-Allenby Bridge road, close to Wadi Shu'aib bridge. The Prophet himself had led, more than once, commercial caravans to Syria before he was commanded to preach Islam.

In the year 610, Muhammad, after reaching the age of forty, commenced preaching the new faith. In 622 he and his adherents were obliged to emigrate to Medina, an event that marks a turning point in the History of Islam. Taking this town as his headquarters, he started sending his missionaries and expeditions throughout Arabia; gaining more converts, and at the same time ascertaining the strength of his enemies and opponents in preparation for bigger and more important activities in the future. Accordingly small but efficient campaigns were carried out against south Syria and Wadi Sarhan, bringing back with them the correct information about the strength of the Romans. The Prophet himself led one of these campaigns against the Oasis of Al-Jauf, in order to put an end to the attacks of the Beduins camping there on the caravans travelling between Medina and Syria. Such measures and activities proved, by the year 627, so successful that the new faith began to gain a foothold in the north. The Governor of Amman for the Romans, Farwa Ibn 'Amr Al-Juzami, embraced Islam and exchanged messages and even presents with Prophet Muhammad; but very soon he was punished by the Romans with imprisonment first and crucifixion afterwards.

Upset by this threatening and perilous move from the south, the Roman Emperor, Heraclius, commenced organizing his forces and recruiting volunteers to guard the southern frontiers. But before he could go very far with these measures he was surprised by an attack of 3000 Moslems led by Zeid Bin Haritha. The fight took place in September 629 at M'uta south of Kerak. The Moslems were largely outnumbered and so the battle, in its first stage was not on the whole in their favour. Three of their most outstanding commanders, namely, Zeid Bin Haritha, Ja'afar Bin Abi Talib, the Prophet's cousin, and Abdullah Bin Ruwaha successively fell on the battlefield. Khalid Bin Al-Walid then was selected to the command. Seeing that retreat was inevitable, he effected it with marvellous skill and speed.

The three commanders killed were buried at Al-Mezar near the battlefield, and were commemorated by a beautiful dome built by one of the Ayyubid kings in the 13th century.

Whatever the result of the battle might be, it was the first real warning to the Byzantine Empire of the destiny awaiting her, and an inauguration of a series of expeditions that ended with the Arab penetration north, east and west.

In 630 the Prophet led another big campaign against southern Trans-Jordan. Making Tabuk his headquarters, he despatched several detachments and emissaries to the surrounding districts of Aqaba, Odroh and Jarba. The Prophet then went back to Medina

awaiting the news of Khalid Bin Al-Walid's expedition against Jauf, This proved to be very successful as the town capitulated, and its Christian chief, Ukaidir, surrendered and was taken back to Medina where he embraced Islam and then was allowed to go back to his territory.

Although the affairs in the newly founded Moslem state were not favorable right after the death of the Prophet in 632, his Khalif (successor) Abu Bakr sent three expeditions; two against southern Trans-Jordan one after the other, and the third against Iraq. All of them were an introduction to the great decisive battle that would be fought later.

In the spring of 634 the Khalif mobilized 24,000 men under the command of the most skilful generals for the conquest of Syria. After successfully occupying Trans-Jordan which was made the headquarters for further operations, the Moslem army concentrated at the southern bank of the Yarmuk while the Romans camped at the opposite shore. At the same time the Moslems received reinforcement under Khalid Bin Al-Walid, detached from the army that was fighting the Persians in Iraq.

Khalid was selected as the best qualified general to plan the military operations and to lead the battle. On August 20th, 636, he ordered an advance; and after a severe fight, he gained an overwhelming victory. Heraclius, on hearing the result of the battle, bade farewell to Syria and set out for Constantinople.

At this juncture it is worthwhile mentioning that the Moslem army was accompanied by women for the purpose of encouraging the men, serving them during the battle, and attending to the wounded; just as the different women organizations are doing during the present war.

Having achieved this result the Moslems started cleaning the land from the the enemy garrisons and men. Several skirmishes were fought before all Syria, including Palestine and Trans-Jordan, became a Moslem dominion.

During the Yarmuk battle Abu Bakr died and was succeeded by 'Omer Bin Al-Khattab whose first duty was to devise an administration for the occupied territory. His first governor there was Abu 'Obeida 'Amir Bin Al-Jarrah.

In 639 a devastating plague broke out in Syria, which caused the death of a large number of the population. It was during the spread of this pestilence that 'Omer set forth on an inspection tour to Syria. He was received by the Arab Emirs and generals at Sargh (modern Mudawara, on the southern borders of Trans-Jordan),

and was advised by them to go back to his capital as the land was infected with plague. But 'Omer insisted on continuing his journey until he heard Abdul Rahman Ibn 'Awf, one of the Prophet's companions, quoting the following saying of the Prophet: "Knowingly approach not a place where the plague rages, nor flee from this pestilence should it spread around you."

Abu 'Obeida died of this disease and was buried in the Ghor that carries, since then, his name, south of Jisr Majami' where a mosque-tomb marks the place. The first constructor of this mosque-tomb is unknown, but it was restored during the reign of the Mamaluke King Beibars (1260-1277). His successor on the governorship of Syria, Ma'az Bin Jabal, succumbed immediately after and was buried at Al-Shuneh about three miles east of Jisr Majami' where, the grave is still standing. The third governor Sharahbil Bin Hasna fell also a victim to the plague and his tomb is still existing in Wadi Al-Yabis; followed very soon by his successor Yezid Bin Abi Sufyan. The governorship of the province was then entrusted to Mu'awiya Bin Abi Sufyan, who later became the first Khalif of the Ummayad Dynasty.

During the rest of Omer's and Othman's Khalifates Trans-Jordan enjoyed rather a happy time. It seems also that the country was not involved in the dispute between the two claimants to the Khalifate Ali Bin Abi Talib and Mu'awiya Bin Abi Sufyan after the assassination of the third Khalif Othman (644-656). But the arbitration conference, that had been agreed upon by the two rivals, took place in 658 at Odroh, south of Trans-Jordan, where a small hill called Tel Al-Asha'ari (Tel means hill) still bears the name of one of the arbitrators, Abu Musa Al-Asha'ari.

However the arbitration did not end the dispute. It was not until the assassination of Ali and the accession of Mu'awiya to the Khalifate that conditions became comparatively better. With this new Khalif the Ummayad Dynasty's reign over the Moslem World was established, and lasted for nearly a century.

Undoubtedly, the tranquility of Trans-Jordan and its proximity to both the capital Damascus and the desert made it the favourite resort of Khalifs for spending their leisure time and holding their sports. No wonder then if the country is rich with monuments attributed to the Ummayad Dynasty which was noted for its love of architecture. Some of the Ummayad buildings, however, were erected on the site of old Roman fortresses or posts that had been demolished by the earthquake of 657.

The most important remains of the Ummayads are found now on the edge of the desert. They include Qasr Al-Kharraneh, Qasr-al-'Amra, which is an interesting example of Moslem art. On its

walls and dome there are interesting frescoes representing the Byzantine Emperor, Roderick the last Vtsi-Gothic King of Spain, Yazdajird III of Persia and the Negus of Abyssinia. The portrait of Roderick reveals that the castle was built after the conquest of Spain in 711. Qasr Hammam Al-Sarkh, Qasr Tuba, and Qasf Bayir all date back to this period.

The most interesting if not the most important of all these buildings is Qasr Al Meshatta, east of Amman, which, despite the divergence of opinion regarding the date of its construction, is typically Ummayad. Large parts of its frescoes were removed to the Berlin Museum in 1905, a typical German exploitation and selfishness.

### **The Abbassid Dynasty.**

With the downfall of the Ummayad Dynasty, the Abbassids came to power. The nucleus of their activities and arrangements was started in a small village, up to this time called Al-Humeima, on the road between Ma'an and Aqaba. Here lived Abu Hashim, a grandson of Ali the fourth Khalif of Islam, who laid down the foundations of a fruitful and effective propaganda against the Ummayads. Before his death he abdicated his right to the headship of the Moslems in favour of Muhammad, a descendent of Abbas, one of the uncles of the Prophet. Soon after, the Abbassides gained so many adherents, especially in Iraq and Persia and by 749 were so powerful as to effect a defeat on the Ummayads, and ruled the Islamic world in their stead.

The Abbassides transferred the seat of the Khalifate from Damascus to Baghdad, an act which proved the death blow of Trans-Jordan. So most of her palaces and castles were abandoned, and gradually fell into ruin. Even the pilgrim road which rail through the heart of Trans-Jordan gave way to the new road that ran direct from Iraq to Hijaz.

In 878 Ahmed Ibn Tulon, the governor of Egypt, disregarding his allegiance to his overlords in Baghdad, ruled practically independent. He enlarged his principality by annexing Syria—including Trans-Jordan and Palestine—to his jurisdiction. Sixty years later the Khalif with the intention of carrying out administrative reorganization, united the governorship of Syria, Egypt, Mecca and Medina.

By the second half of the 10th century signs of dissension appeared on the horizon. The Fatimites, who had first started the propaganda for their cause in north Syria, seized Egypt by a military action and declared themselves as the legal Khalif of Islam being the direct descendents of Ali and his wife Fatima the Pro-

phet's only daughter from whom they took their name. Soon Trans-Jordan, Palestine and Syria came under their rule, while the Khalif at Bagdad was too weak to resist, owing to disorders and conspiracies at his court which resulted in the transfer of his temporal power to the Seljuk Turks.

The Patimites, on the other hand, gradually degenerated as well. Consequently their hold on this country became weaker until 1071 when the Seljuk Turks made a move westward and occupied Syria, Trans-Jordan and Palestine.

## 2 - The Crusades.

### The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem.

At the end of the 11th century the Christians of Europe, instigated by the pope and longing for a material gain from the rich and prosperous East, organized expeditions to deliver the Holy Land from the fanaticism and misrule of the Moslem Seljuks. In June 1098 the first organized crusading army led by noble and skilful princes crossed the Syrian frontiers from the north and seized Antioch; then after a series of battles carried on its advance southward until Jerusalem was captured on July 15th 1099. Having accomplished this, the Crusaders formed a Latin Kingdom whose crown was bestowed on Godfrey of Bouillon, taking the title "Defender and Baron of the Holy Sepulchre."

Godfrey was not destined to live long and was succeeded in 1100 by his brother Baldwin I. Almost immediately after his succession, Baldwin led an expedition to southern Palestine, and after realizing his object from there marched into southern Trans-Jordan, penetrating as far as Wadi Musa (Petra), which he entered, and from which the inhabitants, who were possibly the remnants of the old Nabateans and ancestors of the present Bidul tribe, escaped.

Tughtakin, then the Seljuk ruler of Damascus, did not tolerate the Moslem countries being ravaged by the Crusaders. So he carried out a series of campaigns against them, which lasted with short intervals for ten years, at the end of which Baldwin had the best of the struggle. Finally a peace was concluded according to which Tughtakin agreed to concede half the revenues of the lands of Balqa, Ajlun and Jaulan as far as Hauran to the Latin Kingdom. To secure the collections of these revenues Baldwin built Al-Habis fortress on the south bank of Yarmuk River, overlooking the modern Shajara Station. In reaction to this crusade attempt of establishing a foothold east of the Jordan, Tughtakin erected a fort in old Jerash, from which he made an attack on Al-Habis and captured it.

As an act of revenge the Crusaders decided to occupy the south of Trans-Jordan which, strategically, would actually mean the severance of the main line of communication between the three Moslem strongholds, Egypt, Hijaz and Syria, and would serve also as a protection to the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem against any possible raids or attacks from central or eastern Arabia.

The first move in realization of this end was made in 1115 when the castle of Shobek or Montreal, as called by the Crusaders was built. At the same time an important outpost was founded at Wadi Musa (Le Val de Moise,) and was connected with Shobek by a good road. Aqaba was also seized and a castle was constructed on the Island of Graye in the Gulf of Aqaba which is called now Jeziret Far'un, i.e. the Island of Pharoah. In completion of this constructive programme forts were built at Tafileh, Ahman (Ma'an) and Wu'aira in the Shera mountains. To administer this vital district the principality of Oultre Jourdain was created, extending from Wadi Zerqa in the north to Aqaba in the south, and its first lord was Roman De Puy.

After all these measures had been carried out, Baldwin died in 1118, and the Latin throne was occupied by his nephew Baldwin II. On receiving this news Tughtakin marched with a big force against Palestine and occupied first Tiberias and then proceeded to Ascalon. In order to remedy this critical and dangerous situation the new King, not sufficiently strong to face Tughtakin at Ascalon, marched into north Trans-Jordan to cut his lines of communication. Al-Habis fort was occupied and as soon as he arrived at Busra Eski Sham he defeated Buri, Tughtakin's son, who was there to guard the rear of his father's army. Tughtakin, realizing the perilous position to which he was exposed, hurriedly retreated to Damascus.

Jocelyn, the Lord of Tiberias, to revenge the plunder of his barony in the previous war, made a raid across the Jordan and looted some Arab flocks. But before he could return, he was attacked by a Moslem force and badly defeated. Baldwin II at once came up to the assistance of his vassal. However, no fighting was necessary as a truce was concluded in which Tughtakin pledged to pay a sum of money to Baldwin, while the latter, in return, pledged to refrain in future from raiding the Arab herds. This truce was not of a long duration, for in 1121 Tughtakin attacked Palestine; while Baldwin, in response pushed into Hauran. The two rivals, however, did not risk to meet in a battle, and so each retreated to his own capital. The Latins, on their way back, captured and destroyed the fort at Jerash.

In 1131 Baldwin II died and was succeeded by Fulk of Anjou, who besides his struggles with Buri, who ascended the throne of

Damascus after the death of his father in 1128, paid special attention to strengthening the Latin hold on Palestine and Trans-Jordan. So he ordered Payen the Butler, Baron of Oultre Jourdain after Roman De Puy, to build the castle of Kerak, which became the most important and powerful Latin stronghold in southern Trans-Jordan. This explains why it was called "La Pierre du Desert."

### **The Zinki Dynasty.**

After the death of Tughtakin in 1128 his dominion split up into two parts: the first was the district of Aleppo as far as Hama, and was annexed to 'Imad ud-Din Ibn Zinki, the Seljuk overlord of Mosul. The second part was the district south of Hama with its capital at Damascus,, and was given to Buri son of Tughtakin.

In 1146 'Imad ud-Din was killed and his principality was divided between his two sons, Seif ud-Din took Mosul, and Nur ud-Din took Aleppo. Nur ud-Din as a capable and ambitious ruler looked forward to wresting the principality of Damascus. In 1154 the time was ripe for undertaking such an enterprise. So he laid siege to Damascus for seven days, after which the commander of the city garrison, named Ayyub, opened the gates in execution of a prearranged plan between him and his brother Shirkuh, who was one of the distinguished generals of Nur ud-Din. As a reward Ayyub was appointed the governor of Damascus, and his son Saladin (Salah ud-Din,) then seventeen years old, was honoured with a post at the court of Aleppo.

After uniting Syria, Nur ud-Din adopted a conciliatory policy with the Latins, at least until he could reorganize his new state and strengthen his army. So a truce of two years was agreed upon, and was renewed in 1156 for another year. Baldwin III, however, before the expiration of the truce invaded Trans-Jordan near Damya in the Ghor. Consequently war was inevitable, which ended with the defeat of the Syrian army near a wooden bridge over the Jordan, just below Lake Tiberias, probably lying at the site of modern Jisr Majami'. The war ended without any sort of gain

### **Conditions in Egypt.**

At this time conditions in Egypt were not favourable. The Fatimite Khalifate was at its last breath; and inter-family feuds and bitter competition for post. in the government made matters worse. Hence Egypt became a fertile field for the political activities of both the King of the Latins and Nur ud-Din; the latter being eager to annex it to his dominions, whilst the former tried to prevent such a unity which, if realized, would endanger the integrity of his kingdom and leave the Crusaders in a very critical situation.

In 1163 Shawar was forced to escape from Egypt to Syria appealing for help from Nur ud-Din to regain the ministry usurped by his strong rival Dhorgham. Nur ud-Din willingly stretched a hand of help, and despatched a strong force commanded by Shirkuh. The expedition was successful and Shawar was reinstated in office.

Very soon, however, Shawar became displeased to see the Syrian influence in Egypt; so he secretly sought the assistance of Almaric, King of the Latins, which was, without hesitation, given. At last an agreement was concluded between the two sides, without resorting to bloodshed, in which both were to evacuate Egypt.

In 1167 Nur ud-Din again attempted to capture Egypt but failed before the combined forces of the Egyptians and Latins.

This state of affairs forced Almaric to utilize his friendship with Egypt in order to annex it to his kingdom. The Egyptians? with this new danger had no other alternative but to request the help of Nur ud-Din, who sent to Egypt a strong army led by Shirkuh and his nephew Saladin. No fighting was necessary for Almaric had retreated before the arrival of the Syrian army, which although its presence was no longer necessary, entered Cairo in 1169 and deposed Shawar. Eventually Egypt was added to Nur ud-Din's dominions. Shirkuh was appointed its governor, and on his death in the same year he was succeeded by Saladin, the founder of the Ayyubid Dynasty.

### 3 - The Ayyubids.

#### Saladin.

Saladin was the most heroic and distinguished of all Moslem rulers of that period. The role he played with the Crusaders, and his relations with their leaders and princes were of such a knightly character that the account of him now fills a considerable space in the romantic and historical literature of both the Orient and the Occident. The stories told of his dealings with the English monarch Richard the Lion-Hearted reflect only the best example of true medieval chivalry and knighthood. Perhaps the "Talisman" of Sir Walter Scott exhibits that to a great extent.

Saladin inaugurated his military career with advancing into the south of Palestine and sacked Gaza; then launched a sea and land attack against Aqaba which he captured. This success incited him to march towards Montreal (Shobek) but was obliged to **hurry** back to Egypt on hearing of the conspiracies plotted there against the Syrian supremacy.

In 1174 Nur ud-Din died and his kingdom passed to his **weak** son who became a puppet in the hands of his ministers. It seemed

that the whole state of the late Sultan would go to ruin, when Saladin made his adventurous move towards Syria. After seizing Damascus, he later in 1175 proclaimed himself the rightful Sultan of Syria.

About the same time the erratic Latin noble Renaud de Chatillon married Etienne, the suzerain of the Barony of Oultre Jourdain, and thus he became the real overlord of the Barony. He started his career with attacking a rich Moslem caravan travelling to Hijaz. No sooner were the reports received, that the Sultan started considering what measures should be adopted. He at once decided to leave Cairo and make his headquarters in Syria. On his way he ravaged the country from Aqaba to Montreal. Then the Sultan pushed on and entered Palestine through the Jisr Majami' route. After investing Tiberias, he sent detachments to plunder the surrounding area. Then the Latins arrived on the scene, and a battle was fought near the crusader castle of Belvoir (modern Kawkab Al-Hawa, near Beisan); but it was not decisive and both sides drew back and retired home. Other skirmishes took place between the two belligerent parties in northern Trans-Jordan, but no one of them was of special importance.'

Meanwhile Renaud was busy building up a fleet to invade the Holy Gties of Hijaz by sea from Aqaba. The fleet sailed, but was soon pursued by an Egyptian fleet under Admiral Husam ud-Din Lulu who succeeded in inflicting a heavy defeat on the Latins in which very few of them were saved.

This attempt by Renaud, although it was a failure, aroused the fears of the Sultan that as long as the Latins were holding the south of Trans-Jordan, his lines of communication between his three main territories Hijaz, Egypt and Syria, would be always in danger as well as the pilgrim caravans to Mecca and Medina. Realizing the difficulty of capturing the Latin strongholds in Oultre Jourdain, he concentrated his efforts on strengthening the north of Trans-Jordan. Consequently he ordered the governor of Ajlun to build the Rabadh fortress to rival the Latin fortress of Belvoir and to guard his line of communication with Syria.

In 1184 the Sultan attempted to capture Kerak, and on his failing to do so, concluded a truce with the Latin Kingdom for four years in order to reorganize his forces and the administration of his dominion. Before the expiration of the truce Renaud fell upon a rich caravan going to Hijaz., among whom was the Sultan's sister. Saladin, greatly enraged, definitely decided to put an end to such treachery and immediately collected his best warriors and proceeded to Palestine through Tiberias, near which he was met by the Latin forces, and a decisive battle became inevitable. The Latins as a result were badly beaten in the famous battle of Hittin (1187);

their king and a large number of their princes among whom was Renaud de Chatillon, were taken prisoners. With the exception of Tyre, Tripoli and Antioch, the whole of the Latin Kingdom and the Barony of Oultre Jourdain became Moslem possessions.

### **Al'Adil (Sephadine)**

The Sultan Saladin died in 1193 and his Kingdom was divided up into a number of rival independent petty states, each under a member of his family. Al-Afdhal, the eldest son, took Damascus and Southern Syria, Al-'Aziz, the second son, took Egypt, Al-Zahir, a third son, took Aleppo, their cousins took Baalbek, Horns and Hama, while their uncle Al-'Adil (Sephadine,) who was on friendly terms with Richard the Lion-Hearted of England, took Mosul.

The inevitable result of this split was that rival disputes took place which no blood relationship could smooth over. Their clever and ambitious uncle, Al-'Adil, however, having in mind the object of uniting all these petty states under him, played all the time on their jealousies.

In 1198 Al-Aziz of Egypt died and his son tried to ascend the throne, but Al-'Adil succeeded in deposing him. Before that he was able to defeat Al-Afdhal and to annex Syria to Egypt. In order to administer such a big dominion he divided it up into provinces, each governed by one of his sons. Al-Kamil was appointed to Egypt, Al-Mu'azzam Isa to Damascus and southern Syria, while other sons took over various parts in Iraq. Ajlun and Balqa were ruled by 'Izz ud-Din Usama who was displaced by Aybek Ibn Abdullah. In order to control both districts, Ajlun and Balqa, he restored and enlarged Al-Rabadh castle in 1214 and at the same time built a fort at Al-Salt\*

Aybek also built a fort at Azraq and erected many posts along the pilgrimage route to guard the caravans going to the Hijaz.

### **The Downfall of the Ayyubids.**

On the death of Al-'Adil in 1218 his two sons divided up his kingdom: Al-Kami! in Egypt and Al-Mu'azzam Isa in Syria. Nine years later, Al-Mu'azzam died and was succeeded by his son Al-Nasir Daud. Al-Kamil, having settled his disputes with the Crusaders who had landed in Egypt under Frederick II of Germany, desired to occupy Syria. He, therefore, sent a force under the command of his brother, who obliged Al-Nasir to capitulate with the concession to retain the Jordan Valley, part of Kerak and the Balqa for himself. Ajlun was annexed to the province of Syria and southern Trans-Jordan to Egypt.

Al-Kamil died in 1236 and his kingdom was divided up into two parts: his brother Ismail took Syria and his son Al-Salih took Egypt. Soon after the two states fell into quarrel, that ended with the triumph of the Egyptian army led by the famous General Beibars.

In 1249 Sultan Al-Salih of Egypt died leaving the throne to his only son, Turan Shah, who was then absent in northern Iraq. Fearing that the various ambitious Emirs would fight for the throne, Shajret Al-Durr, a Turkish concubine in the late Sultan's harem, concealed the death of her husband, and governed the country until Turan Shah arrived.

Turan did not rule very long, for in the following year he was assassinated, and Shajret Al-Durr was elected to the throne. This marks the end of the Ayyubid Dynasty in Egypt.

\* Al-Salt might be the important town of Ramoth Gilead of the Bible. The Romans knew it and its name was, very likely, derived, from the Latin "Saltus," a forest. It was mentioned in the Notitiae Ecclesiasticae of the sixth century where the Greek called it "Salton."

#### **4 - The Mameluke Dynasty.**

##### **The Mongol Invasion.**

In 1257 Shajret Al Durr was deposed and murdered and the throne of Egypt was occupied by the Mameluke Kutz.

The principal event in his reign was the great invasion of the Mongols under Hulugu. These savage people, after overt-running Syria advanced into Trans-Jordan. The castle of Al-Rabadh capitulated and the fort of Al-Salt was destroyed. They then proceeded into Palestine and penetrated as far as Gaza where they were met by a strong Egyptian army under Beibars. A severe battle was fought, in which the Egyptians were victorious forcing the Mongols to retire northward and Beibars in close pursuit until both stood face to face at Ain Jalut near Beisan.\* Here the decisive battle was fought resulting in the final defeat of the Mongols and their expulsion from the land.

\* Some authorities state that Ain Jalut is the corruption of Urn Al Jilud, in the vicinity of Ajlun Village.

##### **Sultan Beibars.**

The famous soldier Beibars succeeded Kutz on the throne of Egypt. His chief activities during his reign were confined to preventing any further Mongol incursions which brought orlly devastation and ruin to the country. Strategically Trans-Jordan

should have the biggest share of his programme. So he appointed a trustworthy Mameluke named 'Izz ud-Din Aybek Ibn Abdullah Al-Allani as a governor of northern Trans-Jordan with strict orders to repair Al-Rabadh castle and so rebuild Al-Salt fort. In order to facilitate the movements of his troops west and east and vice versa, he ordered the construction of a bridge over the Jordan near Damya, the remains of which are still to be seen. The Sultan, at the same time devised an organized system of quick communication by establishing a line of signal and pigeon stations, starting from the eastern frontier and ending at Cairo. This line passed through northern Trans-Jordan, and so beacon posts were erected at Turra Village, Irbid and Al-Rabadh.

The signal posts were built on the tops of hills or high buildings. Any movement of the enemy would be reported - by means of fire at night and smoke in the daytime - by the first post

to the next and so on until it reached Cairo. The signals varied according to established code; and in every station there was a telescope to enable these signals to be read. The system worked so efficiently that an alarm on the Euphrates could be known within twelve hours to the Sultan at Cairo.

In this connection it is worth mentioning that the second Khalif Omer, more than six centuries before, ordered Mu'awiya, the viceroy of Syria, to establish such a system of fast communication as a precaution against any possible counter attack undertaken by the Byzantine Emperor.

Up to this time southern Trans-Jordan was still subject to an Ayyubid Emir called Al Mughith Omer, who could withstand all attempts to bring him to submission. Beibars, however, by a devilish trick brought him to Cairo where he was imprisoned and killed. Immediately afterwards he ordered the repair of Kerak castle, whose western tower still bears his name.

Probably with the object of gaining the Moslem public opinion and support he re-established the Abbassid Khalifate in Cairo after it had been overthrown by the Mongols in Baghdad.

Beibars died in 1277 after he had reduced the Crusade possessions in Palestine to few coastal towns, and founded a relatively strong united Moslem empire.

### **The last of the Mameluke Sultans.**

Beibars was succeeded by Sultan Kalaun who had great troubles with the Beduins of Trans-Jordan. He was followed by his son Khalil who finally expelled the Crusaders from Palestine and Trans-Jordan.

Khalil was succeeded by his brother Al-Nasir who loved Trans-Jordan and lived a big part of his life in Kerak. He restored the castle of Shobek, renovated the fort at Aqaba, and built in 1330 the existing shrine at the top of Mount Hor (Jebel Harun.)

Sultan Ahmed, son of Khalil, seems to have loved Trans-Jordan also. For sometime he made Kerak the seat of the Sultanate, to escape the intrigues of Cairo.

After Ahmed, disorders and dissensions spread all over the realm. What made matters worse was the devastating plague that broke out in 1492 throughout Syria and Trans-Jordan accompanied by a great shortage of rainfall, causing enormous loss in cattle and agriculture. This state of affairs, added to over-taxation, culminated in the Trans-Jordan rebellion of 1502. The aged Sultan Kansuh Al Ghuri, who rebuilt the present fort of Aqaba, repaired afterwards in 1588 by the Turkish Sultan Murad, was practically paralyzed, and could do nothing. By 1505 the situation became so serious and out of hand that the Beduin bands sacked both Kerak and Jerusalem. Ten years later the Mameluke Dynasty came to an end with the arrival of the Ottoman Turks.

## CHAPTER IV.

### TRANS-JORDAN IN MODERN TIMES.

#### 1 - The Turkish Regime.

##### **The Conquest of Trans-Jordan.**

After establishing themselves in Asia Minor, the Turks under Sultan Selim the Grim, crossed south into Syria where they smashed the army of the last Mameluke Sultan Qansuh Al-Ghuri in 1516, then proceeded to Damascus and Egypt which was conquered in 1517. The Ottoman Sultan, on returning home, carried off with him the last Abbassid Khalif in Cairo. A few years later this Khalif was forced to resign all his rights and offices in favour of the Turkish Sultan, who henceforth added the title of "the Khalif of Islam" to his royal designations.

Now Trans-Jordan redeemed its special importance as a pilgrim route between Turkey and Hijaz. Hence it became the main duty of the new overlords to restore order and security to the country after the corrupt rule of the Mamelukes, so that the pilgrim caravans might pass through unmolested. Civil administration was at once established at Kerak and a garrison was stationed at Shobek.

These measures did not permanently prove sufficient, for during the reign of Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent the Tamimiya tribe of Kerak expelled the civil servants from the town and declared

disobedience. To remedy the situation, the Wali (viceroy) of Damascus sent; a certain Yusef Agha Al-Nimr of Nablus to crush the uprising. This man succeeded in restoring order; then a new governor was appointed while Hassan Agha, brother of Yusef, remained in command of the troops. The present Aghawat tribe of Kerak claim descent to this officer.

The new governor, very soon afterwards, declared his independence in the Kerak district. The Wali of Damascus by a clever trick arrested the traitor and put him in jail. Meanwhile the 'people of Shobek, infected by the conduct of the neighbouring town, attacked the Turkish garrison and killed most of its men. A few of them, however, escaped to Balqa where their descendants are still known as Shawabka living around Madaba.

### **The New Pilgrim Route.**

The pilgrim route before Suleiman the Magnificent followed for the most part the old Roman road, which by this time had fallen into disrepair so that travel on it had become extremely difficult. During the reign of Sultan Suleiman a new road was made almost along the fringe dividing the desert from cultivated land. The road is called now "Tareeq Al-Bint" or the "Maiden's Road", because it is believed that the Sultan's daughter was the first to travel on it when coming back from Hijaz.

To guard this new road the same Sultan built a fort at Ma'an where his name is still inscribed on its eastern gate. Shortly afterwards posts at Qatrani, Hasa and 'Anaiza were set up; all of them later became stations for the Hijaz railway. At the same time the government started subsidising the Beduins to secure a safe passage of the pilgrim caravans through their areas and spheres of influence. The subsidies were sent with a special official accompanying the pilgrim procession to Hijaz. It has been estimated that these grants amounted to 60,000 gold pounds annually.

### **The Era of Al-Ma'ani II.**

The internal history of Trans-Jordan during the Turkish reign up to the beginning of the 19th century consists mainly of inter-tribal feuds and family rivalry. In addition the country was involved in the continuous disputes of the feudal lords in Palestine and Syria.

. In 1603 Fakhr ud-Din Al-Ma'ani II of Lebanoti succeeded in imposing his rule upon the districts of Safad, Nablus, Ajlun and Hauran. For the time being the Turkish government did not show any signs of resentment. But the quick growth of Fakhr ud-Din's power aroused much suspicion in the central government at Constantinople, and consequently it was deemed necessary that immediate punitive measures should be adopted. Accordingly instructions were issued to the Wali at Damascus to take the initiative.

The Wali utilized the hostility existing between the Sardiya tribe and Fakhr ud-Din. So he instigated them against this Lebanese Feudal Lord, promising to reinforce them with regular troops if required. A considerable fighting took place between the two parties without any decisive results. Two years later Fakhr ud-Din, due to dissensions in his forces, was obliged to escape to Italy, transferring his rights and position to his son AH.

Ali carried on the war with the Sardiya tribe, who were able to drive him in defeat as far south as Quseir Bashir in the Kerak district. Meanwhile Ali appealed for help from his allies, the Beduins of Hama, who eventually arrived on the scene, and attacked the Sardiya from the rear, forcing them to leave Hauran altogether. Consequently the Wali of Damascus was disappointed with this result and had no other alternative but to make peace with the Ma'ani family. He immediately approached the Sublime Porte and obtained in 1617 a pardon for Fakhr ud-Din who in the next year arrived back from Italy. After swearing the oath of allegiance to the Sultan he regained all his territory and offices; and his son Hussein was rewarded with the governorship of Ailun.

This friendship between the Turkish government and Fakhr ud-Din did not endure long, for in 1633 he was seized and taken as a prisoner to Constantinople where he was executed. His possessions were either taken over by the Turkish government or fell into the hands of other feudal chiefs.

### **The Uprising of 1755.**

With the exception of inter-tribal conflicts, nothing of special importance took place in Trans-Jordan for more than a century after the termination of the Ma'ani supremacy. In 1753 the Pasha who was leading the pilgrimage caravans held back part of the subsidies sent to tribes. The Beduins, however, considered this as a breach of faith on the part of the government. Consequently in the next year they prevented the caravans from proceeding until the mohey due to them with the amount deducted in the previous year had been paid. The Pasha hesitatingly complied with the demands and the passage was allowed.

The Sultan on hearing the incident and before ordering an investigation to be made into the reasons of the Beduins' misbehaviour, instructed his viceroy at Damascus to take action against them. The Viceroy by a clever excuse summoned the Beduin sheikhs to Damascus, where their heads were cut off and sent to Constantinople.

The Beduins of course considered this as an act of treachery; so instead of recanting as had been expected by the Wali, they determined on revenge, and the country now was thrown into complete disorder, and there was no security anywhere.

When the pilgrimage caravans of the second year arrived at Qatrani, the Beduins fell upon them. The guards were overwhelmed and routed; the Pasha himself only managed to escape with the help of a friendly sheikh; and of the wretched pilgrims, it was estimated that 2000 out of 6000 were either killed or died of thirst or starvation in the desert. The booty was immense and it has been related how the Beduins mistaking the pearls looted for rice tried to boil them for food.

### **Al-Zahir Omer.**

About the same time the feudal Emir of Acre was trying to extend his influence so that by 1760 he was the unrivalled master of the coast line from Sidon to Jaffa, together with Safad, Nablus and Ajlun districts. Although his forces occupied Al-Salt, yet he was unable to impose his authority on the Balqa district, owing to the strong resistance of the Adwan Tribe.

In 1762 Ajlun revolted under the leadership of the Shreideh Tribe who held out in Tibna Village; but they were brought to submission.

The Turkish government were very suspicious of Al-Zahir's move; and consequently despatched a strong expedition against him. He immediately appealed for help from his ally and friend Ali Bey of Egypt, who although he was a Turkish Viceroy ruled quite independently. The Turkish forces were badly defeated and as reinforcement was not expected the Wali of Damascus resorted to cunning and diplomacy, which resulted in the break up of the alliance and the return of Ali Bey to Egypt.

Ali Bey was succeeded by Muhammed Bey Abul Thahab, who, as a proof of his loyalty to the Sultan, led a campaign against Al-Zahir. But Muhammad Bey himself was killed immediately after the first battle, and his army broke up and went back to Egypt.

Mustafa Pasha Toukan was then appointed Viceroy of Egypt with the pledge to put an end to Al-Zahir. So a strong expedition was detailed under the command of a brave soldier, Ahmad Pasha nicknamed Al-Jazzar (the Butcher.) Al-Zahir was badly beaten, and Ahmad was rewarded with the governorship of his territory.

## **Al-Jazzar.**

Al-Jazzar was a strict and cruel ruler and would not tolerate any rising within his domain, or show any leniency towards any disloyal subjects. He concentrated all his efforts against his rivals in the Lebanon, and nothing of special importance took place in Trans-Jordan during his reign.

It was due to his influence that a strong force was collected from tribes in Palestine and Trans-Jordan to fight Napoleon in 1799 on the plain of Ibn 'Amir (Esdraellon,) near Haifa. Although the Arabs were defeated in this battle, Napoleon was confronted with obstinate resistance everywhere he advanced, and ultimately his campaign in Palestine proved to be a failure.

After the death of Al-Jazzar in 1804 Trans-Jordan fell into general turmoil. The Beni Sakhr Tribe started competing with the Adwan Tribe for the chieftainship of the Balqa district. In the battle that took place in 1812, the Adwan in spite of the assistance they had received from the Turks and the Ruwalla Tribe of Syria, were defeated and had to leave the district and live in Ajlun. The Abbad Tribe, utilizing the absence of the Adwan, started to establish their supremacy in the Balqa. The Adwan, however, with the help of the Hauran people, and Beni Hassan Tribe of Ajlun, attacked the Abbad and forced them to escape to Beisan where they lived for some years.

In Kerak conditions were not any better. The Majali, who had originally come from Hebron,, were in conflict with the 'Amr Tribe who had established themselves in the district long before, and finally the 'Amr broke up and scattered. There was also the strong Beni Hamideh Tribe whom the Majali had to subdue before their supremacy could be recognized. The Majali Sheikh formed a powerful alliance with the inhabitants and fell upon the Beni Hamideh forcing them to leave Kerak and live south east of Madaba where their encampment is still to be found. Hence the Majali were left the undisputed chiefs of the Kerak district.

In the Ajlun district the case was quite different. As a prosperous agricultural area, it suffered greatly from the lack of strong administration, and from inter-tribal feuds. So the inhabitants divided up the district into special areas called Nahiya's, each under a powerful chief, whose main duties were to look after the welfare of his Nahiya, to represent its interests with the government authorities and to defend it against raids or incursions.,

These Nahiya's have survived until the present time though the main reasons for their formation have vanished.\*

The desert area, by the beginning of the 19th century, was occupied by the Beni Attiya, Huweitat, Hajaya, Saidiyeen, Beni Sakhr, Sarhan, Beni Khalid and other Beduin tribes, carrying out intertribal raids and attacking the settled areas whenever possible.

\* For names of these Nahiyas with their chief tribes see Chapter I.

### **The Invasion of Ibrahim Pasha.**

Having assumed the rule of Egypt after the withdrawal of the French in 1805, Muhammed Ali, with the intention of overthrowing the Turkish suzerainty, declared war against the Sultan in 1831. His son Ibrahim Pasha invaded Syria and shook off the Turkish rule there.

But in 1834 with the help of the Turks revolts broke throughout Syria. The most serious outbreak was at Nablus which was led by the chiefs of both the Toukan and Qassim families. Consequently the Pasha of Egypt attacked the town and forced the rebels to escape first to Hebron and then to Kerak. Kerak was immediately besieged by the Egyptian forces, until the rebels evacuated it and fled to Al-Salt, with the Pasha in pursuit. On his way he was attacked by the Beni Sakhr near Zizia. The Beduins, however, were beaten and the town was sacked and destroyed never to be rebuilt again. The Pasha then occupied Al-Salt and destroyed its fort, while the rebels managed to escape to the 'Anaiza tribe who, failing to resist the Pasha's pressure, handed them over to him.

By 1841 conditions in the Near East were so bad and disturbing that the European powers had to intervene. They forced the Egyptians to evacuate Syria, and restored the Turkish rule. During their withdrawal through Trans-Jordan, the Egyptians suffered great losses at the hands of the hostile population.

### **The Establishment of Administration.**

The chaos following upon Ibrahim Pasha's invasion together with tribal warfare proved so disastrous to the settled population of Trans-Jordan that they appealed to the Wali in Damascus for protection and the restoration of order. An expedition was immediately despatched which although it did not effect the complete subjugation of the country, yet succeeded in maintaining security in most places and restraining the activities of the Beduins.

This was followed by a reorganization in the civil administration of the country. A Qaimmaqam (District Officer) was appointed to Ajlun, and another to Al-Salt. In 1892 the Chief Sheikh of the Majali was persuaded to hand over the Kerak district to the government, who immediately stationed a strong garrison at the

citadel and established a Mutassarif (District Commissioner,) who was directly responsible to the Wali of Damascus. In 1905 his jurisdiction covered Balqa and Ajlun districts after detaching them from the Mutassarif of Nablus and Hauran respectively.

By 1905 the government authority was so established that a rebellion which broke out in Shobek was easily put down. In 1910 another serious uprising took place in Kerak caused by the heavy taxation and the government's attempt to collect the firearms from the people. The Turkish garrison was outnumbered and beaten, but soon afterwards a strong expedition was sent from Syria which forced the insurgents to surrender.

### **The Hijaz Railway.**

Though the scheme of connecting Damascus with Hijaz had been put forward as early as 1864, yet it was not realized until the reign of the famous Sultan Abdul Hamid.

On April 12th 1900 the building of the line commenced at Damascus. At the same time a branch line was started from Haifa to join the main line at Dera'a. On August 6th, 1902 the line reached Amman and a year later Ma'an, from where the work continued for five years until it arrived at Medina.

The line from Damascus to Medina was about 1302 kms. long. The original plan included a branch line connecting Ma'an with Aqaba and ultimately with Suez and Port Said, but this has never been built.

It was estimated at the start that the line would cost three and a half million gold pounds; but it actually cost five millions more, raised from subscriptions received from all over the Moslem world, and from different kinds of taxes and funds.

Much damage was done to the line during the war of 1914-1918 because of the acts of demolition carried out by the allied forces to obstruct the movements of the Turkish troops.

In accordance with the decisions arrived at by the conference held at Constantinople in 1924, the line was divided up into four parts, each part belonging to the country through which it passes. The Trans-Jordan section stretching from Dera'a in the north to Mudawara in the south, was put under the control of the Palestine Railways. The line south of Mudawara is in disrepair, and no train has run south of that station since 1925.

## 2 - Hie Great War.

### **The Arab Revolt**

When all preliminary negotiations between the British government and Sherif Hussein of Mecca (late King of Hijaz) had been completed, the Arab Revolt, commenced on the 10th of June, 1916, (Sha'aban 9th, 1334 A.H.), a day which is still commemorated every year as the day of the Arab Awakening.

Arab troops in the Hijaz led by the Sherifs sons attacked the Turkish garrisons there, while Sherif Feisal (late King of Iraq), helped by Colonel Lawrence, led an expedition against Aqaba and captured it. Henceforth Trans-Jordan assumed a position of importance in the War, for it became possible to blow up the Turkish line of communication with the Hijaz, and to carry out an attack from the desert on the Turkish left in Palestine.

Taking Aqaba as his headquarters, Sherif Feisal advanced northward, took Wuheida, near Ma'an, and at the same time a detachment of his force penetrated as far as Shobek. Soon after Sherif Nasir occupied Tafileh. In their attempt to recover the town the Turks were badly beaten.

### **The Conquest of Trans-Jordan.**

By this time Palestine was occupied and the advance into Trans-Jordan was started with the main object of lightening the pressure of the Turks on the Arabs in the Hijaz by cutting their line of communication at Amman.

In the early morning of March 23rd, 1918, the Auckland Mounted Rifles crossed the Jordan at Hajlah Fort near Allenby Bridge and drove the Turkish forces back to Shunet Nimrin; thus the main British force composed of the 60th Division was able to cross the Jordan in safety.

The Turks who were concentrating at Shunet Nimrin were smashed, and the road to Al-Salt was opened. During these operations the Mounted troops with the Camel Brigade advanced eastward, capturing the three villages around Amman, namely, Wadi Sir, Na'ur and Suweileh. However before any movement against Amman was made, reports had been received of the arrival of Turkish reinforcement from Damya and further north, threatening the British Vear. Eventually a retirement was necessary. This was effected without interruption, and by April 2nd all British troops were on the western bank of the Jordan,

This campaign, though unsuccessful, yet served its main purpose. The Turks withdrew part of their forces in the south thus enabling Feisal to capture some railway stations and blowing up considerable part of the line, leaving Hijaz totally cut off from the north for the rest of the war.

Another attempt made by the 60th Division to advance into Trans-Jordan was on April 30th. Al-Salt was captured, but before marching towards Amman a retreat was again thought necessary as the Turks were still holding the best strategical positions behind the British lines.

During the summer of the same year no further attempt to conquer Trans-Jordan was made. But the Arab troops were very active in demolishing the railway line and bridges, and attacking the Turkish garrisons scattered here and there in preparation for the final blow, which started on September 19th. The advance was so successful that it continued without a stop beyond Aleppo to the Turkish frontiers. The Turkish Yildirim (Storm) Group was totally wiped out, as its retreat had been delayed and in fact rendered almost impossible by the effective demolition of the line north and south of Dera'a carried out by the Arab forces.

### **3 - Trans-Jordan after the War of 1914-1918.**

#### **The Kingdom of Syria.**

Trans-Jordan, having been conquered by the Allied forces of the Arabs and the British, formed part of the Occupied Enemy Territory (East), under the Arab administration established by Emir Feisal in Damascus. In December, 1919, Emir Feisal was declared a King and consequently Trans-Jordan was included in his kingdom. The country ceased to be an Occupied Enemy Territory when the San Remo Conference entrusted the Mandate to the British Government in 1920.

After the collapse of King Feisal's rule, and the occupation of Syria by the French, the original Syrian Province stretching from Dera'a to Ma'an (called afterwards Trans-Jordan), was left without any sort of authority. In August 1920 the High Commissioner for Palestine arrived in Al-Salt and declared to a gathering of notables that the British Government favoured the establishment of local self-governments in the country, assisted by British advisers. Accordingly a number of such governments were formed each acting almost independently. The system, however, was a complete failure, for the lack of cohesion among the different governments brought chaos throughout the country until the arrival of His Highness the Emir Abdullah.

#### **H.R.H. THE EMIR ABDULLAH.**

The Emir Abdullah is the second son of the leader of the Arab revolt against the Turks, the late King Hussein. As a member of the House of Hashim, the noblest of all Arab families, he is a direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammad through his daughter Fatima. After spending his early years in the Hijaz, he and his two brothers, the late King Ali of the Hijaz and the late King Feisal I. of Iraq,

went to Constantinople in 1893 to join their father in his captivity. In Constantinople, the Emir Abdullah had the advantage of a good education and also gained political experience, which was to prove valuable. He became a member of the Ottoman Parliament when he was not yet 30 and there he distinguished himself as a champion of Arab interests. His ardent belief in the Arab cause, his eloquence in Arabic and Turkish, his talent, enthusiasm and initiative were such that his father preferred to employ him as his representative rather than his elder brother Ali or his younger brother Feisal. These qualities also endeared him to all who worked on behalf of the Arab cause. He joined one of the Arab secret societies and it was at this stage that he advocated the idea of an Anglo-Arab understanding. He may be said to have been the\* originator of the idea, which has remained with him throughout his career. The Ottoman authorities, who had become suspicious of his activities, made him a number of tempting offers. He was offered a seat in the Cabinet and later the post of Governor-General of the Yemen. But he was not to be diverted from his one aim, which was the independence of the Arab countries. He foresaw that the Arab struggle might result in a trial of strength with the Turks and he also realized that there was no clash between Arab and British interests. He therefore on his own initiative arranged meetings with the late Lord Kitchener as early as February 1914. He also had several meetings with Sir Ronald Storrs, who was then Oriental Secretary at the British Agency in Cairo. During these negotiations, he explained Arab hopes and aspirations and asked for British help in the event of hostilities between the Arabs and the Turks. It is true that he received a discouraging reply to his overtures but the negotiations are important inasmuch as they laid the foundations for a new policy of Anglo-Arab friendship, the fruits of which were seen in the Arab revolt of June 1916.

During the Revolt, the Emir Abdullah distinguished himself both as a soldier and a diplomat. In the latter capacity, he served as adviser on foreign affairs to his father throughout the war. His most distinguished exploit as a soldier was his leadership during the attack on Taif. After a brief but well planned siege, he forced the garrison to surrender unconditionally. A large number of prisoners were taken, among them the Governor-General of the Hijaz, Ghalib Pasha as well as enormous quantities of war material and ammunition.

On March 2nd, 1921, the Emir Abdullah was invited to come to Amman and on March 27th he proceeded to Jerusalem where he conferred with Mr. Winston Churchill who was then in Cairo dealing with the Arab question as Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the High Commissioner for Palestine. . After a series of conversations, a provisional agreement was reached. It provided that Great Britain should use her good offices with France to secure the

restoration of an Arab administration in Syria, with the Emir Abdullah at its head and that in the meanwhile he should assume the rule of Trans-Jordan under the general direction of the High Commissioner for Palestine as representing the Mandatory Power, with the pledge to pave the way for a reconciliation with the French. The arrangement was for six months, during which the Emir\* was to receive financial assistance from the British Government to enable him to raise a force for the preservation of order in Trans-Jordan and check any movement of hostility on the part of the discontented population against the French in Syria, with the object of facilitating the realisation of the project of uniting the two countries.

Immediately after the Emir's return to Amman, a system of central administration was worked out, which did away with the local governments in the different parts of the country.

In September, 1922, a Memorandum was received from His Majesty's Government, declaring the exclusion of Trans-Jordan from the article of the Mandate relative to the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

### **Rebellions.**

Despite the strong measures taken by His Highness's Government to make its authority felt throughout the country, troubles were in store. In June 1921 the Kura Nahiya of Ajlun District rebelled. Before dealing firmly with the situation a regular force the Arab Legion, was formed from the grants-in-aid received from the British Government, and was, until 1938, commanded by Colonel F. G. Peake Pasha, who, a little earlier, had gallantly participated in the Arab Revolt.

About the same time disorders and uprisings broke out in Kerak and Tafileh; and the Arab Legion inaugurated its career by dealing with these two towns. In January 1922, the whole force was sent there and by adopting strict measures, order and security were maintained.

Having accomplished its duty in the south, the Arab Legion was despatched to the north. The campaign there was very successful and the Kura troubles were suppressed in five days.

In September 1923 the Adwan Tribe, joined by a large number of the Balqa Tribes, raised a rebellion against the Government; but they were quickly subjugated by the Arab Legion and a detachment from the Royal Air Force.

## **The Wahhabi Invasions.**

The Wahhabi Tribes of Nejd carried out two big invasions against Trans-Jordan. The first took place in 1922, when a party of them penetrated into the country as far as Al-Tuneib farm, south east of Amman. They were driven back without significant losses by the Beni Sakhr Tribe.

The second invasion was stronger and more serious. It took place on August 23rd, 1924, when about 5000 Wahhabi tribesmen launched a sweeping attack as far as a few miles from Amman. A considerable number of the inhabitants were shot or slaughtered, while many others suffered great loss in property. Soon afterwards a combined force of the Arab Legion and the R.A.F., joined by Trans-Jordan tribesmen, drove them back in complete disorder.

### **Annexation of Ma'an District.**

Ma'an district, including Aqaba, had been part of the Hijaz until 1925 when it was annexed to Trans-Jordan. With the exception of a rising by the people of Wadi Musa in February 1926, which was easily suppressed, nothing of special importance has taken place in this district during the present regime.

### **Agreement and Organic Law.**

On February 20th, 1928, an Agreement between His Britannic Majesty and His Highness the Emir Abdullah was concluded, in accordance with a declaration issued on April 25th, 1923, by the High Commissioner, which runs as follows:

"Subject to the approval of the League of Nations, His Britannic Majesty will recognize the existence of an independent Government in Trans-Jordan under the rule of His Highness the Emir Abdullah, provided that such Government is constitutional and places His Britannic Majesty in a position to fulfil his international obligations in respect of the territory by means of an Agreement to be concluded with His Highness."

An Organic Law was accordingly enacted, and general elections for the Legislative Council were soon held. On April 2nd, 1929, His Highness inaugurated the first session of the Council. The ratification of the Agreement was passed and exchanges took place between the High Contracting Parties in October, 1929.

Prior to 1928 the administrative machinery was run by an Executive Council composed of five members and a president. According to the Law Amending the Organic Law, passed in that year, the Executive Council was changed into a Council of Ministers, who, including the premier, should not exceed six in number.

The Ministers were made directly responsible individually and collectively to His Highness the Emir.

In virtue of the "additional Agreement concluded between His Britannic Majesty and His Highness the Emir, the Trans-Jordan Government is allowed to establish consular offices in the neighbouring Arab countries when a need arises. Accordingly three consulates have already been opened, at Cairo, Baghdad and Damascus.

### **TRANSJORDAN'S CONTRIBUTION TO VICTORY,**

At the outbreak of war, Trans-Jordan represented by her ruler, not only rallied to the cause of the Allies but also placed her army, the Arab Legion, at the disposal of Britain for the duration of hostilities. Trans-Jordan also pledged herself to give any help in her power in the fight against the common foe. There came a period of the war when this help was needed. France collapsed and the French Mandated territories of Syria and Lebanon were administered by the Vichy authorities under the supervision of a German Armistice Commission. British Forces were driven out of Greece, Rommel's first drive in North Africa threatened Egypt and Crete was expected to be "invaded at any time, when a small clique of ambitious army officers in Iraq seized power and set up a Government with pro-Axis tendencies. It was on May 2nd, 1941, that Iraqi batteries opened fire on the British encampment in Habbaniyyah.

The Arab Legion proved itself a worthy ally. Units were detailed to join a small British column which had set out from Palestine to put down the revolt. They set out in advance and captured Rutbah. They not only guided British troops in the desert and performed invaluable and intelligent functions but fought with courage and determination to bring this campaign to a successful end. While the British force was re-fitting in Habbaniyyah, an Arab Legion patrol reconnoitred the route to within sight of the Euphrates and the Palm Gardens north of Baghdad. Other patrols explored the area between the Tigris and the Euphrates as far north as Samarra and as far south as near Kadhimain. Moreover, the Arab Legion cut the Mosul-Baghdad road, as a result of which the enemy were unable to receive supplies from Syria which they expected. It is no exaggeration to say that the Arab Legion played a decisive role in the success of the expedition (see Brigadier Glubb's appendix to the "Golden Carpet" by Captain Somerset de Chair, M.R.).

No sooner was this operation over than the Emir Abdullar sent his troops to assist British forces in the Syrian campaign. Together with a British detachment, Transjordanian Forces crossed a difficult stretch of desert together with British forces, entered

Syria from the east and captured Palmyra, thereby turning the left flank of the French army defending Damascus. Throughout this operation, the Arab Legion carried out desert raids attacking and cutting off Vichy's reserve troops. Perhaps their most exciting exploit was when the Legion, attacked by a superior Vichy force on July 1st, 1941, counter-attacked with dash and routed the enemy, capturing five officers and 64 other ranks, 6 armoured cars and a quantity of other transport, arms and equipment.

An advance unit of the Legion took part in the campaign to drive the enemy out of North Africa. They fought with distinction in the Battle of Alamein, in which one of their officers was killed. Apart from active participation in these three campaigns, units of the Arab Legion are now guarding vital centres in the Middle East, thereby releasing British troops for the European campaigns.\* Throughout the war, Trans-Jordan's historic role as a communication centre for warfare has been revived. The Haifa-Baghdad road runs through the northern district, joining up at Mafraq with the main road which runs through the heart of Syria northwards to the Turkish borders and with another main road running southwards to Amman and then westwards to Jerusalem and other parts of Palestine. Amman is also connected with Maan in the south by a railway line running southwards to Nagb whence a recently built road leads to the Port of Aqaba in the Red Sea, which has become more prominent for strategic reasons during the present struggle. Aqaba is also connected with the Egypt-Palestine road. In brief Trans-Jordan has been and will remain an important base and junction connecting all parts of the Near East and serving as the only available land route between Asia and Africa. The Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline, a veritable artery of a modern mechanised army, passes through Transjordan on its journey from Kirkuk to Haifa and is guarded by Transjordan's Police Force. It may then be said that Transjordan, though small in population, has rendered valuable service to the cause of freedom and democracy under the guidance of her enlightened and progressive ruler, the Emir Abdullah, whose belief in the justice of the cause of the British Empire and the final victory of that cause remained unshaken throughout the blackest period of the war. During an audience granted by His Highness to Brigadier Glubb on the day after the surrender of France when they were discussing the possibility of the Germans seizing the French Fleet and invading Britain, the Emir said:—

"We Arabs have always pride ourselves on never betraying our friends and we do not propose to start now. Whatever happens we shall remain the friends of Britain."







