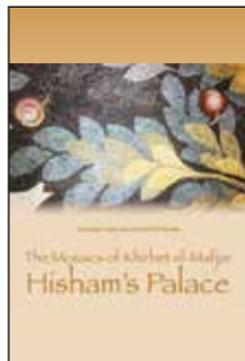




BOOK OF THE MONTH

The Mosaics of Khirbet el-Mafjar, Hisham's Palace



**By Hamdan Taha and Donald Whitcomb
Department of Antiquities, Ministry of
Tourism and Antiquities, 2010**

128 pages, 150 photos

**Available at the Ministry of Tourism
and Antiquities offices in Bethlehem
and Ramallah**

The Mosaics of Khirbet el-Mafjar, Hisham's Palace contains a presentation of beautiful coloured mosaics that originate from Hisham's Palace in Jericho. The mosaics can be found in various palace rooms, the audience hall, the *sirdab*, and the *diwan*. The palace dates from the first half of the eighth century, during the time of the Umayyad Caliphate of the early Islamic period.

Hisham's Palace is regarded as one of the best examples of early Islamic architecture in Palestine. The site consists of a palace, a thermal complex, and a perimeter wall. The palace was subject to a series of restorations throughout its history, and following the transfer of authority to the Palestinian side in 1994, the Palestinian Department of Antiquities began to attend to the task of preserving the site. A project to restore and rehabilitate the site was launched in 1996, in cooperation with the Department of Antiquities and UNESCO. An updated topographic map and a preliminary master plan were produced. In the first phase, work focused on the restoration of the mosaic in the small bath (*sirdab*). It was followed by restoration of the mosaic in the main bath hall and reorganisation of the site museum. A mosaic laboratory was established with the help of the Italian government. In 2008, a rehabilitation

project, funded by USAID through ANERA, was carried out on the site, focusing on site management and access roads.

In 2010, the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage uncovered, cleaned, and assessed the state of conservation of the palace mosaics. A series of high quality digital photographs, from which the images in this volume were taken, was prepared by a team from the department that included M. Diab, I. Hamdan, N. Khatib, S. Ghazal, and R. Sharaia, under the direction of H. Taha. *The Mosaics of Khirbet el-Mafjar, Hisham's Palace* is offered for study and appreciation of this triumph in early Islamic art. The authors allow the images to speak for themselves and provide only brief explanatory comments.

Since 2010, joint excavations undertaken by the Department of Antiquities and the University of Chicago have renewed interest in the presentation of this unique monument. A new museum and visitor's guide have enhanced the understanding of the context of these mosaics. Unfortunately, the mosaics themselves cannot be experienced since they lie under a protective coating and sand until an appropriate protective shelter may be constructed over them. The Japanese government, through JICA, has recently shown interest in assisting in the protection of this spectacular mosaic heritage. With the sheltering and presentation of the mosaics, the site of Khirbet el-Mafjar (Hisham's Palace) will become a prime destination for local and international tourists and a source of pride in Palestinian culture.

Hisham's Palace (Khirbet al-Mafjar), Jericho, Palestine. 128 likes. Representing a sample of early Islamic architecture, the ruins of this impressive... See more of Hisham's Palace (Khirbet al-Mafjar) on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Hisham's Palace (Khirbet al-Mafjar) on Facebook. Log In. Forgotten account?