



Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State

Betty S. Anderson

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According to conventional wisdom, the national identity of the Jordanian state was defined by the ruling Hashemite family, which has governed the country since the 1920s. But this view overlooks the significant role that the "Arab street"—in this case, ordinary Jordanians and Palestinians—played and continues to play in defining national identity in Jordan and the Fertile Crescent as a whole. Indeed, as this pathfinding study makes clear, "the street" no less than the state has been a major actor in the process of nation building in the Middle East during and after the colonial era.

In this book, Betty Anderson examines the activities of the Jordanian National Movement (JNM), a collection of leftist political parties that worked to promote pan-Arab unity and oppose the continuation of a separate Jordanian state from the 1920s through the 1950s. Using primary sources including memoirs, interviews, poetry, textbooks, and newspapers, as well as archival records, she shows how the expansion of education, new jobs in the public and private sectors, changes in economic relationships, the establishment of national militaries, and the explosion of media outlets all converged to offer ordinary Jordanians and Palestinians (who were under the Jordanian government at the time) an alternative sense of national identity. Anderson convincingly demonstrates that key elements of the JNM's pan-Arab vision and goals influenced and were ultimately adopted by the Hashemite elite, even though the movement itself was politically defeated in 1957.

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