

Soft Ornaments

By Ammar Khammash, The Jordan Times Weekender - October 2002

Among the cities, towns and villages of Jordan, Salt has a unique environment. Here is one of the Kingdom's most complete stretches of traditional architecture. Besides this relatively intact architectural fabric with its own distinct style, Salt also represents the most lived-in site of architectural heritage in Jordan. Built on hillsides overlooking the central souq below, Salti houses are relatively ornate and clearly represent the most urban of Jordan's traditional built environments.

Here houses sit on edges. Some of the neighborhoods in Salt are on such a sharp inclination that houses appear as if they are hung on a wall; with this quality the hillsides define the central space of the souq, like walls in a museum surrounding a central hall. This vertical layout has helped shape a special sense of common life, create visual connectedness that enhances social ties, and heighten the overall feeling of sharing one single, extended, introverted house.

Image not found

https://www.khammash.com/sites/default/files/images/research/salt_01.jpg



Besides the display of front elevations of houses, the steep cliffs also displayed well-proportioned negative spaces between buildings. From almost any point in town you can see stairs, alleys, and narrow streets

connecting doorways, courtyards, gardens and open natural hillsides; with the warm-colored stone and the dry summer grass, the result is somewhat reminiscent of a painting or a relief in monochromatic ochre.

