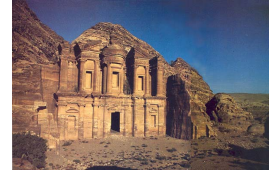


New Light on the Nabataeans

By Philip C. Hammond

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The stones were piled and ready. Costly wood had been purchased. The necessary metal was at hand. The Jews of Jerusalem were rejoicing. Tomorrow—May 20, 363 A.D.—the rebuilding of the Temple would begin! Almost 200 years after the Roman Legions under Titus had destroyed the Temple, the Emperor Julian—called by his Christian subjects “the Apostate”—had given his imperial permission to rebuild the Temple. The Jewish people eagerly responded.



We do not know what was playing on the stage of the theater at Petra on May 20, nor whether services were being held in the temple of Dhu-Shara or the temple of Al 'Uzza-Atargatis. But a recently discovered document has revealed a curious link between the Jerusalemite plans to rebuild the Temple and the life of the Nabataeans living at Petra on that date.

Suddenly, and without warning, at the third hour of the night (the third hour after sunset according to Roman practice) the streets of Jerusalem trembled and buckled, crushing two hundred years of hope into a pile of dust. No longer would there be any possibility of rebuilding the Temple. A hundred and twenty miles south of Jerusalem, on the other side of the Jordan, the magnificent facade of 024Petra's theater fell inward. The columns in disjunctive rows across the orchestra toppled under the weight of the falling facade. The temple of Dhu-Shara rocked, but its four walls held. The temple of Al 'Uzza-Atargatis fared less well. Like the theater, its columns tottered, bringing to the ground showers of painted plaster, roofing tiles, frescos, iron and copper nails, and carved stone. Nearby, an upper-middle-class house felt the shock, shivered, and crumbled. The colonnaded, shop-lined main street of Petra was transformed into a mass of debris. Huge cliff faces shifted, whole residential districts turned into rubble, and public buildings fell into irreparable ruin.

Our 1961–62 excavations at the Main Theater of Petra and our 1974–77 excavations of domestic structures and the Al-'Uzza-Atargatis Temple have amply revealed the 025terrible destruction of this famous earthquake, an earthquake which according to a recently discovered ancient Syriac document, destroyed “half of Petra.” This document, purportedly a letter by Cyril of Jerusalem, was recently found and published by a British scholar.¹ It provided a description of an earthquake which destroyed materials collected by the Jews of Jerusalem for the rebuilding of the Temple. Along with the assessment of the damage done in Jerusalem, the document lists a series of other sites in Syro-Palestine which also suffered damage. Among them was “RQM,” the Semitic (Nabataean) name for Petra. The earthquake was pinpointed to Monday, May 19, 363 A.D. between the third and ninth hours of the night. Hence, this document enables us to date our destruction strata at Petra with almost unheard of precision and accuracy!



In the Main Theater, our stratigraphic evidence enabled us to identify two separate destructions: the first was the result of the mid-fourth century earthquake described in Cyril's letter; the second occurred 200 years later. We were also able to date the destruction stratum of the domestic and public buildings to the mid-fourth century when they too were destroyed by the same earthquake which demolished the Main Theater.

The fourth century earthquake was not the only time events in Jerusalem and Petra were bound together, for Petra was the capital of Nabatene as the Nabataean Kingdom is called and the history of Nabatene is intertwined with Jerusalem. Although the origins of the Nabataean people are obscure, by about the first century 026B.C./A.D. they controlled most of the land east of the Jordan River from Madeba to the northern end of the Red Sea, and were prominent traders, merchants, and caravan guides, absorbing much from the people with whom they came in contact.

In the days of the Nabataean King Aretas I (about 150 B.C. a certain Jew named Jason served as the high priest in Jerusalem. Jason had obtained his office by means of an appropriate “present” to King Antiochus IV, the Seleucid ruler of Syro-Palestine. When Jason was supplanted by Menelaus, a Benjaminitite without any relation to the Jewish high-priestly family, Jason was forced to flee from Jerusalem. According to the author of 2 Maccabees,² Jason managed to get himself “shut up at the court of Aretas, prince of the Arabians!” Whether the Nabataean king was attempting to win friends among Jason's followers or to provide himself with a political prisoner for future bargaining with the Jews is unclear.



Half a century later Nabataean political interests began to conflict with the Judean kingdom. Around 100 B.C. the rule of the Jewish King Alexander Jannaeus, began to extend into the Negev.³ Although the free city of Gaza asked the Nabataean King Aretas II for military aid, Jannaeus captured and sacked Gaza before the Nabataean troops arrived. When Jannaeus withdrew, however, the Nabataeans occupied the

city. Later, Jannaeus resumed and routed the forces of the Nabataean king Obodas I. In turn, the Nabataeans ambushed Jannaeus near Gadara.

Sometime after 85 B.C., Aretas III renewed Nabataean expansion into the Negev, defeating Jannaeus at Adida. Soon thereafter, however, Aretas withdrew, presumably after some mutually agreeable arrangement had been concluded between the Nabataeans and the Jews.

Around 70 B.C. the Nabataeans joined with the forces of Hyrcannus I and Antipater, both of whom were Idumean Jews who claimed entitlement to the office of high priest in Jerusalem. Together, the Nabataeans and the Idumeans besieged Jerusalem. A Roman punitive mission against the Nabataeans was ordered by Pompey, the newly arrived liberator of the Middle East. The Nabataeans avoided Roman punishment, however, simply by buying off Pompey's general, Scourus.

Antipater, attempting to manipulate both Jews and Nabataeans for his own ends, married a well-born Nabataean who bore him four sons and a daughter—Phasaël, Joseph, Pheroras, Herod, and Salome. Herod and Salome, of course, figure prominently in later Jewish history.

Antipater also involved the Nabataean King Malichus I (62–30 B.C.) in Rome's civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey in 49 B.C. When Julius Caesar triumphed over his Roman rival Pompey, Antipater, who had correctly chosen the winner, became a man of considerable political power. Presumably his successful political strategy benefited his Nabataean allies as well.

After Caesar was assassinated and the Parthians intervened from the east in Jewish affairs, the fortunes of the house of Antipater declined. Herod, the son of Antipater, fled to Petra, but the Nabataeans refused him political asylum. That may have been fortunate for Herod, however, for he then made his way to Rome and became king of the Jews by Senate decree.

Despite the Nabataean refusal of political asylum, there was no permanent breach between Herod and Malichus, the Nabataean king. The two rulers jointly leased lands from Cleopatra, which the Queen of Egypt had previously seized from both of them with the connivance of Mark Antony. Mark Antony, senior consul in the ruling triumvirate which included Octavian, had given large portions of the eastern provinces to his great love, Cleopatra. Octavian then declared war on Cleopatra in 31 B.C., and challenged Mark Antony and Cleopatra for supremacy. Herod supported Mark Antony. The alliance between Herod and Malichus to lease Cleopatra's lands had already foundered when Malichus failed to pay his share of rentals to Cleopatra. At the time Octavian challenged Mark Antony, Mark Antony ordered Herod to make war on the defaulting Nabataean partner, Malichus, rather than to send troops against Octavian. After withstanding a series of defeats by the Nabataeans, Herod rallied his forces and drove the Nabataeans back beyond Philadelphia, modern-day Amman.

In subsequent years, the cycle of alliances and breaches between the Jewish and Nabataean kingdoms recurred. At one point, the Nabataean prime minister, Syllaeus, had an affair with Herod's sister Salome. When Herod ended the liaison, Syllaeus was so angry he embarked on a long-term harassment of the Jewish kingdom, primarily by giving refuge to bandits preying upon Herodian territories in the North.

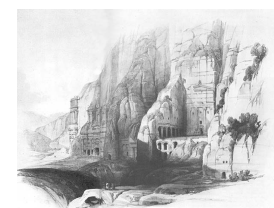
After Herod's death, Nabataean-Roman relations improved. Troops were sent by Aretas IV to assist the Roman general, Varus, in putting down the Jewish riots which erupted in 4 B.C. over Herod's succession.

Herod's son, Herod Antipas, married a daughter of the Nabataean King Aretas IV, once again cementing relations between Jews and Nabataeans. When Herod Antipas later fell in love with his half-brother's wife, he decided to divorce his Nabataean wife. News of the planned divorce leaked out and Aretas's daughter fled home—to Petra—an action which provoked a new round of wars in 36 A.D.

The Nabataean and the Jewish kingdoms began to decline in tandem. Nabataean troops assisted Titus in his siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.; Nabatene fell to the Romans soon thereafter because the Romans wanted to consolidate their power in the area. In 106 A.D. when A. Cornelius Palma, a Roman general and legate of Trajan, formally entered Petra, the Nabataean kingdom finally ended.

Until the present excavations, it was generally believed that Petra fell into virtual oblivion with the coming of the Romans. Now, however, our evidence suggests that, regardless of any political changes, Nabataean life—and commerce—continued at a fairly high level until the middle of the sixth century A.D.

In the 12th century, Petra had a brief revival when King Baldwin I fortified the Jordan's Eastern bank. A fort was erected just outside the ancient city site of Petra ("the Castle of the Valley of Moses"), with a smaller outpost inside, atop Jebel Habis. The Frankish Kingdom of Jerusalem fell within a century, however, and Petra's location once more became



militarily superfluous to the Moslem victors.

After the disastrous earthquakes of 555 and 750 A.D. Little remained of Petra's buildings. Shifts in trade routes also diminished Petra's importance. In addition, the Moslem conquest of Syro-Palestine occurred in the seventh century. Nabatene, as such, simply flowed into the cultural patterns of the new era, and disappeared. Petra was no longer a strategic military or commercial location; it became a waystation for the occasional bedouin groups.

So it was, that the site resumed to nature, to be rediscovered on the 22nd of August, 1812, by the Swiss-born geographer and explorer, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt. Posing as a Moslem pilgrim, Burckhardt entered the Siq (pronounced Seek), the narrow canyon Petra, and proceeded through the ancient ruins to the entrance to Petra, and proceeded through the ancient ruins to the foot of Jebel Haroun (the traditional burial place of Aaron, brother of Moses). He secretly sketched a map of the site and described what he saw as he passed through. Not for another seventy-five years would much further exploration take place and not for another quarter century after that, in 1936, would actual archaeological excavation begin under George Horsfield, then Director of Antiquities under the British Mandate.

The Arabs today call the wadi, or dry riverbed, in which Petra is located the Wadi Musa or "Valley of Moses." According to Arab tradition, it was here that Moses struck the rock to obtain water (*Numbers 13:2-13*). Even today the spring and cleft rock can be seen by visitors. Another legend has it that this Biblical event created the Siq, or defile, which is the only practical way to enter Petra.

Although we had excavated in Petra in 1961-62, we resumed again in 1973, still fascinated with the ancient people. In 1973 we surveyed nearby eighteen acres of the city center, using proton-magnetometers and soil-resistivity devices to look below ground and plot ruins not visible from the modern surface. The proton-magnetometer electronically surveys and measures variations in the earth's magnetic-force field, enabling us to plot sub-surface anomalies. The soil-resistivity device sends electric currents through the soil and detects man-made anomalies which vary the flow of the currents. In this way, we can identify ditches, walls, pits, roads, burials, and similar man-made changes in the soil.

We made over 15,900 separate readings with these instruments. With this data and with surface indications⁹³¹ as well (such as surface sherds, geographical location, and similar archaeological clues) we selected two out of 38 high potential areas in which to begin our excavations. The excavation results in these two areas amply demonstrate the value of our pre-excavation survey with the proton-magnetometer and soil resistivity device.

Area I produced "domestic" remains—a series of superimposed private houses from the first through the mid-fifth centuries A.D. Area II was our "public" site—a Nabataean temple built during the reign of King Aretas IV (9 B.C.—40 A.D.), partially destroyed about 110 A.D. and destroyed even more by the earthquakes of 363 A.D. and 551 A.D.

That we were excavating both private and public structures enhanced the value of each. What we learned at one site helped us in the other. In the domestic site we obtained an extremely refined stratigraphic sequence, especially of ceramic materials, while the public site produced a mass of technological and artistic materials preserved by the earthquake damage and subsequent cover from disuse.

The remains we recovered from Area I (the domestic site) will be of unusual importance for the chronological ordering of Byzantine (better called "Late Roman") ceramics. The discovery is also likely to necessitate the rewriting of that period's religious history in Syro-Palestine. The traditional concept of the generalized Christianization of Petra was based on the reuse of two of the major tombs (the "Monastery" and the "Urn Tomb") for Christian worship. We have now uncovered strong evidence that Nabataean religious rites were practiced as late as the mid-fourth century A.D. and beyond. Specific details of this historical revision must await analysis and publication of the Area I materials from our current excavations.

Out of the "domestic" debris of Area I's houses came masses of odds and ends of everyday living. Cereal grinders, needles, pins, architectural fixtures in copper and iron, stone weights, whetstones for sharpening knives, spinning whorls, and doorsockets—all tell us how the inhabitants of these houses spent their daily lives. Beads, cosmetic items, ornamental bells, and decorative objects reflect the more personal side of everyday living. Gaming pieces tell of leisure. Miniature incense burners, part of a box with a cultic decoration and miniature "eye"-idols (that is, flat slabs with very stylized human features shown on them, especially the eyes) suggest religious practices of some sort in the home.

Far greater in quantity were the ceramic remains. Molded oil lamps, cups, plates, jugs, juglets, cooking pots, storage jars—some only in sherds, some almost complete—comprised the bulk of the material remains. These ceramic materials not only tell us about the daily domestic life of the Nabataeans, but also about the economic level of Petra through time, the status of the families involved, and the trade connections of the day. We found stamped wine jar handles from Rhodes, fine Late Roman "A" wares, deep-red *terra sigillata* pottery, all of which reflect a cosmopolitan and prosperous Nabataean community even after the Roman annexation in 106 A.D. This post-kingdom Nabataean society was alive, viable, and fully capable of importing contemporary luxuries for fashionable households wealthy enough to spend personal capital on expensive imports.



We found no objects marked with crosses or other Christian symbols. Moreover, typical Nabataean religious objects were made throughout the early centuries of our era. The Christian influence so long assumed to exist at Petra because of the two tombs' reuse as churches, must now be rethought.



A cemetery overlying the domestic site's last occupation phase indicates a shift of settlement just before the beginning of the Middle Eastern Early Islamic period. This burial ground is probably associated with as-yet unexcavated remains of a Byzantine church east of the domestic area. Possibly a general conversion to Christianity did occur at Petra, but if so, only in the period just before the mid-seventh century A.D. Muslim conquest.

Although final analysis of our domestic site has not been completed, at least twenty phases (that is, connected series of individual archaeological events) appear to be emerging. Thus, the life of the people who occupied this site will be traced in very close segments, marked by closely dated destructions externally, and by equally close ceramic and numismatic evidence internally. As a result of this carefully controlled chronology we are able to discern not only the influence of Nabataean ceramic and artistic craftsmanship on the "Byzantine" culture of Syro-Palestine but are also able to trace the Nabataean influence on Early Islamic culture.

Area II permits new insights into Nabataean religious practices, especially the cult of Al-'Uzza (later called Atargatis). We are also learning about the eclecticism and syncretism of Nabataean technology and art. The new information in turn, gives us some specific data concerning Nabataean trade and cultural connections during the first century B.C./A.D.



To the eye of the visitor, our Area II appears far more spectacular than the bare floor plans of the domestic remains in Area I. It is not the spectacular that counts in archaeology however. If Area II were only spectacular then it would be just another tourist attraction. Thanks to the earthquakes which destroyed the architectural remains of Area II, we found an archaeological jackpot in that zone.

The religious structure itself is, of course, an important contribution to Nabataean studies. Only two religious structures belonging to this culture had been excavated previously at other sites—one at Wadi Ramm to the south and one at Jebel Et-Tannur to the northwest of Petra. The temple at Wadi Ramm was badly preserved and added little to our knowledge of Nabataean cultic practice. At Et-Tannur the late Dr. Nelson Glueck of Hebrew Union College recovered the first major collection of Nabataean stone-carved cultic material. In cooperation with other scholars Glueck made the first attempt to interpret his finds; the interpretation stressed the syncretistic aspect of Nabataean religious expression in the Greco-Roman world.⁴



Our temple at Petra is the second one to be identified at that site. The first is a marvelous ruin known as the "Palace of the Daughter of Pharaoh." It has been a prime tourist attraction since Petra's rediscovery in 1812. Modern bedouin folklore relates Petra to events of the Exodus. As mentioned previously, Petra is supposed to be in the Wadi Musa, the Valley of Moses. There, Moses struck the rock to obtain water. There, Pharaoh deposited his gold in a building identified by Arab legend as the "Treasury of the Pharaoh." The Nabataean temple which bears the Arabic name Qasr Bint Faroun—"the Palace of the Daughter of Pharaoh"—is supposedly the place where the overburdened Pharaoh, pursuing the Children of Israel, deposited his daughter. Actually, the ruins are a temple dedicated to the Nabataean god Dhu-Shara, "Lord of the Shara Mountain." The temple was probably erected by Aretas IV in the 1st century B.C./A.D. It was damaged by the earthquake of 303 A.D. the Jordanians partially restored the Qasr but never excavated it. Excavations conducted by the British School of Archaeology under Peter J. Parr in 1959 and thereafter and, more recently, by our American Expedition and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan have recovered additional external features of the building. Inside the ruins are tremendous heaps of fallen stone, architectural and decorative, which must first be removed before details of internal decoration and plan can be studied.



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The second Nabataean temple at Petra in our Area II, is popularly known as the "Temple of the Winged Lions" and in Arabic as Al 'Uzza-Atargatis. There we found a wealth of material from which to reconstruct ancient Nabataean religious practice and technology.



That Area II contained a major public structure was apparent from the beginning of the excavation in 1974. By the end of the first season, we were able to identify the building as the Temple of the Winged Lions. The site was excavated on the basis of a grid of 10 meter squares covering the site as a whole. In Square II. 6 we discovered a broad

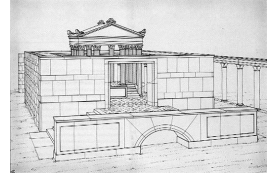
internal platform on the inside of an exterior wall that identified the building as a temple. Only in a temple would such a structural feature be found.



By 1976 the excavation of the entire *cella*, or main hall of the temple, was completed. It was a roughly square room paved with stone slabs and divided into two bays on each side. The massive altar platform, our first signal that we had discovered a temple, stood near the rear wall. The altar was approached by steps at each side. Rust stains were all that were left to indicate that a metal gate once protected the altar. Along the sides and rear of the altar pedestal we found the remains of columns. In the destruction debris we found unusual capitals in the shape of winged felines jutting out at each corner. Niches along the walls were formed by half columns along the wall face. Traces of plaster adhered here and there to the wall.

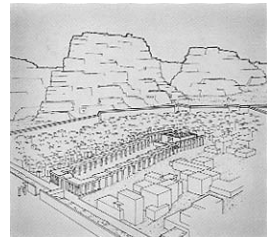


The east side of the outer wall of the temple had completely fallen while on the west side, it had buckled dangerously. The truncated edges of walls revealed the emption or Greek construction methods used by Nabataeans; the method, described by the Roman architect Vitruvius, required a “weaving” of blocks at corners for additional strength, even though the wall was otherwise built in straight courses of stones.



In the front face of the outer front walls we found holes for copper fixtures. Some of these fixtures were recovered; most, however, like the marble *crustae* (facings) which had once covered the walls, had long ago been stolen.

The entrance to the temple was a large gaping hole. Directly in front of the entrance there was neither stairway nor platform. A stairway rising up to a platform had once existed on each side of the entrance; the arches which carried the stairs had fallen.



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On the western side of the entrance, a vaulted chamber was found, which appears to have been a temple storage room. It contained a marble covered stairway paralleling the line of the temple up the mountain. Great blocks of stone, each marked with Nabataean letters to guide the construction crews, were neatly piled along the inner face of the arched passageway. Below the floor line of this passage was still another passage, with a doorway and doorpost socket still in place. On the floor of this lower passageway a pile of over forty pots, cups, bowls, and funnels marked a repairman's supply cache—a painter's workshop, complete with unused balls of blue pigment, mixed batches of black, red and blue paint, and a pile of marble tile blanks ready to be shaped and laid.



In front of the temple lay the remains of one of two monstrous columns which were part of the complex's monumental entry which led upward for 325 feet from the wadi bed. Excavations at the base of that entryway revealed fallen plaster decorations reflecting a magnificence in decoration matching that of the temple itself.



The decorative plaster gave us a clue as to what the internal decoration of the *cella* must have been. Day after day, below the massive fall of stone and earth caused by the earthquakes, we found bits and pieces of ceiling plaster, rows of denticulated moldings, scraps of flat fasciae borders, along with the greyish base plaster that had once held the decorative finishes in place. We found the large iron spikes that had been nailed into the crevices between building blocks to key and hold the coats of base plaster to the walls. We found hundreds of tiny copper tacks which had been driven into the rough undercoats of plaster to key the fine finishing coats. After having been buried in the debris for almost two millennia the colors on the recovered fragments—reds, purples, blues, yellows, garish oranges, blacks and whites—burst forth again.



With infinite patience, the field laboratory crews and the expedition's Recorder matched fragments of plaster and gradually pieced together the molding sequences.

In the 1977 season, parts of the painted niche decorations showing Greco-Roman ritual scenes came to light. In one niche corner we uncovered an almost obliterated fresco of a god or a man. Careful excavation with dental tools revealed the multiple coats of redecoration; unfortunately the cultic scenes had been overlaid with solid colors. This fact itself gives us important information: It suggests a local reaction against “foreign” (that is, the Greco-Roman) religious practices and culture.



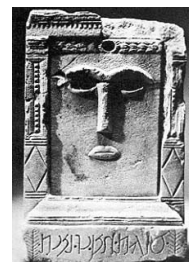
Out of the covering debris came other finds reflecting temple practices as well as

temple decoration. Tragic masks and naturalistic portrait heads—both from molded plaster—suggest some unknown ritual practice. We found tiny ceramic flowers which had been molded and then affixed to the walls and the foliage of the stone-cut capitals. Fragments of what was probably a copper lamp chain and lead hangers (probably for curtains) were uncovered in the debris. Sea shells with holes indicate they were tied together in clusters as a kind of bell-like instrument which no doubt vied with two small copper bells we also found. A molded goddess figurine, a carved seated goddess in stone, and “eye” idols suggest votive decorations. A fragment of an Egyptian funerary stele brought from Athribis in the Nile Delta graces a niche ledge at Petra, thus revealing an Egyptian influence.



We believe the temple must have been dedicated to a female deity. The reader will recall the feline animals carved in the corners of the capitals and the bronze feline head we found. Felines have a long association with fertility goddesses in the ancient world. A splendid ring seal, in carnelian, contains a nude goddess riding a dolphin. One of the “eye” idols bore a finely cut Nabataean inscription on its lower edge—“the goddess of ...”—further strengthening our belief that the temple belonged to a female deity.

The “eye” idols evolved from funerary stelae of the Arabian peninsula. The ritual scenes faintly preserved in the frescos reflected ties with the Greco-Roman West. The Egyptian funerary fragment bespoke the Alexandrian trade routes. All these influences came together in the eclectic religious art of the far-wandering Nabataeans.

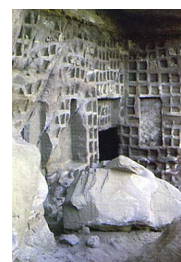


The magnificence of the temple decoration under King Aretas IV shows us what Petra must have looked like at its apex. The later redecoration reflects Nabataean reaction against growing political domination from Rome during the time of King Malichus, 40–70 A.D.

The probable dedication of the temple to a Syro-Nabataean fertility goddess links Nabataean culture with the ancient homeland of the Nabataeans (modern Saudi Arabia) and with the very dawn of civilization in far-off Anatolia and Mesopotamia where such a goddess, “The Great Mother,” reigned. Settling in the midst of agricultural peoples, the semi-nomadic Nabataeans, with their deities Al-‘Uzza and Dhu-Shara, among others, soon identified themselves with the gods and goddesses of those around them. Thus, Dhu-Shara emerges eventually among the Nabataeans as Dionysus, and Al-‘Uzza emerges as the ancient fertility goddess, Atargatis.

Our excavations have opened a number of research possibilities for investigating Nabataean culture. We must first study the floor plans, the technological details and the material remains. Analysis of the material remains, however, is just the beginning, for those studies will provide more primary cultural data for further research.

In addition, our excavations have had important methodological results. We have rigorously applied the stratigraphic method introduced by Sir Mortimer Wheeler and refined by Dame Kathleen Kenyon, and to it we have added our own amplifications.

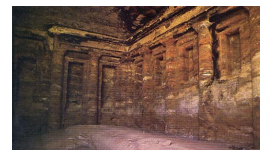


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Earlier archaeological techniques identified levels. Our more refined methods speak of “stratigraphic units.” A stratigraphic unit represents an archaeological event, individual and indivisible. Our two sites have revealed over 1, 800 separate stratigraphic units. When a series of stratigraphic units or archaeological events can be connected, they form a phase. All of the phases are, themselves, units of action and time in the archaeological history of the site and form parts of the total site history. Phases which are dated—either by the events which took place in them or which caused them, or by the numismatic or ceramic materials associated with them—provide the skeleton for developing an absolute chronology for the site as a whole.

The number of stratigraphic units in each site gives some indication of the excavation’s rigorousness and the possibilities for chronological resolution of ceramic and other datable materials recovered by the expedition. We believe this aspect of our work will in itself constitute a major contribution to Nabataean and Late Roman research in the Middle East.

Related to excavation technique is the matter of recording. Using techniques developed at earlier excavations at Petra and at Hebron, we now record by set patterns, using standardized recording forms. We have a daily ordering of strata, we draw extremely detailed wall “sections” based on visual, on-site observation, and utilize careful photographic records. Related to these refinements are sampling techniques by which characteristic ceramic materials for each stratigraphic unit are carefully selected for chronological and typological reference.



Because recording is so important, the Recorder on our excavation is not simply a staff member who makes sure

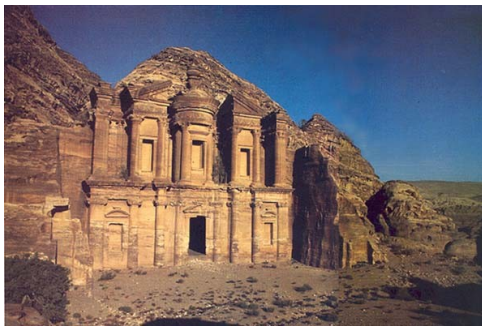
registration numbers get on artifacts or directs the washing of pottery, as has often been the case in the past. Recording on the Petra dig brings together every possible element involved in the stratigraphic method and preserves the data in such a way that interpretation is facilitated. Hence, the job of “Recorder” is second only to the Director in the staff’s organization table.

Another innovation in our work involves interpretation. Archaeological data are only as valid as the methods used to extract them and only as accurate as the recording methods used to preserve them. But, having said this, it is important to recognize that the archaeological scholar must go beyond mere description. Archaeology, in the end, is a branch of anthropology, but if the archaeologist fails to take this final interpretive step, he is not adequately utilizing his data. Archaeology is, after all, the discipline which provides the raw materials for cultural reconstruction, and that reconstruction must include not only the “what?” of a culture’s life, but also the “how?”—the processes by which the culture developed socially, politically, economically, religiously, and technologically. Here we differ both from traditional Middle East archaeology and problem-oriented archaeology common today. The traditional approach was aimed at discovering specific objects: inscribed tablets, artifacts suitable for museums or private collections, Biblical pieces or proofs, for example, the walls of Joshua’s Jericho or Biblical period occupation. True, some excavations sought to uncover culture-history, or “culture-reconstruction,” but they did not necessarily try to explain how or why the culture got to where it was. In more modern times, specific problems have been established in some areas and excavation is conducted to solve the problem or test a hypothesis (for example, to try to rank ancient people by social class based on their dental work as seen in skeletal remains). For us, excavation is not directed toward a predetermined issue or set of issues, but toward a more holistic view of culture in the ancient world.

From the excavations at Petra, capital of Nabatene, we are attempting to reconstruct the public and private life of the ancient Nabataeans—and the mechanisms which brought them into being. But although the tangible discoveries from the excavations are significant, we may not overlook the refinements in methodology and interpretation we have introduced which are of independent and considerable value.

Endnotes:

1. S. P. Brock, “A Letter Attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem on the Rebuilding of the Temple.” *Bulletin of the Society of Oriental and Asian Studies*, 40, 1977, pp. 267–86 and “The Rebuilding of the Temple Julian: A New Source,” *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 108, 1976, pp. 103–107.
2. *2 Maccabees* 4:1–5, 7–9.
3. Josephus, *Antiquities* XIII, 21.
4. Nelson Glueck, *Deities and Dolphins* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965).



Hershel Shanks

The Monastery (Ed-Deir) is the largest monument at Petra. Carved in deep relief from the shoulder of a sandstone mountain, the tomb’s facade is 140 feet high and 107 feet wide. Through the huge 30 foot high doorway, light enters and illuminates one large plain room inside. The second story, decorated with six columns and two pillars, bears a pediment separated in the center by a domed structure called a tholos. On top of the tholos rests a 20 foot high urn upon a Nabataean capital. Although it was never a monastery, the Nabataean tomb was reused by early Christians as a chapel. The signs of this later use caused local people to give it the Arabic name it bears today.



Archaeological Institute of America

8000 spectators could sit together in the Main Theater at Petra. 33 rows of seats were carved from a sheer rock cliff and arranged in three tiers, each divided into six sections. The dark square openings, which appear to be giant projection rooms on the rear wall of the structure, are the remains of tombs cut away to make room for the theater. Probably dating to the reign of King Aretas IV (9 B.C.–40 A.D.), the Roman style theater was built by the Nabataeans, although later construction was probably done by the Romans after their conquest of Petra in 106 A.D. The raised stage has been partially restored by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities.



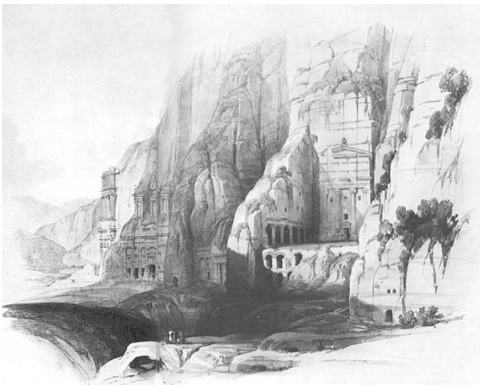
Matson Collection (Episcopal Home, Alhambra, CA)

A daring climber, in this early twentieth century photograph, provides a scale for the 20 foot urn which crowns the central domed structure of the Monastery at Petra.



Hershel Shanks

The Colonnaded Street, so-called because it was once lined with double rows of tall pillars, runs through the center of Petra from east to west. Flanked on one side by shops and on the other by the Wadi Musa, the 20 foot wide street was Petra's main thoroughfare. At its western end, seen here, is the Temenos Gate or the triple monumental gate, one of the few remaining structures in Petra which is made from stone blocks rather than carved from natural rock.



The Holy Land, David Roberts

"The Urn Tomb" by David Roberts, a famous early 19th century lithographer, faithfully renders the scale of the "Royal Tombs." The "Royal Tombs" include the Urn Tomb, and to the left on the same cliff face, the Silk Tomb, the Corinthian Tomb and the Palace Tomb. These elaborate necropolis monuments were probably all carved within the first century. The interior of the Urn Tomb is a massive, unadorned single room, approximately 56 feet deep by 62 feet wide. The Silk Tomb received its name, not because of its architectural design, but because the brilliantly colored sandstone striations give the impression of moiré or watered silk. The Palace Tomb, so-named because of its resemblance to Emperor Nero's Golden House, is a huge many-pillared edifice. One of the few buildings at Petra with three levels, it is the only tomb found whose height exceeds that of the cliff face from which it was carved. Consequently, part of the uppermost facade, which was higher than the cliff, was supplemented by masonry blocks.



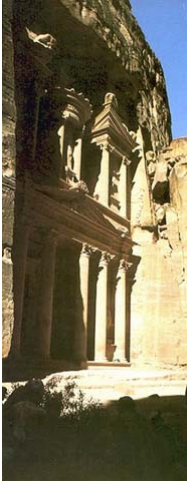
Travels in Syria, John Burckhardt

John Burckhardt, the Swiss explorer, stumbled upon Petra by chance in 1812. Until then, the city had been lost for centuries. Burckhardt lived and traveled in the Middle East for many years and was on a journey from Damascus to Cairo when he heard about Petra from local Bedouin. Known among the Arabs as Ibrahim ibn Abdallah, Burckhardt assumed the role of a Moslem in order to move about unexplored areas without arousing suspicion. Five years after the explorer's untimely death in 1817, Burckhardt's account of his Petra discovery was published in his book, *Travels in Syria*. Burckhardt is buried in the Moslem cemetery of Cairo; his tombstone is engraved, as he requested, with his Arabic name.



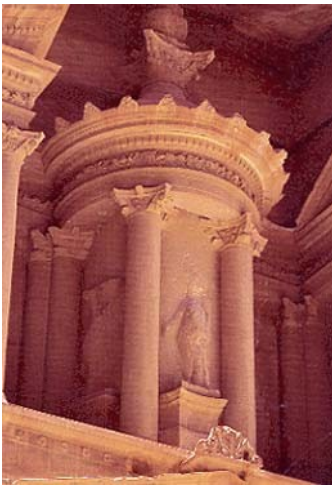
Embassy of Jordan

This decorated bowl found at Petra is characteristic of the fine, thin Nabataean ware. Nabataean pottery is usually a soft terra-cotta/peach color decorated with leaf patterns delicately painted with a manganese solution which produced colors ranging from light reddish brown to almost black.



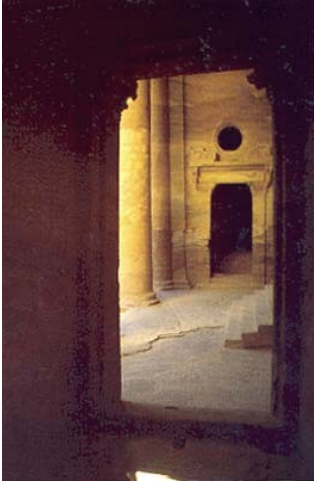
Hershel Shanks

The Treasury's size and magnificent details dazzle the visitor who emerges from the Siq—the entrance to Petra. The facade of the two-story tomb is 92 feet wide and 130 feet to the top of the 11-foot-high urn which crowns its central portion. Six columns enclose the tholos, or central domed structure on top of which a Corinthian capital supports the urn. From the columned porch, a central doorway leads to the inner chamber; two other decorated doorways lead into small side rooms presumably used by priests. Arabs call this tomb *Khaznat-el-Faroun*, the Treasury of the Pharaoh, because an Arab legend relates that here, in this opulent building, Pharaoh deposited his gold.



Gail Rubin

Detail of tholos. For full caption, see photograph of Treasury.



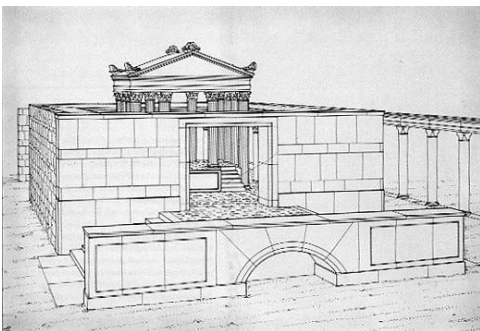
Hershel Shanks

Detail of decorated doorway. For full caption, see photograph of Treasury.



Gail Rubin

The Temple of Dhu-Shara, popularly known as the Palace of the Daughter of Pharaoh (in Arabic, *Qasr Bint Faroun*), honored the ancient Nabataean desert god Dhu-Shara. One of the few freestanding structures at Petra, the temple was built on a colossal scale and decorated with painted plaster designs reminiscent of Pompeian frescoes. Carved, square panels of plaster decorated the pilasters at all four corners. The missing north front wall of the temple faced the Temenos gateway on the main colonnaded street. The missing wall consisted of a huge pillared portico. Stumps of four portico pillars can be seen in the foreground. The massive main wall sustains an arch which long ago was only a relieving arch over the lintel of the main door. Almost 60 feet high, the building stands on a podium, measuring 110 feet by 120 feet, which was originally faced with marble. A Nabataean inscription by Aretas IV, engraved on a bench of the temple complex and found *in situ*, attests that the portico construction date could have been as early as 9 B.C.



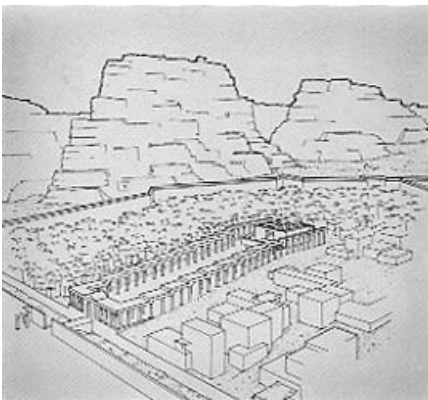
David Van Zanten

Headless felines bearing wings on their haunches were found on this capital uncovered in the newly excavated temple area at Petra.



Philip Hammond

Artist's reconstruction of the possible appearance of the Temple of the Winged Lions. See photograph.



David Van Zanten

Artist's reconstruction of the possible appearance of the long colonnaded entryway of the Temple of the Winged Lions, from the wadi floor 450 feet below the temple gateway. See photograph.



Philip Hammond

The Temple of the Winged Lions (Al 'Uzza-Atargatis). The opulent decorative and architectural details of this temple were buried by rubble from earthquakes until excavations began in 1974. Named after the numerous felines found on its column capitals (see photograph of capital), the temple seems to have honored Atargatis, a fertility goddess and the consort of Dhu-Shara, whose own temple was located obliquely across the Wadi Musa.

A detail at the rear of the altar platform reveals a "closet" which was built into the back of the altar to store ritual

paraphernalia necessary for religious ceremonies. See artist's reconstruction drawings for probable appearance of the temple and its elegant entry colonnade.



Philip Hammond

The Temple of the Winged Lions. This photograph shows the temple's altar platform viewed from the entrance. At the rear of the platform was a "closet" built into the back of the altar to store ritual paraphernalia necessary for religious ceremonies.



Philip Hammond

Building stones intended for the Temple of the Winged Lions were found neatly stacked alongside a Temple wall. Each block was inscribed in Nabataean script and keyed to the Temple's architectural plan. The markings assisted the laborers in putting each block in its correct position.



Philip Hammond

A block found in a room adjacent to the Temple clearly shows the Nabataean letter used to differentiate the block.



Philip Hammond

Decorative plaster fragment from the Temple of the Winged Lions. This frieze fragment depicts a dolphin and bowl, a theme common to Greco/Roman religious art.



Philip Hammond

Decorative plaster fragment from the Temple of the Winged Lions. This frieze fragment portrays a religious scene similar in content and style to some found at Pompeii. Although the specific rite cannot be identified, the people in rigid poses are performing religious rituals.



Philip Hammond

Decorative plaster fragment from the Temple of the Winged Lions. The plaster piece had been affixed to a column drum in the Temple.



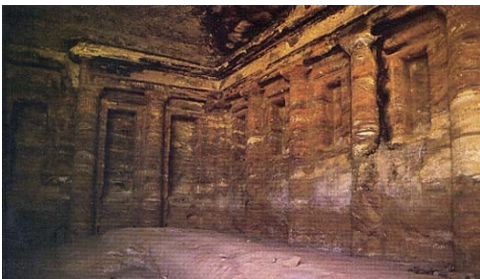
Philip Hammond

An “eye idol”, a votive decoration, was discovered in the Temple of the Winged Lions. On its lower edge the Nabataean inscription reads: “The goddess of ... ”



Hershel Shanks

A pseudo-columbarium was a facade for another Nabataean tomb chamber. True columbaria are collections of niches, probably used to store funerary urns. The builder apparently tried to reproduce a true columbarium; however while the form of this columbarium is accurate, the niches are too small to be usable.



Hershel Shanks

This intricately carved and flamboyantly variegated sandstone interior is unique in Petra. Fluted and reeded half-columns in relief divide the rear and side walls into five bays. Called the Triclinium of the Roman Soldier or the Corinthian Tomb, it was part of a tomb complex used for funerals. In this tomb funeral feasts were held. Guests sat at long tables facing the center of the 38 foot square room.

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