

Contextualizing the Nabataeans:
A Critical Reassessment of their History and Material Culture

By

Jeffrey Eli Pearson

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Committee in Charge:

Erich Gruen, Chair

Chris Hallett

Andrew Stewart

Benjamin Porter

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Abstract

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The Nabataeans, best known today for the spectacular remains of their capital at Petra in southern Jordan, continue to defy easy characterization. Since they lack a surviving narrative history of their own, in approaching the Nabataeans one necessarily relies heavily upon the commentaries of outside observers, such as the Greeks, Romans, and Jews, as well as upon comparisons of Nabataean material culture with Classical and Near Eastern models. These approaches have elucidated much about this enigmatic civilization but have not always fully succeeded in locating specifically Nabataean motivations and perspectives within and behind the sources. To address this lacuna, my dissertation provides a critical re-reading and analysis of the ancient evidence, including literary, documentary, numismatic, epigraphic, art historical, and archaeological material, in order to explore the Nabataeans' reaction to, effect upon, and engagement with, historical events and cultural movements during the period from 312 BCE, when the Nabataeans first appear in the historical record in the wake of the conquests of Alexander the Great, to the annexation of their territory by the Romans in 106 CE. I seek to properly acknowledge the ways in which the Nabataeans self-consciously shaped their own political and cultural destinies while interacting with the broader Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds. While identification, analysis, and articulation of the Nabataean viewpoint guides the dissertation, the project also broadly challenges or qualifies several important assumptions about the Nabataean civilization. In treating the period from 312 BCE to the eastern settlement of Pompey in 63 BCE, I argue that the Nabataeans played a more important role in the Hellenistic world than has generally been acknowledged—especially for the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE—and I articulate the nature and significance of their position vis-à-vis their neighbors and rivals, both regional and further a-field, specifically from the Nabataean point of view. This analysis makes an important contribution to current discussions of the development of Nabataean identity and culture, and it can serve as a model for viewing other under-explored Hellenistic civilizations in the Near East. Events in the ensuing period, after 63 BCE, take place under the broad shadow of the extension of Roman power in the eastern Mediterranean, but by analyzing internationally important events of this period, such as the Roman expedition to Arabia ordered by Augustus, from a specifically Nabataean vantage point, I am able to show that

the Nabataeans' self-interest often did not align with Roman objectives, and that their foreign policy flourished on its own merits. These conclusions appropriately acknowledge Nabataean individuality and autonomy, challenging the widely asserted notion that Nabataea fits a prescribed model of a client—or dependent—state of Rome. In examining the last generations of Nabataean independence, I argue against the traditional characterization that sees during these years a gradual political, economic, and cultural decline for the Nabataeans, culminating in their annexation by the Romans in 106 CE. I demonstrate that the period instead represents a time of increasing sophistication and self-confidence on the part of the Nabataeans, not one of resignation or submission to the inevitability of Roman domination.

Meis Parentibus

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INTRODUCTION

For at least four centuries, from the days of the Successors of Alexander the Great in the late 4th century BCE until the last meaningful eastern expansion of the Roman empire under the emperor Trajan at the beginning of the 2nd century CE, a partially nomadic and highly prosperous civilization governed a capacious territory stretching at its height from the Hawran in southern Syria to the Arabian Hejaz and including large parts of the Negev, Sinai, and eastern Jordanian desert, while consistently occupying an important place in the ancient Mediterranean political, cultural, and economic landscapes. With such a resume, this people ought to be well known, understood, and appreciated, but replying “the Nabataeans” to a query about the subject of one’s dissertation will, more than likely, elicit a quizzical look from the interlocutor. Numerous recent museum exhibitions, cameo appearances of their monuments in modern cinema, increased access for archaeologists and tourists to remains of their culture in previously off-limits or politically fraught areas of Jordan, Syria, and even Saudi Arabia, and—not least—the recent designation of their ancient capital of Petra as one of the new seven wonders of the world, have certainly helped in raising the Nabataean profile. Still, while a serious academic discussion of ancient trade, water management, Semitic linguistics, or Alexandrian-inspired architecture might now be expected to include the Nabataeans, this fascinating civilization remains, even to the general scholar of the ancient Mediterranean world, highly enigmatic, perplexing, and often surprising.

For both political and academic reasons, in particular the traditional (and largely artificial) boundaries that have often persisted between disciplines interested in the ancient Classical and Near Eastern worlds, the Nabataeans long languished in relative obscurity. This situation has fortunately begun to change somewhat, especially in recent years, thanks in large part to an invigorated interest by Classical scholars in the cultures and civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean more generally. The scholarly discourse, though, still focuses largely on the activities of civilizations *in* (i.e. the Greeks and Romans) and not *of* (i.e. the Nabataeans) this Near Eastern context. And, while our body of knowledge of the Nabataeans has increased considerably since Johann Ludwig Burckhardt’s famously dramatic 1812 “rediscovery” of Petra during his peregrinations in the Near East, a great deal about their civilization, culture, and history remains to be elucidated, explored, and analyzed.¹ Indeed, the Nabataeans still have not received near the amount of attention warranted by their critical place in the historical and cultural fabric of the ancient Mediterranean, especially from the 4th century BCE to the early 2nd century CE.

Their dramatic monuments, especially the rock-cut tombs like the Khazneh (the so-called “Treasury”) at Petra understandably provided the initial focal point for critical study of the Nabataeans. Exploration, excavation, and documentation of Nabataean remains, especially at Petra, at the beginning of the last century resulted in the still fundamental work of Domaszewski and Brünnow (*Die Provincia Arabia*) and of Jaussen and Sauvignac (*Mission archéologique en Arabie*), which laid the foundations for modern study of the Nabataeans. Up to the present day, archaeological investigation continues to

¹ Those unfamiliar with the story will find it excitingly retold by Augé and Dentzer (2000), 12-14. From his thorough knowledge of Classical texts, Burckhardt quickly recognized the remains as those of the Petra, the lost capital of the Nabataeans.

occupy the central place in Nabataean studies. Dramatic advances in access, funding, and interest in recent years have given archaeologists a much greater understanding of the Nabataeans' sculptural and urban building programs, as well as of their effect upon, interaction with, and utilization of the physical landscape. With increased sophistication of survey methodology and better analysis of material remains provided by present and future excavations, the physical evidence about the Nabataeans will continue, one supposes, to be the dominant source of new information about their civilization and will contribute to ongoing debates about Nabataean origins, ethnicity, and sedentarization. These are all important questions, to be sure. To be fully answered, though, they must be carefully integrated with and remain firmly rooted in the historical and cultural narrative of the Nabataeans.

Analysis and discussion of Nabataean history and many of its central problems—including political and cultural policy and the interaction and engagement of the Nabataeans with other nearby civilizations—has not kept pace with archaeological exploration, and a lack of serious efforts to better integrate the evidence supplied by Nabataean material culture with the surviving literary and documentary sources still persists, although the situation is beginning to change.² Though scholars have focused on specific historical problems, few full-scale histories of the Nabataeans have been attempted. The most comprehensive of these, Bowersock's pioneering 1983 work *Roman Arabia*, focuses more heavily—as its title suggests—on the period after the Roman annexation in 106 CE than on the period of Nabataean independence, the subject of the present dissertation. More work can be done.

The most ostensible impediment to nuanced analysis of Nabataean history has always been, and will remain, a paucity of surviving evidence, especially compared with the relative abundance of sources available for the more richly documented cultures of Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Mesopotamia. To say the study of the ancient Mediterranean world requires the use of partial and fragmentary sources and evidence is a truism—in the case of the Nabataeans doubly so. Most problematically, we lack an indigenous historical narrative told from the point of view of the Nabataeans themselves. In approaching the Nabataeans one therefore necessarily relies heavily upon the commentaries of outside observers, such as the Greeks, Jews, and Romans, as well as upon comparisons of Nabataean material culture with Classical and Near Eastern models. Furthermore, while modern interpretations have elucidated much about the Nabataeans, they have not always fully succeeded in locating specifically Nabataean perspectives within and behind the surviving ancient sources, nor have they always properly contextualized the Nabataean role in the major historical and cultural events of the eastern Mediterranean during this four hundred year period.³

First and foremost, this dissertation seeks to address this conspicuous lacuna in the modern scholarly conversation about the Nabataeans. The project represents a critical re-reading and analysis of the ancient evidence in order to explore the Nabataeans' reaction

² Recent efforts by S. Schmid, esp. a recent article in which he examines Nabataean foreign policy attitudes in light of their domestic building program, are especially promising. See Schmid (2009); cf. Schmid (2008); Schmid (2003).

³ The very use of the monikers “Nabataeans” and “Petra” betrays our non-Nabataean bias, being rough transliterations of the Greek Ναβαταῖοι and Πέτρα. The Nabataeans called themselves the “Nabatu” (nbtw), while their capital city Petra went by the name Reqem.

to, effect upon, and engagement with, historical events and cultural movements from the end of the 4th century BCE, when the Nabataeans first appear in the historical record defending themselves against the aggressions of Antigonos Monophthalmos, to the annexation of their territory by the Romans in 106 CE and its incorporation into the new *provincia Arabia*. It seeks to properly acknowledge the ways in which the Nabataeans self-consciously shaped their own political and cultural destiny while interacting with the broader Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds. In order to put the Nabataeans in their proper context, the dissertation relies not just upon re-evaluation of the literary and documentary sources; it also extensively incorporates complementary evidence, including, numismatic, epigraphic, art historical, and archaeological material. The integration of material culture with historical events plays a key role in this project.

The dissertation contains four chapters and proceeds chronologically. The first chapter, “The Nabataeans and the Early Hellenistic Context,” treats the period from Antigonos Monophthalmos’ attack on the Nabataeans in 312 BCE up to the year 63 CE. In this chapter, I assemble and critically examine the available evidence, which includes important papyrological and epigraphic testimony in addition to literary historical references, to argue that the Nabataeans played a more important role in the Hellenistic world than is generally acknowledged—especially for the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE—and I explore the nature and significance of their position vis-à-vis their neighbors and rivals, both regional and further a-field. Following their defeat of the most capable of the *diadochoi*, the Nabataeans maintained a robust presence in the Hawran (in the southern part of present-day Syria). I analyze their activity in this area—and in the city of Damascus in particular—along with their interactions with other regional players such as the Hasmonaean leader Alexander Jannaeus, to assess Nabataean motivations and perspectives in the waning years of the Seleucid empire, as they moved to establish and consolidate their political, economic, and cultural positions. The Nabataeans do not easily fit a prescribed model of a Hellenistic kingdom, but they nevertheless form an essential part of the eastern Hellenistic world, one that deserves proper contextualization.

Chapter 2 engages with the years 63 BCE to 9 BCE, from the transformative political settlement of Pompey to the accession of Nabataea’s longest-serving king, Aretas IV. The events in this period take place under the broad shadow of the extension of Roman power in the eastern Mediterranean. Because of the increased contact between Nabataeans and Romans in this period, the historical sources provide a somewhat fuller picture of events, but Roman imperialism has too often served as the sole prism for viewing developments in Nabataea and the wider region, especially in the 1st centuries BCE and CE. Therefore, the complex interactions between the Nabataeans and other regional players such as Herod of Judaea and the Parthians also receive critical treatment in this chapter. One of the most intriguing episodes of the period, the Augustan-commissioned expedition to Arabia, led by the Nabataean guide Syllaios, also receives a thorough re-analysis, which results in a recalibration of the widely asserted notion that Nabataea fits a prescribed model of a client—or dependent—state of Rome during this period. Applying an approach that appropriately acknowledges Nabataean political and cultural autonomy, this chapter demonstrates that the Nabataeans were not simply following Roman cues in responding to political or cultural exigencies, but were rather acting largely—and quite successfully—in their own self-interest.

Chapter 3 examines the years 9 BCE to 40, which coincide with the reign of Aretas IV, Nabataea's longest serving and arguably most successful ruler. This portion of the dissertation engages closely with elements of material culture—including building programs at Petra, Hegra (Madi'in al-Salih), and Si'a—that can help elucidate Nabataean motivation and reaction to international events and enrich the historical narrative. During Aretas IV's reign, the Nabataeans interacted with high-ranking Roman officials on several occasions, including Gaius Caesar, Germanicus, and Calpurnius Piso. These encounters receive careful analysis in view of the important insights they can provide into the relationship between Nabataea and Rome, as well as into Nabataean responses. This chapter also provides a re-evaluation of several critical events, such as Tiberius' alleged planned invasion of the Nabataeans. The analysis in this chapter reveals and articulates the distinctly nuanced Nabataean identity and role in the late Hellenistic and Roman cultural and political contexts.

Finally, Chapter 4 examines the last generations of Nabataean independence, from 40 CE, the year of Aretas IV's death, to 106 CE, the year of the Roman annexation. This chapter begins with a detailed examination of critical political events taking place in Judaea, in order to articulate a Nabataean perspective on these events even where it is not explicitly mentioned in our sources. This period of Nabataean history presents a unique challenge to the ancient historian, who must often shadowbox the historical sources in order to give the Nabataean side of the story. The analysis employed here may serve as a model for viewing other, similar civilizations that also lack an indigenously composed historical narrative. In particular, this chapter seeks to challenge the traditional characterization that sees during these years a gradual political, economic, and cultural decline for the Nabataeans, culminating in their annexation by the Romans in 106 CE. I demonstrate that this period instead represents a time of increasing sophistication and self-confidence on the part of the Nabataeans, not one of resignation or submission to the inevitability of Roman domination.

**CHAPTER 1:
THE NABATAEANS AND THE EARLY HELLENISTIC CONTEXT**

I. INTRODUCTION

Proper acknowledgment for ushering the Nabataeans out of the darkness of history lies with the first century BCE universal historian Diodorus Siculus, who—working from the eyewitness account of Hieronymus of Cardia, the great early Hellenistic chronicler—furnishes the first secure attestations to the hitherto obscure Nabataeans in the context of his description of the expedition of a certain Athenaios, an officer of the *diadoch* Antigonos Monophthalmos, against them in 312 BCE. Diodorus’ account thus situates the Nabataeans both temporally and geographically, at the beginning of the Hellenistic period in or near the site of Petra.¹

Besides Diodorus’ account, the modern historian has only a scant collection of scattered and sporadic references to the Nabataeans throughout the early Hellenistic period upon which to draw for knowledge about them in this period. These include mentions in papyrological and epigraphic testimony, some narrative accounts in Jewish literary sources such as the *Maccabees*, and—after around 100 BCE—limited (but growing) numismatic and archaeological evidence. This paucity of information, though, belies the Nabataeans’ role as an important economic and political player in the region in the early Hellenistic period. Although they initially lacked—at least with the present state of our knowledge—a readily identifiable, structured urban landscape along the model of contemporary Hellenistic kingdoms in the region, the Nabataeans nevertheless had a clearly visible and prominent political and cultural identity and impact, both at home and in the broader regional context. These have not been appropriately appreciated, especially with an eye to the Nabataean point of view. This chapter will thus provide a careful analysis and reassessment of the available evidence in order to locate and articulate the Nabataean perspective on and—where appropriate—role in the events of this period,

¹ Dioid. 19.94-100.3. Diodorus treats the Nabataeans on four occasions in his universal history: in Book 2, in the context of his account of the history of Asia; in Book 3, which deals with the early history of Ethiopia and Libya; in Book 19 (the section in question here), where he describes the activities and campaigns of the *diadochoi*; and in Book 40, where he discusses the history and character of the Arab race. On Hieronymus’ account of the Nabataeans, see esp. Hornblower (1982), 44-50; Bosworth (2002), 187-209. The question of Nabataean “origins” and their activities prior to this temporal and geographical anchor in 312 BCE has generated an extensive, inconclusive, and ongoing debate. Many scholars now lean toward an original homeland in northeast Arabia, but for different reasons. Most now concur that the Nabataeans should not be connected with the Nabayate (Nabayati) and the Nebaioth of the Old Testament. This original objection to this association goes back to Starcky (1966), 903, who argued that the emphatic ‘t’ found in Nabatu is incompatible with the soft ‘t’ in Nabayati/Nebaioth, which also has a final ‘y’ missing in Nabatu. For this argument, see also Bartlett (1979), 62-3; *contra* Graf (1990), 59-68. For recent summaries of the debate about Nabataean origins, with bibliography, see Parr (2003), 27-35; Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 15-19. The controversy, though, has little bearing on the questions posed, examined, and answered in the present dissertation, which focuses only the period after 312 BCE.

from 312 BCE, the year of Antigonos' expedition, to 63 BCE, the year of Pompey's settlement of affairs in the East.

II. THE 4TH AND 3RD CENTURIES BCE: ENCOUNTERS WITH THE *DIADOCHOI*

As they jockeyed for power and position in their struggles following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, the *diadochoi* continually reshaped the political boundaries of the Near East. Initially, Antigonos Monophthalmos had the most success in augmenting his holdings. This expansionist policy eventually brought him into contact with the Nabataeans. Having secured control of Syria and Phoenicia, Antigonos turned his attention toward the “Arabs called Nabataeans,” deciding they were hostile to his interests.² Antigonos' exact motives for attacking the Nabataeans remain vague, but economic considerations likely played a crucial role.³ He sent his friend Athenaios with 4000 light infantry and 600 cavalry to cut off their cattle. After marching from Idumaea for three days, Athenaios reached a location called simply “the rock”⁴ at a time when the Nabataean men were away holding their national assembly. On this occasion, those dwelling around, οἱ περίοικοι, would meet to buy, sell, and trade goods, leaving behind the old men, women, and children.⁵ Finding Petra—described by Diodorus as strong but without walls—unprotected, Athenaios and his men took what frankincense and myrrh they could find there, as well as 500 talents of silver, dispatching or imprisoning the unfortunates who had remained behind.

When the Nabataeans returned and learned what had happened, they pursued the Greeks, who underestimated the speed of the requital. With a force of 8000, the Nabataeans almost completely destroyed Athenaios' forces, allowing only fifty of the

² Diod. 19.94.1: τῶν Ἀράβων τῶν καλουμένων Ναβαταίων...ἑαυτοῦ πραγμάτων ἀλλότριον εἶναι. The question of Nabataean ethnicity does not form a part of this dissertation, but it is worth noting that some scholars have suggested that the Nabataeans were not, in fact, Arabs. This argument has been put forth most recently—and vigorously—by Retsö (2003), esp. 364-391, 623-6, who contends that the term “Arab” is not really an ethnic one, but rather a category of social status. The “Nabataeans,” he claims, were characterized as a peaceful, sedentary people, while the “Arabs” were a military, warlike people united under a king. I am unconvinced by his arguments, as are most other scholars. See esp. Bowersock (2004), 293; Mouton (2006), 98.

³ See Theophrastus *Hist. plant.* 9.4.8; Pliny *NH* 12.56 for Antigonos' interest in the Arabian spice trade. Other motives are possible: at least one scholar has argued that Antigonos' campaigns against the Nabataeans should be connected to preparations for an invasion of Egypt. See Billows (1990), 130-1.

⁴ ἡ πέτρα probably refers to the stronghold of Umm Biyara in the center of the site of Petra, which always goes by this name in surviving Greek sources. However, because Petra does not seem to conform precisely to the distances given by Diodorus, some scholars have postulated another “rock,” or stronghold—in particular the site of Sela, near Busayra. See Lindner and Zeitler (1991), 180; Hart (1986), 91-95. The argument against Petra also rests in part upon the assumption that the Nabataeans were not at this stage sufficiently “settled” to have selected Petra as their capital. See my further discussion below.

⁵ Diod. 19.95.1-2.

cavalry to escape.⁶ Returning to Petra, they wrote to Antigonos in “Syrian letters” (Συρίοις γράμμασι) to complain. This clearly refers to their use of Aramaic, the regional *lingua franca*, and suggests regular dealings—economically and diplomatically—with other regional powers. Most scholars agree that the Nabataeans used an early form of Arabic in their everyday speech, while they using Aramaic in official correspondence.⁷ Antigonos, according to Diodorus’ account, replied favorably to them, in order to lure them into a false sense of security. To overcome nomads living in the desert was, after all, no easy task.⁸ He then sent another force against the Nabataeans, this time under his son Demetrius Poliorcetes. Marching the requisite three days through the desert, Demetrius, with a robust force of 4000 infantry and 4000 cavalry, could not escape the notice of the lookouts. Alerted by fire signals, the Nabataeans sent their property, as well as a garrison, to Petra; they also divided their flocks and moved them into the desert.

Even with his large force, Demetrius could not take the stronghold of the Nabataeans, who sent him a message asking him why he would bother to make war on a people living in the desert, where there is no water, grain, or wine, adding that it made no sense for the Greeks to stay there; they themselves had no water nor could they force the Nabataeans to change their lifestyle.⁹ Demetrius thereby agreed to depart with gifts and hostages.¹⁰ Antigonos was still not finished with the Nabataeans, however. Demetrius received a stern rebuke from his father for his lenient treatment of the enemy, but did appease him with some useful information: on his way back he passed the Dead Sea and noted the economic value of the region, which produced balsam, excellent palm-trees, and—most importantly—asphalt, harvested from the Dead Sea itself.¹¹

Antigonos thus sent a third force to the region, this time under the general-cum-historian Hieronymus, with instructions to collect asphalt from the Dead Sea. A force of 6000 Arabs, sailing on reed rafts, killed most of Hieronymus’ expeditionary troops with arrows. These latter Arabs were almost certainly Nabataeans.¹² Discouraged by this trio of defeats, Antigonos gave up on this promising source of revenue. A new threat from Seleucus in the upper satrapies posed a greater danger and the *diadoch* sent a sizeable force under Demetrius in that direction.¹³

Diodorus provides this lengthy description of the Nabataeans to provide context for his account of the Antigonids, but he also furnishes another substantial passage in Book 2 of his history. In the latter passage, Diodorus says the Nabataeans are nomads, who live in the open air, do not plant grain or fruit-trees, drink wine, or build houses, on penalty of death. Some raise camels, some sheep. They number around 10,000 but are the wealthiest of the Arab tribes. They bring to the sea frankincense, myrrh, and other spices, buying them from traders from Arabia Felix. They have sophisticated reservoirs and extensive knowledge of water-sources in the desert. They will retreat there if necessary to escape

⁶ Diod. 19.95.3-5.

⁷ On the language of the Nabataeans, which most accept as an early predecessor of modern Arabic, see esp. Cantineau (1934/5), 77-97; Starcky (1966), 923-938; MacDonald (2003), 37-56.

⁸ Diod. 19.96.2.

⁹ Diod. 19.97.3-5.

¹⁰ Plutarch (*Dem.* 7.1) specifies that Demetrius took 700 camels along with much booty.

¹¹ Diod. 19. 98.1-100.1.

¹² See Hammond (1959), 40-48.

¹³ Diod. 19.100.3.

enemies.¹⁴ They also have access to the asphalt from the Dead Sea, as well as a monopoly on balsam-trees, which apparently grow nowhere else and which are highly valued for their medicinal uses.¹⁵

Taken together, these accounts give a somewhat contradictory picture. On the one hand, the Nabataeans apparently succeeded in repelling three consecutive invasions by the Antigonids; had mastered asphalt collection from the Dead Sea; and had amassed considerable amounts of wealth. On the other hand, they are described as largely nomadic, without houses or possessions. Hieronymus/Diodorus' version of events has aroused the suspicions of a number of modern scholars, who have accused the historian(s) of treating the Nabataeans as a literary device. In particular, they have seen the characterization of the Nabataeans as stereotypical of ancient Greek perceptions and descriptions of nomadic societies.¹⁶ The comparison of these passages with a well-known passage of the late 1st century BCE geographer Strabo—in which he describes the Nabataeans as a sophisticated, settled civilization, at least in his day—has long served as a departure point for studies of Nabataean history.¹⁷ Since Strabo's account describes the conditions of the Nabataeans around the transition between the 1st centuries BCE and CE, its precise details need not detain us further here in discussing the Nabataean experience in the early to mid-Hellenistic period, except to acknowledge the degree to which these two texts have served as a kind of motif in the secondary literature, functioning as a departure point for asking how, why, and when the Nabataeans went from being a nomadic population disdainful of possessions, as described by Diodorus, to a sedentary people, inhabiting a cosmopolitan city, in Strabo's account.

Diodorus/Hieronymus' account should not be dismissed as simple literary embellishment, and its apparent contradictions become much less troubling when one views the Nabataeans on their own terms and concludes that they had by the late 4th century BCE developed a rather unusual civilization: on the one hand, they exhibit many characteristics of nomadic societies, such as the lack—thus far corroborated by the archaeological record—of a permanent infrastructure; on the other hand, they had clearly developed a sophisticated trade network and had established and demonstrated a formidable military capacity. They had already established their central place in the movement of frankincense and myrrh from the southern Arabian Gulf to Mediterranean markets.¹⁸ Their cache of 500 talents of silver, taken by Athenaios' men, speaks to

¹⁴ Diod. 19.94.2-10; 2.48.1-5.

¹⁵ Diod. 2.48.2. Balsam was used particularly for the embalming process in Egypt.

¹⁶ Bosworth (2002), 187-209, provides the most extensive deconstruction of this portion of Hieronymus' work. He sees in the account a tension between liberty and empire and between nomadism and civilization. For further discussion of the campaign, see Abel (1937), 373-391; Bowersock (1983), 12-16; Negev (1977), 521-530.

¹⁷ Strabo (16.4.21) derives his information from the contemporary eyewitness account of Artemidorus (i.e. 16.4.8 and 16.4.19). He describes the Nabataeans as follows: they are well ruled by a king; they have many Romans and other foreigners in the city, who are engaged in numerous lawsuits with each other; and they have common meals and few slaves. Most significantly, Strabo says they are so inclined to gain possessions that they fine anyone who diminishes his property and honor anyone who augments it; furthermore, they have costly houses made of stone.

¹⁸ Diod. 19.94.5. In the early Hellenistic period the Nabataeans, just as in later periods, would have served as middlemen in the incense trade from the south Arabian kingdom of the Minaeans. See Graf and Sidebotham (2003), 65-73; Graf (1983), 555-569.

considerable economic success, even at this relatively early stage. They also had, by the end of the 4th century BCE, a centralized base of operations, or capital, probably at Petra; and military capacity sufficient for successful self-defense against great-power aggressors, including Antigonos, arguably the most capable of the *diadochoi*.

These capabilities speak to a degree of political and economic organization in Nabataean society that certainly belies some of Diodorus' characterization of them as simple nomads.¹⁹ To argue, however, that the Nabataeans were not at least partially nomadic flies in the face of all current archaeological data: despite strident contemporary efforts, archaeologists have not yet succeeded in identifying any evidence of Nabataean material culture dating to before the end of the 2nd century BCE. Pending such discoveries, a balanced approach is best. But a "settled" existence, in traditional definitions, should not be considered a prerequisite for any of the achievements listed above. The danger lies in making the Nabataeans conform too closely to pre-existing models without fully appreciating their unique achievements. While they may have lacked permanent buildings, coinage, pottery, and other trappings of "sedentary" societies, the range of their economic and military activities suggest they do not fit the usual models of nomadic societies. For a fuller picture of Nabataean society and for the Nabataeans' place within the Hellenistic context, we must turn to the 3rd century BCE evidence.

After their encounters with the Antigonids reported by Diodorus, the next secure reference to the Nabataeans comes in a text (*PSI* 406) from the Zenon papyri; in this document, dated to 257 BCE, a certain Herakleides—chariot driver for Zenon—reports on the activities of two individuals, Drymilus and Dionysus, who were selling slave-girls as prostitutes. They allegedly sold one girl for 150 drachmas in the Syrian Hawran and encountered the Nabataeans on their way back.²⁰ The text thus confirms a Nabataean presence in the Hawran as early as the mid-3rd century BCE. Whether they were there as nomadic traders or as semi-permanent residents acting in an economic capacity is not altogether clear, but taken together with the testimony of Josephus and the Biblical Maccabees (see discussion below) concerning their activities there in the second quarter of the 2nd century BCE, the latter scenario seems the more probable.²¹

The papyrological record has more recently supplied another key piece of evidence, the celebrated Milan papyrus containing scores of epigrams by Posidippus of Pella.²² The epigram in question here, AB 10, is contained within the *Lithika* section of the papyrus. The relevant extant portion reads:

15 ...Ναβαταῖος
16 ...Ἀράβω[ν ἵππο]μάχων βασιλεύς

¹⁹ As some scholars have noted. See i.e. Al-Abduljabbar (1995), 103-109.

²⁰ Reprinted with commentary in Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003) 364-7.

²¹ Another papyrus from the Zenon archive (*PCZ* 59009, frag. (f) = Addenda 285, lines 20-23) refers to the purchase of Gerrhean and Minaean frankincense from a certain Malichus in Moab. Since Malichus is a known Nabataean royal name, the reference may be—if not to a Nabataean king—at least to a Nabataean trader.

²² The papyrus, *P.Mil.Vogl.VIII* 309, has spawned a copious and ever-increasing secondary literature. On this epigram specifically, see Graf (2006), 47-68; Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 587.

15 ...Nabataean

16 ...king of the Arabian (fighting) horsemen²³

If one accepts that the *basileus* is in fact connected with the Nabataean of the previous line, then this epigram provides an early 3rd century BCE reference to a Nabataean king. Scholars have read this in different ways. We must consider the context here. The kings of the major Hellenistic kingdoms had long since taken the diadem and the title of *basileus*, but others would follow in due course. Attalus I in Pergamum, for example, assumed the honor in the latter part of 3rd century.²⁴ The closest geographical parallel, the Hasmonaeans, did not assume the diadem until the late 2nd century BCE in the wake of the retreat of Seleucid power.²⁵ An important question arises: was the assumption of the title *basileus* in the middle of the 3rd century BCE predicated on some kind of major victory or diplomatic achievement, as it had been in the age of the *diadochoi*?²⁶ The editors of the *editio princeps* suggested a different meaning for the word here, something like “local leader,” but this alternate meaning must in part derive from the *a priori* assumption that the Nabataeans were still at this period completely nomadic and therefore not in possession of a “king” in the more traditional sense. Another recently published inscription in the Damascus museum also names a “king of the Nabataeans.” Its date—which some put as early as the mid-3rd century—has been controversial, since it must be derived paleographically, but becomes less so when taken together with the *Lithika* mention.²⁷ The Posidippus epigram contains another important nugget of information: the issue concerns several missing letters before the *machon*. Most commentators have supplied *hippo* without reservation. Strabo’s claims (16.4.23 and 16.4.26) that the Nabataeans used camels instead of horses, and that they were not very good fighters, seem to have no grounding in fact.²⁸

²³ The translation given here is that of Kosmetatou and Acosta-Hughes, modified—following Graf (2006) and Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003)—to include “fighting.” On this, see further discussion below.

²⁴ Attalus I probably took the diadem sometime after his defeat of the Gauls at the Kaikos River in 237. A geographically closer parallel would be the Hasmonaeans, who—according to Josephus—first adopted the diadem under Aristobulus I at the very end of the 2nd century BCE. Pergamum, unlike Nabataea—at least so far as we know from our evidence—began minting coins at around this same period. It also possessed all the other trappings of an established city, such as monumental architecture.

²⁵ See Goldstein (1983), 256, for the suggestion that the Nabataeans only took up the diadem in response to a similar move by the Hasmonaeans.

²⁶ Following “Nabataean” in the text is another word, which has been read as either *Malchos/Malichus* or *makraion*. The former possibility would quite tantalizingly represent the earliest occurrence of a traditional Nabataean king name.

²⁷ Milik (2003), 275. Cf. Starcky (1985), 167-8.

²⁸ With respect to Strabo’s day, the claims are refuted by *de bello Alexandrino*, where it is reported that Malichus, king of the Nabataeans, sent cavalry to Caesar. For the 2nd century BCE, we have the testimony of another of Posidippus’ epigrams (AB 76), in which he celebrates the “glory of Arabian horses,” as well as an additional inscription from Hegra that may support the Nabataean use of horses. See *de bello Alexandrino* 1.1; *CIS* 201=*JS* 29; and Graf (2006), 60, for further details and discussion.

What does one make of the combined testimony of this 4th and 3rd century evidence? Clearly one must take the Nabataeans seriously as a tangible part of the political and economic landscape of the early Hellenistic world. While they did not—at least in the 3rd century BCE—possess many of the visible markers of Hellenistic states such as Ptolemaic Egypt or Seleucid Syria, the nature of their mention in the Posidippus papyrus speaks to their wealth and prestige in this period. It also forces one to re-evaluate the definition of a “traditional” Hellenistic monarchy. That they had appointed some kind of a king, *basileus*, who was recognized as such in the wider Hellenistic sphere, suggests the Nabataeans may have adopted some of the trappings of a royal administration in response to the exigencies of war and trade organization.²⁹ All of this is consistent with the picture one derives from the testimony describing Antigonos Monophthalmos’ strong interest in the Nabataeans’ wealth and his futile attempts on their territory at the end of the 3rd century. Despite this, the fundamental structure of Nabataean society continued to be largely based on many “nomadic” principles. They did not yet have an autonomous coinage; did not make pottery; and did not, apparently, build permanent structures of the kind we are accustomed to seeing in the material record throughout the Hellenistic world. The inherent difficulty of combining much of this seemingly self-contradictory evidence goes all the way back to Diodorus and Hieronymus. The conclusion one must draw—and from which one must work—is that the Nabataeans need to be considered as a unique entity on their own terms. The image of Nabataea that emerges from these 4th and 3rd century documents is one of a well-established player on the international stage, which had found and filled an important niche with its control of the Arabian spice trade and Dead Sea bitumen industry. Though they do not easily fit into existing paradigms of Hellenistic statehood, they were, by the early 3rd century BCE at least, fully cognizant of the larger Hellenistic context and capable of tinkering with models and ideas it might provide.

III. THE 2ND CENTURY BCE: NABATAEAN ENCOUNTERS WITH THE HASMONAEANS

Unfortunately, a lacuna in further literary evidence persists until the second quarter of the 2nd century BCE, where the next substantial reference to the Nabataeans again situates them in the Hawran. In 168 BCE, the high-priest Jason, having been driven out by his rival Menelaus, fled to a *tyrannos* Aretas in Petra.³⁰ This is highly suggestive, since it clearly refers to a Nabataean ruler with the well-attested royal name Aretas.³¹ The Nabataeans evidently were in a strong enough position to provide political umbrage. The broad geopolitical context for this encounter, and for the one that follows, between the Maccabees and the Nabataeans, is the Seleucid takeover during the 5th Syrian War (201-195 BCE) of Coele-Syria from the Ptolemies, who had controlled the region since the

²⁹ Argued at some length by Abduljabbar (1995), 148-155: he places the emphasis on Gaza and the numerous attacks by Antigonos. This is logical, but does not take into account the other evidence, such as the *Lithika* papyrus, which suggests even closer contacts with Ptolemaic Egypt.

³⁰ *2 Macc.* 5.5-10. He is referred to as ὁ τῶν Ἀράβων τύραννος.

³¹ Scholars have traditionally labeled this ruler Aretas I, placing him at the beginning of the Nabataean king lists. He may also be the king referred to in an early inscription from the Negev. See further discussion below.

battle of Ipsos in 301 BCE. Indirectly, this would lead to considerable changes for the peoples in and around the Levant, especially the Jews. A more aggressive policy by the Seleucids, especially after the death of Antiochus III, gradually came to replace a more hands-off Ptolemaic approach to the region. Meddling in the internal affairs of the Jews accelerated with the ascension of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 BCE) to the Seleucid kingship and famously led to the Hasmonaean Revolt under Judas Maccabeus.

Our chief source for these events, Josephus, reports that Judas Maccabeus and his brother Jonathan, setting out with 8000 soldiers, marched three days after crossing the Jordan River before encountering the Nabataeans, who greeted them peacefully and told them what had happened to the Jews, that they had been locked up in the fortresses and cities of the Galaaditis, namely Bosora, Bosor in Alemo, Chasfo, Maked, and Karnain.³² The Nabataeans then urged swift action to free the men. Judas attacked Bosra and killed all the male inhabitants and burned the city. Another passage from Maccabees apparently refers to the same campaign into the Hawran, but in this account Judas and his men encountered a force of nomads, consisting of 5000 infantry and 500 cavalry.³³ This discrepancy has been variously interpreted. The explicit mention of the Nabataeans by name in the first passage contrasts with the non-specific “nomad Arabs” in the second, but the campaign is in both cases against Timotheos. What conclusion can be drawn, then, and how do we resolve this apparent conflict in the sources?

Let us begin with what we know for sure: Judas Maccabeus and his brother came to the Hawran in pursuit of Timotheos and to rescue their fellow countrymen from the cities and fortresses in the Galaanitis, prominent among them Bosora. They had at least one encounter with the Nabataeans, whom Josephus mentions specifically by name. That Josephus describes Timotheos’ hiring of Arab mercenaries in the next passage (*AJ* 12.341) makes clear he is well aware of the distinction. For further corroboration, we need only look at another passage from *1 Maccabees*, which describes the flight of the Maccabees to the Nabataeans three years later, in 160 BCE.³⁴ Here, they ask the Nabataeans to take care of their goods, but another Arab tribe, called the “sons of Jambri,” ambushes their baggage-train.³⁵ This passage suggests both that the Maccabees were on friendly relations with the Nabataeans and that there were other powerful Arab tribes active in the region.³⁶ There is no reason the encounter and conflict of 163 could not have been with these same “sons of Jambri” or another Arab tribe.

These passages have two important implications: first, they provide us with further secure evidence of the continued presence and activity of the Nabataeans in the Hawran. A key point is that they seem to have *advised* the Jews to attack several of the cities in the region, especially Bosora. Assuming that the Maccabee brothers encountered both the Nabataeans and another, more hostile Arab tribe during their expedition into the region in 163, we can also be confident that the Nabataeans, while both present and active in the region, had by no means established any kind of stable political control over it as a

³² Jos. *AJ* 12.335-336; *1 Macc.* 5.24-27.

³³ *2 Macc.* 12.10-12.

³⁴ *1 Macc.* 9.32-42; cf. Josephus *AJ* 13.7-11.

³⁵ Josephus calls them “sons of Amaraioi.”

³⁶ While this is not definitive proof of friendly relations three years earlier in the first encounter, it makes them highly probable.

whole. This may very well be because they were still living and acting in a semi-nomadic manner. It also speaks to the fluidity of political control in the region.

Nabataean economic and political activity can be confirmed for other regions as well. In addition to the mention of a Nabataean *tyrannos*, highlighted above, we have another reference to a king, *mlk*, that may date as far back as the 2nd quarter of the 2nd century. This comes in the form of an inscription from the Negev, specifically from Elusa, a stop on the route from Petra to Gaza, and reads, “This is the place which Notairu has made for the life of Aretas, king of the Nabataeans (*mlk nbtw*).” The Aretas in question cannot be identified beyond doubt, but based on the letter forms of the inscription, scholars have generally identified him with the so-called Aretas I (c. 168 BCE) mentioned in 2 *Maccabees*³⁷ or Aretas II (c. 120/110-96 BCE).³⁸ In any case, the inscription provides further evidence for Nabataean control of the trade routes through the Negev in this period.

A further piece of evidence is particularly instructive. It comes in the form of an inscription from Priene in Asia Minor, which honors Moschion, a local diplomat, for his services to the city.³⁹ Dated to 129 BCE, the text lists diplomatic missions to Alexandria and Petra among Moschion’s accomplishments. This text’s significance lies in its appraisal of the importance of the Nabataeans on the international stage at this point. That in the last quarter of the 2nd century BCE, Petra could be listed alongside the greatest city in the Hellenistic world, on an inscription as far away as Priene, implies it had established a firm place in the Hellenistic consciousness.⁴⁰ This inscription corresponds chronologically with a passage by Agatharchides of Knidos, who was himself writing in Alexandria in the middle-to-late 2nd century BCE: he says that the incense and spice trade led in a direct line from “Nessa” on the Red Sea to Petra, and from there to Palestine.⁴¹ That the rest of the Hellenistic world took the Nabataeans seriously as economic players should now be quite clear. The Nabataeans even seem to have been known in Han China, where a report by Chang Ch’ien of his trip to Bactria in 126 BCE speaks of a “Li-Kan,” which some scholars have connected with “Rekem,” the Nabataean name for Petra.⁴² Evidence for Nabataean trading activities in the early to mid-Hellenistic period can also be found in the archaeological record. An abundance of coins from Arados, for example, with dates ranging from the 3rd to 1st centuries BCE, suggest active trade between this north Phoenician island town and Petra already by the 3rd century.⁴³

³⁷ 2 *Macc.* 5.8; cf. 1 *Macc.* 5.25-26. See discussion above.

³⁸ For the text and extensive bibliography on this inscription, see Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 393-4; Dijkstra (1995), 48-50.

³⁹ For the text and further bibliography, see Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 126-127; cf. Wenning (1987), 23 no. 5; Roche (1996), 83 no. 10. Schmid (2008), 361, postulates that this inscription implies “a minimum of permanent infrastructure that qualified Petra as a kind of city in the eyes of the Greeks from Asia Minor already in 130 BC.” Certainly, as he points out, this inscription problematizes the lack of solid archaeological evidence for the Nabataeans prior to c. 100 BCE.

⁴⁰ See Schmid (2008), 361. As has been shown, we have no conclusive evidence for Nabataean sedentary presence in Petra until the end of the 2nd century BCE, roughly a quarter century after the date of this inscription.

⁴¹ *De mari Erythraeo* 5.87.

⁴² See Graf (1996), 208-9; Pullyblank (1999), 71-79; Graf and Sidebotham (2003), 65-6.

⁴³ All told, it seems that nearly half of all the Hellenistic coins at Petra come from Arados. Some coins were found as part of the excavations conducted by the “Hellenistic Petra Project,” which

The combined weight of this literary and epigraphic evidence suggests that the Nabataeans had already come to play a significant role in the Dead Sea region and northern Arabia as early as the end of the 4th century BCE, when Hieronymus of Cardia had first-hand dealings with them as part of Antigonos Monophthalmos' campaigns. Epigraphic testimony attests to their active presence beyond the area of Petra in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, both in the Negev and in the Hawran. Given our lack of evidence about any direct Ptolemaic or Seleucid control over these regions during this period, it is reasonable to infer that the Nabataeans enjoyed a good deal of autonomy in controlling the most important trade routes, which would have led from Charax (on the Euphrates) and Arabia Felix through Petra to markets in Damascus and Gaza.

All these attestations of the Nabataeans' regional importance nevertheless do not find any significant echo in the material record until the end of the 2nd century BCE. Material culture in the traditional sense—ceramics, coins, and evidence of monumental architecture—does not appear in any real quantity in the archaeological record until around 100 BCE.⁴⁴ Some signs have recently emerged that this picture may change. Excavations in the city center of Petra in 2004 found clear evidence of pre-100 BCE Hellenistic settlement in the form of a number of Greek amphora fragments, partition walls, and signs of domestic cooking in stratified context reaching 1.5 m below the level of the paved street.⁴⁵ These excavations also found sophisticated water works datable to the end of the 2nd century BCE, suggesting the Nabataeans had already been developing such technology for some time.⁴⁶ Finally, work carried out in the *temenos* area in 2005 found a concentration of 3rd century BCE Hellenistic coins along with some Attic pottery.⁴⁷

Attempts to locate further evidence of Nabataean sedentary occupation of Petra in the pre-100 BCE Hellenistic period will continue.⁴⁸ Even without further material evidence, though, the widely held assumption that the Nabataeans were nomadic until the appearance of these concrete barometers of a sedentary lifestyle, is problematic. Besides an argument *ex silentio*, our only “proof” comes from the account of Diodorus/Hieronymus, which specifically describes the year 312 BCE, over two hundred years earlier. As was argued in the first part of this chapter, internal contradictions within the account itself stem more from literary convention than historical fact and the situation begs for further, more careful examination. The cumulative effect of the available

has sought to find evidence of Hellenistic settlement at Petra, and they complement the fifteen Aradus coins found during Parr's excavations at Petra. See Graf, Bedal, Schmid (2005), 437, citing the as-yet unpublished reports by Parr and Bowsher on the earlier excavations carried out by the British in 1958-1964. The authors provide examples of other finds of Aradus coins on the caravan route between Petra and Avdat, many of which also have a Hellenistic context. See also Parr (1960), 130-131, 100-101.

⁴⁴ Schmid (2001), 368; Graf (2007), 333; Schmid (2008), 360-1.

⁴⁵ Graf (2007), 336.

⁴⁶ Graf (2007), 337.

⁴⁷ Graf (2007), 338-339.

⁴⁸ Locating such evidence of material culture prior to the end of the 2nd century forms the impetus behind current efforts of the “Hellenistic Petra Project,” with reports published at Graf, Bedal, Schmid, Sidebotham (2005); Graf, Schmid, Ronza (2007). One awaits publication of findings from the most recent season in 2007. D. Graf (personal correspondence 2010) has indicated to me that these excavations did produce more promising Hellenistic materials in stratified contexts.

evidence suggests an established Nabataean state possibly as early as the mid-3rd century and by the middle of the 2nd at the very least.⁴⁹ I would argue that Nabataean society had long consisted of both nomadic and more “settled” elements by the time we reach the late 2nd century BCE.⁵⁰ The minting of an autonomous coinage in the early to mid-1st century BCE suggests that the Nabataeans were at this point more firmly settled, with a clearly articulated economic system under state control, but it in no way proves that they had not reached a similar stage of development earlier.⁵¹ As with other areas under the larger umbrella of Seleucid hegemony, the Nabataeans had not been free to mint their own coins until Seleucid authority in the region had become sufficiently weak. We can see other, parallel, examples of autonomous minting in the nearby cities of Tyre, Sidon, and Ashkelon in the last quarter of the 2nd century directly connected with a retreat of Seleucid central control. Up to this point, the Nabataeans almost certainly dealt in bullion for large transactions, as seen in the 500 talents of silver taken by Athenaios, or used the widely circulated Ptolemaic and Seleucid coinages.

Until very recently, excavations at Petra and other Nabataean sites had revealed little in the way of domestic or urban architecture predating 100 BCE, and pre-100 archaeological evidence from the site has had little secure context.⁵² Though nothing yet has been found to suggest architecture on a monumental scale, recent archaeological efforts in Petra have begun to bring some corroborative evidence to bear on the literary testimony.⁵³ While a fundamental question dominating the secondary literature has been the date at which the Nabataeans became sedentarized, this has in large part distracted from the unmistakable importance of the Nabataeans in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE. The cumulative effect of the evidence calls for a reassessment of their role in the Hellenistic world prior to the arrival of the Romans. The one hundred or so years directly prior to this, marked by a gradual decline in Seleucid power, seems to have represented something of a *floruit* for the Nabataeans, as well as for other, smaller states and populations such as the Jews. With this in mind, let us now turn to developments in the first part of the 1st century BCE.

⁴⁹ Cf. Graf, Bedal, Schmid, Sidebotham (2005), 418.

⁵⁰ As I argue in Chapter 4, this would continue to be a feature of Nabataean society all the way up to and beyond the Roman annexation in 106 CE. As Parr (2003), 35, notes, a nomadic, pastoral society might very well have a good deal of political centralization. The issue of exactly *why* the Nabataeans became sedentarized falls somewhat outside the scope of this dissertation, but may be a subject of future research. See Parr (2003), 35; Graf (2003), 333; Graf (1990), 53 for basic summaries of the problem.

⁵¹ These first Nabataean coins probably date to the latter part of the 2nd century BCE. Of bronze, they depict the head of Athena on the obverse and Nike on the reverse.

⁵² British excavations by the Horsfields (1929-1936) and Peter Parr (1958-1964) uncovered some early Hellenistic Attic pottery, a 2nd BCE Greek *ostrakon*, and a number of stamped amphora handles, which can be dated from the mid-2nd to the early 1st centuries BCE. Reports: Parr (1960), 124-135; Horsfeld and Conway (1930), 369-380; Horsfeld and Conway (1938), 1-42; Horsfeld and Conway (1939), 87-115; Horsfeld and Conway (1942), 105-205.

⁵³ See Parr (1990), 7-23; Parr (2003), 27-35.

IV. THE NABATAEANS AND THE QUESTION OF GAZA

Toward the close of the 2nd century BCE, the Nabataeans enter more squarely into the extant historical narrative. Their motives and perspectives nevertheless remain largely obscured by the attention paid by our sources to other regional players, chief among them the Hasmonaeans and their expansionist leader, Alexander Jannaeus.⁵⁴ Jannaeus, who succeeded his father Aristobulus to become the Jewish king in 103 BCE,⁵⁵ was an adventuresome and ambitious ruler who greatly enhanced Hasmonaean territory and prestige over the course of an almost thirty year reign.

From the outset, Jannaeus' aggressive activities had him embroiled in the broader politics of the eastern Mediterranean. The Nabataeans were no exception. In 100 BCE, as part of his aggressive, expansionist policy, Jannaeus attacked the port city of Gaza. Josephus reports that the Gazans expected help—in vain, as it turns out, for the succor never arrived—from the Nabataeans.⁵⁶ The incident, which raises important questions about the nature of the relationship between the Nabataeans and Hasmonaeans as well as about the links between the Nabataeans and this important commercial port city on the Mediterranean, has not received the amount of attention it deserves.

The event must first be placed into context. Jannaeus had already conquered Ptolemais, another city on the coast whose pleas for help had gotten Ptolemy Lathyrus—who was at this point engaged in a struggle for control of Egypt with his mother Cleopatra III—directly embroiled in the region.⁵⁷ Jannaeus secretly made an alliance with Cleopatra III. Upon finding this out, Lathyrus also besieged and sacked the unfortunate Ptolemais.⁵⁸ From there he moved against Asochis and Sepphrois, before finally routing Jannaeus at Asophon.⁵⁹ It has been suggested that these incursions into Transjordan were an attempt by Lathyrus to link up with the Nabataeans militarily and diplomatically.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Josephus' *Jewish Wars* and *Jewish Antiquities* constitute the most complete sources for these years. In fact, outside of them we have very little documentary material to work with until the Roman sources speak about the activities of Pompey and his associates in the East from the mid-70s BCE onward. On the career of Jannaeus as it pertains to the Nabataeans, see esp. Schalit (1970), 3-50; Stern (1981), 22-46.

⁵⁵ Apparently taking his widowed mother, Alexandra/Salome, as his wife. See Jos. *AJ* 13.320; *BJ* 1.86.

⁵⁶ Jos. *AJ* 13.360: Ἀρέτας ὁ Ἀράβων βασιλεύς ἐπίδοξος ὧν ἤξειν αὐτοῖς σύμμαχος. See Bowersock (1983), 22-3; Kasher (1985), 111 and (1988), 88-9; and Shatzman (1991), 110ff. for the connection between the Nabataeans and Gazans. For the takeover, see Jos. *AJ* 13.364 and *BJ* 1.87; Strabo 16.2.30.

⁵⁷ Ptolemais had received no help from Antiochus VIII Grypus and Antiochus IX Cyzicenus, who were contending for the Seleucid throne. The tyrant Zoilus—who at this point held Dor and Strato's Tower—stepped forward to provide only minimal support. Ptolemais' inhabitants (Jos. *AJ* 13.327-8) therefore invited Ptolemy Lathyrus from Cyprus, who was at this point engaged in a struggle for control of Egypt with his mother, Cleopatra III. The embassies of Ptolemais clearly instilled in Lathyrus the hope that, if he would come over, he would enjoy the support not only of Ptolemais, but also of Gaza, Sidon and Zoilus. See Jos. *AJ* 13.327-330.

⁵⁸ For these events, Jos. *AJ* 13.334ff.

⁵⁹ Jos. *AJ* 13.338-343; Jos. *BJ* 1.86. Asochis and Sepphoris lie roughly midway between Ptolemais and the Sea of Galilee. Asophon is across the Jordan.

⁶⁰ Kasher (1988), 86 and (1990), 144.

Whether this was his intention or not, the Nabataeans, whose ruler at this point was Aretas II,⁶¹ had other ideas—as we shall see.

Lathyrus' growing power alarmed Cleopatra, who sent forces to the Levant, while Lathyrus made an attempt, albeit it a failed one, on Egypt in his mother's absence. He ended up taking refuge in Gaza, before eventually retreating back to Cyprus.⁶² At this point, Cleopatra and Jannaeus finalized a formal treaty at Scythopolis.⁶³ This agreement proved crucial to Jannaeus, who could now exercise a free hand in Coele-Syria without threat from Lathyrus. Jannaeus took advantage, seizing Gadara, then Amathus, which Josephus calls the greatest fortress beyond the Jordan,⁶⁴ before moving against the cities of the coast: Raphia, Anthedon, and finally Gaza. Ptolemy's abandonment of Gaza had left the city open to attack, and Josephus reports that it was Jannaeus' anger at the Gazans for supporting Ptolemy that led to his attack on the city.⁶⁵

This sequence of events may help to explain why the Nabataeans did not answer the Gazans' pleas for help. Certainly, they would not have wished to confront the joint power of Cleopatra III and Jannaeus; but there was more at stake. Given the concentration of foreign great power involvement on the Levantine coastline, the Nabataeans likely worried about getting embroiled in a larger conflict beyond their control and resources. Even with these factors, the decision to abandon Gaza is highly suggestive. There may have been other considerations at work. Nabataean recalcitrance may indicate either that they had determined that Gaza's conquest by Jannaeus would not result in the complete loss of its ability to act as a free port; or that they counted on other access points to maintain the viability of their trade connections with the Mediterranean—or possibly both. Gaza had a long history of independence, being one of a number of cities on the Levantine coast to become independent of Ptolemaic and Seleucid hegemony toward the end of the 2nd century BCE.⁶⁶ The list also includes Ptolemais and Ashkelon.⁶⁷ The Nabataeans likely could have kept their Mediterranean trade going through Ashkelon even after Jannaeus' takeover of Gaza.

This may be extrapolated further. Following Jannaeus' conquest of the city, Gaza came under Hasmonaean control, losing its status as an independent polis,⁶⁸ but Jannaeus appointed Antipas of Idumaea as *strategos* there. This figure had strong connections with the Nabataeans, with Gaza, and with Ashkelon.⁶⁹ This would suggest, then, that the Hasmonaean conquest of Gaza did not have the deleterious effect on Nabataean

⁶¹ On whom see further discussion below.

⁶² For this sequence of events, Jos. *AJ* 13.348-352; 358.

⁶³ Jos. *AJ* 13.355.

⁶⁴ Jos. *AJ* 13.356: μέγιστον ἔρυμα τῶν ὑπὲρ τὸν Ἰορδάνην κατῳκημένων.

⁶⁵ Cleopatra had also left the city alone and returned to Egypt, where she died in 101. It is likely that she intentionally left the city to Jannaeus, as her behavior in all of this indicates above all her desire and intention to protect Egypt against the actions of her son.

⁶⁶ On Gaza in the Hellenistic period, see Möller and Schmitt (1976), 61ff.; Schürer (1979), 98-103; Shatzman (1991), 109-116.

⁶⁷ Ashkelon seems to have maintained a close friendship with the Ptolemies. It is not mentioned as a city conquered by Jannaeus and its coins keep a Ptolemaic likeness throughout the 1st century BCE. Stern (1981), 26; see Josephus *AJ* 13.15.4. On Ptolemais, see the discussion above.

⁶⁸ The city received its independence again following Pompey's campaigns and its dating system was recalibrated to begin in 61 BCE. Gabinius took credit for rebuilding the city.

⁶⁹ Jos. *AJ* 14.40.

economic activities in the region that is often postulated. Scholars have, with near unanimity, asserted that the conquest of Gaza resulted in the Nabataeans' loss of access to the Mediterranean through that—or other—ports.⁷⁰ The evidence simply does not support this claim. Jannaeus' siege and conquest of Gaza are often cited as the first instance in which Nabataean interests were explicitly affected by Jannaeus' activities.⁷¹ This may be the case, but we must be careful to keep Nabataean motivations closely in mind, and to acknowledge their larger ambitions.

In this light, the relationship with Lathyrus must also be considered. Most scholars have assumed friendly relations between the Nabataeans and Lathyrus, citing alleged tensions in this period between the Nabataeans and Egyptians over trade routes. Because Lathyrus was fighting against the Ptolemaic establishment, would it not then follow that the Nabataeans supported him? Gaza—it is often argued—had opened its gates to Ptolemy Lathyrus, displaying resistance to Egyptian policy. The city had previously provided material support to the Ptolemies in the Fifth Syrian War, but Ptolemy Lathyrus' use of the city and favorable reception there may suggest estrangement from the Ptolemies.⁷²

The objectives of Ptolemy Lathyrus should be clear by this point. Not only was he attempting to gain leverage against Cleopatra by fighting in the Levant, but he was also trying to stake his claim—alongside the other regional players—to Damascus and the Seleucid legacy. This would have brought him into competition with the Nabataeans, who also had such aspirations.⁷³ This may at least partially explain their reluctance to respond to the Gazans call for aid. A defeat of Jannaeus at Gaza—especially with the possibility of a protracted siege—would have been disastrous for the Nabataeans' overall aspirations, so the failure to assist Gaza may represent a careful, well-reasoned calculation. The Nabataeans seem to have been very active militarily in other areas as well. A reference to a “rex Herotimus” in Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus, which may refer to Aretas II, says that this Nabataean ruler attacked both Egypt and Syria.⁷⁴ While vague, this would neatly explain their conflict with the Ptolemies in both of these regions.

⁷⁰ See, e.g., Stern (1981), 42; Roche (1996), 74: “Gaza était le principal port d'exportation des Nabatéens, mais il passa aux mains des Hasmonéens au début du Ier siècle av. J.C., ce qui dut gêner sensiblement le commerce méditerranéen des Nabatéens.”

⁷¹ e.g. Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 469, seeing this as the turning point from friendly to hostile relations between the Jews and the Nabataeans. They argue that the request by the Gazans is in and of itself proof of Nabataean military presence in the Negev at this point.

⁷² Polybius 16.22a. See Stern (1981), 26; cf. Kasher (1990), 148.

⁷³ At least one other scholar has speculated along these lines, that Ptolemy Lathyrus opposed the Nabataeans. See Stern (1981), 42.

⁷⁴ Justin 39.5.6: quorum rex Herotimus fiducia septingentorum filiorum, quos ex paelicibus susceperat, divisus exercitibus nunc Aegyptum, nunc Syriam infestabat magnumque nomen Arabum viribus finitimorum exsanguibus fecerat. For the identification of this Herotimus with Aretas II, see Bowersock (1983), 23; Sullivan (1990), 73-4; Wenning (1993), 29 n. 36; Täubler (1910), 251ff. The connection with Aretas II is generally derived from his reputation as an expansionist, but scholars are not unanimous in this identification. For the identification with Aretas III, see Altheim and Stiehl (1964), 290-3; and for a cautionary view that the text may be too formulaic and exaggerated to describe one particular king, see the recent summary in Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 559.

These activities also provide an excellent explanation for another development: this period also saw the minting of the first autonomous Nabataean coins, insofar as a date for them can be determined, and Aretas II probably bears responsibility for initiating the issue.⁷⁵ The introduction of a homegrown coinage would allow Aretas to pay for expanded military adventures: Alexander Jannaeus continued to be a key foe, but the Nabataeans were looking ahead to a larger prize as well.

V. TAKING UP THE SELEUCID MANTLE: THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF ARETAS III

The Nabataean military struggles against Jannaeus continued under their next ruler, Obodas I. In this figure, the Jewish king finally met his match. Under Obodas' leadership, the Nabataeans, strengthened by camels, succeeded in ambushing and destroying the Jewish king's forces at Garada.⁷⁶ This defeat fueled the flames of rebellion against Jannaeus at home. Whoever remained of the Jews, after he had killed 50,000 of them (according to Josephus), called on Demetrius Akairos for help.⁷⁷ Obodas and Jannaeus met in battle, with the former emerging victorious. At some point following this defeat, Alexander returned to the Nabataeans the territories and fortresses he had previously taken from them in Moab and Galaaditis. Josephus says this was to appease the Nabataeans and to keep them from aiding the rebellious Jews in their struggle against him.⁷⁸ This implies that the Nabataeans were not really interested in taking over Jewish territory per se—they were willing to accept the return of strategically useful cities.

One can therefore make some assumptions about the degree of Nabataean power at this stage. These territorial acquisitions—and re-acquisitions—would pave the way toward making the Nabataeans, for a short time at least, the dominant power in Transjordan. Their actions must be viewed as self-conscious efforts to take up the mantle of the fractured Seleucid empire, as far north as the Hawran in southern Syria. To do so without compromising their relative strength or overextending explains their caution in not assisting with the defense of Gaza and in tactfully withdrawing from Judaea.

Growing Nabataean power and relatively transparent intentions naturally drew the attention of the Seleucids. Antiochus XII Dionysus became the new Seleucid king, probably in 86 BCE, with his power-center in Damascus.⁷⁹ He soon launched an attack on the Nabataeans, but chose to go through Judaea instead of by a more direct route.⁸⁰ This campaign is a vexing one. Josephus' two accounts do not accord precisely: in the *Jewish Wars*, the implication is that Alexander tried to block Antiochus' advance to

⁷⁵ The suggestion, first made by Robinson, that the series of unnamed coins be attributed to the reign of Aretas II, is now generally accepted. See Robinson (1936), 288-91; Meshorer (1975), 10-11; Bowersock (1983), 22-3. The coins depict on the obverse a helmeted figure, probably Athena, and on the reverse a Victory/Nike holding a wreath.

⁷⁶ Jos. *AJ* 13.375. The controversy over the exact location of this town has generated an extensive scholarly debate, which need not be rehearsed here.

⁷⁷ Jos. *AJ* 13.376.

⁷⁸ Jos. *AJ* 13.382.

⁷⁹ Jos. *AJ* 13.387.

⁸⁰ Jos. *AJ* 13.387ff.; *BJ* 1.99ff. By doing so, he left Damascus open to a short-lived takeover by his brother Philip.

Nabataea; Judaea was not, it seems, even a real target for the Seleucid king, especially since he chose to put off exacting vengeance on Alexander for the inconvenience he had caused.⁸¹ In *Jewish Antiquities*, Antiochus set out for Arabia; doubled back upon word of his brother Philip's advance to Damascus; then marched on Judaea, through which he intended to lead his soldiers back to Arabia.⁸² Alexander Jannaeus tried to halt his progress by the construction of a wall, towers, and trench from Antipatris to Joppa. These efforts were practically useless, however, as Antiochus simply set them alight and passed on through, only to suffer personal disaster at the hands of the Nabataeans.⁸³ He was killed in a battle near Cana and most of his surviving troops starved to death in the aftermath of their defeat.⁸⁴

How does one interpret the incident? In the *Jewish Wars*, it almost seems as though Jannaeus was trying to prevent Antiochus from attacking the Nabataeans. Perhaps he presciently envisaged the result of Antiochus' assault on the Nabataeans and feared its consequences. It was after all the Nabataeans who sounded the final knell for the Seleucids; they therefore had some claim to the territory of Antiochus XII. The power vacuum created by Antiochus' death allowed Aretas III to take control in Damascus, whose citizens summoned him as an alternative to Ptolemy, son of Mennaenus.⁸⁵ This event has not received attention befitting its significance. It has important implications for assessing the nature and extent of Nabataean control and influence in the region of Syria prior to its establishment as a province by the Romans. One may also venture a hypothesis about Nabataean intentions. The chief testimonies to survive from this occupation are the coins issued by Aretas III during his tenure as ruler in Damascus. The coins seem to have adhered closely in style to Seleucid antecedents. This "Seleucid character" can be seen in the coins' Greek inscription, which features the title *philhellenos*, in the portrait (which resembles that of members of the Seleucid house), and in the depiction of Tyche.⁸⁶ This iconography fits squarely into the late Hellenistic numismatic tradition. The most strikingly feature of the coins is the legend in Greek. A parallel may be found in Alexander Jannaeus, who was the first to mint coins featuring both Greek and Hebrew inscriptions (see **Figs. 1-2**).⁸⁷

Aretas IV's "Hellenistic" coin types are usually viewed as unsurprising outgrowths of increased Nabataean wealth and economic power in precisely this period. They were once viewed as indicators of the Nabataeans giving up their native culture to embrace that

⁸¹ Jos. *BJ* 1.100: θέμενος δ' ἐν δευτέρῳ τὴν πρὸς τὸν κωλύσαντα ἄμυναν εὐθὺς ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἄραβας ἦει.

⁸² Jos. *AJ* 13.387-391.

⁸³ The king of the Nabataeans at this point is probably Obodas I rather than Aretas III.

⁸⁴ Jos. *AJ* 13.391; *BJ* 1.101-102. Syncellus (I.559) says Jannaeus defeated Antiochus, in apparent contradiction of Josephus. A plausible resolution, as suggested by Shatzman (1991), 119, n. 81, is another, earlier war between Jannaeus and Antiochus.

⁸⁵ Jos. *AJ* 13.392. This Ptolemy was the Ituraean ruler of Chalkis. See Sullivan (1990) 206-7. Numismatic evidence makes clear that the Nabataeans remained in control in Damascus until 72 BCE, when Tigranes took the city. See Meshorer (1975); Wenning (2007), with references. The diadem appears wider than the normal Hellenistic prototype: see Oikonomides (1986), 50.

⁸⁶ It should be noted, though, that the coin's weight standard more closely resembles the Phoenician than the Attic, testament to the close economic links between the Nabataeans and cities like Tyre. See Schmitt-Korte (1994), 93-4.

⁸⁷ Kasher (1990), 137; Schürer (1979), 227 n. 8.

of the west.⁸⁸ This view no longer holds, and does not in any case square with the Nabataeans' later use of their own language on coins.⁸⁹ This coinage has almost universally been interpreted as a "local" one, meant only for circulation in the region of Damascus. Its audience, one assumes, was situated in the same region, since no examples of these coins have been found in the more "traditional" Nabataean territory to the south. This characterization may not go far enough, though, to explain Aretas III's intentions. Certainly, the coins should not be regarded as a literal example of "philhellenism" on the part of the Nabataeans. Rather, they represent Nabataean efforts to outwardly demonstrate their aspirations of filling the shoes of the Seleucids in Damascus.⁹⁰ With these coins, Aretas and the Nabataeans could demonstrate this accomplishment to a wider Greek-speaking audience that understood the significance of Damascus.

Aretas also used the city as a staging-ground for an attack on Judaea, even defeating Jannaeus near Adida. This event marked a watershed event in Nabataean expansionism, but Aretas seems to have withdrawn from Judaea soon after the victory, having come to terms with the Hasmonaean leader.⁹¹ Though Josephus does not mention the connection explicitly, this retreat may be connected with the menace of Tigranes, king of Armenia.

In 72, Tigranes succeeded in capturing Damascus from the Nabataeans; he took over the coinage there until 69, when he left for Armenia to defend it against the Roman general Lucullus. Alexandra/Salome, the widow of Alexander Jannaeus who had succeeded her husband to power in 76 BCE,⁹² had earlier tried to protect Damascus, when it was being overrun by Ptolemaeus of the Ituraeans. The city's fate became sealed with the settlement of Pompey in 63 BCE and the imposition of Roman imperial control after the creation of the province of Syria. In the preceding decades, though, it had changed hands several times, indicating the degree to which the various regional powers jockeying for supremacy, including the Nabataeans, viewed the city as an important symbol of the legacy of the Seleucids.

The Nabataeans were once again affected by internal Jewish affairs in 67, when Queen Alexandra/Salome's death resulted in a sibling rivalry between Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus. Before Alexandra's death, Aristobulus had already proclaimed himself king at the expense of his older brother. The two fought at Jericho and after Aristobulus had soundly defeated his brother—with the help of a considerable number of deserters from Hyrcanus' camp to his own—the two made an agreement, by which Aristobulus would be king and Hyrcanus would stay out of public affairs.⁹³ A prominent, wealthy Idumaeon, Antipater, persuaded Hyrcanus to take refuge with the Nabataean king Aretas III and to make an attempt to regain the kingdom that should have been rightfully his.⁹⁴ This

⁸⁸ See e.g. Parr (1978), 206.

⁸⁹ For more on this, see my discussion in the following chapter.

⁹⁰ It may be that the abandonment of those unrealizable ambitions after the establishment of the Roman province of Syria played some role in the change of the language on the coinage to Nabataean, as I discuss in the following chapter.

⁹¹ Jos. *BJ* 1.103; *AJ* 13.392.

⁹² Her reign (76-69 BCE) was largely occupied with struggles with the Pharisees, as least as characterized by our sources. See Jos. *BJ* 1.107-119; *AJ* 13.399-430.

⁹³ Jos. *AJ* 14.4-7.

⁹⁴ Jos. *AJ* 14.14-17; *BJ* 1.117-25. The question of the origins of Antipater, father of Herod the Great, has generated an extensive bibliography. The controversy begins with Josephus himself,

Antipater had married a high-ranking Nabataean woman and was therefore seemingly in a position to exercise some influence at Aretas' court.⁹⁵ Having traveled furtively to Petra, Hyrcanus and Antipater persuaded Aretas to intervene in the Jewish dynastic quarrel.⁹⁶ The bargaining chip was the return of the twelve cities Alexander Jannaeus had taken from the Nabataeans.⁹⁷ Aretas thus led a massive force against Aristobulus, won a decisive victory, and besieged Jerusalem.

Unfortunately for Nabataeans and Jews alike, the forces of Pompey and his associates were at this point mopping up the remnants of the disintegrating Seleucid Empire. Rome had seen enough of half-measures in the East and would now be imposing more direct control. The general M. Aemilius Scaurus, sent to Damascus from Armenia by Pompey, moved quickly on to Judaea when he heard of the controversy there.⁹⁸ He was met by appeals for help by both Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. He sided with Aristobulus and ordered Aretas to withdraw or else be declared an enemy of Rome.⁹⁹ Scaurus' motives are difficult to detect. Surely he was not simply exercising preference for the heftier bribe, as Josephus suggests; rather, it is likely that Scaurus was siding against Hyrcanus because the latter had the support of the Nabataeans. A victorious Hyrcanus—and an extension by proxy of Nabataean power and influence in Judaea—would further upset the delicate balance of power in the region just as Rome was arriving on the scene.¹⁰⁰ With Roman support, Aristobulus marched out against Hyrcanus and Aretas and defeated them near Papyron.¹⁰¹ We may wonder at this dramatic shift in military fortunes. Josephus mentions only the Roman injunction, not any material support provided by Scaurus to Aristobulus. Were the Nabataeans so cowed by the Roman threat that they simply receded into the background?¹⁰² Aretas' motive seems to have been not the bribes and flattery described by Josephus, but rather the return of these twelve cities and broader strategic considerations. The event also marks the last time the Nabataeans would be able to enjoy this kind of freedom of movement in Syria, since the Romans had begun to organize and incorporate the region. The actions of Scaurus—to be explored in the next chapter—suggest the Nabataeans occupied a larger place than is generally acknowledged in both the regional and the broader Mediterranean consciousnesses.

who questions the testimony of Nicolaus of Damascus, court historian to Herod, on this point; see Jos. *AJ* 14.9-10. More generally, for a discussion of Josephus' treatment of Pompey's involvement in Judaea and Nabataea, see Bellemore (1999), 94-118.

⁹⁵ According to Josephus (*AJ* 14.10), his influence—perhaps accrued by bribery—also extended to the people of Gaza and Ashkelon.

⁹⁶ Jos. *AJ* 1.181; *AJ* 14.18.

⁹⁷ The list is given at Jos. *AJ* 14.18. In *BJ*, bribes and flattery are sufficient to elicit Nabataean support.

⁹⁸ Jos. *BJ* 1.127.

⁹⁹ Jos. *AJ* 14.32: κελύσας ἀναχωρεῖν τὸν Ἀρέταν ἢ πολέμιον αὐτὸν ἀποδειχθῆσθαι Ῥωμαίων.

¹⁰⁰ Looking at Pompey's actions against the Nabataeans supports this argument.

¹⁰¹ Jos. *AJ* 14.33.

¹⁰² This is certainly the implication at Jos. *BJ* 1.131, where it is stated that Hyrcanus and Aretas had been stripped of their Nabataean allies.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this chapter has been to examine the Nabataeans' interaction and engagement with the Hellenistic world from their first secure mention in the historical record up to the arrival of the Romans in the Near East in 63 BCE. Several important conclusions emerge about their activities, role, and importance in this context prior to the Romans' imposition of direct control in Syria and the Levant in the second quarter of the 1st century BCE.

What emerges from this analysis is a picture of the Nabataeans as a crucial political and economic player in the region. When one shines the light intently on the motivations, goals, and actions of the Nabataeans, it becomes clear that they regarded themselves during this period as active participants in the wider regional struggle for political and economic prominence and influence. By the late 4th century, the Nabataeans had already positioned themselves as the principal players in the spice trade from Arabia Felix and the eastern markets to the Mediterranean. They were also willing to—and very capable of—defending these financial interests. It also becomes clear that the Nabataeans, while they had not yet at this point, in the 4th, 3rd, and perhaps even 2nd centuries, constructed a “traditional” urban landscape, nevertheless demonstrate many of the features of a sophisticated society: they had some kind of a king, unambiguously attested by its recognition by the Ptolemaic court in Alexandria; they had a formidable military capacity; and they had—by Diodorus' own admission—developed some permanent infrastructure, even if its main purpose was harnessing and storing water.

This chapter has also demonstrated that in the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BCE, the Nabataeans made a concerted effort to step into the vacuum created by the enfeebling of the Seleucid house. It has gone beyond previous studies to suggest that the Nabataeans were not only taking advantage of the situation to add territory, prestige, and influence, but that they really viewed themselves as logical successors to the Seleucids. This is especially clear from their actions in southern Syria and Damascus after their victory over Antiochus XII.

Throughout all of this, though, we have seen that the Nabataeans do not easily adhere to—nor were they attempting to strictly conform to—any models of “traditional” Hellenistic kingdoms. Rather they sought to achieve their own ambitions and goals. In this, they achieved great success, and should be given due credit. Even the withdrawal from Damascus should not be viewed as a full retreat from the Hawran. Even while riding the successes of these years, the Nabataeans—along with other regional powers—cannot have predicted the effect that the Romans would have on the broader eastern Mediterranean region.

CHAPTER 2: THE NABATAEANS AND THE LATE HELLENISTIC CONTEXT

I. INTRODUCTION

During the latter three quarters of the 1st century BCE, the Romans cast an increasingly broad shadow over the eastern Mediterranean. Although their involvement in the Near East began in more indirect fashion much earlier, Roman presence in the region took on a more permanent visage with Pompey's ultimate defeat of Mithridates of Pontus in 66 BCE and his subsequent annexation and arrangement of political affairs in Syria, which he established as a full Roman province in 63 BCE. Thus began a gradual process by which Rome came to incorporate all the major territories of the eastern Mediterranean, culminating in the annexation of Nabataea and the formation of the *provincia Arabia* by the emperor Trajan in the year 106 CE.

Generally, scholars have viewed 63 BCE as a critical turning point for the Nabataeans, asserting that Nabataea became a client, or dependent, state of Rome following Pompey's settlement.¹⁰³ This characterization has guided much of the historical analysis of the Nabataeans; too much so. The Nabataeans remained politically independent for the next 170 years and during this span they charted a path of economic prosperity, cultural innovation, and political autonomy that belies political or cultural subservience to Rome. The relationship was much more nuanced, and one must be wary of the tendency to fit the Nabataeans into pre-conceived categories, particularly in terms of their relationship to, and with, Rome.

Because they lack a surviving narrative history of their own, any analysis of the Nabataeans necessarily follows to a significant extent their intersection with outside peoples, especially the Jews and Romans, and attempts to write their history must to a large degree trace the timeline of events that interested chroniclers such as Josephus and Strabo. Nevertheless, we should try—whenever possible—to locate the Nabataeans and their motivations and innovations behind the surviving external sources and, through a critical re-reading of these sources, to view historical and cultural events, both regionally and further a-field, from a specifically Nabataean perspective. Nabataea during the mid-late 1st century BCE needs to be viewed on its own terms, as a population seeking to fulfill—to the greatest possible extent—its own political and cultural agenda, not necessarily that of Rome or any other external power. With these objectives, this chapter will examine the period spanning the years 63 BCE—when Pompey departed the East—to 9 BCE, when Aretas IV, most celebrated of the Nabataean kings, secured the throne after a dynastic struggle with Syllaios, the vizier of Aretas' predecessor Obodas II and major political player in his own right.

¹⁰³ The principal study on client-kingship remains Braund (1984). Others applying the characterization to the Nabataeans include Sartre (1979), 37-53; Bowersock (1983), 30-36; Kasher (1988), 163, n. 87; Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2001), 50-1; Wenning (2007), 32. The term "client state" is in and of itself problematic and misleading. It is based on a passage of Suetonius (*Aug.* 60) in which he describes diplomatic escorts. See Millar (1996), 162.

II. THE ROMANS IN SYRIA: THE NABATAEAN REACTION

The relations between the Romans and Nabataeans in the years following the settlement of Pompey have generally been characterized as follows: the Roman governors of Syria made occasional attacks on the Nabataeans, who—being the weaker party—readily proffered bribes to their assailants in exchange for peace.¹⁰⁴ This assessment is based solely upon the aggressive posture of two Romans, Aemilius Scaurus and Aulus Gabinius, toward the Nabataeans.¹⁰⁵ The characterization's chief fault, though, lies in its inevitable portrayal of Nabataean foreign relations as Romano-centric. In other words, no attempt is made to postulate a larger role for Nabataea in the new order ushered in by increased direct Roman involvement in the region, except vis-à-vis Rome itself. Thus, a re-analysis of the two incidents may be fruitful.

After Pompey's departure for Rome—his official term in the East having come to a close with the death of Mithridates—Scaurus launched an abortive expedition against the Nabataeans.¹⁰⁶ Apparently unable to access the site of Petra itself, he settled for ravaging the surrounding countryside. Ultimately, he departed Arabia with a sum of 300 talents, apparently to the mutual satisfaction of both Romans and Nabataeans. Scaurus was able to save face after his failure to capture the Nabataean capital, while reaping a handsome booty; for their part, the Nabataeans parried the Roman invasion with a relatively nominal sum.¹⁰⁷ On the face of it, this invasion and its outcome are remarkable when compared to the purported campaign of Pompey, especially since the only literary record of them to survive is the account of Josephus. It is certainly possible that fictionalized stories about Pompey's engagement with the Nabataeans stemmed at least in part from his triumph, gaining greater currency as time passed and making their way into the source tradition. In 58 BCE, back in Rome serving as aedile, Scaurus issued a coin depicting Aretas, the Nabataean king, submitting to him.¹⁰⁸ The issue depicts Aretas kneeling next to a camel and offering an olive branch (see **Fig. 3**). At least one scholar has seen the event as marking the beginning of the Nabataeans' status as clients of Rome.¹⁰⁹ This exaggerates its significance, though: the coin tells us nothing about the Nabataean perspective. It should be read as an attempt by Scaurus to claim some share of the glory of Pompey's accomplishments. His cupidity was well attested in antiquity and as aedile he could use his minting authority for self-promotion.¹¹⁰

Following Scaurus' departure from the East, two Roman governors, Marcius Philippus and Lentulus Marcellinus, spent their respective two-year tenures (61-60 and 59-58 BCE) defending against Arab intrusions.¹¹¹ Appian, who gives the report, does not specify

¹⁰⁴ See esp. Sullivan (1990), 210 and 221.

¹⁰⁵ Demetrius Poliorcetes received hostages and gifts in exchange for withdrawal from Nabataean territory, but this occurred in 312 and cannot be reliably adduced as evidence here. For the story, see Diodorus 19.98.1.

¹⁰⁶ Jos. *AJ* 14.80-81.

¹⁰⁷ See Sartre (1979), 44.

¹⁰⁸ For the coin, see Crawford (1974), 446-7.

¹⁰⁹ Wenning (2007), 32.

¹¹⁰ See e.g. Bowersock (1983), 35; Sartre (1979), 45.

¹¹¹ Appian *Syr.* 51: ἀλλὰ τῶνδε μὲν διετῆς ἐτρίφθη χρόνος τοὺς γείτονας ἐνοχλοῦντας Ἄραβας ἀμυνομένῳ.

“Nabataeans” in this context and could be referring to any one of the numerous Arab peoples in the region, not necessarily to the Nabataeans specifically. While duly noting the distinction in Appian’s language, it is tempting to see these attacks coming from the Nabataeans.¹¹² The lack of specificity reveals nothing concrete, since Appian could also have given a name to the Arabs in question—if they were not Nabataeans—and these incursions do fit within the general context of Scaurus’ attack and the expedition of A. Gabinius, the next governor of Syria, against the Nabataeans in 55. Furthermore, we have no way of specifically locating these attacks based on Appian’s account and have no explicit information that they came from the Nabataean heartland to the south, raising another intriguing possibility: that Appian refers to rapacious activities of Nabataeans living in the areas recently occupied by the Romans, like the Syrian Hawran and the area of the Decapolis cities.¹¹³ If true, this suggestion has important implications. It would indicate a level of Nabataean resistance to Roman interference in Syria not generally acknowledged by modern commentators while also providing a textual complement to numerous archaeological testimony of Nabataean vitality in this region during the 1st century BCE. It also furnishes the possibility of an alternative reading for the encounter of A. Gabinius with the Nabataeans.

Succeeding Marcellinus as governor of Syria, Gabinius took up his post in 57 BCE; by 55, this equally precocious and rapacious character had already defeated Aristobulus’ son Alexander in Judaea; rebuilt a host of Judaeian cities; defeated Aristobulus himself and sent him to Rome as a hostage; begun an aborted expedition against the Parthians; restored Ptolemy XI Auletes to his throne in Egypt; and reorganized the administration of Judaea.¹¹⁴ No surprise, then, that he also managed to undertake an expedition against the Nabataeans.

What was the nature of this campaign? Given the bluster displayed by Pompey and Scaurus following their own efforts in this direction, we would expect some kind of showmanship from Gabinius if he had actually achieved a significant victory over a

¹¹² Earlier, when referring to Pompey’s campaign, Appian (*Mithr.* 106) specifies *Nabataean* Arabs: ἐπολέμησε δε καὶ Ἄραβι τοῖς Ναβαταίοις. The distinction has been noted, and supported, by Sartre (1979), 45; Bowersock (1983), 33; Parker (1987), 43. For the more commonly-held view that these were Nabataeans, see Starcky (1966), 909; Schalit (1969), 30; Schürer (1973), 245; Sherwin-White (1984), 271; Gautier (1988), 163; Kasher (1988), 119; and esp. MacDonald (1993), 323, citing Strabo’s passage (16.4.21) in which he says that the Nabataeans used to overrun Syria.

¹¹³ The report also raises an important question about the degree to which the various Arab tribes in the region acted in harmony with one another. From Josephus’ account (*AJ* 14.128-129), we learn that later, when Antipater came to Caesar’s aid, he succeeded in rounding up a coalition of Arab leaders. This is an issue with important implications. One problem is the degree to which our Greek and Roman sources understood—or bothered to make—the distinction between different Arab tribes and nations. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the Nabataeans had already entered the consciousness of much of the eastern Mediterranean world as early as the 3rd century BCE. By the time of Pompey and his successors, we would expect the Romans to have had a reasonably secure understanding of distinctions on the ground, but when mentions of Arabs occur in our sources, they are often vague. For an excellent recent discussion of the inherent ambiguities in the use of the term “Arab” in antiquity, see MacDonald (2009), 277-332.

¹¹⁴ *Jos. AJ* 14.82-85; 88; 95-100. The cities rebuilt by Gabinius included, among others, Samaria, Azotus, Scythopolis, Anthedon, Raphia, Adora, Marisa, and Gaza.

worthy adversary. In fact, when compared with that of Scaurus, his victory seems too easy.¹¹⁵ Josephus states only that Gabinius defeated the Nabataeans in battle.¹¹⁶ In no way does the language imply that he conquered them. Thus, the battle, which warrants only a brief mention in both of Josephus' accounts, must have been a rather minor engagement, almost certainly not on the scale of the campaigns of Pompey and Scaurus. Scholars have generally viewed this campaign as motivated by greed and the desire for booty, seeking justification both in Gabinius' other behavior, especially in Egypt, and in what seems to have been general Roman policy toward the Nabataeans.¹¹⁷ Others have seen in Gabinius' action against the Nabataeans an attempt to get more cash specifically for his Parthian expedition. Strabo twice alludes to Gabinius' preparations for a Parthian campaign; so does Dio, who says that Gabinius abandoned the Parthian project in order to restore Auletes in Egypt and to collect on the large ransom.¹¹⁸ The suggestion that Gabinius attacked the Nabataeans simply for their money has no secure basis in the sources, though.¹¹⁹ Nor does the proposal that Gabinius was punishing the Nabataeans for supporting the Maccabean Alexander against the Romans.¹²⁰ Let us look for a better explanation.

Some have wondered whether Gabinius merely engaged in a skirmish with the Nabataeans on his way to Egypt or whether his actions constituted a separate campaign.¹²¹ The chronology in Josephus unequivocally supports the latter; there would be no reason for Josephus not to have placed the Nabataean campaign on Gabinius' way to Egypt, had it happened then. Furthermore, if Gabinius' main purpose with the Nabataeans was to fleece them for cash, why would he have bothered to trouble with them at this juncture, when he was on his way to collect an enormous bribe in Egypt? In both of Josephus' narratives, the incident occurs right at the end of Gabinius' tenure; his only other action before departing for Rome is the dismissal of two Parthian fugitives.¹²² The solution may lie in the battle's location. This encounter, like those of Gabinius' predecessors Philippus and Marcellinus, likely did not occur around Petra, but rather within the boundaries of Rome's newly acquired Syrian territory. This has two important implications: first, it suggests marked Nabataean resistance to increased Roman presence and territorial control in the Near East; second, it suggests that the Nabataeans did not necessarily recognize the new territorial boundaries or acknowledge that the imposition

¹¹⁵ Scaurus, it will be remembered, had encountered great difficulty around Petra, nearly starved, and only escaped by means of diplomacy.

¹¹⁶ Jos. *AJ* 14.103: ἐπὶ Ναβαταίους ἔρχεται, καὶ κρατεῖ μὲν τούτων τῆ μάχη.

¹¹⁷ See in particular Bowersock (1983), 33; Graf (1994), 26. Sullivan (1990), 210, postulates that the expedition ended with a withdrawal and a bribe, "on the Nabataean pattern"; while this is possible, we have no explicit evidence in this case of a monetary transfer or bribe. Josephus (*AJ* 14.104) says Gabinius performed great and noteworthy deeds: καὶ Φαβίνιος μὲν ἔργα μέγαρα καὶ λαμπρὰ κατὰ τὴν στρατηγίαν. For a succinct rehabilitation of Gabinius, see Sherwin-White (1994), 273.

¹¹⁸ Strabo 12.3.34 and 17.1.11; Dio 39.56.

¹¹⁹ For a thorough, levelheaded account of Gabinius' three-year tenure in Syria, see Sherwin-White (1984), 271-279.

¹²⁰ Sherwin-White (1984), 273-4.

¹²¹ For the view that Gabinius won a victory en route to Egypt, see Debevoise (1938), 77; followed by Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 420.

¹²² Jos. *AJ* 14.103-4; *BJ* 1.178-179.

of Roman power was to have any permanence. The Nabataeans of course maintained an active presence in northern Jordan and southern Syria throughout the 1st century BCE.¹²³

Pompey's and his immediate successors' handling of the so-called Decapolis cities highlights this ambiguity. The precise purpose of this block of cities, mostly centered in the region of Peraea to the east of the Dead Sea, but perhaps including at one point Damascus further to the north, has been much debated.¹²⁴ The Roman settlement gave them nominal independence,¹²⁵ but the assumption that the Romans maintained a "league" of cities as some kind of Hellenistic buffer against a Semitic cultural or political threat should be rejected.¹²⁶ Especially in the first century BCE, the cities had little more than a Hellenistic or Roman veneer; their populations remained mostly local.¹²⁷ For their part, the Nabataeans had a long and well-established presence and influence in the Decapolis region.¹²⁸ Indeed, in the mid-late 1st century BCE—the period under discussion here—we should assume a significantly mixed population, including a considerable number of Nabataeans.

While determining the specifically Nabataean reaction to the intensified Roman political presence in Syria is difficult to determine, an examination of changes in Nabataean coinage at this time may provide some clues. Nabataean coins minted in the years following 63 BCE display a distinctly Nabataean character.¹²⁹ This is most obvious in the language of the inscriptions on the coins, now Nabataean instead of Greek—as it had been in the preceding Nabataean coin issues—and in the title given to the king, Obodas II.¹³⁰ The inscription reads "Obodas, the king, king of the Nabataeans." The

¹²³ And indeed into and throughout the 1st century CE as well. The transformation of Bostra into a major urban center in the latter part of the 1st century CE ought to be regarded as testimony of continuity, not a radical departure. See my remarks on this point in the two following chapters.

¹²⁴ On the Decapolis, see, generally, Bietenhardt (1977), 220-261; Browning (1982); Millar (1993), 404-114.

¹²⁵ See Josephus *AJ* 14.4.4; *BJ* 1.7.7.

¹²⁶ In addition, Pompey only rebuilt Gadara (Umm-Qais) of all the Decapolis cities, adding further evidence in refutation the claim that he was a general patron of them all. See Josephus *AJ* 14.4.4; *BJ* 1.155.

¹²⁷ More precisely, not Greek or Roman. For the strong Semitic character of these cities, see esp. Ball (2000), 181. These cities did become increasingly Hellenized in their civic institutions and architecture, beginning toward the end of the 1st century BCE. See the discussion by Graf (1994), 26ff.

¹²⁸ See in particular the discussion Graf (1986), 785-796.

¹²⁹ The coins minted by Aretas III during his tenure as ruler in Damascus had adhered closely in style to Seleucid antecedents. This "Seleucid character" can be seen in the coins' Greek inscription, which features the title "philhellenos," in the portrait (which resembles that of members of the Seleucid house) and in the depiction of Tyche. It should be noted, though, that the coin's weight standard more closely resembles the Phoenician than the Attic, testament to the cozy economic links between the Nabataeans and cities like Tyre. See Schmitt-Korte (1994), 93-4 and my discussion of Aretas III's Damascene coinage in the previous chapter.

¹³⁰ Unfortunately, we have only six coins of Obodas II from which to work: they are given in Meshorer (1975), 17. The existence of this king has not always been universally accepted, since he is never explicitly mentioned in the historical sources. But an inscription and these coins call for a king right after Aretas III and before Malichus I, who began his rule in 60 BCE. See Bowersock (1983), 34, esp. n. 27; Sullivan (1990), 210-11, esp. n. 59 for more on the controversy. To my mind, there should be no further doubt about this king's existence.

changes in character and message of these coins must be significant (see Fig. 4). One scholar has suggested that, “the issuance of these distinctly Nabataean coins immediately after the beginning of Roman domination in the region implies a connection between the two events [subjugation by the Romans and the introduction of a new coinage], apparently indicating the liberal attitude of the Romans towards vassal kings, at least those in the frontier region.”¹³¹ This analysis rests at least partly on the assumption that Nabataea became, in actuality, a “vassal” or “client” state of Rome following the actions of Pompey and Scaurus in 63-62 BCE. In reality, though, the relative regional status of the Nabataean kingdom saw little immediate change with the arrival of Rome. It was free to mint as it saw fit both before and after 63 BCE. The initiative for any numismatic changes lay with the Nabataeans themselves and must be viewed in this light. The eagle depicted on the coin’s reverse calls to mind not Rome, but rather the coinage of Ptolemaic Egypt, the last of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Thus, one should be wary of viewing Obodas II’s introduction of this new coinage from a specifically anti-Roman vantage point.¹³² With this issue, the Nabataeans could reiterate their place as an important regional player, and on their own terms. A new, more “national” coinage would serve as an excellent advertisement of their growing cultural and political influence. Certainly Rome had now entered the regional stage in a more significant way, but from a Nabataean perspective, this need not have signaled subjugation, imminent or otherwise.

This analysis of coinage may be placed in the larger context of Nabataean cultural development. As explored in the previous chapter, evidence of Nabataean ceramic production, minting, and urban construction do not appear on any significant scale until approximately 100 BCE (with the *floruit* in all these areas of course occurring much later). A general consensus has emerged about the course of this development: when the Nabataeans first became sedentary, they lacked artistic indigenous forms to adopt and therefore turned toward outside models, primarily in the Hellenistic world; in the face of Roman political and presumed cultural hegemony in the region after 63 BCE, the Nabataeans became increasingly “Romanized”; around the end of the 1st century BCE, Nabataea entered its cultural golden age, which oversaw a gradual development of a distinctive “Nabataean style.”¹³³ This occurred once they had been sedentary for long enough to achieve a requisite level of political and cultural security. While agreeing with the above characterization in its broad outline, I contend that neither Nabataean artistic and cultural developments nor the rather sudden adoption of monumental architecture at Petra and other sites have been fully explained with an eye to contemporaneous political events, especially during the late Hellenistic period.¹³⁴ One might reasonably characterize

¹³¹ Meshorer (1975), 18.

¹³² Or the Greeks for that matter. *Pace* Patrich, who calls these coins a reaction against the Hellenistic culture whence they emerged: Patrich (2007), 96.

¹³³ It is towards the end of the first century BCE that we really see a rapid acceleration in the monumentalization of Petra and other Nabataean cities. According to Schmid, “maybe even this factor of monumentalization of public space can be considered in relation to the adoption of a kind of Near Eastern Hellenistic *koine*, because it is precisely this aspect that marks Hellenistic cities, especially in Asia Minor”: Schmid (2001a), 390.

¹³⁴ The best attempts in this direction have been made by Schmid in two recent studies: Schmid (2001a), 367-426 and (2001b), 407-419.

the second half of the 1st BCE as a period of increased Roman political and cultural hegemony in the Near East, including Nabataea. And yet, in the elements of their material culture discernable in the archaeological record, the Nabataeans did not slavishly adopt Hellenistic or Roman forms.¹³⁵ One must fully credit the Nabataeans for their actions in the cultural as well as in the political spheres and must be continually wary of viewing cultural innovation, or historical events, through the prism of the inevitability of Roman domination.¹³⁶

III. BETWEEN EAST AND WEST: PARTHIA, HEROD, AND THE ROMAN CIVIL WARS

Following the adventures of Gabinius, our literary sources fall silent on the Nabataeans until 47 BCE, when Antipater, now ἐπιμελητής of the Jews, gave assistance to Caesar in his struggle against Pompey by bringing allies from Arabia to participate. The Nabataeans also sided with Caesar, with Malichus sending cavalry to him in Alexandria.¹³⁷ We should perhaps not give Malichus too much credit for his foresight in this instance, since nearly all of Judaea, Syria, and Asia Minor, following the leads of Mithridates of Pergamum and Antipater, came out in support of Caesar.¹³⁸ Not falling into Caesar's camp would have put Malichus conspicuously at odds with all of his important neighbors in the region. I point this out to suggest that the Nabataean kings and other dynasts may often have had more pressing regional considerations to weigh against what may seem to our Greek and Roman sources (and often, by extension, to us) rather black and white choices to be made between larger geopolitical forces, such as Rome and Parthia. This is important to bear in mind when looking at developments during the ensuing decades.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Taking the pottery as a preliminary example: scholars have divided Nabataean ceramics into several phases, with the first beginning around 100 BCE and lasting until the middle of the 1st century BCE, when we see a distinct change in decorative patterns. Simple lines begin to be replaced by more intricate designs, such as floral motifs. One critic has noted a simultaneous sensitivity to “international fashion” and a move toward a “distinctive Nabataean style.” According to this model, we have two movements taking place: an awareness and reception of international fashion and the development of a distinctly “Nabataean style.” See Schmid (2001), 373. For good syntheses of the development of Nabataean material culture generally, taking into account more recent agreement about dating, see Bedal (2004), 19-38; Schmid (2001), 371-381; Dentzer and Zayadine (1992), 233-251; and, still fundamental, McKenzie (1990), 33-59 and 105-112. More specific studies concentrating on the urban center of Petra have also been helpful in defining the chronology. See esp. Joukowsky (1998); Joukowsky (1999), 195-222; for ez-Zantur, see Stucky et al. (1996); Stucky, Kolb, et al. (1995), 297-315.

¹³⁶ See the comments of Gisborne (2005), 112, appropriately iterating that total Roman domination of the Near East was “far from a foregone conclusion, even in Augustus’ time.”

¹³⁷ Jos. *AJ* 14.128; *Bell. Alex.* 1.1: bello Alexandrino conflato Caesar...equites ab rege Nabataeorum Malcho evocat; Jos. *BJ* 1.178.

¹³⁸ Jos. *AJ* 14.127-132.

¹³⁹ One example can be found in Dio (51.7.1), when he describes the abandonment *en masse* by the “peoples and dynasts” of Antony after Actium. Additionally, Sartre (1979), 47-8, makes a similar point when discussing Malichus’ decision to side with the Parthians instead of the Romans. Another essential factor to bear in mind is that different forces existed within Nabataean

After Caesar's death, the effects of Roman civil strife continued to embroil the East. In 40 BCE, with Antony away in Italy, the Caesarean Labienus took over Parthian forces and invaded Asia Minor and Syria, making it as far as Jerusalem. Herod the Great, who was just coming into power in Judaea, turned to Malichus for help, citing previous aid Herod's father Antipater had rendered the Nabataean king.¹⁴⁰ This assistance had come in the form of loans. Malichus refused, claiming he had been ordered by the Parthians not to receive Herod, whom he sent away. Regretting the decision, though, Malichus tried to catch up with Herod, but failed.¹⁴¹ What do we make of the incident?

Two elements stand out. First, in both accounts, Josephus portrays the Parthian "excuse" as a pretence on the part of Malichus to avoid having to repay his debts; it also indicates some kind of Nabataean alliance with the invading Parthians. Second, and eminently more interesting, is Malichus' apparent change of heart: what prompted his recalculation? We know that, having been spurned by Malichus, Herod moved posthaste to Alexandria, intending from there to go to Rome itself to appeal.¹⁴² By agreeing to help Herod, Malichus would have been—by extension—abrogating whatever agreement he had with the Parthians, a potentially dangerous move. Quite probably, the Nabataean king, once aware of Herod's intentions to seek Roman help, immediately came to see better odds in being on the Roman side of this struggle, despite the risk of angering the Parthians.¹⁴³ Indeed, the choice would have been the more correct one, had it been made in time! Instead, Malichus received a hefty fine from the Roman general Ventidius, ostensibly for helping the Parthian Pacorus.¹⁴⁴ At least one scholar has argued that this fine and another one leveled on the Ituraeans were meant to finance the Roman counter-attack against the Parthians.¹⁴⁵ This explanation is preferable, since Malichus' support of the Parthians cannot be in any way considered treasonous: he had no formal or informal relationship with Rome at this time. To see what might happen to a dynast in breach of a more formal relationship with Rome, one may look to Lysanias, successor to Ptolemaios, the son of Mennaios:¹⁴⁶ Cleopatra later succeeded in convincing Antony to have him executed on the charge of siding with the Parthians.¹⁴⁷ Why not use this same charge

society itself, since it was composed of sedentary, nomadic, and urban elements, each with its own purvey and interests. Looking at the Nabataeans from a strictly Greco-Roman vantage point, it is too easy to see a monolithic entity and to view their actions and motives only vis-à-vis powers to the west.

¹⁴⁰ Jos. *AJ* 14.370; *BJ* 1.274-277.

¹⁴¹ Jos. *AJ* 14.375; *BJ* 1.274-8.

¹⁴² Once he arrived Rome, he secured the help of Antony, Octavian, and the Senate, not to mention official recognition of his kingship: Jos. *AJ* 14.381-385, 389; *BJ* 1.281-285.

¹⁴³ For the view that Malichus originally sought to distance himself from political dependence on Rome by renouncing Herod, see Kasher (1988), 124.

¹⁴⁴ Dio 48.41.5.

¹⁴⁵ Kasher (1988), 131; cf. Sartre (1979), 48.

¹⁴⁶ This Lysanias was ruler of Ituraea. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure exactly *when* Malichus aided Pacorus, whether it before or after the appeal of Herod. Dio is our only source and he places this nugget of information in the context of Ventidius' mopping up of the spoils after the Parthians had left the region. See Dio 48.41.5. Sartre (1979), 48, argues that Malichus refused help to Herod in order not to displease the Romans by meddling in Jewish affairs. This does nothing, though, to address the volte-face.

¹⁴⁷ Jos. *AJ* 15.92. Bowersock (1983), 40.

against the Nabataean monarch? Taken together, these events suggest that during this period Malichus and the Nabataeans were not simply acting as clients or subordinates of Rome and—more importantly—that they were not regarded as such by the Romans themselves. Support such as that given by Malichus to Caesar was on an ad hoc basis, dependent on circumstances, and intended to serve the Nabataeans’ best interests.

Antony’s activities in the East were not limited to meddling with Parthia. He also at this time became intimately and famously associated with the last of the Ptolemies of Egypt, Cleopatra VII. The ambitious queen was in the process of attempting to recapture the former glory and prestige of the Ptolemaic empire, primarily through the acquisition of territory throughout the Near East. Never mind that the lands she sought all lay under the control of other powers, including Rome. Cleopatra rather presumptuously asked Antony, whose jurisdiction as triumvir included the eastern Mediterranean, for the territories of both Judaea and Arabia; she was plotting the removal of both Herod and Malichus.¹⁴⁸ Significantly, Antony refused this request...at least in part. He adhered to diplomatic decorum by refusing to see these kings killed, but he had no qualms about splicing up parts of their territories, giving to Cleopatra the balsam groves of Jericho, as well as the cities south of the river Eleutherus, except Tyre and Sidon.¹⁴⁹ Herod then had to lease back his own lands from the Egyptian queen. In addition to specifying the balsam groves around Jericho, Josephus says that some of these lands lay in Arabia.¹⁵⁰ We can infer that these “Arabian” lands were not previously in Herod’s hands, since they formed part of Antony’s gift to Cleopatra. The relative positions of Herod and Antony/Cleopatra are unambiguous. The Jewish king in fact owed his very position to what effectively amounts to Roman generosity. What about the Nabataean king, Malichus, who was at this point also paying off Rome? Herod was giving tribute to Cleopatra and had also been placed in charge of collecting Malichus’ tribute, going so far as to claim that he was personally responsible for saving the Nabataeans from takeover.¹⁵¹ Malichus at some point stopped paying the 200 talents to Herod, who then planned to march against the Nabataeans. According to Josephus, Antony—at Cleopatra’s behest—ordered Herod to attack the Nabataeans.¹⁵²

Instead of assisting Antony at Actium, therefore, Herod invaded Nabataea, securing an early victory at Dium.¹⁵³ A second engagement took place at Canatha (Qanawat); the Nabataeans emerged victorious with the assistance of a *strategos* of Cleopatra named Athenion. According to Josephus, Cleopatra had essentially instructed Athenion to guarantee an Arab victory, but only to get involved if necessary.¹⁵⁴ The final reckoning

¹⁴⁸ Jos. *AJ* 15.92; *BJ* 1.360.

¹⁴⁹ Jos. *BJ* 1.361. Herod was forced to lease these lands back from Cleopatra for 200 talents.

¹⁵⁰ Jos. *AJ* 15.96: Ἡρώδου...καὶ τε Ἀραβίας τὰ δοθέντα...μισθωσαμένου. Only Plutarch gives any indication of where this territory might lie. He says (*Ant.* 36.2) that it was the part of Nabataean Arabia inclining toward the outer sea. For discussion, see Bowersock (1983), 41. He postulates the part of the Hejaz lying directly opposite Egypt, which is certainly the most probable.

¹⁵¹ Jos. *AJ* 15.131-134; *AJ* 15.107. Following Josephus (15.110), Bowersock (1983), 41, sees this as a way for Cleopatra to sow dissension between Malichus and Herod. See note below.

¹⁵² Jos. *AJ* 15.110-111; *BJ* 1.364-5.

¹⁵³ Called Diospolis by Josephus at *AJ* 15.311 and 1.366. A near unanimity of scholars agrees that the Decapolis city of Dium is meant.

¹⁵⁴ Jos. *AJ* 15.115-116.

took place in two battles near Philadelphia (Amman), where Herod inflicted a sound defeat on the Nabataeans.¹⁵⁵ So much for the broad outline of this war, but a few details warrant closer scrutiny.

Herod's claim, cited above, that he had personally saved the Nabataeans by acting as their guarantor in making payments to Cleopatra, comes in a speech meant to rile up his troops before a battle with those same Nabataeans, who had betrayed him by not making their payments on time. Malichus surely cannot have been entirely ignorant of the potential consequences of his recalcitrance. More likely, he did not expect retaliation by Antony and Cleopatra for failure to pay his bills on time. It was Herod who had given the surety and from him that any punishment would come.

In hindsight, from the perspective of Antony and Cleopatra, Herod's services could have been put to better use at Actium; he had already furnished a well-equipped force for that purpose. We should therefore ask why it was in fact not utilized. The chronology represents one possibility: potentially Herod could take care of the Nabataeans first before joining the struggle at Actium.¹⁵⁶ Another view has Cleopatra playing Herod against the Nabataeans to weaken both sides and seeing herself as the eventual beneficiary of all this territory.¹⁵⁷ There is another possibility, though: that Herod himself wished to attack the Nabataeans in order not to be directly involved in fighting Roman troops.¹⁵⁸ This would give him a freer hand in negotiating with the victor; as it turns out, this was to be Octavian, not Antony. If correct, this interpretation gives Herod a great deal of credit for his foresight. It also emphasizes the degree to which a ruler like Herod, nominally under the sway of Roman hegemony, might act independently.

A similar characterization may be applied to Malichus. After the battle of Actium, the Nabataean king made a bold stroke of his own, burning the ships of Cleopatra as they were passing through the Red Sea, about to be portaged across the isthmus of Suez.¹⁵⁹ This may have been an act of vengeance against the Egyptian queen and her Roman consort, not to mention an opportunity to board the pro-Octavian bandwagon now sweeping the Near East.¹⁶⁰ We should be wary, though, of painting this Nabataean gesture with too broad a brush.¹⁶¹ Without the benefit of hindsight, at this stage Malichus would likely have viewed Octavian as the newest representative of Roman power in the region, with whom he would have to deal. We have no evidence he was thinking in terms of an alliance with Rome. He, like other rulers in the East, would be awaiting further developments before deciding exactly how to proceed. Furthermore, in burning Cleopatra's ships, Malichus may have been thinking not just about Rome, but more

¹⁵⁵ For the events of this war, see Jos. *AJ* 15.11-160; *BJ* 1.366-385.

¹⁵⁶ For this view, see Richardson (1996), 167.

¹⁵⁷ This fits Bowersock's interpretation of a general policy by Cleopatra aimed at dividing Herod and Malichus. See note 40 above and Bowersock (1983), 41-2; cf. Richardson (1996), 167.

¹⁵⁸ Kasher (1988), 138ff., makes a similar suggestion, arguing that Herod started the war against the Nabataeans in order to avoid having to help Antony at Actium. In seeing Herod's whole buildup to his Nabataean effort as a secret switch to the side of Octavian, though, he assumes *too* much prescience on the part of Herod.

¹⁵⁹ Dio 51.7.1; Plut. *Antony* 69.2-3.

¹⁶⁰ Dio (51.7.1) claims near universal transfer of allegiance away from Antony after Actium: *καὶ οἱ δῆμοι καὶ οἱ δυνάσται πάντες ἀπηρνήσαντο*.

¹⁶¹ As for example Sartre (1979), 48, who says that abandonment of Antony for Octavian, the victor, was a demonstration of Malichus' continued fidelity to the "alliance de Rome."

locally as well. Just as the collapse of the Seleucid empire in the late 2nd and early 1st centuries BCE had provided a regional power vacuum into which the Nabataeans could step—politically, economically, and culturally—the apparent defeat of the Ptolemaic empire, with whom the Nabataeans had a longstanding rivalry, presented the promise of another, similar, aperture. This bold stroke was an opportunity for the Nabataean king to advertise his power to his own people; it can also be read as a card played in the political and cultural rivalry with Herod.¹⁶²

IV. THE NABATAEANS, AUGUSTUS, AND THE ENIGMATIC SYLLAIOS

Two events particularly dominate the surviving historical narratives of the Nabataeans during the last quarter of the 1st century BCE: the first is the expedition ordered by the Roman emperor Augustus to explore—and possibly conquer—the southern part of the Arabian peninsula; the second is the dynastic struggle waged over the Nabataean throne upon the death of Obodas II, which ultimately resulted in the succession of Aretas IV, Nabataea's most successful ruler.¹⁶³ One individual, Syllaios, played a key role in both of these events and certainly stands out as the most intriguing Nabataean figure on the stage during this period. An examination of his activities and character provides particular insight into the Nabataeans and can help to elucidate their perspective toward external powers, especially Rome.

Syllaios first appears as a key player in the expedition of Aelius Gallus, the Roman prefect of Egypt, to Arabia Felix in 26 or 25 BCE. This expansion of Roman interests had the potential to directly impact the Nabataeans, particularly in the economic sphere.¹⁶⁴ The sequence of events, following Strabo, runs roughly as follows: Gallus began at Cleopatra, at the north end of the Gulf of Suez, where he built eighty battleships and 130 cargo ships. He took along with him about 10,000 infantry, who included Romans from Egypt as well as 1000 Nabataeans and 500 Jews. By the time he arrived in Leuke Kome, a Nabataean Red Sea port opposite Egypt, Gallus had already lost a considerable number of men to illness, not to mention a great many ships. After wasting as much as a year waiting for his troops to convalesce, he moved into the Arabian interior, with Syllaios serving as guide. The force took six months—capturing several cities along the way—to reach Marsiaba, the furthest point of the expedition. Compelled by lack of water to withdraw his siege of that city in failure, Gallus managed to get his troops back to Hegra

¹⁶² A weapon frieze found at Petra may refer to the burning of Cleopatra's ships, and would thus represent the incorporation of this historical event into the Nabataean cultural program. Many have also suggested that it refers to the battle of Actium. Debate continues over whether the blocks constitute one frieze or several. On the iconography of the frieze, as well as summaries of the interpretations, see Schmid (2009), 326-328; Lyttleton and Blagg (1990), 98-100.

¹⁶³ The remarkable achievements of Aretas IV are treated in detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁶⁴ Over the course of his long reign, Augustus considerably augmented Roman territorial holdings. On the question of whether this always constituted a concerted policy, see esp. Gruen (1994), 147-197. The sources for the expedition are Strabo 16.4.22; Pliny *NH* 6.32.160-1; *Res Gestae* 5.26; Josephus *AJ* 15.317; and Dio 53.29.3-8. For the date, see Jameson (1968), 76-9. For a good summary of the events and issues treated in the modern scholarship, see Sidebotham (1986), 590-602.

in only sixty days, sailing from there back to Myos Hormos in Egypt. Ancient and modern commentators alike have generally regarded the expedition as a failure. This picture derives largely from Strabo, the main surviving source. The geographical historian was a close friend of Aelius Gallus and quite understandably sought to exculpate him from any charges of incompetence. He therefore sought to place blame squarely on the shoulders of Syllaios, the official guide for the expedition.

Detecting Strabo's bias, most scholars have asserted that we should not censure Syllaios, but should focus blame rather upon Aelius Gallus or even Augustus. Proper appropriation of culpability may be missing the point, though. From a Roman perspective, the expedition need not be regarded as a failure at all.¹⁶⁵ Given their imperialistic ambitions and activities around the Mediterranean during the *pax Augustana*, it is remarkable that the Romans made no subsequent effort at a conquest of Arabia until the time of Nero. This suggests that the alleged failure of the expedition did not weigh too heavily on the Roman consciousness or, more specifically, on the conscience of Augustus; otherwise, we would have expected an attempt at vindication.¹⁶⁶ This can be taken a step further: the expedition was never regarded, or at least portrayed, as a failure by the administration in Rome. It has always been generally assumed that Augustus wanted to subjugate Arabia. Even militarily, though, the troops were hardly futile in their efforts. Pliny gives a sizable list of towns that Gallus destroyed: Negrana, Nestus, Nesca, Magusus, Caminacus, Labaetia, Mariba, and Caripeta.¹⁶⁷ From a geographical standpoint, the mission added greatly to Roman knowledge of the Arabian peninsula, as well as of the Nabataeans. We need look no further than Strabo's account for evidence of this new wealth of information! Although we do have sources claiming that Gallus' intentions were military in nature and that this was the first Roman campaign into Arabia,¹⁶⁸ Augustus' objectives may actually have been rather more economic and explorative than strictly martial, as Strabo himself suggests.¹⁶⁹ It is into this context that we should fit Augustus' own claims in the *Res Gestae*.¹⁷⁰ If the emperor was disappointed with the mission's outcome, he was not going to publicly show it.

¹⁶⁵ Sidebotham (1986), 598-9, also takes the view that expedition should be viewed as a success rather than a failure. In addition to the *Res Gestae*, which I reference below, he also cites continued contacts between the Romans and South Arabian states, based primarily on the *Periplus*, as well as some archaeological and epigraphic evidence. My argument serves to augment and strengthen this position.

¹⁶⁶ At least from the standpoint of saving face. The recapture of the standards lost to the Parthians provides a useful contemporary example.

¹⁶⁷ Pliny *NH* 6.32.160.

¹⁶⁸ Dio 53.29: πρῶτοι μὲν δὴ Ῥωμαίων οὗτοι, νομίζω δ' ὅτι καὶ μόνοι, τοσοῦτον ἐπὶ πολέμῳ τῆς Ἀραβίας ταύτης ἐπῆλθον; Pliny *NH* 6.32.160: Romana arma solus in eam terram adhuc intulit Aelius Gallus.

¹⁶⁹ Strabo 16.4.22: τοῦτον δ' ἐπεμψεν ὁ Σεβαστὸς Καῖσαρ διαπειρασόμενον τῶν ἐθνῶν καὶ τῶν τόπων τούτων.

¹⁷⁰ *RG* 5.26: meo iussu et auspicio ducti sunt exercitus eodem fere tempore in Aethiopiam et in Arabiam, quae appel(latur) eudaemon, (maxim)aeque hos(t)ium gentis utr(iu)sque cop(iae) caesae sunt in acie et (c)om(plur)a oppida capta...in Arabiam usque in fines Sabaeorum pro(cess)it exerc(it)us ad oppidum Mariba. The connection with Alexander has not been thoroughly explored, although Hoyland (2001), 45, does suggest that bettering Alexander was a "personal

We must also attempt to see the expedition from the Nabataean point of view: this question has not received attention befitting its potential significance. The Nabataean contribution looks on the face of it overwhelmingly positive. They proffered 1,000 men, twice the number sent by Herod, as well as furnishing the guide. That Syllaios, who—according to Strabo—was already at this stage the *de facto* military commander of the Nabataeans, would have been placed in charge of the Nabataean force that accompanied the Romans, is quite remarkable, and gives the impression that the Nabataeans wished to provide the Romans with the best possible service. This reading finds an echo in the generous hospitality shown the expedition by a certain Aretas—a relative of the Nabataean king—somewhere near Hegra.¹⁷¹ Seen in this light, the venture was conducted in a cooperative spirit; this, at least, was the impression the Nabataeans—especially Syllaios—wanted to convey. Scholars have generally agreed that the Nabataeans provided assistance to the Romans in order to demonstrate loyalty and curry political favor.¹⁷² But they may have had other intentions as well.

At the time of the expedition, the Nabataeans already controlled—or could guarantee the profitability of—the land trade routes between Arabia Felix and Petra, serving as middlemen in the highly lucrative aromatics trade from the southern Arabian peninsula to Petra and thence to Rhinocoula and other Mediterranean ports. It may, therefore, seem difficult to see what they would have stood to gain from more direct Roman intervention in this region. Such explicit Roman interference did not in fact take place until 106 CE, over one hundred years later. The large Nabataean contingent and local, high-placed aristocratic guide provided for Aelius Gallus' expedition may in fact represent Nabataean intentions to shore up their own contacts and bolster security for their activities in the region. Faced with increasing pressure from sea-borne trade and expanded Roman influence in the Near East, especially in Egypt, this venture provided the Nabataeans with a means of turning the apparent inevitability of the encroachment of Roman power at least partially to their own advantage. Thus, the expedition served a double purpose for the Nabataeans: it demonstrated a willingness to help the Romans; it also offered the possibility of expanding their own influence in the Arabian peninsula, under the guise of Roman power. This tactic, which we have seen before, deserves emphasis. We in fact have no evidence that the Romans maintained any lasting presence in the Arabian peninsula in the wake of Gallus' expedition.¹⁷³ The litany of razed cities nowhere reappears in Roman sources. In sum, the Nabataeans emerged as major beneficiaries of this whole episode.

motive" of Augustus in invading Arabia. While about 300 years separate the events, the respective aims of Alexander and Augustus in Arabia appear to have been quite similar.

¹⁷¹ Strabo 16.4.24. Hegra (modern Mada'in al-Salih) lies in present-day northwestern Saudi Arabia. Because of its remote location, it has been historically understudied. Its primary importance lies in the large number of large-scale rock-cut tombs at the site. From epigraphic evidence, the earliest of these tombs can be dated to 1 CE. See most recently Dentzer (2009), 143-192, with bibliography, as well as my discussion in the following chapter.

¹⁷² See for example Sidebotham (1986), 595.

¹⁷³ On the alleged Roman presence in Leuke Kome in the mid-first century CE, see my discussion in Chapter 4.

V. SYLLAIOS AND NABATAEAN POLITICS

The expedition also served as a harbinger for the career of Syllaios. Far from disappearing from the historical narrative after Aelius Gallus' expedition to Arabia Felix, he becomes the major figure in surviving accounts of Nabataea during several critical years from 12-6 BCE. It was he—allegedly—who was actually in charge of Nabataea during the reign of the effete Obodas III.¹⁷⁴ While there can be little doubt that Syllaios exercised enormous authority and influence at the Nabataean court, his precise official role remains intriguingly elusive. Both Josephus and Strabo call him the ἐπίτροπος of Obodas;¹⁷⁵ this may be translated as overseer, vizier, or perhaps administrator.¹⁷⁶ Strabo says that this ἐπίτροπος is also called brother, “ἀδελφός,” and is selected from among the king's Companions.¹⁷⁷ Syllaios played up his position by courting Herod's sister Salome, arguing that the marriage would be beneficial to the Jews, since it was actually Syllaios who was in charge in Nabataea.¹⁷⁸ It would be in his interest to exaggerate his own position if it would secure him a marriage connection with the Judaeen royal family, but the engagement was cancelled when Syllaios refused to adopt the Jewish faith.¹⁷⁹

Syllaios' meddling in Judaea was not limited to the conjugal sphere. He soon came into direct conflict with Herod. The Jewish leader, who had tactfully made peace with Octavian after Actium and maintained good relations with Rome in the years that followed, was carrying out a policy of expansion, with Roman approval. This brought Judaea once again into conflict with the neighboring Nabataeans. While Herod was away on a visit Rome in 12 BCE, a revolt started in Trachonitis, in Transjordan.¹⁸⁰ Herod's surrogates succeeded in quelling the rebellion, but forty of the Arab chieftains escaped to Arabia, where Syllaios took them in and gave them a fortress.¹⁸¹ This they used as a base

¹⁷⁴ Jos. *AJ* 16.220: Ἦν μὲν γὰρ ὁ τῆς Ἀραβίας βασιλεὺς Ὀβάδας ἀπράγμων καὶ νωθὴς τὴν φύσιν, Σύλλαιος δ' αὐτῷ διώκει τὰ πολλὰ. The ancient sources portray Obodas III as weak and ineffectual. See esp. Josephus *AJ* 16.220; 280; 288 and Strabo 16.4.24. Several scholars have recently offered cautionary correctives: Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 597-8; Wenning (1993), 33; Anderson (2005), 155. As these authors suggest, the archaeological testimony paints a somewhat more positive picture of Obodas III. Under his reign, for example, the ambitious Nabataean building programs began at Petra and elsewhere throughout Nabataean territory, such as Si'a and perhaps Oboda. See Negev (1977), 616, 621ff.

¹⁷⁵ Strabo 16.421; Jos. *BJ* 1.487.

¹⁷⁶ Significantly, both Strabo and Josephus use the definite article.

¹⁷⁷ The Nabataean king's retinue of ἐταίρων seems to be a clear nod to the Hellenistic precedent. See my discussion in Chapter 1.

¹⁷⁸ Jos. *AJ* 16.221-4; cf. Jos. *BJ* 1.487 and 1.566.

¹⁷⁹ Jos. *AJ* 16.225. For further discussion, see Kasher (1988), 163.

¹⁸⁰ The uprising began at least in part because of false rumors of Herod's death. Herod had received Trachonitis, along with Batanaea and Auranitis, from Augustus, who had previously taken this territory from Zenodorus. Herod then forced the Arabs there into sedentary living, quite against their will. See Jos. *AJ* 15.343-348; 16.130; 16.271-6. Just before Herod's acquisition of this territory, a large Nabataean temple was founded at Si'a in the Hawran, near Canatha, suggesting a concentration of Nabataean activity in this region. See Negev (1977), 564-5.

¹⁸¹ Jos. *AJ* 16.273-5. Herod had managed to force the local population there into a sedentary lifestyle. Once he was out of the way, the people turned back to their more traditional ways, in effect meaning a return to brigandage and plunder—or so we are told.

of operations for attacks on Judaea and Syria. Herod eventually submitted his grievances to the Roman officials Saturninus and Volumnius.¹⁸² He also demanded repayment of a loan he had given to Obodas III through Syllaios. The Roman administration in Syria explicitly granted Herod permission to act against the Nabataeans as defaulters on the loan.¹⁸³ The Jewish leader conducted troops into Arabia and captured the brigands' fortress at Rhaepta. A small Arab force under the leadership of a certain Nakebos engaged with Herod, apparently resulting in just a few casualties on both sides.¹⁸⁴ The way events played out in Rome after the incident would have broad implications for the region.

The Nabataean ἐπίτροπος was already in Rome, where he had secured Augustus' ear.¹⁸⁵ What exactly was he doing there? Josephus seems to connect the trip with Saturninus' decision to require repayment of the loan.¹⁸⁶ The chronology is troubling, though. The Nabataeans received an ultimatum of only thirty days, surely not enough time for a return trip to Rome. Syllaios did not hear of Herod's attack until he had already arrived in Rome. That he was there just to argue the Nabataean case in the matter of sixty talents owed Herod is highly unlikely. Only Nabataean recalcitrance seems to have been to blame for its not being repaid. Rather, Syllaios' trip should be viewed more broadly as a diplomatic mission to Rome to shore up contacts and to curry favor with the emperor, as Herod himself had done a few years before.

When news arrived of Herod's attack on Nabataea, Syllaios made a dramatic show in front of the emperor, dressing himself in black and bemoaning the Nabataean casualties (whose number he allegedly inflated by a factor of 100).¹⁸⁷ This apparent farce succeeded in eliciting the sympathy of Augustus, who sided with the Nabataeans. All that the emperor asked of Herod's friends in Rome was whether Herod had led his army out of Judaea.¹⁸⁸ Receiving an answer in the affirmative, Augustus sent Herod a reprimanding letter, effectively curbing his ability to retaliate against the Nabataeans.¹⁸⁹

The episode is quite remarkable, especially for the role played by Syllaios. Clearly, the significance of his dramatic performance has been overblown. Josephus states that Syllaios himself received exaggerated accounts of the skirmish.¹⁹⁰ In the course of his dramatic speech, Syllaios argues that Herod had only dared invade Nabataean territory in his (Syllaios') absence.¹⁹¹ In fact, the engagement was only a minor skirmish. Either Syllaios had been misinformed by his sources or he chose to exaggerate his own

¹⁸² C. Sentius Saturninus was governor of Syria from 9-6 BCE and Volumnius likely second in command. See Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 520.

¹⁸³ Jos. *AJ* 16.283.

¹⁸⁴ Jos. *AJ* 16.283-4.

¹⁸⁵ For Syllaios' first visit to Rome, see Jos. *AJ* 16.282ff.

¹⁸⁶ Jos. *AJ* 16.281-2.

¹⁸⁷ Jos. *AJ* 16.

¹⁸⁸ Jos. *AJ* 16.290: εἰ τὴν στρατίαν Ἡρώδης ἐξαγάγοι.

¹⁸⁹ To Augustus, Herod seemed to have acted to quickly, without formal Roman permission. See Jos. *AJ* 16.298.

¹⁹⁰ Jos. *AJ* 16.286: Ἄγγελοι δὲ Συλλαίῳ καταταχήσαντες εἰς Ῥώμην τὰ πεπραγμένα διεσάφουν, εἰς μείζον, ὡς εἶκος, ἕκαστον τῶν γεγονότων αἴροντες. Cf. Jos. *AJ* 16.351.

¹⁹¹ Jos. *AJ* 16.288-9.

indispensability to Nabataean security while at the same time appealing to Augustus' sympathies. This would of course not be unprecedented on his part.

Augustus was only to be swayed in the matter by the eventual arrival of Herod's envoy, Nicolaus of Damascus, whose testimony dramatically turned the tables.¹⁹² Complicating matters further, while Syllaios was at Rome, Obodas III died, resulting in a struggle for the Nabataean crown between Syllaios and a certain Aeneas, the future Aretas IV.¹⁹³ The two rivals resorted to bribery to Augustus in Rome. Aretas, unable to plead his case in person, sent a letter, gifts, and a golden crown. In the letter he accused Syllaios of poisoning Obodas, of wielding royal power while Obodas was still alive, of seducing Arab wives, and of borrowing money to secure the throne for himself.¹⁹⁴

This rather grim picture of Syllaios' character should be weighed against the numismatic and epigraphic evidence, which provides something of a corrective. Two inscriptions from outside the Nabataean kingdom specifically mention Syllaios. The first, from the city of Miletus, reads, in Nabataean, "Syllaios, the brother of the king, the son of Teim[u]...a tribute for the life of Obodas the king, in the month of T[evet in the...year...],"¹⁹⁵ and in Greek, "[Συλλ]αιος ἀδελφὸς βασιλ[έως] ἀνεθῆκεν Διὶ Δου[σάρει]. A second inscription, also bilingual, from Delos, reads, in Nabataean, "[Syllaios, the brother of the] king, [the son of Teimu made set up] this inscription for Dushara, [the god of Gaia] for the life of Obodas, the king [on day] 5 of the (month) Sebet of the 20th year," and in Greek, "Συλ[λαῖος Δου[σάρει] τὸ δε[λτίον]."¹⁹⁶ As the two are so closely related, scholars have used the former inscription to fill in lacunae in the latter. What do we make of these two dedications? It seems odd that Syllaios, whom Aretas was to accuse of poisoning Obodas III, would be setting up dedications "for the life of" the very same. Some scholars have suggested that these inscriptions form part of an elaborate plot by the crafty Syllaios to cover all possible traces of his alleged misdeed: if on his way to Rome, Syllaios made dedications around the Mediterranean to the life and health of the king, surely he could not have been responsible for his death. This ingenious theory, though, should be seriously doubted, if not outright rejected. We cannot be absolutely sure when these dedications were set up, since Syllaios made two trips to Rome. A second problem is the distance of the inscriptions from Nabataea. They would serve little purpose in a trial at Petra and even if someone had seen them, would he regard them as proof of Syllaios' innocence? Doubtful. I also raise another, more serious objection: following Aretas' accusations in 9 BCE, Syllaios returned to Nabataea. There,

¹⁹² A fragment of Nicolaus' history (*FGrHist* IIA90F136.1) survives, describing the trip.

¹⁹³ Jos. *AJ* 16.295.

¹⁹⁴ Jos. *AJ* 16.295-6. It is possible that an inscription from Rome referring to a Nabataean delegation, usually connected with a later embassy sent by Aretas in 37 CE following the death of Tiberius, may actually refer to this delegation sent in 8/7 BCE. See Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 109-100; Roche (1996), 91. For a deconstructive analysis of the letter, see Anderson (2005), 158-165. Anderson argues, with reservation, that Aretas is cleverly manipulating Augustan propaganda to achieve his ends.

¹⁹⁵ From Meshorer (1975), 37; for the publication, see Clermont-Ganneau (1906), 310-2, 328 and (1924), p. VI.

¹⁹⁶ As reprinted in Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 432-3. Cf. Milik (1976), 146; Negev (1991), nr. 113; Bowersock (1983), 51; Roche (1996), 84; Dijkstra (1995), 70-2. The visit to Delos is somewhat puzzling. As A. Stewart (personal correspondence 2011) has reminded me, Delos would have practically deserted at this time; Roche (1996), 84, adds a similar caveat.

he was engaged in a struggle for the reigns of power with Aretas, his rival, carrying out assassinations and subterfuge.¹⁹⁷ One would expect him to have met with a reckoning at this point in Nabataea had his guilt in Obodas' death been as clear cut as it is portrayed in our sources. Rather, it seems he had considerable clout, if not outright power at this point.

Further elucidation lies in the numismatic evidence, which suggests that Syllaios and Aretas may actually have held power at the same time, at least temporarily.¹⁹⁸ We have no coins that depict Syllaios alone and, although there are some coins with the letter ψ , which must stand for Syllaios, it always appears on the same coin with an A (generally assumed to stand for Aretas); this suggests that Syllaios continued to hold an extremely important position in the Nabataean administration even after the accession of Aretas, probably in 9 BCE (see **Fig. 5**).¹⁹⁹ In fact, if this interpretation of the coins is correct, then Syllaios' position actually *improved* after Obodas' death, at least temporarily. The combined testimony raises the possibility that Obodas may even have preferred Syllaios to Aretas IV as his successor. Each no doubt had his supporters.²⁰⁰

The fact that Syllaios often looms larger in our sources than either Malichus I or Obodas II highlights his importance in the Nabataean administration during this quarter century as well as the biases and limitations of our sources and the ambiguity of our explicit knowledge of the inner workings of the Nabataean court. A central problem in assessing Syllaios stems from the partial conflation in Strabo's narrative of the two main events in which Syllaios played a major role (as least as far as the Romans were concerned): the Gallus expedition and the Nabataean vizier's visits to and eventual execution in Rome. Strabo implies that Augustus' condemnation of Syllaios was connected to his role in the Arabian expedition.²⁰¹ In this he is clearly mistaken. As argued above, the expedition was not viewed—or at least not portrayed publicly—as a failure in Rome. That Syllaios continued in his position in Nabataea and even seriously vied for the throne, *with Augustus' approval*, suggests the two events are unconnected.

The personal story of Syllaios does not end well. The charges by Nicolaus of Damascus, Herod's representative, offered a full refutation of Syllaios' previous claims to the emperor and a vindication of Herod's earlier actions in pursuing the brigands into Nabataean territory.²⁰² Augustus, convinced that he had been deceived, condemned Syllaios to death.²⁰³ Notwithstanding his anticlimactic death, the career of this elusive figure, both regionally and internationally, and over nearly a quarter century, highlights the importance of looking carefully at historical events in Nabataea from the inside out. One often tends to see the Nabataeans, as well as the other populations of the Near East, through the prism of Roman imperialism, often without proper appreciation of their

¹⁹⁷ For details of these machinations, which included the murder of Aretas' friend Soaimos, see Jos. *BJ* 1.574.

¹⁹⁸ Schmitt-Korte (1990), 127, including a full discussion of the coins of Syllaios. O

¹⁹⁹ See Schmitt-Korte (1990), 128-9.

²⁰⁰ This raises a tantalizing question about the transfer of power and the nature of kingship vis-à-vis tribalism in Nabataean society. This may be interesting to pursue, but for the moment, I leave the question hanging.

²⁰¹ Strabo 16.4.24: ὁ δ' αἴτιος τούτων ὁ Συλλαῖος ἔτισε δίκας ἐν Ῥώμῃ.

²⁰² Jos. *AJ* 16.335-350.

²⁰³ The accession of Aretas IV is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

motives and personal agency in shaping the course of events. The Nabataean relationship with the great superpower to the west had evolved dramatically by 9 BCE, when Aretas IV began his nearly fifty-year reign, but these changes did not fundamentally alter the Nabataeans' own sense of their economic, cultural and political importance in the Near East. In fact, they were to advertise their role in these spheres in even more conspicuous fashion in the years to come.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In analyzing the major diplomatic, military, and cultural events involving the Nabataeans in the late Hellenistic period, specifically in the years 100 to 9 BCE, this chapter has reached several important conclusions while calling for a reassessment of many commonly held assumptions about the Nabataeans, specifically with regards to their relationship vis-à-vis the Romans. Firstly, it has called into serious question the assignation of the year 63 BCE as a pivotal moment in Nabataean history, arguing that to see it in this way betrays an overly Romano-centric point of view. From the Nabataean perspective, the successful parrying of incursions by Roman commanders such as Pompey and Scaurus might be fit within the larger context of successful Nabataean resistance to foreign hegemony. A central part of the discussion here has focused on locating and articulating the Nabataean role in—and perspective on—many of the key events that served to reshape the Near East during the course of the Roman civil wars. The Nabataeans maneuvered through the uncertainty of these years with considerable tact, and this chapter has highlighted the importance of viewing Nabataean actions, such as Malichus' burning of Cleopatra's ships, in a more local context. Finally, in assessing the character and actions of the vizier Syllaios in the last decades of the 1st century BCE, particularly his leadership role in the Augustan-sponsored expedition to Arabia, we see the extent to which the Nabataeans were acting in support of their own economic and political interests, aligning with external powers—including the Romans—when it might best serve them. This period culminates in the ascension of Aretas IV. While in his struggle for pre-eminence, Aretas worked to appease the emperor Augustus, the new Nabataean king did not envisage a blindly subservient role for the Nabataeans. In fact, Nabataea, in continuing as a major, self-confident regional player in the eastern Mediterranean, was about to embark upon its most prosperous, stable, and culturally prolific period.

CHAPTER 3: ARETAS IV AND THE NABATAEAN KINGDOM, 9 BCE TO 40 CE

I. INTRODUCTION

Nabataea's longest serving ruler came to power under rather fraught circumstances. Complicating his contentious struggle with his rival Syllaios for the throne, Aretas IV's new administration apparently did not meet with the initial approval of the Roman emperor Augustus, who even temporarily considered adding the Nabataeans' territory to Herod's domain, according to Josephus.²⁰⁴ The Jewish chronicler says that Augustus was initially angry at Aretas' accession, since his permission had not been sought in the matter.²⁰⁵ Unfortunately, this incident sets the stage for many examinations of the Nabataeans in the period of Aretas IV, as modern commentators have viewed Nabataea's persistence as an independent state in the Near East as dependent on and subject to the whim of the emperor in Rome. According to this view, Aretas owed his power to Rome and to its *princeps* Augustus. The "eastern policy" of Augustus—insofar as he can be said to have had one—resulted in a greater number of allied and dependent states in the eastern Mediterranean. Nabataea generally receives a billing among them.²⁰⁶

This Romano-centric and overly simplistic categorization gives little credit to the nuances of the Near Eastern—and specifically Nabataean—point of view. The attempt to locate this perspective will provide the main thrust of this chapter, just as it guides the rest of the dissertation. It will seek to probe beyond the Greek, Roman, and Jewish sources to gain a better understanding of the Nabataean perspective on historical and cultural developments. The tendency to view the growth of Roman power as a continuous, progressive force on the landscape makes it seem almost inevitable that the Romans would soon absorb Nabataea. This outlook, though, is dangerously teleological. From the perspective of Near Eastern populations, the veneer of Roman control appeared in many areas to be just that—simply a veneer, both subject to exploitation and leaving openings for the kind of regional power struggles that had persisted for centuries. This reassessment strives to give these rivalries their due.

During the long and stable reign of Aretas IV, Nabataea also experienced a remarkable proliferation of architecture, urbanization, and other signs of high culture, such as art, sculpture, and tomb decoration. Indeed, this period furnishes the bulk of Nabataean epigraphic, numismatic, and archaeological testimony. These serve to complement and enrich the limited backbone of information provided by literary historical sources.²⁰⁷ Taken together, the evidence offers numerous avenues for

²⁰⁴ Jos. *AJ* 16.353. This rivalry, with the vizier Syllaios, is discussed in detail at the end of the preceding chapter.

²⁰⁵ Jos. *AJ* 16.295.

²⁰⁶ One recent account has called the Nabataean rulers, after Pompey, "indistinguishable from other client princes": Sartre (2005), 81. This characterization is not atypical. For further discussions of the nature of client states in the Near East during this period, see Kennedy (1996), 703-736, esp. 728-731; Braund (1983), *passim*; Jensen (2006), 221-224.

²⁰⁷ Surviving sources on this period include the account of Josephus; occasional passages in Tacitus and Cassius Dio; scattered Biblical references; and more general commentary on economy and society provided by Pliny and Strabo.

elaboration, discussion, and analysis. Structurally, this chapter follows the thread of the historical testimony, which—as usual—discusses the Nabataeans primarily when they intersect with the Jews and Romans. Many of these latter encounters take place directly with members of the Julio-Claudian household and thus provide unique insight into the relationship between the two states and—most importantly—a glimpse into the Nabataeans’ point of view on both larger- and smaller-scale political developments. A careful focus on the Near Eastern context and the perspectives of the Nabataeans, as well as of their Jewish neighbors, reveals multiple historical episodes needing reassessment. This analysis will also engage with relevant elements of Nabataean material culture where they can elucidate the historical narrative. The re-evaluation will reveal a society largely in tune with the late Hellenistic and Roman cultural context that also succeeded in creating and maintaining—by means of elaborate displays, ornate monuments, and lavish civic spaces—a distinctly Nabataean voice, representative of a culture on par with any in the eastern Mediterranean at the turn of the millennium.

II. INSTABILITY IN JUDAEA: THE NABATAEAN RESPONSE

Having secured power, the new Nabataean king Aretas IV soon confronted a major crisis in the regional instability brought about by the death of the Jewish king Herod the Great in the spring of 4 BCE. Confusion over Herod’s wills—the third of which was finalized shortly before his death—intensified the struggle over the succession. His son Archelaus, named in this third will, recognized the need to first visit Rome, apparently refusing any of the real trappings of kingship until doing so.²⁰⁸ The lack of central authority resulting from this hesitation led to a mob uprising and bloodshed. Another filial claimant, Herod Antipas, named heir in Herod’s superseded second will, also made his way to Rome to plead his case.²⁰⁹ While Augustus was attempting to settle matters there, the situation in Judaea got out of hand. A legion left in Jerusalem by the Roman general Varus to keep order came under siege from the rioters; a usurper named Simon seized power in Peraea and another, Athrongaeus, put on the diadem and ravaged the countryside. Mayhem reigned supreme throughout Judaea.²¹⁰

Exasperated, Varus moved to quell the revolt before it could spiral out of control and further threaten Roman interests.²¹¹ He took his remaining two legions from Syria, as

²⁰⁸ Herod left explicit instructions for the settlement of his realm in his will, which had Augustus and Rome as guarantor. The will specified that his kingdom was to be divided among his children: Philippus got Batanaea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis; Archelaus got Judaea, Idumaea, and Samaria; Herod Antipas received Peraea and Galilee; and Salome garnered the revenue from Jamneia, Azotas, and Phasaelis, but the territories remained under Archelaus’ jurisdiction. Augustus added the cities of Gaza, Gadara, and Hippus to the Roman province of Syria. See Jos. *BJ* 2.1-2; *AJ* 17.317-321; *BJ* 1.668-9, 2.96-7.

For further details of Herod’s will, see Jensen (2006), 223; Millar (1993), 41; Braund (1984), 139-143; Schürer (1973), 330-335; Hoehner (1972), 21-31. For a succinct summary of the crisis, see Goodman (2007), 397-400.

²⁰⁹ Jos. *BJ* 2.20-23; *AJ* 17.224-227.

²¹⁰ For the sequence of events leading up to Roman intervention, see Jos. *BJ* 2.39-65; *AJ* 17.228-285.

²¹¹ Jos. *AJ* 17.285; Jos. *BJ* 2.66.

well as a large number of auxiliaries, among them a sizable contingent of Nabataean cavalry and infantry sent by King Aretas IV.²¹² All we know of specific Nabataean action is that the Arabs burned the village of Arous, which apparently belonged to Ptolemy, a *philos* of Archelaus,²¹³ and that from there they went on to incinerate Sampho and other villages that lay in their path.²¹⁴ Unfortunately, Josephus is more concerned with Nabataean motives than with their activities: they were, he claims, inspired by deep hatred for both Herod and his friends.²¹⁵ A focus on this seemingly vindictive and savage behavior has also driven much of the secondary literature.²¹⁶ The Nabataeans' behavior, though, should be viewed with a more critical eye. What did they hope to achieve by supporting the Romans?

We know from Josephus' narrative that Varus himself came to Arous and camped near the city. He also led the march to Sampho.²¹⁷ This strongly implies that the Nabataeans burned the cities either at Varus' behest or with his approval, a conclusion that finds corroboration in Josephus' claim that Nabataean aggression against the villages of Arous and Sampho immediately preceded the burning of the town of Emmaus, which explicitly occurred by order of Varus. Josephus distinguishes the motives of the two parties: the Nabataeans acted out of hatred for Herod and his friends, as already iterated; Varus for his part sought to avenge the earlier death of the centurion Arius and forty Roman soldiers in the city.²¹⁸ Still, while the Nabataeans and Romans seem to have been working together, a tension permeates Josephus' account. He says that after ending the revolt, Varus dismissed Aretas' troops, not only because they were no longer needed, but also because they had acted somewhat recklessly and contrary to orders, principally out of a desire for gain.²¹⁹ This apparent overextension of Nabataean aggression must have taken place after the campaigns against Arous and Sampho.²²⁰ The Nabataeans were at this point acting at least semi-autonomously, and probably unsupervised.

In sum, the Nabataeans were taking advantage of a convenient pretext for territorial aggrandizement and enrichment at the expense of their Jewish neighbors and rivals. An ostensibly close alliance with Roman interests and leaders may have been the driving force: the Nabataeans could undermine Judaeon strength by acting under the umbrella of Roman power.²²¹ Josephus says that Aretas formed a friendship, *φιλία*, with the

²¹² Jos. *BJ* 2.68: καὶ κατὰ τὸ πρὸς Ἡρώδη ἐχθὸς Ἀρέτας ὁ Ἄραβ οὐκ ὀλίγην ἄγων δύναμιν ἵππικὴν τε καὶ πεζικὴν; cf. Jos. *AJ* 17.287 (and discussion below).

²¹³ He is mentioned as such at Jos. *BJ* 2.14.

²¹⁴ Jos. *AJ* 17.290.

²¹⁵ Jos. *AJ* 17.290: ἐχθρῶς καὶ πρὸς φίλους τοὺς ἐκείνου ἔχοντες; *BJ* 2.69. Given the context, there can be little doubt that the Arabs in question here are the Nabataeans.

²¹⁶ Kasher (1988), 174, in agreement with many scholars, seeing long-standing enmity between the two peoples based on Josephus' account: Jos. *AJ* 17.287; *BJ* 2.68-70.

²¹⁷ Jos. *BJ* 2.69-70; *AJ* 17.289-90. In *AJ*, though, Varus does not explicitly accompany the Nabataeans to Sampho.

²¹⁸ For Arius' death: Jos. *BJ* 2.62-3; *AJ* 17.282. For Varus' orders to burn Emmaus: Jos. *BJ* 2.71; *AJ* 17.291.

²¹⁹ Jos. *AJ* 17.296.

²²⁰ As implied at Jos. *BJ* 2.76.

²²¹ Nabataean activities here may be analogous to their behavior during Aelius Gallus' Arabian expedition. See my discussion in chapter 3.

Romans.²²² This apparently allowed them more latitude, at least temporarily. It should not be viewed as a permanent formal arrangement. A close look at Nabataean actions suggests that they were trying to destabilize and weaken Judaea; they were not simply acting as Roman pawns and auxiliaries. More importantly, nowhere in their actions do we detect overt obsequy to Roman power. If anything, their activities undermined the Roman effort to re-establish stability in the region, and the Nabataeans were eventually dismissed for being poor allies.²²³ Under normal circumstances, such action on the part of the Nabataeans might not have been possible since it could arouse negative Roman attention and potential retribution. Aretas' alliance with Varus, such as it was, should be regarded as an *ad hoc* measure to gain traction vis-à-vis the Jews. Thus, the prevailing paradigm, according to which the Nabataeans were supporting Varus on account of their position as a dependent kingdom of Rome, should be called into question.²²⁴ At least the Nabataeans, for their part, did not see things that way.

What then, of a conspicuous change in Nabataean coinage that occurs at roughly this same juncture? After about 5 BCE, Aretas' coinage begins to feature exclusively laurel wreaths instead of diadems on the heads of the ruler (see **Fig. 6**).²²⁵ The change from diadem—symbol of the Hellenistic kings—to laurel wreath had begun under Obodas III in about 14 BCE, but that king kept minting both fashions simultaneously.²²⁶ It may be tempting to read the change from diadem to laurel wreath as a further sign of Nabataean obsequy to Rome: Aretas succeeded to the throne under rather delicate circumstances, winning out over his rival Syllaios in a spirited competition for Augustus' approval; once gained, this stamp of approval placed the Nabataeans, like their Jewish neighbors, at Rome's bidding. By permanently adopting the laurel wreath, a conspicuously Roman symbol, in imitation of Roman fashion, Aretas IV was appeasing Augustus and offering allegiance to Rome.²²⁷ It all fits neatly together—perhaps too neatly.

There are, upon closer inspection, good reasons to question—or at least problematize—this tidy hypothesis, and we must treat the Nabataean coinage carefully on this score. In making this modification, Aretas was discarding a prominent symbol of Hellenistic kingship, the diadem, which had first appeared on Nabataean coins when Aretas III and the Nabataeans controlled the city of Damascus in the second quarter of the 1st century BCE.²²⁸ While most Nabataeans, based farther south, may have had no exposure to the Damascene issue, Aretas IV's coins circulated widely within the

²²² Jos. *AJ* 17.287: ἔχθει τῶ Ἡρώδου φιλίαν τὴν Ῥωμαίων κτώμενος.

²²³ Jos. *BJ* 2.76: ὁ δὲ τοὺς Ἀραβας εὐρών οὐ συμμαχῶν ἦθος ἔχοντα.

²²⁴ See e.g. Millar (1993), 42.

²²⁵ The reverse of the coin depicts a standing female figure with raised hand along with an inscription reading “Aretas, King of Nabataea” and the two letters η and Ο. The η can be straightforwardly interpreted as the first letter of Aretas' name. The Ο, which appears on coins of Obodas III, Malichus I, and Aretas IV, has caused more confusion. Schmitt-Korte and Price have argued that the sign stands for “sela,” a word for rock, stone, or weight, and that taken together the η and Ο might be read as “Nabataean money.” Meshorer believes it is the mint mark for Petra. See Schmitt-Korte and Price (1994), 90-93; Meshorer (1975), 35. On the identity of this woman with the raised hand, which remains a mystery, see Meshorer (1975), 34.

²²⁶ See Schmid (2001), 373; (2009), 336-337, with further bibliography.

²²⁷ Many have suggested that the move represents appeasement; see recently Schmid (2001), 373-4; Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 272-3; Schmid (2009), 337.

²²⁸ As was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

Nabataean heartland, and beyond. His coins have been found, for example, at Dura Europus, Cyprus, and Susa.²²⁹ About eighty percent of all surviving Nabataean coinage comes from the long reign of Aretas IV.²³⁰ This comparative glut testifies to a flourishing economy, and it may also point to greater self-assertion and a more important Nabataean economic role vis-à-vis neighboring powers during Aretas IV' reign.²³¹ The introduction of the laurel wreath must be read both in a more local Nabataean context and in a wider regional context. The laurel wreath also appears on some Jewish coins and Palestine city coins.²³² It therefore seems to have carried weight as a general acknowledgement of a (new) dominant regional political paradigm, much like the diadem that prevailed on Hellenistic coins. Nevertheless, its adoption should not be viewed as an indication of Nabataean subservience to Rome. As I have argued, the Nabataeans adopted the diadem in order to advertise their place within the larger Hellenistic royal context. Viewed in this light, while the laurel wreath may represent tacit Nabataean acknowledgement of growing Roman power, it need not signify accession to or appeasement of that power; rather, like the diadem, it advertises Nabataean self-confidence and importance in the Near Eastern and Mediterranean contexts.

The laurel wreath is itself only a part of the coins' overall message, and one must be wary of over-generalizing from one particular feature. Aretas' coins never adopt Roman hairstyles, for example.²³³ Another important component of the coins is Aretas IV's regular use the epithet "lover of his people."²³⁴ At least one scholar has seen a possible linkage between the Nabataean "lover of his people" and the Roman *pater patriae*, but more likely the term comes from the Hellenistic φιλόδημος.²³⁵ This is interesting, because this title was popular with "barbarians like the Parthians."²³⁶ The use of royal epithets such as this was commonplace among the Hellenistic kings, who often employed them as propaganda. Aretas III himself had proclaimed himself "philhellene" on his Damascene coins. The diadem, though, long outlasted the use of Greek. Upon losing control of Damascus, the Nabataeans—under Obodas II—had abandoned Greek legends in favor of their own language. This development is, when placed in a broader context,

²²⁹ Meshorer (1975), 41, n. 118. The relevant archaeological reports are Cox (1959), pl. 26, no. 202; Bellinger (1949), pl. 10, nos. 166-7.

²³⁰ Meshorer (1975), 41; Schmitt-Korte (1994), 103. The Nabataean state had clearly gone long periods without minting its own native coinage. The marked increase at this stage may represent a growing stationary population as well as the desire of this particular king to broadcast his message locally.

²³¹ The two primary detailed studies of the coinage of Aretas IV are Meshorer (1975), 41-62; Schmitt-Korte (1994).

²³² Patrich (1990), 133, n. 47. See also Meshorer (1978), 60-63; Spijkerman (1978), *passim*, but esp. the coins from Gadara and Gerasa; Jensen (2006), 187.

²³³ For discussion, see Schmid (2009), 337 n. 43; Megow (1999), 82-91.

²³⁴ Anderson (2005), 145, notes that, "No study on the proportional presence/absence of the title in his inscriptions has been undertaken, but would certainly be a welcome addition to scholarship on the subject." The wide use of Aretas' epithet, "lover of his people," makes clear that it was "actively broadcast" within the kingdom; it also appears in the Hejaz, Negev, Edom, and elsewhere.

²³⁵ Meshorer (1975), 44, says it is "reminiscent" of the Hellenistic title. Anderson (2005) proposes the Roman allusion in connection with the adoption of the laurel wreath headdress.

²³⁶ See Mörkholm (1991), 31.

quite significant. The neighboring Jews always used Greek on their coins, as did many of the other regional states traditionally labeled as “client-states” of Rome, among them the Jews.²³⁷ Since much of the other imagery on Nabataean coins is borrowed from Hellenistic and Roman models, the introduction and subsequent retention of their native script is indeed striking and may be read as a political and cultural statement in its own right. These coins of Aretas IV thus exhibit a kind of internal tension and a balance of conformity and exceptionality.

The coinage may thus be employed to provide clues about the construction of Nabataean identity, both internal and external. This and the previous chapters have argued that the Nabataean kings before Aretas IV seem never to have overtly advertised subservience or obsequy to Rome, in contrast with the habit of many other Near Eastern dynasts.²³⁸ This apparent negative evidence can in fact be read as a strong positive statement, particularly if we think in terms of the construction of internal legitimacy by the Nabataean kings. Aretas’ coins may owe a clear debt to Roman imagery and display recognition of changing political realities, but they are not in themselves evidence that he was acting out of subservience to Rome, politically or culturally. Comparison with other kings in the region not only serves to highlight Nabataean distinctiveness, but also warns against applying any model of friendly or client kingship too broadly.

III. NABATAEAN ENCOUNTERS WITH THE JULIO-CLAUDIANS

In 2 BCE, the emperor Augustus sent his adopted son Gaius Caesar to settle affairs in the East, with a more specific mission of imposing a political settlement in Armenia.²³⁹ Gaius apparently conducted some kind of brief campaign in Arabia on his way from Mauretania—his first stop on the tour—to the East. Pliny the Elder alludes to an *expeditio Arabica* in several places.²⁴⁰ Dio and Velleius Paterculus furnish additional details.²⁴¹ Two inscriptions add to, while also complicating, our knowledge of the incident. The first, a well-known cenotaph from Pisa, says that Gaius waged war on his trip, beyond the borders of the Roman Empire.²⁴² An honorary inscription for a certain

²³⁷ See my more extended discussion of the Damascene coinage and its significance in Chapter 1. Cf. Anderson (2005), 137-8. For the portraits on these coins, see Smith (1988a), 493-497; Smith (1988b), 104-106, 130-132. For a general discussion of minting by “friendly kings,” see Braund (1984), 123-128; Jensen (2006), 204. Herod the Great, Archelaus, Philip, and Agrippa I, and Herod Antipas all used Greek legends on their coins.

²³⁸ This critical point was made by Graf (1994), 291. No epithet appears either in inscriptions or on coins. Contrast this with client kings like Juba II of Mauretania, Polemo I of Bosphorus, Archelaus of Cappadocia, and the Hasmonaeans. See esp. Braund (1984), 105-111.

²³⁹ For Gaius’ itinerary in the West, see Romer (1978), 201-202, with further bibliography; for his itinerary and activities in the East, see in particular Romer (1979), 199-214; Bowersock (1983), 56.

²⁴⁰ Pliny, *NH* 2.168; 6.141; 6.160; 12.55-6; 32.10. See Bowersock (1971), 219-242; Bowersock (1983), 56; Romer (1979), 204-208.

²⁴¹ Dio 55.10.17; Vell. 2.101.1.

²⁴² *CIL* XI.1421 = *ILS* 140: *consulatum, quem ultra finis extremas populi Romani bellum gerens feliciter peregerat.*

Scipio, in Messene, also implies military action on Gaius' part.²⁴³ Based on the testimony of these inscriptions, most scholars have concluded that Gaius employed arms during the Arabian portion of his eastern trip. But difficulties arise when one tries to explain when and under what circumstances. Some have attempted to resolve the question by suggesting that Gaius conducted a minor campaign against nomadic invaders pushing up from the south.²⁴⁴ Such a campaign, it is argued, was meant to give Gaius some military credibility for his future ventures. Still, this explanation raises further difficulties, especially when taking into account the Nabataean perspective. Had a military campaign taken place in Nabataean territory, or even Arabia more loosely interpreted, the Nabataeans themselves should have taken part.²⁴⁵ The nature of Nabataean participation—indeed, leadership—in the earlier expedition of Aelius Gallus makes this abundantly clear.²⁴⁶ Pliny himself quite explicitly contrasts the activities of Gaius and Gallus, who (he says) alone brought Roman arms into Arabia (*Romana arma solus in eam terram adhuc intulit Aelius Gallus*).²⁴⁷ Pliny's narrative implies that Gaius did not attack Arabia *per se*, but rather that he simply viewed the territory (*prospexit tantum Arabiam*), presumably from the Gulf of Aqaba, which must be the *Arabicus sinus* in question. An Arabian military victory should be doubted, if not outright rejected.²⁴⁸ Instead, a non-military explanation for Gaius' activities must be sought.

No doubt agreeing with this premise, in his pioneering work *Roman Arabia*, G. Bowersock offers an ingenuous explanation for Gaius' activities in Arabia, suggesting that the Romans temporarily annexed Nabataea, making it a province between 3 BCE and 1 CE.²⁴⁹ Bowersock bases his argument upon the coincidence of a gap in the surviving coinage of Aretas IV during these years with a passage in Strabo which seems to suggest direct Roman control over Nabataea: *νῦν δὲ κάκεινοι Ῥωμαίοις εἰσὶν ὑπήκοοι καὶ Σύροι*.²⁵⁰ He thus posits that the purpose of Gaius' *expeditio* to Arabia was the re-establishment of the Nabataean kingship.

While enticing, this explanation does not find enough corroboration in the surviving evidence. Such a move on the part of the Romans was not unprecedented, but it does not

²⁴³ *SEG* 23 (1968), 76f., no. 206: ἐπιγνοὺς δὲ καὶ Γάιον τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ τὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀνθρώπων πάντων σωτηρίας τοῖς βαρβάροις μαχόμενον ὑγιαίνειν τε καὶ κινδύνους ἐκφυγόντα ἀντιτετιμωρῆσθαι τοὺς πολεμίους.

²⁴⁴ Bowersock (1971), 227-8; followed by Romer (1979), 205 and (more tentatively) Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 572.

²⁴⁵ Herz (1984), 118-127. For the chronology, see Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 572.

²⁴⁶ The Nabataean involvement in this expedition is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

²⁴⁷ Pliny, *NH* 6.160.

²⁴⁸ Others have also raised doubts on this score. See for example Swan (2004), 126-127, citing the lack of corroboration in Velleius and Dio.

²⁴⁹ The argument is presented in Bowersock (1983), 54-56. The strongest part of his case is the language in Strabo's statement; the gap in coinage is less convincing. There are other lacunae in the Nabataean numismatic record: for example, 58-36 BCE during the reign of Malichus I; 65-70 CE during the reign of Malichus II; and 101-102, toward the end of the reign of Rabbel II. See Sartre (2005), 252 with notes. Those skeptical of Bowersock's hypothesis include Sartre (2005), 83; Millar (1993) 44, n. 1; Fiema (1987), 25; Funke (1981), 10ff.; Hackl et al. (2003), 572. Those more favorable toward Bowersock's proposal include Gruen (1996), 150-1; Bennett (2001), 175.

²⁵⁰ Strabo 16.4.21.

in this case accord well with what we know of the Nabataeans.²⁵¹ Surely a full institutional takeover would have left more in the archaeological and especially the historical record than the simple lacuna of three years in home-minted Nabataean coinage. Given the attention paid to the campaign of Aelius Gallus, both by Strabo and by Augustus himself, one would expect some mention in our historical testimony of Roman annexation of such a large and prominent territory. The ambiguity of the moniker *expeditio Arabica* in no way suggests that such large-scale diplomatic maneuvers were at stake. Finally, we have no evidence of Nabataean resistance, armed or otherwise.

How, then, should we interpret Gaius' Arabian activities, if they did not involve a victory over Arab tribes living south of the Nabataeans or a diplomatic settlement restoring Nabataean territory to the Nabataeans, as Bowersock proposed? The accounts of Dio and Velleius Paterculus may help to furnish an answer. Dio's narrative implies an formational component: he says that Gaius was learning to rule in quiet and safety, while dangerous undertakings were regularly assigned to others.²⁵² According to Velleius, *cum C. Caesar ante alios provinciis ad visendum obitis in Syriam missus*. This *visendum* recapitulates the *prospexit* from Pliny discussed above. Although some scholars have noted that Gaius' trip may have had an educational component,²⁵³ they have not connected this putative educational purpose with the Nabataeans. It has generally been assumed that Gaius passed by the Nabataeans' territory, not through it. One finds nothing in the language of our sources, though, to preclude a visit by Gaius to the Nabataean capital at Petra itself. In fact, he almost certainly passed through some Nabataean territory on his way eastward. And, since Gaius' trip to Nabataea would by necessity have occurred before—and on the way to—Syria, it would thus form part of the *ad visendum* described by Velleius.

Nabataea represented a logical stop on Gaius' tour. We know from Strabo's friend that a significant community of Romans and other expatriates were living at Petra at this time:

γενόμενος γοῦν παρὰ τοῖς Πετραίοις Ἀθηνόδωρος, ἀνὴρ φιλόσοφος καὶ ἡμῖν ἑταῖρος, διηγεῖτο θαυμάζων εὐρεῖν γὰρ ἐπιδημοῦντας ἔφη πολλοὺς μὲν Ῥωμαίων, πολλοὺς δὲ καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ξένων.²⁵⁴

At any rate, Athenodorus, a philosopher and a companion of mine, was continually amazed when he was at Petra, for he said that he found there many Roman citizens as well as many other foreigners.

Gaius Caesar may have visited members of this community on his way through Nabataea. The richness of Nabataean cultural achievements also represented a worthy destination for this high-ranking Roman visitor. Indeed, the omission of Petra from Gaius' itinerary would be highly surprising. The Moschion inscription from Priene, discussed in Chapter 1, had listed Petra alongside Alexandria already by the last quarter of the 2nd century

²⁵¹ The best-known example of an annexation like this is Commagene, twice annexed and returned. See Tacitus *Ann.* 2.56; Cassius Dio 59.8.2, 60.8.1; Suet. *Vesp.* 8; Jos. *BJ* 7.7.1-3; Bowersock (1983), 54, n. 37.

²⁵² Dio 55.10.17.

²⁵³ e.g. Romer (1979), 203: It “simultaneously groomed him for the consulship, military leadership and his part in the succession.”

²⁵⁴ Strabo 16.4.21.

BCE. The reputation of Petra as one of the great Hellenistic cities can only have been significantly enhanced by the Nabataeans' aggressive pursuit of monumental architecture beginning in the latter part of the 1st century BCE. To a select audience at least, the reputation of the Nabataean capital had long been secured. But while its former glory had rested primarily on success in trade and commerce, the rapid proliferation of culture in the last decades of the 1st BCE had now given Petra an urban center to rival any in the Eastern Mediterranean. Gaius' visit would be proof that these efforts had been successful in attracting attention beyond just the Near East. In this light, we might view the agency behind Gaius' visit as lying at least in part with the Nabataeans. Aware of the general purpose of Gaius' mission, they likely took an active role in inviting and playing host to the prominent Roman visitor. The visit afforded Aretas IV a chance to enhance his stock among his own people. Most importantly, for both king and subjects, here was a marvelous opportunity to show off the prosperity and cultural prominence of Petra to the great power of the west. In addition to Petra, Gaius may also at this time have visited the city of Hegra (modern Mada'in Salih), which was precisely in this period emerging from obscurity to become—at least until the rise to eminence of Bostra—the second most important Nabataean city after Petra.²⁵⁵

In 18 CE, the Nabataeans once again had the opportunity to showcase their cultural achievements to an elite international audience—and again this audience was Roman. The critical interaction between the two peoples took place when Germanicus, adopted son and nephew of the emperor Tiberius, attended a banquet hosted by the Nabataean king Aretas IV. Tacitus provides a description of the event:

vox quoque eius audita est in convivio, cum apud regem Nabataeorum coronae aureae magno pondere Caesari et Agrippinae leves Pisoni et ceteris offerentur, principis Romani, non Parthi Regis filio eas epulas dari; abiecitque simul coronam et multa in luxum addidit quae Germanico quamquam acerba tolerabantur tamen.²⁵⁶

Then, at the banquet held at the court of the Nabataean king, on which occasion very heavy golden crowns were presented to [Germanicus] Caesar and [his wife] Agrippina and lighter ones to Piso and others, Piso was heard saying that those presents were being given to the son of the Roman *princeps*, not the son of a Parthian king. With that he threw aside his crown and added many criticisms against luxury, words Germanicus tolerated although they were bitter.

This account tantalizingly alludes to an explicit interaction between high-ranking Romans and the Nabataean court, while also marking the end of a significant lacuna in our direct

²⁵⁵ Bowersock (1983), 57-8, linked the growth of the city of Hegra to his hypothetical annexation of Nabataea by the Romans, or at least to tensions between Aretas and Augustus, arguing that the city would have provided a potential bulwark against Roman expansion. According to this reasoning, Hegra would have been a base of potential retreat should Petra fall permanently into Roman hands.

²⁵⁶ Tac. *Ann.* 2.57.4.

historical testimony about the Nabataeans going back to Gaius Caesar's *expeditio*. It has not garnered the attention it deserves.

The event fits within the context of Germanicus' broader mission in the East, where Tiberius had sent him to put affairs in order. In 18 CE, Germanicus settled matters in Armenia.²⁵⁷ Thus, for at least the second time, Nabataea represented a stopping-over point for a Roman dignitary carrying out a mission in Armenia. In Tacitus' narrative, the event takes place after Germanicus has placed a royal symbol, *insigne regium*, on the head of the Armenian king.²⁵⁸ Following this, Germanicus installed Quintus Veranius as governor of Cappadocia and Quintus Servaeus as praetorian governor of Commagene. The proximity in Tacitus' text of the imposition of more direct Roman control in Cappadocia and Commagene to the description of the banquet at the Nabataean court brings the event into sharper focus.

At the function, the Nabataean king gave out golden crowns to his honored guests. The unfortunate Piso received a lighter prize than his rival Germanicus.²⁵⁹ Grossly offended, Piso is said to have remarked that the dinner was being given to the son of a Roman *princeps*, not to the son of a Parthian king.²⁶⁰ Aretas IV had of course sent a golden crown to Augustus himself on an earlier occasion. What were his intentions here? Piso's comment, while possibly apocryphal, is still instructional. It transfers the banquet more squarely into a Near Eastern context by implying that Aretas' gift would not be inappropriate for a Parthian royal guest, but that it exceeds Roman decorum. The ability of the Nabataeans to host a royal banquet in this period finds corroboration in a passage of Strabo, who describes their lavish drinking parties: ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ἐν ὄγκῳ μεγάλῳ πολλὰ συνέχει συμπόσια.²⁶¹

Another important facet of the banquet concerns its location. Tacitus describes a meeting between Germanicus and Piso at the quarters of the tenth legion at Cyrrhus in the far north of Syria, and some have speculated that Aretas may have hosted the banquet there.²⁶² An official visit to a Roman legionary camp by the Nabataean king seems highly unlikely, however.²⁶³ Furthermore, while he juxtaposes the two stories, Tacitus does not connect them chronologically. In fact, he claims the two men—Piso and Germanicus—parted ways in hatred from Cyrrhus before using the story of the Nabataean banquet as an illustration of their continued enmity. In addition, while Tacitus' description *apud regem Nabataeorum* could possibly mean "in the presence of the Nabataean king," the language strongly suggests Aretas' agency in the arrangement of the banquet. Almost certainly, the

²⁵⁷ Similarly, the Romans annexed Cappadocia in 17 CE. This—as it turns out—was to be a temporary measure; the Romans restored Antiochus IV to the throne in 38 CE. See Tac. *Ann.* 2.42.7, 56.2; Strabo 16.2.3.

²⁵⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 2.56.

²⁵⁹ Tac. *Ann.* 2.57.3.

²⁶⁰ Tac. *Ann.* 2.57: vox quoque eius audita est in convivio...principis Romani, non Parthi Regis filio eas epulas dari.

²⁶¹ Strabo 16.4.26. In a provocative study, M. Vickers (1994), 231-248, has argued for the prevalence of gold drinking vessels in the Nabataean dining context. He suggests that Nabataean ceramic design and decoration evolved as an imitation of gold vessels.

²⁶² e.g. Millar (1993), 53.

²⁶³ Though an official trip Damascus or another administrative capital is certainly not out the question.

event should be situated at the Nabataean court. The only possible difficulty lies in explaining the simultaneous presence of Germanicus and Piso in Nabataea, but such a joint visit would not be surprising, given the regional importance of Nabataea as a neighbor to the Roman-held territories of Judaea and Syria. If one accepts that Gaius Caesar visited the Nabataean capital on his way to Armenia in 2 BCE, a similar visit by Germanicus makes perfect sense.²⁶⁴

The Nabataean perspective must also be considered: Aretas IV should be given due credit for his role in staging the event, which both gave the Nabataeans another opportunity to showcase their cultural achievements and afforded them an occasion to feel—and appear—actively involved in the geopolitics of the Near East. What transpired at the banquet should be viewed in the same light. This was not, of course, the first time that Aretas had offered a golden crown to a Roman.²⁶⁵ It will be remembered that about twenty-five years earlier, in his struggle with the vizier Syllaios for the Nabataean throne, Aretas sent a crown to Augustus in Rome, in a vain (on that occasion, at least) attempt to secure legitimization of his nascent rule.²⁶⁶ Aretas' gesture, as I argued, was an attempt to secure and advertise his *own* position. It may be possible to apply the same reading to this banquet: here was an excellent opportunity for Aretas to reaffirm and re-legitimize his own standing in the face of the most powerful Roman official besides the emperor.²⁶⁷ The agency in the gesture lies with Aretas, not with the Romans, and it need not represent obsequy or subservience on the part of the former toward the latter. The relative position of Nabataea vis-à-vis Rome did not weaken following these events. Because the banquet almost certainly took place at Petra, the visit of Rome's highest-level officials in the Near East represents an overt acknowledgment of Nabataea's importance as a regional power—as well as a concession to its continued independence. The visit afforded Germanicus the opportunity to visit and behold the splendor of Petra, just as Gaius' visit had done previously for him.

As the Nabataeans played host to these two imperial Roman visitors in the first two decades of the 1st century CE, they could showcase formidable political, as well as cultural, achievements. A closer look at some aspects of their cultural program can help to further illuminate the perspective of the Nabataeans on the visits of Gaius and Germanicus. As we saw in the previous chapter, a striking aspect of Nabataean material culture is that it seems in most cases to appear *ex novo*. A key question then is how to properly contextualize artistic developments and innovations. While the connection between many aspects of Nabataean art and the West, especially Alexandria, is clear, one must be careful to acknowledge a debt to other, especially Near Eastern, sources, as well, and to recognize Nabataean originality and individuality where it exists.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁴ Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 619, acknowledge the possibility that the banquet took place in Nabataean territory; *contra* Goodyear (1981), 369, who argues that Aretas traveled to Syria for the meeting.

²⁶⁵ On the question of gifting golden crowns, specifically in a Greek and Roman context, See Millar (1977), 140ff.; Goodyear (1981), 369.

²⁶⁶ See my discussion of this incident in the previous chapter.

²⁶⁷ Germanicus had proconsular authority and *maius imperium* to go with his status as adopted son and nephew of Tiberius.

²⁶⁸ McKenzie (1990) explores in detail the debt to Alexandria.

The site of Hegra highlights the potentially skewed nature of our surviving—or as yet explored—evidence. Partial excavation of the city’s urban core has only recently begun. The most conspicuous remains are still the vast array of crenellated (crow-stepped) tombs that dominate the landscape. These ornate facades, ubiquitously visible at both Hegra and Petra, are the most arresting and best-preserved remnants of Nabataean material culture. The tombs remind us to be wary of viewing the Nabataeans with an overly western bias—since this is, after all, also the period that oversaw the construction of the theater and the completion of the Qasr al-Bint at Petra.²⁶⁹ Tomb architecture provides an avenue for examining how the Nabataeans of Aretas IV’s days viewed themselves in relation to the wider Near Eastern political and cultural landscape, exhibiting a tension analogous to that found in Aretas IV’s coinage.

Numerous typologies have been established to categorize the extant tombs. Scholars have traditionally distinguished between the tombs featuring crenellations—a conspicuously Near Eastern motif—and those featuring ostensibly Greco-Roman decorative forms. The Khazneh and al-Dayr at Petra provide the most prominent and recognizable examples of the latter (see **Figs. 8-10**).²⁷⁰ While making such a distinction may seem perfectly natural, it requires approaching the material from one vantage point or the other.²⁷¹ This tactic by definition denies something of whatever might be distinctly Nabataean about the monuments. Bearing this point in mind, there are several ways in which the tomb facades might contribute to a better understanding of the Nabataeans and their self-presentation, both domestically and internationally.²⁷²

It is perfectly reasonable to view the crenellated tombs as being derived from eastern models, specifically Achaemenid Persia, since crenellations are extremely prevalent

²⁶⁹ We have strong evidence that the *temenos* wall of the Qasr al-Bint dates at least to the reign of Aretas IV. See McKenzie (1990), 34. The Main Theater was dated by Hammond, its excavator, to the reign of Aretas IV, and the epigraphic evidence indicates a date in the early-mid 1st century CE.

²⁷⁰ A seemingly obvious, but seldom-made, point, is that the crenellated, “oriental” or “Near Eastern” style tombs greatly outnumber those in a more western style.

²⁷¹ The secondary literature on Nabataean tombs is vast. The fundamental work on the facades of Petra remains Brünnow and von Domaszewski (1904). Domaszewski implied that there was always a progression from simple to complex in Near Eastern archaeology. In suggesting a chronology, he divided them into seven groups, proceeding from simple to complex. These are 1) pylon tombs; 2) step tombs; 3) proto-Hegra tombs; 4) Hegra tombs; 5) arch tombs; 6) gable tombs; 7) Roman temple tombs. Five of these types occur at Hegra. The inscriptions, first published in Jaussen and Savignac (1909), 107-206; 301-441 and (1914), 78-108, date from the years 1-76 CE. In emending this view, Negev (1976), 203-236, concluded that the more complex tombs belonged to people of higher social standing. He thought that typological order of tombs at Petra does not necessarily reflect a chronological order, but rather the social division of their owners. J. McKenzie (1990), the most recent scholar to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the tombs, concludes that the simplification of details like moldings, florals, capitals, and sculpture is related to chronological development. For a succinct summary of the typology of the tombs at Petra, see Wenning (2003), 133-138. For discussion of the possible sources for different aspects of the Greco-Roman style tombs, see Schmid (2001), 384-388.

²⁷² In a recent dissertation, B. Anderson provides an important stimulus and corrective to the debate on Nabataean identity, especially in his discussion of coinage and tomb facades. Much of the following discussion engages with his theses: Anderson (2005), *passim*.

there, especially at Persepolis. Rosettes, another important feature of Achaemenid art, also appear frequently. Given the juxtaposition of these different features, it may be tempting to see conflict—or at least push and pull—among the different elements, but even if one accepts that those responsible for commissioning the tombs were looking eastward, it does not necessarily follow that they were acting in a self-consciously anti-western, or anti-Roman way. The fact that we have extremely limited examples of tombs in the Greco-Roman style and cannot tell absolutely who commissioned them, or why, complicates the problem. In addition, we should be extremely wary of attributing the appearance of a certain style—which might be considered a kind of *koine* for the Near East—to a particular political moment. Describing developments in Nabataean art as anti-Roman, anti-Greek, or anti-whatever external influence, as the case may be, is to see Nabataean innovation as overly negative and reactionary.²⁷³

These tombs remind us that Nabataea fits at least as squarely into the wider Near Eastern context as into the Mediterranean one, while also reminding us of Nabataea's own distinct artistic and cultural identity. There is abundant evidence that in general terms Nabataean art became less Hellenizing over time and that the Nabataeans gradually developed a distinct style. This may be observed in virtually all aspects of their material culture, including pottery, sculpture, tomb construction, and coinage. This is most often characterized as a “simplification” of Classical forms. Scholars generally agree that the Nabataeans, when they began the process of sedentarization, and lacking their own indigenous artistic models, adopted forms from outside peoples. The first examples may be seen in their pottery and coinage, but similar patterns can be observed in domestic architecture and eventually in elements of the Qasr al-Bint and the Khazneh. It is in the first century CE that we really start to see the process of this so-called “simplification,” most apparent in the tombs. Scholars have detected the same sort of pattern—the adoption of external forms prior to the development of a self-conscious, national art—in other cultures too.²⁷⁴ An essential point is that the development of a more distinctly Nabataean art took place in an environment where it would have been “extremely favorable” to maintain a more Hellenistic- or Roman-style art.²⁷⁵ This speaks to an increasing self-confidence and self-consciousness, though the progression is by no means simple and neat. There is of course considerable overlap in the “western” and “eastern” tomb types, and visual art in the Greco-Roman tradition continues to persist right up to the Roman annexation of Nabataea in 106 CE, and beyond.²⁷⁶

While it may be tempting to read tension into the co-existence of apparently contradictory styles within Nabataean art and material culture, the Nabataeans themselves surely saw in these displays little contradiction. After all, at the same time that their elites were commissioning crenellated tombs, they were also overseeing the construction of a

²⁷³ Additional objections are that the majority of our exempla are located in Hegra, a site that has produced little in the way of material that might be seen as Greco-Roman; and that dichotomy overplays the conflict between East and West. Anderson sees this selection as specifically anti-Roman self-definition, but what reason would the elites have for being anti-Roman? After all, the Nabataeans, unlike their neighbors, managed to resist Roman annexation, in fact maintaining political independence for another 100 years.

²⁷⁴ See e.g. McKenzie (1988), 81, 88-9; Patrich (1990), 114-166; Schmid (2001), 402-404.

²⁷⁵ Schmid (2001), 404; cf. Bouzek (1995), 114-115.

²⁷⁶ The next chapter explores this important point in more detail.

Greco-Roman style theater and other ostensible trappings of Hellenistic and Roman civic life. The co-existence of so-called “hybrid” art, of forms borrowed from different external sources, and of internal innovation should come as no surprise in Nabataea, an important crossroads throughout its history. During this period of Aretas IV’s reign, from 9 BCE to 40 CE, Rome continued to expand its imperial reach and influence in the Near East. While their neighbors fell increasingly under Rome’s sway, the Nabataeans maintained and exercised both autonomy and individualism, both in their politics and in their culture. This extension of influence occurred not just at sites like Petra and Hegra, but also north of the Nabataean heartland, within the confines of Jewish, and increasingly Roman, territory. Several inscriptions at the temple of Ba’alshamin at Si’a (Seeia), located in the region of Auranitis, attest to this.²⁷⁷ One building inscription from the site indicates that construction of a Nabataean temple there lasted from 32 until 1 BCE.²⁷⁸ This can be juxtaposed with inscriptions from the same site attesting Herod the Great, Agrippa I, and Philip the Tetrarch.²⁷⁹ The inscription referring to Philip is the most intriguing. Written in the Nabataean language, it says that the altar was dedicated “in year 33 of our Lord Philippus,” or 28/29 CE.²⁸⁰ This indicates that although Philip controlled the territory, the temple continued to serve a Nabataean clientele. That the author of the text acknowledges Philip’s hegemony in 28/9 CE may indicate good relations between the two peoples. Recent studies have demonstrated that the prevailing cultural character of the site of Si’a fits within the local context of southern Syria; it is not, in other words, generally Nabataean in character.²⁸¹ Even assuming a heterogenic population in the region, evidence of Nabataean activity nevertheless merits attention. Recent work on the temple has identified distinctive Nabataean horned capitals in a courtyard of the sanctuary of Si’a.²⁸² These would have served as clear markers of continued Nabataean cultural influence in the area.²⁸³ The period of Aretas’ reign continued to be a time of Nabataean self-assertion in southern Syria and the Hawran. The behavior of the Romans, variously confiscating and giving the territory back to the Jews can only have led the Nabataeans to conclude that Roman presence in the region was tenuous and its permanence at times doubtful.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁷ The god Ba’alshamin was the main sky god for the nomads of the region: MacDonald (2003), 278-279.

²⁷⁸ *CIS* II 195-197, no. 163; reprinted in Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 170-171.

²⁷⁹ A statue of Herod the Great stood at Si’a: *OGIS* 415=*IGRR* 3.1243.

²⁸⁰ Littmann (1914), no. 101. See also Cantineau (1932), 15ff.; Starcky (1985), 174-5; Kokkinos (1998), 239-240; Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 178-9.

²⁸¹ See esp. Dentzer-Feydy (2003), 109.

²⁸² For more on Nabataean horned capitals, with comparanda and bibliography, see Japp (2003), 230-232. For the development of Nabataean temple architecture more generally, see Tholbecq (1997), 1069-1095; Tholbecq (1998), 241-254; Freyberger (1997), 71-84; Schmid (2001), 376-382.

²⁸³ Dentzer (2003), 110-111; Dentzer-Feydy (2003), 105-109; MacDonald (2003), 278-9; Dentzer-Feydy (1986), 280-283.

²⁸⁴ As I argue in Chapter 4, they maintained this impression about the Roman presence in the Hawran up to and beyond the Roman annexation of Nabataea in 106 CE.

IV. NABATAEA, HEROD ANTIPAS, AND ROME

The religious and cultural interaction between Jews and Nabataeans in southern Syria forms the backdrop to a renewed series of political and military engagements between the two peoples in the first half of the 1st century CE. As often, the intersection of Nabataean history with events in Judaea has left us with better historical testimony than for intervening years. Still, more can be done to tease out the Nabataean perspective on these interactions. Let us return to the historical narrative.

At some point in his reign, Aretas IV's daughter Phasaelis married Herod Antipas, creating or solidifying a renewed political link between the Nabataeans and the Jews.²⁸⁵ Who took the initiative on this score and why? One possibility has been suggested: that Augustus arranged the marriage in order to link two client states.²⁸⁶ We have no direct evidence of Roman involvement, though; the proposal hinges upon viewing Nabataea in the same light as other regional states in its relationship vis-à-vis Rome. Rather, the initiative ought to lie with Aretas or Herod—or both. The timing of the marriage is important. One scholar has convincingly argued that the marriage should be linked to a special coin issue of Aretas IV from the year 7/6 BCE that mentions his daughter. The coin depicts the double cornucopia, as well as a palm branch. Taken together, the two symbols almost certainly represent a marriage. The palm branch also appears on the coins Aretas IV minted to celebrate his second marriage, to Shaquilat I.²⁸⁷

Clearly, both parties regarded the measure as politically beneficial. It would have given Herod Antipas the opportunity to strengthen his position by securing his eastern borders. For the Nabataeans, the arrangement furnished a helpful political arrangement—a regional ally in the face of the uncertainty of future Roman action. When the union took place, Antipas was the heir apparent to Herod the Great, as stipulated in his will. Thus, to the Nabataeans, the marriage represented a move of shrewd political expediency, providing an alliance with a known quantity in Herod Antipas. His relationship with the next Roman emperor, Augustus' successor Tiberius, will have justified the move.²⁸⁸

The marriage lasted nearly thirty-five years and was, from the Nabataean perspective, highly successful, helping to maintain regional stability and relative peace—at least as long as it lasted, for in 27 CE, Herod Antipas rejected his Nabataean wife in favor of the infamous Herodias, a daughter of his half-brother Herod.²⁸⁹ The affront caused an international incident and apparently set off a chain of events that resulted in a planned—but prematurely aborted—Roman invasion of Nabataea. Josephus says that upon discovering Antipas' plans to leave her, his Nabataean wife arranged to be sent to the

²⁸⁵ Kokkinos (1998), 230-231, arguing by process of elimination against Aretas IV's four other known daughters on the basis of their ages and other marriage liaisons. His argument has been accepted, recently, by Kraemer (2006), 324-325.

²⁸⁶ See Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 536; Bowersock (1983), 59, n. 1.

²⁸⁷ Kokkinos (1998), 231; cf. Meshorer (1975), 103, no. 97, pl. 6.97; Schmitt-Korte (1990), 119-20, nos. 66-69.

²⁸⁸ For the close relationship between Antipas and Rome, see Jensen (2007), 302-303; cf. Braund (1984), 23-27.

²⁸⁹ See Jos. *AJ* 18.109-122; cf. Matt. 14.3-12.

fortress of Machaerus, on the Nabataean-Judaeian border.²⁹⁰ He also implies that this was only a pretext: she really intended to travel to Nabataea to tell her father the news. This she in fact did, with the help of the στρατηγοί along the way.²⁹¹ Her father Aretas, infuriated at the rebuff, launched a successful punitive invasion into Jewish territory.

Josephus situates the battle between the Nabataeans and the Jews—won handily by the Nabataeans—after his description of Herod’s repudiation of his Nabataean wife, implicitly linking the two incidents. A closer inspection of the chronology, though, belies this simple cause and effect chain of events. Antipas’ new marriage took place in or just after 27 CE, but there is good evidence to suggest that the outbreak of hostilities between the Nabataeans and Jews did not occur until at least 34 CE, and probably later. It was in that year that the death of the tetrarch Philip occurred.²⁹² He had been in control of the territories of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanaea, and Paneas.²⁹³ After Philip’s death, exiles from his territory could be found in the army of Herod Antipas.²⁹⁴ These exiles, though, subsequently betrayed Antipas deserted to the Nabataeans.²⁹⁵ The presence of these troops in the battle between Aretas and Antipas supports a post-34 CE date.

The timing suggests that Aretas “calculated very carefully the occasion on which to take his revenge against Herod for the return of his daughter.”²⁹⁶ But even imagining Aretas to have been exceedingly deliberate, such a long delay speaks strongly against a direct connection between the annulment of the marriage and the Nabataean war with the Jews. One therefore cannot definitively conclude that Aretas’ true motive for the war was to avenge his daughter’s repudiation by her Jewish husband. Aretas made use of clever marketing to sell the war, but Nabataean aggression in this case is better viewed as an attempt to regain former territories.²⁹⁷ According to Josephus, the conflict arose at least in

²⁹⁰ Jos. *AJ* 18.111-112. The fortress of Machaerus was originally built by Alexander Jannaeus (*AJ* 7.6) and strengthened by Herod the Great. The question of whether the fortress lay at this point within Jewish or Nabataean territory has fueled some debate; it seems clear from the context, though, that it was in Jewish hands, since Antipas’ wife was going there with her husband’s permission. On the question, see esp. Schürer (1973), 308, n.66; 344.

²⁹¹ These στρατηγοί have prompted discussion about the nature of Nabataean administration in this period. See Jones (1971), 291-2; cf. *CIS* ii. 169; Kasher (1988), 178, n. 126. For the fullest discussion of the term, see Graf (1994), 275-279.

²⁹² See Kasher (1988), 180. Josephus supplies the date in clarifying that Philip’s death occurred in the twentieth year of Tiberius’ reign: Jos. *AJ* 18.106.

²⁹³ Jos. *AJ* 17.188-9; 17.319; 18.106; *BJ* 2.95. Upon Philip’s death, the emperor Tiberius annexed his territories to the province of Syria, but seems to have done so only provisionally. Taxes were held back, not sent to Rome, and Gaius Caligula, after taking control in Rome in 37 CE, was to give the territory to Agrippa I, one of Herod the Great’s grandsons. Tiberius’ arrangement: Jos. *AJ* 18.108: Τιβέριος παραλαβών προσθήκην ἐπαρχίας ποιεῖται τῆς Σύρων τοὺς μέντοι φόρους ἐκέλευσε συλλεγομένους ἐν τῇ ἐκείνου γενομένη κατατίθεσθαι. Gaius’ arrangement: Jos. *AJ* 18.237.

²⁹⁴ The observation is made by Bowersock (1983), 66. The refugees in fact betrayed Herod, contributing to his defeat. See further discussion below. Jos. *BJ* 2.114; Jos. *AJ* 18.114.

²⁹⁵ Following Josephus (*AJ* 17.27, 18.114), scholars have generally attributed this to their hatred of Herod Antipas. See, e.g., Kokkinos (1998), 239.

²⁹⁶ Bowersock (1983), 66.

²⁹⁷ As Bowersock (1983), 67, argues. He also postulates that Aretas IV may have been trying to re-conquer Damascus for symbolic reasons, since it had once belonged to his namesake.

part over borders.²⁹⁸ The historian's treatment of this conflict has close parallels with his earlier assessment of Aretas' motives for his attacks on Jewish cities in the wake of Herod's death. Here, as there, we should give the Nabataean king due credit for his strategic sensibilities. Just as in 4 BCE, Aretas took advantage of political instability and hegemonic ambiguity for aggrandizement of Nabataean territory and influence. Following Aretas' victory over Herod Antipas, Nabataean re-expansion may even have reached as far as Damascus.

A story in the Biblical New Testament relates that the apostle Paul was lowered down in a basket from the walls of Damascus, while an *ethnarch*, ἔθναρχης, of King Aretas was keeping guard over the city.²⁹⁹ This puzzling reference has unsurprisingly generated a great deal of speculation, since it falls within the purview of Biblical, not just Nabataean, scholars. It has clear implications for Nabataean history: by most reckonings, the Nabataeans had not controlled Damascus—or the Hawran that far north—since the second quarter of the 2nd century BCE.³⁰⁰ How, then, does one interpret the Biblical testimony? Modern scholars have diverged heavily on the question, centering debate on the nature and role of the *ethnarch*. Some have proposed that the Nabataean official was stationed in Damascus in an economic capacity, to protect Nabataean trade interests.³⁰¹ One scholar has argued that, “an official in charge of a Nabataean community is the more likely explanation rather than unlikely Nabataean rule”;³⁰² another sees the *ethnarch* as a kind of tribal sheikh or chieftain acting in the role of a στρατηγός, a Nabataean official designated with royal authority and acting on behalf of the king.³⁰³ A third argues that the *ethnarch* points unequivocally to Nabataean political control of Damascus at the time of the reference.³⁰⁴

²⁹⁸ A spirited debate has raged over the location of the disputed territory. Josephus' text reads “Gamala,” which is located near Petra, in southern Nabataea, but some scholars have emended the text to “Gabala,” located in territory bordering Herod Antipas'. Those keeping Gamala, following the *editio princeps* of Josephus (von Niese 1890), are Bowersock (1983); Kasher (1988), 179-183. Those following the emendation proposed by Jones (1971), 449-50, n. 19, are Starcky (1966), col. 916; Hoehner (1972), 254-7; Shatzman (1991), 301. Negev (1977), 568-9, quite confusingly assumes Gabala to have been the original reading in Josephus' text.

²⁹⁹ 2 Corinthians 11.32-3: ἐν Δαμασκῶ ὁ ἔθναρχης Ἀρέτα τοῦ βασιλέως ἐφρούρει τὴν πόλιν Δαμασκηνῶν πιάσαι με καὶ διὰ θυρίδος ἐν σαργάνῃ ἐχαλάσθην διὰ τοῦ τείχους καὶ ἐξέφυγον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ; cf. Acts 9.23-5 and Galatians 1.15-17, which specifies that Paul went to Arabia before returning to Damascus. See further MacDonald (1993), 368-372; Bowersock (1983), 68-69.

³⁰⁰ Well attested in all other areas known to have been under Nabataean hegemony, Nabataean ceramics were long conspicuously absent from the archaeological record north of an imaginary boundary in southern Syria, the so-called the “Madaba line,” running just north of Dera'a and Bostra. See e.g. Peters (1977), 271. This has been effectively put to rest by more recent archaeological work that has turned up Nabataean material north of the imaginary line.

³⁰¹ For this view, see Knauf (1983), 145-7; Starcky (1964), 915.

³⁰² Kennedy (1996), 735.

³⁰³ Taylor (1992), 720-724.

³⁰⁴ Bowersock (1983), 68-9.

Others have remained mute on the nature of the official, given the difficulty of explaining his presence there,³⁰⁵ but we must arrive at a solution, given the passage's implications for the broader role and position of the Nabataeans in the Hawran in the early-mid 1st century CE. The Nabataean role in this region between the reign of Aretas III and the last quarter of the first century BCE, when Bostra became a major Nabataean city, has defied easy characterization.³⁰⁶ The issue of the *ethnarch* forces us to consider with a more open mind the nature of Nabataean power and influence. Lack of any definitive corroborating evidence has—quite understandably—defined objections to Nabataean control over Damascus during this period. But, we need only look back to earlier precedents, in the 2nd century BCE for example, to see Nabataeans playing an active role in that region. What is more, we can be sure of significant Nabataean—and other indigenous—presence in these cities, only now “formally” recognized by the Romans for political reasons. The earlier Nabataean “departure” has always been somewhat vague, and represents nothing more than the relinquishing of overt political control. To see a continued Nabataean presence there is completely reasonable. Furthermore, no Roman coins exist from the city between the years 34 and 62 CE. Thus, there may have been no Roman governor in Syria following the death of Philip in 34 CE.³⁰⁷ We may look to the precedent of Aretas III, who had—at the request of the residents of Damascus—taken charge of the city in the early part of the 2nd century BCE. Very likely, the city had a similar character at this point in time, with the Nabataean leader called—if only for a short time—to take charge in the city after he had defeated Herod Antipas. To Aretas IV and the Nabataeans, the ambiguous nature of Roman control in southern Syria suggested an opening. Having defeated Herod Antipas, the Nabataean king attempted to regain traction there and installed a political representative in Damascus. This would explain the presence of the *ethnarch* described in the Corinthians passage. The incident also highlights the importance of looking at the local, regional perspective. To Aretas, Roman control over the Hawran was by no means an unambiguous fact.

This brings us back to the additional fallout of Aretas IV's victory over Herod Antipas. Having been defeated by the Nabataeans, Herod filed a complaint with Rome and requested aid in exacting retribution. The emperor Tiberius, convinced by Antipas' embassy that the Nabataeans had started the hostilities, ordered L. Vitellius, the Roman governor of Syria, to attack Petra, authorizing him to capture, even to kill, the Nabataean king.³⁰⁸ Fortuitously, Tiberius died soon after issuing these orders and the invasion never took place. Having sworn his allegiance to the new emperor Gaius, from whom he had no official sanction for the invasion, Vitellius dismissed his troops for the winter.³⁰⁹ Aretas

³⁰⁵ e.g. Sartre (2005), 83, n. 239, who offers no explanation for the official, but does not believe the Nabataeans were in control of the city at this time.

³⁰⁶ On Nabataean Bostra, see Sartre (1985), *passim*; Peters (1977), 263-277; Patrich (1990), 40-48.

³⁰⁷ Bowersock (1983), 67, n. 28; Taylor (1992), 724-5. The Roman emperor Tiberius had annexed Philip's territory to the province of Syria upon the tetrarch's death: Jos. *AJ* 18.108.

³⁰⁸ This Vitellius is the father of the future emperor. See Suet. *Vit.* 2-3; Tac. *Ann.* 6.32; Jos. *AJ* 18.88-90, 97-99, 104-105, 115-120, 125-126; Dio 59.26; 60.21; Tacitus, *Hist.* 1.9.

³⁰⁹ Jos. *AJ* 18.124: ἀνεκάλει δὲ καὶ τὸ στράτευμα ἐπὶ τὰ οἰκεῖα ἐκάστου χειμαδιᾶν πόλεμον ἐκφέρειν οὐκέθ' ὡμοίως δυνάμενος διὰ τὸ εἰς Γάιον μεταπεπτωκέναι τὰ πράγματα. Scholars

and Nabataea had, it seems, enjoyed a narrow escape. Or so we are told. The episode has generally presented little difficulty for modern interpreters, who have, with near unanimity, suggested that Tiberius' death led directly to cancellation of the invasion, since Vitellius would have needed approval of the new emperor to carry out the attack. Perhaps Gaius' decision to cancel the attack was based on his own plans—or lack of concrete plans—for the region: while the complications inherent in attacking and likely acquiring such a large swath of territory may have dissuaded him from risking such a venture at this juncture, one might also conclude both that he did not give a great deal of weight to the conflict between Aretas and Herod Antipas and that he did not feel any obligation to favor the Jewish leader over his Nabataean counterpart.

This explanation, though, which cedes agency in the decision to the new emperor Gaius, is overly Romano-centric and fails to capture troubling nuances of the episode. Several issues raise flags: Tiberius' decision to side with Herod Antipas over his Nabataean rival; the emperor's apparent authorization to kill or capture Aretas, an action that would, of course, have broad and drastic implications; Vitellius' movements; and Gaius' decision to abandon the invasion altogether, a complete volte-face that apparently enabled Nabataea to remain autonomous for another seventy years. Had it taken place, this would have been the first real Roman attack on Nabataean territory since the mid-second century BCE and would likely have resulted in Roman victory and an early annexation of the Nabataeans' territory. The whole episode, both intriguing and troubling in its particulars, warrants a reassessment.

The close—and well attested—relationship between Herod Antipas and the emperor Tiberius seems a fruitful place to begin, since Tiberius' decision to invade would have to stem at least in part from a personal commitment to Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas conforms reasonably well to the general categories of a “client-king,” at least as modern scholars have articulated them.³¹⁰ He had been sent to Rome to be educated;³¹¹ he founded a city, Tiberias, named after the emperor;³¹² he also issued coins proudly displaying the name of the emperor. The rapport can also be seen in the role played by the Jewish tetrarch in Roman negotiations with the Parthians. Having given a feast for the Roman commander Vitellius and the Parthian Artabanus in the middle of the Euphrates, Herod Antipas then pre-empted Vitellius in reporting to Tiberius on the success of the negotiations.³¹³ The relationship between the Jewish leader and the Roman emperor seems cozy indeed; but, as always, we must remain mindful of perspective. The audience for Herod's array of displays of his fealty to Rome is of course primarily a Jewish—not a Roman—one. As we have seen, Aretas IV did not advertise a relationship with Rome in the same way, but this does not mean that Tiberius would be more apt to take the side of the Jews in a regional conflict.

have generally signaled that this passage suggests Vitellius was not permitted to wage war now that Gaius had taken over the government or, perhaps, but cf. Kennedy (1996), 730, who suggests that he used the emperor's death as a pretext to avoid carrying out the invasion.

³¹⁰ The principal study, still fundamental, is Braund (1984). On Herod Antipas in this role, see Jensen (2006), 227-228.

³¹¹ Jos. *AJ* 17.20.

³¹² Jos. *AJ* 18.36.

³¹³ Jos. *AJ* 101-105.

Tiberius' directive for the capture or assassination of Aretas also presents a problem. Even if one assumes that Aretas did not enjoy the same relationship as Herod Antipas with Tiberius, an order to have him executed appears extremely suspicious and unlikely. The dispute between the Nabataeans and Jews had not explicitly involved Roman territories or interests. And Tiberius apparently had no plan to replace Aretas once he had been removed. Such a move makes little sense in light of Rome's regional interests, which leads us to the most problematic aspects of the situation: the preparations for the attack, followed abruptly and peculiarly by its cancellation. The movements of Vitellius do not accord well with preparations for an invasion of Nabataea. When the legions under Vitellius' command set out—presumably from Antioch—they first took over Ptolemais (Akko) on the central Levantine coast. Vitellius then moved on to Jerusalem, where he spent three days during the celebration of the traditional festival. While there, he replaced the high priest Jonathan with Theophilus, Jonathan's brother. He was, in other words, conducting important official business in Jerusalem. He never proceeded beyond this point; it was at Jerusalem that he administered his oath of loyalty to the new emperor Gaius³¹⁴. At this point he also scrapped the Nabataean invasion. This rapid volte-face represents the most troubling aspect of the case. That an attack should have been ordered, then revoked, without Roman troops having set foot on Nabataean soil, piques suspicion, primarily because the proposed invasion would have been largely out of place and character: going all the way back to the days of Pompey, the Romans had distinctly avoided a direct attack on the Nabataeans; nor would they venture one for another six decades. Clearly they were at this point not intending an annexation. Taking all of these problems together, we might seriously doubt that Tiberius ever ordered Vitellius to carry out an invasion of Nabataea.

How, then, does one explain the appearance of the episode in Josephus' narrative? To find the answer, we must once again shift our focus away from Rome, to look at the event from a more regional perspective. We are fortunate in this case to have an account of the Nabataean reaction in Josephus' text:

ἐλέγετο δὲ καὶ τὸν Ἀρέταν οἰωνοσκοπησάμενον πρὸς τὴν ἀγγελίαν τῶν Οὔτελλίου στρατιωτῶν φάναι μηχανὴν οὐκ εἶναι τῶ στρατῶ τῆς ἐπὶ Πετραίους ὁδοῦ; τεθνήξεσθαι γὰρ τῶν ἡγεμόνων ἢ τὸν πολεμεῖν κελεύσαντα ἢ τὸν γνώμη τῆ ἐκείνου ὠρμημένον διακονεῖσθαι καὶ ἐφ' ὃν γένοιτο ἢ παρακευὴ τοῦ στρατεύματος.³¹⁵

It was also said that Aretas, when he consulted the birds after word arrived of the expedition of Vitellius, said that there was no way for his army to approach Petra; for one of the leaders would die: either the one who had given the orders to make war or the one who had set out to carry out the decision to attack him against whom the army had been assembled.

The language here is hopelessly vague, naming none of the principals in the second part of passage; furthermore, the impersonal ἐλέγετο implies Josephus had no direct knowledge of Aretas' reaction to the putative invasion. It smacks of rumor. We have

³¹⁴ Jos. *AJ* 18.120-124.

³¹⁵ Jos. *AJ* 18.125.

additional evidence attesting to the imprecision of Josephus' own information on the event: its remarkable similarity to reports of the death of John the Baptist, especially the manner of his death by beheading.³¹⁶ The whole account may therefore be the result of a conflation in Josephus' account of the death of John the Baptist with the revenge being exacted by Antipas for his defeat at the hands of Aretas IV and the Nabataeans.³¹⁷ The coincidence, too stark to be overlooked, points us toward an answer to the problem.

The initiative must therefore lie with Herod Antipas. The Jewish leader, seeking vindication for his defeat at the hands of the Nabataeans, certainly had a motive. Antipas sought Roman help in curbing Aretas' expanding influence in southern Syria following the latter's victory over him. Tiberius, though, did not accede. Seeking a bargaining chip against Aretas, Antipas sought to give the Nabataean king the impression that he had secured Roman backing. Carefully monitoring Roman troop movements and aware of Vitellius' official business in Jerusalem, Herod Antipas began circulating a rumor that the Romans—under Vitellius' command—would attack the Nabataeans. Word spread about the possible invasion, cloaked by a veneer of legitimacy. The Nabataean king, though alerted, was not seriously alarmed; hence the propitious omen he reportedly received from the birds. Herod Antipas, it seems, was utilizing Vitellius' movements to give the Nabataeans the impression that they might soon be attacked. The whole incident comes soon after his defeat at the hands of the Nabataean king and the latter's attempt at a re-occupation of the highly significant city of Damascus. A clear solution thus emerges: no invasion of Nabataea was ever ordered by the Roman emperor Tiberius.³¹⁸ Herod Antipas hatched the scheme, seeking leverage against his rival Aretas IV in Syria, where the absence of clearly articulated Roman control well into the 1st century CE continued to leave the area open to the ambitions of local Near Eastern players, specifically the Jews and Nabataeans, who both had traditional claims on the region. Josephus, confused about true nature of the whole incident, combined an amalgam of several different incidents to construct his narrative.

V. CONCLUSIONS

From this analysis and reassessment of the historical and material culture sources pertaining to the reign of Aretas IV, several important conclusions have emerged. While the extensive activities of the Romans and Jews in territories affecting the Nabataeans during the reigns of the emperors Augustus and Tiberius provided a necessary backdrop for examining the Nabataeans, this chapter has attempted to identify and view, wherever possible, the Nabataean perspective. Material culture of course serves as the most

³¹⁶ In Luke 9:9, Antipas explicitly claims to have had John beheaded; cf. Mark 1:14 and Matthew 4:12, which say only that Antipas had John arrested.

³¹⁷ Kraemer (2006), 325, also notices the coincidence, without, however, exploring it further: "Interestingly, in his account of the conflict between Antipas and Aretas, Josephus claims that when drawn into the conflict, Tiberius sent word to Vitellius that Aretas should either be brought back in chains, or, if killed, that Aretas' head should be sent to him."

³¹⁸ Saulnier (1984) also doubts the proposed invasion, but does so on chronological grounds. She dates Aretas' victory to 29 CE and argues—as I do—against the likelihood of a retributive campaign on the part of Aretas IV.

conspicuous reminder of Aretas IV's precociousness, but viewing these monuments within the broader political and cultural context demonstrates that Aretas IV, while sensitive to both traditionally Eastern and Western cultural precedents, was at the same time acutely aware of the impact of Nabataean art and architecture upon international audiences. In actively playing host to prominent Roman visitors such as Gaius and Germanicus, he could showcase these achievements, further propagating the Nabataean reputation. Aretas IV, however, sought to impress not only by imitation, but also by innovation. Coins, tombs, and temples from his reign all demonstrate a distinct, and boldly self-conscious, Nabataean identity.

In keeping with this attitude, Aretas IV pursued a forthright and aggressive policy in dealing with his neighbor, contemporary, and rival Herod Antipas. Defeating Antipas in a major engagement, Aretas again advertised the Nabataeans' role in the Hawran and southern Syria by temporarily repositioning Damascus under Nabataean political jurisdiction. Whether this was *de iure* matters little; its significance lies in its impact upon local impressions. On the ground, the prospect of permanent Roman control did not directly affect Nabataean—or for that matter, Jewish—actions. In the same way, close examination of the local Near Eastern context has also permitted a reassessment of the attack on the Nabataeans and their king allegedly ordered by the emperor Tiberius. This re-evaluation gives more credit not only to Aretas IV, but also to Herod Antipas.

Aretas IV embodies the Nabataeans' fortunes at a critical crossroads and his successes span both political and cultural arenas. Given his prodigiously long reign and its coincidence with architectural proliferation at Petra, as well as at other cities like Hegra, scholars have often viewed Aretas IV's reign as the apogee of Nabataean civilization. While not an unreasonable assessment, one must not forget that Nabataean independence lasted for another sixty-six years after Aretas' death in 40 CE. These years witnessed continued Nabataean innovation—both cultural and political—as well as distinct regional prominence. They form the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THE LAST DECADES OF NABATAEAN INDEPENDENCE, 40-106 CE

I. INTRODUCTION

Following the demise of its most successful and longest-serving ruler in 40 CE, Nabataea largely disappears once again from the pages of contemporary historical sources. Due to the extreme paucity of surviving literary testimony about this period—extending from the death of Aretas IV to the Roman annexation of Nabataea in 106 CE—attempts at constructing an historical account of the Nabataeans have often largely neglected the second half of the 1st century CE. The last Nabataean king, Rabbel II (70-106 CE), is known only from epigraphic and numismatic evidence; scarcely better attested is the career of Malichus II (40-70 CE), Rabbel II's predecessor and Aretas IV's successor. By contrast, the Roman annexation of Nabataea—since it represents a critical intersection of Nabataean history with that of Rome—has garnered a great deal of attention. This imbalance welcomes a corrective: firstly, more can be done to explore the history of the Nabataeans in this period using non-literary evidence, such as coins, epigraphy, art, and architecture; secondly, it may be possible to view the occasion of the annexation itself, as well as the decades preceding it, through more of a Nabataean, rather than a strictly Roman, prism. Thus broadening the scope of investigation serves to open up previously underexploited lines of investigation, particularly in the overlap of Nabataean history and material culture.

The results of the following analysis present a serious challenge to the prevailing view that sees the Nabataeans as a culture and civilization in decline during a six-decade long arc toward inevitable annexation by the Roman Empire. Many scholars have concluded that ever-increasing knowledge of trade winds and ensuing competition spelled the death-knell for Nabataean commerce; that an alleged lack of sophistication in art represents a decadent period in Nabataean culture; and that an absence of serious involvement in international affairs signals military and political *faiblesse*. The Nabataeans, in other words, were on the path to inexorable irrelevance. Approaching these claims from the Nabataean perspective, though, has the effect of casting them in a somewhat different light.

II. THE NABATAEANS AND THE JEWISH REVOLT

Following the death of Aretas IV in 40 CE, the Nabataeans once again largely disappear from the literary historical record before re-emerging during the Jewish War (66-74 CE), prompting most modern observers to gloss over the intervening period. Close examination of the surviving evidence, however, may succeed in locating the Nabataeans even where they are not explicitly mentioned. Two incidents in particular might yield some clues. The first occurred sometime toward the end of the reign of Agrippa I, probably in 42 CE. Josephus reports that the Jewish king convened a number of other regional rulers at Tiberias in Galilee.³¹⁹ These included Antiochus IV of Commagene, Herod of Chalcis, Sapsigeramus II of Emesa, Polemo II of Pontus, and Cotys of Armenia

³¹⁹ Jos. *AJ* 19.338-342.

Minor. Domitius Marsus, the Roman governor of Syria, happened to show up as the conference was taking place; when Agrippa came out of the city to meet him, with the other kings in tow, it seemed likely to Marsus that the degree of cordiality among the members of the group might represent a threat to Rome.³²⁰ He therefore ordered them to disband. Since Josephus fits the meeting within the context of Agrippa's visits and benefactions to other cities such as Berytus and Caesarea, the congregation likely represents an exhibition by Agrippa of his cultural program to other regional rulers, rather than an attempt to organize a conspiracy against Rome. Modern scholars have at various times called all six of these rulers client kings of Rome.³²¹ With this in mind, we might expect to see the Nabataean king, Malichus II, on the guest list. We cannot be sure whether or not Malichus received an invitation; either way, his absence serves as a reminder that we must be wary about blanket characterizations about "client rulers" of Rome, who all will have had their own individual motives for attending the conference—or, as in the case of Malichus, of choosing not to. Whatever its precise nature, Malichus' relationship to the Roman principate at this point should not simply be lumped in with that of other contemporaries without affording him due credit for his independence on this and other occasions.

A second such episode occurred in 54 CE, as Rome was preparing for yet another Parthian campaign. Agrippa II sent troops to aid in the venture.³²² This represents a continued deference to Rome on the part of the Jewish leader. Quite striking, though, is the absence of the Nabataeans in the mission. Had they participated, we would certainly expect to hear about it, and the lacuna warrants an explanation.³²³ Knowledge of Parthian-Nabataean contacts remains very limited, but we may be sure that the Parthians represented an important eastern trading partner for the Nabataeans. For *comparanda* from the annals of political history, one may look back to 40 BCE, when Malichus sided with the Parthians during their invasion of Judaea and attack on Jerusalem.³²⁴ The chronological gap is admittedly substantial, but together the two events suggest a closer Nabataean-Parthian relationship than that manifest in our sources.³²⁵ Most significant, though, is that the Nabataeans were either not required, or chose not, to send troops to help the Romans in this Parthian venture, implying that their status vis-à-vis Rome did not compel them to subscribe to or participate in all of her military adventures, even in the mid-first century CE; furthermore, it may suggest that the Nabataeans did not wish to take sides in a conflict between the Romans and Parthians, specifically. As it turns out, the Romans would not inflict their decisive victory on the Parthians until several years

³²⁰ Jos. *AJ* 19.341: συγκαθεζόμενος γὰρ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀπήνης ἐπήγετο τοὺς ἄλλους βασιλέας, Μάρσῳ δ' ἢ τούτων ὁμόνοια καὶ μέχρι τοσοῦδε φιλία ἀλλήλους ὑπωπτεύθη συμφέρειν οὐχ ὑπολαμβάνοντι Ῥωμαίοις δυναστῶν τοσοῦτων συμφρόνησιν.

³²¹ See e.g. Jacobson (2001), 34; Schürer (1973), 448.

³²² Tac. *Ann.* 13.7. On Agrippa II and his career more generally, see Schürer (1973), 471-483; Millar (1993), 61-79, 91-2.

³²³ Agrippa II seems to have been rather exceptional in his obsequiousness to Rome. He decorated his coins with images of the emperors, called himself φιλόκαισαρ and φιλορώμαιος, and renamed his capital Neronias. See esp. Schürer (1973), 474-7; Kokkinos (1998), 317-341.

³²⁴ Dio 48.41.5. See my discussion in Chapter 2.

³²⁵ We would after all not expect Greek, Jewish, and Roman sources to be overly concerned with Nabataean-Parthian economic relationship.

after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom.³²⁶ We may assume, then, a balanced impartiality on the part of the Nabataeans, if not outright sympathy with the Parthians, who represented an important regional economic partner and with whom they had sided at least once before against Roman interests.

The first secure reference to the Nabataeans after the death of Aretas IV comes from the Jewish War (66-74 CE), the intense struggle that precipitated the Romans' destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. Josephus, who actively participated on the Jewish side of the conflict before being captured and taken to Rome, describes the events painstakingly.³²⁷ According to Josephus, four regional kings supplied forces for the Roman military effort: Antiochus IV of Commagene; Agrippa II and Sohaemus of Emesa; and Malichus II of Nabataea.³²⁸ Josephus kindly provides more explicit detail on the extent of Nabataean involvement: Malichus sent 1000 cavalry and 5000 infantry.³²⁹ Taken on their own terms, these figures appear rather modest, but they become more significant when compared to the 2000 bowmen and 1000 infantry sent by other regional players.³³⁰ When assessing the Nabataean participation and relative contribution, two important questions arise. Were the Nabataeans simply acting in concert with other regional powers? And what was at stake for them in the revolt?

The Nabataeans had on prior occasions taken advantage of direct Roman intervention in Judaea to further their own aims and enhance their regional position, most notably when Varus was quelling the revolt that broke out after the death of Herod the Great in 4 BCE. On that occasion, the Nabataean king Aretas IV supplied a “not insignificant” contingent of troops (οὐκ ὀλίγην ἄγων δύναμιν ἰππικὴν τε καὶ πεζικὴν).³³¹ These, though, took advantage of Roman diplomatic cover for pecuniary and territorial aggrandizement in Judaea and were eventually dismissed as much because of their independent behavior as because the Romans no longer needed them to accomplish the mission. We have no explicit evidence that the Nabataean troops sent by Malichus during the Jewish War acted independently, but the possibility cannot be dismissed. It is also worth recalling another, more dramatic, example of the Nabataeans ostensibly furnishing troops on behalf of a Roman cause: namely, Aelius Gallus' expedition to Arabia in 26 or 25 BCE, for which the Nabataeans provided 1000 men and, more importantly, a high-ranking Nabataean guide—Syllaios—for the venture. As argued in the previous chapter, while Augustus proclaimed the success of the expedition in the *Res Gestae*, the Nabataeans themselves emerged as its major beneficiaries, as it enabled them to solidify control of the overland caravan routes from Arabia Felix to Petra.

³²⁶ The oft-alleged connection between the annexation of Nabataean and this latter Parthian campaign will be examined below.

³²⁷ Ancient literary sources for the war are Jos. *BJ* 2.271-455; *BJ* 4.17-413; Tac. *Hist.* 5.1-13; Suet. *Vesp.* 4-8; *Tit.* 4-5; Dio 66.4-7; Sulp. Sev. *Chron.* 2.30. For a succinct overview of recent scholarship on the revolt, see Goodman (2002), 15-24. Still fundamental is Schürer (1973), 484-513.

³²⁸ Jos. *BJ* 3.68. Cf. Tac. *Hist.* 5.1.2: Tacitus' list comprises Agrippa, Sohaemus, and Antiochus, as well as a contingent of Arabs.

³²⁹ Jos. *BJ* 3.68.

³³⁰ Josephus (*BJ* 3.69) puts the total number of troops used to quell the revolt at sixty thousand.

³³¹ Jos. *BJ* 2.68. See my extended discussion of this incident in Chapter 3.

Considered alongside these earlier episodes, we can reasonably argue that Nabataean participation in helping to quell the first Jewish revolt came on their own initiative. This becomes even clearer if, as I have argued, the Nabataeans deliberately did not participate in the Roman expedition against Parthia in 54 CE. What, then, was at stake for Malichus in the Jewish uprising that motivated Nabataean participation, if he was not simply responding to Roman demands for assistance? Though they cannot have known the severity with which the Romans would punish the insurrectionists following the conflict, from the Nabataean perspective, the revolt—had it succeeded, even temporarily—would have represented a serious threat to regional stability and thus to Nabataean trading interests. And yet, from the point of view of the Nabataeans, the outcomes of the struggle and its denouement, however brutal, were never really in question. Rome’s numerical and military superiority was overwhelming. This would explain Malichus’ relatively modest contribution of troops to the cause. Despite its central place in the narratives of the Jewish people and indeed of the Roman politicians like Vespasian and Titus whose careers it helped to solidify, the event did not represent a dramatic shift in the broader politics of the region nor in the position of the Nabataeans vis-à-vis their neighbors. The relationship of the Nabataeans and Romans in the mid- to late-first century CE seems in fact to have been mutually beneficial and profitable, at least from an economic point of view. Nabataean trade continued to prosper without direct Roman interference, as will be explored in more detail below. Additionally, we have no evidence that the installation of more direct Roman control in Judaea following the Jewish War significantly, or directly, affected the Nabataeans themselves; annexation of their territory would not come for over thirty years.

III. MALICHUS II AND THE QUESTION OF NABATAEAN DECLINE

The Nabataean contribution to the Roman effort—assessed in purely numerical terms—can also be placed in the context of a larger historiographical debate concerning the political fortunes of the Nabataeans during the reign of Malichus II. Some scholars have argued for a serious decline during the reign of this penultimate Nabataean king, which might then serve to explain his people’s modest military contribution to the Roman cause.³³² The evidence marshaled for this putative nadir is worth reviewing in detail.

In arguing for Malichus’ ineffectuality, some have adduced a bit of evidence that lies beyond the chronological parameters of his reign: the epithet later adopted by his successor to the Nabataean throne: Rabbel II (70-106 CE). The epithet reads, “He who has brought life and deliverance to his people.”³³³ It has been suggested that Rabbel’s personal title might speak directly to the failings of Malichus II, his predecessor; Rabbel brought deliverance—or so the argument goes—from the inefficacy of his predecessor’s policies. There is good reason, though, for rejecting this notion. The corpus of “official” Nabataean royal epithets comprises only a few examples (that of Aretas III, of Aretas IV, and this one, of Rabbel II). Aretas III’s epithet of *philhellenos* can be located more straightforwardly in the context of the Hellenistic world, especially because it appears in

³³² For this argument, see esp. Negev (1977), 570; 637.

³³³ The title appears in numerous inscriptions. See e.g. Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 402-3; 404.

Greek upon coins circulating in a Greek-speaking area, while Aretas IV's "lover of his people" presents more difficulties, but does seem to echo—even if indirectly—Hellenistic parallels.³³⁴ Both epithets serve to advertise positive characteristics of the rulers, without any implicit negative reference to a predecessor. Rabbel's epithet ought therefore to be read on its own terms, not as a referendum on Malichus II.

Further alleged evidence of decline lies in an apparent cessation of coinage in the last six years of Malichus II's reign, a lacuna that begins in 64/5 CE.³³⁵ One scholar tentatively connects the gap with the Jewish War, suggesting that perhaps the Romans called in all bullion during this period.³³⁶ It has also been suggested that some kind of change took place in Nabataea's relationship—or obligations—to Rome. The chief fault with these explanations is that we have absolutely no evidence that the Romans had this kind of sway over Nabataean monetary policy. Additionally, we know that minting resumed at least by 70 CE or, more likely, never ceased. The Nabataeans had continually shown themselves willing to use their coinage, even quite explicitly, to assert their autonomy and independence, both politically and culturally.³³⁷

To account for the possible gap, some have offered another suggestion, directly connecting the apparent cessation of Nabataean minting in the years 63-70 CE with the re-introduction of an autonomous Damascene coinage in the year 62 CE. This renewal of minting in the city of Damascus would then be connected to a Nabataean retreat from that city.³³⁸ Despite its ingenuity, this explanation rests on a rather thin foundation. The evidence for a Nabataean occupation of Damascus beginning in the latter years of Aretas IV—consisting solely of a New Testament text alluding to the presence of a Nabataean official in the city during the time of Paul the apostle—remains quite tenuous.³³⁹ More problematic, though, would be to conclude on the basis of the reintroduction of an autonomous Damascene coinage that Nabataean political fortunes were ebbing or to use the coinage as further evidence of an already strained argument for Malichus' weakness as a ruler.³⁴⁰ Rather, this coinage ought to represent a self-conscious political decision on the part of the Damascenes and should be not taken as an indication of a Nabataean retreat—or weakness. Additionally, we should be wary both of making too much of a gap like this, when the number of existing, datable coins is exceedingly small, and of viewing such changes directly through a Roman prism.³⁴¹ In the previous chapter, I cautioned against the dangerous temptation to conclude broad-scale geopolitical changes on the basis of putative numismatic gaps. The same caveat applies here. These minor changes in

³³⁴ I treat these epithets in greater detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

³³⁵ See Bowersock (1983), 71; Meshorer (1975), 67.

³³⁶ Bowersock (1983), 72.

³³⁷ Most conspicuously when Aretas III controlled Damascus in the 1st century BCE. See my detailed discussion in Chapter 2.

³³⁸ For this hypothesis, see Schmid (1997); Negev (1977).

³³⁹ For discussion of this episode, see Chapter 3.

³⁴⁰ The argument is made by Meshorer (1975), 63-4; 67, who accepts that the Nabataeans controlled Damascus during this period.

³⁴¹ The most important source of Malichus' coins is the Murabb'at hoard, which contained only thirty coins of Malichus II and upon only eight of which is a sure date decipherable. See Meshorer (1975), 65-66.

the numismatic record should not be used *per se* to argue for a decline of Nabataean fortunes during the end of Malichus' reign.³⁴² Too many other factors are involved.³⁴³

Finally, we have a long-held assumption that Nabataean economic success waned as a result of increased use of the monsoon winds by Roman traders traveling to India.³⁴⁴ This pessimistic assessment paints a grim picture of Nabataean fortunes during Malichus' reign, but will it stand up to scrutiny? The best evidence for exploitation of the monsoon winds comes from *Periplus de Mari Erythraeo*, the famous Greek handbook on trade routes between the Mediterranean and India; the text, though, furnishes—when examined in this same context—a further cautionary note against portraying Malichus II as a weak ruler.³⁴⁵ The relevant portion of the text reads as follows:

ὁ λέγεται Λευκὴ κώμη, δι' ἧς ἐστὶν εἰς Πέτραν πρὸς Μαλίχαν, βασιλέα Ναβαταίων, ἀνάβασις. ἔχει δὲ ἐμπορίου τινὰ καὶ αὐτὴ τάξιν τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀραβίας ἐξαρτιζομένους εἰς αὐτὴν πλοίοις οὐ μεγάλοις. διὸ καὶ παραφυλακῆς χάριν καὶ εἰς αὐτὴν παραλήπτῃς τῆς τετάρτης τῶν εἰσφερομένων φορτίων καὶ ἑκατοντάρχης μετὰ στρατεύματος ἀποστελλεται.³⁴⁶

Which place is called Leuke Kome, through which the land route passes going to Petra and to Malichus, king of the Nabataeans. The same place

³⁴² Similarly, we should treat with caution the contention that a reduction in the silver content of Malichus' coins suggests Nabataean economic decline. See esp. Schmitt-Korte and Price (1994), 110-111, where the evidence counters Meshorer's contention that Malichus II's policy is exceptional in this regard. The debasement of the coinage echoes a general trend in the Mediterranean world during this period. More importantly, though, Malichus II's numismatic policy does not actually represent a significant departure from that of his predecessors. A gradual reduction in the silver content had first begun under Obodas III (in 23 BCE) and continued systematically under his successors, with each king linking his coinage to external models.

³⁴³ Future research might explore the relationship between Nabataean coinage and other models, both Eastern and Western: while noting the indirect connection between Roman standards and the Nabataean silver coinage, Schmitt-Korte and Smith (1994), 111, write that "it would be interesting to investigate in which way the reforms and adjustments of the Roman Imperial monetary system may have been influenced by the pre-existence of similar models in the East."

³⁴⁴ Representative of this view are Bowersock (1983), 21: "...by the mid-first century A.D. overland traffic through Petra had largely dried up," and Negev (1982), 126, who assigns the beginning of the decline to 7 CE, to coincide with the first known debasement of the Nabataean currency. Bowersock ties the decline to a passage of Strabo (16.4.8) that describes the Nabataeans engaging in piracy on Ptolemaic shipping. He relies, though, upon a highly anachronistic connection between Nabataeans' anxiety about the possible implication of these trade winds and their eventual exploitation late in the Hellenistic period. I discuss the piracy incident in Chapter 1.

³⁴⁵ Recent consensus about the sequence of Nabataean kings has rendered largely moot the spirited debate that once raged over the *Periplus*' date. A reference to Malichus, a Nabataean king (19.6.28-9), situates the text in the reign of Malichus II (40-70 CE). Given the nature of long-distance trade described in the treatise, it cannot refer to Malichus I, who reigned in the 1st century BCE. See Casson (1989), 6-7 for conclusive refutation of the few scholars who still cling to a later date. Cf. Bowersock (1971), 223-225; Robin (1991), 1-30; Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 564.

³⁴⁶ *Periplus* 19. For the full text of the treatise, with commentary, see Casson (1989).

serves as a kind of emporium for small ships that come from Arabia laden with cargo. For security, therefore, a toll-collector is stationed there, who levies a toll of 25% on incoming goods, as well as a centurion with an attachment of troops.

A reference to trade flowing through the port of Leuke Kome—whence it would have traveled to Hegra, Petra, and onward to Mediterranean markets—speaks to the continued viability of Nabataean trade and prosperity during the mid-first century CE.³⁴⁷ Strenuous debate has centered on the text's mention of a centurion (ἐκατοντάρχης) stationed at Leuke Kome—namely upon whether this official and his accompanying security detail were Romans or Nabataeans. The question has important implications for one of the central issues being explored in this chapter—the nature of the Nabataean relationship and attitude toward Rome. The argument that the official might be Roman has traditionally rested on the implied status of Nabataea as a Roman client state, subject—willing or not—to having Roman troops stationed on its territory.³⁴⁸ Some have also argued that the official must be Roman because the Romans would not have wished to allow for the possibility of ships docking on the eastern shore of the Red Sea and avoiding a twenty-five percent τετάρτη customs duty imposed on goods entering Roman territory.³⁴⁹ Therefore, it follows that the Romans themselves had stationed this official in Leuke Kome to collect duties equal to those levied on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea.³⁵⁰

These arguments ultimately rest, though, on the assumption that Nabataean trade would have diminished during the time of the *Periplus* in the mid-first century CE. It makes far more sense, given our understanding of the relationship between Nabataea and Rome in this period, to accept the thesis—now less favorable among modern scholars—that Nabataeans, not the Romans, had the leading role in administering Leuke Kome.³⁵¹ What about the Nabataean perspective and what would have been their motivation for stationing this official at Leuke Kome? To find an answer, we may adduce a passage from Pliny (*NH* 12.32), in which he describes in detail the route taken by frankincense from the southern Arabian peninsula to the port at Gaza, whence it would make its way to Mediterranean markets:

³⁴⁷ I am in agreement on this point with Wenning (2007), 40; Schmid (2000),

³⁴⁸ Nabataean use of Greek and Roman military terms is well attested, so this cannot be used for evidence that the officials were Roman. See *CIS* 217; Bowsher (1989), 21. See Bowersock (1983), 71 n. 41; Sidebotham (1986), 107 n. 137.

³⁴⁹ Raschke (1978), 983; Young (1997), 267-8. Young argues that the presence of an official collecting such a tax on behalf of the Nabataeans would seem to preclude the onward transport of these goods—overland and via the port at Gaza—to the Mediterranean and Roman markets.

³⁵⁰ The site of Leuke Kome has never been securely identified, in spite of its being the most important Nabataean port and emporium on the Red Sea. Suggestions include Yanbu' al-Bahr, al-Wagh, and 'Aynuna im Higaz, with the majority of scholars favoring the latter site. See Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 566 and Casson (1989) for discussions.

³⁵¹ Sharing this view, that the official was Nabataean, are Bowersock (1983), 70ff.; Funke (1989), 2ff; Millar (1998), 124. For discussion of these Roman customs duties, see esp. Sidebotham (1996), 293-5. For the view that the Romans took over the city, see Peters (1977), 11.

Iam quacumque iter est aliubi pro aqua aliubi pro pabulo aut pro mansionibus variisque portoriis pendunt, ut sumptus in singulas camelos DCLXXXVIII ad nostrum litus colligat, iterumque imperii nostri publicanis penditur.

Now along the whole route they pay for things, in one place for water, in another for hay, or tolls for staying over at halts, so that the expenses add up to 688 *denarii* for each camel before reaching our shore [the Mediterranean]; and again payment is made to the *publicani* of our empire.

These charges must refer to fees collected by the Nabataeans or their associates along the overland route across the desert. Since the *Periplus* confirms the increased efficiency of using sea-borne routes, this twenty-five percent import duty would ensure the Nabataeans recuperation of whatever part of the 688 *denarii* per camel was lost if these goods were transported by sea.³⁵²

Even with this issue resolved, a further question remains: why would ships continue to dock at Leuke Kome instead of at Egyptian ports such as Myos Hormos? The best explanation may be that an overall increase in trade and demand allowed the Nabataean ports to continue to flourish even as more goods docked on the western shore of the Red Sea.³⁵³ This conclusion has clear implications for the present discussion of Nabataean economic prospects during the reign of Malichus II. Since the Nabataean port of Leuke Kome was vying for international maritime traffic with its Roman competitor across the Red Sea, one cannot simply assume that increased trade traffic on certain routes necessarily led to a decreased use of other routes. In fact, the opposite may be true. An expansion in Mediterranean markets under Roman hegemony in the 1st century CE likely created greater demand for eastern goods. The growth of overland trade cities such as Palmyra speaks to the continued viability of land routes alongside increased monsoon wind aided use of the seas. In short, we have no concrete evidence of a drop-off in overland trade moving through Petra in the mid-first century CE. Malichus' reign, therefore, does not represent a period of any meaningful, or even readily discernable, decline for the Nabataeans. This assumption rests largely upon a hindsight-driven desire to detect signs of Nabataean economic decline that might portend the kingdom's eventual demise, as well as upon a series of *argumenta ex silentio*, most notably the paucity of Greek and Roman sources discussing the Nabataeans in this period.

IV. RABBEL II: AN ASSESSMENT

In 70 CE, control of the Nabataean kingdom fell to Rabbel II (70-106 CE), last of the autonomous Nabataean kings.³⁵⁴ His long rule presents several interesting and important

³⁵² See Sidebotham (1986), 107-108.

³⁵³ See Graf and Sidebotham (2003), 72.

³⁵⁴ For his coins, see Negev (1963), 124. On his title, see Negev (1963), 115-6; Kammerer (1929), 256; Clermont-Ganneau (1901), 169-74, 189, 290, 395; (1924), 263-4. (both in *Recueil d'archéologie orientale*). For the inscriptions, see Meshorer, 70-1; *CIS* II: 182, 224, 225, 161 (and

questions, which have stirred up robust debate in the secondary literature. Because of the almost total lack of surviving literary sources on this period, modern scholars have necessarily focused their attention largely on the evidence furnished by material culture. Much of the discussion centers upon an apparent renaissance of Nabataean fortunes during Rabbel's reign.

Rabbel II's adoption of a new royal epithet, "he who brought life and deliverance to his people," is indeed puzzling.³⁵⁵ It has often been viewed as an advertisement of the king's role in restoring prosperity after a downturn during Malichus' reign. As argued in the previous section, though, we must treat this assumption with caution, lest it serve as an argument *per se* for Rabbel's revival of the Nabataeans' prospects. Some have connected the epithet directly to a rise in Nabataean agricultural cultivation toward the end of the first century CE. This period was, it is often supposed, the point at which at the Nabataeans made the final transition from a nomadic lifestyle to a sedentary one.³⁵⁶ This characterization, though, is too simplistic, missing a key feature of Nabataean society. The Nabataeans had long combined sedentary and nomadic practices and would continue to do so. Rabbel would thus have had no reason to claim he was "delivering" his people by offering them sedentarization.

The alleged increase in Nabataean sedentarization and changes in their land use to favor agricultural production have often been directly connected to another key assumption: that Rabbel II transferred the Nabataean capital from its traditional site at Petra to Bostra sometime during his reign. This significant change—first suggested by Milik in 1958—has now gained general acceptance, with most scholars seeing a concomitant ascension of Bostra and decline of Petra in the latter years of the Nabataean independence.³⁵⁷ The evidence, though, is rather more tenuous than it might at first glance appear. The only extant ancient testimony that could imply transfer of the Nabataean administrative seat consists of an inscription dedicated to "Dushara-A'ra, god of our lord Rabbel who is at Bostra."³⁵⁸ A'ra was a local deity at Bostra, later syncretized with the Nabataean god Dushara. This inscription, though, does not provide sufficient evidence for concluding that Rabbel II transferred the Nabataean capital to Bostra. First of all, it might ambiguously refer to *Dushara* who is at Bostra instead of *Rabbel*.³⁵⁹ What is more, the tribute may allude not to Rabbel's physical presence in Bostra, but rather to the attention we know that Rabbel paid to building up the urban landscape of the city in the last century of the 1st century CE.³⁶⁰

others). For the possibility of a putative Malichus III, Rabbel's heir, continuing to rule in some capacity, see my discussion below, with references.

³⁵⁵ The phrase occurs in at least two inscriptions from Oboda: Cantineau (1932), 9; Negev (1961), 135-138. n. 8; Negev (1963), 113-117 n. 10. Both reprinted with commentary in Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 402-404.

³⁵⁶ I address the issue of Nabataean sedentarization in more detail in the Introduction and in Chapter 1.

³⁵⁷ Milik (1958), 233-5; supported by Starcky (1965), 920, 988; Hammond (1973), 38; Bowersock (1983), 73.

³⁵⁸ The inscription can be dated to 93 CE. It is published in Cantineau (1932), 21; cf. Milik (1958), 227; Sartre (1985), 54ff.; Millar (1993), 408; Fiema (2003), 43.

³⁵⁹ As Wenning (1993), 94-5, also highly skeptical of the capital's transfer, has noted.

³⁶⁰ For a good synthesis of the material rise of Bostra in this period, see Ball (2000), 198-203.

This well attested increase in building activity has been itself used to support the notion of the capital's transfer away from Petra. D. Graf, though, has quite plausibly tied Rabbel II's building program in the Hawran—at both Si'a and Bostra—to a revolt that took place in the Hejaz around the time of the king's succession. As attested in Safaitic inscriptions, the leader of the insurrection, Damasī, a prominent Nabataean from Hegra, seems to have been conducting operations from the Hawran.³⁶¹ This would suggest Rabbel was attempting to shore up support and build legitimacy in the region. The suppression of this revolt very likely served as the pretext for Rabbel's adoption of his epithet.³⁶² A revolt taking place simultaneously in the Hawran and the Hejaz—the most prominent northern and southern areas of Nabataea—must be taken seriously. It has perhaps not received its deserved attention because, being a strictly Nabataean problem, it failed to attract the attention of outside chroniclers. Our only evidence comes from these inscriptions.

There are further reasons for skepticism that Bostra replaced Petra as the administrative capital. As I have noted, many have tended to view late first-century Petra as a city in decline. This conclusion derives from an overly bipolar analysis focusing solely on Petra and Bostra. It also rests heavily on the assumption—against which I argued above—that changes in trade patterns prompted a dramatic shift northward of the Nabataean power base. A potentially fruitful parallel might be sought in the period of Nabataean control over Damascus and the Hawran under Aretas III. The Nabataean king minted coins in Damascus and seems to have used the city for some administrative purposes, but we have no indication that he ever considered a transfer of the Nabataean capital there.³⁶³ Widespread acceptance of Milik's suggestion of a transfer under Rabbel II also relies heavily upon the thesis that Bostra later supplanted Petra as the most important city under the Romans, who may have made it the administrative capital of their new province of Arabia. We must be highly wary, though, of circular argumentation here. Clearly, any Roman decision in the years following the annexation reflects *Roman* priorities, not necessarily Nabataean ones.

There are further difficulties. If, on account of becoming more sedentarized, the Nabataeans adopted Bostra, which lay in a more productive agricultural area, as their capital, would there have been less need for a trade-based capital at Petra? As argued

³⁶¹ MacDonald (1993) provides a detailed and exhaustive discussion of the extant corpus of Safaitic inscriptions, particularly those found in the Hawran. The term “Safaitic” refers to the script used to write an Old North Arabian Dialect, not to the name of the people who spoke the language. Inscriptions have been found over a broad area ranging from the Hawran in southern Syria to northern Arabia and dating from the 1st to 3rd centuries CE. See MacDonald (1993), *passim* but esp. 303-310; Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 21-22 and 160-161; Winnett (1973), 54-57.

³⁶² A suggestion tentatively endorsed by Bowersock (1983), 72, n. 48; 156.

³⁶³ It is also possible that, despite Petra's obvious centrality as a cultural and economic hub, we should be cautious about thinking of a single “capital” in such stark terms, given our lack of documentary evidence about Nabataean administration. A fruitful avenue for future exploration may lie in investigating the archaeological record for traces of the fortunes of other Nabataean centers, as well as a sample of smaller sites, to see how they fared during this period. This may supply more tangible evidence against the idea that Nabataean power shifted dramatically to the north—toward Bostra and the Hawran and away from the more traditional power centers to the south—during the reign of Rabbel II.

earlier, the answer to this question is clearly no; rather, Bostra's rise to prominence should also be connected at least in part to trade. The city lay at the midway point between Petra and the increasingly powerful trade city of Palmyra, as well as at the western end of the Wadi as-Sirhan, one of the main overland routes coming from the east.³⁶⁴

Another question, equally vexing and intriguing, concerns developments in Nabataean art during the years of Rabbel II's reign. It has been suggested that a kind of official program took place under Rabbel II that stressed more "oriental" and abstract art. Evidence for this is sought in the proliferation of aniconic *baityloi*, many of which can be dated to the end of the 1st century CE.³⁶⁵ Nabataean painted pottery also witnesses a profound shift in the latter half of the century. Within Phase 3 (c. 20-100 CE), which features vessels of increasing fineness and of a wide variety of shapes, a marked shift occurs around 70 CE, or right at the time of the ascension of Rabbel II to the throne.³⁶⁶ At this point, the shapes of the painted designs become larger, more abstract, and further apart (see **Fig. 11**). Also striking are the changes that occur in the coinage: the motifs, originally smaller and more naturalistic, become larger, less naturalistic, and more ornamental (see **Fig. 7**).³⁶⁷ Even further parallels may be found in the Nabataean sculptural program, at both Petra and Khirbet al-Tannur, as well as in the design of the capitals and other architectural features.³⁶⁸ For example, the wider, more open façade of al-Dayr, the most dramatic Nabataean rock-cut tomb at Petra besides the Khazneh, whose date has generally been assigned to the last quarter of the first century CE, has been analogized to the more open spaces in between designs on the pottery (see **Figs. 9, 11**).³⁶⁹

When taken cumulatively, can these changes be considered an accident? Usually, it is thought that the Nabataeans "freed themselves" from Hellenistic prototypes in the second half of the 1st century CE as they came to realize their own unique style, one no longer indebted to western models. Some scholars have noted that the Nabataeans—perhaps uniquely among similar Near Eastern populations, resisted ultimate assimilation to Roman cultural forms, quite rightly remarking upon the singularity and curiosity of the Nabataean achievement.³⁷⁰ This characterization, though, in some ways misses the point—it denies that everything leading up to these years was also "Nabataean," while also raising a larger question: to what extent is it appropriate to speak of "Hellenization" or "Romanization" of Near Eastern peoples such as the Nabataeans, and how can one do so without denying them agency in the changes?³⁷¹

³⁶⁴ Emphatically supporting Bostra's importance for trade is Bennett (2001), 173-4.

³⁶⁵ See Schmid (2001), 400. For Rabbel II and the last years of the Nabataean dynasty, see esp. Wenning (1993), 81-103.

³⁶⁶ See Schmid (2001), 391; Schmid (2008), 378-9.

³⁶⁷ Schmid (2001), 400-401: he dates the change to around 70/80 CE.

³⁶⁸ Schmid (2001), 399-400.

³⁶⁹ Schmid (2001), 398; cf. Schmid (1999-2000), 485-509 for discussion of the date.

³⁷⁰ E.g. Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 53: "Jedoch sind die Nabatäer als einziger wirklich bedeutender Araberstaat im Bereich der römischen Ostpolitik hier doch etwas anders zu betrachten als die vielen anderen kleinasiatischen, syrischen und nordafrikanischen Völkerschaften, die leichter zu assimilieren waren als die selbstbewussten Nabatäer."

³⁷¹ Observable connections and similarities with Hellenistic and Roman art, as well as with possible Near Eastern prototypes, have been well documented, but significant problems still persist in our understanding of Nabataean art in the first century CE, and indeed beyond.

Many of the same scholars who argue for this self-consciously anti-Roman message in Nabataean art during Rabbel II's reign show little hesitation in ascribing earlier developments as self-consciously Hellenizing. Wenning, chief proponent of this proposition, acknowledges as much. He posits increased Roman power in the region as the reason behind the changes: as the Nabataeans began to seriously struggle for survival, more conservative, traditional elements won out. This led to conspicuous changes in Nabataean art.³⁷² Wenning has argued that Rabbel II may have conceived of and implemented a kind of pan-Nabataean cultural canon to assert a distinct Nabataean identity.³⁷³ This theory also ingeniously (although, in my view, erroneously) explains Rabbel's epithet, with which we began this section, claiming that Rabbel's anxiety about the Roman threat resulted in a cultural program designed to promote indigenous, Nabataean art.

While it has the benefit of attributing primary agency to the Nabataeans in orchestrating their own cultural programs, this so-called *renovatio* raises a serious issue. The concept of "renewal" implies that these changes, as well as previous "western" programs, were directly imposed by the king himself, or by Nabataean elites, in order to return to a previous model, one perhaps more authentically Nabataean. While such directives would not be unprecedented—one only need look to the example of Augustan Rome—such a model cannot in my view be so easily applied here. The Nabataean artistic and cultural landscape had always been a highly nuanced one, as previous chapters of this dissertation have illustrated. Furthermore, a self-conscious rejection of Roman-ness or Greek-ness in their art would be to cast aspersion on much of the very foundation of what constituted Nabataean art and material culture. The Petra of the late first century CE abounded in buildings, monuments, and architectural sculpture that might be considered "western inspired," yet which also exude a distinctly Nabataean character that cannot have been lost on an ancient viewer any less than a modern one. We have no evidence that Rabbel II rejected any of this. Even if one acknowledges certain uniformity in the patterns of development of coins, pottery, and architecture in this period, the shift must be seen as part of a broader cultural phenomenon, one based, as Schmid has argued, "in the entire population, or at least the majority."³⁷⁴ In short, it seems necessary to disengage this discussion from a direct connection with alleged royal or official policy. This has important implications. Wenning has seen Roman suppression of the first Jewish revolt as a major catalyst for Rabbel II's cultural policies. On the basis of the Jewish experience, the Nabataeans could foresee their own eventual subjugation.³⁷⁵ This deterministic view, though, largely obscures the continued success, economically, politically, and culturally, of the Nabataean realm under Rabbel's reign. It also makes more difficult the task of locating the Nabataean perspective on the Roman annexation, to which we now turn.

³⁷² Schmid (2001), 401.

³⁷³ Thus giving the *renovatio* "eine starke nationalistische und innendpolitische Bedeutung": Wenning (1993), 91; Patrich (1990), 165-6.

³⁷⁴ Schmid (2001), 398.

³⁷⁵ Wenning (1993), 82.

V: ANNEXATION: THE NABATAEAN PERSPECTIVE

Early in the year 106 CE, the Roman governor of Syria, Cornelius Palma, led Roman occupation forces into Arabia. In the wake of Palma's successful efforts, the Romans—in the name of the emperor Trajan—formally annexed Rabbel II's Nabataean kingdom and its territories, ultimately incorporating them into a new *provincia Arabia* and marking the end of a politically autonomous Nabataean state.³⁷⁶ The annexation of Nabataea might seem, when viewed teleologically, a logical step in the march of Roman imperialism in the Near East, being the last in a long series of territorial acquisitions across the region. To see the annexation in such a light, though, risks obscuring the interesting nuances that arise in attempting to divine the Roman and—in particular—Nabataean perspectives on the event. Unfortunately, no extant contemporary literary sources document the annexation. Not even close: the earliest such testimony comes from the 4th century CE historian Ammianus Marcellinus and the 11th century epitomator of Cassius Dio, Xiphilinus. Brief mentions in Eutropius and Festus round out the literary record. Some numismatic, epigraphic, and archaeological material can be used to supplement the scant literary sources, but myriad gaps and apparent contradictions confront modern commentators, whose interest in the event has lain largely with its significance for the history of Roman imperialism, specifically in the Eastern Mediterranean. The following discussion will begin by reviewing the available evidence in order to establish the context for the annexation, with a brief look at Roman actions and motivations. It will then make an effort—despite the limited state of the extant evidence—to irradiate how the Nabataeans themselves perceived and reacted to these critical events.

While a detailed assessment of Roman motivations falls outside the scope of the present study, we still must decide whether the annexation represents deliberate Roman policy toward Nabataea—in other words, had it been long in the works and only awaited a signal event such as the death of their ruler, as many have suggested? Or was this a sudden decision made to take advantage of an unstable situation in Nabataea?³⁷⁷ The standard line has held that the Romans had decided earlier on to annex the Nabataean kingdom upon Rabbel II's death. The king's death therefore would have spurred Palma to action. We have no direct evidence, though, to support this theory. In my view, the decision should not be directly connected with a grand imperial strategy on the part of the Romans, governing this and other annexations in the East.³⁷⁸ Rather, the Romans

³⁷⁶ Greek and Aramaic documents from the Nahal Hever archive have settled prior disagreement about the date. See Bowersock (1970), 39; Yadin (1963), 232ff. Essential bibliography on the annexation includes Bowersock (1970), 37-47; Bowersock (1971), 219-242; Eadie (1985); Fiema (1987), 25-35; Freeman (1996), 93-102; Kennedy (1980) 283-309; Preaux (1950-1), 123-139; Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2001); Young (2001).

³⁷⁷ For the view that this was a well and long-thought out decision, whose execution awaited the death of the Nabataean king, see Kennedy (1980), 286; Bowersock (1983), 82-3. Taking the opposite position, that the event was not highly premeditated, is Eadie (1985), 416-17.

³⁷⁸ See esp. Luttwak (1976). This assumption is quite properly refuted as overly simplistic by Fiema (1987), 26. Some have seen the Nabataean annexation primarily in economic terms: it was part of a larger Roman policy to control and consolidate Red Sea trade. It was more about maintaining the status quo, though, but now with a more direct Roman hand. For this view, see esp. Fiema (1987), 35. Those taking the opposite line argue that Rome had no direct economic motive for the annexation: see esp. Sartre (1985), 70ff.; Young (2001), 90-118; in this chapter, he

approached the annexation of Nabataea rather tentatively. This would have a meaningful effect on the Nabataeans' reaction: they did not view their subjugation as a *fait accompli* when Palma overran Arabia in 106 CE, as we shall see.

Our primary concern, with important implications for the lost Nabataean perspective on the event, must be whether the annexation was brought about peacefully or by force of arms. The evidence furnishes a somewhat varied—even contradictory—picture. Let us review the ancient testimony, beginning with a passage from Ammianus Marcellinus:

Haec [Arabia] quoque civitates habet inter oppida quaedam ingentes, Bostram et Gerasam atque Philadelpham, murorum firmitate cautissimas. Hanc provinciae imposito nomine, rectoreque adtributo, obtemperare legibus nostris Traianus compulit imperator.³⁷⁹

This territory [of Arabia] also has among its towns some of large size and well protected by strong walls: Bostra, Gerasa, and Philadelphia. The emperor Trajan gave this territory the name of province, put a governor in charge of it, and compelled it to obey our laws.

Ammianus' language here is tantalizingly ambiguous, seeming to refer to the legal and administrative changes wrought by the Roman annexation, not necessarily to a military subjugation. We may compare it with Dio's account, which implies at least administrative subjugation, if not necessarily violent acquisition of Nabataean territory:

κατὰ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν τοῦτον χρόνον καὶ Πάλαμας τῆς Συρίας ἄρχων τὴν Ἀραβίαν τὴν πρὸς τῇ Πέτρᾳ ἐχειρώσατο καὶ Ῥωμαίων ὑπήκοον ἐποιήσατο.³⁸⁰

At the same time Palma, the governor of Syria, took over Petran Arabia and made it subject it to the Romans.

We also have the account of Eutropius:

usque ad Indiae fines et mare Rubrum accessit atque ibi tres provincias fecit, Armeniam, Assyriam, Mesopotamiam, cum his gentibus, quae Madenam attingunt. Arabiam postea in provinciae formam redegit. In mare Rubro classem instituit, ut per eam Indiae fines vastaret³⁸¹

He advanced up to the borders of India and the Red Sea and established three Provinces: Armenia, Assyria, and Mesopotamia, along with the peoples bordering Madena. He later converted Arabia into the form of a

treats Arabia and the Nabataeans specifically, while the volume as a whole puts forward this thesis of a lack of consistent Roman economic policy in the eastern Mediterranean.

³⁷⁹ Amm. Marc. 14.8.13.

³⁸⁰ Dio 68.14.

³⁸¹ Eutropius, *Brev.* 8.3.2.

province. He established a fleet in the Red Sea, so that he might lay waste to India with it.

The modern interpretation of these passages has—quite understandably—produced little consensus in answering the essential question posed above, whether the Roman annexation occurred peacefully or violently. Xiphilinus’ ἐχειρώσατο, while implying subjection, does not directly indicate the use of arms. Ammianus’ *obtemperare legibus nostris Traianus compulit* seems to refer to submission in the legalistic sense. The language in Eutropius, *Arabiam postea in provinciae formam redegit*, refers primarily to the imposition of provincial status upon the Nabataeans; it offers little help in determining the exact nature of the annexation.

In arguing that the annexation took place peacefully, without a military confrontation, scholars have also noted several features of Roman behavior during or after the event. They note that the emperor Trajan assumed the titles *Dacicus* and *Parthicus* in recognition of his military accomplishments, but seems never to have added the title *Arabicus* to his official resume;³⁸² they also cite coins advertising the takeover that read *Arabia adquisita*, not *Arabia capta*; they point, finally, to several milestones found in the province bearing the inscription, *redacta in formam provinciae*, which—it is argued—does not necessarily imply subjection by conquest. In sum, most commentators, while tending to acknowledge that our sources may imply *some* kind of a confrontation between Nabataeans and Romans, generally dismiss the idea of a significant conflict between the two sides in 106 CE or following.

Following this interpretation, the Nabataeans readily succumbed to the inevitability of a Roman takeover, becoming simply the last card to fall in the Romans’ Near Eastern imperialist game.³⁸³ As we saw in the previous section, this deterministic outlook weighs heavily in most analyses of late-first century Nabataea, including cultural ones; it also makes a balanced reading more difficult. More problematically, it relies in part upon circular reasoning. Nabataea’s cozy client state relationship with Rome made the administrative and legal transition to a formal province much easier. Since the Nabataeans had long enjoyed a peaceful co-existence with the Roman Empire, they would accept—perhaps even welcome—more direct Roman administrative control.

None of this evidence speaks conclusively for a peaceful—or willing, on the part of the Nabataeans—transfer of territory. On the contrary: *redacta in formam provinciae* and *adquisita* hardly suggest tacit compliance to Roman imperial demands. As for Trajan’s titles, these appear on a monumental arch set up in Petra in the year 114 CE.³⁸⁴ Thus, the martial language in the above evidence cited above cannot be simply discounted,

³⁸² E.g. Bennett (2001), 1976.

³⁸³ Representative are Sartre (2005), 87: “We do not have to look far for the reasons for this annexation, which followed the logic that Rome had pursued as far back as the Flavians...there is no sign of fighting or of any Nabataean resistance whatsoever”; Graf (2007), 173-174; and Bowersock (2003), 22: “At least there is no clear evidence of resistance in either the textual or archaeological material for the annexation.”

³⁸⁴ For the text on the arch, see Bowersock (1983), 85, n. 28. In a recent dissertation, K. Cassibry has appropriately called for greater precision in defining such monuments, which she labels “Roman arch monuments.” She also highlights the importance of treating individual arch monuments in their local contexts. See Cassibry (2009), esp. 1-26.

especially when one adduces other sources, such as archaeological testimony. Destruction layers at several sites can be dated to the first decade of the 2nd century CE.³⁸⁵ These include Oboda, Moje Awad, Khirbet adh-Dharih, Sbaita, and Dhiban.³⁸⁶ Although some have connected these layers with an (otherwise unattested) earthquake, the distribution of sites argues against this proposal. All are located within Nabataean territory and there are other towns within the expected range of such an earthquake, like Mampsis, which exhibit no evidence of destruction.³⁸⁷ In addition, we know that Romans employed at least parts of two legions for the occupation, implying that they anticipated resistance.³⁸⁸

Most notably, Trajan set up a statue of the Roman commander who effected the annexation, Cornelius Palma, in the Forum of Augustus in Rome, in commemoration of his achievement—presumably his role in the annexation.³⁸⁹ Such a tribute for a non-military achievement would have been extremely rare.³⁹⁰ Even more decisive, though, may be Palma's receipt of the *ornamenta triumphalia* in 107 CE. Since triumphs were reserved for the emperor, the *ornamenta* represented a highly coveted honor for provincial governors in the imperial period.³⁹¹ Associated with military achievements, they were, for example, later granted to the governors of Syria and Arabia, Iulius Severus and Publicius Marcellus, respectively, after the Bar Kochba revolt.³⁹²

How, then, does one reconcile the two possible, seemingly contradictory, explanations, one peaceful, one violent? On balance, the available evidence favors an interpretation of real Nabataean resistance to the Roman invasion. This accords well with what we have been establishing about the Nabataeans over the course of the first century CE. Given the sparse, fragmentary nature of the surviving evidence, we may also surmise that annexation took place in more gradual fashion than as a carefully designed, organized imperial plan.³⁹³ Quite significantly, Trajan seems to have exercised a measure of restraint in the manner in which he advertised the conquest.³⁹⁴ The Romans did not formally broadcast the takeover until 111 CE, five years after the annexation supposedly took place. There are neither coins nor inscriptions from this interlude that speak directly

³⁸⁵ For the case for Nabataean armed resistance, see esp. Schmid (1997).

³⁸⁶ Schmid (2001), 401; Schmid (2008), 385.

³⁸⁷ Schmid (1997), 417.

³⁸⁸ The question of which troops the Roman used in the campaign has inspired a legion of tortured debate in the secondary literature. It is likely that the occupying force consisted of elements from the III Cyrenaica and probably the VI Ferrata. The year before the annexation had witnessed the transfer of two cohorts to Judaea from Egypt. On the presence of the VI Ferrata, see esp. Kennedy (1980), 283-309; cf. Bowersock (1983), 81, n. 18; Speidel (1971), 111-12; Speidel (1977), 687-730. On the III Cyrenaica, see Preaux (1950-1), 123-9; Bowersock (1970), 40-43.

³⁸⁹ For the statute: Dio 68.16.2; *CIL* VI.1386 (Dessau, *ILS* 1023). For modern discussion, see Schmid (2008), 385 n. 116; Wenning (1993), 101 n. 107.

³⁹⁰ See Schmid (2008), 385 n. 116.

³⁹¹ Eck (1999), 82.

³⁹² Cotton (2003), 148-9; Eck (1999), 82ff.

³⁹³ On this point, I am in agreement with Kennedy (1996), 113. The degree to which the abruptness of the transition to Roman rule is reflected in the material culture needs further exploration.

³⁹⁴ Bowersock (1983), 83-84, has argued that he seems to have been more interested in publicizing the *via Traiana*. By this logic, Trajan wished to confront the Near East with a *fait accompli*.

to the event.³⁹⁵ This has led some scholars to make the argument that the Romans did not actually annex the territory completely until 111.³⁹⁶ The afore-mentioned arch—in which Petra was honored as a metropolis and the city honored the emperor and on which Trajan's titles of *Germanicus* and *Dacicus* are given—was not set up until 114 CE, a full eight years after the annexation.³⁹⁷ The arch should probably be linked to formal advertisement of the establishment of the new province, connecting it with milestones on the *Via Nova Traiana*. This road was probably completed in several stages: the first, between Petra and 'Aqaba (Aila) in 111 CE; the second, between Petra and Philadelphia, in 112; and the third, northernmost section, between Philadelphia and Bostra, in 114 CE.³⁹⁸ About two hundred milestones document the route, which extended over 400 km in length.³⁹⁹ The Roman delay in broadcasting the annexation has generated a great deal of speculation. We may suggest another possibility: the Romans wished to ensure continued Nabataean cooperation in the operation of trade through Petra and Bostra.

Furthermore, the dates of dedications indicate that the Romans did not begin conscription of Nabataeans until 111-114: they seem at least to have conscripted Nabataeans to help in the Parthian campaign. Trajan's *cohorts Ulpiae Petraeorum*, which he drafted after the annexation, consisted of six auxiliary units from the Nabataean army.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, all of the most important changes would not occur until after 111, when Claudius Severus was appointed governor of the province.⁴⁰¹ This would be further evidence to a Nabataean observer of a lack of palpable, permanent Roman control, leading to a hesitation to accept the new political reality. The at times ambiguous nature of the Roman annexation created an uncertain atmosphere. In the years immediately following 106 CE, prior to (and perhaps even after) the construction of the new road north from Aqaba, the Nabataeans may have sensed an impermanent quality to the Roman occupation. There had, after all, been well-known precedents of the Romans giving back previously acquired territory.⁴⁰²

In addition, even as the Romans took over the primary administrative centers of Petra and Bostra, their influence at the local level should be regarded as more gradual and less pervasive. The political annexation may overlay a more subtle cultural—and even political—reality. It seems clear that the Roman annexation affected the Nabataeans at an administrative level, but largely failed, at least initially, to penetrate to the level of religion and culture.⁴⁰³ The Nabataean cult to the deified King Obodas at Obodas (Avdat) in the Negev Desert, for example, persists at least until 267/8 CE.⁴⁰⁴ The cult of Dushara also remained vibrant long after the annexation.

³⁹⁵ On the problem, see Bowersock (1983), 82; Bowersock (1982), 197-8.

³⁹⁶ For this view, see esp. Freeman (1996), 113.

³⁹⁷ For the text: Bowersock (1983), 85, n. 28.

³⁹⁸ See Graf (1996), 31-32.

³⁹⁹ Graf (1996), 1.

⁴⁰⁰ Graf (2007), 176.

⁴⁰¹ See Freeman (1996), 106, 108.

⁴⁰² Perhaps most conspicuously, Commagene: the Romans annexed the province in 17 CE; restored it in 37 or 38; and re-annexed it in 72 and added it to the province of Syria. See Jos. *AJ* 18.53, 19.276, Dio 60.8.1.

⁴⁰³ See esp. Graf (2007), 184-185 with bibliography.

⁴⁰⁴ Graf (2007), 183;

The key lies in Nabataean perception of and reaction to these critical events. As some have argued, the Romans may have intended the new road to be a conduit for an impending invasion of Parthia.⁴⁰⁵ It need not have represented—at least initially—a frontier. In other words, this project, while giving some semblance of permanence, might also be interpreted as a sign that the Romans’ real imperialist ambitions lay—at least in the shorter term—farther afield. In assessing the Nabataean reaction, we also have some evidence. Two incidents stand out. It is possible that some kind of local administration remained in place while the transition to a full Roman province was effected. A rather puzzling inscription from Hegra suggests that the Romans left a putative Malichus III in charge of this part of the territory, at least temporarily. It reads, “This is the altar that Shakahu, son of Taura, made for A’ra, who is in Bostra, the god of Rabbel, in the month Nisan of year one of Malichus, the king.”⁴⁰⁶ Most have thought that the Romans left this putative Malichus III in charge, as a kind of client ruler, so that they would not have to take over that part of Nabataean territory, at least initially. We may suggest, though, another, more attractive, solution: that this Malichus was acting on his own initiative, not that of Rome, and was trying to keep the Nabataean monarchy going.⁴⁰⁷ Malichus need not necessarily have been a blood descendent of Rabbel II. We may conclude that a local Nabataean chieftain perceived an opportunity for a kind of continued autonomy in the Hejaz, the key region of southern Nabataea.

We also have some evidence of continued Nabataean resistance to Roman rule in the years after the annexation, including attestation of probable Nabataean participation in the Bar Kochba revolt in 135 CE. In *P.Yadin 52* of the Babatha archive, a certain Soumaios writes a letter requesting wands and citrons for the rebels.⁴⁰⁸ Because he claims an inability to write Hebrew, and because Soumaios is elsewhere attested as a Nabataean name, the author is likely a Nabataean.⁴⁰⁹ A passage from Cassius Dio, in which he writes that many outsiders joined the Jewish cause out of a desire for gain, may refer to Nabataeans, of whom this Soumaios may have been one.⁴¹⁰ We can go further. The governor of Arabia during the revolt, T. Haterius Nepos, received the *ornamenta triumphalia*, almost certainly for his role in suppressing the revolt.⁴¹¹ This would suggest some fighting occurred in Arabia, with Nabataean participation being likely, even if such activity was largely centered in the Jewish community living within Nabataea. It also

⁴⁰⁵ See most recently Schmid (2008), 385-6 for this view.

⁴⁰⁶ *CIS* II.256: See Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 343-345 for discussion of the text, including its date, which they put convincingly in or just after 106 CE; cf. Wenning (2001), 83, n. 9; Bowersock (1983), 70 n. 37. Eadie (1985), 415, strenuously advanced the thesis that the Romans left Malichus in charge of this territory, which Eadie speculates would have been centered on Hegra. It would exist at Rome’s pleasure and could be annexed later.

⁴⁰⁷ See Hackl, Jenni, Schneider (2003), 345.

⁴⁰⁸ The text has received a great deal of attention, and numerous interpretations, most recently Cotton (2002), 351-362. Bibliography on the Babatha archive, which lies outside the scope of this dissertation, is extensive. See esp. Lewis (1989), *passim*; Goodman (1991), 169-175; Lewis (2003), 189-192.

⁴⁰⁹ As Cotton notes (2003), 146, the name also appears twice in the Babatha archive, in Greek. In post-annexation documents, Nabataeans sign their names either in Nabataean or in Greek, while generally signed in Hebrew.

⁴¹⁰ Dio 69.13.2.

⁴¹¹ As argued convincingly by Eck (1999), 84-85.

illustrates—especially when taken together with the interpretation put forth throughout the rest of this dissertation—that the Nabataeans can be seen as acting in their own self-interest even some time after, and in spite of, the Roman annexation. Most importantly, though, it adds to the impression of a more gradual transition, and one not without difficulty or without resistance on the part of the Nabataeans. Taken together, the available evidence suggests a protracted Nabataean resistance to Roman occupation. This recalcitrance seems to have been based in no small part upon the Nabataean perception, at least initially, that the Romans would not be staying as a permanent occupying force in Arabia. Paradoxically, the Romans’ rather gradual takeover of Nabataea may have helped to limit, in the longer term, Nabataean resistance.

V: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has highlighted several important problems with the generally accepted explanations of Nabataean civilization in the last four decades of the 1st century CE. First, it has demonstrated that the Nabataeans, just as in the preceding periods, continued to pursue a foreign policy in their own interests, not one simply in the service of foreign powers such as the Jews and Romans. It has also spoken out strongly against an oft-alleged significant Nabataean decline in the first century CE under the reign of Malichus II.⁴¹² On the contrary, we see the continued vitality and vibrancy of Nabataean cultural, political, and economic achievements in this period. Most importantly, the chapter has strongly challenged the inevitability of the Roman annexation, particularly from a Nabataean point of view. Review of the available evidence shows significant Nabataean resistance to the annexation, inspired at least in part by the possibility that the changes might not represent a permanent state of affairs. The gradual manner in which Romans the Romans effected, then advertised, their acquisition of the new *provincia Arabia* may have contributed to further, protracted Nabataean resistance to Roman hegemony. This was especially true prior to 111 CE, and quite probably as late as 135 CE.

While living in the shadow of the increasingly powerful Roman presence in the eastern Mediterranean seems on the whole to have helped, rather than hindered, the Nabataeans during this period, we should not consider them simply in stock terms, according to a prescribed model of client states on the periphery of the Roman empire.⁴¹³ As always, we need to be careful to evaluate them—and their relationships with Rome and other neighboring states—on their own terms. Analysis of the last decades of Nabataean independence presents a unique challenge to the Nabataean historian, who has so little surviving evidence with which to work—even less than exists for earlier periods. As has been shown, however, the effort expended in locating and articulating the Nabataean perspective on the critical events of these years is not without substantial rewards.

⁴¹² There has, fortunately, been somewhat of a corrective on this score in recent years, as I illustrated above.

⁴¹³ In a recent article, Schmid has articulated some of the same objections repeatedly raised in this dissertation. He notes, for example, that, “There is no evidence at all that Roman emperors were honoured by the Nabataeans prior to AD 106. If theirs was a client kingdom, the Nabataeans should have shown more devotion or interest to such matters”: Schmid (2009), 350.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has explored in detail the history of the Nabataeans during the four hundred year period that they operated as an independent polity in the Near East, from 312 BCE—when they successfully repelled the attack of Antigonos Monophthalmos and his son Demetrius Poliorcetes—to the Roman annexation in 106 CE. It has sought to make an important and original contribution to our knowledge about the Nabataeans and their civilization. Through a critical re-reading and interpretation of the available evidence—including epigraphic, papyrological, numismatic, archaeological, and literary testimony—the dissertation identifies, analyzes, and articulates the specifically Nabataean perspective on the major political, cultural, and economic events in the Near East during this approximately four hundred year period, while also calling into question or recalibrating many key assumptions about this precocious and perplexing civilization.

As critical re-examination of the early Hellenistic period from 312 to 63 BCE has demonstrated, the Nabataeans had already established a prominent role for themselves as early as the late 4th century BCE, when they rebuffed the efforts of Antigonos and his son Demetrius to occupy their territory and exploit their resources. The need for proper recognition and analysis of Nabataean activities in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE has become especially apparent in the last several years, as archaeological work has begun to explore and identify more of the Hellenistic-era Nabataean remains at Petra.⁴¹⁴

The roughly one hundred year period from the settlement of Pompey in 63 BCE to the death of Aretas IV in 40 CE has bequeathed us comparatively rich testimony about the political activities of the Nabataeans during these critical decades, as well as striking evidence of their cultural programs and agendas. This period nevertheless has previously lacked thorough examination with a goal to identifying specifically Nabataean objectives and perspectives. The expedition of Aelius Gallus, for example, demonstrates Nabataean self-interest and opportunism in the face of Roman imperialist ambitions in the Near East.

Study of the last decades of Nabataean independence and their role in the political and cultural events of the 1st century CE has required a unique kind of historical approach, one that incorporates a broad range of evidence. The strategy followed in this section of the dissertation has almost by definition provided a uniquely Nabataean perspective. Future investigation might expand on this approach to take account of the Nabataeans in the post-annexation period. The methodology employed here may also contribute to the further examination and evaluation of other civilizations on the eastern periphery of the Greek and Roman worlds.⁴¹⁵ Many of these suffer in the same way as the Nabataeans from a lack of an indigenous historical narrative. We ought, as historians, to endeavor to provide their perspective.

The ever-increasing amount of archaeological data on the Nabataeans promises to help elucidate the periods both before and after the annexation in 106 CE. While this project ends with the Roman annexation, the potential for future work beyond that date should be as abundantly clear to the reader as it is to me. Future research in this direction will tell us much more about the impact of the imposition of Roman imperial authority in the farther reaches of the eastern Mediterranean. From the Nabataean point of view, we would

⁴¹⁴ See notes 46 and 47 above, with bibliography.

⁴¹⁵ Such as, for example, the Palmyrenes in Syria or the Sabaeans in the southern Arabian peninsula.

certainly like to know more about specific reactions on the ground to the political, cultural, and economic shifts brought on by these changes. What impact did the Roman takeover have on major Nabataean cities like Bostra and Petra and does urban development differ significantly from the pre-annexation period? What was the cultural output of the Nabataeans after the annexation and, more importantly, to what extent did the Nabataeans succeed in maintaining a distinct cultural identity? With so many tantalizing questions, the future prospects for study of the Nabataeans looks bright indeed.

This dissertation makes an important contribution to the scholarly dialogue about the Nabataeans and their history. The state of the field of Nabataean studies is growing and evolving, with more data and evidence coming to light all the time, most of it from ongoing archaeological fieldwork in Jordan, Syria, Israel, and Saudi Arabia. One hopes that this trend continues, as it will certainly augment our knowledge about this fascinating, enigmatic civilization. We must be mindful at the same time of the continuing need to contextualize this material and to integrate and balance it with analysis and careful evaluation of historical and cultural events. One of course also harbors the almost certainly futile hope that some day a Nabataean history, written in the Nabataeans' own language, will appear. In its lieu, this dissertation may serve in some small way to fill the gap.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>ADAJ</i>	<i>Annual of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>British Archaeological Reports</i>
<i>CIS</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i>
<i>JRA</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Archaeology</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>SHAJ</i>	<i>Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan</i>
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die Papyrologie und die Epigraphik</i>

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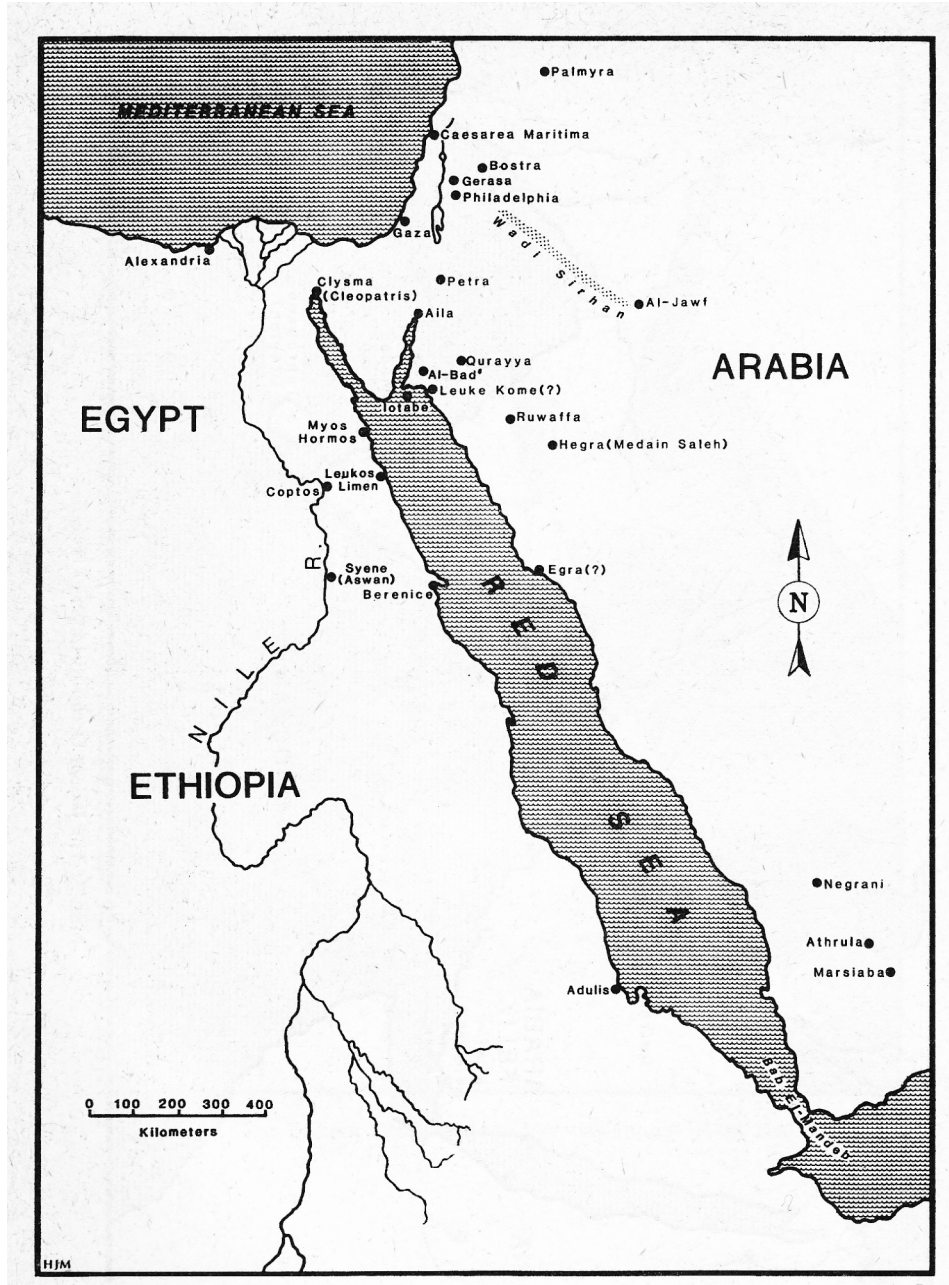
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APPENDIX:
MAP AND FIGURES



Map of Nabataea and Environs
(from Sidebotham 1986, xiv)

FIGURE 1



Coin of Aretas III *Philhellenos*
(from Schmitt-Korte 1990, pl. 10 no. 8)

FIGURE 2



Coin of Alexander Jannaeus
(from American Numismatic Society, no. 1944.100.62735)

FIGURE 3



Coin of M. Scaurus with Aretas III
(from American Numismatic Society, no. 1908.89.11)

FIGURE 4



Coin of Obodas II

(from American Numismatic Society, no. 1944.100.69434)

FIGURE 5



Coin of Aretas IV and Syllaios

(from Meshorer 1975, pl. 3, no. 40)

FIGURE 6



Coin of Aretas IV with Laurel Wreath

(from Meshorer 1975, pl. 4, no. 58)

FIGURE 7



Coin of Rabbel II

(from American Numismatic Society, no. 1963.198.1)

FIGURE 8



The Khazneh (the “Treasury”), Petra
(photo by J. Pearson)

FIGURE 9



Al-Dayr (the “Monastery”), Petra
(photo by J. Pearson)

FIGURE 10



Crenellated Tombs, Petra
(photo by J. Pearson)

FIGURE 11



Nabataean Painted Bowl from Phase 3b (c. 70/80-100 CE)
(from Schmid 2001, 80 fig. 27)