

Artists and Artisans: Reflections on Nabatean Minor Art – Clay, Metal, and Stone*

Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom

“Ethnicity refers to a situation meaningful for individual and collective action in which a relatively large group of human beings is united by the belief in a common origin, in sharing cultural history and actual experiences and by the awareness of a specific perception of identity and solidarity”. With these words, the modern scholar F. Heckmann defines the concept of ethnicity in his work on the sociology of inter-ethnic relations (Heckmann 1992: 46). In this sense the Nabateans never formed an ethnic identity nor a nation or state in the modern sense. Their civilization was a conglomerate of Bedouin nomadic tradition and Hellenistic urban society, and in fact, it is this dichotomy of Bedouinism and Hellenism that is its characteristic feature (Knauf 1997: 15–17). These two ways of life are mutually exclusive, yet in the ancient and modern Orient several examples of this dichotomy can be found, to name only the city-states of Palmyra and Hatra in the Hellenistic-Roman period or the present kingdoms and sheikhdoms in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf Emirates (Khouri 1997: 164–167). The division of society into two groups, nomads and a settled population, means that the prosperous city elite aspired to a life style different from that of the nomads, yet at the same time was dependent on the nomads for the safety of the transport routes and delivery of the goods. The question arises, to what extent this dichotomy is reflected in the cultural heritage and how can we define Nabatean culture? In the minor arts the answer is much less obvious than in monumental art and architecture. The attribute ‘Nabatean’ is assigned to material remains which have come to light in the area extending from ancient Bostra in the north to Hegra in the south, including the Negev and Sinai Peninsula and extending as far west as Qasr wet in the eastern Nile delta. However, this region was multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious; thus Nabatean architectural remains such as temples, monumental tombs, public buildings and private dwellings are identified not only by structural features like plans, architectural elements, masonry, construction technique, but also by additional components such as location, inscriptions and iconography, which betray a combination of Oriental, Classical and indigenous Arab traditions. The last decade has seen an increase in research activity at the royal residence of Petra, the Nabatean administrative, economic, social and religious center. Furthermore, the refinement of archaeological and interpretative

methods has changed our perception of Nabatean culture and many aspects need to be reviewed and rethought (Joukowsky 2001). As an actual example relevant to the objects under discussion, the title of Nelson Glueck’s pioneering study “Deities and Dolphins: The Story of the Nabataeans”, which appeared in 1965, is based on the assumption that the female bust from the temple at Khirbet et-Tannur, crowned with two fish, represents a dolphin goddess to be identified with Atargatis (Fig. 38). Glueck comments: “ Meeting her, as we did, practically in the middle of the desert, flaunting dolphins on top of her head, seemed at first almost as strange as it would to have encountered a camel swimming far out to sea”. Judith S. McKenzie (2001: 108–109) has convincingly argued that the figure is a personification of the zodiac sign Pisces, a reassessment supported by the depiction of male busts on the main frieze of the temple at Khirbet edh-Dharib, representing zodiac signs. This interpretation also bears upon the identification of the dolphin on the gold pendants (Fig. 39), the painted bowl from Mampsis (Fig. 40), and the small stone altar from Oboda (Fig. 41). Following Glueck, the fish-shaped pendants and the painted and relief decorations had been tentatively interpreted as representations of dolphins (Rosenthal 1975).

The wealth of Nabatean material culture is attested by the diversity of objects used in daily life: clay vessels including tableware and kitchenware, clay and bronze lamps and altars, clay seals, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines of clay and bronze, gold jewelry, pendants and beads, bronze implements such as bells and dress pins, and portable stone objects like libation bowls, altars, and betyls (stelae and plaques representing deities). Nabatean craftsmanship is represented at its best by ceramics, clay figurines, jewelry and coins made by local artists and artisans. The majority of the objects under discussion falls within the chronological range of the 1st century BCE to the 2nd century CE, i.e. the late Hellenistic and Roman periods and the peak of Nabatean culture. During the early phase of political and economic consolidation and a mainly nomadic lifestyle, i.e. for some two hundred years from the first mention of Nabateans in 312 BCE, most objects of daily use were imported. By the late 2nd century BCE the production of painted and plain ware clay vessels had begun and from the 1st century BCE onwards bronze and silver coins were minted.

Clay Vessels

The egg-shell ware, easily identified by material and decoration, is the hallmark of Nabatean ceramics: the delicate thinness, the reddish color and the painted decoration are outstanding (Figs. 40, 42-46). Being so fragile, it was not meant to be transported over long distances, thus it is found outside the Nabatean realm in small numbers only: in the harbors and anchorages along the Mediterranean coast from Rhinocolura (el-Arish) to Antioch-on-the-Orontes, at a few Judean sites with a Jewish population, in the Sinai Peninsula, along the Wadi Sirhan to the Jawf Oasis and far south into Arabia Felix to Marib and al-Faw and the island of Bahrain in the Persian Gulf. Plain ware is recorded from Tel Anafa in the Galilee, Jalame on the Kishon River, Yokneam in the Jezreel Valley and Aroer in the Negev. For a long time a cultic use had been postulated for the painted pottery. However, the latest excavations of the University of Basel at Petra/ez Zantur have demonstrated that this theory should be dismissed. These excavations, concentrating primarily on private dwellings, have also provided the stratigraphic basis for a chronological and typological division of the fine painted ware into three main phases, ranging from c. 100 BCE into the 2nd century CE. A fourth phase is represented by painted pottery of diminishing quality, which continued to be produced into the 4th century CE, fragments of which have been found in the remains related to the earthquake of 363 CE (Fig. 42 after Schmid 1996). The three main phases have yielded over 400 vessel types in household contexts, 75% of which are low open forms such as plates and bowls. In the early phase of Nabatean pottery production Hellenistic forms were copied. From the middle of the 1st century BCE onwards one can speak of a distinctly Nabatean style. The most common painted ware vessel is a wide-mouthed, semi-circular bowl without a stand-ring or handles, painted on the interior. It functioned as a drinking-cup held in the palms of both hands. The decoration is varied: floral motifs such as palmettes, rosettes, pomegranates, wreaths of olive and laurel leaves, single leaves, and geometrical motifs like triangles, stars, horns of altars and dots arranged in pyramid shape; representations of birds and stylized human figures are rare (Figs. 40, 42-46). Nabatean painted pottery developed at a time when Hellenistic painted wares, West Slope Ware and lagynoi were no longer in vogue, thus it is unlikely that shapes and ornamentation were directly copied. However, a definite influence can be discerned between the footless bowl with a wreath painted around the inner edge (Figs. 42-45) and bowls produced in the West Slope technique

(Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995: 224–225 and Fig. 5.9:5–9 on p. 267), both types going back to metal prototypes from the Achaemenid period. The painted jug (Fig. 46) can be related to the painted lagynoi (Leroux 1913: *passim*). In neighboring Judea a class of painted pottery, including bowls and closed vessels, developed at the same time (see Hershkovitz this volume). While Hershkovitz postulates that the Jewish potters copied the Nabatean forms and adapted the decoration schemes to the needs of Jewish society, this author suggests a simultaneous development of two groups of regional products in the tradition of the Hellenistic painted pottery. Just as the decoration of the Judean painted pottery (the author prefers this term to Jerusalemite) is related to that common in Jewish art of the late Second Temple period on coins, lamps, stone furniture, ossuaries, tombs, mosaics and wall-paintings, the Nabatean painted pottery should be viewed within the general development of Nabatean art and architecture.

Of utmost significance are the installations of a large-scale pottery industry discovered in the vicinity of Az-Zeraba: workshops and kilns, misfired rejects, dumps extending over an area of 500 sq m, and clay deposits in the vicinity. Production continued from the early 2nd into the 6th centuries CE, the earliest kiln dating from the post-106 era (Zayadine and 'Amr in Weber and Wenning 1997: 137–140). Pre-Roman kilns have been unearthed at Adru-Augustopolis 17 km to the east of Petra and at Oboda in the Negev.

It is not possible to discuss here the large repertoire of additional plain and decorated fine wares, table and kitchenwares and containers for storage and transportation. Noteworthy are the fine ware cups and chalices with impressed and/or rouletted decoration, the fine and medium ware juglets, strainer juglets (Fig. 47), jugs and pitchers with rouletting, all representing distinctly Nabatean ceramics. These vessels occur alongside cooking ware in the assemblages of forts, fortresses and way-stations along the Petra–Gaza road in the Negev (see Erickson-Gini and Israel this volume), where painted egg-shell ware is not as plentiful as at centers like Petra or Oboda. The small and larger-sized unguentaria of piriform shape (Erickson-Gini and Israel this volume: Fig. 14) were made at Petra during the 1st to 3rd centuries CE, one of the branches of the Petrean manufacturing industries, and were used for the distribution of perfume and spice products (Johnson 1987). The Nabateans imported and copied late Hellenistic and Roman imperial lamps and lamp-fillers. The unmistakable Nabatean lamp type (Fig. 48) is common from around the middle of the 1st century to the

early 2nd century CE. Typologically it is related to the late Hellenistic tradition, with a wide decorated shoulder, a decorated nozzle and a small plain discus and does not adhere to the imperial Roman concept of discus lamp with a narrow shoulder and a large space for depicting anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and ornamental subjects. The Nabatean lamp is evidence that in the East, regional traditions were long-lived and stronger than Roman influence. A parallel in shape and decoration is found in the class of Deba'al lamps, manufactured in Phoenicia (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995: 246, Type 24, 50–150 CE), while the concept of shoulder and nozzle decoration can be seen in the lamps of southern Judea and the Shephelah (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1995: 244, Type 23, c. 75–150/200 CE) and in the lamps with a bow-shaped nozzle of the 3rd and 4th centuries CE (Rosenthal and Sivan 1978: 104–108).

These ceramics are evidence of Nabatean innovations in manufacturing and decoration techniques and of the high standard of workmanship that Nabatean potters achieved, parallel to the high-quality workmanship evident in gold jewelry (see below) and spinning and weaving techniques (see Shamir this volume).

Considering the extensive Nabatean trade connections throughout the Near East and into the Aegean and Italy, it is not surprising that tableware of foreign origin was imported, almost exclusively luxury vessels used in dining and drinking. The superior quality red-glazed ware is represented by three groups, Eastern terra sigillata produced in northern Syrian workshops, Cypriot sigillata, and Western terra sigillata from Italy. Eastern terra sigillata group A (ESA), was the most popular tableware throughout the eastern Mediterranean. At Petra ESA was imported during Phase 1 of the Nabatean fine painted ware, i.e. from the late 2nd century to c. 50 BCE; in Phase 2 from c. 50 BCE to 20 CE a small number of Western terra sigillata and cooking dishes called Pompeian Red were imported from Italy (Schmid 1996: 129; Schneider 1996: 141–142). These dishes, quite common in Mediterranean countries as well as in western and central Europe, have a flat base and lids and are best termed pans, as they are appropriate for the preparation of a Roman patina, or a modern quiche. Recorded from Oboda and Petra during Phase 2 (50 BCE–20 CE), they reflect a change in culinary tastes (Negev 1986b: 17–19; Schneider 1996: 137). Here again, the Nabateans shared the tastes common in the Levant, along with the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem. Such dishes have come to light in Area A in the Jewish Quarter

excavations, in a context from the time of Herod the Great to 70 CE (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2003: 215–216).

Four additional imported ceramic types should be mentioned: two types of wine cups and two types for holding liquids. The first is the Knidian-Koan wine cup, a popular Knidian mass-produced vessel with a wide distribution along the Mediterranean coast and into the Black Sea region. This product was manufactured and exported over a long period from around 200 BCE into the 2nd century CE, being the only Hellenistic form to survive well into the Roman period. Some cups were imported into the Hellenized coastal and northern cities in the Land of Israel already in the 2nd century BCE, although they do not occur in Nabatea and neighboring Judea before the middle of the 1st century BCE (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2003: 207–208). The second type comprises lead-glazed cups and chalices from Asia Minor, the so-called Tarsos Group manufactured between c. 50 BCE to 50 CE, which were found at Petra and Oboda and reached Timna in southern Arabia along the incense and spice route (Negev 1986b: 12–13; Schneider 1996: 137–138; Hochuli-Gysel 1977: 108, 110). Along with the shape and wreath decoration of the egg-shell drinking bowls described above, these wine cups are evidence of Hellenistic influence on Nabatean dining habits.

The third and fourth type, the Green ware and the Green-glazed ware, are closed table vessels such as jugs and amphorae (Schneider 1996: 138–139, 141). The former, a coarse to medium-fine fabric, comprises mainly strainer jugs made for the storage and serving of cold drinks (Murray and Ellis 1940: 20). Such vessels were found also at sites in Judea, at Masada and Aroer. Petrographic analysis points to a Mesopotamian origin, as is the case with the rare Green-glazed ware.

Among the remnants of funerary meals in the Mampsis necropolis, imitations of ESA ware have been found. Although the shapes follow the original, the slip has been carelessly applied. Since these vessels were used only once in the ceremony and then, being ritually unclean, were broken into pieces and discarded, the potters purposely produced a cheap imitation ware. On the other hand, high-quality Nabatean vessels were placed in the tombs themselves (Negev and Sivan 1977; Bikai and Perry 2001).

Seals

In the Mampsis necropolis 27 clay seals (bullae) came to light in the tomb of a woman who was buried with personal documents

in a wooden box, of which only charred wood and the fired seals were preserved. Three Nabatean cities are represented by official seals from Roman chancelleries: Petra with the bust of Tyche and a seated Tyche; Charachmoba (al-Kerak) with the bust of Arabia (Fig. 49), a seated Tyche, and the zodiac signs *sagittarius*, *capricorn*, and *aquarius*; and Rabbathmoba (Areopolis) with a standing warrior and the zodiac signs *libra*, *scorpio* (Fig. 50) and *sagittarius*. The Tyche of Petra is also found on a bulla from the caravan station at Mo'a in the Aravah. This depiction was copied from a coin minted at Petra under Hadrian (Negev 1969). The custom of sealing documents is well-known in the Near East, and regional seal types range from Achaemenid, Ptolemaic and Seleucid, Samaritan, Jewish and Roman from Syria. The Archive of Babatha, hidden in the Cave of the Letters in the Judean Desert at the time of the Bar Kochba Revolt, contains documents written in Nabatean, issued at the administrative centers of Petra and Rabbathmoba, indicating that the Nabatean administration system was taken over and preserved by the Romans.

Clay Figurines

The repertoire of mold-made figurines of deities, humans and animals is considerable. Female and male statuettes include enthroned and standing goddesses, standing nude boys or young gods, Dionysos, children holding a dove or a bird, and musicians. Animal figurines comprise camels, horses and riders. Less common are horned animals and birds as well as theatrical masks and small altars (Parlasca in Weber and Wenning 1997: 126–131; El-Khouri 2002). Nabatean mold-made figurines are easily identified by fabric and iconography and were mainly, if not exclusively, manufactured at Petra, where some clay and stone molds were recovered. Several figurines were molded from worn molds, indicating that molds were copied and re-used (El-Khouri 2002: 34). Production began in the 1st century BCE, and reached its height in the 1st century CE, with some types continuing into the 3rd century. It is regrettable that so many pieces originate from the antiquities market and thus their context is unknown. Find-spots include public buildings, private houses, tombs and dumps. More than any other class of small finds, the figurines are evidence of religious beliefs and cults, as many can be identified as votive offerings. There are images of the Nabatean pantheon and “imported” deities such as the Mourning Isis, Harpocrates, Bes and Serapis from Egypt, and Aphrodite, Eros, Nike and Dionysos from the Greco-Roman realm.

The enthroned female (Fig. 51), her right hand raised in a

gesture of blessing and possibly holding a pomegranate in her left hand, has been tentatively identified as Al-'Uzza/Aphrodite (El-Khouri 2002: 9–11). The gesture of blessing, the concept of frontality, the strict symmetry with the exception of the position of arms and hands, as well as the nudity adhere to an ancient Oriental tradition. The gesture of the raised right hand expresses a variety of concepts: blessing, protection, supplication, reverence and might. The same message is conveyed by the palm of a hand on the reverse of coins struck under Malichus I (see Meshorer this volume). Identical to the enthroned goddess in style and size is the figurine of a standing male youth wearing a necklace with a crescent-shaped pendant (*lunula*) and raising his right hand, who may be interpreted as her son Eros (Fig. 52; El-Khouri 2002: 13–14). The *lunula* is a very ancient symbol found in many different cultures from the Neolithic period onwards. It was worn on a necklace as an amulet (*apotropaion*) against the evil eye or as a divine symbol. In both monumental and minor art, on lintels, reliefs, figurines, tesserae and gemstones, astral deities were depicted with a crescent on the head, behind the shoulder or below the bust. In the Roman imperial period the *lunula* was commonly worn by women and children as a charm to ensure a good healthy life. For the Nabateans, the crescent-shaped pendant most likely personified Al-'Uzza /Aphrodite (Rosenthal-Heginbottom in Weber and Wenning 1997: 143).

The large number of horse figurines and the fewer examples of camels and dromedaries – the Arabian one-humped camel (Fig. 54–56), are always represented in side view with both halves made from molds corresponding in most details (El-Khouri 2002: 19–29). The horses (Fig. 54) are depicted with an elaborate harness and saddle, wearing a necklace with a crescent-shaped pendant; the camels with harness, saddle and saddle bag, water gourd, sword and shield. Both types were votive offerings to the gods asking for protection and guidance in business and daily life. In a Nabatean inscription from Puteoli, modern Pozzuoli, in the Bay of Naples, two camels were dedicated as votive offerings to the god Dushara (Tran Tam Tinh 1972: 142–144). The devotees were itinerant merchants and people engaged in the supervision and protection of the caravan routes. In the Negev the Nabateans were engaged in horse-breeding and stables were uncovered at Mampsis, Oboda, Sobata and Rehovot-in-the-Negev. These stables were constructed with great care and always connected with a residential building, indicating that the contents were considered of great value. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE horses were sold to the Roman army stationed in Syria, particularly during

the war against the Parthians conducted under the Severan emperors (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1980). The identity of the few horse and camel riders – whether god or human – (Fig. 53), is unknown (from Petra: Parlasca in Weber and Wenning 1997: Figs. 146b, 147; El-Khoury 2002: 23, 28; from Mo'a: Cohen 1993: 1139). Two horses, one with a rider, were incised on a plaster wall in the tower at Oboda, erected in 293–294 CE (Fig. 57). The horse rider may be related to the Hellenistic concept of the victorious ruler that became a popular pictorial type throughout the Near East with the veneration of Alexander the Great, and even appears on Coptic textiles many centuries later. If this is the case, these figurines are evidence for the Hellenization of the East.

Gold Jewelry

In the necropolis of Mampsis a variety of delicate gold jewelry came to light: simple and elaborate earrings, nose-rings, and pendants. Parallels were found in the excavations at Oboda, Petra and in the Hauran, while quite a number of similar specimens are in the possession of museums and private collectors and their Nabatean origin can only be determined through stylistic comparison. The existence of a school of Nabatean goldsmiths is underscored by the fact that despite the extensive trade connections, no foreign jewelry was imported, nor were Nabatean types exported (Rosenthal 1973: 80–87; Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1997: 202–205; Rosenthal-Heginbottom in Weber and Wenning 1997: 140–144). In addition to the technical skills required, raw material needed to be attained. Ancient gold mines are reported along the eastern coast of the Red Sea between the kingdoms of Midian and Saba and along the western coast between the harbors of Myos Hormos and Berenike. In addition to the revenue from the incense and spice trade and the manufacturing industries at Petra, the mining of gold could have been another source of the Nabateans' immense wealth.

It is not possible to discuss here the typological variety or the technical aspects of Nabatean jewelry, thus only a few artifacts will be presented. A pair of crescent-shaped earrings (Fig. 58.1) is richly adorned with minute granules arranged in triangles, bars, rosettes and clusters and surrounded by a row and two pyramids of globules, now partly damaged. Earrings of this type, with slight variations, are known from a number of museums, nearly all of which were acquired on the antiquities market (Goldman 1996). Since several examples are known from Egypt, an Alexandrian origin was once postulated, although this can no longer be maintained (Fig. 58.2). Granulation is also the main

decorative element on flat circular earrings, a single earring and a pair from the Mampsis necropolis (Figs. 59.1-2), and on a nose-ring from Oboda (Fig. 60) which has a close parallel at Mampsis. The single earring (Fig. 59.1) is decorated with Aphrodite Andayomene (see Fig. 61) standing in a shrine and flanked by two garnets set in a bezel. The surface has clusters of granules and the edge is surrounded by a plaited wreath bearing bunches of grapes. Wreaths are also a common element on the egg-shell painted bowls (Figs. 42-44). A wreath also surrounds another pair of stylistically-related earrings with two garnets and a small shield set in the center below the garnets (Fig. 59.2). J. Patrich has identified the combination of garnets and shields – representing two eyes and a nose, as eye betyls; thus the same goddess Al-'Uzza/Aphrodite is depicted in both an anthropomorphic and aniconic manner (Patrich 1984). The use of the nose-ring is confirmed by its location within the skull in the burial at Mampsis, by the fact that such objects occur in single pieces and that the pendant is firmly soldered onto the loop and thus immovable (Fig. 60). The earliest nose-ring appears to be an ornament from Nimrud, dated between the 8th to 7th centuries BCE. During the Roman and Byzantine periods the nose-ring is listed in the Mishna among the jewelry pieces a Jewish woman is permitted to wear on the sabbath. Among the Bedouin of northern Arabia the nose-ring (*shnaf* or *zmaymah*) is still worn. Another example of the survival of an ancient tradition into modern times is the thumb rings found in Meroitic tombs from the Roman period which are still worn today in the Sudan.

Loop and boat-shaped earrings were manufactured in a different technique by beating the sheet gold over a core (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 2002). They are either plain or decorated with globules, or in rare cases with bezel-set garnets (Fig. 59. 3). Since the form and technique are wide-spread it is difficult to differentiate between Nabatean, Syrian and other Hellenistic-Roman workshops.

Pendants include the lunula, mentioned above, as well as a scorpion, a fish/dolphin (Fig. 39) and a faience frog. They were probably strung on a necklace together with small and large beads, as indicated by the numerous beads found in Nabatean contexts. It is impossible to prove the apotropaic character of this jewelry, although it is suggested by the fact that the Nabateans, when using semi-precious stones, preferred the red garnet. At Khirbet et-Tannur, N. Glueck noted traces of red color in the eye sockets and on the lips of several sculptures (Glueck 1965: 197, 292, 399). In antiquity this color was attributed a positive influence as it symbolized life.

Metal Objects

Statuettes

The Acropolis Hoard, found in the staircase tower of the Nabatean temple at Oboda, contained fifteen intact and fragmentary bronze statuettes and objects, two Nabatean inscriptions from the reign of Aretas IV, pottery and jewelry. The objects were apparently left when the settlement came to a sudden end in the mid-1st century CE. Among the statuettes is one of Aphrodite Anadyomene (Fig. 61), and the upper part of a male clad in a fringed cloth, tentatively identified as Adonis (Rosenthal-Heginbottom 1997: 197–201; Erickson-Gini and Israel this volume: Fig. 12; for an alternative identification as a youthful god or priest see Parlasca 1993: 63–66, three fragmentary clay figurines manufactured at Petra). The statuettes of Aphrodite and Adonis and an inscription to Zeus Obodas can be interpreted as evidence of a temple dedicated to the triad of Ba'al/Zeus, Adonis and Atargatis/Aphrodite at Oboda, as in the temple at Byblos (Soyez 1977: 76–89; see also Negev 1991a: 63, who suggests more than one temple on the acropolis).

Other objects from the hoard include a bust of a bearded man with a pointed cap/Phrygian hat, possibly an attachment for a bucket handle (Fig. 62), a figurine of a female panther (Fig. 63), a lamp in the shape of a Negro's head with a Nabatean inscription which reads "Good memory and peace to..." (Fig. 64), and several attachments and feet of vessels such as candelabra, braziers, amphoras and buckets. A number of bronzes have been unearthed at other Nabatean sites. The bust of Zeus-Serapis from the Temple of the Winged Lions at Petra has a parallel in a bust from the Mampsis necropolis (Hammond 1996: 51; Negev 1971: Pl. 27A). Indeed, judging from the iconography of the Nabatean bronzes known until now, they are common late Hellenistic and Roman types. An exception is the figurine of an ibex from a residential building at Rehovot-in-the-Negev (Tsafrir 1988: Ill. 16 on p. 10), which has parallels in clay from Petra (El-Khoury 2002: 29–30) and Mampsis (Erickson-Gini and Israel this volume: Fig. 13). The latter, which came to light in the 363-CE earthquake destruction layer, represents the continuance of Nabatean material culture into the late Roman and early Byzantine periods.

Jewelry

In several burial caves at Petra and in the Nabatean hypogeum at Dat Ras small bronze bells, *tintinnabula*, were unearthed. They appear to have been special jewelry for the deceased, although it is still unclear whether bronze bells were placed in both male

and female burials and how they were used. They could have been worn on necklaces or sown on garments. In very few cases were loops for suspension or clappers preserved. In the ancient Near East bronze bells, sometimes also bells of gold or silver, were worn by humans and animals to protect against the evil eye, to banish demons and to prevent illness and accident. As tomb offerings they served as apotropaion and from the 8th century BCE onwards bells are well-documented in sepulchral contexts in the Levant. In the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods they were used by the pagan, Jewish and Christian population and the Nabateans also adhered to this Oriental custom.

Among the offerings in a tomb at Petra were eight bells, beads, and a bronze pendant decorated with a cluster of grapes, probably once worn on a necklace (Fig. 65). Grape clusters also occur as architectural decoration. It is an ancient Oriental motif not restricted to a specific period or region. The Nabateans developed viticulture and produced wine in Arabia Petraea, the Negev and the Hauran (Dar this volume). Grape clusters could have had religious significance as a symbol of the main god Dushara in the form of Dionysos, the god of wine (Rosenthal-Heginbottom in Weber and Wenning 1997: 144).

Among the imported bronze objects, two dress pins or fibulae from the Nabatean way-station at Horvat Dafit should be mentioned. They belong to the "Aucissa" type, inscribed with this Celtic name, and were manufactured in the Roman province of Gallia, modern France. Although commonly associated with the Roman army, fibulae have been found in a tomb on the site of the Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem, dated by a coin to the second year of the First Jewish Revolt (67/68 CE), at the Nabatean site, at Tel Dor and in a tomb at Mishmar Ha-'Emeq, casting doubt on this interpretation. Two additional pins of unknown origin are in the collection of the Israel Antiquities Authority (Fig. 66).

So far, there is no evidence that the Nabateans manufactured bronze objects. The discovery of iron and copper slag in Sabra, a suburb of Petra located halfway between Petra and the copper mines of Umm al-'Amad, Abu Huseba and Muhefir, suggests a Nabatean metal industry. However, at the metal workshop connected to the Temple of the Winged Lions at Petra, it seems that only small objects were manufactured and repairs carried out, since no smelting or casting installation, or molds have been found (Hammond 1996: 51).

Stone Objects

The number of portable stone objects recovered from the sites

of the Negev is small. Of particular interest is a fragmentary altar from the acropolis of Oboda made of local limestone and preserved to a height of 18 cm. Its original shape measured c. 25 x 20 cm (Fig. 41). Each side of the rectangular block was decorated with an arched entrance of a shrine or temple, and above this, on the two extent sides, are a Medusa head and a dolphin. The corners of the altar were formed by columns with a base and capital, and an architrave and frieze decorated with a griffin in a vine scroll. The Medusa head, the dolphin and the griffin are represented on other stone monuments and on terracotta lamps. A parallel is the larger altar of Alexandros Amrou from Khirbet et-Tannur (Glueck 1965: Pl. 187b on p. 419).

Incense burners and eye idols of stone have been unearthed at Petra. Incense burners are stone cubes, each side measuring about 10 cm, decorated with simple geometric incised or chip-carved patterns (Glueck 1965: Pl. 193d on p. 425). They were apparently used in private houses as opposed to the larger altars in sanctuaries and public buildings. Eye idols are square or rectangular plaques decorated on one side only with either a stylized face with eyes, nose, mouth and head-band in relief or a schematic face consisting of squared eyes and a straight nose (Glueck 1965: Pl. 199 on p. 441). Some examples have peg holes for attaching decorations of stucco or semi-precious stones. These slabs are called betyls, a term deriving from the Greek *baitylos* referring to the ancient Semitic tradition of representing a deity in aniconic form on a stone stele or plaque. The advantage of portable altars, bowls, incense burners and betyls is that they could be carried by their owners on their travels, so that cultic ceremonies such as incense burning and pouring blood on the sacred stone could be performed. They belong to the same phenomenon as the numerous rock-carved betyls at Petra, some of which are inscribed with dedications to gods (Wenning 2001).

Summary

The classes of objects discussed here and presented in the exhibition represent the creativity and innovation of the Nabatean craftsmen and artisans, and their high technical standards, particularly the potters, coroplasts and goldsmiths. The objects are defined as Nabatean on the basis of ware and fabric, decoration and iconography, as well as their restricted distribution within the Nabatean sphere of influence. These objects, an expression of popular religious beliefs and folk art, are an invaluable source for understanding Nabatean religion, burial customs, economy, trade, industry, lifestyle and even individual

and collective perception. The subjects depicted comprise six groups: anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations, objects of daily use, architectural designs, floral and geometric patterns. The contexts of these finds point to both sacred and profane use and even objects of daily use such as clay vessels, lamps and lamp fillers bear ornamentation with symbolic meanings. However, these religious symbols often lose their meaning over the centuries and become mere decorative elements. Jewelry worn by the living expressed a general wish for a happy and healthy life. When included among the funerary offerings of the deceased, jewelry had an apotropaic purpose to ward off evil spirits in the netherworld. At the same time jewelry was a sign of economic prosperity and social standing as well as an aesthetic appreciation of beauty. While altars and betyls were definitely cultic in nature and most figurines were votive offerings, coins and seals, though adorned with religious symbols, were above all an expression of the power of the ruling class, of its administration and economic capacity.

New discoveries raise new questions, and every item unearthed is another piece in the fascinating puzzle of the Nabatean culture. The tribal name lived on much longer than the tribe itself, and in the course of time *nabat* became a term of abuse among Arabs no longer related to the ancient Nabateans. Rhazes, a Persian physician who practiced in Baghdad in the 10th century CE, recommended the fish sauce of Nabatea for the treatment of small pox (Curtius 1991: 189). He was referring to *garum*, a popular Roman sauce adopted by many ethnic groups around the Mediterranean and inscribed on an amphora fragment found at Masada (Cotton and Geiger 1996: 168). Did the Nabateans acquire it together with the Roman patina, which was prepared in the so-called Pompeian Red cooking dishes which they imported from Italy? Was the fish sauce a product of the spice industry the Nabateans established at Petra?

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