

Ancient Travellers in Moab and Modern Excavations

Reports of the ancient travellers are always instructive when preparing survey or an archaeological excavation. All of us begin by reading the relations of our predecessors in the regions where we are digging, as they often give precise information on a site and its archaeological remains *in situ*,¹ on the geographical and the geological background,² on the fauna and the flora³ that they have observed, as well as on the anthropology and ethno-archaeology. The habits of the inhabitants of a region, their belonging to one or another tribe, are sometimes mentioned in those accounts⁴ and allow a better understanding of the mentality of the modern people, be they citizens or country-men, nomads or semi-nomads. The observations of H. B. Tristram,⁵ travelling in the Dhībān region, helped us to better visualise the surroundings of Wādī al-Mūjib. The sketch of N. Glueck, made in 1933 allowed us to observe the archaeological richness of al-Lāhūn village, near the ancient Moabite capital. Although it was only R. Brünnow and A. Domaszewski⁶ who mentioned the site of al-Lāhūn during their journey in Moab and M. R. Savignac⁷ who observed the direct road between al-Lāhūn⁸ and al-Bālū' later on in 1936, their observations were important for us when surveying the region and prompted us to visit the site we are digging

now.⁹

The accounts of previous centuries are often completed by drawings showing landscape and scenes of daily life.¹⁰ From the middle of the 19th century, the invention of photographs¹¹ allowed to observe more precisely the quick changes in house constructions, tools or implements particular to one or the other region, or the evolution of ancient sites.¹² Paintings¹³ of previous travellers, which we can admire in museums, also show the impact of the Arab civilisation in Europe for the new discovered lands. Sometimes, in unexpected cities as in Nijmegen (Netherlands), we find illustrations with oriental inspirations as those of the Dutch artist, P. Gerrits.¹⁴ He brought many drawings, sketches and photographs to the Netherlands, evoking the urban and agricultural daily life seen during his travels in north Jordan between 1906 and 1911.

Motivations for travelling can be various. Some narrations have been given by theologians or historians who wanted to understand the events of the Bible or episodes of the classical authors; others, are provided by picturesque artists, intrepid explorers, sometimes by merchants, tradesmen or even by opportunists.¹⁵ They give information about ancient sites or epigraphic transcriptions.¹⁶ Their style can be scientific or romantic, but their

¹ Glueck, N., *Exploration in Eastern Palestine I-IV*, Philadelphia, New Haven 1933, 1935, 1939, 1951 (= AASOR 14, 15, 18-19, 25-28).

² Bender, F., *Geologie von Jordanien*, Berlin 1968.

³ Tristram, H. B. *The Flora and the Fauna of Palestine*, London 1884.

⁴ Jaussen, A., *Coutumes des arabes au pays de Moab*, Paris 1908.

⁵ Tristram, H. B. *The Land of Moab. Travels and Discoveries on the East Side of the Dead Sea and the Jordan*, London 1973.

⁶ Brünnow, R. and von Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia auf Grund Zweiter in den Jahren 1897 and 1898 unternommenen Reisen und der Berichte früherer Reisender*, Strassburg 1904, 1905, 1909.

⁷ Savignac, R., *Chronique: Sur les pistes de Transjordanie Méridionale*, RB 45 (1936), p. 241.

⁸ Al-Lahūn is located in the northern Moābite plateau, 7 km west from Dhībān and 3 km from 'Arā'ir. It is possible to see al-Bālū'a on the southern plateau.

⁹ Homès-Fredericq, D., *Découvrez Al-Lahun et la Voie Royale. Les fouilles archéologiques belges en Jordanie*, Brussels 1997. See also Homès-Fredericq, D. and Hennessy, J.-B., *Archaeology of Jordan I. Bibliography. II. 1-2. Sites and Surveys*, Brussels-Leuven 1986, 1989

¹⁰ Conder, C.R., *Tent Work in Palestine*, London 1879; Id., *Heth and Moab. Explorations in Syria in 1881 and 1882*, London 1889.

¹¹ Rockett, W.H., The Bonfils Story. A Special Section, *Aramco World Magazine* 34:6 (1983), p.8-31, figs.

¹² Compare the Khazna (Petra) drawn in de Laborde, L. - Linant, L., *Journey through Arabia Petraea to Mount Sinai and the Excavated City of Petra, the Edom and the Prophecies*, London 1868 and the photographed in Tayler, J., *Petra*, London 1993.

¹³ Wijdan Ali et al., *On the Banks of the Jordan. British Nineteenth Century Painters*, Amman 1987; Osband, L., *Famous Travellers to the Holy Land. Their Personal Impressions and Reflexions*, London 1989.

¹⁴ Jansen, W., Piet Gerrits. Dutch Painter and Proto-Ethnologue in Northern Jordan, *Newsletter IAAYU* 11 (1991), p. 4-6 (P. Gerrits achieved also biblical wall paintings in the Latin church of al-Ḥuṣn, south of Irbid).

¹⁵ Trench, R., *Arabian Travellers*, London 1986.

¹⁶ Gatier, P.-L., *Inscriptions de la Jordanie. 2. Région Centrale*, (= BAH 114), Paris 1986, p. 17-22.

memories are a precious documentation.

Discovering Jordan during the Last Two Millennia

In his publication *Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestinae* (1890),¹⁷ R. Röhricht mentions that between 333 and 1878 AD, more than 3515 “travellers” (pilgrims, missionaries, traders, merchants, poets, painters or explorers) passed through Palestine. They left one or more publications with their personal observations and souvenirs. Two thousand of them visited the region between 1800 and 1878 and more than 5000 publications appeared in this period about the subject. They came for different reasons: politic or diplomatic transactions, scientific aims or personal ones. They include painters as D. Roberts¹⁸ who illustrated so romantically Nabataean Petra with interesting testimonies about lost monuments. It is also the period of the first geographers, topographers and explorers, as M. Jacotin,¹⁹ W. F. Lynch²⁰ and U. J. Seetzen,²¹ all pioneers of modern archaeology. But we must not forget the treasure hunters, the conquerors, the diplomats, the biologists, zoologists, archaeologist, doctors, tailors, who passed through Palestine between 1800-1878. Their narration's are often illustrated or relate the numerous episodes of their travel. Sometimes such journeys were nearly tragic, as for J. Mac Gregor²² who was attacked by Arabs in the region of Hūla. All those travellers had of course various personalities, unequal capacities of observation or interpretation, but they surely have opened the way for modern archaeology.

In R. Röhricht's list the colleagues who surveyed Jordan after 1878, helping to find new archaeological sites are not included, such as N. Glueck who passed on the third of June 1933 and made a quick map of al-Lāhūn,²³ indicating the Bronze age and Nabataean remains, which were better identified through our excavations.

A study about ancient travellers in Jordan has never been done systematically, although we can find some information in the publication of Y. Ben-Arieh, *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land*.²⁴ Many names are famous for the Hashemite Kingdom. Let us only mention ash-Shaykh Ibrahim, Ibn Abdallah, the Swiss orientalist, better known as J. L. Burckardt, who identified Petra in 1812 for

the Association for Promotion of the Discovery of the Interior Parts of Africa. He studied at Göttingen with the same professor as U.J. Seetzen who was the first to explore systematically Jordan and discovered Gadara/Umm Qays, Jarash and other sites. Sponsored by the duke of Saxe-Gotha, his expedition was intended to find antiquities for his protector. Funds and reasons for travelling were thus varied, but both explorers were courageous, with a strong character, preparing their expedition by reading ancient sources (Egyptian, Assyrian, biblical, classical and Islamic texts). Both had the sense of observation, and protected themselves by dressing oriental clothes and speaking Arabic.

The reasons for “travelling” can also be different from period to period. For modern time, we think essentially of map makers and explorers, who have opened the way for excavations in Jordan, revealing many historical sites, which have been identified and examined since the 19th century, when the country was nearly *terra incognita*.²⁵

Prehistoric man too liked to “travel”, following his herd from place to place, from water point to water point. In biblical times, there were often inter-tribal relationships²⁶ or war connections allowing different people to meet.

The definition of the French word “*Voyage-voyageur*” (travel, traveller) is derived from the Latin substantive “*Viaticum*” or “money for the travel”. It means also “the fact to go from one place to another, sometimes far away”, while an “Explorer” or “Explorateur” comes from the Latin verb “*explorare*”, “to visit a country, a place to study it carefully” or “someone who is going to the discovery of a country”.

A complementary definition is given by D. Baly, when he says: “*the normal tendency is for people to expand as far as the natural limit of its own particular way of life*”.²⁷

The notion of distance is a quite relative. For a child or for a modern man, the value is very different. Abd al-Rahman Munif²⁸ explains in his book *Story of a City - A Childhood in Amman*, how he “travelled” in ‘Ammān for the first time of his life, the day of the death of King Ghazi. “*Before that day the boundaries of the town, as conceived by the children, had not extended beyond the*

¹⁷ Röhricht, R. *Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestina*, Berlin 1890. See also R. Röhricht, *Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestina. Chronologisches Verzeichnis der von 333 bis 1878 Verfassten Literatur über das heilige Land mit dem Versuch einer Kartographie. Verbesserte und Vermehrte Neuauflage mit einem Vorwort von D.H.K. Amiran*, Jerusalem 1963.

¹⁸ Roberts, D., *The Holy Land from Drawings Made on the Spot*, London 1842-49.

¹⁹ Jacotin, M., *Carte topographique de l'Égypte et de plusieurs parties des pays limitrophes levée pendant l'expédition de l'armée française*, Paris 1840.

²⁰ Lynch, W.F., *Narrative of the United States' Expedition to the River Jordan and the Dead Sea*, Philadelphia 1849.

²¹ Seetzen, U.J., *A Brief Account of the Countries Adjoining the Lake*

of Tiberias, the Jordan and the Dead Sea, London 1813; Id., *Reisen durch Syrien, Palästina, Phäenicia, die Transjordan Länder, Arabia Petraea und Unter-Aegypten*, Berlin 1859.

²² MacGregor, J., *The Rob Roy on the Jordan*, London 1870.

²³ Glueck, N., *op. cit.* 1935, p.48-49, n° 99, pl.10.

²⁴ Ben Arieh, Y., *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land*, Jerusalem - Detroit 1979.

²⁵ Miller, J. M. Ancient Moab Still Largely Unknown, *BA* 60 (1997), p. 196-199.

²⁶ Baly, D., The Pitfalls of Biblical Geography in Relation to Jordan p.123, *SHAJ* III (1985).

²⁷ Baly, D., *op.cit.*, p.123.

²⁸ Abd Al-Rahman Munif, *Story of a City. A Childhood in Amman*, Amman, 1996 (English translation from Arabic version of 1994).

neighbourhoods in which they lived". He tells how his family had left the house for the funerals, and how he stayed alone with his neighbour, a friend of his age. Both were wondering where their parents disappeared. So, they discovered at once that there was another world, known by their parents, probably not far from their own world. They also realised there was something else that just their street. The little boys crossed King Faysal street. Quickly they were completely lost. They became very afraid, as it was the first time they left their home. For adults, to travel presently implicates to drive a car or to take a plane, so that we can move from a few to thousands of kilometres in one day. But the desire to discover what happens in another world, different from the every day life, is surely one of the reasons that push people to travel. Others, more timorous, as some inhabitants of al-Lāhūn, have never crossed the local wadi or seen Dhībān, some 7 km from their village.

Travellers in the Millennia Before Christ

The contrast between the information before and after Christ are enormous, and we have only scarce data for the beginning of history, compared with the thousands of visitors of the two last millennia. Few texts and some archaeological remains allow us to reconstruct the way of travelling in Jordan at that time. It seemed interesting, in this conference on Jordan through the millennia, to investigate also if it was possible to understand the reasons of the travellers leaving their country and discovering the world in the millennia BC, from prehistory till the beginning of the Nabataean period and to investigate which reason pushed them to go from one place to another, and which distances they could cover in one day, from the prehistoric hunters to the Nabataean merchants.

In antiquity, travelling was successively done, first by walking, running or sailing a short distance, or by riding onagers and donkeys in the Early Bronze Age,²⁹ and camels and horses in the Iron Age.³⁰ People could travel alone or with a caravan, on a daily distance of five to thirty km, with or without guide. As in modern times, one main road "the King's Highway" seems to have been the principal access, linking Arabia with Syria, but secondary itin-

eraries could of course be followed.

The evidence of travelling in antiquity is quite relative, and difficult to prove because we have nearly no text before this period in the Levant. But even in antiquity, the desire to discover the other regions was strong in the heart of ancient people. If we read Lucianos, his heroes Charon and Hermes want to discover the world. They look for a high place from where they can observe and understand the panorama. They built a huge mountain, piling different mounts one above the other, taking many risks, obtaining an impression of aerial view. They discover the daily life of people, various towns and ancient archaeological sites as Babylon and Sardes and mention lost cities of their time, as "Ninive already gone and there is not a trace of it now" says the Greek text.³¹

We will try to focus on examples of the ancient Moab region, because there we are excavating the archaeological site of al-Lāhūn, on the northern plateau of Wādī al-Mūjib (biblical Arnon). When not possible, we will look at other areas, better known than central Jordan, east of the Dead Sea and less investigated than the others. Until recently, Moab was nearly unknown from the archaeological point of view.³² Many sites are still to be excavated in Moab. For the neighbourhood of al-Lāhūn, the ruins of Mushayrfa, Jumayl, and many others are interesting for different periods. The whole Moabite plateau is very promising, as has been observed by the recent surveys.³³ Biblical narration, as the story of Ruth³⁴ or the history of King Mesha³⁵ assume the importance of the region, which was not so different as presently.³⁶ Al-Lāhūn itself has been well flourishing in various periods.³⁷ The place has the same advantages of agricultural potential as the other Moabite sites,³⁸ with water supply by springs and wadis, allowing irrigation, as attested by the water reservoirs in the Early Bronze Age at al-Lāhūn, dams and terracing in the Nabataean and Islamic periods. There was the possibility of dry farming as on the al-Karak plateau, with a good climate and a perfect strategic position.³⁹ Medieval writers as al-Maqdasī (985) and al-Idrīsī (1154) mention the possibility of talking from one side of the Wādī al-Mūjib plateau to the other, a real advantage in war period. The site dominates the King's Highway, which so often

²⁹ See the Mesopotamian "standard of Ur" (Woolley, L.C., *Ur Excavations. II. The Royal Cemetery*, Oxford 1934, pl.91-92; possibly also in Jordan, see Köhler-Rollefson, I., Gillespie, W., Metzger, M., Hunting, Herding at Neolithic 'Ain Ghazal: Preliminary Report on the Animal Remains from the First Three Seasons (1982-1984), Mss., nd., cited in Rollefson, G. O., pp. 30-32 in *SHAJ III* (1987), Amman: Department of Antiquities.

³⁰ See the horseman discovered at al-Muqāblayn, near 'Ammān (Harding, G. L., An Iron Age Tomb at Meqabelein, *QDAP* 14 (1950), p. 44-48, pls. 13-17).

³¹ Harmon, A. T., *Translation of Lucian, vol. II. Charon, or the Inspectors*, London 1915, p. 443.

³² Miller, J. M., *op. cit.*, 1997, p. 199.

³³ Mattingly, G. L., A New Agenda for Research on Ancient Moab,

BA 60:4 (1007), p. 214 mentions the most recent surveys in Moab. For first survey in Jordan, see Homès-Fredericq, D. and Hennessy, J.-B., *Archaeology of Jordan I. Bibliography*, p. 185-241.

³⁴ Ruth 1:1-5, see also Miller, *op. cit.*, 1997, p.195.

³⁵ Dearman J. A. ed, *Studies in the Mesha Inscription and Moab*, Atlanta 1989.

³⁶ Dearman, J. A., Roads and Settlements in Moab, *BA* 60 (1997), p. 205.

³⁷ Especially in the Early Bronze, the end of the Late Bronze, the Iron Age, the Nabataean, Roman, and Islamic period,. Traces of Pre-historic and Byzantine occupation have also been found at al-Lāhūn.

³⁸ Miller, *op. cit.*, 1997, p.195.

³⁹ The steepness of the canyons of Wādī al-Mūjib, nearly inaccessible, is a perfect protection for the inhabitants in war times.

used for military, commercial and trade purposes.⁴⁰

If we have many written sources for the modern period, we have less information concerning the earliest ones; nevertheless Egyptian, Biblical, Moabite, Assyrian, Nabataean, and classical texts inform us about historical periods.⁴¹

Concerning prehistory, we read the information from the scarce archaeological remains attested. Prehistoric, hunting, man represented on the rock relief's from Kilwa⁴² travelled from place to place, to find water, following the animals to kill them. He subsisted, thanks to the nature, taking what he could find and gathering plants, "travelling" for surviving economically. At al-Lāhūn too, he lived in caves and "*abris sous roche*" and realised quickly that he could use the raw material found in the cliffs of Wādī al-Mūjib to shape its implements. He made the same experience, as in the whole Levant, using the silex nodules for his scrapers, knives and handaxes, which developed till the Early Bronze age, as has been attested by the survey made by G. Rollefson in 1980.⁴³

In Prehistory people travelled alone or in small groups. But even in the eighth millennium contacts were established in the Levant and must have been more important than assumed. In the Epipaleolithic, numerous beads from the Mediterranean and the red sea were imported in the al-'Azraq region, used for jewellery and cloth decoration. These distant contacts were probably casual as it is difficult to realise how some products were imported into Jordan from so far away.

More distant contacts are attested in the Prepottery Neolithic,⁴⁴ when every one was capable of making his own flint implement; travelling "specialist" came probably to 'Ayn Ghazāl to shape arrows, sickles and knives from special flint types coming from a quarry some 2 km from the village.⁴⁵ Proof of long distance contacts were given at 'Ayn Ghazāl around 7250 BC⁴⁶: basalt was introduced from the al-Mafraq region, some 35-40 km NE, to prepare grinding stones, sea-shells were imported from the Red Sea and the Mediterranean shores, asphalt and coral? from the Dead Sea, carnelian from the sandstone formations of Wādī Ramm and obsidian from Anatolia, the principal

trade centre.

Around 6200 BC, a new phenomenon appears with the beginning of semi-nomadism: people leave the village of 'Ayn Ghazāl, leading their sheep and goats to the steppe and the desert. Exchanges⁴⁷ and contacts are established across the regional boundaries.⁴⁸ The larger sites, developing their own techniques, were focus centres for spreading the new technological discoveries. This is attested by identical objects and cultural background.

During the Pottery Neolithic and later on, when early agricultural sites appeared, obsidian from Anatolia and turquoise from the Sinai were found in the Jilāt and al-'Azraq region, while in Abū Thawwāb, Mediterranean shells were discovered. In Abū Ḥāmid, petrographic analysis has shown that basalt was coming from the Yarmuk valley and Wādī 'Arabah, where the workshops have to be found,⁴⁹ as no trace of manufacturing was detected in the Jordan Valley site. Bone tools at Yarmukian sites of Jordan present parallels with coastal sites. All those observations allow to suppose that there were two roads, one by sea (from the Mediterranean) and another by land (east of the Asia-Africa Rift or the northern Syrian plateau, the Anti-Lebanon and the Jordanian uplands.⁵⁰

Different reasons seem to explain those travelling contacts: transhumance, trade, exchange of goods, economic for finding raw material as stones, copper⁵¹ and basalt.⁵² For the Early Bronze Age (end of the fourth and third millennium BC) an enigmatic document was found by Dr. E. Borzatti von Lowenstein⁵³ in the region of Jabal 'Amūd (in southern Jordan in the Wādī Ramm). A large stone of 2.80 m by 1.70 m was carved with some 150 holes and lines of different dimensions. According to the discoverer, it should reproduce a topographical map, where the holes represent in proportion small and larger settlements, while the lines indicate roads, channels and bypasses. He assumes that we have here the earliest intentionally carved map, to give information about the best hunting areas and the roads to follow. He dates the document from 3000-2500 BC. If his interpretation is right, we should have here the most ancient testimony of large scale travelling in prehistory and the first known road in-

⁴⁰ Dearman, J. A., *op.cit.*, 1997, p.205-213.

⁴¹ Van Zyl, A. H., *The Moabites*, Leiden 1980, p. 4-42; Miller, *op.cit.*, 1997, p. 194.

⁴² Rhothert, H., *Transjordanien, Vorgeschichtliche Forschungen*, Stuttgart 1938; see also rock carvings from Dhuwayla (Bienkowski, P., *Treasures from an Ancient Land. The Art of Jordan*, Gloucestershire 1991, fig.29).

⁴³ Homès-Fredericq, D. and Franken, H., *Pottery and Potters. Past and Present. 7000 Years of Ceramic Art in Jordan*, Tübingen 1986, fig. p.67.

⁴⁴ Kafafi, Z. - Rollefson, G. O., *Le village néolithique d'Ain Ghazal, Jordanie. Sur les pas des archéologues*, Paris 1997, p. 35-36.

⁴⁵ Kafafi, Z. - Rollefson, G. O., *op.cit.*, 1997, p. 35.

⁴⁶ Rollefson, G.O., *Local and External Relations in the Levantine PPN Period: 'Ain Ghazal (Jordan) as a Regional Centre*, Pp. 29-30 in

SHAJ III (1987), Amman: Department of Antiquities.

⁴⁷ Kafafi, Z. - Rollefson, G.O., *op.cit.*, 1997, p. 37.

⁴⁸ Rollefson, G. O., *op.cit.*, 1987, p. 30.

⁴⁹ Dollfus, G., *La vie villageoise dans la vallée du Jourdain il y a 7000-6000 ans, Jordanie. Sur les pas des archéologues*, Paris 1997, p. 55.

⁵⁰ Kafafi, Z., *The Pottery Neolithic in Jordan in Connection with other Regions*, pp. 34 in *SHAJ III (1987)*, Amman: Department of Antiquities.

⁵¹ Dollfus, G., *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.51.

⁵² Smith, R. H., *Trade in the Life of Pella of the Decapolis*, pp.53-54 in *SHAJ III*, Amman: Department of Antiquities.

⁵³ Homès-Fredericq, D., *General Introduction to the Theme "Sites and Settlements in Jordan"*, pp.44-45 in *SHAJ IV (1994)*, Amman: Department of Antiquities.

formation, but we cannot be sure, neither of the date, nor the interpretation of the document. The Early Bronze is also the period when large towns appear in the Near East, following the same pattern. The pottery is also similar. If we compare the one of al-Lāhūn with that of Bāb adh-Dhrā', there are so many analogies in shape, drawings and potter's marks that the whole region east of the Dead Sea must have the same economic and cultural contacts.⁵⁴ The stamp seal decorations of the pottery corresponds to Levantine sealing⁵⁵ and had surely the same value of property as in Mesopotamia, Syria or Palestine. Perhaps some ambulant "seal cutters" were travelling from place to place, as suggested for the Akkadian period (2450-2250 BC), where a "seal cutters set" has been found at Tall Asmar.⁵⁶ Once more, we have testimonies of many contacts, but no texts.

For the second and first millennium BC, the information are less hazardous as we have now written records. For Mesopotamia and Anatolia, the Cappadocian tablets (1950-1650 BC)⁵⁷ give itineraries about the safest roads to follow on a 1,500 km trip between Assur and Kültepe, mentioning the best places to rest with the caravans. Although we don't have such early sources in Jordan, hieroglyphic texts mention, in a later period, the passage of the Egyptian troops in the Jordan valley and the Moab region.

In the Middle and Late Bronze periods many goods were imported from Egypt, Syria and Cyprus: Pella attests of international trade,⁵⁸ with its scarabs, alabaster vessels, jars, boxes with carved inlay and fine ceramics. Ramses II (1304-1237 BC) and Ramses III (1198-1166 BC) were the first to mention the country, and they too, although conquerors and warriors, can be considered as "explorers" and "travellers", discovering new countries, describing the Moab region, its towns and roads, creating international contacts by introducing their culture. The stele of Bālū'a⁵⁹ is one of the best examples as well as the small scarab seal⁶⁰ of al-Lāhūn, with its clumsy hieroglyphs, mentioning Ammon-Re in a reverse order. Both were prob-

ably made by local artists, inspired by Palestinian or Egyptian craftsmen. The different archaeological remains in Moab, Edom or the Jordan valley⁶¹ are other testimonies.

In the first millennium, the Bible⁶² and Moabite inscriptions⁶³ mention the political events east and west of the Dead Sea, with their multiple contacts with Palestine and Phoenicia, in this period of international trade-war-contacts in the Levant. Assyrian tablets and reliefs show the interaction between Mesopotamia and Jordan; they give indications about Moab and their Kings, their trade and commerce, their tributes offered to the Assyrian kings.⁶⁴ Some cuneiform letters from Kalakh-Nimrud announce Ammonite, Moabite and Edomite delegations with their annual tribute and how they were well received by the Assyrian administration. We can imagine the caravans, loaded with precious good and two long lists enumerate the mutual gifts. This explains also the interaction of those cultures: "lady at the window" from the temples of 'Ammān⁶⁵ is an imitation of Levantine or Mesopotamian ivories. Political reasons explain those "travels". The Iron Age I village of al-Lāhūn is a good testimony of these international journeys in the Levant. In the "Pillar house" we find Palestinian influence, in the "Scarab house" Egyptian and in the "Palette house" Phoenician ones, with the cosmetic palette of al-Lāhūn, but also proofs of war are present in the "blocked house".⁶⁶

The Mesha stele suggests also intensive travel in and outside Moab. The Iron Age II fortress of al-Lāhūn⁶⁷ built above the Iron I village, was probably designed by an architect who travelled and had seen the granary fortresses of the Negev.⁶⁸ The New Year's flask⁶⁹ of al-Lāhūn reminds of the international exportation contacts of the Egyptian merchants in the Saïte period in the whole Mediterranean world. The cuneiform tablet of Ṭawilān,⁷⁰ written in Babylonian script and dating probably from the reign of Darius I (or perhaps II) attests the trade between Aramaeans from the Harran region (at the border of Anatolia and Syria) and an Edomite, some one 1000 km from

⁵⁴ Only minor, local differences exists: at Bāb adh-Dhrā' the clay is purer than in al-Lāhūn where the clay is collected from Wādī al-Lahūn and mixed with crushed shells as temper.

⁵⁵ Ben-Tor, A., *Cylinder Seals of Third-Millennium Palestine*, Cambridge MA, 1978.

⁵⁶ Frankfort, H., *Tell Asmar, Khafadje and Khorsabad. Second Preliminary Report of the Iraq Expedition*, Chicago 1933 (= OIC 16), p. 47-48, fig. 30.

⁵⁷ Garelli, P., *Les Assyriens en Cappadoce*, Paris 1963; Veenhof, K. R., *Aspects of Old Assyrian Trade and its Terminology*, Leiden 1992; Larsen, M. T., *The Old Assyrian City. States and its Colonies*, Copenhagen 1976.

⁵⁸ Smith, R. H., Trade in the Life of Pella of the Decapolis, pp. 55 in *SHAJ III* (1987).

⁵⁹ Biekowski, P., *op.cit.*, 1991, fig. 33.

⁶⁰ Homès-Fredericq, D., *op.cit.*, 1987, p. 61, fig. 40.

⁶¹ Zayadine, F., Une longue histoire commune avec Israël, *Le Monde de la Bible* 46 (1986), p. 19.

⁶² Van Zyl, *op.cit.*, p.4-29.

⁶³ Van Zyl, *op.cit.*, p.29-36.

⁶⁴ Waterman, L., *Royal Correspondance of the Assyrian Empire*, Michigan 1930, p.440-441.

⁶⁵ Zayadine, F., Recent Excavations on the Citadel of Amman, *ADAJ* 18 (1973), p.27-35, pl.22-24.

⁶⁶ Homès-Fredericq *et al.*, *op. cit.*, 1987, p.53-66, figs.30-40.

⁶⁷ Homès-Fredericq *et al.*, *op. cit.*, 1987, p.68-77, fig.56.

⁶⁸ Cretaz, C., *Les forteresses du Negev à l'époque du Fer: Etat de question*, Jerusalem 1982. (Thesis).

⁶⁹ Homès-Fredericq, D., Un goulot de bouteille de Nouvel An trouvé à Al-Lahun (Jordanie), *Studia Paolo Naster Oblata*, Leuven 1882, p. 79-90, pl. 8-9.

⁷⁰ Dalley, S., Report on the Babylonian Cuneiform Tablet from Tawilan in Southern Jordan, *Akkadica* 34 (1983), p. 61-62; Id., *The Cuneiform Tablet*, Bennett, C. M. - Bienkowski, P., *Excavations at Tawilan in Southern Jordan*, Herford 1995, p. 67-68.

there. Some Aramaic tablets from Ma'allanate, kept in the Royal Museums of Art and History⁷¹ in Brussels, confirm this international travelling habit to this Syrian province of Harran. On these documents, coming from the Palace of the Queen and her Son (probably King Assarhaddon), seal impressions show strong artistic Mesopotamian influence: a worshipper adores the altars of the Mesopotamian gods Marduk, Nabu, as well as the goddess Gula seated on her throne, are in typical Assyrian style. Perhaps the Phoenician "traveller" of Sa'idiyya⁷² had met the Harran merchants, dressed as Yerah 'Azar of 'Ammān.⁷³ Even in the Persian period, when Greek was used as the language to facilitate international trade, proof of travelling existed often with Western Asia, Arabia and the Mediterranean world.⁷⁴

The Nabataeans⁷⁵ were of course the most impressive, enterprising and "great travellers" of antiquity. A whole network of roads allowed their merchants to trade from Arabia to Damascus, Egypt, Syria, Greece and Rome, as well as to the Far East, with China and India.⁷⁶ This produced an interesting period known by the classical authors,⁷⁷ and beautiful monuments mixing oriental and western art.⁷⁸

Their intercontinental trade left its imprint even on isolated places as al-Lāhūn, with its small Nabataean temple.⁷⁹ We can easily imagine, the agricultural or nomadic population of the region "travelling" to meet the well protected caravans from Petra. They surely exchanged their local products with the abundant goods of the Nabataean

capital such as spices, incense, perfumes, iron, copper, gold, ivory, animals and medicines, near the sanctuary of al-Lāhūn.

Conclusions

We can conclude, summarizing the story of the travellers through the millennia, that even in periods we have evidence of "travelling" thanks to the archaeological remains. It began with the first hunters, by foot and in the neighbourhood of their camps, developing to more distant areas by group for transhumance, sometimes to exploit natural resources and to make commerce on a casual basis.

From the second millennium BC on, written records provide less hypothetical information. War and international commerce, probably by caravan, along a distance of ca 30 km a day, are linked with a better road system in the Levant, increasing also economic contacts. But testimonies are still to be found, scattered in texts and found in influences on art, in those times when people did not have the habit of writing their memories. In the Nabataean period, the classical authors admire the intercontinental trade of Petra with Asia, Europe and Egypt. In opposition to those early periods, we have a much better documentation for the two most recent millennia, with 3515 recorded individuals. For the last two centuries only, a real "boom" of 2000 travellers and explorers went to Palestine, opening the way to modern archaeology in Jordan.

⁷¹ Homes-Fredericq, D., Garelli, P. and Lipinski, E., *Archives d'un Centre Provincial assyrien, conservées aux Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire*, Bruxelles 1999 (Forthcoming).

⁷² Pritchard, J. B., An Eight Century Traveller, *Expedition* 10:2 (1968), p.26-29, 9 figs.

⁷³ Zayadine, F., Statue de Yera 'Azar, *La Voie Royale, 9000 ans d'art au Royaume de Jordanie*, Paris 1986, p.105-106, n°129.

⁷⁴ Smith, R.H., *op.cit.*, p.55.

⁷⁵ Wenning, R., *Die Nabatäer - Denkmäler und Geschichte*. Eines Bestandesaufnahme des archäologischen Befundes, Freiburg-Göttingen 1987.

⁷⁶ Zayadine, F., Caravan Roads between Egypt and Nabatea and the Voyage of Sultan Baibars to Petra in 1276 AD, p. 159 in *SHAJ* II (1985),.

⁷⁷ Starcky, J., *Petra et les Nabatéens*, aperçu historique; D. Homès-Fredericq, *Inoubliable Petra, le royaume nabatéen au confins du désert*, Bruxelles 1980, p. 12-20.

⁷⁸ D. Homès-Fredericq, *op.cit.* 1980, figs.7, 11, 16-17; cat. n° 1-214; T. Weber and R. Wenning (eds), *Antike Felsstadt zwischen arabischer Tradition und griechischer Norm*, Mainz am Rhein 1997.

⁷⁹ D. Homès-Fredericq, *op.cit.* 1987, p. 81-87, figs. 59-64.