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The Distribution of Nabataean Pottery and The Organisation of Nabataean Long Distance Trade

Introduction

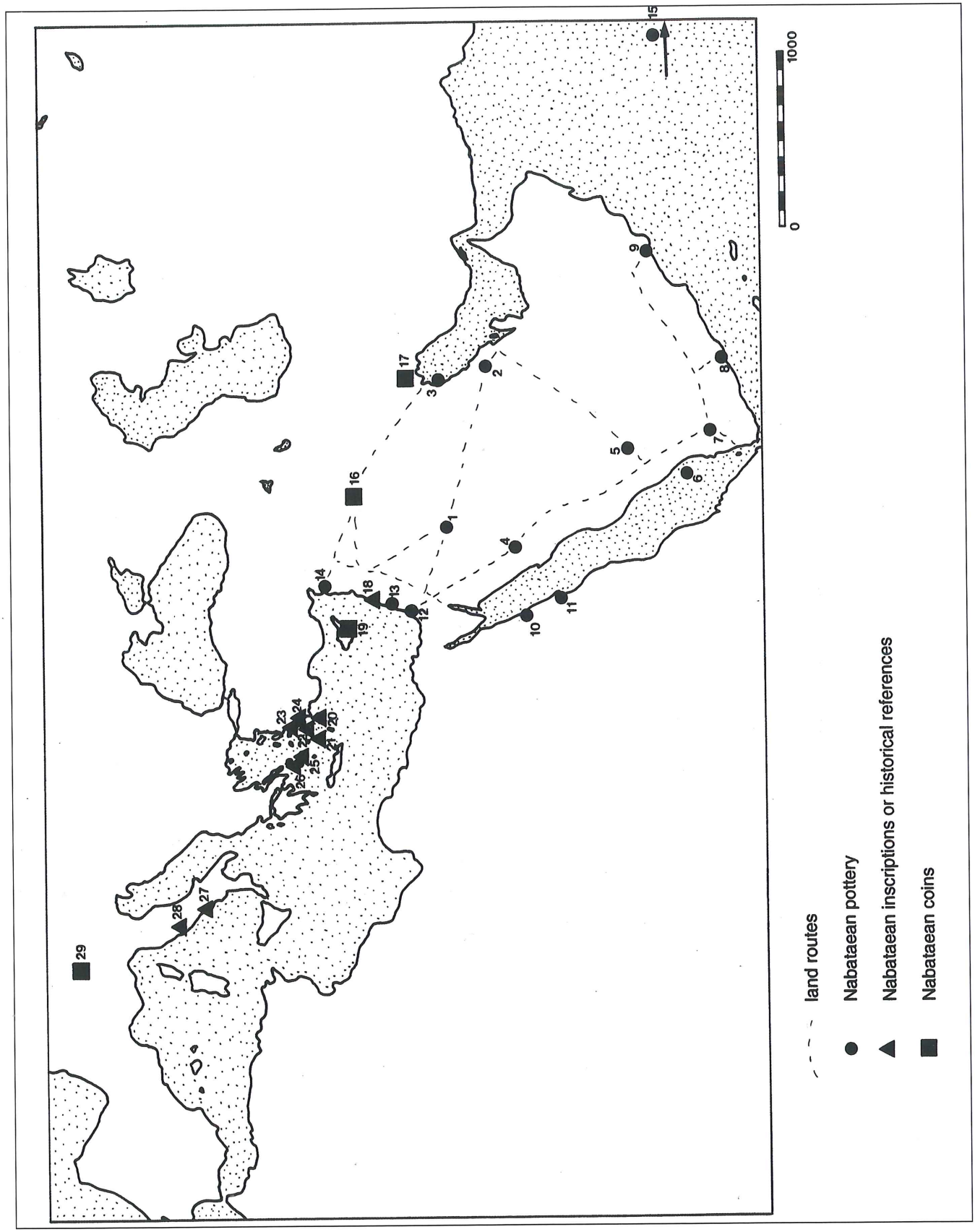
In recent years, it has been possible to establish a rather firm typology and chronology of Nabataean pottery, and especially of the finer variants, both painted and plain (Schmid 2000 with further references). One could call these finer types the "tableware" of the Nabataeans in order to distinguish them from the coarser wares that were probably used for the preparation, cooking and storing of foods and beverages (on Nabataean coarse ware pottery see Gerber 1996). As the fine ware spectrum contains some very characteristic types like the so-called egg-shell thin pottery and painted specimens, it was used from a rather early stage in Nabataean archaeology in order to identify places that may have belonged to the direct sphere of Nabataean influence, or that had been occasionally visited by Nabataean travellers. Nelson Glueck especially used Nabataean pottery in order to determine Nabataean presence during his surveys (Glueck 1933/34; 1934/35; 1937; 1937/39; see also Iliffe 1934; and Schmitt-Korte 1989: 205ff. who states correctly that it is rather difficult to establish firm borders in the case of a former nomadic population such as the Nabataeans).

This contribution will not focus on the Nabataean heartland, which is more or less well known, especially due to more recent survey projects (Hart and Falkner 1985; Hart 1985; 1986; 1987; Mattingly 1990; synoptic presentation by Wenning 1987; cf. also Gunneweg *et al.* 1988: 316). As Nabataean pottery was not apparently produced as a trade commodity — despite its very high technical and aesthetic standards — finds of that pottery outside the Nabataean mainland necessarily point to the passage of Nabataean travellers. I will use this distribution pattern as a starting point for further reflections about the organisation of Nabataean long distance trade and the social structure of Nabataean society.

In the following, the places where Nabataean pottery was found are first analysed before adding further thoughts. The chronology of Nabataean pottery used here is the one established by Schmid (2000: 7-42). Therefore, phase 1 runs from the end of the second century BC to c. 50 BC, phase 2 from c. 50 BC to c. AD 20 and phase 3 from c. AD 20 to 106 (for previous discussion of Nabataean pottery finds in the Arabian peninsula see Gatier and Salles 1988). Additional reflections will mainly focus on the discrepancy between the sites where Nabataean pottery is actually found and these are restricted mostly to the Arabian Peninsula, and other places around the Mediterranean where the passage of Nabataean travellers is attested by other means, mostly inscriptions.

Presumed Findspots of Nabataean Pottery (FIG. 1)

1) Jawf oasis/Dumata (Saudi Arabia): Several fragments of phases 1 to 3 (Wenning 1987: 115 no. 10; Adams *et al.* 1977: Pl. 16, 20-27, nos. 23, 24 and 27 belong to phase 1, no. 20 to phase 2 and nos. 21 and 22 to phases 2b/c or 3). Several other fragments of phases 1 and 2a are reported for aṭ-Ṭuwayr, approx. 30km east of Jawf (Parr *et al.* 1978: Pls. 33, 38-40, 42). The Jawf oasis must have belonged, at least temporarily, to the Nabataean kingdom as is attested by inscriptions (cf. Wenning 1987: 115 no. 19; see also Schmid 2000: 139f.). Of course, the entire Wādī as-Sirḥān, linking Bostra to Jawf/Dumata (MacAdam 1988; Speidel 1987; Bowersock 1983: 154-159), did produce considerable amounts of Nabataean pottery. These shall not be analysed in detail, but they confirm the regular use of this connection by Nabataean travellers (cf. Wenning 1987: 112-116).
2) Thāj (Saudi Arabia): One painted sherd from phase 2b/c (Potts 1991: 139 Fig. 1). This find put an end to a long discussion about Nabataean finds from Thāj (cf. Dickson 1948; Lapp 1963; Ghoneim 1980, discussed by Potts 1990: 198ff.; on Thāj in general see also Winnett and Reed 1970). Further, there are some fragmented and complete plain bowls that seem to be Nabataean as well (Eskoubi and al-Aila 1985: 41-53, especially 48 and Pl. 40A; Potts 1993: 92f. 106 Fig. 17 compares these bowls with the ones from Failaka, cf.

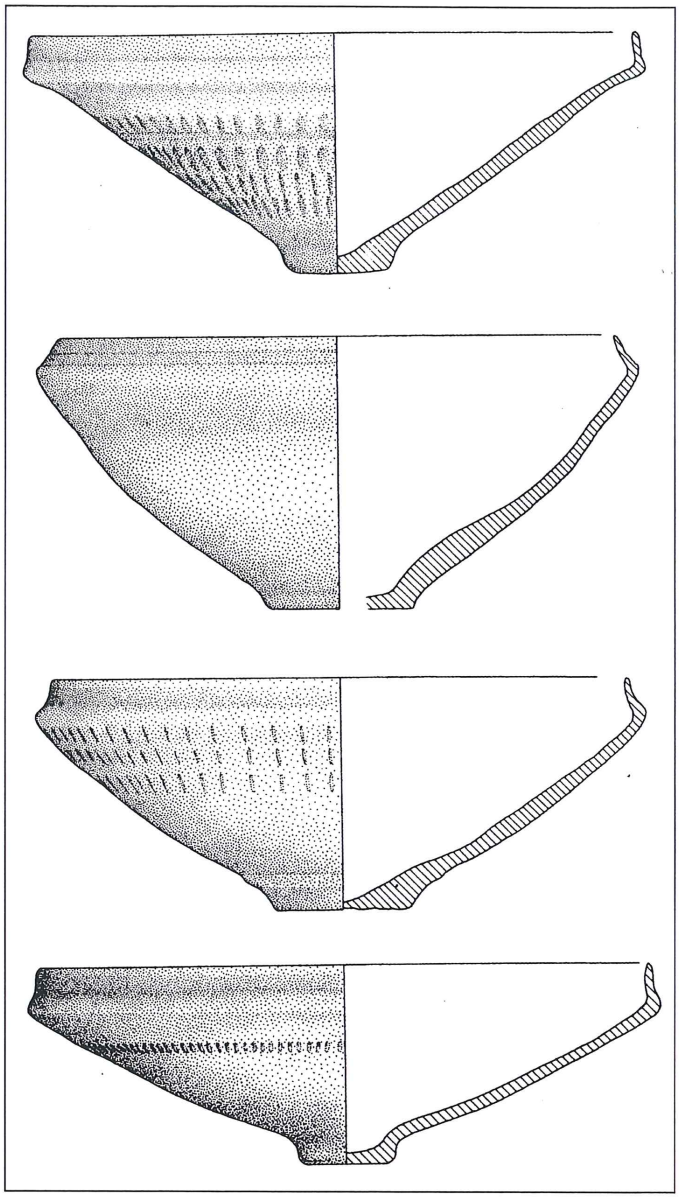


1. Distribution of Nabataean finds (Schmid).

below, but concludes that they should be of local origin). As far as it can be deduced from the published illustrations, these bowls would correspond rather exactly to one of the main types of phase 3, including the colour of the clay and the surface treatment with a whitish slip on the upper part (cf. FIG. 3; Schmid 2000: 9 [E 1c 8] Figs. 52, 53). Contrary to most other findspots considered here, where only single fragments of Nabataean pottery were found, in Thāj these bowls are very prominent in the so-called "penultimate settlement level" (Eskoubi and al-Aila 1985: 48). This, together with the painted sherd as well as some coins (Potts 1991) could point to a rather regular presence of Nabataean travellers at Thāj. The "penultimate settlement level" is dated to the period 250 BC to AD 150 (Eskoubi and al-Aila 1985: 53), a rather long span of time that would include both the dating of our phases 2b/c (25 BC to c. AD 20) as well as of phase 3 (c. AD 20 to 106). Other pottery finds at Thāj need closer examination in order to determine their exact origins (see Potts 1993: 92f. 101, 106 Figs. 9, 17).

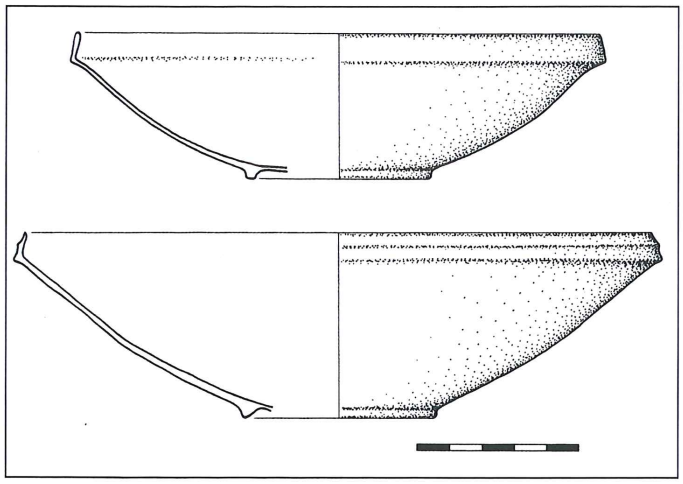
3) Failaka/Ikaros (Kuwait): During the Danish excavations some unpainted bowls were found that were published as Nabataean (J. Brydson in Hannestad 1983: 51ff. nos. 419-426). Reactions on this interpretation were different; D. Potts (Potts 1990 [II]: 196) is still positive while J.-F. Salles (Salles 1990: 324ff.) thinks they could be local imitations after Nabataean pottery (similar Potts 1993: 92f.: "..., it is clear that these were local products whether or not they were inspired by Nabataean models"). Although their general shape is similar to some of the characteristic Nabataean types (Schmid 2000: 9 [E 1c 7 and E 1c 8] Figs. 52-56), there are important differences (FIGS. 2, 3). While the "real" Nabataean bowls of that type always show a clearly distinguished foot ring, the finds from Failaka simply have a flat base. Further, three of the four Failaka bowls show rouletted decoration on the outside, what was taken as a specific Nabataean feature (Brydson in Hannestad 1983: 51). Indeed, this kind of decoration often occurs on Nabataean pottery, especially on small closed shapes and occasionally on some deep bowls (Schmid 2000: 9 [E 8a 94. 95. 97] Figs. 62-65; 59f. Figs. 215-219; Khairy 1982; 1983). However, the forms that come closest to the bowls from Failaka never show rouletted decoration. Also, the general shape of the typical Nabataean bowls is a flatter one (cf. FIGS. 2, 3). Therefore, a direct import from the Nabataean area can be excluded.

4) Hegra/Madā'in Ṣāliḥ (Saudi Arabia): Several painted fragments belonging to phases 2a, 2b, 2c and 3a (Al-Ibrahim and Talhi 1989: 21 Pl. 18; Wenning 1987: 119-122; Winnett and Reed 1970: Fig. 81). Of course, the illustrated fragments should be considered only as the tip of the iceberg (Winnett and Reed 1970: 50f. 178f.; cf. also Parr *et al.* 1971: 23). Especially in the case of Hegra, detailed statistics based on stratified finds would be very important, as they could contribute to the discussion about a presumed separation from the Nabataean kingdom around AD 70/80 (cf. Wenning 1987: 119; Meshorer 1975: 74). A similar picture is provided from sites nearby, where Nabataean pottery covers the entire range from phase 1 to phase 3c (Siraj Ali 1990).



2. Plain bowls from Failaka/Ikaros (after Hannestad 1983).

5) Qaryat al-Fāw (Saudi Arabia): two painted fragments belonging to phase 2c, nine of phase 3a, one of phase 3b and four of phase 3c (Wenning 1987: 126 no. 1; al-Ansary 1981: 63 Figs. 2-4; Fig. 5 is not a Nabataean



3. Nabataean plates from Petra (Schmid).

vase, while the pottery of Fig. 6 need closer examination). Contrary to the hypothesis of al-Ansary (1981: 22) that this pottery may be produced locally, it seems to be a proper Nabataean product and, therefore, imported.

6) Gharrain, Farasān islands (Saudi Arabia): Two painted sherds, one probably belonging to phase 2b or 2c (Wenning 1987: 126 no. 2; Zarins *et al.* 1981: 27 with n. 20 Pl. 28, 6). In the text two painted fragments are mentioned while one rim sherd is illustrated, apparently not showing painting. However, the form corresponds to a well known Nabataean painted type (cf. Schmid 2000: 28 [E 2a 356] Fig. 88 colour illustrations 1-3) that belongs to sub-phases 2b and 2c.
7) Ma'rib (Yemen): Two painted fragments of phase 2c (Wenning 1987: 126 no. 3; Stucky 1983: 7 Figs. 10. 11; more Nabataean pottery from Ma'rib is mentioned, though not illustrated, by Krautwurst 1989: 329ff.).
8) Qanā (Yemen): Three painted fragments belonging to phase 2b, one to phase 2c or 3a (Sedov 1992: 122 Fig. 10).
9) Khor Rori (Oman): Two painted sherds, one belonging to phase 2c, one to phase 3a (Yule 1993: 265 Fig. 6, 10 [phase 3]. 11 [phase 2c]; cf. Yule and Kervran 1993: 81 Fig. 3, 8 [phase 3a]. 9 [phase 2c]; other imported pottery from Khor Rori, including terra sigillata, is discussed by Comfort 1960).
10) Quṣayr al-Qadīm (Egypt): One painted fragment of phase 2b/c, one maybe belonging to phase 3b/c (Whitcomb and Johnson 1982: 59f. 67f. Fig. 21d; Fig. 21e may also represent a Nabataean fragment). In the meantime more Nabataean pottery was found at Quṣayr al-Qadīm (personal communication by D. Whitcomb).
11) Berenice (Egypt): Two painted Nabataean sherds (Oral communication by J.W. Hayes; according to his description these fragments could belong to phase 2c or 3a).
12) Gaza (Palestine): Recent finds of Nabataean pottery from Gaza finally filled a long existing gap (Sachet 2000). As an ending point of the famous incense road, the absence of Nabataean finds was difficult to explain. The finds illustrated so far belong to phases 2a until 3a (Sachet 2000: 52). Apparently Nabataean coins of Aretas IV were also found at Gaza (cf. Roche 1996: 75 n. 7 referring to oral communication by C. Augé).
13) Caesarea Maritima (Palestine): According to oral communication by J. Patrich, Nabataean pottery was found at Caesarea.
14) Antiocheia-on-the-Orontes (Syria): One painted fragment belonging to phase 2b (Waagé 1948: 42 Fig. 23 no. 9).
15) Abhayagiri Vihara (Sri Lanka): In a preliminary report on this excavation, it was suggested that some red painted fragments could be of Nabataean origin (Wikramagamage *et al.* 1983: 363f. with n. 19). However, since then it became clear that the chronology would not fit, as the corresponding contexts are dated to the fourth century BC, and the pottery seems to be of local production (Wikramagamage *et al.* 1984: 60ff. Fig. 9; Charvát 1985: 247 with n. 22; Bouzek 1993: 84 Figs. 56. 57; J. Bouzek kindly sent me a copy of his publication). Although so far no Nabataean pottery is known to have been found on Sri Lanka and in India, the general possibility of further finds is by no means excluded (on contacts between the Mediterranean world and Sri Lanka cf. Weerakkody 1997; Bopearachchi 1992; Abeydeera 1991; De Romanis 1988; Bouzek and Deraniyagala 1985). At Khor Rori as well as at Quṣayr al-Qadīm, Nabataean pottery was found together with pottery imported from India (Khor Rori: Yule and Kervran 1993: 81 Fig. 3, 1-5; 91ff; Yule 1993: 257ff. Fig. 5, 5. 8 ["Indian Red Polished Ware"]; cf. Comfort 1960; Quṣayr al-Qadīm: Whitcomb and Johnson 1982: 67 ["Arikamedu Ware"]) that, in turn, was also found on Sri Lanka (Bouzek 1993: 84 Fig. 55, 4-7. 10. 11; on other imports see also Charvát 1993). Recently, the presence of presumed Indian pottery at Petra has been pointed out (Gogte 1999).

Commentary

Most of the picture revealed so far (cf. FIG. 1) fits quite well into our general knowledge about Nabataean travelling and trading activities in the Arabian Peninsula (as a general account see Potts 1988; cf. also Zayadine 1996; for a theoretical background see Fiema 1996).

On the one hand, the so-called incense road is perfectly covered by finds of Nabataean pottery, from its starting point at harbour sites in modern Oman and Yemen,

through Saudi Arabian oases and stations until its ending point at Gaza (on the incense road see for example Macdonald 1997; Groom 1981). On the other hand, the finds from the Jawf oasis and Thāj also attest the use of other tracks connecting Petra with the Arab-Persian Gulf. According to the chronology of the pottery recorded, the Jawf oasis was already frequented by Nabataeans during the first half of the first century BC. This connection was maintained at least until AD 44, as this is the date of a Nabataean inscription found there (Savignac and Starcky 1957: 196ff.). According to the finds from Thāj the Nabataeans reached the Arab-Persian Gulf at least until the first quarter of the first century AD (painted pottery), or maybe even throughout the entire first century AD (plain pottery). These finds confirm the mention of traders from Gerrha and Minaea in Petra (Diod. 3, 42; Strabo 16, 4, 18), as well as the reports of Nabataean traders in southern Mesopotamia (Plin., n. h. 6, 32, 144ff; 12, 40, 80). It would seem then, that the Nabataeans reached the port sites of the Arab-Persian Gulf (for further reflections on the trade in the Arab-Persian Gulf see Salles 1989; for trade routes between the Mediterranean and the Gulf see Millar 1998), and this should point to their efforts in order to control the whole journey of trading goods from the moment when they entered the Arabian Peninsula, either at the northern or at the southeastern coast, until they left it at Gaza. Whether or not the Nabataeans were also involved in the maritime trade that brought spices and other goods from India, cannot be proven with the available evidence (in general on this maritime trade see Casson 1989; Sidebotham 1989). The finds of Nabataean pottery from the Farasān Islands and from sites on the Egyptian coast show at least that the Nabataeans not only shipped their goods by land using the incense road, but also by ship in the Red Sea. The presence of Nabataeans in Egypt is further confirmed by inscriptions and graffiti (Fiema and Jones 1990; Jones *et al.* 1988; Wenning 1987: 126-128; on seafaring in the Red Sea and the Arabian Red Sea ports see Casson 1995). This, in turn, created continuous disputes with the Ptolemies (Diod. 3, 43, 4f.; Strabo 16, 4, 18).

When the Ptolemaic kingdom was integrated into the Roman empire in 30 BC, this must have resulted in new obstacles for Nabataean trade, despite the fact that the Nabataeans supported Octavian in his struggle with Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra and even had burnt a part of Cleopatra's fleet (Dio Cass. 51, 7, 1; Plut., Ant. 69,3; cf. Schmid 2001A: 383 with n. 85). As Rome had already taken over the Seleucid kingdom in 64/3 BC, the Nabataeans were hemmed in on most sides by the same trading concurrent. The Romans on the other hand followed at the beginning a rather competitive if not to say aggressive trading policy focusing on the Red Sea and South Arabia that is best illustrated by the expedition of Aelius Gallus in the year 25/4 BC (Strabo 16, 4, 22-24; cf. Luther 1999; Mayerson 1995; Marek 1993; Buschmann 1991; Sidebotham 1986B: 590ff; on the expanding Roman trading policy see Bari 1992: esp. 75; Bowersock 1983: 46ff.; Sidebotham 1986A: esp. 175ff.; Eadie 1989: 113ff.; Miller 1969). Even if we reckon that Strabo's account on that expedition is rather tendentious, it shows that Nabataeans and Romans understood themselves as opponents in trading matters (see also Sidebotham 1996 for the wider frame; it seems to me that the thesis of only a weak Roman interest in long distance trade with the East, as reestablished by Young 2001, is not compelling). The immense efforts of the Romans and, as a logical consequence, the losses of the Nabataeans can also be illustrated by the fact that the number of ships that sailed from Egypt to India was multiplied from 20 *per annum* in the late Ptolemaic period to 120 *per annum* under the reign of Augustus (Strabo 17, 1, 13 (798); as Strabo used to live in Egypt at that time his statement can be trusted; cf. Sidebotham 1989; Delbrueck 1955/56: 230ff.). It is for sure no coincidence that Augustus received several embassies from India during the first ten years of his reign (Strabo 15, 1, 4 (686); 15, 1, 73 (719); Mon. Anc. 31; cf. Sidebotham 1986B: 601f.; Delbrueck 1955/56: 232 and in a wider frame De Romanis 1982-87; Casson 1993). The Indian delegations found a striking parallel in AD 107, immediately after the Roman annexation of Nabataea (Dio Cass. 68, 15, 1; cf. Schmid 2000: 145). Most likely, these delegations were a direct result of the aggressive Roman trading policy towards South Arabia.

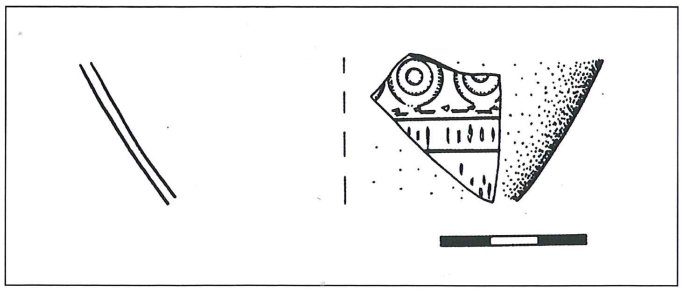
Whether this Roman trading policy forced the Nabataeans to shift some of their own trade from the southern routes, both inland and on water, to northern routes leading to southern Mesopotamia and the Arab-Persian Gulf, cannot be decided by the scanty evidence of just a few potsherds resulting mostly from survey activities. It is, however, interesting to observe that it is precisely during the first century AD that a specific kind of pottery, most probably imported from Parthian territory, appears in considerable numbers at Petra (Schneider 1996: 138f.; 141f.; Schmid 2000: 136f.). After the annexation of the Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms by Rome, the Parthian empire remained the only supra-regional power in the wider area, not only regarding military but also trading aspects (Wolski 1976: 397ff.; Dabrowa 1991). This is confirmed by contacts reaching as far as China. In 115 BC the first delegates from China are reported to have reached Parthian territory followed only one year later by the first caravan, while in AD 97 another Chinese delegation is mentioned reaching Charax (Schippmann 1980: 8. 90 with n. 1; Nodelman 1960: 106f.). The rivalry between Rome and Parthia in trading matters is underlined by the fact that in AD 166 a Roman delegation to China had to specifically avoid Parthian territory (Yingh-Shih 1986:

460ff.; Altheim and Stiehl 1965: 62 with n. 50). However, the chronology of the Nabataean pottery finds on the Arabian Peninsula listed above would rather imply that trading activities continued on both main routes until the end of the Nabataean kingdom. The best evidence for this comes from Qaryat al-Fāw (no. 5) where indeed pottery of phase 3c was found. As this station is not, as it is sometimes shown on maps, situated on the incense road but quite some kilometres inland and, therefore, on the route linking the incense road with the Arab-Persian Gulf (on the correct location of Qaryat al-Fāw see for example Saud al Saud 1996), this proofs that Nabataean traders still were active on the entire Peninsula at the beginning of the second century AD.

One of the problems about Nabataean trading activities is related to the goods they were mainly trading in. As they were all perishable goods, nothing but the scanty remains listed above as well as some epigraphic evidence not discussed here can indicate how Nabataean trade was organised. Still, it is astonishing how few imports from South Arabia are attested in the Nabataean territory. For instance, the excavations at az-Zanṭūr in Petra revealed only two objects, namely stone basins, with a possible South Arabian origin (Stucky 1996: 338. 341 cat. nos. 4. 5; 345f. Figs. 947-949). In terms of pottery, our main concern in this paper, beside the supposed Indian imports at Petra mentioned above (n. 37), nothing has been noted so far. An unstratified surface find from near az-Zanṭūr in Petra (FIG. 4) for sure has nothing in common with Nabataean pottery, and could be of South Arabian origin.

Other Evidence of Nabataean Presence Outside the Nabataean Kingdom (FIG. 1)

The following list contains finds, other than the above-mentioned pottery, that were reported from outside the Nabataean heartland. Not mentioned are inscriptions that attest to the presence of Nabataeans but cover the same areas as the pottery evidence dealt with above. Also not listed are the so-called "Nabataean capitals" found in Egypt and on Cyprus (as well as at some other places), as they most probably reflect Ptolemaic rather than a Nabataean influence (McKenzie 2001; Laroche-Traunecker 2000; Sinos 1990: 145-156. 227-229; Soren 1987: 206-212; Wenning 1987: 23 nos. 10. 11).



4. Presumed South Arabian sherd from Petra (Schmid).

16) Dura Europos (Syria, on the Euphrates): Nine Nabataean coins, four of Aretas IV and five of Rabbel II (Bellinger 1949: 10 nos. 166-168; 119; Meshorer 1975: 41 n. 118).
17) Susa (Iran): One Nabataean coin of Aretas IV (Le Rider 1965: 202 no. 499; Meshorer 1975: 41 n. 118).
18) Sidon (Lebanon): Dedication to Dusares, dated to 4 BC or AD 23 (Roche 1996: 75f. no. 2; Wenning 1987: 24 no. 13).
19) Kourion (Cyprus): Three Nabataean coins of Aretas IV (Roche 1996: 77 no. 5; Meshorer 1975: 41 n. 118; Cox 1959: 26 no. 202).
20) Rhodos (Greece): Inscription mentioning an Arab named Theodotus, maybe a Nabataean, dated to the second half of the second century BC (Roche 1996: 78 no. 6; Wenning 1987: 23 no. 8).
21) Chalke (Greece): Altar with a dedication, maybe to Dusares (Roche 1996: 78 no. 7).
22) Kos (Greece): Nabataean-Greek bilingual dedication to al-'Uzza/Aphrodite, dated to AD 9 or — less probably — 23 BC (Roche 1996: 78-80 no. 8; Wenning 1987: 23 no. 7).
23) Priene (Turkey): Greek inscription mentioning an embassy sent to, within other destinations, Petra, dated to 129 BC (Roche 1996: 83 no. 10; Wenning 1987: 23 no. 5). Of course, this does not necessarily imply the presence of Nabataeans at Priene.
24) Milet (Turkey): Nabataean-Greek bilingual inscription by Syllaios, dated 9 BC (Roche 1996: 80-83 no. 9; Wenning 1987: 23 no. 6).
25) Delos (Greece): Nabataean-Greek bilingual inscription by Syllaios, dated 9 BC (Roche 1996: 83-85 no. 11; Wenning 1987: 23 no. 4; F. Zayadine is preparing a new edition of this inscription). A badly preserved portrait head found on the island may be connected with this dedication (Schmid 1999). From Rhenaia, the necropolis of ancient Delos, comes an inscription mentioning a slave with the name Zaidos (= ZYD), maybe a Nabataean (Roche 1996: 85 no. 12).
26) Tenos (Greece): Inscription mentioning a Nabataean, dated to the second half of the second century BC (Roche 1996: 85 no. 13).
27) Puteoli/Pozzuoli (Italy): Two Nabataean inscriptions mentioning the construction and restoration of a sanctuary of Dusares as well as the offering of two camels; dated to c. 50 BC (construction), AD 5 (restoration) and AD 11 (offering) respectively (Steuernagel 1999: 162-164; Roche 1996: 86-89 nos. 15. 16; Lacerenza 1988-89: 123ff. 140ff.; Wenning 1987: 22f. no. 2). Beside the two Nabataean inscriptions there are a number of other inscriptions and graffiti in Latin characters mentioning Dusares (Roche 1996: 89 no. 17; Lacerenza 1994; 1988-89: passim; Wenning 1987:

22f. no. 2; Bisi 1972).

28) Rome (Italy): Two Nabataean-Latin bilingual inscriptions and one Greek-Latin inscription mentioning Nabataeans at Rome, dated between c. 50 BC and the second half of the first century AD (Roche 1996: 89-94 nos. 18. 19. 22; Wenning 1987: 22 no. 1). Of course, Nabataean presence at Rome is best attested by the historical accounts concerning the two trips of Syllaios to Rome (Jos., Ant. 16, 9, 1-9; 17, 3, 2; 17, 4, 3; cf. Roche 1996: 92f. nos. 20. 21).

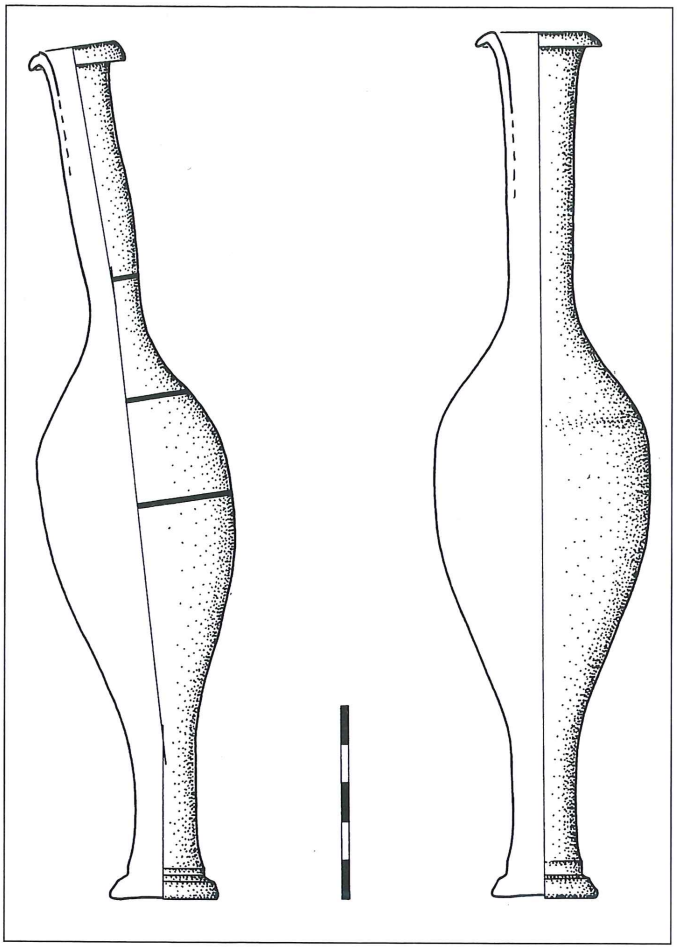
29) Avenches/Aventicum (Switzerland): One coin of Aretas IV (Cahn 1995: 152 no. 7; Cahn 1970/71; Meshorer 1975; 41 n. 118).

Commentary

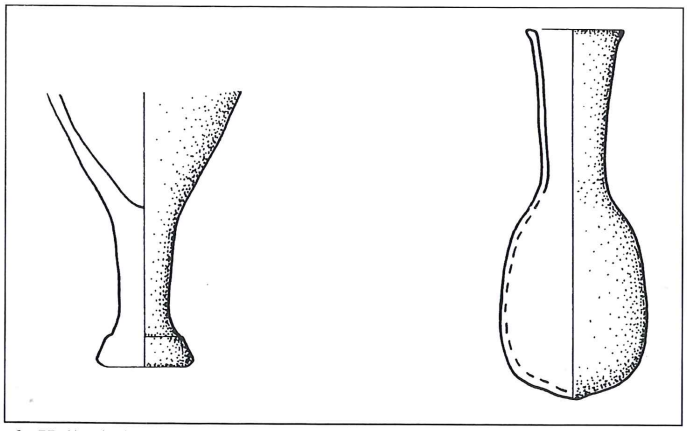
As mentioned above, the so-called Nabataean capitals are of no value for determining Nabataean presence, as they may very well be the result of Ptolemaic influence on several regions, including Nabataea. Of similar doubtful value are the different Nabataean coins listed above, as they may have been brought to their final destination by any person, not necessarily Nabataeans. This seems especially likely in the case of the coin found at Avenches/Aventicum in Switzerland (no. 29). Further, one of the coins found at Dura Europos (no. 16) was obviously used as a decoration element, maybe for a necklace (Bellinger 1949: 119 no. 167a). On the other hand, the Nabataean coins from Dura Europos and Susa (nos. 16, 17) would well confirm the Nabataean trading connections with middle and southern Mesopotamia that are attested by Pliny, Diodorus and Strabo (Plin., nat. 6, 32; 12, 40; Diod. 3, 42; Strabo 16, 4, 18).

Also the inscriptions have to be considered carefully. Examples mentioning non-specified Arabs (no. 20) or not clearly readable dedications (no. 21) do not necessarily testify Nabataean presence. Finally, for Priene (no. 23) we have to bear in mind that only a local embassy to Petra is attested but not the reciprocal case. However, the remaining evidence attests — despite the small number of single elements — the regular presence of Nabataeans in the Mediterranean area. The inscription from Tenos proves the early travelling activities of Nabataeans at least as far as the Aegean islands. The picture probably is somewhat distorted by the numerous inscriptions and historical references related to one or two trips of Syllaios to Rome (nos. 24, 25, 28). This could lead to an overinterpretation of travelling activities in the early years of Aretas IV. However, the important inscriptions attesting the construction and restoration of a sanctuary of Dusares at Puteoli/Pozzuoli (no. 27) clearly show that from the mid first century BC onwards Nabataeans visited the Italian coast regularly and in considerable numbers, as otherwise the installation of a permanent sanctuary and its maintenance would not make much sense. Nabataean travelling to Italy continued during the entire first century AD as is attested by one of the inscriptions found at Rome (no. 28).

It is difficult to get more precise information as to the organisation of Nabataean trade by the evidence looked at so far. D. Johnson suggested that the Nabataeans not only shipped big quantities of raw material across the Arabian Peninsula, but refined it into much smaller units and also sold the end product all over the Mediterranean (Johnson 1990: 240ff.; followed by Roche 1996: 95f.). This hypothesis is based on the somewhat naïve observation that specific types of small pottery, the so-called unguentaria, found at Petra and other Nabataean sites, look very similar to contemporary unguentaria found all over the Mediterranean (on Nabataean unguentaria see Schmid 2000: 75f.; Johnson 1990; Khairy 1980). Containers of unguents and other highly specialised and refined products, such as amphorae for wine, oil and garum, all show some common basic characteristics: They have long necks with small diameters in order to avoid evaporation of the contents and much larger, somewhat clumsy bodies. Therefore, unguentaria belong to the most uniform types of pottery and nothing speaks in favour of a common (Nabataean) origin of the examples from Dacia, Italy, Greece, Palestine and Syria as suggested by D. Johnson, as may be illustrated here with two examples found at Eretria on the Greek island of Euboea (FIG. 5) in a context of the second quarter of the second century BC (see also Anderson-Stojanovic 1987, pointing out the existence of manifold local production centres of unguentaria; in general terms on unguentaria cf. Camili 1999, although I believe that the distribution maps in this book are incorrect). The unguentaria known from Nabataean sites can be roughly divided into two main forms (FIG. 6), a Hellenistic form and a Roman one. The Hellenistic type is extremely rare in the Nabataean territory and the few examples attested so far are probably imported from the Aegean or Asia Minor (Schmid 2000: 75 with n. 308). It would seem, then, that the Nabataean ceramic industry did not produce any containers for unguents until the later first century BC. This is when the second type (right on FIG. 6), with several sub-types, shows up. It is true that on the site of the Temple of the Winged Lions at Petra quite a large number of these containers was found, compared for example to private dwellings (Johnson 1990). But still, the number of unguentaria is by far smaller than the quantity of bowls and plates for eating and drinking. The only conclusion that can be reached from the existing evidence is that apparently on a temple site more unguents were used than in a private household. Further, in historical sources the Nabataeans are always mentioned as traders of incense, myrrh and other aromatic goods, no refinery is mentioned and no such activities are archaeologically attested (Diod. 19, 94, 1ff.; Strabo 16, 4, 18; Peripl. M.



5. Hellenistic unguentaria from Eretria/Greece (Schmid).



6. Hellenistic (left) and Roman (right) type unguentaria from Petra (Schmid).

Rubr. 19; Plin., nat. 12, 32, 63ff. [not directly mentioning the Nabataeans]; on aromatics production and trade in the Arabian Peninsula and the Mediterranean see Zayadine 1995; it seems I was too optimistic on these points myself in Schmid 2002: 46f.). A possible exception could be the so-called *officina* excavated at 'En Boqeq on the south-western shore of the Dead Sea (Fischer, Gichon and Tal 2000). Although the excavators suggest a primarily Jewish occupation of that site, J. Magness correctly pointed out that Nabataean pottery and coins, as well as considerable amounts of pig bones point to an at least partial Nabataean occupation (Magness 2002: 346f.). But still, we are dealing here with a rather small installation that probably produced for a regional rather than the international market and most of all, these *officina* probably produced honey, unguents and perfumes from local products, such as dates, olives and bitumen from the Dead Sea.

While looking at the distribution pattern of the different signs for Nabataean presence on the Arabian Peninsula and in the Mediterranean area (FIG. 1), one observation is imposing: Nabataean pottery is restricted to the southeastern half of the map, that is the Syro-Phoenician coast, the Arabian Peninsula and some sites in Egypt. Despite the fact that Nabataean travellers were attested on several Aegean islands and in Italy, no remains of pottery were found there. Of course, the picture may be related to the fact that this kind of pottery is not well known in the West and may not have received the attention it deserves. On the other hand, the very fine and often painted Nabataean pottery would seem distinguished enough compared to the Hellenistic and Roman mainstream in order to be specially mentioned in publications. As we necessarily have to deal with the evidence as it exists, we have to look for a satisfying explanation. Such an explanation may be related to the organisation of Nabataean long distance trade. According to the evidence, the people travelling to the Mediterranean where not the same ones bringing the goods from the Arab-Persian Gulf and from South Arabia to the Nabataean heartland. In other words, at least from the later second century BC onwards, a continuous specialisation and social differentiation within Nabataean society must have taken place. This evolution coincides with the presumed process of settlement of the former nomadic Nabataeans (Schmid 2001A: 368-371; 2001B). Interestingly, ethnological studies were able to show that with the process of sedentarisation a stronger specialisation in terms of trade, crafts and administration is observed, leading, of course, to the creation of different social groups within a society (Altorki and Cole 1989). In the earlier stadium of sedentarisation there were people within that community that could be called "part-time-sedentarised" because they were involved in long distance camel trade and therefore on the road for about six months a year, while others were permanently resident (Altorki and Cole 1989: 67-82; however, this did not exclude the camel riders from having houses in their home cities). With the introduction of new means of transport, most of the former camel riders had to change their occupation and new social differentiation was created (Altorki and Cole 1989: 101f. 208-231). The careful analysis in the

case of 'Unayzah and its comparison to our case would offer much more inspiration for reconstructing the process of sedentarisation and social diversification among the Nabataeans (on similar topics see also Fiema 1996). Partially the same can be concluded in the case of the Nabataeans. With their definite sedentarisation — at least in and around Petra — at ca. 100 BC, some specialisation had to take place. In order to maintain their economic wealth, i.e. the supply of spices and other goods from South Arabia, some people would have travelled along the peninsula for most of the year. Others would have specialised in crafts and industry as can be seen in the case of pottery, because the Nabataean pottery is for sure the product of professional potters from its fist stage on. Again other people would have specialised in maintaining contacts with potential end-consumers of the traded goods in the wider Mediterranean area. The members of the Nabataean society travelling to Greece and Italy probably were not simple shippers of goods but rather ambassadors in economic and diplomatic terms. Although the Nabataean society was always closer to a Bedouin tribe than to an urban or long-term settled society in terms of social differentiation, some differences must have occurred, not the least in the field of material culture. This is confirmed by the well known statement of Strabo (16, 4, 26) attesting the use of golden drinking cups by the Nabataean aristocracy (on the connection between Nabataean metal bowls and pottery see Schmid 2000: 153-156; Vickers 1994).

Maybe this is the reason why no Nabataean pottery was found in the West: There simply is none, as the people travelling to Greece and Italy belonged to a social class using precious metal vessels.

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