

A Study of the Nabataean Minor Arts and their Cultural Interpretations

International politics, economics, society and religion are directly reflected in the study of the Nabataean minor arts. The Hellenistic world during the first centuries BC-AD was in turmoil, with almost constant warfare and political instability disrupting trade and with an economy in decline. The Nabataean kingdom was by no means peaceful, but its successful expansionist foreign policies were accompanied by internal political stability and a booming economy. These differing circumstances are reflected in the relative impoverishment of the late Hellenistic minor arts repertoire and the comparative crudity of its workmanship, while within the Nabataean kingdom new pottery and other minor arts proliferate and the objects illustrated in this study are, in every case, finer and more delicate than their external analogues. At Petra, the painted pottery, for instance, approaches a peak in quality and variety towards the beginning of the Christian era and is far better than the pottery of the preceding or following periods. This period corresponds approximately to the time of Aretas IV (9BC-40-AD).

It would be strange if the sophisticated Nabataean civilization, with its distinctive architecture, religion, script, coinage and the “egg-shell” painted bowls, had not also possessed a distinctive range of minor fine arts. Generally, the characteristic Nabataean minor arts discovered at Petra and other Nabataean sites show clear signs of Hellenistic - Roman influence, although created in abundant variety within a flourishing and unmistakably local context.

This research describes some of the Nabataean minor arts, such as ink-wells, drinking vessels, piri-form unguentaria, fine ware with rouletted decorations, painted ware, pottery lamps, terracotta figurines and stone cultic objects, all of which throw

some light on different aspects of Nabataean culture.

Nabataean Ink-Wells

The ink-wells of the Roman period in general and their Nabataean counterparts in particular, that have been found in Jordan over the past six decades have not, to date, been the subject of detailed discussion in any publication. Two main types of Nabataean ink-well have been found at Petra, being:

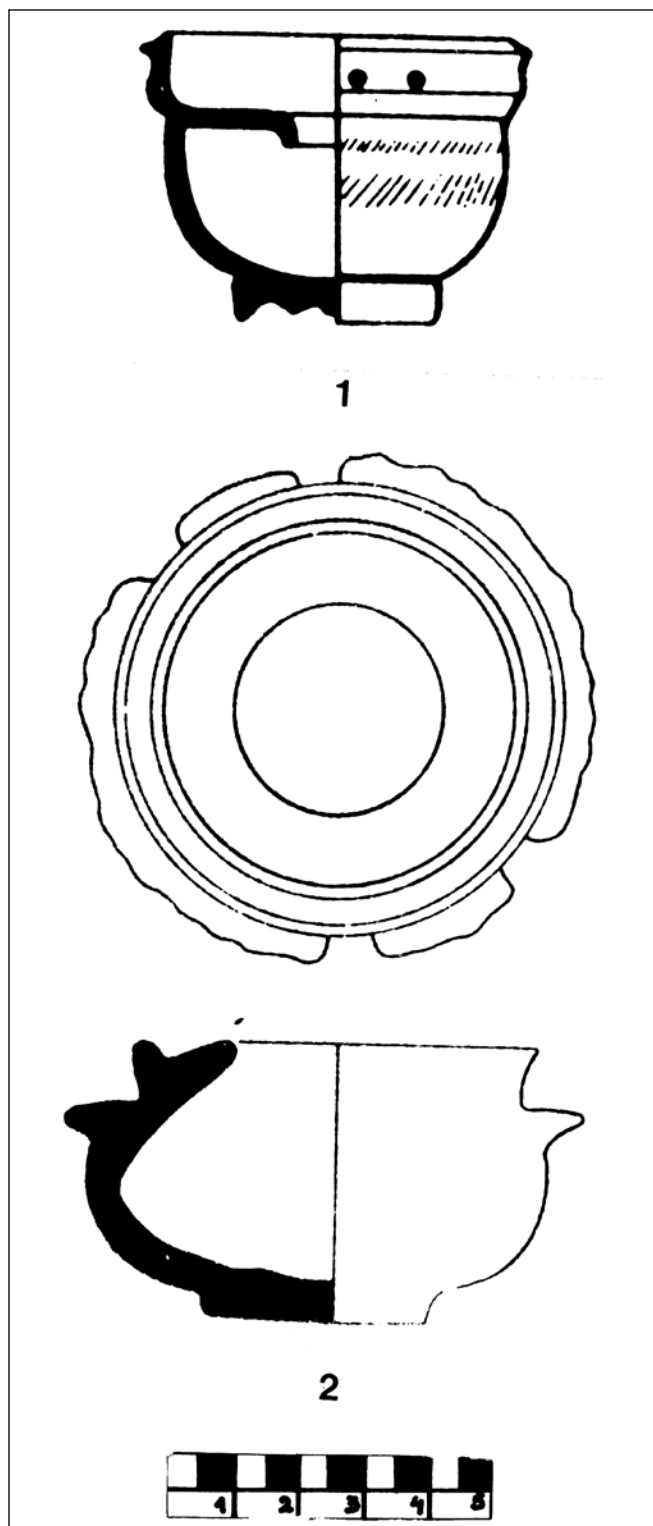
Pottery Ink-Well (FIGS. 1:1, 2:1)

Height	4.5cm.
Diameter	6.0cm.
Diameter of filling-hole	1.3cm.
Height of rim	0.8cm.

Cup-like ink-well, mended, part of rim and body is missing, flattened top, surrounded by up-standing rim, filling hole on top, two pairs of incomplete pierced small holes on either side of the rim, ring base, light red ware, darker red wash outside, two rows of incised vertical dashes on body outside.

This ink-well was found by P.J. Parr during his excavations at Petra (1958 – 64). There are parallels in Terra Sigillata, comparable to examples published by Oswald and Pryce (1920: 209 – 10, Pl. LXX. 1 – 5, “early Roman”), Baur (1922: 225. No. 552, not illustrated here, but occurred in Hayes (1972: 177, Form 124.1), who suggests a “Flavian or possibly Trajanic date” for his example No.1) and Lamboglia (1958: 284 – 5, Form 16). The latter has been nicely described and redrawn by Hayes (1972: 177, Form 124.2), who attributes this type to “the second century AD”. Another example has been published by Gose (1975: 14, Pl. 10, 155 – 6, which is dated to the “middle of the second century AD”).

Although the Petra pottery ink-well (FIGS. 1.1,



1. Alabaster ink-well.

2:1) has a similar body form to the parallels mentioned above, there are the following differences: the parallels are made of Terra Sigillata, have a slightly concave top, shorter upstanding rim and are without non-functional suspension holes in the rim. There-



2. Alabaster ink-well.

fore, one might add the above-mentioned Petra ink-well to the list of typically Nabataean forms.

Alabaster ink-well (FIGS. 1:2, 2:2)

Height 4.6cm.
 Body diameter 7.8cm.
 Diameter of filling hole 2.8cm.

Cup-like ink-well, intact, large filling-hole on a concave top, disk base, horizontal dented ridge (ledge) on shoulder with which to carry the object, another upstanding ridge around the top to avoid splashing the ink and to confirm its function as an ink-well. Thick white(ish) alabaster, traces of ink discoloration in places.

This alabaster ink-well was found alongside a pottery ink-well by the Department of Antiquities of Jordan at Petra in 1968. Such an elaborate ink-well was unknown amongst contemporary alabaster vessels discovered elsewhere and therefore seems to be purely Nabataean.

Nabataean Drinking Vessels

Two main types of cup can be identified amongst the unpainted pottery recovered from Nabataean sites, representing one of the commonest forms of household vessel (Horsfield and Conway 1942: 122 – 123):

Hemispherical Cup (FIGS. 3.1, 4.1)

Diameter 7.3cm.
Height 3.8cm.

Broken and mended, inclined walls, ring base, pinkish ware, grey core in places. Creamy wash around outside rim, mostly peeled.

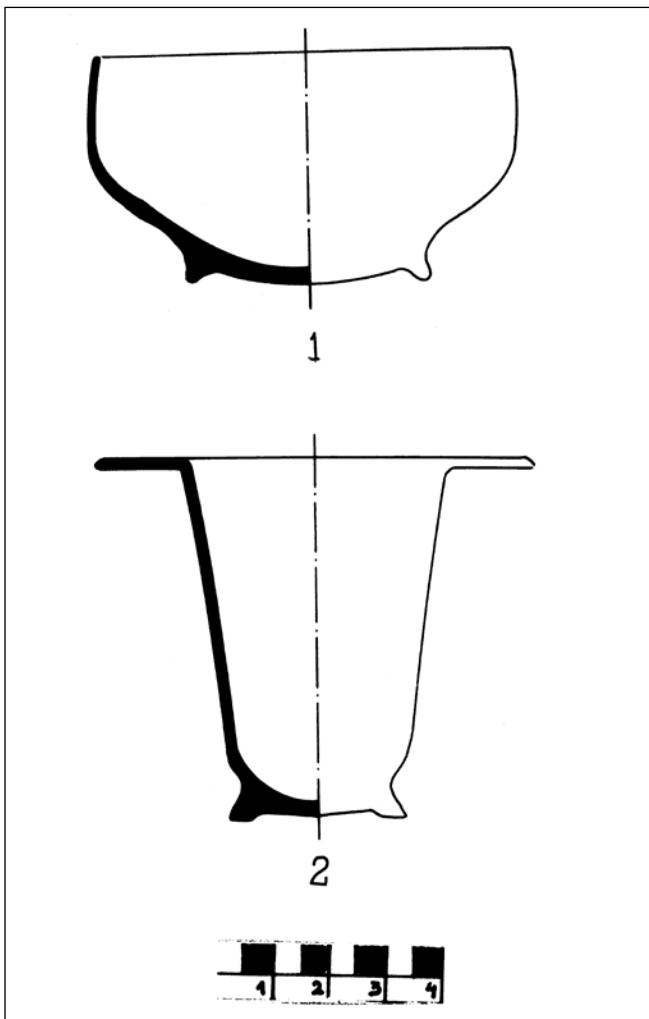
Nabataean sites offer typical parallels for the hemispherical cup which was found in the 1981 Petra excavations, including the examples published by Crowfoot (1936: 23 – 27, Pl. IV. 5), Murray and Ellis (1940: 13 – 18, Pls. VIII.4, 55 – 57. 60; XXV: 6; XXXI: 119 – 121, “undated”), Horsfield and Conway (1942: 144, Pl. XXI: 158, which was classified as “Nabataean Fine Plain Ware”), Hammond (1962: 175, 178 Class 112 (b) and (c): 4, “Nabataean”), Hammond (1973: 46, No. 78, “Nabataean”), Weippert (1979: 96, fig. 4: 12, 144 “Nabataean – Roman Ceramic”) and Rosenthal and Sivan (1977: 138, fig. 1:1 – 2 “unstratified object”).

Cup with Flattened Rim (FIG. 3:2, 4:2)

Diameter 7.6cm.
Height 6.2cm.

This cup has a flattened-out rim extending beyond the widest point of the body. Such a rim is not practical or comfortable for drinking, since it is not easy to control the flow of liquid. The body is heavy at the top and tapers down to a ring base. Pinkish-red ware, evenly fired, well-levigated, darker pinkish engobe outside. This cup was found in the 1981 Petra excavations conducted by the University of Jordan. The only parallels for this cup appear at the Nabataean sites published by Negev (1970: 48 – 51, Pl. 32: 7 “First half of the first century AD”), Bennett (1962: 233 – 242, especially No. 241) and Hammond (1973: 33, Nos. 88 – 89, 91, “Nabataean”).

The hemispherical cups recovered at Nabataean sites are comparatively small for drinking water



3. Hemispherical cup.



4. Hemispherical cup.

vessels; a thirsty person might drink several cups before being satisfied. Moreover, the inverted rim on the majority of such cups is more suited to sipping. It is therefore most probable that hemispherical cups of this type were used for more precious liquids, perhaps wine. Bearing this in mind, in the fourth century BC Diodorus wrote that the Nabataeans were nomadic Arabs who abhorred the use of wine (Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historica* XIX: 94 – 95), but later on, in the first century AD, Strabo (XVI: 4. 26) offers a somewhat modified picture, describing them as a settled community living in large houses in rich cities, where “...no one drinks more than eleven cupfuls, from separate cups”.

Cups with an everted flattened rim (FIG. 3:2) are neither practical nor comfortable for drinking water, or even precious liquids, from the external rounded edge of the rim. The only practical way to use this type of cup is to sip the liquid from the internal part of the rim; it is most probable that these cups were used in special social and religious ceremonies. None of the above-mentioned two types have handles, but their size fits nicely into the palm of the hand with a thumb around one side and the forefinger and middle finger around the other side.

Although the two main variants of hemispherical cup (FIG. 3:1) and cups with everted flattened rim (FIG. 3:2) have, in a few cases, been found together in the same loci, there is a general chronological development from cups with slightly inclined rounded sides to those with vertical sides. Cups with rounded sides tend to occur in contexts dated from around the last quarter of the first century BC to around the end of the third quarter of the first century AD. The majority of hemispherical cups with vertical sides have been found in contexts dated from around the end of the fourth century AD to around the end of the reign of Rabbel II (106AD). The thicker Nabataean carinated cups date to the reign of Malichus II (40 - 70AD); hemispherical cups seem to have become smaller over time and their ware is comparatively thick and coarse for the size of object. This development occurred after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom by the Romans in 106AD and lasted into the early third century AD.

The development of the second type — cups with everted flattened rim (FIG. 3:2) — cannot be precisely determined. Generally, early forms dating to the first four decades of the first century AD have shorter everted flattened rims than those of

the second half of the first century AD. This type of cup became shorter and thicker, with a tiny everted rim during the second and the early third centuries AD.

According to the above-mentioned parallels, one can assign these two types of cup to the list of the purely Nabataean forms since their occurrence is restricted to Nabataean sites.

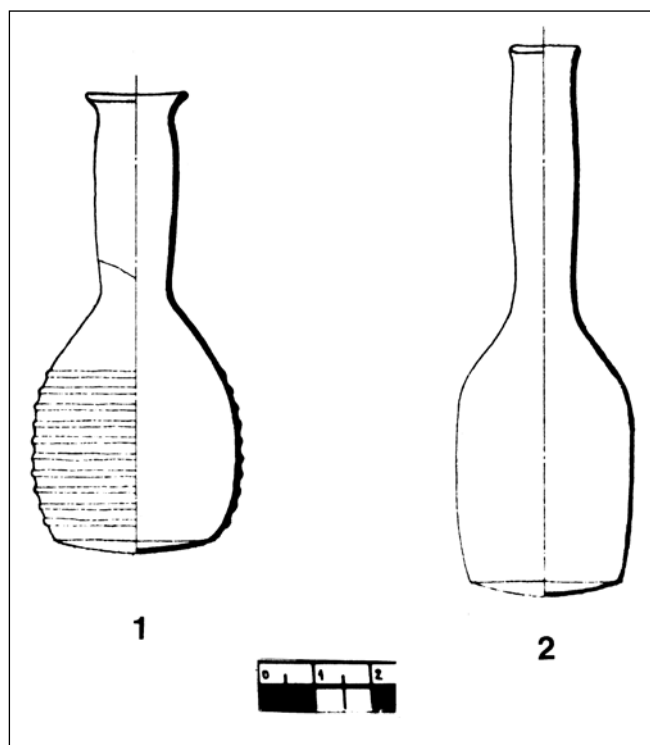
Nabataean Piriform Unguentaria

Nabataean piriform unguentaria can be classified into two main types: ribbed (FIGS. 5:1, 6:1) and unribbed (FIGS. 5:2, 6:2). Although they reflect outside influences, these artefacts have their own typical forms, which are not difficult to distinguish. It is however difficult to identify traces of foreign influence in their production:

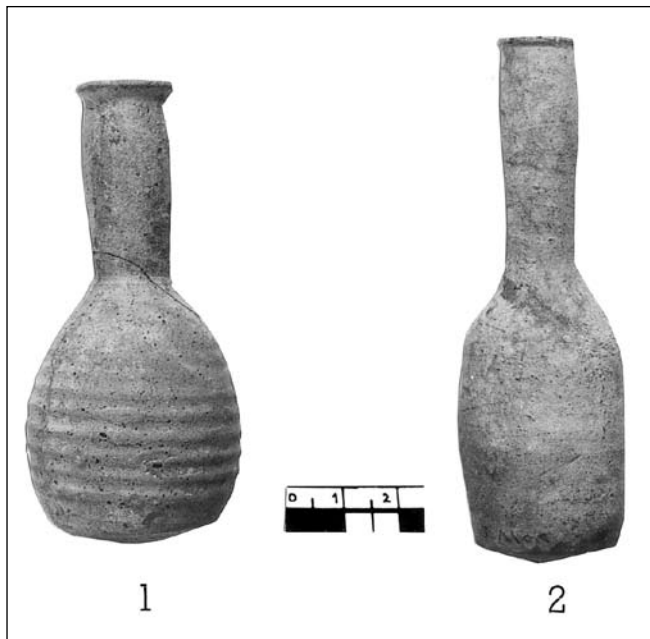
Ribbed Unguentarium (FIGS. 5:1, 6:1)

Diameter of mouth	1.9cm.
Height	7.9cm.
Width of body	3.0cm.

Broken and mended, oval body with elongated bulging neck, furnished with everted rim and cone-like base. Red ware, few limestone grits with traces of creamy slip externally, evenly fired, body ribbed from below shoulder to above base.



5. Nabataean piriform unguentarium.



6. Nabataean piriform unguentarium.

Unribbed Unguentarium (FIGS. 5:2, 6:2)

Diameter of mouth 1.1cm.
 Height 7.9cm.
 Width of body 3.0cm.

Tubular body with elongated bulging neck, intact, everted rim and cone-like base, creamy-buff ware with few fine white grits, buff slip externally.

Some scholars have suggested a Parthian heritage (Glueck 1965: 265; Horsfield and Conway 1942: 204). This type of unguentarium is wheel-made. Occasionally, the marks of the cutting string or tool are visible just above the base; fingerprints can also be present on the exterior of the body, but frequently these marks have been smoothed off to seal the clay pores and improve the general appearance of the vessel. No evidence of knife-paring has been noted on Nabataean unguentaria except on the cone-like bases.

Since the two unguentaria illustrated here (FIGS. 5:1, 5:2) did not come from stratified deposits, an intensive effort have been made to locate dated and undated parallels. The ribbed Nabataean unguentarium has fairly close parallels from Petra (Horsfield and Conway 1942:143, 150, Pls. 21, 155, 24, 173 “first half of the first century AD”; Hammond 1973a: 30, no. 36 “Nabataean”), Dhāt Rās (Zayadine 1970: 35, esp. 135, fig. 2:212 “AD 14 – 37”), Nessana (Collin Baly 1962: 299, A58: 38 “Pre – Byzantine”) and ‘Ammān (Harding 1964: 60, Pl. 20, 4 “BC 50 – AD 50”).

The ribbed unguentarium (FIG. 5:2) is similarly

restricted to Nabataean sites and can be compared to the examples published by Hammond (1973a: 30, Nos 43 – 46 “Nabataean”) and Horsfield and Conway (1942: 149 – 50, Pl. 25, 180, undated).

It was formerly believed that these small unguentaria were designed to be placed with bodies in tombs (Thompson 1934: 473; Debevoise 1934: 87; Kahane 1952: 178). However, it now seems more probable that the unguentaria were simply popular vessels, designed primarily as containers for the transport of ointment, balsam, jasmine, kohl, costly oil and other toilet preparations (Thompson 1934: 473; Goldman *et al.* 1950: 171; Toll 1946: 106 – 107; Debevoise 1934: 15). Therefore, the term “tear-bottles” is a misnomer (Thompson 1934: 472), even though the vessels were often used secondarily in burial deposits as dedicatory offerings.

Perfume, as a raw material, was probably produced locally or imported from other regions in the east Mediterranean, especially Jericho and the area around Petra, which were fertile and contained many gardens (Strabo XVI: 26). Diodorus mentions that the Nabataeans imported balsam from Jericho and bitumen from the Dead Sea (Hammond 1973: 68 – 69). The Nabataeans controlled these resources, which were considered amongst their most important sources of income. It may be assumed that the Nabataeans did not export perfumes as raw material, but instead controlled the perfume industry and supplied the European markets with bottled unguentaria containing, for example, balsam, jasmine or kohl. These containers were made in different forms and sizes, to be sold at various prices (Horsfield and Conway 1942: 68 – 69). Evidence for this practice is seen in the large unguentaria from Petra (Horsfield and Conway 1942: Pl. 24: 173, ca. 29cm. High and ca. 20cm. Wide). We can assume that these large unguentaria were used by the Nabataeans for the industrial export of perfume, *contra* the view that these containers were “...never of any great size, nor more than a few inches in length” (Murray and Ellis 1940: 13).

Fine Nabataean Ware with Impressed and Rouletted Decoration

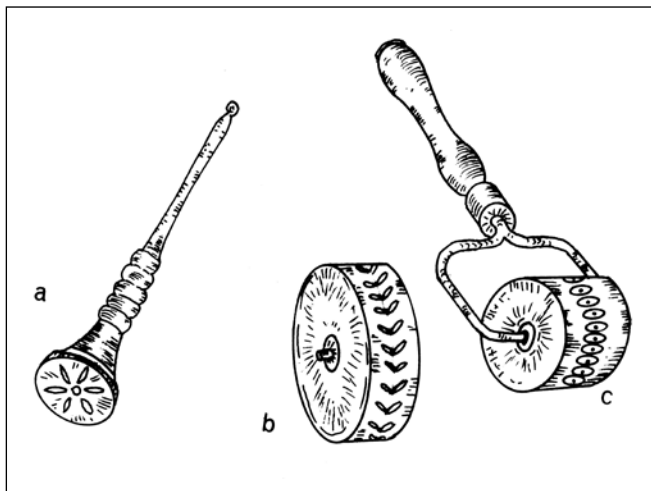
No attempt has hitherto been made to study the fine ware with impressed and rouletted decorations from Nabataean sites, nor even to draw a distinction between Nabataean and non-Nabataean pottery. Most archaeologists who have excavated Nabataean sites have concentrated on the painted

Nabataean pottery, e.g. Winnett and Reed (1964), Hammond (1968), Schmitt-Korte (1968) and Tushingham (1972). They have rarely studied the unpainted coarse and fine wares. Reed failed to identify Nabataean pottery, including the rouletted ware, and states that “the assimilation of Nabataean and Roman culture makes it impossible to distinguish certain vessels as either Roman and Nabataean” (Winnett and Reed 1964: 55).

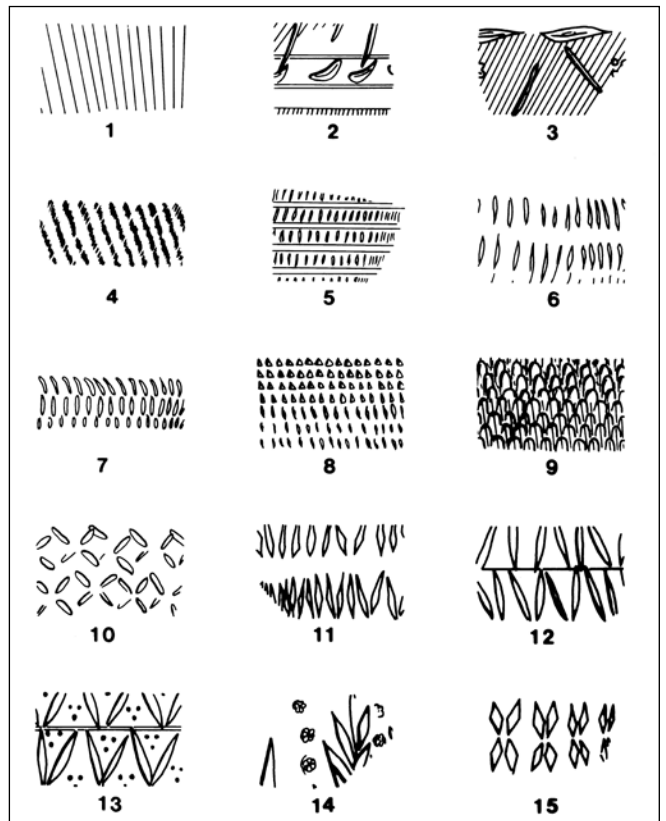
In figure 7a, b and c shows how various tools were used to give either impressed or rouletted decoration. For the former, a flat stamp seal (FIG. 7a) with an incised pattern was used. The handle enabled the decorator to control the depth of the impression. For the latter, the roulette (FIG. 7b and c) gives a continuous line of impressions where the motif is repeated. In essence, the roulette — as its name suggests — is a small wheel with handle or spindle for guidance that is rolled around the vessel. These tools were easily manufactured from stone, bone or even pottery.

The same tools could be used on both globular or straight sided vessels before the clay was completely dry, although the motif would obviously be confined to the external surface. Some sort of support would have had to be given to the inside walls.

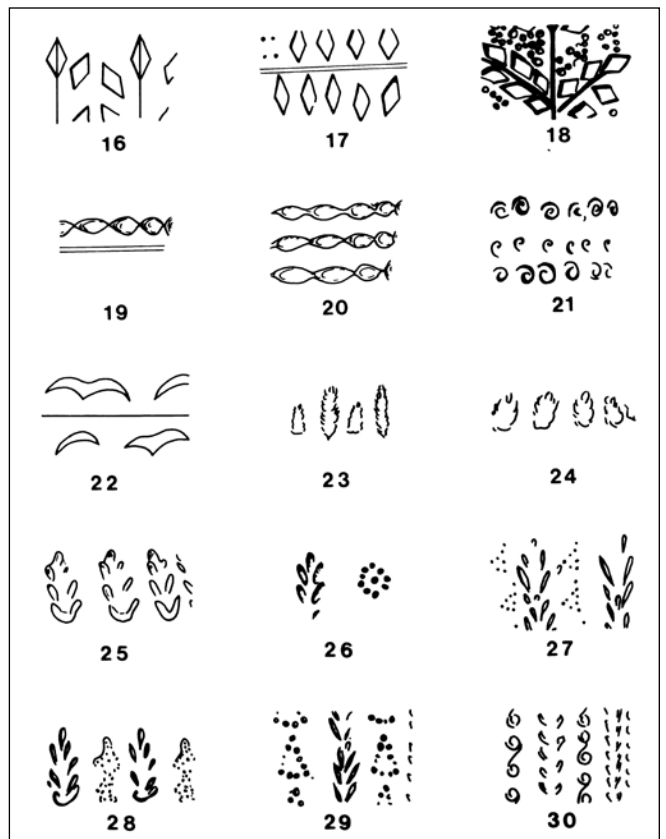
The different designs of the impressed and rouletted decoration are illustrated in Figures 8 and 9, Nos 1-30. The ware is of pinkish — red clay. It is evident that the different types of Petra fine ware, with their impressed and rouletted decoration, are most commonly found on Nabataean sites. The following artefact, found by P. J. Parr at Petra, is a fine example of Nabataean fine ware with rouletted decoration:



7. Pouletted wheels.



8. Impressed and rouletted decorations.



9. Impressed and rouletted decorations.

Handle with Rouletted Decorations (FIGS. 10, 11) Large fragment of rim, neck, and handle (FIG. 10), with everted rim, cylindrical neck, wide strap handle, fine grey ware, thin red outer zones, very few white grits. Handle decorated with impressed lozenges and small circles, arranged in fruit tree-like pattern, surface smooth. This form and decoration are restricted to Nabataean sites and do not occur elsewhere. Hence, this type can be added to the list of uniquely Nabataean production.

Nabataean “Egg-Shell” Painted Ware

This ware was first identified and studied in 1930 by G. Horsfield and his wife Agnes Conway (Horsfield and Conway 1930: 375), who ran the first systematic excavations in Petra in 1929. Their’s was the first illustrated study (Horsfield and Conway 1942: 105 – 206) to describe the painted vessels and properly reconstruct the many decorative patterns. During the last five decades, further scholarly works on painted Nabataean pottery have been published. The three seasons at Dhibān (1950 – 53) provide us with some examples of this ware (Winnett and Reed 1964). Two chapters of Hammond’s (1968) thesis concentrate on the painted Nabataean pottery. Schmitt-Korte (1968: 496 – 519) was the first to produce a study on the distribution of floral patterns on painted Nabataean bowls. However, it was Parr (1978: 202 – 209) in particular who provided a genuine contribution to the study of the painted Nabataean ware, when he dealt with the problem of the chronology and origins of this ware.



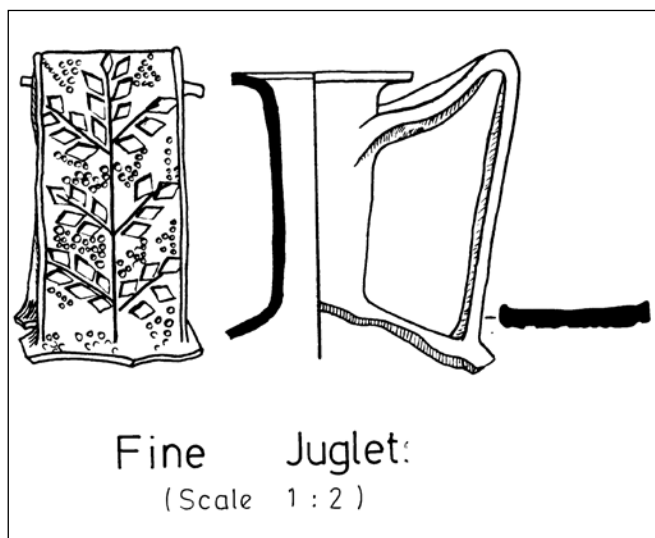
11. Handle with rouletted decorations.

Two artefacts are discussed here:

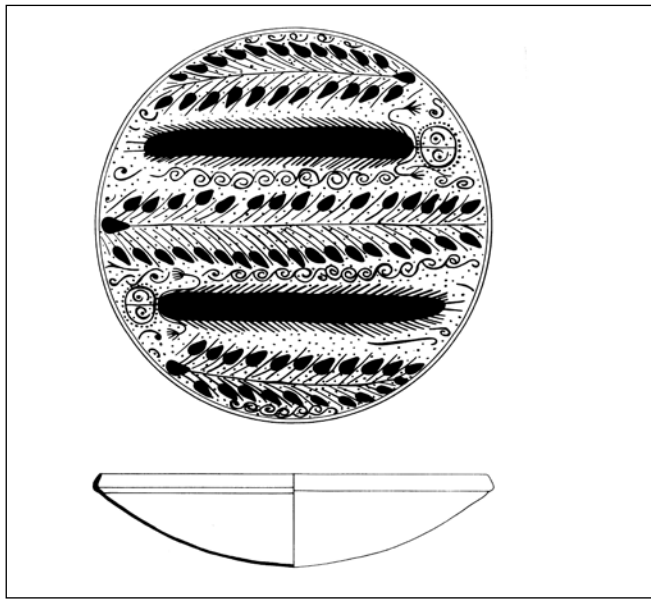
Complete Painted Bowl (FIG. 12)

Diameter 18.0cm.
 Height 4.3cm.
 Thickness 1.0 – 1.3cm.

Shallow bowl with rounded base and bent-up rim, pinkish – red ware, evenly fired, dark pinkish engobe with creamy slip around outside rim. The interior is decorated with a brown paint. The design is divided into two halves by a central wreath of almonds. The two halves are arranged in a head to foot “tete-beche” position. Each half containing a stylized human figure (15.4cm. in length). The head is almost circular and is surrounded by dots. It has two eyes with central pupils; the face is divided into two halves by a vertical line. The hands are raised with the palms open and the figure probably



10. Handle with rouletted decorations.



12. Painted bowl.

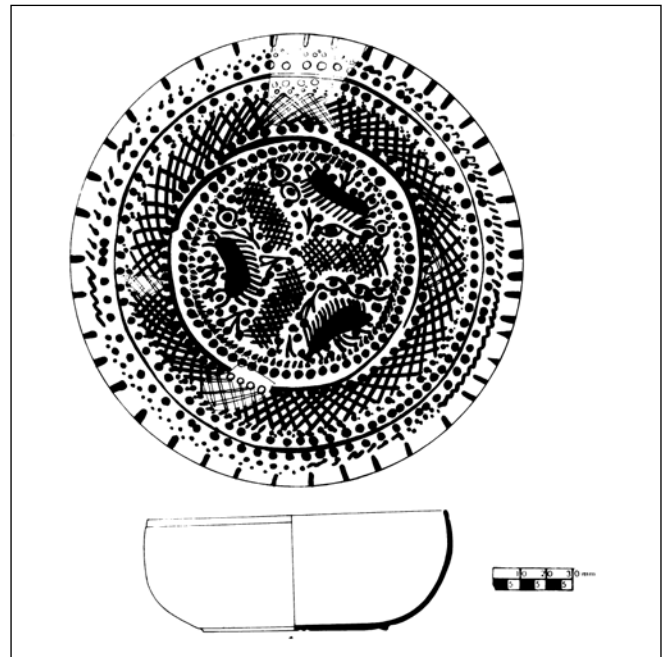
represents a worshipper. The body is in the form of a millipede with numerous legs in double pairs placed on each side of the segment.

No human figures so far appear to have been found on Nabataean “egg-shell” painted pottery. Two interpretations could be put forward for the upraised arms of figures such as those illustrated in Figure 12. They may represent worshippers receiving the god’s blessing, or may be symbols aimed at protecting the user(s) of these painted bowls against evil spirits during social and religious ceremonies. Either way, it seems likely that these vessels had a religious significance and that some of them probably used in funerary meals and religious ceremonies.

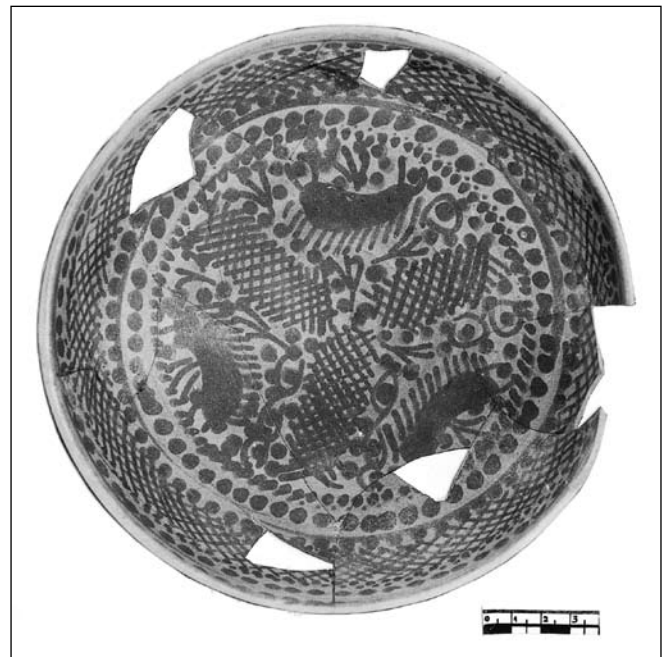
Hemispherical Painted Bowl (FIGS. 13, 14)

Diameter	11.3cm.
Height	4.4cm.
Approx. thickness	1.0 – 1.5cm.

Inclined walls with sharp rim on top, pinkish — red ware, well livegated, evenly fired, smooth to touch, yellowish-white slip on the exterior surface. An incised spiral wheel finishing the base. The interior is covered with three concentric zones of decoration the inner circular zone is divided into three equal fields by three bands of trellis pattern radiating from the center. Each trellis alternates with a millipede of numerous legs and the background is covered with dots. The middle circular zone consists of a trellis bordered on both sides by dots. The outer zone is decorated with dotes of different siz-



13. Hemispherical painted bowl.



14. Hemispherical painted bowl.

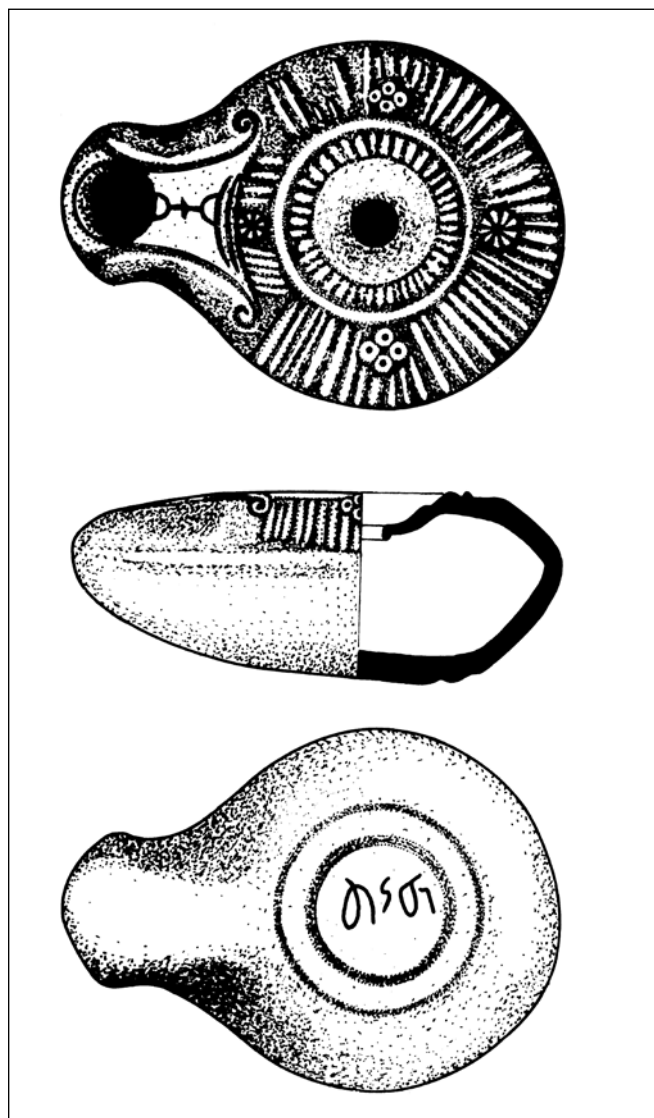
es, wavy lines and tiny splashes evenly distributed on the interior of the rim. The painted decoration is dark red. The above mentioned hemispherical bowl was found during the 1981 Petra excavations supervised by the author. No exact parallels for the above-mentioned two painted bowls have been found to date. Therefore, they are uniquely Nabataean objects.

Nabataean Pottery Lamps

Our information on the Nabataean pottery lamps recovered from Nabataean sites remains obscure, since no thorough study of this topic and its chronological sequence has been made. Also, until recently archaeologists have been content to attribute these lamps to broad chronological periods. Our primary task, therefore, is to try to separate Nabataean from contemporaneous non-Nabataean pottery lamps. Six Nabataean lamps are dealt with in this paper (FIGS. 15-20, 21-23:1-6):

Intact Lamp with Four Inscribed Nabataean Characters (FIGS. 15, 21:1)

Length	8.8cm.
Width	6.2cm.
Height	3.4cm.



15. Intact lamp with four inscribed Nabataean characters.

Rounded body, small sunken disc, shallow ring base, two incised concentric circles separating the rounded shoulder from the disc, main-hole of 0.8cm. diameter. The shoulder of the lamp is decorated in low relief with very tight strokes representing the sun's rays, with a rosetta of four circular petals on each side of the shoulder. A third small rosetta of nine petals on the handle. On the nozzle is a symbol most probably representing a chalice with hemispherical body and trumpet base. Buff-creamy ware, few grits included, evenly fired, traces of brownish slip are visible on the upper half of the lamp, dripped irregularly in streaks on the upper part of the body, encrustation in places. The base carries four Nabataean characters in red, which were studied for George Horsfield and his wife by the Rev. Pere M-R. Savignac. His reading was TLT, which means "TLT" or the third (Horsfield and Conway 1942: 122). Hammond also accepted the TLT and quotes, but with a question mark. Albright's suggestion was that these characters are an abbreviation of "thrice blessed" (Hammond 1957: 12 - 13). Negev (1984: 115 - 120) read these Nabataean characters differently on his lamp No. 89a, from the potter's workshop at Oboda, as ALT, which is the name of a major Nabataean goddess, "Allat". However, the correct reading appears to be neither TLT nor ALT but RAYT (Khairy 1984: 115 - 119), since the inscribed word consists of four characters and not three, which means "I saw" or "I have seen". I believe that there is a direct and logical relationship between the functional purpose of the lamp itself — as a means lighting up the darkness of the wilderness, tombs, dwellings and caves — and the meaning of the word. Such lamps are common at Nabataean sites, especially Petra, but seem not to occur elsewhere.

Intact Lamp with Decorated Sunken Discus (FIGS. 16, 21:2)

Length	9.3cm.
Width	6.3cm.
Height	2.7cm.

Three incised concentric circles separating a narrow shoulder from sunken discus, flattened base, nozzle surrounded by two volutes, a bird — probably a dove — looking right with open wings. Filling-hole of 1.2cm. diameter pierced above the bird's tail. Grey ware, well-levigated, no visible porosity, black slip on top of the lamp falling in streaks on to the lower half. Right side of upper



16. Intact lamp with decorated sunken discus.

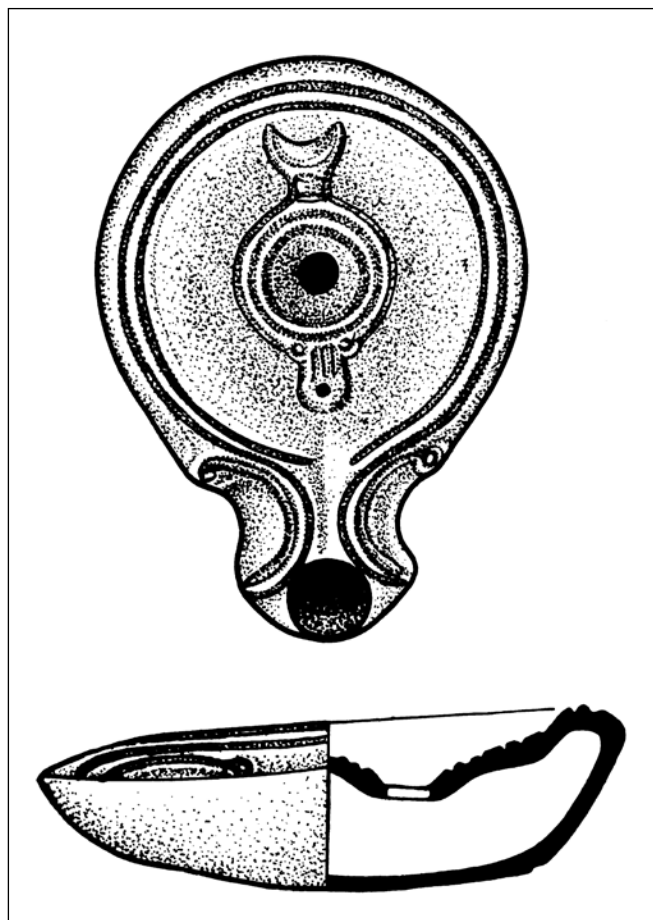
part of lower half of lamp incised with the Nabataean characters “SLM QWAK”, which probably means “God give you strength / power”. The bird, which appears on the sunken discus of this lamp may represent an escaping soul (Fletcher 1961: 217); additionally the fish and dove were sacred to Atargatis. One version of the myth informs us that Atargatis fell into a pool and was saved by a fish; according to another version Atargatis turned into a fish and her daughter Semiramis into a dove (Diod. Sic. 2.4 2 – 6; 2. 20. 1 – 2).

It is obvious that the above-mentioned lamp should be added to the corpus of Nabataean lamps, since it carries inscribed Nabataean characters.

Intact Lamp Decorated with the Shape of a Lamp with Crescentic Handle (FIG. 17, 22:3)

Length	9.8cm.
Width	7.1cm.
Height	2.8cm.

Rounded body with two volutes separating nozzle from body, two incised concentric grooves sur-



17. Intact lamp decorated with the shape of lamp with crescentic handle.

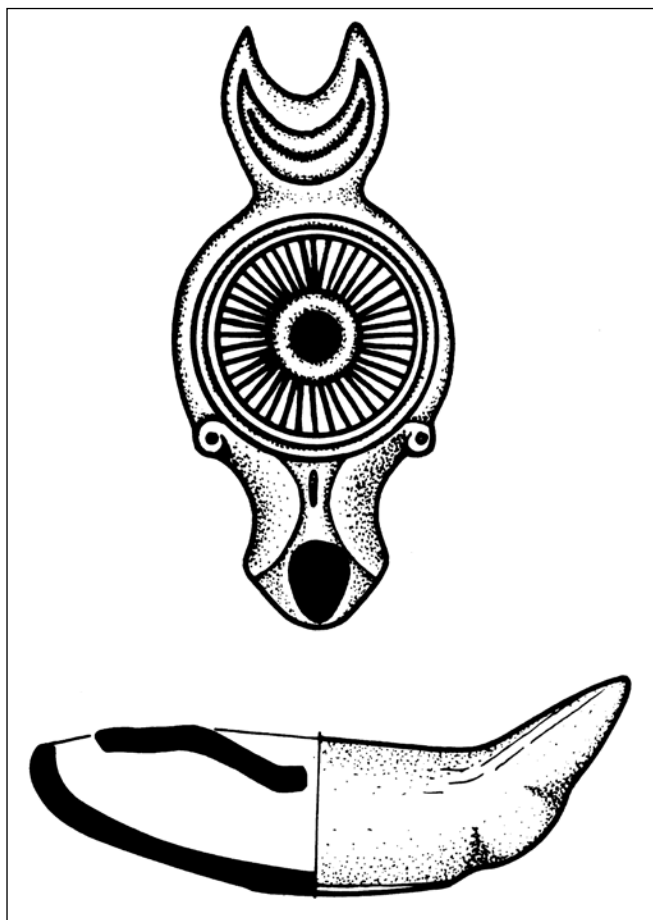
rounded sunken discus, which is decorated in low relief with the shape of a lamp with crescentic handle, flattened base marked with circular incision. Buff-red ware, evenly fired, well levigated, traces of creamy slip on the exterior surface.

For parallels see Loeschke (1919: 399, Pl. XVII. 461 “Roman”) and Deneauve (1969:116, Pl. XXXIX. 338 “early first century AD”). The ware and shape suggest that this lamp was made in Petra.

Intact Lamp with Crescentic Handle (FIGS. 18, 22:4)

Length	10.0cm.
Width	4.6cm.
Height	2.5cm.

Rounded body with two volutes around nozzle, three incised concentric circles on tiny shoulder with sunken discus, decorated with tight incised strokes representing the sun’s rays, flat base surrounded by incised circle, finger-impression on center of base, creamy ware, well levigated, evenly



18. Intact lamp with crescentic handle.

fired, pinkish slip on exterior surface.

This lamp is frequently mentioned in the literature and is comparable with examples published by Walters (1914: 127 – 128, Pl. XXXVI. 837 – 850, but each of the latter examples has two nozzles), Loeschke (1919: 224, fig. 4. 1 2 “first century AD”), Broneer (1930: 169, Pl. VII. 396 “Type XXI”), Waage (1934: 62, Pl. VIII, 1927, classified as “Roman Group I”), Robins (1939: 55 – 56, Pl. XII. 8), Iliffe (1945: 21, Pl. VII. 128), Goldman *et al.* (1950: 95, Pl. 102: 203, which is attributed to “Group XVI” and dated to the first century AD), Vessberg (1953: 117, Pl. 11.17 “first century AD”), Menzel (1969: 26 – 29, No. 88 “early Roman”), Vessberg and Westholm (1956: 123, fig. 38. 17 “Roman”), Deneauve (1969: 145 – 146, Pls. LVI. 544 – 545, LVII. 551 – 552, LX. 589 “first century AD”), Oziol (1977: 172 – 173, Nos. 521 – 523 “first century AD”), Rosenthal and Sivan (1978: 19 – 21, Nos. 42, 49 – 50, which are classified as “Roman Imperial Lamps”) and Bailey (1980: 205, Pl. 28. Q 1002, Type D, Group II “The first half of the

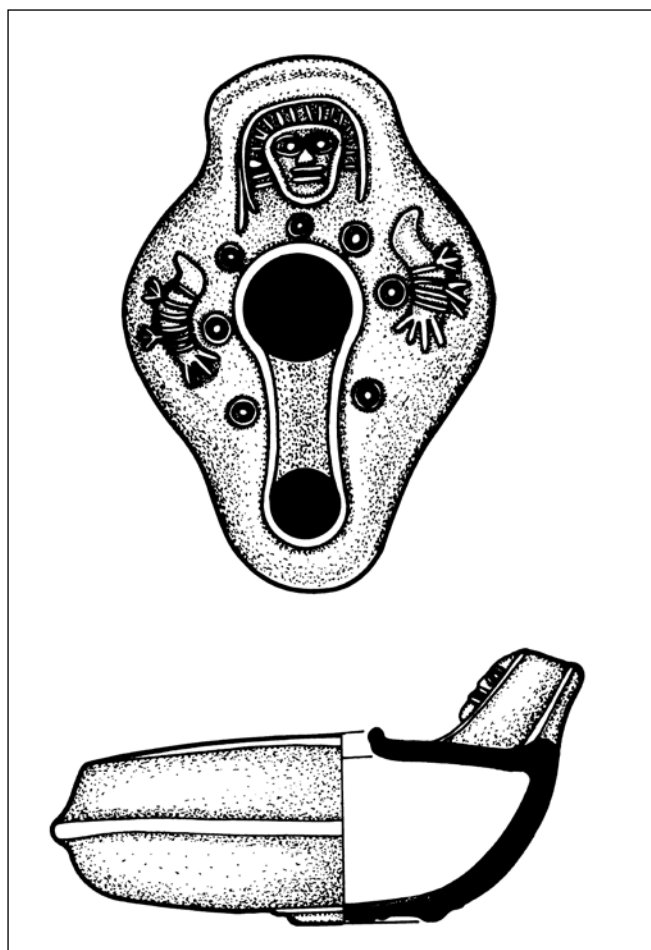
first century AD”).

Although this lamp (FIG. 18) with crescentic handle was locally produced, it is of a type well-known inside and outside the Nabataean kingdom, especially during the first century AD. This date does not contradict the chronological attribution of this lamp, which was found during the 1981 Petra excavations and belongs to Phase II (40 – 70 AD).

Intact Lamp with Anthropomorphic Handle (FIGS. 19, 23:5):

Length	10.0 cm.
Width	6.8cm.
Height	3.8cm.

Oval body with broad nozzle and bent-up tongue handle in the form of a human head, probably a female with head-covering, her hands tied on both sides of the lamp’s shoulder. Defined ridge around comparatively large filling-hole of 2.1 cm. diameter extends on to nozzle, forming a trough connecting the filling-hole with wick-hole of 1.3cm. diameter. Shallow ring base, seven tiny circles in low relief



19. Intact lamp with Anthropomorphic handle.

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around the main-hole, creamy-buff ware, fine grits included, body evenly fired, traces of dark buff slip noted in places.

This lamp was found at Petra and published by N. Glueck (1965: 148, Pl. 66. a – b). No published parallels can be cited for this lamp. Therefore, it could potentially be added to the list of purely Nabataean production.

Incomplete Lamp with Anthropomorphic Handle
(FIG. 20, 23:6)

Length	10.0cm.
Width	6.6cm.
Height	2.7cm.

Flute-like shaped lamp, two defined rosettae on either side of a female head, each rose consisting of ten petals, curly hair, nicely arranged on forehead. The female head probably represents Atargatis. An olive wreath shown on each side of the discus refers to the fertility deities. Two pierced vents of 0.2cm. diameter and a filling-hole of 0.8cm. diameter on discus. Pinkish ware, evenly fired, darker pinkish



20. Incomplete lamp with Anthropomorphic handle.



21. Nabataean lamps.

slip on top of lamp. This lamp was found in Petra and is not paralleled elsewhere.

Nabataean Terracotta Figurines

The majority of terracotta figurines found at Nabataean sites are in a fragmentary state. Four examples are described in this paper:

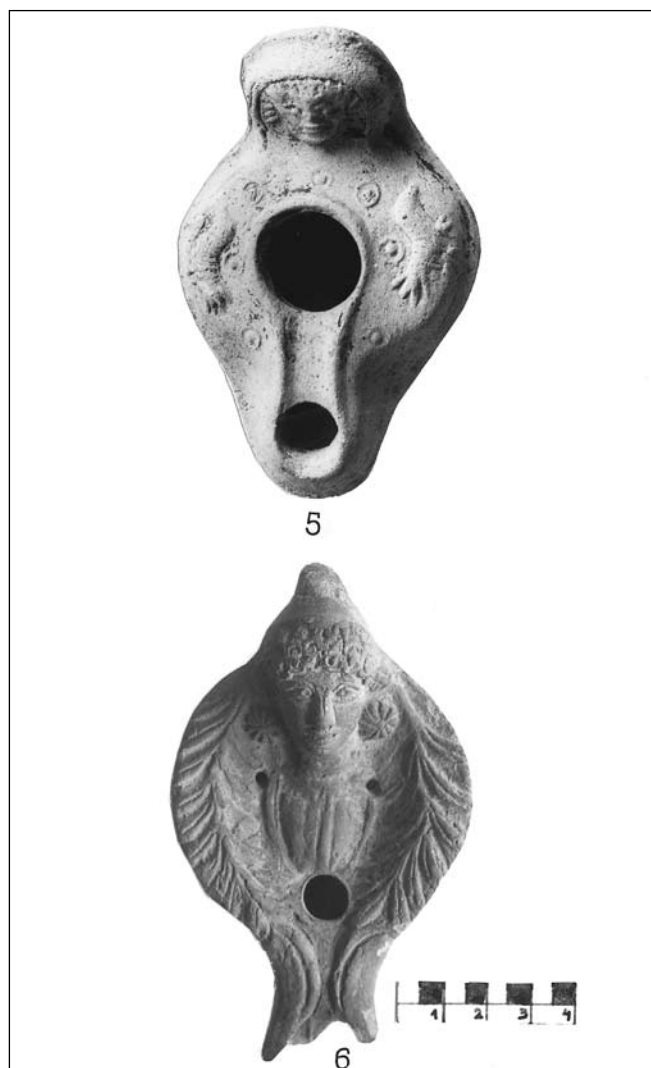
Upper Half of Female Figurine (FIGS. 24:1, 25:1)

Ex. Height	4.7cm.
Width	3.0cm.

Nude female figurine, most probably representing “Atargatis”, the Nabataean goddess of fertility, right hand in gesture of benediction with fingers closed. The raised right hand with open palm symbolizes the bestowal of blessings, happiness, prosperity or success upon her worshippers. The wrist of the raised right arm wears a bracelet. The hair is arranged with plaits very similar to the Hathor wig, which reaches the shoulder. Facial features indicate that the goddess is young and physically attractive.



22. Nabataean Pottery lamps.



23. Nabataean Pottery lamps.

The ware is pinkish — red with a darker pinkish external slip, evenly fired and polished.

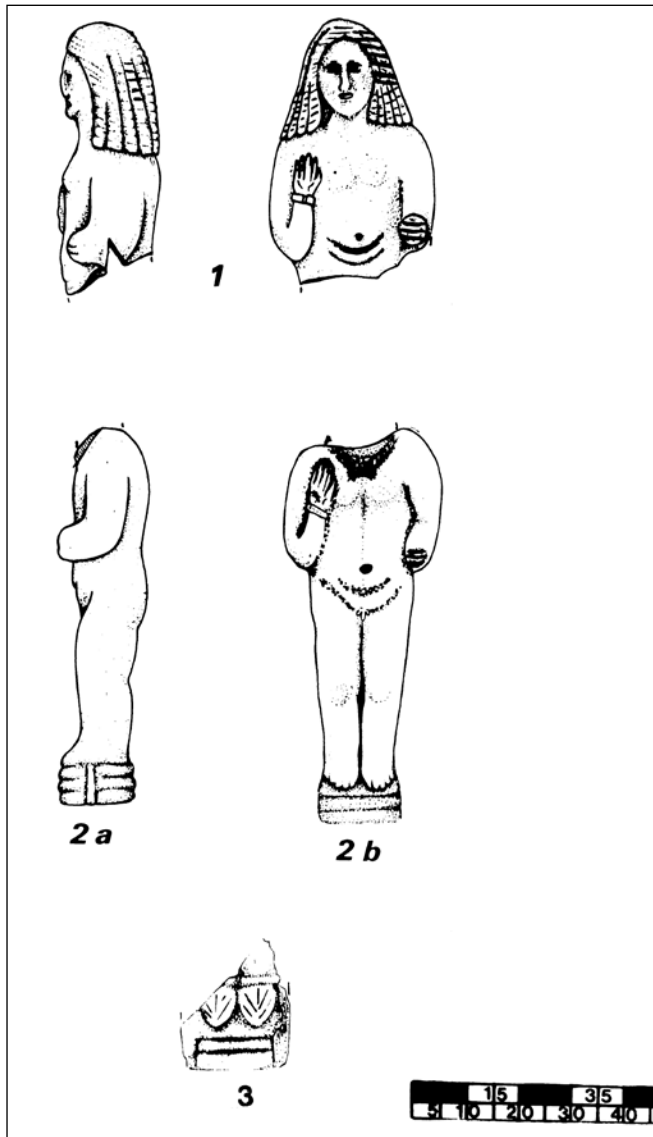
A very close parallel to the above-mentioned figurine is an example from Petra (Schmitt-Korte 1976: 43, Pl. 26, third object to the left). This example is seated on a pedestal and identified as “Nabataean”. Glueck published similar figurines, which are also attributed to the Nabataeans (Glueck 1935: 64, Pl. 30 B: 12; 1965: 508, Pl. 81).

Headless Hermaphrodite Figurine (FIGS. 24:2a and b, 25:2a and b)

Ex. Height 7.7cm.
 Approx. Width 3.2cm.

This figurine represents a hermaphrodite, neither totally male nor female. Head missing wears necklace of small beads with a crescentic shaped pendant in an inverted position, which probably has re-

ligious significance. The crescent appears as a cultic symbol in different forms in the ancient Near East. For a clear idea of the missing head’s details and its facial features, one might refer to Figurine No. 1 (FIG. 24:1), while Figurine No. 3 (FIG. 24:3) may shed light on the details of the missing feet. The legs are close together. Parallel examples are typically barefooted and standing on a shallow plinth. Greek myth informs us that one of Aphrodite’s children was Hermaphroditus, whose father was Hermes (Huyghe 1963: 68). The Greeks recognized in Atargatis a form of Aphrodite (Hammond and Scullard 1979: 136). I therefore assume this figurine, with its hermaphroditic features, represents the counterpart of Hermaphroditus, son of the Nabataean goddess of fertility Atargatis. The ware is creamy-red, well levigated, evenly fired, with some traces of traces of an external pinkish slip.



24. Nabataean Terracotta Figurines.

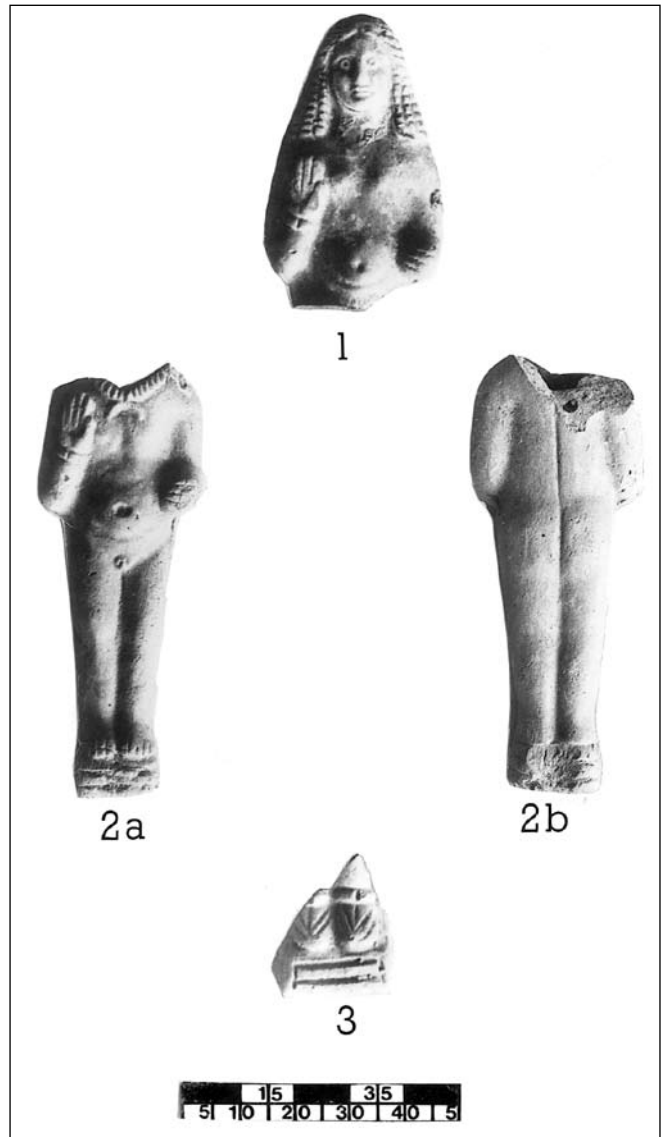
There are fairly close parallels from Petra (Horsfield and Conway 1942: 198 – 199, Pl. XLVII. 445; Schmitt-Korte 1976: 43, Pl. 26, the second object on the left).

Fragment of Two Feet on a Plinth (FIGS. 24:3, 25:3)

Ex. Height 2.1cm.
Width 2.0cm.

Legs broken off, feet together, standing on a plinth, wearing anklets and pointed slippers decorated with upper folds. Light pinkish ware, evenly fired, traces of pinkish slip in places.

This fragment is comparable to an example from Petra (Glueck 1965: 508, Pl. 81).



25. Nabataean Terracotta Figurines.

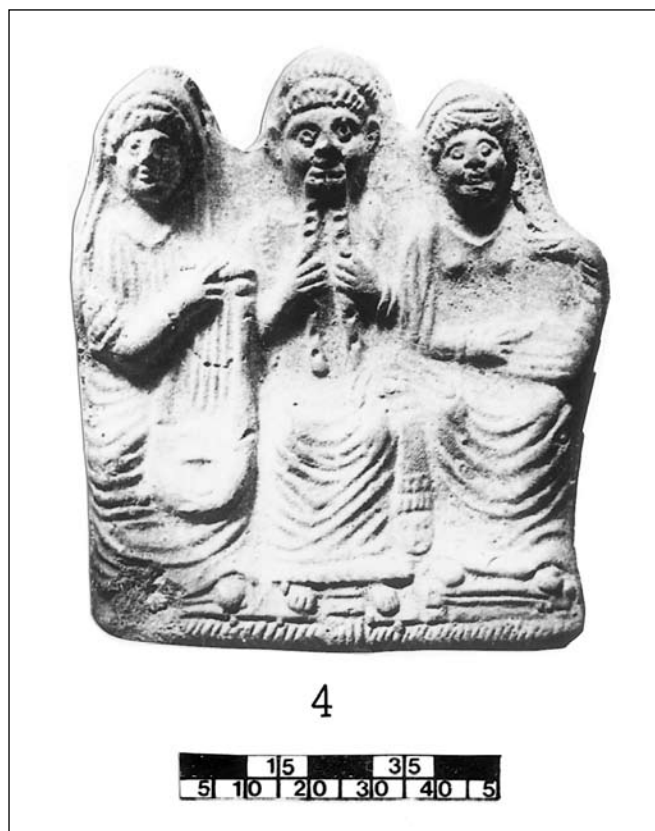
Figurine of “The Three Nabataean Musicians” (FIGS. 26, 27)

Height of the middle figure 9.2cm.
Height of the surrounding figures 8.6cm.
Width across shoulders 8.6cm.
Base dimensions (approximate) 7.9 x 2.4cm.

Three seated musicians; a man in the middle plays a double flute, each punctured with eight holes. He is flanked on either side by female musicians who appear younger in age and slightly smaller in size than the middle male figure. The woman on his right plays a musical instrument similar to a harp with rounded ends; the lower side is slightly heavier than the top, and its upper two-thirds are furnished with five strings. She holds the harp on



26. Three Nabataean Musicians.



27. Three Nabataean Musicians.

her left side and is plucking at the upper part of the strings with her right hand. The male figure is blowing the double flute and using all his fingers to achieve the desired notes. The female on his left side appears to be beating a drum-like instrument under her right shoulder. The hair of the middle male figure is arranged in double bands around the forehead, each band consists of many tight vertical plaits. The back of his head wears some sort of head-covering. The hair style of the females is almost the same; divided from the middle into two equal halves. Both female heads wear a heavy oriental covering. Each of the three figures wears a chiton and mantle. Each chiton has a v-like collar, with tight vertical folds on the upper part and wavy horizontal folds on the lower part. The male's chiton ends in a tassel-like pattern. Each female wears a bracelet on her right wrist. The male is barefoot, while the females are wearing leather-like shoes. The feet of the three figures rest on a plinth, which is decorated with a chevron-like pattern. A small branch or, more probably, an ear of grain is in the left hand of the male figure; this symbolizes fertility and is associated with worship of Atargatis. What appears to be a woolen sheath or pouch for the double flute hangs from the left side of the male figure and is tied at his waist with an elaborate knot; it is decorated with two bands of tassels.

This figurine was made in two halves, poorly joined together as the back was slightly split before firing. The rough joins are still visible in places. The rough joins are still visible in places. The figurine base is slightly warped, so the object is consequently somewhat unstable. This figurine is made of red - pinkish ware, with light grey core and medium size white limestone grits included. The exterior surface is dark pinkish except for a small creamy patch of discoloration.

This figurine sheds new light on a hitherto unknown aspect of Nabataean culture and social life. For the first time, we have a clear idea about Nabataean enjoyment of music. Three different musical instruments (harp, double flute and drum) are used simultaneously. Such musical instruments are still used today in most countries of the Middle East, especially in Palestine and Jordan. One can also infer that Nabataean men and women played together in the same musical groups, participated in the same social events and worked together as a single team, which indirectly reflects the existence of an open and developed Nabataean community, especially at the beginning of the Christian era and into the first

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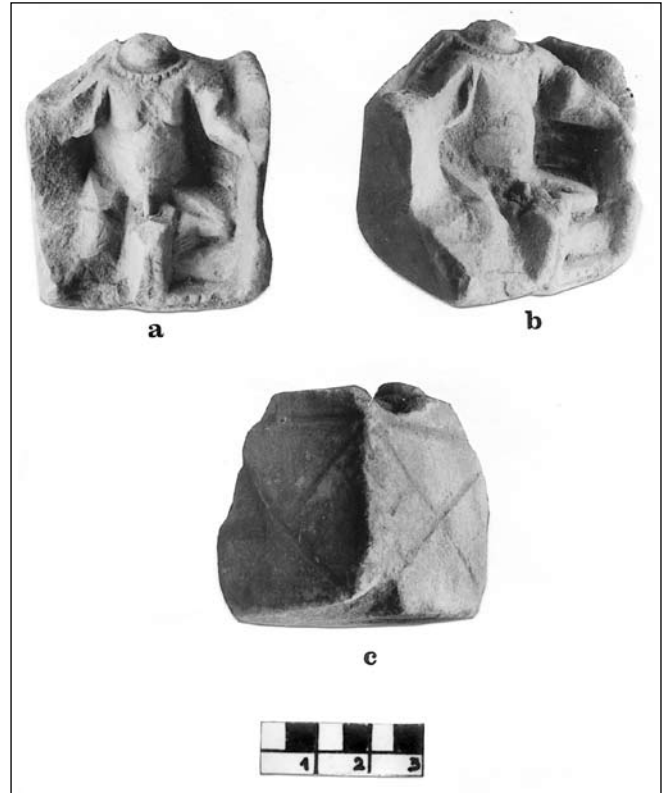
two centuries AD.

Harding (1958: 15) states in his note on “Recent Discoveries in Jordan” for the years 1955 – 1956 that Diana Kirkbride found a well-preserved tomb which yielded pottery objects including a figurine of the same description as this figurine. As the Jordanian Archaeological Museum records do not give us any information about this object, other than that it came from Petra, I believe that this figurine is the one found by Diana Kirkbride during her 1955 – 1956 excavations at Petra.

The God “Bes” from Petra (FIGS. 28a-d, 29a-c)

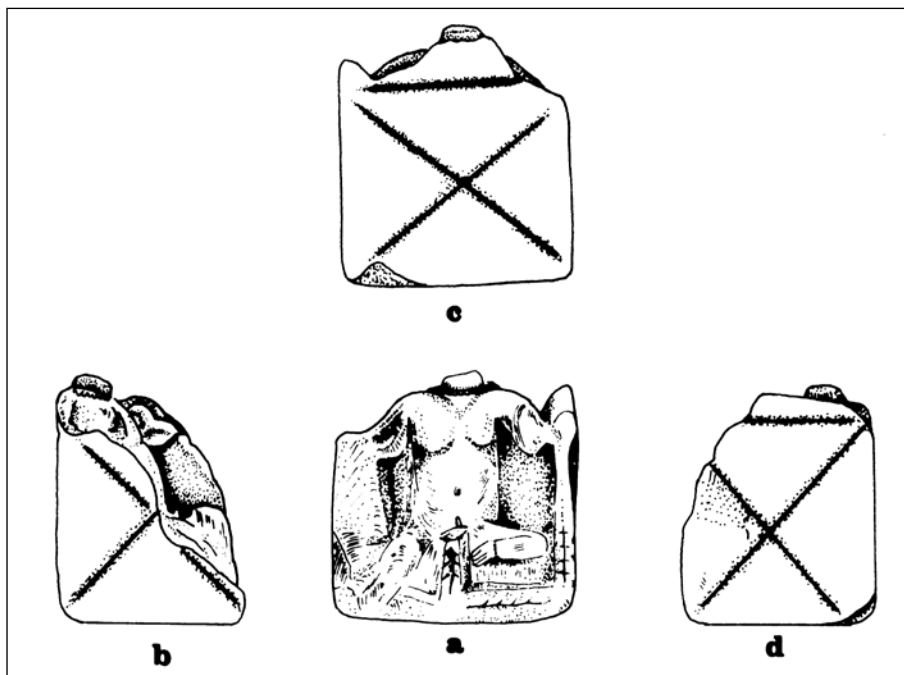
Height	4.1cm.
Width	4.0cm.
Thickness at base	3.3cm.

A limestone cube representing a nude seated male with missing head. The lower part of the neck is visible and wears a necklace of thirty two raised dots representing beads. A pendant hangs at the front of the necklace. The right hand is missing, while the left one rests on the left side of the seat. The body is plain and does not show any physical features, except for the navel and phallus, which is shown between two frog-like legs. The seat is cube-like and furnished with a couch beneath the seated figure. With the exception of the chair’s base, each of the three external flattened sides of the chair is decorated with two incised lines crossing each other diagonally. The stone is a soft yellowish limestone with grayish deposits of calcite encrustation in places. There are also faint traces of red paint on external surfaces. This object represents the Egyptian god Bes seated on a high-backed chair or throne. Hammond has published a differ-



29. God “Bes” from Petra.

lowish limestone with grayish deposits of calcite encrustation in places. There are also faint traces of red paint on external surfaces. This object represents the Egyptian god Bes seated on a high-backed chair or throne. Hammond has published a differ-



28. God “Bes” from Petra.

ent example of the god Bes, which was purchased at Petra. The latter object was made of pottery and shows Bes with a large head and pronounced phallus (Hammond 1973: 37, photo No. 155 on page 49). Murray and Ellis 1940: 15, Pl. XIV. 15) illustrate a piece of decorated pottery from Petra which is identified as “possibly head of a figure of Bes”. Furthermore, three cube-like stone incense altars were found at Petra and published by G. Horsfield and A. Conway (1942: 165, Pl. XXXII. 277 – 279).

Bes played an important role in Egypt, especially from the New Kingdom period until around the Christian era (Baines and Malek 1980: 214). He is usually depicted as a dwarf, typically with a large head and stylized legs. It was believed that every Egyptian family had to be protected by placing his figure or idol on a pillar, stele or in a niche to avoid harm or danger from, for example, harmful spirits, snake bite or scorpion stings. He is often associated with child birth and was also regarded as the god of marriage (Viaud 1978: 39). The frequency of this figure at and around Petra indicates that the Egyptian god Bes probably played a similar role among the Nabataeans, and this practice survived in neighboring countries until as late as the first half of the first century AD.

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