

Nabataean Settlement Patterns Inside Petra

This paper will consider the two issues involved in "settlement patterns" at Petra: namely, the original settlement of the Nabatu bedouin population and the subsequent geographical distribution / urban development within the Basin.

The first issue is obscured by Diodorus' use of the term "Nabataean" to describe the earliest record of settlement and by Strabo's picture of their urbanization (16.4.18, 21 ff.), as well as by a confusion in classical sources resulting from the use of the terms "Arab" / "Arabs" [Josephus *AJ* Ixii.4, V.iv.7, XIII.xiii. 3,5, XIV.e.4, vii.3, viii.1, xi.2, XV.iv.1, v.1-2, XVI.vii.5, ix.1; *JW* I.vi.2-4, ix.3, xix.1ff., xxii.3, xxvii.1, II.vii.18, III.iv.2, V.vii.5, xiii.4-5; Tacitus 5.1, 5.6; Dio Cassius LXVIII.5; Strabo 16.2.11; *II Macc.* V.8.: but cf. Josephus *AJ* VIII.viii.2, IX.1.2, x.3, XII.iv.11, XIII.i.4, iv.8, xiv.3, xv.1, XV.v.5, x.2, xi.3, XVI.ix.10-2, XVII.iii.2, *JW* I.iv.7ff., xxix.3ff., *I Macc.* V.39 (cf. v.24-25), ix.66, xi.16-17, 39-40, xii.31; *II Macc.* XII.10-11; Diodorus II.54.3, XIX.69.1 (and Greer's footnote 3 to this passage); Strabo 16.2.20, 3.1-3, 4.1-2, 4.18, 4.22, 4.25; Pliny XII.xxv. 69, xxxii.62].

Diodorus' description of "Nabataeans" as traders, living a "wild and savage" life in isolation, followed by the description of "Arabs" (II.54.3) as pastoralists, provide the basis for viewing their subsequent rise to urbanism under a socio-evolutionary model (nomads > agriculturalists > "civilized" urbanites). It is here asserted, however, that a temporal distance must be posited between the term "Nabatu" and "Nabataean", and that Diodorus' account obscures that distinction.

Further, the title "tyrant", used in the earliest contemporarily reported Nabataean leadership (*II Macc.* V.9; Aretas I), rather than the title "king", a more commonly used title for such leadership, is seen to be directly related to the earliest settlement of the Nabatu at Petra. That the title "king" is also used of the same person (the Khalasa Inscription), indicates a knowledge of the difference connotated by the two terms.

Since the title "tyrant" was acknowledged, from earlier times, as a legitimate title for the leadership of a "tyranny", in distinction to, but contemporary with, the title "king", its use in regard to a "Nabataean" leader indicates

recognition of the form of government involved, prior to a monarchical development. That the former title was still in use in the Hellenistic and Roman periods can be documented (Athenaeus III.90; V.206, 250, 257, 215; VI.246, 249, 251; IX.401; X.435, 437; VI.251, 261; XI.466; XII.522, 540, 541; XIII.609; Diodorus XX.44.1, 54.1; and Josephus *JW* I.xii.2; *AJ* XIII.viii. 1; XIV.ix.1; XVI.2).

Since a "tyranny", historically, also involved two populations, a solution to two other aspects of Nabataean settlement at Petra may also be resolved by its recognition there: the obscure (but generally undocumented) "migration" of the previous, permanent, inhabitants of Petra, the Edomites, to the West (becoming "Idumeans"), and the amazing technological advances made by the "Nabataeans" themselves.

In the former case, Strabo noted that the "Idumeans" were "Nabataeans" who had been banished from Nabataene (16.2.34), suggesting a tradition otherwise ignored, but also suggesting that a relation had existed between the (traditionally) Edomite origin of the Idumeans and the Nabataeans.

If, therefore, Edomites were still occupying Petra at the time of the arrival of the Nabatu, the resulting Nabatu-Edomite synthesis under a tyranny, with a later loss of the Edomite identity (i.e. becoming "Nabataean" as a joint political group), explains both the confusion in Strabo's identification of Idumeans and the migration of some Edomites to the West, because of dissatisfaction with the Nabatu-Edomite synthesis.

In the second place, the remarkable technological achievements of the Nabatu-become-Nabataeans may therefore also be resolved. The Nabatu element could continue in its trading expertise, with the Edomite element continuing in agriculture, hence reconciling Diodorus' account of the early Arab cultures. With time erasing the original distinction between Nabatu and Edomites, population increases, expansion of the Nabataean trade network providing further technological knowledge, and similar social evolution, the combined peoples could produce the technological achievements to be seen in the later culture and in their urban stage.

The geographical question involved in settlement must

again balance the fourth century B.C. source of Diodorus against the urban picture painted by Strabo. On the basis of Diodorus' reference to the acropolis-use of Jabal Umm al-Biyara, the presence of the (early) cultic monument, known as the "Snake Monument", early tomb types, and the probable direction of original Nabatu advance into the Basin, original settlement by both Edomites and Nabatu in that area is to be postulated.

Subsequently, movement toward the currently recognized "city center" along Wadi Musa must be seen as a result of population expansion from the earlier settlement site in the South, as well as movement dictated by strategic considerations, water-supply, probable climatic betterment for residential use, and site-access improvement, among other factors. Thus, by the time of the informant of Strabo, urbanization in the northern area was achieved. On the basis of current archaeological data, it would seem that much, if not all, of the "monumental" development of the urban area was the work of Aretas IV, from the late first century B.C. to A.D. 40 (see Hammond 1965; 1973; 1978; McKensie and Phippen 1987; Parr 1967-68; Zayadine 1986).

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