

Judith McKenzie

(1957-2019)

An Outstanding Scholar, a True Human Being and a Friend

Dana Firas

Dr. McKenzie is known for her important award winning publications on Petra and Alexandria and has lectured at many universities. Over four decades, she gained international recognition for research excellence and exceptional scholarship on the art and architecture of Egypt and the Levant spanning the Hellenistic, Roman into Early Islamic periods. Her work in Petra was groundbreaking. Judith made Petra her home the 1980s and with the support of Jordan's Department of Antiquities, proceeded with new techniques and meticulous study to identify and resolve issues related to the age and styles of the monuments in Petra. Not only did she relate differing architectural styles from evolution to coalescence to build a new chronology of some of the monuments in Petra, she also linked the study to social identities and an emerging cultural profile for that period. Her findings were published in 1990 in her seminal book *The Architecture of Petra*, which included a large number of drawings and photographs.

Her work in Jordan did not end there. Judith returned in 2001 to investigate Nelson Glueck's reconstruction of Khirbat at-Tannūr, a Nabataean Temple north of Petra, which he excavated in 1937. Judith located Glueck's field records in what Alan Walmsley described as a "remarkable tale of modern detective work in archeology"¹. She worked on producing a new reconstruction of the Temple with drawings by Sheila Gibson. The results were published in 2013 in two highly acclaimed volumes.

In connection with her work on the Temple, a Spanish art dealer contacted Judith in 2018 to authenticate three carved stone blocks which

were being put up for sale by a descendent of a Spanish diplomat who had served in Jordan. Judith contacted me immediately to alert me to the sales. Once she confirmed the stones were original and belonged to the altar platform, we worked together to try to return the stones to Jordan. Her guidance throughout the process and careful negotiation with the dealer were instrumental in getting the stones successfully repatriated to Jordan within months and are currently with the Department of Antiquities in Jordan.

In almost all her work, Dr. McKenzie invested substantial time, effort and resources to produce educational materials in both Arabic and English, a testament to her incredible commitment to providing reliable and accessible resources for the Arabic-speaking world. It was through one of these efforts that I got to know Judith. I was impressed and touched by her dedication to establishing Manar Al Athar, a free digital platform to make available in Arabic and English photographs that are curated and labeled to scholars and researchers globally.

It was born out of Judith's realization through her work with universities in the Middle East that there was an important need for high-resolution free photographs of archeological sites and important works of art and architecture for researchers, scholars, students and teachers for their own work and teaching. The collection covers the period 300BC to the present.

Judith approached all her projects with passion. One of her projects, a children's story, touched me deeply. I will remember with great fondness her kindness and thoughtfulness

1. Alan Walmsley (2019) Judith McKenzie 1957–2019, *Levant* 51: 1, 1-5, DOI: 10.1080/00758914.2020.1741886.

towards my own family. Knowing my son's great love for elephants, Judith engaged Hashem on a brief children's story set in Petra. Together they named the characters and built the plot. She also made sure that the books was available in both Arabic and English.

Her loss was felt deeply by myself, my family, Jordan, the Middle East and the world at large. She is one of a kind and her contributions to historical knowledge, archeology and cultural awareness in the Middle East will remain unparalleled.
