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Table of Contents

Researcher	Title	Page
Nada Al-Rawabdeh Regine R. Hunziker- Rodewald	Introduction	I
Fawzi Q. Abudanah Ahmad Z. Hasanat	Production in the hinterland of Petra: winepresses as a case study	1
Zaid A. Tahseen Mohannad H. Al-Tantawi	The Nabataean School of Painted Fine "Egg-Shell" Ware: Mythology and Concept	17
Björn Anderson	The Camel Reliefs in Petra's Siq: Reflections on the Life and Afterlife of an Early Nabataean Monument	39
Ulrich Bellwald	Wadi Aglat Winery: A Model for Long Term Planning and Investment in Agriculture in the Petra Area – a Question at the Beginning	63
Virginia Cassola-Cochin	The Development of Nabataean Madā'in Ṣāliḥ (Saudi Arabia) into an Attractive Sightseeing: From Traditional Rejection to Official Recognition	81
Guillaume Charloux	A Note on At-Tuwayr: An Eastern Nabataean Site?	97
Marco Dehner	The Capitals of the Capital - New Insights into Freestanding Nabataean Architecture in Petra	125
Thibaud Fournet Nicolas Paridaens	The Hanging Baths of Jabal Khubthah (Petra): Preliminary Conclusions Following Archaeological and Architectural Studies (2015-2017)	147
Gaby Abousamra	Nabataeans or Ituraeans in Mount Lebanon? About the Aramaic inscription of Yanouh	165
Matthias Grawehr Aleksandra Brzozowska- Jawornicka	The 'Nabataean' Blocked-out Capital in Its Wider Framework: A Closer Look	181
John F. Healey	Linguistic Variation in the Nabataean Aramaic of the Nabataean Period	201
Ulrich Hübner	Excavations at the Early Bronze Age I-II Settlement at Umm Saisabān Near Petra	215
David Johnson	Magic, Medicine and Fraud	233
Will M. Kennedy	Investigating the Socio-Political Make-Up of Rural Petra – The Petra Hinterland Social Landscapes Project	249
Lamia Kenoussi	Nabataean Religion and Its Pantheon Through Pre-Islamic and Early Islam Sources: al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manāt	273
Pauline Piraud-Fournet Laïla Nehmé	House V12 in the Nabataean village of Dharih. First attempt to interpret the remains	300
Andrew Smith	The Nabataean Rural Economy in the Hinterland of Petra	315
Juan Manuel Tebes	Beyond Petra: Nabataean Cultic and Mortuary Practices and the Cultural Heritage of the Negev and Edom	333
Andrea Vanni-Desideri	The Nabataeans and Al-Wu'ayra: Archaeological Data, Hypothesis and Questions	349
Robert Wenning	A Head from the Frieze of the Temenos Gate at Petra	367
Regine Hunziker- Rodewald	Squeezes, Fleas and "a beautiful clay head of Egyptian style": Julius Euting in Petra (March 7-23, 1898)	380



The International Conference on Petra and the Nabataean Culture (ICPNC)

Introduction

The International Conference on the Nabataean Culture was initiated at the request of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al-Hussein as an international triennial conference intended to act as "a touring ambassador" for the heritage of the Nabataeans.

The University of Jordan translated His Majesty's noble suggestion into reality by giving full financial and moral support to this international gathering. The conference was initiated to explore new dimensions of the different aspects of the Nabataean culture and to deal with themes related to Nabataean arts, trade, coinage, communication, international relations and cultural interaction. Consequently, the First International Conference on the Nabataean Culture (ICNC I) was held under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty in Petra, Jordan, on **May 5-8, 2012**. The Second International Conference on the Nabataean Culture (ICNC II) was held in Provo, Utah, USA, on **May 6-9, 2015**, in the spirit of the bilateral academic agreement between the University of Jordan and Brigham Young University.

The Third International Conference on Petra and the Nabataean Culture (ICPNC III)

The Third International Conference on Petra and the Nabataean Culture (ICPNC III) (which produced this issue's articles) was held in Petra, Jordan, on **June 18-21, 2018**, under the patronage of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal. It was organized by The School of Archaeology and Tourism at the University of Jordan, Amman, in cooperation with the Petra Development & Tourism Region Authority in Petra.

The conference participants were made up of 37 specialists in the field: university graduates, researchers and professors working in 14 countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, France, Belgium, Netherlands, England, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Poland, United States, Argentina).

The Head of the conference: The Dean of The School of Archaeology and Tourism at the University of Jordan, Dr Nada Al-Rawabdeh.

The Organizing Committee: Dr Nada Al-Rawabdeh and Dr Ismaiel N. Abuamoud (University of Jordan, Amman), Dr Regine R. Hunziker-Rodewald (University of Strasbourg, France), Dr Suleiman A. D. Farajat (Petra Development & Tourism Region Authority) and Mohammad H. Al-Tantawi (University of Jordan, Amman).

The Scientific Committee: The scientific board included archaeologists and epigraphers, most of them English speakers. They were Prof. John Healey, Dr. Laurent Tholbecq, Dr Anna Accettola and Dr Björn Anderson.

The three main themes of the conference:

- 1 **Trade and trade routes**
- 2 **Cultural exchange**
- 3 **Local traditions.**



Photo by Mohannad H. Al-Tantawi

Petra: The Rose-Red City of the Nabataeans

Petra is a treasure of the desert, safe and protected from abuse and greed by the mountains surrounding it.

This Jordanian treasure was rediscovered by the Swiss traveller Johann Burckhardt in 1812. And so, Petra emerged as one of the most fascinating and exquisite ancient cities in the world.

The rose-red city – a name it got from the colour of the stone it was carved in – captivates the eye of lovers of culture, history, and archaeology. It attracts them, allowing them to delve in the imprint of history and to witness evidence of the greatness of a long distinguished civilization, the kingdom of the Arab Nabataeans.

The city's temples and houses, stores and theatre, water channels and dams, funeral halls, and baths-were carved in its towering sandstone mountains. Its other monuments, such as its gates and colonnaded streets, were built by skilled hands. Its facades bear traces of various previous and subsequent civilizations.

Al-Siq is the rocky main entrance to Petra, interspersed with arched niches, sculptures of gods, and dams for blocking and collecting rainwater, which was directed into the city through channels. In addition, its varying heights block the burning rays of the sun, providing nice shade and calm darkness, only to light up the site of one of the most famous facades in the world, the Treasury.

Petra was the capital of the Nabataean Kingdom from the 2nd century BCE to the beginning of the 2nd century CE. Its location between Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Palestine played a significant role in the Nabataeans' domination of the trade routes passing through it. The city now is located in the south of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, 236 km (146 mi) south of Amman, and 126 km (78 mi) north of Aqaba.

Today the Nabataean capital is one of the highlights of Jordanian historical, archaeological, and cultural sites. After its listing as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985, being described as one of the most valuable cultural heritage properties of humankind, and being chosen as one of the Seven Wonders of the World in 2007, Petra became one of the most important tourist destinations and attracts many visitors.

Dr Nada Al-Rawabdeh
Dean of School of Archaeology and Tourism
and Head of the Conference

Dr Regine R. Hunziker-Rodewald
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Photo by Maysoon Al Nahar