

## Coinage of the Nabataeans<sup>(1)</sup>

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**Abstract.** *The Nabataeans have left no written record of their history. In studying their history we therefore depend on other contemporary sources which alluded to them casually. The present study attempts to shed some light on the coinage of the Nabataean kingdom. It is maintained that the study of coins constitutes an important instrument for surveying Nabataean history, in view of the fact that coins bear inscriptions that refer to the place of issue, name of the reigning monarch and his title, as well as to the name of his consort. The study also examines the relationship between the Nabataean coinage and the Nabataean inscriptions, especially as depicted in the tombs of Hegra (Al-Hijr - Mada'in Salih). Although Sela' may not be one of the names of the Nabataean capital (besides Al-Raqeem and Petra), nevertheless it may safely be stated that inscriptions found in the tombs of Hegra (Al-Hijr - Mada'in Salih) clearly indicate that Sela' lies in Hegra or somewhere thereabout, and that coins have been minted there since the reign of king Aretas IV (9 BC - 40 AD), and they continued to be produced until the fall of the kingdom in AD 106.*

### Introduction

The Nabataeans have left no records. In studying Nabataean history we therefore depend on other contemporary sources which alluded to them in passing, especially from their neighbours: the Seleucids, the Ptolemies, the Hashmonite Dynasty in ancient Judaea and others.

We have also some glimpses of their history from some ancient writers, such as Diodorus Siculus, the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius and the Greek geographer Strabo - although the latter had derived his information mainly from one Athenodos who is reported to have been born in Nabataean country and lived there since then.

However, our knowledge of Nabataean history will continue to be incomplete until a full study of the antiquities and inscriptions of this kingdom is undertaken.

The Assyrian Annals referred to Nabataeans as Arabs, adding that until the 4th century BC, they were leading a nomadic way of life. In his description of the Nabataeans, Diodorus Siculus said: "They took it upon them-

selves not to sow seeds, nor to plant any fruit-bearing trees, nor to drink wine, nor to construct a house, and he who does that shall receive the death penalty" (Abass 1987: 29; Mahran 1994: 2/316).

Despite the nomadic life, the Nabataeans did not only work in grazing, but also worked in trade and excelled therein, and made tremendous achievements in this area. Diodorus Siculus remarks that their successful commercial activities have drawn the attention of Antigonos (a successor of the Alexander the Great), who tried to subdue them. Antigonos sent one of his officers in the year 312 BC, and managed to seize quantities of incense, myrrh and silver. However, the Nabataeans regained what the officer had seized. Antigonos repeated the attempt again, and sent his son Demetrios to fight the Nabataeans, who managed to make peace with Antigonos, thus putting an end to the hostility between the two parties (Abass 1987: 30:32; Mahran 1994: 2/317-318).

Historians are agreed on the Arabic origin of the Nabataeans, but they differ on the areas from which they came. While some historians say they came from the South of the Arabian

Peninsula, others say they came from North Najd (in Saudi Arabia) or from its easterly northern region. A third party states that they came from Northern Hijaz (Al Ansary & Abu Al Hassan 2001:68-73).

However, historians do not agree on the exact date on which the Nabataean Kingdom came into being, nor do they agree on the order or succession of their Kings, although there is a consensus that Aretas the First, was the first Nabataean King, who took office around the years 168 or 169 BC. The Nabataeans established Al-Raqeem (Petra) as their capital, while they also made Hegra (Al-Hijr -- Mada'in Salih) as their second capital, or as an advanced military base to control trade routes from the southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula (Abass1987: 37-39; Mahran 1994: 2/312, Al Ansary & Abu Al-Hassan 2002:97).

### The Nabataean Economy

Like all other ancient communities, the Nabataeans were involved in trade exchanges. Incense and myrrh were the most prevalent at the time. However, the major role that the Nabataeans played was to control the northern part of the land trade route, where trade caravans used to pass through several Nabataean cities, most important of which were Mada'in Salih, Leuke kome (White Village) and Petra.

These cities played an important role in the trade activity in the region, including the commercial exchange and facilitation of the passage of trade caravans, and the collection of taxes there from the above trade activities in favour of the State or the Political governor of the region.

The Nabataean control of Mada'in Salih had enabled them to control trade routes coming from the Southern to the northern parts of the Arabian Peninsula, while their control of the Negev had enabled them to control the road

passing through Gaza and Sinai to Egypt. Some historians attribute the transfer by King Rabel II (70-106 AD) of the Capital from Petra to Bostra (Bosra) to the change of commercial routes. Caravans ceased using the land route, linking the Southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula with the Northern parts, passing through Dedan (Al-'Ula) and Mada'in Salih; instead they started using the maritime route, which was used to transport trade coming from the Southern parts of Arabian Peninsula between the two Red Sea coasts since the 1st century BC, while caravans coming from the Gulf coast were heading to Dawmat al Jandal and then to Bosra, passing by Um Al Jimal. Thus, Bosra had replaced Mada'in Salih and Petra, and was one of the stations through which trade routes used to pass.

It is trade that drew the attention of the Nabataeans to raising camels and to acquire all the means needed to help them arrange, classify and store goods. The Nabataean trade activity was not confined to the mere transport of goods, but also extended to exporting some of their local production to Egypt, including tar bitumin which they extracted from the Dead Sea. Tar was used for colouring metals and for making jewelry, as well as for mummification. The Nabataeans' skill in the earthenware industry was reflected in the huge quantities discovered in Mada'in Salih, Petra, Dedan (Al-'Ula), and al Bid'. What also testifies to their craftsmanship in pottery is the presence of making kilns pottery found near al-Raqeem (Petra). This is in addition to fact that the Nabataean clay dating back to the first century BC, was found in al-Fau (Al Ansary 1982: 30, Abass 1987: 107-114, Al Ansary & Abu Al-Hassan 2002: 61-62, Al-Ansary 2003: 133-134).

### Nabataean Coins

The Nabataeans minted coins of different denominations, including, for example, the half and the quarter. They had struck domestic

coins for circulation inside the cities, in addition to the State's official coins, which were used for international trade.

King Aretas II (120 - 96 B.C) was the first Nabataean king to mint coins. These coins reflected the influence of Greek coins, with an image of a man wearing a helmet on his head with his face to the right, on obverse, while reverse carried the image of Nike, and the letter "A," the first letter of the name of Aretas II. Other portraits of the Aretas's II coins carry the letter "H" in the Aramaic, in reference to his name (Abass 1987:40; Al rawahna 2002: 60-61).

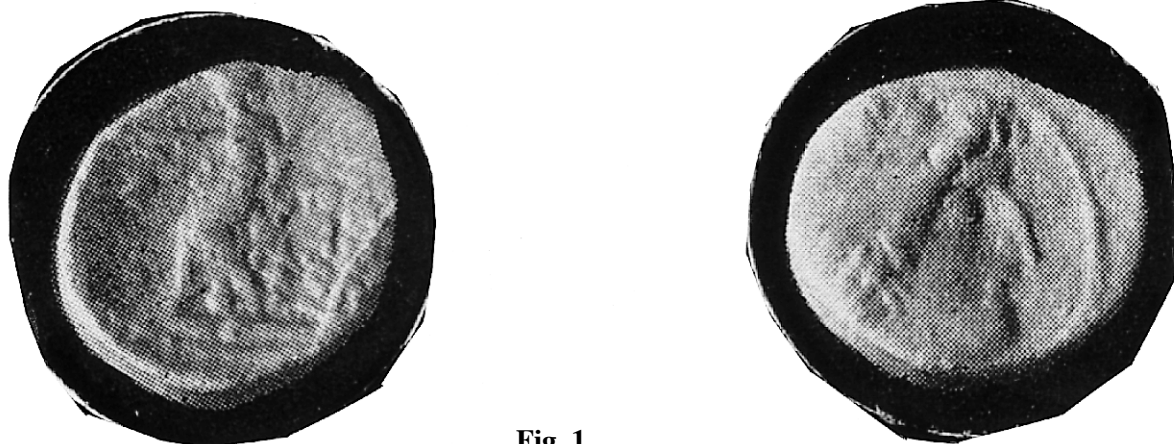
Nabataean coins have seen two eras: The first era starts from the time of Aretas II until the year AD 7. During this era, the coins had high monetary value. The silver component in the coins during this era ranged between 96% and 63% so as to compete with the Roman denarius in international trade. However, during the second era, from AD 7 until the fall of the Nabataean Kingdom in AD 106, the value of the Nabataean coins dropped by 41-20 per cent. On the technical sphere, the first phase coins were affected by the Hellenistic and Ptolemaic coins. The Ptolemaic effect translated itself in the image of the Ptolemaic falcon, which characterised the coins of that era. In the second era, the coins got rid of the Hellenistic and Ptolemaic effects (Abass 1987:148; Qadoos

1999:186; Musees Royaux 1980:59-62).

King Aretas III (85-62 BC) minted a series of coins in Damascus after annexing it to his Kingdom in 85 BC. What made these coins different from others is that they were the first to have the name of the Nabataean King imprinted on them. He also wrote down his title as (Philhellenos) on the coins. He was the first Nabataean King whose portrait appeared on coins. The writing on the coins was Greek.

Coins continued to be minted at Damascus during the era of Aretas III until the year 70 BC, when it was controlled by Dekran (Tigranes), the King of Armenia. The 2-fils coins, minted during the rule of Aretas III, carried the image of the King on obverse, while the reverse carried the image of Nike (Fig.1-2) (Altal 1983:36; Abass 1987:42; Qadoos 1999:187; Kammerer 1929:531).

In the year 64 BC, the Roman commander Pompey launched a campaign against the Nabataeans but he shortly after that left the area to Rome and assigned the Roman Commander Scourus to continue the campaign. Scourus reached an agreement with King Aretas, under which the latter had to pay a tribute (head tax) to the Romans. After returning to Rome, Scourus commemorated his campaign against the Nabataeans by minting coins carrying in obverse image of King Aretas beside a camel, and



**Fig. 1**

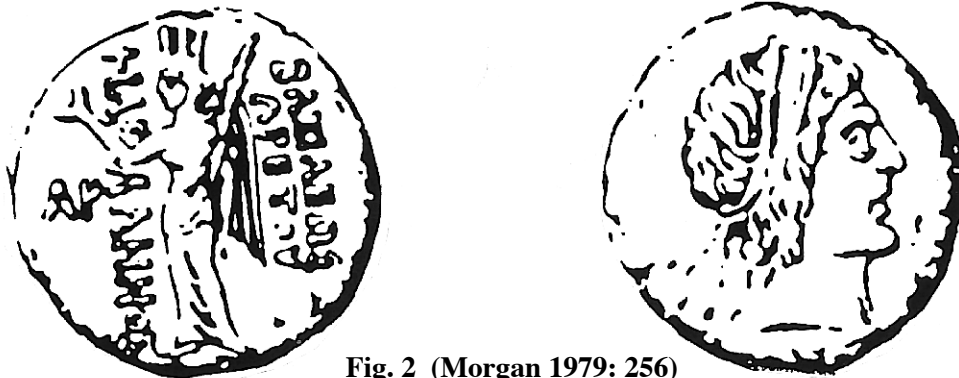


Fig. 2 (Morgan 1979: 256)

on reverse image of the Roman deity Jupiter (Fig. 3) (Abass 1987:47-48; Al rawahna 2002:95; Morgan 1979:256).

King Oboadas II (62-59 BC) minted only silver coins, according to available information. Therefore his coins are considered among the rarest Nabataean coins. The proportion of silver in these coins ranges from 87 to 96 per cent, with the image of the King on obverse, where the Hellenistic effect appears clear in the features of the face, and the hairstyle. On reverse, appears the image of the Ptolemaic falcon. King Oboadas II is the second Nabataean King who wrote down his name in the Nabataean script on the coins. His predecessors used to write down their names in Greek or initial their names in Aramaic scripts. Oboadas II's name was written on the coins as follows: ('BDH MLKA MLK NBTW') (Al rawhna 2002:64-65).

King Malichus I (59-30 BC) had minted fils coin among the coins, featuring the King's image. The fils coin clearly demonstrated that the Hellenistic impact on human image was still dominant. Similarly, the Ptolemaic effect was reflected in the image of the Falcon, with the following phrase in Nabataean script written around the image (MILKW MLK NBTW) (Fig. 4). It is during his reign that the number of

bronze coins had increased; the wars he fought against the Jewish state made him in dire need for more money to spend on these wars (Al tal 1983:37; Al rawahna 2002:65) (fig .5).

King Malichus I coins carried their date of minting in Nabataean figures. They also showed decorations such as: the Nabataean eagle which was engraved on coins, and the decorations of the Crossed Cornucopia or "horn of plenty," which continued to appear on the Nabataean coins until the fall of the Kingdom in



Fig. 3 (Morgan 1979: 256)



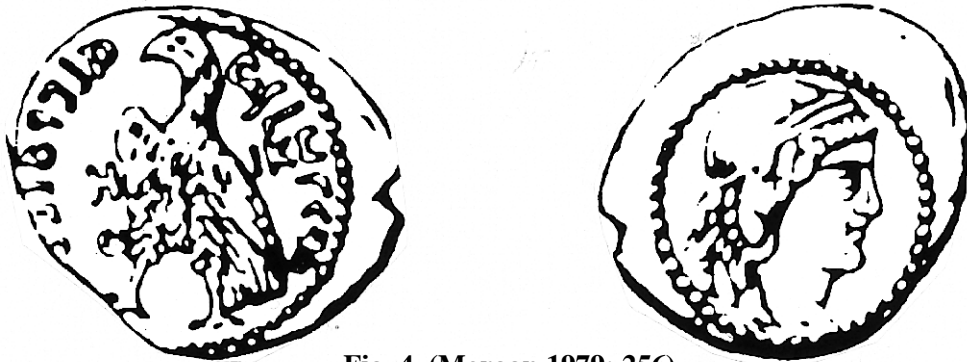


Fig. 4 (Morgan 1979: 256)

the year AD 106. The palm of the hand was also a distinctive Nabataean symbol (Al rawahna 2002:66).

King Oboadas III (30-9 BC) minted two types of coins; the first was issued at the onset of his rule. It had the same weight as the Ptolemaic coins, and that was why it was known as the Ptolemaic coins. The coins carried on the obverse the image of King Oboadas III, and on the reverse the image of an eagle. The second type, which was issued during the first 10 to 20 years of King Oboadas III's rule, was known as the Greek coins because their weight was similar to that of the Greek coins. The image of the

King appeared on obverse; the reverse carried the image of the King and the Queen (Fig. 6-7). The following phrase was engraved on both types: ('BDH MLKA MLK NBTW'). It is believed that the King's mother was installed "Regent" during the early years of his rule; therefore, her image appeared next to his image on the coins during that period. However, later coins carried the picture of his wife (Ali 1980: 7/494).

During his rule, the weight of coins dropped to 4.4 grams, less than the official Nabataean standard weight of 6.61 grams. King Oboadas was forced to reduce the weight



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

of coins. He nevertheless enlarged them in a bid to compete with the Roman denarius, particularly after the Romans controlled Egypt. The Roman denarius weighed 3,8 grams, and contained a high proportion of silver, which exceeded by almost 17% the proportion of silver in the Nabataean coins (Abass 1987:57).

During the rule of King Aretas IV (9BC-40AD), alias "the philopatis"(the lover of his people), the Nabataean Kingdom reached the climax of its cultural prosperity. His era witnessed a huge construction boom, covering the

southern part of the Kingdom. Accordingly, Mada'in Saleh had become the second capital of the Nabataean Kingdom. Hardly a year passed of his rule without striking new coins. Reflecting on this, Ihsan Abbas writes: "It is for this reason that we may find that 8 out of 10 coins had been struck during his reign" (Abass 1987:61).

King Aretas IV coins included A drachma carrying on obverse the King's image surrounded by the following phrase: (Aarertas, the King of Nabataeans and the Philopartis "the lover of his people"); the reverse carried the image of

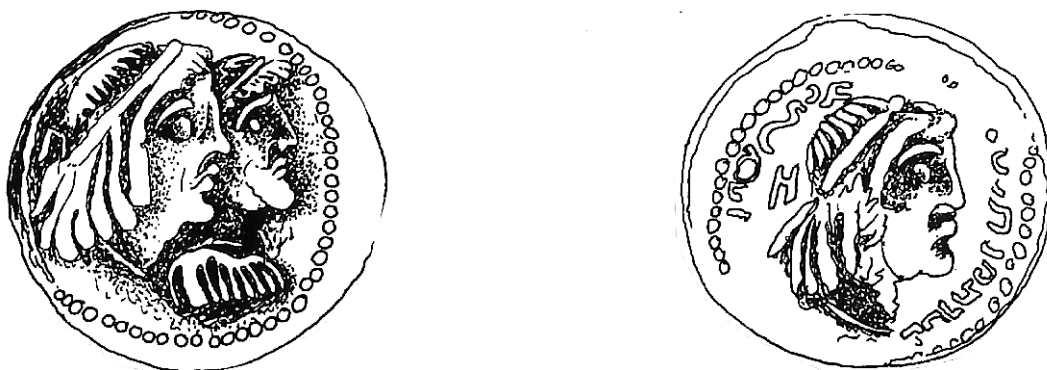


Fig. 7

Queen Khaldah (Holdou) surrounded by the phrase: (Queen Khaldah of the Nabataeans) (Fig. 8).

A drachma carrying on the obverse the King's image, and Queen Khalda's image on the reverse (Fig. 9-11).

A bronze fils carrying on the obverse the King's image with Queen Shiqilat, whom he married after the death of Queen Khaldah (Holdou); the reverse carried decorations reflecting the Crossed Cornucopia. Coins carrying the image of King Aretas and Queen Shiqilat were issued during the 20th year of his reign, corresponding to AD 11 (Fig. 12) (Abass 1987:61).

A copper fils carrying image of the King and Queen Shiqilat on the obverse and decorations reflecting the Crossed Cornucopia on the reverse (Fig. 13-14).

A bronze fils, carrying on the obverse profile of the King, and on the reverse the image of the King standing with his hand up. This fils is considered one of the rarest coins during the time of King Aretas IV. (Kammerer 1929:532) (Fig. 15-16).

A bronze fils, carrying on the obverse the King's image, and on the reverse a decoration reflecting the Crossed Cornucopia (Kammerer 1929:533) (Fig. 17).

The Aretas IV coins included the issue date since the first year of his rule. An example of this is a silver dirham carrying the date of issue, inscribed as follows:

*Text: H R T T / M L K / N B T W / S H N T / H D H*

Reading: Aretas, king of the Nabataeans, first year (Al-rawahna, 2002, p. 78).

All coins during the rule of Aretas IV included the following phrase: (Aretas, the King of Nabataean the Philopatris "the lover of his people"). Aretas IV had issued several commemorative coins, including one commemorating the construction boom in Mada'in Salih. Here, on obverse, appeared the image of the King of the coin, while the word (Hegra) was engraved on reverse. Aretas IV also issued a commemorative coin carrying the name of his son fasi-el (Abass 1987:62, Qadoos 1999:187, Al-rawahneh 2002, 82, Al Ansary & Abul Al Hassan 2001:27-28,).



Fig. 8

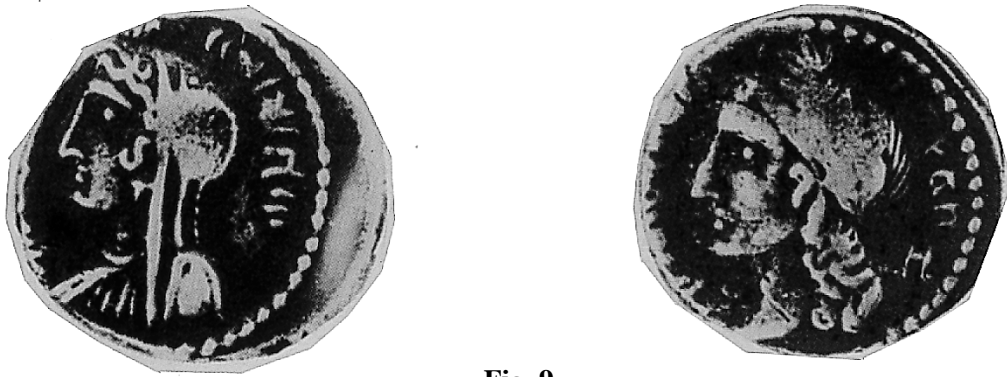


Fig. 9

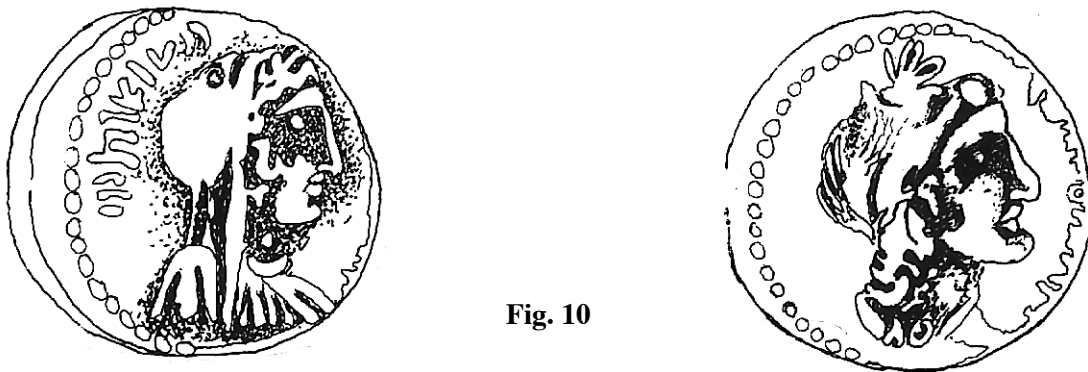


Fig. 10



Fig. 11 (Morgan 1979: 257)

אחיהם נכנסו להם, ויהי אהיהם  
ויהי אהיהם ויהי אהיהם



Fig. 12



Fig. 13

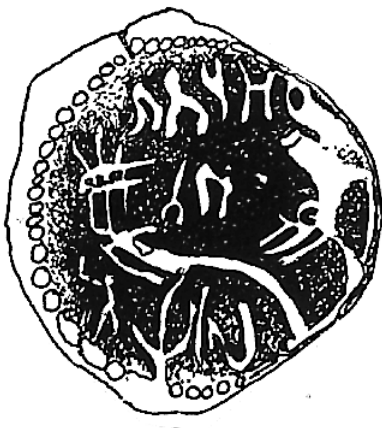


Fig. 14



Fig. 15



Fig. 16

Aretas IV was succeeded by his son, King Malichus II (40-70 AD). The following are examples of his coins:

A fils carrying on the obverse the King's image, and on the reverse the image of Queen

Shiqilat (Fig. 18-19).

A fils with the image of the King and the following phrase appearing on one face: (MILKW MLK NBTW), and on the reverse the image of Queen Shiqilat with the phrase: "His sister Shiqila, Queen Nabatu" (Kammerer



Fig. 17

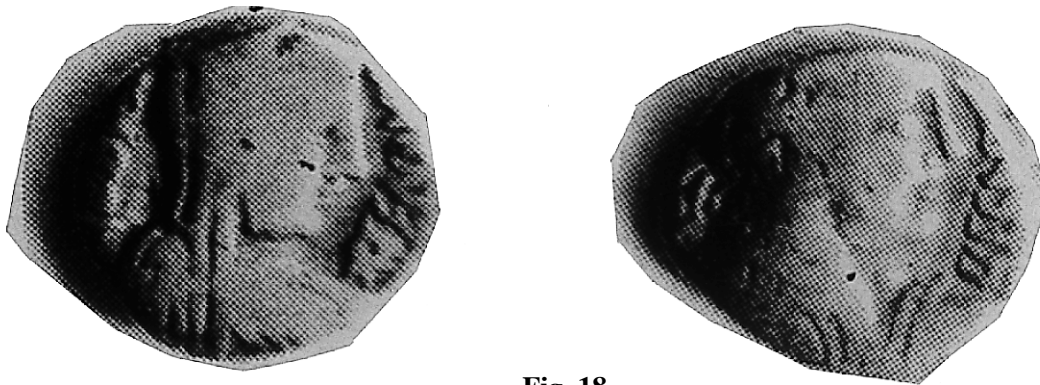


Fig. 18

1929:533-534).

During the rule of King Malichus II, Damascus became again the center for minting Nabataean coins. However, this practice came to an end during the last six years of his rule (Abass 1987:66-67).

The last Nabataean King was King Rabel II (70-106 AD), who was young when he assumed power, so his mother Queen Shiqilat was became "Regent." This explains the reason for having her picture, along with his, on the coins. She remained Regent until the year 75 AD. Some of the coins on which Queen Shiqilat appeared alongside her son Rabel were:

A drachma carrying the image of the young King on the obverse, while the reverse carried the image of his mother Queen Shiqilat (Fig.

20).

A bronze fils carrying on the obverse the image of the King and his mother Queen Shiqilat, and on the reverse the Crossed Cornucopia (Fig. 21). On this type of coins the following phrase was engraved: (Rabel and his mother Shiqilat) (Kammerer1929: 534).

Since the year 75 AD, coins began to show the picture of Queen Gamilat, wife of King Rubel, instead of the picture of his mother Queen Shiqilat. The coins included:

A drachma carrying on the obverse the King's image, and on the reverse the image of his wife Queen Gamilat (Fig. 22).

A bronze fils carrying on the obverse the King's image, and on the reverse the image of his wife Gamilat; the phrase read: "Rab-el and

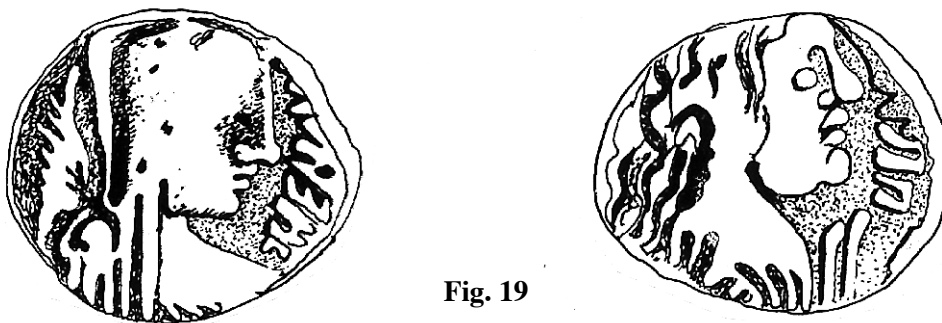


Fig. 19

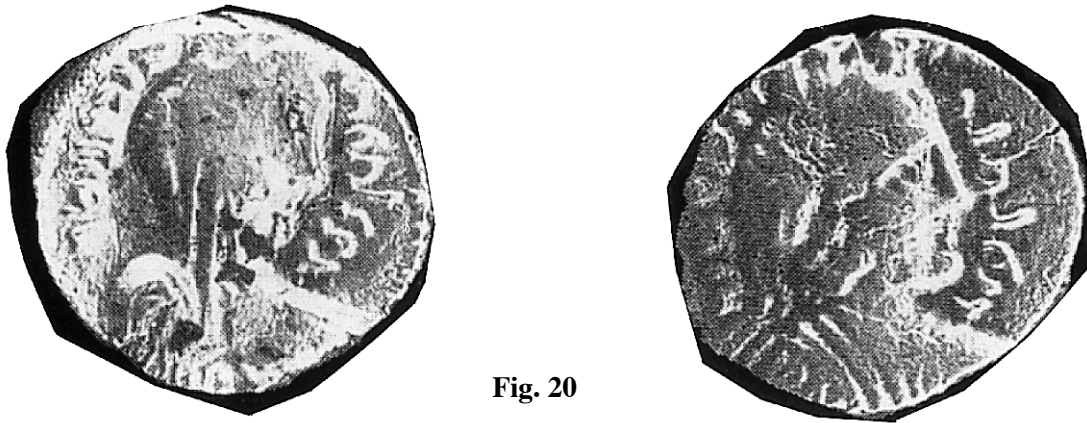


Fig. 20

his sister Gamilat Queen Nabatu" (Kammerer 1929:534) (Fig. 23-24).

A bronze filis carrying on the obverse the image of the King and Queen Gamilat, while it was carrying on the reverse the Crossed Cornucopia, as well as the names of the King and the Queen (Rabel and Gamilat) (Kammerer 1929:534).

It seems that, after Queen Gamilat, King Rabel had married another wife, named Hajar. This was made apparent in the coins that carried on the obverse the image of the King and his second wife, and the Crossed Cornucopia, and the following phrase: Rabel, Hajro (Hajar) on the other (Al rawahna 2002:71). Rubel II managed to prevent the depreciation of the silver Nabataean coins (Healey1993:24).

Whereas King Aretas III (85-62 BC) was the first Nabataean King, whose image appeared on the coins, King Oboadas III (30-9 BC) was the first to engrave the Queen's image on the coins. His coins carried the image of the King on the obverse and the image of both the King and the Queen on the reverse. This testifies to the high status of women in general and the Queen in particular in Nabataean society.

During the rule of King Aretas IV (9BC-40AD), the King's image appeared on the obverse while Queen Khaldah's image appeared on the reverse, with the following phrase engraved surrounding it: "Queen Khaldah (Haldou) of the Nabataeans." After her death, King Aretas IV married Queen Shiqilat. However, her image did not appear separately on the coins, but appeared along with the image of

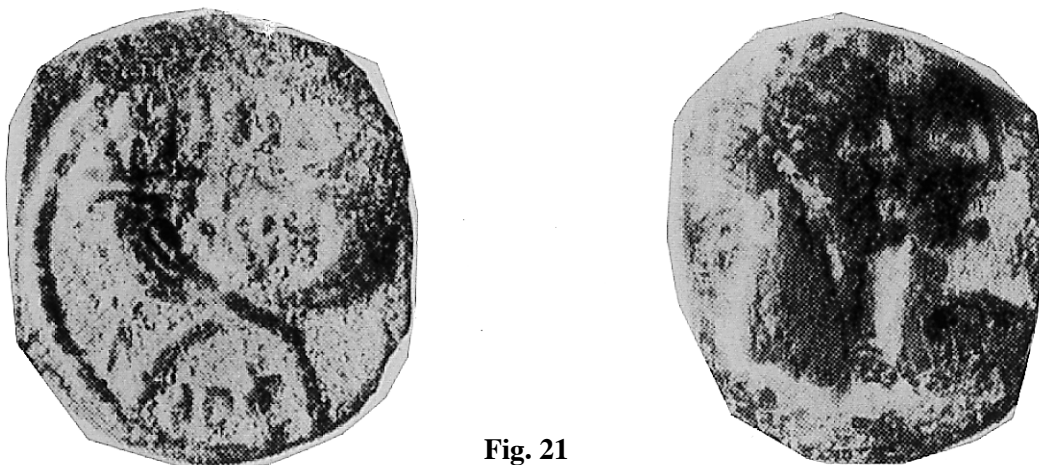


Fig. 21





Fig. 22



Fig. 23



Fig. 24



Fig. 25

the King. This shows the unique status of Queen Khaldah (Holdou). In the case of King Malichus II, however, his image appeared on the obverse while the image of his wife, Queen Shiqilat, appeared on the reverse. Queen Shiqilat is the only Nabataean Queen whose image appeared on coins during the rule of her husband King Malichus II, and that of her son King Rabel (70-106AD) when she was Regent for him over the period from 70 to 75 AD. Later the image of Queen Gamilat, wife of King Rabel, had replaced that of Shiqilat.

Coins continued to be produced during the rule of King Rabel until the conquest of the Nabataean Kingdom by the Romans in 106 AD. The Roman governor in Syria Cornilus Palma became a ruler of the Nabataean Kingdom on behalf of the Roman Emperor Trajan (98-117 AD). At this time Nabataean coins ceased to be minted and the ones in circulation had been sealed with the Roman logo. Thus the Nabataean Kingdom had become a Roman province, known as Provincia Arabia (Abass 1987:67-68).

The Romans had minted coins carrying on obverse a Image of Emperor Trajan and reverse a Image of a girl representing the Arab countries, carrying in her right hand branches of Incense with a camel beside her. This image

symbolized that the Romans had subdued the Arab Nabataean Kingdom.

The Roman coins carried the following phrase: (Arabia Capta), which means that Arabs have become subjects of the Roman Empire. The same phrase appeared on Nabataean coins, which remained in circulation after the fall of the Nabataean Kingdom (Fig. 25). By doing so, Trajan had followed in the footsteps of Scaurus, who commemorated his campaign on King Aretas III (85-62 BC) by issuing coins carrying pictures of the Nabataean King with a camel next to him.

#### **Nabataean Coins in the Inscriptions of Hegra (Al- Hijr - Mada'in Salih) Tombs**

Mada'in Salih is located half way on the old incense road linking the Southern parts of the Arabian Peninsula with its northern parts. Al-Hijr had witnessed, during the rule of Aretas IV (9 BC-40AD), a large construction boom, thus becoming a more or less second capital of the Nabataeans after Petra. Mada'in Salih tombs are better documented than those of Petra, containing inscriptions with the names of people and dates of construction. What concerns us here are the inscriptions relating to Nabataean coins found on tombs.

The following are some of the tombs whose

inscriptions carried reference to coins:

Inscription of the tomb of Kamkam, the daughter of Wa'ilat grand daughter of Haramu. The tomb dates back to the period from December of the first year BC to January of the first year AD. The coins carried in lines 7-9 the following:

And their offspring, and whoever does not implement what is written here shall be cursed five times by Dhushara, Hubalu and Monotu, and shall pay a fine to the priest.

1000 Haretite pieces from the city of Sala' (Petra) (Al Ansary 1984: 31-32).

There is another reading for the 8th and 9th lines:

Five coins for Dhushara, Hubalu and Monotu and a fine for the priest.

1000 Haretite coins (Al-Theeb 1998: 245).

The difference in readings centred on the interpretation of the word "shamad" by each of A.R. al Ansary, S. Al-Theeb and J. Healey. While Ansary interpreted it as "curses," Al-Theeb, despite his agreement with Ansary that the root of the word is (S. M. D) "Shamad", which means "cursed" in Syriac language, is of the view that it most likely means in this inscription a monetary unit (coin) (Al-Theeb 1998: 248). Healey agrees with Al-Theeb that the word "Shamad" means a monetary unit (Healey 1993:160).

Kumkum tomb inscription, as well as those on other Mada'in Salih tombs have been attributed to the city of Sela' (Petra). We notice that the word Sela' or the term "Haretite Sela'aiyah" refers to the capital or the place in which the coins have been minted. Haretite is attributed to King Aretas IV. It continued in this manner until the era of King Rabel II.

Both Ansary and Healey attribute the coins to Sela'. Healey's reading attests to this: (for a fine of a thousand Haretite Sela's "Sl'yn") (Healey 1993:154-155).

The tomb inscription Haushab son of Nafi Al Kouf from Tayma of AD 4 mentions of the coins in lines 6-8:

(i And whoever does other than what is written above shall be liable to the god Dushara regarding the inviolability referred to above, for the full price of a thousand Haretite sela's, "Sl'yn" and to our Lord King Haretat for the same amount i) (Healey 1993:68).

The inscription on Mun'at and Hagaru tomb dated AD 7 mentions of the coins in lines 6-9:

(i will be liable to Dushara the god in the sum of one thousand Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" and to our lord Haretat for the same amount, the sum of one thousand Haretite sela's, "Sl'yn" and to i the goddess in the sum five hundred sela's i) (Healey 1993: 200; Winnet 1970: 153).

Inscription in the tomb of Kahlan the physician son of Wa'lan, dated April-May 26 AD mentions of the coins in lines 7-8:

(i will be liable to Dushara in the sum of three thousand Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" and to our lord Haretat for the same amount i) (Healey 199: 166).

Halafu son Qosantan tomb inscription dated 31 AD mentions of the coins in lines 8-9

(i will be liable for a fine to Dushara the god of our lord in the sum of five hundred Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" and to our lord for the same amount i) (Healey 1993:226).

Hani'u son of Tafsa cemetery inscription dated March-April 31 AD. mentions of the coins in line 9:

(i shall be liable to our lord in the sum of

three thousand Haretite sela's "Sl'yn"i) (Healey 1993: 131).

Inscription of the tomb of Wushuh daughter of Bagrat, dated 34 AD, mentions of the coins in lines 4-5:

(i or remove her from this burial-niche for ever shall be liable to our lord Harretat, king of the Nabataeans, lover of his people, in the sum a thousand Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" i) (Healey 1993:101).

Inscription of the tomb of Wushuh daughter of Bagrat and Qaynu and Naskuyah her daughters, Taymanite dated 34 AD mentions of the coins in lines 9-10.

(i will be liable to Tadhay in the sum of hundred Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" and to our lord king Haretat for the same amount i) (Healey 1993: 137).

Inscription of the tomb of Abdobadat son of Aribos, dated Dec. 35 AD- January 36 AD mentions of the coins in line 8:

(i shall be liable to our lord in the sum of two thousand Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" i) (Healey 1993:123).

Inscription of the tomb of Leader Sa'dallah son of Zabda, whose date is not clear, but it was built during the rule of King Aretas IV. mentions of the coins in the 11th line.

(iwill be liable Dushara in the sum of thousand Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" i) (Healey 1993: 206).

Inscription of the tomb of Sulley son of Radwa, whose date is not clear. It was also built during the time of King Aretas IV. The coins had been mentioned in lines 6-7:

(ito Dushara, the god of our lord, in the sum of thousand Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" i) (Healey 1993: 193).

Inscription of the tomb of Leader Tarsu son Tayemu, dating back to 64 AD during the rule of King Malichkus II mentions of the coins in lines 7-8:

(i shall be liable to the governor in Hegra the sum of thousand Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" and to our lord king Maliku for the same amount i) (Healey 1993: 234).

Inscription of the tomb of Hinat daughter Abdobadat, dating back to 72 AD during the rule of King Rabel II mentions of the coins in lines 12-13:

(... will be liable for a fine to Dushara and Manatu in the sum of thousand Haretite sela's "Sl'yn" and to our lord Rabel king of Nabataeans, for the same amounti) (Healey 1993: 219).

The inscriptions on the tombs at Mada'in Salih, which were built during the rule of King Aretas IV (9BC- 40AD) show the continuous change of the parties (bodies) to which fines were paid by those who desecrate the sanctity of tombs. During the years 1 BC-1 AD, it was paid to the priest (Kamkam tomb inscription). In AD 4, the inscription on Mada'in Salih tomb stated that fines would be paid to both Dushara and Aretas IV (the inscription on Haushab son of Nafi). In AD 7, inscriptions on tombs showed that payment of fines would be made to Dushara and Monotu, as it was the case in the inscriptions on the tombs of Muna'at and Hagaru. The inscription provided that a fine of 1000 pieces of Haretite coins had to be paid to Dushara, and a similar amount to Aretas IV. Again an additional 500 pieces had to be paid to the goddess Monotu, which was apparently less important than Dushara, the major deity (worshipped God) of Nabataean. The fine continued to be paid equally to the Deity and the King until the year 34 AD (Kahlan the physician son of Wa'lan Tomb inscription, and

Halafu son of Qosnatan tomb inscription, as well as the inscriptions on the tomb of Wushuh daughter of Bagrat and Qaynu and Nas-kuyah).

Some inscriptions suggested that fines would be paid to the King rather than to the Deity (Hani'u son Tafsa tomb inscription, Wushuh daughter of Bagrat tomb inscription and Abdobadat son of Aribos tomb inscription) or to the Deity rather than to the King (the inscriptions on Sa'dallah son of Zabda and Sulley son of Radwa tombs).

The 100-coin fine payable to the goddess Tadhay was the lowest ever paid to any Deity. Some researchers attribute this to the fact that Tedhi was not one of Mada'in Salih Deities, noting that Tadhay was mentioned in an inscription on Wushuh daughter of Bagrat and her relatives, all of whom are from Tayma, and Tadhi was one of the Tayma Deities (Healey 1993:142).

During the rule of King Malichus II (40-70 AD), the Mada'in Salih Tombs inscriptions indicated that fines would be paid to the Ruler of Al-Hijr and to King Malichus II. However, deities resumed the previous practice of sharing the fines with the King, during the rule of King Rabel II. The inscription on Hinat daughter Abdobadat tomb refers to this point. The inscription divided the fine equally between Dushara and Monotu in terms of the amount payable to each of them. Previously, Monotu used to get half of Dushara's share of the fines during the rule of King Aretas IV.

### **Circulation of Nabataean Coins outside the Nabataean Kingdom**

We have two texts of Lihyanite inscriptions referring to Nabataean coins. The first text is reproduced by Abu Al-Hassan (Abu Al-Hassan 1977: 288); here, he believes that the word Sela' refers to a unit of money.

The second Lihyanite text is cited by H. Al-Fasi (Al-Fasi 1994: 145) which may be rendered as follows:

"A man bought ten watering places for which he paid (40) Sala'at."

H. Al-Fasi makes the following comment:

[In this context, what invites our attention is the name of the currency "Sala'at," which appears to be very similar to the name of the Nabataean coin: "Sl'yn"] (Al-Fasi, p. 145).

Ferner Caskell also confirms this point when he states that silver drachmas bearing the portrait of the Nabataean king Aretas IV were in circulation among the Lihyanites (Caskell, 1974:100).

### **Nabataean coins in Southern Arab inscriptions**

According to the Sabaic Dictionary, the word Sela' means a monetary unit (Beston 1982: 125). Sabaic inscriptions referred to the coins in circulation in Saba' Kingdom in its religious legislation, which provided for payment of financial fines on worship-related violations. The legislation proscribed that anyone, who sends out or drives away anybody from the temple, should pay 5 pieces of sala'am. One of the inscriptions included the following text: "It was a lawful share for him from Sala'atam and he spent it" (Al-Nua'im 2000: 315). Commenting on the word Sela'a, which was mentioned in the Southern Arab inscriptions, Yousef Abdullah said: (in the Nabataean language, Sela' means money) (Abdullah 1988: 98).

Thus, the words Sela', Sala'am and Sala'atam refer to the kind of coins in circulation in the South of the Arabian Peninsula, which is connected to Sela' (Petra). This connection confirms the view that they are Nabataean coins, and their circulation in Saba' Kingdom signifies the importance of econom-

ic relations between the various Kingdoms of the Arabian Peninsula. It should be noted that Qatabanian and Sabaic coins (Sedov 2001: 30) carried phrases written in the Aramaic and Lihyanite script, thus indicating that they have been in circulation in the kingdoms of North Arabia. It should be noted that circulation of the Nabataean coins was not confined to the places in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, but extended to other places as well. Nabataean coins, dating back to King Aretas IV, carrying pictures of the King and his wife Queen Shiqilat have been discovered in Omana (Al Door) site in Umm Al Qiwain emirate (Potts 1998:136-137).

### Is Sela' Synonymous with Petra?

Inscriptions on Mada'in Salih tombs gave different names to Nabataean coins, including: Sl'yn, sela'iyah, Haretite, and kesf. Thus, all inscriptions on Mada'in Salih three tombs were unanimous in attributing these coins to Sela'.

What is Sela', then? If the Nabataean capital had been known as "Al-Raqeem"(Petra), I would most likely say that Sela' is another name for it, in accordance with the Lihyanite and Sabaic, as well as the Mada'in Salih inscriptions.

Some historians and geographers affirm that Sela' is the name of the capital of the Nabataean kingdom. These include Yaqout Al Hamawi, who said that Sela'a is a fortress in Wadi Mousa (Hamawi 1957:2/236). J. Ali says: "Petra is the capital of 'Nabt' (Nabataean), meaning rock in Arabic. Its old name 'Sela' also means the rock in the Edomite language." (Ali 1980: 3/53). O. Farroukh says: Sela' is Petra, adding that (i the Nabataean lived in Sela' since the 6th century BCial Sela' is a crack in the mountain. Sela' is a castle in Wadi Mousa in Al Shobak district). O. Farroukh states that Sela' is identi-

cal with Petra, adding that the Nabataean of Sela' designate their country as Petra, following the Greek tradition (Farroukh 1984: 65).

A. H. Jones also agrees that Sela' is Petra: (iNo doubt a very important city did exist in the Southern Desert oasis. The Greeks knew it as Petra, and probably it was mentioned in the Old Testament by its Semitic name Sela', the Rock) (Jones 1987:19). M. B. Marhan says: Petra is a Greek word meaning "rock," which may be a translation of the Hebrew word "Sela'" that was mentioned in the "Bible" Isaiah 1:16,11:42 which was used before to refer to Petra. It also means a crack in the rock. The Hebrew name may have been the most accurate, because the entrance to Petra is surrounded by two deep ridges between two mountains, known as the Sique, a terminology that has been perverted from "crack" (Mahran 1994: 2/335). Sela' (Petra) was part of the old Edomite Kingdom, until the Nabataeans came, and displaced the Edomites (Qadoos 1999: 2/266).

In a Lihyanite inscription recovered from Dedan (Al-'Ula), the capital of the kingdom of Dedan and Lihyan, it was held that the word Sela'an (Z - A S L A'N) referred to a crack or a hollow ground between mountains (Abu Al-Hassan 2002: 103). The reference in the inscriptions was made in praise of the king as: "the king of mountains that surround many Sela'an (plural)." In this sense the Arabic inscriptions support the view that Sela' means a "rock" or a crack between rocks.

Although Sela' may not be one of the names of Petra, the Capital of the Nabataeans, it nonetheless has been the place where Nabataean coins have been minted from the time of King Aretas IV to the fall

of the Nabataean Kingdom. So the Nabataeans were no different from other Arab kingdoms who used to mint their currencies in places other than their capitals. For example, the two kingdoms of Hadramaut and Himyar had both minted their coins in places outside their capitals.

The controversy of whether Sela' is one of the names of Petra, the capital of the Nabataeans, merits a further note. Based on inscriptions recovered from Mada'in Salih tombs, as well as on the Lihyanite inscriptions, (Abu Al-Hassan 2002: 103), it may be safely said that the word (Sela') was applied to Mada'in Salih or somewhere near that place. It was also established that Mada'in Salih was the center for Nabataean coins since the reign of Aretas IV (9 BC - AD 40) and until the fall of the kingdom in AD 106.

#### Names of Nabataean coins.

Besides the names of Nabataean coins of sala', sl'yn, sala'at, sala'am, sala'atam and hare-tite, other names include: Kesf, which was mentioned in the inscription on the tomb of Kahlan, the physician, son of Wa'lan. Kesf means silver and bronze coins. It appeared on one of the bronze fils, minted during the time of King Aretas IV, as follows:

*Text: H R T T/ M L K/ N B T W/ R H M/ A M H/ M A' H/ K S F*

Reading: Aretas, king of the Nabataean, the philopatris, lover of his people with a Kesf. (Al-Fasi, 1994: 200; Rawahna, 2002: 82).

Note that the word "Haretite," which recurs several times, refers to king Aretas IV (Rawahna 2002: 82).

If we accept the interpretation of S. Al-Theeb and J. Healey of the word "Shamads" as a monetary unit, then we'll be adding another name for the Nabataean coins. However, referring to the inscription on Kamkam, the daughter of Wa'ilat tomb, where this word was mentioned, we find that the text, according to which the word was interpreted to mean a monetary unit, had imposed only 5 monetary units to the three Deities: Dushara, Hubalu and Monotu, whereas the priest was given 1000 coins. If Healey's justification of the small fine of 100 pieces, payable to the Deity, Tadhay, because she was one of the Deities of Tayma', was correct, then why were the shares of Dushara, the major Deity at Mada'in Salih and other Deities too small? This, in my view, supports the interpretation of A. R. Al Ansary of the word Shamads as meaning "curses" rather than a monetary unit.

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**ملخص:** لم يترك الأنباط تاريخاً مدوناً ولا نزال نعتمد في دراستنا لتاريخهم على مصادر تاريخية أشارت إليهم بشكل عارض، ويهدف هذا البحث إلى إلقاء الضوء على مسكوكات مملكة الأنباط بوصفها من الوثائق المهمة التي يمكن من خلالها كتابة تاريخ الأنباط بما تحمله من نقوش تتضمن الأماكن التي ضربت بها وأسماء الملوك وألقابهم وأسماء زوجاتهم، ويناقد البحث الصلة بين المسكوكات والنقوش النبطية خاصة نقوش مقابر الحجر (مدائن صالح)، كما يناقد البحث موقع سلع التي ضربت بها المسكوكات النبطية، ويرجع الباحث استناداً إلى نقوش مقابر الحجر (مدائن صالح) أن سلع إن لم تكن من أسماء البتراء (الرقيم) عاصمة مملكة الأنباط فإنها تقع في الحجر (مدائن صالح) أو في جوارها، وضربت بها المسكوكات النبطية منذ عهد الملك حارثة الرابع (٩٠م-٤٠م) وحتى نهاية عهد مملكة الأنباط سنة ١٠٦م.

## Note

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