

**The role of trade in the
evolution of the Nabataean
religious belief**

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Information about the religion and gods of the Nabataeans is meagre; and although the Nabataeans' gods are mentioned in many inscriptions and writings, these descriptions are brief and often cited the name of the god without any further details, such as the method of worship and how he was transmitted to the Nabataeans.

Archeologist *Lamia El Khouri* says: "Since the onset of the archaeological activities in the Nabataean sites, scientists have hoped to find evidence to help them construct a better understanding of the Nabataean religious belief system, but heretofore we could not find apprehensible and clear explanations regarding the gods of the Nabataeans"¹.

Nevertheless, we endeavour as much as possible to grope through the dim light that emits from the Nabataean inscriptions discovered on rocks, tombstones, etc., (which were written by the Nabataeans themselves), from currencies which carried some religious symbols, architectural monuments² and other historical resources.

In this paper, we seek to highlight the role of trade in the evolution of the Nabataean religious belief. The geographical framework of the Nabataean Kingdom had a role in their trade due to their strategic location in southwestern Syria, down south to the north of the Arabian Peninsula and west to Sinai Peninsula and on the road of the trade route coming from the south of the Arabian Peninsula up to the shores of the Mediterranean and Egypt³. As a result of this strategic location between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, and between the Levant, Egypt, Arabian Peninsula and Yemen⁴, the Nabataean economy was based on commerce. The Nabataeans assumed control over the sea trade and convoys between the East and the West in the ancient world⁵. The fact that their capital, Petra, was located on the trade route linking the Arabian Peninsula and Syria⁶ rendered them a primarily commercial nation. Their commercial activity reached distant areas in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia Minor, Italy, India, China, Gaul, Wales and Africa⁷.

Trade routes are considered a link between different countries and peoples. They transfer different cultures, news and their resulting doctrines and opinions. That is why markets and commercial stations are considered an arena for the exchange of ideas and knowledge. As a result of the Nabataeans business in trade, their community had included many different people who migrated to the region for trade⁸, therefore shaping a cultural ideas pollination which had some influence on religious beliefs.

Traders used to discuss their religion as they moved from one country to another to engage in trade. Some of them were preachers and clerics travelling with the main objective of disseminating their religious beliefs. Some of them even settled in the areas they originally visited for trade purposes, to spread their beliefs. Whether the influence they left on the beliefs of Nabataeans through business trips seemed obvious or not, we know that the Nabataeans had likened their gods to many of the gods of neighboring nations by means of communication.

Due to the relationships between the Nabataeans and other nations inside and outside the Arabian Peninsula, the Nabataeans' religion was affected by other contemporary religions, e.g. they were influenced by the Greek, Roman, Aramaic, Egyptian, and Phoenician religions⁹ along with the religions of the Arabs before Islam¹⁰.

The transmission that led the Nabataeans from the nomadic lifestyle to a life of stability was another factor in the development of their religious beliefs. They had maintained some of the religious beliefs they embraced from the life of mobility and roaming¹¹, including certain gods, such as "*Shae'a Qawm*", "*Dushara (Dushares)*", "*Allat*", "*Al Uzza*" and "*Manawat*¹²". It is possible that this religious evolution had developed to fill the spiritual needs and strengthen the relationships between the Nabataeans and their gods, since stability had requested a religious system to keep pace with the stage of civilizational development.

Nabataeans presence outside their area:

The Nabataeans used to carry their gods on board merchant seafaring vessels wherever they went to feel secure whenever they travelled away from their homeland¹³. The god "*Shae'a Qawm*" was a god that protected convoys¹⁴ and traders in the desert, therefore they used to worship him by means of vows and prayers. This god was mentioned in many inscriptions in Hajar area and Thamud, Palmyra and Safa inscriptions¹⁵.

In the beginning, the gods of the Nabataeans were small stones ranging in height from 60 cm to 10 cm in order to be compatible with the Nabataeans' mobile lifestyle¹⁶. They were placed inside niches so that the worshipper could bring the stone out for worship and carry it again after he had done¹⁷. The other kind of stones was fixed monument and obelisks¹⁸. The Nabataean gods, whether fixed or mobile, were made of stone without any human or animal representation¹⁹. However, afterward and due to their

communication and contact with different and contemporary people and nations, by means of trade, the Nabataeans were influenced by the religions of these mentioned nations²⁰.

The Nabataeans had a clear-cut presence confirmed by the inscriptions, which amounted to 3851 inscription in Egypt (Eastern Desert), for example.²¹ These inscriptions were inscribed during business trips from the coast of the Red Sea to the Nile; they also provide an indication of the Nabataean presence, which was nothing more than a commercial exchange.

With the commercial movement of the Nabataeans, their gods were discovered outside the borders of their kingdom:

An inscription was discovered in Tel Al Masghutah area that dates back to 400 BC. It was written on copper pots with Aramaean font, and mentioned the name of the god "Allat": [haḍa (l ina') quḍima (ahdahu) Ṣaḥa' bin Amr lililahah allat] "This (the pot) was submitted (given as a gift) by Sahha' ibn Amr to the god Allat²²". Another text was discovered in the same area dating back to the same era, with the following: [ḥarbuk bin fasri qadama haḍa l ina' lil latillah], "Harbak bin Fasari has presented this pot to the god Allat". It is noted on the inscription that the presenter of the pot was Egyptian, and this shows that the ancient Egyptians had sanctified the god Allat²³, who was also mentioned with the Egyptian god "Isis" in an inscription discovered in Makman Al Jahaleen (Jordan), [haḍa an nqṣu li tayem walitḍkur (el ilah) allat ? bdizis], "This inscription is for "Tayem" to sanctify (God) Allat Abdul Isis²⁴."

In Italy (Betola) an inscription was discovered dating back to AD 11. This inscription has mentioned the god "Hubal²⁵". Two other inscriptions were also discovered in Italy of the god "Dushara²⁶" demonstrating the strength of the commercial activity between the two parties. The inscriptions were discovered in Betola, Italy for the god "Dushara" contained the following:

[haḍa) an eljamalan el lḍaan] "The two camels"

[taqaraba bihima z y d wa wa ? b d a l j a], "Sacrificed by Z Y D O O A B D A L J A"

[abna' t y m wa bin h n a wa li ḍṣara al laḍi], "Sons of T Y M O Bin H N H O to "Dushara" who

[... (fi sa) nat 20 li ḥari (ṭatu)], "(in the year) 20 for Har (itha)"

[al malik maliku al anbaṭ muḥibu ša? bihi], “(The beloved king of the Nabataeans)”.

The other inscription:

[... mal (ik) el malik ...], “... Mali(k the king ...)”

[li ḍu šara al ilah fi ša (hr) ... sanat ...], “To *Dushara* the god in (month) ... (Year)”²⁷

Archaeological missions have discovered several remains of Nabataean inscriptions in different Greek regions (Cyprus, Rhodes, Kos), some of which have mentioned the God *Al Uzza*:

[fi šahr aab) sanat 18 li ḥariṭa] “In August of the year 18 to Haritha”

[maliku al anbaṭ) ? ma aws ullah], “King of the Nabataeans, Aws Allah”

[bin roḥ) bin a z q n haḍa elmabna el muraba?], “Bin Rouh Bin A Z G N has constructed this square building”.

[...] t lil uzza il ilah], “(.....) T as a tribute for Uzza the god”

[(al ḥaiat) ḥariṭa maliku al anbaṭ], “(Al Hayat) *Haritha*, king of the Nabataeans”²⁸.

In the inscriptions discovered south of the Arabian Peninsula, the god *Dushara* was mentioned: [haḍani huma aš šahed wa qā'idah al laḍani aqamahuma košai bin taimo li ḍa šara fi šarwaḥ fi šaḥer Ṭibt fi el'am aṭaleṭ li ḥukmi ḥariṭa maliku al anbaṭ muḥibu ša?bihi], "These were the tombstone and the base built by Timo bin Kuchay bin Timo to *Dushara* in Serwah in Tebt month in the third year of the reign of Haritha, king of the Nabataeans”²⁹.

The Lehyanian inscriptions had mentioned Nabataean currencies, including: [ʔfsi bi mā'n aṭlala (qadama) ʔn farṭat wa sela? Lahu (wa ʔn0 nakhel biḍi ʔaman] wa [ana rajulan ištara ʔšrat manahel miah dafa? Fiha 40 silʔat] wa [kan faraṭ lahu min silʔatum fa 'nfaqaha], "Afsi bin Maen Otlal has presented his offer and purchased (Sala'a) palm trees in Thi A'man" and "A man has bought ten fountains of water for which he's paid 40 Sala'at. In Nabataeans language (Sala'a) means money”³⁰.

Evolution of currencies:

Currencies were one of the most important manifestations of trade. They demonstrated the influence of other nations who traded with the Nabataeans on them. This Monetary trade between the Nabataeans and other nations, and the emergence of Greek-Ptolemaic-Roman gods had influenced the Nabataeans in their first stage³¹ (imitation and simulations). Thus, Nabataean currencies later appeared with Nabataean gods similar to other Greek and Roman gods. Pictures of the Greek god (Nike) were inscribed on Nabataean currencies since the early ages. King *Aretas II* (110 – 96 BC) is considered the first to mint bronze coins similar to the Greek ones. The back of the coin had an inscription of the Greek god of Victory (*Nike*) wearing a helmet³². This tradition continued to the era of the Nabataean kings, such as King *Obodas II* (62 – 59 BC) who minted a Nabataean coin with a picture of a Ptolemaic eagle on the back. This currency was similar to currencies in the city of Sour. Pictures of the Ptolemaic eagle were also carved on currencies dating back to the era of *Malichos I* (59-30 BC)³³ and King *Obodas III* (30-9 BC)³⁴. When *Aretas IV* (87-62 BC) seized Damascus, he minted silver and bronze coins bearing his title "Philhellene"³⁵ (lover of Greek), and the image of the god Nike (god of Damascene victory) sitting on a rock³⁶, suggesting cultural Hellenization hegemony especially religious-wise.

During the reign of King *Aretas IV* (9 BC -AD 40), pictures of the god Nike and Ptolemaic eagle appeared on issued coins³⁷. His reign was marked by frequent coin minting. This illustrates the extent to which the Greek religion and gods were influential during his reign.

During the reign of King Rub el II (70-AD 106), coins were minted with pictures of the king and his mother, "Rub el and his mother Shaqelah", and on the coin's back, the crossing prosperity horns were carved along with a picture of the king and his wives³⁸. After the Romans had seized the Kingdom of Nabataeans, coins were sealed with Roman symbols; and currencies were minted with a picture of a Nabataean King next to a camel, or a picture of a girl holding branches of frankincense next to a camel. It appears that the camel was considered a symbol of the Nabataeans from the viewpoint of the Romans since the reign of Al King *Aretas IV*³⁹.

Also, pictures of the Nabataean god, *Dushara*, had appeared on currencies minted in the Arab state in AD 177, which shows the beautiful

side of *Dushara's* long silky hair. And in AD 209, other coins were minted in the Arab state, with the picture of *Dushara* standing on a platform between two monuments. During the reign of Emperor Elagolous, bronze coins were minted with a picture of *Dushara* in Karak, Bosra and Dar'ah⁴⁰.

In general, Nabataean kings had minted their currencies using gold and silver. And during the latest times of their rule of the Kingdom, pictures of the Ptolemaic Eagle or crossed horns of prosperity⁴¹ appeared on the coins up until the Romans took charge of the area in AD 106 during the reign of the last Nabataean king King *Rabbel II* (70-AD 106).

Many of the Nabataean coins' symbols had "palm fronds" and "Mace" both of which were Greek symbols that emerged with the god Hermes on Seleucia coins⁴². As well as a Roman currency "laurel wreath" was inscribed on Greek currency alongside the god Nike, which was one of the symbols inscribed on the Nabataean currencies. "Wheat spikes" was a Grecian symbol that represents the god of fertility and god Demeter, the Roman god Ceres and the Egyptian god Isis⁴³.

Development of the gods:

Some of the gods that influenced the Nabataeans were "*Ba'l Shmaen*", an ancient Canaanite god that represented the god of fertility⁴⁴, as well as the worship of Isis "*Zeus*" of Egypt⁴⁵. *Jerash* was a center for the worship of the Roman god *Artemis* and his son *Zeus*⁴⁶. Also, the God *Dushara* had appeared with a Greek and Roman character since he resembled *Ares* and *Zeus* then became the god of the sun⁴⁷, and like *Ba'l Shmaen*⁴⁸, as Kdosaris defined the Roman name for the Arabic name, and was the same as their gods *Dionysus*, *Bacchos*, *Mars*, and *Jupiter* (*Zeus* to Romans)⁴⁹. In Judaism, *Dushara* represented the god Jehovah⁵⁰ and Dionysus, the god of wine. In the south of Syria and the Negev region, *Allat* became *Dushara's* wife⁵¹. *Dushara* was referred to with a symbol of the bull similar to the god *Zeus* and the Aramaic god *Hadad*⁵², as an expression of fertility⁵³. It was also referred to with a symbol of a lion, snake and falcon, while *Dionysus* and *Bacchus* were referred to with grapes and grape leaves⁵⁴.

Since *Dushara* represents the god of the sun, its symbols and monuments were found pointing to the East⁵⁵, while *Allat*, his wife, represented the moon, because the Arabs of the north used to consider the moon as the wife of the god of the sun⁵⁶. Atarathes "or Atrgatis", the god of Manbij, was similar to *Allat*, and was referred to with a symbol of lions,

dolphins (or fish), spikes⁵⁷, horns of prosperity, wheel, eagle and others⁵⁸. Atrgatis was the Syrian goddess of fertility (Aramaic⁵⁹), which was Allat originally, but became Atrgatis after *Dushara* became equivalent to *Zeus-Hadad*, so *Atrgatis* became his wife instead of *Allat*⁶⁰.

Dusharawas considered the main or the first god among the Nabataean gods. He had a special position that could be seen through the fact that, when mentioned with other gods, his name was stated first, then followed by other gods, for example: (Before the gods *Dushara* and *Manawat*), (*Dushara* and his throne and *Allat of Amnad* and *Manawat* and *Qaysh "Qais"* shall curse⁶¹), or using the term "all the gods", such as: (*Dushara* and all the gods shall curse⁶²), (*Dushara* and all the gods testify to this/these curse(s)⁶³) before *Dushara*, the god of gods"⁶⁴. His distinctive stature did not underestimate the stature of the other Nabataean gods⁶⁵. The reason behind this distinction might be because *Dushara* was the god of the ruling Nabataean family, (*Dushara* was the god of our Lord King)⁶⁶, as he was titled "Master of the house"⁶⁷; and the god of gratitude and happiness⁶⁸.

Dushara was a black⁶⁹ square or rectangular stone with four corners based in Petra⁷⁰. At the beginning of his development, a square eye was inscribed on him⁷¹, afterwards two eyes, a nose and mouth were inscribed and so on until his complete human image was done⁷². *Dushara* might originally be an Edomite god that the Nabataeans inherited, and upon settlement they adopted this god in a region where agriculture occupied the mainstay of economy or its cornerstone. This view proves the continuity of worship of *Dushara* after the Roman domination of the area from AD 106 to 3rd century AD and onwards⁷³.

During the first stage of the life of the Nabataeans, *Dushara* did not drink alcohol, and when offerings were presented to him; they were mixed with milk, oil or wheat and other foods. However, after the evolution of the Nabataean religious belief, *Dushara* became similar to *Dionysus* the Greek god of wine, and offerings became mixed with wine⁷⁴.

Brunnow believes that the reason behind the name *Dushara* is because Al Sarah means a fertile area with dense trees, especially olive trees and grapes⁷⁵. Or it could be a reference to the Sarah Mountains (Sarat)⁷⁶ which were the destination that Alozd and Aws tribes migrated to after the collapse of Ma'rab Dam, an area located between Yemen and the Hijaz⁷⁷. Also, his name may be related to trade (the master of purchase)⁷⁸, or "Lord of the Earth" or "Lord of the Al Sarat land" near the capital of Petra, the

headquarters of worship, since Du means "owner" and Shara means "mountain"⁷⁹.

Since the late first century BC to the beginning of the second century AD, many inscriptions had been discovered in Al Hajar area. These inscriptions spoke of *Dushara*, and there were many inscriptions in Al Hajar area that mentioned *Dushara* in this period. This may indicate that Al Hajar was the worship center, or it can point out to their belief that he "*Dushara*: is present in every place and time, and man must pray to him anytime and anywhere"⁸⁰. It also may be a result of increased arrivals to the region due to its political and economic status⁸¹.

Allat used to represent Aphrodite for Greeks⁸², and *Artemis* for the people of Carthage⁸³, and *Minerva* for the Romans⁸⁴, and *Hera* for the Greeks⁸⁵. *Allat* was one of the gods of the Arameans, Acadians and the Arabs⁸⁶. She also represented the sun for the Arabs residing in the south of the Arabian Peninsula. She was called "That Hameem"⁸⁷ by the Sabaeans. This fact was confirmed in the Qur'an, that the Southern Arabs had worshipped the sun in the story of the Queen of Sheba in the verse: "I found her and her people worshipping the sun instead of Allâh, and *Shaitân* (Satan) has made their deeds fair-seeming to them, and has barred them from (Allâh's) Way: so they have no guidance."⁸⁸. *Allat* was a square rock with geometric motifs⁸⁹, and then evolved, as a result of socializing with other nations, to acquire a human form⁹⁰.

In Greek inscriptions discovered in Carthage, *Allat* was mentioned: [b d m l r t bin m s m n "B D M L R T Son of S M N H L S the priest of *Allat*"⁹¹].

Hubal was also one of the gods worshiped by the Nabataeans and the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula, as mentioned in two inscriptions discovered in Al Hajar area⁹², and in another inscription in Ola area (To *Dushara*, *Hubal* and *Manawat* monetary units⁹³). Originally, *Hubal* was a Phoenician god before the Arabs worshiped him⁹⁴ (He who does not follow (Comply with) what is written shall (bring with him) 5 monetary units to *Dushara*, *Hubal* and *Manawat* and a fine of 1000 *Harithi* coins⁹⁵).

Al Kutbay or *Al Kutba* was one of the gods whom sex was controversial. Its name was derived from writing, due to the merchants' need for writing in business transactions, and this demonstrates the value of writing⁹⁶. The Nabataean god "*Al Kutbay*" represented the Assyrian Babylonian god Naboo or Nebo⁹⁷, the Roman "*Apollo*" (*Voyeos*), (who was worshipped in the middle of the Arabian Peninsula)⁹⁸, the Egyptian *Tut*⁹⁹,

and the Greek *Hermes*, known to the Arabs Al Lihyaneen (*Hun - Katab*). Statues of this god were discovered in the temple of Khirbet Ed-Dharieh, Khirbet et Tannuer and Petra¹⁰⁰.

The Nabataeans had also worshipped the god "*Manawat*, the god of death" along with the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula. *Manawat* was the equivalent of the Babylonian god of destiny and death¹⁰¹. The Nabataeans had also worshipped the god "Al Uzza" who represented the planet Venus¹⁰², similar to the god Venus worshipped by the Arabs residing in the south of the Arabian Peninsula¹⁰³. She was a goddess of war for Arabs and was symbolized by a woman¹⁰⁴ and had a temple in Bosra called Beto Eel, which represented Aphrodite or Astarte t¹⁰⁵.

Allat, *Al Uzzi* and *Manawat* were gods worshiped by Arabs during the pre-Islamic era¹⁰⁶. They were also mentioned in the Koran: (Have you then considered *Al-Lât*, and *Al-'Uzzâ* (two idols of the pagan Arabs), And *Manât* (another idol of the pagan Arabs), the other third?)¹⁰⁷.

"*Al Qaws*" was one of the gods worshiped by the Nabataeans and was given the symbol of an Eagle as stated in the inscriptions of Bosra. Originally, he was an Edomite god¹⁰⁸, a god of war and force as deemed by the Edomites¹⁰⁹. The Nabataeans and the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula had also worshipped the gods Qais, Manaf¹¹⁰, Saad and Saeed¹¹¹. The god *Ruldaiu* (*Ruda*) was associated with god Azizu from Tadmur, and *Ruda* from Thamud, and Rida the Safavid, and through the Nabataeans, this god reached the Arabs of Hijaz and Najd¹¹². There is a Safavi inscription in which god *Ruda* was mentioned, [aiuha el ilahu raṬu sanatu ḥarbi el anbaṬ], "O god *Ruda* the Nabataean year of war¹¹³", and the Canaanite god Dad or Hadad was also worshipped by the Nabataeans¹¹⁴.

The god "*Eel*", the great Phoenician god (The god of rain and crop¹¹⁵) was mentioned in many of the Nabataean inscriptions alongside personal names, and the most prominent was "Lord of Eel" which was one of the names appointed to most of the Nabataean kings, as a means of seeking blessing from this god. We mention some of these inscriptions herein: [taḥiatu rum eel], "Greetings of Rum Eel¹¹⁶", [ḍikra dimsy bin rabeeb el wali (al ḥakim) at taibah], "Tribute to Damsi bin Rabeeb El-Wali (governor) Al Taibah¹¹⁷", [taḥiatutakra? el], "Greetings of Takra' Eel¹¹⁸", [taḥiatu ?omar el bin a'kh], "Greetings of Omar Eel bin Akh¹¹⁹", [bala (na?am) taḥiatuḡawṭ el], "Yes, greetings of Ghath Eel¹²⁰", [taḥiatu ?bdu rub el bin], "Greetings of Abdu Rab Eel Bin¹²¹", [ḍikra ḡanem bin njud el bin z?aiṬ], "Anniversary of bin Najud Eel bin El Zeit¹²²", [taḥiatu mery el bin tatn at taibah], "Greetings Mari Eel Bin Natn Al Taibah¹²³" and [taḥiatu han

el wataim], "Greetings of Hin Eel Watem¹²⁴". The name of the God "Eel" was common in most religions¹²⁵.

Another Phoenician god that was mentioned in Nabataean inscriptions is the god "Bael", the god of rain, tornadoes, lightning and storms, who was similar to the Babylonian and Aramaean god "*Hadad*"¹²⁶. *Bael* was mentioned in the Koran: "Will you call upon *Ba'l* (a well known idol of his nation whom they used to worship) and forsake the Best of creators,¹²⁷). He was also mentioned with personal names in some Nabataean inscriptions, [ḏikraiatu ba'lhun], "Memoirs of Baal Hoon¹²⁸", [ḏikra ba'lu at taibah], "Anniversary of Baal Al Taibah¹²⁹".

It is noted that the deification of emperors was tiring to the communities surrounding or contemporary to the Nabataeans, including: the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. However, this was not the case for the Nabataeans despite their civil connection with the aforementioned nations. The only incident of such sort was the deification of the king *Obodas II* (III), "Abdu Obodas bin Erebus". This was, according to Al Thaeab, due to the love of his people and his distinctive accomplishments¹³⁰, or as Ihsan Abbas believes, it was done to give credit to the King *Obodas II* due to the deeds of his minister Sala. *Obodas* was not popular among his people since he concentrated on internal civil status and left all foreign affairs to his minister Sala¹³¹.

Alongside the phenomenon of duplication among the Greek gods (male and female), "*Zeus and Hera*" which appeared in the Nabataeans culture during the early stage of development "*Allat and Dushara*"¹³²."

Temples outside the Nabataeans area:

The Nabataeans had linked their gods and worship with other contemporary gods as a result of contact¹³³. This influence was not limited to the ritual worship of the gods, but had also included temples as we can see in the treasury (Khazneh), Qasr el Bint¹³⁴ and the Temple of Khirbet et Tannuer which contained two statues depicting *Dushara* and *Allat* after their development to *Zeus- Hadad* and *Otarata*¹³⁵, in addition to the Temple of *Baal Eshmun* to the south of Damascus, which was devoted to the worship of the god *Baal Eshmun*¹³⁶.

Nabataean temples, small or big, proliferated in all the areas where Nabataeans had lived, inside or outside the Arabian Peninsula¹³⁷. The designs of the temples discovered in Petra are not much different from the style of Greek temples.

The Nabataeans had built a temple in Betoli to worship their local gods. They used to visit the temples and praise the gods after unloading their cargo in Betoli. They also prayed to the gods to bless them with favorable wind¹³⁸. The presence of Betoli Temple in Italy shows the influx of the Nabataeans to the region as traders; they had left their names and some texts in inscriptions that mentioned the god *Dushara*¹³⁹. They had also constructed a temple in Tall Al Shaqifiyah in Egypt which dates back to 1st century AD¹⁴⁰.

Some temples have also been discovered in the south of the Arabian Peninsula that are similar to Nabataean temples in the north. Among them we mention The Wadam Thee Msam'am Temple, which dates back to 7th century BC and resembles Qasr Al Bint in Petra¹⁴¹.

In Adomatu area (Dumat Al Jandal), a Nabataean inscription of the god *Dushara* was discovered. It indicated the presence of a temple built by the commander of the garrison military there- Ghanim bin Dmsevs, in the fifth year of the reign of the Nabataean king Malik. The temple was reconstructed by priest Malik bin Jaza in order to carry on the religious rituals of the god *Dushara*¹⁴².

The inscription: [haḍa el maʔbado al laḍibana ḡanem šaḥeb (raʔees), “This temple was built by Ghanem Sahib (head)”

[almoʔser bin demsfes li ḍu eṢira ill ah], “ al-Moesser Bin Dmsevs to the God *Dushara*”

[j y a l bi dawmat, wa ḥadaṭa wa aṬafa], “J Y A Lin Doma; he renovated and added”

[iliehi (?alihi) malik el ʔaraf, al laḍi bi dawmat bin jazʔa], “To it Malik Al Arraf who was in Domah bin Jaza”

[fi as sanati khams (min ḥukm) el malik malek (manko) maliku el anbaṬ], “In the fifth year (of the rule) of Malik (Manko) the king of the Nabataeans¹⁴³.”

The Nabataeans had built a temple in Sweida to the god *Dushara* in 33 BC¹⁴⁴, and another one in Egypt, specifically in Tal Al Shaqeqah region¹⁴⁵. An inscription was discovered in the Delta that says a member of the Nabataean community in the region called "Wahb Allah" had built a temple in Daphne in 43 BC for *Dushara*¹⁴⁶. And in Petra, the Nabataeans had built a temple to the Greek god *Bacchus*, or *Marsas* the Roman call him¹⁴⁷.

The Nabataeans had built many temples on trade routes between the Arabian Peninsula and Damascus. The Nabataeans used the temples to store the Kingdom's fines and funds which indicate that the temples had banking functions¹⁴⁸.

We can say, from what has been mentioned so far, that the Nabataean religion was characterized by openness to the outside world. The Nabataeans were influenced by the culture and religions of the surrounding peoples. They worshipped Phoenician, Greek and Roman gods as well as other oriental influences from Egypt, Mesopotamia and the gods of the Arabs marked by *Allat*, *Manawat*, *al-Uzza* and *Hubal*¹⁴⁹. This indicates that the Nabataean religion was polytheist and pagan. Due to commercial contact with various peoples, they were affected by the religions of those areas. Syria in general was affected by the Greek culture since the invasion of Alexander the Great to the east, and then affected by the Roman culture around the middle of the 1st century BC¹⁵⁰.

Conclusion:

The study has shown that the Nabataean society's shift from the nomadic lifestyle to settlement, their role in international trade and their contact with other peoples and nations led to the cohesion and exchange of ideas, and thus left some influence on the Nabataeans by other more urbanized nations, such as the Greeks and Romans on the one hand, and they had some influence on peoples or areas that were less civilized on the other.

The religious aspect was the most influenced to some extent. The Nabataeans were influenced by gods of neighboring peoples, but they kept their own style and form in its public image. It seems that the Nabataeans had inherited gods of the Edomites as they copied other cultural aspects such as agriculture, trade and architecture. *Dushara* was an Edomiti god that the Nabataeans worshipped after they settled in the region. This view explains the continuity to worship *Dushara* after the Roman domination over the region in AD 106 until the third century and onwards.

The change that touched on the religious life is evident in several matters: development of picturing and representing Gods. In the beginning, the Nabataean Gods were represented on rock or stones, and then they acquired a human image, and this demonstrates the addition of the human character to the gods. The qualities of the gods had also changed, e.g. *Dushara* did not drink alcohol in the first stage of the Nabataean life, but upon the evolution of Nabataean religious belief, this norm was altered,

similar to *Dionysus-Bacchus* the Greek and Romans god of wine. The evolution had also touched on the offerings made to *Dushara*. In the beginning, they were mixed with milk, oil or wheat and other foods and then later became similar to the Greek god of wine. Moreover, the temple of *Dushara* which was located at the top of the highest mountain in Petra (Temple of the monastery) was similar to the temple of god *Zeus*, which was at the top of Mount Olympus.

The Nabataeans had inscribed the Greek goddess of victory on their currencies as well as the horns of prosperity which indicates the Nabataeans subordination to the Roman since the reign of *Aretas II* to the fall of the Nabataean Kingdom in 106 AD. The Nabataeans had symbols for their gods, such as the Greeks and the Romans, for example, the god *Dushara* was symbolized by the lion, snake and falcon, along with various symbols that appeared on Nabataean currencies, such as "palm fronds", "Mace", "Wheat spikes" and others.

Dushara became, after its development, the protector of traders and travelers, similar to *Hermes* the Greek god of commerce and travelers, as evidenced by the existence of a temple for the god *Dushara* outside the Nabataean region in Betola and in the inscriptions discovered south of the Arabian Peninsula which mentioned *Dushara*.

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Appendix

Nabataean Gods	Equivalent Gods	God origin	Function
Shae'aQawm šy' h□wm			Protection of convoys and traders
Dushara	Ares - Zeus Baal Shamen Cdosarris Dionysus Bachuss – Mars - Jupiter Lihue	Roman Canaanite Roman Roman Roman Jewish	Protection of convoys and traders, God of fertility, God of wine and God of the sun
Allat	Ataratheh (Atargatis) Aphrodite - Hera Artemis Minerva Sun	Syrian fertility goddess Greece Carthage Roman Arabs south of the Arabian Peninsula	God of love, beauty and the moon.
Hubal		Phoenician God	
AlKutbay	Nabu Apollo Tut Hermes	Assyrian Babylonian Roman Egyptian Greek	God of writing
Manawat		Babylonian God	God of death
	Venus Aphrodite Astrate	Arabs south of the Arabian Peninsula	God of war
Al Qaws		Edomite God	God of war and power
Ruda	Azizu	Palmyrian God	
	Dad or Hadad	Canaanite	
Bael	Bael	Phoenician God	God of rain, storms, lightning and Tornados