

Religion in Nabataea

By Anna Accettola, Bucknell University

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Religion in Nabataea was a confluence of native and foreign deities and practices which spread across the Arabian desert. Ranging from the worship of betyl blocks to figural sculpture, sacred high places to Greco-Roman temples, priestly worship in sacred places to traveling pocket-sized 'eye-idols,' religious practice adapted readily to the many needs of its people and the cultural heterogeneity which permeated the region. While the concept of a "Nabataean religion" is inauthentic, a general understanding of the polytheistic religious practice within the area controlled by the Nabataean king can be reconstructed from material evidence and the few remaining literary sources. Aniconic blocks are the most common aspect of Nabataean worship, in Petra and throughout the region. These rectangular blocks, sometimes including eye stones or engravings called 'eye-idols,' were often dedicated to the primary deities of Nabataean polytheism, specifically Dushara and al-Uzza. Ritual feasting was also an important aspect of religious tradition, as was common in other Near Eastern and Semitic religious groups. These feasts took place commonly in triclinia as part of sacrificial and funerary ceremonies. Sacrifices, perhaps of live animals, but more likely of clay figurines, were fundamental aspects of these ceremonies. Egyptian, Persian, and Greco-Roman influences were clearly prominent in the art and architecture of main Nabataean cities, including figural depictions of deities which was unusual for the aniconic traditions of the Nabataeans. While foreign deities were often amalgamated with Nabataean deities, such as Dushara-Zeus-Dionysus and al-Uzza-Isis-Aphrodite Ourania, the syncretization remained largely in public urban spaces. In practice, religious traditions seem to have remained unchanged even with the on-going contact with foreigners. Few foreign influences have been found in private spaces, sacred high places, or rural areas. As Nabataeans spread into the Mediterranean, for political and economic purposes during the later part of the Hellenistic period, their worship of the high god Dushara traveled with them. Cultic sites and altars dedicated to Dushara have been found as far away as Puteoli, Italy. This is likely due to the strong connection between Nabataean kingship and Dushara. While the king played a role in religious practice, much still remains unknown about the roles of worshippers and the organization of religion in Nabataea due to the lack of written records by contemporary, Nabataean sources.



Date Range: 300 BCE - 450 CE

Region: Kingdom of Nabataea

Region tags: Levant, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Arabian Peninsula, Israel, Egyptian Desert, Judean desert

Extent of settlements of the Nabataean Kingdom during height of its power from 1st century BCE to 1st century CE

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

– Source 1: Alpass, Peter. *The Religious Life of Nabataea*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

- Source 2: Erickson-Gini, Tali. "Piecing Together the Religion of the Nabataeans." *Religion Compass* 9/10 (2015): 309–326.
- Source 3: Healey, J. F. *The Religion of the Nabataeans: A Conspectus*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1 URL: https://nabataea.net/explore/culture_and_religion/gods/
- Source 1 Description: A well-sourced, but non-academic resource for all aspects of Nabataean culture and history.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

↳ Is the cultural contact competitive:

– No

↳ Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Yes

Notes: Syncretization is a large part of later religious art. However, as no literary evidence survives from contemporary, Nabataean sources, it is impossible to know to what extent the Nabataean people themselves adopted foreign influences into their private worship. Material culture seems to indicate very little adoption.

↳ Is the cultural contact neutral:

– No

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– No

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– No

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: There is no evidence of this, which would lead me to believe that they do not proselytize

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

↳ Are the priests paid by polity:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is religious infrastructure paid for by the polity:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Are the head of the polity and the head of the religion the same figure:

– Yes

Notes: This is a qualified yes - as the king of the Nabataeans was an integral figure in the worship of Nabataean deities, but it is unknown if he also had an official religious role, such as a priest. However, the king of Nabataea and the chief deity, Dushara, were clearly linked both within and outside the bounds of the kingdom, with Dushara known as "the god of the king" to some scholars.

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is religious observance enforced by the polity:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Polity legal code is roughly coterminous with religious code:

– No

Notes: While no official legal code from Nabataea survives, evidence from papyrus contracts and other literary documents suggest that any legal and religious laws were separate entities. However, tomb inscriptions and penalty clauses from contracts do invoke the deities as one aspect of curtailing illegal or immoral behavior (such as the desecration of tombs or the breaking of signed contracts).

↳ Polity provides preferential economic treatment (e.g. tax, exemption)

– Field doesn't know

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– No

Notes: For example, the incorporation of figural worship exists alongside the older aniconic style of worship through the end of the Nabataean period - one does not replace the other.

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Nature of religious group [please select one]:

– Small religious group (seen as being part of a related larger religious group)

Notes: "Nabataean culture" is something of a misnomer as the region did not adhere to a cultural homogeneity. Rather, the kingdom of Nabataea, and thus its religious practice, should be seen as a politically affiliated grouping of semi-nomadic tribes with some religious and cultural aspects in common (polytheism, primacy of Dushara, language).

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: What they were or how they were chosen remains unknown. The king, for example, had a religious role, but details remain obscure.

↳ Is there a hierarchy among these leaders:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Are leaders believed to possess supernatural powers or qualities:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Are religious leaders chosen:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Are leaders considered fallible:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and

unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:

– Field doesn't know

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also “oral scriptures” (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– Field doesn't know

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

↳ Size of largest single religious monument, square meters:

– Square meters: 7560

Notes: Great Temple at Petra

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Height, meters: 39

Notes: Khasneh

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes

↳ Tombs:

– Yes

Notes: Rock cut tomb facades made up a significant number of architectural remains in the main cities of Nabataea. Petra, in particular, is famous for these buildings, which are now known to largely be family tombs.

↳ Cemeteries:

– Yes

Notes: K. D. Politis, "The Nabataean Cemetery at Khirbet Qazone," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62.2 (1999), 128.

↳ Temples:

– Yes

Notes: Many free-standing temples exist in Nabataean cities, often highlighting the syncretization of Nabataean and Greco-Roman religious traditions and practices.

↳ Altars:

– Yes

Notes: These can be found in public areas, such as sacred high places, or in smaller familial devotional spaces.

↳ Devotional markers:

– Yes

↳ Mass gathering point [plazas, courtyard, square. Places permanently demarcated using visible objects or structures]:

– Yes

Notes: While the interpretation of the monumental architecture is still on-going (especially in Petra), arguments can convincingly be made that certain structures were intended to support larger populations at once. The area near al Deir and the colonnaded street through the middle of the city are both areas in which significant numbers of people likely congregated for different activities and festivals. The largest temple in Petra, the Qasr el-Bint, is also connected to the Colonnaded street, allowing for the possibility that it was a center for popular worship. Multiple re-buildings of the area have made reconstructions of the pre-Roman era building heavily disputed.

↳ Other type of religious monumental architecture:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: In Petra, for example, there were bathing complexes, gardens, and pools - but to what extent they had religious applications is unknown.

Is iconography present:

– Yes

↳ Where is iconography present [select all that apply]:

– On persons

– Some public spaces

Notes: There is significant regional variation in how iconography is displayed in sacred places, which mirrors the regional variation of religious practice across Nabataea. As an example, in some of the rural sanctuaries of central Nabataea, such as Tannur and Dharih, the zodiac iconography plays a much greater role. However, this differs greatly from a nearby site Dhat Ras, as well as from iconographic choices in Petra and other main cities. For more evidence of regional variation see Peter Alpass, "Chapter Six Three Sanctuaries in Central Nabataea: Form,

Function and Followers," in *The Religious Life of Nabataea* (Brill, 2013).

↳ Are there distinct features in the religious group's iconography:

– Yes

Notes: Featureless blocks of stone, called betyls, were produced in various sizes from several tons to pocket-sized and were aniconic depictions of the Nabataean deities. Stylized eye-idols, rectangular blocks with eyes engraved on one side, were also included in some spaces, but seem to have functioned similarly.

↳ Eyes (stylized or not):

– Yes

Notes: On some betyl blocks.

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic):

– Yes

Notes: Figurines of various types, including zoomorphic images, have been found in certain cultic areas. However, arguments continue about their (non-) religious uses.

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic):

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic):

– Yes

Notes: This is a qualified yes. Figurines of various types, including anthropomorphic, have been found in certain cultic areas. However, arguments continue about their (non-) religious uses. "Foreign" deities, such as Isis, were introduced to Petra fairly early in its development and had anthropomorphic shape. Later Egyptian and Greco-Roman influence also added anthropomorphic figures to art and architecture.

↳ Supernatural beings (abstract symbol):

– Yes

↳ Portrayals of afterlife:

– No

↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols):

– No

↳ Humans:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Possible carved depictions of processions of men (and camels) traveling to sacred high places - however, their attribution to religious processions is under debate.

↳ Other features of iconography:

– No

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Yes

Notes: High places atop mountains, temples, and tombs were all considered sacred spaces or marked out for sacred practice in Nabataea.

↳ Are sacred site oriented to environmental features:

"Environmental features" refers to features in the landscape, mountains, rivers, cardinal directions etc...

– Yes

Notes: Mountain top overlooks in particular ("sacred high places") were important for religious practice.

Are pilgrimages present:

– Yes

↳ How strict is pilgrimage:

– Field doesn't know

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: At Hegra, the deceased are invoked through tomb inscriptions to protect the entombed and punish those who would violate the tombs. This indicates at least a partial spirit-body distinction. However, there does seem to be a regional difference in the level of distinction, as at Petra, Dushara is given the role of protector and the dead are not mentioned nearly as often.

Belief in afterlife:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: While it is unclear if a concept of the afterlife existed, the presence of grave goods, especially those of food and containers for liquids, could indicate that an afterlife was possible and that the dead would need these supplies.

Reincarnation in this world:

– Field doesn't know

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

↳ Cremation:

– No

↳ Mummification:

– Yes

Notes: C. Bouchaud, I. Sachet, P. Dal-Prà, N. Delhospital, R. Douaud, et al.. New Discoveries in a Nabataean Tomb. Burial Practices and 'plant Jewellery' in Ancient Hegra (Madâ'in Sâlih, Saudi Arabia). *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, Wiley, 2015, 26, pp.28-42. [ff10.1111/aae.12047](https://doi.org/10.1111/aae.12047). [ffhal-02306041f](https://doi.org/10.1111/aae.12047)

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: C. Bouchaud, I. Sachet, P. Dal-Prà, N. Delhospital, R. Douaud, et al.. New Discoveries in a Nabataean Tomb. Burial Practices and 'plant Jewellery' in Ancient Hegra (Madâ'in Sâlih, Saudi Arabia). *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, Wiley, 2015, 26, pp.28-42. [ff10.1111/aae.12047](https://doi.org/10.1111/aae.12047). [ffhal-02306041f](https://doi.org/10.1111/aae.12047)

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

↳ Exposure to elements (e.g. air drying):

– Yes

↳ Feeding to animals:

– No

↳ Secondary burial:

– Yes

↳ Re-treatment of corpse:

– Yes

Notes: Mummification is present, but rare.

↳ Other intensive (in terms of time or resources expended) treatment of corpse :

– Field doesn't know

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– Yes

↳ Human sacrifices present:

– No

↳ Animal co-sacrifices present:

– Yes

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

↳ Personal effects:

– Yes

Notes: For example, a fusiform unguentarium was found in a chamber tomb in Wadi Mataha, Petra, Jordan. See DAVID J. JOHNSON, "A Nabataean Chamber Tomb and Carved Block in Wadi Mataha, Petra, Jordan," Conference Paper 2013.

↳ Valuable items:

– Yes

↳ Significant wealth (e.g. gold, jade, intensely worked objects):

– Yes

Notes: Renate Rosenthal-HeginBottom, "GRAVE GOODS AND NABATEAN IDENTITY: MAMPSIS AND QASRAWET," *Eretz-Israel* 31, Ehud Netzer Volume, 2015, 154-165.

↳ Some wealth (some valuable or useful objects interred):

– Yes

↳ Other valuable/precious items interred:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Other grave goods:

– Yes

Notes: Fruit, palm leaves, and other organic material

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

↳ As cenotaphs:

– No

↳ In cemetery:

– No

↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– Yes

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– No

↳ Other formal burial type:

– Yes [specify]: Shaft or chamber tombs sometimes found outside of rock-face carved family tombs.

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Notes: Dushara (also known by different spellings, such as *dwsr'*, *Dusares*, and *Dousares*) was the high god of Nabataea polytheism. Often closely associated with the city of Petra, having a cult center in Wadi Musa, and linked strongly as a patron of Nabatean kingship, Dushara had "many faces" such "as god of the mountains, as storm god and as vegetation god and as a god with solar features..." (R. Wenning, "The Many Faces of Dushara - A Critical Review of the Evidence," *SHAJ XII* 2016: 189-209). Originally a mountain god of the Edomites, Dusara became

the primary deity of Petra before growing into the titular deity of Nabataea more broadly. Wenning sees this growth as reflective of the organizing of different tribes under an umbrella of "Nabataean" central control. Dushara's very name indicates the manner in which he is worshiped. He "from the mountain Sharat" or "the one of the Sharāt mountain range" was venerated in sacred high places or on mountain peaks. This association with the sky and his places a supreme deity created an easy parallel with Greco-Roman Zeus, allowing for easy syncretization of the two, especially when Dushara moved beyond the bounds of the Nabataean kingdom.

- ↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic:
 - No
- ↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity:
 - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld):
 - No
- ↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):
 - No
- ↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites:
 - Yes [specify]: Possibly a patron of the king/kingship
- ↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Other feature(s) of supreme high god:
 - Yes [specify]: male, paired with a female high goddess
- ↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god exhibits positive emotion:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god exhibits negative emotion:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god possesses hunger:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:
 - Yes
- ↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Previously human spirits are present:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:
 - Yes

Notes: Organization of the deities of Nabataea (both domestic and foreign) into a clear pantheon or even a chronological pattern of introductions is fraught by a lack of clear-cut evidence. However, many deities exist under the "leadership" of Dushara. As Peter Alpass stated, "The earliest surviving mention of a deity is certainly Dushara (text no. 1, p. 88, below: 96 or c. 62 BC), and this is probably followed by a mention of Isis (no. 2 below: 26/25 BC). By the early first century AD, Baalshamin (no. 4) and Obodat (no. 5) can be added to the list, and

towards the end of that century 'the idol block of Boşra' (no. 8) and Şabu (no. 7). In the meantime, al-Uzza (nos 17 and 18), Atargatis (nos 22 and 23) and Kutba (no. 20) make their appearance." in *The Religious Life of Nabataea* (Brill, 2013), 48. **the numbers are in reference to an appendix to the chapter**

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Organized hierarchically:

– Yes

↳ Power of beings is domain specific:

– Yes

Notes: Each deity tends to be worshipped in specific geographic regions of Nabataea. Dushara is unusual in that he is worshipped across the kingdom and outside of its boundaries

↳ Other organization for pantheon:

– Field doesn't know

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

↳ There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular:

Prosocial norms are norms that enhance cooperation among members of the group, including obviously "moral" or "ethical" norms, but also extending to norms concerning honouring contracts and oaths, providing hospitality, coming to mutual aid in emergencies, etc.

– Yes

Notes: In particular this applies to the honoring of the dead, as engraved on tomb inscriptions.

↳ Supernatural beings care about taboos:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists:

– Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about sex:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about lying:
 - Yes
 - Notes: The king and deities are invoked in written contracts.

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths:
 - Yes
 - Notes: The king and deities are invoked in written contracts, if legal contracts and the exchange of money/goods is considered an oath.

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about laziness:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about sorcery:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about shirking risk:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about gossiping:
 - Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings care about property crimes:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals:

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings care about conversion of non-religionists:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about economic fairness:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about personal hygiene:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Supernatural beings care about other:

– Field doesn't know

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Done to enforce group norms:

– Yes

Notes: To prevent grave-robbing for example - J.F. Healey, "Nabataean Inscriptions", in: W.W. Hallo (ed.), *Context of Scripture*, vol.2 (2003), 164-167.

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness:

– Yes

Notes: Also for the prevention of grave-robbing, J.F. Healey, "Nabataean Inscriptions", in: W.W. Hallo (ed.), *Context of Scripture*, vol.2 (2003), 164-167

↳ Done randomly:

– No

↳ Other [specify]

– Field doesn't know

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Field doesn't know

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It seems very unlikely given the nature of the polytheistic beliefs and lack of source evidence.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Are there centrally important virtues advocated by the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: According to Diodorus Siculus, there was a legal prohibition on the drinking of wine. However, archaeological evidence (remnants of wine presses, etc.) has shown the local production of wine around Petra and other areas.

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– Yes

Notes: There seems to have been processions to sacred high places, likely for sacrifices or other types of services. Temples were also likely centers for regular sacrifices or worship.

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Given the current evidence, it seems unlikely. However, there were many sacred sights in semi-dangerous locations (such as at the precipice of tall mountains) or with narrow, steep access routes. Basic safety precautions largely eliminate these risks though.

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– No

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– Yes

Notes: Traveling or pocket-sized betyls have been found at small-scale altars as far away as Puteoli, Italy indicating private or household performance of religious practices. Triclinia, both enclosed and out in the open, were used extensively. 120 exist in Petra alone. Cult idols and niches have been found in many of these structures, as well as ritual items, such as bowls. Triclinia exist in domestic structures and some tombs.



What is the average interval of time between performances (in hours):

Performances here refers to small-scale rituals.

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale “ceremonies” and “festivals.”

– Field doesn't know

Notes: "Probably" seems the best answer here. As mentioned before, archaeological evidence of processions is present, indicating large-scale pilgrimage or festivals.

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

– Field doesn't know

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– Field doesn't know

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– A state

Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized famine relief:

– Field doesn't know

Is famine relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– Field doesn't know

Is poverty relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

– Field doesn't know

Is institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– Field doesn't know

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Yes

Notes: A link between the state bureaucracy and the religious institutions exist, though the details remain unknown. For example, a temple inscription in marble seems to indicate that dedications of money to priests could be regulated and insured by state law, see J.F. Healey, "Nabataean Inscriptions", in: W.W. Hallo (ed.), *Context of Scripture*, vol.2 (2003), 191-193, esp. 191-192.

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– Field doesn't know

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Water management, especially in Petra and the desert, was extensive. However, it seems to have been done by the state institutions and not a religious group.

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– Field doesn't know

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: Transport infrastructure, from roads to military outposts to protect caravans to port facilities, all seem to have been done by the kingship and state institutions in return for a tax on traded products (25% reported by ancient sources Diodorus Siculus and Strabo).

Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– Field doesn't know

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: The state levied taxes on its people, especially upon imported and exported trade goods. How those taxes were differentiated for religious group adherents is unknown.

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: While information on the Nabataean legal system is scattered and sparse, inscriptions from Nabataea and reports from non-Nabataean authors seem to indicate legal norms and an institutionalized court system. However, its interactions with a religious group's adherents is unknown.

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents subject to a formal legal code provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: It seems likely given the aforementioned scattered evidence for a legal code in Nabatea. Once under Roman rule, there was definitely a legal code to which the group's adherents would have been subject.

Warfare

Does religious group in question possess an institutionalized military:

– No

Do the group's adherents participate in an institutionalized military provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Are the group's adherents protected by or subject to an institutionalized military provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: The Nabataean military (eventually a Roman cohort) was well-documented in ancient sources. How soldiers were enlisted or conscripted and from which populations within Nabataea is unknown.

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– Field doesn't know

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: Nabataean Aramaic was the common written language for graffiti and inscriptional texts.

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: It seems likely that Nabataean Aramaic would have been used by the group's adherents. Greek, Demotic, and Hebrew are also found within the bounds of Nabataea, indicating possible multilingualism among various populations.

Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: There is a newly developed argument that a cultic calendar did exist within Nabataea. However, it relies on a radical reinterpretation of older archaeological evidence and has not yet been widely adopted. See Juan Antonio Belmonte, A. César González-García, Andrea Rodríguez-Antón, "Arabia Adquisita: the Romanization of the Nabataean Cultic Calendar and the Tannur 'Zodiac' Paradigm," in *Archaeoastronomy in the Roman World*, edited by Giulio Magli, et al., 123-144 (Springer, 2019).

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: MAHDI ALZOUBI, "THE NABATAEAN TIMING SYSTEM," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung.* Volume 69.3 (2016), 301 - 309.

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Field doesn't know

Is food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Notes: Though modern Arabia is a desert, water management and agricultural production, especially around the larger cities, were a staple of Nabataean life. Grain and grapes were produced in large numbers and helped supply the local region.

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