

*The World of the Herods. Vol. 1 of the International Conference The World of the Herods and the Nabataeans held at the British Museum, 17.–19. April 2001.* Edited by NIKOS KOKKINOS. Oriens et Occidens, Band 14. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2007. ISBN 978-3-515-08817-6. 327 pp, EUR 62.

*The World of the Nabataeans. Vol. 2 of the International Conference The World of Herods and the Nabataeans held at the British Museum, 17.–19. April 2001.* Edited by KONSTANTINOS D. POLITIS. Oriens et Occidens, Band 15. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart, 2007. ISBN 978-3-515-08816-9. 392 pp, EUR 62.

A most praiseworthy initiative by N. Kokkinos, K. Politis and S. Moorhead gathered at the British Museum in April 2001 a constellation of scholars renowned in Herodian and Nabataean studies. Although the volumes under review appeared only six years later, the information they contain is still one of the most significant and up-to-date contributions to these subjects. The combination of Herodian and Nabataean subjects is particularly welcome. Some contributions – quite rightly – go far beyond the time-period associated with the heydays of the Herodian and Nabataean kingdoms. However, the majority of the papers faithfully portray the rich cultural *milieu* of the Late Hellenistic and the Early Roman periods in Palestine and Transjordan while pointing to clear affinities, interaction and syncretism of both cultures.

The Nabataean volume, which is of particular interest here, is a virtual encyclopaedia of Nabataean studies. Following the introduction on the rediscovery of Petra (N. Lewis), the presented subjects include Nabataean history (R. Wenning), language and script (J. F. Healey), religion (J. R. Bartlett), art (J. Patrich), monumental architecture (L. Tholbecq), dwellings (B. Kolb), Nabataeans in the Roman period (D. Graf), cultural continuity in the Byzantine period (K. D. Politis), trade (F. Zayadine), irrigation and agriculture (J. P. Oleson), animal exploitation (J. Studer), urban development (P. J. Parr), textiles (H. Granger-Taylor), fine ware (St. G. Schmid), pottery manufacture (J. B. Mason), coinage (J. M. C. Bowsher), pastoral nomadism (St. Rosen), and CRM at Petra (Z. Aslan), ending with concluding notes by G. W. Bowersock, who summarizes the most recent discoveries. This catalogue of subjects appears quite exhaustive. However, while some contributions draw upon the material from these regions, the Nabataean cultural "image" would have been more complete with the inclusion of specific presentations on the Nabataeans in southern Syria (e.g., Bostra) and north-western Arabia (e.g., Medain Salih).

The Herodian volume is equally informative. Due to the fact that the world of the Herods – both spatially and temporally – was somewhat more restricted, the contributions have been conveniently divided into major themes: literary and documentary evidence, archaeology, art and architecture, and the Herods in context. In the opinion of the reviewer, both volumes will long remain standard references on the Herodian and Nabataean cultures as well as a model for a conference presenting a combined image of syncretic cultures.

Zbigniew T. Fiema