

# New inscriptional evidence and Petra's rôle in the province of Arabia

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G. W. Bowersock's seminal book *Roman Arabia* (1983) on a province that was at the cross-roads of East and West gave rise to a whole new field of study and stimulated a new generation of archaeologists and social historians. Since then, excavations conducted by the American Center for Oriental Research (ACOR), Brown University, and several other missions have made important archaeological and textual discoveries at the Byzantine basilica with its charred papyri, the Great and Small Temples, the Agora, and the residential area in the city center. The new evidence supplements Bowersock's work and underscores Petra's administrative and cultural importance within the province and the wider region. The inscriptions presented here are a small sample of the new discoveries.

## LATIN INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE SMALL TEMPLE

### 1. The earliest inscription of Roman Arabia?

This inscription was discovered accidentally after the completion of the excavation of the Small Temple.<sup>1</sup> M. S. Joukowsky has provided the following information:

Under the direction of C. Augé, archaeologists working at the Qasr al-Bint examined the Small Temple–Imperial Cult Building, previously excavated by Brown University's Great Temple project. The Small Temple lies to the east of the Qasr al-Bint. Found lying face up was a marble 4-line inscription that had fallen away from the SW exterior wall of the Small Temple. Its secondary use had been as wall-facing for the dado of the Small Temple. The French excavators reported the discovery to C. A. Tuttle, Assistant Director of ACOR in Amman. On December 12, 2007, he visited the Small Temple, found the inscription and a fragment, and photographed them *in situ*, before carrying the inscription to ACOR in Amman for safekeeping. He informed Joukowsky of the discovery, and it was agreed that it should remain at ACOR until she viewed it. On June 7, 2008, Tuttle handed the inscription over to Joukowsky who asked T. Gagos to examine the fragment and to analyze its significance.

Locus: 08-S-1.

Dimensions: L 16.7; W 9.80, Th 2.05 (top) - 2.54 cm (bottom).

Letter size: 7.47 (l. 1), 6.69 (l. 2), 6.05 (l. 3), 5.46 (l. 4)

#### Diplomatic transcription

]ESAR[

]E · TRAI[

]CICO · [

4 ]STAT· X[

#### Edited text and translation

[Imp(eratori) Ca]esa[ri] d(i)vi Nerva[e] f(ilio)

[Nerva]e Trai[ano Augusto]

[Ger(marico) Da]cico p[ontif(ici) max(imo) trib(unicia)]

4 [pote]stat(e) X[

To Emperor Ca]esar, [son of the deified Nerva,] Traj[an, Augustus Germanicus Da]cicus, p[ontifex maximus, in the] 10(+) year [of his tribunician] power [

1. About 10 letters are missing at the end of the lines. The reconstruction would be too long if *divi* was not abbreviated at the letter *d*.



<sup>1</sup> For the excavation of this building and its function, see S. Karz Reid, *The Small Temple. A Roman imperial cult building in Petra, Jordan* (Piscataway, NJ 2005).