

Petra



Petra (Arabic: البتراء, romanized: Al-Batrā'; Greek: Πέτρα, "Rock"), originally known to its inhabitants as Raqmu or Raqēmō[3][4] (Nabataean: 𐤓𐤓𐤓𐤓 or 𐤓𐤓𐤓𐤓𐤓, *Raqēmō), is a historic and archaeological city in southern Jordan. Famous for its rock-cut architecture and water conduit system, Petra is also called the "Rose City" because of the colour of the sandstone[5] from which it is carved;[6] it was famously called "a rose-red city half as old as time" in a poem of 1845 by John Burdon. It is adjacent to the mountain of Jabal Al-Madbah, in a basin surrounded by mountains forming the eastern flank of the Arabah valley running from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba.[7] Access to the city is through a famously picturesque 1.2-kilometre-long (3/4 mi) gorge called the Siq, which leads directly to the Khazneh.

Cliffs near Petra, View over Wadi Arabah The area around Petra has been inhabited from as early as 7000 BC,[8] and the Nabataeans might have settled in what would become the capital city of their kingdom as early as the 4th century BC.

PETRA

Emergence of Petra

The Nabataeans were one among several nomadic Bedouin tribes that roamed the Arabian Desert and moved with their herds to wherever they could find pasture and water.[9] Although the Nabataeans were initially embedded in Aramaic culture, theories about them having Aramean roots are rejected by many modern scholars. Instead, archaeological, religious and linguistic evidence confirm that they are a northern Arabian tribe.[22] Current evidence

suggests that the Nabataean name for Petra was Raqēmō, variously spelled in inscriptions as rqm̄w or rqm̄.[4]

The Jewish historian Josephus (ca. 37–100 AD) writes that the region was inhabited by the Midianites during the time of Moses, and that they were ruled by five kings, one of whom was Rekem. Josephus mentions that the city, called Petra by the Greeks, "ranks highest in the land of the Arabs" and was still called Rekeme by all the Arabs of his time, after its royal founder (Antiquities iv. 7, 1; 4, 7).[23] The Onomasticon of Eusebius also identified Rekem as Petra.[24] Arabic raqama means "to mark, to decorate", so Rekeme could be a Nabataean word referring to the famous carved rock façades. In 1964, workmen clearing rubble away from the cliff at the entrance to the gorge found several funerary inscriptions in Nabatean script. One of them was to a certain Petraios who was born in Raqmu (Rekem) and buried in Garshu (Jerash).[25][26]

History

Neolithic By 7000 BC, some of the earliest recorded farmers had settled in Beidha, a Pre-Pottery Neolithic settlement just north of Petra.[8]

Bronze Age Petra is listed in Egyptian campaign accounts and the Amarna letters as Pel, Sela, or Seir.[19]

Iron Age Edom The Iron Age lasted between 1200 and 600 BC; in that time, the Petra area was occupied by the Edomites. The configuration of mountains in Petra allowed for a reservoir of water for the Edomites. This made Petra a stopping ground for merchants, making it an outstanding area for trade. Things that were traded here included wines, olive oil, and wood.

Initially, the Edomites were accompanied by Nomads who eventually left, but the Edomites stayed and made their mark on Petra before the emergence of the Nabataens. It is said that 10,000 men were thrown off of the mountain Umm el-Biyara, but this story has been debated by scholars.[20]

ROMAN PERIOD

Roman

In AD 106, when Cornelius Palma was governor of Syria, the part of Arabia under the rule of Petra was absorbed into the Roman Empire as part of Arabia Petraea, and Petra became its capital.[28] The native dynasty came to an end but the city continued to flourish under Roman rule. It was around this time that the Petra Roman Road was built. A century later, in the time of Alexander Severus, when the city was at the height of its splendor, the issue of coinage came to an end. There was no more building of sumptuous tombs, owing apparently to some sudden catastrophe, such as an invasion by the neo-Persian power under the Sassanid Empire.[7]

Meanwhile, as Palmyra (fl. 130–270) grew in importance and attracted the Arabian trade away from Petra, the latter declined. It appears, however, to have lingered on as a religious center. Another Roman road was constructed at the site. Epiphanius of Salamis (c.315–403) writes that in his time a feast was held there on December 25 in honor of the virgin Khaabou (Chaabou) and her offspring Dushara.[7] Dushara and al-Uzza were two of the main deities of the city, which otherwise included many idols from other Nabataean deities such as Allat and Manat.[29]

LAYOUT OF PETRA

Layout

Excavations have demonstrated that it was the ability of the Nabataeans to control the water supply that led to the rise of the desert city, creating an artificial oasis. The area is visited by flash floods, but archaeological evidence shows that the Nabataeans controlled these floods by the use of dams, cisterns, and water conduits. These innovations stored water for prolonged periods of drought and enabled the city to prosper from its sale.[48][49]

In ancient times, Petra might have been approached from the south on a track leading across the plain of Petra, around Jabal Haroun ("Aaron's Mountain"), the location of the Tomb of Aaron, said to be the burial place of Aaron, brother of Moses. Another approach was possibly from the high plateau to the north.