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Strategoï in the Nabataean Kingdom: a Reflection of Central Places?

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*Stratego*i in the Nabataean Kingdom: a Reflection of Central Places?

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Abstract

This contribution examines the function and characteristics of the official known as *'srtg'* (*strategos*) in the Nabataean inscriptions and ancient literary sources. It provides an updated list of the texts which mention a *strategos* as well as a list of the *stratego*i mentioned in them, as well as a general commentary on their role, distribution, career, prestige, etc. It appears that the *stratego*i are very much related to the Nabataean provincial system, the places where a *strategos* is known to have had an authority being central places in the Nabataean kingdom.

Keywords: Nabatean inscriptions, military titles, administration, province of Arabia

1 Introduction

This contribution was initially presented at a conference organised in 2009 by the Excellence cluster Topoi in Berlin, the title of which was Central places in Arabia during the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The oral contribution dealt with a few general topics such as the role of the oases as central places in the desert, the central character of the ancient city of Hegra in northwest Arabia during the Nabataean period, the existence of possible other central places in this region and finally some glimpses on the relationship between the title of *strategos* and central places. It is on this particular aspect that I decided to concentrate for the written contribution, the presence of a *strategos* in a particular place being considered as a possible indication that this place was central, whatever the meaning of this adjective. New Nabataean inscriptions or rereadings of previously published inscriptions which mention *stratego*i have indeed convinced me of the interest to present an up to date commented list of the known Nabataean *stratego*i.

The Nabataean inscriptions have provided a relatively large number of words referring to military and/or administrative titles, the etymology of which is either Semitic, Greek or Latin. Several publications have dealt with them, mainly by D. Graf (1994) and J. Bowsher (1989). One of these titles, *strategos*, best translated as 'governor', is assumed to have been borne by men who had both a military and administrative function.¹ The Greek word is always

¹Graf (1994: 278): 'the Nabataean stratêgoi were charged with both the civil and military administration of their districts'; Teixidor (1995: 115): 'À côté du roi existait le stratège, une fonction administrative nabatéenne très attestée qui fut plus civile que militaire, éponyme et cer-

STRATEGOI IN THE NABATEAN KINGDOM

rendered, in Nabataean, as *ʿsrtgʿ*, dual/plural *ʿsrtgyʿ*, except in JSNab 61 where it is spelt *ʿsrtygʿ* (see n. 7). This title is particularly interesting because it is attested not only in the Nabataean inscriptions but also in Josephus, in various episodes related to the history of the relationship between the Nabataean and Jewish kingships during the Herodian period. It will be examined here in view of the following question: may the places where *strategoi* are mentioned be called *central* places?

The list of Nabataean *strategoi* has been usefully established by D. Graf in 1994, with some complements by L. Nehmé more recently,² but corrections and comments should be made to this list, which is given in the table below (see map in fig. 7), as a basis for a general discussion on this function in the Nabataean realm. At the end of the table, only the inscriptions which are not very well known, or those which were previously unpublished, are presented in more detail.

No.	Site	Type of inscriptions	Date
1	Şaydā – Sidon (despite the doubts expressed by E. Renan (1869: 538), the stone comes probably from ancient Sidon)	On a very small marble slab (14 x 15 cm), dedication of a <i>rbʿt</i> , a ‘bench’ (?) by a <i>strategos</i> whose name is lost.	5/4 BC? ³
CIS ii 160 (RÉS 482.1, 2092.1); Nehmé 2003: 4–6, with references to previous editions n. 11 ⁴			
2	Ḍmayr	Dedication of a <i>msgdʿ</i> , an ‘altar’ by a person one son of whom, ʿAdramū, is a <i>strategos</i> and the other son of whom may have been adopted by another <i>strategos</i> , ʿAbdmankū.	AD 94/95
CIS ii 161; Sachau 1884; Cantineau 1932: 19–20; Clermont-Ganneau 1888 and 1897: pl. XLII; Healey 1989: 334–336			
3	Qanawāt – Canatha	Dedication of a <i>nefesh</i> , probably by the <i>strategos</i> , whose name is lost, to his wife.	—
CIS ii 169; de Vogüé 1868-1877: no. 8, p. 97			
4	Umm ar-Raṣāṣ	Dedication of the <i>nefesh</i> of ʿAbdmankū, the <i>strategos</i> , by his brother Yaʿmarū, also <i>strategos</i> .	AD 40/41
CIS ii 195; de Vogüé 1868-1877: no. 15, p. 160–161			

tainement héréditaire’. On the *strategos*, see also Savignac & Starcky (1957: 201–203) and Healey (1993: 108). Note that the title is also used in Palmyrene Aramaic (Hillers & Cussini 1996: 341, *ʿsrtg*, ‘general’), in Jewish Aramaic (Jastrow 1903, *ʿisartēgōs*, ‘general, prefect, city commander, chief of body guards’), and in the Greek New Testament (Bauer 2000: ‘chief magistrate of a city, commander responsible for the temple in Jerusalem’).

²Graf (1994: 276), and Nehmé (2005-2006: 187–188).

³The text is dated to year 5 of a king named Aretas, probably Aretas IV, but an earlier date is also possible.

⁴Only the main references are given in this table, the list is not comprehensive.

No.	Site	Type of inscriptions	Date
5	Mādabā	Epitaph of a tomb and two <i>nefesh</i> made by 'Abd'ubdat the <i>strategos</i> for his father 'Aytibel, also <i>strategos</i> , as well as for his son 'Aytibel the camp commandant.	AD 37/38
CIS ii 196 (RÉS 674); Cantineau 1932: 44–45; Healey 1993: 47–48, with reference to previous editions; Kühn 2005: 221–222			
6	Southwest of Taymā'	signature of a <i>strategos</i> named Gadūdīlū.	—
Al-Theeb 2005: no. 57 (see below figs 1-2).			
7	Southwest of Taymā'	Dedication of the <i>nefesh</i> of a <i>strategos</i> named probably Wuraylū	—
Al-Theeb 2005: no. 59 (see below and fig. 3)			
8	Southwest of Taymā', Sar-madā'	Signature of two <i>strategoī</i> signing together, one named Šullay and one named probably Wuraylū.	—
Al-Theeb 2014: no. 30 (see below and fig. 4)			
9	Southwest of Taymā', Sar-madā'	Signature of a <i>strategos</i> named 'Abdrab'el (' <i>bdrb'l</i>).	—
Al-Theeb 2014: no. 80 (see below and fig. 5)			
10	al-'Arniyyāt (Ar 104) ⁵	Signature of a <i>strategos</i> named 'Abdmankū.	—
Previously unpublished (see below and fig. 6)			
11	Hegra, Qaṣr al-Bint	Legal text on tomb façade IGN 20. The <i>strategos</i> Šullay son of 'Aydū is the owner of the tomb.	AD 40/41–70? ⁶
JSNab 6 (RÉS 1104); Healey 1993: no. 6.			
12	Hegra, Jabal al-Aḥmar	Legal text on tomb façade IGN 127. The <i>strategos</i> Taymū is the father of one of the owners of the tomb, a woman, the other owner being a man, probably her husband.	AD 36/37
CIS ii 213; JSNab 24; Winnett & Reed 1970: no. 82; Healey 1993: no. 24.			
13	Hegra, Jabal al-Khraymāt	Legal text on tomb façade IGN 66. The <i>strategos</i> Maṭiyū is the owner of the tomb.	AD 39/40
CIS ii 214; JSNab 32			

⁵This text was photographed in 2004 during the Darb al-Bakra survey, a project directed by A. al-Ghabban. It is due to be published by the author along with the 800 Nabataean texts recorded during this survey (in Nehmé forthcoming).

⁶On the very uncertain date of this text, see Nehmé 2015: vol. 2: 46.

STRATEGOI IN THE NABATEAN KINGDOM

No.	Site	Type of inscriptions	Date
14	Hegra, Jabal al-Khramāt	Legal text on tomb façade IGN 87. The two <i>strategoī</i> mentioned in the text, Malkū and Rabīb'el, are father and son and their names are given in order to specify the family relationship between them and the owners of the tomb (on this, Nehmé 2015: vol. 2: 97–98).	AD 71/72
<i>CIS</i> ii 224 (1156, 1293,7); <i>JSNab</i> 34; Healey 1993: no. 34.			
15	Hegra, Jabal al-Khramāt	Legal text on tomb façade IGN 100. The <i>strategos</i> , whose name is not given, represents one of the authorities to which a fine should be paid by anyone who does contrary to what is written in the text.	AD 63/64
<i>JSNab</i> 38 (RÉS 1108, 1293,1); Healey 1993: no. 38.			
16	Hegra, Jabal Ithlib	Claiming of ownership over a <i>mškb</i> , a 'resting place' by the <i>strategos</i> 'Animū.	—
<i>CIS</i> ii 234; <i>JSNab</i> 40; Winnett & Reed 1970: no. 57; Nehmé 2005-2006: no. 17, p. 205–206, fig. 143, with references to previous editions.			
17	Hegra, Qaṣr al-Bint	Claiming of ownership over an 'tr', a 'place' in order to build a tomb, by the <i>strategos</i> Rabīb'el (Nehmé 2015: vol. 2: 97–98).	—
<i>CIS</i> ii 270 (RÉS 1174); <i>JSNab</i> 43; Nehmé 2005-2006: no. 19, p. 208–210, fig. 146, with references to previous editions.			
18	Hegra, Jabal Ithlib	Signature commemorating several persons who were the servants of two <i>strategoī</i> , Ba'qat and Malkū, who were responsible for the restoration of a 'place' for the 'Lord of the temple'.	—
<i>CIS</i> ii 235 (RÉS 1160, 1291,1); <i>JSNab</i> 57; Nehmé 2005-2006: no. 17, p. 194–200, fig. 138, with references to previous editions.			
19	Hegra, Jabal Ithlib	Signature possibly written 'in the time of the <i>strategos</i> Hani'at'. ⁷	—
<i>CIS</i> ii 238 (RÉS 1162); <i>JSNab</i> 61; Nehmé 2005-2006: no. 10, p. 186–188, fig. 129, with references to previous editions.			
20	Hegra, Jabal Ithlib	Signature commemorating a man named Damasī who is the son of Rabīb'el the <i>strategos</i> .	—
<i>CIS</i> ii 287 (RÉS 1182); <i>JSNab</i> 84			

⁷This text has been reread in Nehmé 2005-2006 as *šlm* 'bd'l'z' m zmn hn't 'sryg' w tymw br 'šlm,

No.	Site	Type of inscriptions	Date
21	al-ʿUlā	Signature of a man named Rabibʿel whose name is possibly preceded by the letter ʿ, interpreted by Jaussen and Savignac as being an abbreviation of ʿsrtgʿ (reading and interpretation denied in Winnett and Reed).	—
JSNab 216; Winnett & Reed 1970: no. 45.			
22	near Philadelphia – ʿAm-mān	A <i>strategos</i> named Elthemos (ʿlṯmw in Nabataean?) is a troupe commander during the military conflict between Malichos I and Herod.	32 BC
Josephus <i>JW</i> I. 381			
23	?	Nakebos (<i>nqybw</i> in Nabataean?) is called both a hegomenos and a <i>strategos</i> during the episode of the punitive expedition launched by Herod against Raēpta, the base from where rebels from Trachonitis were fighting him.	ca. 9 BC
Josephus <i>JA</i> XVI. 282–285			
24	Machaerus – Jabal al-Mashnaqa	A <i>strategos</i> who was stationed at Machaerus arranged the journey of Aretas IV’s daughter, who wanted to run away from her husband, from there to Arabia, being passed from one <i>strategos</i> to the other. ⁸	ca. AD 27 or a little after
Josephus, <i>JA</i> XVIII. 112			
25	Gamala, north of the Yarmūk	Herod Antipas and Aretas IV dispatched their respective <i>strategoī</i> when engaging a battle in the territory of Gamala. ⁹	ca. AD 34
Josephus, <i>JA</i> XVIII. 113			

2 Supplementary notes

Note that two texts listed by D. Graf as containing perhaps the title ʿsrtgʿ do not, in fact mention it. The first one is *CIS* ii 319a (RÉS 1194), from Mabrak an-

⁷May be safe ʿAbdʿalʿuzzā, in the time of the *strategos* Haniʿat, and Taymū son of ʿAšlamʿ.

⁸Loeb edition: ‘when she arrived [at Machaerus] all preparations for her journey had been made by the governor. She was thus able to start for Arabia as soon as she arrived, being passed from one governor to the next as they provided transport’. Note however that since Machaerus was under Herodian rule, one has to assume either that there was a Nabataean official there, acting in the name of the Nabataean king, or that the *strategos* was a Herodian one.

⁹On the location and date of this battle, see Bowersock 1983: 65–67.

Nāqa, name given to a pass ca. 12 km north of Madâ'in Sâlih. This text is equal to JSNab 187, an equivalence which was not given by Jaussen and Savignac. The correct reading of this inscription, already given by them, is *yṯbw brt tymw bgy*. *bgy* may be here the toponym *gy*, Gaia, ancient Wādī Mūsà near Petra, preceded by the preposition *b-*.

The second text is *CIS ii 293* (RÉS 1185), which is equal to JSNab 65, from the Dīwān area in Hegra. It has been recently reexamined by the author and it reads *dkyr lwqys* '----' *drw bṯb*. There is no particular reason to restore *'srtg* after *lwqys*.¹⁰

Previously unpublished or not very well known texts listed in the table are the following:

2.1 Text no. 6 of the table: Al-Theeb 2005: no. 57 (figs 1–2).



Figure 1: Inscription Al-Theeb 2005: no. 57. Photograph Taymā' archaeological Project.

¹⁰See the photograph in Nehmé (2010: fig. 8).

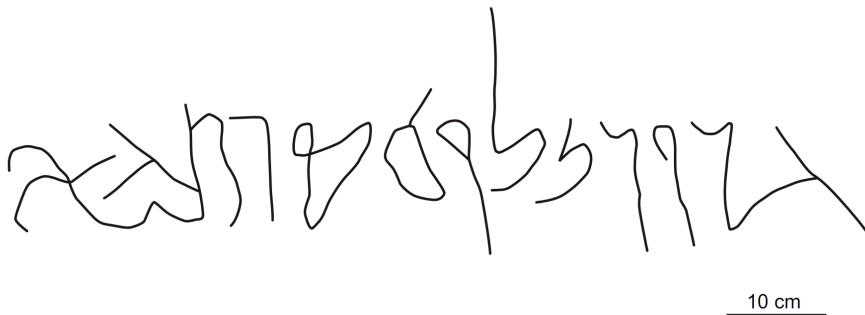


Figure 2: Facsimile of Al-Theeb 2005: no. 57.

This text was also photographed in the desert southwest of Taymā³ during the 2005 excavation season at this site by the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut*.¹¹ It is 85 cm long and the *d* is 10 cm high. It is written in beautifully incised characters, to the left of a rectangular betyl, ca. 30 x 72 cm, carved in relief in a shapeless niche.

gdwdylw 'srtg'
 'Gadūdīlū the strategos'

The reading *gdwdylw* is suggested here instead of *grwrylw* because the shape of the *r* and that of the *d* seem to be distinguished in this text: the upper horizontal stroke of the *r* in *'srtg'* is straight whereas it is curved in both *d*. S. al-Theeb reads this name *gdwdyly* but the last letter is very similar to the first *w* and it is very unlikely that it should be read as a final *y*. The name does not occur elsewhere in Nabataean and, as pointed out by S. al-Theeb, it is probably of foreign origin. It is interesting to note that there is no patronym after the name, which is quite rare in the Nabataean inscriptions. This is also the case for several *strategoī* mentioned in the texts, such as *b'qt* and *mlkw* in JSNab 57, *hn't* in JSNab 61, *'bdmknw* in Ar 104, etc., as if, due to the importance of their function, the authors of these inscriptions felt that it was not necessary to give their father's name to be recognized. This text was probably written by Gadūdīlū or commissioned by him.

¹¹We are very grateful to R. Eichmann for letting us use the photograph.

2.2 Text no. 7 of the table: Al-Theeb 2005: no. 59 (fig. 3)

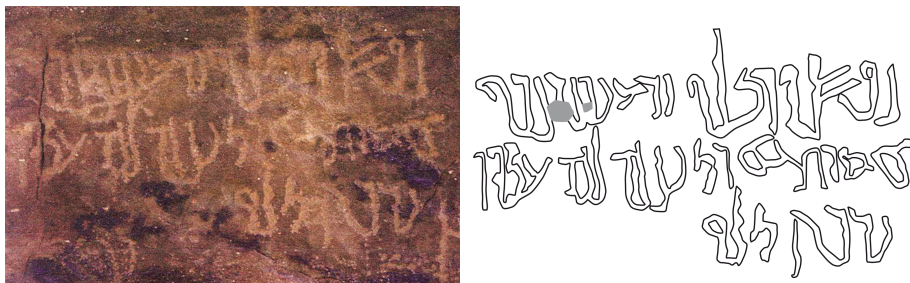


Figure 3: Inscription Al-Theeb 2005: no. 59. Photograph from Al-Theeb 2005.

This text is written in a much cruder way than the previous one.

npš wrylw br 'bdmknw
'srtg' dy bnh lh 'ydw
br khylw
 'Nefesh of Wuraylū son of 'Abdmankū the *strategos* which 'Aydū son of Kuhaylū built for him.'

Here and elsewhere, it is assumed that the title *strategos* applies to the first person mentioned, here Wuraylū, not to his father.¹² This text is the dedication of a *nefesh*, a commemorative funerary monument which was probably erected near the place where the text was carved. The form of the *nefesh* (small monument or obelisk shape stele) is not known. The author of the text is of course the person who erected the *nefesh*, not the *strategos* himself.

2.3 Text no. 8 of the table: Al-Theeb 2014: no. 30 (fig. 4)¹³



Figure 4: Inscription Al-Theeb 2014: no. 30. Photograph Taymā' Hinterland Survey Project, M.C.A. Macdonald.

¹²Except in JSNab 84, where we have *dkyr dmsy br rhyb'l 'srtg'*. Rabīb'el being a very well known *strategos*, the title applies probably to him, unless his son Damasi was also a *strategos*.

¹³I am very grateful to M.C.A. Macdonald for providing me with photographs of this inscription and the following.

This text is written in very large and elegant characters in the upper part of a large panel of rock which bears many Nabataean inscriptions. It occupies therefore an outstanding position on the panel.

šly w [w]rylw 'srtgy' šlm
 'Šullay and [W]uraylū the strategoi, may they be safe'

Despite the quality of the script, it is likely that the author forgot to carve a *w* after *šly w*. Indeed, considering that a strategos named *wrylw* is mentioned in the same area (Al-Theeb 2005: no. 59, see above), it is likely that both texts were written by the same author named Wuraylū.

2.4 Text no. 9 of the table: Al-Theeb 2014: no. 80 (fig. 5)



Figure 5: Inscription Al-Theeb 2014: no. 80. Photograph Taymāʿ Hinterland Survey Project, M.C.A. Macdonald.

This text is written in relatively crude characters in the bottom part of a panel bearing many other Nabataean inscriptions.

dkyr bdrbʿl
ʿsrtgʿ kd/ry / ʿsrtgʿ kd/ry

The original editor notes that the text can be read in two different ways according to whether the ʿ is attached to *ʿsrtg* or to the following word. However, since the ʿ is very close – although not touching – the end of the *g*, it is more likely that it belongs to *ʿsrtg* and that the following three letters form a separate word, or even a separate text. The interpretation of *ʿkd/ry* as a toponym is possible but the formula, *ʿsrtgʿ* of a particular place, is not attested elsewhere in the Nabataean inscriptions.

2.5 Text no. 10 of the table: Ar 104 (fig. 6)

Previously unpublished text, south of Tabūk.

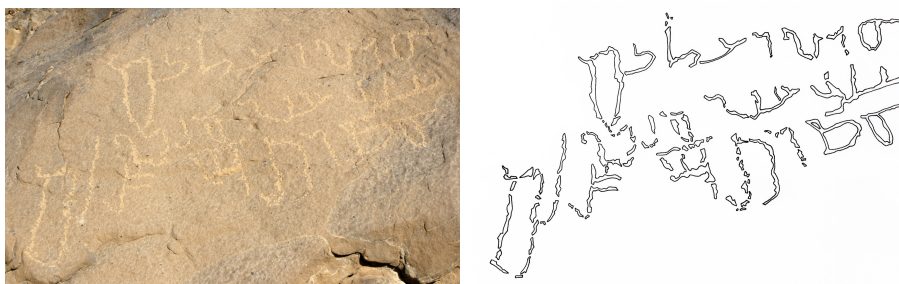


Figure 6: Inscription Ar 104. Photograph Darb al-Bakra project.

ʾ{h}wr ʿlym
 <ʿbd> ʿbdmknw
 ʾsrtgʾ šlm
 ʿAḥwar the servant of ʿAbdmankū the *strategos*, peace.ʾ

This text is a simple signature.

3 The provenance and date of the inscriptions

Thirteen out of the twenty-five occurrences of the word *strategos* in the texts are dated, from the interval between 32 BC and AD 95, none of them being later than AD 106. *Strategoi* are mentioned in eleven different places which are all, except for Sidon and Ḍmayr, in areas formerly under the control of the Nabataean kingdom (fig. 7). There is a strong predominance of both Transjordan, around Mādabā, and northwest Saudi Arabia. It is interesting to note that not a single *strategos* is mentioned either in Petra or Bosra, the two major cities of the Nabataean kingdom. In Petra, the only military title which is attested is *rb pršyʾ*, ‘chief of cavalrymen’.¹⁴ In Bosra, the only attested military title is *hprkʾ*, hipparch or eparch, ‘cavalry general or prefect’.¹⁵

¹⁴Two inscriptions mention a *rb pršyʾ* in Petra. One, found in az-Zantūr, was published by J. Starcky in 1971 (MP 664) and mentions a certain *dydwrs rb pršyʾ*. The other, carved within an incised cartouche in the rock-cut chamber Brünnow & von Domaszewski (1904-1909: no. 41) in al-Madras, is MP 58 (= CIS ii 442), lines 2 and 3 of which were read by J.T. Milik as ---- [b]r [ʿb]dḥrtt rb [prš]y[ʿ dy] m[n] wqytʿ ----. The inscription was severely damaged by erosion and only the last two letters of lines 2 and 3 are still visible (see MP 58): ²---- rb ³----tʿ, while ²---- rb ³ [prš/mšr]y[ʿ/ʿ] ---- can be restored with the help of the available copies and squeezes. Finally, it is uncertain whether MP 85 (in Nehmé 2012: 177), written with charcoal inside the *triclinium* Dalman (1908: no. 117), contains the word *pršʿ*, read by J.T. Milik’s at the beginning of the text. The latter was photographed by the author in 2002 but it is not legible anymore. On the unpublished photographs taken by J. Starcky in 1969, the word *pršʿ* is not visible.

¹⁵CIS ii 173: ʿbdʿlgʿ hprkʿ. On *hprkʿ*, see Healey (1993: 108–109).



Figure 7: Map showing the distribution of the *strategoī*.

4 The categories of inscriptions:

There are twenty-one Nabataean inscriptions and two literary texts which mention *strategoī*. The inscriptions belong to different types which can be divided as follows:

Simple signatures of *strategoī*: no. 6 = Al-Theeb 2005: no. 57 (Taymā' area), no. 8–9 = Al-Theeb 2014: no. 30 and 80, no. 10 = Ar 104 (al-'Arniyyāt) and possibly no. 19 = JSNab 216 (Hegra).

Strategoi who own monumental tombs at Hegra: no. 11 = JSNab 6 and no. 13 = JSNab 32.

Claiming of ownership over an object by a *strategos*:

- of a resting place (*mškbʿ*): no. 16 = JSNab 40, (Hegra);
- of a place (*ʿtrʿ*) in order to make a tomb: no. 17 = JSNab 43 (Hegra).

Dedications of objects by a *strategos*:

- a bench (of a *triclinium*?) for Dūšarā: no. 1 = CIS ii 160 (Sidon);
- a *nefesh* for his wife: no. 3 = CIS ii 169 (Canatha);
- a *nefesh* for his brother, who is also a *strategos*: no. 4 = CIS ii 195 (Umm ar-Rašās);
- a tomb and two *nefesh* for his father, who is also a *strategos*, and his brother, who is a camp commandant: no. 5 = CIS ii 196 (Mādabā).

Dedications of objects for a *strategos* by other persons: *nefesh* made by a person for him: no. 7 = Al-Theeb 2005: no. 59 (Taymāʿ area).

***Strategoi* mentioned as family members of persons who are the authors of a signature or are responsible for a dedication or a legal text:**

- no. 20 = JSNab 84, in Hegra, is the signature of the son of a *strategos*;
- In no. 2 = CIS ii 161, from Dmayr, two *strategoi* are mentioned: the first is one of the sons of the person who dedicated the altar which bears the inscription while the second may have adopted the other son of this person;
- In no. 12 = JSNab 24, from Hegra, the *strategos* is the father of one of the owners of the tomb;
- In no. 14 = JSNab 34, from Hegra, two *strategoi*, father and son, are named only in order to relate to them the family of the owners of the tomb.

***Strategoi* mentioned as being the persons who made the restoration of a sanctuary and who had servants:** no. 18 = JSNab 57 (Hegra).

***Strategoi* who represent the local authority:** no. 5 = CIS ii 196 (Mādabā), no. 15 = JSNab 38 and possibly no. 19 = JSNab 61, both at Hegra; Josephus, though it is possible that he uses *strategos* not as a specific title but as a general word for ‘military leader’.

All in all, there are few instances in which it is clear that the *strategos* who is mentioned in the available sources had a military and administrative authority over a particular place.

- The most important of them is Josephus, who says that the daughter of Aretas IV was ‘being passed from one governor to the next as they provided transport’. There were therefore, in various places from Machaerus to Petra, persons who bore the title *strategos* and who were responsible for transportation and presumably security along the roads. These places are probably to be equated with the *byt šlṭwn*, the ‘house of authority’¹⁶ where ʾAytibel the *strategos* and ʾAytibel his grandson were said to be stationed in the Mādabā inscription, *CIS* ii 196. It is probable that each *strategos* had a *byt šlṭwn*, which was the centre of his jurisdiction and from where he exercised his authority over a region.
- Another important text is JSNab 38, which shows that the *strategos* who was stationed at Hegra represented the administrative authority to whom the fine due by the persons who sold a tomb or gave it in pledge had to be paid. There are other mentions of fines in the tomb inscriptions¹⁷ but JSNab 38 is the only one in which it is said that the fine had to be paid to the *strategos*. Considering that a fine of the same amount was also due to the king, it is clear the the *strategos* represented the *local* authority (it is specified in the text that he is ‘in Hegra’, *dy hw’ bhgr’*) while the king represented the great central power.
- We then have JSNab 61 which, according to the rereading we proposed (see no. 7) dates the inscription to the ‘time’ (*zmn*) of one particular *strategos*. This suggests that the function he exercised lasted for a limited span of time – sometimes twice this span, see the Mādabā inscription, *CIS* ii 196 – which was probably known to the local people. The same word, *zmn*, is used in the Mādabā inscription to designate the period during which the *strategos* and his grandson, the camp commandant, exercised their authority over Luḥitū and ‘Abartā (*šlṭw zmnyn tryn*). This may suggest the eponymous character of the title.
- We may consider that the trouble taken by the owners of tomb IGN 87, in JSNab 34, to relate their family to the name of the *strategos* Malkū, is an indication that the latter was considered locally as the warrantor of the ownership over the tomb.
- The fact that the *strategos* Rabībʾel claims ownership over the place where the largest tomb of Hegra (IGN 46) would have been carved if it had been finished shows that Rabībʾel had considerable financial means. It should also be noted that tombs IGN 20 and IGN 66, which are also said to belong to *strategoī*, are either the largest or the almost largest tombs of the necropolese in which they are carved, the Qaṣr al-Bint and the Jabal al-Khramāt respectively. The other instance of claiming of ownership, that of a ‘bench’ in the Jabal Ithlib area (JSNab 40), is not particularly significant.
- The military importance of the *strategoī* is given by Josephus, who mentions several of them in contexts which are clearly related to battles.

¹⁶Healey 1993: 247: ‘territory of their rule’. However, the word *byt* refers more to a specific place than to a ‘territory’.

¹⁷On the fines, see Nehmé 2015: vol. 1: 131 (table 17).

- Finally, the possible hereditary character of the title may also be an indication of its importance. This character can be inferred from inscriptions *CIS* ii 196 (Mādabā), *CIS* ii 161 (Ḍmayr) and *JSNab* 34 (*CIS* ii 224, Hegra) where both father and son are *strategoi*.¹⁸ In *CIS* ii 195 (Umm ar-Raṣāṣ), two brothers are *strategoi*.

All the other occurrences of the function of *strategos* do not particularly point to the fact that the persons mentioned in them exercised their authority in the place where the inscriptions were carved.

In conclusion, one may say that the places which can be interpreted as *central* on the basis of the presence in them of a *strategos* invested of a recognized authority are Machaerus, undetermined places between there and Petra, Hegra, as well as some place in the region of Mādabā.¹⁹ As for the five *strategoi* who appear southwest of Taymāʿ, it is possible that they signed their names while they were on their way from there to Hegra or coming from Hegra. It is possible that the *strategoi* were stationed only in the provincial districts, which may explain why there was no need to have any in Petra, where the power would have been exercised by the king and his ministers directly. The absence of a *strategos* in Bosra is more difficult to explain but it may be due to the lacunae of our documentation. All the places in which a *strategos* is known to have had an authority is a central place in the Nabataean kingdom. These *strategoi* are characterized by a territorial based activity and had both civil and military responsibilities.

5 The career of the *strategoi*

There is no way of knowing how and by whom the *strategoi* were appointed. They may, in some cases, have been appointed two by two, as shown on the one hand by inscription *JSNab* 57, which mentions the servants of two *strategoi*, by inscriptions Al-Theeb 2014: no. 30, which mentions two *strategoi* together, and on the other hand, possibly, by *CIS* ii 195, in which a man who was a *strategos* made a *nefesh* for his brother, also *strategos*. Neither of these inscriptions, however, specifies that the *strategoi* held the function at the same time and together. In *CIS* ii 195, they may have had this function successively, even if each one of them is called *strategos* in the text (this because of the prestige attached to the title), or at the same time but in different places.

We know that some of them started their career as junior officers before becoming *strategoi*:

- ‘Animū son of Damasippos was *rb mšryt*’ in Dūmat in AD 44 before becoming *strategos* in Hegra;
- it is probable that Rabibʿel, the brother of ‘Animū, was *strategos* in Hegra. Indeed, despite the fact that none of the Hegra inscriptions in which he is mentioned proves that he was the *strategos* of the city, we can assume that

¹⁸On the hereditary character of the function, see Graf 1994: 277.

¹⁹The text is not clear as to whether both the *strategos* ʿAytibel and his grandson the camp commandant, who bears the same name, were in Luhitū and ʿAbartā. Indeed, the last part of the expression *lʿytybl ʿsrtg* [...] *w lʿytybl rb mšryt dy blhytw w ʿbrt* may refer either to both names or only to the last name mentioned, i.e. the grandson.

he would not have claimed the ownership of a place to build his tomb, in JSNab 43, giving his title, if he had not been *strategos* of the district at the time when the inscription was written, i.e. at a date between ca. AD 40 and 72. Whether he was also the *strategos* of the other places where he left his signature is not certain, especially since he gives his title in neither of them. We know that it is the same Rabib'el only because he gives his father's name, Damasippos, and because this name is so rare that it is very unlikely that there were two persons bearing the same name and patronym.²⁰ On this basis, we may assume that Rabib'el's brother, 'Animū, was *strategos* during the same time span of thirty years.²¹

Appendix: List of Nabataean *strategoi*, by name, in alphabetical order

Nabatean name	Name	Site
Elthemos ([?] <i>lṯmw?</i>)		Near Philadelphia – 'Am-mān
Josephus, JW I. 381		
Nakebos (<i>nqybw?</i>)		?
Josephus, JA XVI. 282–285		
?	?	Qanawāt – Canatha
<i>CIS</i> ii 169		
?	?	Hegra
JSNab 38		
?	? son of Zū----	Ṣaydā – Sidon
<i>CIS</i> ii 160		
[?] <i>drmw</i> [<i>br bgrt</i>]	[?] Adramū [son of Bagrat] (feminine name)	Ḍmayr
<i>CIS</i> ii 161		
[?] <i>tybl</i> [[?] <i>b 'bd'bd</i>]	[?] Aytibel [father of 'Abd-'ubdat]	Mādabā
<i>CIS</i> ii 196		
<i>b'qt</i>	Ba'qat	Hegra
JSNab 57		

²⁰The list of mentions of Rabib'el son of Damasippos has been established by D. Graf (1994: 280): Dūmat al-Jandal (Winnett & Reed 1970: no. 3): *rbyb'l br dmsps šlm*; Jabal Maṣūr in the Ḥismā, east of Wādī Ramm (Graf 1994: 280, no. 3): *rbyb'l br dmsps šlm*; Jabal Ṣarbūt Thu-laytha, southwest of Tabūk (Al-Theeb 1993: no. 69, the reading of which was corrected by Graf 1994: 280, no. 4): *dkyr rbyb'l br dmsps bṯb*. To these should be added, from Umm Jadhāyidh, Al-Theeb 2002: no. 152: *šlm rbyb'l br dmsps*.

²¹On the family of Rabib'el son of Damasippos, see J.T. Milik and J. Starcky in Winnett & Reed 1970: 142; Graf 1988: 199–200; Healey 1993: 222–223. The last two each provide a genealogical tree of the family of Damasippos, part of which is based on hypotheses which cannot be proved.

STRATEGOI IN THE NABATEAN KINGDOM

Nabatean name	Name	Site
<i>gdwdylw</i> Al-Theeb 2005: no. 57 (no. 6, see above and figs 1–2)	Gadūdilū	Taymā' area
<i>hn't</i> JSNab 61	Hani'at	Hegra
<i>wrylw br 'bdmknw</i> Al-Theeb 2005: no. 59 (no. 8, see above and fig. 3)	Wuraylū son of 'Abdman- kū	Taymā' area
<i>[w]rylw</i> Al-Theeb 2014: no. 30 (no. 8, see above and fig. 4)	Wuraylū	Sarmadā' (southwest of Taymā')
<i>y'mrw [br 'byšw]</i> CIS ii 195	Ya'marū [son of 'Ubayšū]	Umm ar-Raṣāṣ
<i>mṭyw br 'wprns</i> JSNab 32	Maṭiyū son of Euphronios	Hegra
<i>mlkw</i> JSNab 57	Malkū	Hegra
<i>mlkw br rbyb'l</i> JSNab 34	Malkū son of Rabīb'el	Hegra
<i>'bdmknw</i> Ar 104	'Abdmankū	Al-'Arniyyāt
<i>'bdmknw ['b nqydw]</i> CIS ii 161	'Abdmankū [father of Na- qīdū]	Ḍmayr
<i>'bdmknw br 'byšw</i> CIS ii 195	'Abdmankū son of 'Ubay- šū	Umm ar-Raṣāṣ
<i>'bd'bdt br 'ytybl</i> CIS ii 196	'Abd'ubdat son of 'Aytibel	Mādabā
<i>'bdrb'l</i> Al-Theeb 2014: no. 80 (no. 9, see above and fig. 5)	'Abdrab'el	Sarmadā' (southwest of Taymā')
<i>'nmw br dmsps</i> JSNab 40	'Animū son of Damasip- pos	Hegra
<i>rbyb'l?</i> JSNab 216	Rabīb'el?	al-'Ulā
<i>rbyb'l</i> JSNab 43	Rabīb'el	Hegra

Nabatean name	Name	Site
* <i>rbybʿl br dmsps</i>	Rabībʿel son of Damasip- pos	Dūmat al-Jandal; east of Wādī Ram; southwest of Tabūk; Umm Jadhāyidh
Winnett & Reed 1970: no. 3; Graf 1994: 280, no. 3; Al-Theeb 1993: no. 69 (= Graf 1994: 280, no. 4; Al-Theeb 2002: no. 152)		
<i>rbybʿl [ʿb dmsy]</i>	Rabībʿel [father of Dama- sī]	Hegra
JSNab 84		
<i>rbybʿl [ʿb mlkw]</i>	Rabībʿel [father of Malkū]	Hegra
JSNab 34		
<i>šly</i>	Šullay	Sarmadāʿ (southwest of Taymāʿ)
Al-Theeb 2014: no. 30 (no. 8, see above and fig. 4)		
<i>šly br ʿydw</i>	Šullay son of ʿAydū	Hegra
JSNab 6		
<i>tymw [ʿb ʿrsksh]</i>	Taymū [father of ʿArsak- sah] (feminine name)	Hegra
JSNab 24		

* before a name indicates that the person is not mentioned specifically as a *strategos* in the inscriptions but that we know from other inscriptions that he was one.

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Sigla

CIS ii	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars II. Inscriptiones Aramaicas Continens.</i> Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1889–.
JSNab	Nabataean inscriptions in Jaussen & Savignac 1909-1922.
MP	Unpublished corpus of the inscriptions from petra, established by J.T. Milik. They appear partly in Nehmé 2012
RÉS	<i>Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique.</i> Paris 1900–196.

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