

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It seems completely fitting that we present in ACOR's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, itself a major milestone, the final volume of the Petra papyri series. The papyri were discovered in the early years of the ACOR directorship of Pierre Bikai during the excavations in Petra led by Zbigniew T. Fiema in December 1993—thus 25 years ago. The editing of the first volume was overseen by Patricia Bikai and appeared in 2002. I have been privileged to see through the publication phases of the final four volumes since becoming ACOR director in 2006. Getting to know the papyrologists and other specialists who have come to ACOR to examine the texts firsthand has been a great pleasure, and they have included the editors of and contributors to this publication.

Each volume has been consistent in its careful presentation of the texts conveyed on these fragile scrolls and each is a treasure trove of knowledge of sixth-century Petra. For me, the wonderful part of these publications is how they put the people back into the landscape and provide stories that can now be told about Petra and some of its inhabitants in the sixth century. There are my own personal favorites, like the single-sheet (8 × 28 cm) papyrus document of a “List of Stolen Goods” (6) known as *Papyrus Petra Lou Gonda* in Volume I and the long document (ca. 430 x 20 cm) included here as the “Gift after Death,” (55) prepared by Jaakko Frösén. This senior scholar represents the person with the longest sustained involvement with the study of the papyri given that he came to Amman at the invitation of Pierre Bikai in early 1994, as did Ludwig Koenen of the University of Michigan, to help plan the program of the enormous task of opening and studying the scrolls.

Many dedicated scholars have worked tirelessly to present this material in these final publications as well as in numerous articles (see Selection of Articles and Reports in each respective volume). They have discussed both the big picture and the minutiae so that very little is not covered and considered. The introductory section here includes several invaluable overviews—the “People of Petra” by Antti Arjava with fascinating details of the extended circle of archdeacon Theodoros and some of his contemporaries; “The Greek of the Petra Papyri” by Marja Vierros with insights into the people who could write and interesting information on categories of writing; and “The Arabic of Petra” by Ahmad Al-Jallad, demonstrating details of the dialect of Arabic spoken in Petra at that time. These invaluable synthetic overviews had to await this final publication in order to be comprehensive and reflect the full range of scholarly debate that has ensued since the beginning of the project.

The plates in each volume have been a challenge to produce given the nature of the black ink on the black carbonized background, thus there has had to be some manipulation at various stages. This has included the final printing process at National Press in Amman where Isabelle Ruben, who has undertaken the final layout for Volumes II to V, and I have had to make decisions on each plate as it comes off the machine. A set of the 1994 photographs made by R. Henry Cowherd—with the assistance of Matti Mustonen and Jan Vihonen soon after the papyri were opened—are at ACOR and will be included in our general archives. The Petra Papyri digital photo archive of the glass plates as assembled over the years by the Finnish team will be placed on ACOR's Photo Archive, which as of 2017 is housed on Starchive of Digital ReLab. These will include the 1998 multispectral images created by Steven W. Booras and Gene A. Ware of Brigham Young University with the camera donated by Robert Johnston. Maija Holappa has worked on the preparation of the plates, which is a major task for each volume. These edited digital images will also be made available, with metadata, through the Advanced Papyrological Information System (APIS) at Duke University.

*Petra Papyri* I published in 2002 contains a list of the main people thanked at that time (p. vi)—for their scholarship, their conservation work, their logistical support (among many, also ACOR staff), and their donations, including through “adopting a papyrus,” as well as those involved in imaging and publication responsibilities. All who want to consider what it takes to support such a major undertaking should refer to that list, which represents those involved in the first decade of the publication project. The University of Helsinki researchers listed therein are some of the ones who have seen this project to completion but a younger generation has also been part of the team and they are acknowledged for their efforts in subsequent volumes. In recent years, Matias Buchholz has played a major role in the scholarship and final corrections for the volumes. The ultimate oversight of the publication was undertaken first by Jaakko Frösén of the University of Helsinki (now retired) and in recent years by Antti Arjava, Secretary General of the Finnish Cultural Foundation. Their persistence and that of their colleagues remained remarkable in the face of many competing obligations. Major support in Finland came from the project “Ancient Greek Written Sources” of the University of Helsinki, a part of the “Centres of Excellence in Research” program of the Academy of Finland. Myriad other funders have assisted over the years and they are duly acknowledged in the prior volumes in both prefaces and forewords. ACOR’s Publication Fund has benefited from major, as well as modest, donations over the years. This fund has afforded ACOR the means to produce these books in Jordan and distribute them to the many people to whom thanks are due, including authors, funders, and members of the advisory board, both official and unofficial.

Finally, it should be recalled that the Petra Church excavations, which began in 1992 under the late Ken Russell and led to the discovery of the papyri, were funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). That story has been told in *The Petra Church* (2001) and referenced in many *ACOR Newsletters* (see Volume IV, p. vii). As noted in Volume II (p. viii), document **39**, dedicated to H.M. King Hussein bin Talal and H.M. Queen Noor al-Hussein, was put into the care of the Jordan Museum in 2012. The remaining papyri sandwiched in glass plates and housed at ACOR since the 1990s will be handed over to the Jordanian authorities who will then be responsible for the protection of these fragile and essentially unique artifacts. Indeed, the ultimate authority for this material lies with the Department of Antiquities of Jordan, whose current director is Dr. Monther Jamhawi. ACOR remains grateful for the Department’s support in ensuring that the publication phase could be completed and the plates kept at ACOR for scholarly access.

When you consult one of these volumes for whatever reason, do think of and thank the many people who in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries ensured that this significant body of information was made available in such a comprehensive manner. Two of the key players are no longer alive, Marjo Lehtinen and Traianos Gagos, but their work lives on through their contributions to multiple texts, including ones in this volume. They would surely be proud of the end results as are the members of the ACOR Board of Trustees and staff, who collectively acknowledge the many people who brought this endeavor to completion.

BARBARA A. PORTER