APPENDIX C

SOME REMARKS ON EPITHEThS OF NABATAEAN
ROYAL DEITIES

Modifications of deities occur frequently in Nabataean epigraphy. Apart
from ‘Ilh mdrs’ (CIS II: 442) and ‘Ilh mnbtw (Cantineau 1978b: 2),
Dusares is also known as ‘Ilh gy’, the god of Gaia, in Oboda, a city
in the Negev desert (Negev 1963: 113). A slightly different spelling,
‘Ilh gy’, is attested in Djof, a city at the south-eastern end of Wadi
Sirhan (Savignac and Starcky 1957: 198). Dusares is also known as
‘r’, Aara, in Bostra (Cantineau 1978b: 2) and Imtan in the
neighbourhood of Bostra (Cantineau 1978b: 21). The latter, moreover,
qualifies Dusares Aara as dy bbsr, who dwells in Bostra. In Hegra
‘Aara’, also is modified as dy bbsr, but with the amplification ‘Ilh
rb’l, the god of Rabbel, it appears by itself (CIS II: 218). Dusares
is also modified as ‘Ilh mn’r, the god of our lord. A couple of times
Aretas IV is meant (CIS II: 201, 208, 209, 211), and once Rabbel
II (Cantineau 1978b: 21). Elsewhere, ‘Ilh rb’l, the god of Rabbel,
is directly linked with Dusares (Milik 1958: 231). Also the two are
combined to ‘Ilh mn’r rb’l mlk, the god of our lord king Rabbel
(Starcky 1985: 181). Similarly, Baalshamin is modified twice as ‘Ilh
sydw, the god of Saoidu (CIS II: 176) and as ‘Ilh mtnw, the god of
Mattanu (Cantineau 1978b: 18). It is noteworthy that both names
originate from the Hawran.

The god Asdu is once modified as ‘Ilh m’ynw, the god of Moainu
(RE5, no. 2053). In Petra the god Saabu is qualified as ‘Ilh’ dy [b]’sI
hbr’t, the god who resides in . . . of Hubta (Cantineau 1978b: 9; Winnett-
Reed 1970: 158; DFD: 212).1 The same god appears to be cited in
an inscription from Hegra as well (Winnett-Reed 1970: 157). Although
1.3 is badly damaged, its middle part probably reads: [. . . ‘Ilh sI’bw
‘Ilh’ . . .], to the god Saabu, the god of . . . If this is the case, then
Saabu is also in this instance modified as the god of ‘somebody’ or
‘some place’.2 Provided that the restorations are correct, then Saabu

1 According to DISO ‘sI is an architectural terminus technicus. Its exact reference is
unfortunately unknown (DISO: 22). It may denote both a structure or a particular element
of such a structure.
2 Cf. for Saabu: CIS II: 3991. This inscription was found on a small altar similar to
must have commanded considerable authority within the Nabataean pantheon. His presence can be traced at Hegra, Palmyra and Petra, cities somewhat distant from each other. Moreover, a sanctuary was dedicated to Saabu in Petra (Cantineau 1978b: 9; Winnett-Reed 1970: 158), the Nabataean national shrine (Gawlowski 1975–76), whereas in Palmyra he is described as the Gad of the Nabataeans (CIS II: 3991). Again, a god tr or td, probably though dwtr (Starcky 1966: 1000; Wenning 1987: 253), once occurs modified as 'lh ḥtyšw, the god of Hotaishu (CIS II: 354). Finally, on one occasion such a qualification appears alone in order to designate the divine recipient of a dedication without attributing to him a proper name: 'lh qṣyw, the god of Qasiu (CIS II: 174).

Now, if it is possible to make a general remark on this limited material, then three observations stand out. Firstly, the modification of Dusares as 'lh mr'n clearly links him to the Nabataean royal family, especially during the reign of Aretas IV (CIS II: 201, 208, 209, 211) and the last Nabataean king, Rabbel II (Starcky 1985: 181; CIS II: 350 (?); Cantineau 1978b: 21). Once the modification is explicitly linked with Dusares in his manifestation 'Aara' (Cantineau 1978b: 21), whereas it is said that Aara dwelt in Bostra (Cantineau 1978b: 21; CIS II: 218). Cantineau (1978b: 21) is dated by the regnant years of Rabbel II, 'lh mr'n, the god of our lord, referring to Rabbel II. The apposition resembles those found in Starcky (1985: 181), 'lh mr'n rb'l mlk', and Milik (1958: 231), 'lh rb'l, both dated by the regnant years of Rabbel II. However, they both fail to qualify Dusares as 'Aara'.

The modification of Aara who dwells in Bostra as the god of Rabbel is remarkable, since CIS II: 218 is dated to the first year of king Malichos II, Rabbel II's predecessor. Although it is theoretically possible that the modification 'Aara' as 'the god of Rabbel' should

the ones offered to the 'Anonymous God' in Palmyra. Interestingly, Saabu is qualified as dy mqr gd' [']nbt, who is called the Gad (or: Fortune) of the Nabataeans.

3 Perhaps, the same deity is meant in CIS II: 336: t[dr] which was found in Taima, north-east of Hegra. Possibly, this deity also occurs in a funerary inscription from Hegra as the god to whom the fine for violating the tomb had to be paid (Cantineau 1978b: 31 = CIS II: 205). If so, however, there is a gender problem, for in CIS II: 354 the god is obviously male, whereas in CIS II: 336 she is definitely female.

4 Although he dates the inscription to c.40 AD, Starcky (1955: 104), followed by Hammond (1973: 29), suggests that the apposition the god of Rabbel does not refer to Rabbel II but to Rabbel I. He argues that an expression like 'god of So-and-So' easily becomes traditional and that Rabbel II, bearing the same name as his distant predecessor, adopted 'Aara' as his tutelary deity too. However, it is rather awkward that the designation is not met with at an earlier stage in Nabataean history then, for surely a close relationship between a deity and a monarch affects the relation between the Divine and the monarch's