1.	Record Nr.	UNINA9910790796103321
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	Titolo	Gerasa and the Decapolis : a 'virtual island' in northwest Jordan / / David Kennedy
	Pubbl/distr/stampa	London, England : , : Bloomsbury, , [2007] ©2007
	ISBN	1-4725-3774-2 1-4725-3773-4
	Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (217 p.)
	Collana	Duckworth debates in archaeology
	Disciplina	933.5
	Soggetti	Excavations (Archaeology) - Jordan
	Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
	Formato	Materiale a stampa
	Livello bibliografico	Monografia
	Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
	Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (pages 199-210) and index.
	Nota di contenuto	Cover; Contents; Preface; Abbreviations; The Decapolis; Principal ancient and modern place-names; List of illustrations; 1. Defining the topic; 1.1. The topic; 1.2. Study area; 1.3. The problem; 1.4. Conclusion; 2. Evidence and methodologies; A. Evidence; 2.1. Scale and survival; B. Methodologies; 2.2. Archaeological interpretation and texts; 2.3. Nomads; 3. The natural and human landscape and environment; 3.1. Introduction; 3.2. A 'virtual island'; 3.3. Broad patterns; 3.4. Micro-regions: diversity and difference; 3.5. Natural routes; 3.6. Ancient climate and environment; 3.7. Discussion 4. Settlement4.1. Hellenistic beginnings, c. 300-50 BC; 4.2. Early Rome, c. 50 BC - AD 200; 4.3. Opening up the interior: communications and security, AD 200-350; 4.4. A 'world of villages' ... and churches, AD 350-600; 4.5. Ruling from the margins, AD 600-850; 4.6. Discussion; 5. Population and people; A. Population size; 5.1. Introduction; 5.2. Population numbers; 5.3. Northwest Jordan; 5.4. Discussion; B. Application; 5.5. Cemeteries; 6. A world of writing; 6.1. Introduction; 6.2. Writing in the Near East; 6.3. Greeks and Romans; 6.4. The scale of writing; 6.5. Visibility and use 6.6. 'Safaitic' inscriptions6.7. Conclusion; 7. The structures of the Roman state; 7.1. The provinces; 7.2. Provincial governors at work; 7.3. Provincial administration; 7.4. The Roman census; 8. Everyday life; 8.1. Health, disease and poverty; 8.2. Seasonality of birth, marriage and

Sommario/riassunto	During the Long Classical Millennium (fourth century BC to eighth century AD), Northwest Jordan was part of two worlds, looking west to the Mediterranean as well as east towards the Arabian desert. It was not only a collection of distinctive micro-regions but a "virtual island", isolated by geography on all sides. Here one finds historical and archaeological data of an intensity and quality probably superior to that of any region in the Near East other than Israel. This book exploits some of that evidence to explain the character of an unusual region with a dense network of cities and an un