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Julien Aliquot, Younis Al-Shdaifat. Greek Christian epitaphs from Charakmoba and the Land of Moab. *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, 2020, 152 (1), pp.3-26. 10.1080/00310328.2020.1712834 . halshs-02556289

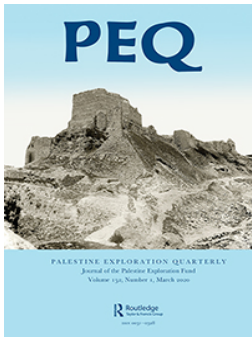
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To cite this article: Julien Aliquot & Younis al-Shdaifat (2020) Greek Christian epitaphs from Charakmoba and the Land of Moab, Palestine Exploration Quarterly, 152:1, 3-26, DOI: [10.1080/00310328.2020.1712834](https://doi.org/10.1080/00310328.2020.1712834)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00310328.2020.1712834>



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Greek Christian epitaphs from Charakmoba and the Land of Moab

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ABSTRACT

Fifteen Greek inscriptions recently discovered in the Land of Moab (southern Jordan) are published here. All are Christian epitaphs, engraved on limestone funerary stelae of an extremely common type at Al-Karak (ancient Charakmoba) and on the surrounding plateau, which bring new information on the onomastics and funerary customs of the local communities in Late Antiquity. An epigram that contains phrases directly borrowed from the epic code of the time is also remarkable. Like the other, less sophisticated, inscriptions discussed here, it testifies to the late and partial Hellenization that characterized the history of the Land of Moab in the Byzantine period.

KEYWORDS

Roman Arabia; Palaestina Tertia; Greek epigraphy; Christianity; onomastics; epigram

Introduction

In recent years, new discoveries of Byzantine tombstones have multiplied in southern Jordan on the Moab plateau (Figure 1), both in and around Al-Karak (ancient Charakmoba). The purpose of this article is to add fifteen items to a series that already has more than 500 pieces, most of which were published by Reginetta Canova in her 1954 book (see Aliquot, Shdaifat and Weber 2014, with a bibliographical update, and most recently Gatier et al. 2017, 347, no. 9, and Aliquot 2018). The first ten stelae were found in Al-Karak (nos. 1–10). The following three come from Al-^cAmaq (no. 11), Khirbat al-Nushaynish (no. 12), and Muḥay (no. 13). The last two (nos. 14–15) have no certain provenance, but they obviously share the same features as the others and must accordingly be listed in the same group. Like most of the antique grave markers in the region, all were carved in the local hard limestone, inscribed in Greek, and decorated with Christian symbols. Their formal characteristics, as well as the contents of their epitaphs, including spelling and grammatical irregularities, make it possible to attribute them to the period between the middle of the fourth century and the seventh century AD. Except for the tombstone of Kosmas and its epigram (no. 4), the inscriptions that they bear are of the simplest type, with only the name and age of the deceased, whether or not accompanied by his

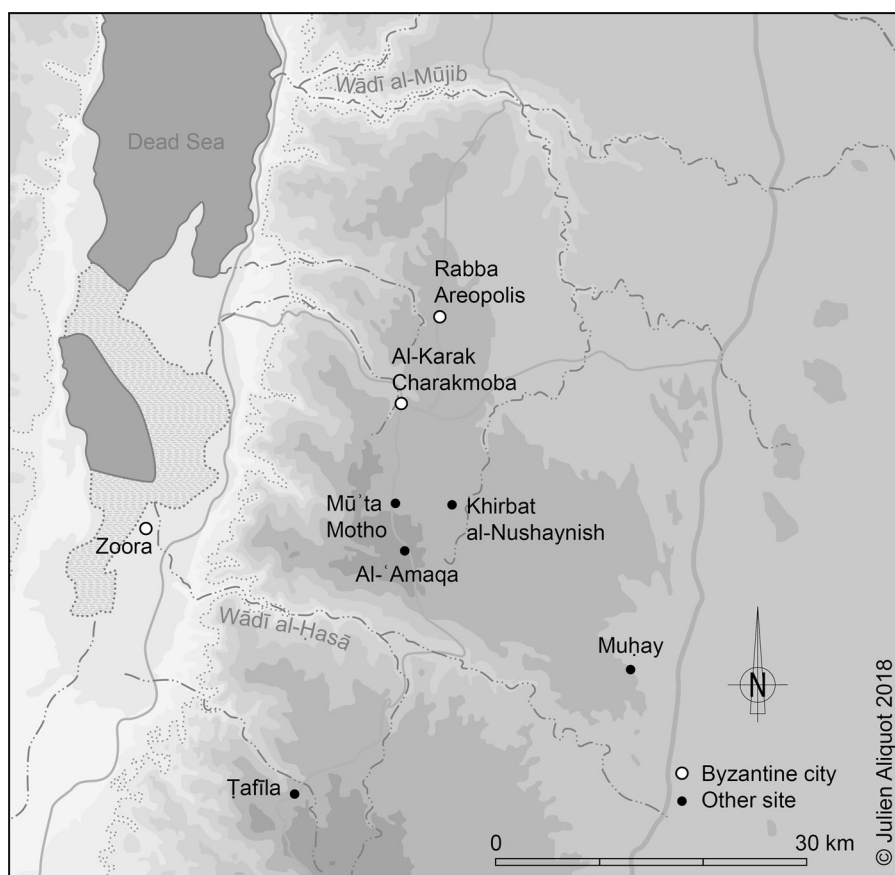


Figure 1. Map of the Land of Moab (© Julien Aliquot 2018).

or her patronymic name. Seven of them (nos. 1, 5, 7, 11–14) are more precisely dated from the sixth and seventh centuries AD. Their dates have to be converted in the Julian calendar by using the provincial era of Roman Arabia, whose start was set in March 22, 106 AD, following the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom, and which was used in the Land of Moab as elsewhere in the province, even after the region was integrated in Palaestina Tertia in the fifth century AD (Meimaris 1992; Di Segni 2018).

Al-Karak

Al-Karak (lat. 31.18073 N, long. 35.70161 E), well known as the ancient city of Charakmoba under the Roman empire and in Byzantine times, is the site that has provided the greatest number of funerary monuments in the Land of Moab (already 197 items in Canova 1954, 3–173, nos. 1–199bis). The ten tombstones that we present here were found between 2016 and 2018 to the south of the medieval castle, in a sector which Canova has already identified as a necropolis area, on the hill of Umm al-Thalāja and on the eastern bank of Wādī al-Sitt.

1. Epitaph of Eunomos son of Dousarios

Description

Tombstone, broken or recut in its upper part and on the left. Red paint in the letters. Cross in the middle of line 1, inverted zeta in line 4, horizontal strokes above numerals in lines 5–6. H. 60 × W. 30 × D. 16 cm. H. of the letters: 3–5 cm (Figure 2).

Text

Μν † ημ(εῖον)
 Εὐναμο-
 ς Δουσαριο-
 4 [υ], ζήσας ἔτ-
 [η] νε', ἔτου[ς] σ-
 4ς'.

Apparatus

L. 2–3. Εὐναμο|ς for Εὐνόμου, undeclined and written with the phonetic confusion omicron/alpha, common in the Near East, as Waddington (1870, 463) had already



Figure 2. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Eunomos son of Dousarios, no. 1 (© Younis Shdaifat 2018).

noted; cf. Canova (1954, CVII–VIII), with about thirty examples for the Land of Moab alone, including personal names such as Δωράθεος for Δωρόθεος (no. 75) and Μοξίμα for Μαξίμα (no. 338).

Translation

Tomb of Eunamos (= Eunomos) son of Dousarios, who lived 55 years, in the year 296.

Commentary

The Greek name Εὐνομος has already appeared two or three times in the Land of Moab, each time in Al-Karak: (Canova 1954, nos. 44(?), 63, 84; cf. Sartre 1985, 200, and Sartre 2007, 217–18), about the success of this personal name in Roman Arabia and its similarity to Semitic names. The pagan theophoric name Δουσαριος and its various forms (cf. below, no. 14: Δουσαρης; no. 15: Δουσαριος), all derived from the name of the great Nabataean god Dushara (*ḏwšrʿ*), were still very popular in Moab as everywhere in the former Nabataean kingdom in the Byzantine period (see, e.g. Canova 1954, nos. 62, 72, 74, 133, 147, 201, 207, 244, 312, 330, 356, 424 (Δουσαριος), 71 (Δουσαριας) and 73 (Δουσαρις); Meimaris, Mahasneh and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2007, 559–60, no. 23 = SEG 57.1930 (Δουσαρις); cf. Sartre 1985, 198–99; Meimaris and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2005, 283–84).

Date

22 March 401–21 March 402 AD.

2. Epitaph of Ioannes son of Anastasios

Description

Tombstone, rounded at the top and inscribed inside an incised frame and between two small columns. Cross in the upper right part of the epigraphic field. Horizontal stroke above numerals in line 6. Dimensions unknown (Figure 3).

Text

Ἐν- †
 θάδε κεί-
 ται Ἰωάννη-
 4 ς Ἀναστασί-
 ου, ζήσ(ας) ἔτη
 ιε'.

Apparatus

L. 3–4. Ἰωάννη|ς for Ἰωάννης.

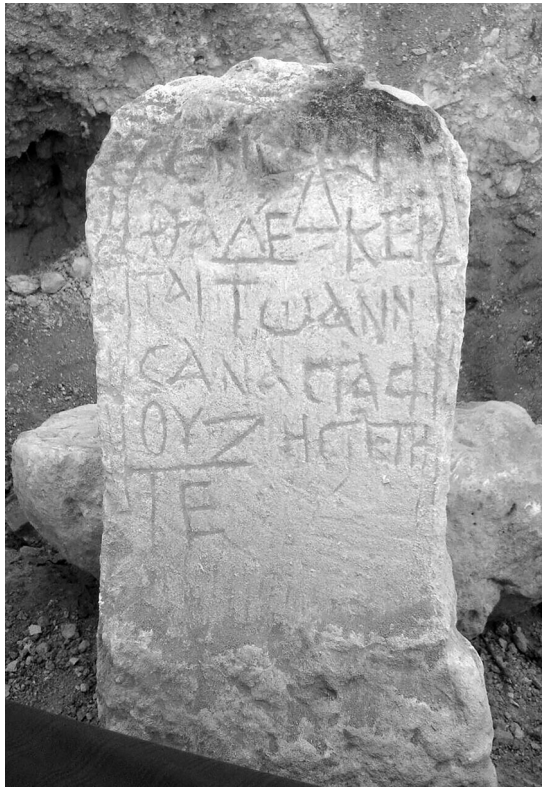


Figure 3. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Ioannes son of Anastasios, no. 2 (© Younis Shdaifat 2017).

Translation

Here lies Ioannes son of Anastasios, who lived 15 years.

Commentary

The deceased man and his father had very common Christian names, abundantly recorded on the plateau of Al-Karak (see also below, nos. 3 and 11) and throughout the Byzantine world (see, e.g. Meimaris and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2005, 52 (on the biblical name Ἰωάννης, of Hebrew origin) and 320 (on Ἀναστάσιος, which refers to the Resurrection, ἀνάστασις, as the feminine Ἀναστασία), with many inscriptions from the Land of Moab and elsewhere).

3. Epitaph of Ioannes son of Anastasios

Description

Tombstone, rounded at the top and inscribed inside an incised frame, broken to the left and in its lower part. In the upper part, cross between the Christian sigla. Delta upside down in line 2, S-shaped abbreviation sign in line 3. H. ca. 30 × W. ca. 30 cm. H. of the letters: ca. 3–6 cm (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Ioannes son of Anastasios, no. 3 (© Younis Shdaifat 2018).

Text

[Ι(ησοῦ)ς] † Χ(ριστό)ς.
 [Εν]θάδε
 [κεῖτ(αι)] Ἰωά-
 4 [ννης Ἀνα]στα-
 [σίου ---]

Translation

Jesus Christ. Here lies Ioannes son of Anastasios . . .

Commentary

Onomastics: see above, no. 2.

4. Funerary epigram for Kosmas

Description

Tombstone rounded at the top, inscribed inside an incised frame and between two small columns, now broken in two fragments. Decoration and engraving are more meticulous than usual. In the upper part, encircled cross between two doves facing each other. Cross at the beginning of the inscription. Ligature OΥ in line 1, vacat and S-shaped abbreviation signs in line 9. Dimensions unknown (Figures 5–6).

Text

† Οὐνομά μοι Κοσ-
 μάς βαιὸς τεκέω<ν>
 γενετῆρος, νηπιά-
 4 χους πραπίσιν θα-
 λερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ-



Figure 5. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Kosmas, no. 4 (© Younis Shdaifat 2017).



Figure 6. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Kosmas, no. 4, lower part (© Younis Shdaifat 2017).

8 ον εἶβω, ὅτι με
 τῦ{νο}ον ἔοντα γαι-
 ης δόμος ἐνθάδε
 κεύθει *vac.* ζήσ(ας) ἔτ(η) β'.

Apparatus

L. 2. τεκέω for τεκέων. L. 7. τυνοον for τοῖον: the engraver first inscribed NO, then made a correction without erasing these letters. L. 9. κεύοει for κεύθει. Except the final phrase ζήσ(ας) ἔτ(η) β', the text is written in verses:

† Οὐνομά μοι Κοσμᾶς, βαιὸς τεκέω<ν> | γενετῆρος,
νηπιά|χοις πραπίσιν θα|λερὸν κατὰ δάκρυ|ον εἴβω,
ὄττι με | τῦ{νο}ον ἐόντα γαί|ης δόμος ἐνθάδε | κεύθει,
ζήσ(ας) ἔτ(η) β'.

Translation

My name is Kosmas, the little one among my father's offspring, for the childish hearts I let big tears fall in drops, since the house of earth hides me here in such plight, after living two years.

Commentary

This poem is an interesting addition to the series of funerary epigrams already found in Al-Karak, which is the biggest series of epigrams in the whole region (11 or 12 examples: Canova 1954, nos. 3, 47, 59, 76, 108, 144, 169, 173, 181, 183, 194(?); Mouterde 1957, 266 = SEG 19.895). Its three hexameters cover the common theme of funerary laments expressed by a child who died at an early age. The most remarkable feature is that some phrases are borrowed from the epic code of the time and go back to Homeric poetry, especially the phrase in the second verse: 'I let big tears fall in drops,' which was already used in the Iliad (24.9: θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυον εἴβεν) as in the Odyssey (11.391: θαλερὸν κατὰ δάκρυον εἴβων; see also 14.441: ὄττι με τοῖον ἐόντ', for the beginning of the third verse). This example shows how the local authors of funerary epigrams worked in Late Antiquity, by adapting themes and motifs that had been tried and tested for a long time.

The Greek name Κοσμᾶς is quite common in Byzantine Arabia and Palestine. Its popularity may be linked to the success of the cult of the healing Saints Kosmas and Damian (see Canova 1954, no. 298 (the sole other instance to date in the Land of Moab); cf. Meimaris and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2005, 363).

5. Epitaph of Maria daughter of Georgios

Description

Tombstone, rounded at the top and inscribed inside an incised frame and between two small columns, broken at the top, to the right and at the bottom. In the upper part, cross between two doves facing each other and Christian sigla. Two crosses before and after the dating formula, horizontal strokes above numerals in lines 6–8. H. 60 × W. 35 × D. 21 cm. H. of the letters: 3–6 cm (Figure 7).

Text

[I(ησοῦ)]ς † Χ(ριστός),
Α Ω
Ἐνθάδε κ[ι]-

- 4 τε Μαρία Γε-
ωργίου, ζή-
σασ(α) ἔτ(η) ιη', †
ἔτους φβ', ἰγ[δ(ικτιῶνος)]
8 κ' †.

Apparatus

L. 3–4. κ[ῖ]|τε for κείται. L. 8. γ' (3) was mistakenly engraved instead of ι' (10): in this case, the year 502 of Provincia Arabia can only correspond to indiction 10.

Translation

Jesus Christ, alpha and omega. Here lies Maria daughter of Georgios, who lived 18 years, in the year 502, indiction 10.

Commentary

The deceased was named after the Virgin. Her father had a Greek name, Γεώργιος, whose success was proportional to the renown of the soldier-martyr Saint George among the Christians (see Aliquot, Shdaifat and Weber 2014, 150, no. 1 (Γεώργιος), and 152, no. 4 (Μαρία), with bibliography).

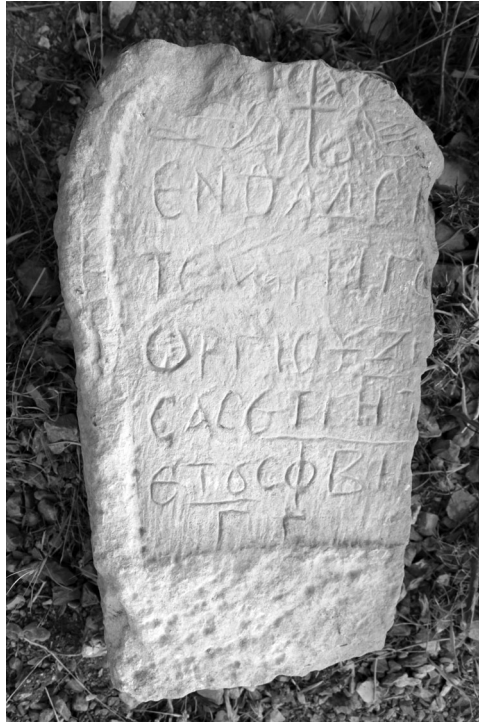


Figure 7. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Maria daughter of Georgios, no. 5 (© Younis Shdaifat 2018).

Date

22 March–31 August 607 AD.

6. Epitaph of Nonna daughter of Orion

Description

Tombstone, rounded at the top and inscribed inside an incised frame and between two small columns. Dimensions unknown (Figure 8).

Text

Ἐνθάδε
κεῖται
Νόννα Ὠ-
4 ρίωνος, ζή-
σας(α) ἔτη
λε'.

Translation

Here lies Nonna daughter of Orion, who lived 35 years.

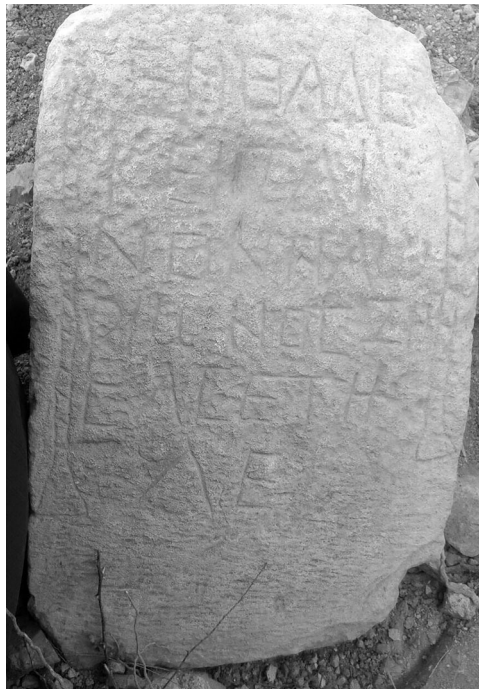


Figure 8. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Nonna daughter of Orion, no. 6 (© Younis Shdaifat 2017).

Commentary

The Greek name of Nonna was very popular in the Land of Moab during the Byzantine period, especially in Al-Karak. By contrast, the name of her father, of pagan origin, was less common, although it was already recorded twice in Al-Karak (see Canova 1954, nos. 8, 24, 34, 132–138, 234, 284, 303, 363 (Νόννα); nos. 113, 224, 304 (Ὀρίων); Meimaris, Mahasneh and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2007, 538–39, no. 7, and 548–49, no. 14 = SEG 57.1915 and 1921 (Νόννα); 552–53, no. 18 = SEG 57.1925 (Ὀρίων); cf. Meimaris and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2005, 149 and 330 (Ὀρίων and Νόννα in Arabia and Palestine)).

7. Epitaph of Obodas son of Kyriakos

Description

Tombstone, rounded at the top and inscribed inside an incised frame. Cross in the upper part. Ligatures, abbreviation sign < in line 5, small *eta* above the *mu* and horizontal stroke above the letters INΔ in line 6. H. 64 × W. 33 × D. 20 cm. H. of the letters: 2.5–6 cm (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Obodas son of Kyriakos, no. 7 (© Younis Shdaifat 2018).

Text

† Στή-
 λη Ὀβόδα
 Κυριακοῦ,
 4 ζήσας ἥ-
 τη ξ', ἔτ(ους) υ-
 π', μη(νι) Ξ(ανθικοῦ), ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) δ'.

Apparatus

L. 4–5. ἥ|τη for ἔτη. L. 5–6. There is a discrepancy between the dating by year and month and the indictional dating: the month of Xanthikos, year 480, ran from 22 March until 20 April 585 AD; indiction 4 started only in September 585 AD. So, either ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) δ' (indiction 4) was engraved instead of ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) γ' (indiction 3) or ἔτ(ους) υ|π' (year 480) was engraved instead of ἔτ(ους) υ|πα' (year 481).

Translation

Tombstone of Obodas son of Kyriakos, who lived 60 years, in the year 480(?), in the month of Xanthikos, indiction 4(?).

Commentary

The famous royal Nabataean name Ὀβόδας was still popular in Al-Karak and the Land of Moab in Byzantine times, as in the other areas of the former Nabataean kingdom. The Greek Christian theophoric name Κυριακός and its feminine version Κυριακή are quite naturally very common (see Canova 1954, nos. 120, 127, 214, 361, 378 (Ὀβόδας); nos. 36, 41, 102, 111, 254, 304, 325, 335–36, 367, 419 (Κυριακός); Meimaris, Mahasneh and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2007, 555–58, no. 21 = SEG 57.1928 ([Κυρια]κός?); cf. Meimaris and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2005, 157–58 and 237, about each name respectively).

Date

22 March–20 April 585 or 586 AD.

8. Epitaph of Oulpiane**Description**

Tombstone, rounded at the top and inscribed inside an incised frame and between two small columns. Crosses in lines 1 and 6. S-shaped abbreviation sign in line 2. Dimensions unknown (Figure 10).

Text

Ἐν † θά-
 δε κεῖτ(αι)
 Οὐλπια-

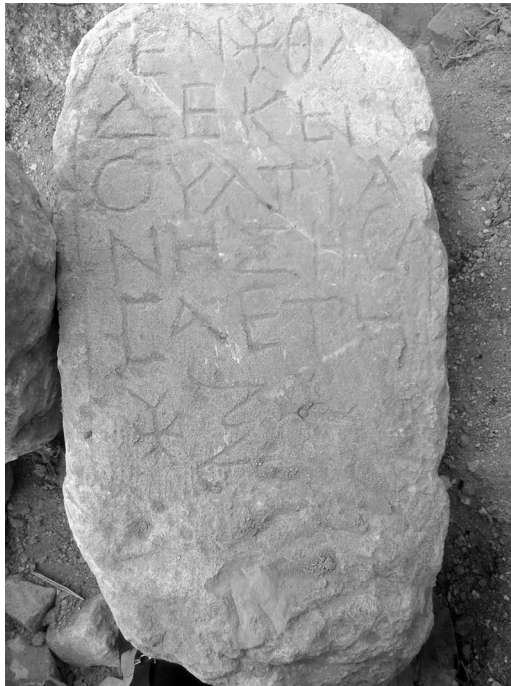


Figure 10. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Oulplane, no. 8 (© Younis Shdaifat 2017).

4 νή, ζήσα-
σα ἔτη
† ξ' †.

Translation

Here lies Oulplane, who lived 60 years.

Commentary

The Greek name of the deceased woman is a transliteration of the Latin *cognomen* *Ulpiana*. Although it was rather common in Arabia and Palestine (cf., e.g. Meimaris and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2005, 153), it was seemingly unrecorded until now in the Land of Moab, either under this form or under the masculine form Οὐλιπιανός.

9. Epitaph of Sozomenos son of Dorotheos

Description

Tombstone, rounded at the top and inscribed inside an incised frame and between two small columns, broken in the upper right part and at the bottom. H. ca. 40 × W. ca. 30 cm. H. of the letters: 2.5–6 cm. [Figure 11](#).



Figure 11. Al-Karak: Tombstone of Sozomenos son of Dorotheos, no. 9 (© Younis Shdaifat 2017).

Text

Ἐγ[θά]-
 δε κ[εῖται]
 Σωζο[με]-
 4 νός Δωρ-
 οθέου, ζή-
 σας ξ[τη]
 [1-2].

Apparatus

L. 7. One or two letters missing.

Translation

Here lies Sozomenos son of Dorotheos, who lived . . . years.

Commentary

The classical Greek names Σωζομενός and Δωρόθεος are frequently recorded in Byzantine Arabia and Palestine. Both were specifically appreciated by the Christians, who may have been seduced by their religious connotation. As regards the Land of Moab, see below, no. 13, and Canova (1954), nos. 71, 128, 149, 160, 261, 284, 359, 368 (Σωζομενός); nos. 75,

230, 308 (Δωρόθεος); cf. *SEG* 62.1701 and 1709 (Σωζομενός for a hegumen in the monastery of Saint Lot).

10. Fragmentary epitaph

Description

Tombstone rounded at the top, broken at the bottom and formerly inscribed inside an incised frame, with a cross in the upper part. The inscription is almost completely deleted. Ligatures, horizontal strokes above numerals in lines 4–5. H. ca. 50 × W. ca. 40 cm. H. of the letters: ca. 3–5 cm (Figure 12).

Text

[---]
 [---]
 ζήσα[ς/σα ἔτη]
 4 [. .], τοῦ ἔτους
 [1–3], [---]

Apparatus

L. 5. One to three letters missing in the end of the dating formula.



Figure 12. Al-Karak: Tombstone with a fragmentary epitaph, no. 10 (© Younis Shdaifat 2018).

Translation

. . . who lived . . . years, in the year . . .

Al-^ᶜAmaqā

Al-^ᶜAmaqā (lat. 31.05624 N, long. 35.70166 E; Miller 1991, 151, site 410) is a modern village built on an ancient settlement site about 1 km to the south/southeast of Al-Mazār. In her collection, Canova has already published six inscribed stelae from this place (Canova 1954, 316–21, nos. 333–38). The following tombstone was found in 2016 at ca. 300 m to the west of the village.

11. Epitaph of Samouelos son of Ioannes

Description

Tombstone, rounded on top and inscribed inside an incised frame and between two small columns. Crosses in the upper part between the Christian sigla, as well as at the beginning and end of the inscription. Ligatures, S-shaped abbreviation signs in lines 4 and 10, horizontal strokes above the numerals and the abbreviation M for μ(η)νι in lines 7 and 10. H. 79 × W. 31 × D. 24 cm. H. of the letters: 2.5–4 cm (Figure 13).

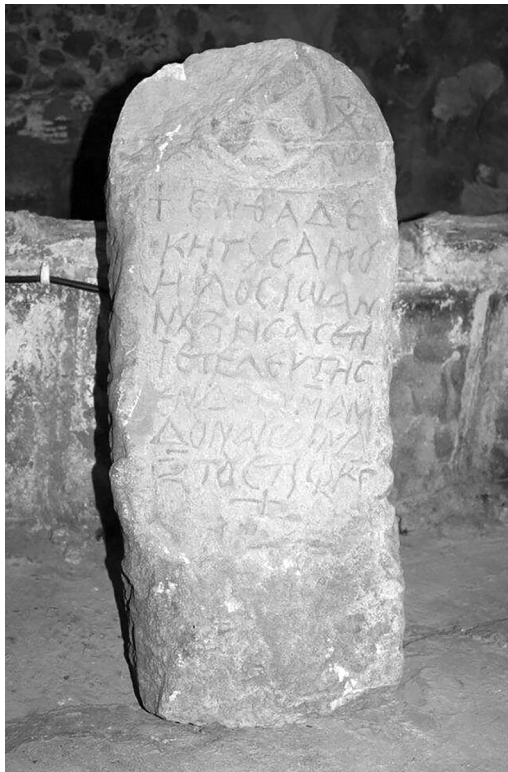


Figure 13. Al-^ᶜAmaqā: Tombstone of Samouelos son of Ioannes, no. 11 (© Younis Shdaifat 2016).

Text

[Ι(ησοῦ)ς] † Χ(ριστό)ς,
 Α Ω.
 † Ἐνθάδε
 4 κῆτ(αι) Σαμου-
 ῆλος Ἰωάν-
 νου, ζήσας ἔτι
 8 εν δὲ [ἐν] μ(ηνί) Αὐ-
 δοναίῳ, ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος)
 β', τοῦ ἔτ(ους) φκγ'.
 †

Apparatus

L. 4. κῆτ(αι) for κείται. L. 6. ἔτι for ἔτη. L. 8–9. Αὐ|δοναίῳ for Αὐδοναίῳ.

Translation

Jesus Christ, alpha and omega. Here lies Samouelos son of Ioannes, who lived 10 years; he died in the month of Audynaïos, indiction 2, in the year 523.

Commentary

The Hellenized Hebrew name Σαμουῆλος is here recorded in the Land of Moab for the first time. On Ἰωάννης, see above, no. 2.

Date

20 December 628 AD.

Khirbat al-Nushaynish

Khirbat al-Nushaynish (lat. 31.08777 N, long. 35.75956 E; Miller 1991, 131–33, site 353; Borstad and Haroun 2010: 486) is a large unoccupied ruin located ca. 6 km to the east of Mū'ta and 6.5 km to the east/northeast of Al-Mazār. A series of houses, some cisterns and lower courses of numerous walls have been (rightly or wrongly) identified with the remains of a Nabataean settlement. No tombs or inscriptions had been found on the spot until recently. The following inscribed tombstone is the first from the site. It was found in 2016.

12. Epitaph of Euboulos**Description**

Rectangular tombstone. Cross in the beginning of the inscription. Ligatures, horizontal strokes above numerals in lines 5–6. H. 64 × W. 28 × D. 21 cm. H. of the letters: 2–4.5 cm (Figure 14).

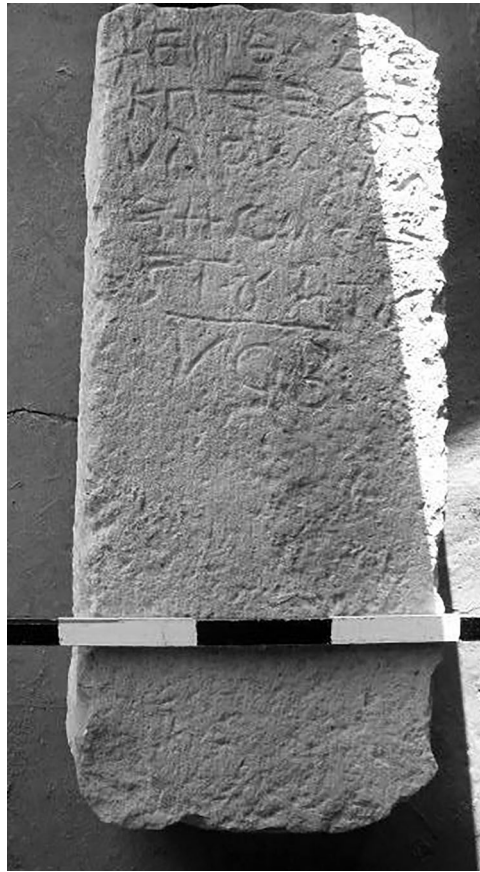


Figure 14. Khirbat al-Nushaynish: Tombstone of Euboulos, no. 12 (© Younis Shdaifat 2016).

Text

† Ἐνθάδε
 κίτε Εὐβο-
 υλος Α[---],
 4 ζήσας ἔτ(η)
 ς', τοῦ ἡτους
 υοβ'.

Apparatus

L. 2. κίτε for κείται. L. 6. ἡτους for ἔτους.

Translation

Here lies Euboulos son of A. . ., who lived 6 years, in the year 472.

Commentary

For other occurrences of the classical Greek name Εὐβουλος on the Moabite plateau (see Canova 1954, no. 343, 380, 387).

Date

22 March 577–21 March 578 AD.

Muḥay

The modern village of Muḥay (lat. 30.99212 N, long. 35.86264 E; Miller 1991, 163–66, site 436) has developed on the ruins of a large ancient settlement. Canova reported two Byzantine cemeteries here, one to the northwest and the other to the southwest of the village, with no less than sixty-eight tombstones inscribed in Greek (Canova 1954, 341–401, nos. 350–418). The following inscribed stele was first seen in 2016.

13. Epitaph of Porphyria daughter of Sozomenos**Description**

Rectangular tombstone, maybe broken at the top. Cross at the beginning and end of the inscription. Horizontal strokes above numerals in line 4 and above the abbreviation in line 5. H. 103 × W. 67 × D. 15 cm. H. of the letters: 3–5 cm (Figure 15).

Text

† Ἐνθάδε [κίτε]
 Προφυρία Σο-
 ζωμενοῦ, ζή-
 4 σασα ἦτι λ', ἔτε-
 λεύκτησεν μη(νὶ) Δύ-
 στου, ἰνδ(ικτιῶνος) θ',
 τοῦ ἔτος υο'. †

Apparatus

L. 1. κίτε for κείται. L. 2–3. Προφυρία for Πορφυρία and Σο|ζωμενοῦ for Σωζομενοῦ.
 L. 4. ἦτι for ἔτη. L. 5–6. Δύ|στου for Δύστρου. L. 6. ἔτος for ἔτους.

Translation

Here lies Prophyria (= Porphyria) daughter of Sozomenos, who lived 30 years; she died in the month of Dystros, indiction 8, in the year 470.

Commentary

The later Greek name Πορφυρία, derived from the word πορφύρα, 'purple', was already recorded twice in the Land of Moab (see Canova 1954, nos. 285 and 318; cf. no. 422, for the masculine Πορφύριος, and more generally Meimaris and Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2008, 96–97, about the dissemination of the feminine and masculine versions of the name in Arabia and Palestine). On Σωζομενός, see above no. 9.



Figure 15. Muḥay: Tombstone of Porphyria daughter of Sozomenos, no. 13 (© Younis Shdaifat 2016).

Date

15 February–16 March 575 AD.

Unknown provenance

As already mentioned in the beginning of this article, the epitaphs nos. 14 and 15 have no certain provenance, but they obviously belong to the Moabite series.

14. Epitaph of Dousares son of Roumos

Description

Rectangular tombstone, inscribed inside an incised frame. Horizontal stroke above numeral in line 5. Dimensions unknown. The text was read from a photo provided by Thomas Maria Weber-Karyotakis in March 2017 (Figure 16).

Text

- [E]νθάδε κίτε
 [Δ]ουσαρης Ρου-
 [μου], ζήσας ἐτῶν
 4 [1–2], ἀπέθανεν <μη>-
 [νὸς Ἀρτεμη<σ>ίω γ',
 [ξ]τους ὑμη', ἐν(δικτιῶνος) α'.

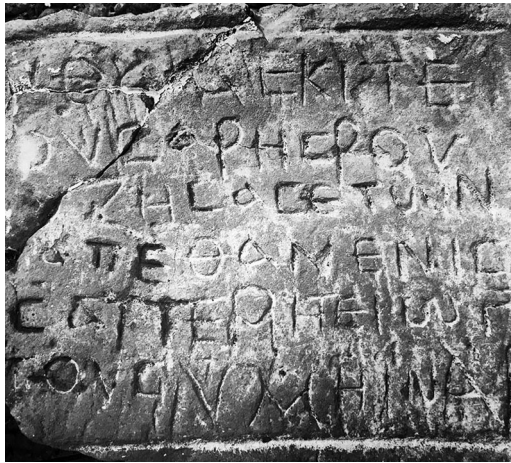


Figure 16. Unknown provenance: Tombstone of Dousares son of Roumos, no. 14 (© Thomas Maria Weber-Karyotakis 2017).

Apparatus

L. 1. κῆτε for κείται. L. 3. ἐτῶν for ἔτη. L. 4. One or two letters missing for the age. L. 4–5. IC|[—]CAPTEMHEIΩ.

Translation

Here lies Dousares son of Roumos, who lived . . . years; he died in the month of Artemisios the 3rd, in the year 448, indiction 1.

Commentary

On Δουσαρης, see above, no. 1. The Hellenized Semitic name of the deceased man's father, Ρουμος (sometimes accentuated Ροῦμος by modern editors), has been considered as the hypocoristic form of a theophoric name, the meaning of which could be: '(the god) is exalted.' It is typical of Moabite onomastics, and especially of Muḥay, which may give an idea of the provenance of the present tombstone (see Aliquot, Shdaifat and Weber 2014, 154–55).

Date

23 April 553 AD.

15. Epitaph of Dousarios son of Barichos

Description

Tombstone, rounded at the top and inscribed inside an incised frame and between two small columns, first seen in 2017 at Al-Ḥumayma in Al-ʿAqaba Governorate. Crosses in lines 1 and 7. Horizontal strokes above numerals in line 7. Dimensions unknown (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Unknown provenance: Tombstone of Dousarios son of Barichos, no. 15 (© Younis Shdaifat 2016).

Text

Ἐν † θά-
 δε κείται
 Δουσα-
 4 ριος Βα-
 ριχου, ζή-
 σας ἕτη
 νε' †.

Translation

Here lies Dousarios son of Barichos, who lived 55 years.

Commentary

On Δουσαριος, see above, no. 1. The Hellenized Semitic name Βαριχος (or Βαριχας) is built on the root *brk*, which alludes to the idea of ‘blessing’. It was very common in Byzantine Moab (see Canova 1954, nos. 19, 60–61, 156, 200, 281, 283, 350, 352, 355, 368, 389, 410).

Conclusion

The above-published stelae are only a small addition to the plentiful series of the Christian monuments from the Karak plateau. Altogether, however, they give a typical sample of the regional funerary customs. They also illustrate the success of some Greek, Latin, and

Semitic names that were particularly popular in Byzantine Moab. The most remarkable document surely is Kosmas' epigram (no. 4), which is perfectly in line with the local poetic production from southern Jordan in Late Antiquity (Gatier 1992; Agosti 2018; Aliquot 2018). Like the other, less sophisticated inscriptions published here, it testifies to the late and partial Hellenization that characterized the history of the Land of Moab in the Byzantine period.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the two anonymous reviewers whose comments led us to improve the first version of this article. Of course, any errors that may remain here are our responsibility.

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