

## REVIEW ARTICLES

### Inscriptions from Southern Jordan

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M. Sartre, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, Tome xxi, *Inscriptions de la Jordanie*, Tome iv: *Pétra et la Nabatène méridionale, du wadi al-Hasa au golfe de 'Aqaba*. Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1993, pp. 206, 51 Plates, indices.

Recently the Roman Near East in general and Roman Arabia in particular have become the subject of intensive study after years of relative neglect.<sup>1</sup> The literature includes various works of interpretation, reports on archaeological activity and one major collative project: the publication of a corpus of Greek and Latin inscriptions from Syria, with separate volumes devoted to the inscriptions from Jordan. The current volume, which is part of this series, follows two earlier publications: volume xiii.1 devoted to the inscriptions of Bostra (in modern Syria), provincial capital of Arabia and legionary headquarters<sup>2</sup> and volume xxi.2, collecting the inscriptions of the central region of Jordan.<sup>3</sup> These works represent the activities of French scholars who are part of a tradition going back to the travels of W.H. Waddington in the sixties of the previous century.<sup>4</sup> In their present format these books give us far more than just the basic material required in a corpus (photographs, texts, bibliography and critical apparatus). The work reviewed here contains a geographical introduction, a very useful historical survey with extensive bibliography, introductions for each geographical sub-section, French translation for each inscription and extensive commentary. All of these reflect the high professional standards we have come to expect of this project.<sup>5</sup>

### Inscriptions from Petra

#### Petra and Bostra

It may be useful for a review in this journal to give some historical comments on the material which is now easily accessible. More than half of the inscriptions, 93 out of a total of 156, derive from the ancient Nabataean capital, Petra. It is not surprising to learn that most inscriptions belong to the period before the second half of the second century, for Petra did not prosper in the later period (p. 30f.), although there are now reports of

<sup>1</sup> See now F. Millar, *The Roman Near East: 31 BC-AD 337* (Cambridge, Mass. 1993).

<sup>2</sup> *IGLS* xiii.1, Bostra, ed. M. Sartre.

<sup>3</sup> *IGLS* xxi.2, ed. P.-L. Gatier

<sup>4</sup> W.H. Waddington, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1870).

<sup>5</sup> It would have been desirable to include more maps in a volume which gives the reader such generous measure in other respects. A map of Petra and its vicinity, for instance, would have been helpful.

Byzantine papyri discovered there. The contrast with the material from Bostra is interesting: the dated material from Bostra is distributed over not much more than a hundred years, roughly the mid-second to mid-third century. However, some dated building inscriptions there belong to a later period: from 259/260 to Justinian. Petra has produced one building inscription (Byzantine) and a few Byzantine grave inscriptions. By contrast, the Byzantine towns of the Negev have produced hundreds of inscriptions which contain formulas related to those found in Southern Jordan.<sup>6</sup> This once again emphasizes the remarkable expansion of prosperous settlement in the Negev in the Byzantine period. It is important to realize that there was no parallel development in the region east of the Aravah.

It is further remarkable that only one inscription antedates the Roman annexation (no. 54) and this is also one of the two bilingual texts from Petra, in Greek and Nabataean.<sup>7</sup> Bilingual texts, it should be noted, are rare anywhere in Arabia;<sup>8</sup> in Bostra Nabataean and Greek are combined in two texts (9003, 9412); Greek and Latin on one imperial dedication (9409).<sup>9</sup> Both Gerasa and Ziza have each one Nabataean - Greek inscription.<sup>10</sup> Yet bilingual inscriptions are frequent in the Hauran, Palmyra and among the Jewish inscriptions of Palestine. The publication of a full corpus like this makes us more than ever aware of the complexity and diversity of what is now commonly called 'the epigraphic habit'.<sup>11</sup> Petra has produced 93 inscriptions as compared with Bostra's 472. In Bostra many of the inscriptions were set up by the military authorities or by individual soldiers. As already noted, these belong primarily to the second half of the second century, and the first half of the third. The contrast with the current volume is striking. While there are quite a few military inscriptions from Petra, the major army bases in the south are remarkable for the absence of written documents. Udhruh has produced one non-military inscription (pp. 158-161) and at Aela (Aqaba), base of the *Legio X Fretensis* from the late third century onwards, a total of seven inscriptions has been found.<sup>12</sup> One of these, no. 150, is a fragmentary Latin building inscription, dated 324-6.<sup>13</sup> At the Tetrarchic(?) legionary base at Lejjun which has been under excavation for years, not a single inscription has yet been found. Thus, whatever the reason, in the second and third centuries the military at Bostra left behind numerous inscriptions, while their successors in the fourth century, further to the south, failed to do so. Yet there can be no doubt that fourth-century legions had an administration based on paper-work. In this connection it may be recalled that there is very little extant epigraphical documentation of the substantial military presence that was stationed in eastern Cappadocia in the Flavian period.

<sup>6</sup> See the observations and references on p. 144, discussing formulas in grave inscriptions: many parallels are found between Southern Jordan and the Negev, different formulas in Northern Jordan.

<sup>7</sup> The other bilingual inscription is No. 28, perhaps a dedication to Dousares.

<sup>8</sup> See Millar (above, n. 1), chapter 11.

<sup>9</sup> See below for a remarkable bilingual text from Wadi Ram.

<sup>10</sup> Kraeling, *Gerasa*, p. 371, no. 1 (AD 81); IGLS xxi.2, no. 154.

<sup>11</sup> After the famous article by R. MacMullen, "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire", *AJP* 103 (1982), 233-46.

<sup>12</sup> Pp. 183-191, nos. 150-156.

<sup>13</sup> For discussion of the discoveries at Aqaba see also: E.A. Knauf and C.H. Brooker, *ZDPV* 104 (1989), 179-181; D. Whitcomb, *ZDPV* 106 (1990), 156-61.

### Epigraphy and the Army

But the new volume is by no means lacking in information about military matters. There are enough inscriptions to state with some confidence that there was a cohort of the *III Cyrenaica* based in Petra for some time.<sup>14</sup> As usual with military inscriptions of the High Empire, most of these are in Latin.<sup>15</sup> An important inscription of the mid-fifth century from Petra (no. 50) mentions a *numerus* of *Τερτιοδαλματεις* which may have been based there at the time.

Inscriptions sometimes furnish information about recruitment. This is certainly the case with Arrianos (no. 55) whose Greek verse epitaph records the fact that he died from illness in his twenty-seventh year of military service.<sup>16</sup> It is probably also true for Marcus Ulpius Andromachos, the son of Ulpius Diogenes, commander of the *Ala II Auriana* (no. 49, Greek) who was buried in Petra, for his unit is known to have been based in Capadocia. His ancestors must have been granted citizenship at the time of the annexation of the province. He himself would have been one of the few equestrian officers whose provenance was from the province of Arabia. We would note here that it is important to distinguish between possible evidence of recruitment as opposed to possible evidence of a garrison. Thus *IGLS* xxi.2, nos. 26 and 30 almost certainly indicate that recruits from Philadelphia or its territory served in the legion *X Fretensis* in Palestine and went home after their discharge.<sup>17</sup> There is no need at all to believe that there was a vexillation of the *X Fretensis* in Philadelphia, for there is an inscription attesting the presence of the Arabian legion *III Cyrenaica* in the city.<sup>18</sup> To return to Petra, inscription no. 36 may furnish valuable evidence for the existence of a local militia patrolling the roads near the city, as observed by the editor.<sup>19</sup> Evidence of local militias in the Near East is relatively rare, although it may be supposed that it was a widespread institution. All this is interesting additional evidence of the military presence in cities, typical of the disposition of troops in the Near East.<sup>20</sup>

### Governors and Financial Procurators

Another point worth commenting on is the distribution of inscriptions testifying to the presence of provincial governors in cities in Arabia. There are as many as 22 of those in Bostra, for obvious reasons, for it was the provincial capital and the base of the legion

<sup>14</sup> No. 44: the *Cohors Au(relia)*. It is interesting to see that legionary cohorts could have names instead of numbers. Also: nos. 19, 47 (an *optio* of the legion), 52 (an *eques* of the legion).

<sup>15</sup> No 19 is in Greek and no. 61, a fragmentary grave inscription in Greek, contains a reference to the legion. I am not certain why the editor says that the inscription refers to the son or daughter of a soldier rather than the soldier himself.

<sup>16</sup> The length of his service may suggest that he was an auxiliary.

<sup>17</sup> Gattier, *IGLS* xxi.2, p. 55: "Il faut penser que la légion 10<sup>e</sup> Fretensis a des troupes (une vexillation?) à Philadelphie au début du III<sup>e</sup> siècle". Gattier himself observes on p. 117 with n. 96 that there is epigraphical evidence of recruitment in Philadelphia, referring to *AE* 1953. 74 and *ILS* 9168.

<sup>18</sup> *IGLS* xxi.2, 34: a funerary inscription for the wife of a centurion. Note also no. 117 in honour of a centurion of the same legion, set up by the city of Madaba.

<sup>19</sup> Comments on p. 116f.

<sup>20</sup> B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: the Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1992<sup>2</sup>), chapters 1, 3 and 6.

which the governor commanded.<sup>21</sup> They are dedications made, in so far as they can be identified, by: the city (1), soldiers (12), family and private persons (2). The governor appears as dedicant on two others.<sup>22</sup> These inscriptions range in date from the reign of Hadrian to the reign of Gallus Caesar. Furthermore there are four third-century building inscriptions from Bostra, describing the governor as responsible for the erection of fortifications.<sup>23</sup> The governor is also mentioned, but less frequently, at Gerasa.<sup>24</sup> Gerasa probably also had a garrison.<sup>25</sup> At Philadelphia one dedication made by a legate and one inscription in honour of another legate have been found.<sup>26</sup> In the reign of Hadrian regular visits by the governor to Petra are attested in the Babatha archive.<sup>27</sup> Inscriptions 1-8 show that these still took place in the early third century. Inscription no. 45 is noteworthy because it is a dedication to the first governor of Arabia, C. Claudius Severus, who is mentioned in the well-known letter of Julius Apollinarius, written in 107. Apollinarius mentions work carried out by soldiers of his legion in the vicinity of Petra, presumably connected with the *Via Nova Traiana*.<sup>28</sup> No. 51 is the funerary inscription of the governor T. Aninius Sextius Florentinus, who is also mentioned in *P. Yadin* 16 from 127.<sup>29</sup> As the editor notes, most of the inscriptions testifying to the presence of the governor in Petra antedate the mid-second century.<sup>30</sup> He attributes this to an initial interest in the old Nabataean capital which subsequently declined.

One inscription (no. 48), from the third or fourth century, set up by the 'metropolis and metropol(onia)' honours a financial procurator. The distribution of inscriptions in honour of this official in Arabia is also interesting. At Gerasa there are six inscriptions honouring the procurator and another set up by the *cornicularius* of the procurator.<sup>31</sup> In

<sup>21</sup> *IGLS* xiii.1, pp. 135-158, Nos. 9063-82. 9081 and -2 are a pair in honour of a governor and his son. 9083 honours a governor of Syria-Palaestina, perhaps indicating that the man (his name is lost), came from Bostra, as suggested by Sartre. However, that would make him the only attested senator originating from the province of Arabia: cf. G.W. Bowersock, "Roman Senators from the Near East: Syria, Judaea, Arabia, Mesopotamia", *Tituli* 5 (1982), 651-68.

<sup>22</sup> 9060-62; see also 9086.

<sup>23</sup> 9105-6 belong to the series discussed by H.-G. Pflaum, "La fortification de la ville d'Adraha d'Arabie", *Syria* 29 (1952), 307-30; cf. Isaac, *op.cit.*, 133f. This represents a programme whereby the fortifications of Bostra, Adraa and Soada (Dionysias) were strengthened in the sixties and seventies of the third century. 9108-9 from 278-9 and 282-3 may be related; also: *IGLS* xxi.2, 179 from Dibon (Dhiban) in Moab, dated 245-6, which is a little earlier than the other texts of this series. I take no account here of milestone inscriptions, or texts which merely state that a building was erected in the time of a specific governor.

<sup>24</sup> The governor of Syria appears on building inscriptions of AD 90/91: at this date Gerasa belonged to this province: J. Pouilloux, *Liber Annuus* 27 (1977), 246-54; 29 (1979), 276-8; Kraeling, *Gerasa*, no. 50. The governor of Arabia: e.g. nos. 160-2, 165, 170.

<sup>25</sup> Isaac, *op.cit.*, 346.

<sup>26</sup> *IGLS* xxi.2, 11, a dedication to *IOM Conservatori* of AD 143; 25.

<sup>27</sup> N. Lewis, *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters* (Jerusalem 1989), nos. 14, 23, 25.

<sup>28</sup> *P. Mich* 466, cf. M. Speidel, *ANRW* II 8, 691-3. Note also inscription no. 46 from Petra, a fragmentary dedication to a governor made by the city.

<sup>29</sup> No. 51, with comments on p. 86f.; For *P. Yadin* 16: Lewis, *op.cit.*, 65-70. This is a census declaration which attests the presence of a cavalry commander at Rabbat Moab.

<sup>30</sup> P. 29.

<sup>31</sup> C.H. Kraeling, *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis* (New Haven, 1938), nos. 173, 175-9, 207f; cf. Isaac, *op.cit.*, 345f, where it is suggested that this city was the seat of the procurator, a situa-

contrast, a procurator is mentioned on only one text from Bostra,<sup>32</sup> and this is an exceptional case, for it is a dedication made by the powerful Timesitheus who served both as procurator and as acting governor. The inscription can be dated to the period of the joint rule of Elagabalus and Severus Alexander (AD 211/2). This is possibly the context of the grant of colonial status to Bostra, first recorded on coins of the reign of Severus Alexander.<sup>33</sup> It is quite likely that Petra received the same status about the same time. Petra issued colonial coins before Bostra, under Elagabalus,<sup>34</sup> but that gives us merely a *terminus ante*, for cities did not issue coinage every year. Even if Bostra received colonial status early in the reign of Severus Alexander, it is possible that the grant of this status was the result of a decision made in the reign of Elagabalus, for there is no other city which received colonial status in the reign of Severus Alexander. For the province of Arabia the governorship of Timesitheus, which spanned both reigns, forms an appropriate setting.

We have noted above that there are not many Byzantine inscriptions, especially when compared with the numbers from the Byzantine towns in the Negev and central Jordan. This apparently reflects the unimportance of the town in this period.<sup>35</sup> A remarkable and very well-known text is provided by the only building inscription in this volume, recording the dedication of an old Nabataean tomb as a Christian church in 446 by the bishop Jason<sup>36</sup> in the presence of the *numerus* of the *Tertiodalmateis*, already mentioned. Related to this is the epitaph of a man who was almost certainly Jason's son, set up in 447 (no. 63). The texts cut in the rock of an hermitage quite near the city (Nos. 75, 76) are also instructive for the history of Petra in the Byzantine period.

### Other Sites

So far the inscriptions from Petra. The remainder of the inscriptions, Nos. 94-156, are grouped in regional sections moving from north to south. First comes Wadi al-Hasa - more remarkable for its archaeological remains than its inscriptions. However there is an interesting graffito cut in the rock near the spot where the desert route crosses Wadi al-Hasa (no. 94); it mentions a  $\delta\rho\omicron\mu\epsilon\delta[\acute{\alpha}]\rho\iota\varsigma$ . Nearby the editor saw a site, perhaps a fort, named Qasr al-Abyad. The *gentilicium* of the camelrider is Flavius, which suggests a date in the fourth century or after. He could then have served in one of the various units of *equites* recorded in the *Notitia Dignitatum* Or. xxxiv. For those interested in the Babatha documents the section on the Ghawr al-Safi could have been rewarding, for this is the area of Zoara, which is subject of many of the papyri. There are, however, only two inscriptions from this region, curiously dated 387 and 388 respectively, although they are not connected (pp. 133-7, nos. 105f). The scarcity of inscriptions in this area is not really

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tion resembling that of Britain in the first century, when Camulodunum was the capital and London seat of the procurator (*RIB* 12; Tacitus, *Ann.* xiv 38).

32 No. 9019 with comments on p. 90f. No. 9085 mentions a subprocurator.

33 A. Spijkerman, *The Coins of the Decapolis and Provincia Arabia* (Jerusalem 1978), p. 80f, nos. 48ff; A. Kindler, *The Coinage of Bostra* (Warminster, Wilts. 1983), 8f; M. Sartre, *Bostra, des origines à l'Islam* (Paris 1985), 76f; F. Millar, "The Roman *Coloniae* of the Near East: A Study of Cultural Relations", in *Roman Eastern Policy and Other Studies in Roman History*, edd. H. Solin and Mika Kajava (Helsinki 1990), 52.

34 Spijkerman, 236, nos. 55f. S. Ben-Dor, "Petra Colonia", *Berytus* 9 (1948-49), 41-3; Millar, *op.cit.*, 51f.

35 See the survey and references to literary sources and archaeological material on p. 30f.

36 List of known bishops from Petra: p. 83f.

surprising, for the Babatha documents themselves clearly point to the limited literacy of Babatha herself and others who appear in them.

Phaeno is famous as the penal colony town which received Christians condemned during the persecution of 303-313.<sup>37</sup> What we know about the history of this copper-mining town is conveniently summarized in the introductory section, pp. 139-2. The names of several bishops are recorded in the fifth and sixth centuries. It had two churches and the few inscribed tombstones found on the spot contain formulas which are part of the Byzantine repertoire of the Negev. In this connection it is worth observing that a Christian epitaph found at Aela shows a relationship with usage in Egypt rather than Syria.<sup>38</sup>

Finally there are the inscriptions found in the remote South-East, the Hisma.<sup>39</sup> A Greek graffito cut in the rock says: 'Ρωμέοι ἀεὶ νικῶσιν. Λαυρίκιος ἔγραψα. Χαῖρε Ζήνων. (no. 138) ('The Romans always win. I, Lauricius, wrote "Hail Zenon"'). It is almost certainly the same Zenon who is greeted on another graffito nearby: 'Greetings Zenon, son of QYMT, Tribune, with (the) good for ever.'<sup>40</sup> The Roman (auxiliary?) officer Zenon had a father with an Arabic name and friends who could write both Greek and Aramaic. These texts, then, reflect a sense of superiority held by those who identified with Roman power while at the same time they are evidence of the mixed culture prevailing in the area. In the same region is the Nabataean sanctuary of Wadi Ram (pp. 173-182, inscriptions nos. 139-49). The Roman military is represented by a *duplicarius*, responsible for the construction (139). A man named Ulpus (140) may also have been a soldier. Two emperors and a governor are mentioned on a fragmentary Latin inscription, one of the remotest texts of its kind. Finally, one of the very few bilingual (Greek and Nabataean) inscriptions mentions one of the builders: 'Let Ouabalas, also named Abdomanos, son of Abdomanos, son of Aialos, from Phaeno, builder be remembered.'<sup>41</sup> Rome's impact on the remote desert area is obvious, yet in the end we still cannot say how far the epigraphic material is representative of local culture.

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<sup>37</sup> Pp. 139-148, nos. 107-114.

<sup>38</sup> No. 156 with comments on p. 190f.

<sup>39</sup> For this region and its inscriptions: pp. 165-82. It may be noted that no inscriptions have been found at the important site of Humaymah (pp. 167f, no. 133 is a milestone, no. 134 is illegible and no. 135 was found 5 m. east of the site).

<sup>40</sup> W.J. Jobling and C. Bennett, *ADAJ* 26 (1982), 199-209: *Šlm Zynwn br Qymt klyrk bb l'lm*.

<sup>41</sup> No. 141: Μνησθῆ Ουαβαλας ὁ κα[ί] Αβδομαν[ο]ς Αβδομανου τοῦ Αιαλο[υ Φ]αινησιος ἀ(ρχ) [ιτέκτων]. [dkrt'] lt [w w]hb'lh'y dy mtr' 'bd'mnw [br] 'bd'mnw [br] 'ylw [br] 'bd'bd' br qynw fyny bny'.