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**RESCUE EXCAVATIONS IN THE NABATAEAN CEMETERY AT
KHIRBAT QAZONE 1996-1997**

by
Konstantinos D. Politis

**AMMAN
1998**

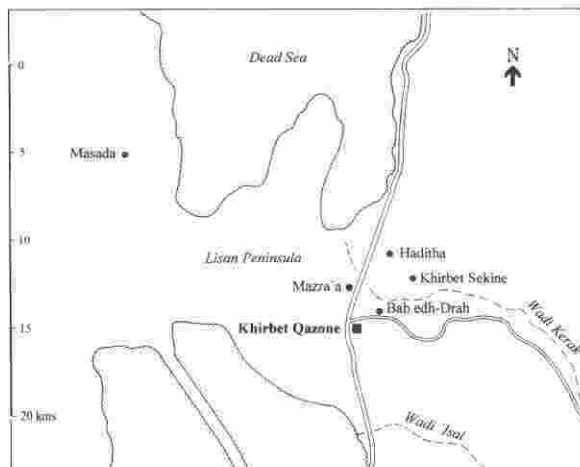
RESCUE EXCAVATIONS IN THE NABATAEAN CEMETERY AT KHIRBAT QAZONE 1996-1997

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Introduction and Objective

During April and May 1997 rescue excavations were conducted at a Nabataean cemetery locally referred to as Khirbat Qazone (an area just south-west of Bāb adh-Dhrā') (Fig. 1). The objective was to continue the urgent measures taken in May 1996 to investigate this unusual site. The site had originally been identified in 1994 by staff of Dayr 'Ayn 'Abāṭā excavations while the al-Mazra'a aṣ-Ṣāfi highway was being widened (Fig.2). Unfortunately, nothing was done to protect it from ruthless and systematic pillaging.



1. Location map of Khirbat Qazone (J. M. Farrant).



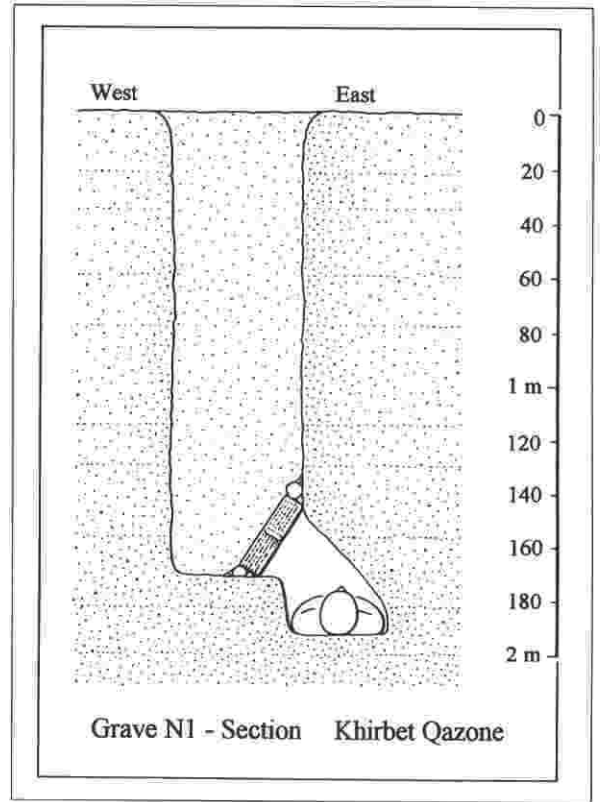
2. Aerial view of Khirbat Qazone at al-Mazra'a on 22-09-1992 (courtesy of The Royal Jordanian - Geographic Center, 'Amman).

Survey and Excavations Results

Initially, surface collections and a survey were conducted to define the extent of the cemetery. Over 3,500 robbed-out shaft graves were counted which were orientated north-south (Fig. 3). Local tomb robbers were interviewed for additional information.

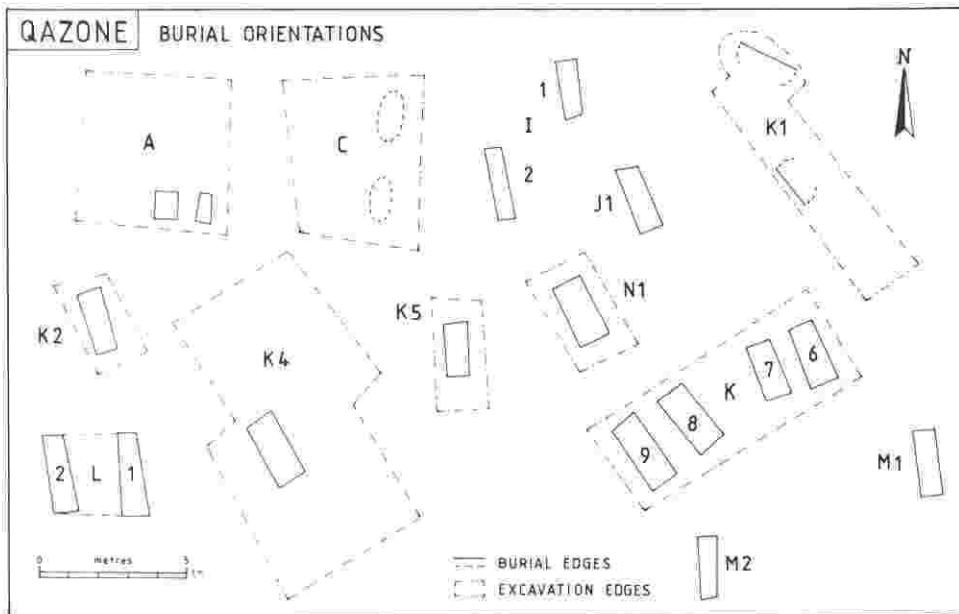
In total, twenty-four shaft graves were investigated in detail, twenty of which were excavated. Each of the graves had a single burial and there was no evidence of re-internment. Most of the graves were dug into the natural al-Lisān marls, undercut to the east and covered by adobe brick slabs (Fig. 4). A few were constructed of stone cists. Men, women and children were laid out with their heads on the south side of the grave. The dry conditions of the soil in which they were buried allowed many of the corpses to be so well preserved that hair, skin and even internal organs survived (Fig. 5).

Some of the bodies were encased within decorated and stitched leather shrouds (Fig. 6). Others had reused textiles still wrapped around them (Fig. 7). From robbers' spoil and excavations thirty-five complete and partial tunics, mantels and scarves representing the most intact textiles (mostly made of wool) ever found in the Levant were retrieved.

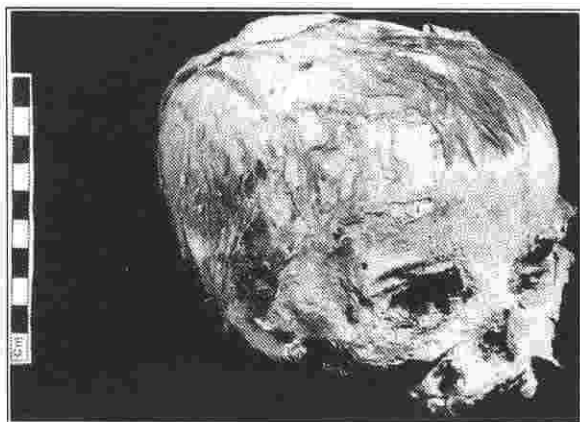


4. Section of grave which was characteristically undercut to the east and covered by adobe brick slabs (J. M. Farrant after C. Pickersgill).

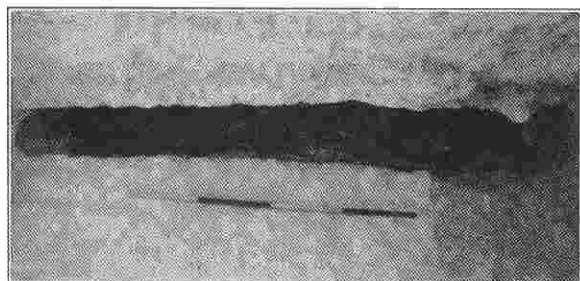
Only a few of the burials which were excavated contained any grave goods. They included iron, copper, silver and gold earrings and bracelets, beads, a scarab, a wooden staff, a pair of leather sandals and a lau-



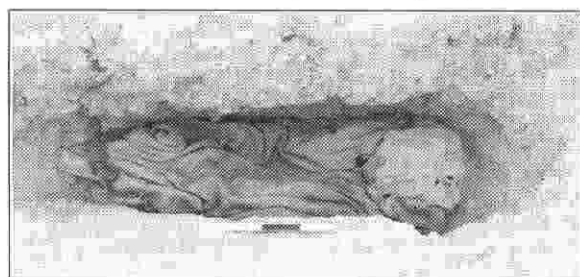
3. Orientation of graves (W.E. Moth).



5. Well-preserved head of Nabataean boy (photo: T. Springett).



6. Burial H2 with body encased within decorated and stitched leather shroud (photo: T. Springett).



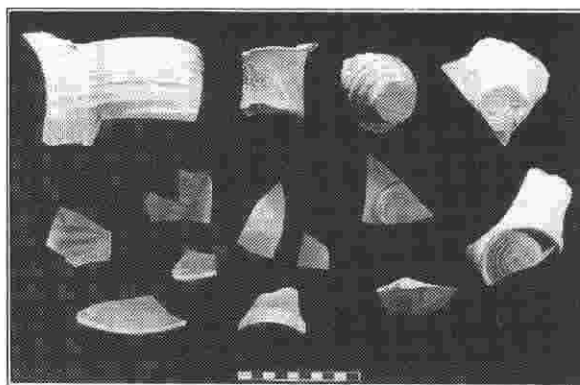
7. Burial A1 with textile wrapped around body (photo: T. Springett).

rel wreath.

From surface collections more metal work was recovered, as well as pottery and glass fragments belonging to the first and second century AD (Fig. 8). Five funerary stelae were also discovered from robbed-out tombs, four of which had engraved rectangular signs (*betyles* or “Dusares blocks”) (Figs. 9 and 10) and one which was inscribed in Greek, ΑΥΧΕΝΗ Η ΚΑΛΗ (= Afseni the pretty one) (Fig. 11).

Conclusions

Regional surveys revealed first to second

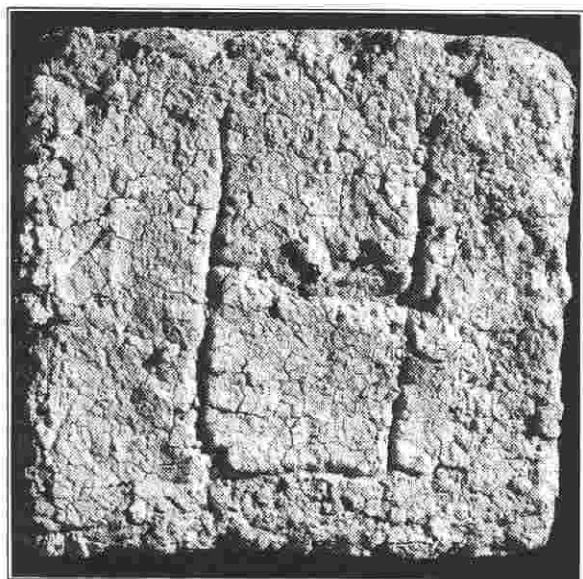


8. First to Second century AD Nabataean pottery fragments (photo: T. Springett).

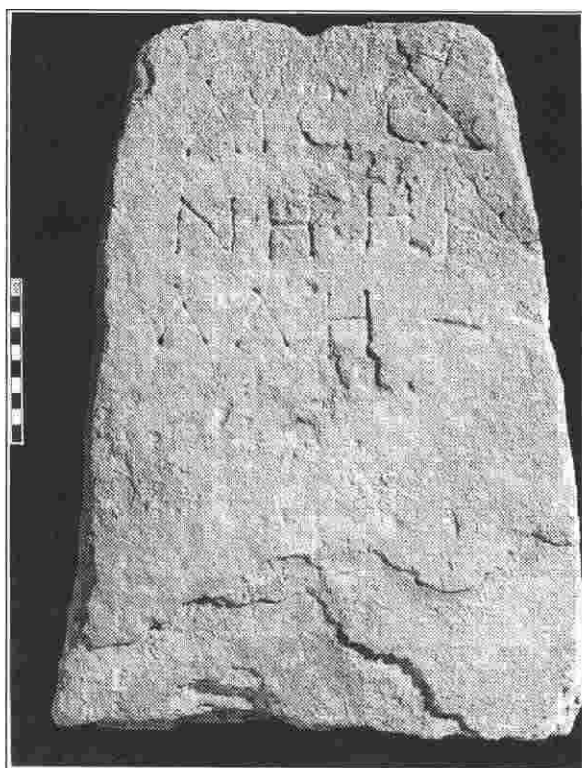


9. Funerary stela KQ 2 with rectangular sign (*betyle* or “Dusares block”) (photo: T. Springett).

century AD pottery sherds to the north in the ashy deposits of the Medieval/Islamic sugar factory in al-Mazra'a near the Wādī al-Karak which could have also been the location of the settlement site related to the Khirbat Qazone cemetery. Further investigations indicated the possibility of similar period cemeteries and settlements situated at Khirbat Sekine and al-Ḥadītha. These may all have been part of the Nabataean community living near the Dead Sea which was described by the ancient historians Di-



10. Adobe brick slab KQ 6 engraved with rectangular sign (betyle or "Dusares block") (photo: T. Springett).



11. Funerary stela KQ 5 inscribed in Greek. (photo: T. Springett).

odorus, Strabo and Josephus.

The Staff

The excavation team consisted of Khalil Hamdan, Department of Antiquities representative; Kathy Gruspier, human osteologist; Clare Pickersgill, archaeologist; W. Eddie Moth, surveyor; Pippa Cruickshank and Denise Ling, field conservators; Trevor Springett, photographer; Yannis Meimaris, epigraphist; and excavations were assisted by Ghassan Nasser, Isabelle Ruben and Samer Mouasher. A preliminary identification and analysis of the textiles was done by Hero Granger-Taylor and initial laboratory conservation was conducted by Karen Horton who also compiled a catalogue on the textiles. The project was directed by the author of this report.

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