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REVIEW ARTICLES AND LONG REVIEWS,  
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David F. Graf

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# Zoora rises from the grave: new funerary stelae from *Palaestina Tertia*

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This large corpus of Greek epitaphs from the ancient Byzantine village of Zoar/Zoora just southeast of the Dead Sea is unparalleled in *Palaestina Tertia* or, for that matter, in most of the cities or towns in the Roman Near East. Such abnormal finds are usually accidental and rarely commensurate with the importance of the settlement — there is no ‘even playing field’ for the distribution of funerary *stelae*/tombstones in antiquity. Major urban centers have produced few but virtually unknown small rural settlements have produced hundreds. The famous Hellenized Decapolis cities of Philadelphia (Amman) and Gerasa (Jerash) in the N Transjordanian heartland have produced less than 50,<sup>1</sup> the vast majority of their urbanized and cultured inhabitants remaining anonymous and silent; by contrast, the rural pre-4th c. village of Umm al-Jimal on the desert periphery has produced more than 500 epitaphs, and the numerous villages in Moab (central Transjordan) have yielded 428 inscribed tombstones from late antiquity.<sup>2</sup> The discovery of inscribed tombstones is almost always fortuitous and inevitably flawed as an index to the actual population, which is certainly the case with the 386 newly-discovered Greek epitaphs from Zoora (the name is derived from the 6th-c. Madaba Map, referring to Biblical Zoar), yet they are of exceptional quality and unusual character.

The discovery of the corpus is a scandalous episode filled with intrigue. The tombstones are from the An-Naq<sup>c</sup> cemetery on the outskirts of the town of Safi, on the S bank of the Wadi al-Hasa, across from Deir ‘Ain ‘Abata (“The Sanctuary of Lot”), and adjacent to the mediaeval town of Zughar, where there was a sugar factory and water-fed mills.<sup>3</sup> After the Israeli-Arab war in 1967, the Wadi Arabah between the Dead Sea and Aqaba became a closed military zone, prohibiting archaeological inquiry at Ghor es-Safi until the early 1980s, when the Jordan Valley Authority arranged for the Italian construction firm Impresit to develop a modern irrigation system at Safi to revitalize agriculture in the area. The local villagers were relocated to the N bank (modern Safi). During the construction project, the workers began encountering the ancient remains of Zoar. The impoverished villagers seized this opportunity for gain, and began looting and pillaging the remains, selling them to wealthy Jordanians and antiquities dealers. The result is that many antiquities from Zoar/Zoora now reside in fashionable homes in Amman and Kerak. Others were illegally transported to museums and private collections in Israel, or taken as booty by employees of Impresit back to Milan, or sold to wealthy diplomats and businessmen in Saudi Arabia, Italy, Britain and America. Many

1 For Amman, see P. L. Gatier, *IGLS XXI/IJ II* (Paris 1986) nos. 33-35. For Jerash, see C. B. Welles, “The inscriptions,” in C. H. Kraeling (ed.), *Gerasa: city of the Decapolis* (New Haven, CT 1938) nos. 199-239, 353-54; more than 200 inscriptions (including some more epitaphs) to have emerged since 1938 will be published by P.-L. Gatier: cf. D. Kennedy, *Gerasa and the Decapolis* (London 2007) 35.

2 For Umm al-Jimal, see E. Littmann, *Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria III. Greek and Latin inscriptions A.3* (Leiden 1913) nos. 276-522. Several hundred more remain unpublished: R. Canova, *Iscrizioni e monumenti protocristiani del paese di Moab* (Pontificio Istituto de Archeologia Cristiana IV; Roma 1954).

3 For a brief but informative historical summary of the settlement see M. C. Astour, “Zoar,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* VI (1992) 1107.

appeared on the antiquities market in London. In July 1994, a large shipment of antiquities from Zoar heading for New York was intercepted at Southampton by British custom officials. The full extent of the trafficking is unknown.

In this chaotic situation K. D. Politis entered the picture. While completing excavations at nearby Deir ʿAin ʿAbata in 1994, he learned about the looting at Ghor es-Safi, and with others admirably began a rather frantic campaign to record and photograph as many of the looted inscribed tombstones as he could locate. To accomplish this, Politis was forced to interact with the looters and illegal dealers, purchasing what he could, in cooperation with the Jordanian Department of Antiquities, before they disappeared into private and foreign markets. His ultimate goal was to create a museum at Safi to display the results of this noble salvage enterprise, and it is scheduled to open shortly.<sup>4</sup> The tombstones that Politis was able to salvage were placed in the capable hands of Y. E. Meimaris of the National Hellenic Research Foundation in Athens, who diligently pursued their publication supported by his research assistant K. I. Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou. The present volumes (Ia and Ib), appropriately dedicated to Politis, are the result. In addition to the 386 inscribed tombstones, twenty more bear only Christian symbols. With the exception of a few texts (nos. 7, 18, 20, 56, 59, 201, and 227), all the Greek epitaphs in vol. Ia were previously unpublished.<sup>5</sup> Volume Ib is a collage, with 64 Greek texts from An-Naqʿ at Zoora (38 previously published in Ia without commentary or an appendix; and 27 new texts), one from Khirbet Qazone 20 km to the north, and 13 from Feinan (Byzantine Phaeno), some 65 km south of Ghor es-Safi in the Wadi Arabah (8 of those were previously published). All the texts from Byzantine Zoora are funerary except for a few (vol. Ib no. 64, and perhaps another from nearby Khirbet Sheikh ʿIsa, no. 65). An epitaph from the Roman-Byzantine fort above Safi (no. 66) is also included. The focus of this review will be the 386 new Greek epitaphs from Zoora, salvaged mainly by the heroic efforts of Politis, who estimates they represent just the majority of an estimated 700 inscribed stones that were uncovered by looters.<sup>6</sup> The number of recorded epitaphs includes at least 50 Aramaic texts — primarily Jewish — to be published by S. Brock as vol. II. In sum, the three volumes will contain 436 new Greek and Aramaic texts. If an indication is needed for the value of this new corpus, it can be seen in the fact that in 1993 the entire known epigraphic corpus of this region of “Pétra de la Nabatène méridionale” was just 176 Greek and Latin texts.<sup>7</sup>

The introduction to vol. Ia begins with a brief summary by Politis on the modern rediscovery of the cemetery of An-Naqʿ at Byzantine Zoora, including the history of the settlement and the results of his salvage project to recover the funerary remains. It is followed by a methodical and detailed analysis of the texts by Meimaris which includes an intricate description of the tombstones, especially the decoration and interpretation of the symbols, the burial formulae used, the onomasticon, a discussion of the offices and professions mentioned, the ages and causes of death of the deceased, and their dates of death; it concludes with a discussion of the language and paleography illustrated by 11 pages of charts displaying by date the development or peculiarities of the script used. This introduction is an epigraphic model, thorough and

4 For the details see K. Politis, “Biblical Zoar: the looting of an ancient site,” *Minerva* 5/6 (1984) 12-15, and id., “Dealing with the dealers and tomb robbers: the realities of the archaeology of the Ghor es-Safi in Jordan,” in N. Brodie and K. Walker-Tubb (edd.), *Illicit antiquities: the theft of culture and extinction of archaeology* (New York 2002) 257-67. The scandalous episode is only mentioned briefly (6) in the volume under review. The Safi museum, scheduled to open by the end of 2009, will display over 100 of the inscribed tombstones; the rest are in the possession of the Department of Antiquities of Jordan.

5 All are noted by Meimaris except three texts: nos. 7 and 20, for which see K. D. Politis, “Ancient Arabs, Jews and Greeks on the shores of the Dead Sea,” *Studies in the history and archaeology of Jordan VIII* (Amman 2004) 366-67; and no. 227, for which see M. Piccirillo, “Un stele funeraria dalla regione di Moab,” *Liber Annuus* 54 (2004) 428-29. D. Feissel (*Bullep* 2006, no. 491; later *SEG* 54 (2004 [2008]) no. 1709) detected that the epitaph was originally from Zoar, not Moab.

6 Meimaris (9-10) indicates that more than 30 other Greek texts are in private collections and unavailable to him, with others “misplaced, presented to individuals as gifts, stolen, sold, or mutilated”, so in some instances photographs have to suffice.

7 M. Sartre, *IGLS XXI/I/IV* (Paris 1993).

comprehensive; that of vol. 1b is briefer (23-52) and mostly reinforces the impressions of Ia. The presentation of the texts that follows is a meticulous and authoritative treatment of each tombstone, arranged chronologically, first those bearing specific dates (vol. Ia nos. 1-264, vol. Ib nos. 1-49), followed by those dated relatively by paleography or style (vol. Ia nos. 265-318; vol. Ib nos. 50-63). The fragmentary texts are few (vol. Ia nos. 319-21) and tombstones merely bearing Christian symbols number just 20 (vol. Ia nos. 322-41). The Greek texts placed in an appendix in vol. Ia without commentary have all been republished with commentary in vol. Ib. Each has an exhaustive bibliography, with complete indices of the texts, followed in vol. Ia by black-and-white photographs (I-LXXI) and capped by 14 magnificent color plates of some of the best preserved of the texts, while in vol. Ib there are mostly color photos of the texts with line drawings (I-XXXIX). The photographs are excellent but do not always justify the reading in the text.<sup>8</sup>

The most novel aspect of the texts is the stereotyped dating formula. The age of the deceased is almost universal, appearing in 334 of the texts, and representing 197 men and 132 women, with ages ranging from 8 months to 108 years old. This data leads to an analysis of the mortality rates at Zoora, with few surprises: 30% of men and 47% of women died before reaching the age of 25, and just over 10% of the men and 12% of the women reached 65 years of age or above. In addition, 314 of the texts provide the date of death — by the year of the province of Arabia (which began on 22 March, A.D. 106), stretching from A.D. 309 (vol. Ia no. 1) to 607 (vol. Ib no. 49), then the Macedonian month, and often (in 204 texts) the day of the week either by its planetary (which is highly unusual for this period) or numerical name, and even, in one case, the hour of death (vol. Ia no. 128). The indiction year often appears, including the earliest ever recorded for Palestine or Arabia (vol. Ib no. 8 = A.D. 384). The mention of the month in the epitaphs provides the basis for an analysis of the seasons of death, which implies increased mortality in the winter (December-January) and spring (April-May).<sup>9</sup> The extraordinary care in handling the texts is indicated by the re-dating of several texts in the last stages before printing, in one case from A.D. 322 to 402 (no. 2) and in another from A.D. 465 to 421 (no. 216), disrupting the chronological arrangement of the texts but duly noted at the appropriate juncture (after nos. 80 and 101, respectively).

All of the mortality data derived from the tombstones is then tabulated and listed in statistical tables, where some reservation must be expressed. As has been frequently pointed out, calculations based on ages of death given on tombstones are distorted by a number of factors — cultural bias, the particularity of the sample, and inaccuracy of the ages by exaggeration or age-rounding.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the mortality results are flawed by the circumstantial and random compilation of the Zoora corpus. This is reflected in the chronological distribution of the epitaphs. For the 4th c. there are 95 epitaphs, 201 for the 5th, a mere 17 for the 6th, and only one for the 7th c. The uneven distribution is attributed to a dramatic rise in the population in the 5th c., but cultural factors or chance could just as well explain the disparity. For example, in vol. Ia there is a serious gap in dated texts between A.D. 517 and 570, which is bridged by only two texts in vol. Ib dated to A.D. 535 (no. 46) and 559 (no. 47). This gap is ascribed to a series of disasters that struck Palestine in that period — the famine between 516 and 521, the Samaritan revolt in 529, and the plague of 542/3 — and one could add the severe earthquake of

8 For example, the cross in the last line of Ia no. 11 is not visible (pl. III, black and white) nor the last line in presumably red paint of no. 148 (color pl. VII).

9 The fundamental study in a larger context is B. D. Shaw, "Seasons of death: aspects of mortality in imperial Rome," *JRS* 86 (1996) 100-38.

10 For skepticism of estimates of life expectancy based on the ages of death recorded on tombstones, see K. Hopkins, "Graveyards for historians," in F. Hinard (ed.), *La mort, les morts et l'au-delà dans le monde romain* (Caen 1987) 113-26. R. S. Bagnall and B. W. Frier (*The demography of Roman Egypt* [Cambridge 1994] 109) suggest that Roman life expectancy at birth is not remarkably higher than agricultural communities of the Neolithic or Bronze Age; for the post-Roman pre-Industrial world see P. Laslett, "Necessary knowledge: age and aging in the societies of the past," in D. Kertzer and P. Laslett (edd.), *Aging in the past: demography, society and old age* (Berkeley, CA 1995) 3-77.

July 9, 551 to the calamities.<sup>11</sup> But none of these events appears to have had any dramatic effect nearby in the Arabian sphere. The Petra papyri yield dates spanning the period from 537/8 to the 560s and indicate a thriving hinterland.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the majority of the epitaphs from the villages on the Moabite plateau are dated to the 6th c., rendering questionable the interpretation of the gap in the Zoora texts as being due to a major calamity.<sup>13</sup> The only cause of death due to physical events mentioned in the Zoora texts comes with 4 victims of the well-documented earthquake of 19 May, 363 (vol. Ia no. 22-24; implied perhaps in vol. Ib no. 41 and 51), in which half of Petra was destroyed and serious damages done in cities from the Negev to Galilee.<sup>14</sup> As impressive as the number of the Zoora epitaphs may be, the haphazard and accidental nature of the corpus must not be forgotten.

Very impressive in the discussion of the texts is the careful and comprehensive research of each personal name, the frequency and occurrences of each being exhaustively investigated and cited. Of the 295 different anthroponyms in the onomasticon, the majority are Semitic (160 names), attesting to the "solid Semitic population in the city". The Greek (81) and Latin (41) names are primarily from the Christian tradition and those of saints and martyrs, suggesting we are dealing primarily with a "Hellenized and Christianized" Semitic population. Some of the oft-appearing Semitic names are epichoric, attested only here: Σαμίραββας (appears 11 times) and Ἀψης (5). There are also some typical Nabataean theophoric names like Ἀβδόαλγης (9) and Δουσόριος (4), the Nabataean dynastic name Οβόδας (7), and Nabataean "basileophoric" names like Ἀβδοάρθας (twice) and Ἀβδομόνχος (3 times). The latter confirms the reading in Aramaic of *'bdmknw* on Nabataean coins and papyri proposed by J. T. Milik and J. Starcky in the 1950s, although Milik's conjecture that there was a Nabataean king named Mankô remains doubtful.<sup>15</sup> Meimaris suggests that names like Ἀβδόαλγης that contain the Arabic definite article *al-* are "Nabataean", supporting it with Macdonald's observation that this is a "relatively sure criterion" of their Nabataean Arabic origin, seemingly unaware of his subsequent cautionary views on the Arabic article and ethnicity.<sup>16</sup> The phenomenon of supernomina — the ὁ καὶ ("also called") formula — appears only twice in the texts (vol. Ia nos. 142 and 196). The occurrence of these "double names" has been studied for Egypt and Italy, but a full-fledged study of the accumulating occurrences in the Roman Near East is still needed.

Perhaps the most interesting of the acclamations in the epitaphs is the phrase εἰς θεός, representing a confession of monotheistic faith that appears normally at the beginning of the epitaph, sometime painted in red. The expression makes its appearance in the Near East in the late 3rd c., and becomes frequent in the 4th and 5th. It appears first at Zoora in A.D. 361 (vol. Ia no. 20, with important commentary), but after that over a hundred times (vol. Ib no. 31). In fact, the number of occurrences in the Zoora corpus equals all the appearances of the phrase from elsewhere in Palestine and adjacent areas, providing the most substantial dated evidence for

11 K. W. Russell ("The earthquake chronology of Palestine and northwest Arabia from the 2nd through the mid-8th century A.D.," *BASOR* 260 [1985] 44-46) exaggerates its effect on Petra.

12 J. Frösén *et al.* (edd.), *The Petra Papyri I* (Amman 2002) and A. Arjava *et al.*, *The Petra Papyri III* (Amman 2007).

13 Canova (*supra* n.2) xcvi. See Kerak nos. 12-18 [A.D. 541-570], Ader nos. 200-1 [542-569], El-Freng nos. 228-29 [550-560], 'Ainun no. 238 [559/60], 'Arza nos. 277-79 [524-557], Kh. Umm el-Hamed no. 294 [553/4], Maḥna no. 297 [554/5], El-Mote nos. 307-9 [545-567], Dhat Ras nos. 342-43 [546-562/3], and Maḥaiy no. 351-354 [524-570].

14 Russell (*supra* n.11) 42.

15 See my discussion in "Józef Tadeusz Milik (1922-2006): Nabataean epigrapher par excellence," *Polish Journal of Biblical Research* 6.2 (2007) 128-29. The reading *'bdmknw* also appears in Old North Arabic: see D. F. Graf and M. Zwettler, "The North Arabian 'Thamudic E' inscription from Uranibah West," *BASOR* 235 (2004) 60 ll. 6 and 66.

16 M. C. A. Macdonald revised his view (*Syria* 70 [1993] 381) subsequently in "Reflections on the linguistic map of pre-Islamic Arabia," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 11 (2000) 49; cf. my "Nabataean identity and ethnicity: the epigraphic perspective," *Studies in the history and archaeology of Jordan* 8 (Amman 2004) 145-54.

the development of the phrase.<sup>17</sup> The first hints of Christianity at Zoora are the name Paulos in A.D. 324 (vol. Ia no. 3), the appearance of a cross in 345 (no. 6), and the *chi-rho* in 355 (no. 14). After this, church officials begin to appear. The first is the archdeacon Samikon in 363 (vol. Ia no. 24) and then Bishop Apsēs in 369 (no. 27), the earliest bishop known at Zoora, but followed by a string of four more, known from documentary and literary sources, between 381/384 and 536. To these can also be added two later bishops mentioned in mosaic dedicatory inscriptions recently found at nearby Deir 'Ain 'Abata dating to 572/3 and 605/7 (vol. Ia p. 124). By the 4th c. Zoora was the location of a Roman garrison (Euseb., *Onom.* 41.1-5); according to the *Notitia Dignitatum* (*Or.* 34.26), an *equites sagittarii indigenae* unit was stationed at the town.<sup>18</sup> The first signal of bureaucratic development in the epitaphs is the *officialius* in 330 (vol. Ia no. 4), but the first military officers begin with regularity only after 371/2 (no. 30). Of note is the epitaph for Kassisos, who died at 30, as a Βουλᾶ[υτοῦ], the only mention of a *boulê* (vol. Ia no. 286, late 4th-early 5th c.), but perhaps referring to the Council at Petra.

The few ethnics in the texts designate only local cities and towns elsewhere in *Palaestina Tertia*. The old administrative center at Petra is mentioned in 3 texts (vol. Ia no. 31 and 279, vol. Ib no. 57), and Augustopolis appears once (vol. Ia no. 278; late 4th c.), now certainly to be identified with the ruins at Udruh, c.15 km east of Petra, an important military camp that appears frequently in the Petra papyri.<sup>19</sup> The only other toponym to appear in the texts is Phaeno (vol. Ia nos. 80 and 268; vol. Ib no. 54). During the Great Persecution of 303-313, Christians were condemned to the copper mines at Phaeno, and were even served by a Bishop, Silvanus of Gaza, before he was executed with others (Euseb., *HE* 8.12.10; 13.5). Phaeno is identified with the settlement at Wadi Faynan, where a huge cemetery of over 1200 graves has been recorded, including 614 orthostats or grave markers, but only 5 were inscribed. Among them are perhaps the most interesting texts in the corpus (vol. Ib nos. 68-70). One of these is an epitaph discovered by Frank in 1934 and published inadequately in 1935 by Alt, who dated it to A.D. 455/6 on the basis of a facsimile and photographs.<sup>20</sup> Autopsy of the actual stone corrected some of his troublesome readings and filled in lacunae, including the date (now clearly  $\nu\pi\zeta$  — i.e., year 487 of *provincia Arabia*), the cause of death, and the context: in the year [i.e., A.D. 592] during which the people were crying for food [ἐμαμίονν], and one-third of the population died [τὸ τρίτον τοῦ κόσμου] (no. 68). The last phase appears completely intact in a fragmentary text (no. 70) from the cemetery, confirming the formula of the last line of no. 68, and providing the missing elements to fill the lacuna in an associated epitaph of Nonna (no. 69) found also in the S cemetery at Phaeno. Meinaris cites references to a plague in 592 at Antioch and near Petra in support of the Faynan texts. It also is interesting that dated texts from Zoora end in 591 (Ia nos. 263-64), after which there is a gap until the last epitaph of 607 (vol. Ib no. 49).

Of special importance is the glimpse the Zoora texts provide of an Arab and Jewish community in transition to a Christian world. Although Christian texts predominate in the corpus, other texts reflect the survival of the Arab and Jewish community at the settlement. The first attestation of the Jewish community in the new Zoora texts is the epitaph of Saridas the ἀρχισυννόγωγος (a misspelling of ἀρχισυννόγωγος) in A.D. 347 (vol. Ia no. 7), followed by a bilingual Greek-Aramaic Jewish epitaph of 358/9 (vol. Ia no. 18), in which the Greek text is

17 See L. Di Segni ("Εἰς Ἐεός in Palestine inscriptions," *SCI* 13 [1994] 94-115) lists 62 appearances in Palestine and less than two dozen in the Golan and Hauran, and suggests a pagan or Gnostic origin for the phrase, adopted later by Jews and Christians.

18 See D. Kennedy, *The Roman army in Jordan* (London 2000) 203-4.

19 *Petra Papyri* III (supra n.12) 204 lists over 20 occurrences; for the identification, see Z. Fiema, "Late antique Petra and its hinterland: recent research and new interpretations," in J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *The Roman and Byzantine Near East* 3 (*JRA* Suppl. 49, 2002) 209, and D. Kennedy and H. Falahat, "Castra legionis VI Ferratae: a building inscription for the legionary fortress at Udruh near Petra," *JRA* 21 (2008) 150-69.

20 M. Sartre, *IGLS XXI/IJ IV* (1993) no. 107, noted "la date [of Alt] est très incertaine"; cf. G. Findlater et al., "The Wadi Faynan Project: the south cemetery excavation, Jordan 1996: a preliminary report," *Levant* 30 (1998) especially 79-80. More than half the graves have been robbed.

initial and primary, and the Aramaic added.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in the An-Naq<sup>c</sup> cemetery, about 50 Aramaic tombstones were registered and recorded before they passed through the hands of looters. Of these, 25 Jewish Aramaic tombstones have been published, ranging in date between 351/2 to 504/5, with the majority dating to the 5th (14), and most of the rest to the 4th (7), with only a few to the 6th c. (3) — i.e., the same chronological pattern as the Greek texts from Zoora.<sup>22</sup> None of this is surprising. The presence of Jews in this corner of Moab dates at least to the Late Hellenistic period. Zoar is one of the Nabataean cities conquered by the Hasmonean ruler Alexander Jannaeus (Jos., *AntJ* 13.15.4 [397]), and it was returned to the Nabataean king Aretas III (*AntJ* 14.1.4 [18]) at the time of Pompey's Eastern expedition.

For Zoar in the Roman period, we benefit from the discovery of the papyri in the Cave of Letters near the Dead Sea that reveal Jews and Nabataean Arabs intermingled and intermarried in the centuries before the Bar Kochba revolt. This evidence is primarily contained in the archive of the Jewess Babatha, who resided and held property in Maḥoz 'Eglatain (*mḥwz 'gltyn*, meaning literally "port 'Eglatain), a village (*kômē*) in the capital district of Zoar (*P. Yadin* 12:7; cf. 14:20, "in Maoza, near Zoar").<sup>23</sup> In this village, Babatha's Jewish father purchased a date orchard from a Nabataean woman in A.D. 97/8 that Babatha later inherited. This property is described as being between another Nabataean woman's property to the west and a road to the east, and the swamp to the north and an estate of the Nabataean king Rab'el to the south.<sup>24</sup> In these documents, it is not surprising to find Arabic loanwords and Arabisms,<sup>25</sup> indicating intimate interaction with the Nabataean Arab community. The assigning of the village of Maḥoz 'Eglatain to the modern village of Al-Mazra'a in the Lisan of the Dead Sea, some 15 km north of Zoar/Zoora, seems reasonable.<sup>26</sup> Just 3 km south of Al-Mazra'a, at Khirbet Qazone, a Nabataean cemetery was discovered with an estimated 3,500 shaft graves dating to the 1st and 2nd c. A.D., unfortunately the scene of "ruthless and systematic pillaging".<sup>27</sup> The surviving evidence is minimal, but includes an inscribed tombstone for a young lady (vol. Ib no. 67) and two Greek papyri of land deeds with Nabataean signatures.<sup>28</sup> Both Maḥoz 'Eglatain

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- 21 Previously published by H. Cotton and J. Price, "A bilingual tombstone from Zo'ar (Arabia)," *ZPE* 134 (2001) 277-83; cf. F. Millar, *JJS* 59 (2008) 135. It should be noted that traditional Jewish names and symbols were adopted by Christians in the Roman and Byzantine periods: see P. W. van der Horst, *Ancient Jewish epitaphs* (Kampen 1991) 17-18.
- 22 For the publication of the Jewish Aramaic texts (in Hebrew) see Cotton and Price, *ZPE* 134 (2001) 2777 n.3, with 283 for a chart tabulating texts, and vol. Ia no. 7 commentary.
- 23 Babatha's archive consists of 35 Aramaic and Greek papyri. For the Greek ones, see N. Lewis, *The documents from the Bar Kokhba period in the Cave of Letters: Greek papyri* (Jerusalem 1989); for the Aramaic, see *P. Yadin* 1-4, 6-10 in Y. Yadin, J. Greenfield, A. Yardeni and B. Levine (edd.), *The documents from the Bar Kokhba period in the Cave of Letters. Hebrew, Aramaic and Nabatean-Aramaic papyri* (Jerusalem 2002). See also H. M. Cotton, "The archive of Salome Komaise daughter of Levi," *ZPE* 105 (1995) 171-208, for the archive of another Jewess from the Cave of Letters who lived at Maḥoza'.
- 24 *P. Yadin* 2, ll. 4-5. The royal Nabataean estate appears to have been absorbed into the emperor's *patrimonium* after the annexation of the Nabataean kingdom in 106: see Lewis *ibid.* no. 16, ll. 14 and 24 [A.D. 127].
- 25 For the several dozen Arabic lexical items in the Aramaic papyri, see Yadin *et al.* (supra n.23) 27-31; cf. J. Greenfield, "Some Arabic loanwords in the Aramaic and Nabataean texts from Naḥal Hever," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 15 (1992) 10-21, with the essays of B. Levine, "The various workings of the Aramaic legal tradition: Jews and Nabataeans in the Naḥal Hever Archive," and A. Yardeni, "Notes on two unpublished Nabataean deeds from Naḥal Hever — P. Yadin 2 and 3," both in L. Schiffman, E. Tov and J. VanderKam (edd.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls fifty years after their discovery* (Jerusalem 2000) 836-51 and 862-74.
- 26 K. D. Politis and H. Grainger, "Nabataeans and the Dead Sea littoral," in G. Markoe (ed.), *Petra rediscovered: lost city of the Nabataeans* (New York 2003) 106.
- 27 K. D. Politis, "Rescue excavations in the Nabataean cemetery at Khirbet Qazone 1996-1997," *ADAJ* 42 (1998) 611-14; K. D. Politis, A. Kelley and L. Usman, "Survey and excavations at Khirbat Kazūn 2004," *ADAJ* 48 (2005) 327-37.
- 28 The papyri are in the Shlomo Moussaieff collection in London and remain unpublished: see Politis and Grainger (supra n.26) 107.

and Khirbet Qazone are just west of Bab adh-Dhrā', the famous Bronze Age site near the Dead Sea, and offer the possibility for further illuminating Babatha's contemporaries and environs.

By contrast, the Nabataean Arab and Jewish population of Hellenistic and Roman Zoar before the 4th c. remains unknown. The map of the cemetery of An-Naq<sup>c</sup> at Ghor es-Safi, based on aerial photographs, indicates that the Greek tombstones were found on the W periphery and the Aramaic ones on the N periphery of the Early Bronze Age cemetery, with some interspersing adjacent to the mediaeval Sugar Factory (Ia p. 7, fig. 3). The only indication of a pre-4th c. burial in the Zoora corpus is the first bilingual Nabataean Aramaic-Greek text from the settlement (vol. Ib no. 50), an epitaph for a woman named Ishma<sup>c</sup>in that was dedicated by her husband 'Αβδαπέτον, who bears a Nabataean "basileophoric" name (which is written as *Abusalem* in Aramaic). It is assigned a date of the 2nd-3rd c. A.D., on the basis of paleography, but no exact provenance is given for the tombstone. It is possible that it came from elsewhere than the An-Naq<sup>c</sup> cemetery. More recently, Politis indicates (pers. comm.) that a new cemetery has been discovered at Ghor es-Safi that is littered with pottery of the 1st-3rd c. A.D. and that has produced at least one inscribed tombstone bearing a Greek epitaph for a woman with an Arabic name. These links with the earlier population at Zoar are promising and offer the possibility of illuminating the society at the settlement that later produced the Zoora corpus. We are indebted to Politis who labored valiantly to bring together this valuable corpus and to Meimaris and his colleagues for diligently and competently bringing it through to publication, thereby making a major contribution to our knowledge of this sector of the Near East in late antiquity.

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