



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Aramaic in Transjordan from the Iron Age to the Persian Period

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Abstract

New Aramaic epigraphic discoveries in Transjordan increasingly make it possible to observe and understand script- and language-usage in this region during the late Iron Age and Persian period. The present paper aims to bring together recently published and under-studied Transjordanian Aramaic epigraphic data in the service of two new observations. The first of these is geographical: Persian-period Aramaic-language texts remain best attested in a cluster of northern sites around 'Amman and Jerash, but old and new central and southern Aramaic texts suggest a more widespread phenomenon of Aramaic writing that complicates the total attribution of such writing to the operation of imperial bureaucracies. The second has to do with language and script definitions and their implications for history: the line between Iron Age "national scripts" (Ammonite, Edomite, Moabite) and affiliated languages and the Aramaic of the Persian period and beyond is very obscure, in ways that severely complicate the reconstruction of script and language history in this region as one of imperial imposition on local diversity. Several individual texts -- e.g. from Tall Jawa, Tall al-Halifa, Busayra, etc. -- will be engaged as illustrations of these problems and prospects.

Keywords

Aramaic, Transjordan, Iron Age, Moabite, Edomite

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