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Mobile Peoples – Permanent Places.

The construction and use of stone-built architecture by nomadic communities of the Jebel Qurma region of the Black Desert (Jordan) between the Hellenistic and Early Islamic periods

by Harmen Huigens

1. The creation of Safaitic inscriptions and petroglyphs in the Black Desert, conventionally dated to the Late Hellenistic and Roman period, is part of a more broadly encompassing and more long-lasting tradition of landscape modifications among nomadic communities.
2. While the tradition of landscape modifications, which included the creation of rock art and stone-built architecture, ended around the 4th century AD, the inhabitation of the Black Desert by nomadic communities continued well into the Byzantine and Early Islamic periods.
3. The construction of long-lasting stone-built features in the Jebel Qurma region in the Hellenistic and Roman periods facilitated engagements with the landscape by nomadic communities on various temporal and geographic scales.
4. The archaeological record of nomadic inhabitants of the Black Desert in the Classical and Late Antique periods is much richer in quantity, quality, and diversity than previously assumed, and deserves more archaeological scrutiny.
5. The archaeological record of the Black Desert is limited in terms of macroscopic faunal remains and environmental proxies, and in order to better understand the economic activities of nomadic communities and its environmental context future research may apply a number of science-based methods to investigate such issues.
6. Nomadic activities within the landscape follow recurrent patterns geared towards specific social and economic strategies, and an understanding of such strategies may therefore benefit from spatial analysis through Geographic Information Systems of the archaeological remains left behind by nomads.
7. The inherently strong relationship between nomadic and sedentary communities implies that the study of nomads needs to be taken seriously in order to obtain a better understanding of their sedentary neighbours.
8. Ethnographic accounts of 19th- and early 20th-century Bedouins cannot be used uncritically as analogies for more ancient nomadic communities who resided in the same geographic areas given the potential variability between nomadic systems, the fluidity of such systems, and the scarcity of empirical evidence for continuity between ancient and recent nomadic lifeways.
9. The methodological dichotomy between 'archaeological' and 'epigraphic' field surveys has limited value when archaeological and epigraphic remains originate from the same cultural and

geographic context, in which case they should be regarded as complementary datasets, and survey methods should be designed accordingly.

10. Investigating the archaeological remains of ancient mobile lifeways and migration patterns, and their relation to sedentary communities has a direct relevance to contemporary society. It fits well the Dutch national science agenda, or 'Nationale Wetenschapsagenda'.