

South of the Zerqa river

There are a few dolmen fields on the slopes of the wadis which enter the Zerqa valley basin from the south. They form a link between the big fields of Jebel Muttawaq, just north of the Zerqa river, and the former dolmens of Amman. Their proximity to the capital makes most of them easy to visit. An important one is at a place called Makam Ayssa near Umm Ramana, close to an exit east of the new Jordan Street where it circles the Beka'a valley. In older literature this place has also been called Mobas or Mobis. The dolmen field, which still has some nice intact ones, faces east towards the village of Umm Rumana, but as elsewhere, they are threatened by the increasing population of the area. Close by, with some overlooking the Beka'a valley, there are a number of rock-cut niches and tombs with well-cut interiors—an architectural feature of many tombs (and some dolmens) of the Zerqa basin. These tombs were hollowed out in such a way as to allow for a (wooden?) floor, separating the upper from the



Pseudo-dolmen cut into the bedrock, with a loose capstone, overlooking the Zerqa river



Dolmen near Jebel Nebi Hadad

lower part. Sometimes, a vertical groove also suggests a door. De Vaux, who first remarked on these rock-cut tombs in 1937, already suggested that they might be an architectural evolution from the dolmen as such.

Further east, overlooking the Zerqa river and partly facing the Jebel Muttawaq dolmen fields across the river, there is a group of about 25 dolmens (as well as a few megalithic round tombs and cairns) on the upper slopes of a spur. This spur is northwest of the Jebel Nebi Hadad (Ras an-Nebi Hadad) and southwest of the old sugar mill of Tawahin al-Adwan, which is close to the river. Another ruined group exists southwest of the highest point of that mountain range. This area is called Arqub Ibn Hadad and is mentioned by Glueck. These remains of dolmens, just above Sarrut (north of Birein), are more difficult to find and are actually not very exciting. None has an intact capstone. Both geographically and architecturally (some have a rectangular platform), these fields seem connected to the Jebel Muttawaq dolmen field across the river.

There are a few more small groups of dolmen remains as well as individual ones in the area east of Jubbah, again overlooking the Zerqa river. They are sometimes cut out of the rock with a closing top slab, as are the ones around Makam Ayssa. I leave it up to the persevering reader to find them ...

How to get there

Arqub Ibn Hadad

N 32°10'58.9"

E 035°58'42.1"

Makam Ayssa

N 32°05'27.7"

E 035°54'12.3"

The sites described above are all close to Amman, but not always easy to find without a GPS unit. Makam Ayssa should not be too difficult, even though Jordan Street has many exits, and this one, half way to the Beka'a valley, is not marked. 50 m after the exit to the right (coming from Amman) you can go right again and should soon find a couple of dolmens on the left. Others are further down the wadi slope but many are being destroyed now. The dolmens on the upper slope of Arqub Ibn Hadad can be reached by traveling northwards from the town of Zerqa along the river. The Jebel Nebi Hadad is the point where the Zerqa river bends towards the west. Turn left just before the bridge crossing over the Zerqa river at the ruined sugar mill of Tawahin al-Adwan. If you subsequently take the smaller road towards Sarrut, dolmens can be seen high on the slope on the left, but to reach these fields you need a four-wheel-drive car or it is a bit of a climb.

References:

- Glueck, N. 1939. Explorations in Eastern Palestine, III. *AASOR* 17–18, (1937–1939): 214–17.
- 1945. *The Other Side of the Jordan*, 118–20. New Haven.
- Vaux, R. de. 1938. Exploration de la région de Salt, *RB* 47: 398–425.