

Ader standing stones

The village of Ader, on the Moabite Kerak plateau, can boast the tallest surviving standing monolith of Jordan. Locally it has been called the Sarbut Ader ('the standing stone of Ader') and now stands in the middle of the village. Musil took a picture of it in an empty landscape when he first visited it in 1896... The standing stone, which has obviously been worked to form an elongated rectangular pillar, is close to 5 m high, 40 cm thick and 1.4 m wide at its base. Its broad sides face east-west. A little below the middle, a groove can be seen on its northern side.

Next to it lies another stone on its side, of rather similar dimensions. Although it is commonly thought to have fallen, it rests on its smaller side and it prolongs the width of its standing companion in a northerly direction. It reminds me of the recumbent stones in the British Isles. Between the standing stone and the fallen one, another flat stone can be seen buried in the ground. It has a circular groove in the middle of its upper side. A cave nearby has remains of a staircase. Only excavation could ascertain the original setup of the group. (According to locals, a tractor once tried to pull down the standing stone but failed; it is alas leaning over somewhat since then).

A third monolith, again with roughly the same measurements, was noticed in the 1930s by Albright and Mallon, as well as Glueck, a little to the west of the previous two. This is probably the large stone which can still be found in the garden on the opposite side of the street and which was pointed out to me by the landowners. It is now only about 2 m long. In 1933, Glueck found sherds around the three stones, 'belonging to the last phase of the Early Bronze and the first part of the Middle Bronze I'.

A fourth (broken) one, again with roughly the same thickness and width, was found in 1933 by Albright in the portico of a nearby Bronze Age 'temple'. When he made soundings in the building, he found three main stratigraphic layers, dating from Early Bronze Age III to the Middle Bronze Age. I suspect that this is the structure with very large boulders that is still visible among the older village ruins across the little wadi which intersects the village. It is not clear to me how this relates to the two monoliths which Mallon noticed about 100 m south of the standing stone close to the center of the village, but it may have been the same group.



Four fallen and broken standing stones north of Ader

About 2 km north of the village, Worschech noted a group of four stones, now all on the ground and partly broken. They seem to have been a row of monoliths, running east-west. The most interesting thing about this group is the fact that they are alternately made of limestone and basalt. They intersect a low, square building, while another low row of stones, possibly a wall, can be seen a little south of it.

How to get there

Main stones

N 31°12'33.7"

E 035°45'45.3"

Northern group

N 35°13'33.9"

E 035°45'32.4"

The village of Ader is not too far northeast of Kerak, east of the King's Highway. The main stones are in the middle of the village, north of the wadi which intersects the village. The second group, north of the village, can be reached by a tarmac road. The stones are clearly visible to the right of the road, about 2 km north of Ader.



Standing stone of Ader with the second, recumbent (or fallen) one to the left

References:

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- Musil, A. 1907. *Arabia Petraea I (Moab)*, 26–27. Vienna.
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