
GREEK INSCRIBED MOSAICS FROM THE CHURCH FLOOR IN 'UQERBAT, CENTRAL SYRIA



MALATIUS JAGHNOON
HOMS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, SYRIA

INTRODUCTION

In January 2018, an archaeological discovery took place in the village of 'Uqerbat (عقيربات) located in the Syrian Badia (steppes or semi-arid zones), some 65 km to the east of the provincial capital city of Hama (حماة), and 35 km east of Salamia (سلمية). A large 5th-century floor mosaic from a church complex was uncovered measuring 37 x 18 meters within an area approaching 670 square meters. The discovery was made by accident, and it includes a wealth of Greek inscriptions placed inside fourteen panels. Photos of nine panels were provided to the author by the Syrian General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums (GDAM), Damascus, which requested decipherment and Arabic translations. The readings and translations published in the present article are meant to provide wider dissemination.

TEXTS

1) Tabula ansata DIMS, measuring 85 x 49 cm.



1. Η ΕΥΓΕΝΕΣΤΑΤΗ ΔΟΜΝΙΑ
2. ΛΑ Η ΚΑΙ ΚΥΡΑΓΑΜΕΤΗ

3. ΤΟΥ ΜΑΚΑΡΙΟΥ ΘΕΟΔΟΤΟΥ
4. ΑΚΤΟΥΑΡΙΟΥ [ΕΥΓΟΥ] ΜΕΝΗ
5. ΕΨΗΦΩΣΕΝ ΤΟΝ [ΘΡ]ΟΝΟΝ
6. ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΕΙΣΟΔΙΟΝ ΜΕΤΑ ΚΑΙ
7. ΤΗΣ ΚΟΝΧΗΣ
8. ΤΟΥ Θ Μ Ψ Ε Τ Ο Υ Σ

‘Η εὐγενέστατη Δομνίλλα ἡ καὶ κυραγάμετη τοῦ μακαρίου Θεοδότου Ακταρίου (?) [εὐγού]μένη ἐψήφωσεν τὸν [θρ]όνον καὶ τὸ εἴσοδιον μετὰ καὶ τῆς κόνυχης τοῦ θμψ’ ἔτους.

“(It was) the most noble Domnilla who is also the lord's (esteemed) wife of the most blessed Theodotos the account book-keeper who laid the mosaic of the throne and the entrance behind the niche in the year 749 (= 437 AD).”

Line 5: The term ‘throne’ also refers to the bema.

Line 6: Greek inscriptions from the Middle East use the Seleucid computation system, which began in 311 B.C. To obtain Gregorian years, 311 should be subtracted from the dates given in the inscriptions.

2) DIMS, measuring 63 x 42 cm.



1. ΕΥΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ
2. ΔΑΝΙΗΛΟΣ
3. ΑΝΑΓΝΩΣΤΗΣ
4. ΕΨΗΦΩΣΕΝ ΠΙ Ε.

Εὐξάμενος Δανιήλος ἀναγνώστης ἐψήφωσεν πιε’.

“In fulfillment of a vow of Daniel the (scripture) reader this mosaic was laid.”

Line 3: The reader is the person to whom the task of reading the scripture aloud is normally assigned during church services.

3) Tabula ansata DIMS, measuring 130 x 80 cm



1. ΕΥΞΑΜΕΝΟΙ ΒΙΚΤΩΡΙΝΟΣ
2. ΚΑΙ ΟΥΡΑΝΙΣ ΓΑΜΒΡΟΣ +
3. ΑΥΤΟΥ ΑΜΑ ΣΥΜΒΙΩΝ +
4. ΚΑΙ ΤΕΚΝΩΝ ΕΨΗΦΩΣΑΝ
5. ΤΗΝ ΣΤΟΑΝ ΑΜΑ ΤΟΙΣ +
6. ΜΕΣΑΣΤΥΛΟΙΣ. ∫ . ΕΤΟΥΣ. Η Κ Ψ

Ευξάμενος Βικτώρινος και Ούρανίς Γαμβρός + αὐτοῦ ἅμα συμβίων + και τέκνων εψηφωσαν τήν στοάν ἅμα τοῖς + μέσαστυλοῖς. ∫ . ἔτους ηκψ´.

“In fulfillment of a vow of Victorinos and Ouranis Gambros + for themselves together with their wives + and their children this mosaic of the stoa with the + area between the columns was laid with mosaic . ∫ . the year 728” (= 416 AD).”

4) DIMS, measuring 92 x 53 cm

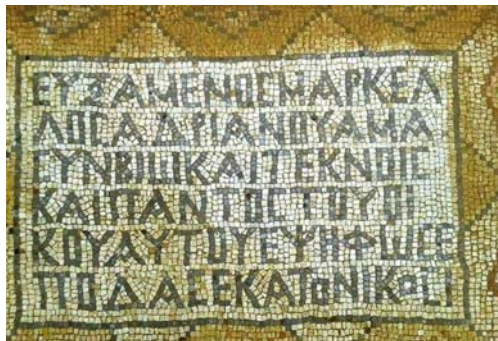


1. ΕΥΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΘΩΜΑΣ
2. ΓΕΝΝΑΔΙΟΥ ΑΜΑ +
3. ΣΥΜΒΙΩ ΚΑΙ ΤΕΚΝΩΝ
4. ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΨΗΦΩΣΕΝ ΠΛΕ.

Ευξάμενος Θωμάς Γεννάδιου ἅμα + συμβίῳ και τέκνων αὐτοῦ εψηφωσεν πλε(υρα).

“In fulfillment of a vow of Thomas Gennadios with + his wife and children this si(de) was laid with mosaic.”

5) DIMS, measuring 80 x 56 cm



1. ΕΥΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΜΑΡΚΕΛ
2. ΛΟΣ ΑΔΡΙΑΝΟΥ ΑΜΑ
3. ΣΥΝΒΙΩ ΚΑΙ ΤΕΚΝΟΙΣ
4. ΚΑΙ ΠΑΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΟΙ
5. ΚΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΨΗΦΩΣΕ
6. ΠΟΔΑΣ ΕΚΑΤΟΝ Ι ΚΟΣΙ

Εὐξάμενος Μαρκέλλος Ἀδριάνου ἄμα συνβίῳ καὶ τέκνοις καὶ πάντος τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ ἐψηφῶσε πόδας ἑκατόν [καὶ] (εἰ)κοσι.

“In fulfillment of a vow of Marcellos Adrianos with his wife and children and all (members) of his house the area of one hundred (and) twenty feet was laid with mosaic.”

6) Tabula ansata DIMS, measuring 130 x 60 cm



1. ΕΠΙ ΤΟΥ ΟΣΕΙΟΤΑΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΘΕΟΤΙΜΗ
2. ΤΟΥ ΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΥ ΗΜΩΝ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡ.Υ
3. ΚΑΙ ΣΑΜΜΟΥ ΠΕΡΙΟΔΕΥΤΟΥ ΕΨΗ
4. ΦΩΘΗ ΑΓΙΟΤΑΤΗ ΕΚΛΗΣΕΙΑ
5. ΕΤΟΥΣ ςΚΨ ΜΗΝΟΣ ΞΑΝΔΙΚΟΥ.Ι.

Ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄσειοτάτου καὶ θεοτιμήτου ἐπισκόπου ἡμῶν Ἀλεξάνδρ(ο)υ καὶ Σάμμου περιοδεύτου ἐψηφῶθη ἀγιοτάτη ἐκ(κ)λησ(ε)ία ἔτους ςκψ' μηνὸς Ξανδικοῦ . ι'.

“Under the most pious and God-honored our bishop Alexandros and Sammos the periodeut (this) most holy church was laid with mosaic (in the year) 726 (on the) 10th of the month of Xandicos” (= March-April 414 AD)

Line 1: Misspelling for ὁσιωτάτου.

Line 3: “Periodeut” refers to a travelling preacher or priest, representing the bishop. He was a sub-bishop whose main task was to preach the parish of nomads who lived in the Syrian Badia (steppes or semi-arid zones), outside the towns and/or the small outlying villages with insignificant Christian presence.

7) Tabula ansata DIMS, measuring 52 x 36 cm

- 1. ?
- 2. ?
- 3. E . . . ?
- 4. ΧΙΔΙΑΚ ΕΨΗΦΩΘΗ
- 5. ΜΗΝΙ ΔΥΣΤΡΟΥ ΤΟΥ
- 6. Θ Μ Ψ Ε Τ Ο Υ Σ

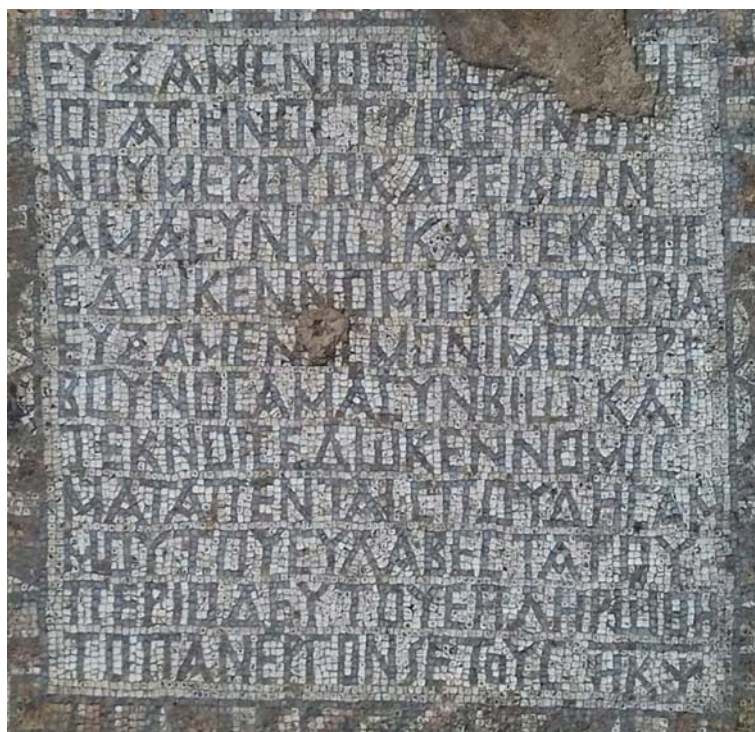


.(Missing) E [αρ]χιδια(κονου)

Εψηφῶθη μηνι Δύστρου τοῦ θμψ' ἔτους.

“.(Missing) . . ? . .E? (ar)chdeacon was laid with mosaic (in the) month of Dystros (the) year 749” (= 437 AD).

8) DIMS, measuring 120 x128 cm



1. ΕΥΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ
2. ΙΟΓΑΤΗΝΟΣ ΤΡΙΒΟΥΝΟΣ
3. ΝΟΥΜΕΡΟΥ Ο ΚΑΡΕΙΒΩΝ
4. ΑΜΑ ΣΥΜΒΙΩ ΚΑΙ ΤΕΚΝΟΙΣ
5. ΕΔΩΚΕΝ ΝΟΜΙΣΜΑΤΑ ΤΡΙΑ
6. ΕΥΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΜΟΝΙΜΟΣ ΤΡΙ
7. ΒΟΥΝΟΣ ΑΜΑ ΣΥΜΒΙΩ ΚΑΙ
8. ΤΕΚΝΟΙΣ ΕΔΩΚΕΝ ΝΟΜΙΣ
9. ΜΑΤΑ ΠΕΝΤΑ ΕΝ ΤΑΙ ΣΠΟΥΔΗ ΣΑΜ
10. ΜΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΥΛΑΒΕΣΤΑΤΟΥ
11. ΠΕΡΙΟΔΕΥΤΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΠΛΗΡΩΘΗ
12. ΤΟ ΠΑΝ ΕΡΓΟΝ ΞΕΤΟΥΣ ΗΚΨ.

Εὐξάμενος Ἰωάννης (υ)ιο(υ) Γάτηνος τριβούνος
Νουμέρου ὁ καρειβων ἅμα συμβίω καὶ τέκνοις ἔδωκεν νομίσματα τρία. Εὐξάμενος
Μονιμος τριβούνος ἅμα συμβίω καὶ τέκνοις ἔδωκεν νομίσματα πεντα ἐν
ται σπουδῇ Σάμμου τοῦ εὐλάβεστατου περιοδεύτου τοῦ ἐπληρῶθη τὸ πᾶν ἔργον Ξέτους
ηκψ´.

“In fulfillment of a vow of John son of Gatinos the dear Numerius praefect together with
his wife and children who endowed money three (times?).”

In fulfillment of a vow of Monimos the praefect together with his wife and children who endowed money five (times?) (and) by virtue of the mettle of Sammos the pious and devout periodeut⁽⁴⁾ under whom the whole work was accomplished in the year 728" (= 416 AD)

Line 2: Misspelling for Γατήνου, which corresponds to Latin *tribunus*, which in turn means *magistratus, tribunus, praefectus, militaris*.

Line 3: Misspelling for Νουμέριου, *Numerius* Latin for a Roman name of honor of the nobilities; καρειβων is misspelled for ἀκριβόν.

Line 6: Μονιμος is a Greek name meaning "stable, with stability."

9) DIMS, measuring 93 x 93 cm



1. ΕΥΞΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΚΑΣΤΡΙΚΙΣ
2. ΑΚΤΑΡΙΟΣ ΝΟΥ ΜΕΡΟΥ ΠΡΟ
3. ΜΩΤΩΝ ΥΠΕΡ ΕΑΥΤΟΥ +
4. ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥ ΟΙΚΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ.
5. ΕΨΗΦΩΣΕΝ ΠΟΔΑΣ .Ι. Τ
-
6. ΕΥΨΑΜΕΝΟΣ ΜΑΡΚΕΛΛΟΣ
7. ΘΕΟΔΟΣΙΟΥ. ΥΠΕΡ ΕΑΥ
8. ΤΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΝΤΟΣ ΤΟΥ ΟΙ
9. ΚΟΥ ΑΥΤΟΥ ΕΨΗΦΩΣΕΝ
10. ΠΟΔΑΣ .Ι. Σ .Ι. ΕΤΟΥΣ ςΚΨ.

Εὐξάμενος Καστρίκις ἀκτάριος Νουμέρου προμῶτων ὑπὲρ ἑαυτοῦ + καὶ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ ἐψηφῶσεν πόδας.Ι. Σ .Ι. ἔτους ςκψ'.

"In fulfillment of a vow of Castrikis the Numerius promoter account book-keeper for himself + and the (members) of his house the area of two hundred feet was laid with mosaic the year 726" (= 414 AD)

Line 2: ακτάριος is Greek for Latin *actarius*; short hand writer, clerk, account book-keeper, secretary.

Line 3: Greek προμῶτων is for Latin *promoter*.

CONCLUSION

These represent but a sample of the mosaic inscriptions found at 'Uqerbat. It is anticipated that with further stability within the region more archaeological findings will be discovered and made available to the international community.