

Prosopography and the Talpiyot Yeshua‘ Family Tomb: Pensées of an Epigrapher

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I. Methodology of Prosopography: Types of Ancient Data

A. Patronymics and Matronymics.

Samaria Papyri: a slave named “Yehohanan bar She’ilah” (Gropp 2001, 35, no 1).

Masada: “Shimeon bar Yehosep” and “Shimeon ben Yo‘ezer” (Yadin and Naveh 1989, 40, nos 463, 466).

Jerusalem ossuary: “Alexas Mara, mother of Judas Simon, her son” (Rahmani 1994, 258, no 868).

B. Titles

City of David Bulla: “[Tobšillem] son of Zakar, the physician” (Shoham 2000, 35 [no 6]).

Aramaic of Persepolis: “Data-Mithra the treasurer” (Bowman 1970, 71-74 [no. 1]).

Iron Age Ammonite: “Palatya ben Ma’aš, the recorder” (Taleb 1985, 21-29).

Mount Scopus Ossuary: “Yehosep, son of lananya, the scribe” (Rahmani 1994, 262 [no. 893]).

Identification: “Gallio” as a “Proconsul of Achaia” (e.g., Tacitus; Pliny; Acts 18:12). Delphi Greek: “Proconsul Gallio” (Hemer 1980, 3-18).

C. Statements of Relationships

Kidron Valley Ossuary: “Shalom, wife of Yehudah” (Rahmani 1994, 81 [no. 24]).

French Hill Ossuary: “Miryam, wife of Mattiyah” (Rahmani, 1994, 197 [no. 559]).

Mount Scopus Ossuary: “Judith, daughter of Nadav” (Rahmani 1994, 201 [no. 572]).

Ramat Eshkol Ossuary: “Ossuary of Shalom, daughter of Sha’ul, who failed to give birth. Peace, daughter!” (Rahmani 1994, 132 [226]).¹

Mount Scopus Ossuary “Shimi, son of ‘Asiya, brother of lanin” (Rahmani 1994, 200 [570]).

D. Geographicon

Kidron Valley Ossuary: “Sara (daughter of) Simon of Ptolemais” (Rahmani 1994, 102 [no. 99]).

¹ Striking is the fact that an ossuary inscribed “Sha’ul” was found in the same place. It seems that this daughter had been married, but had no children, and was interred in a tomb with her father, rather than in a tomb with her husband.

II. Talpiyot Tomb: Names with Patronymics, but neither title, nor geographicon:

Yšw' br Yhwsp (Yeshua' bar Yehosep) = Rahmani # 704

Yhwdh br Yšw' (Yehudah bar Yeshua') = Rahmani # 702

III. Talpiyot Tomb: Names with no Patronymics, and neither title, nor geographicon

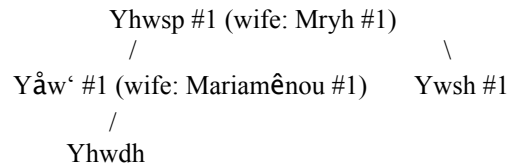
Mtyh (Mattiyah) #1 = Rahmani #703

Ywsh (Yoseh) #1 (or = Yhwsp #1) = Rahmani # 705

Mryh (Maryah). #1 = Rahmani # 706

Mariamênou {ê} Mara #1 = Rahmani 701²

IV. Talpiyot Tomb: Jacobovici, Pellegrino, and Tabor's Proposed Reconstruction of the Kinship Nexus



[Mtyh: No specific Relationship Posited]

² Rahmani states that he believes the name Mara is a short form of the name Martha and that this is the case of a double name (Rahmani 1994, 222 [no. 701]; cf. 181-182 [no 468] for Mara and Martha on the same ossuary, arguably referring to the same woman). Pfann (2006) has argued that this should be understood not as "Mariamênou {ê} Mara," but as "Mariame kai Mara," thus eliminating the less-common name Mariamne.

V. Talpiyot Tomb: A Sober Attempt at Reconstruction with Multiple Possibilities Enumerated

A. Based on this data, it is tenable to posit with substantial certitude the following family tree³:

Yhwsp #1
/
Yāw' #1
/
Yhwdh #1

B. Working with Very Limited Data: Possible Kinship Ties for Remaining Inscribed Ossuaries

i. Mtyh (Mattiyah) #1. *Some of the Possible Options*

Son of Yāw' #1
Son of Yhwdh #1
Son of Yhwsp #1
Father of Yhwsp #1
Etc.

ii. Ywsh (Yoseh) #1 (or = Yhwsp #1)⁴

Same person as Yhwsp #1
Father of Yhwsp #1
Son of Yhwsp #1
Son of Yāw' #1

³ Note that although this understanding of the genealogy is probable, it cannot be understood as certain. That is, one can understand different scenarios that would result in different configurations. For example, someone might suggest that Yāw' #1 also had a son named Yāw' #2 and that Yhwdh #1 was the son of Yāw' #2, not Yāw' #1. Arguably this is not as probable, but it must be conceded that it is not impossible either.

⁴ Sometimes the same ossuary will have the long form and the short form of a name. For example, an ossuary from the western slope of Mount Scopus has “Asous” and “Asoubos,” the long form and the short form of the same name, arguably (but not certainly) for the same person (Rahmani 1994, 164, [no. 383]).

- Son of Yhwdh #1
- Etc.
- iii. Mryh (Maryah)
 - Wife of Yâw' #1
 - Wife of Yhwdh #1
 - Wife of Yhwsp #1
 - Wife of Mtyh #1
 - Mother of Yhwsp #1
 - Unmarried Daughter of Yâw' #1
 - Unmarried Daughter of Yhwdh #1
 - Unmarried Daughter of of Yhwsp #1
 - Unmarried Daughter of Mtyh #1
 - Unmarried Sister of Yhwsp #1
 - Etc.
- iv. Mariamênou {ê} Mara
 - Wife of Yâw' #1
 - Wife of Yhwdh #1
 - Wife of Yhwsp #1
 - Wife of Mtyh #1
 - Mother of Yhwsp #1
 - Unmarried Daughter of Yâw' #1
 - Unmarried Daughter of Yhwdh #1
 - Unmarried Daughter of of Yhwsp #1
 - Unmarried Daughter of Mtyh #1
 - Unmarried Sister of Yhwsp #1
 - Etc.

VI. Names.

A number of scholars have noted the fact that some of the names on the ossuaries were very common in the Second Temple Period. This is certainly a relevant point. Also of relevance is the fact that several of these names are also common in the First Temple Period. This could be understood as providing a comparative window for discussions of the frequency of names in the Talpiyot Yeshua' Family Tomb. That is, trans-horizonal usage may be of some (modest) relevance.