

## **A New Nabataean Inscription from the Hūdybāt al-Maḍl'ānī Site**

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The site of al-Maḍl'ānī is located about thirty-five kilometres to the north-east of the city of Taymā'. Our thanks go to the Director of Antiquities in the province of Taymā', Mohammed al-Najm, who discovered this site during his inspection tour of the archaeological sites in the province. He was the first person to draw our attention to this site. The site is significant for the following reasons:

1. The inscriptions and rock art indicate continuity of settlement at the site for a long period of time, extending at least from the beginning of the first millennium BCE to the seventh or eighth centuries CE, taking into account the drawings of the two ibexes (see plates no. 5: II and no. 6: I) accompanied by early Islamic inscriptions.
2. The artists of this pre-Islamic rock art were probably familiar with two important occupations, firstly agriculture which is indicated by the use of the bull and the donkey in cultivation and secondly grazing and hunting, taking into account the dog's pursuit of the ibexes (see plate no. 9: II). These rock drawings point to the ability of the Arab artist to depict his ideas clearly and finely in his own style. Some of the representations of ibexes, gazelles and camels seem to be finely drawn (see plates no. 8: II and no. 9: II).

Before we begin our detailed study of the Nabataean inscriptions, we give a brief idea about the other Thamudic and Islamic inscriptions, followed by the Nabataean inscriptions, then a short study of the rock art associated with these inscriptions

### **I: The Inscriptions**

In addition to the five Nabataean inscriptions (see plates no. 1: II and no. 4: I), the site contains nine early Arabian inscriptions, seven of them are Thamudic,

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whereas the remaining two are early Islamic texts dating to the seventh or eighth centuries CE.

### ***1. Thamudic Inscriptions<sup>1</sup>***

These are seven texts (see plates no. 6: II and no. 8: I), two of which belong to the late Thamudic period and the rest go back to the middle Thamudic period; for more information see (al-Theeb 1999: 5–9). All of them are commemorative inscriptions with the exception of one belonging to the late period.

### ***2. Islamic Inscriptions<sup>2</sup>***

We found only two small texts (see plate no. 2: I) the first starts with the first person singular pronoun, while the second begins with the *basmala* ('in the name of god'), as follows:

Inscription No. 1

*'n' tmrh 'sl*

*'llh 'lgnh*

I am *tmrh* asking the God of heaven

Inscription No. 2

*bsm 'llh' 'mn dryd brbh*

In the name of God, *dryd* believes in his Lord

### ***3. Nabataean Inscriptions:***

Inscription No. 1

*'mrw br k'bw*

*'mrw son of k'bw*

That this short memorial text goes back to the Christian period is suggested by the letters 'm' in *'mrw*, and 'r' in both *'mrw* and *br*.

*'mrw*: a simple personal name, appearing in other Nabataean inscriptions (al-Theeb 2010: 1123) and Palmyrene (Stark 1971: 54, 106), while the name found as *'mr*, in Safaitic inscriptions (al-Khraysheh 2002: 134–5; Abbadi

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<sup>1</sup> We plan to study and publish these inscriptions in the near future.

<sup>2</sup> These inscriptions will be studied by Abdullah al-Muneef, assistant professor, Archaeology Department, King Saud University.

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2006: 7, 55; Ababneh 2005: 414; al-Manaser 2008: 206), and in Thamudic (al-Theeb 1999: 139; al-Theeb 2000a: 49) and in Lihyanite (Abū al-Ḥasan 2002: 247). The name *'mrm* appears in Qatabanian (Hayajneh 1998: 144), Minaean (al-Said 1995: 141), and Sabaean (al-Anzi 2004: 67).

*k'bw*: a simple personal name known in Arabic (al-Khazrājī, 1988: 532), which has been interpreted by Ibn Manẓūr 1956, vol. 1, 718: 'May God exalt his glory (*ka'b*) i.e. exalt his greatness. It is said "May God exalt his dignity" and in a *ḥadīth* is his saying: "By God, may thy glory not cease to be exalted", and it is a prayer to him (God) for dignity and exaltedness.' (similarly in Ibn Durayd 1999: 24). In this case it means *'al-sharīf*. The name is found in other Nabataean inscriptions (al-Theeb 2010, 189: 3, 206: 1), as well as in Palmyrene (Stark 1971: 92, 106).

Inscription No. 2

*l fhm 'mrw br ḥklhy*

for *fhm 'mrw* son of *ḥklhy*

A number of difficulties are faced in giving the likely reading of this commemorative text. It cannot be determined how the first word fits into the text. It is read as *fhm*, but it also could be read *fgm* or *fgh*. However, it cannot be ruled out that it is the first element of the compound personal name *fhm 'mrw*. The other problem is confirming the correct reading of the last personal name, which could also be read with reservation as *ḥklmy* or *ḥklhy*.

What is beyond dispute is that it is a commemorative inscription, like the previous one, and goes back to between the second and third centuries CE.

*fhm 'mrw*: this compound personal name appears here according to our information for the first time in the Nabataean inscriptions. The inscription would begin with the particle 'l' which often occurs in Thamudic and Safaitic texts. There are a number of Nabataean inscriptions, which begin with 'l'. For more information see al-Theeb 2010: 6, 7, 564, 616, 678.

The first element of the name appears in Safaitic (Winnett 1957: 228), and Thamudic inscriptions (Branden 1950: [Hu262] 138). While in Nabataean we have *fhmw* (al-Theeb 2010, 607: 1, 730: 1).

*ḥklhy*: a compound personal name in a verbal sentence form. Its first element is derived from the Arabic root (خَالَق) (al-Firūzābādī 1987: 1211), and it means 'created by God'. Perhaps the closest examples of similar names are: *ḥk* and



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*hkk*, both found in Safaitic inscriptions (Harding 1971: 196).

Inscription No. 3

*hmyn*

*hmyn*

A simple personal name, the *f'lān* form of the root *hmy*, located in other Nabataean inscriptions (al-Theeb 2010, 227: 3, 632: 2, 886), and in Palmyrene (Stark 1971: 89), Safaitic (al-Khraysheh 2002: 121), Lihyanite (Abū al-Ḥasan 2002: 184), and Minaean inscriptions (al-Theeb 1990: 21; al-Said 1995: 93).

Inscription No. 4

*'mrw br y'lngm*

*'mrw son of y'lngm*

This short commemorative inscription goes back to the late Nabataean period, as we can see from the shape of the letters 'm' in both names, and the 'r' in the first personal name and the noun 'br'.

*y'lngm*: a compound personal name in verbal sentence form, meaning 'the star rose'. It appears, as far as we know, for the first time in Semitic inscriptions. Similar personal names are *'ly'l*, *'lysn* and *'lyhz*, the first two found in Minaean inscriptions (al-Said 1995: 138–9), while the third appears in Qatabanian (Hayajneh 1998: 195).

The two elements of this name are found as a personal name in several Arabian scripts. For example, the name *y'ly* occurs in Safaitic inscriptions (Harding 1971: 196; Ababneh 2005: 420–11). The second was found in Thamudic (al-Theeb 2000a: 58), and Safaitic inscriptions (Harding 1971: 196). In the Nabataean it has been detected in the form of *ngmy* (al-Theeb 2010), the form *ngmw* in Palmyrene (Stark 1971: 92, 106), and as *ngm* in Safaitic inscriptions (Ababneh 2005: 767).

Inscription No. 5

*šlm 'bd'l br k'b*

Greeting of *'bd'l* son of *k'b*

Unlike the previous inscriptions this commemorative inscription, to judge from the shape of its letters, goes back to the period after the fourth century CE.

*'bd'l*: a compound personal name meaning 'the servant of 'l', found in Sabaic (Harding 1971: 397), Aramaic (Maraqten 1988: 192) Safaitic (Clark 1980:

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309; Ababneh 2005: 946), Thamudic (Shatnawi 2003: 718), Qatabanian (Hayajneh 1998: 186; Arbach 2002: 158), Ugaritic (Gröndahl 1967: 105), and in the Old Testament (Brown et al. 1906: 715); the name known as 'bd'l' in Nabataean inscriptions (al-Khraysheh 1986: 126), and as 'bd'ly in Hatra inscriptions (Abbadi 1983: 139); For more information see Hayajneh 1998: 186, and Shatnawi 2003: 718.

*k'b*: a simple personal name (see inscription no. 1), discovered in Thamudic (al-Theeb/al-Dhīb 1421/2000–1: 122), and Safaitic inscriptions (Winnett, Harding, 1978: 2716, 3344).

## II: Rock Art

The site includes a number of examples of rock art. Two of them are in the form of a human being, while the others are in an animal shape. The first human drawing is a person believed to be in a dancing position, because his hair and hands are raised (see plate no. 3). The second is a poor drawing of a person riding a horse (see plate no. 5: I).

The animal drawings occur in several types. While the deer and the camels in this site are greater in number, the bull (see plate no. 7: I), the donkey (see plate no. 7: II) and the dog and the gazelle (*ghazal*) are found in only one drawing for each of them. However, some of them are drawn in a very good style, such as the gazelle and the two camel drawings. The rest of the drawings vary between good and excellent; some are poorly drawn.

### I - Rock Art:

Type	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
Camel	2	4	–	2	8
Ibex	3	7	3	–	13
Horse	–	–	1	–	1
Donkey	–	–	1	–	1
Bull	–	–	1	–	1
Dog	–	–	1	–	1
Gazelle	–	–	–	1	1
Unknown	1	–	–	–	1
Total	6	11	7	3	27

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### 2 - Symbols:

Human	Sign	Geometric	Total
2	6	5	13

Personal Names:	Vocabulary
<i>ḥklhy</i> : 2	<i>br</i> : 'son of' 1, 2, 4, 5
<i>ḥmyn</i> : 3	<i>l</i> : 'for' 2
<i>y'lngm</i> : 4	<i>šlm</i> : 'greeting' 5
<i>k'b</i> : 5	
<i>k'bw</i> : 1	
<i>'bd'l</i> : 5	
<i>'mrw</i> : 1, 4	
<i>ḥm'mrw</i> : 2	

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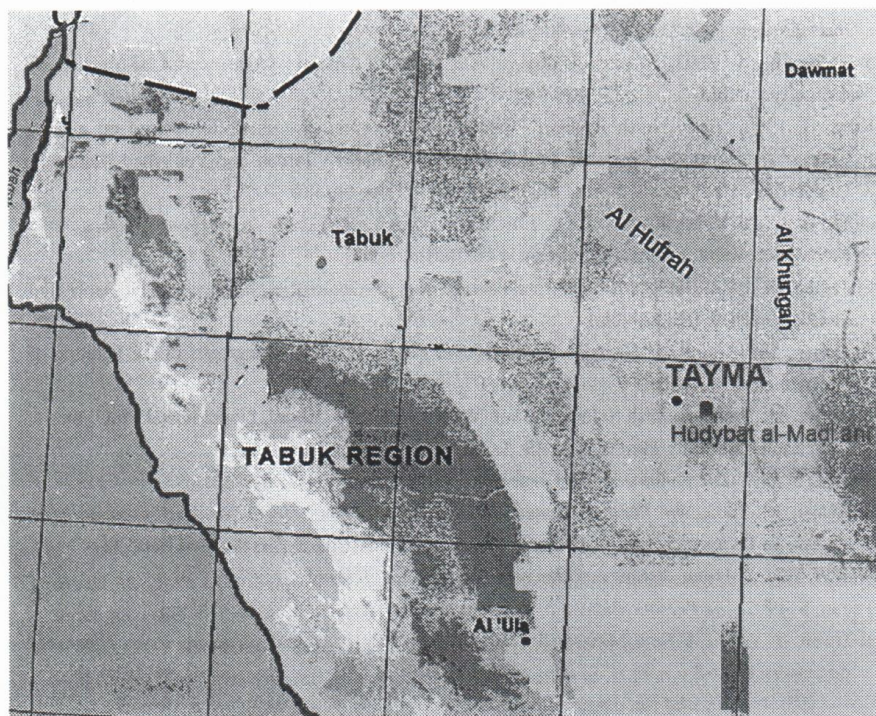
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From Ancient Arabia to Modern Cairo

Plate no. 1



I: Hüdybāt al-Maql'ānī Site



II: Nabataean inscriptions



A New Nabataean Inscription from the Hūdybāt al-Maḍl'ānī Site

Plate no. 2



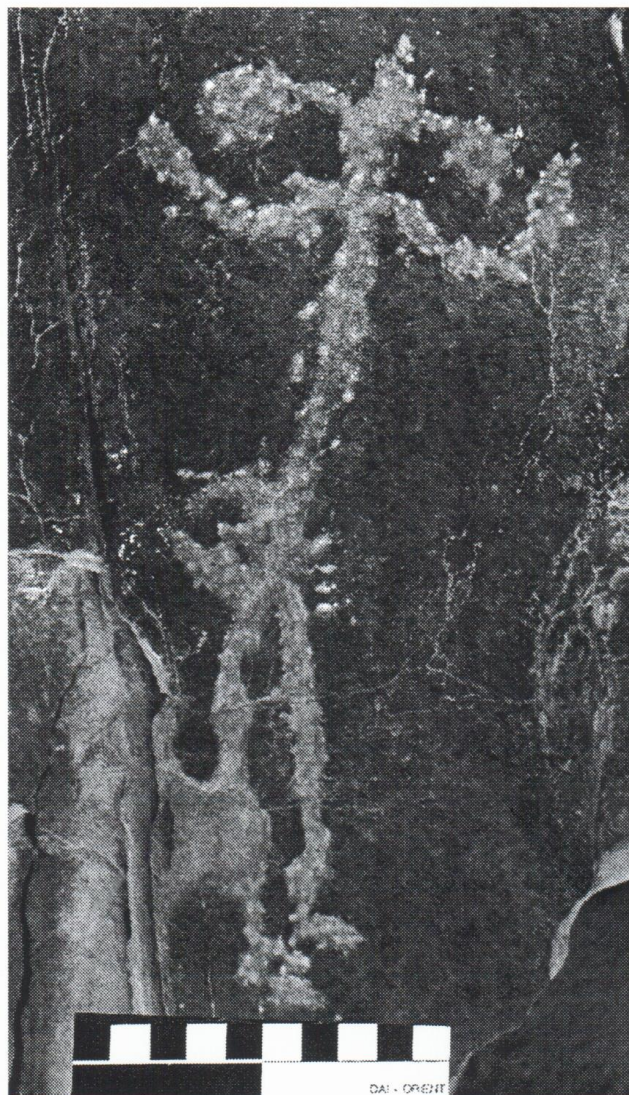
I: Islamic inscriptions



II: Symbols and signs and some animal drawings

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Plate no. 3



A drawing of a human being



A New Nabataean Inscription from the Hūdybāt al-Maḍl'ānī Site

Plate no. 4



I: Some symbols and signs with Nabataean inscriptions



II: Animal drawings



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Plate no. 5



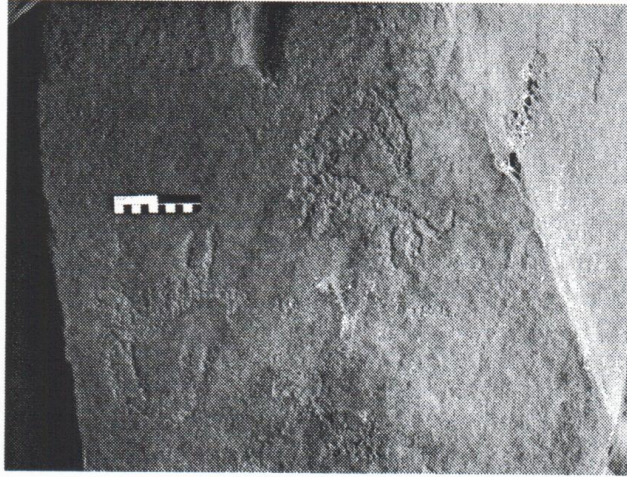
I: A drawing of a person riding a horse, with some animal drawings



II: A drawing of an ibex

A New Nabataean Inscription from the Hūdybāt al-Maḍl'ānī Site

Plate no. 6

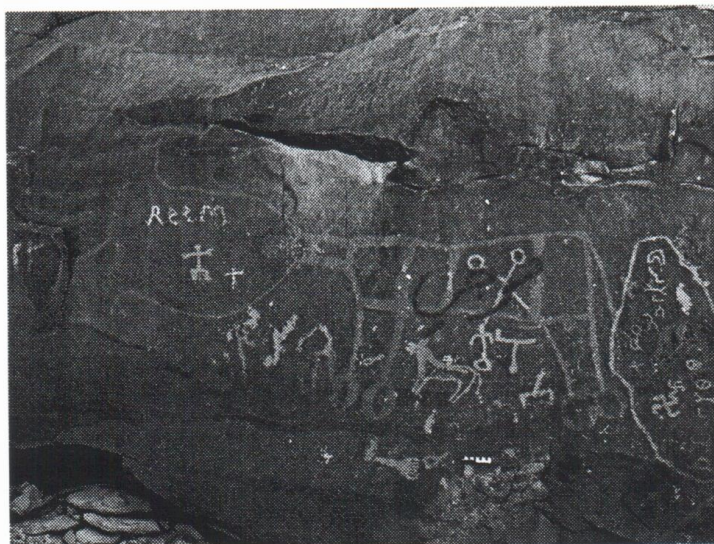


I: A drawing of an ibex and a dog

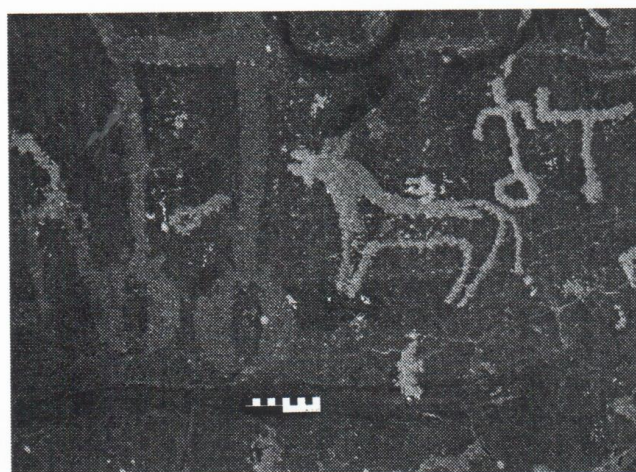


II: Thamudic inscriptions





I: A drawing of a bull



II: A drawing of a donkey

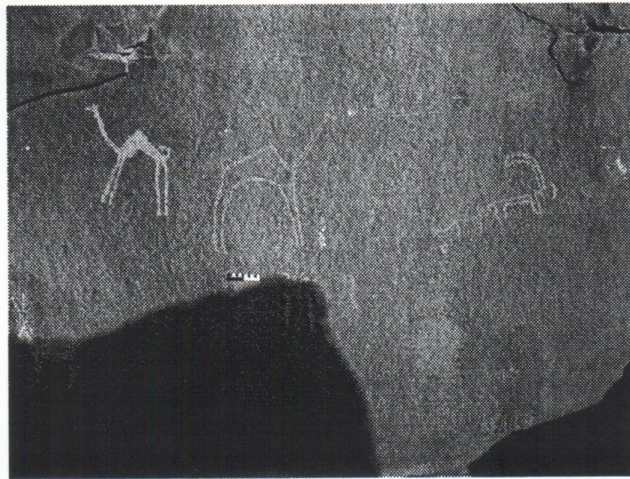


A New Nabataean Inscription from the Hūdybāt al-Maḍl'ānī Site

Plate no. 8



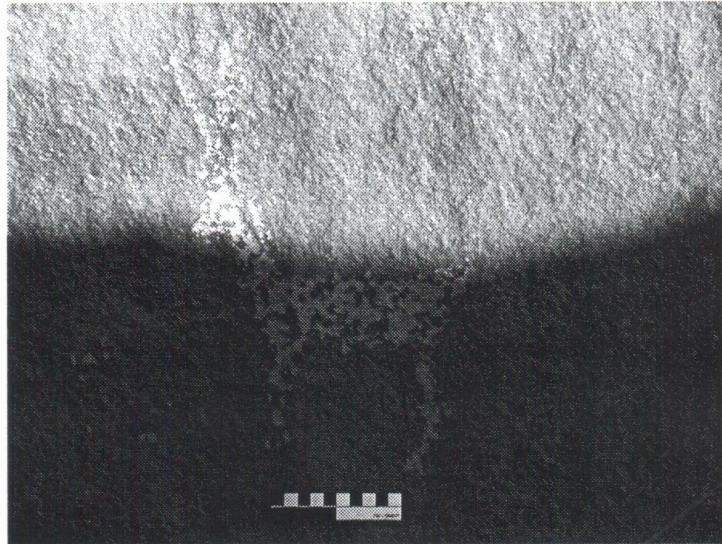
I: Thamudic inscriptions



II: Animal drawings (camels, gazelle and an ibex)

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Plate no. 9



I: A drawing of a gazelle

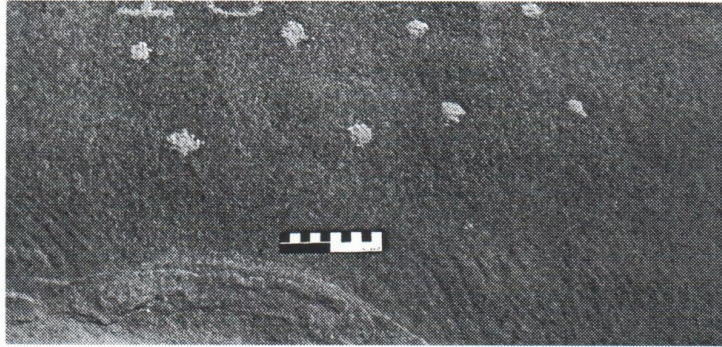


II: A drawing of a dog and an ibex



A New Nabataean Inscription from the Hūḍybāt al-Maḍl'ānī Site

Plate no. 10



Dots