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New Nabataean inscriptions from the site of al-Sīj in the region of al-ʿUlā, Saudi Arabia

SOLAIMAN ʿABD AL-RAḤMĀN AL-THEEB

Summary

A group of twenty-eight Nabataean inscriptions was found at the site of al-Sīj, c.40 km east of al-ʿUlā, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Several of them are by men who describe themselves as *frs* ‘horseman, cavalryman’. Some provide names which are rare or new in the Nabataean onomasticon.

Keywords: Nabataean inscriptions, Saudi Arabia, al-ʿUlā, cavalry, personal names

This group of inscriptions was found at the site of al-Sīj, 40 km east of al-ʿUlā in north-west Saudi Arabia (Fig. 1). They were discovered by Dr Badr al-Faqayr, Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, Faculty of Arts, King Saud University, during his geographical survey of the province, in the spring of 2008.¹

The study of these twenty-nine inscriptions provides the following information.

1. There are thirty-six personal names, which can be analysed in the following manner:

Type	Number
a. Simple	23
b. Compound	5
c. Hypocoristic	3
d. Consisting of a divine name	1
e. Non-Semitic	2
f. Unspecified	2

- a. Among the twenty-three simple personal names, the *ʿal* form is the most common. Thus: *blḥw* (no. 15), *dmy* (nos 7; 16/2; 20), *ḥwrw* (11d), *ḥy* (12), *ʿdyw* (6; 2, 9), *ʿnqw* (9), *rbw* (4). There are six names of the *ʿal* or

ʿil form: *hnʿ* (11b), *mṭrw* (13), *ndmw* (10), *ʿšm* (1), *rkḏw* (13a), *šhlw* (4). There are three names of the *mʿl* form: *mslm* (13), *mʿyḏw* (3), *msʿdw* (11b). There are two names of the *ʿal* form: *gydt* (no. 21), *nʿrt* (5/2; 17/2). There are two names of the *ʿalān* form: *glqyn* (21), *ʿlyn* (1). There is one example of each of the following three forms, the *ʿal* form: *ʿḥlb* (11c); the *ʿal* form: *swrw* (11a; 14/1); and the *ʿal* form: *thnh* (13a).

- b. Compound names: *ʿwsʿb* ‘gift of ʿb’ (15a), *mrʿlhy* ‘the servant of ʿlhy’ (11c), *ʿbdšms* ‘servant of Šms’ (11), *ʿbdḥrtt* ‘servant of Ḥrtt’ (16/1), *šyʿlhy* ‘follower of ʿlhy’ (10).
 - c. Hypocoristic names: *ḥyw* ‘life [+ the name of a deity]’ (5/2; 17/1), *ḥnynw* ‘virtue [+ the name of a deity]’ (2; 3), *ṭymw* ‘servant [+ the name of a deity]’ 5/1; 8; 18/1).
 - d. One personal name consists of the name of a god: *bʿtrw* (6/2), which is a name containing the divine name *ʿttr*, preceded by the preposition *b*.
 - e. There are only two personal names that do not have a Semitic etymology: *hrś* (2) which may represent the Egyptian divine name *Ḥrw* via its Greek form *Horos/Hōros*, and *rwfš* (5/1; 8; 18/1; 22; 23), which is the Latin name *Rufus*.
2. Nine of the names in this group of inscriptions are new to the Nabataean onomasticon: *ʿḥlb* (11c), *blḥw* (15), *bʿtrw* (6/2), *glqyn* (21), *hrś* (2), *mṭrw* (13), *mʿyḏw* (3), *ʿbdšms* (11), *ʿšm* (1).
 3. Five of the authors of these commemorative inscriptions give their profession as *frs* ‘the horseman’

¹ Editor’s note: the author has not followed the *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* Guidelines on transliteration and wishes to transliterate the Nabataean texts as he believes they would have been pronounced, i.e. as if they were classical Arabic. This means that, according to the context, Nabataean *d* is transliterated as ‘d’ or ‘ḏ’, Nabataean *ḥ* as ‘ḥ’ or ‘ḥ’, Nabataean *ʿ* as ‘ʿ’ or ‘ḡ’, Nabataean *š* as ‘š’ or ‘ḏ’, Nabataean *s* as ‘š’ or ‘s’, and Nabataean *t* as ‘t’ or ‘ṭ’. He has used *š* for Nabataean *semkath* in order to distinguish it from the ‘s’ with which he sometimes transliterates Nabataean *šin*. The translations of names or words the reading of which is doubtful in the original are placed between { }. He places letters the reading of which is very doubtful between ().

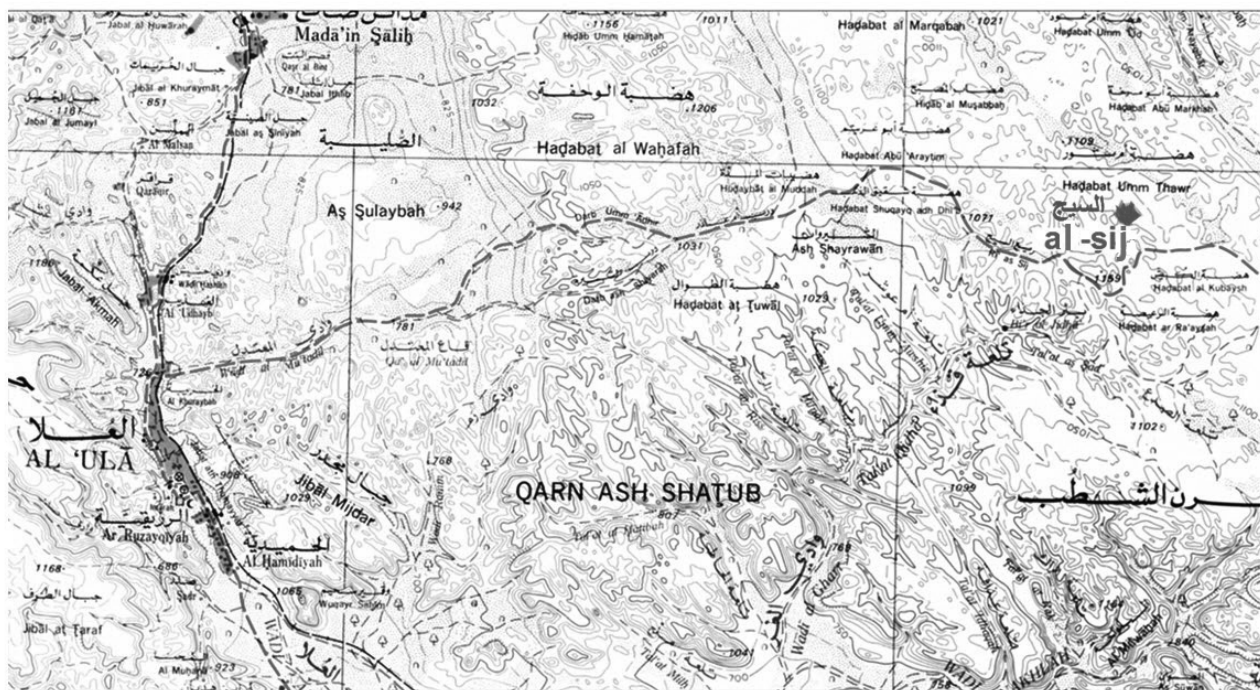


FIGURE 1. A map showing the location of al-Sij.

- (1; 2; 3; 4; 13; 21).
4. There are several different ways in which the inscriptions begin: (a) with the singular noun *ḏkyr* 'remembrance' (1; 5; 7; 11; 11a; 11c; 12; 14; 15; 16); possibly appearing as *ḏkr* in 11d; (b) with a personal name (2; 3; 4; 6; 9; 10; 19; 20; 23); (c) with the conjunction *w* (8); (d) with the singular noun *slm* 'greetings' (11b; 13a; 17; 18; 21; 22); (e) with the interjection *bly* 'yes, indeed' (13).
 5. The longest inscriptions are numbers 5, 6, and 16, which each consist of three lines, while we have four inscriptions of two lines (14; 17; 18; 19). The remaining twenty-two are of one line.
 6. This group of inscriptions provides us with nineteen lexical items. Two verbs, both in the third person singular masculine perfect: *ktb* (16/3; 18/2), *qr* (19/2); thirteen nouns including one, *hry* 'the freedman' (11a) occurring here in the emphatic state for the first time; the prepositions *b* (ten times) and *l* (once); the conjunction *w* occurs five times; the interjection *bly* occurs once.
 7. Some of these inscriptions were well carved (5; 7; 16; 17; 18; 20; 21) by people with a good knowledge of Nabataean calligraphy. Others were reasonably well engraved (1; 9; 22; 23) and the rest were either carelessly written or have suffered from weathering,

making it difficult to obtain the correct reading. The inscriptions of this group are distributed as follows:

Elegantly written *Well written* *Carelessly written* *Weathered*

7 4 10 9

8. The engravers of only four of these inscriptions (3; 7; 16; 20) used the dot to distinguish the letter *d* from the letter *r*.
9. Each of the inscriptions in this group relates to only one person, with the exception of no. 5, which was written by the two friends, Tymw son of Rwfs and Hyw son of N^{rt}, and no. 16 which was carved by two brothers, Khylw and ʿbdhrt sons of Dmy.
10. These texts were accompanied by a number of animal drawings, some carefully drawn such as the ostrich near no. 6, and the two camels (nos 13 and 19). There is also a scene representing a dog chasing an ibex (no. 5).
11. All of these inscriptions were written by or for men, except for 13a, which — if my reading is correct — was carved by or for a woman.

Inscription no. 1 (Fig. 2)

ḏkyr ʿsm frs br ʿlyn b-ṭb

The good remembrance of ʿsm the horseman son of ʿlyn

This short commemorative inscription is well written and the reading given above is therefore certain.

ḏkyr: a noun in the masculine singular construct (passive participle). It occurs very frequently in Nabataean and other Semitic inscriptions (see al-Theeb 2000a: 71).

ʿšm: a simple personal name of either the *fāʿil* or the *fiʿāl* form. Thus, it could be vocalized as *ʿāšim*, *ʿiṣām*, or *ʿašm*. The first would mean ‘defender’, and the second would mean ‘the one who has been protected’. All three personal names appear in the early Arabic sources: *ʿāšim* in al-Qalqashandī 1984: 447; Ibn al-Kalbī 1986: 692; al-Andalūsī 1983: 274; *ʿašm* and *ʿiṣām* in Ibn Durayd 1991: 338, 544. Indeed, the personal names *ʿāšim* and *ʿiṣām* are still in use today (Ibn al-Zubayr & Badawī 1991: 1098, 1173). In the form *ʿšm*, it is known in other Semitic inscriptions such as: Thamudic (e.g. al-Theeb 1999: no. 18; Eskoubi 1999: no. 43), and Safaitic (e.g. Clark 1983: 176; al-Manaser 2008: nos 109, 246), and Lihyanite (e.g. JSLih 76/2). It occurs in the form *ʿšmw* in two Nabataean inscriptions found in the Ḥawrān (Cantineau 1978, ii: 134; Negev 1991: 94), and in the form *ʿšmm* in Qatabanic (Hayajneh 1998: 191).

frsʿ: a noun in the masculine singular emphatic meaning ‘the horseman, the cavalryman’, occurs in this form in a number of Nabataean and other Semitic inscriptions (see al-Theeb 2000a: 210–211).

ʿlyn: a simple personal name in the form *faʿalān* of the root ʿ-L-W/Y ‘to rise’. The name appears in the Early Arabic sources (Ibn al-Kalbī 1986: 140), and is still in use among the Arabs (al-Ḥazrāji 1988: 264; Ibn al-Zubayr & Badawī 1991: 1211). It is found elsewhere in Nabataean (e.g. al-Theeb 2002b: no. 165/1), and in other Semitic inscriptions: Thamudic (e.g. King 1990: 529; Shatnawi 2002: 726), and Safaitic (e.g. Alūlū 1996: no. 246; Clark 1983: no. 1165), Sabaic (e.g. CIS iv 308/20), and Lihyanite (e.g. JSLih 270); cf. *ʿln* in some Aramaic texts (Maraqten 1988: 198).

b-ṭb: a noun (*ṭb*) in the masculine singular absolute preceded by the preposition *b*, meaning ‘for good, well’; known in Nabataean, as well as in many other Semitic inscriptions (see al-Theeb 2000a: 107).

Inscription no. 2 (Fig. 2)

hrš frsʿ b r ḥnynw slm

Greetings of Hrs the horseman son of Ḥnynw

hrš: probably a form of the Egyptian divine name *Ḥrw* via its Greek form *Horos/Hōros* (Preisigke 1922: col. 343), in which case it would be a hypocoristic. It appears here for the first time in Nabataean inscriptions.

ḥnynw: a hypocoristic name which means ‘virtue [+ the name of a deity]’, derived from the Semitic root Ḥ-N-N, ‘to show favour, to be merciful’, which is attested in a number of Semitic inscriptions (e.g. al-Theeb 1993: no. 219; 1995: no. 1). The name is found in this form in a number of Nabataean (e.g. JSNab 250, 259/2, 279; al-Theeb 1995: nos 1, 37; 2002a: nos 1/1, 2/2; 2005: nos 19d, 50), and Palmyrene inscriptions (Stark 1971: 89). It also occurs in the form *ḥnn* in Ugaritic (Gröndahl 1967: 136), Aramaic (Maraqten 1988: 166), Ammonite (Jackson 1983: 512), Safaitic (e.g. al-Rūsān 2004: no. 346; Clark 1983: nos 302, 1065), Thamudic (e.g. Eskoubi 1999: no. 94), and Syriac inscriptions (e.g. Drijvers & Healey 1999: no. Am 10/13), and in the Old Testament (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1906: 339; Holladay 1988: 110). It is also attested in Qatabanic inscriptions as *ḥnynm* (Hayajneh 1998: 125), and as *ḥnyn* in Minaic (al-Said 1995: no. 94), and *ḥnnh* in Lihyanite inscriptions (e.g. JSLih 252). It could be the equivalent of the Arabic name *ḥunayn*, which is found in early Arabic sources (al-Andalūsī 1983: 116) and is still in use among the Arabs (Ibn al-Zubayr & Badawī 1991: 474).

slm: a noun in the masculine singular absolute, found in Nabataean and other Semitic inscriptions (see al-Theeb 2000a: 253–254).

Inscription no. 3 (Fig. 2)

ḥnynw frsʿ br mʿyḏw slm

Greeting of Ḥnynw the horseman son of Mʿyḏw

This short commemorative inscription is distinguished by the use of the dot, which occurs on the fourth letter of the second personal name, a phenomenon well known in Nabataean inscriptions (see Nehmé 2010: 55, 56–59). Since there is no dot over the *r* in *frsʿ* and *br*, this means

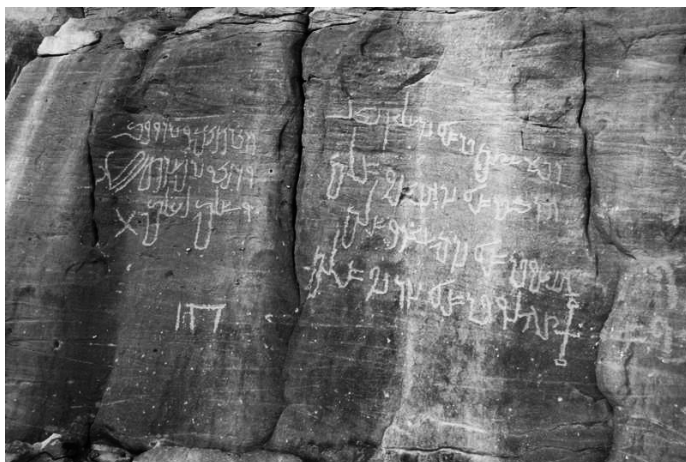
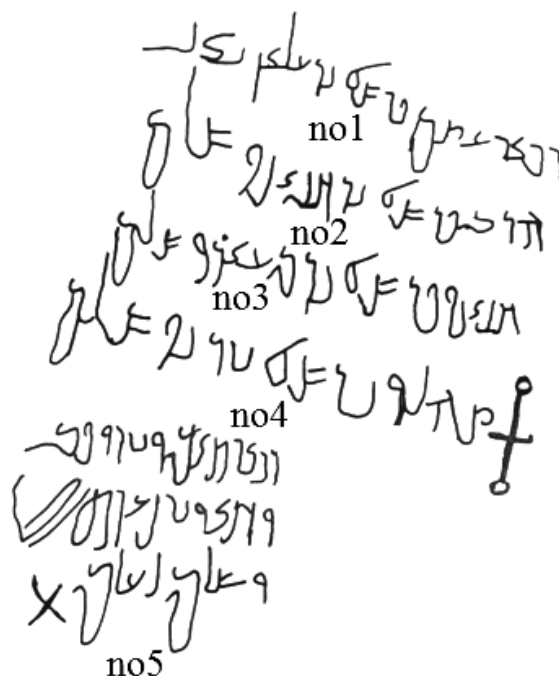


FIGURE 2. *Al-Sij Nabataean inscriptions 1–5.*



that this name must be read *mʿyḏw/mʿydw* (rather than *mʿyrw*, *mgyrw*, etc).

To the best of my knowledge a name with this spelling has not been found before in any Semitic inscription. However, *mʿd* is well attested in Safaitic inscriptions (Harding 1971: 552), and *mʿḏ* is also known (1971: 553, to which add Clark 1983: no. 253). It is worth mentioning that two names probably from the same root are also known from Safaitic inscriptions: *ḏ* (e.g. Abbadi 2006: 132; ʿAlūlū 1996: nos 373, 352), and *yḏ* (e.g. Ababneh 2005: no. 286) the latter also being found in Lihyanite (e.g. Abū al-Ḥassan 1997: 431; 2002: 341).

Inscription no. 4 (Fig. 2)

ṣhlw frsʿ br rbw slm

Greeting of Ṣhlw the horseman son of Rbw

ṣhlw: a simple personal name in the *faʿl* or *faʿal* form of the root Ṣ-H-L, which is found in Ugaritic (Gordon 1965: 473), and in the Old Testament (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1906: 843), Syriac (Costaz 1963: 299) with the meaning ‘to neigh’. It appears that the intended meaning of this name is courage and bravery. A name, *ṣhlyt*, from the same root is found in Nabataean inscriptions (JSNab 280).

rbw: although this is the most likely reading, it should be borne in mind that because the letters

d and *r* can have identical forms, and the shapes of *b* and *n* can be very similar, especially in medial position, this name could in theory also be read *rnw*,² *dbw*,³ (or *ḏbw*),⁴ *dnw*,⁵ (or *ḏnw*).⁶

The name *rbw* occurs in Nabataean (Cantineau 1978, ii: 145), and Safaitic inscriptions (e.g. al-Manaser 2008: no. 299). Compare *rbʿ* in Palmyrene texts (Stark 1971: 111), *rb* in Thamudic (e.g. al-Qaḥṭānī 2007: no. 101; Shatnawi 2002: 691) and in Qatabanic inscriptions (Hayajneh 1998: 145). It could be compared with the name *rbhmy*,⁷ which was reported in Lihyanite inscriptions (Abū al-Ḥassan 2002: 295). It could be explained as a simple personal name meaning ‘the master, the great’.

² To the best of my knowledge, this name has not been found in any of the Semitic inscriptions. It could be derived from the Arabic roots R-W/Y-N.

³ The name *db* occurs in Safaitic inscriptions (Harding 1971: 233; Clark 1983: 452). A simple name related to Arabic *dabb* ‘bear’.

⁴ The name *ḏb* is found in Safaitic (Harding 1971: 248), and *ʿḏbb* in Qatabanic inscriptions (Hayajneh 1998: 69).

⁵ A name, *dn*, is found in Thamudic (al-Theeb 1999: no. 171) and Safaitic inscriptions (Harding 1971: 244), and in the Old Testament (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1906: 192). It might be compared with the name *ḏny* in Palmyrene (Stark 1971: 83) and *ḏny* in Syriac inscriptions (al-Jadir 1983: 369). The most acceptable interpretation would be that it is derived from the Semitic root D-Y-N, meaning ‘do justice’, found in the Old Testament (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1906: 193) and Syriac (Costaz 1963: 60) and in other Semitic languages (see Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995: 363).

⁶ A name *ḏn* is found in Safaitic inscriptions (Winnett & Harding 1978: no. 1725a).

⁷ A similar name, *rbhm*, occurs in Thamudic inscriptions, meaning ‘their master’ (al-Theeb 2002b: 78).

Inscription no. 5 (Fig. 2)

ḏkyr tymw br rwfš
whyw br nʿrt b-ṭb
wslm l-ʿlmʷ

Good remembrance of Tymw son of Rwfš, and Hyw son of N-rt and greetings for ever

This inscription, which is composed of three lines, is the longest in this group. With the exception of the interjection *bly* ‘truly, indeed’, the writer Tymw has used all of the terms which appear in Nabataean memorial inscriptions: *ḏkyr*, *b-ṭb*, *slm*, and *l-ʿlmʷ*.

tymw: a hypocoristic name ‘servant [+ the name of a deity]’. It has been found in Nabataean (Cantineau 1978, ii: 155; al-Khraysheh 1986: 187; Negev 1991: 68), International (Imperial) Aramaic (e.g. al-Theeb 2007: no. 4b/1–2), Palmyrene (Stark 1971: 115), Minaic (al-Said 1995: 76–77), Sabaic (e.g. RES 463/2), Safaitic (e.g. al-Khraysheh 2002: no. 297), and Thamudic inscriptions (Shatnawi 2002: 662); the name resembles the well-known Arabic personal name *Taym*.

rwfš: a transliteration of the Latin name *Rufus* which, to the best of my knowledge, has been found twice before in Nabataean inscriptions (Cantineau 1978, ii: 146).

hyw: I consider this to be a hypocoristic personal name meaning ‘living [+ the name of a deity]’. It is found in other Nabataean inscriptions (e.g. al-Theeb 2002a: nos 80, 89/4, 103, 154; 2005: nos 25, 29; Negev 1991: 28), as well as in Sabaic (e.g. RES 3090), Qatabanic (Hayajneh 1998: 126), Minaic (al-Said 1995: 96), Safaitic (e.g. Winnett & Harding 1978: 871), and Lihyanite inscriptions (e.g. Caskel 1954: no. 77/1).

*nʿrt*⁸: a simple personal name in the *faʿalah* form from the root N-ʿ-R, (Ibn Manẓūr 1955–1956, v: 220–221). It is found in this form in Nabataean (e.g. al-Theeb 2002a: no. 83; Negev 1991: 44) and Thamudic inscriptions (King 1990: 555). Compare *nʿry* in Palmyrene (Stark 1971: 100) and *nʿr* in Sabaic inscriptions (e.g. CIS iv 552/3), and the theophoric name *nʿrgd*, in a Dedanite inscription (JSLih 138).

l-ʿlmʷ: the preposition *l-* ‘for’ and the masculine singular noun in the emphatic state *ʿlmʷ*. The phrase

occurs frequently in Nabataean inscriptions, mostly in the form *l-ʿlm* but occasionally as *l-ʿlmʷ*, as here (e.g. Healey 1993: no. 11/4), and almost exclusively in Palmyrene (see Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995: 860). It is found in a number of Semitic languages (for more information see al-Theeb 2000a: 197–198).

Inscription no. 6 (Fig. 3)

bʿtrw
br ʿdyw
slm

Greetings of Bʿtrw son of ʿdyw

This short commemorative inscription is composed of three lines, written below a good drawing of an ostrich.

bʿtrw: a personal name composed of the divine name *ʿtr*, preceded by the preposition *b-*. A similar name *bʿttr* is found in Sabaic (Tairan 1992: 84), Minaic (al-Said 1995: 71), and Thamudic inscriptions (Shatnawi 2002: 656). This type of name is known from a number of other Semitic inscriptions, such as the name *bʿm* in Qatabanic (Hayajneh 1998: 99) and *bʿlh* in Safaitic (e.g. Clark 1983: no. 375).

ʿdyw: The name is found in this form in other Nabataean Inscriptions (al-Khraysheh 1986: 135; Negev 1991: 48), while *ʿdy* occurs in other Semitic inscriptions, thus: Thamudic (e.g. al-Theeb 2000–2001: no. 190), Safaitic (e.g. al-Khraysheh 2002: 133; al-Rūsān 2004: 402; Abbadi 2006: nos 62, 85). It is a simple name meaning ‘the man who runs to fight’ (Ibn Durayd 1991: 50–51; al-Khazrajī 1988: 448), which is also found in Early Arabic sources (Ibn al-Kalbī 1986: 263; al-Qalqashandī 1984: 253; al-Hamdānī 1987: 93; al-Andalūsī 1983: 120).

Inscription no. 7 (Fig. 4)

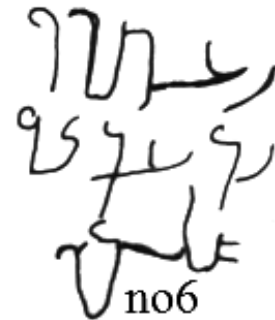
ḏkyr khylw br d{m}y b-ṭb

The good remembrance of Khylw son of D{m}y

Above this short commemorative inscription we find two good drawings. The first drawing is an ibex with a large body, the second is perhaps a dog. The letters are well formed and show a good knowledge of the Nabataean script. Note, in particular:

1. The use of the diacritic point over the first letter of

⁸ The close proximity of the signs *n* and *ʿ* may suggest to some that it should be read as *m*. If so, the name would be *mrt* (see al-Theeb 1998: no. 213/1).

FIGURE 3. *Al-Sīj Nabataean inscription 6.*

the second name, used to distinguish the *d* from the examples of *r* which in the text have an identical shape.

2. The use of the final forms of *b* (in *b-ṭb*) and *y* (in *dmy*).

khylw: As far as I know, this is the seventh appearance of this personal name in Nabataean inscriptions (e.g. al-Theeb 1995: no. 28; 1998: nos 197/1, 231; 2002a: nos 5, 54; 2005: no. 59). The name appears in this form in Palmyrene inscriptions (Stark 1971: 92), and as *khl* in other Semitic languages, e.g. Thamudic (King 1990: 541; Shatnawi 2002: 736), Safaitic (e.g. al-Khaysheh 2002: no. 407; al-Theeb 2003a: no. 30; Abbadi 2006: 132), Sabaic (e.g. al-ʿAnazī 2004–2005: no. 92), and Minaic (al-Said 1995: 154–155). It is found as *khlm* in Qatabanic texts (Hayajneh 1998: 222). The name could have several explanations, as follows:

1. It could be a simple personal name derived from the Arabic word *al-kahl*, the ‘person who has passed the age of fifty’ (Ibn Manẓūr 1955–1956, xi: 600), in this case it would mean ‘elderly’.
2. It could be a hypocoristic of a theophoric name compounded with the divine name *Khl* who was worshipped in Arabia as a moon-god and caravan-god. An image of this deity was found at the site of Qaryat al-Fāw, in southern Saudi Arabia (al-Ansary 1989: 107), and references to him are also found in the Thamudic and

Lihyanite inscriptions (Bākhashwayn 1993: 78–79).

3. It could be interpreted as the passive participle of the Aramaic verb ‘to be able’ (Brauner 1984: 255; Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995: 489–490); while in Sabaic it means ‘be able to, succeed in, win’ (Beeston *et al.* 1982: 77; Biella 1982: 241). Thus the name could mean ‘winner, victor’.

*dmy*⁹:

A name of this form may have been found in a Lihyanite inscription (Harding 1971: 244); and could be compared with the name *dm*, in Safaitic (e.g. Winnett 1957: no. 442) and Thamudic inscriptions (e.g. al-Theeb 1999: no. 167; Eskoubi 2004: no. 120). The personal name might be explained as:

1. a hypocoristic name, its first element (*dm*) could be compared with the Hebrew root D-M-M meaning ‘to be, or to grow, silent’ (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1906: 198).
2. a simple personal name based on the Arabic root D-M-M ‘to smear all over’, cf. Arabic *dumma al-baʿīru damman* ‘the camel was loaded with fat’ (Ibn Manẓūr 1955–1956, xii: 207).

⁹ The name could also be read as *dśy*, a personal name which, to the best of my knowledge, appears here for the first time in Nabataean.

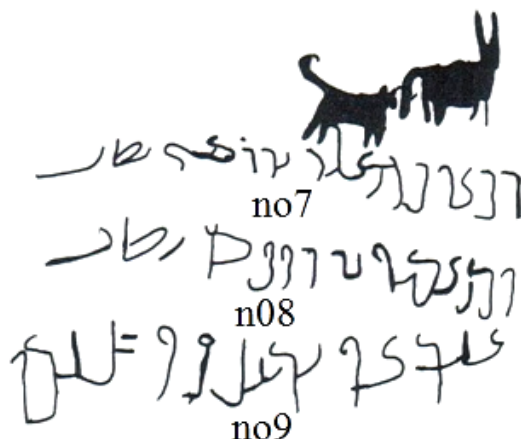
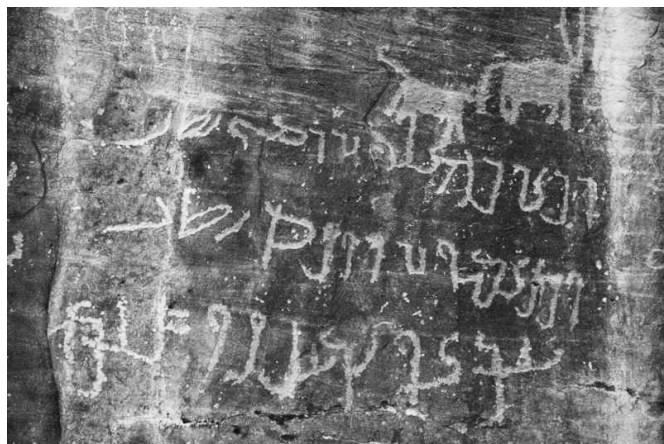


FIGURE 4. Al-Sīj Nabataean inscriptions 7–9.

Inscription no. 8 (Fig. 4):

w tymw br rwfš b-ṭb

The good (remembrance) of Tymw son of Rwfš

Because Tymw wrote *b-ṭb* (see inscription no. 1), I have not taken this as part of the previous inscription, no. 7. Interestingly, Tymw starts his inscription with the conjunction *w* since he did not want to repeat the word *ḏkyr* (see inscription no. 1). I believe that the Tymw of this inscription is also the author of the first line of inscription no. 5.

Inscription no. 9 (Fig. 4)

ʿdyw br ʿnqw slm

Greetings of ʿdyw son of ʿnqw

The small commemorative inscription is well written and the reading is clear. ʿnqw is a simple name which, to the best of my knowledge, appears here for the second time in Nabataean inscriptions (JSNab: 300; al-Theeb 1998: no. 248). It also occurs in the form ʿnq in Safaitic (Winnett 1957: no. 201; Winnett & Harding 1978: 598) and Thamudic (King 1990: 531). For more information see al-Theeb 1998: 318.

Inscription no. 10 (Fig. 5)

šyʿ ʿlhy br ndmw slm

Greetings of Šyʿ ʿlhy son of Ndmw

This small inscription is carved on a rough surface. The crack in the rock linking the top of the letter *b* (in *br*) with

the *m* in the second name makes the reading given above a little doubtful.

šyʿ ʿlhy: a compound name meaning ‘follower of ʿlhy’, which is found in other Nabataean inscriptions (e.g. al-Theeb 1995: nos 26, 46/1; Cantineau 1978, ii: 150; Negev 1991: 63).¹⁰ Similar names appear in other Semitic texts, for example, šyʿ ʿl in Safaitic inscriptions (e.g. al-Khraysheh 2002: nos 386–388; Ababneh 2005: no. 795) and šʿlh in Thamudic (King 1990: 515). For further comparisons with other Semitic languages see al-Theeb 2007: 77. In the Early Arabic sources it appears as šayʿu llāh (al-Zabīdī [1966?], v: 405).

ndmw: a similar name occurs as *ndm* in Safaitic Inscriptions (Harding 1971: 584; Clark 1983: no. 1142).

Inscription no. 11 (Fig. 6)

ḏkyr ʿbdšms

Remembrance of ʿbdšms

This short inscription was written at the top of the rock face.

ʿbdšms: a compound personal name meaning ‘servant of Šms’ and, to the best of my knowledge, a name with this spelling has not been found before in any Nabataean inscription. However, it is attested in a number of other Semitic

¹⁰ It should be noted that Negev’s association of this name with Arabic *šīʿlāʿ* ‘witch, hag’ (1991: 63) was based on a misunderstanding of Harding 1971: 320.



no10

FIGURE 5. *Al-Sīj Nabataean inscription 10.*

inscriptions, such as Safaitic (e.g. Ababneh 2005: no. 265), Lihyanite (Abū al-Ḥassan 1997: no. 159; 2002: no. 197/2–3?, 259, 276), Aramaic (Maraqten 1988: 195), Hatran (Abbadi 1983: 143), Syriac (al-Jadir 1983: 394). A similar name appears as ʿbdšm in Sabaic (Harding 1971: 399) and as ʿbdšmy in Palmyrene (Stark 1971: 103).

Alongside this inscription there are several other texts, some badly or carelessly carved, others damaged or badly weathered. The readings proposed below must therefore remain tentative.

Inscription no. 11a (Fig. 6)

ḏkyr swrw br {n}ʿ{m} ... ḥryʿ b-ṭb

The good remembrance of Swrw son of {N}ʿ{m}. . . the freedman

The text is crudely carved on the left side of the rock face. The reading above is suggested tentatively. It is possible that this author is the same as the Swr who left two inscriptions at al-Ḥijr (JSNab 181, 344).¹¹

swrw: a simple personal name, which may be derived from the Arabic root S-W-R, meaning ‘to bounce, leap’ (Ibn Durayd 1991: 216). A second possibility is that it is derived from the Arabic *al-sawwār*, meaning ‘the lion’ (al-Ḥazraḥ 1988: 371).

ḥryʿ: a masculine noun in the singular emphatic, meaning ‘the freedman’, which is found as *ḥry* elsewhere in Nabataean (CIS ii 161 II/2). For further comparisons with the other Semitic languages see al-Theeb 2000a: 101.

Inscription no. 11b (Fig. 6)

slm m{s}ʿ(dw) br hnʿ

Greetings of M{sʿdw} son of Hnʿ

This poorly carved inscription is engraved immediately below no. 11a.

msʿdw: a simple personal name, in the *mafʿūl* form meaning ‘the one who is happy, blessed, glad’. See also *msʿwdw*, in other Nabataean inscriptions (e.g. JSNab 334, 335). *Msʿd* occurs in Thamudic (e.g. Eskoubi 1999: nos 2, 12, 19), Safaitic (e.g. al-Theeb 2003a: no. 11), and Sabaic inscriptions (e.g. al-ʿAnazi 2004–2005: no. 38), and *Msʿdm* in Qatabanic inscriptions (Hayajneh 1998: 234).

hnʿ: a simple personal name of the *fāʿil* form found in a number of Nabataean inscriptions (e.g. al-Theeb 2005: nos 24, 54; JSNab 192). The name appears in various forms in a number of Semitic inscriptions (see al-Theeb 1998: 129).

Inscription no. 11c (Fig. 6)

ḏkyr {m}rʿlhy {b}r ʿḥlb b-ṭb

The good remembrance of {M}rʿlhy {son of ʿḥ}lb

¹¹ Note that I would reread JSNab 181 as follows: *ḡylw br swr dwmʿ slm*, meaning ‘Greetings of Ḡyl son of Swr the plasterer.’

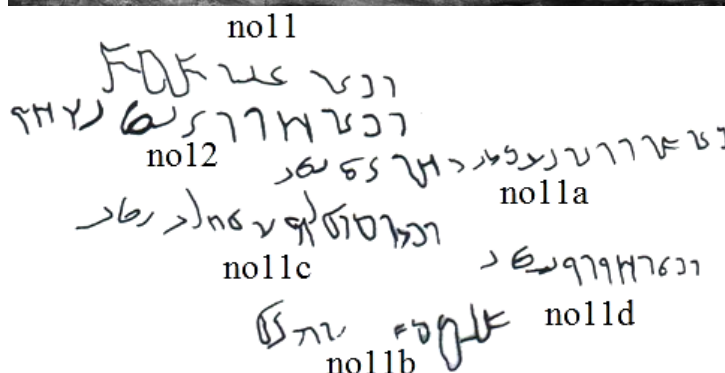


FIGURE 6. Al-Sīj Nabataean inscriptions 11–12.

This inscription is carelessly engraved and so the reading above is offered tentatively.

mr̥lhy: To the best of my knowledge, this is the first occurrence of this name in a Nabataean inscription. It is found as a personal name in Safaitic (Hazim 1986: 80) and Ugaritic (Gröndahl 1967: 160).

ḥlb: There is one occurrence of a name *ḥlbw* in Nabataean (Negev 1991: 29), and *ḥlb* is found in Safaitic inscriptions (e.g. Ababneh 2005: no. 936; al-Manaser 2008: no. 122).

ḥwrw: a simple name that may be derived from *al-ḥawwar* ‘straying, misguided’ (Ibn Durayd 1991: 380), but is more likely to mean ‘small camel’, if we take into account the meaning of the Arabic *al-ḥūr* (Ibn Manẓūr 1955–1956, iv: 221; al-Fīrūzābādī 1987: 487). It is well attested in Nabataean (e.g. al-Theeb 1998: 366; al-Khraysheh 1986: 78–79; Negev 1991: 28), as well as in Thamudic (e.g. al-Theeb 1999: no. 161) and Safaitic inscriptions (e.g. al-Khraysheh 2002: 120).

Inscription no. 11d (Fig. 6)

ḏkr ḥwrw b-ṭb

The good remembrance of Ḥwrw

This crude inscription is carved immediately below no. 11b, right at the bottom of the rock face. It seems that Ḥwrw accidentally carved the letter *ṭ* instead of *y* in *ḏkr*.

Inscription no. 12 (Fig. 6)

ḏkyr ḥwry b-ṭb br ḥy

The good remembrance of Ḥwry son of Ḥy

There are a number of difficulties with this commemorative inscription. One of them is the appearance of the phrase *b-ṭb* between the first name and *br*, which is very unusual

in Nabataean. It is therefore possible that Ḥwry added the name of his father (Ḥy) later.

ḥy: a simple name meaning ‘alive’. This is the first time it has appeared in this form in the Nabataean inscriptions (cf. *ḥyw* in no. 5/2), but it is found as *hy* in a number of Semitic inscriptions such as Safaitic (e.g. ʿAlūlū 1996: 162; al-Khraysheh 2002: 125; al-Rūsān 2004: 396; Ababneh 2005: no. 408; al-Manaser 2008: no. 259), Lihyanite (Harding 1971: 209), and Thamudic (Shatnawi 2002: 680).

Inscription nos 13, 13a, and 14 (Fig. 7)

This rock face has suffered the same wear and tear as the previous one, as well as deliberate tampering. This makes it very difficult to give a proper reading of these inscriptions. I suggest the following:

Inscription no. 13 (Fig. 7)

bly slm mṭrw frs° {b}{r} m{s}lm l-(lm)

Indeed greeting of Mṭrw the horseman {son of} M{s}lmw, for {ever}

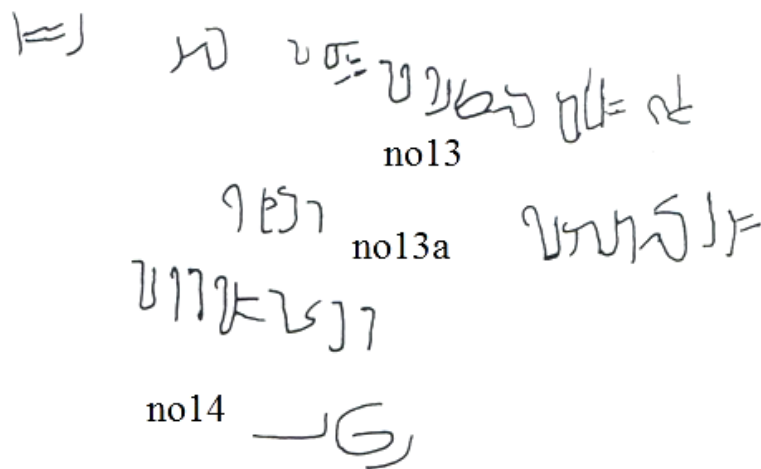
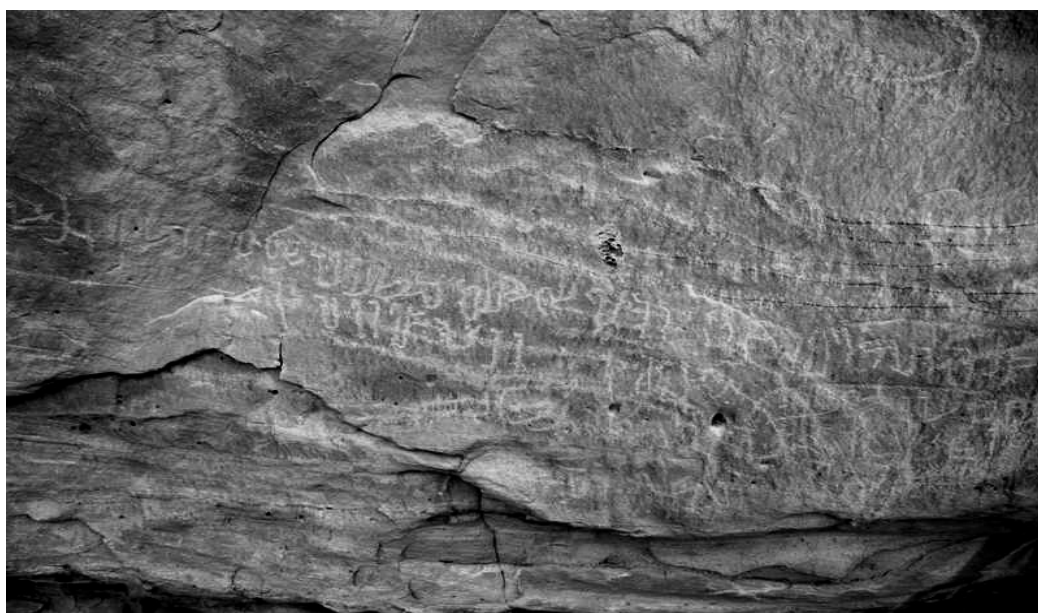


FIGURE 7. *Al-Sīj Nabataean inscriptions 13–14.*

- bly*: an interjection which occurs at the beginning of many Nabataean inscriptions. For variations on this formula in Nabataean see al-Theeb 2000a: 42–43. This particle also occurs in Hatran (Vattioni 1981: no. 99).
- mtrw*: as far as I am aware, this name appears here for the first time in Nabataean. However, *mtr* is found in Thamudic (e.g. al-Theeb 2000b: no. 94; King 1990: 547), Lihyanite (e.g. Abū al-Ḥassan 2002: nos 200, 301), and Safaitic inscriptions (e.g. ʿAbd Allāh 1970: nos 52, 64; Abbadi 2006: 132); *mtrn* occurs in Sabaic (e.g. RES 4546/1). It is a simple name in the *faʿl* or *fāʿil* form of the root M-Ṭ-R from which nouns are formed not only in Arabic but also in Old Aramaic (Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995: 619), Jewish-Palestinian Aramaic (Sokoloff 1992: 303), Sabaic (Beeston *et al.* 1982: 88), Lihyanite (al-Qudrah 1993: 123), Safaitic (e.g. ʿAlūlū 1996: 179; al-Rūsān 2004: no. 344), and the Old Testament (Brown, Driver & Briggs 1906: 564). A name *mtrʿ* occurs in Hatran (e.g. Aggoula 1985: no. 27e/1) and *mtryʿ* in Syriac (Costaz 1963: 181). It may mean ‘the rain, the one who [was] born on a rainy day.’ A personal name *maṭr* is known in early Arabic sources (Ibn al-Kalbī 1986: 215; al-Andalūsī 1983: 227; Ibn Durayd 1991: 217), and is still in use among the Arabs up to the present day (al-Khazrajī 1988: 571; Ibn al-Zubayr & Badawī 1991, ii: 1521, 1522).
- mslm*: the reading is uncertain, but it could be *mšlw*/*mslw*. The name *mslm* is a simple *mafʿal* form meaning ‘submitted’. It occurs in a Nabataean inscription at al-Ḥijr (JSNab 235) and in other Semitic texts, e.g. Palmyrene (Stark 1971: 97–98), Minaic (al-Said 1995: 161), Thamudic (Shatnawi 2002: 741), and Safaitic (al-Theeb 2003a: no. 54). It could be compared with the Arabic personal name ‘Muslim’ (Ibn Durayd 1991: 276–277; al-Andalūsī 1983: 234; al-Qalqashandī 1984: 332).

Inscription no. 13a (Fig. 7)

slm th{n}h (brt) ... (br) {r}kḏw

Greetings of Th{n}h {daughter of} . . . {son of} {R}kḏw

This short commemorative inscription was carved to the left of no. 13. The scratching of random lines as well as

the bad state of the face makes it very difficult to read the central part of this inscription, so the reading given above is purely a suggestion. It should be noted that it is futile to attempt reading the rest of the inscriptions on this face from the photograph, since only one or two signs are clear.

Inscription no. 14 (Fig. 7)

ḏkyr swrw br

b-ṭb

The good remembrance of Swrw son of

This inscription consisting of two lines is carved directly below no. 13. The father’s name was either not carved or was subsequently destroyed.

Inscription no. 15 (Fig. 8)

{ḏ}{k}{y}{r} blḥw br mmt . . .

{Remembrance of} Blḥw son of Mmt . . .

The indiscriminate scratching of lines is reminiscent of the previous rock face with nos 13, 13a, and 14. In addition to the vandalism this rock is badly weathered, which has also damaged these two inscriptions.

blḥw: a simple personal name derived from the Arabic *al-balḥ*, ‘the dates’ (Ibn Manẓūr 1955–1956, ii: 414). As far as I know, it occurs here for the first time in Nabataean, although it is also found in Thamudic inscriptions (e.g. al-Theeb 2003b: no. 16).

I suggest the following reading for the crudely and badly engraved inscription below no. 15.

Inscription no. 15a (Fig. 8)

q{ḏ}{m}w br ʿ{w}{s}ʿb

Q{dm} son of ʿ{ws}ʿb

Inscription no. 16 (Fig. 9)

ḏkyr khylw w ʿbdḥrtt

ʿḥwhy bny dmy b-ṭb khylw

ktb

The good remembrance of Khylw and ʿbdḥrtt his brother, sons of Dmy. Khylw wrote [this inscription]

Unlike the previous three rock faces, this is smooth and has been professionally prepared. All four inscriptions are clearly and beautifully carved. This inscription is by



no15

no15a

FIGURE 8. *Al-Sij Nabataean inscriptions 15–15a.*

two brothers, though only Khylw (author of nos 7 and 20) did the carving. Compare inscription no. 5 which was also by two (apparently unrelated) persons. Note that the diacritical dot is used over the *d* of *dmy*.

^c*bdhrtt*: a compound personal name meaning ‘servant of Ḥrtt’. To the best of my knowledge this name occurs only in Nabataean (e.g. al-Theeb 1998: nos 118/1, 219/5; JSNab 254) and Thamudic inscriptions (King 1990: 522).

^h*why*: a masculine noun in the singular construct with the third person singular masculine suffix, which occurs in other Nabataean inscriptions (e.g. al-Theeb 2002a: no. 123; Winnett & Reed 1970: Nab. no. 30). It is also found in Palmyrene (e.g. CIS ii 4072/2) and Hatran inscriptions (e.g. Vattioni 1981: no. 34/6). For

more comparisons see al-Theeb 2000a: 6–9.

bny: a masculine noun in the plural construct. It is found in a number of Nabataean inscriptions (e.g. al-Theeb 1998: 193/5; al-Muaikil & al-Theeb 1996: 6/2, 23) and a number of Semitic languages (for further comparisons see al-Theeb 2000a: 45–46).

ktb: a verb in the third person singular masculine (see al-Theeb 2000a: 136).

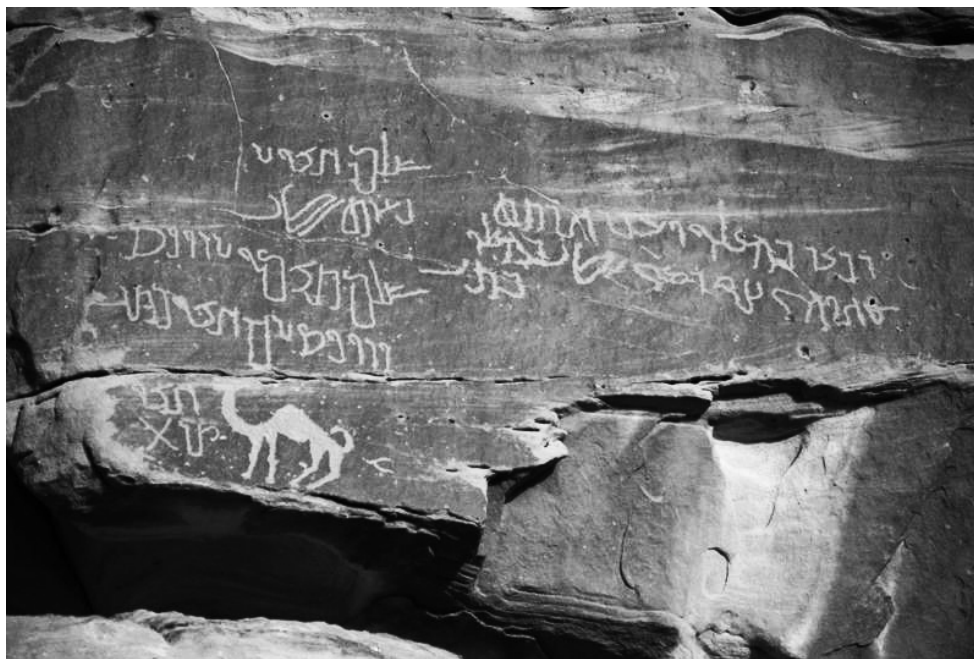
Inscription no. 17 (Fig. 9)

slm hyw br

n^crt b-ṭb

Good greetings of Ḥyw son of N^crt

This short commemorative inscription is carefully and elegantly written. It is highly likely that this Ḥyw son



no16

no18

no19

FIGURE 9. *Al-Sīj Nabataean inscriptions 16–19.*

of Nᵉrt was the author of no. 5, since the writing is very similar.

Inscription no. 18 (Fig. 9)

slm tymw br rwfš
w rwfš brh ḥyw ktb

Good greetings of Tymw son of Rwfš and Rwfš his son.
Ḥyw wrote [this]

In no. 5 Ḥyw wrote a joint inscription for himself and Tymw. Here he has written two separate texts, one for himself (no. 17) and one for Tymw and his son Rufus (no. 18). Finally, Ḥyw records that he read or recited (the inscriptions) (no. 19).

brh: a masculine singular noun in the construct with the third person singular, masculine suffixed pronoun, meaning ‘his son’ (see al-Theeb 2000a: 56–57).

Inscription no. 19 (Fig. 9)

ḥ y w
q r ʾ

Ḥyw read [the inscriptions?]

This short inscription was written alongside a beautiful drawing of a camel.

qrʾ: a verb in the third person masculine singular perfect (see al-Theeb 2000a: 231–232).

Inscription no. 20 (Fig. 10)

khylw br dmy slm

Greetings of Khylw son of Dmy

Another inscription by the author of nos 7 and 16. Note the dot over the *d* of *dmy* to distinguish it from *r*, as in the other texts by this author.

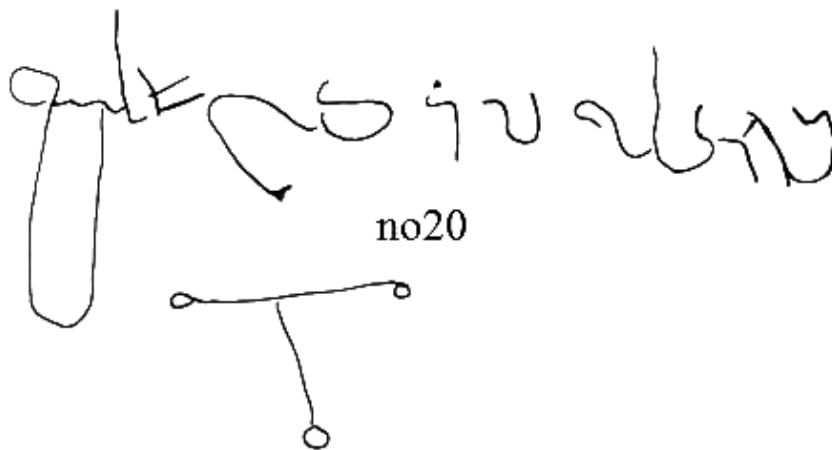


FIGURE 10. *Al-Sij Nabataean inscription 20.*



no21

FIGURE 11. Al-Sīj Nabataean inscription 21.

Inscription no. 21 (Fig. 11)*slm glqyn br gyd {t} frs°*

Greetings of Glqyn son of Gyd{t} the horseman

This short commemorative inscription was carved to the left of no. 20.

glqyn: a personal name which, as far as I know, occurs here for the first time in Nabataean and for which I have no explanation. The second name could be read as: *gydt* or *gyrt*. *Gyry*, a similar name is known in Qatabanic inscriptions (Hayajneh 1998: 113, 115). The more probable explanation for the name *gydt* is to derive it from Arabic *al-jayd* ‘beauty’ (Ibn Manẓūr 1955–1956, iii: 139).

Inscription no. 22 (Fig. 12)*slm tymw br rwfš*

Greeting of Tymw son of Rwfš

Inscription no. 23 (Fig. 13)*tymw br rwfš slm*

Greeting of Tymw son of Rwfš

See nos 5, 8, and 18.



no22

FIGURE 12. Al-Sīj Nabataean inscription 22.



Handwritten transcription of the Nabataean inscription, showing the characters in a cursive script. Below the transcription, the text "no 23" is written.

FIGURE 13. *Al-Sīj Nabataean inscription 23.*

Personal names

ʿwsʿb	15a	mrʿlhy	11c
ʿhlb	11c	mʿydw/mʿydw	3
blḥw	15	msʿdw	11b
bʿtrw	6/1	mmt...?	15
gydt	21	nʿrt	5/2, 17/2
glqyn	21	ʿbdḥrṯt	16/1
dmy	7, 16/2, 20	ʿbdšms	11
hnʿ	11b	ʿdyw	6/2, 9
hrś	2	ʿlyn	1
ḥwrw	11d	ʿnqw	9
ḥy	12	ʿsm	1
ḥyw	5/2, 17/1, 18/2, 19/1	šhlw	4
ḥnynw	2, 3	qdmw?	15a
khylw	7, 16/1, 2, 20	rbw	4
mṯrw	13	rkdw	13a

<i>vfš</i>	5/1, 18/1 and 2, 22, 23	<i>l</i>	‘for’	5/3, 13
<i>vrw</i>	11a, 14/1	<i>ʿlm</i>	‘ever’	13
<i>ʿlhy</i>	10	<i>ʿlmʿ</i>	‘ever’	5/3
<i>nh</i>	13a	<i>frsʿ</i>	‘the horseman’	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 21
<i>mw</i>	5/1, 18/1 and 2, 22, 23	<i>qrʿ</i>	‘he read’	19
		<i>slm</i>	‘greeting’	2, 3, 4, 5/3, 6/2, 10, 11b, 13, 13a, 17/1, 18/1, 20, 21, 22, 23

Vocabulary

<i>ʿh</i>		
<i>ʿhwhy</i>	‘his brother’	16/2
<i>b</i>	‘preposition’	1, 5/2, 6, 7, 8, 11a, 11c, 11d, 12, 14/2, 16/2, 17/2
<i>bny</i>	‘sons of’	16/2
<i>bly</i>	‘indeed, yes’	13
<i>br</i>	‘son of’	1, 2, 3, 4, 5/1 and 2, 6/2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11a, 11b, 11c?, 12, 13, 13a?, 14/1, 15, 15a, 17/1, 18/1, 20, 21, 22, 23
<i>brh</i>	‘his son’	18/2
<i>brtʿ</i>	‘daughter of’	13a
<i>dkʿr</i>	‘remembrance’	11c
<i>dkyr</i>	‘remembrance’	1, 5/1, 7, 11, 11a, 11c, 12, 14/1, 15, 16/1
<i>w</i>	‘conjunction’	5/3, 16/1, 18/2
<i>hryʿ</i>	‘the freedman’	11a
<i>tb</i>	‘good’	1, 5/2, 7, 8, 11a, 11c, 11d, 12, 14/2, 16/2, 17/2
<i>ktb</i>	‘he wrote’	16/3, 18/2

Acknowledgements

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Sigla

CIS ii	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars II Inscriptiones Aramaicas continens.</i> Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1889–1954.
CIS iv	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars IV. Inscriptiones Himyariticas et Sabaicas continens.</i> Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1889–1932.
JSLih	Lihyanite inscriptions published in Jaussen & Savignac 1909–1914.
JSNab	Nabataean inscriptions published in Jaussen & Savignac 1909–1914.
RES	<i>Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique.</i> Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1900–1968.

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