

TWO NEW DATED NABATAEAN INSCRIPTIONS FROM AL-JAWF

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In 1981 a team from the Saudi Arabian antiquities Department visited the site of Qārat al-Mazād during a survey project conducted mainly for epigraphic purposes.¹ After the preliminary report of the survey became available, Dr K. al-Muaikel and the author also visited the site in the summer of 1990 and were able to record and register more than 20 Nabataean inscriptions.² The site is at a distance of 6 km from al-Laqa'it on the north-eastern outskirts of Sakāka. The inscriptions are engraved on the eastern side of a mountain.

R. Savignac and J. Starcky published in 1957 what seems to have been the first Nabataean inscription known from the Jawf area.³ Then in 1970 F. V. Winnett and W. L. Reed published the results of their 1962 visit to the area. They collected twenty-one Nabataean inscriptions from four different places. Fourteen were discovered in al-Qal'ah (inscriptions 1-14), five in Jabal Abū al-Qays (nos. 17-21), one in Sakāka (no. 15) and one in the ancient city of Dūmat al-Jandal (no. 16).⁴ The present author, in a survey conducted to collect ancient Aramaic and Nabataean inscriptions from the north and north-west of Saudi Arabia, was able to register four further Nabataean inscriptions.⁵

¹ Livingstone *et al.*, 1985, 128-44.

² These twenty inscriptions will be published in *al-'Uṣūr (Ages)*, see al-Theeb and al-Muaikel, *al-'Uṣūr*, forthcoming. During our visit (1990) we collected and gathered twenty-two new Nabataean inscriptions from the Qiyāl site (see al-Theeb, 1992c) and thirteen Nabataean inscriptions from al-Naṣah site (see al-Theeb, 1992a).

³ This inscription goes back to the fifth year of the Nabataean king Malichus II (AD 40-70); see Savignac and Starcky, 1957, 196-217.

⁴ Milik and Starcky studied and translated these inscriptions when they were given to them by Winnett and Reed; see Winnett and Reed, 1970, 142-6. The inscriptions which were found in al-Qal'ah, plus the one discovered in the ancient city of Dūmat al-Jandal, were re-studied by the author (see al-Theeb, 1992b).

⁵ Al-Theeb, 1989, Nos: 92, 93, 94, and 95. These ancient Aramaic and Nabataean inscriptions and graffiti were discovered during a survey conducted by the author in the summer of 1987, now published in his Ph. D. thesis (see al-Theeb, 1989 and 1993). A comprehensive re-publication of the ancient Aramaic inscription from Taymā' is presently being prepared by the author.

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Among the twenty inscriptions found in 1990 by Dr al-Muaikel and the author, two are dated and are thought worthy of separate treatment here.

A. INSCRIPTION DATED AD 4/5

Plate 1 and Figure 1

1. *zydw br š'??*
2. *br 'bdw*
3. *šlm bšnt*
4. 13 *ḥrtt*

'zydw son of š'?? son of 'bdw, peace, in the year 13 of ḥrtt

Part of the third word on the first line has been affected by weathering, but the reading of the rest of the inscription is certain. With regard to this doubtful word, we can read *š* followed by *'*. Since it is preceded and followed by *br*, 'son of', the word is likely to be a personal name. The first name, *zydw*, appears elsewhere in Nabataean and other Semitic inscriptions⁶ and *'bdw* is similarly well attested.⁷

The importance of this inscription lies in its being dated to the reign of Haretat IV (9 BC-AD 39/40). The number of the year, written in ciphers, is clearly 13.⁸ There can be little doubt that this is Haretat IV in view of his importance and the fact that the script of the inscription clearly belongs to the end of the first century BC, or the beginning of the first century AD. There are many inscriptions dated to the reign of this king. The king's usual title, *rh̄m 'mh*, 'lover of his people', is, however, omitted.⁹

⁶ Savignac, 1934, 575; Littmann and Meredith, 1954, 221; Winnett and Reed, 1970, Nos: 26, 44, 67, and 70; al-Theeb, 1989 and 1993, Nos: 53 and 85, and al-Theeb and Nasif, 1991, 227, No: 3. It occurs also in ancient Aramaic (see Maraqtan, 1988, 75 and 159). A similar name, *zydl̄t*, appears in Old Syriac (see al-Jadir, 1983, 373); *zyd'lt* is found in Hatra inscriptions (see 'Abbādi, 1983, 105); and *zyd*, without *wāw*, was known in pre-Islamic Arabian inscriptions (see Harding, 1971, 304-5).

⁷ The third letter could be read also as *r* (see Euting, 1885, 23). Thus the name could be read *'brw*, a personal name which occurs without *wāw* in the pre-Islamic Arabian inscriptions (see Harding, 1971, 409). For more parallels see al-Theeb, 1989, 295, 1991, 280 and 193, 228-9.

⁸ The Nabataeans employed two systems in recording the year-numbers in their inscriptions, by writing the number of the year in words (see, for example, Jaussen and Savignac, I, 1909, Nos. 1:8, 3:8, 7:7, and 9:9), or by using ciphers (see Euting, 1885, 97, and for more information see Cantineau, 1930, 36-7).

⁹ For more discussion of this title see al-Theeb, 1992b, 6.

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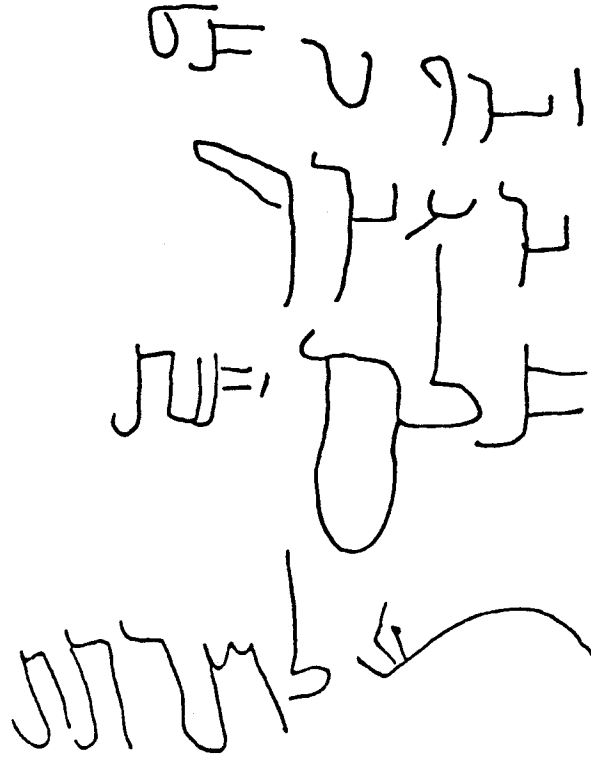
PLATE 1

TWO NEW DATED NABATAEAN INSCRIPTIONS FROM AL-JAWF



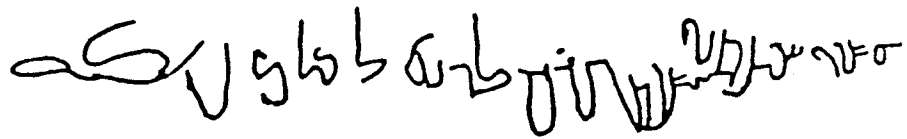
PLATE 2

TWO NEW DATED NABATAEAN INSCRIPTIONS FROM AL-JAWF



Handwritten Nabataean script in three lines. The first line contains three characters: a vertical stroke with a hook, a U-shaped character, and a character with a vertical stem and a horizontal top bar. The second line contains four characters: a vertical stem with a hook, a character with a vertical stem and a horizontal top bar, a character with a vertical stem and a horizontal top bar, and a character with a vertical stem and a horizontal top bar. The third line contains four characters: a vertical stem with a hook, a character with a vertical stem and a horizontal top bar, a character with a vertical stem and a horizontal top bar, and a character with a vertical stem and a horizontal top bar.

Figure 1



Handwritten Nabataean script in a single line, consisting of a sequence of approximately 15 characters in a cursive style.

Figure 2

B. INSCRIPTION DATED AD 70/71

Plate 2 and Figure 2

1. 'šdw br mntnw
2. bšnt ḥdh lrb'l mlk nbṭw

'šdw son of mntnw, in the first year of rb'l, king of the Nabataeans'

The engraver of this graffito had to place the second part of his inscription below the last letter of the name of his father, to avoid confusion with another adjacent Nabataean inscription. The reading given here is more or less certain. Some of the letters are joined in the manner well established in Nabataean graffiti. Quite apart from the date given (see below), the shape of the letters suggests that the inscription might have been written in the late first century AD.

Because *r* and *d* are hard to distinguish in this script, the first name could be read 'šdw or 'šrw.¹⁰ The former is more likely, since this personal name occurs frequently in Nabataean.¹¹ The second name, mntnw, is also found elsewhere.¹²

bšnt ḥdh is clearly 'in the first year', following the usual formula (ḥdh feminine with šnt).¹³ This is followed by the king's name, rb'l. Two Nabataean kings are known to have borne this name. Rab'el I appears to have reigned briefly c. 87 BC. Rab'el II reigned from AD 70/71 to 106. This inscription certainly belongs to the reign of the latter in view of the shapes of the letters and the importance of this king in the history of the Nabataean realm.¹⁴ There are many other

¹⁰ A personal name which may contain the name of the Assyrian deity Ashur or the Egyptian deity Osiris. See Huffmon, 1965, 172-3.

¹¹ Al-Theeb, 1989 and 1993; Nos: 87 and 94:1, and for more parallels see al-Theeb, 1989, 262 and 1993, 206. It is a name well known in other Semitic inscriptions.

¹² Al-Theeb, 1989 and 1993, 94:1.

¹³ Cantineau, I, 1930, 59. The author wishes to thank Dr J. Healey for drawing his attention to the possibility of this being the correct reading.

¹⁴ It is believed that the Nabataean kingdom was annexed by the Romans in AD 106 (see Hammond, 1973, 29). Professor Beeston, however, in a lecture during the Nabataean conference held at Oxford in 1989, drew attention to the total absence of inscriptional proof of this date. He noted a Greek inscription mentioning the date AD 112. There is, however, another Greek text that goes back to the year AD 107 and clearly indicates Roman military activity in the area. This is the letter found in the city of Karanis in Egypt, dated 26 March, AD 107, written by one Iulius, working at that time with the third army corps (Legio III Cyrenaica) in Arabia, and sent to his father in Egypt (see Speidel, 1971, 111; 1977, 691-3).

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inscriptions dated to his reign.¹⁵ His usual title, *dy hyy wšyzb 'mh*, 'who brings life and deliverance to his people',¹⁶ is absent.

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¹⁵ Jaussen and Savignac, I, 1909, No: 22:4; *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, Nos: 161 III:4, 183:3.

¹⁶ Some scholars suggest that he assumed this title for political reasons while others think that the reason must be sought in the religious and social life of the Nabataeans. A. Negev assumed that it was due to the diversion of trade to the new Red Sea route which affected Nabataean income (see Negev, 1963, 115-7). However 'Abbās has suggested that Rab'el assumed this title because of an interior revolt against him led by Damasi, who was showing dissatisfaction when his youngest brother was appointed *strategos* after the death of their father (see Winnett, 1973, 54-5; also 'Abbās, 1987, 68).

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