

## The Settlement of the Arabian Tribes in South Jordan and the Sinai at the End of the First Millenium BC

### Introduction

The penetration of the Arabian tribes into South Jordan and the Fertile Crescent, from the first millenium BC to the Late Roman periods, was a continuous process. The scope of interest of this paper will cover mainly the area of the Nabataean Kingdom from Damascus to the Gulf of al-'Aqaba - Ayla on the Red Sea for Jordan, in addition to the homeland of the tribes from al-'Ulā - Dedan in Central Arabia to Taymā' in the northwest. The expansion of the tribes into southern Palestine, the Sinai and the eastern Delta was not the result of the Nabataean trading activities but started much earlier from the Assyrian to the Achae-menid periods.

### Thamud and Qedar

In the ninth century BC, the term "Arab" was recorded for the first time in the Assyrian Annals: Under Shalmanassar III, Gindibu the Arab participated in the battle of Qarqar (853 BC) with a contingent of one thousand cameleers (ANET 1955: 279). He was most probably a tribal leader (*shaykh*), rather than a king, although the tribal leaders of Qedar were bestowed the title of King by the Assyrians (Macdonald 1995a: 1359). To safeguard the communication routes between southern Arabia and Mesopotamia, especially for the protection of caravans heading through Wādī as-Sirhān or following the incense road, Sargon II mounted a campaign against the nomads of Central Arabia: "I crushed the tribes of Tamud, Ibadidi, Marsimanu and Hiapa, the Arabs who live, far away, in the desert" (ANET: 286). At that time, the Arabs were active in the trade of spices and the Assyrian involvement in the Arabian affairs was most likely motivated by their need of this supply. Sargon II records in his Annals that he received from the Arabs "all kinds of aromatic substances" (ANET: 286), and Essarhaddon demanded one hundred leather bags, "more than his father paid, on Iate', King of the Arabs" (ANET: 292).

After he defeated the tribes of Thamud, Sargon II "deported their survivors in 721 BC and settled them in Sa-

maria" (ANET: 286). This deportation is thought to have been a policy for the control of the trade routes to the Mediterranean. The assumption is plausible, since Tigleth Pileser III appointed, after the conquest of Gaza, an Arab governor to monitor the trade between Egypt and the Sinai (Macdonald 1995a: 1365). It is worth noting in this respect that the prophetic oracles of *Jeremiah* 49:8 and *Ezekiel* 25:13-14, dated to the sixth century BC, warn Edom, Dedan and Teman of an imminent destruction: "Go into hiding, inhabitants of Dedan for I will bring down ruin on Esau" (*Jer.* 49:8). "People will be put to the sword from Teman to Dedan. I shall unleash my revenge on Edom" (*Ezk.* 25: 13-14).

This association of the Edomites and Dedanites could be justified by their common trading interests in the transportation of frankincense and myrrh, but also by their ethnic affiliation: It is noticeable in this view that in the oases of Dedan, Lihyanite and Minaean personal names incorporate the Edomite god Qôš. One Lihyanite king, for example, bears the name Galti-Qôš (Macdonald 1995a: 1362).

In 552 BC, the Babylonian king Nabonidus migrated to Arabia, and settled in Taymā'. He invaded the land of Edom on his way (Lindsay 1976: 33-34) and left a relief with a cuneiform inscription at as-Sila'/ Sela (Dalley and Goguel 1997: 169-174). This event was crucial for the history of settlement of the Arabian tribes in southern Jordan: some of the Arabian tribes in the Taymā' region were loyal to Nabonidus as it is evident from north Arabian inscriptions found in the area of Ramm in northwestern Arabia (Eskoubi 1999: 74-75, 237, 251). One inscription (No. 169) reads: "I Mardan, the ally of Nabonidus, king of Babel, 2) came with RB SRS" (master of the eunuchs)... (FIG. 1). Another inscription (No. 177) refers to another ally of Nabonidus: "zn 'nds hlm nbnd mlk bbl": This is 'nds, the friend of Nabonidus, the king of Babel (FIG. 2). It can be concluded from these important inscriptions that some Arabian tribes were allied to Nabonidus and were settled in the area of Taymā'. It is also probable that the





1. Thamudic inscription from Taymā', mentioning Nabonidus. After Eskoubi, n°169.



2. Thamudic inscription from Taymā', mentioning Nabonidus. After Eskoubi, n°177.

Babylonian King settled in southern Edom tribes who were faithful to him to protect the rear of his army and insure the safety of his communications with his capital Babylon. The Nabataeans are believed to have migrated to the land of Edom at the end of the sixth century BC. It can be assumed that they were with other tribes (Lihyanites, Minaeans and Thamudaeans) allowed to settle southern Jordan from Wādī Iram to Buṣayra and as-Silā'.

At the end of the sixth century BC, the Arab tribes were settled in southern Palestine (the Negeb) and in the eastern Delta of the Nile. When Cambyses invaded Egypt in 525 BC, those tribes provided his army with camels to carry water skins in the desert between Ienysos (Khān Yūnis?) and Mount Casios (Rās al-Kasrūn) (Herodotus III: 5.7.9) (Lemaire 1990: 45-46). The Arabian Nome of the eastern Delta included the area south and east of Gazā, that is the Sinai, the Negeb, the Arabian and the Transjordanian desert between al-'Aqaba - Ayla and Gaza (Lemaire 1990: 47). In the mid-fifth century BC, this Arabian Nome was under the authority of Geshem the Arab (*Nehemiah* II:19). His son Qaynu, king of Qedar, offered in ex-voto a silver bowl to han-'Ilāt, the pan Arabian goddess, corresponding to Ourania-Alilat of Herodotus III: 8 and to Allat of the Nabataean pantheon in the temple of Tall al-Maskhūṭa (ancient Patoumos), near Ismailia.

The Qedarites were a powerful federation of several Arabian clans who were originally based in Adumatu - Dumat al-Jandal, modern al-Jawf. They spread to the north by way of the incense roads, as far as Palmyra. It has been assumed that the Nabataean belonged to the same federation (Knauf 1989: 60). The hypothesis is credible on the basis of the following evidence: In the first place, the Nabataeans are associated in three tomb inscriptions of Hegra with the Salamaeans ŠLMW (Healy 1993: index, 251 s.v.). In the love poem of the *Song of Songs*, I:5, dated to the third century BC, the young beauty of Jerusalem compares herself to the tents of Qedar and

the pavilions of Salam (not Solomon) (Knauf 1989: 60) : "Black I am, but beautiful, ye daughters of Jerusalem: as the tents of Qedar, as the pavilions of Salam".

The Salamaeans who are attested at Hegra are associated with the Qedarites and the Nabataeans. It is noteworthy in this context that Pliny the Elder (first century AD) associates the Nabataeans and the Cedrei (Qedarites) (*Nat. Hist.* V.XII,65). At the same time we know that the caravan station of Hegra - Madā'in Šālīḥ was the homeland of the Thamudaeans. In this case, it is possible to conclude that the Qedarites, the Thamudaeans, the Salamaeans and their federates the Nabataeans were settled in Central Arabia in the first millenium BC. However, they may have been settled at one time in northeastern Arabia (Milik 1982: 261-265).

It is agreed that "Thamudic" is only utilized as a conventional term to designate the script used by the north Arabian tribes, "since the name *tmd* occurs but twice in Thamudic texts, both times in central Arabia, and only about a half-dozen times in all of the pre-Islamic inscriptions" (Harding 1971: 148; Graf 1987: 11-12). *TMD* and *TMDY* appear at Hegra - Madā'in Šālīḥ (Jausen and Savignac 1914: n°s 280 and 300).

In Wādī Iram, more than 2700 graffiti were collected by the recent survey of IFAPO and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan. In one instance only the name Ḥayy bin Tmd was registered in the remote Wādī al-Kbāshī, south of Wādī Sābiṭ (Farès-Drapeau *et alii*, forthcoming). In this graffiti, *TMD* appears as a patronym. As a matter of fact, more than twenty five tribal names are known in Thamudic (King 1990: 961) and of those only six were recorded in the recent survey: In Wādī Umm Saḥm, a long valley which runs for more than 35km and peters out at the Saudi Arabia borders, near al-Mudawwara, the most frequent tribes is *MZN*. A graffiti of Wādī Umm Zarb, a tributary of Wādī Umm Saḥm reads, for example: "By Sa'd bin Wahballah of the *MZN* tribe, and may Lat remember all those who belong to al-Mazn" (Farès-Drapeau 1996: 280-282). This latter tribal name is still alive and is carried by a large clan of ad-Dīṣah, the Mzinah, who joined the powerful tribe of al-Ḥuwayṭāt during World War I (Al-Zalabiah 1989: 48). In the Sinai, the Mzinah are one of the most influential nomadic groups (Shoucair 1916: 112). At Madā'in Šālīḥ, the *nisbah mznayt* (of *MZN*) appears in a tomb inscription of Sukaynat, daughter of Murrat of Mazin (Healy 1993: 178-179). The other frequent tribal names are: M'n'l, H'l, Zydt, Šllt and 'Ad. This latter tribal name has a special impact on the mind of the Islamic tradition because it is frequently mentioned in the Qur'an with the Thamūd. In *Sūrat al-Fajr* 89: 6-9, 'Ad and Thamūd are associated with Iram: "Hast thou not considered how thy Lord dealt with 'Ad, (with) Iram of the high peaks, whose like has never been created in the world? And (with) Thamūd who hewed the rock in the



valley?”.

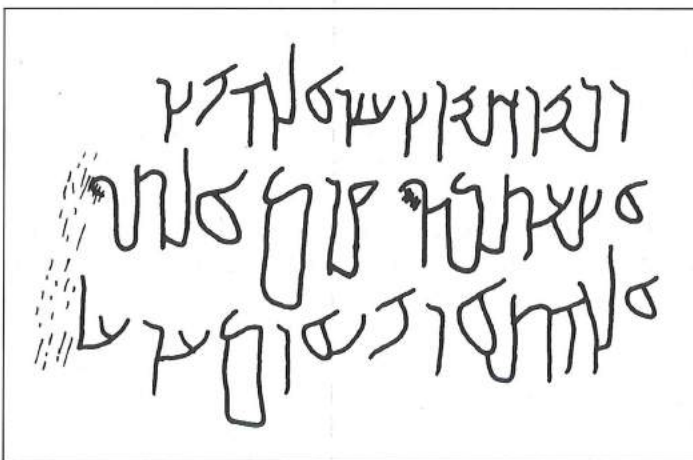
This Surat records, as late as the sixth century AD, the presence of the ‘Adites and Thamudaeans in Wādī Iram. It is well-known that the name of this valley is attested in the Nabataean graffito at Jabal al-Judayda, near a water reservoir (Savignac 1932: 592-593) (FIG. 3). The word “*imād*” in S.98:7 is usually translated “lofty pillars”. However, in the Arabic lexicon *‘imād*, pl. of *‘md* designates the high support of mountains, such as the expression *‘imād as-samā*, “the pillars of the sky” (see: Ibn Manzur 1956: IX). More common is the term *‘mūd*, meaning mountain (al-Bakri 1983: s.v.). At Wādī Iram, near ad-Disah, Jabal ‘Amūd is a well-known peak. At any rate, the tribe of ‘Ād appears to have been well established in Wādī Iram: In the survey of 1997, a sandstone block was found reused in the floor of the Lat Temple at the foot of Jabal Ramm. It was incised with a North Arabian inscription which reads: “By Gawth, son of Awsallah, son of Thakam, and he built the sanctuary (*bayt*) of Lat of al-‘Ad” (Zayadine and Farès-Drapeau 1998: 255-258). It is this dedication that evidences the responsibility of the ‘Adites for the building of the Temple of Lat, the main patroness of the valley, probably in the second or first century BC. The temple was remodeled most probably by Aretas IV in the first century BC-AD (Tholbecq 1998: 246-247). In the time of Rabbel II (AD 76-106), the settlement around the temple was completed and the building continued to be occupied to the third century AD. Recently Macdonald (2000: 73 no. 141) addressed harsh criticism to the interpretation of *ḏ l d* as of the tribe of ‘Ād. Regrettably, he misread the article in *ADAJ* 42, 1998: 255-258, and failed to look at fig. 2 which indicates the exact location of the inscribed block. Furthermore, he claims that *ḏ* could be *‘ayd*, *‘awd*, *‘ud*. There are no Arabian tribes by these names and I invite him to look at Harding and Littmann 1952: n° 4 : lzky bn ‘mr *ḏ l d*, translated by the authors: “By Zakiy son of ‘Amr of the tribe ‘Ād”.

If the Nabataeans took possession of a sanctuary of

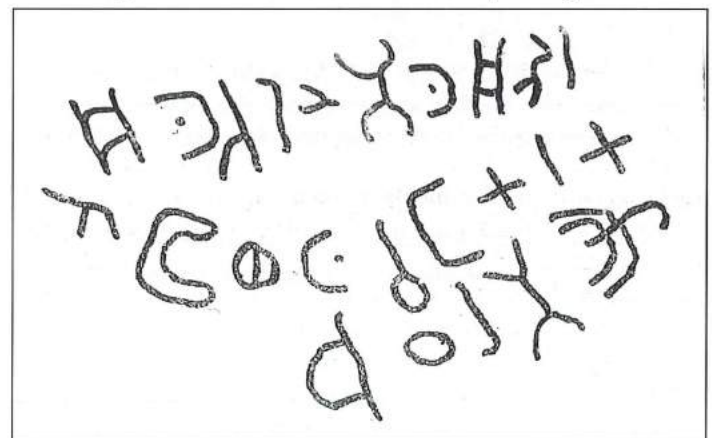
Lat, originally founded by the ‘Adites, this peaceful occupation is full of consequences for the settlement of the Arabian tribes in southern Jordan: The excavation of the temple by Kirkbride (1960: 65-92) revealed no destruction phase. Although the soundings did not confirm the existence of an earlier temple, yet its presence on the same plan as the extant sanctuary remains a possibility (see Tholbecq 1998: 242). Kirkbride noticed in her section two large blocks which projected from the rear wall of the cella (1960: 85). Most probably, the ‘Adite shrine of Lat consisted of a cubic room (*ka’ba*). The central monument still standing averages 4.11 and 4.10m for the north and south walls respectively and 4.94m for the east and west walls (FIGS. 4, 5). Aretas IV enclosed this *ka’ba* with four columns on each side and coated the walls with painted stucco (see Tholbecq 1998: 246). A graffito on a stucco fragment bearing the date 40+ was first published by Savignac (1935: 264-268) and dated to the Provincia Arabia. Starcky (1966: c. 979-980) confirmed the reading and dated the graffito to AD 147. However, a Nabataean inscription at the dam of Kharaza, Jabal Ratama, is dated to the year 41 of Aretas IV. The graffito on the stucco of the Lat Temple should be related to the reign of Aretas IV, not to the era of the Province.



4. The temple of Allat at the foot of Jabal Ramm, looking northwest.



3. Nabataean dedication from Wādī Ramm, to Allat who is in ‘RM.



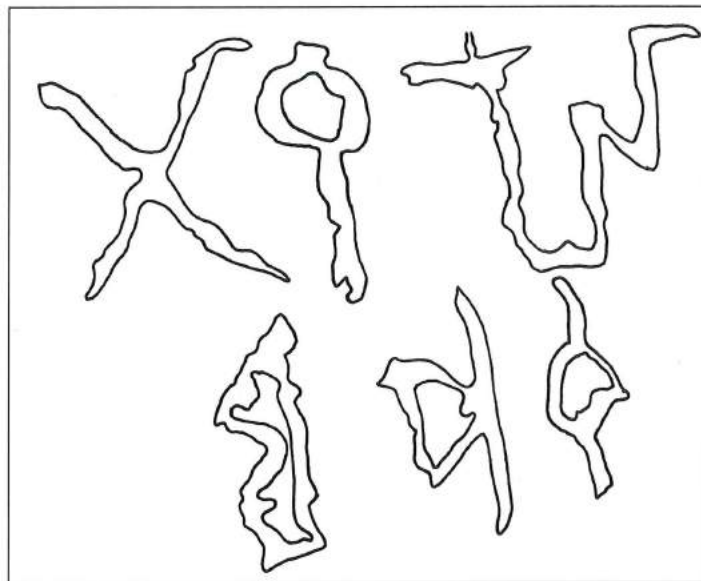
5. Thamudic dedication to a temple of Allat in Wādī Ramm.



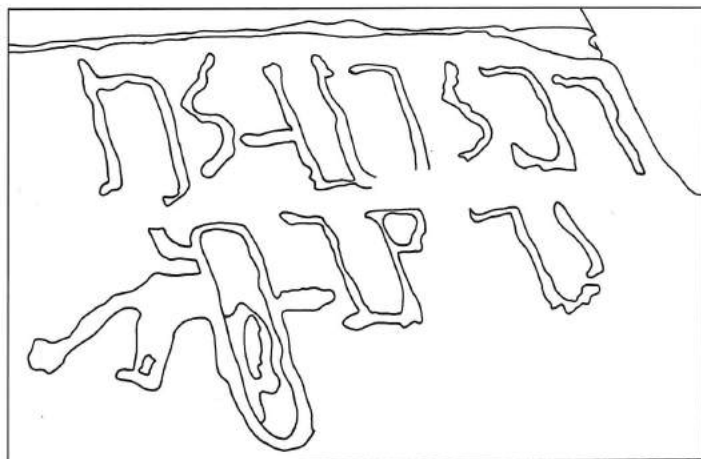
### The Nabataeans and the Tribes in South Jordan

The transition from 'Adites to Nabataeans took place, without apparent conflict, at the end of the first century BC. This new phase could only happen if the Nabataeans and the 'Adites belonged to the same tribal federation. This assumption can be ascertained by the fact that the Nabataeans used, when they first arrived in Wādī Iram, the North Arabian script or so-called Thamudic E. The first evidence came from the survey of the late W. Jobling: At Muqawwar, a rock cascade overlooking the Ḥismā is covered with graffiti in North Arabic and Nabataean and the site was interpreted as "a centre of some religious significance" (Jobling 1990: 108). Similar bilingual inscriptions were noticed by S. Farès-Drapeau at Sahl Muzayrib, a tributary of Sahl aṣ-Ṣuwwan. The name *NGYT BR QDM*, Nagyat son of Qidim is incised in both Nabataean and North Arabic script (FIG. 6a, 6b). Other significant examples of bilingual scripts are the theophoric names of 'Abd'obadat and 'Abdḥaritat, attested in several instances (see King 1990: s.v.). The first theophoric name refers, most probably, to king 'Obodat I (93-85BC). He defeated the last Seleucid king Antiochus XII who fell in the battle of Moto. But 'Obodat died soon after his victory, was buried at 'Obodat, modern 'Ubāda/ Avdat, and was deified after his death. He had privilege during his lifetime to receive an oracle from the gods who ordered him to build a town on the site of Auara (in Aramaic Ḥawrā; meaning white), at the place where a man wearing a white robe would appear on a white camel (Eady 1984: 211). The foundation of the town was credited to his son Aretas III (84-61 BC). This major station to the north of Hegra and half way between al-'Aqaba - Ayla and Petra was the major factor in establishing the Nabataean leadership over the Arabian tribes of Wādī Iram. It is most likely, in this case, that the theophoric names 'Abd'obodat and 'Abdḥaritat refer to 'Obodat I and his son Ḥaritat III. As indicated above, the establishment of the Nabataean authority in the south of Jordan was peaceful, mainly because the Nabataeans belonged to the same realm of the Qedarites and the Thamudaeans who are attested in the second century BC to have been active on the Red Sea coasts, between al-Wajih and Muwayliḥ (Van der Branden 1966: 11). In this same period, the Nabataeans who took over the spice trade from the Minaeans were also attested in this area and were reported to have preyed on the Ptolomaic ships (Diodorus III,43,1-5).

Since the Thamudaeans were settled by Sargon II in Samaria (*supra*), it should be emphasized that they were not completely nomadic. There is evidence from the rock drawings that they tilled the soil and one of their villages is dedicated to the god Nahy (Van der Branden 1950: 7). At Rawwāfa, south of Tabūk, the Thamudaeans (*ethnos* in Greek), dedicated a temple to Ilah in Nabataean and Greek during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lu-



6a. Thamudic inscription of Wādī Muzayrib: NGYT, QDM.



6b. Nabataean inscription of Wādī Muzayrib: let be remembered NGYT son of QDM.

cius Verus (AD 166-169) (Milik 1971: 45-48, Graf 1978: 9-12). One would subscribe to the caution expressed by Macdonald (1993b: 93-101) to translate *šrkt* of the Nabataean text by "confederation". However, it is not probable that the term could mean "a military unit" (Macdonald 1993b: 100). *Ethnos* is usually rendered by "people living together, nation" as it is the case for the Jewish *ethnos* in Fl. Josephus. The translation by Thamudaeans is not specific enough but is more convenient in this context. Shahid (1984: 128-140) is of the opinion that "*sharikat*" in Arabic does not mean "federation" or "confederation" but rather "people, tribe". It is true that two units of the Roman army were designated as the "*Equites Thamudeni Illyriciani*" in Palestine and the "*Equites Saraceni Thamudeni in Limes Aegypti*" in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, according to the military terminology. Thus, the term *šrkt*=*ethnos* would be inadequate for Roman units. As late as the sixth century AD, the Qur'an ad-



ressed the Thamūd by the mouth of their prophet Šālih: “will ye be left secure with all that ye have here? Gardens and springs, and corn fields and date palms with spathes near breaking? And ye carve houses out of mountains with great skills?” (Surat 26: 146-49). In the 14th century AD, Abulfida reports that “the Thamud are the sons of Geter (Qedar?), son of Aram, son of Sem” (quoted by Van Den Branden 1966: 2). According to the same tradition, they were settled in Yemen but when king Ḥimyar seized the throne, he expelled them from his country. They migrated to the north and settled in the mountains of al-Ḥijāz. They moved with the Nabataeans to Wādī Iram and their graffiti were found in the ‘Ammān area at the cave of Rufaysa, near al-Yādūda, at Za‘farān, on the road to Umm ar-Rašāš - Mayfa‘a and at this latter site (Macdonald 1991: 422-428).

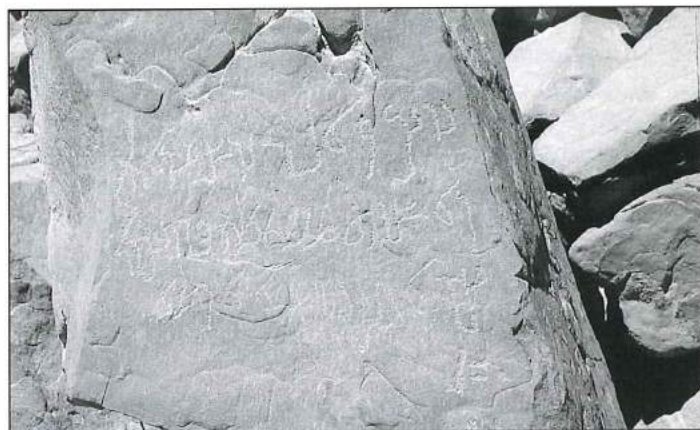
The Thamudaeans also reached the Negeb and their graffiti were found around ‘Oboda, on the Gaza route (Anati 1955; Graf 1978: 6). This is a convincing testimony that they were involved in the spice trade, either as caravaneers or as a security escort. Thus, justified reservation should be expressed against Graf’s assertion (who quotes Negev) “that the Thamudic tribes were the agents of destruction for the settlements of the Petra-Gaza road during the mid-1st century AD” (Graf 1978: 6). This conclusion was supported by surface exploration only. The survey and excavations of Cohen (1982: 240-244) demonstrated that the stations from Moyet ‘Awwad to ‘Oboda “was in uninterrupted service through out the centuries covered by the Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine periods” (Cohen 1982: 246). However, it is admitted that raids of Bedouins in the desert increased in the Late Roman period. The Nabataean inscription of Wādī Mukattab, *CIS II*, 964 has been advocated by a legion of notorious scholars to prove the nomadic destruction of the region. But the interpretation of this inscription has been revised. The author of this paper has been able to trace this short text in the company of Graf (1989: 344-345):

Text (FIG. 7a, b)

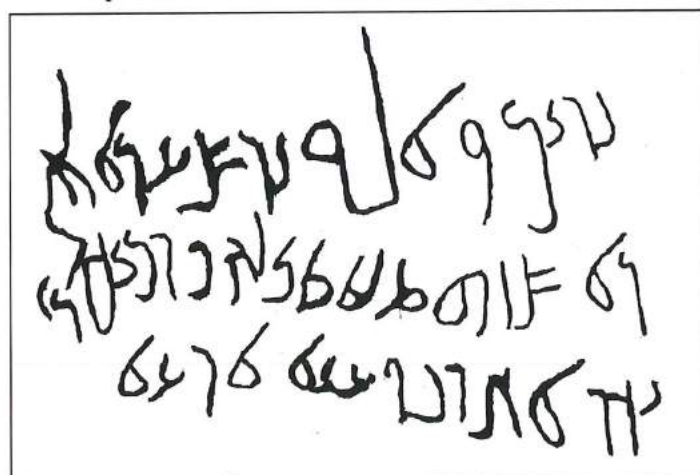
bryk w’lw br s’d’lhy d’ snt 85 lhprky’ d bh ‘hrbw ‘y’ ‘rš’

#### Commentary

A diversity of opinion was brought about the last line: ‘HRBW ‘Y’. Euting, in his drawing of the graffito restituted a *nūn* after the ‘ayn: ‘NY’. But he recognized that this letter was not certain because of a fracture in the rock (*CIS II*, 964), and it was not possible to distinguish any trace of it when Graf and myself examined the inscription in 1989. In any case, it is not possible to restore ‘arbya because there is no room for two letters between the ‘ayn and the yā’ and it is not possible to read the second letter as *rā*, as it was abusively admitted by some authors, such as Negev 1963: 124.



7a. Inscription of Wādī Mukattab in the Sinai.



7b. Facsimile of the inscription of Wādī Mukattab in the Sinai.

Sartre (1982: 127), surprisingly comments: “Only the word ‘rby’ the Arabs is partially restored, but we can consider this restoration for granted”! He can be excused for not being familiar with Nabataean epigraphy, but it is hard to plead for Negev, a good epigraphist who published several inscriptions from the Sinai. Furthermore, he attributed the destruction of ‘Oboda to this single graffito and even holds it responsible for the dramatic annihilation of the Nabataean civilisation (1963: 123-124). An objective re-examination of the inscription does not allow such conclusions: It was already noticed by the *CIS II*, 964 that the reading “Arabs” by Euting is an incorrect emendation. Instead, the reading ‘ay’ is the best acceptable solution and is explained “as the name of a tribe or people” (Graf 1989: 345): A clan ‘aya’ is recorded as a fraction of the south Arabian tribe of Jarm (see Kahhaleh 1991: 865).

#### Translation

Blessed be Wael, son of Sa‘dallahi. This (was written) the year 85 of the Eparchy, in which the ‘Aya’ ruined the land.

Raids of south Arabian tribes into the Sinai were frequent as late as the Byzantine period. Those attacks by the



Bedouin tribes were evidence that the desert was not living in continuous peace.

Of special concern are the Safaitic graffiti that refer to the "war of the Nabataeans". One of these reads "*l'slh bn s'dlh bn jdy, w'lf snt hrb nbt yhd*": By Awsallah, s. of Sa'dallah, s. of Jady and he became weak the year of the war of the Nabataeans and the Jews (see Abbadi 1996: 239-244). The translation of '*lf* by became weak in preferable to "feed or fodder the (animals)" rendered by Abbadi (see for the verb '*lf* Macdonald and Harding 1976: 126).

### The Nabataeans and the Population of the Ḥarra

The Jordanian and Syrian Ḥarra is the natural extension of the Arabian desert. It was through Wādī as-Sirḥān and the oasis of al-Azraq that the tribes penetrated into northeast Jordan. By Wādī Rājil, they penetrated into southern Syria and reached the eastern edge of the Ṣafā. The graffiti of those tribes were engraved on rocks in a South Semitic script, but according to Macdonald (1994: 761) "none have even been found in the Safa itself". The same author assumes that the graffiti "were written almost exclusively by nomads". However, it seems surprising that those Bedouins were aware of political events that prevailed in the region. Four inscriptions, for example, refer to important political dates such as "the year Caesar's son died; and he heard Philippus had been killed". It was suggested that the son of Caesar is Gaius Caesar, the grandson and adopted son of Emperor Augustus or Germanicus, the nephew and adopted son of Tiberius. Philippus is believed to be a friend and general of Agrippa II who ruled the Ḥawrān between AD 53 and 93/4 (Macdonald 1995b: 285-290).

More important for the relations between the Nabataeans and the population of the Ḥarra are the so-called Safaitic inscriptions dated to the kings of Petra: The inscription which appeared in the desert of ar-Ruṭba, at the site of H3n on the way to Baghdād is dated *snt mt 'bdt*: "the year 'Obodat died" (Naji 1962: 168-169). It was presumed by the author that 'BDT is king 'Obodat III (30-9 BC) who was succeeded by king Aretas IV in 9 BC. Another recently discovered graffito in Wādī Salma, 30km north of aṣ-Ṣafāwī, in the northeastern Ḥarra reads: "*l's'd bn bnt bn s'd 'l mskt wr'y h 'bl snt mlk rb'l*": By Ṣa'd s. of Banat, s. of Ṣa'd, of the tribe of Masikat, and he pastured the camels, the year Rabel became king. It has been assumed that the graffito was dated to the accession year of Rabel II in AD 76 (Zayadine 1999: 315-317). It is known that Rabel II became king after the regency of his mother Shaqilat II. This inscription can be considered as a personal record of the taking-in-charge of the job by the shepherd Ṣa'd. This is a good proof that the population of the Ḥarra was in close contact with the Nabataean kingdom.

In the Postscript to his monograph *Nabataean Ar-*

*chaeology Today*, A. Negev pointed out to the "correlation between the decline of the Nabataean-Aramaic script and the rise of the 'Safaitic script'" (1986: 150). His remark is judicious. However, one should keep in mind that at the end of the Nabataean kingdom and the creation of the Province of Arabia, Nabataean was used side by side with the so-called Safaitic script, as it is the case in the northeastern desert of Jordan at Qaṣr Burqu' (Milik 1980: 42), at Jāwa North (Macdonald 1982: 172), and the Ḥarra of Wādī Rājil.

After he made the Bedouin tribes of the Negev and the Sinai responsible for the destruction of the Nabataean civilisation (*supra*), A. Negev concludes surprisingly "Looking at these facts, I am going to suggest that the so-called 'Safaitic' inscriptions are not the product of anonymous Arab tribes, but rather are the records of the Nabataeans themselves" (1986: 150). It is true that the Bani 'Amrat of the Safaitic inscriptions were originally based in the Mādabā area (Milik 1980: 41-54), that they spread in the Ḥarra up to Dayr al-Kahf, to aṣ-Ṣafāwī (tomb of Hani) and Burqu' (Milik 1980: 41-45; Graf 1989: 360). But Macdonald was cautious about the evidence presented by the two authors and concludes: "The connection is possible but, I would suggest, it remains to be proved" (1993a: 360). As a matter of fact, the personal name 'Amrat is very common in the Nabataean onomasticon, was found in the epitaph of a lady at Dhāt Rās, near al-Karak (Zayadine 1970: 132), and was adopted as a tribe name in South Arabia (Pirenne 1968: 221). At any rate, it is hard to imagine that the kings of Petra who occupied Damascus under Aretas III had no control on the population of the Ḥarra. Some of the tribes, like the HWLT were believed to be foreign to the country and aggressive (Harding 1969: 20; Macdonald 1993a: 308). This fact could justify the "war of the Nabataeans" if their caravans were not granted free passage on their way to the north. It is hazardous, in this case, to identify the Safaitic nomadic groups with the sedentary population of the Nabataean kingdom.

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