

# THE WĀDĪ RAMM PROJECT: PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2014 SEASON

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## **Acknowledgments**

The 2014 season of the Franco-Jordanian Wādī Ramm project lasted from 29 November to 20 December. This project, funded by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is part of the French *De Pétra au Wadi Ramm* program directed by Laurent Tholbecq (Université Libre de Bruxelles). We would like to thank Dr Monther Jamhawi, Director-General of the Department of Antiquities (DoA), and Aktham Oweidi, Director of Excavations and Surveys, for their support and for granting us the permit. We would also like to thank Ahmad Lash (DoA) for his constant help and kindness, as well as Zuhair al-Zoubi, Director of Amman Citadel and the Jordan Archaeological Museum, for his warm welcome and permission to study Thamudic Inscription no. J.14202. Many thanks are also due to Thibaud Fournet of the Institut Français du Proche-Orient (IFPO) Amman, for his cooperation and for providing us with lodgings in Amman.

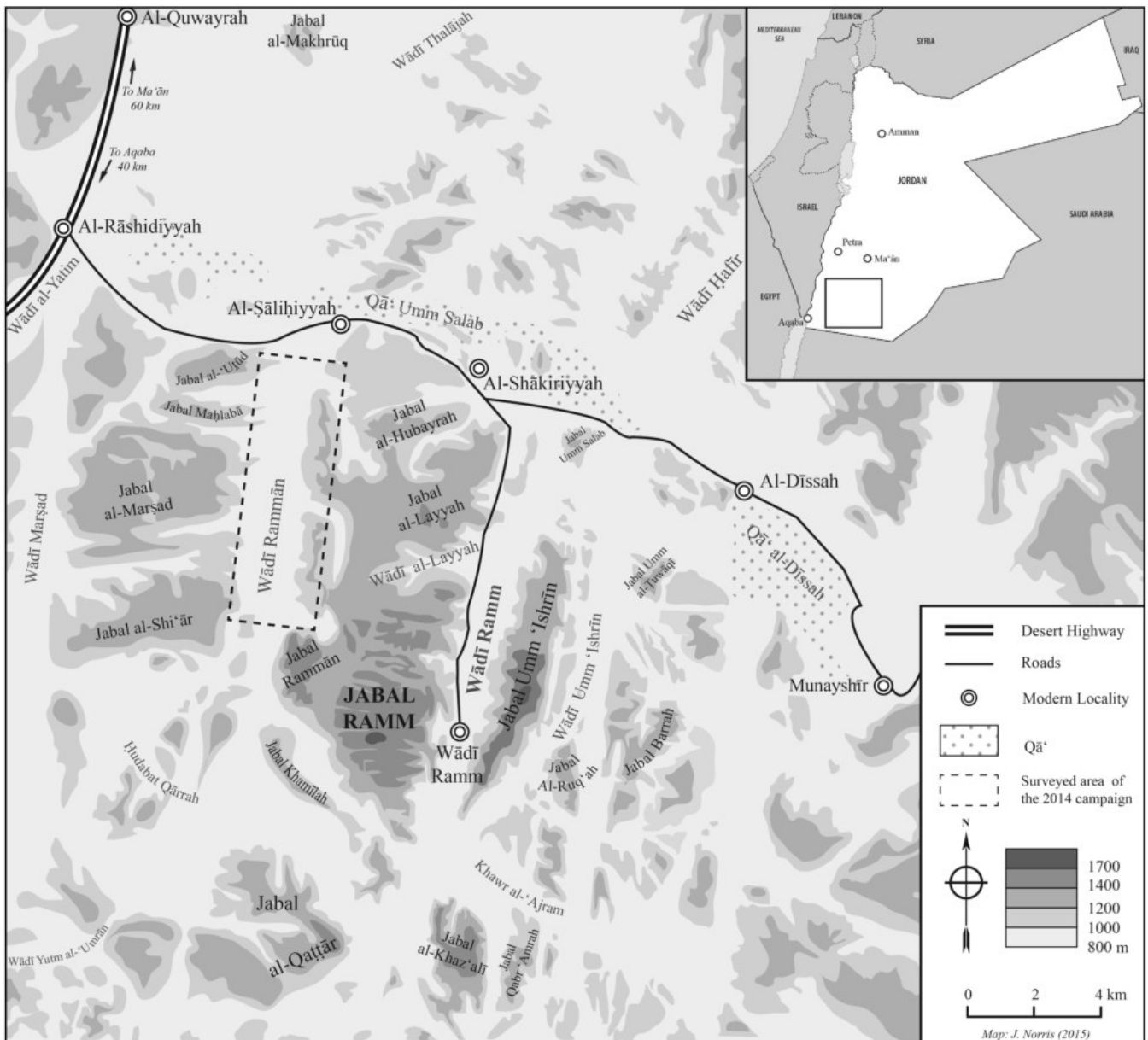
The 2014 field season staff consisted of Dr Saba Farès (Director [Université de Provence, Aix-Marseille, France]) and Jérôme Norris (PhD student [Université de Lorraine, Nancy, France]). The Department of Antiquities representative was Khaled al-Tarawneh, to whom we are most grateful for his assistance and involvement in the project. Logistical support was provided by Mustafa Smadi.

## **Introduction**

Located in southern Jordan, to the east of Aqaba and along the Saudi border (**Fig. 1**), the Wādī Ramm region belongs to the Ḥismā desert that extends from the Rās an-Naqab escarpment

to the Tabūk area of Saudi Arabia. Famous worldwide for its natural beauty, sandstone mountains and the sojourn of T. E. Lawrence during the First World War, the site was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 2011. Since the first archaeological work undertaken at Wādī Ramm in the 1930s by Savignac and Horsfield (1932: 581-597; 1933: 405-422; 1934: 572-589; 1935: 245-278), the place has usually been identified with ancient *Iram* of the Coran. During the Hellenistic and Roman periods it appears to have been an important religious center of the Nabataean kingdom, which was devoted to the Arabian goddess Allāt. Iram was also a major stop on the incense caravan route and an area densely occupied by nomadic camel herders who left thousands of carved inscriptions and drawings on the desert cliffs.

Intensive surveys started in 1996 with the launch of the Franco-Jordanian Wādī Ramm project by Fawzi Zayadine and Saba Farès, with the purpose of carefully documenting all ancient remains and adopting a multidisciplinary approach (archaeology; epigraphy; geography; ethnology). Since then, the project has had two primary objectives. First, to study the human occupation of a desert area and the ways in which its inhabitants were able to acquire their resources, particularly water, from prehistory to Islam. Second, to analyze the cultural practices of the Arab tribes living between southern Jordan and northern Arabia during Antiquity through the study of their languages (Ancient North Arabian and Nabataean Aramaic), religion, social organization and economy. The results of surveys and excavations conducted between 1996 and 2010 have been presented in



1. Wādī Ramm area.

various articles (Farès-Drappeau 1996; Zayadine and Farès-Drappeau 1998; Farès-Drappeau *et al.* 2001; Farès-Drappeau and Zayadine 2004), as well as in a recently published edited volume (Farès 2013a). After fourteen years of research, it also seemed appropriate to establish an international bi-annual colloquium on the history and geography of Wādī Ramm, viz. Men and Deserts. This meeting aims to facilitate the diffusion of our results and compare them with those of other

research teams involved in desert archaeology<sup>1</sup>.

The 2014 field season was devoted to the exploration and intensive survey of a little-known sector of the research area: Wādī Rammān (وادي رمان) (Figs. 1 - 4).

### Wādī Rammān: Location and Setting

Wādī Rammān<sup>2</sup> is a valley on a north - south axis that runs parallel with and immediately west of the Wādī Ramm ‘corridor’ (Figs. 1 and 2). It

1. To date, two iterations of this meeting have taken place. The first was held at the Wadi Rum Visitor Centre on 11 - 13 November 2011 (Farès 2013a and b). The second was held on

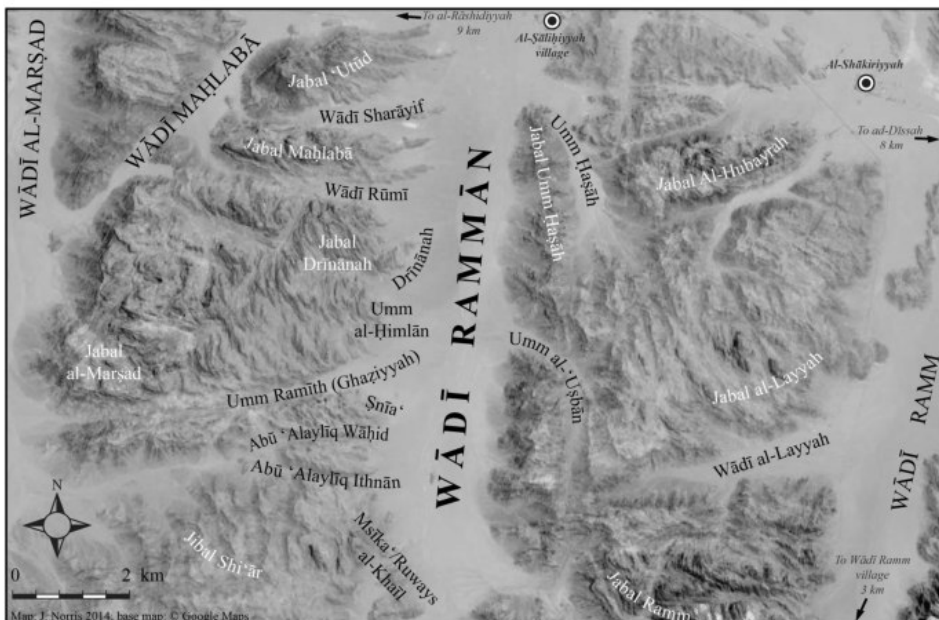
5 - 7 March 2014; its publication is in preparation.

2. The vocalisation of this toponym is given according to the pronunciation of the local bedouin: Rammān.

extends approximately 18 km from the road of al-Dīsah and the modern village of al-Şālihiyyah (29°42'39.1"N; 35°22'45"E) towards Jabal al-Qaṭṭār (29°31'59"N; 35°22'7"E). Around two kilometers wide, it is flanked on the east by the foothills of Jabal al-Hubayrah and Jabal Ramm (1764 m), *viz.* Jabal Umm Ḥaşāh (1205 m) and the dominant peak of the valley, Jabal Rammān (1404 m). On the west, it is bordered by the mountain ranges of Jabal 'Utūd (1172 m), Jabal Maḥlabā (1090 m), Jabal Marşad and its foothill Jabal Drīnānah (1128 m), and finally Jabal Shi'ār (1276 m). The hills on its west side consist of sandstone, whereas those

on the opposite side are more granitic. On the sandy valley floor, vegetation is typical of the Wādī Ramm region (Herveux 2013), being dominated by small shrubs of *Haloxylon* sp. and *Retama raetam*. Some scattered acacia trees are found in areas where water collects during rainfall, as well as one palm tree that stands at the foot of the huge cliff in Wādī Umm Ramīth (or Umm al-Ghadhiyyah) (**Fig. 5**).

In the late 1990s, the valley became a protected reserve of the Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed al-Nahyan foundation, in order to reintroduce Arabian oryx and Nubian ibex to the region (**Figs. 6 and 7**). Closed and controlled by guards,



2. *Wādī Rammān and its tributaries.*



3. *Overview of Wādī Rammān, from the north-east.*



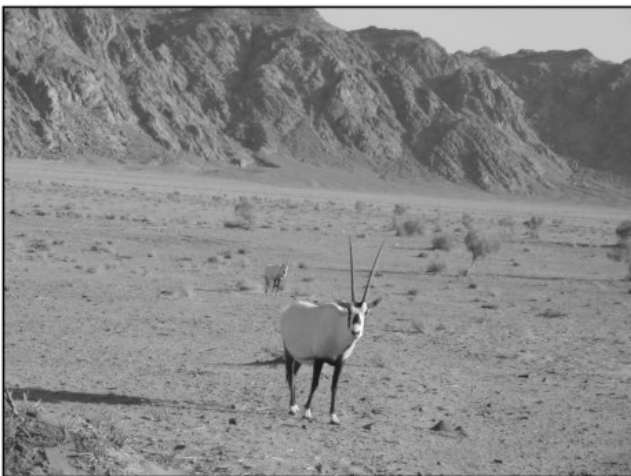
4. *Wādī Rammān, from the south-west.*



5. The palm trees of Wādī Umm Ramīth.



7. Nubian ibex at the foot of Jabal Drīnānah.



6. Arabian oryx in Wādī Rammān.

access to the site is only possible by obtaining special authorization from the reserve's director.

### Previous Surveys and Archaeological Work in Wādī Rammān

The Rammān area was first described by Alois Musil in 1907 - 1908, who listed Jabal Rammān amongst the major mountain peaks of the Ḥismā (1907: 4, 262; 1908: 227-228). He later visited an area very close to the valley, since he crossed the parallel Wādī Marṣad during his trip between Ma'ān and Aqaba in June 1910. A description of Jabal Rammān and its position in relation to Jabal Ramm and Jabal al-Qaṭṭār is found in his travel report (Musil 1926: 45, 50, 68), but the explorer gave no account of the presence of ancient inscriptions or archaeological remains.

In 1980 and 1981, the late Dr William Jobling

(University of Sydney) carried out, amongst other activities in the region, the first scientific research in Wādī Rammān. Interesting discoveries were made during these two surveys. First, surface material such as flint tools and ceramic sherds from the Chalcolithic, Iron Age and Roman periods (Jobling 1981a: 107, 108, 110-111, pl. XXXI-XXXII; 1982: 201-202). Second, a stone structure, named *Ruways al-Khail*, located in the south-west part of the wadi. Jobling described it as a cluster of house or wall foundations but did not publish any photo or drawing of this installation (Jobling 1982: 201). Third, North Arabian Thamudic inscriptions and rock art. The photos of two ibex drawings were published in his first reports (Jobling 1981a: fig. 1-2, pl. XXVIII; republished in 1981b: pl. 98, **fig. 3**). Of his Thamudic discoveries, only one text was read and published: AMJ 1 by Geraldine King (Jobling 1981b: pl. 98, fig. 2; 1982: 202, n. 6, pl. LVII, fig. 4; 1983: 32, fig. 8; King 1990: 523). A second text (AMJ 2), discovered in 1980, was brought to the Amman Museum and registered as no. J.14202. It is mentioned in several papers (Jobling 1982: 199, 202; Macdonald 1980: 200; King 1990: 523), but has remained unstudied to this day. Lastly, Jobling published a photo of a battle scene from an unknown place in Wādī Rammān accompanied by two Thamudic graffiti (Jobling 1981a: pl. XXIX, fig. 1; 1983: 32 fig. 7). These inscriptions were not included in the AMJ corpus compiled by Geraldine King (1990:



523-531) and have never been commented on.

More recently, an exploration of Wādī Rammān was conducted in 2001 during the sixth season of the Wādī Ramm project. This survey resulted in the discovery of a new structure in a north-west tributary of the Rammān valley named Wādī Rūmī (**Fig. 8**). A sounding was excavated, yielding pottery sherds from the Nabataean and Roman periods (see Fares and Zayadine 2004; Fares 2004: 35-36; Kafafi 2013: 94, 114-116). Epigraphic material was also recorded during this season, including a Thamudic graffito published in the 2004 report (Fares and Zayadine 2004: 362, fig. 8). In sum, it had become clear that Wādī Rammān was an interesting area with great archaeological and epigraphic potential. As most

of Jobling's discoveries remained unpublished because of his premature death, an intensive survey of this location was deemed desirable in order to place the site in its regional setting.

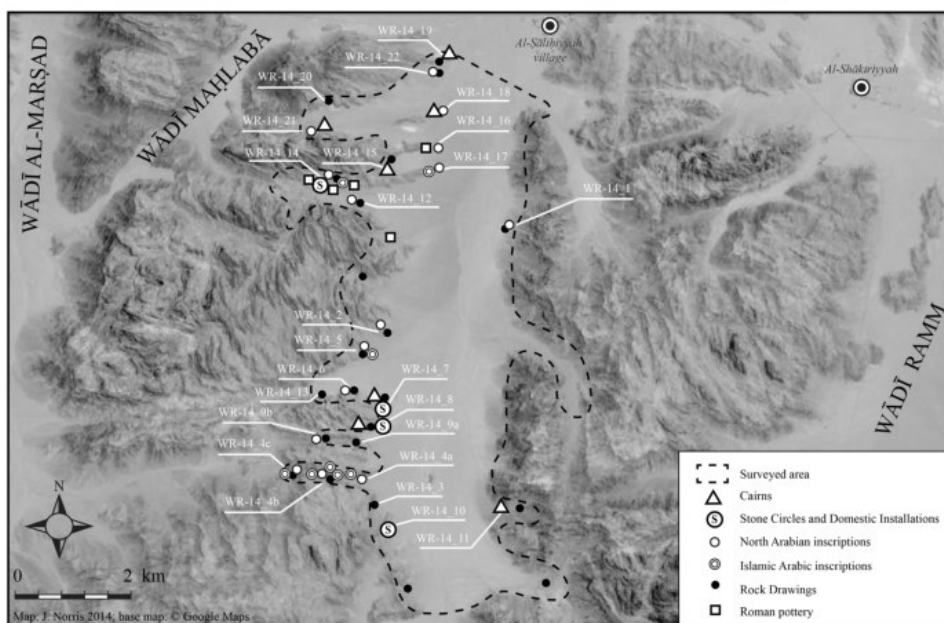
### Objectives and Survey Methodology

The 2014 field season had two main objectives. First, to record all locations in Wādī Rammān, both new and previously known, that might yield information about human activity during prehistory and Antiquity. This was to include all find-spots of archaeological material, petroglyphs and rock carvings. To this end, it was necessary to attempt to revisit and re-record the sites discovered by Jobling in 1980 and 1981, particularly that of *Ruways al-Khail* and the location of Thamudic inscription AMJ 1. Second, to focus on ancient carved inscriptions which might shed light on the identity and lifestyle of the ancient inhabitants of this area.

Owing to time constraints, it was decided to focus on the northern part of the *wadi*, from the road to al-Šālihiyyah village (29°41'24.1"N; 35°21'39.2"E) to the southern edge of the oryx reserve (29°36'11.1"N; 35°21'28.5"E). The exploration of the southern sector, which needs more time, will be conducted during a future season. The survey was made on foot and focused on three areas (**Fig. 9**). First, the west side of the valley and its five tributaries (Wādī Sharāyif,



8. Roman structure at Wādī Rūmī.



9. The survey area and recorded sites.

Wādī Rūmī, Umm Ramīth, Abū ‘Alaylīq Wāḥid and Abū ‘Alaylīq Ithnān). Second, the east side of the wādī and its two tributaries (Umm Ḥaṣāh and Umm al-‘Uṣbān). Third, the isolated hills, boulders and massifs situated in the bed of Wādī Rammān. Any place displaying traces of ancient occupation was recorded as a ‘site’. Twenty-two such sites were visited (Table 1, Fig. 9). These were designated WR-14\_1 to \_22 (WR-14 = Wādī Ramm 2014). Each of them was located using a handheld Global Positioning System (GPS), described and photographed with a whiteboard indicating its number.

Ancient inscriptions were photographed, measured and recopied by hand. We also read all texts on-site in order to interpret them within their landscape context. The surface material was not collected, but only recorded and photographed on the field in order to evaluate the potential of a site. After the survey, a few days were spent in Amman to study Jobling inscription AMJ 2 (Amman Museum reg. no. J.14202) so that it could be included in our corpus of North Arabian inscriptions from Wādī Rammān.

### Archaeological Remains

The discoveries included stone structures and some surface material. Eighteen structures distributed over nine sites were recorded (WR-14\_7, \_8, \_10, \_11, \_14, \_15, \_18, \_19 and \_21). If we exclude the previously known site of Wādī Rūmī (WR-14\_14), two categories can be

distinguished.

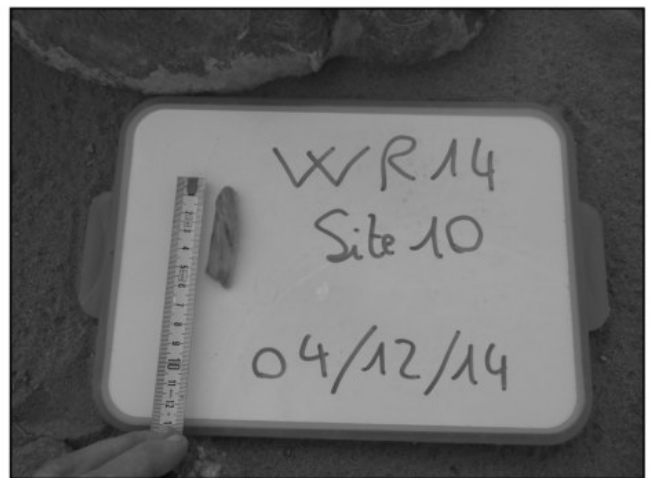
First, the stone circles at sites WR-14\_7, \_8 and \_10 (Figs. 9-11). These constructions are enclosures built of non-worked stone that form circles varying from 3 to 18 meters in diameter. Only one had associated surface material: WR-14\_10 (Fig. 11) in the south-west part of Wādī Rammān. From its location and organisation, it seems highly probable that this is the stone alignment discovered by Jobling in 1980 - 1981 which he referred to as *Ruways al-Khail* (Jobling 1982: 201). The construction stands at the foot of the cliff, on a north - south orientation. Its dimensions are approximately 18 meters north - south by 13 meters east - west. The presence of two small flint tools on the ground surface suggests a prehistoric or protohistoric occupation (Fig. 12). Similar structures are known in the Wādī Ramm valley, in particular at the site of Ṭurayf al-Marāgh. According to G. O. Rollefson



10. The circular structure of site WR-14\_8.



11. The structure of Ruweis el-Kheil: site WR-14\_10.



12. Lithic artifact at site WR-14\_10.

**Table 1:** List of sites.

Site Number	Locality	Coordinates	Date Of Survey	Structure	Material	North Arabian Inscriptions	Islamic Inscriptions	Rock art
<b>WR-14_1</b>	Jabal Umm al-Ḥaṣāh	N°46.9'29°39 E°14.4'35°22	01/12/2014			2		Camel; wasm.
<b>WR-14_2</b>	Umm al-Ḥimlān	N°46.6'29°38 E°59.3'35°20	02/12/14		Flint debitage.	7		Camels; ibex; dogs.
<b>WR-14_3</b>	Abū 'Alaylīq Ithnān (south-east)	N°09.7'29°37 E°46.7'35°20	02/12/14					Horsemen; camel riders.
<b>WR-14_4a</b>	Abū 'Alaylīq Ithnān (east)	N°26.6'29°37 E°41.2'35°20	02/12/14			1	1	Horsemen; camel riders, hunting.
<b>WR-14_4b</b>	Abū 'Alaylīq Ithnān	N°28.6'29°37 E°11.2'35°20	02/12/14			3	25	Warfare; hunting; camel riders; cattle; camel; ibex; oryx; dogs; wasm.
<b>WR-14_4c</b>	Abū 'Alaylīq Ithnān (west)	N°31.5'29°37 E°51.1'35°19	06/12/14			3	4	Hunting; camel riders; horsemen; ostriches; ibex; dogs; wasm.
<b>WR-14_5</b>	Umm Ramīth	N°31.8'29°38 E°49.1'35°20	03/12/14			2	2	Camel riders; camels; ibex; oryx; ostriches; wasm.
<b>WR-14_6</b>	Umm Ramīth	N°14.6'29°38 E°32.3'35°20	03/12/14			2		Ibex; wasm.
<b>WR-14_7</b>	Aṣ-Ṣniā'	N°03'29°38 E°51.1'35°20	04/12/14	1 stone circle; 2 cairns.				Ibex; dogs; human figures.
<b>WR-14_8</b>	Aṣ-Ṣniā'	N°52.3'29°37 E°49.8'35°20	04/12/14	1 stone circle; 1 cairn.				Ibex; oryx; dogs.
<b>WR-14_9a</b>	Abū 'Alaylīq Wāhid	N°44.1'29°37 E°39.8'35°20	04/12/14					Camels; ibex; horsemen.
<b>WR-14_9b</b>	Abū 'Alaylīq Wāhid	N°47.8'29°37 E°24.7'35°20	04/12/14			4		Warfare; hunting; dogs; ibex; ostriches; wasm.

<b>WR-14_10</b>	Msīka' al-Khail (Ruways al-Khail)	29°36'57.8"N 35°20'57.9"E	04/12/14	1 stone circle.					
<b>WR-14_11</b>	Jabal Umm al-'Uṣbān	29°37'08.1"N 35°22.00.8"E	05/12/14	1 cairn.					Camel riders; dogs; wasm.
<b>WR-14_12</b>	Wādī Rūmī	29°40'00.3"N 35°20'33.7"E	05/12/14			2			Camels; wasm.
<b>WR-14_13</b>	Umm Ramīth	29°38'11.1"N 35°20'14.9"E	06/12/14						Hunting; horsemen; ostriches; dogs; wasm.
<b>WR-14_14</b>	Wādī Rūmī	29°40'13.8"N 35°20'19.4"E	06/12/14	Domestic installation.	Roman sherds.	1		1	Camel riders; horsemen.
<b>WR-14_15</b>	Between Wādī Rūmī and Wādī Sharāyif	29°40'19.0"N 35°20'52.6"E	07/12/14	1 cairn.					Ibex.
<b>WR-14_16</b>	Wādī Sharāyif	29°40'34.0"N 35°21'25.0"E	07/12/14		Roman sherds.	6			Horsemen; ibex; oryx.
<b>WR-14_17</b>	Wādī Rūmī	29°40'18.7"N 35°21'32.7"E	07/12/14			2		1	
<b>WR-14_18</b>	Wādī Sharāyif	29°40'50.5"N 35°21'33.2"E	07/12/14	2 cairns.				3	Ibex.
<b>WR-14_19</b>	Wādī Sharāyif	29°41'24.1"N 35°21'39.2"E	08/12/14	3 cairns.					Camel; ibex; dogs; wasm.
<b>WR-14_20</b>	Wādī Sharāyif	29°41'00.6"N 35°20'19.2"E	08/12/14						Ibex; human figures.
<b>WR-14_21</b>	Wādī Sharāyif	29°40'38.6"N 35°20'03.2"E	08/12/14	3 cairns.				2	
<b>WR-14_22</b>	Wādī Rammān north-west	29°41'15.1"N 35°21'25.7"E	08/12/14					4	Ibex; oryx; dogs; wasm.



who studied them (2007: 220-221; 2013: 210-213), these circular constructions should be regarded as ritual structures imprecisely dated between the Chalcolithic and Nabataean periods.

Second, the cairns recorded at sites WR-14\_7, \_8, \_11, \_15, \_18, \_19 and \_21. They were built using both large blocks and small stones, with diameters varying from 3 to 8 meters. Most are found, like the stones circles, along the bases of the jibāl. In Wādī Sharāyif, however, five stand on the top of stone cliffs (sites WR-14\_18 and \_19) (**Fig. 13**). No artifacts were found in association with these constructions. Three Thamudic texts were found on a stone at WR-14\_18 but, as this was some distance from the cairns, no relationship between the graffiti and structures could be established.

Ceramic material was also noted, but exclusively in Wādī Rūmī and its surroundings. One isolated sherd was found along the north side of Jabal Drīnānah, with four others at site WR-14\_16 at the foot of Jabal Maḥlabā. As noted in 2001, the only significant concentration of sherds is found around the Wādī Rūmī structure (WR-14\_14). Dating to the Roman period, this material includes fragments of jars and bowls made of reddish-brown fabric (**Fig. 14**).

### Rock Art and Wusūm

A total of 164 examples of rock art were recorded, distributed over nineteen of the twenty-two WR-14 sites (**Table 2**). The engravings are dominated by depictions of animals. Of the taxa observed, Nubian ibex is predominant, with 49 depictions at 15 sites. The next most common animals are camel (18), dog (eight), Arabian oryx (five) and ostrich (four) (**Fig. 15**).



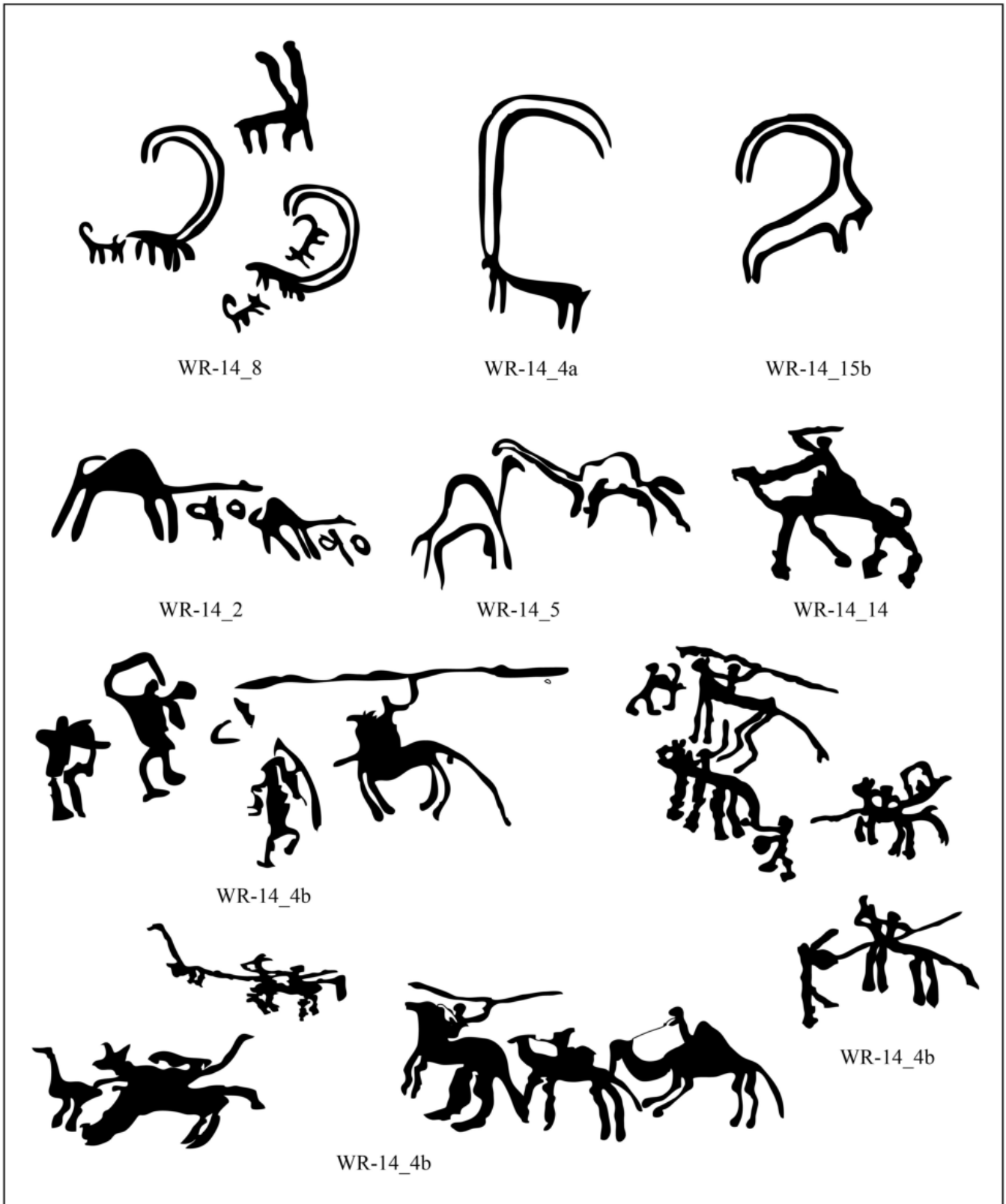
13. One of the cairns at site WR-14\_18, on a hilltop in Wādī Sharāyif.



14. Roman sherds in Wādī Rūmī (WR-14\_14).

**Table 2:** Composition of Wādī Rammān Rock Art.

Subject	Number of depictions	%
Animal		
Nubian ibex	49	29.8
Arabian oryx	5	3
Camel	18	10.9
Ostrich	4	2.4
Cattle	1	0.6
Dog	8	4.8
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>51.8</b>
Other		
Hunting	8	4.8
Warfare	3	1.8
Camel rider	11	6.7
Horseman	14	8.5
Human figure	3	1.8
Wasm	40	24.3
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>48.1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>100.0</b>

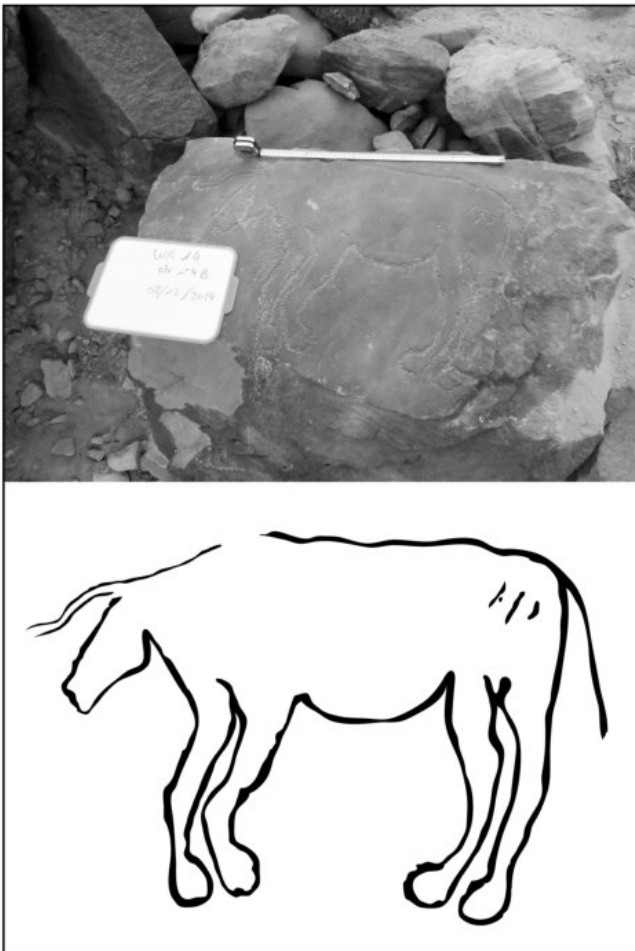


15. Selection of rock art from various sites.

A single bovid was noted. This is an elaborate carving found in Wādī Abū ‘Alaylīq Ithnān (WR-14\_4b) (**Fig. 16a-b**). It is engraved on the upper side of a block that stands on the south side of the *wadi* slope. It measures ca 57 cm in length by ca 40 cm in height. The animal is represented in profile, with a pronounced musculature and curved, forward-pointing horns. Its physiognomy argues for it being identified as the extinct aurochs, or *Bos primigenius*. As ever, it is difficult to determine the precise age of a rock art panel. However, several elements argue for a prehistoric date. First, this representation clearly predates the extinction of aurochs from Arabia that took place soon after the end of the Holocene wet phase at around 3,800 BC<sup>3</sup>. Second, the heavy degree of patination suggests

that it is far older than the adjacent carvings (ibex drawings; Thamudic and Arabic inscriptions) which all have a fresher yellow patina. It is also significant that the figure is deeply carved. This is evidence that the panel was carved before the development of desert varnish during the Holocene arid phase (Olsen and Bryant 2013: 38). Finally, the artistic style of this carving has nothing in common with the way in which the cattle are usually depicted in Wādī Ramm (Campetti and Borzatti von Löwenstern 1983: tav. XXVI-XXVII; Farès 2006: 40) and, more generally, in all early Arabian rock art - of which the ‘Jubbah style’ is a striking example (Parr et al. 1978: 47-48; Jennings *et al.* 2013: 680). In contrast, it is done in the prehistoric realist style and shares many similarities with Late Palaeolithic cattle representations from the site of Qurta in southern Egypt (Huyge and Ikram 2009: 158-163). If the dating of this aurochs figure to the Late Palaeolithic or Early Neolithic period is correct, it would be one of the oldest known petroglyphs in the region, cf. those at Kilwa in northern Saudi Arabia (Horsfield *et al.* 1950).

The Wādī Rammān rock art also depicts many horsemen and camel riders (**Fig. 15**), as well as around eight hunting (WR-14\_4a, \_4b, \_4c, \_9b, \_13 and \_16) and three fighting scenes (WR-14\_4b and \_9b). The battlefield panel photographed by Jobling (1981a: pl. XXIX, fig. 1; 1983: 32 fig. 7) was rediscovered in Wādī Abū ‘Alaylīq Wāhīd and was recorded as site WR-14\_9b. On a block ca 1.9 meters high by 3.2 meters wide, it shows fighting between horsemen armed with spears, amongst whom are hunters pursuing ostriches. It is not clear whether the two Ancient North Arabian (Hismaic) graffiti carved within the scene are the signatures of the artists or not. *Many wusūm* (tribal symbols) were observed during the survey. These were found in isolated contexts or in association with graffiti and drawings. However, only three



16a - b. Prehistoric aurochs depiction from Wādī Abū ‘Alaylīq Ithnān (WR-14\_4b).

3. On the presence of aurochs in Arabia during the Holocene wet phase and their depiction in rock art, see the excellent

discussion in Olsen and Bryant 2013: 37-39, 197.

symbols recur frequently; the most common takes the form of a curve accompanied by two little strokes (**Fig. 17**).

**Ancient North Arabian Inscriptions**

Around forty Ancient North Arabian graffiti were recorded at thirteen sites in the research area: WR-14\_1, \_2, \_4, \_5, \_6, \_9, \_12, \_14, \_16, \_17, \_18, \_21 and \_22. Two texts were discovered in the east part of the *wadi* (nos 1 and 2 from site WR-14\_1.), while all the others are written on boulders and mountain bases in the west part. This distribution is easily explained by the geology of Wādī Rammān. The sandstone rocks of the west side are better for carving than the granite rocks of the opposite side. This is also true of the rock drawings, since only two petroglyphs were found on the east side. The number of readable texts is reduced, however, by the fact that some are scratched or have deteriorated through erosion. For example, sites WR-14\_2, \_5 and \_14 have examples of texts that have been completely erased. There is also the case of isolated characters, observed at sites WR-14\_2 and \_9c (**Fig. 15**), which should certainly not be texts, but may be *wusūm*. In sum, the corpus of North Arabian graffiti from Wādī Rammān consists of a total of 36 readable texts: 35 were recorded in the field, to which should



17. Most common wasm found on the rocks of Wādī Rammān.

be added AMJ 2 from the Amman Museum<sup>4</sup>.

Thirty-two belong to the so-called ‘Hismaic’ (Thamudic E) category of Ancient North Arabian, whereas three are Thamudic C (nos 3, 4 and 27) and one Dadano-Liḥyānite (or Dadanitic) (no. 5). Their content falls into four categories (**Fig. 18**). Twenty-seven are texts of simple authorship (nos 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 30, 34, 35 and 36), with one that includes a long genealogy (no. 13) and two in which a tribal affiliation is indicated (nos. 17 and 36). Two texts are prayers for remembrance addressed to the goddess *Li* (nos 16 and 29).

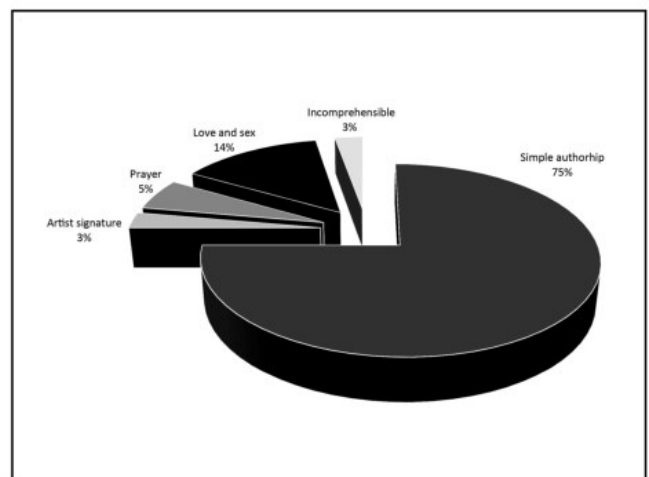
Five are love texts or of a sexual content (nos 3, 4, 27, 31 and 32). One is the signing of a drawing (no. 5). There is also a text with no coherent sense (no. 33), which may be a writing exercise. Here is one example from the corpus:

**Inscription no. 9 (Fig. 19a - b)**

Site 4b, Wādī Abū ‘Alaylīq Ithnān: length = 50 cm; average height of letters = 12 cm. This graffito is carved below a hunting scene and a Kufic inscription. It reads from left to right:

l qym bn ’slm

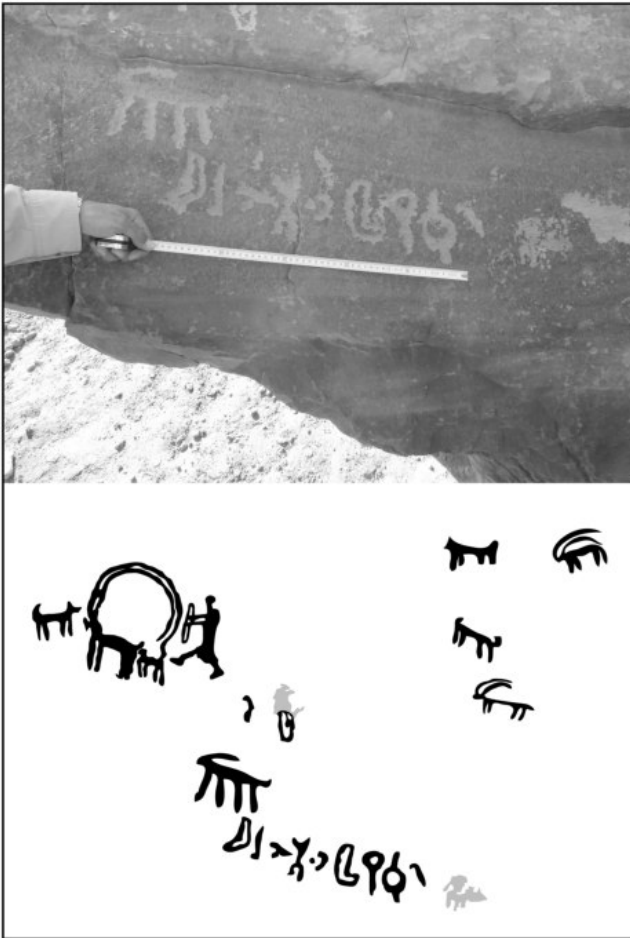
By Qym son of ’slm



18. Content of the North Arabian inscriptions from Wādī Rammān.

4. The study of this corpus of North Arabian inscriptions is being conducted by Jérôme Norris as part of his PhD

dissertation: *Peuples et groupes sociaux en Arabie du nord-ouest aux époques nabatéenne et romaine*.



19. a - b. North Arabian Inscription no. 9 from Wādī Abū 'Alaylīq Ithnān (Site WR-14\_4b).

All the letters are clear. This is a text of simple authorship introduced by the particle *l* (lām auctoris). In the absence of the word *ḥṭṭ* that could represent the participle “inscriber” or the verb “he engraved”, it is difficult to say whether this text should be associated with the scene depicted above, *viz.* a man armed with a bow, surrounded by his dogs, who is hunting an ibex. The two names are well-known. *Qym* is mainly attested in Safaitic (Harding 1971: 492), but has also been found in around ten Hismaic texts. It appears three times in the Wādī Ramm sector (Farès in press), twice in Wādī Judayyid (KJC 319; KJC 664), twice in Wādī Ḥafīr (Corbett 2010: nos R430.5; R653.8), once at Jafr

(Abdelaziz and Ma'ani 2006: no. 2) and twice in northern Saudi Arabia (Koenig 1971: no. tdr 9; al-Theeb 1999: no. 181). Note that it is also attested in Nabataean as *qymw* (Negev 1991: 58).

The patronymic, *'slm*, is a name of the elative *'af'al* form (cf. Arabic 'Aslam اسلم). It is found in both North and South Arabian inscriptions<sup>5</sup>, as well as in Nabataean Aramaic (Harding 1971: 45; Negev 1991: 15). In regard to its attestation in the Jordanian Ḥismā, King has noted over eighteen occurrences (1990: 358) to which should now be added three new texts discovered in the southern part of the Wādī Ramm area (Farès, in press) and six others from Wādī Ḥafīr (Corbett 2010: nos R227.9; R244.1; R377.2; R627.1; 07-0026.1; 07-0026.4).

### Islamic Inscriptions

Thirty-three Islamic Arabic texts were discovered or re-discovered<sup>6</sup>. Most are concentrated in the tributary of Wādī Abū 'Alaylīq Ithnān (sites WR-14\_4a - c). These are mainly signatures and prayers. Two recurrent types of religious formulas can be read: *šahādah* and invocations introduced by *Allāhumma*. It should be noted that the major part of these graffiti is by a single author, *'Umar bin 'Uqbah*, who wrote his name on numerous stones at sites WR-14\_4a, \_4b and \_4c. Outside this *wādī*, one text was recorded in the immediate vicinity of the Roman structure of Wādī Rūmī, (WR-14\_14), two at Umm al-Ḥimlān (WR-14\_5) and a damaged one in the north-west part of Wādī Rammān (WR-14\_17). Some of them are carved next to ibex drawings that show the same degrees of patination. This indicates that some Islamic inscriptions and animal representations are contemporaneous and by the same hand.

### Concluding Remarks

Until now, Wādī Rammān was an area that had been poorly investigated. This might seem paradoxical when one takes into account its

5. In the Dadano-Liḥyānite inscriptions of al-'Ulā, the name appears in JSLiḥy 237, D 151 (= AH 24, U 43), AH 258 and 296.

6. The study of the Arabic inscriptions recorded in Wādī Rammān has been assigned to Frédéric Imbert (Iremam, Université de Provence, Aix-Marseille, France).



proximity to the main center of the area, Wādī Ramm (ancient Iram). The survey of this valley allowed the recording of new and interesting material. The most striking findings are a corpus of Ancient North Arabian inscriptions and a set of rock art drawings. Two main observations can be made in the light of our results. The first concerns chronology. By cross-referencing the epigraphic and archaeological material, it appears that Wādī Rammān was permanently occupied from prehistory to the Islamic period. The few recorded lithic tools and possible Late Palaeolithic aurochs depiction in Wādī Abū ‘Alaylīq Ithnān are evidence of the most ancient phase of human activity in this locale. In absence of excavation, it is difficult to say if the stone circles of the valley belong to this early phase or not, as only one was found with associated artifacts. The North Arabian inscriptions and sherds of Wādī Rūmī belong to the next phase, i.e. the Hellenistic and Roman periods. A final phase is evidenced by a large number of Islamic inscriptions. The second main observation concerns the nature of human occupation and the role of this valley in its regional context. Despite its geographical orientation, the wadi seems not to have been a great communication axis between north and south. Liḥyānite and Thamudic C inscriptions testify to the presence of individuals from southern regions, but no Nabataean, South Arabian or Greek inscriptions were found there - a situation that contrasts with the nearby Wādī Ramm corridor. Moreover, very few rock art drawings and inscriptions are found in the *wadi* itself. Their concentration in the western tributaries suggests, in contrast, that Wādī Rammān was an east - west route. Of course, it will be necessary to explore the farthest tributaries, as well as the adjacent Wādī Maḥlabā and Wādī Maṣṣad, to confirm such a hypothesis. However, it is noteworthy that it was on this axis that the Roman installation of Wādī Rūmī was built. Concerning the stone structures recorded, their function(s) remains enigmatic but comparison with those of Ṭurayf al-Marāgh might indicate that they were ritual rather than

domestic in nature. The absence of domestic structures, with the exception of the Wādī Rūmī example, suggests that occupation was mainly by nomadic groups who came to this valley to graze their camels and hunt, as depicted in numerous examples of rock art. Further survey in this *wadi* is therefore necessary, to explore its southern part and confirm the hypothesis developed above.

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