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## **The Ancient North Arabian Inscriptions from Wādī Ramān in the Ḥismā Desert**

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### **Introduction**

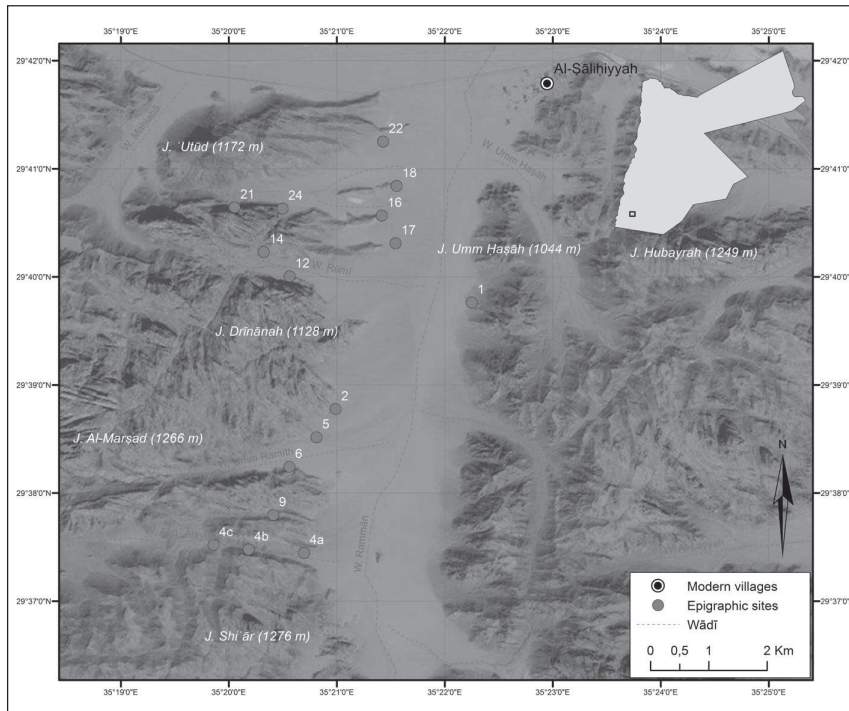
During antiquity, the sandy desert of the Ḥismā, around Wādī Ramm (ancient Iram) in southern Jordan, was inhabited by various groups of camel-breeding nomads who left thousands of drawings, tribal marks (*wusūm*) and graffiti on the cliff-faces and stones of the region. Most of these inscriptions are in a language classified as a form of old Arabic, expressed in a local Ancient North Arabian (ANA) script formerly called “Thamudic E” and nowadays labelled “Hismaic” (King 1990). A handful of graffiti in other varieties of ANA are also found in the area, including some Safaitic, Thamudic B, Thamudic D and Dadanitic texts, certainly produced by travellers coming from central and northern Arabia. All of these texts are of considerable importance, not only for the study of Arabic’s pre-Islamic past, but also because they contain religious and socio-historical information about their authors, peoples who lived on the borders of the great early empires, between the Arabian Peninsula and

the Levant.

This paper is an edition of thirty-six ANA inscriptions which were recorded in Wādī Ramān during the 2014 field campaign of the Wādī Ramm project led by Saba Farès (Université de Provence)<sup>1</sup>. To these a text is added which was discovered in the same wadi by the late William Jobling in 1981 that is nowadays kept in the Amman Museum (no. 37 = AMJ 2). Wādī Ramān (or *Wādī Ramān*) is a valley of about 16km in length which is situated to the south of the village of aṣ-Ṣāliḥiyyah and immediately to the west of the Wādī Ramm corridor (FIG. 1). All the inscriptions under study are new, with the exception of two texts. These are no. 19, which was published by Jobling in the early 1980s (AMJ 1); and no. 36 which Saba Farès and Fawzi Zayadine edited in the preliminary report of the sixth campaign of the Wādī Ramm project (2004: 362-363)<sup>2</sup>. The distribution of the texts, which are found in great concentration in the western tributaries of the Ramān valley (Wādī Abū al-‘Ulaylīq 1-2, Umm Ramīth,

1. The Jordano-French archaeological project at Wādī Ramm, directed by Saba Farès (Université de Provence, HISCANT-MA), is supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is part of the program “De Pétra au wadi Ramm” which is led by Laurent Tholbecq (Université libre de Bruxelles).

2. Editorial sigla and symbols: {} encloses doubtful letters; {} indicates alternative readings of a letter or a word; [ ] encloses restored letters; {·} indicates a non-identified letter; --- indicates a damaged area; PN: personal name; DN: divine name; ANA: Ancient North Arabian.



1. Satellite view of Wādī Ramān, with positions of the sites on which the inscriptions were recorded (Map: J. Norris 2017).

Wādī Rūmī and Wādī Shurayyif), is almost certainly a reflection of the geological conditions of the wadi (FIG. 1), its eastern side providing very few suitable rocks for carving in contrast with its western side.

### Site 1: Jabal Umm Ḥaṣāh

#### Inscription no. 1

The text is carved left-to-right in the Hismaic script on a sandstone block lying on the slope of the massif (FIG. 2). Length: 50 cm; average height of the letters: 6 cm.

*w mṭr bn ḥlf*

And Mṭr son of Ḥlf

The text begins with the conjunction *w* instead of the more common *lām auctoris* particle (*i.e. l PN* “By PN”), an alternative way to introduce the author’s name which is frequently encountered in Hismaic (King 1990: 54-55). Interestingly, five other texts of the present collection begin this way (nos. 2, 6, 13, 36, 37). The two personal names are known from Saffaitic and Hismaic (HIn: 227, 551; King 1990: 395, 463). *Ḥlf* could probably represent one of the names transcribed as *Ḥlpw* and *Ḥlypw* in Nabataean Aramaic, both of which are attested

in the Wādī Ramm area (Savignac 1933: no. 3; Farès-Drappeau *et al.* 2001: 214).

#### Inscription no. 2

Immediately to the right of no. 1: a little Hismaic text running diagonally (FIG. 2). Length: 15 cm; average height of the letters: 4 cm.

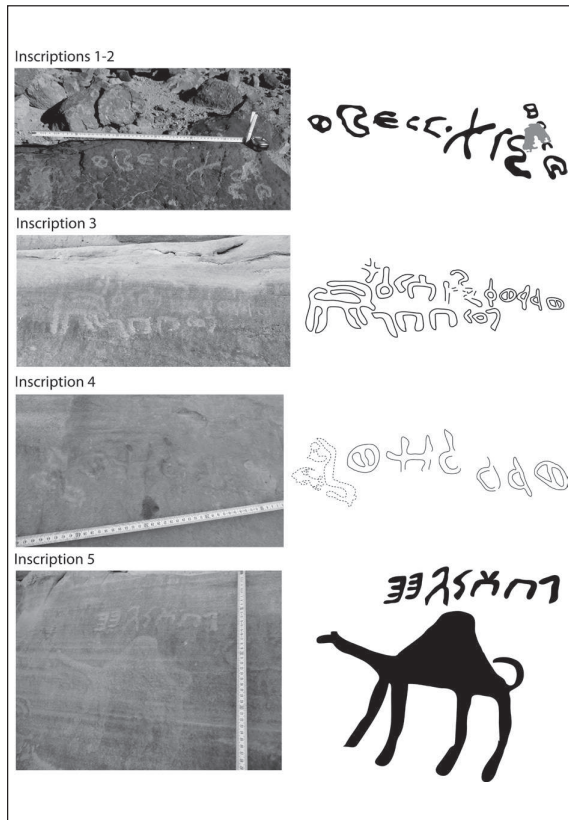
*w ---rm*

And ---rm

It is the same type of text as the previous one, namely a signature introduced by *w* but without patronymic in this case. An abrasion on the stone prevents the reading of the personal name. From what is discernible, the initial letter seems to be formed by a little circle, which may correspond to a *ʿ* or a *y*. However, no reliable restoration appears possible.

### Site 2: Umm al-Ḥimlān

The texts from this site are carved next to each other on a panel which stands two meters above the ground which we can access easily by climbing a slight slope. Some of these graffiti are almost entirely destroyed by the effects of time.



2. Inscriptions nos. 1-5 (Photographs and tracings: J. Norris; Wādī Ramm archaeological project).

*Inscription no. 3*

Besides the drawing of an ibex (FIG. 2), two lines in the Thamudic B script written right-to-left. Length: 40 cm; average height of the letters: 5 cm.

*wdd wq{.} {s'ry}{t}*  
*l 'rbbl*

Wq{.} loved {s'ry}{t}  
 By 'rbbl (?)

This inscription is in an extremely poor condition because of erosion, especially the upper line which seems to contain a formula of the type *wdd PN<sup>1</sup> PN<sup>2</sup>*. Whereas the word *wdd* could either be a substantive, a verb in the suffix conjugation, a passive or an active participle (cf. Tsafirir 1996: 141-148; Stokes 2016: 37-38), its position as the first element of the sentence and the absence of the element *f* suggest that

3. The re-interpretation of the *wdd f PN*-formula as “greetings be with PN” was recently proposed by Ahmad Al-Jallad in an excellent paper entitled The Thamudic C (*wdd f*) Inscriptions given at a conference in Austin 14 February 2016.

it represents here a verb. If this is correct, the inscription would conform to a VSO word order as is the norm in Safaitic and Classical Arabic (Macdonald 2004: 524-525). On the other hand, one could ask if whether the *w* which follows *wdd* is not in fact a comitative *wāw* (cf. *wāw al-ma'iyah*) instead of the first letter of the personal name. If this is so, *wdd* would instead be a nominal formation “love, greeting”. An alternative interpretation of the text would therefore be *wdd w q{.} {s'ry}{t} l 'rbbl* “greetings be with Q{.} {s'ry}{t}. By 'rbbl”<sup>3</sup>.

I am unable to read the personal(s) name(s) following *wdd/wdd w* of which only the letters *q, s', r, y* are certain. The lower line, introduced by the *lām auctoris*, certainly consists of the author's signature. As far I know, if correctly read, the name 'rbbl has not been found before. Compound names with the word 'rb are only represented in the Arabian milieu by 'rb{'}l which occurs once in Safaitic (C 3998) and by 'rbs<sup>2</sup>ms<sup>1m</sup>, attested once in Sabaic (HIn: 414). Very tentatively, I would suggest that 'rbbl could be a theophoric compound composed with the element 'rb “to enter” and the name of the Babylonian deity Bēl. Compare the Akkadian name *Ērib-ilāni* “the one who enters [into the presence of] the gods” (PNAE 1: 403). However, we would have to admit that the compound of 'rb + bl happened without an assimilation of the first consonant of the divine name to the preceding *b*, which is not necessary unlikely (e.g. *bnn 'm < bn + n 'm*, CH.R703.6). Another difficulty is the source language from which this name would come given that the representation of ' excludes an Akkadian origin and that the 'rb-compound names are not attested in North-West Semitic onomastica. Nevertheless, note that a theophoric name containing Bēl has been found in Safaitic (*s<sup>2</sup>'bl* “companion of Bēl”; cf. Al-Jallad 2015: 58)<sup>4</sup>.

4. A second way to interpret this line would be to read *l 'r b bl* “By 'r son of Bl”. However, the n-assimilation in unstressed position and the writing of *b* for *bn* “son” are characteristic features of Taymanitic which have not been found in other ANA varieties (Kootstra 2016: 83).

*Inscription no. 4*

To the left of the previous text, one horizontal line written right-to-left (FIG. 2). Heavily weathered, it is difficult to say whether this is a Hismaic or a Thamudic B inscription. Length: 34 cm; average height of the letters: 7cm.

*wdd* {y/q}{n/s²}{t}{w/}{g}

Another *wdd* formula, either of the type *wdd PN* “PN was in love” or of the type *wdd PN<sup>1</sup> PN<sup>2</sup>* “PN<sup>1</sup> loved/greeted PN<sup>2</sup>”.

*Inscription no. 5*

To the left of the previous text, a Dadanitic inscription written right-to-left above and in association with a drawing of a she-camel facing left (FIG. 2). Length 29cm; average height of the letters: 6cm.

*lb'n hṭṭ*

Lb'n is [the] carver/has carved

Although it consists of a simple artist's signature, this text is of great significance. On the one hand, it brings the number of Dadanitic inscriptions so far known in the Jordanian Ḥismā to three, which represent the most northerly examples of the use of this alphabet (Graf 1983: 555-560; Farès-Drappeau 1995). Secondly, it exhibits an interesting combination of Hismaic and Dadanitic features. Whereas the script is clearly Dadanitic (*cf.* the shapes of *ḥ* and *ṭ*), the formula and the word *hṭṭ* are rather characteristic of the local dialect expressed by the Hismaic inscriptions (King 1990: 53-54). Indeed, this contrasts with the usual ways attested in the texts of al-‘Ulā to record the action of writing or claiming the authorship of an engraving (*e.g.* *tqt b'ṭ* “B'ṭ has carved/B'ṭ's signature”, D 35; *s'lmh / bn 's'd / mrh / f'l* “S'lmh son of 's'd [of the family of] Mrh made [the drawing]”, Nasif 1988: 86).

Placed after the name, the word *hṭṭ* possibly represents a verb in the third person masculine singular of the suffix conjugation \*/ḥattāta/ “he inscribed, drew”, since the SVO word order is the norm in Dadanitic (Macdonald 2004: 524; Farès-Drappeau 2005: 76). However, if one

posits that this was written by a Wādī Ramm native whose dialect apparently had no definite article (Macdonald 2000: 45), the word would more likely be an active participle \*/ḥāṭṭit/ “carver, inscriber”. Outside south-western Arabia, the name *Lb'n* is attested in Dadanitic (D 134), Safaitic (KRS 2684, *etc.*) and Hismaic (unpublished).

**Site 4: Abū al-‘Ulaylīq 2**

The texts recorded in Wādī Abū al-‘Ulaylīq 2 are engraved on boulders and stones which stand on three different points in the valley, from east to west, sites 4a, 4b and 4c respectively (FIG. 1).

*Inscription no. 6*

On a boulder at the entrance of the *wadi* (site 4A), a Hismaic text running vertically above a modern Arabic graffito (FIG. 3). Length: 27 cm; average height of the letters: 7cm.

*w 's'lh*

And 's'lh

Simple authorship text introduced by *w*. The theophoric name *'s'lh* “gift of Lh” (*cf.* Arabic *Awsallāh*; CIK: 215-216) is attested in Safaitic and Hismaic (HIn: 45). In Nabataean Aramaic, it occurs with four different spellings: *'wš'lh*, *'wš'lh*, *'wšlh* and *'wšlhy*, (Negev 1991: 10-11).

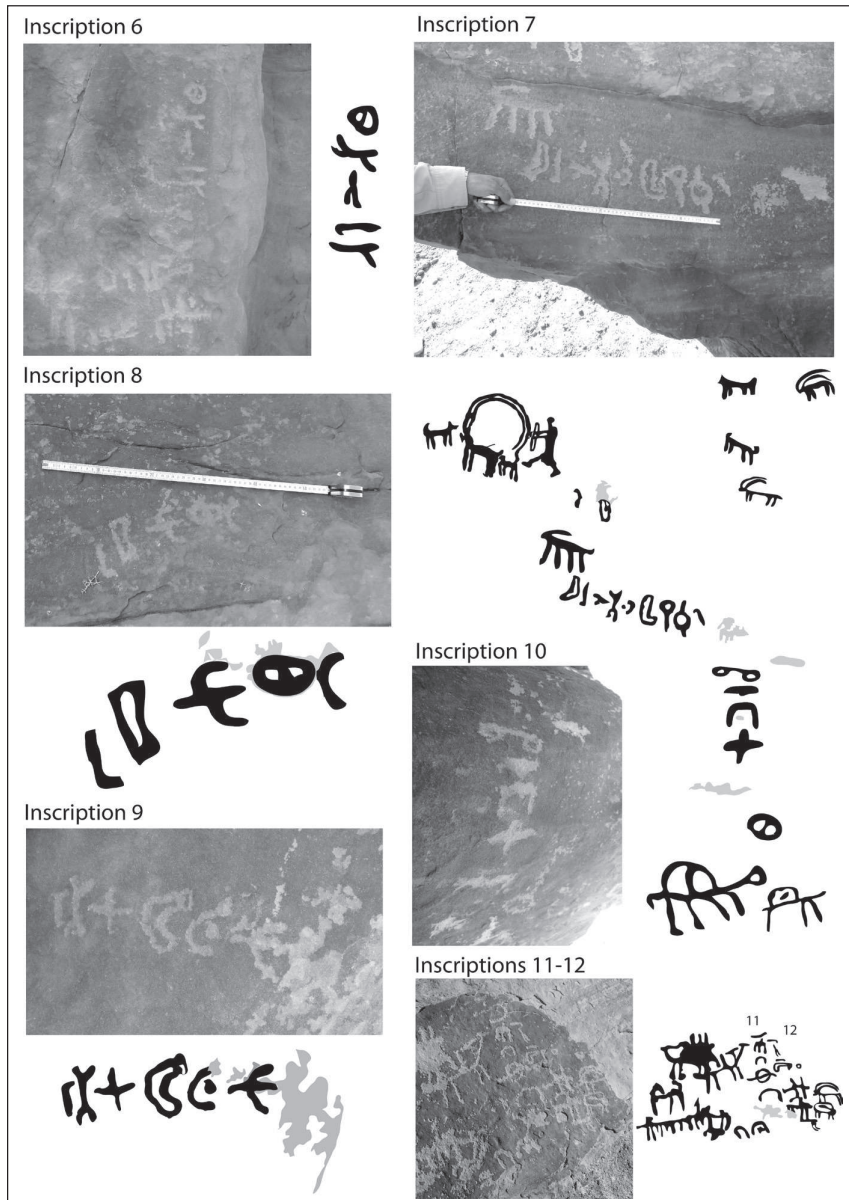
*Inscription no. 7*

A few meters away from the previous boulder stands another block, which has a Kufic inscription, a hunting scene and a Hismaic graffito written right-to-left (FIG. 3). Length: 50cm; average height of the letters: 12cm.

*l qym bn 's'lm*

By Qym son of 's'lm

The scene depicted consists of an ibex facing left that is surrounded by two dogs and a man holding a bow. The archer is in the act of shooting arrows, one of which has already struck the animal. To the right of this stand two dogs and two stick-figure drawings of ibexes, perhaps produced by another artist. It is unclear



3. Inscriptions nos. 6-12 (Photographs and tracings: J. Norris; Wādī Ramm archaeological project).

whether the inscription has a relationship or not with these drawings.

The personal name *Qym* (cf. Arabic *Qayyim*) is known from Safaitic, Hismaic and Nabataean (HIn: 492; Negev 1991: 58). Note that, in Dadanitic, the word *qym* is used as an official title “manager” (D 13, 22). The patronym, *'s'lm* (cf. Arabic *Aslam*; CIK: 197), is a name of the *'f'l* elative form, attested in both Ancient North and South Arabian (HIn: 45), as well as in Nabataean Aramaic with the forms *'šlm* and *'šlmw* (Negev 1991: 15). On *'šlmw*, see no. 12.

*Inscription no. 8*

In the middle part of the wadi (site 4b), a Hismaic graffito written left-to-right on the upper face of a boulder (FIG. 3). Length: 29 cm; average height of the letters: 8cm.

*l m h w r*

By Mḥwr

A simple signature. *Mḥwr* is a name of the *mf'l* passive participle form. Not very common, it has only been found in Hismaic and Safaitic (HIn: 532; King 1990: 460), without parallels in the Nabataean onomasticon or in the genealogy of the Arab tribes.

*Inscription no. 9*

On a block standing next to the boulder where the previous text is situated, a Hismaic graffito written left-to-right (FIG. 3). Length: 35cm; average height of the letters: 7cm.

*l' tm bn h[r]*

By 'tm son of H[r]

The name 'tm occurs in Safaitic (HIn: 19), Hismaic (cf. King 1990: 353; Bikai and Al-Khraysheh 2002: 219), Dadanitic (D 108), Taymanitic (Ph 279p1) and Thamudic C<sup>2</sup> (WHI 181). Also known in Nabataean Aramaic (Negev 1991: 16), 'tmw is interestingly found twice in the Wādī Ramm area (Farès-Drappeau and Zayadine 2004: no. 4; Hayajneh 2006). An abrasion on the stone obscures the patronym. From the space available, it seems probable that this is a bi-radical name. If one admits that no. 28 of the present collection was carved by the same author, then this would have to be restored as H[r] (cf. the Arabic names Ḥūr and Ḥurr; CIK: 333-334), which is a well-known name in Hismaic (cf. King 1990: 387).

*Inscription no. 10*

On a rock in the western part of the wadi (site 4c), a text written vertically which is difficult to assign to a particular script (FIG. 3). Length: 12 cm; average height of the letters: 6 cm.

*{g/t}{l/n/s}bt*

The absence of an introductory particle makes interpretation of this kind of text very uncertain, but one could suggest that here we are dealing with an isolated personal name. The reading depends on the values of the first two letters. If the text is written in the Hismaic script, then this would read *gs<sup>2</sup>bt* which is so far unattested in the ANA corpora. However, the root exists in Arabic “rough, gross” (Lane: 426b-c) from which probably derives the Nabataean name *Gwšb* (JSNab 193). If, on the other hand, the text is in another script (Thamudic C?), then this could read *glbt*, *gnbt*, *grbt*, *tlbt*, *trbt* or *tnbt*, of which the first five represent possible personal names.

*Inscription no. 11*

On a second boulder at the same location, a Hismaic graffito carved vertically next to several figures of ibexes, camels and horse-riders (FIG. 3). Length: 26 cm; average height of the letters: 6 cm.

*l {h/t}rq*

By {H/T}rq

It is difficult to say whether the little line on the upper part of the second letter is extraneous or not to the text. For this reason, both readings, as *h* and *t*, are possible. The name *Trq* (cf. Arabic *Ṭāriq*; CIK: 557) is attested in around twenty Safaitic inscriptions of the OCIANA corpus and in six Hismaic texts from southern Jordan (TIJ 141, 294, 469; CH 07-0001-02.6, 07-0001-03.2, 07-0024.1). If, on the other hand, *Ḥrq* is the correct reading, the name is known only from a doubtful context in Safaitic (Is.R 145). However, we can compare it with the Arabic names *Ḥarrāq* and *Ḥurāq*, the latter being also that of a tribe (Banū Ḥurāq) in the time of the Prophet.

*Inscription no. 12*

Immediately to the right of the previous text (FIG. 3), a Hismaic graffito written vertically. Length: 17cm; average height of the letters: 4 cm.

*l s'lm*

By S'lm

*S'lm*, which is of course very common and attested in all the categories of ANA inscriptions (HIn: 325), appears in 54 Hismaic inscriptions of the OCIANA corpus. According to Savignac, the form *Šlmw* occurs in one Nabataean text from 'Ayn al-Shallālah (Savignac 1933: no. 14), but the correct reading is in fact *'šlmw* (*dkrt 'lt ḥnynw bny' br 'šlmw w 'šlmw* “May 'It be mindful of Ḥnynw the builder son of 'šlmw and 'šlmw”).

**Site 6: Umm Ramīth/Umm Ghaziyyah**

*Inscription no. 13*

In the south-eastern part of the wadi, a flat

stone packed with several *wusūm* and a Hismaic graffito carved *boustrophedon* (FIG. 4). The text starts right to left on the upper line, turns to the right on the second line and then curves back on itself from right to left on the third line. Length: 70 cm; average height of the letters: 7cm.

w 'bdḥwr bn ḥ{.}d bn 'bdḥwr  
bn grm bn wtr bn kmn

And 'bdḥwr son of Ḥ{.}d son of 'bdḥwr  
son of Grm son of Wtr son of Kmn

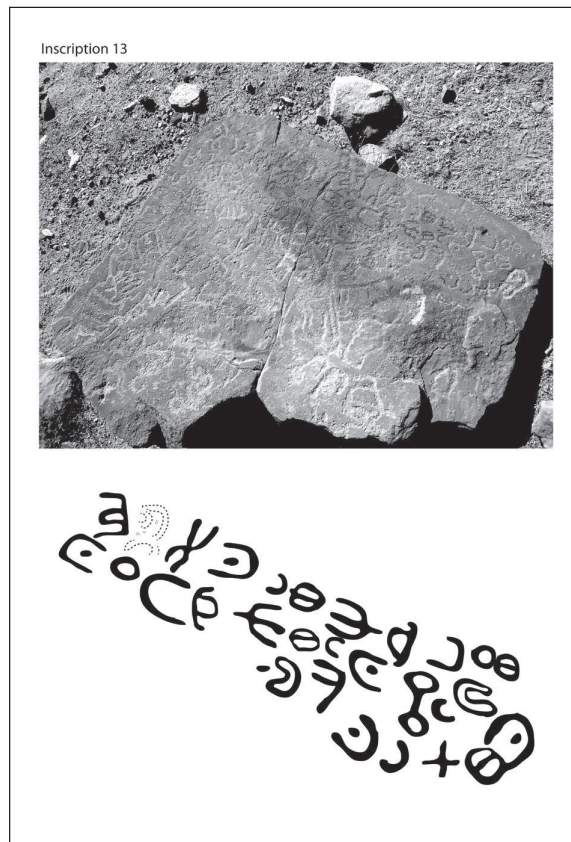
Erosion has affected the stone, but most of the letters are clear with the exception of the eleventh one. This is probably a *l*, but not enough is visible to make it virtually certain. Although it is a simple signature, this text is of interest since it contains a developed genealogy, which, unlike Safaitic, is quite rare in Hismaic. *Grm*, *Wtr* and *Kmn* are common in Safaitic and Hismaic. By contrast, the compound name 'bdḥwr was so far only known from the

inscription from W. Ramān published in 2004 (Farès-Drappeau and Zayadine 2004: 362-363), no. 36 of the present collection. Three Hismaic inscriptions from Wādī Judayyid and Wādī Ḥafīr contain the forms 'bd'ḥwr (KJC 757; CH.07-0028) and 'bd'l{'}[h]wr (KJC 202), but whether *ḥwr* and 'ḥwr represent the same thing remains to be proved. For a discussion on this issue, see Zayadine 2007: 11-12.

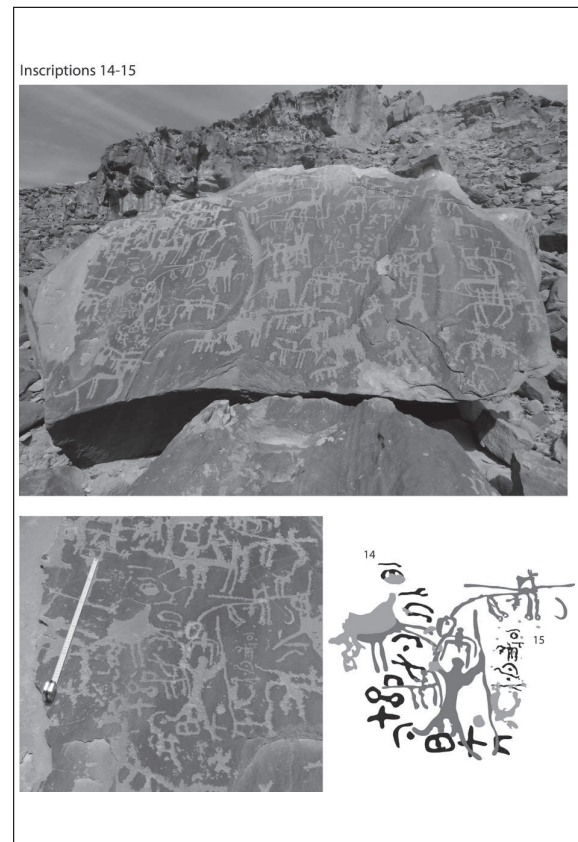
### Site 9: Abū al-'Ulaylīq 1

#### Inscription no. 14

On the mid northern hill slope of the *wadi*, a block measuring about 1.90 m high and 3.20 m wide that is crowded with cavalymen armed with long lances, persons on foot who hold their hands in the air, ostriches, camels and two Hismaic graffiti (FIG. 5). A photograph of this panel had already been published by Jobling, although without reading or comment of the texts (1981a: pl. XXIX, fig. 1; 1983: 32, fig. 7).



4. Inscriptions no. 13 (Photograph and tracing: J. Norris; Wādī Ramm archaeological project).



5. Inscriptions nos. 14-15 (Photographs and tracings: J. Norris; Wādī Ramm archaeological project).

On the left part of the block, the first graffito is written between the figure of a camel (?) and that of a foot soldier armed with a spear who is lifting his arms upwards. It starts vertically and then turns to the right below the soldier. Length: 70 cm; average height of the letters: 10 cm.

*l whbl bn ḥrgt bn wtr*

By Whbl son of Ḥrgt son of Wtr

The two lines before *bn* are not letters, but the legs of the animal depicted to the left whose body is obscured by an abrasion. Therefore, the author's name reads *Whbl* and not *Whblh*. This is of course a variant of *Whb'l* with an elision of the glottal stop, a form already attested in Hismaic (TIJ 230; KJC 581) and Mixed Safaitic-Hismaic (WHI 42). Note that in Taymanitic, the loss of the /' / in Ēl-based theophoric names is very frequent (Kootstra 2016: 82-83). The name *Ḥrgt* (cf. Arabic *Khārijah*; CIK: 344) is known from Safaitic and Hismaic. *Wtr* (HIn: 633) has been found in no. 13 above and it recurs in nos. 24, 30 and 35.

*Inscription no. 15*

Immediately to the right of the previous graffito stands a second Hismaic text, carved vertically alongside the spear of the man on foot (FIG. 5). Length: 20 cm; average height of the letters: 6cm.

*l 'hd bn {f/s²}n{'/h}*

By 'hd son of {F/S²}n{'/h}

This text is written in crudely shaped letters, making the reading of the patronym extremely difficult. We are perhaps dealing with the name *Fn'* or *S²n'*, but these can be no more than guesses. *'hd* is a new name, though it is presumably a variant of *'hd* which is known from Safaitic, Hismaic and Nabataean (HIn: 446; Negev 1991: 49; King 1990: 441), given that the root √*'hd* is not found in the Semitic languages. The sound change *d > ḏ* in personal names is an attested phenomenon in Hismaic, as illustrated in TIJ 109: *rd'l* < \**rd'l*, KJA 318: *w'd* < *w'd* and RTI A: *tm'bḏt* < *tm'bdt* (cf. King 1990: 41).

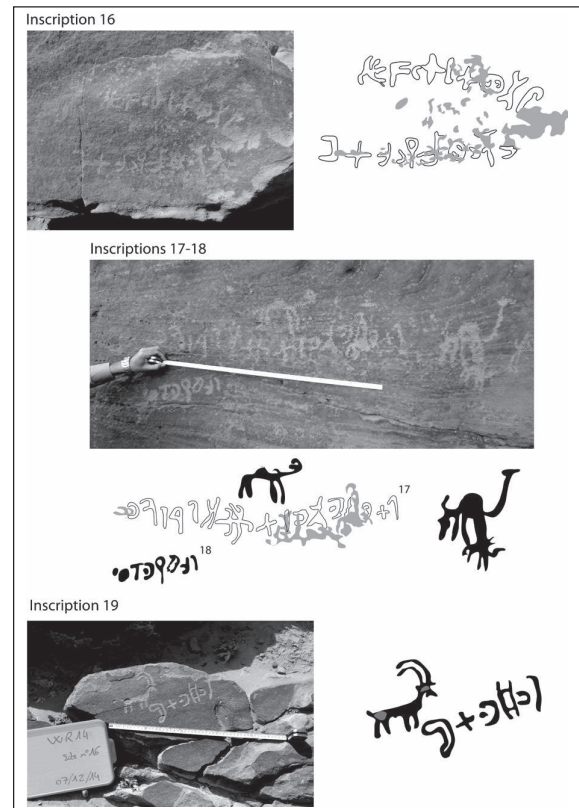
*Inscription no. 16*

A few meters down from the previous panel, at the base of the hill, is a block which has a Hismaic graffito on its lower part (FIG. 6). Written *boustrophedon*, the text runs left to right and then turns and runs from right to left. Length: 45cm; average height of the letters: 6cm.

*ḏkrt lt w'l --- w {ḡ} {y/h} r k t b*

May Lt be mindful of W'l --- and ...

This text and no. 29 are the only prayers that we have recorded in Wādī Ramān. Unfortunately, only the first line of this graffito is in fully legible condition. If the reading of the letters {ḡ}, {y}, *r*, *k*, *t*, *b* at the end of the text is correct, then I would tentatively suggest that this could represent a personal name, {Ḡ}{y}rktb \*/ Ḡiyyār-Kutbā/, comparable to Ḡyr'l which is common in Safaitic. The Hismaic inscriptions of southern Jordan attest of several theophoric formations based on the divine name 'l-Ktb' / *Ktby/Ktb*, such as *Tmktb* (TIJ 28; Farès 1999: nos. 1-2), *Tmktby* (TIJ 285), *Tmktb'* (SIAM 43)



6. Inscriptions nos. 16-19 (Photographs and tracings: J. Norris; Wādī Ramm archaeological project).



and *Mr'ktb* (KJC 442; CH.R702.1, 718.06).

An alternative possibility would be to take *Ġyr* as a one-word name followed by the active participle *ktb*. Thus, *ḍkrt lt w'l --- w ḡyr ktb* “May Lt be mindful of W'l --- and Ġyr is [the] writer”. If so, this text would provide an interesting variant of the usual formula *w ḍkr(t) DN PN<sup>1</sup> w PN<sup>2</sup> ḥtt* “and may DN be mindful of PN<sup>1</sup> and PN<sup>2</sup> is [the] carver” (KJC 202, 711; AMJ 46, 137, 148). I should repeat that this interpretation and the one formulated above are no more than tentative suggestions.

**Site 12: Wādī ar-Rūmī**

*Inscription no. 17*

On a cliff-face of the southern bank of the wadi, a Hismaic graffito running right to left next to a group of *wusūm* and two schematic drawings of camels (FIG. 6). Length: 97cm; average height of the letters: 10cm.

*l t--- bn {}{}r}{}s<sup>2</sup>t d-'l ys<sup>2</sup>k{r}*

By T--- son of {}{}r}{}s<sup>2</sup>t of  
the lineage of Ys<sup>2</sup>k{r}

The dark desert varnish of the rock is heavily cracked, which makes it difficult to distinguish the letters from the chips in the stone. The patronym, if the reading is correct, occurs in twenty-two Safaitic and four Hismaic inscriptions of the OCIANA corpus. The last letter of the text looks like a *m*, but the small curve which one would take as its inner line has in fact a slightly lighter patina and so is presumably extraneous to the text. Unlike *Ys<sup>2</sup>kr* (cf. Arabic *Yashkur*; CIK: 592), *Ys<sup>2</sup>km* is moreover unknown. A lineage of *Ys<sup>2</sup>kr* is attested twice in Safaitic (CSA 1.2; HaNSB 351), but there is very little chance that the three texts refer to the same social group.

*Inscription no. 18*

Below and to the left of no. 17, a Hismaic text written right-to-left (FIG. 6). Length: 35cm; average height of the letters: 8cm.

*l kmy bn z'n*

By Kmy son of Z'n

The penultimate letter has been infilled, but there is no doubt that this is a ' . We can compare this with the shape of the same letter in KJB 115. Both names are known in Safaitic and Hismaic (HIn: 392, 505; King 1990: 426, 455).

**Site 16: Jabal Maḥlabā**

*Inscription no. 19 (= AMJ 1; Jobling 1981b: 98, fig. 1; 1982: 202, n. 6, pl. LVII, fig. 4; 1983: 32, fig. 8)*

On the top of the northern foothill of Jabal Maḥlabā, a Hismaic graffito carved right-to-left on the ground next to the drawing of an ibex or a wild Bezoar goat (FIG. 6). Length: 16cm; average height of the letters: 6cm.

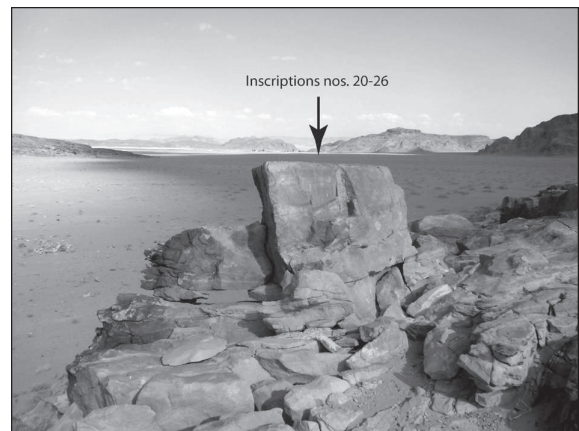
*l rṭ bn tm*

By Rṭ son of Tm

*Rṭ* (cf. Arabic *Rayṭ*; CIK: 484) apart from in this text has only been found once in Hismaic (MZH 1), though the compound *Rṭ'l* is a well-attested name in Safaitic (HIn: 269). The hypocoristic name *Tm* is of course well-known in all ANA categories.

*Inscription no. 20*

A few meters from the position of the previous text is a block which has on its upper face the eight Hismaic inscriptions which follow (FIGS. 7-8). The first of these texts runs from left to right and then turns diagonally upwards. Length: 41cm; average height of the letters: 5cm.



7. Position of the inscriptions nos. 20-26 on Jabal Maḥlabā (Photograph: J. Norris; Wādī Ramm archaeological project).

*l kmy bn z'n bn ḥbb*

By Kmy son of Z'n son of Ḥbb

There is the same combination of name and patronym as in no. 18 from Wādī ar-Rūmī. This suggests that both texts were carved by the same individual, but, alas, the absence of the grandfather's name in no. 18 prevents us from confirming this hypothesis. The name *Ḥbb* (cf. Arabic *Ḥabīb*; CIK: 287-289) is found across the ANA corpora (HIn: 172).

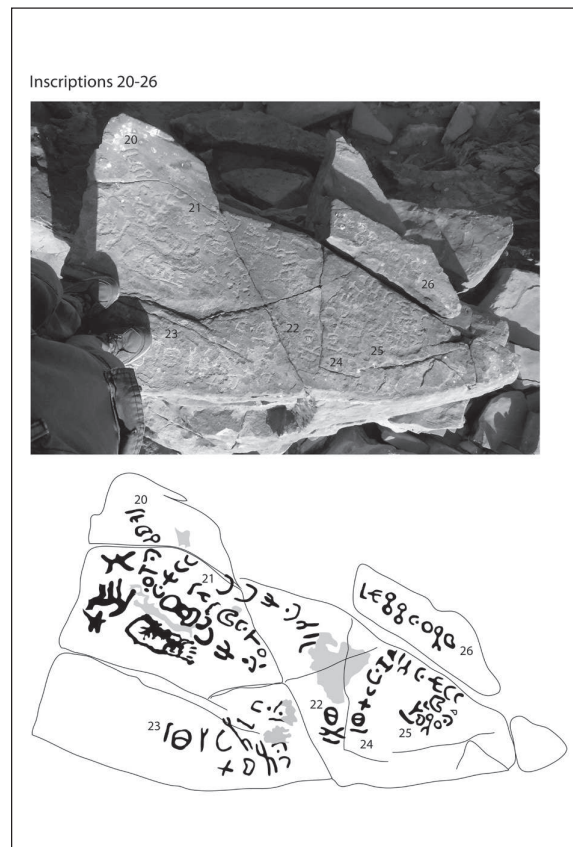
*Inscription no. 21*

Immediately to the right of no. 21 (FIG. 8), this inscription is written *boustrophedon*, starting from left to right on the upper line and then running from right to left on the lower one. Length: 40cm; average height of the letters: 7cm.

*l s'lm bn z'n bn ḥbb*

By S'lm son of Z'n son of Ḥbb

The author of this text is the brother of the



8. Inscriptions nos. 20-26 (Photographs and tracings: J. Norris; Wādī Ramm archaeological project).

individual who carved no. 21 and perhaps no. 18. Note that we have already encountered the name *S'lm* in no. 12.

*Inscription no. 22*

To the right of nos. 20 and 21, this text is carved from right to left along the edge of the face (FIG. 8). Length: 54cm; average height of the letters: 7cm.

*l 'w---{.}lh bn ḥbb*

By 'w---lh son of Ḥbb

This is the signature of an additional grandson of *Ḥbb*. The fracture on the rock surface does not allow us to fully read his patronym, but it can be seen that this is presumably a theophoric compound based on the divine name *Lh*. The author of this text is the cousin of *Kmy* and *S'lm*, and his father, the brother of *Z'n*.

*Inscription no. 23*

This text is carved below no. 21 and no. 22 (FIG. 8). It starts from left to right and then curves down diagonally to avoid the crack on the stone. Length: 48cm; average height of the letters: 6cm.

*l whb'l bn {s'/r}n{.}{.} bn rhmt*

By Whb'l son of {S'/R}{.}{.} son of Rhmt

The patronym is almost entirely obscured by an abrasion on the stone. Traces of the initial letter and the penultimate letter can be seen along the edge of the abrasion, but not enough of each glyph is visible for us to be able to suggest a reliable interpretation. The authors omitted the *r* of *Rhmt* and inserted it below the line. *Whb'l* is a famous theophoric name attested in both Ancient North and South Arabian (HIn: 651), appearing in around seven Hismaic graffiti of the Wādī Ramm area (KJB 182, 392; TIJ 84, 234, 235, 239, 451). *Rhmt* is known from seven Safaitic inscriptions of the OCIANA corpus and three Hismaic inscriptions (KJC 572 and two unpublished texts).

*Inscription no. 24*

To the right of the four previous texts, one line written right-to-left which curves along

the crack and the edge of the block (FIG. 8). Length: 51cm; average height of the letters: 8cm.

*l wtr bn zdlh bn ḥbb*

By Wtr son of Zdlh son of Ḥbb

This is the signature of another kinsman of Ḥbb, which offers additional information about this family group (FIG. 9). *Wtr* is the cousin of *Kmy* and *S'lm*, and his father, *Zdlh*, the brother of *Z'n*. One may ask whether *Zdlh* is not in fact the patronym which occurs in no. 22, given that both names have the same *-Lh* ending. If this is so, *Wtr* would be the brother of the author of no. 22. Although likely, this remains of course unprovable. Similarly, it may be tempting to link this text with an inscription from Wādī Ḥafīr, 20km north from site 16, which reads *l wtr bn zdlh* “By Wtr son of Zdlh” (CH.R310.15). Both texts can indeed represent the signatures of the same individual at two different places of the Ḥismā, but, once again, this is purely speculative in the absence of a detailed genealogy. *Zdlh* (cf. Arabic *Zaydallāh*; CIK: 604) is known from Dadanic, Safaitic, Hismaic and Nabataean Aramaic (HIn: 297; Negev 1991: 26).

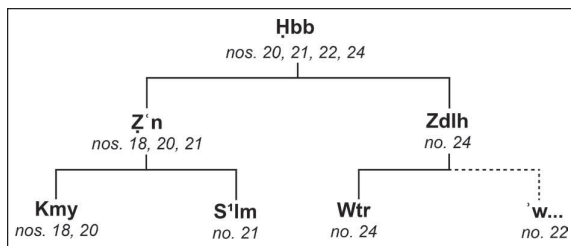
*Inscription no. 25*

Immediately below no. 24, carved *boustrophedon* on two lines (FIG. 8). The text starts left-to-right and then turns and runs right-to-left. Length: 21cm; average height of the letters: 7cm.

*l s<sup>l</sup>{r}m bn 'šm*

By S<sup>l</sup>{r}m son of 'šm

There is a mark before the word *bn*, which looks like a *n*, but in view of its remote position from the *m*, I would say that this is certainly a



9. The family tree of Ḥbb according to the inscriptions of Jabal Maḥlabā.

natural pit in the rock. Otherwise, one would have to read *S<sup>l</sup>{r}mn*, an unknown name in contrast to *S<sup>l</sup>rm* which is attested in Safaitic and perhaps in one Hismaic text (TIJ 198). *'šm* is known from Safaitic and Hismaic, previously attested five times in the Jordanian Ḥismā (TIJ 39, 242; KJC 212; AMJ 6; CH.R337.1).

*Inscription no. 26*

Above the previous text, carved horizontally left-to-right on the slab which breaks away from the main block (FIG. 8). Length: 40cm; average height: 7cm.

*l ḥgg bn 'šm*

By Ḥgg son of 'šm

The rock surface is very eroded, but the letters are sufficiently clear and well written to make the reading certain. The author of this text is possibly the brother of the individual who carved the previous graffito. The name *Ḥgg* (cf. Arabic *Hajjāj*) is found in virtually all the categories of ANA inscriptions.

**Site 17: Western Part of Wādī ar-Rūmī**

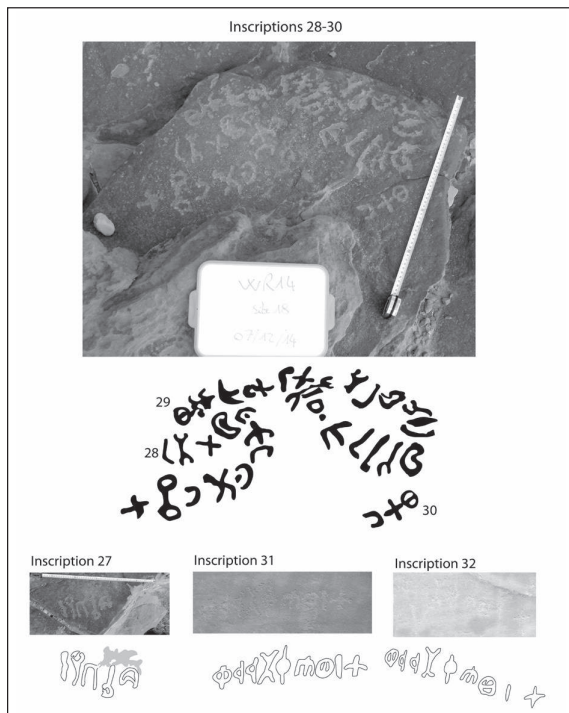
*Inscription no. 27*

On a rocky hill situated in the northwest part of Wādī ar-Rūmī and in front of Jabal Maḥlabā, one line written right-to-left in the Thamudic B script (FIG. 10). Length: 20cm; average height of the letters: 10cm.

*my {b/k}yn*

{B/K}yn drank water (?)

This is a short but complex text. The third glyph has a shallower line on its upper right part giving it the appearance of a *k*, which makes it difficult to be sure of the letter value knowing that both *Byn* and *Kyn* are attested names. The word *my* (cf. Levantine Arabic *mayye*) occurs in Safaitic with the meaning of “water” (Al-Jallad 2015: 329). From the context, one may cautiously suggest that this could refer to the action of “drinking water”, but I should emphasize that this is purely a suggestion. Another way of interpreting the text could be to read from left to right *nyk ym* “Ym had sex repeatedly”. In-



10. Inscriptions nos. 28-30 (Photographs and tracings: J. Norris; Wādī Ramm archaeological project).

deed, the verbs *nk* and *nyk* are recurrent in the Hismaic inscriptions of the Wādī Ramm area (King 1990: 69-71), lending support to such an interpretation.

### Site 18: Wādī Shurayyif 1

#### *Inscription no. 28*

On the rocky hill which dominates the entrance of the *wadi*, a Hismaic graffito carved *boustrophedon* (FIG. 10). The text runs left to right in the first line and then curves back on itself and continues from right to left in the second one. Length: 73cm; average height of the letters: 11cm.

*l 'tm bn ḥr bn ḥrgt*

By 'tm son of Ḥr son of Ḥrgt

As mentioned above, the author of this graffito is possibly the same person who engraved no. 9 in Wādī Abū al-‘Ulaylīq 2 (site 4), though there is no way to prove this. On the name *Ḥrgt*, see no. 14.

#### *Inscription no. 29*

Immediately on the right of no. 28, a second

Hismaic text carved *boustrophedon*. The text starts left to right on the lower line and twists along the best surface of the stone after which it turns upwards and continues right to left on the upper line (FIG. 10). Length: 50cm; average height: 10cm.

*w ḍkrt lt 's²'-n kll-hm l s²kmlh*

And may Lt be mindful of our companions, all of them. By S²kmlh

All the letters are clear. The plural of the word *s²'* “companion” (cf. Classical Arabic *šay'*) occurs here as *'s²'* instead of the expected *'s²y'* (cf. KJA 36, KJC 641, CH.R701.5). This unusual spelling is found in four other Hismaic inscriptions (KJC 641; CH.07-0005.5, R677.1, R716). Also attested in Safaitic, Ahmad Al-Jallad has recently suggested that this form could reflect attraction to the plural pattern of the geminate roots  $C^2 = C^3$ , *\*'aśā'* rather than *\*'aśyā'* (Al-Jallad 2015: 63). The structure of the text is also interesting. Usually, the *ḍkr(t)* *DN* formula always follows the authorship section (KJA 36; KJC 42, 202, 641, AMJ 46, etc.). As far I know, this is the first instance in which the invocation precedes *l PN*. The theophoric *S²kmlh* “recompense of Lh” is only attested in Hismaic and in Nabataean Aramaic (King 1990: 420; Negev 1991: 63).

#### *Inscription no. 30*

Immediately below no. 29, a short Hismaic text written diagonally downwards (FIG. 10). Length: 12cm; average height of the letters: 5cm.

*wtr*

This could either represent the same personal name encountered in nos. 13, 14, 24, written here without an introductory particle, or be a signature introduced by *w*, i.e. *w tr* “and Tr”. The name *Tr* is found once in Hismaic (KJA 122).

### Site 21: Wādī Shurayyif 2

#### *Inscription no. 31*

In the south-western part of the wadi, on a

boulder which is at the base of Jabal Maḥlabā, a Hismaic text running horizontally from left to right (FIG. 10). Length: 70cm; average height of the letters: 7cm.

*wdd 'qh ws<sup>2</sup>t*  
*'qh loved Ws<sup>2</sup>t*

The names, if the reading is correct, have not been found before. The former is presumably an elative *'f'l* form of the root √qhh, which means “pure, mere, genuine” in Classical Arabic (Lane: 2787c). I would suggest that the latter is a simple variant of the common name *ws<sup>2</sup>yt* with a loss of the glide, perhaps *\*/waśāt/* < *\*/waśayat/*. These are only suggestions, of course, and there may well be other possible interpretations of these names.

*Inscription no. 32*

Immediately below no. 31 is an exact duplicate of the sentence *wdd 'qh ws<sup>2</sup>t*, which is carved using the same technique (FIG. 10). Length: 110cm; average height of the letters: 9cm.

**Site 22: Wādī Shurayyif 3**

*Inscription no. 33*

On the top of a rocky hill in the north-western part of the *wadi*, a Hismaic graffito carved on the upper face of an elongated rock segment (FIG. 11). Length: 85cm; average height of the letters: 7cm.

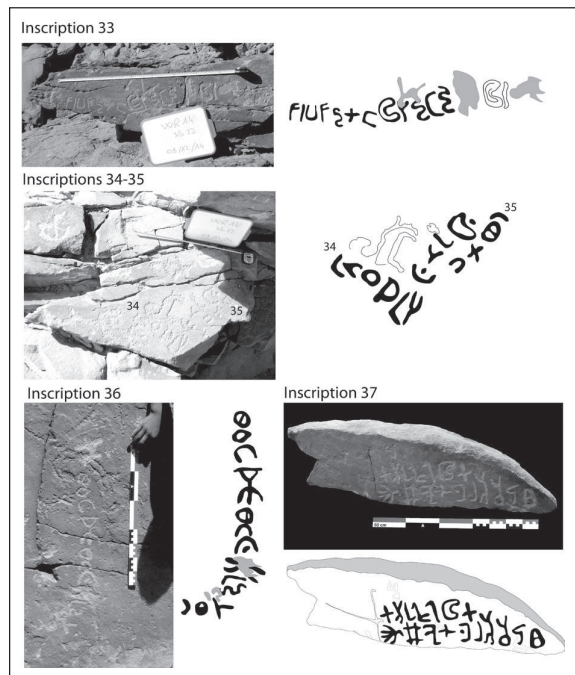
*ks<sup>2</sup>{b}{k}{ftbm}{l/s<sup>2</sup>}fbf m{l/s<sup>2</sup>}*

Although the graffito at first gives the impression of being well written, I am unable to interpret this. One might ask whether this is not a writing exercise of or an attempt to write made by a non-literate person (?).

*Inscription no. 34*

Just a few meters away from the position of the no. 33 is a slab with a flat upper surface which has two Hismaic texts (FIG. 11). The first of these starts diagonally to the right and then turns upwards. Length: 40cm; average height of the letters: 9cm.

*l s<sup>1</sup>'dlh bn s<sup>1</sup>l<sup>mn</sup>*



11. Inscriptions nos. 33-37 (Photographs and tracings: J. Norris; Wādī Ramm archaeological project).

By S<sup>1</sup>'dlh son of S<sup>1</sup>l<sup>mn</sup>

This text is in good condition. Both names are well-known. *S<sup>1</sup>'dlh* (cf. Arabic *Sa'dallāh*; CIK: 497-498) occurs in all the varieties of ANA, as well as in Nabataean and Palmyrene Aramaic (HIn: 319; Negev 1991: 66). *S<sup>1</sup>l<sup>mn</sup>* (cf. *Salmān*; CIK: 509) is attested in Safaitic, Hismaic, Dadanitic, Taymanitic, as well as in Nabataean and Ancient South Arabian (HIn: 326; Negev 1991: 64).

*Inscription no. 35*

Immediately below no. 34, one line carved right-to-left (FIG. 11). Length: 20cm; average height of the letters: 8cm.

*l wtr*

By Wtr

On the name *Wtr*, see nos. 13, 14, 24 and 30.

**Site 21: Wādī Shurayyif 4**

*Inscription no. 36 (= Farès-Drappeau and Zayadine 2004: 362-363)*

In the middle southern part of the *wadi*, a Hismaic graffito carved vertically on the lower left part of a boulder which has several engraving-

ings of ibexes and cameleers. Length: 50cm; average height of the letters: 5cm.

w 'bdḥwr bn ḥlf

And 'bdḥwr son of Ḥlf

Three signs occur horizontally after Ḥlf, which look like the Hismaic letters ṣ/h, ' and r. I have not taken this to be part of the text. On the compound name 'bdḥwr, which occurs twice in no. 13, see the commentary of the present inscription in Farès-Drappeau and Zayadine 2004: 362-363. On Ḥlf, see no. 1.

### Unknown Provenance from Wādī Ramān

Inscription no. 37 (= AMJ 2/J.14202)

This Hismaic text is housed in the Jordan Archaeological Museum of Amman, registered as J.14202. It was discovered by W.J. Jobling in 1981 on an unknown site of Wādī Ramān. It is carved *boustrophedon* on a sandstone slab, starting right-to-left on the lower line and then turning to the right on the upper one. Length: 42cm; average height of the letters: 6cm.

w fṣ'l bnt ḡt-ḡlmt

And Fṣ'l daughter of Ḡt of the lineage of Ḡlmt

Fṣ'l and Ḡt are known from Safaitic and Hismaic. To the best of my knowledge, Ḡlmt has so far not been found as a lineage name, though it is attested as an anthroponym in both Safaitic and Hismaic. The significance of this text lies in the fact that it has been carved by a woman, which is quite rare, and that it contains the first attestation of the feminine form of the relative pronoun ḡ in Hismaic, occurring here as ḡt (*cf.* Classical Arabic ḡāt). For a detailed study of this text (see Norris 2017).

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### Sigla

AMJ	Hismaic inscriptions recorded by Jobling which are gathered and coherently numbered in King 1990
C	Safaitic inscriptions in <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars V. Inscriptiones Saracenicae continent, Tomus 1. Inscriptiones Safaiticae</i> . Paris: Imprimerie nationale (2 volumes), 1950-1951
CH	Hismaic inscriptions in Corbett 2010
CIK	Caskel 1966
CSA	Safaitic and Mixed Safaitic-Hismaic inscriptions in Clark 1984-1985
D	Dadanitic inscriptions in Farès-Drappeau 2005
HaNSB	Safaitic inscriptions in Ḥarāḥiṣah 2010
HIn	Harding 1971
Is.R	Safaitic inscriptions from al-ʿĪsāwī published on OCIANA
JSNab	Nabataean inscriptions in Jaussen & Savignac 1909-1922
KJA, KJB, KJC	Hismaic inscriptions from sites A, B and C in King 1990
KRS	Safaitic inscriptions recorded by G.M.H. King during the Basalt Desert Rescue Survey and published on the OCIANA
Lane	Lane 1863-1893
MZH	Hismaic inscriptions published in Al-Manaser & Alzoubi 2016
OCIANA	Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia. <a href="http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/index.php">http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/index.php</a>

Ph	Thamudic inscriptions recorded by H.St.J.B. Philby and published in Van den Branden 1956
PNAE 1	Radner 1998
RTI	Hismaic inscriptions in Rölling 1987
SIAM	Safaitic inscriptions in Macdonald 1980
TIJ	Thamudic and Safaitic inscriptions in Harding & Littmann 1952
WHI	Thamudic inscriptions published in Winnett 1973

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