NEWLY DISCOVERED NORTH ARABIAN INSCRIPTIONS FROM JORDAN

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Abstract: This study deals with a new group of Ancient North Arabian (Ḥarrat Belād Ash Shām zone) inscriptions that collected during a recent survey in the North Eastern Bādiya of Jordan known by (Ḥarrat Belād Ash Shām). This concerns three Pre-Islamic Safaitic inscriptions, and two early Islamic texts. The purpose of this article is to publish images of the newly-found inscriptions, give a translation, and provide some commentary. This work was achieved through 4 main points; field survey, lab works, documenting and tracing the collected inscriptions, and, theoretical works including translating and analyzing. Our results proved that Islamic inscriptions show the extent of development in writing the simple Kufic script and the ability of the people of the desert to learn.

Keywords:
Islamic Inscriptions
Safaitic Inscriptions
Early Arabian
Bādiya of Jordan
North Arabian

1. Introduction
The North Eastern Bādiya of Jordan or Ḥarrat Belād Ash Shām is a massive zone spreading over a wide area extending from the Jordanian-Syrian border in northeastern Jordan to Saudi Arabia boarders to the south and eastward Iraqi boarders. This zone covers an area of basalt hundreds of square km. [1]. This area, covered with grass and scrub vegetation, is extensively used for pasture by nomadic and semi nomadic herders. It is one of the main neighborhood of the Jordanian Bādiya, located to the east of Al-Safawī village north-east of Jordan, in the two sides of the international highway connecting Amman to Baghdad. The altitude of the region is about 600 m. above the sea level in its southern part and 650 m. in its northern side. Most of the rocks were found on the sides or on the bottom of the valleys in the area, others on the top of the cairns in the study area.

2. Materials and Methods
Data were collected during an epigraphical survey at the north-eastern Badiya of Jordan. The research methodology consists of the field survey, and a lab work comprising documenting and tracing the collected inscriptions, and, finally, a theoretical work including translating and analyzing of each inscriptions has been made.

3. Results
The study figure out more information concerning the linguistic phenomena, social and religious lives of the people who left
these inscriptions. In addition, the Islamic inscriptions of this study show the extent of development in writing the simple Kufic script and the ability of the people of the desert to learn.

4. Discussion

4.1. The Safaitic Inscriptions

The term Safaitic is derived from the name Safa, the black basalt desert (or Harra), the term is, however, a misnomer resulting from the initial discovery of the texts in the region in 1857. The texts frequently contain extensive genealogies that trace the lineage back to eponymous ancestors called Safaitics. Their written inscriptions can be dated roughly between the 1st century BC and the 4th century AD. [2]. The majority existence of the Safaitic inscriptions are between the northern Syria and the middle of Euphrates in the east; Palestine and Jordan in the West; and Wadi as-Sarhan and the upper of Hejaz in the south. However, the main parts appear in southern Syria, northern and eastern Jordan, and northern Saudi Arabia. The immigrants were obliged to be ruled under Roman-rulers at first. They were not fit and had not got ability to attack them. Therefore, the Safaites worked in the Roman army as soldiers. Thus they played an important role along the Roman territory between nomadic tribes and the Roman Empire. By this role, they protected the Roman from any tribal attacks. The Safaitic script, as well as the Thamudic and Lihyanite, were derived, according to some studies, from the so-called al-Musnad script in old South Arabia. The texts were written in different directions; from left to right and from up to down, vice versa or in a boustrophedon direction. Its alphabet represents 28 consonants.

4.1.1. Inscription No 1

Transliteration: h-rdy s’d bn mnh bn hrs’l bn ḫbṭ w-tṣr h-ḥl
Translation: Ō Rḍy! Help the Bnmnh son of Hrsʾl son of Ḥbṭ, and he awaited the horses (or the horsemen).

• Comments

This inscription is carved on the middle of a big basalt stone. It contains an invocation for rḍy to grant help for bn mnh who was waiting for the horses (or the horsemen). The inscription consists of one line started from left to right and then it bowed up at the end on the inscription. h-rḍy: h is the safaitic definite article “the”. ṭḍy is a divinity name occurred generally in safaitic in two forms: ṭḍy and ṭḍw [3]. Accordingly to Litmann, this divinity represents the planet Venus, and he claimed also that ṭḍw is the masculine form and ṭḍy has is the feminine one [4]. sʾd: v.1-stem: “to help” derived from the root sʾd. It is the equivalent of the Arabic سايد/sāʾid “grant help” [5]. mnḥ: a masculine personal name derived from the root mnḥ, it is the equivalent of the Arabic منة/mnḥat means “kindness; gift”. This personal name is rarely attested in Safaitic inscriptions. ḥrsʾl: It is a masculine theophoric personal name hitherto unrecorded on other safaitic inscriptions. It consists of two element: the verb ḥrs “to keep watch; to look after; to anticipate” [6] and the divinity
Name ‘l. ḫbṯ: a well-known Safaitic personal name derived from the root ḫbṯ carries the meaning “worthless, wicked, impure person”. It could parallel to tradition name Ḥabīṯ [7].

w-tẓr: w- : it is a common conjunction in Semitic “and”. tẓr : v.t2-stem. “to wait, to await; to lie in wait” it derived from the root: nẓr.

h-ḥl: It is a concrete noun preceding by the definite article – h “the horses or the horsemen” [8].

4.1.2. Inscription No 2

Transliteration: ljn bn jlhm bn Šdy bn ḥrb bn qṭbn h-jml w-hṛḡw ḡnmt w-‘wr

Translation: By jn son of jlhm son of Šdy son of ḥrb son of qṭbn this Camel, Ŭ Raḡw (grant) booty and obliterate (who damage the text).

• Comments

This inscription is written in a medium size basalt stone in a so-called boustrophedon form. The inscription consists of two lines carefully executed in medium pecked out letters, apparently, with a sharp tool. Its letters go from left to right and then reverse for the next line. jn: is a personal name frequently attested in saffaitic inscriptions. It could be the equivalent of the Arabic جَن/janna; name derived from the root جَنَّ/janna means “Take away power of judgment; to cover completely or hide from view” [9]. jlhm: a well-known personal name in saffaitic and in Nabataean (as : ĵlhmw). It is the equivalent of the Arabic personal name جَلْهِم/Jalham means “the great stone” [10]. Šdy: Personal name frequent in saffaitic, it is derived from the root Šdy meaning “chanting”. ḥrb: p.n. m. frequently attested in Safaitic, Thamudic, Liyanite, Sabaic, Minaean and in Qatabanian [1]. It is the equivalent of the Arabic حَرَب/ḥarb ‘war’; name derived from the root حَرَبَ/ḥaraba ‘to fight’ [12]. qṭbn: this personal name is rarely mentioned in other saffaitic inscriptions, it has been noted once in [13]. ḡnmt: n.m.f. “booty”. It is could be vocalized as Arabic غَنيمة/ġanīmat; name derived from the root غَنَمَ/ġanama “be victorious, obtain goods”. ‘wr: n.s.m. “Blindness” derived from the root ‘wr “to blind”.

4.1.3. Inscription No 3

Transliteration: lḥr bn ‘m bn ḥn bn ḥnn bn ṣḥdt d ‘l b’r

Translation: By ḥr son of ‘m son of ḥn son of ḥnn son of ṣḥdt from the tribe of b’r

• Comment

This inscription is found on a small size basalt stone. It is carved by a sharp tool, the letters of the inscription are thin and of large size the inscription was written from right to left in curved form. The inscription contains only the author’s name and his affiliation. ḥr: a well-known masculine personal name. It has been noted in Safaitic and in Thamudic, and in Liyanite [14]. It could
be the equivalent of the Arabic 
\textit{hur} “free, unrestricted” [15]. \textit{ʾm}: personal name frequently attested in saifaitic and in thamudic. It could be vocalized as \textit{ʿamām} “perfect, entire”. It might be also the equivalent of the Arabic \textit{ʿamāl} “uncle”. \textit{ḥn}: a personal name derived from the root \textit{ḥnn} “long for; strive for”. \textit{šhd}: a well-known Safaitic personal name derived from the root \textit{šhd} [16]. \textit{ḍl}: pro. relative pronoun. \textit{ʾl}: n. col. “lineage; people”. This word probably reflects an original collective noun based on the root \textit{ʾwl}, \textit{ʾāl}.

4.2. The Islamic Inscriptions

Hundreds new Early Islamic inscriptions have been found in the Northeastern Badia of Jordan in the last two decades, they belong to the Ayyubid, Mamluk, Umayyad and Abbasside periods. These inscriptions vary in subjects and contents, most of them are prayers in favor of deceased, and other contains Qur’anic verses Hadith and few reveal historical events happened in the region.

4.2.1. Inscription 4

\begin{tabular}{|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Arabic reading} \\
\hline
1. 
\textit{bi-smi llāhi l-raḥmānī l-raḥīm} \\
2. 
\textit{allāhumma iġhfir} \\
3. 
\textit{l-Ḥasīb al-Ḥaṭī.} \\
4. 
\textit{w-l-waledāih w-lima w} \\
5. 
\textit{lada āmīn rabbu} \\
6. 
\textit{l-ʿālamīn} \\
\hline
\textbf{Translation} \\
1. In the name of God. \\
2. Ô God, forgive \\
3. Ḥasīb al-Ḥaṭī. \\
4. and for his parents and their \\
5. offspring [lit. what they have begotten] \\
6. the world!
\end{tabular}

- **Comments**

This inscription was written in middle of a small basalt stone; it consists of six lines and was written in simple Kufic script free of punctuation. It was carved on an elongated basalt rock measuring about 32. cm in width and 38. cm. in height. The inscription started with the \textit{basmalah} (in the name of Allāh) which is sloppily written, followed by a praying in favor of Ḥasīb bin al-Ḥaṭī. The text has no date, based on the form of the letter; it seems to be dated back to the second century AH. The text is characterized by its way of writing; the leaving out of vowels as in the word \textit{العالمين}, the decreasing of the spaces between lines and the division of the words between two line as in \textit{والما}, but also the writing of the \textit{ya} in the bowed form. The proper name Ḥasīb was a well-known personal name during the different Islamic periods. According to Ibn Manẓur, the tribe name is known in Oman and Bahrain al-Ḥaṭī one of the frequent personal name, Ibn Manzur
mention that a famous type of spears was attributed al-Ḥaṭī tribe [19]. A famous Issa bin Fatek al-Ḥaṭī was is one of the Kharijites in the Umayyad period who had a meeting with Al-Zubayr bin Al-Awwam [20].

4.2.2. Inscription 5

Regarding the Trib’s name of Šam’alat, which is al Hilālī, is one of the very famous ancient Arabian tribe [22]. Therefore, the lineages mentioned in the two inscriptions indicate the importance of the Jordanian Badia in the diversity of the proportions of people living in it from different Arab tribes during the early Islamic periods, in addition to its importance as transit areas for many pilgrimage or trade caravans through different paths in light of the availability of water in the region.

5. Conclusion

These inscriptions have been presented here in transcription, and facsimile together with a discussion of a number of points which have been arisen from their study. Moreover, the study managed to figure out more information about the linguistic phenomena, social and religious lives of the people who left these inscriptions. It figures out more information about the linguistic, social and religious aspects about the people who left these inscriptions.

References


