

## NEWLY DISCOVERED NORTH ARABIAN INSCRIPTIONS FROM JORDAN

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#### Abstract:

*This study deals with a new group of Ancient North Arabian (Harrat Belād Ash Shām zone) inscriptions that collected during a recent survey in the North Eastern Bādiya of Jordan known by (Harrat 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.*

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### 1. Introduction

The North Eastern Bādiya of Jordan or Harrat Belād Ash Shām is a massive zone spreading over a wide area extending from the Jordanian-Syrian border in northeastern Jordan to Saudi Arabia borders to the south and eastward Iraqi borders. 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-Safawi 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

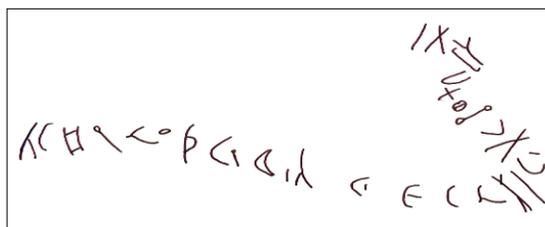
these inscriptions. In addition, the Islamic inscriptions of this study show the extent of development in writing the simple Kufic script and the ability of the people of the desert to learn.

## 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 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and the 4<sup>th</sup> 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-rḏy s<sup>c</sup>d bnmnh bn ḥrs'l  
bn ḥbt̄ w-tzr h-hl*

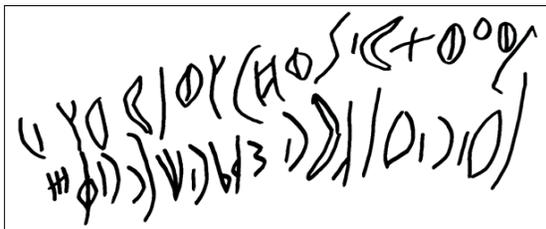
**Translation:** *Ô Rḏy! Help the Bnmnh son  
of Ḥrs'l son of Ḥbt̄, and he awaited the  
horses (or the horsemen).*

#### ▪ Comments

This inscription is carved on the middle of a big basalt stone. It contains an invocation for *rḏy* to grant help for *bnmnh* 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-rḏy***: ***h*** is the safaitic definite article “the”. ***rḏy*** is a divinity name occurred generally in safaitic in two forms: *rḏy* and *rḏw* [3]. Accordingly to Litmann, this divinity represents the planet Venus, and he claimed also that *rḏw* is the masculine form and *rḏy* has is the feminine one [4]. ***s<sup>c</sup>d***: v.l-stem: “to help” derived from the root *s<sup>c</sup>d*. It is the equivalent of the Arabic *ساعد/sā'id* “grant help” [5]. ***nmh***: a masculine personal name derived from the root *mnn*, it is the equivalent of the Arabic *منة/menat* means “kindness; gift”. This personal name is rarely attested in Safaitic inscriptions. ***ḥrs'l***: 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. **hbt**: a well-known Safaitic personal name derived from the root *hbt* carries the meaning “worthless, wicked, impure person”. It could parallel to tradition name *Habīl* [7]. **w-tzr**: **w-**: it is a common conjunction in Semitic “and”. **tzr** : v.t2-stem. “to wait, to await; to lie in wait” it derived from the root: *nzr*. **h-hl**: It is a concrete noun preceding by the definite article *-h* “the horses r the horsemen [8].

#### 4.1.2. Inscription No 2



**Transliteration:** *ljn bn jlhm bn šdy bn ḥrb  
bn qṭbn h-jml w-ḥrḏw ḡnmt w-<sup>c</sup>wr*

**Translation:** *By jn son of jlhm son of šdy  
son of ḥrb son of qṭbn this Camel, Ô Raḏw  
(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 safaitic inscriptions. It could be the equivalent of the Arabic *جانن/janna*; name derived from the root *جانن/janana* means “Take away power of judgment; to cover completely or hide from view” [9]. **Jlhm**: a well-known personal name in safaitic and in Nabataean (as : *jlhmw*). It is the equivalent

of the Arabic personal name *جالهم/Jalham* means “the great stone” [10]. **šdy**: Personal name frequent in safaitic, it is derived from the root *šdy* meaning “chanting”. **hrb**: p.n. m. frequently attested in Safaitic, Thamudic, Liḥyanite, Sabaic, Minaean and in Qatabanian [1]. It is the equivalent of the Arabic *حرب/ḥarb* ‘war’; name derived from the root *حرب/ḥaraba* ‘to fight’ [12]. **qṭbn**: this personal name is rarely mentioned in other safaitic inscriptions, it has been noted once in [13]. **ḡnmt**: n.m.f. “booty”. It is could be vocalized as Arabic *غنيمة/ḡanīmat*; name derived from the root *غَنَمَ/ḡanama* “be victorious, obtain goods”. **<sup>c</sup>wr**: n.s.m. “Blindness” derived from the root *<sup>c</sup>wr* “to blind”.

#### 4.1.3. Inscription No 3



**Transliteration:** *lḥr bn <sup>c</sup>m bn ḥn bn ḥnn  
bn šhdt d'l b<sup>c</sup>r*

**Translation:** *By ḥr son of <sup>c</sup>m son of ḥn son  
of ḥnn son of šhdt from the tribe of b<sup>c</sup>r*

##### ▪ Comment

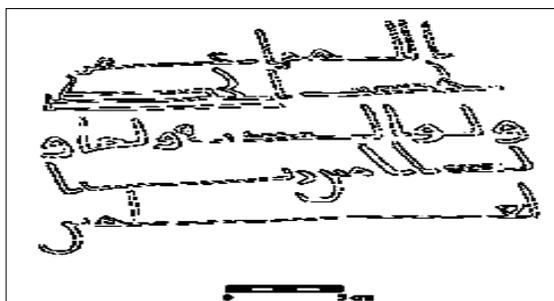
This inscription is found on a small size basalt stone. It is carved by a sharp tool, the letters of the inscription are thin and of large size the inscription was written from right to left in curved form. The inscription contains only the author’s name and his affiliation. **ḥr**: a well-known masculine personal name. It has been noted in Safaitic and in Thamudic, and in Liḥyanite [14]. It could

be the equivalent of the Arabic *hur* “free, unrestricted” [15]. *‘m*: personal name frequently attested in safaitic and in thamudic. It could be vocalized as *‘amam* “perfect, entire”. It might be also the equivalent of the Arabic *‘am/عم* “uncle”. *ḥn*: a personal name derived from the root *ḥnn* “long for; strive for”: *šhdt*: a well-known Safaitic personal name derived from the root *šhd* [16]. *ḏ’t*: ḏ. pro. relative pronoun. *’l*: n. col. “lineage; people”. This word probably reflects an original collective noun based on the root *’wl, ’āl*. The term is sometimes used to refer to anybody of people, including outside groups such as the Nabataeans, Jews, and Romans [17]. *b<sup>‘r</sup>*: this tribe has been mentioned in four other safaitic inscriptions from al Juthoum in the Badia of Jordan and al Zalef in Syria [18].

#### 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



#### Arabic reading

- 1- بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
- 2- اللهم اغفر
- 3- لخصيب الخطي
- 4- ولوالديه ولما و
- 5- لدا أمين رب ا
- 6- لعلمين

#### Transliteration

- 1- *bi-smi llāhi l-raḥmāni l-raḥīm*
- 2- *allāhumma iḡhfir*
- 3- *l-Ḥasīb al-Ḥaṭī.*
- 4- *w-l-waledaih w-lima w*
- 5- *lada āmīn rabbu*
- 6- *l-‘ālamīn*

#### Translation

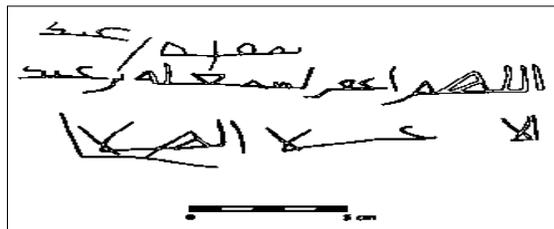
- 1- *In the name of God.*
2. *Ô God, forgive*
3. *Ḥasīb al-Ḥaṭī.*
- 4- *and for his parents and their*
- 5- *offspring [lit. what they have begotten]*
- Amen! Lord of*
- 6- *the world!*

#### 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 *basmalah* (in the mane 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 *العالمين*, the decreasing of the spaces between lines and the division of the words between two line as in (*ولما، والعالمين*), but also the writing of the *ya* in the bowed form. The proper name *Ḥasīb* was a well-known personal name during the different Islamic periods. According to Ibn Manzur, 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



#### Arabic reading

- 1- .....عبد
- 2- اللهم اغفر لشمعة بن عبد
- 3- الاعلا الهلالي

#### Transliteration

- 1- .....<sup>°</sup>abd
- 2- *allāhumma ighfir l-Šam<sup>°</sup>alat bin <sup>°</sup>abd*
- 3- *ala<sup>°</sup>lā al Hilālī*

#### Translation

- 1- .....<sup>°</sup>abd
- 2- *Ô God, forgive Šam<sup>°</sup>alat son of<sup>°</sup>abd*
- 3- *ala<sup>°</sup>lā al Hilālī*

#### ▪ Comments

The importance of this short inscriptions comes out from the rare propre names that appeared in the inscriptions. We have only one example in the historical resources for the mention of the personal name *Šam<sup>°</sup>alat*, this come from the Umayyad period during the reign of the caliph Abdelaziz ibn Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik ; a poet called *Šam<sup>°</sup>alat* was mentioned in al-Balādhurī book *Ansab al-Ashraf* [21]. The personal name *°Abd al A<sup>°</sup>lā* is a well-known name in the classical Arab. It consists of two elements: *°Abd*: “the servant” and the god (Allāh) most Beautiful names) *al A<sup>°</sup>lā/الأعلى* “the Highest”.

Regarding the Trib’s name of *Šam<sup>°</sup>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*

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