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A selection of Safaitic inscriptions from the Mafraq Antiquities Office and Museum

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Abstract

This paper provides the photographs, readings, and interpretations of sixty-one Safaitic inscriptions from the Mafraq Museum's collection.

Keywords: Ancient North Arabian; Safaitic; Old Arabic

1 Introduction

The inscriptions under investigation are part of the collection of the Mafraq Museum, located in the town of Mafraq in northern Jordan, about 45km southeast of Irbid. Since 1991, Abdul Qader al-Housan has been gathering inscriptions from various sites across northern Jordan, including Wadi Salma, Wadi Rajil, Al-Muhaddath, Al-Ajb, Zaatari, Al-Qattafiyat, Al-Ashaqif, and storing them in the depository of the Mafraq Museum. This effort has been mainly to preserve the texts against development, theft, and vandalism. Unfortunately, the provenance of these stones is not known and no GPS information is available.

The texts edited herein are considered a representative sample of the kinds of Safaitic inscriptions held by the Museum. It is hoped that by publishing these texts, we will stimulate the interest of researchers to visit the Museum on-site and to work on the various collections of texts held in its depository. The reading and translation of these texts was made in collaboration with Dr. A. Al-Jallad and Dr. A. Al-Manaser, and the tracings are by Dr. A. Al-Manaser.

2 Vocabulary items of interest

The inscriptions of this corpus have yielded several unique or rarely attested words. These are listed below in the order of their occurrence.

Word	Translation	Occurrences	Comments
<i>tll</i>	‘writing’, ‘words’	#1	See Al-Jallad (2015: 348)
<i>šdt</i>	‘side of a valley’	#10	CAr <i>šuddun</i> ‘the side of a valley’ (Lane, 1659a)
<i>mtʿ</i>	‘the day became advanced, the sun being held high’	#13	CAr <i>mataʿa n-nahāru</i> ‘the day became advanced’ (Lane, 3016c)
<i>s²yʿ</i>	‘to experience want’	#26	See Al-Jallad (2015: 345)
<i>ʿnzt</i>	‘goat’	#31	<i>well known</i>
<i>gʿlt</i>	‘short palm-trees’	#31	CAr <i>ḡaʿlun</i> ‘short palm-tree’ (Lane, 431b), perhaps here an individuating plural */gaʿlāt/.
<i>ḥrf</i>	‘the side of a rivulet’	#42	CAr <i>ḥarfūn</i> ‘the extremity, verge, boarder, margin, brink, brow, side, or edge of anything...for example the side of a rivulet’ (Lane, 550a).
<i>rđt</i>	‘meadow’	#44	See Al-Jallad (2015: 339)
<i>tʿmr</i>	‘to be widespread’	#45	See Al-Jallad (2015: 300)
<i>ḥgg</i>	‘to make a pilgrimage’	#58	<i>well known</i>
<i>ḥfrt</i>	‘guidance’	#60	See Al-Jallad (2015: 318)

3 The inscriptions

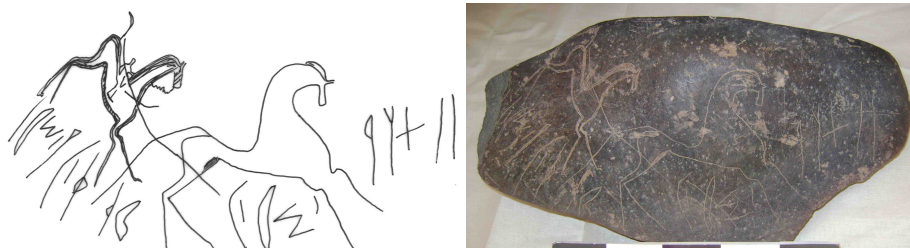


Figure 1: Inscription No. 1

No. 1: *l mfny bn qdm bn mfny h- tll*
 ‘By Mfny son of Qdm son of Mfny is this writing.’



Figure 2: Inscription No. 2

No. 2: *l 'by bn grmt bn d'ḅ bn 's²mn bn 'mr w wgm ḷ- bz w ḷ- 'kt*
 'By 'by son of Grmt son of D'ḅ son of 's²mn son of 'mr and he
 grieved for Bz and for 'kt.'

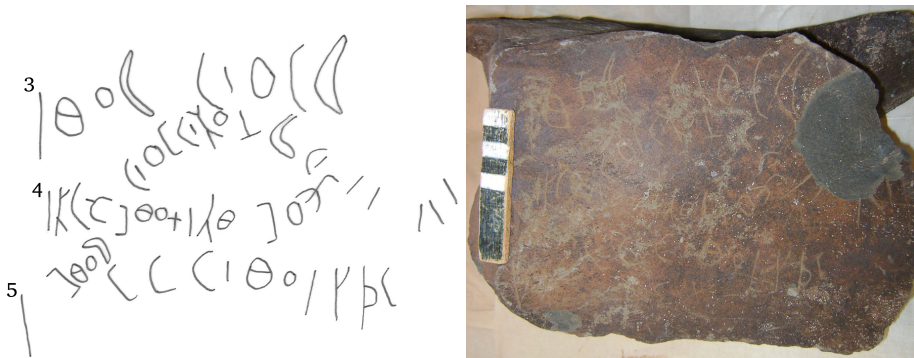


Figure 3: Inscriptions No. 3-5

No. 3: *l wḷ bn grm*
 'By Wḷ son of Grm.'

No. 4: *l 'bs¹ bn gr bn 'zm bn d'r w h lt 'wr m 'wr*
 'By 'bs¹ son of Gr son of 'zm son of D'r, so, O Lt, blind whoso-
 ever would efface (this inscription).'

No. 5: *l rb bn wḷ h-dr*
 'By Rb son of Wḷ, in this region.'



Figure 4: Inscription No. 6

- No. 6:** *l s¹mm bn 's¹lm bn šm bn ġt h- frs¹*
 'By S¹mm son of 's¹lm son of Šm son of Ġt is the horse.'



Figure 5: Inscriptions No. 7-8

- No. 7:** *l qtl bn grm bn d¹l bn bwk bn šbh*
 'By Qtl son of Grm son of D¹l son of Bwk son of Šbh.'

- No. 8:** *l 'dr bn b^cmh bn s¹wd w h 'lt s¹lm w nq²t l- d 'wr h- s¹fr*
 'By 'dr son of B^cmh son of S¹wd and so, O Lt, [grant] security but may he who would efface this writing be thrown out of the grave.'



Figure 6: Inscription No. 9

No. 9: *l b'l bn ḥtft h- ḥyt*
 'By B'l son of Ḥtft are the animals.'



Figure 7: Inscription No. 10

No. 10: *l ns¹r bn nhmn bn 'd bn kmn f h rzy ḡrmt*
 'By Ns¹r son of Nhmⁿ son of 'd son of Kmn, so, O Rzy, [grant] spoil.'



Figure 8: Inscription No. 11

- No. 11:** *l s¹k¹rn bn ḥṭs¹t bn s¹k¹rn h- ṣdt w ʿs²rq f h lt s¹lm*
 ‘S¹k¹rn son of Ḥṭs¹t son of S¹k¹rn, at this side of the valley, and he migrated to the inner desert so, O Lt, [grant] security.’



Figure 9: Inscription No. 12

- No. 12:** *l ḡhm bn zky bn ḥṭs¹t bn s¹k¹rn w wgd s¹fr ʿb -h w l ...*
 ‘By Ḡhm son of Zky son of Ḥṭs¹t son of S¹k¹rn and he found the writing of his father ...’



Figure 10: Inscriptions No. 13-19

- No. 13:** *l ʾnʿm bn ʿdrʾl bn bdr w mtʿ f h ʾlt sʾlm*
 ‘By ʾnʿm son of ʿdrʾl son of Bdr and the day became advanced
 (the sun’s heat was intense) so, O ʾlt ,[grant] security.’
- No. 14:** *l mlk bn bdn bn ʿwḏ w rʿy*
 ‘By Mlk son of Bdn son of ʿwḏ and he pastured.’
- No. 15:** *l zʿn bn gfft*
 ‘By Zʿn son of Gfft.’
- No. 16:** *l ḥr bn ʿm*
 ‘Ḥr son of ʿm.’
- No. 17:** *l sʾd bn ḡyrʾl bn sʾkṛn bn zkr bn znʾl*
 ‘By Sʾd son of Ḡyrʾl son of Sʾkṛn son of Zkr son of Znʾl.’
- No. 18:** *l ḥsʾk b[n] ḥrsʾ w rʿy*
 ‘By Ḥsʾk son of Ḥrsʾ and he pastured.’
- No. 19:** *l qsʾ bn ḥlf bn frg w rʿy*
 ‘By Qsʾ son of Ḥlf son of Frg and he pastured.’



Figure 11: Inscriptions No. 20-23

- No. 20:** *l 'qrbn bn s²rk^l bn ḥrs²n*
 'By 'qrbn son of S²rk^l son of Ḥrs²n.'
- No. 21:** *l s²ḥtr bn nṣr bn 'ḥlm bn zhrn*
 'By S²ḥtr son of Nṣr son of 'ḥlm son of Zhrn.'
- No. 22:** *l s²kr^l bn s²kr^l bn ḥrs²n h- dmyt*
 'By S²kr^l son of S²kr^l son of Ḥrs²n is the drawing.'
- No. 23:** *l khl bn s²kr^l bn ḥrs²n*
 'By Khl son of S²kr^l son of Ḥrs²n.'



Figure 12: Inscription No. 24

No. 24: *l s¹d bn ḥny bn ʿbd bn š^cd bn ʿbd bn ʿd bn s²rb bn ḡlmt w wgd s¹fr
 ʾs²y^c -h f ng^c w r^cy h- dⁿ f h lt ḡnyt l- d r^cy w mḥlt l- d y^cwr h- s¹fr*
 ‘By S¹d son of Ḥny son of ʿbd son of ʿd son of S²rb son of Ḡlmt
 and he found the inscription of his companions so he grieved
 in pain; and he pastured the sheep, so, O Lt, may he who has
 pastured have abundance but may he who would efface this
 writing experience a dearth of pasture.’



Figure 13: Inscription No. 25

No. 25: *l s²mt bn zkr bn ḡyr^l w r^cy h- dⁿ f h lt ḡnyt*
 ‘By S²mt son of Zkr son of Ḡyr^l and he pastured the sheep and
 so, O Lt, [grant] abundance.’



Figure 14: Inscriptions No. 26-28

No. 26: *l s²ddt bn s²bm w r^ʿy h- nhl w s²y' f h rdy gny[t] l- d r^ʿy*
 'By S²ddt son of S²bm and he pastured in the valley but experienced want so, O Rdy, may he who has pastured have abundance.'

No. 27: *l m^ʿqn bn 's¹n*
 'By M^ʿqn son of 's¹n.'

No. 28: *l 'bd*
 'By 'bd.'

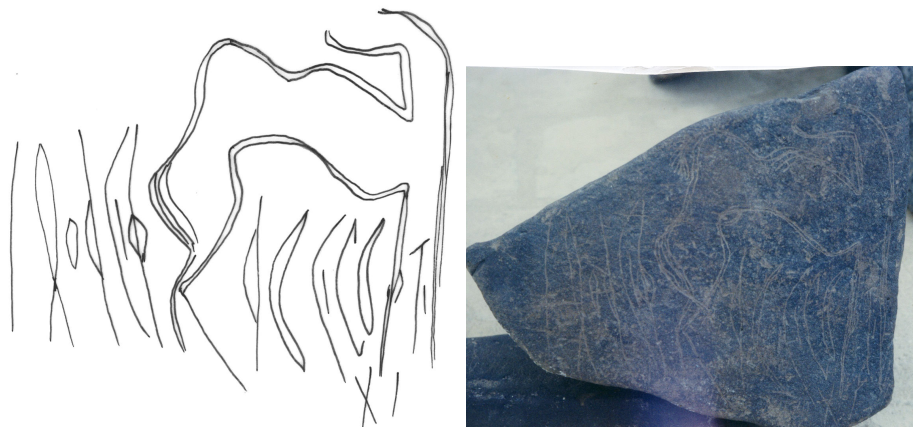


Figure 15: Inscription No. 29

No. 29: *l s^ʿd bn qdm bn rmzn*
 'By S^ʿd son of Qdm son of Rmzn.'



Figure 16: Inscriptions No. 30-36

- No. 30:** *l dr'l bn 'hlm bn mty bn rgd bn hqr w hrš h- s'nt f h lt s'lm w rwh
h b'ls'mn w nq't l- d y'wr h- s'fr*
'By Dr'l son of 'hlm son of Mty son of Rgd son of Hqr and he kept watch this year and so, O Lt, [grant] security and send, O B'ls'mn, the winds; and may he who would efface this writing be thrown out of the grave.'
- No. 31:** *l hd bn mhrk bn mty w hrš {n}{z}t -h g'lt f h lt s'lm d s'r*
'By Hd son of Mhrk son of Mty and he watched his goats at the small palm-tress, so, O Lt, keep him who would leave (this inscription) untouched safe.'
- No. 32:** *l tm bn gmr bn tm*
'By Tm son of Gmr son of Tm.'
- No. 33:** *l š'd bn znn bn š'd bn l'tmn bn rgd*
'By Š'd son of Znn son of Š'd son of L'tmn son of Rgd.'
- No. 34:** *l 'lf bn znn bn š'd bn l'tmn bn rgd*
'By 'lf son of Znn son of Š'd son of L'tmn son of Rgd.'
- No. 35:** *l znn bn š'd bn l'tmn w wgm 'l- hdk*
'By Znn son of Š'd son of L'tmn and he grieved for Hdk.'
- No. 36:** *l s'hr bn s'd bn s'rz w hrš*
'By S'hr son of S'd son of S'rz and he kept watch'



Figure 17: Inscription No. 37

No. 37: *l mlk bn y'mr h- ḥṭṭ*
 'By Mlk son of Y'mr are these carvings.'



Figure 18: Inscription No. 38

No. 38: *l bny bn 'sr bn bny h- frs¹ f h lt 'wr l- d y'wr h- ḥṭṭ*
 'By Bny son of 'sr son of Bny is the horse, so, O Lt, may whoso-
 ever would efface these carvings go blind.'

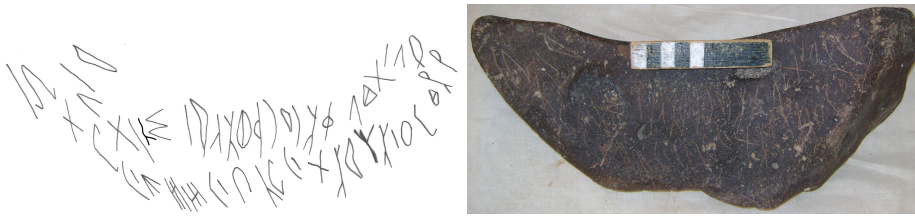


Figure 19: Inscription No. 39

- No. 39:** *l zhr bn ḥṭṭ bn zhr bn t'm ḡ- ḡl gr w syr s'nt ws'q ḡl 'bd w 's'ml f h
lt s'lm*
 'By Zhr son Ḥṭṭ son of Zhr son of T'm of the lineage of Gr and
 he returned to a place of water the year of the struggle of the
 lineage of 'bd and 's'ml and so Lt [grant] security.'



Figure 20: Inscription No. 40

- No. 40:** *l s'ny bn s'wd bn ḥy bn ṭrd bn ms'ḡ*
 'By S'ny son of S'wd son of Ḥy son of Ṭrd son of Ms'ḡ.'



Figure 21: Inscription No. 41

No. 41: *l 'tm bn hn' bn 'tm w wgm l- bs¹ w l- hn'*
 'By 'tm son of Hn' son of 'tm he grieved for Bs¹ and for Hn.'



Figure 22: Inscriptions No. 42-43

No. 42: *l gfft bn wqm bn ḥs² bn ws¹m w r'y h- ḥ{r}f*
 'By Gfft son of Wqm son of Ḥs² son of Ws¹m and he pastured
 the side of a rivulet.'

No. 43: *l s²l bn 'n'm bn znmy*
 'By S²l son of 'n'm son of Znmy.'



Figure 23: Inscription No. 44

- No. 44:** *l kṣṭ bn nṣr'l bn zbdy bn s²kr'l bn ryḏ w r'y h- ḏ'n h- rḏt bql f h lt s¹lm*
 'By Kṣṭ son of Nṣr'l son of Zbdy son of S²kr'l son of Ryḏ and he pastured the sheep in the meadow on fresh herbage so, O Lt, [grant] security.'

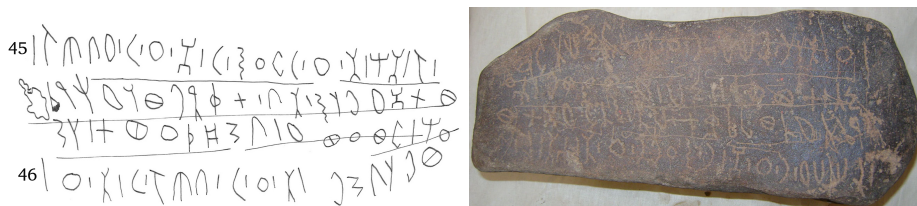


Figure 24: Inscriptions No. 45-46

- No. 45:** *l kḥs¹mn bn gn'l bn s²r bn gn'l ḏ-¹ kn w t'mr h- s²n' s¹nt qsr w h- mḏy f h lt w gḏḏf s¹lm w 'wr l- ḏ- 'wr h- s¹fr*
 'By Kḥs¹mn son of Gn'l son of S²r son of Gn'l of the lineage of Kn and adversity was widespread the year of Caesar and the Persians so, O Lt and Gḏḏf, may he be secure; and may he who would efface this writing go blind.'
- No. 46:** *l gn'l bn kḥs¹mn bn gn'l*
 'By Gn'l son of Kḥs¹mn son of Gn'l.'



Figure 25: Inscriptions No. 47-48

No. 47: *l s²sr bn qtl bn s¹hly bn mr bn 'ft*
 'By S²sr son of Qtl son of S¹hly son of Mr son of 'ft'

No. 48: *l mty bn s²sr*
 'By Mty son of S²sr.'



Figure 26: Inscriptions No. 49-50

No. 49: *l ys¹lm bn glt bn rbn w r^{cy} h- nhl tbb f h rđw flt -h [m-] b's¹*
 'By Ys¹lm son of Ġlt son of Rbn and he pastured in the valley as an old man so, O Rđw, deliver him [from] misfortune.'

No. 50: *l hđz bn w^l w r^{cy} h- nhl wny*
 'By Hđz son of W^l and he pastured in the valley feebly.'

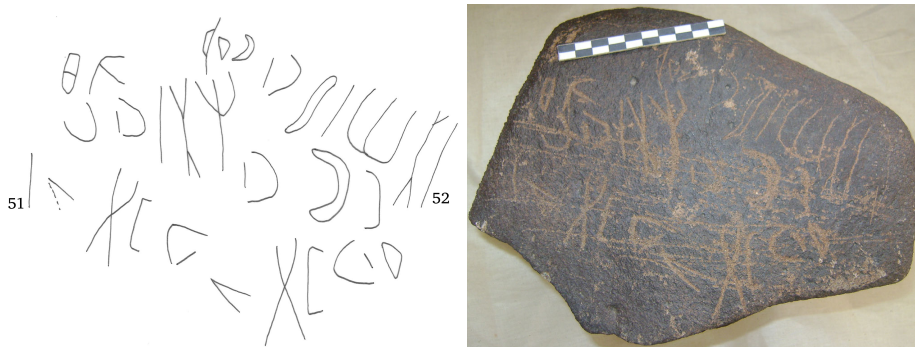


Figure 27: Inscriptions No. 51-52

No. 51: *l s¹hr bn s¹hr bn grm bn d¹ bn bwḥ*
 ‘By S¹hr son of S¹hr son of Grm son of D¹ son of Bwḥ.’

No. 52: *l ḥlm bn m^cd*
 ‘By ḥlm son of M^cd.’



Figure 28: Inscriptions No. 53-54

No. 53: *l s¹krm bn ḥts¹t bn s¹krm*
 ‘By S¹krm son of Ḥts¹t son of S¹krm.’

No. 54: *l s¹hr bn ṯs¹ bn ṯs¹hr w ḥrṣ f h lt s¹lm w ṯwr l- d ṯwr w ḡnmt l- d
 d^cy w tnzr mṯr*
 ‘By ṯs¹hr son of ṯs¹ son of ṯs¹hr and he was on the look out
 and so O Lt [grant] security; and may he who would efface
 (this inscription) go blind but may he who would read (this
 inscription) aloud have spoil; and he awaited rain.’



Figure 29: Inscription No. 55

- No. 55:** *l tm bn s¹lm bn nml ḏ- ʿl grs²t w wld h- mʿzy f h lt s¹lm w ḏkr yt^c
bn s²ddt hl -h*
 ‘By Tm son of S¹lm son of Nml of the lineage of Grs²t and he helped the goats to give birth, so, O Lt, [grant] security; and may Yt^c son of S²ddt, his maternal uncle, be remembered.’



Figure 30: Inscription No. 56

- No. 56:** *l trml bn y^cly bn ḏhdt bn s¹dy*
 ‘By Trml son of Y^cly son of ḏhdt son of S¹dy.’

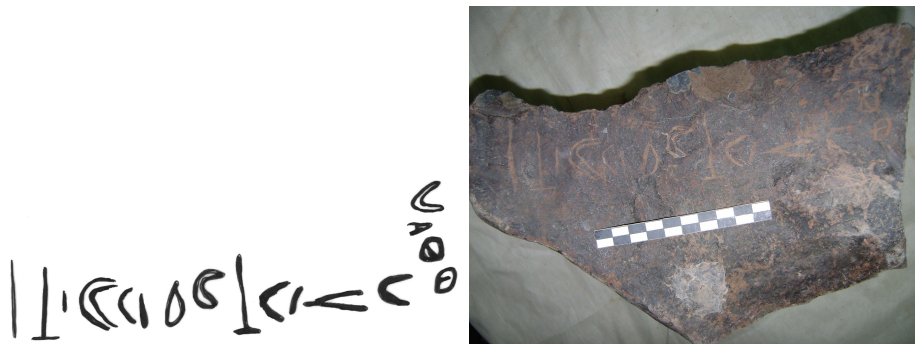


Figure 31: Inscription No. 57

No. 57: *l znm bn gmz bn s¹b w wgm*
 'By Znm son of Gmz son of S¹b and he grieved.'

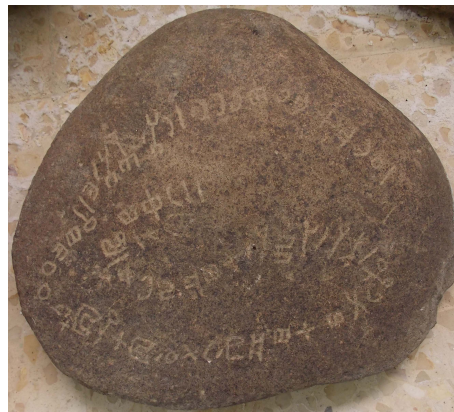
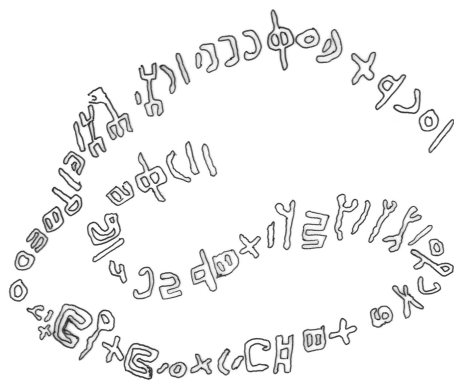


Figure 32: Inscription No. 58

No. 58: *l 'bdt bn 'qrb bn lb'n d- 'l hly w hgg s¹nt myt mn't bn rđwt w hrš*
l- 'hl -h f h lt w ds²r s¹lm w qbll
 'By 'bdt son of 'qrb son of Lb'n of the lineage of Hly and he made a pilgrimage the year Mn't son of Rđwt died and kept watch for his family so, O Lt and Ds²r, [grant] security and reunion.'



Figure 33: Inscription No. 59

No. 59: *l mn^c bn h^sl... n s^lk^{rn} h- gml*
 'By Mn^c son of H^sl n S^lk^{rn} is the male camel.'

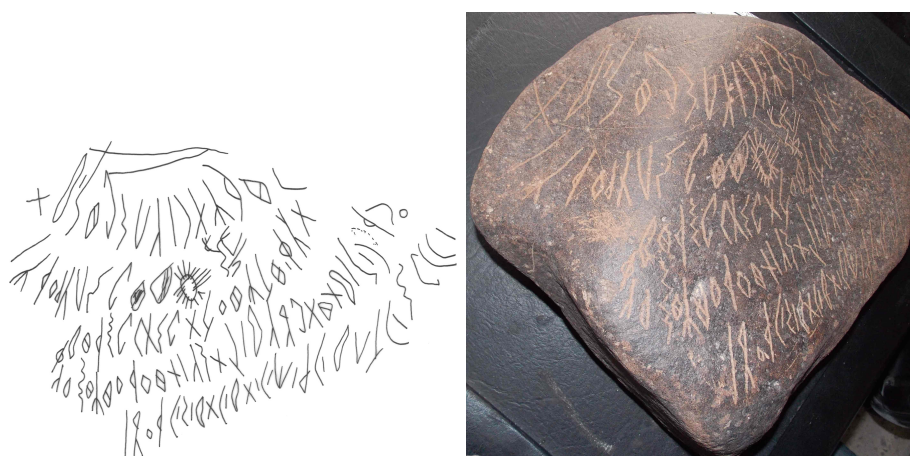


Figure 34: Inscription No. 60

No. 60: *l s^cd bn glmt bn mtn bn hny bn ms^lk bn s²rk bn 'bd bn glmt w h^rs*
h- mlkt f h lt w gd^wd w s²hqm w ds²r b- h^rft -k 'wd -k w nq^t b-
wd[d] d hbl h- s^lfr w gnmt l- d d'y h- s^lfr w w
 'By S^cd son of Glmt son of Mtn son of Hny son of Ms^lk son of S²rk son of 'bd son of Glmt and he kept watch for Hmlkt so, O Lt and Gd^wd and S²hqm and DS²r, through your guidance comes your protection; and may he who would obscure this writing be thrown out of the grave by a loved one but may he who would read this writing aloud have spoil and...'



Figure 35: Inscription No. 61

No. 61: *l ...l bn ʿnʿm bn nṣr bn nṣr bn hms¹k bn ḥg bn rb bn hmlk bn nhḏ
bn ḥmyn bn ḡḏḏt bn ʿnḏt bn ws²kt bn ḏf bn gnʿl*
'By ...l son of ʿnʿm son of Nṣr son of Nṣr son of Hms¹k son of
Ḥg son of Rb son of Hmlk son of Nhḏ son of Ḥmyn son of Ḡḏḏt
son of ʿnḏt son of Ws²kt son of Ḍf son of Gnʿl'

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wgd ‘to find’: 12, 24
wgm ‘to grieve’: 2, 35, 41, 57
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Sigla

Lane Lane (1863-1893)

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