The Nabataeans against the *Ḥwlt* – once again. An edition of new Safaitic inscriptions from the Jordanian Ḥarrah desert

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Abstract

This paper examines three Safaitic graffiti recently discovered during a survey of the Wādī Salmā area in the *ḥarrah* desert, north-eastern Jordan. While one of these texts consists exclusively of onomastica, the other two contain new references to the *Ḥwlt* tribe, one of which is in a prayer asking Dushara to avenge the Nabataeans against them. This provides further evidence of a conflict that took place between the Nabataeans and the *Ḥwlt*, a mysterious event that has recently been brought to attention by Sabri Abbadi. The decipherment of the texts is followed by an updated list of the documents referring to this war and by some remarks on its historical context. The question that is asked is whether it could have occurred during the Nabataean takeover of northern Arabia during the first century BC.

Keywords: Nabataean inscriptions Safaitic Ancient North Arabian Tribes of Pre-Islamic Arabia North-west Arabia

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1 Introduction

The little that we know about the military policy of the Nabataean kingdom is almost entirely derived from the testimonies of Flavius Josephus and Strabo. In their writings about the Jewish history and the geography of the *Oikoumene*, these authors made a couple of references to the conflicts which brought the kings of Petra into opposition to the Seleucids, the Judeans and the Romans. Regarding the Nabataean inscriptions, they give important information on the Nabataean military organization,[1] but say absolutely nothing about the wars in which the kingdom was involved. Some evidence is provided, however, by an unexpected corpus of documents, the Safaitic inscriptions of the *ḥarrah* desert. Carved by the nomads of southern Syria, north-eastern Jordan and northern Saudi Arabia, these texts refer a few times to some "Nabataean wars" (*ḥrb nbṭ*) and to some struggles between the "Nabataeans and Rome/the Romans (*rm*)" as well as between "the Nabataeans and the Jews (*yhd*)", events which are likely to be the same as those described by the classical authors.[2]

But the greatest interest of these texts is that they highlight other military activities of the Nabataeans about which we could not have heard from any other source because of their purely local significance. These are, on the one hand, some occasional engagements with the authors of the Safaitic inscriptions themselves. RWQ 334, for instance, explicitly refers to the plundering of the tribe of *Ḏf* by the *Nbṭ*.[3] On the other hand, Sabri Abbadi (2015) has drawn attention to a small number of texts revealing to us the existence of a war between the Nabataeans and the *Ḥwlt*. The latter is the name of a tribe frequently mentioned as an enemy in the Safaitic inscriptions.[4] It was long ago recognized as a people from outside the *ḥarrah* whose territory could have been in north-western Arabia. Some scholars have suggested identifying it with Strabo's Χαυλοταίων (16.4.2) and Pliny's Avalitae (6.157),[5] and the

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[1] On this point, see Graf (1994) and Nehmé (2015).

[2] For a discussion of the mentions of the Nabataeans in the Safaitic inscriptions, see Al-Manaser (2012).

[3] Among other examples, note the recent publication of a text whose author claims to have "raided a caravan from the Nabataeans" (Al-Rawabdeh & Al-Husan 2016: no. 1).

[4] On the identification of this group, see Harding (1969: 20); Macdonald (1993: 308; 2009a: 18; 2009b: 179); Hoyland (2009: 384 n. 46).

[5] The Latin *Avalitae* could well reflect the Semitic *Ḥwlt*, but this seems less secure for the Greek Χαυλοταίων. Indeed, one would have to explain the collapse of the internal triphthong */awa/

question arises whether it should also be equated with the Biblical *Ḥawîlâ* and the Arab tribe of Ḥawālah (حوالة) that is said to be a subdivision of the Azd by the medieval genealogists.[6] Five Ancient North Arabian graffiti left by members of this group are so far known, the most famous of which is a Hismaic text from Wādī ʿAṣāfīr in the Tabūk region (north-west Saudi Arabia).[7]

The aim of this paper is to publish three Safaitic graffiti that were discovered by the OCIANA Badia Survey of 2015 in Wādī Salmā in the *ḥarrah* desert, north-eastern Jordan (Figures 1–3).[8] The site on which they were recorded lies on the northern bank of Wādī Salmā, 7 km east of Qāʿ al-ʿAbd. While one of these texts consists exclusively of onomastica, the other two contain new mentions of

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or */awi/ to αυ. If one accepts the vocalisation of the name either as */Ḥawālat/ or */Ḥawīlat/, the o-vowel would also cause a difficulty. The initial χ, however, does not represent a problem since the spelling of Χατραμωτῖται in the same paragraph (Strabo 16.4.2), which corresponds to the Ancient South Arabian *Ḥḍrmwt,* clearly shows that this is with this Greek letter that *ḥ* was transcribed in Eratosthenes' book. In spite of these remarks, one has to keep in mind that the source of Eratosthenes was certainly not a Semitic speaker and that the spellings of these various names must have represented a real issue for a Hellenistic Greek writer, without counting the problems with the transmission of the text. See the remarks of Strabo himself when describing the central coast of the Arabian Peninsula: "I am not giving most of the names of the tribes because of their insignificance and at the same time because of the oddity of the pronunciations" (Strabo 16.4.18).

[6]CIK I, table 209, II: 322; Hoyland (2009: 384, n. 46); Müller (1992). See also Retsö (2003: 146) who identifies Strabo's Chaulotaeans with *Ḥawîlâ,* but does not take the ANA material into account. If the identification of *Ḥwlt* with the tribe of Ḥawālah is correct, then it would be just a further example of an Arab tribe of northern Arabia or the Levant to which the medieval genealogists ascribe a South Arabian or Qaḥṭānite origin, as is the case of ʿĀmilah, Judhām, Bahrāʾ, Balī, Ghassān, Kalb, Lakhm, Ṭayyiʾ, Juhaynah, etc.

[7]Macdonald (2009b: no. 15): *l ls²ms¹ bn brʾn ḏ-ʾl ḥwlt* "By Ls²ms¹ son of Brʾn of the lineage of Ḥwlt". Note that this inscription had already been published in a paper in Arabic by S.F. Al-Saʿīd (2003: no. 1), who misread the author's name as *ṭms¹*. The second text carved by a *Ḥwl*-ite is an unpublished Hismaic inscription of unknown provenance which is mentioned in Macdonald (1993: 308, n. 34). The third, LP 87 (= C 3787, 3788), is a Safaitic text from Al-Ḥifnah (Syria) which exhibits an uncommon *hn*-form of the definite article, pointing towards a dialect of north-west Arabia (see Macdonald 1993: 308; Al-Jallad 2015: 16–17). The fourth is a Hismaic text discovered by Saba Farès at Kilwa (north-west Saudi Arabia) that she has recently presented at the *21ᵉ Rencontres Sabéennes*, Toulouse, June 10th 2017. The fifth is a Safaitic graffito from Jabal Qurma which will be edited by Chiara Della Puppa in her PhD dissertation.

[8]We would like to express our deep gratitude to the director of the OCIANA (Online Corpus of Inscriptions from Ancient North Arabia) and *The survey of the Badia of north-eastern Jordan* projects, Michael C.A. Macdonald (University of Oxford), for allowing us to work on the material under study.
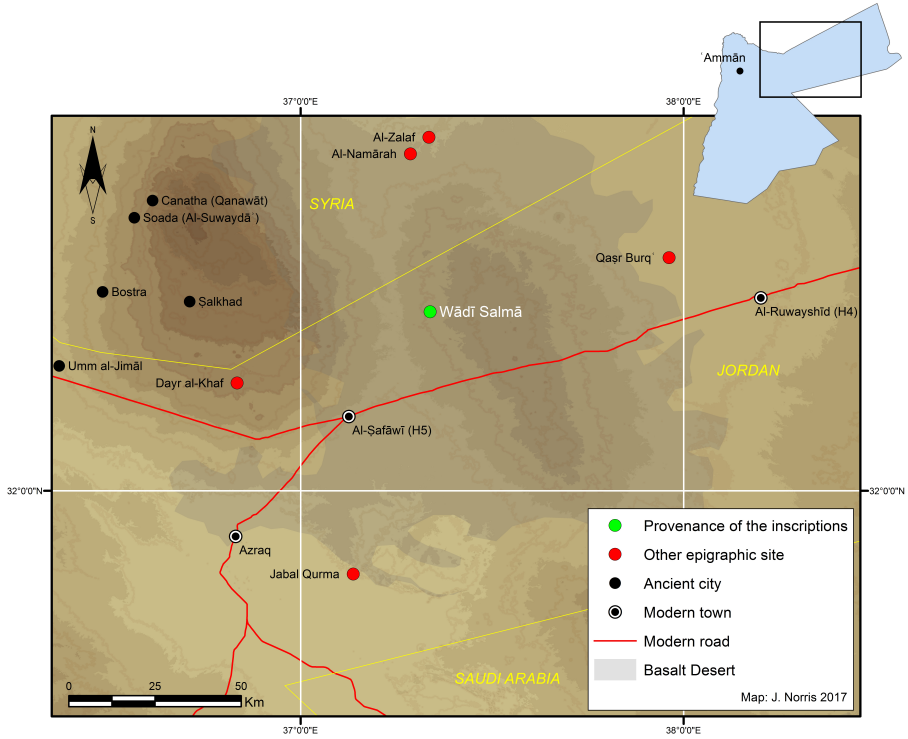
Figure 1: A map of the Jordanian ḥarrah desert showing the site on which the inscriptions were recorded (Map: J. Norris).

the *Ḥwlt*, one of which is in a prayer asking Dushara to avenge the Nabataeans against this group. The publication of this material gives us the opportunity to update the list of the texts referring to the conflict between *Nbṭ* and *Ḥwlt* and to reflect upon the context in which it could have taken place.

2   NAH 1

This graffito and the one which follows are carved on an oval-shaped stone which is about 30 cm long (Figure 4). The first text is written on two lines.

Figure 2: View of Wādī Salmā (Photograph: A. Al-Manaser).

Figure 3: View of Wādī Salmā (Photograph: A. Al-Manaser).

Figure 4: NAH 1–2 (Photograph: A. Al-Manaser).

It starts right-to-left on the upper line and then continues left-to-right on the lower one.

2.1   Transliteration

l zhr bn hḥrm bn ms¹k h r{ḍ}y ʿyr ḥwlt[9]

2.2   Translation

"By Zhr son of Hḥrm son of Ms¹k, O R{ḍ}y, make the Ḥwlt go away/disgrace the Ḥwlt!"

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[9]Epigraphic symbols and abbreviations: { } enclose letters and words of which the reading is doubtful. {/} indicates alternative interpretations of the same letter. [ ] enclose letters or words which are restored. ---- indicates a damaged area. * marks reconstructed forms. */ / enclose proposed vocalisations. N: name.

2.3   Commentary

The letter *ḍ* in the divine name presents an uncommon form. Its lines do not extend beyond the sides as they usually do, causing it to look like a simple rectangle that could be easily confused with a *g*. Nonetheless, the high frequency of the divine name *Rḍy* in Safaitic and the religious character of the text allow us to be quite certain of its value.[10]

   The word *ʿyr* and its variant *ʿyrt* occur frequently in prayers,[11] where they represent substantives meaning "vengeance, blood-money" which can be compared with Syriac *ʿəyārā* and *ʿəyārtā* (Payne Smith 1903: 412).[12] Sometimes, the invocation takes a direct object which is introduced by the preposition *m(n)* if it represents the person(s) against whom the vengeance is sought, or by *l* when it refers to the one(s) to be avenged.[13] Interestingly, there are two other prayers for *ʿyr(t)* against the *Ḥwlt* tribe which are addressed to *Rḍy*:

BWM 2:

l ʿrg bn ykbr wlh f wlh ḻ-ġnmt f h rḍy ʿyr m-ḥwlt

"By ʿrg son of Ykbr, he was sad and he was distraught for Ġnmt so, O Rḍy, let there be vengeance against the Ḥwlt!"

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[10]Note the recent identification of two unusual spellings of the divine name *Rḍy* as *Rṯy* and *Rqy*. The former results from of a sound change *ḍ > ṯ* and the latter of an Aramaicization of the god's name (Al-Jallad 2017b: 77).

[11]Not to be confused with the verb of motion *ʿyr* "to go away, to journey" (cf. Classical Arabic *ʿāra*; Lane: 2207c) and the diminutive *ʿyr* */ʿoyayr/* "small ass" (cf. Al-Jallad 2015: 61, 306). The editor of HaNSC 33 interprets the sentence *wlh ḻ-mkyn ʾs²ʿ-h f h rḍy ʿyr* as "he was distraught with grief for Mkyn his friend so, O Rḍy, make him go away". From the context, however, the translation of *ʿyr* as "vengeance" appears more suitable.

[12]The Syriac words, however, are cognate with the Arabic root √ġyr, which is well attested in Safaitic, giving rise to the abstract nouns *ġyr*, *ġyrt* and *ġrt* that are translated either as "blood-money" or as "abundance", depending on the context (C 2403, 2787; KRS 40; cf. Al-Jallad 2015: 317). Consequently, we must explain the form *ʿyr(t)* as an Aramaic loan or as an example of a *ġ > ʿ* sound change, for which there is at present no good evidence in Safaitic. We are very grateful to Ahmad Al-Jallad for his helpful comments on this philological item.

[13]See, for instance, WH 2911: *f h lt ʿyrt m-kkb* "so, O Lt, let there be vengeance against Kkb!" and Is.H 576: *w rḍw ʿyr l-ʾḥw{r}* "and Rḍw, let there be vengeance for ʾḥwr!".

KWQ 117:

l rb bn hḥrm bn hs¹r bn hf w h rḍy ʿyrt m-ḥwlt

"By Rb son of Hḥrm son of Hs¹r son of Hf and, O Rḍy, let there be vengeance against the Ḥwlt!"

Here, however, the direct object is not preceded by a preposition. Consequently, the word *ʿyr* is more certainly a transitive verb in the imperative whose meaning is open to different interpretations. Of these, one may suggest that it represents a G-stem verb of the root √ʿyr, which, in Classical Arabic, can mean "to destroy" as well as "to upbraid, to blame" in Forms I and II (Lane: 2208a–b).[14] In a prayer addressed against enemies, the verb is certainly best translated as "to disgrace" (cf. Classical Arabic *ʿārun* "disgrace, shame"; Lane: 2008b), as pointed out by Ahmad Al-Jallad in his *Grammar and Dictionary of Safaitic* (forthcoming). Given that this root also refers to motion, one can alternatively take it as a D-stem verb with a causative meaning, i.e. "O Rḍy, make the Ḥwlt go away!", an interpretation which would fit nicely within the context.[15] A third possibility would be to assume a shift of *w > y* and to take *ʿyr* as the imperative of the root √ʿwr "to blind", a situation attested in KRS 1695.[16] But because inflicting blindness is normally expressed to protect inscriptions against destroyers, not for the punishment of enemies, this interpretation is perhaps less likely than the former ones.

All the names appearing in the genealogy are already known from Safaitic.

3   NAH 2

Although it has nothing to do with the *Ḥwlt,* this inscription is included in the study because of its position, being carved on the same stone as the previous text. It is written left-to-right on one line, immediately below NAH 1.

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[14]Cf. *ʿāra-hu* "he blamed, reproached him"; *ʿayyara-hu ʿalā fiʿli-hi* "he upbraided him for his deed" (Lane: 2208a–b).

[15]There are various texts attesting the *Ḥwlt*'s penetration into the *ḥarrah* (C 307, ISB 72, RWQ 335, WH 1231). Note also LP 87 (= C 3787, 3788) from Al-Ḥifnah which was carved by a *Ḥwl*-ite himself. Thus, a prayer asking for their eviction from the area would not be a surprise.

[16]KRS 1695: *h rḍy ʿyr m ʿyr{-h}* "O Rḍy, blind whoever would efface it!".

3.1 Transliteration

l ġyrʾl bn mġny bn grmʾl

3.2 Translation

"By Ġyrʾl son of Mġny son of Grmʾl"

3.3 Commentary

There are absolutely no problems regarding the reading of this inscription, which is a simple signature with genealogy introduced by the *lām auctoris*.[17] All the names are well-known in Safaitic, recurring hundreds of times in the OCIANA corpus. Note that all three are attested in the Greek inscriptions of the Levant, transcribed as Γεαρηλου (e.g., *AAES* III 418), Μονιος (e.g., Wadd 2553) and Γαρμήλου (e.g, *IGLS* XXI 5.1 42).[18]

4 NAH 3

This text is carved *boustrophedon* on a roughly rectangular stone measuring about 23 cm high and 30 cm wide (Figure 5). It starts on the bottom of the surface and goes up in alternating right-to-left and left-to-right after which it turns downwards at 90°.

4.1 Transliteration

l ʿbṭ bn hby bn ṣʿd bn ġḥs² bn ġlm bn qflt bn yʿly w h lt s¹lm w h ḏs²r nqmt l-nbṭ m-ḥwlt

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[17]On the function and use of the introductory particle *l*, see Al-Manaser (2008: 79–82); Al-Jallad (2015: 5, 145).

[18]For a linguistic survey of the transcriptions of Arabic names in the Greek material of Roman and Byzantine Near-East, see Al-Jallad (2017a: 99–186).

Figure 5: NAH 3 (Photograph: A. Al-Manaser).

4.2   Translation

"By ʿbṭ son of Hby son of Ṣʿd son of Gḥs² son of Ġlm son of Qflt son of Yʿly and, O Lt, let there be security and, O Ḏs²r, may the Nabataeans have retribution against the Ḥwlt!"

4.3   Commentary

The text is marred by numerous marks and scratches but is quite clear. Because of lack of space, the author was compelled to carve the tribal name *Ḥwlt* to the right of where the majority of the inscription stands and in a vertical position. He also had some difficulty writing the *s²* in *Ḏs²r* because of a hollow in the upper left corner of the face of the stone, which explains why the letter has a different shape from the one in *Gḥs²*, and looks like a *f*. Interestingly, the author of this inscription appears to be related to other carvers of Safaitic inscriptions, since a relatively similar genealogy occurs three other times throughout the corpus.

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CSNS 875:

l ġḥs² bn qflt bn ġlm bn yʿly

"By Ġḥs² son of Qflt son of Ġlm son of Yʿly"

WH 2562:

l hby bn ṣʿd bn ġḥs² bn qflt bn ġlm bn yʿly w h-bkrt

"By Hby son of Ṣʿd son of Ġḥs² son of Qflt son of Ġlm son of Yʿly and [to] him belongs the young she-camel"

KRS 2869:

l mḥl bn hby bn ṣʿd bn g{b/ḥ}s² bn qflt bn bdn bn ġlm bn yʿly h-ṣrt w ngd w tẓr ʿnd h lt w rḍy w ḏs²r s¹lm ġnmt

"By Mḥl son of Hby son of Ṣʿd son of G{b/ḥ}s² son of Qflt son of Bdn of Ġlm son of Yʿly at the structure on high ground, and he was courageous while he stood guard at it (the structure); O Lt and Rḍy and Ḏs²r, let there be security [and] spoil!" (Translation: Al-Jallad 2015: 264)

It is remarkable that, in the four texts, the genealogies do not extend beyond *Yʿly* who may appear to have been regarded as the ancestor of this family. There are two possible ways to establish the family tree of these different individuals (Figure 6). The first is to assume that we are dealing with three lines of descent from *Yʿly* in which the same names would recur in the different generations. The second would be to identify the author of our text as the son, the grandson and the brother of the persons who wrote WH 2562, CSNS 875 and KRS 2869, respectively. However, this would imply that two authors had make mistakes in the establishment of their paternal lines: the carver of KRS 2869 would have added an extra *Bdn* and the writer of NAH 3 would have inverted *Ġlm* and *Qflt*. For this reason, the first solution is probably the most likely.[19]

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[19]We are most grateful to Michael C.A. Macdonald for his suggestions for improvement in the formation of this family tree.
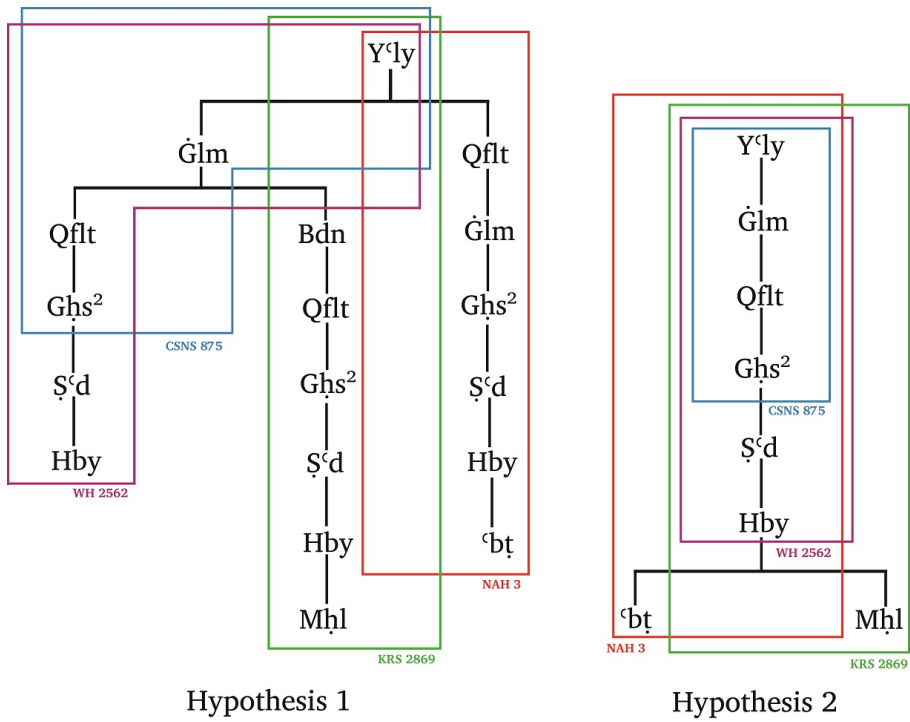
Figure 6: The family of Yᶜly.

The chain of lineage is followed by a prayer addressed to two deities very frequently invoked in Safaitic, *Lt* and *Ḏs²r* (Dushara). The former is petitioned for *s¹lm* "security" whereas the latter for *nqmt* "retribution, vengeance". The formula *nqmt l-N1 m-N2* is not attested elsewhere,[20] although its syntax is perfectly clear, employing the prepositions *l-* as a dative "for" and *m(n)* to indicate opposition "against" as is usual in prayers for security and vengeance (cf. Al-Jallad 2015: 150–151).

5   Remarks on the conflict between *Nbṭ* and *Ḥwlt*

Two of the Safaitic inscriptions examined above refer to the *Ḥwlt* and, as is always the case in the approximately forty other Safaitic inscriptions mentioning this people, it is done in hostile terms (see Macdonald 1993: 308). NAH 1 petitions *Rḍy* either for their punishment or expulsion – depending on the interpretation of the verb *ʿyr* –, while NAH 3 asks Dushara to avenge the Nabataeans against them. This is the third time that an author of a Safaitic inscription expresses his solidarity with the Nabataeans against the *Ḥwlt*. The two other instances so far known are:

AbNH:

l zyd bn mʿz bn grm w rʿy s¹nt ʾys¹ f h lt s¹lm w ġnyt w h ds²r hb s¹ʿd l-nbṭ ʿl-ḥwlt

"By Zyd son of Mʿz son of Grm and he pastured the year of ʾys¹/desperation, so, O Lt, let there be security and abundance, and, O Ds²r, grant aid to the Nabataeans against the Ḥwlt!"

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[20]However, compare with a very similar sentence in Is.L 319: *h rḍw hb l-qdm nqmt mn ʾs¹d ʾbl-h* "O Rḍw, grant retribution to Qdm against the raiders of his camels" (Translation: Al-Jallad 2017b: 84). For other usages of the substantive *nqmt* in prayers, see, for instance, C 834: *l s¹lk bn bʾẖh bn ḥwq w rḍw nqmt m-s²nʾ* "By S¹lk son of Bʾẖh son of Ḥwq and, [O] Rḍw, let there be vengeance against enemies"; SIJ 39: *l ʾnʿm bn ġṭfn bn ʾdnt ḏ-ʾl ʿ{w}ḏ {w} mrd f h lt s¹lm w nqmt m-ḏ ʾs¹lf* "By ʾnʿm son of Ġṭfn son of ʾdnt of the lineage of ʿwḏ and and he rebelled so, O Lt, let there be security and vengeance against him who has committed this act".
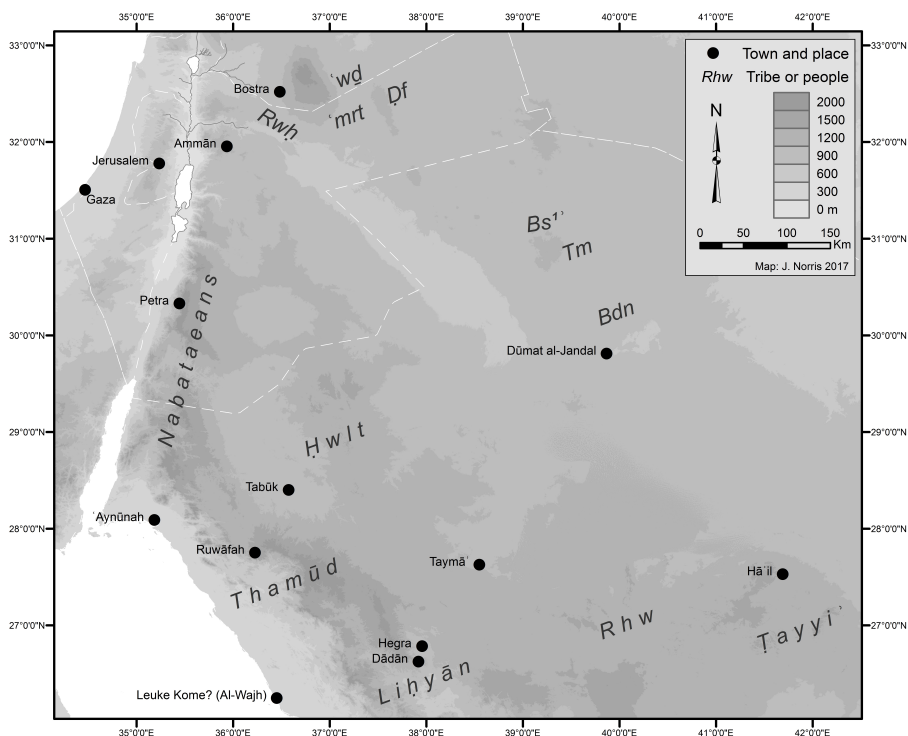
Figure 7: A map of north-west Arabia showing some of the local peoples and lineage groups (Map: J. Norris).

Stehle 25–26:

l qḥs² ḏ-ʾl ʾrs² w wgm ʿl-s¹ʿdʾl w ʿl-wtr w ʿl-ḥdrgt w ʿl-ḥf---- w ḫrṣ f h lt w ds²r w bʿ[l]s¹m{n} ġ{r}t w s¹ʿd h-{n}bṭ ʿl-ḥwlt

"By Qḥs² of the lineage of ʾrs² and he grieved for S¹ʿdʾl and for Wtr and for Ḥdrgt and for Ḥf---- and he was on the look-out and so, O Lt and Ds²r and Bʿ[l]s¹m{n}, let there be blood money and help the {N}abataeans against the Ḥwlt!"

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As in our inscription, these prayers are addressed to Dushara, which is perhaps not a coincidence given the special status of this deity among the Nabataean community. In his commentary of AbNH, Sabri Abbadi notes that it is unclear whether or not the event mentioned in ISB 365.1 has to do with the conflict under consideration (2015: 72).[21] A clear echo of it is, however, found in another text from Wādī Salmā:

RDNH:

l ʾnʿm bn qdm bn ʾnʿm ḏ-ʾl nġbr w rʿy h-ʾbl s¹nt ws¹q ʾl ḥwlt ʾl nbṭ f h lt s¹lm w nqʾt l-ḏ ʿwr h-ḫṭṭ

"By ʾnʿm son of Qdm son of ʾnʿm of the lineage of Nġbr and he pastured the camels the year of the struggle of the people of Ḥwlt against the Nabataean people so, O Lt, let there be security and may he who would efface this writing be thrown out of his grave.[22]"

Testifying to a war between two neighbours of the *ḥarrah* nomads, this set of Safaitic texts represents just one more example of the surprising amount of information in the desert about important political events in Syria and Arabia.[23] Taken together, these graffiti also indicate that their authors openly took a position against the *Ḥwlt* in siding with the Nabataeans and praying for their victory. Whereas one can assume that the hereditary conflict between the tribes of the *ḥarrah* and the *Ḥwlt* had to do with the normal inter-nomad raiding and disputes over the control of pasturing lands,[24] the cause of the war between the *Ḥwlt* and the Nabataeans is much more difficult to grasp.

The recent publication of excavation results from Madāʾin Ṣāliḥ and Al-ʿUlā has led Jérôme Rohmer and Guillaume Charloux to suggest the existence of an autonomous power at Hegra that could have flourished between the fall of

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[21] ISB 365.1: l *ʿbṭ bn ʾṣmʿ w tẓr ʾbgr ḥrb ḥwlt* "By *ʿbṭ* son of *ʾṣmʿ* and he awaited *ʾbgr* while waging war upon the Ḥwlt". The name *ʾbgr* is known among the Nabataeans (MNIN 6), but the role of this individual within the text is not clear. It seems most obvious to us that what is at issue here is nothing more than another engagement between the tribes of the *ḥarrah* and the *Ḥwlt*, as, for instance, in WH 1231.

[22] On the etymology of the word *nqʾt*, see Al-Jallad (2015: 335); Al-Jallad & Macdonald (2015: 155–156).

[23] On this topic, see Macdonald (1995; 2014).

[24] On the mentions of raiding in the Safaitic inscriptions, see Macdonald (1993: 314).

Figure 8: A North Arabian Athena bronze coin, or "Hegraean owl". Class B, around the third century BC *(Bauzou 2016: 89, no. 15).*

the kingdom of Liḥyān at the end of the third century BC and the Nabataean takeover of the area in the first century BC.[25] On the other hand, it is frequently claimed, on the basis of Pliny's passage about the Avalitae, that the towns of Dūmah and Hegra belonged to this tribe at an undetermined period (6.157).[26] Therefore, it could appear very tempting to equate this anonymous power with *Ḥwlt* and to posit that the rise in power of the Nabataeans in the area would have led to a war between the two peoples for the control of the North Arabian oases. Although attractive, this speculative scenario does not stand up to a careful examination of Pliny's text. As Rohmer & Charloux (2015: 313) note, the ascription of Dūmah and Hegra to the Avalitae stems from an arbitrary choice of the Loeb edition, in which the sentence *Hemnatae, Avalitae, oppida Domata, Haegra, Thamudaei* is inaccurately translated as "Hemnatae, Avalitae (with the towns of Domata and Haegra), Tamudaei" (Pliny 6.157, translation: Rackham 1942: 457). In actual fact, the word for "towns" (*oppida*) is a nominative plural and so has absolutely no connection with the name standing before it. Thus, this passage is better translated as "the Hemnatae, the Avalitae, the

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[25]Rohmer & Charloux (2015: 311–313). To this day, this anonymous power is only known through the coins it issued, which consist of Athenian tetradrachm imitations, mostly in bronze, showing the head of Athena on the obverse, and, on the reverse, an owl with the inscription ΑΘΕ (Figure 8). See their recent study by Bauzou (2016).

[26]See Macdonald (1993: 308 n. 36; 2000: 42; 2009a: 18; 2015: 46 n. 91); Nehmé (2004: 632 n. 5); Nehmé et al. (2006: 43); Alpass (2013: 131–132 n. 108); Hoyland (2009: 384 n. 46); Abbadi (2015: 72).

towns of Domata and Haegra, the Thamudaeans (…)",[27] the tribes and the places being simply listed successively, perhaps in geographical order.

If the autonomous power ruling Hegra before the Nabataeans cannot be identified with the *Ḥwlt* tribal group, it remains, however, perfectly possible that the establishment of the Nabataean rule in the Ḥijāz and the eviction of the regional power(s) may have met with resistance from local communities. It is interesting to note that the references to the Chaulotaeans and the Avalitae come from Eratosthenes (c. 285–194 BC) and Juba (c. 52 BC–23 AD) and refer thus to a situation of the Hellenistic period, perhaps of the Early Roman one in the case of Juba. In contrast, no mention of the *Ḥwlt* appears to be found in the works of the subsequent classical authors, as, for instance, in Ptolemy's description of northern Arabia (6.7.).[28] Could this be a testimony of the *Ḥwlt*'s loss of influence in the first two centuries AD? If so, the war between them and the Nabataeans would have to have taken place somewhere before or around the beginning of the common era and this would indeed coincide with the moment during which the kings of Petra were imposing their rule on the Ḥijāz.[29] Of course, this is no more than a hypothetical line of thought based on very fragmentary evidence,[30] knowing that the identification of the *Ḥwlt* with the groups mentioned in the classical sources remains to be proved. We must thus hope that, in the fullness of time, new data will appear which will help us to understand this little-known period in north-west Arabia better and know more about this enigmatic event mentioned in the nomads' graffiti.

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[27]This is how the text is translated in the French edition of Littré (1848–1850: I, 265): "les Hémuates, les Analites; les villes de Domatha et d'Egra; les Thamudènes (…)".

[28]There is only one Safaitic text which mentions Rome and *Ḥwlt* together (C 1713), although it is ambiguous. Indeed, it has *hrm*, not *rm*, which can represent both *h-rm* "the Romans" or the Semitic name *Hrm*. As Macdonald (1993: 329) remarks, *Hrm* is known as a lineage name at *Taymā*ʾ.

[29]According to Rohmer & Charloux (2015: 312), Hegra was not integrated into the Nabataean sphere until the second half of the first century BC.

[30]It should be kept in mind that, at the end of the third century BC, Eratosthenes lists the Chaulotaeans immediately next to the Nabataeans (Strabo 16.4.2), which suggests that they were direct neighbours. The war between the two peoples may therefore have many other reasons and have taken place well before or after the Nabataean takeover of the Hegra area in the first century BC. Since the *Ḥwlt* are frequently described as raiders in the Safaitic inscriptions, we could also suspect that this conflict has to do with the security of the kingdom's borders, roads or places.

References	Content	Site	Area
RDNH	Dated to the year of the struggle of *Ḥwlt* against *Nbṭ*	Wādī Salmā	North-eastern Jordan
AbNH	Prayer to support *Nbṭ* against *Ḥwlt*	Wādī Ramm	Southern Jordan
Stehle: 25–26	Prayer to support *Nbṭ* against *Ḥwlt*	East of Al-Ṣafāwī (H 5)	North-eastern Jordan
NAH 3	Prayer to avenge *Nbṭ* against *Ḥwlt*	Wādī Salmā	North-eastern Jordan

Table 1: List of the texts referring to the conflict between the Nabataeans and the Ḥwlt.

Sigla

AAES III	Greek and Latin inscriptions in published in Prentice (1908)
AbNH	Safaitic inscription in Abbadi (2015)
BWM	Safaitic inscriptions recorded by Alison Betts in Wādī Miqāṭ which are published on OCIANA
C	Safaitic inscriptions in *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars V. Inscriptiones Saracenicae continens, Tomus 1. Inscriptiones Safaiticae.* Paris: Imprimerie nationale (2 volumes), 1950–1951
CIK	Caskel (1966)
CSNS	Safaitic inscriptions published in Clark (1979)
HaNSC	Safaitic inscriptions in Harahsheh (2007)

IGLS XXI 5.1	Greek and Latin inscriptions in Bader (2009)
ISB	Safaitic inscriptions in Oxtoby (1968)
Is.H	Safaitic inscriptions from al-ʿĪsāwī recorded by Hussein Zeinaddin and published on OCIANA
Is.L	Safaitic inscriptions from al-ʿĪsāwī recorded by Laïla Nehmé and published on OCIANA
KRS	Safaitic inscriptions recorded by G.M.H. King during the Basalt Desert Rescue Survey published on OCIANA
KWQ	Safaitic inscriptions from Wadi Qattafi published on OCIANA
Lane	Lane (1863–1893)
LP	Safaitic inscriptions in Littmann (1943)
MNIN	Nabataean inscriptions in Milik (1958)
OCIANA	Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia. `http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/index.php`
RDNH	Safaitic inscription in Al-Rousan (2009)
RWQ	Safaitic inscriptions published in Al-Rousan (2005)
SIJ	Safaitic inscriptions in Winnett (1957)
Stehle	Safaitic inscriptions in Stehle (1960)
Wadd	Greek and Latin inscriptions in Waddington (1870)
WH	Safaitic inscriptions in Winnett & Harding (1978)

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