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Dadanitic Graffiti from Taymā' Region Revisited

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Dadanitic Graffiti from Taymā' Region Revisited^{*}

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Abstract

This article re-examines three graffiti published in Eskoubi (1999) and argues that they are examples of the Dadanitic script being used away from the area of al-ʿUlā.

Keywords: Ancient North Arabian, Dadanitic

This contribution is devoted to four Dadanitic graffiti from the Region of Taymā' – North-West Arabia and will provide a new philological treatment of them. They were published by M. Kh. Eskoubi in his work entitled *Dirāsa Taḥlīliya Muqārīna li-Nuqūš min Miṭṭaqat (Ramm) Ġanūb Ġarb Taymā'*, which appeared in al-Riyāḍ in 1999. It is worth mentioning here that the Taymā' region witnessed a diversity of written epigraphical types that can be called Ancient North Arabian.¹

Eskoubi 74

Figure 1: Photo by M. Eskoubi



^{*}This contribution was composed during my two-month stay as a visiting scholar at the Leiden Center for the Study of Ancient Arabia (Leiden University) in Summer 2016. I am deeply thankful to Dr. Ahmad Al-Jallad, Dr. María del Carmen Hidalgo-Chacón Díez, and Dr. Marijn van Putten for valuable comments on an early version of this article.

¹See Macdonald (2000; 2004) and Hayajneh (2011).

Figure 2: Tracing by H. Hayajneh



1. *Mzn z*
2. *t«/»qt*

“*Mzn*, who incised / wrote (the inscription)”

The personal name *Mzn* occurs often in Safaitic (Harding 1971: 543). A misplaced dot as a word divider «/» is recognizable in the second line after the letter *t*, separating it from the rest of the word, *qt*. Given that the word *tqt* is well known and attested elsewhere (for examples, see Farès-Drappeau 2005: 264), this is likely a writing mistake. The sign for *z* at the end of the first line can be considered as a variant of the relative pronoun “who”, cf. Arabic *ḏū*, which precedes here the verbal form, *tqt*. In the inscriptions from oasis of al-‘Ulā, this relative pronoun is written with the *ḏ* sign. Although some scholars derive the verb from the root *qṭṭ*,² no verbal form *qt* or *qṭṭ* is attested in Dadanitic. Macdonald (2004: 512–513) considers a possible derivation from *nqt* or *wqt* and interprets it as a *t*-infix stem (*ftʿl*).

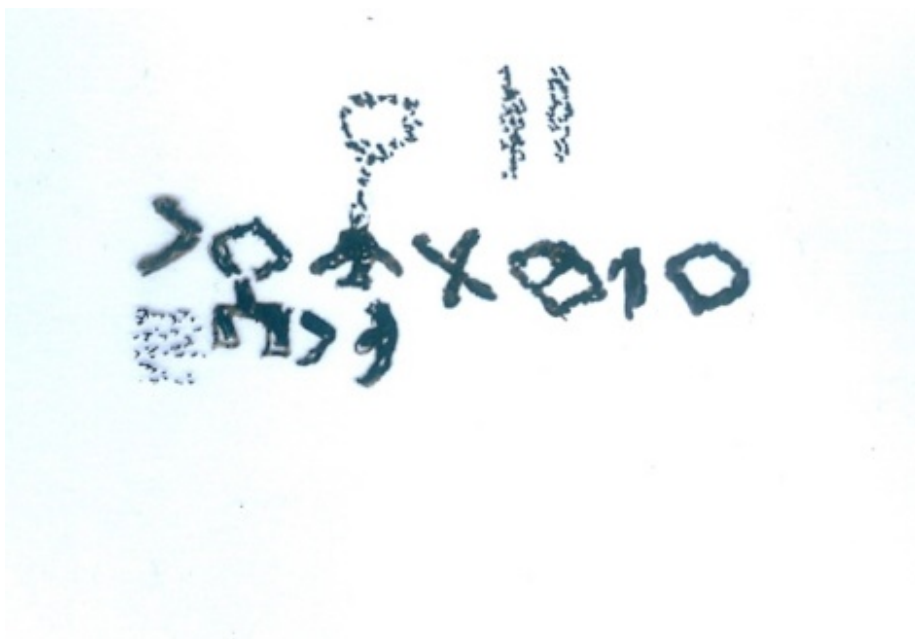
²See Sima (1999) for discussion.

Eskoubi 115

Figure 3: Photo by M. Eskoubi



Figure 4: Tracing by H. Hayajneh



1. *lwt hfr*

2. *h-rs*¹

“*lwt* engraved this/the [. (?)]”

For onomastic derivatives and parallels related to the personal name *lwt*, see under the names *lwm* and *lwn* in Hayajneh (1998: 195f). The verbal form *hfr* “to dig, engrave, carve, dig” is known in Safaitic (Clark 1979 [1983]: 23;

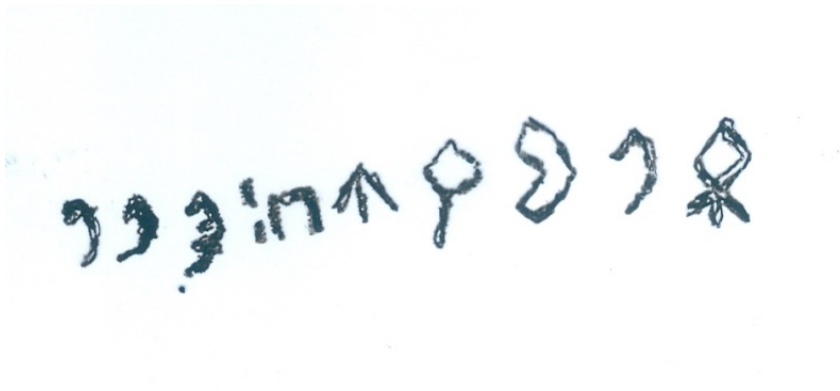
CIS 777) and other Semitic languages (see Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995: 396f and Cohen 1970–2012: 906f). There could be traces of a deteriorated letter after the s^1 .

Eskoubi 154 = JSLiḥ 382

Figure 5: Photo by M. Eskoubi



Figure 6: Tracing by H. Hayajneh



1. *Ṣlmyḥb* / *ṣll*

“*Ṣlmyḥb* performed the *ṣ/tll*-ceremony / has offered”

The inscription was already identified as Dadanitic by Jaussen & Savignac (1909–1922: 532).

ṣlmyḥb: Hidalgo-Chacón Díez (2010: 193) translates *Ṣlmyḥb*, which is the name in the present text, as “*Ṣalm* hat beliebt”. It is not attested in the Dadanitic onomasticon from Dadan itself, but we encounter the name *Ṣlmgd* in a Dadanitic graffito from from Tal‘at Al-Ḥammād (*Mr‘lh bn Ṣlmgd*), where the theophoric element *Ṣlm*, the divine name venerated in Taymā' itself,³ is used as part of the name. The nature of the name and presence of the graffito in Taymā' itself leaves us with some speculations regarding his origins and whether he belongs to the Taymanite community. In the Dadanitic inscriptions, the root *ṣll* produced the verbal causative form *ṣ/hṣll*. Its etymology

³See Hayajneh (2009) on the worship of *Ṣalm* in the Tayma' region as reflected in the Taymanitic inscriptions.

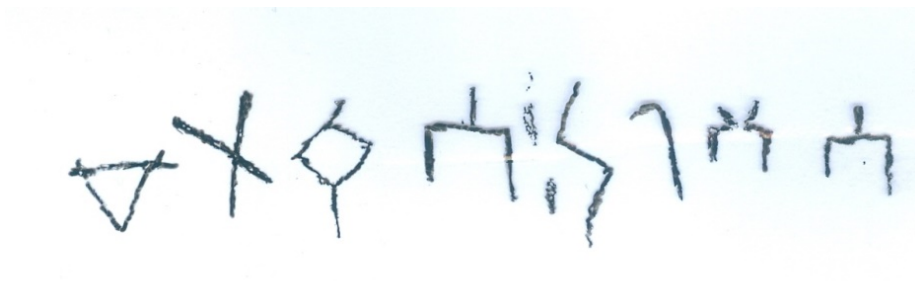
and semantic field is disputed, however its conventional unanimous meaning is “offer, sacrifice”, “perform *zll*-ceremony” (Farès-Drappeau 2005: 264–265), or, as Sima (1999) constantly translates, “(er) hat gedeckt den unterirdischen Wasserleitungskanal”. In contrast to the Dadanitic inscriptions from Dadan, the verbal form in the present graffiti is *zll* (1st or 2nd stems) not in the typical Dadanitic causative stem. It is not easy to decide whether the bearer of the name *Šlmyhb* belongs culturally and linguistically to the Dadanitic realm or not, to explain his usage of the of *zll* instead of *ʾhzll*.

Eskoubi 253

Figure 7: Photo by M. Eskoubi



Figure 8: Tracing by H. Hayajneh



1. $S^1ʾln / s^1yt z$

“ $S^1ʾln$ placed this (inscription)”

Eskoubi reads (ʾ) $s^1ʾlns^1qt$. For the etymology and parallels of the PN $S^1ʾln$, see the name $s^1ʾln$ in Al-Said (1995: 117). The word-divider is lightly incised on the rock and seen close to the n glyph. The reading of the following three letters is certain, especially the y . A small diagonal short stroke is seen on the right side of the rhombus, however a reading such as q or t is not eligible; for a q , the stroke is expected to be longer and straight and for a t , another stroke on the left side is expected. In addition, Semitic has no root clusters that begin with s and t . As for the last sign, which appears as an inverted triangle with protrusions at the points of interchange of the upper two acute angles, it is best identified as a z . It is unlikely that this figure represents a drawing, e.g. of the

head of the deity *Šlm*. Following these epigraphical remarks, I would take the cluster *s¹yt* as a form of suffix conjugation from the root *s¹-y-t*, cf. Ugaritic *št* 'to place, set, set up' (Del Olmo Lete & Sanmartín 2003: 848), Phoenician *št* 'to place, to put, to establish' (Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995: 1130), Hebrew *šyt* 'to set, stand, place' (Koehler & Baumgartner 1967–1990: 1375ff). In a similar semantic contextual usage, i.e. "placing an inscription, name" we encounter this verb "to place, to put, ...", cf. Phoenician *w hspr z št phl's hspr* "and this inscription P. the scribe has set down" and *w'm 'bl tšt šm 'tk* "and if you don't put my name beside your own" (Hoftijzer & Jongeling 1995: 1130f); see Koehler & Baumgartner (1967–1990), pages 1375ff. for more Semitic derivatives, especially in the Old Testament, e.g. *šāt* "to set, stand, place". The final *z* should be identified as a demonstrative pronoun.⁴

Concluding remark

While the shape for *z* in the first inscription (Eskoubi 74), which we dealt with above, has a regular "H" form, it has the evolved triangular form "▽" in Eskoubi 253.⁵ This would mean that we are dealing with two shapes of the grapheme *z* used in the same region. This is applicable to the letter *ḏ* as well but from other texts in Dadan proper. No paleographic or chronological order on the basis of these undated graffiti can be drawn. We may assume that with these letters, as Macdonald (2010: 13f) observed for the glyphs of *s¹* and *ḏ*, the informal shapes must have evolved in parallel with the use of the formal ones, since we regularly find them used side by side in the same Dadanitic inscriptions. It is strange, but it appears that the stonemasons of the official inscriptions and those who employed them, considered the informal shapes to be valid alternatives to the formal ones, even within the same text.⁶ This could be applicable for the forms in this collection, i.e. both shapes were used in graffiti in an unofficial context.

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⁴See Macdonald (2004: 518) for the demonstrative adjectives in Dadanitic and Taymanitic.

⁵The letters *'*, *g* and *s¹* are encountered in a triangular form in Dadanitic.

⁶See Macdonald (2010: 14) and Farès-Drappeau (2005: 109ff) for the development of the letter shapes in Dadanitic.

Sigla

- CIS Safaitische Inschriften, in: *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars V.* Paris, 1950–1951.
 JSLiḥ Dadanitic inscriptions, in Jaussen & Savignac (1909–1922).

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