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The writing culture of ancient Dadān: A description and quantitative analysis of linguistic variation

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Chapter 3 - Genres and Compositional Formulae

Both ASA and ANA inscriptions contain the same basic formulaic parts, starting with the subject of the text, indicated by a genealogy, followed by “the principle verb that characterizes the typology of the text” (Avanzini 2017, 98) with possible elaborations, and ending in an invocation or a curse for the person who would damage the inscription (Al-Jallad 2015, 201–21; Avanzini 2017, 97–98). In his work on the Dadanitic inscriptions from al-‘Uḏayb, Sima (1999) dedicated a large part of his work to the discussion of the formulae. He recognized the same basic three-part division of the inscriptions and termed them *superscriptio*, *narratio*, *invocatio*, following Knauf (1980) (Sima 1999, 49). The *superscriptio* contains the names of the authors or dedicants of the inscription, in the case of the al-‘Uḏayb inscriptions the *narratio* often contains a dedicatory verb which can be elaborated by adding to whom the dedication is being made and what is being dedicated and on behalf of what the dedication is being made, the *invocatio* contains a plea for favor or sometimes a curse for the person who damages the inscription. In the following this basic three-part structure will form the main division, within which the most common compositional formulae will be presented, similar to how Al-Jallad presented the Safaitic data (Al-Jallad 2015, 201–20).

Based on their content, the Dadanitic corpus comprises several different genres: dedicatory, construction, funerary, legal and or narrative. While the first three genres are also clearly represented in the compositional formulae the ‘legal and or narrative’ texts cannot easily be described in terms of formulae, mostly because there are too few examples and some inscriptions that fall into this category were possibly unique texts (e.g. JSLih 064; JSLih 072; JSLih 077). I would term inscriptions like JSLih 072 ‘legal or narrative’ since it seems to narrate a victory of sorts of the group mentioned in the inscription, but it is unclear whether this declaration may have had further legal consequences, for example relating to land rights.

3.1 Graffiti vs. more formal inscriptions

Besides the content-based genres, a distinction can be made between graffiti and more formal inscriptions. I will follow Macdonald’s definition of graffiti as “personal statements, carved, written or painted on a surface in a public space” (Macdonald 2015, 8) as discussed in § 1.6.1.3 Graffiti vs. commissioned texts. While most of these inscriptions consist of only one or more personal names or a genealogy, they still seem highly formulaic and within this group several compositional formulae can be distinguished as well.⁸³

Taking the purpose of the inscription as leading in defining it as a graffiti means a *ẓll* will never be considered as a graffiti. Even ones that are executed with a seemingly low level of skill indicating that they were probably the work of the individual dedicating the inscription instead of a professional mason, cannot be considered graffiti. They were part of a public ritual and can therefore not be considered to be a personal statement. In other cases the border seems less clear. Take for example JaL 016 a, which is a unique inscription, but has religious content.

JaL 016 a *f-ys'm ' l-h 'l//w-ylm 'h*
‘so may ‘Ēl listen to him and make him splendid’

⁸³ The high formularity of graffiti seems to be typical of ANA and ASA corpora and is very different from the graffiti we find, for example in Pompeii, which include quotations from literary works (Milnor 2014, 4–5), the phallic drawings and accompanying texts (Bagnall 2011, 11–13), and texts about love and sports and games (Bagnall 2011, 16) found in the basement of the Smyrna basilica probably from between the later first and the late second century CE (Bagnall 2011, 8) look much more personal and free in their self expression.

This inscription is reminiscent of the *invocatio* at the end of dedicatory inscriptions (Sima 1999, 113). While it is likely a religious formula the author of the inscription knew from a different context, it does not seem to have been part of the Dadanitic epigraphic culture, and therefore the choice to represent the statement like this on rock seems to have been a personal choice and the inscription would therefore fall into the category of graffiti.⁸⁴

3.2 The formulaic parts

3.2.1 Superscriptio

A thorough analysis of the content of the first element of the inscriptions from al-‘Uḏayb can be found in Sima’s work (1999, 52–90). In the following only the basic structure will be discussed.

Almost all inscriptions start with a personal name,⁸⁵ which can be followed by the name of the father, connected with *bn* ‘son of’. Unlike most other ANA varieties, Dadanitic inscriptions usually lack an introductory particle.⁸⁶ The genealogies are generally very short: only about 120 persons are mentioned with their patronym and less than 20 with a third generation,⁸⁷ an extremely low number in a corpus of nearly 2000 inscriptions, many of which mention several individuals.⁸⁸

Family lineage is usually indicated with the relative *ḏ* followed by the name of the family (Sima 1999, 84). It commonly occurs, however, that two names follow each other directly, not separated by *bn* or *ḏ*. This happens most often following the patronymic, but there are also inscriptions where a name directly follows a personal name (e.g. AH 131; U 096). Sima interprets the directly following name as a family name, the equivalent of a name following *ḏ* (Sima 1999, 84). Farès-Drappeau, on the other hand proposes to interpret these names as indicating the name of the direct family, as opposed to the lineage or clan which, according to her, would be indicated by *ḏ* (Farès-Drappeau 2005, 97–98). Since this practice seems to occur especially frequently following the patronymic and generally with names that are also attested as personal names, I have chosen to interpret these strings of names as part of the genealogy.

In some inscriptions with multiple individuals mentioned in the *superscriptio*, their family relations are specified, usually by using a conjunction *w-* followed by the family term with a possessive suffix and the name of the relation. In the table the number of attestations of each form is indicated between brackets.

w-X-h PN

⁸⁴ Note that this inscription is only known from Jamme’s copy, so it cannot be confirmed that there is no text before this phrase. Even if it did function as a blessing at the end of a longer inscription, however, this particular phrase is unique in the Dadanitic corpus and clearly not part of the standard repertoire of epigraphic expressions.

⁸⁵ But compare for example, inscriptions that do not contain more than a single letter (e.g. JaL 008 o; 084 a; 124), or that start with a verb (e.g. JSLih 147), or with a statement (e.g. JaL 106a).

⁸⁶ However, compare for example JaL 145 m; AH 265; JaL 008 e.

⁸⁷ This calculation includes strings of names that are not separated by *bn*, in which each name was taken to represent a generation and not as several names for the same person.

⁸⁸ Note that the repetition of individuals mentioned in the inscriptions is extremely low. Based on the names in the genealogies that are tagged as such in the OCIANA database, only 3.8% of the names repeat. This is based on 1003 two name genealogies with a more than once repeat, excluding the kings that are mentioned in the dating formula in some of the inscriptions. This calculation does not even take into account the chance recurrence of personal names, which would only further lower the number of individuals mentioned more than once. This suggests that leaving an inscription was a once-in-a-lifetime action and not part of an annual ritual.

Table 9 Family relation mentioned in the *superscriptio*

'b (2)	father	U 044; Al-'Udayb 065
'h (2)	brother	JSLih 079 ('hw); U 064
'ht (1)	sister	AH 204
'm (4)	mother	AH 217; AH 081; AH 197; AH 011.3
'tt (4)	wife	U 115; U 023; Al-'Udayb 064; Umm Darağ 04
b'l (1)	husband	AH 199
bn (5)	son	U 037; U 040; U 029; U 023; JSLih 049
bnt (2)	daughter	JSLih 282; AH 081
htn (1)	male relative by marriage	U 075

A person can be further identified by mentioning a title or occupation, following their name or their father's name (Sima 1999, 88–90).

Table 10 Occupations mentioned in the *superscriptio*⁸⁹

'fkl (5)	priest	Al-'Udayb 079; JaL 010 a; Al-Sa'id 1420/1999: 15–26, no. 2; JSLih 048; Tall al-Katīb, no. 1
'fkl h-ktby (1)	priest of h-ktby	JSLih 055
'fkl lt (1)	priest of lt	JSLih 277
'fkl wd (1)	priest of wd	JSLih 049
frs ^l (2)	horseman	AH 136; AH 137
kbr h-d't (1)	kabir of the council(?)	JSLih 072
mlk (1)	king	AH 145
mlk ddn (1)	king of Dadān	Al-Sa'id 2011.1
mlkt lhyn ⁹⁰ (1)	queen of Liḥyān	JSLih 053
qnt-POSS (3)	his/their female servant	AH 303; JSLih 282; JSLih 302
qnh h-mlk (1)	female servant of the king	AH 304

⁸⁹ Sima also mentions *qs'm* 'oracle priest' as a title (1999, 89). However, *hqs'm* also clearly occurs as a personal name in several inscriptions (AH 300; AH 303; Nasif 1988: 96, pl. CXLVI). Therefore interpreting it as priest in U 100, seems highly uncertain.

⁹⁰ This reading is problematic, as the name mentioned before it contains *bn* and seems to belong to a man.

<i>s¹lh ḏḡbt</i> (24)	priest of <i>ḏḡbt</i>	e.g. JSLih 061; U 023; Al-‘Udayb 042
<i>s¹lht ḏḡbt</i> (7)	priestess of <i>ḏḡbt</i>	e.g. U 022; AH 006; Al-‘Udayb 129
<i>s¹lht wd</i> (1)	priestess of <i>wd</i>	AH 199

3.2.2 Narratio

3.2.2.1 Dedication

The bulk of the Dadanitic dedicatory inscriptions commemorate a local ritual called the *zll* which was performed on behalf of the local deity *ḏḡbt*. This type of inscriptions is found in two locations at the oasis: at al-‘Udayb and at a rock formation called Umm Daraḡ (see Figure 7 showing the distribution of the different types of inscriptions across the landscape). The formulae of the inscriptions from al-‘Udayb have been thoroughly discussed by Sima (1999, 49–113). However, he considered all dedicatory inscriptions from this area to be of the same type, regardless of the object that was being dedicated. While it is true that all dedicatory inscriptions follow the same formulaic template, I have chosen to split the dedicatory inscriptions up into their main semantic types: *zll* inscriptions; *hgg* or pilgrimage inscriptions and general dedications. Since there are several dedicatory verbs that seem to only have been used in combination with the *zll* inscriptions, while other verbs could be used with both *zll* and general dedications, this division may shed some light on the semantics of the individual verbs and possibly even on the purpose of the rituals themselves. Moreover, some phrases, like the location *khl* to indicate where the ritual was performed and the elaboration to indicate on behalf of whom or what the dedication was being made are almost exclusively used with *zll* inscriptions.

In his discussion of the dedicatory inscriptions Sima divides the formula into three parts: the verb, the object, and the extension (Sima 1999, 90–105). I will follow a similar structure below.

3.2.2.1.1 *zll*

The most expansive form of the formula contains the following elements:

Gn [verb] [object] *l-ḏḡbt b-LOC b ‘d/’ly* [property] *b-[toponym] f-invocatio*

3.2.2.1.1.1 The verbs

Most frequently the performance of the *zll* ritual is indicated by a causative verb of the same root.⁹¹ Since the focus of this chapter is the formulae of the inscriptions, the variation in *z/t* spelling for **z* is left out of the discussion here. For a complete overview of all *zll* inscriptions written with *t* see § 2.1 Glyphs and their variant forms. Note that *’fy* ‘to accomplish’ and *’dq* ‘to dedicate’ are only attested in combination with the *zll* ritual. The verbs *’gw* and *f’l* are also attested with other types of dedications (see § 3.2.2.1.3 Other dedicatory texts).

Gn [verb] *h-zll l-ḏḡbt*

⁹¹ For a discussion of the different forms of the verb see Chapter 5 verbal morphology.

Table 11 Verbs used for the dedication of the *zll*

<i>ʿzll</i> (116)	e.g. U 019; U 058; AH 003
<i>ʿzl</i> (37)	e.g. AH 072; AH 080; U 006
<i>hzll</i> (10)	e.g. U 041; U 116; AH 011
<i>ʿfy</i> (9)	e.g. U 005; U 031; AH 015
<i>ʿdq</i> (1)	AH 087
<i>ʿgw</i> (35)	e.g. U 038; AH 202; Al-ʿUdayb 138
<i>fʿl</i> (1)	AH 088
<i>ndr</i>	U 010

3.2.2.1.1.2 *The objects*

The most commonly used phrase uses the verb and object of the same root *ʿzll h-zll*. There are also many inscriptions in which no object of dedication is specified. This phrase can be elaborated by mentioning the deity to whom the dedication is being made (almost always *dgbt*⁹² in case of the *zll* inscriptions) with a preposition *l-*. In some cases also the location where the dedication was made is mentioned. Note that while VERB *h-zll l-dgbt b-LOC* is the most common order attested, any of the elaborations can be left out and they occur in different orders.⁹³

Sima considers the dedication to *dgbt* and the location of the action⁹⁴ as part of the elaborations, but since these two phrases seem closely connected with the action itself and the object can occur after both of these elaborations I would consider them part of the same section of the inscription.

U 056	<i>ʿzllt l-//dgbt b-{k}hl</i> ‘she performed the <i>zll</i> ceremony for <i>dgbt</i> at <i>khl</i> ’
U 058	<i>ʿzll/h-zll/{b-}khl/l-dg//bt</i> ‘he performed the <i>zll</i> ceremony at <i>khl</i> for <i>dgbt</i> ’
U 050	<i>ʿzll/l-dgbt/tl//tt/ʿzlt</i> ‘he performed for <i>dgbt</i> three <i>zll</i> ceremonies’

⁹² There is one inscription in which a *zll* seems to be dedicated to *qm* and another deity whose name is lost (AH 100).

⁹³ This variation may be compared to the variation found in the composition of some of the Aramaic magic bowl texts. Even in duplicate texts with the same content, made for the same family, these texts tend to contain minor variations. This led Levene to conclude that the scribes were likely writing from memory and not copying their texts from a notebook or even the first bowl of the set they produced (Levene 2003, 26).

⁹⁴ He translates *b-khl* as ‘nach Vermögen’ (Sima 1999, 98; following Stiehl 1971, 8), but this does not work syntactically. Interpreting it as a location is even more likely when we consider the parallel of *b-mšd* ‘at the sanctuary’, which did not occur in Sima’s corpus. Moreover, Maria del Carmen Hidalgo-Chacon Diez (2014: 20-22) has clearly shown that all attestations of *khl* occur at al-ʿUdayb, suggesting that it was the ancient name for this site.

Table 12 Different ways of specifying the *zll*

<i>h-zll</i>	the <i>zll</i> ceremony	e.g. U 049; U 054; AH 062; AH 244
<i>zll h-nq</i> (9)	the <i>zll</i> of the <i>nq</i>	e.g. AH 001; AH 225; U 037; U 119
<i>h-zll dh</i> (11)	this <i>zll</i> ceremony	e.g. U 005; U 033; U 038; Al-‘Udayb 041; AH 061
<i>zll</i> (5)	a <i>zll</i> ceremony	AH 100; AH 015; AH 079; AH 091; Al-‘Udayb 138
<i>’-zll</i> (2)	the <i>zll</i>	U 043; AH 138
<i>h-zlln</i> (1)	the two <i>zll</i> ceremonies	U 034
<i>litt ’zlt</i> (2)	three <i>zll</i> ceremonies	U 032; U 050

3.2.2.1.1.3 Locations

In the first narrative part of the inscriptions, several different locations are mentioned, which seem to indicate where the ceremony was performed.

Table 13 Locations in the *zll* inscriptions

<i>khl</i> (72)	toponym	e.g. AH 100; U 002; U 071; AH 119
<i>mšd</i> (6)	sanctuary ⁹⁵	AH 202; AH 244; Nasif 1988: 99, pl. CLVIII; AH 197; AH 199; Private collection 1
<i>btr</i> (1)	toponym	U 079 bis

3.2.2.1.1.4 *ndr*

Some of the *zll* inscriptions mention that the *zll* was completed ‘according to what was vowed’ (*hmd ndr*) possibly referring to a previous commitment to the fulfillment of the *zll* itself.

Table 14 Different *hmd ndr* phrases

Gn [verb][object] <i>l-dgbt b</i> -[location] <i>hmd ndr</i> (X) invocation	AH 023; AH 204; AH 244; AH 013; Private collection 1
Gn [verb] [object] <i>ndr</i> (<i>l-dgbt</i>) elaboration invocatio	U 003; U 021; U 007

⁹⁵ Translation following Lundberg (2015, 136). Abū l-Ḥasan (2002, 36–37) translates *h-mšd* as ‘the high red mountain’, which he interprets as a reference to the red stone of Ġabal Umm Daraġ where almost all of the inscriptions mentioning *mšd* are found, except for JSLih 085 which was found at Al-Ḥuraybah. Note that JSLih 085 was found at the entry to “the ancient sanctuary” (notes section in OCIANA record, accessed 7–3–2018). Abū l-Ḥasan’s identification of *h-mšd* with the location of Ġabal Umm Daraġ is probably correct, based on the distribution of the texts containing this word. However, based on the etymology of the word (discussed in Lundberg 2015, 136) and its occurrence in relation to the sanctuary in Al-Ḥuraybah a translation as ‘sanctuary’ is more accurate, with the important side note that in most cases the sanctuary at Ġabal Umm Daraġ was meant.

3.2.2.1.1.4 Elaboration

Following the description of the ritual the dedication can be elaborated by mentioning what seem to be the intended benefactors of the final *invocatio*. This part of the inscription is preceded by a preposition usually followed by property or crops, which can be followed by what seems to be a location. In some cases the property slot can be replaced by a person for whose benefit the dedication was made.⁹⁶ This section can be extended by adding different crops or other property following the conjunction *w-*.

b 'd/ 'l(y) [Property]-[POSS] (*w*-[Property]-[POSS]) *b*-[Location]

Table 15 Property mentioned in the dedication

<i>nhl</i> (39)	palm trees	e.g. U 038
<i>'nhl</i> (2)	palm trees (pl.)	Al-'Udayb 071; 073
<i>dt'</i> (32)	crops of the season of the later rains	e.g. Al-'Udayb 132; JSLih 077
<i>dt'</i> (1)	crops of the season of the later rains	AH 107
<i>'dt'</i> (2)	crops of the season of the later rains (pl.)	Al-'Udayb 071; 073
<i>ml</i> (24)	property	e.g. Ryckmans 3.30; AH 141
<i>ml kn l-h</i> (1)	the property that was his	AH 120
<i>q-kn l-h</i> (21)	that which was his	e.g. U 050; U108; AH 069; AH 75
<i>q-l-h</i> (3)	that which is his	U 092; U 080; AH 010
<i>m-kn l-h</i> (3)	what was his	U 044; U 059; AH 125
<i>tbrt</i> (12)	grain	e.g. U 112; U 069; AH 084
<i>n 'm</i> (4)	livestock or property	U 094; AH 074; AH 076; AH 008.1
<i>s²ym</i> (3)	field?	U 118; AH 100; AH 138
<i>hrf</i> (2)	crops of the season of the first rains	U 041; U 059
<i>gdw l-h</i> (1)	the property that was given to her	U 070
<i>'rd</i> (1)	valley	U 046
<i>h-drt</i> (1)	enclosed area	U 003
<i>mrbq</i> (1)	meadow	AH 073

⁹⁶ There is one inscription in which *b 'd* is followed by a verbal clause (AH 065) *b 'd 'gw b-tr* 'on behalf of what he dedicated at *tr'*.

There are two inscriptions in which the crops are specified after the location is mentioned. In these cases the partitive *mn* ‘of, from’ is used (Lundberg 2015, 133).

U 059	<i>’ly-/m-kn/l-h/b-ḏ//t’l/mn/dt’w ḥrf</i> ‘on behalf of what was his at <i>ḏt’l</i> of the crops of the season of the later rains and the crops of the season of the first rains’
AH 077	<i>b//’d/ḏ-kn/l-h//b-bdr/mn/nhl {-h}</i> ‘on behalf of that which was his at <i>bdr</i> of his palm trees’

Table 16 Persons mentioned in the dedication

<i>-h</i> (1)	him(self)	U 102 bis
<i>’b-h</i> (1)	his father	U 034
<i>nfs¹-h</i> (1)	himself	U 021

The toponyms occurring in the Dadanitic corpus have already been thoroughly discussed by Hidalgo-Chacon Dièz (2014). Here only a list of attested forms and their number of occurrences will follow.

Table 17 Toponyms specifying the location of property mentioned in the dedication

<i>btr</i> (1)	U 079 bis
<i>bdr</i> (38)	e.g. AH 010; AH 061; U 064
<i>blḥ</i> (2)	U 071; U 72
<i>bn’l</i> (9)	e.g. AH 012; AH 141; U 038
<i>byr</i> (1)	U 108
<i>tqmm</i> (12)	e.g. AH 096; U 025; U 068
<i>tr</i> (8)	e.g. AH 065; AH 157; U 117
<i>ḏ’dn</i> (2)	AH 066; U 126
<i>ḏ’ḏn</i> (1)	U 013
<i>ḏt’l</i> (5)	e.g. AH 072; U 059; U 091
<i>ḏ’mn</i> (20)	e.g. AH 062; U028; U 066
<i>ms²hl</i> (1)	U 026
<i>mh{m/g}t</i> (1)	U 089
<i>h-mḏhb</i> (1)	U 075

3.2.2.1.2 Pilgrimage - *hgg*

A special kind of dedicatory inscriptions refers to the *hgt* ‘pilgrimage’. Whenever the activity is expressed by the verb *hgg*, it mostly occurs in the plural (9 attestations as opposed to 2 singular forms). There are four attestations of the noun (AH 206; AH 219; AH 226; AH 239), but these all occur in damaged inscriptions. It is interesting to note that it occurs once as a noun in *hgt b-khl* ‘pilgrimage at *khl*’ (AH 206), once as ...*mšd hgt* ‘... sanctuary, pilgrimage’ (AH 226) and once in construct with *mšd*: *hgt h-mšd* ‘the pilgrimage of the sanctuary’ (AH 219).

Many of the inscriptions mentioning the verb *hgg* are damaged, making it difficult to distill an exact formula. Based on what is visible, there seems to have been a lot of variation in the possibility to add information. The following discussion therefore focuses on distilling the most basic form of the formula to which more could be added. Generally speaking, in most cases the verb is followed by the name of a deity for which the pilgrimage was made, preceded by the preposition *l-*. There are two inscriptions in which the preposition is missing, which seems to confirm that *hgg* is a verb of motion. Many of the inscriptions mention the location of the ritual, which follows the name of the deity for which the pilgrimage was performed.

Gn *hggw* (*l-*)DIN *b-LOC invocatio*

Table 18 Deities mentioned with *hgg*

<i>hrg</i>	AH 217; AH 197
<i>dgbt</i>	U 063; AH 198; Rabeler 001; Al-‘Udayb 075 (without preposition); Umm Darağ 22

Table 19 Locations mentioned with *hgg*

<i>khl</i>	toponym	U 063; Al-‘Udayb 075
<i>h-mšd</i>	the sanctuary	AH 217; AH 221; AH 198
<i>bt-hm</i>	their temple	AH 197

3.2.2.1.2.1 Elaboration

There are two *hgg* inscriptions with the elaboration *‘l-hm* ‘on behalf of them’ (AH 206; AH 233).

3.2.2.1.3 Other dedicatory texts

Other dedicatory texts generally take the same form as the *zll* inscriptions, excluding the elaboration and usually without mentioning the location of the dedication itself.

Gn verb [object] *l-*DIN *f-invocatio*

Table 20 Attested dedicatory verbs

<i>’dq</i> (6)	e.g. AH 222; JSLih 061; JSLih 063
<i>’fqw</i> (1)	JSLih 054
<i>’gw</i> (35)	e.g. AH 134; AH 201; AH 140

<i>ʿgy</i> (1)	JSLih 177
<i>ʿqd</i> (1)	AH 222
<i>ʿrqw</i> (1)	AH 204
<i>ʿšdq</i> (1)	JSLih 008
<i>fʿl</i> (8)	e.g. Al-Saʿīd 2011.1; Nasif 1988: 86, pl. CXVI/e; Al-Ḥuraybah 06
<i>hdq</i> (2)	Al-Saʿīd 1419/1999: 4–24, no. 1, side 1-2; JSLih 062
<i>hḡnyw</i> (1)	AH 197
<i>wqd</i> (1)	Al-Ḥuraybah 08
<i>hṭb</i> (1)	Al-Ḥuraybah 12
<i>hwdq</i> (4)	Al-Ḥuraybah 13; AH 288; Al-Ḥuraybah 14; JSLih 049
<i>hwḏʿ</i> (1)	Al-Ḥuraybah 12
<i>qrb</i> (3)	JSLih 041; AH 209; Al-Ḥuraybah 09

Table 21 Attested deities in the general dedicatory texts

<i>dḡbt</i> (15)	e.g. AH 222; JSLih 041; Al-Ḥuraybah 12
<i>hn-ʿktb</i> (1)	JSLih 062
<i>hrg</i> (2)	AH 222; AH 197
<i>lh</i> (1)	JSLih 061
<i>ṭhln</i> (2)	Al-Saʿīd 2011.1; Al-Saʿīd 2011.2

3.2.2.1.4 Elaboration

Table 22 Elaborations attested with general dedicatory inscriptions

<i>bnt-h</i>	his daughter	JSLih 073
<i>ml-h</i>	his property	AH 140

3.2.2.2 Building

There are two forms of building inscriptions: dedicatory ones that mention the building of an object for divine favor; and ones mentioning funerary structures. Most building inscriptions use the verb *bny* (9 attestations), while there is one inscription that uses the verb *fʿl* to refer to the construction of a temple.⁹⁷

3.2.2.2.1 Funerary buildings

Gn + bny + [funerary structure]

⁹⁷ Most inscriptions containing *fʿl* are more general dedicatory inscriptions.

JSLih 078 *bny/b//r'h-mṭbr/'//l-h/h'*
 'he built the facade of the grave chamber and it is his'

Table 23 funerary structures mentioned

<i>mṭbr</i>	grave chamber	JSLih 078
<i>kfr</i>	tomb	JSLih 045

3.2.2.2.2 Dedicatory buildings

Dedicatory building inscriptions generally follow the following formula, in which the specification of the object and the deity seem to have been optional (the deity is left out in U 008, while the object is not specified in AH 200)

Gn + bny + [OBJ] + [l-DING] + *invocatio*

Müller, D.H. 1889: 63-64, no. 8/ 1-3 *bnyw/bt/h-ṣn----//l- ḏḡbt/f rḏ-hmy/w s' 'd-hmy/w 'hrt//hmy//*
 'they built the... for *ḏḡbt* so may he favor them both and aid them and their posterity'

Table 24 Structures mentioned in building inscriptions

<i>bt</i>	temple	Müller, D.H. 1889: 63-64, no. 8; JaL 006
<i>bny</i>	building	Al-Sa'īd 1420/1999: 15–26, no. 2
<i>'rb 'w</i>	sanctuary	U 008

The inscription using *f'l* follows the same basic formula as the dedicatory *bny* inscriptions.

AH 247 *f'l/h-bt/w h-//lhn/f s' 'd//----*
 'he made the temple and the *lhn* so aid...'

3.2.2.3 Funerary

3.2.2.3.1 'ḥḏ

The verb *'ḥḏ* is used to refer to taking possession of funerary structures (e.g. *qbr* (JSLih 079); *mqbr* (JSLih 306)), but also of sections of cliff (JSLih 065; JSLih 066). These were probably meant to reserve a section of cliff for the future construction of a tomb.⁹⁸ The inscriptions minimally consist of a name and the verb, which is usually followed by an object (JSLih 230 and JSLih 289 only contain a name and the verb), specified with a demonstrative.

Gn *'ḥḏ* ([object] (*ḏh*))

Table 25 Objects following 'ḥḏ

<i>hl-btt</i>	this section (of cliff)?	JaL 021 f
<i>h-mqbr ḏh</i>	this burial place	JSLih 306

⁹⁸ Compare the use of the verb *'ḥḏ* in Nabataean texts from Hegra outlining and claiming the position of a future tomb (Nehmé 2015, vol.1: 105).

<i>h-mṭbrn</i>	the grave chambers	JSLih 045
<i>h-qbr</i>	the grave	JSLih 257
<i>h-qbr ḏh</i>	this grave	JSLih 079
<i>ʿ-ṣḥt</i>	the section of cliff	JSLih 065
<i>h-ṣḥt ḏt</i>	this section of cliff	JSLih 066

3.2.3 *Invocatio*

The *invocatio* is usually the last part of the inscription, sometimes followed by a dating formula (e.g. U 008; Müller, D.H. 1889:63–64, no.8; JSLih 072). It is typically introduced with the conjunction *f-*. Both blessing and curse formulae exist (Sima 1999, 111).

3.2.3.1 *Blessing*

Blessing formulae occur at the end of almost every dedicatory inscription, and sometimes also in graffiti (e.g. JSLih 084; W.Dad 16). The blessing formula minimally consists of the form *rḏ-h* ‘may he favor him’, which is commonly followed by *w-ʿḥrt-h* ‘and his posterity’. The longer phrase *f-rḏ-h w-sʿd-f w-ʿḥrt-h* ‘so may he favor him and aid him and his posterity’ occurs frequently, and is sometimes amended with the verb *ʿṭb-h* ‘may he reward him’. While *rḏ* (256 occurrences) is clearly the most common form, and *ʿṭb* does not occur very frequently (36 occurrences), these basic elements were seemingly freely combined in different orders.

f-[verbs] *w-ʿḥrt-h*

Table 26 Verbs attested in *invocatio*

<i>rḏ-h</i> or <i>rḏy-h</i>	may he favor him
<i>sʿd-h</i>	may he aid him
<i>ʿṭb-h</i>	may he reward him

There are a few examples of unique blessing formulae, such as the following:

U 040.1 *ʿṣll h-ṣll //hny/hn-ʿ//ḥrt*
‘he performed the *ṣll* ceremony may he benefit the posterity’

JaL 016 a *f-ysm ʿl-h ʿl//w-ylm ʿ-h*
‘so may ʿĒl listen to him and make him splendid(?)’

3.2.3.2 *Curse*

Curses occur both in dedicatory inscriptions (e.g. AH 222; AH 230; AH 236) and in what seem to be graffiti (e.g. AH 210; AH 289; JSLih 276). In the dedicatory inscriptions they always occur in the *invocatio* slot at the end of the inscription, usually following a blessing formula (e.g. AH 288). In graffiti curses generally occur in the same position in the inscription, or they may occur by themselves (AH 289).

- AH 288** *w hwdq/l-h/h-mhry ----//{l-}hgr/f rdyt-h/w 'hrt-h ----//rr/dgbt/w h'/'hrt ----//rr-h*
...and he dedicated to him the incense burner... to *hgr* so may she favor him and his posterity... may *dgbt* dishonor and this posterity...[who] mistreats it'
- AH 210** *'s¹k/bn/htm/h//tq/tq/r[r] {d}g{b}t/t/t' n/'rr ----*
'PN son of PN PN inscribed; may *dgbt* by smiting(?) the one who mistreats...'
- AH 289** *f-mn y 'rr-h//y 'r-h n 'm//dgbt/wtħln*
'so may whoever mistreats it be stripped of grace, *dgbt* and *ħln*'

3.2.4 Date

Some inscriptions are dated to the year of the reign of a king, in addition to which a period referred to as *r'y* can be mentioned, which seems to have indicated a specific time of the year, possibly the rising or setting of an asterism. These formulae usually follow the *invocatio* when they occur in dedicatory inscriptions. The dating formulae are found with building inscriptions (U 008*; Müller, D.H. 1889: 63–64, no. 8*) and several kinds of dedicatory inscriptions: *hgg* types (AH 206; AH 221*; AH 219*; Rabeler 001*; AH 239*; AHUD 001); *zll* inscriptions (AH 244*; AH 013; AH 216; AH 235; Private collection 1; AH 202) and other dedicatory forms (e.g.; AH 204; AH 222). There are also attestations of dated graffiti (Nasif 1988: 96, pl. CXLIV*; Nasif 1988: 96, pl. CXLV*; JSLih 349*; JSLih 181); and what might be legal inscriptions (JSLih 072*; JSLih 068*; JSLih 070; JSLih 077).⁹⁹

s¹nt X PN bn PN mlk Lħyn 'year X PN son of PN king of Liḥyān' (e.g. AH 64)

s¹nt X b-r'y Y PN bn PN mlk Lħyn 'year X during the *r'y* of Y; PN son of PN king of Liḥyān' (e.g. AH 239; AH 244).

- U 008** *bnyw/hn-'rb//w/f rđ-hm/s¹nt/'{s²}//r/w s¹b 'b-r'y/s¹lħn*
'they built the sanctuary so may he favor them year seventeen during the rising of the asterism *S¹lħn*'
- AH 219** *----bt/hgt/h-mšd/f rđ-h/{w} s¹//d-h/b-r'y/hrf/s¹nt/ħms¹/ntn*
'... [performed] the pilgrimage of the sanctuary so may he favor him and aid him during the rising of the asterism *hrf* year five of *ntn*'
- AH 013** *'//zlt/h-zll/l-dgbt/b-k/hl/hmd/ndrt//f r{d}{-h}/w{s¹} 'd-h/w {'}{ħ}rt-h/s¹nt/ħms¹/s²{h}r/{b}n/hn's¹*
'she performed the *zll* ceremony for *dgbt* at *khl* according to what she vowed so may he favor her and aid her and her posterity year five of *s²{h}r* son of *hn's¹*'
- AH 204** *'rqww/h----//bt/hm-d/ndr/dg[b][t]---- [f]/rđ-hm/w s¹'d-hm/ ----//s¹nt/'s²rn/w 'r[b][']---*
-//bn hn's¹ mlk lħy[n]
'they sent up the.... according to what was vowed [to] *dgbt*... so may he favor them and aid them... year twenty four... son of *hn's¹* king of Liḥyān'
- AH 222** *'qd h- m---- l- ħrg//s¹nt s¹t hn's¹//mlk lħyn*
'he dedicated the... to *ħrg* year six of *hn's¹* king of Liḥyān'

⁹⁹ The sigla indicated with an asterisk are the inscriptions that include the more elaborate dating formula including the time of the year.

**Nasif 1988: 96,
pl. CXLIV**

ms¹kh/ys²bk//tqt/s¹nt/ḥdy//b-r'y/d'bs¹mwy
'*ms¹kh ys²bk* inscribed year one during the *r'y* of the asterism *d'bs¹mwy*'

JSLih 072

ḥḍw/h-mkn//w h-mq d/ḍh/kll-h/mn/m //n/h-gbl/hn'ly/dky//m {n}/h-gbl/hn's¹{l}l f/rḍ-//hm/s¹nt/ḥms¹/b-r'y//bdn/hn's¹
'they took the place and this sitting place, all of it from the assembly place of the upper border until the sanctuary of the lower border*¹⁰⁰ so may he favor them year five during the *r'y* of the asterism *'bdn* [during the reign of] *hn's¹*'

3.2.5 Signature

Some texts are signed by the artisan who made them at the end of the inscription, confirming that at least some of the inscriptions were commissioned (Macdonald 2010, 7). The most common way of mentioning the artisan is by giving his name and title following the *invocatio* and possibly the date. There are also several inscriptions in which the person mentioned in the genealogy gives his title 'the artisan' (e.g. JSLih 074; 075; JaL 003; JSLih 035).

f-invocatio (date) PN *bn* PN [title] (w-PN *bn* PN [title])

In two inscriptions the signature is elaborated by the phrase '*bd l-mr'-h* 'he made it for his lord' Al-Ḥuraybah 12; JSLih 035).

f-invocatio PN *bn* PN [title] '*bd l-mr'-h f-invocatio*

Table 27 Occupations mentioned in the signature

<i>s¹fr</i> (2)	writer	JSLih 082; AH 220
<i>ṣn'</i> (11)	artisan	e.g. Al-Ḥuraybah 12; JSLih 075; JSLih 082
<i>ṣwḡ</i> (2)	smith	Al-Ḥuraybah 04; 05
<i>ṣyḡ</i> (1)	smith	Al-Ḥuraybah 14

3.3 Graffiti

Graffiti are generally much shorter than the other inscriptions. Many consist of only a name or genealogy, some even of just a single letter (e.g. JaL 008 o; 084 a; 124). Others contain brief statements.

JSLih 139

ḡḍmnt/bn s¹lm/r'y
'*ḡḍmnt* son of *s¹lm* pastured (the livestock)'

More frequently recurring themes are inscriptions mentioning the activity of writing, thus claiming authorship; inscriptions with the verb *wdd* 'to love; and those mentioning *nṭr* 'he guarded'.

3.3.1 Writing and claiming authorship

There are several graffiti that seem to commemorate the writing of the inscription itself. Only the inscriptions using the verb *tqt* seem to form a coherent formulaic group however.

Gn *tqt*

¹⁰⁰ Translation following Lundberg (2015, 135).

This basic formula is sometimes elaborated with, for example, an invocatio (W.Dad 16) a curse (AH 210); a date (JSLih 349) or a dedication (JSLih 182).

JSLih 182 { } *bdhny*// *tqt*//*ly*//*qrt*
 ‘{ } *bdhny* inscribed on behalf of *qrt*’

Table 28 Attested verbs of writing and inscribing

<i>hṭ</i> (1)	JSLih 181
<i>hṭṭ</i> (1)	Nasif 1988: 92, pl. CXXXII
<i>ktb</i> (1)	JSLih 279
<i>mṭl</i> (1)	JSLih 339
<i>qt</i> (1)	JaL 152
<i>s¹fr</i> (2)	Ğabal İtlib 08; JSLih 128
<i>tqt</i> (85)	e.g. JaL 169 af; JSLih 339; W. Dad 16

3.3.2 *wdd*

The verb *wdd* ‘to love’ occurs 14 times (e.g. JaL 147 c; Ph 395 v; Nasif 1988: 94, pl. CXL/c), and once as *wd* (JaL 116).¹⁰¹

PN *wdd* PN

3.3.3 *nṭr*

The *nṭr* inscriptions are almost all found at Jabal İtlib in Madā’ in Şālih. They commemorate the guarding activities that were carried out at this location. Several of them were executed in a unique style (see § 2.2.1.1 Jabal İtlib relief).

PN *bn* PN *nṭr ddn*/PN

¹⁰¹ The verb *wdd* ‘to love’ is also part of one of the common Hismaic formulae. In Hismaic the verb is usually positioned at the beginning of the inscription however. Also the Hismaic inscriptions seem to be dealing more explicitly with romantic or erotic love, often mentioning that the loved person is a young woman *glmt* and adding references to intercourse *nk* (e.g. KJA 105; KJA 23).