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The Safaitic scripts: palaeography of an ancient nomadic writing culture

Della Puppa, C.

Citation

Della Puppa, C. (2022, April 21). *The Safaitic scripts: palaeography of an ancient nomadic writing culture*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3283744>

Version: Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

The Safaitic scripts

Palaeography of an ancient nomadic writing culture

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus Prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college van promoties
te verdedigen op donderdag 21 april 2022
klokke 15:00 uur

door

Chiara Della Puppa

Promotor: Prof. dr. P.M.M.G. Akkermans
Co-promotor: Prof. dr. M.G. Kossmann
Promotiecommissie: Prof. dr. O.E. Kaper
Prof. dr. J.C.A. Kolen
Dr. M.C.A. Macdonald (University of Oxford)
Dr. M. van Putten
Prof. dr. J.A.C. Vroom

This research was supported by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research under project number 360-63-100.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis is part of the project ‘Landscapes of Survival: Pastoralist Societies, Rock Art and Literacy in Jordan’s Black Desert, c. 1000 BC to 500 AD’, directed by Prof. Peter Akkermans and funded by NWO. I thank my supervisor Peter Akkermans for his trust and support, as well as for granting me the freedom to pursue my interests and inclinations within the framework of the project. I am very grateful to my co-supervisor Maarten Kossmann for patiently guiding me to complete this thesis and for always providing a sharp and lucid outlook on my research. His scientific rigour has been a great example for me, and I feel that under his supervision I have become a much better scholar.

I thank the whole Jebel Qurma team for being so delightful, collaborative, and fun, both in the desert and at the office. The development of a very idiosyncratic type of humour was essential in keeping the spirits high throughout the long hours of fieldwork in the scorching sun. A special thanks goes to Nathalie Brusgaard, Harmen Huigens, Monique Arntz, Koen Berghuijs, Merel Brüning, Rita Kremer, Maikel van Stiphout, and Thomas Vijgen. I would also like to thank all the other colleagues I have met in Leiden over the years for the nice conversations: Fokelien Kootstra, Marijn van Putten, Benjamin Suchard, Hekmat Dirbas, Jouni Harjumäki, Johan Lundberg, Khalid Mourigh. I thank Harry Stroomer for kindly giving to me several books on Safaitic epigraphy from his own personal library. I am very grateful to Jan Just Witkam for his support and interest in my research.

I am greatly indebted to Michael Macdonald for always being so generous in sharing his extensive knowledge of Safaitic epigraphy with me, and for kindly providing several comments and corrections to an initial draft whose contents are now embedded in Chapters 2–4 and Appendices A–B. I also want to thank Ali Al-Manaser and Michael Macdonald for warmly welcoming me as a member of their team during the second half of the 2015 mission of the Badia Epigraphic Survey, which was an extremely formative and exciting experience. I thank Jérôme Norris for the pleasant discussions on Ancient North Arabian and for his kind help with the Thamudic material of the Jebel Qurma corpus.

I would have never been able to complete this thesis without the support of my family and friends. I thank my mum Ena, my dad Michele, and my brother Giovanni for always being there for me and for supporting me throughout my outrageously nonlinear study path. I thank all of my friends who from close and afar have motivated and

Acknowledgments

encouraged me to complete this thesis. I want to thank in particular Lucia Raggetti for her crucial guidance, support, and advice. Last but most definitely not least, I thank my beloved Nicolò for always joyfully standing by my side as well as for helping me in countless ways—from deciphering my most illegible drafts, to cooking delicious *risotto*, to providing emotional support.

Data-sets and conventions

The primary data-set used for this research is the Jebel Qurma corpus (JQC) from north-eastern Jordan (see §1.2). The images of all JQC inscriptions referenced in this book can be accessed at: <https://doi.org/10.17026/dans-xcv-nwk8>.¹ In §3.2, Chapter 4, and Appendices A–B, the data-set mainly consists of texts from other collections. Inscriptions from editions other than the JQC have been accessed via the Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia (OCIANA) at <http://krcfm.orient.ox.ac.uk/fmi/webd/ociana>. For such corpora, I follow the *sigla* employed in OCIANA.

The *siglum* of texts from the JQC is QUR. The inscription number is a combination of site, panel, and text number, which are always in this order. For example, the text QUR 2.353.7/C was found in the site QUR 2 (which is the hill named Jebel Qurma itself), on a panel which was assigned the number 353, while the text was assigned the number 7 (since apparently there are several texts on the panel). Whenever I wish to refer to the whole panel rather than to individual carvings I simply leave out the inscription number, e.g. QUR 2.353 in the example just mentioned. Whenever a text is already known from a previous edition, it will be followed by ‘= [edition *siglum/sigla*]’, e.g. QUR 2.646.1/C = WH 3925, HYGQ 95.

Almost all texts *sigla* in this study are followed by ‘/[script]’. Thus, in QUR 2.353.7/C, the C means that the text is in the ‘common’ script. I use the following abbreviations: C = ‘common’ script; F = ‘fine’ script; SoS = SoS (i.e. ‘Southern Safaitic’) script; C/F = transitional between ‘common’ and ‘fine’; ThB = Thamudic B script; C/ThB = texts with both ‘common’ Safaitic and Thamudic B features; H = Hismaic script; ThD = Thamudic D script. If the script is likely one of these scripts but we do not have enough distinguishing features to be sure, the abbreviation is followed by a question mark, as in QUR 372.19.4/C?. If we have no clear hints, they are followed by ‘/U’, which stands for ‘Unclassified’. The only exceptions to this rule are the texts *sigla* in Chapter 4 and Appendix A, which are followed by ‘/[generation number]’ rather than by ‘/[script]’.

I follow the transliteration system of Safaitic graphemes employed in the OCIANA (see Al-Manaser and Macdonald 2017:xv). I also use some of OCIANA editorial conven-

¹In case the reader wishes to check the original photos of the texts which are here displayed with my tracing over them, at this link they can also find the photos without my tracings.

tions:² { } for a graph which is weathered or damaged and whose reading is uncertain; {{ }} for a graph which has been altered and turned into another; [] for a graph which is completely damaged and which had to be reconstructed from context; ---- when one or more graphs within a text are very damaged and can be neither read or reconstructed; < > for an editorial correction of a graph; < < > > for an editorial excision of a redundant graph; [[]] for a graph which has been either corrected or erased by the author of the text.

I do not employ a special notation system to distinguish the different graphematic and graphetic units, i.e. grapheme, basic shape, graph, and graph form.³ All units are represented by the transliteration in italic type, but whenever a precise distinction of the different levels is particularly relevant to the point being made, the meant unit will be made clear in the text. For instance, by referring explicitly to the graph/form/shape of *b*, it will be clear that the referent is either a graph or a graph form or a basic shape of the grapheme *b*.

All photographs appearing in this thesis which are not accompanied by credits are by default 'Jebel Qurma Archaeological Landscape Project'. The provenance of images which come from other sources is always acknowledged in the captions.

²Al-Manaser and Macdonald 2017:xii.

³For a definition of these terms, see §1.1.3.