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The Safaitic scripts: palaeography of an ancient nomadic writing culture

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Chapter 6

Writing Styles

The aim of this Chapter is to investigate the interplay of writing styles, graphetic variation, authorship, and family relationships. A study of writing styles can help us to better understand not only the nature of graphetic variation, but also certain important aspects of the transmission of Safaitic literacy. Stylistic variation can best be appreciated through a study of texts written by the same author. I have therefore selected 14 authors who left three or more texts – 8 ‘common’ script authors, 3 ‘fine’ script authors, and 3 SoS script authors – and have sub-divided the Chapter accordingly into three Sections. For each prolific author, I first give a list of the distinctive stylistic traits which are shared by his texts, and then I look at the differences occurring among them. At the end of each Section, in case inscriptions by family members of the prolific authors are attested, I also look at how certain features may have been kept or changed from one generation to another. I will limit this investigation to the close family, i.e. relatives at up to two generations of distance from the authors in question.

I define a writing style on the basis of the choices of graph forms, carving technique, and text layout within a given script. While most writing styles present features which are also found in other texts in the same script, the ways in which these features are chosen and combined vary from text to text. The writing style of some authors is characterised by salient distinctive features which are sometimes also shared with other members of the same family. However, there always seems to be a fluctuating component of variation from text to text by the same author and among texts by relatives—no inscription is identical to the other. Therefore, I mainly use the term ‘writing style’ to refer to the stylistic features of a single text which can be more or less distinctive and be shared to a greater or lesser extent with other texts by the same author or by relatives. In some cases, however, I will refer to the ‘writing style of an author’, by which I mean the set of features that are shared by his texts, be these features distinctive or not.

In most of the texts studied here, the genealogies of the authors, if present at all, only give the patronym. For the purposes of this investigation, this is problematic, as a name lacking genealogy or even followed by a patronym could correspond to

many different authors. Furthermore, it has already been noted by several scholars that, since Safaitic is consonantal, more than one PN could be hidden behind the same consonantal skeleton.³⁸³ Thus, we mostly cannot resort to genealogies alone to know whether we are dealing with texts by the same author or by family members. However, as remarked by King for Hismaic, other types of evidence make it more probable that the author in question is the same. She proposed the following clues: 1) similarities in script (i.e. what is here referred to as ‘writing style’); 2) similarities in drawings; 3) certain features of the distribution of the texts.³⁸⁴ The Safaitic inscriptions of the JQC present a very similar situation to the one described by King for Hismaic, and we will see that in many cases a study of stylistic features can in turn be employed to identify inscriptions by the same authors. The more similarities we observe in texts sharing the same name, the likelier it is that these texts were by the same author. Some of the prolific authors discussed here were also prolific artists. Thus, the similarities in their drawings will also be brought up as further evidence of their authorship. In any case, for each studied prolific author, all attested texts bearing his name and patronym have been considered, even the ones attested in other corpora, which have all been collected via the OCIANA database.

That being said, it should be stressed that, in all cases in which no sufficient genealogical information is supplied by the inscriptions, the identification of same-author texts should be treated as uncertain. The same applies to the identification of family relationships. Fortunately, some inscriptions indicate genealogies extending to the papponym or further. In such instances, it is highly probable that they were carved by the same person.

Despite the difficulties due to the shortness of most genealogies, it is striking that the various case studies examined in this Chapter show very similar patterns of stylistic consistency and variation. Such patterns can be synthesised as follows:

- Different texts by the same author share a relatively consistent set of features (these can be said to make up the author’s *writing style*);
- The variation among texts by the same author is generally limited to, e.g., differences in layout, technique and/or in a few graph forms, but I found no examples of same-author texts with radically divergent features;
- The writing styles of some authors come out as more peculiar/distinctive than others;
- Distinctive stylistic features, if present, were sometimes passed on from one generation to the next;

³⁸³See Corbett 2012:180 and the references he gives in there, n. 7.

³⁸⁴See King 1990a:§5.C.1, n. 66; also Corbett (2012:180) considered writing and rock art style as useful criteria to recognize authors in Hismaic, but he mainly confined his study to a spacial analysis of the distribution and position of texts by the same authors or family members on the same or nearby sites. In the JQC, I have observed same author texts or texts by family members were sometimes distributed in the same site or in sites close-by, but for the scopes of this study I will not undertake a distribution analysis.

- When texts by more than one son of a prolific author are attested, it appears that some sons followed the writing style of their father more than others;
- Even in those cases in which the writing styles of family members present clear differences, one can observe that the similarities still outnumber the differences.

The similarities in the writing styles of Safaitic prolific authors and members of their close family bear witness to the transmission of Safaitic literacy from generation to generation. It should moreover be remarked that, among our case studies, there are no instances of authors who carved some texts in one inventory (‘common’, ‘fine’, or SoS) and others in a different one. Likewise, we have no examples of close relatives writing in different scripts. Even in the particular case of the development of the ‘fine’ script from the ‘common’ one (see Chapter 4), it appears that palaeographic change unfolded rather gradually and across several generations. This is confirmed by the study of ‘fine’ prolific authors in this Chapter, as their writing styles do not differ significantly from the ones of close relatives at one to two generations of distance.

6.1 ‘Common’ script authors

6.1.1 *mrr bn ʾb*

This author left six inscriptions in the Jebel Qurma region³⁸⁵ and three more are attested in other corpora.³⁸⁶ The genealogies of QUR 64.117.2/C and WH 2873/C reach the papponym *ngy*, while KRS 2412/C has a remarkably long genealogy, showing seven generations.³⁸⁷ The rest of the texts indicate only the patronym, but present writing styles which are strikingly similar to the inscriptions with longer genealogies just mentioned. The writing style of this author features some distinctive characteristics:

- The graphs are finely chiselled and well spaced between each other;
- The two ʾs of the patronym are elongated, resulting as bigger in proportion to the other graphs;
- The *b*’s and/or the *m* of the author’s name are sometimes embellished through the use of either square or 90° graph forms, or a combination of both features.

There is, however, a certain extent of variation in the type of special features used from text to text as well as in which graphs take special features and which ones do not. For example, in QUR 974.38.1/C (Fig.6.1(a)) only the *b* of the patronym is turned by 90° and is squarish, while in QUR 186.187.2/C (Fig. 6.1(b)), none of the graphs is turned, but both *b*’s have square forms. In QUR 186.131.1/C, the two *b*’s and the

³⁸⁵QUR 64.117.2/C, 186.131.1/C, 186.162.1/C, 186.187.2/C, 974.19.3/C, 974.38.1/C.

³⁸⁶These are ASFF 340/C, KRS 2412/C, and WH 2873/C.

³⁸⁷*l mrr bn ʾb bn ngy bn ʾtḥ bn syd bn ʾsʿd bn ḏr.*



(a) QUR 974.38.1/C



(b) QUR 186.187.2/C

Figure 6.1: Inscriptions by Mrr son of ʾb

one *m* are all turned by 90°, while in QUR 186.162.1/C³⁸⁸ only the *b*'s of *bn* and of the patronym are square and turned by 90°, while the *m* of the author's name and the *b*'s of the statement are written in curved forms and not turned. Comparable features and variation are found also in the texts from outside the Jebel Qurma region. One can note that the commonly attested forms of the *lām auctoris* with a short hook and of the *r* as a straight line with slanted short arms are found consistently in all of his texts.

6.1.2 *fdy bn yṣḥḥ*

This combination of name and patronym is attested six times in the JQC,³⁸⁹ but it is not found in other Safaitic corpora. The most remarkable feature of his writing style is the consistent use of the form of the *f* with a big square middle undulation and much smaller side-undulations (see the examples in Fig. 6.2).

The technique used is mostly chiselling or, in one text, rubbed incision,³⁹⁰ always with a neat trait. His inscriptions are usually surrounded by lightly scratched car-touches.

Three texts by this author are associated to rock art: two of them (QUR 171.20.1/C and QUR 176.32.2/C, both shown in Fig. 6.2) refer to the associated drawings. Both images depict stylistically similar ibexes with exaggeratedly long horns.³⁹¹ In QUR

³⁸⁸It reads: *l mrr bn ʾb w wlh ʿ-ḥbb-h* 'By Mrr son of ʾb and he was distraught on account of his beloved'. This text is shown in Chapter 3, see Fig. 3.2(a).

³⁸⁹The inscriptions are: QUR 148.59.2/C, 171.20.1/C, 176.32.2/C, 186.34.5/C, 186.159.1/C, 202.4.1/C.

³⁹⁰QUR 202.4.1/C; the text reads *l fdy bn y{ṣ}ḥḥ h-sʿtrn b-h-ngd* 'By Fdy son of {Yṣḥḥ} are the two shelters at this high place'.

³⁹¹It appears that they were both effaced. In QUR 171.20.1/C both the text and the images of the ibexes have been damaged by hammering, while in QUR 176.32.2/C only the caption has been scratched out, while the rock art figures have been left intact. Both panels are moreover associated to other texts by different individuals. QUR 176.32.2/C is accompanied by the text of *ṣbwn bn rdwn* (QUR 176.32.1/C), carved with the same writing style, and, lightly scratched on the upper edge of the panel is also a text by *ṣbwn*'s brother, *zʿm bn rdwn* (QUR 176.32.3/C).



(a) QUR 171.20.1/C (right text)



(b) QUR 176.32.2/C (lower text)

Figure 6.2: Two rock art signatures by *Fdy* son of *Yṣḥḥ*



(a) QUR 786.1.1/C



(b) QUR 232.29.1/C

Figure 6.3: Inscriptions by *Fhrn* son of *Khln*

176.32.2/C, the two ibexes are in the context of a hunting scene.³⁹²

6.1.3 *fhrn bn khln*

Inscriptions by authors bearing this name and patronym have not been attested outside the Jebel Qurma region, where we have eight instances³⁹³ sharing a similar writing style. Most texts by this author are finely chiselled.³⁹⁴

fhrn's texts feature the use of elongated and compressed graph forms (see Fig. 6.3), especially in the form of the *h* – the angle of its fork being very acute and its shaft very long – and of the *r*, which appears as a very long vertical stroke with very short arms or,

³⁹²Although in Fig.6.2(b) only a bow and two arms are visible on the low-right part of the panel, the body of an archer is carved on the other side panel as if sneaking up on the ibex. On this peculiar type of exploitation of the boulder faces in hunting scenes, see Brusgaard 2019:127–132.

³⁹³QUR 2.62.1/C, 148.128.2/C, 176.50.1/C, 232.29.1/C, 256.12.2/C, 372.19.1/C, 786.19.1/C and 980.19.2/C. Except for QUR 980.19.1/C, which lacks a genealogy, they all indicate the patronym *khln*.

³⁹⁴QUR 232.29.1/C (Fig. 6.3(b)) is carved using rubbed incision but has a very neat trait. Only QUR 148.128.2/C and 980.19.1/C, hammered and incised respectively, are carved less elaborately.

in two cases (QUR 148.128.1/C and 176.50.1/C), as a very shallow curve. However, other graph forms, such as the *b* and the *k*, never appear as elongated. Further non-compressed graph forms include, e.g., the *w* and *h*, attested in QUR 372.19.1/C, the first being a circle and the second being square.

flrn left also drawings: three of his inscriptions are embedded in panels with rock art. Two inscriptions (QUR 980.19.2/C and 148.128.2/C) are rock art signatures and they both refer to the drawing of a camel, while QUR 256.12.2/C is on a panel with two images of camels and other texts. It does not refer to any image and it may have been added later.

6.1.4 *zby bn mlkt*

The JQC attests eight identical name-only texts reading *l zby bn mlkt* ‘By Zby son of Mlkt’.³⁹⁵ A further inscription by this author was found ca. 40 km to the north-east of Jebel Qurma.³⁹⁶

The most remarkable features recurring in all of *zby*’s inscriptions are idiosyncrasies in the style of the text layout:

- The loop of the *y*, rather than being positioned on top or at the bottom of the text height, as usual, always sits in the middle, with the stroke hanging either downwards or upwards;
- In some texts, the position of the other graphs of the name is also moved as to create a zigzag-like effect in the text flow. Thus, in QUR 2.194.1/C (Fig. 6.4(a)), the *lām auctoris* and the *z* are slightly raised in comparison to the *b*, while in QUR 210.18.1/C (Fig. 6.4(b)), the *lām auctoris* and the *b* are placed much below the *z* and *y*.

In the latter text, a part of the horizontal bar of the *t* is placed inside the curve of the previous *k*, but it is difficult to decide whether this is the result of insufficient space planning—as the graphs become increasingly smaller—or a stylistic choice. In any case, it should be noted that in QUR 202.3.2/C, by the same author, this same phenomenon occurs even though there is plenty of space on the panel. A feature unique to QUR 2.194.1/C (Fig. 6.4(a)) is the cartouche adorned with fourteen protruding curves.³⁹⁷

From the point of view of the graph forms, in the writing style of this author the *b*’s are mostly straight lines with two relatively long perpendicular or slightly open arms, and in some cases the back is slightly curving. All *l*’s are consistently hooked, and the legs of the *z* face upwards in all but one text (QUR 232.8.1/C). The author also made use of square forms, most consistently in the *b*, which is usually a vertical line with two

³⁹⁵These are: QUR 2.194.1/C, 2.708.1/C, 64.96.2/C, 64.245.1/C, 202.3.2/C, 210.18.1/C, 232.8.1/C, 442.17.1/C.

³⁹⁶TLWS 10.3/C.

³⁹⁷When geometric figures are added to Safaitic texts, their number is mostly seven and sometimes multiples of seven, although other numbers are also attested (see Brusgaard 2019:84–85). In some cases, these elements are incorporated in the cartouche, as in this text (see §5.6).



(a) QUR 2.194.1/C



(b) QUR 210.18.1/C

Figure 6.4: Two inscriptions by *Zby* son of *Mlkt*

horizontal arms, but less consistently also in other graphs, see, e.g., the square *m* in Fig. 6.4(a) vs the curved variant in Fig. 6.4(b). The *k* has the most variable forms from text to text, appearing either as curved or as square, with the tail protruding upwards, downwards, vertically or obliquely, although in most cases it has a vertical stance.

6.1.5 *hl'l bn 't'*

Four inscriptions by an author named *hl'l bn 't'* are found in the JQC,³⁹⁸ and three more approximately 35 km as the crow flies to the north-east of Jebel Qurma.³⁹⁹ Unlike the Jebel Qurma texts, these also indicate the papponym '*md*'.

In the writing style of this author, the graphs, especially the ones of the genealogy, are embellished by the following stylistic features, used either separately or in combination (although they never occur all together):

- Elongation, especially in the strokes of *h* and *'* in the author's name, this feature is particularly prominent in QUR 64.61.1/C (Fig. 6.5(a)) and ZMQJ 15/C (Fig. 6.5(d));
- The graphs are carved with very little space between each other, see all the examples in Fig. 6.5;
- The *b* is mostly square – see QUR 148.74.13/C (Fig. 6.5(b)), QUR 2.617.1/C (Fig. 6.5(c)), ZMQJ 15/C (Fig. 6.5(d));
- The graphs gaps are partially filled-in, e.g. QUR 64.61.1/C (Fig. 6.5(a)) and ZMQJ 15/C (Fig. 6.5(d)), where the spaces inside the gaps of the *h* near the point where the two lines cross have been partially filled in.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸QUR 2.202.1/C, 2.617.2/C (Fig. 6.5(c)), 64.61.1/C (Fig. 6.5(a)), and 148.74.13/C (Fig. 6.5(b)).

³⁹⁹HNSD 201/C, ZMQJ 8/C, and ZMQJ 15/C = HNSD 12/C (Fig. 6.5(d)).

⁴⁰⁰Moreover, in QUR 64.61.1/C (*l hl'l b{n} {'}t' {h-}dm{y}t* 'By Hl'l {son of} {'t'} is {this image}'), the forks of the second *'* and of the *h* have been filled in. These features are either embellishments



(a) QUR 64.61.1/C (large text on the left side of the panel)



(b) QUR 148.74.13/C



(c) QUR 2.617.1/C



(d) ZMQJ 15/C (Photo: OCIANA)

Figure 6.5: Inscriptions and drawings by Ḥl'l son of ʾt in QUR (a–c) and in ZMQJ (d)

- The use of ligatures, cf. the joining of the *h* to the following *l* and of the *ʾ* to the following *l* in QUR 64.61.1/C (Fig. 6.5(a)).⁴⁰¹

In QUR 148.74.13/C (Fig. 6.5(b))⁴⁰² the stroke of the *y* of *dmyt* curves and goes inside the preceding *m*, a stylistic feature which, as the other distinctive features by this author, finds a parallel in the style of the associated drawings, whose forms are also elongated and carved very close to each other. In QUR 148.74.13/C (Fig. 6.5(b)), two elongated ostriches to the right of the text are carved one above the other, their shapes lining up, as if they were two tiles of a mosaic. This particular effect is typical of the style of the inscriptions and rock art of this author.⁴⁰³ Just as the graphs by this author are well carved and often tiled together, similarly, in his drawings the various animals are carved with very little space between each other, and in some cases their silhouettes line up. This peculiar aesthetic feature can be observed in Fig. 6.5(a) (see the animals to the left of the camel), Fig. 6.5(b) (see the ibexes to the left of the camel and the two ostriches to its right), and Fig. 6.5(d) (see the thick mosaic of animals below the text).

6.1.6 *bdh bn rgl*

Three inscriptions indicating this name and patronym have been attested.⁴⁰⁴ Other inscriptions lacking a genealogy by an author named *bdh* may be ascribed to the same author for stylistic reasons. These cases, however, are very uncertain, especially because other authors named *bdh* but with a different patronym are attested in the JQC.⁴⁰⁵ The following set of features characterize *bdh bn rgl*’s writing style:

- His texts are chiselled with a thick instrument;
- The use of square graph forms, see the square *b*’s and *h*, and the *g* as a vertical rectangle;
- The loop of the *d* is only hinted at, being either a tiny filled-in half circle or a single chisel blow—probably because of the thickness of the instrument;
- The *r* is a vertical line with two short arms type.

or perhaps effacements; several hammering dots across the panel suggest the second option, but it is also possible that the joining of graphs and other features were original, while the damage may have been produced later. On similar ambiguities concerning the interpretation of ligatures, see the footnote below.

⁴⁰¹Note also that also the *b* and the *n* of *bn* ‘son of’ were joined through ligatures to form a single graphic sign, although these may have been malicious alterations, considering other types of effacement on the same panel (see the footnote above). On the difficulty of interpreting such elements, which could be either decorative or disruptive, see §5.3 and §7.2.

⁴⁰²*l hlʾl bn ʾtʿ h-dmyt* ‘By *hlʾl* son of *ʾtʿ* is the image’.

⁴⁰³See also head and horns of the second ibex from the top, which line up with feet, legs, and front belly of the above ibex, while his feet are placed right above the third ibex back.

⁴⁰⁴QUR 147.15.1/C (Fig. 6.6(a)), 148.139.1/C (see Fig. 3.1(b), Chapter 3), and 449.83.4/C (Fig. 6.6(b)).

⁴⁰⁵Cf. *bdh bn yʾtʿ* (QUR 146.18.1/C) and *bdh bn bny* (QUR 1020.10.1/C).



(a) QUR 147.15.1/C



(b) QUR 449.83.4/C

Figure 6.6: Two inscriptions by *Bdh* son of *Rgl*

These features can be seen in the two inscriptions shown in Fig. 6.6.⁴⁰⁶

The three inscriptions indicating both name and patronym are all embedded in panels with rock art.

Three texts without genealogies (QUR 2.192.4/C,⁴⁰⁷ 256.27.1/C, 428.9.1/C) may have been written by the same *bdh* because of the similarities in the writing style. As in the other texts by *bdh bn rgl*, both QUR 2.192.4/C and QUR 256.27.1/C are chiselled with a thick instrument, have square graph forms, and the *d*'s loop is only hinted at. QUR 428.9.1/C is less neatly carved, being directly hammered rather than chiselled, but it presents the same graph forms.

6.1.7 *db'n*

Although most of the Jebel Qurma inscriptions by an author bearing the name *db'n* have no genealogy,⁴⁰⁸ it is interesting to note that they all share a peculiar form of *d* as a rectangular grid with the branches extending only very shortly past the rectangle. Moreover, the *'* is always a dot except for one case, QUR 533.27.1/C (Fig. 6.7(b)), the only incised text, in which *'* is a small circle. The carving technique employed for all other texts seems of the same type of hammering. In QUR 360.38.1/C and QUR

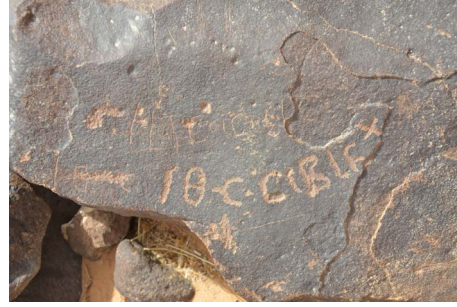
⁴⁰⁶QUR 147.15.1/C (Fig. 6.6(a)) *l {{b}}d{{h}} {{b}}n r{{g}}l* was subjected to different types of alterations, which could be the result of authorial choices, but which could equally be interpreted as vandalisations. The *lām auctoris* and the following *b* are joined by hammering, a vertical line closes the *b* by joining its two arms, the *b* and the *n* of *bn*, 'son of', are joined by a horizontal line, and the *g* of the patronym has a line crossing horizontally the rectangle, making it look similar to a rectangular *w*. These lines may represent a decorative feature made by the author himself, but since they compromise the legibility of the text this option seems less likely; on the ambiguities of additions and modifications to texts, see the discussion in §5.3 and §7.2. As to QUR 449.83.4/C (Fig. 6.6(b)) *l {{b}}dh bn rgl*, some graphs of the author's name have been partly effaced by limited hammering. Excluding the *b*, which because of some hammering in the middle looks similar to a *h*, this limited effacement does not compromise the legibility of the name. As I will show in §7.2, effaced texts are often still perfectly legible.

⁴⁰⁷ = WH 3923/C; this text is presented in §7.2, see Fig. 7.3(f).

⁴⁰⁸See QUR 2.351.1/C = WH 3921.1/C, QUR 12.62.4/C, QUR 64.215.1/C (Fig. 6.7(a)), QUR 458.10.2/C, and QUR 952.53.1/C = MKTF 6/C.



(a) QUR 64.215.1/C



(b) QUR 533.27.1/C (incised upper text)

Figure 6.7: Two inscriptions by *Ḍb'n*

533.27.1/C (Fig. 6.7(b)), *Ḍb'n* indicates also the patronym, but both inscriptions are too weathered to read it with certainty. Nevertheless, the first graph of the patronym, which is in both cases an *s*², has a very similar form in both texts, with the central undulation being more prominent than the upper and lower ones.

6.1.8 ‘*qrb bn 'ds*¹

Inscriptions bearing this name and patronym have only been found within the Jebel Qurma region, where this author left thirteen inscriptions. Three of these describe pastoral activities,⁴⁰⁹ in one text the author states that he was awaiting the rains during a drought,⁴¹⁰ three texts say that he was present in a place,⁴¹¹ one is a rock art signature (QUR 439.4.1/C), and the rest are name-only texts,⁴¹² one of them (QUR 186.261.1/C) with a remarkably long genealogy extending to the twelfth generation.⁴¹³ In five inscriptions,⁴¹⁴ ‘*qrb* wrote both patronym and papponym. Thus, together with the inscription with the long genealogy just mentioned, we have six texts for which it is fairly certain that the author was the same. The remaining seven inscriptions⁴¹⁵ indi-

⁴⁰⁹QUR 32.8.1/C (Fig. 6.8(b)), 974.4.1/C, 998.4.1/C (Fig. 6.8(a)).

⁴¹⁰QUR 2.665.1/C = KnSS 1.

⁴¹¹QUR 1051.2.1/C, 171.94.1/C, 439.45.1/C.

⁴¹²QUR 171.89.1/C, 186.261.1/C, 449.37.1/C, 739.21.2/C, 786.7.2/C.

⁴¹³QUR 186.261.1/C {l} {'}{q}{r}b bn 'ds¹ bn mlkt bn 's¹ bn yṣḥḥ bn 'f}{rt bn lhgn bn yt' bn gr bn nmrn bn rf't 'By} {qrb} son of 'ds¹ son of Mlkt son of 's¹ son of Yṣḥḥ son of {f}{rt} son of Lhgn son of Yt' son of Gr son of Nmrn son of Rf't'. There are also inscriptions by members of the same family of 'qrb with rather long genealogies. A text by his third cousin has the longest genealogy of the JQC, with eleven generations: QUR 20.31.1/C l ngs² bn kr{f}s¹ bn ḥrb bn 'qrb bn yṣḥḥ bn 'f{rt bn {l}h{g}n bn yt' bn gr bn nmrn bn r{f}'t bn zmhr w h rd{w} [']{w}{r} [m] 'wr 'By Ngs² son of {Krf's¹} son of Ḥrb son of 'qrb son of Yṣḥḥ son of 'f{rt} son of {Lhgn} son of Yt' son of Gr son of Nmrn son of {Rf't} son of Zmhr and O {Rdw}, {blind} {whosoever} would efface'. While the investigation of texts by his family members in §6.1.9.8 below is limited to the texts by members of the same close family, it should be noted that all texts by more distant relatives of 'qrb are in the 'common' script as well.

⁴¹⁴QUR 171.89.1/C, 2.665.1/C, 449.37.1/C, 739.21.2/C, 786.7.2/C.

⁴¹⁵QUR 32.8.1/C, 439.4.1/C, 439.45.1/C, 974.4.1/C, 998.4.1/C, 1051.2.1/C.

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(a) QUR 998.4.1/C



(b) QUR 32.8.1/C

Figure 6.8: Two twin inscriptions by ‘qrb son of ‘ds¹

cate only the patronym, but their writing style is similar to the one of the other texts, making it probable that all these texts were written by the same author.

In the writing style of this author, we do not have many distinctive features, but the same set of graph forms appears rather consistently in all of his texts, with the exception of some minor variation which seems to be mainly tied to differences in technique.⁴¹⁶

- The *lām auctoris* is a straight short line in all inscriptions where it is visible,⁴¹⁷ whereas other *l*'s, whenever present, are long straight lines;
- The *r* is a straight line with two short arms;
- The ‘ is a dot in hammered texts, but in the three incised texts it is a small circle;⁴¹⁸
- The *q* has either an empty or a filled-in circle in hammered texts, while in the incised texts it has a circle with the vertical line crossing it;
- The *d* has a small loop, which is always filled in hammered texts, and empty in incised ones.

The form of the *k* is the one which varies the most, independently of the technique used, the tail being placed in different places and positions (protruding diagonally or vertically, either from the arm or from the back). This kind of variation, however, is found in other authors as well.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁶I.e. hammering (employed in most texts) vs incision (used in QUR 2.665.1/C, 439.4.1/C and 449.37.1/C).

⁴¹⁷In some inscriptions (QUR 171.94.1/C, 186.261.1/C, 739.21.2/C, 1051.2.1/C), the part which has it is unfortunately too weathered to be sure. In QUR 1051.2.1/C [l] [ʿ][q]rb bn ‘ds¹ h-dr ‘{By} {‘qrb} son of ‘ds¹, at this place’, the first three graphs had to be reconstructed because the rock fragment which supposedly had them is missing.

⁴¹⁸This suggests that these two variants were connected to carving techniques, see §2.1.2.

⁴¹⁹Cf. *zby bn mlkt* in §6.1.4 above.

Beside sharing the same graph forms, all inscriptions by this author are accompanied by geometric symbols consisting of either one or more sets of seven dots or seven lines.⁴²⁰ Only QUR 2.665.1/C = KnSS 1 is not, but instead it is surrounded by a cartouche made of seven concentric scratched lines.⁴²¹

As shown in Fig.6.8, 'qrb left two twin inscriptions (QUR 32.8.1/C and QUR 998.4.1/C) reading *l 'qrb bn 'ds¹ w r'y* 'By 'qrb son of 'ds¹ and he pastured'. They are both carved with the same exact direct hammering technique and graph forms. They also exhibit a very similar layout, which follows the shape of the panel, and are associated to a set of seven dots. Only two differences can be noted: the *q* in QUR 998.4.1/C has an empty circle and the text is surrounded by a scratched cartouche, while in QUR 32.8.1/C the circle of *q* is filled-in and the text is not framed by a cartouche.

6.1.9 Family members

As we will see, the family members here identified are mainly sons, grandsons, in two cases brothers, and, only in the case of 'qrb bn 'ds¹, possibly the father. This scarcity of ancestors does not necessarily imply that the prolific authors' fathers/grandfathers could not write. Rather, it may be partly due to the fact that most 'common' texts have short genealogies, thus making the identification of texts by ancestors much harder.

6.1.9.1 mrr bn 'b's sons and brother

QUR 186.18.1/C (Fig. 6.9(a)), by *mrr*'s son 'zhm, has a long genealogy⁴²² and it shares several stylistic features with the texts by his father:

- The finely chiselled and well spaced graphs;
- The 's are elongated and bigger in proportion to the other graphs;
- The use of square and 90° forms, see especially the *b* in the papponym 'b, which usually presents both features, once in combination with elongation as well (see Fig. 6.9(a)).

A further stylistic device employed by this author but not present in the texts by *mrr* is the infilling of the upper forks of two 's. Moreover, the arms of the *b* of the first *bn* have been joined through a vertical line, although this could be an alteration as well.

An individual named 'H's¹ son of Mrr' left a rock art signature accompanying the drawing of a young she-camel (see Fig. 6.9(b)).⁴²³ Also in this text, the similarities with *mrr*'s writing style are striking, suggesting that he may have been his son: the graphs

⁴²⁰On these geometric motifs, see Brusgaard 2019:81–85.

⁴²¹Thus, the cartouche may have incorporated the graphic functions of the symbols; see §5.6.

⁴²²We can thus be sure about this identification, the text reads: *l {z}hm {b}n mrr bn 'b bn ngy bn 'th{f}* 'By {'zhm} {son of} Mrr son of 'b son of Ngy son of {'thf}'.

⁴²³QUR 974.23.1/C *l h's¹ bn mrr h-bkrt* 'By H's¹ son of Mrr is the young she-camel'. Note that both the camel figure and the author's name have been partially effaced.



Figure 6.9: Inscriptions by *Mrr*'s sons 'zhm (a) and *Hs*¹ (b)

are finely chiselled and well spaced, the ' is elongated, some graphs are square/turned by 90°.

A further possible son of *mrr* is 'bdy, who left several name-only texts reading *l 'bdy bn mrr* 'By 'bdy son of *Mrr*'.⁴²⁴ Of these, QUR 186.37.1/C is the one closest in style to *mrr*'s texts, as it is carved in thinly chiselled graphs. 'bdy employed square forms as well, although in a different way: unlike the *b* of *bn*, which takes the regular curvilinear form, the *b* of his name takes a square form and it is also elongated. In addition, the graphs of his name are carved more closely together than the rest of the text, whose graphs are well spaced as in the texts by *mrr*. Perhaps this was also a decorative device employed by this author in order to distinguish his name.⁴²⁵

Finally, QUR 449.77.3/C *l {h}{t} {b}{n} '{'b* may be by *mrr*'s brother on account of its style: the graphs are finely chiselled, the 's are elongated and bigger than the other graphs, the *h* and both *b*'s are turned by 90°, with the *b* of the patronym being also square.

6.1.9.2 *fdy*'s sons

Several texts by authors with the patronym *fdy* have been attested – 'rd,⁴²⁶ 'grd,⁴²⁷ and *zmhr*⁴²⁸ – but unfortunately none of them reaches the papponym.

The text by 'rd (QUR 137.74.7/C), however, exhibits the same form of the *f* with a pronounced angular back, which, if *fdy* was indeed his father, could be a feature he inherited from him. The other authors do not share this distinctive trait, the middle undulation being curving and smaller. They may have not followed their father's style or simply not be related to *fdy bn yshh*.

⁴²⁴QUR 64.14.2/C, 186.37.1/C, 186.132.1/C, 974.22.1/C, QUR 974.30.1/C.

⁴²⁵Cf. the writing style of *hl'l bn 't'* discussed in §6.1.5 above for a similar practice.

⁴²⁶QUR 137.74.7/C.

⁴²⁷QUR 2.557.1/C.

⁴²⁸QUR 137.81.1/C, 146.24.1/C, 148.66.3/C.



(a) QUR 176.94.1/C



(b) ZMQJ 4/C (Photo: OCIANA)

Figure 6.10: Inscriptions and drawings by Gd (a) and Gdy (b)

The texts by *zmhr*, on the other hand, are all associated to rock art: QUR 137.81.1/C is accompanied by the same motif of an ibex as his father's, although more roughly hammered than the elaborated chiselled figures by *fdy*; QUR 146.24.1/C is associated to a roughly hammered quadruped, with lines joining his bodily parts, possibly a later modification; QUR 148.66.3/C runs next to the image of a roughly executed camel. If *zmhr* was indeed the son of *fdy bn yshh*, it is striking that his carvings result as less elaborated than the ones by his father.

6.1.9.3 *fhrn bn khln*'s sons and grandson

Several inscriptions carved by sons of *fhrn* – *b'mh*, *bgdt*, *gd*, *gdy*, and *tmn* – are attested.

The son with the writing style which is closest to *fhrn*'s is *gd*, who left at least three texts (QUR 139.19.1/C, 176.94.1/C, and 1020.37.1/C). Like in the writing style of his father, he features elongated and compressed forms of *h* and *r*. QUR 139.19.1/C is a name-only text whose genealogy goes at least until the papponym *khln*,⁴²⁹ while the two other texts, QUR 176.94.1/C and QUR 1020.37.1/C, are associated to drawings, as are also some texts by *fhrn*. QUR 176.94.1/C (Fig. 6.10(a)) presents a genealogy reaching the papponym *khln*⁴³⁰ and it is associated to the drawing of a hunting scene with three goats and surrounded by a scratched cartouche.

Although in QUR 1020.37.1/C the genealogy only reaches the patronym,⁴³¹ the writing style is strikingly similar to the two other texts, and the drawing as well is stylistically very similar to the one associated to QUR 176.94.1/C.⁴³² The writing style

⁴²⁹QUR 139.19.1/C *l gd bn fhrn bn khln bn----*.

⁴³⁰The text reads: *l gd bn fhrn bn khln h-ʿ{ʿ}{n}{z}* 'By Gd son of Fhrn son of Khln are the {she-goats}'.

⁴³¹QUR 1020.37.1/C *l gd bn fhr{n} {h-ʿ}{ʿ}{n}{z}* 'By Gd son of {Fhrn} are {the she-goats}'. The caption was effaced, perhaps by the author of QUR 1020.37.4/C, who may have added his text later: QUR 1020.37.4/C *{l} {.j}h{l} {b}n ʿd{n}* '{By}... {son of} ʿd{n}'. Note that he used the line of a goat neck as shaft of the *d*, which is incorporated in the drawing. There is a conglomerate of inscriptions and effaced inscriptions which makes the reading of the first part of the text particularly difficult.

⁴³²The main difference with the other rock art is that the bodies of the goats have not been completely

differs mainly in the form of the *g* in the author's name, which is an irregular circle, while in the other texts it is a rectangle. This text and rock art by *gd* are associated to an identical text and similar drawing by the brother *bgdt*,⁴³³ in which the graphs of patronym *fhrn* and of the caption are much more elongated and compressed than the ones of the name. The writing style, especially in this part of the text, is very similar to the one of his brother and father, with compressed and elongated *h* and *r*. *bgdt* left at least two other texts (QUR 9.32.1/C and QUR 148.25.3/C), both chiselled and surrounded by a roughly hammered cartouche, in which the graph forms of the patronym are not as elongated as in the incised one.

A text associated to the rock art of a hunting scene by a person named *gdy bn fhrn bn khln* (see Fig.6.10(b)) was attested ca. 35 km as the crow flies to the north-east of Jebel Qurma.⁴³⁴ The text presents exactly the same graph forms and compressed style as the text by *gd*.⁴³⁵ Another point in common with *gd* is the rock art style, since the body of the hunted lion and the shield of a hunter are filled with stripes, like the two goats in QUR 1020.37.1/C.

Two texts by the son *b'mh* were found: QUR 372.43.3/C,⁴³⁶ scratched on the side of a panel covered with hammered texts, and QUR 956.75.4/C,⁴³⁷ an incised text curving above the image of a hunting scene. The style with which the patronym *fhrn* is written is the same as all other texts by the brothers discussed above and *fhrn* himself, but their trait is less neat than the texts by his father and the brothers discussed above. *b'mh*'s son (*fhrn*'s grandchild), *k'mh* left two texts (QUR 867.1.1/C and 956.39.2/C).⁴³⁸ They are directly hammered and do not present any of the stylistic features of the rest of the family.

Finally, three texts by another son of *fhrn*, named *tmn*, were found: QUR 913.2.1/C,⁴³⁹ QUR 980.17.1/C,⁴⁴⁰ and QUR 1008.5.2/C.⁴⁴¹ In both the text with a 4 generations filled in, but rather one is empty and the other two are filled with stripes, which are probably decorative (see Brusgaard 2019:§5.3.3).

⁴³³QUR 1020.37.2/C *l bgdt bn fhrn h-ʿnz* 'By Bgdt son of Fhrn are the she-goats'.

⁴³⁴ZMQJ 4/C *l gdy bn fhrn bn khln h-ḥyt* 'By Gdy son of Fhrn son of Khln are the animals'.

⁴³⁵One may wonder whether this text was by *gd* himself, and the final *y* which distinguishes it was perhaps an hypocoristic element not spelled in the other texts. Interestingly, the *y* is squeezed in between the preceding *d* and the following *y*, and it may have been added later.

⁴³⁶*l b{ʿ}{m}{h} bn f{h}{r}{n}* 'By {B'mh} son of {Fhrn}'.

⁴³⁷*l b'mh bn fhr{n} bn {k}hln bn yṣḥh w {ʿ}{ʿ}{h}{r}{h}{m}* 'By B'mh son of {Fhrn} son of {Khln} son of Yṣḥh and...'

⁴³⁸They read QUR 956.39.2/C *l k'mh bn b'mh bn fhrn* and QUR 867.1.1/C *l k'mh b b'mh b fhrn b kh{l}{n}*. Note that in the first text 'son of' in the genealogy is written *bn*, as usual, while in the second text it is consistently spelled *b* with assimilation (?) of *n*; the omission of the *n* could represent a stylistic choice by the author rather than a linguistic reality. It is also possible that in the dialect of the author the assimilation already took place, but in one of the two inscriptions he opted for an archaic spelling.

⁴³⁹*l tmn bn [[b]][[n]] fhrn* 'By Tmn son of Fhrn'. Note the dittography of *bn*, the second *bn* seems to have been slightly hammered over, perhaps by the author himself (see 'Corrective effacement' in Chapter 7). Parts of the rock edges have been roughly hammered and reused as natural cartouche. The text is associated to seven dots.

⁴⁴⁰*l tmn bn fhrn bn khln{n} bn {y}{ṣ}{h}{h}{h}* 'By Tmn son of Fhrn son of {Khln} son of {Yṣḥh}'. It runs next to the image of a camel

⁴⁴¹*l tmn bn f<L>hrrn* 'By Tmn son of Fhrn'. The text is associated to the symbol of seven circles clustering

genealogy (QUR 980.17.1/C) and in the texts which only give the patronym, in comparison to the other texts by his family members, *tmn*'s texts appear as executed more roughly and with the least neat trait. In addition, none of the graph forms are as stylistically distinctive as in the texts by his father and some of his brothers.

6.1.9.4 *zby bn mlkt*'s sons

Texts by three sons of *zby* – *hnbt*, *gg*, and *rt'l* – have been found, all showing the typical stylistic characteristics featuring in the texts by their father. Three texts are only known from drawings,⁴⁴² but in all of them one can still observe the same distinctive features.

One text by the son *rt'l*⁴⁴³ shows both patronym and papponym. The patronym *zby* is carved in the same style of the texts by his father, with the zigzag layout, the loop of the *y* being set in the middle, the legs of the *z* facing upwards. In addition, the *l*'s are hooked and the *b*'s square, as in *zby*'s texts.

Two texts by *Gg* son of *Zby*⁴⁴⁴ likewise exhibit a slightly zigzag layout in the name of the father, although not as marked as in the texts by the father. In QUR 256.3.5/C one can also see the squarish *b*'s and the *z* with the legs facing upwards, characteristic of *zby*'s writing style.

Four texts by *hnbt* were attested: QUR 640.8.1/C,⁴⁴⁵ with a 5 generations genealogy, AbaNS 968/C,⁴⁴⁶ with the genealogy reaching the papponym, and the two texts QUR 171.109.2/C and AbaNS 495/C⁴⁴⁷ both indicating only the patronym. Of these, only AbaNS 968/C and AbaNS 495/C clearly exhibit the distinctive zig-zag layout of the graphs of the patronym as found in the texts by the father. The other texts show it to a certain extent as well, although less marked.

6.1.9.5 *hl'l bn 't's son (?) and grandson (?)*

A person named *mr't bn hl'l*, possibly *hl'l*'s son, left five texts in the Jebel Qurma region⁴⁴⁸ and five others elsewhere.⁴⁴⁹

While his texts are mostly neatly chiselled and elaborated, as the texts by *hl'l*, his writing style does not share the distinctive stylistic features of the texts by *hl'l*. One exception is perhaps the occasional use of a form of the ' with an exaggeratedly long stroke – see, e.g., ASFF 417/C (Fig. 6.11(b)) – which distinguishes also the texts by his father.

together from which a line comes out.

⁴⁴²These are: AbaNS 495/C and AbaNS 968/C, by *hnbt*, and AAEK 247/C, by *rt'l*.

⁴⁴³AAEK 247/C *l rt'l bn zby bn mlkt* 'By *Rt'l* son of *Zby* son of *Mlkt*'.

⁴⁴⁴QUR 256.3.5/C *l gg bn zby*; QUR 640.8.2/C *l gg bn {{z}}{{b}}y*.

⁴⁴⁵QUR 640.8.1/C *l hnbt bn zby bn m[l]kt bn s²k bn gg*.

⁴⁴⁶AbaNS 968/C *l hnbt bn zby bn mlkt*.

⁴⁴⁷QUR 171.109.2/C *l hnbt bn zby*; AbaNS 495/C *l hnbt bn zby h-bkrt* 'By *Hnbt* son of *Zby* is the young she-camel'.

⁴⁴⁸QUR 27.6.2/C, 176.47.1/C, 911.2.1/C, 931.1.1/C, 974.43.1/C.

⁴⁴⁹ASFF 417/C, CEDS 357/C, CEDS 446/C, HaNSB 80/C, 346/C.



(a) QUR 974.43.1/C



(b) ASFF 417/C (Photo: OCIANA)

Figure 6.11: Two inscriptions by Mr't son of Hl'l

Like *hl'l*, *mr't* carved also images: four of his Jebel Qurma texts are accompanied by drawings (see, e.g., Fig. 6.11(a)).⁴⁵⁰ But his drawings always consist of one to maximum three animal figures, and there is no trace of the 'mosaic' style of his father. ZSSH 39/C,⁴⁵¹ by *hl'l*'s grandson *mnhr*, is incised with an irregular trait. Similarly to some texts by his father, the only prominent feature he shares with *hl'l* is the use of a form of the ' with a very long stroke, resulting as much bigger than the other graphs of the text.

6.1.9.6 *bdh bn rgl*'s sons/grandsons (?)

Several inscriptions by authors who were possibly descendants of *bdh* were found. However, none of them presents the whole range of distinctive stylistic features characterising the texts by *bdh*. In general, the texts appear as less elaborated both technically and stylistically. Three inscriptions by a *h's¹ bn bdh*, possibly the son of *bdh bn rgl*, are attested: QUR 7.12.1/C,⁴⁵² QUR 147.9.2/C, and QUR 137.40.1/C. While they all indicate only the patronym, the possibility of such relationship is shown by the long genealogy of an inscription by the great grandson *s²rb*: HaNS 706/C *l s²rb bn gnt bn h's¹ bn bdh bn rgl*. The only features in common with *bdh*'s writing style are the use of a form of the *d* with a very small filled-in loop and the occasional use of square graph forms.

The second text is a rock art signature associated to an inscription by *s²nf* (QUR 147.9.1/C) running parallel to it. We know from another text that *s²nf* was possibly *h's¹*'s son, i.e. the grandson of *bdh* (see below). The associated rock art is an image of a

⁴⁵⁰The texts are: QUR 27.6.2/C *l mr't bn hl'l h-r* 'By Mr't son of Hl'l is the ass'; QUR 176.47.1/C *l mr't bn hl'l h-nqtn* 'By Mr't son of Hl'l are the two she-camels'; QUR 911.2.1/C *l mr't bn hl'l h-nqt* 'By Mr't son of Hl'l is the she-camel'; QUR 974.43.1/C (Fig. 6.11(a)) *l mr't bn hl'l h-zbyn* 'By Mr't son of Hl'l are the gazelles'.

⁴⁵¹ = ASFF 307 = QHGHA 14. It reads: *l mnhr bn mr't bn hl'l bn 't w tẓr h-s¹my mḍ/t----* 'By Mhr son of Mr't son of Hl'l son of 't and he awaited the rains...'.
⁴⁵² *l h's¹ bn bdh w r'y hl* 'By H's¹ son of Bdh and he was on the look-out while camping'.

camel whose body has been decorated by partial infilling and lines;⁴⁵³ an animal with similar stylistic features is found on the same panel as a text by *bdh* (QUR 148.139.1/C; see Fig.3.1(b) in Chapter 3). If *bdh* himself produced the latter rock art,⁴⁵⁴ this particular style may have been inherited by his son *h's¹*, who decided to reproduce it on this figure together with his son. In the third text, the *d* is joined to the following *h* by rough hammering. It is associated to an inscription without genealogy by *bdy* (QUR 137.40.2/C <<>>l *bd{y}*), in which the *d* is joined to the following *y* by a ligature, and the loop of the *y* is bending backwards in the direction of the *d*, although it is not touching it. An inscription by an *bdy bn bdh* has also been attested on a panel next to an inscription by *hgg bn bdh*, no doubt another son of *bdh*.⁴⁵⁵ Thus, contextually *bdy* is likely to be the brother of *h's¹*. While family relationships are often implicit in associated inscriptions, we know from other cases that the practice of writing inscriptions together as members of the same family was common (see §5.7).

Some texts by what are possibly grandsons of *bdh* are also attested. One is QUR 147.9.1/C l *s²nf*, associated to a text by *h's¹ bn bdh* (see above). Then we have QUR 171.79.1/C l *s²nf bn h's¹* and QUR 1028.6.1/C,⁴⁵⁶ in which the upper fork of *'* is pronouncedly slanted. This feature is attested, although in a less pronounced way, also in two texts by the father *h's¹* (QUR 137.40.1/C and 147.9.2/C). The panel QUR 533.25/C, with inscriptions by *s²nf* and his brothers, is shown and discussed in §5.7 (see Fig.5.11(d)).

6.1.9.7 *db'n's* son

The hammered text QUR 39.7.1/C (l *hb'l bn db{n}* 'By *Hb'l* son of {*Db'n*}') may have been written by the son of *db'n*, considering that the patronym *db'n* is carved using the same writing style. It presents the distinctive form of the *d* as a rectangular grid with the branches extending only very shortly past the rectangle, which is typical of *db'n's* texts, as well as the dot form of the *'*, which is found in all hammered texts by him.

6.1.9.8 '*qrb bn 'ds¹*'s father and brother

On the panel QUR 439.29/C there are two associated texts, one by a person named '*ds¹* son of *Mlkt*',⁴⁵⁷ while the other is by '*Hwf* son of '*ds¹*'.⁴⁵⁸ Both inscriptions indicate only the patronym, but because they are associated, it is likely that they were carved on the same occasion by father and son. It is possible that the first text is by '*qrb*'s father '*ds¹*', while the other is by his brother *hwf*, as the texts have the same graph forms as '*qrb*'s – cf. the *lām auctoris* as a straight short line, the *r* as a straight line with two short arms, the *'* as a dot, the *d* with a small filled-in loop – and, as '*qrb*'s texts, they are also

⁴⁵³See Brusgaard 2019:§5.3.3 for a discussion of patterned figures in the JQC.

⁴⁵⁴As can be seen from the figure, there are other texts on the same panel. Thus, the author could be somebody else.

⁴⁵⁵These are QUR 122.1.2/C and QUR 122.1.6/C.

⁴⁵⁶l *s²nf bn h's¹ bn bdh w tgr h-{.}r{g/{'}}* 'By *S²nf* son of *H's¹* son of *Bdh* and he lay in wait...'

⁴⁵⁷QUR 439.29.1/C l '*ds¹ bn mlkt h-dr* 'By '*ds¹* son of *Mlkt* at this place'.

⁴⁵⁸QUR 439.29.2/C l *hwf bn 'ds¹* 'By *Hwf* son of '*ds¹*'.

associated to a set of seven dots. Two further inscriptions by *hwf* indicating only the patronym *ds¹* were found,⁴⁵⁹ and they present the same graph forms found in *qrb*'s texts as well. The first text is incised – hence the *ʿ* is a small circle rather than a dot, as it also appears in *qrb*'s incised texts – and associated to seven dots. It is found on another face of the same rock as an inscription by *qrb* (QUR 739.21.2/C). Its location further supports the idea that *hwf* was *qrb*'s brother.

6.2 'Fine' script authors

6.2.1 *mgd bn zd*

mgd is a 14th generation *df*-ite⁴⁶⁰ who left at least five texts.⁴⁶¹ Excluding one text from the Jebel Qurma region, all other instances are found in more northern areas, between north-eastern Jordan and southern Syria. *mgd*'s four longest texts (QUR 176.24.1/F,⁴⁶² SIJ 823/F,⁴⁶³ BRenv.G 1/F⁴⁶⁴ and WH 947/F⁴⁶⁵) run boustrophedon and are incised in small graphs.⁴⁶⁶ In *mgd*'s writing style, the graph forms are typical of the 'late 'fine' stage',⁴⁶⁷ see the consistently hooked *r* and the *z* with two slanted dashes in both texts

⁴⁵⁹QUR 739.21.6/C *l hwf bn ds¹ h---* 'By Hwf son of *ds¹...*' and QUR 775.1.3/C *l hwf bn ds¹* 'By Hwf son of *ds¹*'.

⁴⁶⁰For his position in the *df*'s lineage-tree, see Fig. A.18 in Appendix A.

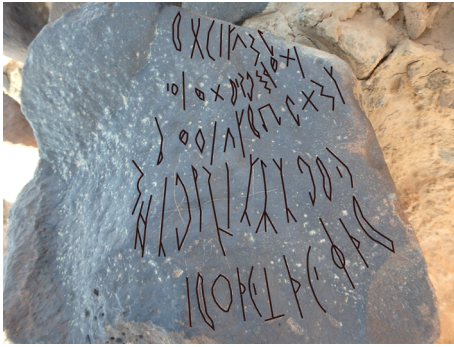
⁴⁶¹In QUR 176.24.1/F, SIJ 823/F, BRenv.G 1/F, BS 639/F, and WH 947/F (only known from a tracing), the genealogies are all long enough – i.e. at least until the papponym but in most texts they go further up – to consider these texts as definitely by the same Mgd (NB: BS 639/F was collected via OCIANA in 2019, but now (December 2021) it is not to be found in the OCIANA anymore). In addition, there is one hammered text (the other texts just mentioned are all incised) which indicates only the patronym; it reads: BES15 946/F? *l mgd bn zd* 'By Mgd son of Zd'. While this short text does not present sufficient diagnostics to classify it as 'fine' in the first place, the *m* and *b* seem relatively compressed considering the use of hammering, and the *g* of the name of the author is a big circle, as in other texts by this author (see below).

⁴⁶²It reads: *l mgd bn zd bn qdm bn mr' d 'l gyr h-dfy w gls¹ h-mzrt f h lt w ds²r gnm¹ w l'n m hbl h-s¹fr* 'By Mgd son of Zd son of Qdm son of Mr' of the people of Gyr, the Df-ite, and he halted at this look-out point so, O Lt and Ds²r, grant spoil and curse whosoever would obscure this writing!'. Note that the *'l gyr* is probably a branch of the Df lineage named after *mgd*'s ancestor *gyr bn rft bn ws²yt bn df* (see §A.1.1).

⁴⁶³It reads: *l mgd bn zd bn qdm bn mr' d 'l df w qss b'd df s¹nt mrd dmsy {ʿ}l---mn w 's¹lm f {ʿ}...* 'By Mgd son of Zd son of Qdm son of Mr' of the lineage of Df and he patrolled on behalf of the Df, the year Dmsy rebelled against...but he surrendered (?), so...'.
⁴⁶⁴The OCIANA reads: *l mg{d} bn zd bn qdm bn mr' bn znn¹ {w} wgd s¹fr 'm-h {b}l{y} w wqr---s¹c---ydhm{ʿ}yh{f}t'mr'nfh{r}bn'nn* 'By Mgd son of Zd son of Qdm son of Mr' son of Znn¹ and he found the inscription of his grandfather...'.
⁴⁶⁵The text reads: *l mgd bn zd bn qdm bn mr' w nqr h-s²n' f h lt fsy w s¹lm w gnm¹ l-d d'y gn* 'By Mgd son of Zd son of Qdm son of Mr' and he was on the look-out for the enemy, so, O Lt, [grant] deliverance and security and booty to whosoever...' (see OCIANA).

⁴⁶⁶The graphs of the text from southern Syria (BRenv.G 1/F) are remarkably small—they are on average around 1 cm high. The picture of this text is blurred. The last part of the text is of difficult reading, but the word *'m* in *wgd s¹fr* *'m-h* probably refers to his great great grandfather (BRenv.G 2/C *l znn¹ bn mr'*), whose inscription is carved right below on the same panel. Its graph forms are visibly less compressed than *mgd*'s text, and the *r* takes the 'common' form of a straight line with two short arms; see §4.1 on the development of the 'fine' script from the 'common' script.

⁴⁶⁷For a definition of the 'late 'fine' stage', see §4.1.3.



(a) QUR 176.24.1/F



(b) SIJ 823/F (Photo: OCIANA)

Figure 6.12: Inscriptions by Mgd son of Zd

where it occurs.⁴⁶⁸ A distinctive feature is that the *g* of the author's name *mgd* is bigger and, in two texts, QUR 176.24.1/F and SIJ 823/F (see Fig. 6.12), more rounded than the average 'fine' *g*, perhaps as a way to emphasize the name of the author.⁴⁶⁹ In the other texts, however, *mgd*'s *g* appears as a big-sized rhomboid.

A further distinctive trait found in both QUR 176.24.1/F and SIJ 823/F is the *d* with a very small hook protruding from its shaft and forming an acute angle. This is remarkable, as hooked *d*'s are otherwise a typical feature of the SoS script.

Two idiosyncrasies are found exclusively in QUR 176.24.1/F: 1) in the *f* of the word *df*, the central angle is a curve, but the usual zigzag form is also attested in the other instances of the *f* in the same text as well as in the other texts by him; 2) a slanted dash protrudes from the lower part of the stroke in *gyr*, but the *g* in the same text and the other *g*'s in other texts do not have it. Moreover, in this text, the name, genealogy and affiliations of the authors are written in bigger graphs than the rest of the text.

6.2.2 š'd bn g̃t

This author is a 16th generation 'w̃d-ite⁴⁷⁰ who left at least four texts in the Harrah. Apart from one text found in the Jebel Qurma region (QUR 148.76.3/F⁴⁷¹) three texts

⁴⁶⁸QUR 176.24.1/F and WH 947/F.

⁴⁶⁹Note that the other *g* attested in QUR 176.24.1/F in the verb *gls*¹ 'he halted' is in fact a small rhomboid, which is the typical 'fine' graph form.

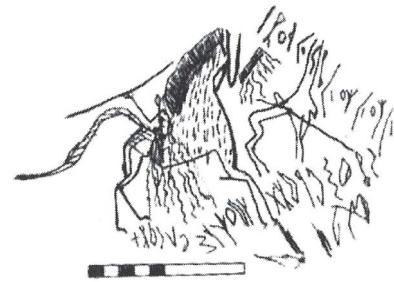
⁴⁷⁰His position in the tree is showed by the overlapping genealogies of, e.g., š'd's text QUR 148.76.3/F {š}'d bn {g̃}t bn 'd bn {'d} bn g̃t and SESP.D 5/F, by his brother, going back to the eponymous ancestor: rmyn bn g̃t bn 'd bn 'd bn g̃t bn wdm bn s'r bn šbh bn q<>>s<>>m bn s'by bn {'b}d bn hngs² bn whbn bn qmr bn r{t}{'} bn 'w̃d (see OCIANA).

⁴⁷¹It reads: l {š}'d bn {g̃}t bn 'd bn {'d} bn g̃t d 'l 'w̃d w {r}{d}{f}{t}{h}m {w} {'}{f}— 'By {š}'d son of {G̃t} son of 'd son of {'d} son of G̃t of the lineage of {'w̃d} and...'. The inscription superimposes another incised text and is carved above the drawing of a camel (see Fig.6.13(a)). The camel is most probably not related to the text, as another text in the 'common' script referring to it runs vertically downwards to its right: QUR 148.75.1/C l hlb bn khnt h-gml 'By Hlb son of Khnt is the camel'. Moreover, the image of the camel – its figure being completely filled in by chiselling and with an exaggerated hump and unnaturally

6. Writing Styles



(a) QUR 148.76.3/F



(b) AbaNS 286/F

Figure 6.13: Inscriptions by Š'd son of Ġt

were found much further north in southern Syria (C 2769/F, LP 244/F) and one in north-eastern Jordan (AbaNS 286/F), in an area very close to the border with Syria. The most consistent features of his writing style are:

- The use of highly compressed graph forms;
- The pointed *b* and *r*;
- The *d* with the loop facing backwards;
- The *ġ* with its head being angled and bigger than the straight line to which it is attached.

C 2769/F⁴⁷² is only known from not very precise drawings. We have only tracings also of AbaNS 286/F (Fig. 6.13(b)), a text which curves around a very elaborated drawing of a horseman with a spear,⁴⁷³ and of LP 244/F.⁴⁷⁴ The tracings of the latter two texts seem quite accurate and both show all the stylistic features typical of this author listed above.

straight neck – is typical of ‘common’ camels found in the Jebel Qurma region, but very different from the style of ‘fine’ camels, which are usually incised and exhibit more naturalistic proportions (see Brusgaard 2019:118–119).

⁴⁷² *l š' d bn ġt bn ['] d bn 'd w wgd s'f[r] {} b-h w 'm-h f bk{y} f h lt s'lm l-d s'r* ‘By {Š'd} son of {Ġt} son of {d} son of d and he found {the inscription of} his {father} and his grandfather and so {he wept} and so O Lt [grant] security to whoever leaves [the inscription] intact’ (reading and translation: OCIANA).

⁴⁷³ The text reads: *l š' d bn ġt bn 'd bn 'd bn ġt w s'ry m-ħ-h m'd h-frs' b-m't* ‘By Š'd son of Ġt son of d son of d son of Ġt and he bought the horse from his brother M'd with a hundred’ (reading and translation: OCIANA).

⁴⁷⁴ *l š' d bn ġt bn 'd bn 'd bn ġt bn wdm bn s'r bn šbh bn qs'm bn gby bn 'bd* ‘By Š'd son of Ġt son of d son of d son of Ġt son of Wdm son of S'r son of Šbh son of Qs'm son of Gby son of 'bd’ (see OCIANA).



(a) QUR 2.336.1/F



(b) QUR 2.490.1/F


Figure 6.14: Inscriptions by *Ms¹k* son of *ʿnʿm*

6.2.3 *ms¹k bn ʿnʿm*

The author *ms¹k bn ʿnʿm*, of the social group of *qs²m*,⁴⁷⁵ left two texts on top of Jebel Qurma (QUR 2.336.1/F, 2.490.1/F; Fig.6.14), while a third was found in southern Syria, at Al-ʿIsāwī (Is.K 291/F). In QUR 2.336.1/F, the author indicates only the patronym, but in both QUR 2.490.1/F and Is.K 291/F the genealogies extend until the papponym. In any case, all three texts affiliate to the *ʿl qs²m*.

Both QUR 2.490.1/F⁴⁷⁶ (Fig. 6.14(b)) and Is.K 291/F⁴⁷⁷ are incised with a fine point,⁴⁷⁸ while QUR 2.336.1/F,⁴⁷⁹ (Fig. 6.14(a)) is directly hammered. The texts by this author, although they all share 'fine' features, they also present a certain extent of variation in the graph forms.

A trait shared by both Jebel Qurma texts is the *ḏ* with a slanting hook attached to its tail, which is usually a distinctive trait of the SoS script.⁴⁸⁰ The *ḏ* of Is.K 291/F is damaged by hammering and thus it is not possible to see if it is hooked or not. A remarkable feature of QUR 2.490.1/F is the use of a curved *f* instead of the 'fine' zigzag form.

In Is.K 291/F, the *ṭ* has an extra horizontal line, unlike the *ṭ* in QUR 2.490.1/F.⁴⁸¹ The *z*, attested only in this text, takes a peculiar form  which may be interpreted as a stylised, compressed form of the 'common' form of the *z* with converging arms;⁴⁸² the

⁴⁷⁵Note that *qs²m* may have been a sub-group of *ʿwḏ* (see §B.2).

⁴⁷⁶*l ms¹k bn ʿnʿm bn {s¹}r ḏ ʿl qs²m w mty f h s²hqm ḡnmt* 'By *Ms¹k* son of *ʿnʿm* son of {*S¹r*} of the people of *Qs²m* and he journeyed so, O *S²hqm*, may there be spoil!'.
⁴⁷⁷*l ms¹k bn ʿnʿm bn {s¹}r ḏ ʿl qs²m w nṣr s¹nt ngy mlk slt{n}* 'By *Ms¹k* son of *ʿnʿm* son of {*S¹r*}, of the people of *Qs²m*, and he stood guard, the year *ngy mlk slt{n}*'.

⁴⁷⁸QUR 2.490.1/F is carved using the rare rocking-blade technique; see §5.1.3.1 for a more detailed discussion and pictures of this type of carving technique.

⁴⁷⁹*l ms¹k bn ʿnʿm ḏ ʿl {q}{s²}m* 'By *Ms¹k* son of *ʿnʿm* of the people of {*Qs²m*}'.
⁴⁸⁰This form is also found in two texts by the 'fine' script author *mgd bn zd* (see above).
⁴⁸¹The feature of adding an extra line is attested in some 'common' script texts as well, both in the *ṭ* and the *ḏ* (see 'ḏ' and 'ṭ' in Chapter 2).
⁴⁸²See 'z' in Chapter 2.

arms face backwards and only one of the two arms is closed.⁴⁸³

In QUR 2.336.1/F, which is hammered, although one finds the typical ‘fine’ forms of the *k* and of the *b* as a shallow curve, the other graphs have less compressed forms. The last graphs are very roughly outlined and have an irregular trait. The circle of the *q*, for example, is only roughly hinted at. Moreover, the *s*¹ of the author’s name does not have a vertical stance, a typically ‘fine’ stylistic trait which is on the other hand found in the incised texts, but rather a form more similar to the ‘common’ one.⁴⁸⁴

6.2.4 Family members

The first two ‘fine’ script authors discussed above – *mgd bn zd*, of the lineage of *df*, and *ṣḏ bn ḡt*, of the lineage of *wḏ* – have relatively long genealogies. This allows us to identify with certainty relatives several generations removed from them.

6.2.4.1 *mgd bn zd*’s brother, father, grandfather and uncle

Several texts by close relatives of *mgd* are attested in north-eastern Jordan, all from regions much further north than Jebel Qurma.⁴⁸⁵ A text by *mgd*’s brother *mr*^ʿ (SIJ 834/F⁴⁸⁶) was found at Tell al-‘Abd, which is the same site as one of the texts by *mgd* (SIJ 823/F). The text is only known from a tracing but nevertheless with clear ‘late ‘fine’ features, just like *mgd*’s writing style – see the hooked *r*’s and the *z* with slanted dashes protruding from its legs. One text by the father *zd* (BES15 623/F) is known. It seems also ‘late ‘fine’ and runs boustrophedon, incised in very big graphs—the ones of the name are around 10 cm high. Unlike the texts by *mgd* and his brother *mr*^ʿ, however, the *z* is simply an open rectangle without slanted dashes. This difference could be either stylistic or due to the fact that the text, which belongs to an earlier generation, reflects an earlier stage of development of the script.⁴⁸⁷

In the texts by *mgd*’s grandfather *qdm*,⁴⁸⁸ the *r*’s are consistently hooked, but the

⁴⁸³ A similar graph form, although with both arms converging, is attested in NEH 1, discussed in Norris 2020:365–368.

⁴⁸⁴ However, in other corpora there are cases of hammered ‘fine’ texts in which the *s*¹ keeps a vertical stance (see, e.g., KRS 2415/F).

⁴⁸⁵ Note that texts by more distant relatives were also found in southern Syria, see, e.g., C 3897/C/F, by his great grandfather *mr*^ʿ, and C 2377/F, by his granduncle *mgd*.

⁴⁸⁶ *l mr*^ʿ *bn zd bn qdm bn mr*^ʿ *bn znn*^ʿ *l bn m[r]*^ʿ ‘By Mr’ son of Zd son of Qdm son of Mr’ son of Znn^ʿ son of {Mr’}’ (reading: OCIANA).

⁴⁸⁷ The text reads: *l zd bn qdm bn mr*^ʿ *w wgd* *’tr* *’b-h w dd-h f b’s*¹ *m zll* ‘By Zd son of Qdm son of Mr’ and he found the traces of his father and of his paternal uncle and so those who remain despair’. On the translation of the expression *b’s*¹ *m zll*, see Al-Jallad 2015: 207; OCIANA did not read *w dd-h* ‘and his paternal uncle’. The phrase *’tr dd-h* (‘traces of his paternal uncle’) is probably referring to the text BES15 622/C/F (*l mgd bn mr*^ʿ ‘By Mgd son of Mr’), hammered on the same panel and partly superimposed by BES15 623/F. The text by Mgd’s granduncle is less compressed than his father’s. While this may be partly due to the different technique used, since the *r* is represented by a simple curve without vertical hooks, it would seem that the script of this text was still transitional between the ‘common’ and the ‘fine’ script according to the definition in §4.1.3.

⁴⁸⁸ These are: BES15 207/F, BES15 886/F, KRS 1007/F, KRS 1037/F and KRS 1153/F.



(a) KRS 1037/F



(b) KRS 904/F

Figure 6.15: Horsemen by Mgd's grandfather Qdm (a) and his uncle Mšrm (b) (Photos: OCIANA)

ṣ's have no slanted dashes. While all of *qdm*'s incised texts are rather compressed, the hammered one (BES15 886/F⁴⁸⁹) is much less so. This is a good example of how the choice of a particular technique can in some cases influence the graph forms, but without altering the distinctive features of their underlying shapes. For instance, despite the lower degree of compression, all *r*'s in the text still exhibit vertical hooks, which characterise the 'fine' shape. Two inscriptions by *qdm* – KRS 1037/F (Fig. 6.15(a)) and KRS 1153/F⁴⁹⁰ – are accompanied by very elaborated and skilfully incised drawings.

Finally, there are two late 'fine' texts by *mgd*'s uncle *mšrm*, KRS 904/F and RSIS 171/F. KRS 904/F (Fig. 6.15(b)) shows that, like *mgd*'s grandfather *qdm*, *mšrm* left drawings as well. The text is intertwined with and refers to the finely incised figure of a horseman.⁴⁹¹ The form of the horse looks stylistically similar to the one by his father *qdm*, i.e. *mgd*'s grandfather (cf. Fig. 6.15(a)).

6.2.4.2 ṣ'd bn ḡt's relatives

Like ṣ'd's texts, the inscriptions by his close family members are all highly compressed.⁴⁹²

SESP.D 5/F, by his brother *rmyn*, SESP.D 6/F, by his uncle *wdm* and SESP.D 7/F, by his cousin *ḡnn* son of *wdm*, are incised on the same big boulder and run parallel to each other.⁴⁹³ Beside the high compression, they share with ṣ'd's writing style the

⁴⁸⁹ *l qdm bn mr' bn ḡnn'l w wgd 'tr mn't f ng' {f} b's' m ḡl* 'By Qdm son of Mr' son of ḡnn'l and he found the inscription of Mn't and was stricken with sorrow {so} those who remain despair'. He could have referred to the text by his brother *mn't* (BES15 905/F).

⁴⁹⁰ KRS 1153/F is incorporated within the drawing of two camels and its layout is adjusted to the empty spaces within the images.

⁴⁹¹ It reads: *l mšrm bn qdm bn mr' h-ḡtt w 'ḡd l-ṣ'd* 'By Mšrm son of Qdm son of Mr' is the carving and he took for ṣ'd'.

⁴⁹² The texts by the brother ṣ'd (C 1278/F, AWS 352/F) and by the father ḡt (C 1279/F, C 2768/F) are only known from tracings and will not be discussed here.

⁴⁹³ The texts by the brother *rmyn* and the uncle *wdm* both present very long genealogies going back to the eponymous ancestor 'wḡ: SESP.D 5/F *l rmyn bn ḡt bn 'ḡ bn 'ḡ bnj ḡt bn wdm bn s'r bn ṣbh bn q<◇>s²<◇>m // bn s'by bn {b}d bn hngs² bn whbn bn qmr bn r{t}{t} bn 'wḡ // [] wgm ḡ-m-h* 'By Rmyn son of ḡt son of

6. Writing Styles



(a) Text by Š'd's uncle Wdm (BES15 1004/F)



(b) Panel with text by the grandfather (Is.H 516/F) and others (Is.H 513/C/F, 514/F, 515/C/F)

Figure 6.16: Inscriptions by Š'd's relatives (Photos: OCIANA)

use of a *g* with a big head, the *d* facing backwards, and some instances of pointed *b*'s, especially in the text by the uncle *wdm*. BES15 1004/F (Fig. 6.16(a))⁴⁹⁴ another text by *wdm*, shares some typical stylistic features found Š'd's texts, see the pointed *b*'s and the *d* facing backwards. The head of the *g* is also big, as in Š'd's texts, although it is curved instead of pointed.

SESP.D 16/F,⁴⁹⁵ by his uncle *s¹hr*, is incised on another face of the same large boulder where the texts by the two brothers and the nephew of Š'd were found.⁴⁹⁶ *s¹hr* also wrote Mr.A 6/F, associated to the image of a horseman and another equid, both animals bodies are skilfully decorated.⁴⁹⁷ At the same site, a text by another uncle, *mgyr*, is attested, Mr.A 10/F = C 4407/F,⁴⁹⁸ which runs boustrophedon downwards and then

‘d son of ‘d son of Ġt son of Wdm son of S¹r son of Šbh son of {Qs²m} son of S¹by son of ‘bd son of Hngs² son of Whbn son of Qmr son of {Rt} son of ‘wd and he grieved for his grandfather’; SESP.D 6/F *l wdm bn ‘d bn ‘{d} bn ġt bn wdm bn s¹r bn šbh bn qs²m bn s¹by bn ‘bd bn hngs² bn whbn bn qmr bn rt} bn ‘wd* ‘By Wdm son of ‘d son of ‘d son of Ġt son of Wdm son of S¹r son of Šbh son of Qs²m son of S¹by son of ‘bd son of Hngs² son of Whbn son of Qmr son of Rt} son of ‘wd’ (readings: OCIANA).

⁴⁹⁴It reads: *l wdm bn ‘d bn ‘d bn ġt bn wdm bn s¹r* ‘By Wdm son of ‘d son of ‘d son of Ġt son of Wdm son of S¹r’.

⁴⁹⁵*l s¹hr bn ‘{d} bn ‘d bn ġt bn wdm bn s¹r bn šbh bn qs²m w hll h-dr* ‘By S¹hr son of ‘d son of ‘d son of Ġt son of Wdm son of S¹r son of Šbh son of Qs²m and he camped here’ (reading: OCIANA).

⁴⁹⁶See the OCIANA commentary to SESP.D 1/F. On this same face, there is also a text by his second cousin *hr*: SESP.D 19/F *l hr bn mgyr bn s¹r bn ġt bn wdm bn s¹r bn šbh bn qs²m bn s¹by bn ‘bd bn hngs² bn whbn bn whbl bn qmr* ‘By Hr son of Mgyr son of S¹r son of Ġt son of Wdm son of S¹r son of Šbh son of Qs²m son of S¹by son of ‘bd son of Hngs² son of Whbn son of Whbl son of Qmr’ (reading: OCIANA).

⁴⁹⁷The text reads: *l s¹hr bn ‘d bn ‘d bn ġt w s²ry m-‘{d} bn ‘h{-h} h-dmyt w ‘{w}r l-d {y}‘{w}r* ‘By S¹hr son of ‘d son of ‘d son of Ġt and he bought the image [sic!] from ‘d, the son of his brother and may whosoever would efface be blinded’. ‘d would be the brother of Š'd, two texts by him are known, unfortunately only from tracings, C 1278/F and AWS 352/F. They are not associated to any drawing.

⁴⁹⁸*l mgyr bn ‘d bn ‘d bn ġt bn {w}dm bn s¹r bn šbh w hṛš ‘hw-h f h lt s¹lm l-d hṛš w ‘wr d y‘wr*. ‘By Mgyr son of ‘d son of ‘d son of Ġt son of Wdm son of S¹r son of Šbh and he was on the look out for his brothers. So, O Lt [grant] security to whoever keeps watch and blindness to whoever scratches out the inscription’ I follow the OCIANA reading, except for *wdm*, which was read as {h}dm in OCIANA.

curves vertically upwards. It is highly compressed and features pointed *b*'s, but, unlike *ṣ'd*'s texts, the *ḡ* has a small head.

Is.H 516/F (Fig.6.16(b)), a small text by *ṣ'd*'s grandfather *ḡ*, is incised in a style similar to *ṣ'd*'s – cf. the pointed *b*'s, the *ḡ* with a big pointed head, and the *d* facing backwards – between the graphs of a bigger text (Is.H 513/C/F). Is.H 513/C/F is clearly older – as Is.H 516/F is incised in between its graphs – and it is by a 10th generation ancestor, *n'mn*, who is the brother of the great great great grandfather of *ṣ'd*.⁴⁹⁹ There is a clear difference in compression, the text being several generations older, and the graph forms seem to belong to the transitional script (see §4.1.3). The text is associated to Is.H 515/C/F, also a transitional text, whose author is most probably by a 8th generation *ḡf-ite*.⁵⁰⁰ The text by *ṣ'd*'s grandfather reads that he found the text of his father *ḡ*⁵⁰¹ (*ṣ'd*'s great grandfather). It refers to Is.H 514/F, which is also clearly added later and carved with the same writing style as *ṣ'd*'s (i.e. high compression, pointed *b*'s, *ḡ* with big head and *d* facing backwards) in between some graphs of the older transitional text. It reads that he found the inscription of *n'mn*,⁵⁰² who is indeed the author of the transitional text Is.H 513/C/F. This cluster of texts by authors from generation 10, 13, and 14 of the *ḡd* lineage, is a good example of the practice of adding texts directly to panels with inscriptions by relatives.

6.3 SoS script authors

6.3.1 *bs¹ bn s¹dlh*

Three texts by this author have been attested: one text was found in the Jebel Qurma region (QUR 813.14.1/SoS,⁵⁰³ Fig.6.17(a)) and two other texts (HaNSB 306/SoS and HaNSB 379/SoS)⁵⁰⁴ were found in a region ca. 25 km away (as the crow flies) from Jebel Qurma and, just like QUR 813, situated along Wādī Rāḡil. In all three texts the

⁴⁹⁹The text reads: Is.H 513/C/F *l n'mn bn ṣbh bn qs²m w wgm ḡ-ḡbb* 'By N'mn son of Ṣbh son of Qs²m and he grieved for a loved one'.

⁵⁰⁰This text reads: *l s¹wr bn nqm* 'By S¹wr son of Nqm'. Although it indicates only the patronym, it has the same exact graph forms as the ones found in Is.M 258/C/F, which can be safely located within the lineage tree since its genealogy indicates 4 generations: *l s¹wr bn nqm bn s¹wr bn ḡmyn w wgm ḡ-ḡ----*. For the position of this author in the *ḡf* lineage-tree, see Appendix A, Fig. A.8.

⁵⁰¹Is.H 516/F *l ḡ bn ḡ bn ḡt w wgd s¹fr ḡ-b-h f ng'* 'By ḡ son of ḡ son of ḡt and he found the inscription of his father and he grieved in pain' (reading: OCIANA).

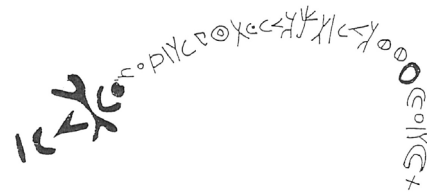
⁵⁰²Is.H 514/F *l ḡ bn ḡt bn wdm bn s¹r bn ṣbh w wgd s¹fr n'mn f ng'* 'By ḡ son of ḡt son of Wdm son of S¹r son of Ṣbh and he found the inscription of N'mn and he grieved in pain'. I follow OCIANA apart from the reading of the name of the author, which in the OCIANA omits the *ḡ*.

⁵⁰³The text reads: *l bs¹ bn {s¹}{ḡ}dlh {b}{n} {r}{ḡ}{ḡ}----{w}{ḡ}{ḡ}m ḡ-hmnt w ḡ-mlk w ḡ-ḡtn f h lt w ds²r ḡr m{n-}{h}{w}[l][t]* 'By Bs¹ son of {S¹dlh} {son of Rḡ}...{and he grieved} for Hmnt and for Mlk and for ḡtn, so, O Lt and Ds²r, may there be revenge from [the Ḥawilat]'. The last two graphs were completely reconstructed because the stone is very weathered.

⁵⁰⁴HaNSB 306/SoS is a grieving text: *l bs¹ bn s¹dlh b[n] rḡ bn bs¹ ḡ ḡ bs¹ w wgm ḡ-hmt* 'By Bs¹ son of S¹dlh son of Rḡ son of Bs¹ of the social group of Bs¹ and he grieved for Hmt', while HaNSB 379/SoS is a name-only text: *l bs¹ bn s¹dlh bn rḡ* 'By Bs¹ son of S¹dlh son of Rḡ'. Excluding the papponym of the first text, which I read as *rḡ* instead of *rḡh*, I here follow the readings and translations of OCIANA.



(a) QUR 813.14.1/SoS



(b) HaNSB 306/SoS

Figure 6.17: Inscriptions by $Bs^{1\flat}$ son of $S^{1\flat}dlh$

genealogies reach the papponym. In HaNSB 306/SoS, the genealogy goes even one generation further, and the author affiliates to the social group of $Bs^{1\flat}$. As shown in Fig. 6.17(a), the Jebel Qurma text is neatly chiselled with a fine instrument on a small limestone slab. The two HaNSB texts are unfortunately known only from drawings, but one can still recognize certain features which seem to be shared among all three texts:

- The use of a form of the ' with a very short stem next to a graph with the usual form of ' within the same text;
- The d with a big loop, which in QUR 813.14.1/SoS and HaNSB 379/SoS is also squarish;
- The r is a deep curve, as the b , but proportionally smaller.

In addition, in the two less weathered examples of r 's in QUR 813.14.1/SoS (the ones in the words ds^2r and t^2r), it seems that two small vertical hooks protrude from both ends,⁵⁰⁵ while in the drawing of HaNSB 306/SoS (Fig. 6.17(b)), its form seems slightly more pointed and a vertical hook protrudes only from the upper arm. Further distinctive features are attested in QUR 813.14.1/SoS, which presents the graphs k and s^2 (not attested in the other two texts): the k has the curly variant, identical to a Hismaic g , while the s^2 presents a peculiar form of the typical SoS 'S'-shape of the s^2 , the upper curve being slightly squarish and with a wavy back.

QUR 813.14.1/SoS exhibits also a peculiar layout, which is found in the text by $bs^{1\flat}$'s grandfather as well (see below): it curves along the panel borders and then turns towards the inside of the panel continuing boustrophedon. In the middle of the panel, there is the geometric symbol of seven parallel lines joined together by another line to their side.

⁵⁰⁵Note that this form is clearly distinct from the typical 'fine' form of the r , also with vertical hooks, since the curve is deep, while in the 'fine' script it is always shallow.



(a) QUR 370.130.1/SoS



(b) QUR 370.231.1/SoS

Figure 6.18: Inscriptions by *Dr* son of *n'm*

6.3.2 *dr bn n'm*

Three texts by *dr* – QUR 370.16.1/SoS,⁵⁰⁶ 370.130.1/SoS⁵⁰⁷ and 370.231.1/SoS⁵⁰⁸ – were found in the same site, the genealogy of the latter two extending until the papponym. The texts are all rather tiny, with graphs on average 2 cm high. The *n* is always a dot and, in the word *bn* ‘son of’, placed inside the preceding *b*.⁵⁰⁹

Despite such similarities, there is also a discrete amount of variation from a text to the other. In QUR 370.16.1/SoS, the *b* and the *r* are two straight lines with perpendicular arms, but the *b* is distinguished by size, being much smaller. In QUR 370.130.1/SoS and QUR 370.231.1/SoS, however, they are both curved and very close in form. The *d* takes a different form in each text: in QUR 370.16.1/SoS it has a perpendicular hook at the end of the tail, in QUR 370.231.1/C the tail curves to form a hook, while in QUR 370.130.1/C it has no hook. In QUR 370.130.1/SoS, the *s*² is composed of three waves with the central wave rather small and the lowest being the biggest, but in QUR 370.231.1/SoS the three waves have more or less the same size, and two further curls are attached to the upper and lower ones.

QUR 370.16.1/SoS is a signature to a group of hammered and incised figures covering the whole panel: four she-camels – one of which led by an incised anthropomorph whose body is filled in with stripes –, two equids with roughly hammered bodies and incised spears, and a quadruped. QUR 370.130.1/SoS (Fig.6.18(a)) runs next to the stylized image of an incised anthropomorph holding a spear: similarly to the antropomorph in QUR 370.16.1/SoS, also in this image the body is filled with stripes.

⁵⁰⁶ *l dr bn n'm h-dmyt* ‘By *Dr* son of *n'm* is the image’.

⁵⁰⁷ *l dr bn {'}n'm bn {d}'b bn m{s²}{r}* ---- ‘By *Dr* son of {*n'm*} son of {*D'b*} son of {*Ms²r*}...’.

⁵⁰⁸ *l {d}'r bn n'm bn d'b bn ms²r bn* ---- ‘By {*Dr*} son of *n'm* son of *D'b* son of *Ms²r* son of...’.

⁵⁰⁹ This practice is perhaps comparable to the joining of *b* and *n* to form a single graphic sign in texts where the *n* is a short line (see §5.3).



(a) QUR 639.3.1/SoS



(b) QUR 639.8.1/SoS

Figure 6.19: Inscriptions by Ġyr son of Mġyr

6.3.3 ġyr bn mġyr

As *ḡr bn ʾnʿm* above, also *ġyr*, of the social group of *ʾkt*, left three texts at the same site: QUR 639.3.1/SoS,⁵¹⁰ 639.7.1/SoS,⁵¹¹ and 639.8.1/SoS⁵¹². The genealogies of all three extend until the papponym, although in one (QUR 639.7.1/SoS) only the first graph of the papponym is legible. These three texts present shared graph forms, but also a lot of variation from text to text, and, in some cases, even within the same text. In all of *ġyr*'s texts the *n* is a dot⁵¹³ and in both QUR 639.3.1/SoS and 639.7.1/SoS, where the *k* is present, it takes the usual SoS script fork form, and the two arms are very close to each other and both slightly curving downwards. In QUR 639.3.1/SoS, the only text attesting a *ḡ*, its tail is not hooked, but joined to the side of the fork rather than centrally.

Some variation is attested in the forms of *b* and *r* and the way these are distinguished, both within the same texts and from text to text. In QUR 639.3.1/SoS, the *r*'s are small curves very close in form to the *b*, but the first two instances can be distinguished because the arms are slightly curved and the back is more straight. QUR 639.8.1/SoS (Fig. 6.19(b)), on the other hand, attests forms of the *r* which are similar to the ones found in QUR 639.3.1/SoS (Fig. 6.19(a)). However, in this case the first two *r*'s are deep curves indistinguishable from the *b*, but in the third *r* a vertical hook protrudes from the arm, clearly disambiguating its graphematic value.

The *ġ* exhibits most variant forms. In QUR 639.3.1/SoS (Fig. 6.19(a)), the *ġ* of the first name is a slanted line with a curve facing upwards attached to its top, but its allograph immediately later takes the rather different form of two joined curves. In QUR 639.7.1/SoS, which has been heavily effaced, one can still see that the first *ġ* is a short line with a curve facing in the text direction attached to its top. Finally, in QUR

⁵¹⁰ *l ġyr bn mġyr bn ḡ{r}tn {ḡ} ʾ{kt}t w dmyt* 'By Ġyr son of Mġyr son of {Ḥrtn} {of the people of} {ʾkt} and [the] image [is his]'.

⁵¹¹ *l {ḡ}{y}{r} {b}{n} {m}{ḡ}{y}{r} {b}{n} {ḡ}—kt {w} d{m}{y}{t}* 'By {Ġyr} {son of} {Mġyr} {son of}...{and} [the] image [is his]'.

⁵¹² *l ġyr bn mġyr bn ḡrtn { }* 'By Ġyr son of Mġyr son of Ḥrtn'.

⁵¹³ Note that in QUR 639.3.1/SoS the dotted *n* is placed inside the preceding *b* of *bn*.



Figure 6.20: Inscription by bs^{1b} 's grandfather (QUR 952.83.1/SoS)

630.8.1/SoS, the \dot{g} 's take yet different forms: the first is a short vertical line with two waves on top, while the second is a long line with three waves on top.

All three texts are embedded in panels with stylistically similar drawings of roughly hammered camel figures, their body parts being depicted in a highly stylized manner (cf. the examples in Fig. 6.19).

6.3.4 Family members

6.3.4.1 bs^{1b} bn $s^{1c}dlh$'s grandfather

A text by $rd' bn$ bs^{1b} (Fig.6.20), most probably bs^{1b} 's grandfather, was attested in the Jebel Qurma region in a site not far from the one of bs^{1b} , it reads: QUR 952.83.1/SoS l $rd' bn$ bs^{1b} \underline{d} $'l$ bs^{1b} w wgm $'l-bgt$ w $'l-bs^{1b}$ w $'l-s^{1rdt}$ w $'l-rt$ 'By Rd' son of Bs^{1b} of the social group of Bs^{1b} and he grieved for Bgt and for Bs^{1b} and for S^{1rdt} and for $'rt$ '. While the genealogy of this text stops at the patronym, the author affiliates to the same social group as the one indicated in one of bs^{1b} 's texts (HaNS 306/SoS). The writing style of this author presents some striking similarities to bs^{1b} 's texts:

- One instance of $'$ – the one of the patronym – has a very short stem, unlike the others, and in two instances, the stem is slightly curving;
- The r 's are generally small curves and the r of $'rt$ has also a small vertical hook protruding from the upper arm, as attested in HaNSB 306/SoS by bs^{1b} ;
- The inscription runs in a similar fashion as the Jebel Qurma text by bs^{1b} : it curves along the panel borders and then descends boustrophedon towards the center of the panel.

6.3.4.2 dr bn $'n'm$'s cousin

The genealogy of QUR 613.20.1/SoS (l $'s^{1d}$ bn s^{2b} bn $\underline{d}'b$ bn $\{m\}\{s^2\}'r$ 'By $'s^{1d}$ son of S^{2b} son of $\underline{D}'b$ son of $\{Ms^{2c}r\}'$) suggests that it may be a text by dr 's cousin. This possible relationship is substantiated by two shared features. First, as in the texts by dr , in

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this text the n is a dot. Second, similarly to two texts by dr (QUR 370.130.1/SoS and 370.231.1/SoS), the b and the r are both small curves, although in this text the r is slightly bigger.