A Sort of Sepulchral Construction in Wadi *Umm* Ṭulayḥa, *Southeastern Badia, Jordan*?

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Abstract

This paper presents a linguistic and etymological analysis of three North Arabian inscriptions carved on a relatively small stone. The stone was found east of al-Jafr in southern Jordan, near the Jordanian-Saudi border. The content of the three inscriptions in terms of writing style, topic, and vocabulary is similar to other North Arabian inscriptions. Nevertheless, the three inscriptions include new words that have not been attested before in other inscriptions of the same type. Some rock drawings were also found in the same rujm.

Keywords: Wadi Umm Ṭulayḥa, Ḥismaic inscriptions, Ancient North Arabia, funeral culture.

Description of the Stone:

The inscriptions published in this article were found in Rujm Umm Ṭulayḥa. The site lies in Wadi Umm Ṭulayḥa, which runs west-east through the Jordanian-Saudi border to the south of the Mushash Hudruj police station. The inscriptions were *in situ*, carved on a sandstone rock that was found alongside Rujm Umm Tulayha (part of Wadi Umm Tulayha) by the eastern Bayir archaeological survey team after the Bedouin told them about the location of this rock. Since 2011, the project has been part of a collaboration combining two former archaeological research projects (1. Al Thulaythuwat Archaeological Survey and Excavation Project, and 2. Eastern Bayir Archaeological Project) into one joint research program on the settlement of the desert areas of southeastern Jordan during the protohistoric periods (Tarawneh et. al. 2017).

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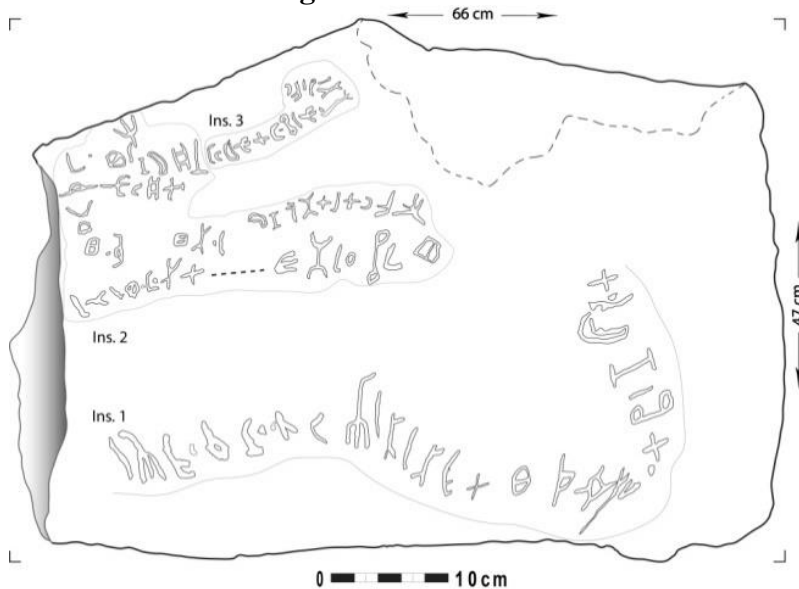
Figure 1: The stone.

Figure 2: Drawing of the inscriptions.

These inscriptions are carved on a rectangle surface, 47 cm high, 66 cm wide and 23 cm thick. They are in Ḥismaic, and three of them are readable. In the indentation of the stone face, there is an Islamic-Arabic inscription at the left side in the middle between inscriptions number one and two that can be read as *nwfl bn ḥsnh* "Nawfal, son of Ḥasanah." The inscriptions are pecked in shallow hammered characters. The first inscription consists of one line that starts near the lower left corner of the stone and runs to the right and turns upward near the right edge. The second inscription is above the first and is executed in a boustrophedon style. It starts on the left edge and about halfway along the stone turns back to the left edge. It then runs along the left edge up to the upper left corner of the stone and ends by curving down to the right.

The third inscription on one line runs slightly up from left to right and is inscribed at the top of the stone to the right of the second inscription.
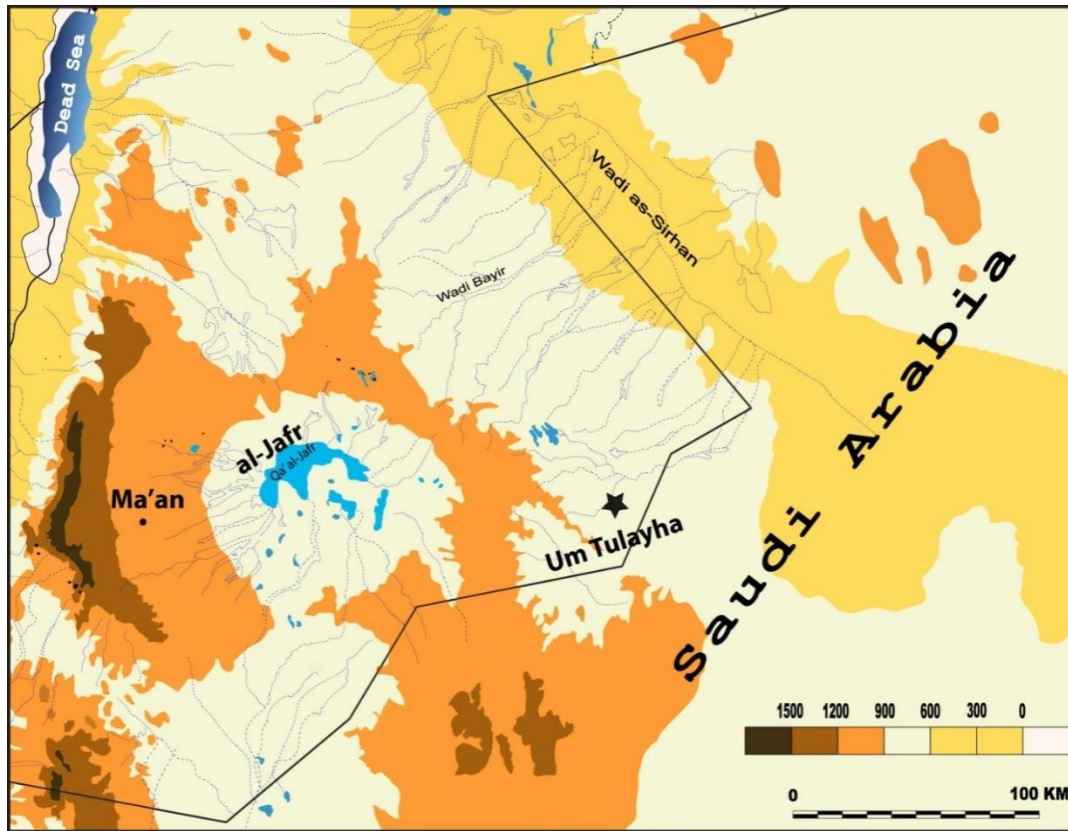
Figure 3: Map of southern Jordan showing the location of the Rujm.

Several animals are drawn at the top right side of the stone. These are probably camels and horses, but we cannot define their function and symbolism. There are several other scratchings, rubbings, and scribbles that have letter shapes in Ancient North Arabian script scattered among the inscriptions. They are executed in different sizes.

Introduction

Before discussing the inscriptions, it should be noted that the personal names in this corpus are formed without the use of deity names. This phenomenon is also known from other similar cases and needs detailed study that may shed light on the life cycle of the names affected by the changes and developments that occurred in society (Rosenhouse, 2002: 97).

The Inscriptions
Inscription 1:

l ḏġny bn nsr ḏʾl ʾġt w dṯʾ snt gnz mbnt

By Ḏġny son of Nsr of the lineage ʾġt, he stayed/encamped and spent spring /the season of the later rain at the time he *gnz/* collected, gathered up the building/ tomb, grave.

All the letters of the inscription are clear and easy to read. The character *b* in noun *bn* is attached at the lower edge by a shape that looks like *b* or *l*. We notice a vertical sign after the letter *ḏ* of *ḏʾl*, which cannot be interpreted as a letter; it appears as *l*.

Ḏġny: The personal name is from a name involving a root ġny found in Ḥismaic inscriptions with the meaning of "become free from want" (see KJB 1, KJC 139, KJC 317 in King 1990) which is parallel to Arabic ġaniya "to be rich, wealthy, became free of want" (Lane, 1968, part 6: 2301-2302), and ġny occurs as a noun "wealth" (CH.R 252 in Corbett, 2010).

This form is not evident in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E and Safaitic onomastics. But the form mġny has many attestations in Ḥismaic (Jacobson, A.7.B.3, D.27.1 in OCIANA; KJB 116, 70, KJC 303 in King 1,990), and the form Ġny occurs in Safaitic (ASWS 61: 296, BR 1) and Central Minaic (Maʿīn 93/ 51 in CSAI).

Nsr: This personal name refers to Semitic "eagle" (Mirʿi, 2012: 220). One could assume the meaning of the name lies behind the ancient Arabian god NSR/ Nisr (Ibn al-Kalbī, 1995: 57-58), which show a creedal affirmation about family religious belief.

This name is attested in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E (MEEK in King 1990: 641; TIJ 121). It occurs many times in Safaitic (see for example CSNS 17; AbaNS 373, RSIS 304), once in Dadanite (reading of Müller, D.H. 1889: 71, no. 22). The name can be hypochoristic, as a part of a compound name in Dadanitic in the form of ʾyḏns, the "ns" diminutive of NSR (Díez, 2009: 28, 233), nsrh (Díez 2009: 267) and nsrn (JaL 161g in Jamme 1974: 22), and is attested in nisbeh? form nsry (Bogue 61 in OCIANA) and in Sabaic Nsr (Kortler 7 in CSAI), but it is not attested in Taymanitic.

ḏʾl: It is a popular form in Ancient North Arabian inscriptions in Ḥismaic, Safaitic and Hasaitic and means "he who is of the lineage of". The term ʾl gives the impression of social groups of some size, a lineage group of "any unit from tribe to family," or even of all levels (MacDonald 1993: 353-354, Maʾani and Sadaqa 2003: 644-645, Nehmé and Macdonald 2015: 73). The social group term ʾl is attested in a few Nabataean inscriptions which borrowed from Old Arabic, or Ancient North Arabian ʾāl, which occurred in the forms ʾl or dy mn ʾl + the name of the group or by the nisbah (Nehmé and MacDonald 2015: 71-72), and ʾl is translated by δῆμος in the Greek inscriptions (Nehmé and MacDonald 2015: 72).

ʾġt: This tribal name is not attested elsewhere in Ancient North Arabian inscriptions, although there is evidence that it served as a personal name in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E (Jacobson D.24.6 in OCIANA). It is ʾfʿal form from the root ġtt and means "continuing in drinking, to sink someone in the water" (al-Zubaydī 1969, part 5: 16-18).

dṯʾ: Spend time in a place during the spring season (see Ababneh and Sadaqah 2014).

snt: Year. It is known from other Ancient North Arabian inscriptions.

gnz: This word has not been found in the corpus of Ancient North Arabian inscriptions, although the meaning and etymology of other uses of this term in other Semitic languages connote funerary associations. In the context of this inscription, it is not a noun, but rather seems to have the form of transitive verb stem. Based on a comparison with Geʿez, Arabic, and another Semitic etymon, this would mean "veiled, concealed, hid or cover"; otherwise, it has a sense of collected, gathered up.

This lexical-verb gnz is considered as a loanword from Geʿez and parallel to ganaza with the meaning "shroud, wrap in linen, enwrap, prepare a body for burial" (Leslau 1987: 199). In this course, Nöldeke points out that the borrowing is beyond doubt (1910: 58, see Weninger 2009: 399- 400). The explanation is also based on the Sabaic gnztn (Ja 702) and means "funeral precinct"; otherwise, Ghul gives the meaning "assembly, congregation" (Beeston et. al., 1982: 50), and CSAI "sacred precinct." The Classical Arabic phrase ganiza al-ragulu refers to a dead man: "the man was gathered up, i.e. a corpse is gathered up in

the grave clothes," and the form *gannazahu* signifies "he put it/the corpse upon a bier". The noun *ganāzah* means "a dead person, a corpse," and signifies a "bier, bier with the dead person" (Lane 1968 book 1 part 2: 470). The Hebrew stem *gnz* refers to the sense of "hide, cover" (Jastrow 190 vol. 1: 258; BDB 170), and is connected with the word in question. A cogent and logical usage of the nouns *gənaz*, *ginzayā* and *gnz* and *gnzʾ* "treasure, treasury" is found in both Imperial Aramaic (Taylor 2011: 6) and Official Aramaic (Hoftjizer and Jongeling. 1995: 229).

The theme of the above meanings could also apply to the verb *gz*, which appears once in the Jewish tombstone epitaph written in Jewish Aramaic from Ghur Es-Safi "Byzantine Zoora" (for the cite see al-Nasarat 2013) (no. 8. = Naveh-Ṣuʿar 24 in Robin, 2004: 890-891; 2015: 192; no. 38/ 2 in Meimaris et al., 2016: 68) and is roughly dated to 469 A.D. The verb *gz* in the inscription occurs as an alternative to the verb *myt* "died" (no. 4/ 2, 6/ 2?, 16/ 2, 38/ 6) and has the same place; in this respect it yields a similar sense. The etymological verb *gz* could be explained by its being N-assimilation of the root *gnz*. The assimilated vowelless *n* phenomenon is well-known in Hebrew and Aramaic (see Macdonald 2004: 501). The sporadic assimilation of *n* occurred in the corpus of Zoora, *št* " year" (4/ 1, 7/ 7, 18/ 5, 19/ 4, 20/ 4 in Meimaris et al., 2016), the full form is also found in the same corpus *šnt* "year" (no. 16/ 4, 17/ 4, 22/ 6 in Meimaris et al. 2016). The verb *gz* has been given meanings that denote death: for example Robin "trépassa" (2004, 20015) and Meimaris et al. "pass away" (2016), without giving the etymology of the verb. Therefore, the verb *gz* could be put under the umbrella of the Semitic root *gnz*.

mbnt: It is derived from the ground stem verb, *verba tertiw radicalis "y"/the defective verb "bny"* "built" (see Al-Jallad and Jaworska 2019: 61). The verb *bny* corresponds to the Classical Arabic past verb *banaya/faʿala*. The *bny* is an indicative verb such as *bky*, and the final glide is not represented, instead it terminates in a long vowel (Al-Jallad, 2020: 3). Therefore, *mbnt* is the equivalent to the Classical Arabic structural form *mibnāt/mifʿāl = al-baytu al-mabniy* "the built house" (al-Zubaydī 2001 part 37: 228), suggesting it can be derived from *bnyt /bonyat* "the structure" (WH 967; KRS 1515 in OCIANA; Al-Jallad and Jaworska 2019: 61), and that it belongs to the Classical Arabic *bunyat/fuʿlat or binyat or fiʿlat* (al-Zubaydī, 2001, part 37: 216). In this sequence it could refer to the singular emphatic noun *bnynʾ* "building" as a similar form to Arabic mentioned in a Nabataean inscription from Ḥawrān (Healey 2020: 205)

In this sequence, it belongs to the common Semitic stock with the literal and restrictive meaning "to build" and has a sense of "kind of structure i.e. a house, a house for corpse > tomb, grave. The form *mbnt* is not known from Ḥismaic/Thamudic E, but occurs as a place in Sabaic *ʿs²q w-mbnt byt* (BaBa al-Ḥadd 9 in CSAI) "terracing and construction of house," and in Hebrew-Qumran Scroll in the form מַבְנִית "building, structure" (4Q403-4QShirShabb-d-1i 30–46:41). In Hebrew, the form *mibhneh* is found in the construct in the expression *kemibhneh ʿr* "like the structure of a city," and means a group composed of several buildings but looking like a single building (Botterweck and Ringgren, 1999: 178). Similarly, a Phoenician inscription has the form *mbnh/mbnt*" constructions, building" (Hoftizer et al., 1995: 591; Botterweck and Ringgren, 1999: 178-179).

Inscription 2:

l slwn bn ḫt[s] […] d̠ʾl ʿgb w d̠krt lt ʾkzm [bn] hnʾ w ʿdn w ʿbd bn ḫrt̠t w ḫll m t̠z

By Slwn son of Ḫt[s] […] of the tribe of ʿgb, and may the Goddess Lt remember ʾkzm

[son of] Hnʾ and ʿdn and ʿbd sons of Ḥrṯṯ, and he camped from Ṯẓ".

Almost all the letters in this inscription are clear, except for the third letter of the second name *ḫt[s]*, which is nearly worn away by the lower part of the cross stroke-line of *ḫ* letter-shape crudely engraved. It appears to be read as *s* since the upper horizontal slope line of the letter is clear. The first letter of the same name is clearly *ḫ*, but distorted by scribbled line shapes. Also, the tail and the lower forked parts of the letter *ḏ* of *ḏʾl* are disturbed by the same thick *ḫ* letter-shape. Furthermore, the thick *ḫ* letter-shape obscures the surface space between *ḫt[s]* and *ḏʾl* and the space after *ʾkzm*, and the upper stroke of the same shape spoils the lower part of the letter *m* of the name *ʾkzm*. There is a bit affected by a broad-circle on the letter *ʿ* of the name *ʿdn*.

Slwn: It is not found in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E, although the form *Slw* is found in Safaitic (BRenv.J. 30; IS.Mu 410 in OCIAN), and *Slw* in Dadanitic (AH 312, 330). This name is from the root *slw* and means "became forgetful, unmindful, diverted from the remembrance, endured with a patient" (al-Zubaydī, 2001, part 38: 296-299).

Ḫt[s]: It is not found in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E, although the form *Ḫtst* is known in Safaitic (CIS 5337).

ʿgb: This tribal name is attested in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E (TIJ 223 in King, 1990: 662), and occurs as a personal name in several Safaitic inscriptions (BS 629 in OCIANA; CSNS 391, 783; AWS 67), and it is possibly found as a personal name in Thamudic B (see Macdonald, 2018: 237) and Taymanitic inscriptions (ThTay?1 in Macdonald, 2018: 237). It is from the root *ʿgb*, and this name could be either related to the *al-ʿagb* and mean "the root of the tail of any beast, the base and bone of the tail عُصْعُص, or the extremity of the spine", or to the form *al-ʿugb,* which signifies "wondered, and deemed it strange, extraordinary" (Lane, 1968, part 5: 1956-1958). However, there is a character next to this name over w that could be read as l to form ʿgbl.

ḏkrt: This optative verb "may (goddess) remember" is recorded often in ANA inscriptions. For example, Hayajneh considers the invocatory clause form to be a suffix conjugation of the third person feminine singular, which is preceded by the conjugation *w* (Hayajneh, 2009: 212).

Lt: Allāt, the Arabian goddess, is the most popular goddess in Ancient North Arabia. For other spelling as *ʾlt* see Krone (1992: 96).

ʾkzm: It is not found in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E, but it is frequently attested in Safaitic (AbaNS 1068; AHS 6; CIS 2716; 3730). It is *ʾfʿal* form and related to *kzm* root; the word is used to describe a body situation; the short fingers, the small hands, and feet; as a verb, it means "to bite something by the teeth" (al-Zubaydī, 2000, part 33: 356-358).

hnʾ: A well-known personal name in Ancient North Arabian inscriptions (see King, 1990: 559), but rarely attested in Thamudic B (JS 276).

ʿdn: The form *ʿdnn* is found in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E (TIJ 246); while the form *ʿdn* frequently occurs in Safaitic (CIS 1695, 1875; ASWS 185, 307), and *ḏ ʿdn* is known as a lineage name in Minaic (Maʿīn 97 in CSAI) and as an epithet of the god *Yṯ ʿm ḏ-ʿdn* in Sabaic (CIH 550/ 9).

ʿbd: This term is particularly common in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E (AMJ 43, 102, 131 in King, 1990) and Safaitic and it means "slave" (AAEK 17, 47, 121).

Ḥrṯṯ: *Ḥrṯ* occurs in ambiguous readings in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E (TIJ 460; cf King, 1990: 671, it is read as Ḥrgl); however, the theophoric name *ʿbdḥrṯṯ* is attested in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E (Corbett, 2010, no. 07-0007.2), *Ḥrṯṯ* occurs in many Safaitic

inscriptions (CIS 788, 1056; Al-Namārah.H 153 in OCIANA; AWS 343), as a clan name in Sabaic *ḏ-ʾhl Ḥrṯ* (CIH 514/ 2 = Haram 6, CIH 513/ 2 = Haram 7), and as a name of king *ʾl-Ḥrṯ/ bn/ Kʿbm/ mlk ʾs¹d* "*ʾl-Ḥrṯ* the king of *ʾs¹d*"(CIAS 39.11/ 02, no 8/ 7-8 in Beeston, 1986: 33).

ḥll m: The phrasal verb *ḥll m* is composed from the verb *ḥll* "to camp, encamp" and *m* the short form of the preposition *min* "from", and is not found in Ḥismaic. However, the verb *ḥll* occurs in Ḥismaic (KJC 46 in King 1990), in addition to its indication of a ritual sense/to return to a profane condition (Hayajneh, 2016, 1: 505-510; see HH 1 in OCIANA). The verb *ḥll* is found often in Safaitic (AbaNS 246; Al-Jallad and Jaworska, 2019: 85; see Hayajneh, 2016: 208), and is attested with prepositions such as: *m*: *w ḥll m nbṭ* "and he camped/returned from Nbṭ (WH 158), *mn*: *w ḥll m*n *ʿn bl* "and he camped (on the way) of *ʿn bl*" (AbaNS 375), *ʾl*: *w ḥll ʾl dr* "and he camped in this place (CIS 5137), *b*: *w ḥll b ḍʾn* "and he camped with some sheep" (KRS 811 In OCIANA), *ʿl*: *w ḥll ʿl h ḥsy* "and camped on the water place (LP 161).

tẓ: An unknown root, and not listed in Semitic. It is mostly considered as a toponym/ place name.

However, it is highly unlikely to consider *tẓ* to be an equivalent root to the Ugaritic noun *ṯṯ,* which means "a piece of cloth or garment" (Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, 2003: 936) or even "wool" or "kilt" (Watson, 2011: 169). The phoneme *ṯ* goes back to the proto-Semitic and Aramaic and is cognate with Arabic, Epigraphic South Arabian *ẓ* e.g. *ṭhr* equivalent to *ẓhr* "back, height, mid-day, sun" (Renfroe, 1992: 27).

Inscription 3: l rmḥt bn glḥn [ḏ]ʾl yškr
By Rmḥt son of Glḥn [of the] lineage Yškr.
Rmḥt: It is not found in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E, but it is attested in Safaitic inscriptions (GS 28 in OCIANA; HCH 68, 69, 70). *Rmḥ* is found in Sabaic (CIH 454). It simply means "lance, spear, and weapon" (al-Zubaydī, 1969, part 6: 401).

Glḥn: This term occurs in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E (Corbett, 2010, no. 07-0007.7), and it has several parallels in Safaitic (ASFF 162, 467, 469 in OCIANA; ASWS 235; BR 12). The basic meaning of root *glḥ*, from which the name is derived, is "to eat" (al-Zubaydī, 1969, part 6: 341).

Yškr: Though this tribal name is not attested in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E, it occasionally occurs in Safaitic (CSA 1.2 in OCIANA; HaNSB 351). We find the form *Škr* as a personal name in Ḥismaic/Thamudic E (Corbett, 2010, no. R222.o2; Jacobson B.3.E.10 in OCIANA). The form *Yškr* as a personal name in Safaitic (CIS 5260; AbaNS 683, 717; BS 601 in OCIANA; Hayajneh, 2018, fig. 3, Salhub 2a). It is known from the pre-Islamic period *al-Ḥāriṯ son of Ḥillizah al-Yaškuri* (al-Zubaydī, 1975, part 15: 115-116), and Bani *Šukr* a tribe of al-Azd (al-Zubaydī, 1969, part 12: 235). *Yškr* is an epithet in Sabaic (Ir 1/ 1) and a name in Minuscule writing (YM 11738 in Ryckmans et al., 1994).

Discussion of the Evidence

Although Ancient North Arabian inscriptions rarely shed light on ancient Arabian life, this small group of inscriptions may provide evidence for the preparation of a burial chamber. It conveys a sense of sadness concerning the oral heritage at Wadi Umm Ṭulayḥa, in the eastern Badia.

The first inscription may possibly deal with funerary liturgy, using the suitable terms *gnz* "collected, gathered up the building". In that case we read *ḥlzm* "as a personal name" instead of the phrasal verb *ḥll m*. The *ṯz* in the second inscription possibly carries the sense of "put on, dressed as a grief sign". Therefore, this deed demonstrates a kind of sad celebration known in other Semitic cultures, and shows the deep cultural activity of the contemporary society narrated in the texts. However, *ṯz* more probably denotes place.

Acknowledgments

نوعٌ منَ البناء الجنائزي في وادي أُمِّ طليحة، البادية الجنوبيّة الشرقيّة، الأردن

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ملخص

تقدّم هذه الورقة تحليلًا لُغَويًّا واشتقاقيًّا لثلاثة نقوش عربيّة شماليّة منحوتة على حجر صغير نسبيًّا وُجِدَ في رُجمٍ في الشرق من الجفر في جنوبي الأردن، بالقرب من الحدود السعوديّة الأردنيّة. ويشبه محتوى النقوش الثلاثة من حيثُ أسلوبُ الكتابة والموضوعاتُ والمفرداتُ النقوشَ العربيّة الشماليّة الأخرى. ومع ذلك، فإنّ النقوش الثلاثة تشمل كلماتٍ جديدةً لم يُعثر عليها سابقًا في نقوش أخرى من النوع نفسِه، وفي الرُّجم نفسِه أيضًا بعضُ الرسومات الصخريّة.

الكلمات الدالة: وادي أُمِّ طليحة، النقوش الحسمائيّة، شمال الجزيرة العربيّة قديمًا، الثقافة الجنائزيّة.

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