The Legendary Tribe of *Ṭs¹m*: The First Evidence for Its Existence in a Safaitic Inscription from Jordan

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Abstract

This research studies a remarkable Safaitic inscription recently recovered in the al-Laẓāiym region in the north-eastern Bādiyah of Jordan. This inscription is important because it mentions the extinct Arab tribe of *Ṭs¹m*. This inscription represents the first recognizable reference of *Ṭs¹m* ever to appear in a Semitic inscription.

Keywords: Extinct Arab tribes, *Ṭs¹m*, Safaitic, Semitic Inscriptions, Bādiyah of Jordan.

Introduction

Finding unique Safaitic inscriptions has become frequent lately, especially under the many surveys done by multiple teams from different countries around the world and especially by the *Badia Epigraphic Survey* (BES) team associated with the *Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia* (OCIANA) (http://krcfm.orient.ox.ac.uk/fmi/webd/ociana).[1] The BES team documented thousands of inscriptions (Safaitic, Nabataean, Palmyrene, Greek, Arabic, mediaeval and Modern Arabic inscriptions)[2] and also compiled a huge database to serve all researchers in the field

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[1] (The Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia (OCIANA) was started at the University of Oxford. The project aims to renew our knowledge of ancient Arabia in term of history, cultures, and languages. This objective is achieved by crafting an electronic corpus of all identified pre-Islamic engravings from Central and North Arabia. The database offers a reading of each script—both reproduced fonts of the ancient letters and in roman transliteration—as well as an English translation, references to previous readings, explanation where needed, bibliography, and all recognized data about the inscriptions, such as origin, the technique of engraving, and relation to other scripts or to petroglyphs. The record of each text is supplemented with photographs (when possible) and facsimiles, and these can be downloaded for free at adequate resolutions for publication purposes. The Corpus can be straightforwardly updated when new findings are reached and can be entirely searched based on words, names, subjects, and grammatical features. http://krc2.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/).

[2] There have been many projects in the Jordanian *Badia* to document the inscriptions. These include: the *Hashemite University Project* supervised by Sultan Al-Maani and Hussein Al-Qudrah; *Mahdi*, a project at Yarmouk University supervised by Hani Hayajneh; and the *Surveys Project of the South of Wadi Al-Khudari* by Younis Shdeifat, Ziad Al-Salamin, and Rafie Harahsheh.

of inscriptions.

In the corpus of inscriptions, many names of tribes are found, as well as historical references to the Romans, the Persians, or Roman emperors, which indicate a cultural connection between these communities and the "Safaitic," though it should be noted that in inscriptions it was common to mention the name of the kings and the people from a historical point of view. This inscription was found during a recent epigraphical survey, it contains clear evidence mentioning the "*Ṭsꞌm*" tribe, which was considered a legendary tribe: so, do we have the first evidence of its existence?

Figure 1: A map showing the sites where inscriptions were found and recorded.

Description of the Stone

A small basalt stone with dimensions of approximately 45×50cm, contains two Safaitic inscriptions (Nos. 1 and 2), apparently engraved with a sharp tool. The letters in both inscriptions are clearly incised and the reading provided below is certain (Figure 2).
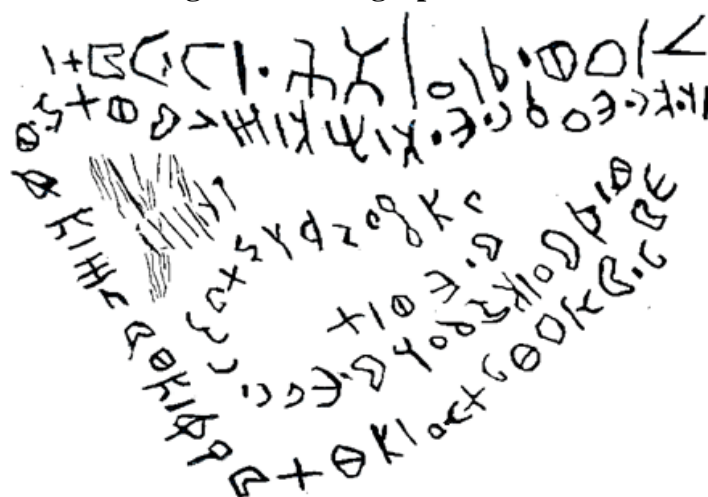
Figure 2: Photograph of the stone

Figure 2: Tracing of the stone

Inscription No 1

Transliteration

l hnʾ bn ḫgy bn ḥnʾl ḏ-ʾl ṭs¹m w ts²wq ʾl ṭs¹m w ʾl qymt w ʾl ᶜs¹tr w gls¹ mn rmḫ w ndm ʾl ʾs²yʿ-h mḥbbn b- frt f h ds²r ṯʾr m ḫwlt

Translation

By Hnʾ son of Ḫgy son of Hnʾl of the lineage of Ṭs¹m and he longed for Ṭs¹m and Qymt and ᶜs¹tr, and he halted galloping (horse), and he grieved for his companions of beloveds in the Euphrates, Ô Ds²r [grant] vengeance from Ḫwlt.

Commentary

The importance of this inscription comes from the mention of the extinct Arab tribal name of *Ṭs¹m*; a tribal name hitherto unrecorded either in other Safaitic inscriptions or in ancient Semitic inscriptions.

ṭs¹m

The noun *Ṭs¹m* has been noted as a personal name in other Safaitic inscriptions (see: OCEANA: C 1273, 4390), but it is mentioned here for the first time in Safaitic as a tribe name.

Ṭs¹m is the name of one of the famous extinct tribes of the Arabs (*al-ʿarab al-bāʾida)*. It is considered among the oldest classes of Arabs, as they are the sons of *Lūḏh bẓ. Sām b. Nūḥ* (Ibn Ḥazm 1962: 1-9). We do not have reliable sources to date *Ṭs¹m*'s history precisely, as they have not been identified in archaeological work, and the writings of other people unsurprisingly did not mention *Ṭs¹m*. They have been written about in classical Arab poetry, and in the reports of Arab classical historians, geographers, and travelers (Ali 1993: 334). Thus, some researchers have tried to produce a picture of *Ṭs¹m* that is closer to myth than to actual history: for example, some claimed that *Ṭs¹m* and *Jidis* were cousins who lived together in al-Yamamah between 110 BCE and 525 CE, which was one of the most fertile countries during that time (Ali 1993: 334).

Some researchers propose that *Ṭs¹m* is a mythical tribe, and that the story with *Jadis* is not true, particularly one part about a woman who belonged to the tribe of *Ṭs¹m* but was married to a member of the sister tribe *Jadis*. She was called *Zarqāʾ al-Yamāma,* "the blue-

eyed woman of Yamāma"; it said that she had a rare gift, as she was believed to have the ability to see riders from the distance of one week (Ali 1993: 334).

Regarding our inscription, the subject of the study, we only have a few indications that confirm the existence of *Ṭs¹m*. Firstly, a Greek text dating back to the year 322 CE was found by D. H. Müller at Salkhad in Syria. It mentioned a person who belonged to the *Ṭs¹m* tribe, called *'Anam Tassam* (Müller 1877: 67). Secondly, it is suggested that the *Ṭs¹m* tribe is directly linked with Biblical genealogies, and thus precedes the split into Northern and Southern Arabs, as shown by Adnan. J. Zaydan (1922: 66), who identifies *Ṭs¹m* with the Biblical לְטוּשִׁם "Letushim" of Genesis 25:3, as it is mentioned with another Arab tribe from Dedan, לְאֻמִּים "Leummim."

Genesis 25:3:

וְיָקְשָׁן יָלַד אֶת־שְׁבָא וְאֶת־דְּדָן וּבְנֵי דְדָן הָיוּ אַשּׁוּרִם וּלְטוּשִׁם וּלְאֻמִּים

"And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim"

According to scholars, Ṭs¹m land was inhabited by Jadis in the historical region of al-Yamamah, the now-extinct ancient village of Jaww al-Yamamah (al-Hamawī 1995: vol. 2: 96). For some scholars, it seems that this was not the first home of *Ṭs¹m* (Mahran 1998: 167-168). In their early history *Ṭs¹m* and *Jadis* lived together in the lands of Babylon, and when the Persians invaded the lands of Babylon they then moved into the Arabian Peninsula and settled between al-Ahqaf, al-Bahrayn, and al-Yamamah (Heinrichs 2000: 359-360).

Both tribes were ruled by a king from *Ṭs¹m* called 'Amlīḵ (or 'Amlūk), who was a vicious and tyrannical ruler. 'Amlīḵ humiliated and dishonored *Jadis* who rebelled against him, crushed him and killed his entourage. A few men of *Ṭs¹m* managed to escape the massacre, among them Reyāḥ ibn Murrah, the brother of Zarqā' al-Yamāmah. Reyāḥ ibn Murrah headed south to King Ḥassān ibn Tubba' of Yemen and asked him to avenge their dead. King Ḥassān seized the opportunity, as it was always his wish to expand his kingdom northwards to include al-Yamamah. He returned to *Jadis* territory and fought them until they were wiped out, and thus the two tribes perished (al-Mas'ūdī 1990, Vol 2. 106-110).

In Arabic literature, the story of *Jadis* and *Ṭs¹m* is frequently told, such as by the poet al-Būsīrī who said: (al-Būsīrī :2011109)

وكأَنَّ طَسمًا لمْ تكنْ وَجَديسا   هَلَكَتْ جَديسُ وطَسْمُ حِينَ تعادَتا

"*Jadis* and *Ṭs¹m* were wiped out when they were hostile to one another as if they had never been"

Our inscription, the subject of this study, is the strongest evidence yet that shows that *Ṭs¹m* was not a mythical tribe. Moreover, this inscription hints that their original territory may be the Euphrates region.

ᶜs¹tr: pn. It is not hitherto known in Safaitic. We may compare it with the name *ᶜs¹trt* attested in Oxtoby no. 275, which according to Oxtoby (1968: 84, no. 275), may be derived from the divine name Ishtar.

gls¹: v.g-stem. "To halt". Root: *gls¹* "(see: Al-Jallad and Jaworska 2019: 72). It is the equivalent of the Arabic جَلَسَ/ *galasa* "to halt" (see: Ibn Manẓur: *galasa*). *rmḥ*: v.g.-stem. Root. *rmḥ*. *rmḥ* as a noun "Lance, Spear" is frequently attested in Safaitic. It is attested here for the first time as a verb in Safaitic. It could be the equivalent of the Arabic رَمَحَ

/*ramaḥa* "Spearing, or galloping horse". الرَمْح /*ar-ramḥ* in Arabic is the fastest a horse can move (Ibn Manẓur 2003: *rmḥ*). It is noteworthy that other Safaitic inscriptions used the formula *rmy b-rmḥ* to express the act of striking with a spear (See: Al-Jallad and Jaworska 2019). Thus we think that it is better to translate *rmḥ* in this inscription as "galloping horse".

mḥbbn: n.pl. "beloved ones". Root: *ḥbb*. The noun *mḥbb* has been noted as a singular noun in many other Safaitic inscriptions (see: Al-Jallad and Jaworska 2019: 95), but it is attested here for the first time in Safaitic in its plural form.

frt: Top. "Euphrates". This noun has been noted in other three Safaitic inscriptions. It is attested as a personal name in CSNS, and as a toponym in other two inscriptions: the first is RNQ 329**:** *l ʿqrb bn grmʾl bn bḫtn w ḫrṣ ʾbgr ʾḫ -h ṣmkr ʿl- {n}hr frt f h gdḍf sˡlm* "By ʿqrb son of Grmʾl son of Bḫtn and he kept watch for ʾbgr, his brother, at Ṣmkr bordering the {river} Euphrates, so, O Gdḍf, let there be security"; and the second is:[3] *l ḥrt bn nmgn ḏ- ʾl ʾsˡ w wgm ʿl- {y} ʿt w trḥ w mty l- frt f h lt sˡlm* "By Ḥrt son of Nmgn of the lineage of ʾsˡ and he grieved for {Yʿt} and he had perished and he travelled quickly to Frt and so Ô, Lt [grant] security."

Inscription No 2
Transliteration
ltm bn bln ḏ- ʾl ʿlyn wglsˡ
Translation
By tm son of bln of the lineage of 'lyn, and he encamped

Commentary
This short inscription was found above the first one (no. 1) on the same stone. It contains the authorʾs name and his genealogy. *Tm son of bln*—the author of the inscription— mentions that he encamped (in this place). *Bln* is a personal name that has been noted on eight other Safaitic inscriptions (see OCIANA)[4].

ʿlyn: is a tribe name attested here for the first time in Safaitic inscriptions. It was a branch of a Hamadan tribe, which is one of the most famous Kahlani tribes that were known before Islam, and it had a great reputation after the advent of Islam.

Conclusion
This research presents and analyzes unique Safaitic inscriptions found during an epigraphic survey in the al-Laẓāiym region of the north-eastern Bādiyah of Jordan. The first inscription mentions the legendary tribe of Ṭsˡm, which is one of the most famous extinct Arab tribes. The inscription contains the first reference to this tribe in the ancient Semitic inscriptions discovered so far. Both inscriptions reveal new verbs, personal names, and tribe names hitherto attested for the first time in Safaitic.

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[3] URL of this record (for citation): http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/corpus/pages/OCIANA_0024104.html
[4] URL of this record (for citation): http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/corpus/pages/OCIANA_0004958.html

Abbreviations

BES	Badia Epigraphic Survey
g-stem	ground stem (form I).
CSNS	Clark, V.A. 1979. A Study of New Safaitic Inscriptions from Jordan
n	Noun.
No	Number
OCIANA	Online Corpus of the Inscriptions of Ancient North Arabia. http://krc.orient.ox.ac.uk/ociana/index.php
pl:	plural
pn:	proper noun
RNQ:	al-Roussan, M., (2004). Nuqūsh ṣafawīyah min wādī qiṣṣāb bi-al-urdun.
top:	toponym
v:	verb

قبيلة طسم الأسطورية: أول دليل على وجودها في نقش صفوي من الأردن

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ملخص

يتناول البحث دراسة واحد من النقوش الصفويَّة المهمَّة، الذي جرى اكتشافُهُ مؤخَّرًا في منطقة اللظايم في البادية الشماليَّة الشرقيَّة الأردنيَّة؛ إذ يرد فيه اسمُ قبيلة طسم، وهي إحدى القبائل العربيَّة البائدة. وَيُعَدُّ هذا النقشُ أوَّلَ دليل صريح على ذكر هذه القبيلة البائدة في نقش سامي.

الكلمات الدالة: قبائل عربيَّة بائدة، طسم، الصفويَّة، نقوش ساميَّة، بادية الأردن.

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