

A New Most Beautiful Name of *Allāh* in an Early Islamic Inscription from Southern Jordan?

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Abstract

This study tackles a personal name that appears in an Arabic inscription from the early 2nd century of the Islamic era that W.J. Jobling discovered in Wādī Shīrah in southern Jordan in the 1980s. Although several authors dealt with the inscription, they did not pay enough attention to the name of the inscription's owner that appears in line four as *ʿbd l-ʿlā*. After discussing the possible vocalizations of the name, the paper comes to favor the form *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā* and it draws the attention to the fact that it appears for the first time in the Arab onomastics. More importantly, the study points out that this name contains a so far unattested epithet of *Allāh*. Thus, the paper offers a brief review of the “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” and their canonization and considers the circumstances that allowed for coining this new “Beautiful Name”. It concluded that this was made possible, firstly because of the liberal theological stance towards the corpus of “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*”, which regarded it as an open list of epithets, and secondly based on the name's affinity to the other “Beautiful Names” derived from the verb *ʿalā*.

Keywords: The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*, Arabic inscriptions, Southern Jordan, Wādī Shīrah, theophoric names.

INTRODUCTION

During his 1988 archaeological and epigraphic survey of Wādī Shīrah in southern Jordan,¹ W. J. Jobling discovered an Arabic inscription in a waystation mosque. He gave some information about the inscription (1989: 255), but did not publish it, or provide a photograph of it. In 1993, he delivered a further report on the same campaign (244-47), in which he published a photograph of the inscription, gave the name of its owner, and mentioned that it is dated to 107 H or 109 H. It was in 1997 that the first systematic study of this inscription appeared. Hoyland provided a transliteration, translation, commentary, and an excellent photograph of it (97-100), and established that it was written in 109 H. Later, several archaeologists republished the same inscription: Krayyim [Karīm] (2002: 259-81), al-Bqāʿīn (2004, 56-8) and al-Farājāt and al-Nawāflah (2005, 30-31). Finally, in 2015 al-Bqāʿīn, Corbett and Khamis (114-15) tackled the inscription again in a comprehensive article on the mosque and the waystation in Wādī Shīrah.

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¹ For information on the archaeological and epigraphical remains in Wādī Shīrah, see al-Bqāʿīn *et al.* 2015.

The Inscription

It has come down to us in relatively good condition. Its script is elegant, and it is readable without difficulty, except for lines six and seven.



Figure 1: The Wādī Shīrah inscription

Photo after al-Bqā'īn *et al.* 2015, 114, by G. Corbett

- 1- بسم
- 2- الله الرحمن
- 3- الرحيم اللهم
- 4- فعل من عند العلاء بن سعيد
- 5- صلاته وصومه وحفظه
- 6- [هـ²... في اهله واحلفه في]
- 7- واصلحه انك على [كل شيء قدير
- 8- صل الله عليه وسلم واسلم عليه
- 9- ورحمب الله وبركاته و
- 10- كتب في رمصان
- 11- سنة سبع ومائة

² al-Bqā'īn *et al.* 2015, 114 suggest: [إنصره] / [إنصره], which I do not find convincing, and would rather adapt the cautious reading of Hoyland given here, notwithstanding the embedded difficulties. However, since the translation of line six is irrelevant to this article, I will not pursue its reading any further here.

The translation:

1. In the name
2. of *Allāh* the Merciful
3. the Compassionate. O *Allāh*,
4. accept from *ʿbd l-ʿlā* son of *Saʿīd*
5. his prayer and his fasting, and keep him
6. among his family, and act as his deputy for his [...]
7. and make him virtuous. You are cap[able of everything].
8. May *Allāh* pray on him and greet him. And may peace be upon him
9. and the mercy of *Allāh* and His blessing. And
10. he wrote in Ramaḍān
11. of the year one hundred and nine.

The Name of the Inscription's Owner

Although the above-mentioned studies tackled the various aspects of the inscription, a closer look at them shows, however, that the name of the inscription's owner in line four has not received the attention it deserves. As stated previously, the inscription is easy to read and its editors agree on reading the personal name in line four as: *ʿbd l-ʿlā*, but do not agree on how to vocalize it.



Figure 2: The name of the inscription's owner in line four

Krayyim (2002: 260), al-Bqāʿīn (2004: 57) and al-Farājāt and al-Nawāflah (2005: 30) gave the name in the Arabic script as *ʿbd l-ʿlā*, without the short vowels, which did not reveal the morphological form they assumed for it. Jobling read in his 1993 report *ʿAbd alʿulla* (244) and left the geminated *l* of *alʿulla* unaccounted for. Since the second *l* in *ʿulla* does not correspond to any form derived from the root *ʿlw*; I take it, therefore, for a misprint and assume that he considered the theophoric element in this name *al-ʿUla*. Hoyland (1997: 98) gave *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā* in his transliteration, but his translation has *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā* with a final *hamzah*. The *hamzah* is clearly not on the stone, and there are no epigraphic grounds to suggest it. Al-Bqāʿīn, Corbett and Khamis (2015: 114) gave *ʿAbd il-ʿAlʿa* in their transliteration but read *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā* in their translation. I assume that *ʿAlʿa* is a misprint for *ʿAlā*, which probably indicates that they followed Hoyland's reading. To sum up, the studies that have tackled this inscription so far suggest that the forms that might underlie *ʿl-ʿlā* are *al-ʿulā* or *al-ʿalā*(ʿ).

Both forms are possible. We need, therefore, to take a closer look at their semantic, religious, onomastic, and orthographic aspects, to decide which of them is more favorable. *Al-ʿulā*, suggested by Jobling, is derived from the verb *ʿalā*, which signifies “high or

elevated rank”, “eminence” (Lane 1984: 2142, 2146). A meaning suitable for a theophoric element. It is a feminine plural form of ‘*ulyā*’ (highness) (Lane 1984, 2147). Ibn Manẓūr (d 711/1311) (1990: 15, 84-85) stresses its religious significance by maintaining: “... it is the plural of the highest characteristic and of the highest word [‘*ulyā*’], *al-‘ulā* is also the plural of the highest name [of *Allāh*] *al-‘a’lā* (The Highest)”. This statement stands much in favor of *al-‘ulā* as a candidate for the theophoric element in our inscription. The textual evidence yet does not back this conclusion. *Al-‘ulā* appears only twice in the *Qur’ān*, both in *sūra* 20 (*Tāhā*), referring once to the “highest heavens” (verse 20): “A revelation from He who created the earth and highest (*al-‘ulā*) heavens”³, and, in the other, to the “highest degrees” (verse 75): “But whoever comes to Him as a believer having done righteous deeds – for those will be the highest (*al-‘ulā*) degrees”, but never referring to *Allāh* himself.

A further argument against the vocalization of ‘*l-‘lā*’ in the Wādī Shīrah inscription as *al-‘Ulā* lies in its orthography. In both Qur’anic occasions mentioned above, the final *alif* of *al-‘ulā* is written with *alif maqṣūrah*, unlike the orthography of the personal name in the inscription, where it is written with *lām alif*, as is usually the case in the inscriptions of the Umayyad period (Gruendler 1993: 118-20). Admittedly, the writing with *alif maqṣūrah* is occasionally admissible, as is shown by the Qur’anic orthography itself, but the writing of ‘*l-‘lā*’ with *lām alif* in fact favors its reading as *al-‘alā*.

Finally, one should point out that *al-‘ulā* plays no role in theophoric personal names, neither pre-Islamic nor Islamic. In fact, it does not appear in the early and medieval Arab onomastics at all (al-Kalbī (d. 204/819) 1966: 2; Ibn Durayd (d. 321/933):1979).

Al-‘alā’ also is derived from ‘*alā*’. This infinitive fits well therefore as a theophoric element referring to *Allāh*. Although it does not occur in the *Qur’ān*, *al-‘Alā*’ is well attested as a masculine personal name in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, but without any religious connotations. Ibn al-Athīr (1994: 4, 70-75) mentions 12 companions of the Prophet that had the first name *al-‘Alā*’, all born before Islam. On the other hand, al-Kalbī (1966: 2, 151) mentions two persons with the first name *al-‘Alā*’ born in Islam.

Notwithstanding this secular use, its meaning qualifies it very well as a theophoric element in a personal name, i.e., ‘*Abd al-‘Alā*’ “slave/servant of the Highness” that would denote *Allāh*. One should, however, point out that the infinitive of ‘*alā*’ always comes with a final *hamzah*, unlike in the Wādī Shīrah inscription, where it ends with *lām alif*. At a first glance, one might feel inclined to move away from suggesting *al-‘Alā*’ as the theophoric component in our name, but dialectical variants can be of help here, for *al-‘alā* could be a dialectical variant of *al-‘alā*’, where the *hamzah* is dropped, as in some instances in the *Qur’ān*, such as *gazā* for *gazā*’ in *sūra* 2: 85 (*al-Baqarah*) (Diem 1981: 371). Apparently aware of this, Hoyland added the *hamzah* at the end of the name in his translation (but not his transliteration) of the inscription, without giving his reasons for that. Finally, the orthography of ‘*l-‘lā*’ with *lām alif* clearly speaks, as argued above, in favor of reading the name as *al-‘Alā* and not *al-‘Ulā*.

To recapitulate, although ‘*l-‘lā*’, the theophoric element in the owner’s name appearing

³ Translations from the *Qur’ān* in this paper follow those of Taqī-ud-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muhsin Khān.

in line four of the Wādī Shīrah inscription, can be vocalized *al-‘Ulā* as well as *al-‘Alā*, the sum of the arguments presented above favors the latter reading.

As stated above, one finds the personal name *al-‘Alā* among the pre-Islamic and early Islamic onomastics, but never with *‘abd* (al-Kalbī 1966: 2; Ibn Durayd: 1979). Thus, the owner’s name of this inscription, *‘Abd al-‘Alā*, represents an addition to the Islamic onomasticon.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the theophoric element *al-‘alā* is unique, because this attribute to *Allāh* is not attested so far, to the best of my knowledge. It is remarkable, however, that the editors of the inscription did not pay attention to this. Only Krayyim (2002: 263) remarked that the name is new and hinted to its possible relationship to *al-‘Aly* (The Elevated), one of “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*”.

The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*

This brings into discussion the question of the “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*”⁴ and their canonization. The term *asmā’ Allāh al-ḥusnā* occurs in the *Qur’ān* four times (Q 7: 180 (*al-‘A’rāf*); Q 17: 110 (*al-‘Isrā’*); Q 20: 8 (*Ṭāhā*); Q 59: 24 (*al-Ḥashr*). Verse 180 of the seventh *sūra* (*al-‘A’rāf*), for example, reads: “And (all) the Most Beautiful Names belong to *Allāh*, so call Him by them, and leave the company of those who belie or deny His Names”. However, these verses do not enumerate the names themselves. The *Qur’ān* left the identity and number of “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” undecided, i.e., it did not tell us which names are included in this genre and which are not.

The tradition of the Prophet, on the other hand, goes in three different ways, as far as these names are concerned.

The first is represented by a tradition after Abū Hurayrah (d. 59/678) that goes as follows: “... There are 99 names of *Allāh*; he who commits them to memory would get into Paradise ...” (Muslim (d. 261/875) 1990: part 16, 4-5). *Ḥadīth* scholars classified this *ḥadīth* as *ḥasan* “of good authority”. It shares the same information as the Qur’anic verses, in that it mentioned that *Allāh* has “The Most Beautiful Names” and added their number, i.e., 99 names, without listing them.

Longer versions of the previous *ḥadīth* manifest the tradition’s second position. These enumerate the 99 “Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” one by one. In theory, this allows us to determine whether a newly attested name, as in our case, belongs to this category of names or not. Only in theory! For the lists attached to this *ḥadīth*, reveal two difficulties: For one, the two main corpora of *ḥadīth*, Bukhārī (d. 256/869) and Muslim do not mention these lists, which clearly undermines their authority. They are mentioned in later, less authoritative sources (v. *infra*). The other problem manifests itself in the content of the lists

⁴ Many studies already tackled “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*”, and it is not the aim of the current article to investigate this topic anew. It will just give a brief overview of this subject to facilitate the discussion of the epithet in question. For more information on these names see Gardet 1979 and Böwering 2002, I, 316-322 with the bibliographies in both studies.

themselves. It suffices to compare two of them: the one given by al-Tarmidhī (d. 279/892) (after al-Walīd ibn Muslim (d. 195/810)) (2011: 5, 1170) with the one given by al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī (d. 405/1014) (transmitted through ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn al-Ḥuṣayn (d. 54/673)) (1990: 1, 62-63). In the latter list, 35 “Beautiful Names” replace names mentioned in the first. It is, thus, obvious that these lists are not the production of a rigid religious screening, but more likely represent popular conventions.

The third stand of the Prophet’s tradition regarding these names also goes down a permissive path. A *ḥadīth* of the Prophet after Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) (transmitted by Ibn Mas‘ūd (d. 32/643)) says: “... I implore You with every name which is Yours, by which You have named Yourself, or which You revealed in Your book, or which You taught one of Your creation, or which You appropriated to Yourself in Your knowledge of hidden things ...” (1994: 6, 246-247, no. 3712). This *ḥadīth* neither gives a number for “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” nor confines them to 99. According to it, they are not limited to a certain corpus of names known to us, which allows for enlisting almost any given number of names under the category “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*”. This view stems in particular from the above-mentioned statement: “... which You taught one of Your creation ...”, for it implies that any one of *Allāh*’s creations might be able to know a hitherto unknown “Most Beautiful Name of *Allāh*”.

In accordance with the second and third positions of the tradition, many Muslim scholars took a liberal stand towards “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*”. They regarded them as adjectives that one can attribute to *Allāh* by reason, with or without textual evidence. One of the best representatives of this liberal attitude is Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111). He allowed (1995: 167), in accordance with the *ash‘arī* position, to assign any attribute to *Allāh* if its meaning agrees with the adjectives or actions assigned to Him in the *Qur’ān*. He explained the occurrence of some non-canonized epithets of *Allāh* by their analogy to other already canonized names. Thus, *al-Qaḥḥār* (The Dominator) became an epithet of *Allāh* through analogy with *al-Qāḥir* (The Subduer), a well-established “Beautiful Name”. Similarly, the non-canonized adjective *al-Aḥad* (The One) was coined based on the canonized “Beautiful Name” *al-Wāḥid* (The One God), and the non-canonized *al-Shākir* (The Grateful) through the canonized *al-Shakūr* (The Very Grateful).

Against this background, one can understand the varying lists of “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” that one finds in Islamic sources. In one instance, for example, al-Sharabāshī (1980) added 73 “Beautiful Names” to the 99 canonized names, thus demonstrating that the corpus of “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” is not considered closed, and one keeps adding to it over time.

One should point out, nonetheless, that this liberal position had a conservative counterpart that saw the “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” as an already determined body of names, and that one should not add to them or replace them. A prominent advocate of this position is Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/855) (2003: 1, 49-51). The large numbers of “Beautiful Names” attested in the various lists clearly show, however, that this conservative position remained theoretical and had little impact in actual practice.

To sum up, the textual evidence from *Qur’ān* and *ḥadīth* mentions the “Most Beautiful

Names of *Allāh*” but does not give an inclusive list of them. This left the door always open for addition of new “Beautiful Names”. This liberal religious position obviously was in line with the public attitude towards religious matters, which did not (and does not) always adhere to the guidelines set by the religious authorities. A glimpse at modern names of Muslims can confirm this. One finds in the Arab countries theophoric names that disagree with the rules set by Muslim theologians, such as ‘*Abd al-Ḥūt* (Slave of Fish) (al-Zubayr 1991: 3, 1953), and ‘*Abd al-Shawk* (Slave of Thorns) (al-Zubayr 1991: 3, 1959), among many others.

Al-‘alā a “Beautiful Name” by Analogy

A look at the most common lists of “The Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” reveals that there are therein three names derived from the verb ‘*alā*: *al-‘Alī* (The Elevated) (four times, for example Q 2: 255 (*al-Baqarah*)), *al-Muta‘ālī* (The Supremely Exalted) (Q 13: 9 (*al-Ra‘d*)), and *al-‘Alā* (The Highest) (three times, for example Q 24: 79 (*al-Nāzi‘āt*)). The use of ‘*alā* as a theophoric element is quite conceivable, for it also has a meaning that fits well as an adjective of a deity, i.e., “became high, elevated, or lofty” (v. *supra*). Consequently, each of these “Beautiful Names” stands as a theophoric element in personal names, classical and modern, combined with ‘*Abd*, such as: ‘*Abd al-‘Alī* (al-Zubayr 1991: 3, 1965), ‘*Abd Muta‘ālī*(ī) (al-Zubayr 1991: 3, 1972) and ‘*Abd al-‘Alā* (al-Zubayr 1991: 3, 1946), also mentioned by al-Kalbī (1966: 2, 122 for the earlier periods).

A glimpse at Muslim personal names, however, reveals that Muslims extended the sacral sense embedded in these three epithets to other adjectives derived from ‘*alā*, not mentioned in the *Qur‘ān* as epithets of *Allāh*. This probably happened in analogy to the already canonized “Beautiful Names” from the same verb, according to the above-mentioned concept proposed above by al-Ghazālī. This almost certainly was backed by the understanding that all words derived from the verb ‘*alā* can refer to *Allāh*, as expressed, for example by Ibn-Manzūr (d. 711/1311). In his discussion of the root ‘*lw* (1990: 15, 85), he spoke of *Allāh* maintaining that: “He is *al-‘alī*, *al-muta‘ālī*, *al-‘ālī* (The High), *al-‘alā*, *dhū-l-‘ulā* (the Highest), (*dhū*)-*l-‘alā*’ (The One with the Highness) and (*dhū*)-*l-ma‘ālī*” ((The One with the actions that are) the means of acquiring high rank), along with these names he also mentioned the verb *ta‘ālā* (exalted be (*Allāh*)). For him, these words stand together in expressing *Allāh*’s exalted status, although *al-‘Ālī*, *al-‘Ulā*, *al-‘Alā*’ and *al-Ma‘ālī*’ do not occur as adjectives of *Allāh* or his actions in the *Qur‘ān* (‘Abd al-Bāqī 1981). Nonetheless, he placed them in a similar position to those which refer to *Allāh* in the *Qur‘ān*.

Taking the above into consideration, it becomes comprehensible that people gave their children names built from these adjectives that do not occur in the *Qur‘ān*, repurposing them into theophoric elements. One example is the name ‘*Abd al-‘Ālī*(ī) (al-Zubayr 1991: 3, 1962). In agreement with this, one can assume that *al-‘Alā* in the Wādī al-Shīrah inscription was coined as a theophoric element referring to *Allāh* in correspondence with the other “Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” derived from the verb ‘*alā*.

Epigraphical Evidence for the Theophoric Names in the Early Islamic Period

To better judge the appearance of the theophoric name under discussion in the Wādī Shīrah inscription, one needs to become acquainted with the use of this genre of names in the early Islamic period in Jordan and its environs. For this goal, we will have a look at the personal names mentioned in inscriptions from the first two centuries in this region.

Krayyim (2003) documented 66 early Islamic inscriptions from sites not far from Wādī Shīrah. His collection has 102 personal names; twelve of them are theophoric: *ʿAbd Allāh* (4 times), *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā*, *ʿAbd al-ʿAlī*, and *ʿAbd al-Malik* (all of three appear once only). Whereas the hypocoristicon *ʿbd* appears five times.

From eight other sites in southern Jordan, Krayyim and al-Maʿānī documented inscriptions, in which 74 names appear, three are theophoric that appear in four instances: *ʿAbd [Allā]h* from Wādī Ḥudruj (Krayyim and al-Maʿānī 2000a: 171) and from Shaʿīb al-ʿĀdhiriyyah (al-Maʿānī and Krayyim 2002: 836), *ʿAbd al-Malik* from Wādī al-Ghirrah (Krayyim and al-Maʿānī 2000b: 111), and *ʿAbd al-Raḥmān* from Wādī al-Ghirrah (al-Maʿānī and Krayyim 2000: 435).

In the 64 Umayyad inscriptions collected by al-Ḥiṣān (2007), mainly in the northeastern desert of Jordan, 95 personal names are attested. This corpus shows five theophoric names, appearing in eight instances: *ʿAbd Allāh* (ins. 21, ins. 27, ins. 54), *ʿAbd al-Raḥmān* (ins. 57), *ʿAbd al-ʿAlīm* (ins. 4), *ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz* (ins. 22, ins. 58), *ʿAbd al-Malik* (ins. 50).

If one moves to Palestine and Egypt for comparison, one finds in ʿAyn Zurayb, not far from the southern end of the Dead Sea on the Palestinian side, 27 inscriptions from the 1st and 2nd centuries AH were found (Sharon 1999: 159). They reveal the following theophoric names: *ʿAbd al-Allāh* (ins. 15) (170); (ins. 17) (171-172); (ins. 26) (177), *ʿAbd al-Raḥmān* (ins. 57), *ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz* (ins. 3) (163), *ʿAbd al-Malik* (ins. 5) (164-65).

In the Qurra ibn Sharīk archive from Egypt dated to 90/91 (708/709) one finds 89 personal names, among them the following four theophoric names (all citations after Abū Ṣafiyyah (2004): *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā*: (206; 210) (reconstructed after the Greek text); (261; 263); *ʿAbd Allāh*: (133; 155 (largely reconstructed)); (199; 211-12 partly reconstructed)); (222; 242); *ʿAbd al-Raḥmān*: (244; 273; 279); *ʿAbd al-Malik*: (155).

From the above review of theophoric personal names in the early Islamic period, one can deduce the following:

- All theophoric elements in these corpora are adjectives of *Allāh* mentioned in the Qurʾān and are enlisted in the canonized lists of the “Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*”, i.e., not a single name among them is built by analogy. This shows, on the one hand, that people were aware of a canonized corpus of “Beautiful Names” and adhered to it. It undoubtedly confirms, on the other hand, the uniqueness of *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā* in the Wādī Shīrah inscription as a theophoric name with a non-canonized theophoric element.

- Yet, although not a “Beautiful Name”, *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā* stands close to the canonized “Beautiful Names”, since, as we have shown above, it is built by analogy to other “Beautiful names” from the root *ʿālā*. In sites near Wādī Shīrah one found two canonized

early Islamic theophoric personal names built with the verb *ʿalā* (Krayyim 2003): *ʿAbd al-ʿAʿlā* and *ʿAbd al-ʿAly* (v. *supra*).

- Theophoric personal names appear in these early Islamic corpora in 35 instances only, i.e., merely 10.4 percent of all 337 personal names. In these 35 attestations only seven deferent “Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh*” are represented, leaving the rest of the supposedly 99 names corpus unattested. This evidently shows that theophoric names were a marginal category of personal names in the early Islamic period. The subordinate status of this genre might have facilitated a permissive attitude towards adding to it by building theophoric names by analogy, as was case with *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā*.

- The use of these seven theophoric names specifically was most probably religiously and politically motivated.⁵

CONCLUSION

Our inscription dates to the year 109 H/727-728 CE, which allows us to suppose that a certain *Saʿīd*, probably towards the last quarter of the first Islamic century, named his newborn son *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā* using his local dialectical form of the name. The father intuitively built a pseudo “Beautiful name” in analogy to other, already attested “Beautiful Names” from the root *ʿalā*, centuries before Islamic scholars like al-Ghazālī framed theological rules for this practice. At any rate, the name *ʿAbd al-ʿAlā* illustrates that Muslims towards the later decades of the first Islamic century took certain liberties in assigning attributes to *Allāh* that the theological discourse during later periods partly or fully restricted.

⁵ One could explain the frequent utilization of the two personal names *ʿAbd Allāh* (18 times) and *ʿAbd al-Raḥmān* (five times) by the favorable status assigned to them by the *ḥadīth* narrated after Muslim (2132): “The most favorable names to *Allāh* are *ʿAbd Allāh* and *ʿAbd al-Raḥmān*”. Both names could also be, according to Caskel (1966: I, 52) Islamic variants of pre-Islamic pagan theophoric names. On the other hand, the names *ʿAbd al-Malik* (six times) and *ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz* (three times), were carried by members of the Umayyad house (names of two children of Khalif Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam), which most probably made them fashionable.

اسم جديد من أسماء الله الحُسنى في نقش إسلامي مبكر من جنوب الأردن

عمر الغول*

ملخص

يناقش البحث اسم علم يرد في نقش عربي يرجع إلى أوائل القرن الثاني الهجري، اكتشف في وادي شيرة بجنوب الأردن في ثمانينيات القرن العشرين. وعلى الرغم من أن عددًا من الباحثين اشتغل بالنقش، فإنهم لم يولوا اسم صاحبه عناية كافية. يخلص البحث بعد مناقشة الاحتمالات المختلفة لشكل الاسم إلى أن لفظه -على الأرجح- هو "عبد العلاء"، وبلغت النظر إلى أن هذا الاسم يرد للمرة الأولى ضمن أسماء العلم العربية، غير أن أهم ما بلغت النظر في الاسم أنه يصف الله -سبحانه وتعالى- باسم لم يرد سابقًا ضمن القوائم المتفق عليها لأسماء الله الحُسنى؛ لذا يناقش البحث هذه الأسماء والأحاديث والآراء الواردة بشأنها في المصادر الإسلامية؛ سعيًا إلى فهم المعطيات الدينية التي أتاحت ظهور هذا الاسم خلافًا لما هو متوقع. وعليه، فقد خلص البحث إلى أن استخدام هذا الاسم يرجع، في المحل الأول، إلى الموقف المتساهل الذي أبداه الفقهاء تجاه تقنين أسماء الله الحُسنى، معتبرين إيّاها قائمة "مفتوحة" من الألقاب، لا كبير حرج في الإضافة إليها. وقد استخدم هذا الاسم أيضًا لشبهه بأسماء أخرى من أسماء الله الحُسنى مشتقة من الفعل "علا"، مثل "عبد العلي".

الكلمات الدالة: أسماء الله الحُسنى، نقوش عربية، جنوب الأردن، وادي شيرة، الأسماء المرغبة مع لفظ الجلالة.

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