

A new Minaean inscription from North Arabia*

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The present publication represents a welcome addition to the relatively small number of inscriptions in Minaean script discovered in North Arabia. The basic bulk of these inscriptions has been included in RÉS (Nos. 3266–3293; 3338–3382; 3602–3605; 3608; 3610; 3695–3852; 3927: from Petra). Recently some of these inscriptions have been republished by Garbini (1) (Nos. 287–291; 313–335; 350–372; 389–391; 452; 457; 464–465). Five Minaean inscriptions have been discovered at Wādī Ramm (2). G. Ryckmans has also studied 50 Minaean graffiti found by Philby & Bogue in Hijaż (3). Winnett & Reed (4) published three new inscriptions, one found in the Jawf area, but also dealt with previously known inscriptions (5). Sayyed (6) studied one Minaean inscription on a sandstone block now in the storehouse of the Department of Antiquities and Museums in al-'Ulā. Still further to the North, several Minaean inscriptions have been found in southern Jordan in the Ḥisma area and published by Graf (7). Finally, reference should be made to A. Nasif, who recently published photographs of more than thirty Minaean graffiti (8).

The present inscription (Fig. 1) was discovered during a survey conducted by the author in the summer of 1987 for the purpose

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Note the following abbreviations: DN = Divine Name; OSA = Old South Arabian; PN = Personal Name; RÉS = Répertoire d'Épigraphie Sémitique.



Fig. 1.
The new Minaean inscription from North Arabia.

of collecting Aramaic and Nabataean inscriptions and graffiti (9). The spot in which the inscription was located (10) is about 60 km NW of al-'Ulā. It is in relief and engraved with early Minaean script to be dated to the fourth century BC.

Especially characteristic of the text are the letters *b* and *h*. The inscription consists of two lines which read *whb'l w hmyn* "whb'l and hmyn". The first line contains the name *whb'l*; the vertical stroke of the letter *w* joining the letter below should be noted. The name *whb'l* – "gift of 'l" or "'l has granted" – is a common name in pre-Islamic Arabian inscriptions (11). The name *hmyn* occurs in Minaean six times (12). It may be taken as containing the root *hmy* (*hamiya*), "to be warm", in the adjectival formation *fa'lan*. The root meaning "to defend", "to protect" is less probable, since the *-an*-suffix is commonly attached to intransitive verbs (13). Nevertheless an infinitive *himyān* should be taken into consideration, perhaps meaning "protection" (14) (compare Ryckmans (15) who reads the Minaean name as *himyān*). The latter alternative has been discussed thoroughly by Müller (16). In this case *hmyn* would be a short name ("protection of DN"). Abdallah (17) relates the OSA name to *hamīn* occurring in al-Iklil of al-Hamd-āni, and suggests reading the PN as *humayn*. The same PN occurs in Naba-

taean and Palmyrene inscriptions, (see al-Khraysheh (18) and Stark (19), who interpreted the name as *ḥumaiyān* and *ḥamyān* respectively) (20).

References

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3. Ryckmans G. Graffites minéens relevés par H. St. J. Philby et R. G. Bogue dans le Ḥigāz septentrional. *Le Muséon* 78: 1965: 217–228. Reference mentioned Winnett & Reed, *Ancient Records*, 74; and Graf, Dedanite and Minaean Inscriptions: 562.
4. Winnett & Reed, *Ancient Records*: 74, 122.
5. These are RÉS 3721, 3722, 3727, 3732, 3733, 3735, 3736, and 3738.
6. Sayyed AMAH. A New Minaean Inscription from al-Ola. *Journal of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities* (King Abdul Aziz University, Jeddah) 2: 1982: 51–65. This inscription had already been published by Jamme A. *Miscellanées d'ancien [sic] arabe VII*. Washington: no publisher, 1974: 67–68 and facsimile on Pl. 17, under the siglum Ja 2288. Cf. Jamme A. *Miscellanées d'ancien [sic] arabe XIV*. Washington: no publisher, 1985: 71.
7. Graf, Dedanite and Minaean Inscriptions: 555–569.
8. Nasif A. *Al-'Ulā: An Historical and Archaeological Survey with special Reference to its Irrigation System*. Riyadh, 1988: Pl. XCVII–CIX, CXI, and CLXII.
9. Now published in my PhD. thesis. Al-Theeb S. *A Comparative Study of Aramaic and Nabataean Inscriptions from North-West Saudi Arabia*. Durham: Durham University, 1989.
10. Together with a few Thamudic and Lihyanite inscriptions.
11. See Harding GL. *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions*. Toronto: Near and Middle East Series, 1971: 8: 651 (e.g. 16 attestations in Minaean).
12. See Harding, *An Index*: 205.
13. Cf. Brockelmann C. *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*, i. Berlin: Von Reuter & Reichard, 1908: 392.
14. Brockelmann, *Grundriss*, i: 390, §212 B.a.
15. Ryckmans G. *Les noms propres sud-sémitiques*, i. *Répertoire analytique*. Louvain: Bibliothèque du Muséon, 1934: 2: 94. Ryckmans

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refers to Hess JJ. *Beduinennamen aus Zentralarabien*. Heidelberg: Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Klasse, 1912: 19: 19. As Prof. W.W. Müller has suggested, the latter lists, however, the name "hmeijan".

16. Müller WW. *Die Wurzeln Mediae und Tertiae Y/W im Altsüdarabischen: eine etymologische und lexikographische Studie*. Tübingen: Inaugural Dissertation, 1962: 42–43.

17. Abdallah Y. *Die Personennamen in al-Hamdānī's al-Iklīl und ihre Parallelen in den altsüdarabischen Inschriften: ein Beitrag zur jemenitischen Namengebung*. Tübingen: Inaugural Dissertation, 1975: 45.

18. al-Khraysheh F. *Die Personennamen in den nabatäischen Inschriften des Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*. Marburg/Lahn: Inaugural Dissertation, 1986: 86.

19. Stark JK. *Personal Names in Palmyrene Inscriptions*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971: 89.

20. Prof. W. W. Müller tends to explain the name as *ḥumaiyān* containing the OSA article *-ān* and corresponding to North Arabian *al-ḥumaiy* (compare *ḥumaiy* in al-Iklīl).

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