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Vorwort

Am 3. September 2004 kam Alexander Sima bei einem Verkehrsunfall im ostjemenitischen Mahraland ums Leben. Er befand sich gerade auf Feldforschung, um letzte Ergänzungen für seine geplante Habilitationsschrift über die Mehri-Sprache zu sammeln. Sein viel zu früher Tod — Alexander hatte noch nicht einmal sein 35. Lebensjahr vollendet — war eine Tragödie für seine Frau, seine Tochter und seine Eltern sowie ein schwerer Schlag für alle, die ihn kannten und schätzten.

Aber sein Ableben bedeutete auch — obwohl dies hinter die persönliche Tragik zurücktreten muß — einen großen Verlust für die Wissenschaft. Alexander Sima hatte extrem vielseitige Interessen und widmete sich doch immer mit voller Begeisterung und großem Einsatz demjenigen Thema, das er gerade bearbeitete. Ein Blick in die auf den folgenden Seiten abgedruckte Publikationsliste Alexander Simas zeigt, wieviel er in den kurzen Jahren seiner Forscherkarriere geleistet hat, und in der *Scientific community* besteht kein Zweifel, daß ihm eine große Zukunft als Wissenschaftler auf internationaler Ebene offengestanden wäre.

Da inzwischen einige Nachrufe auf Alexander Sima erschienen sind, wollen wir hier nicht nochmals auf sein Leben und seine Werke im Detail eingehen, sondern nur auf die entsprechenden Veröffentlichungen verweisen:

Walter W. Müller: "Alexander Sima (9. Nov. 1969 — 3. Sept. 2004)." In: *Archiv für Orientforschung* 50 (2003/2004), Seite 514-516.

Michael Jursa: "Alexander Sima." In: *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 94 (2004), Seite VII-VIII.

Janet Watson: "*In Memoriam* Alexander Sima." In: *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 35 (2005), pp. 6-8.

Bald nach dem tragischen Ereignis im September 2004 faßten wir den Entschluß zur Herausgabe der **A***nalecta* **S***emitica* **I***n* **M***emoriam* **A***lexandri.* Nun liegt diese Gedenkschrift endlich vor und die Liste derjenigen, die zu ihr beigetragen haben, demonstriert, wie sehr Alexander mit seinem Fach und dessen Vertreterinnen und Vertretern in der ganzen Welt verwoben war. Wir kennen nicht seinesgleichen.

Wien, Marburg, Heidelberg, im Sommer 2009 Die Herausgeber

Schriftenverzeichnis Alexander Sima

STEFAN WENINGER

Marburg

a. Monographien

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11. Aramaica aus Dedan und Taymā. *Arabian archaeology and epigraphy* 10 (1999), 54-57.

12. „Another monotheistic dedication: Ja 2956“? Anmerkungen zu den Namensformen des Gottes ḏSmwy und seines Tempels Yġrw. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 89 (1999), 207-224.
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d. Artikel in Nachschlagewerken

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e. Online-Bibliographie

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ARNA Nab 17 and the transition from the Nabataean to the Arabic script

M.C.A. MACDONALD

Oxford

In grateful and admiring memory
of Alexander Sima,
a brilliant scholar and a delightful friend.

In May 1962, F.V. Winnett and W.L. Reed discovered a Nabataean inscription on a ridge which they called Jabal Abū al-Jays, near al-Jawf, in Saudi Arabia.[1] They made a hand copy of it and photographed it twice. J.T. Milik and J. Starcky published it as ARNA Nab 17 with a facsimile but without the photographs.[2] In 1996, Ḫ.I. al-Muʿayqil and S.A. al-Ḏīyīb republished it from Milik and Starcky's facsimile, reading it as two inscriptions: their nos 63 and 64.

Apart from the first word of line 3, both sets of editors read lines 3–5 without difficulty. However, they both had problems with the reading and interpretation of lines 1–2 (= al-Muʿayqil & al-Ḏīyīb 1996: no. 63).

With the aid of a photograph (Pl. 1) taken in much better conditions than those of Winnett and Reed's, a more coherent reading of the text can now be suggested and it can be seen that the inscription contains a number of interesting features which deserve further discussion.

The five-line Nabataean inscription is carved on the more or less triangular face of an outcrop of pinkish sandstone. From the photograph, the edges of the face

1 Winnett and Reed spell the name *Jabal Abū al-Jays* (1970: 19, 73) and *Jabal Abu'l Jays* (1970: 145), which is no doubt how they heard it, and give neither a map reference nor an indication of its position in relation to Dūmat al-Jandal. Al-Muʿayqil and al-Ḏīyīb spell it *Jabal Abū Qays* (NB without the article, 1996: 203) and place it NNW of Dūmat al-Jandal on the map (4) on p. 86. The *Official Standard Names Gazetteer* for the Arabian Peninsula (1961: 5) gives the name as *Abū al-Qaws* and its co-ordinates as 29° 54 N 39° 35' E which would place it approximately 15 km NNW of Dūmat al-Jandal.

2 See Winnett & Reed 1970: 145–146, 230 pl. 26. The unpublished photographs are in Professor Winnett's archive which is on loan to me from the University of Toronto Library.

would seem to measure, clockwise starting at the left, approximately 48, 47 and 48 cms respectively.[3]
I would read:

1. *w šbʿyn*
2. *dnh šnt mʾh*
3. *ʾy dkyr ʿwydw*
4. *br šlymw*
5. *khnʾ*

Notes on the reading

Line 1: Milik and Starcky were unable to read the first three letters of line 1 on the photographs at their disposal, but assumed that it was a personal name followed by the verb *ʿbd* (1970: 145).[4] However, the new photograph (Pl. 1) shows that such an interpretation is untenable. The first two letters are clearly *w-š*, and the third could be a *b* or a *n*. The word-division after this third letter, which would be required by Milik and Starcky's reading, would leave the odd upward slope of the base line of the *š-b/n* unexplained. The base-lines in all the other words in this text either slope down to the left or are more or less horizontal in relation to the other words in the line, and the sharp upward movement of the tail of the *b/n* must surely indicate that what follows is part of the same word and that therefore the *b/n* is medial rather than final. The letter ʿ is not normally joined from the *preceding* letter in Nabataean, except in very developed forms of the script,[5] and even in these it is extremely rare for *b-ʿ* or *n-ʿ* to be joined.[6]

The ʿ is clear and the following letter has a slight backward slant starting not far from the base line, suggesting that it is a *y*, see the palaeographical discussion below.

The final letter, is unlikely to be a *d*, as read by Milik and Starcky, followed by al-Muʿayqil and al-Ḏīyīb (1996: 203), since comparison with the three other examples in the text (in *dnh*, *dkyr*, and *ʿwydw*) shows that *d* — as is normal in Nabataean at all periods — retains the flourish at its top. It is very rare in Arabian Nabataean for *d* to be written without this flourish, or at least a horizontal line, at the top, and it

3 It will be noted that the scale in the photograph is of pliable cardboard which has been creased in places so that the divisions are of unequal lengths. In the measurements and in the tracing (Pl. 2) I have therefore "normalized" these divisions giving them all the same length as that at the extreme right, which is the longest. However, this can only give an approximate idea of the size of the stone and the letters. I have assumed that the scale originally measured 25 cms, in 5-cm divisions.

4 Al-Muʿayqil and al-Ḏīyīb read this line *z {.} {š} {.} ʿb d* (1996: 203, no. 63).

5 See, for instance, al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 128 (*šʿdw*, see Pl 3a, here and the revised reading of this text given below in note 45), JSNab 219 (*šgʿw*), 286 (*šʿdw*), 333 (*{k}{n}ʿn*), etc.

6 See, for instance, in informal texts, *bʿtw* in JSNab 212, *bʿnw* in JSNab 296, and in formal texts *bʿnw* in H 10/1, *šbʿh* in H 22/4, and *ʿrbʿ* in H 35/3 (which is clearer on Euting's squeeze, 1885: no. 28).

would be extremely unusual for a *d* to be written both without its flourish and with the base-line continuing under it to the left, particularly in a text in which the other examples of the letter are of a standard form.[7] It should be noted that the final letter is slightly taller than the one before it and I would suggest that it is a *b* or a *n*. Given the other letters in the word, *šbʿyn* would seem to be the most natural reading.

Line 2: The reading of the first two words, *dnh šnt*, is clear, though the form of *h* in *dnh* will be discussed below. Milik and Starcky tentatively read the signs after *šnt* as two ciphers representing 20 and 100 respectively but commented that "la date reste incertaine, à cause de l'ordre inusité : dizaines – centaines," (1970: 145). Using the

7 I can find only three examples in which the *d* in *ʾbd* appears to be represented by a simple vertical line with the base-line continuing to the left below it, (i.e. identical to the *b* which precedes it), all in the onomastic element *ʾbd'l-*, rather than the verb *ʾbd*. The first is from the Jawf area and occurs in the name *ʾbd'lhy* in al-Muʿayqil & al-Ḏīyīb 1996: no. 14 (see the photograph in al-Theeb [=al-Ḏīyīb] 1994a: 36, pl. 2, where it is not read). The script of this text is interesting since it shows that the writer was familiar with both formal, calligraphic letter-shapes (*l*, *m* in *šlm*, the *l* and final *y* in *ʾbd'lhy*, the *t* in *tymw*, and the word *pršw*) as well as more informal ones (the *š* of *šlm*, the *y* in *tymw*). In this context, the *d* of this shape and the *'* consisting of a straight vertical line, next to a calligraphic *l*, suggest that the writer was making an elegant monogram of the first five letters of his name in which the right prong and tail of the *ʿ* were horizontal and the left stroke formed the first in a row of four verticals. The second example is in a graffito from Sinai, CIS ii 947 (see Pl. 3b). I am most grateful to Professor Alain Desreumaux for allowing me to use his photograph of this inscription in which the features described below are extremely clear, in contrast to Bénédite's copy (CIS ii.1.3 Pl. LXXIV). It is a well-carved "signature", in which the first name begins with an *ʿ* followed by three vertical strokes of exactly equal height on a horizontal base which continues below a fourth vertical stroke of almost twice their height. The rest of the name is clearly *bʿly*. CIS read the name as *ʾbd'lbʿly* which would require taking the second of the three vertical strokes as a *d* (with no flourish and joined to the left), and the third as an *'* joined from the right and to the left, despite the fact that these would be extremely unusual shapes and ligatures for these letters. The fourth, taller, stroke must represent *l*, since *bʿly* without the article does not seem to occur in theophoric names in Sinai and thus the reading of the signs before it as *ʾbd'* is probably correct. The third text is al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 88, in which the patronymic must, I think, read *ʾbd'lg'* (with the editor, at the end of his commentary, 2002: 110). This also is a well-carved text in which the letter-forms are even more calligraphic than those of CIS ii 947, and, like the latter, it was clearly intended to be an elegant example of the writer's art. Both writers were aware of the "normal" Nabataean forms of *d* and *'* (see *'l-qynt* in the first text, and *dkyr* and *g'* in the second). A very developed *š*, of an Arabic form, consisting of three vertical "teeth" on a horizontal base-line would be out-of-place in such a context. But turning the letters *ʿ-b-d-'* into what is virtually a monogram could well be appropriate in the signature of a sophisticated writer (on "playing" with letter-forms, see Macdonald 2005: 93–95). I would therefore suggest that the unusual forms of *d* and *'* in the combination *ʿ-b-d-'-l* in these three texts are calligraphic eccentricities rather than significant stages in a process of palaeographical development.

same facsimile, al-Muʿayqil and al-Ḏīyīb read the sign immediately after *šnt* as "5" (1996: 203). The photograph on Pl. 1 shows for the first time that the signs after *šnt* are not ciphers but the word *mʾh*, in which *m* has the same circular form as in *šlymw* in line 4, ʾ has the same form as in the first word of line 3 and the last letter in line 5, and *h* a rather peculiar shape which will be discussed in the palaeographical study below.

Line 3: All the letters in this line are clear. Milik and Starcky read the first word as *bly*, and al-Muʿayqil and al-Ḏīyīb as *[bl]{y}*. However, it can now be seen that it consists of two letters, an ʾ of the same form as in lines 2 and 5, and a final *y*, and that Milik and Starcky's facsimile (1970: 230) is incorrect in showing them as joined.

Lines 4-5: The reading of all the letters in these lines is clear, with the exception of the second letter in line 5, which has an unusual shape which will be discussed below. However, the reading *khnʾ* is not in doubt.

Commentary

Although the reading presents few problems, it is, at first sight, difficult to make coherent sense of the five lines. One explanation would be to assume that lines 1 and 2 represent a fragment of one inscription and that lines 3–5 represent another, complete or fragmentary text.[8] In theory, it is possible that a section of rock to the right of what is now visible broke away after lines 1 and 2 were carved, carrying with it the initial parts of these lines. However, we would surely have to postulate a large amount of lost text in order to create a context in which the words now visible represent the ends of lines. If we assume that a large section of rock has broken away, then we have to explain why lines 3–5 appear to read as a continuous text fitted into the triangular shape of the rock in its present form. We could, of course, assume that lines 3–5 were inscribed after the rock had split, or that the lower part of the supposed lost section was unsuitable for inscribing or was already occupied, or that lines 3–5 are not in fact complete but are simply the ends of the lines of a much longer text and it is only chance that makes them appear coherent.

However, these explanations do not appear to me very satisfactory since they depend on too many assumptions. Moreover, I would argue that the similarity of the letter-forms and use of ligatures in lines 1–5 suggest that they were all carved by the same hand and that there is no need to assume that any of the text has been lost.

I would suggest that the writer first carved lines 3–5 as a memorial inscription, starting where the smooth section of the face was at its widest and fitting the text to the triangular shape of the rock. Having completed his three-line inscription, he then

8 This is not the position taken by al-Muʿayqil and al-Ḏīyīb (1996), who appear to regard lines 1–2 (their no. 63) as a complete text.

decided to add the date. Normally, this would go at the end of a text,[9] but here there was no room at the end, the only available space being in the area above the words *ʾy dkyr ʿwydw*. The surface of this section of the face was as smooth as the part on which he had inscribed line 3, but not quite as wide. Perhaps because this new line with the date would now look like the beginning of the text, the author began it with the demonstrative pronoun *dnh* "This is...".

One might ask why he did not employ the expression *b-šnt* ..., which occurs as the opening phrase in a few official texts in the Ḥawrān Aramaic,[10] Palmyrene,[11] and Hatran scripts.[12] In these, it is surely carried over from its use in legal and administrative documents.[13]

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9 For dates at the end of informal texts, see from the Jawf area: al-Theeb [= al-Ḏīyīb] 1994a: nos A (*b-šnt* ...) and B (*b-šnt*) =al-Ḏīyīb 1992: nos 19 and 15 = al-Muʿayqil & al-Ḏīyīb 1996: 19 and 15, respectively; from elsewhere in Arabia, al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 90/3–4 (*b-{y}r{ḥ} tšry šnt* ...), 134/5–7 (*b-yrḥ tšry šnt* ...); and from Sinai, Negev 1967: no. 1 (*b-š[n]t* ...), no. 2 (also *b-š[n]t* ...); CIS ii 963 (*šnt*), 1325 (*b-šnt*), 2666 (= Negev 1977a: no. 6, *šnt*). For dates at the end of formal texts, see, for example, the second Shuqafiyah inscription (see Fiema & Jones 1990, *šnt*), the inscription from the "Temple of the winged lions at Petra" (see Hammond, Johnson, & Jones 1986, *b-ywm ʾrbʿh b-ʾb šnt*), CIS ii 195/5 (*b-šnt*), 196/8 (*b-šnt*), H 1/9 (*b-yrḥ šbṭ šnt*), H 3/8 (*b-yrḥ ʾyr šnt*), H 4/7 (*b-ym ḥd b-ʾb šnt*), etc., and JSNab 17/5-6 (*šnt ... b-yrḥ tmwz*), 386/4–5 (*b-yrḥ {s}ywn šnt*), Stiehl 1970 lines 5–6 (*b-yrḥ ʾb šnt* ...), etc. where (in these last three texts) it is the date of death which is mentioned rather than the date of the inscription. It might be thought that Milik & Starcky 1975: no. 5 (*b-ḥd b-ʾyr b-šnt* ...) is an exception, since the editors put the date at the beginning of their translation. However, note that the inscription is carved on either side of a niche containing the statue of the goddess Isis (1975: Pl. XLIV, 1). The identification of the deity together with the dedication are carved on the right of the niche, where those accustomed to reading from right-to-left would naturally start, and the date is on the left, which would thus be at the end of the text.

10 LSI Nab 2/1–2 (*b-šnt* ...), LPNab 101/1–2 (*b-šny* ...) both from Sīʿ, and CIS ii 170 (*b-{y}rḥ tšry šnt* ...) from Hebran. These are from areas of the Ḥawrān outside the Nabataean realm, are dated respectively by the Seleucid era and the regnal years of Philip the Tetrach and the emperor Claudius, and are in the Ḥawrān Aramaic rather than the Nabataean script (Macdonald 2003: 54, and figs 31–32).

11 For example, a tomb property inscription: PAT 0515/1 (*b-yrḥ ʾdr šnt* ...); a list of regulations: PAT 0991/1 (*b-yrḥ ʾdr šnt* ...); a dedication: PAT 1539/1–2 (*b-yrḥ ʾlwl šnt* ...).

12 See for example, on a statue base: Beyer 1998: A(ssur) 1/1 = Aggoula 1985: Pl. I,4 (*b-šnt* ...) cf. LSI Nab 2; in construction inscriptions such as Beyer 1998: G(addāla) 1/1 (*b-šnt* ...), G 2/1 (*b-šnt* ...), H(atra) 214 (*b-šnt* ...), etc.

13 See, more or less at random, the legal documents in Cowley 1923, and also the petitions, where the date comes immediately after the address and greetings at the beginning of the subject-matter (e.g. nos 27/2, and 30/4,); the Jewish Palestinian Aramaic and Nabataean legal documents in Yadin *et al.* 2002; and the Greek legal documents from the same archive in Lewis, Yadin, & Greenfield 1989.

However, the only case I have come across of *in*formal memorial inscriptions consistently beginning with a date, are a specific group among the Hatran graffiti at Assur. These are A(ssur) nos 17–29.[14] They are carved on limestone paving slabs from the north-east *liwan* of the "jungparthischer Liwanbau" which was built over the ancient temple of the god Assur.[15] They are scratched, incised, and in one case chiselled, higgledy-piggledy in different axes, with up to eleven texts on one slab. They are clearly informal, yet of the seventy-two graffiti (not all of them readable) identified by Aggoula on nos 17–29, 32–34, at least twenty-eight begin with the day, month, and year, using the formula found occasionally in formal inscriptions from the same site (e.g. A(ssur) 1, 4, and 14). The date is followed (or in one case, 28b, preceded) by *dkyr* N.Pr. *br* N.Pr (sometimes a list of several persons), and then often *qdm* N.Div. They do not appear to be the work of pilgrims, since the same names and patronymics recur repeatedly, and the authors probably belonged to a limited number of families.[16] If the dates are correct, these graffiti appear to have been written over a period of at least twenty-eight years.[17] It is curious that, where the month-name has survived, the only months mentioned are Nīsān (15 times), Shebāṭ (7 times) and Tishrī (2 or 3 times).[18]

Why should a relatively limited number of individuals carve memorial (and other) informal inscriptions higgledy-piggledy on the paving slabs of a public building? Were they perhaps apprentice scribes trying out their skills, using common formulas such as the initial date, or the *dkyr* expression, that would be required in their profession? Some support for this view may come from the two non-memorial graffiti in this collection. No. 21[19] begins with the date and lists the numbers of two groups of building workers, ending with "I, ʾzʾ have written [it]". Unlike most of the dated texts, this one gives only the year (536 [Seleucid]), and so it is difficult to see it as, for instance, a foreman's aide-memoire during building work, and it is surely more likely to represent practice in writing common scribal formulas. The second is no. 27e[20] which begins with the date (12th Nisan 525) and records that there had been violent rain from 26th Shebāṭ (six weeks earlier) until that day. This is the sort

14 The numbers refer to the stones on which they were carved, not the individual inscriptions. Nos 32–34, which were not found *in situ* but are thought to have come from the same place, bear similar informal memorial inscriptions, but without dates

15 Andrae & Lenzen 1933: 76–78, pl. 57; Andrae & Jensen 1920: 3, 8–9, 11–20; Aggoula 1985: 12.

16 See Aggoula 1985: 12, 24.

17 That is between 511 and 539 Seleucid (AD 200– 228/9), to use only the dates the reading of which appears to be secure. Note that many of the dates in the table on Aggoula 1985: 23 are based on uncertain readings, while Beyer (1998: 15–24) gives no justification for any of his readings.

18 Aggoula 1985: reads it in line 1 of 29j, but Beyer does not read this line.

19 See Andrae & Lenzen 1933: Taf. 57b.

20 See *ibid*: Taf. 57e.

of information one might expect in a chronicle or possibly an administrative document, but it is difficult to see how it could have had any practical purpose roughly cut on a paving stone among other graffiti of quite different content. Once again, it suggests a scribal exercise, rather than a document. Thus, I would suggest that most, if not all, these texts are the work of apprentice scribes practicing stereotypical formulas, rather than genuine informal memorial inscriptions.

For, "In the year ..." is not an obvious way to begin a personal inscription/graffito, where the most important elements — the identification of the author or subject of the text, and a blessing or commemorative phrase — would normally come first since they are the impetus for carving it. Moreover, to return to ARNA Nab 17, it should be noted that beginning an inscription with the date is a practice which appears to be foreign to the Nabataean and the North Arabian epigraphic traditions, even in monumental inscriptions.[21] Thus, I would suggest that when the writer of ARNA Nab 17 decided to add the date, at what would then be the beginning of the text, the model he followed was that of monumental inscriptions in the former Nabataean realm which normally began with *dnh/d'...* "This is ...", even though this was not an appropriate way to introduce a date. There is, however, one other Nabataean inscription in which the date is introduced by the demonstrative pronoun, though it comes *after* a blessing and the name, as, if I am correct, the author would originally have intended it to do in ARNA Nab 17. This is CIS ii 964 (of AD 190/191) in Wādī Mukattib, in Sinai, which reads:

bryk w'lw br šʿd'lhy

d' šnt 20 20 20 20 5 l-hprkyh d[y]

b-h ----[22]

"Blessed be W'lw son of Šʿd'lhy.

21 As far as I know, the only inscription from North Arabia which has been thought to open with the date is the Taymā' stela in the Louvre (A.O. 1505, CIS ii 113, see Gibson 1975: 148–151, no. 30), where the only readable letters in the first line are *...bšt....* This has been taken to mean "in the year", as *b-šṯ* does in certain contexts in some Phoenician and some Hebrew inscriptions (e.g. KAI 18/4, 19/5, 60/1, 183/1, 184/1, etc.). However, as Degen has pointed out (1974: 87), *šṯ* for *šnt* would be unique in Imperial Aramaic, a point not disputed by Folmer (1995: 80, n. 238) who suggests it is "possibly a writing error", but nevertheless includes it as one of the "linguistic peculiarities" of the Aramaic written in Taymā' (*ibid.* 744). It is surely dangerous to draw any conclusions from three letters, of which the reading is not certain, in an otherwise completely damaged passage. I would therefore suggest that the first Taymā' stela cannot be used with confidence as an example of an inscription opening with the date.

22 I will not discuss here the problems of reading the rest of line 3, since they are irrelevant to the point I am making.

This is the year 85 in
which ... ”

This provides a fairly close parallel to my suggested reading of ARNA Nab 17, and shows that a date at this point in the text can be introduced by the demonstrative pronoun (here in the correct gender).

The suggestion that line 2 was written after line 3 is supported by the fact that the *nt* of *šnt* and the *m* of *m’h* suddenly slope upwards to avoid the second and subsequent letters of *ʿwydw* in line 3.

Unfortunately, however, the writer miscalculated the amount of space available and not only had to run over the edge of the smooth surface into the rougher area on the left in line 2, but had to find room for the final word in the rough area above. Thus, I would suggest that the lines of the text were written in the following order: 3, 4, 5, 2, 1, but that because the writer had accepted that the text would have to begin with the date, we should read:

2.	*dnh šnt m’{h}*	2.	This is the year one hundred
1.	*w šbʿyn*	1.	and seventy.
3.	*ʾy dkyr ʿwydw*	3.	Yea, may ʿwydw be remembered
4.	*br šlymw*	4.	son of Šlymw,
5.	*khn’*	5.	the priest.

It needs to be remembered that stone is an unforgiving medium on which to make unprepared personal statements. A monumental mason would presumably have had his text written out for him beforehand, yet even so — to take but one example — a number of the tomb inscriptions at Madāʾin Ṣāliḥ run over onto the raised borders which frame them.[23] How much more difficult then, for an amateur carving a personal inscription, the text of which he may have been composing as he went along. An error in such circumstances is difficult to erase or disguise, and miscalculations have to be adapted and incorporated as far as possible. There are numerous examples among the Safaitic graffiti of texts wandering all over the surface of a stone as the author had new thoughts which he wanted to express.[24]

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23 That is, parts of the inscriptions themselves spill onto, or through, the borders, as opposed to the signatures of the masons, which can also appear on the frames, or the rock-faces adjacent to the inscriptions. See, for example, H 9 (where a section of the left border has been removed to accommodate the ends of lines 4 and 5), 16 (where line 10 is on the bottom border), 36 (where the ends of several lines run onto the inner edge of the left border).

24 See, at random, WH 2006 and 2007 (Winnett and Harding 1978: Pl. 78), or SIAM II 42 where the author started carving his text across the centre of the surface, continued it above the first line and then, having still insufficient space, ended it below line 1. Thus the order of the lines in the text is 2, 1, 3. See also, probably, SIAM II 41 which has the order 2, 1, 3. There may be a similar case in the Nabataean graffito Umm al-Rassas 11 (see

One last point on the arrangement of the text. Although, as I have said, the letter-forms and use of ligatures suggest that all five lines are in the same hand, the words in line 3 are the smallest and most neatly carved. The letters become larger and less neatly carved in lines 4, 5, 2, and 1.[25] This commonplace feature of informal personal texts results, of course, from the writer becoming tired and losing concentration as his inscription progresses.

I will discuss each line in the order suggested above, i.e. 2, 1, 3, 4, 5

Line 2: The use of the masculine demonstrative pronoun, *dnh*, with a feminine noun is, as Cantineau notes, not unusual in later Nabataean texts,[26] though I do not know of another instance of its use with the word *šnh*. The latter is in the construct state before the numerals, as is normal with dates.[27] The reading of the last three letters as *m'h* is clear on the photograph, despite the odd form of the *h* (see the palaeographical discussion below). Although the tail of the *t* appears to touch the *m*, a close examination of the photograph shows that there is a space between them.

It is interesting to compare the letter forms in *m'h* in this text with those in the same word in JSNab 17/5, which is only eight years earlier and a few hundred kilometres to the south-west. In the latter — which is a not entirely successful attempt to write a formal epitaph — the forms of the letters are still recognizably those of the "calligraphic Nabataean script"[28] used in monumental inscriptions. By contrast, those in ARNA Nab 17 represent a far more developed and, probably, much more widespread, form, which continued long after the calligraphic forms had fallen out of general use, though probably not out of memory,[29] and which were increasingly employed to write texts in the Arabic language.

Line 1: *w-šbʿyn*: this is apparently the first time this numeral has been found in Nabataean. If this date is according to the era of *Provincia Arabia* — as is always assumed when dates are encountered in late Nabataean and pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions — it would be equivalent to AD 275/276.

Macdonald 1991: 427, Pls 45–46), where the lines also seem to be arranged in the order 2, 1, 3, though the reading of this text is by no means certain.

25 For instance, the shaft of the *š* below the branches becomes shorter and less vertical in lines 4, 2, and 1 respectively; the point at which the medial *y* bends is progressively lower down the shaft in lines 3, 4, and 1 respectively; and the *d* in line 2 (*dnh*) is less carefully carved than those in line 3 (*dkyr*, *ʿwydw*).

26 Cantineau 1930–1932, i: 58-59. It is also found occasionally in Palmyrene (Cantineau 1935: 145), in one instance (as *znh*) in the Elephantine papyri (Cowley 1923: no. 27/3), and in the Asoka inscriptions. Cantineau (1935: 145) makes the interesting suggestion that *dnh* in Palmyrene "était peut-être senti comme une sorte d'adverbe 'ici; que voici' ", and this might well be the case here also.

27 Cantineau 1930–1932, i: 98.

28 For my use of this term, see Macdonald 2003: 52–54.

29 As suggested by many of the letter forms in Stiehl 1970.

Line 3: *ʾy* would seem to be an asseverative particle, like *bly*. So far, it has only been found in Nabataean inscriptions of the Jawf area and only in the expression *bly w-ʾy*.[30] It is probably related to Arabic *ʾiy*, which is glossed as *naʿam* in the lexica, while Lane cites al-Jawharī as saying that "it is a word preceding an oath meaning *balā*" (1863–1893: 131c–132a). Like *balā*, its use in Nabataean would not correspond exactly to that in Classical Arabic, but in both it appears to give asseverative force to the statement which follows.

The name *ʿwydw* is well-known.

Line 4: The name *šlymw* does not seem to have been found with any certainty in Nabataean inscriptions outside this text,[31] and it is, of course, impossible to know whether or not it is one of the names represented in the various Ancient North Arabian scripts by the letters *šlm*. It could be the equivalent of either of the Arab names *Salīm* or *Sulaym*.

Line 5: It is unusual for the word *khnʾ* to be found in the determined (emphatic) state in Nabataean inscriptions because the deity is usually specified,[32] but *khnʾ* without a deity has been found at Jabal Munayjah in Sinai,[33] and probably in Wādī Ramm.[34] It is commonly translated as "priest" but in fact we have very little evidence for the exact functions of the *khnʾ* in Nabataean and North Arabian society, or of the distinction between the *khnʾ* and the **kmrʾ*.[35] The fact that the former has been found in desert areas (primarily in Sinai, but twice in Wādī Ramm, and once here at Jabal Abū ʾl-Qaws), while **kmrʾ* has been found in urban contexts (once at Petra[36] and once outside the Nabataean kingdom at Hebran[37]), *may* be significant but it is dan-

30 See al-Muʿayqil & al-Ḏīyīb 1996: nos 2/1, 5/1, 6/1, and the commentary to no. 2 on p. 94 (repeating that in al-Ḏīyīb 1992: 219, no. 2). Al-Ḏīyīb also states that it is present in 1996: nos 17 and 22/1, but it is not visible on the facsimile of 17 (or on the photograph in al-Ḏīyīb 1992: 252, no. 17), and he restores it in no. 22, of which there is no facsimile or photograph in either of the publications.

31 Al-Ḏīyīb (1994b: 172, 175, no. 13; repeated in al-Muʿayqil & al-Ḏīyīb 1996: 159–160, 164, no. 35) reads *šlymw* in ARNA Nab 16/1 and 3 (as against Milik and Starcky's *šlytw* in line 1; they read very little of line 3). However, the stone is so damaged that even on the somewhat better, colour, photograph published by al-Ḏīyīb (1994b: 193), it is very difficult to see the fourth letter of this name in line 1 or to see the name at all at the beginning of line 3.

32 Thus, for instance, *ʿzyʾ* (CIS ii 611, 1236); *tʾ* (CIS ii 506, 766 (?), 1885, 2491); *ʾltw* (Savignac 1932: 591–592, pl. XVIII, no. 2).

33 See CIS ii 2665 (now Negev 1977a: 222, Pl. 31C, no. 5).

34 Savignac 1934: 578, no. 23 (no photograph). Since the end of the text is lost it is theoretically possible that it originally read *khn ʾ[ltw]*, though the fact that the *n* has a medial rather than a final form and is joined to the *ʾ*, would suggest that *khnʾ* is the better reading.

35 The word has not been found in the determined singular **kmrʾ*, only in the construct singular (*kmr*) and the determined plural (*kmryʾ*).

36 In Hammond, Johnson, & Jones 1986, line 2 (*kmryʾ*).

37 CIS ii 170/4 (*kmr ʾlt*).

gerous to speculate on the basis of so few occurrences.[38] It is possible that one function of the *khn'* was the delivery of oracles or the interpretation of omens (the later *ʿarrāf*), as it seems to have been in late pre-Islamic society, but he may equally have had the priestly task of performing sacrifices for the community (the later *rabb*), or of guarding holy places (the later *sādin*), since these functions are all attributed to various *kāhin*s in the early Islamic sources.[39] In view of our ignorance, the term "priest", by which *khn'* is usually translated, should be interpreted in the most general sense as a "man who is a link with the divine".

Palaeographical discussion

Several of the letters in this inscription have forms which illustrate the transition between what are categorized as the "Nabataean" and the "early Arabic" scripts. Such categories, while useful, should not disguise the fact that the "Arabic script", in all its forms, simply represents the later phases of the Nabataean script, i.e. in terms of graphic development there are not two scripts — Nabataean and Arabic — but simply one script, developing over centuries and used first to write the Aramaic language, then sometimes Aramaic sometimes Arabic, then Arabic.[40] Some developments, such as changes to the letter forms, were more or less involuntary. Others, such as the development of a common system of pointing to distinguish homomorphs and formal derivatives,[41] must have been intentional and systematic.[42]

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38 Thus, there are 12 attestations of *khn(')*: in Sinai, CIS ii 506, 526, 611, 766, 1236, 1748, 1885, 2491, 2665 (=Negev 1977a: 222, no. 5), the possible example in 1750+1741/1 is too uncertain to be included; in Wādī Ramm, Savignac 1932: 591–592, no. 2/2, 1934: 578, no. 23; in Jabal Abū ʾl-Qaws, ARNA Nab 17. The only 2 attestations of **kmr'* are given in the previous two notes.

39 See Fahd 1978 and references there.

40 Later, of course, it was also used to write Farsi, Ottoman Turkish, Urdu, etc., and this required some changes in letter-form and in pointing.

41 I use the term "homomorph" to describe two separate letters inherited from the Aramaic prototype, whose forms had become indistinguishable and which in Syriac or Arabic were eventually differentiated by the use of diacritical points. Thus *d* and *r* in Syriac; and in Arabic *b* and *t* (+ the medial forms of *n* and *y*), *g* and *ḥ*, *z* and *r*. These letters should be distinguished from "formal derivatives", which are letters, which did not exist in the Aramaic prototype, and which were created by the addition of diacritical dots to the letters which in Aramaic had been used to transcribe them. These do not exist in Syriac, but in Arabic *ḏ* was created from *d*, *ḫ* from *ḥ*, *š* from *s*, *ḍ* from *ṣ*, *ṯ* from *ṭ*, *ġ* from *ʿ*, *ṯ* from *t*. See Macdonald 1986: 148, note 119.

42 Note that in the discussion which follows, I have tried as far as possible to cite works which provide *photographs* (rather than tracings, copies, etc) of the inscriptions and papyri with which I draw comparisons. I realise that the large number of texts used in this way will create a burden for the reader, and I have therefore tried whenever possible to cite early Arabic papyri and inscriptions illustrated in Grohmann 1966, 1977, and Ghabbān 2003. It has proved more difficult to restrict the range of works containing photo-

’ In ARNA Nab 17, the form of ’ (in *m’h*, *’y*, and *khn’*) is particularly interesting. The three examples are virtually identical.[43] The calligraphic *alif* of the first century AD, a loop with a long straight tail going from the top of the loop to the right at roughly 45°, has retained its stance but changed its form in as much as the loop has been reduced to a short vertical shaft. It now needs only a tilt to the left and the short shaft will become horizontal and the “tail” will become an almost vertical line leaning slightly to the right, as in the *’alif* of some of the earliest Arabic inscriptions and papyri.[44] This process can be seen to be already under way in ARNA Nab 7 (see Pl. 4, and the excellent close-up in al-Ḏīyīb 1994b: 190, no. 6) in the first letter of the patronymic, which I would read *’psy*. Note that the vertical stem (the survivor of the original loop) though extremely small is still just present here and in the same name in ARNA Nab 6 (Pl. 4, here). Another interesting text is al-Ḏīyīb 2002: 128, (see Pl. 3a here)[45] in which the “tail” of the ’ is at a steeper angle than those in ARNA Nab 17, while the remains of the loop can still be seen as a short vertical stroke below it. The progress to vertical is taken a stage further in al-Ḏīyīb 2002: 159 (Pl. 3e here), where the patronymic must surely read *yhwd’* with the “tail”

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graphs of Nabataean texts, simply because there are at present no compendia with photographs of Nabataean inscriptions, equivalent to the works by Grohmann cited above. With Nabataean texts, I have usually drawn comparisons first with those from the area of al-Jawf, and then from north-west Arabia, before going further afield.

43 For other examples of this form of ’, see Negev 1971: Pl. *s’*, 3 no. 20 (in *tym’lhy*), and 1977b: 70, no. 253 (in *tym’lhy*).

44 In the inscriptions, the lean to the right without the short horizontal is present in the Zebed (AD 512, Grohmann 1971: Taf. II) and Harrān (AD 569) inscriptions and, only very slightly, in the Jabal Says graffito (AD 528) (for photographs of the Harrān and Jabal Says inscriptions see Macdonald 2008: 477, Figs 4 and 5). It is only very slightly present (without the horizontal except in one example) in the Zuhair graffiti (Ghabbān 2003: 300–302) of AH 22/AD 644–645. Almost, or completely, vertical, but *with* the horizontal, it occurs consistently in the Tā’if dam inscription of AH 58/AD 677–678 (Khan & Al-Mughannam 1982: Pl. 118 A), the Ḥafnat al-Abyaš inscription of AH 64/AD 684 (Grohmann 1971: 80, Abb. 45); and the other inscriptions illustrated in facsimile on Grohmann 1971: 81–90, and on Ghabbān 2003: 294–297; etc.

In the early papyri, the lean to the right is seen in PERF 558 (conveniently shown on Grohmann 1966: Taf. II, 1) of AH 22/AD 643; and PERF Inv Ar. Pap 94 (*ibid.* Taf II, 3) of AH 25–30/AD 645–650; whereas the lean to the right and the short tail can be seen, for example, in *P.Mich.* 6714 (*ibid.* Taf. III, 1) of *c.* AD 643–670, PERF 573 (*ibid.* Taf IV, 1) of AH 57/AD 677; PERF 585 (*ibid.* Taf IV, 2) of AH 75/AD 694; PERF 575 (*ibid.* Taf V, 1) undated but of the seventh century AD; *P.Berol.* 9177 (*ibid.* Taf V, 2) of AH 124/AD 702; etc.

45 This must surely read: *dkyr šʿdw // br ʿbd ’yš // b-šlm.* A new edition of this and other inscriptions in transitional scripts between Nabataean and Arabic is in preparation under the direction of ʿAlī al-Ghabbān, Robert Hoyland, Michael Macdonald, Moshallah al-Moraeḫi, Ḫalīl al-Muʿayqil, Laïla Nehmé, and Christian Robin, following an extremely productive *table ronde* on the subject organized by L. Nehmé in Paris in January 2005.

of the ʾ practically vertical and the remains of the flattened loop just visible at an obtuse angle to it above a blemish in the rock. The ʾ in these texts explains the backward tilt of the early Arabic ʾ even when the horizontal line has partially or completely disappeared.

b The only example (in *šbʿyn*) is a vertical stroke on the base-line, as in Arabic. It is remarkable for the upward lift of its tail towards the next letter, which I have suggested indicates that it is medial rather than final, even though it cannot be joined to the following ʿ.[46] The form consisting of a vertical stroke standing on the base-line is surprisingly unusual even in informal Nabataean texts[47], and it more commonly appears as a curve and/or situated at various heights above the base line, both in the calligraphic versions of the script and in informal texts. In this respect, al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 134 (see Pl. 3d here), is particularly instructive, since *b* takes four different forms in this one text: (1) a curve resting on or near the base-line (in *bly*, *rbʾl*, *gbr*, *b-yrḥ*); (2) a straight more or less vertical line with a straight more or less horizontal tail to the left forming part of the base-line (in *br*, and the first *b* in *b-ṭb* in line 2); (3) a straight more or less vertical line with a horizontal tail *above* the base-line (for aesthetic reasons, in *nbṭw*); and (4) a calligraphic form, usually associated with early Nabataean texts, which has a flourish at the top making it identical to a calligraphic *k* (see the second *b* in *b-ṭb* in line 2, the *b* in *ṭb* in line 3, and most interestingly the *b* in *ktyb* where the *b* at the end of the word is virtually identical to the *k* at the beginning, and the tail of this calligraphic *b* joins the curved [type 1] *b* of *b-yrḥ*). This is a very carefully carved informal inscription and there can be no doubt that the use of these four different forms was intentional. It is a warning of the dangers of treating variations in letter-forms as chronological indicators.

d and ***r*** In contrast to the calligraphic Nabataean script of the first centuries BC/AD, a clear distinction is made in this text between *d* and *r*. Again, this is something which points towards the early Arabic scripts, for we see here that *d* (in *dnh*, *dkyr*, and *ʿwydw*) retains its upper flourish and is joined from the right at the base (*ʿwydw*), both being features it retains in early Arabic.[48] On the other hand, *r* (in *dkyr*, *br*) has

46 Cf. *b-šlm* in al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 128, line 3 (Pl. 3a, here), where the tail of the *b* points slightly upwards to touch the right "tooth" of the *š*.

47 This is true even in common combinations like *br*, *ʿbd*, and *bṭb*. However, see, for instance, al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 9+10 which is surely one text and (*pace* the edition) must read *dkyr b-ṭb // ʾšlm br ʾšlm{w} // w dkyr kl gbr ṭb b-ṭb* "May ʾšlm son of ʾšlmw be well remembered, and may every good man be well remembered" (the phrase *kl gbr ṭb* recurs in no. 134, where it is recognized by the editor). In 9+10, the *b* in *br* and in *gbr* is a straight vertical on the base-line, but those in *ṭb* and the two instances of *b-ṭb* are curved. See also *ibid.* no 17 (in *b-ṭb*); and in *br*, *ʿbd* and *b-šlm* in no. 128 (as re-read above in note 45).

48 There are occasional instances in Nabataean of the horizontal line running leftwards at the base of a *d*, which is another characteristic of the early Arabic *d* and makes it indistinguishable from a *k*, except that it does not join to the left. See, for instance, al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 132 (in *ʿbydw* at the beginning of line 2).

lost all but the slightest curve at the top and is joined from the right at a point on the stem above the base. It is thus almost indistinguishable from a Nabataean *z*.[49] Both these features of *r* have developed a stage further in ARNA Nab 7 (Pl. 4, here), where the join is further up the stem and there is a slight curve at the bottom (at least in *br*).[50] It has gone further still in CIS ii 345 (Pl. 3f, here),[51] and the end of the development can be seen in the small, curved *r*s in *dkyr* and *br* in ARNA Nab 13a (Pl. 4, here)[52] which are almost indistinguishable from early Arabic *r/z*.[53] This is one of the many strong arguments against a Syriac origin for the Arabic script. For in Syriac, as in earlier calligraphic Nabataean, *d* and *r* are homomorphs,[54] whereas in later Nabataean the form of *r* became progressively distinct from that of *d*[55] and, in

49 See, for instance, the *z* in *ḥzy* in ARNA Nab 7 (Pl. 4 here), and see the next note.

50 See also the excellent close-up of this text in al-Ḏīyīb 1994b: 190, no. 6. I would read this text *dkyr ḥzy // br ʾpṣy*. Note that all that distinguishes the *r* in *br* and *dkyr* from *z* (in *ḥzy*) is that *r* is slightly curved. The name *ḥzy* has been found once in Safaitic (CIS v 1065) and *ʾpṣy* has been found in ARNA Nab 6 (Pl. 4, here) and in Nabataean texts from Egypt (Littmann & Meredith 1953: nos 30 and 37). Note that the *ṣ* in *ʾpṣy* already has the form of an ellipse with a point at the top left (the only remains of the original shaft) which it has in early Arabic.

51 *Pace* CIS, the last name in this text must surely be read *brdw*, not *brkw* (cf. the other *d*s and *k*s in the text). Note that in this inscription the transition to the early Arabic forms of *d* and *r* is almost complete. The *d*s retain the flourishes at their tops and are joined from the right at the base, while the *d* in *ʿdyw* has acquired a horizontal line to the left at its base, exactly as in early Arabic. By contrast, *r* has no flourish at the top, is joined from the right at the *middle* of the stem and has already developed the curve which is characteristic of the letter in early (and later) Arabic.

52 This text is cut by the left edge of Winnett and Reed's photograph and was not read by Milik and Starcky. Unfortunately, it does not appear on the photographs published in al-Ḏīyīb 1994b. I would read *{b/n}yš---- // dkyr ---- // br mlkw ----*.

53 See, at random, the papyri illustrated on Grohmann 1966: Taf. II–V; the Zebed inscription (AD 512, Grohmann 1971: Taf. II), the Jabal Says graffito (AD 528) and the Harran inscription (AD 568, for photographs of both of which see Macdonald 2008: 477), Ghabbān 2003: 301–302 (*zuhayr*, *zaman*, *ʿumr*, *arbaʿ*, *ʿišrīn*), and the inscriptions, and dipinto, on Grohmann 1971: Taf. X–XV.

54 See note 41 above for this term.

55 Ironically, the use of diacritical marks to distinguish *d* and *r* in Nabataean has mainly survived in texts where the letters are already distinct in form. The earliest dated example so far known seems to be JSNab 321, which is dated to the thirty-sixth year of Rabbʾel (AD 106). Here, the second name is surely *brdw* (*contra* JS), the only *d* in the text being distinguished from the *r*s not only in form but by a diacritical dot. Similarly, in al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 128 (undated, Plate 3a here) and Stiehl 1970 (dated AD 356, Plate 5 here), the carver has placed diacritical dots over the *d*s, even though they are perfectly distinct in form from the *r*s, though it may be noted that both the language and script of Stiehl 1970 are archaizing. For a general discussion of diacritical dots in Nabataean, see Healey 1990–1991: 45, though there is considerably more evidence for the use of diacritical marks in Nabataean than he cites.

the process, became a homomorph of *z*, a process illustrated by ARNA Nab 17 among many other texts, and exactly the situation we find in the earliest texts in the Arabic script.

h The forms of the letter *h* (in *dnh*, *m'h*, and *khn'*) in this text are particularly interesting. Unfortunately, the upper part of the *h* in *khn'* is not entirely clear, but it is possible that there are two parallel horizontal lines, which would make it already suggestive of the shape of the early Arabic *medial h* — an oval with a horizontal line across the middle and a short vertical line at its top right. On the other hand, it is also reminiscent of a Nabataean *final h* which has been raised to rest *on* the line and in which the horizontal line to the left of the top has moved 90° clockwise to become vertical. The fact that it is not joined to the following *n* may suggest that it was intended to be a final form. It is possible that the writer either did not distinguish between medial and final forms of this letter — though this seems unlikely given the persistence of this distinction throughout the development of the Nabataean[56] and into the Arabic script — or that, for some reason, he thought a final form was appropriate in *khn'*.[57] If I am correct both that this was intended to be a final form and in suggesting that lines 3–5 were written before line 2, one can see a progressive development in the form of final *h* in *khn'*, *dnh*, and finally *m'h*.[58] It is noteworthy that all three rest on the base-line (literally in the cases of *khn'* and *dnh*, and theoretically in that of *m'h*), like final (but not medial) *h* in Arabic. In this, they are in marked contrast to earlier Nabataean forms of final *h*, which are usually joined from the right at the top and hang below the base-line, like final *m*. Indeed, the forms in ARNA Nab 17 are "advanced" even compared to Stiehl 1970 (AD 356, Plate 5 here) where final *h* in *mwyh* in line 3 is joined slightly above the base, though, as noted above, the script of Stiehl 1970 is archaizing.[59]

w The calligraphic Nabataean form stands on the base-line and is joined from the right either at the base or a little way above it. Here (*w*, *ʿwydw*, *šlymw*), it already

56 This is also the case in the Aramaic script of the Ḥawrān, though the final form usually rests on the same (theoretical) line as the other letters rather than descending below it, and occasionally a final form which is open at the base occurs. See Macdonald 2003: 54, and figs 31–32, and fig. 38 nos 10, 11.

57 However, for other examples of a final *h* in unexpected positions see al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 113/1 (in *whbyl*) and Negev 1967: Pl. 48 B and p. 252 in the name *hʾly* in a graffito from Wādī Mugharah, Sinai, dated AD 267/268. This unusual name may recur in a graffito in Wādī Abū Daraj (Jomier 1954: 422–423, no.8 where the final letter was copied as a doubtful ʾ). It is probably a variant of the common name, *ʾl'*.

58 The short vertical line at the top right of the *h* in *m'h* can be seen, but the base does not seem to be closed. I am at a loss to explain this latter feature.

59 The Arabic form of final *h* is already present in the Namārah epitaph (AD 328), but the comparison between this and ARNA Nab 17 and Stiehl 1970 can be misleading, since the Namārah epitaph almost certainly represents a slightly different (more northerly) line of development from that of north-west Arabia.

extends a little below the base-line, even in the unligatured examples (*w* in line1, and the second *w* in *ʿwydw*). In Stiehl 1970 (AD 356) the join is a little higher and the part of the stem below the join is also below the theoretical base-line. In ARNA Nab 13a/3 (in *mlkw*) the join is at the base of the loop, as in Arabic, with the rest of the stem below the base-line. In the Namārah epitaph (AD 328), the join is almost at the base of the loop (*mlwkhm*, *m{d}{ḥ}gw*, *ʾl-šʿwb*), though in *b-kšlwl* it is joined at the base. It is interesting that the scribal form found in the Babatha papyri, which is a single "tooth" joined at the base from the right (e.g. *P.Yadin* 3/25 *yḥwmyʾ*) or in both directions (*P.Yadin* 3/34 *ywm*) appears to represent a cul-de-sac in the development into Arabic.

y Medial *y* (in *šbʿyn*, *dkyr*, *ʿwydw*, and *šlymw*) has lost most of its curves and is clearly in the process of becoming a single short vertical stroke indistinguishable from medial *b* and *n*. Once again, if my interpretation of the inscription is correct, it is interesting to see how the point at which the curve to the right begins gets progressively lower from *dkyr* to *ʿwydw* to *šlymw*[60] until in *šbʿyn* it is very near the base, and at first glance the letter looks almost like a straight line leaning slightly to the right. In the name *ḥnynw* in another informal Nabataean inscription near al-Jawf[61] it is already a straight line slightly higher than the *n*s on either side of it. By the time of the earliest Arabic inscriptions and papyri it is indistinguishable from medial *b*, *t*, and *n*.

The final *y* (in *ʾy*) has a long back-sweep to the right with the tail resting on the (theoretical) base-line. This form, but sweeping *below* the base-line, can already be found in the Nabataean papyri of the late first century AD,[62] and occurs regularly (either resting on the base-line or sweeping below it) in later and/or informal Nabataean inscriptions,[63] and (always sweeping below the base-line) in early Arabic

60 Note the medial *y* with an almost identical form in the name *šlymn* in al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 30, where, by contrast, the curve in the *y* in *dkyr* is at the very top, as it is in the same word in ARNA Nab 17.

61 The second name in ARNA Nab 10, Plate 4 here (= al-Ḏīyīb 1994b: 191, no. 8, reprinted as al-Muʿayqil & al-Ḏīyīb 1996, no. 30), which clearly reads *ḥnynw*. Curiously, Milik and Starcky read the name *{zbyn}w* and are followed in this by al-Ḏīyīb (who, however, does not show the letters as doubtful, and incorrectly separates the first vertical from the rest of the letters in his facsimile on 1994b: 166).

62 For instance, in a text written by a scribe, *P.Yadin* 3 *ʾḥyy* in line 27, *ʾyty* in line 28, etc. (see Yadin *et al.* 2002: Pl. 24); and in a subscription written by a literate layman, *P.Yadin* 22, the final word in line 31 *bʿ{ʿ}ly*, or *kdy* and *dy* in line 33, etc. (see Lewis, Yadin, & Greenfield 1989: Pl. 27). In all these cases, the tail sweeps *below* the base-line.

63 Thus, it is found in LPNab 41 (*c.* AD 250, *šly*, below the base-line), JSNab 17 (AD 267, *hy*, *fy*, *mry*, *ḥšy*, *yʿly*, more or less *on* the theoretical base-line, or at least level with the bases of medial *h*, *f*, *r*, but below those of *š* and *l*), JSNab 386 (AD 307/308, *ʾḥdy*, below the base-line), the Namārah epitaph (AD 328, *ty*, *ʿkdy*, *fy*, *ʿkdy*, below the base-line). In Stiehl 1970 (AD 356), in *ḥny* it is below the base-line, but in *dy*, *ḥdy* and *tmny* the end of the tail of the *y* is joined to the lowest point of the preceding letter. This latter practice ap-

inscriptions.[64] This contrasts with the conventional Nabataean calligraphic form in which the tail sweeps to the *left*,[65] which is still found in the Rawwāfah inscription (AD 166–169), and it is this tradition which is maintained in the Jabal Says graffito (AD 528, in *al-awsī*, *ʿalà*, and *arsalanī*) and in some of the earliest Arabic papyri.[66] The two traditions continued side by side well into the Islamic period.[67]

k The letter *k* (in *dkyr* and *khn'*) has a rather formal shape.[68] It is identical to *d* except that it has a horizontal line at its base (in *dkyr*) and may be joined to the left (in *khn'*). By the earliest Arabic papyri and inscriptions, *d* has developed a line at the base like *k*,[69] making *d* and *k* almost homomorphs, the only distinguishing feature being that *k* is joined to the left and *d* is not. As noted above, in this inscription *d* and *r* are clearly distinguished, with *d* retaining the flourish at the top which renders it very similar to *k*, but with no horizontal line at its base.

l In *šlymw*, medial *l* is simply a tall vertical line on the base-line.

m The rounded *m* (in *m'h* and *šlymw*) with a horizontal line projecting from the middle of the left side has also almost completed the transition to its shape in early Arabic, where it is more or less circular and is joined from both right and left at the middle point of each side, so that it appears to be suspended half above and half

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pears to be a calligraphic eccentricity peculiar to this inscription, rather than a significant stage in the palaeographical development of the letter-form and its use.

64 See, at random, in *tuwuffiya* in Ghabbān 2003: 301–302 (AH 24/AD 644–645), and in *mawlà* in *ibid*. 300; *'ḫdy* in El-Hawary 1930 (AH 31/AD 652, Grohmann 1971: Taf. X, 1) line 7; *ʿalī* in the Khashnah inscription (AH 56/AD 675–676, Sharafaddin 1977: 69, pl. 50), etc.

65 For examples see Macdonald 2003: 53, fig. 38, nos 5–7, 12.

66 For example, in the words *uḫrà* and *fī* (line 4), *jumādà al-ūlà* (line 5) in PERF 558 (AH 22/AD 643, Grohmann 1966: Taf. II, 1); *fī* in line 2 of *P.Berol.* 15002 (of the same date, *ibid.* Taf. II, 2), etc.

67 Thus, although the form with the curve to the right is consistently used in the inscriptions on the inner and outer octagonal arcades in the Dome of Rock (AH 72/AD 691-692, see Nuseibeh and Grabar 1996: 82-105), the inscription on the bronze plate at the eastern entrance employs the form with the curve to the right on most occasions, but that with the left curve in two places (*al-ḥusnà* in line 5, and *nunajjī* in line 6, Grohmann 1971: Taf. XII, 1).

68 In both formal and informal inscriptions the flourish at the top is often converted to a more or less straight horizontal line, particularly in common words, see, in a formal text from the Jawf region, Savignac & Starcky 1957 line 5 (*mnkw*, *mlk'*), and, in an informal one, al-Muʿayqil & al-Ḏīyīb 1996: no. 2 (= al-Ḏīyīb 1992: 347, no. 2, *dkyr*). These could be multiplied many times over in, for instance, some of the tomb inscriptions from Madā'in Ṣāliḥ and the JSNab graffiti and those from Jabal Umm Judhayidh (in al-Ḏīyīb 2002). It is interesting that, despite this, a memory of the original flourish on both *d* and *k* was retained and it appears in late texts such ARNA Nab 17, JSNab 17 (*Kʿbw*, *d'*), and the Namārah epitaph (*klh*, *mlwkhm*, etc.).

69 See notes 7 and 48.

below the base-line.[70] However, here, the development is not yet complete and it is still joined from the right at the base and so sits upon, or rather forms part of, the base-line.[71]

n As usual in both Nabataean and Arabic, the medial form of *n* in *šnt* is joined on both sides at the base, and that in *dnh* joins to the left at the base. However, in *šbʿyn*, even final *n* is joined from the right *at the base* and so sits *on* the base-line,[72] in contrast to final *n* in both calligraphic and day-to-day scribal Nabataean, and in Arabic, which is joined from the right on the stem and drops below the line.[73]

ʿ Since, in this text, *ʿ* is still not joined from the right — following normal Nabataean, as opposed to Arabic, practice — both examples (in *šbʿyn* and *ʿwydw*) are in effect "initial" forms. The letter's stance in both examples is diagonal in relation to a theoretical horizontal base-line. In *šbʿyn,* because the right prong and tail of the *ʿ* slant down from right to left and the letters which follow the *ʿ* consist of strokes at (more-or-less) right angles to the base-line, the base-line follows the slant of the right prong of *ʿ*. Note also that its left prong already has the beginnings of the curve which is characteristic of initial *ʿ* in Arabic, four centuries later.[74] It may be instruc-

70 See already the *m* in *raḥmān*, *ḫamsīn*, *jumādà* in PERF 558 (Grohmann 1966: Taf. II, 1); and in *ʿumar* in the Zuhayr inscription (Ghabbān 2003: 301/302). It is more or less standard in well-written papyri and inscriptions thereafter.

71 Compare, at random, the *m* in the phrase *ktyb bmtn'* at the beginning of line 43 of *P.Yadin* 3 recto (AD 97/98, Yadin *et al.* 2002: Pl. 24) and *ʿnmw* in al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 14, in both of which it is joined at the base on both sides, with that in *lmlkw* in al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 217 (p. 328), where the *m* is rectangular but, as here, is joined from the right at the base and to the left by a horizontal line attached half-way down the left side. In *ibid.* no. 30, the *m* in *šlymn* is almost identical to that in ARNA Nab 17.

72 The isolated form in *khn'* also sits *on* the line.

73 The final *n* in Nabataean of the first centuries BC/AD is a long straight vertical line going below the base-line, sometimes with a small horizontal or curving head, see the forms marked with a small * in the *n* column of the script-table in Macdonald 2003: 53, fig. 38: nos 3, 5–6, 9, 14–16. This is maintained in the calligraphic script of the Rawwāfah inscription (*ibid.* fig. 38: no. 7) in the mid-second century AD. Later, however, the form changed to a straight vertical line running below the base-line with a leftwards curve (or angle) at the *bottom*, but still joined somewhere on the stem (Macdonald 2003: 53, fig. 38 nos 13 (AD 328), 8 (AD 368). A development of this is the form universally found in early Arabic, where it has become a long shallow curve mainly below the line, a form which continues late enough (third and fourth centuries AH) to become identical to *r* and unpointed *z*, which by this time have also become a long curve extending below the line. This confusion is deliberately maintained even in those decorative inscriptions where *n* and *r/z* are inverted so that they rise *above* the line (see Grohmann 1971: Abb. 251a, where they are identical, and 251b, 253, and 255, where they are similar).

74 See, for instance, the *ʿ* in *ʿišrīn* in PERF 558 and *P.Berol.* 15002, both of AH 22/AD 643 (Grohmann 1966: Taf. II, 1, 2); in *ʿalayka* in PERF Inv. Ar. Pap. 94 (*ibid.* Pl. II,3); *ʿumar* and *ʿišrīn* in the Zuhayr inscription of AH 24/AD 644 (Ghabbān 2003: 301–302); in *iġfir*

tive to compare initial and medial ʿ in this text with those in al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 128 (see Pl. 3a here),[75] which represent a transition between the forms in ARNA Nab 17 and those in early Arabic. In al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 128, both the initial example (in *ʿbd*, line 2) and the medial one (in *šʿdw*, line 1) are identical in form. The right prong remains diagonal in relation to the horizontal base-line of which the tail (which is an extension of the right prong) now forms part. The letter is now joined from the right in medial position and the join comes at the base of the fork. The left prong also curves back to the right. This is the form in both initial and medial position in al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 128. However, by the early Arabic texts, the curve of the left prong is confined to the initial form in which the right prong is no longer diagonal but is part of the base-line, while the medial form has lost the curve of the left prong and has the shape of a "v" on a horizontal line.[76]

r See under *d*.

š In all three instances (in *šnt*, *šbʿyn*, and *šlymw*), *š* is in initial position and has its conventional form in calligraphic Nabataean, though with a shorter stem. [77] For an example of the transition to the Arabic forms of both initial and final *š*, within a text which is on the borderline between the Nabataean and Arabic scripts, see al-Ḏīyīb 2002: 128 (see Pl. 3a here). There, the *š* is horizontal and in its final form (line 2) has the tail characteristic of the final form in Arabic.

t In *šnt*, final *t* has a simple angular form in which the leftward short horizontal lines, or curves, at the base of each vertical have been joined together to form a continuous horizontal line across the base which projects to the left. It is very similar to the *medial* form of *t* in Stiehl 1970,[78] and quite different from the final form in that text[79] and in JSNab 17,[80] in which there is a loop on the left side. However, al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 134 (see Pl. 3d here), discussed above under *b*, shows that the form with the loop and the form without it could be used promiscuously in the same text.[81] The shape of Arabic *t* must have developed from the diagonal-Z-like form

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and *ʿalī* in the inscription from Khashnah of AH 56/AD 675/676 (Sharafaddin 1977: 69, Pl. 50); etc.

75 See my re-reading of this text in note 45.

76 See for instance, *sʿdw* in Zebed (AD 512, Grohmann 1971: Taf. II); *maʿahu* in El-Hawary 1930 (AH 31/AD 652, Grohmann 1971: Taf. X, 1) line 3; *muʿāwiyah* and *li-ʿabd* in the Tāʾif dam inscription (Khan & al-Mughannam 1982: 129–130, Pl. 118A), etc. In papyri see PERF 558 (*aṣġar*), and other papyri on Grohmann 1966: Taf. II–III.

77 For a very unusual example of a similar form of *š* in medial position, see ARNA Nab 13a (Pl. 4, and see n. 52 here).

78 Thus, the first *t* in *ʾtth* and the medial forms in *mytt*, *mʾtyn*, *tltyn*, and *wtmny*.

79 That is in *brt*, *mytt*, *šnt*, and *brt*.

80 The medial forms in JSNab 17 do not have a line across the base.

81 Thus, the only example of the form with the loop is in medial position in the word *ktyb* which also contains a calligraphic form of *b*. The other medial *t* (in *trtyn*) is without a loop, as are the initial (*tymw*, *tšry*, *trtyn*) and final (*šnt*) examples.

which was already in use in the Nabataean subscriptions by literate laymen to the papyri in the Babatha archive (early second century AD),[82] though not in the body of the Nabataean documents, which were written by scribes. It is found very rarely in inscriptions.[83]

Unfortunately, Dr Mušallaḥ al-Murayḫi's extremely interesting article "ṭarḥ ğadīd ḥawla manša' al-ḥarf al-ʿarabī wa-mawṭin-hu al-aṣlī fī ḍaw' muktašafāt aṯariyyah ğadīdah" (pages 97–133 in *Qayd al-našr fī kitāb. Dirāsāt fī 'l-āṯār (al-kitāb al-ṯānī) — buḥūṯ ʿilmiyyah muḥkamah — qism al-āṯār*. Al-Riyāḍ: kuliyyat al-siyāḥah wa-l-āṯār, ğāmiʿat al-malik saʿūd, 1428/2008) reached me after this volume had gone to press. I have therefore been unable to discuss here the very intersting comparisons between the script of the text published by Dr Murayḫi (dated AD 175) and that of ARNA Nab 17. However, I hope that either he or I, or both, will be able to do so in the near future.

* * *

It will be clear that in this text, as in Arabic, the script "sits" on a real line made up of the bases of letters and the ligatures between them, rather than "hanging" from an imaginary line as Milik and Starcky suggested was the case with Nabataean.[84] While I have never thought that "hanging from an ideal line" was a particularly appropriate description of the ductus of the first century BC/AD Nabataean script, the development of a *real* horizontal base-line on which the majority of the letters "sit" is clearly an important aspect of the evolution of both the Arabic and the Syriac scripts. However, the fact that both developed into what might be called "base-line scripts" is not evidence that one developed from the other, as Milik and Starcky seem to suggest.

The development of Nabataean into a base-line script requires a detailed demonstration which I hope to provide elsewhere. Here, it may suffice to point out that the base-line is used in different ways in Syriac and in Arabic.

In Estrangelo the "base-line" is broken vertically by:
g, *ṭ*, *ṣ*, and the final forms of *k*, *m*, and *n*.
In the scribal hand of the Syriac document on parchment of AD 239 (Teixidor 1990)[85] it is broken by:

82 See for example *P.Yadin* 22 (Lewis, Yadin, & Greenfield 1989: Pl. 27), in initial position: *tryn* in line 33; in medial position: *ktwšyn*, *bktb'* in line 32; in final position: *brt*, *zbnt* line 31.

83 For exceptions see JSNab 386 (AD 306) from al-ʿUlà, and al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 132+133, which, *pace* the edition is one text, (in the word *šnt* in line 3).

84 See Starcky 1966: cols 932–933.

85 The same is largely true for the parchment in Teixidor 1990–1991 (AD 241) and the deed of sale from Dura Europos = Welles, Fink, & Gilliam 1959: 142–149, Pl. LXIX (AD 243)

g, *ṭ*, *ṣ*, very slightly by *d/r*, *w*, *z*, *t* and the final forms of *k*,[86] *m*, *n*, *t*.[87]

In the earliest extant Serṭo manuscript (AD 459–460) by:
g, *ṭ*, *ṣ*, very slightly by *d/r* (but not *w*, *z*, *t*) and the final forms of *k*, *m*, *n*.

However, in early Arabic it is broken by a predominantly different, and larger, set of letters:
g/ḥ/ḫ (usually), *h* (sometimes), and always by *w*, *r*/z, *m*[88],
and the final or isolated forms of *y*, *l*,[89] *n*, *ʿ/ġ*, *ṣ/ḍ*,[90] *q*, and *s/š*.[91]

Moreover, the line is broken in the *horizontal* plane (i.e. by letters which do not join to the left) in Syriac by:
’,[92] *d*, *h*, *w*, *z*, *ṣ*, *r*, and *t*,

86 There is no example of final *k* in Teixidor 1990 or 1991–1992, but it occurs in the Syriac deed of sale from Dura Europos (AD 243, Welles, Fink, & Gilliam 1959: 142–149, Pl. LXIX), e.g. in *yrtyk* (line 11), *lmhpk* (line 15), etc.

87 In the parchments in Teixidor 1990 and 1991–1992, final ’ breaks the base-line with a flourish at the end of a line (e.g. in 1990 *scriptura exterior*: *mlk’* at the end of lines 3 and 6, *ṣbyny’* and *ḥdt’* at the end of lines 8 and 9 respectively, etc.), but not elsewhere. This is therefore a decorative feature, specific to a certain position in the text, rather than a normal “final form” of the letter.

88 *M* sits half above and half below the line.

89 For instance in the Dome of the Rock inscription (AH 72/AD 691-692), the north-west section of the inner octagonal arcade in *qawl*, where the base of the *l* is level with the end of the tail of the *w* (Nuseibeh & Grabar 1996: 92, centre right, note that the caption should read “Northwest” not “Southwest”); or in the south-east section in *bi-ahl* (*ibid.*, 104, centre right, note that the caption should read “Southeast” not “Northeast”).

90 For example in *al-arḍ* in line 2 of the copper plaque at the eastern entrance of the Dome of the Rock (AH 72/AD 692, Grohmann 1971: Taf. XII, 1)).

91 For instance, at random, in *ahnas* and *ḫams* in PERF 558 (Grohmann 1966: Taf II, 1). In the earliest inscriptions and papyri, *g/ḥ/ḫ* do not have special final forms with tails, though the lower part of their diagonal stroke pierces the base-line, as in the initial and medial forms. See, for instance, in the Dome of the Rock inscription, the east section of the inner octagonal arcade in *rūḥ* (Nuseibeh & Grabar 1996: 102, centre right) and in *al-masīḥ* (*ibid.*, 103, centre right). The letter *f* in final position has a straight horizontal tail, as in *yastankif* in the north section of the inner octagonal arcade in the Dome of the Rock inscription (*ibid.*, 97, centre left), and *niṣf* in *P.Berol.* 15002 (AH 22/AD 643, Grohmann 1966: Taf II, 2).

92 This is the case in Estrangelo, in inscriptions and carefully written manuscripts, and in Serṭo in carefully written manuscripts. However, in cursive documents it is very often joined to the left not only within a word but between the end of one word and the beginning of the next, in marked contrast to Arabic. See, for instance, the many examples of ’ in the Syriac documents dated AD 239 (Teixidor 1990: figs 1 and 2), 240 (Teixidor 1991–1992) and AD 243 (Welles, Fink, & Gilliam 1959: no. 28, Pl. LXIX), and other examples

while in Arabic the horizontal line is broken only by:
’, *d*/*ḏ*, *w*, *z*/*r*.

These fundamental structural differences are the consequence of the independent development of the two scripts, and it is very difficult to see how the ductus of the Arabic script could have developed from that of Syriac. By contrast, each element of the Arabic ductus — both the forms of the individual letters and, equally importantly, their relationship to each other within a word and between words, the ligatures and the spaces — can now be explained in detail through the progressive development of the Nabataean script.

But the problems facing the proponents of the “Syriac thesis”[93] extend far beyond this. Firstly, we have not a single document from the pre-Islamic period in which the Syriac script has been used to write the Arabic language.[94] This is surprising since Arabic was written in a number of different scripts before the rise of Islam, and it is curious that Syriac should be missing from the list. [95] This contrasts with Nabataean, which, in the documents available to us, was used more than any other script to write Arabic.

Secondly, the term “Syriac” represents a group of scripts, the form of each of which was firmly established by the late pre-Islamic period. The Syriac alphabet contained 21 different letter shapes, and even the only homomorphs (*d*/*r*) were consistently distinguished by diacritical dots. The “extra” phonemes in Arabic could easily have been accommodated in Syriac by the use of more diacritical dots, as they were, centuries later, in Garshuni. Syriac would therefore have been a much clearer means of transcribing Arabic than the late Nabataean alphabet, which had only 16 different letter-shapes.[96] Moreover, the continued use of Syriac as a prestige script to write a prestige language, Syriac, would surely have inhibited the development of one form of it into a quite different script when used to write Arabic, i.e. Arabic would have gone on being written in the *Syriac* script, which, with the extra diacritical dots, was perfectly adapted to transcribe it, with no impetus to change the letter

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in the sixth-century colophons in Syriac minuscule, including the manuscript dated to AD 509 (BM [now BL] Add Ms 14542, see Land 1862: 70–71, and Pl. V, no. 11) which Starcky cites in support of a Syriac origin of Arabic ’ (1966: col. 934).

93 Now, apparently only G. Troupeau (1991, 2003), F. Briquel-Chatonnet (1997), and S. Noja Noseda (2005, 2006: 540-542).

94 Naturally, this is an argument *e silentio*, but it is surely curious to propound a theory for which there is no evidence, in opposition to one for which there is a great deal. To be fair, Milik and Starcky merely made a suggestion without working it out in detail. It is those who have followed them who have the responsibility to demonstrate that there is any basis for it.

95 Thus, the Dadanitic, Sabaic, and probably Safaitic scripts, as well as the Nabataean, see Macdonald 2008.

96 See Macdonald, in the press.

forms. This is what happened with Garshuni, which remained the *Syriac script* with simply the addition of extra diacritical dots, to transcribe non-Syriac sounds.

Thirdly, even if we were to suppose that Syriac was habitually used to write Arabic — and again I stress that there is not a single piece of evidence to support this supposition — it is very difficult to see why *d* and *r* (already differentiated by dots) would develop (or be given) entirely different shapes, while at the same time, three entirely new sets of homomorphs (*g/ḥ*, *z/r*, and medial *b/y/n/t*) were created. Indeed, it is very difficult to envisage how, in Syriac, *g/ḥ* and medial *b/y*, *b/n*, *b/t*, *y/t*, and *n/t could* have developed as homomorphs naturally. Only *z/r* and medial *y/n* have the potential to become homomorphs in Syriac, though in effect they did not do so.

By contrast, in the places where Nabataean continued to be used as a written language among people who spoke a different tongue (north-west Arabia and parts of Syria),[97] knowledge of the Aramaic language seems to have been dying out among Arabic speakers at a time when some of them, at least, were feeling an increasing desire to write their spoken language. The use of Arabic legal terms as complements to Aramaic words in the Nabataean papyri of the Babatha archive,[98] and the two lines of Arabic in the inscription of ʿAyn ʿAbdah/ʿĒn ʿAvdat, which may represent a quotation from an Arabic liturgy of the deified Obodas,[99] suggest that Arabic (even as an unwritten language) played a major and sophisticated role in the society of the central Nabataean kingdom, as one would also expect it to have done in North Arabia. Thus, if on occasions, an Arabic speaker in the area of the former Nabataean kingdom wanted to write his spoken language, it was surely natural to use the Nabataean script. It is the very fact of the decline of the use of the Nabataean script to write *Aramaic* in communities which spoke Arabic, but did not as yet habitually write it, that allowed this script to become a vehicle for writing Arabic. Syriac existed in a completely different milieu in which the Syriac language was living and was spoken, if not by everyone who wrote it, at least by a strong and powerful community.

This is not to say that once the Arabic script had developed and was widely used, the practices of Syriac scribes may not have had some influence on some copiers of Arabic manuscripts. But this is something which could not have taken place until after the Arabic script was firmly established and the enormous expansion of its use following the Rise of Islam. It has nothing to do with the origins of the script.

Thus, if my interpretation of ARNA Nab 17 is correct, not only is it an addition to the relatively small number of dated late Nabataean texts in Arabia, but it provides useful examples of transitional letter-forms in the later development of Nabataean on its way to becoming the Arabic script.

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97 Probably also in southern Iraq, but at present we have no material evidence.

98 See Levine 2000.

99 See Macdonald 2005: 98.

Sigla

ARNA Nab	Nabataean inscriptions published in Milik & Starcky 1970.
CIS ii	Aramaic (including Nabataean) inscriptions in *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars II. Inscriptiones aramaicas continens*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1889–1954.
CIS v	Safaitic inscriptions in *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars V. Inscriptiones Saracenicas Continens, Tomus 1. Inscriptiones Safaiticae*. Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1950-1951.
H	Nabataean inscriptions in Healey 1993.
JS Nab	Nabataean inscriptions in Jaussen & Savignac 1909–1922.
KAI	Inscriptions in Donner & Röllig 1966–1969.
LPNab	Nabataean inscriptions in Littmann 1914.
LSI Nab	Nabataean inscriptions in Littmann 1904.
PAT	Palmyrene inscriptions in Hillers & Cussini 1996.
PERF	J. von Karabacek, *Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer: Führer durch die Ausstellung*. Vienna, 1894.
P.Yadin	Papyri published in Yadin *et al.* 2002 and Lewis, Yadin, & Greenfield 1989.
SIAM II	Safaitic inscriptions in Macdonald 1980.
WH	Safaitic inscriptions in Winnett & Harding 1978.

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Plate 1: ARNA Nab 17

Plate 2: ARNA Nab 17, facsimile

Plate 3a: A tracing of al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 128.

Plate 3b: CIS ii 947 (photograph by Alain Desreumaux).

Plate 3c: A tracing of al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 88.

Plate 3d: A tracing of al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 134.

Plate 3e: A tracing of al-Ḏīyīb 2002: no. 159.

Plate 3f: Euting's copy of CIS ii 345.

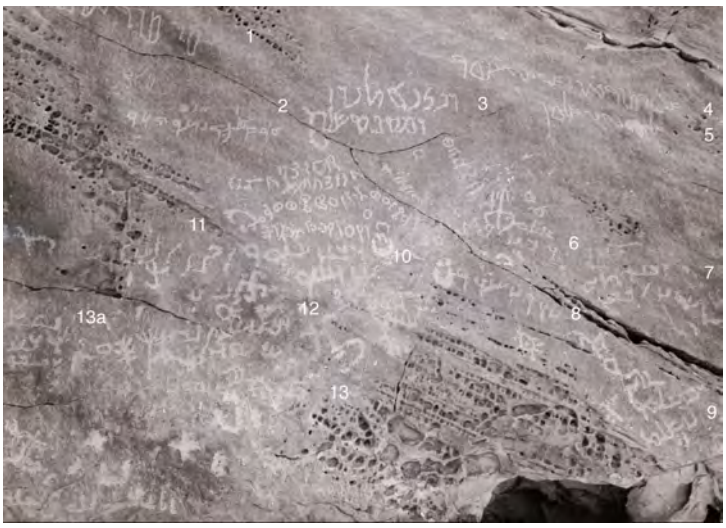

Plate 4: ARNA Nab 1–13 , + one fragmentary Nabataean text (13a: *{b/n}ʿš---- // dkyr ---- // br mlkw* ----) not read by Milik and Starcky. (Photograph Winnett and Reed, = 1970: Pl. 10. The original is in the Winnett Archive, see note 2).

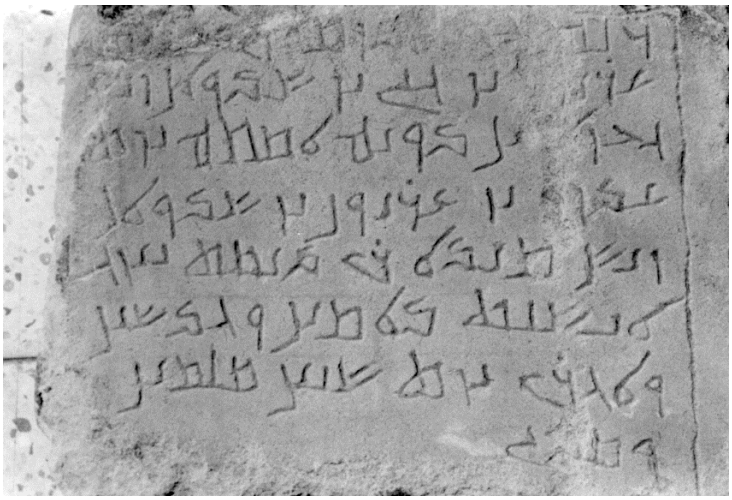

Plate 5: Stiehl 1970.