

Wheels in a land of camels: another look at the chariot in Arabia

A rock drawing in north-west Arabia shows a rider, a chariot and a foot soldier in battle. It is exceptional not only for its subject (at present unique) but for its use of a mixture of the artistic conventions employed in Arabian rock art and those used in Neo-Assyrian and Egyptian art. The three different parts of the composition have ‘captions’ in the Thamudic B script identifying the artists and the subjects, including the first occurrence of an Ancient North Arabian word for chariot.

Keywords: rock art, Arabia, chariot, equids, artistic conventions, Thamudic, Hismaic inscriptions, onomastics

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Before the arrival of the internal combustion engine, few terrains in the Arabian Peninsula can have been suitable for the use of wheeled vehicles. Yet, surprisingly, there are a handful of rock drawings of carts and chariots in the north of the Peninsula, in sand deserts and in areas covered with millions of basalt stones and boulders (*harra*).¹ Although this simply shows that the ‘artists’ knew that such vehicles existed, and is not proof that they were used in the areas where the drawings are found, they present an art-historical, and perhaps an ethnographic, puzzle.

Most of these drawings are of simple two-wheeled carts, shown either by themselves or pulled by animals of more or less indeterminate species. One such is at the rich rock-art site of Jubba, in the Nafūd

desert of North Arabia (Fig. 3).² I myself found two others near the site of Jawa in the *harra* of north-eastern Jordan, one of which is pulled by two stick-figure animals (Figs 4–5).³ Another group of such vehicles has been found at Timna’ in Wādī ‘Arabah (Fig. 6), some with archers on them (Fig. 7),⁴ while in Wādī Danan north-west of al-‘Ulā (ancient Dedān) in the Ḥijāz, there are two curious, schematic

¹ That chariots did sometimes penetrate very difficult country is suggested, for instance, by the representation on the Balawat Gates of chariots being pulled and pushed over stony mountainsides in northern Mesopotamia, see Schachner 2007: 32, 137, Taf. 1 nos 14–18, Taf. 18a and 18b, and Figure 1 here, and a relief of Ashurnasirpal II in his chariot travelling over rough and mountainous terrain, Figure 2 here.

² See Euting 1896: 152–153, fig. 5 (drawing); Clarke 1978: 49; and Nayeem 2000: figs 209–210 (photographs). Note that Wallin’s description of ‘a small cart on four very low wheels, drawn by two camels’ (1854: 165) does not fit this drawing. However, if he was describing another drawing, the latter has not been reported by subsequent visitors. The prominent ears and the long stalk-like tails of the animals pulling the vehicle would suggest that they are asses.

³ Unpublished, but see Searight 1982: 169. A third was photographed elsewhere in the same area by the Basalt Desert Rescue Survey, on which see King 1990a, though this particular drawing is not mentioned there. For a study of rock drawings of similar wheeled vehicles, but from much further east, see Littauer 1977, and in particular compare the rock drawings illustrated on pages 244 nos 1–7, 246 no. 18, and 252 no. 25.

⁴ See Anati 1979: 52–53, 56–58, and the 15th and 16th unnumbered double-page plates and the back cover (= Figs 6 and 7 here). Again it is impossible to identify the animals, although Anati (1979: 56), for reasons he does not make clear, thinks they could be horses.



Fig. 1.

Assyrian chariots being hauled over mountains on the way to Lake Van, from Band R7 of the Balawat Gates of Shalmaneser III (858–824). (British Museum 124662. Photograph ©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved).

drawings of a chariot carrying an archer (Fig. 8).⁵ A more elaborate wheeled vehicle drawn by four animals was found at Qahza, north of Tabūk in northern Saudi Arabia (Nayeem 2000: fig. 95) (Fig. 9). It is at present impossible to give a secure dating for any of these drawings.

It will be obvious that the same artistic conventions have been used in carving all these examples. The vehicle is seen simultaneously from above and in profile. The pole of the cart/chariot and, when present, the yoke are seen from above but the wheels

⁵ See al-Zahrani *et al.* 2002a: 103 (site no. 4), pl. 4.10A; 2002b 39 (site no. 4). The authors take the vehicles as ploughs and the human as a peasant cultivating his land (2002a: 103, not mentioned in the English summary on 2002b: 39), but the human figures are clearly shown in the act of shooting arrows. The authors also tentatively suggest that the animals drawing the vehicles may be camels (caption to pl. 4.10A). But again this seems unlikely since there is no sign of a hump. Given their size in relation to the vehicle, the straight horizontal back, the long neck, and the stalk-like tail with a tassel, I would suggest that they are either onagers or horse-onager hinnies (see below), although the representation of feet would be strange on either an equid or a camel. The construction of the vehicle is very curious. The archer stands behind the wheels and the double line representing the platform on which he is supported extends across the axle and runs to the *head* of the animal, giving the impression that it was intended to indicate both the pole and the reins, since if it was intended to indicate the pole alone it would be attached to the wrong part of the beast, and if it is supposed to be the reins it should run to the top of the front of the car, not to the base of the platform. However, if the lines are intended to represent both, they convey an impression that the animal is attached to the vehicle, which is perhaps all that the ‘artist’ intended. It would seem anyway that he was not very familiar with the subject he was depicting!



Fig. 2.

Ashurnasirpal II in his chariot driving over mountainous and uneven ground. (British Museum 124557. Photograph ©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved).

and, when present, the animals pulling it are shown as if tipped at 90° to show their profiles but still as if seen from above, giving the impression that they are lying on their sides. It is interesting that this convention can be found over a huge geographical area. For example, Piggott (1983) shows representations of wheeled vehicles from Armenia (pp. 80–81),



Fig. 3.
A wheeled vehicle pulled by two animals, at Jubba in northern Saudi Arabia. (From Nayeem 2000: 166, fig. 210).

Val Camonica, Italy (p. 107), Spain (p. 131) and Scandinavia (p. 117), which share this convention, while Littauer shows examples from across Central Asia as far as Outer Mongolia (1977: figs 1–7, 9–19, 22, etc.) and cites others from even further afield (1977: 250).⁶ Littauer makes the interesting observation that this is how chariots and the animals drawing them are sometimes disposed in the *dromos* to a tomb (i.e. wheels dismantled and laid on their sides, animals placed symmetrically, lying on their sides back to back), and wonders whether ‘this type of rendering of a vehicle [in rock art] was not first suggested to the artist by looking down into a tomb’ (1977: 261). Attractive as such an idea is, chariot

⁶ One wonders if the drawing of two circles joined by a ‘T’ from Taht-i Melik in south-eastern Anatolia (Uyanik 1974: fig. 83) is not one of these carts, rather than a ‘highly symbolized demon figure with two heads’, as suggested by the author.



Fig. 4.
A wheeled vehicle at Jawa, in north-eastern Jordan. (Unpublished photograph by the author).



Fig. 5.
A wheeled vehicle pulled by two animals at Jawa, in north-eastern Jordan. (Unpublished photograph by the author).

burials are high-status and relatively rare, so the number of people who were in a position to obtain this view of a chariot must always have been extremely limited. By contrast, this method of rendering wheeled vehicles in rock art is found over such an extraordinarily wide geographical area, that it is difficult to believe that such an experience could have been the origin of the convention in every region.



Fig. 6.
A wheeled vehicle pulled by two animals at Timna' in the Israeli part of Wādī 'Araba. (Anati 1979: 15th unnumbered plate).



Fig. 7.
Wheeled vehicles pulled by two animals, carrying archers at Timna' in the Wādī 'Araba. (Anati 1979: 16th unnumbered plate).

I would suggest that it might be more fruitful to look at the problem from a different angle.⁷ This schematic method of showing a vehicle is paralleled by the way animals and humans are represented in rock art throughout Arabia, in which the subject's most easily identifiable characteristics are emphasised.⁸ Thus the long straight horns of the oryx or the back-curving, often annulate, horns of the ibex are usually exaggerated in order to allow drawings of

⁷ I am not an expert in rock-art theory and the only region in which I have any considerable experience is Arabia, so the following observations are offered tentatively as suggestions.

⁸ See Macdonald 2005: 336–338 for a longer discussion of this.



Fig. 8.
Wheeled vehicles pulled by single animals, each carrying an archer, in Wādī Danan, north-west of al-'Ulā (ancient Dedān) in the Hijāz. (See Al-Zahrani *et al.* 2002a and 2002b: pl. 4.10A).



Fig. 9.
A wheeled vehicle pulled by four animals and carrying an armed man at Qahzah, north of Tabūk, Saudi Arabia. (Nayeem 2000: fig. 95).

them to be recognised even when they are merely stick figures.⁹ Indeed, I hope to have shown this recently in regard to a famous drawing of stick-figure animals with short, raised, vertical tails, which I have identified as domestic goats.¹⁰ This emphasis on distinguishing characteristics is also common in the representation of equids: horses (with small heads and short ears, and where the individual hairs of the

⁹ See the examples of drawings of oryx given in Macdonald 2005: 336, n. 15, to which add Nayeem 2000: fig. 253. For drawings of ibex see for instance Nayeem 2000: figs 167, 240, 262, 270, 272, etc.

¹⁰ See Macdonald 2005: 337–338. The drawing in question is on face A of HCH 73, from the Cairn of Hani (see Harding 1953: 30, pl. 6).



Fig. 10.
The complete three-part composition.

mane and tail are often shown), asses (with long ears, erect manes, and stalk-like tails with a tassel at the end) and hybrids (with long ears, ass manes and tails, on a horse-like body [mules], or short ears, ass manes, and a cross between an ass and a horse tail, on an enlarged ass body [hinnies], see below). Another convention that seems to have been used throughout Arabia was first recognised by Ann Searight (1983: 575): this distinguishes male camels (which are shown with their tails hanging down) from female camels (which have their tails curled up). This can be seen in the camels on the rock face that forms the main subject of this article (Figs 10 and 21).

Unless a person had experienced the art of the great empires of the Near East and had absorbed the artistic conventions used in Mesopotamia or Egypt for representing three-dimensional objects in two dimensions, it would seem unlikely that such conventions would have occurred to him or her *ex nihilo*. For instance, the way of representing the maximum area of an animal is to show it in profile. But in a *true* profile, the image shows only what can actually be seen when looking at the original subject from one side; what is unseen (i.e. the other side) has to be inferred. It is this inference that is missing from most Arabian rock art of the literate period.¹¹ Thus, when a horse is shown in profile, both its ears will be represented, even though in reality one would normally hide the other. If there are two reins, both will often be shown on the visible side of the horse's neck, as are the reins on the equid in the central panel (Fig. 15) and on the equid beside inscription no. 3 (Fig. 21). With humans, the maximum area is shown by representing them facing out of the picture and this is how they are mostly shown, even when their activities would require them to be in profile.¹² Thus, a horseman or cameleer is shown with his legs in profile on his mount, but his body and head facing out of the picture (e.g. SIJ 244 (= H 81 on pl. 4); WH 2188 (pl. 78); Harding 1969: pl. 19; Macdonald, Al Mu'azzin & Nehmé 1996: 468, fig. 18; Nayeem 2000: figs 200, 256, 258, 288, etc.). Bulls

whose horns form a wide arc are drawn in profile but their heads are usually shown as if from above, because (without perspective and without the habit of inferring the unseen from what is shown) this is the simplest way of representing their distinguishing characteristics (see, for instance, Nayeem 2000: figs 129–130a, 138–147, etc.).

Yet there are other ways of doing this as well, perhaps reflecting different periods or simply different artists. In these, the head of the animal, like the body, is shown in profile but the horns have been turned at 90°, as if seen from the front. A good example of both styles together can be seen on Nayeem 2000: fig. 75, and of the latter style (2000) in his figs 23, 90, 102, 110, 329, etc. In both cases, however — as with oryx and ibex — both horns are shown, because they are the animal's distinguishing characteristic, whereas in 'true' profile, one would normally be hidden.

Of course, it is impossible to make an absolute rule for the creations of hundreds of thousands of individuals of widely varying abilities over a wide area and thousands of years, and a number of exceptions to what I have suggested immediately spring to mind. Yet, there is, I would suggest, sufficient truth in it to explain why wheeled vehicles were shown in this way. To show them in 'true' profile would have been to suggest that they had only one wheel and one draft animal and that the shaft reached only as far as the animal's tail, because neither the artist, nor presumably most of those who saw his creation, had been trained automatically to infer what was unseen from what was shown.

The drawing which is the subject of the remainder of this article (Fig. 10) could be seen as a dramatic exception to the ideas I have just put forward.¹³ In subject matter it is so far unique in Arabian rock art, and in treatment it is extremely unusual in the corpus, at least before the modern age. As we shall see, it combines elements of the traditional, 'non-inferential' forms of representation in rock art, and

¹¹ I mean by this the styles of rock art that are often associated with inscriptions, which identify the subject and/or the artist of the drawing.

¹² One could compare the convention in Egyptian art of showing the head and legs in profile but the body *en face*.

¹³ This drawing was first published in Macdonald 1996: 74, 76–79, 224–225, and later in Nayeem 2000: 70, 74, and figs 52–53. I am extremely grateful to the late Mrs Mary Litaer and to Professor J. Crouwel for the considerable help they gave me in discussing this drawing, and to them and to Dorothy Alexander for showing me much comparative material. Naturally, none of them is responsible for my errors or my conclusions.



Fig. 11.
The left panel.

of the 'inferential' forms found in Mesopotamian reliefs or Egyptian reliefs and wall paintings.

It is on a rock face with other drawings and a number of inscriptions, near Tabūk, in north-west Saudi Arabia,¹⁴ and is a composition in the form of a 'trptych' in which the central picture is signed by a certain 'b'hl, while those on either side are signed by a man called S²hr.¹⁵ All three inscriptions are in an Ancient North Arabian script, called Thamudic B,¹⁶ which was used mainly by nomads throughout pre-Islamic western Arabia in the first millennium BC and, possibly, the early centuries AD.

The left panel of the 'trptych' shows a man riding bareback on a male equid. The central panel shows a chariot drawn by one or more equids with a driver,

and an archer shooting back towards the right panel, where a man on foot shoots arrows at the chariot, while his female camel stands beside him bearing a saddle of a most unusual shape. The whole of the left panel is enclosed within a border.

It is impossible to know whether the three panels were drawn at the same time, as a combined effort, or whether S²hr extended 'b'hl's scene at a later date. However, as it stands, the work of both men forms a single composition. There are very slight differences between the shapes of the letter ' in the inscriptions written by the two men, but this is almost certainly because the text by 'b'hl (in the rectangular box above the chariot) is neater and more formal. It is, alas, impossible to date the drawing by the inscriptions since our knowledge of the chronology of Thamudic B is extremely hazy. Indeed, it might be hoped that the subject matter of the drawings would help to date the inscriptions, though for the reasons outlined below this also seems unlikely.

Description

The left 'panel' (Fig. 11)

The left part of the composition was drawn by S²hr and shows a man riding an equid. Some of the animal's features have been obscured by later over-scourings¹⁷ but most of the drawing is clear. There are twenty-one dots on its shoulder, which may simply be decorative since it is difficult to imagine that they are natural markings.¹⁸ It is possible that they

¹⁷ These show up as much whiter on the photograph. For instance, the equid's hooves and the tip of its tail appear to have been hammered over and there is later hammering behind the head of the animal and on either side of the rider's head. It also looks as though the equid's penis is a later addition. See also note 19 below.

¹⁸ In drawings accompanied by Safaitic inscriptions, the bodies of horses and other animals are occasionally filled in with bizarre markings, see, for instance, the lattice work on the neck of the ass in Harding 1969: pl. 19, or the hatching on the horse and rider in CSNS 48, or on the camels in WH 730, 2018, etc. *Contra* Macdonald 1996: 77, it is unlikely that the dots on S²hr's horse represent the apotropaic sign of dots in multiples of seven which often accompanies Safaitic inscriptions and drawings, since these do not seem to occur beside texts in other Ancient North Arabian scripts. The only possible examples I can find at present are KJA 323 (Hismaic), an eight-rayed 'star' (?) with seven dots interspersed between the rays, and Moritz 10, a seven-rayed 'star' (?) beside an unclassifiable ANA inscription.

¹⁴ It is located south of Tabūk on rock 200-S-516 of the Epigraphic Survey of Saudi Arabia (Livingstone *et al.* 1985: 129, 131 [Phase IX], 134 [Phase IX]), which is at site no. 200-95 of the Comprehensive Archaeological Survey of Saudi Arabia. According to Nayeem (2000: 40, 70) this is at 'Jabal Aeran at Wadi Asafir', probably al-'Ayrayn, a hill at 28° 12' N 36° 32' E, which is in the right position according to Nayeem's sketch map (2000: 41).

¹⁵ For discussions of these names see inscriptions 9 and 12, below.

¹⁶ See Macdonald & King 2000: 438. The 'captions' are inscriptions 9, 12, and 14, below.



Fig. 12.
Assyrian cavalry from the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 BC) showing the binding of the horses' tails, with the ends turned back in a 'mud knot'. (British Museum 118907, photograph by the author, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).



Fig. 13.
A rock drawing of a horseman from an area south-west of Taymā', northern Saudi Arabia (see Jacobs & Macdonald, in press). (Photograph courtesy of the DAI, Berlin).



Fig. 14.
Assyrian cavalry from the reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC), showing the curling decoration on the lower part of the scabbard, and the nocks on the bows. (British Museum 124544, photograph by the author, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

indicate intended to represent some form of saddle-cloth, though, if so, one would have expected it to extend under and behind the rider. The drawing is too crude to allow one to identify with any certainty the type of equid portrayed.

It is uncertain whether the mane was shown in the original drawing¹⁹ but the animal has two longish ears, which can still be seen below the over-scoring, and a stalk-like tail to which a tassel (?) has been added at a later date. We cannot tell, of course, whether the tail, as drawn, was intended as a crude representation of a horse's tail (in which multiple hairs originate from the root), or as a more realistic representation of the stalk-like tasselled tail of a

donkey, onager²⁰ or mule,²¹ or even of a horse's tail bound and with the end bent back in a 'mud knot' (see note 28), as on Figure 12.

The rider²² is not using a saddle and holds in his right hand a single rein. This appears to be attached to a halter, shown by a line crossing the animal's nose. The rein then descends below the nose. This is possibly intended to show that it is attached to the equid's mouth, implying the use of a bit (cf. Fig. 13), and then runs diagonally across the animal's neck, below its eye, to a point just above the neck where it

²⁰ Clutton-Brock (1987: 99) accepts Zarins' contention that onagers could never be domesticated but that they may have been interbred with donkeys and horses. She also makes the very telling point that 'unlike the African wild ass, which is the progenitor of the domestic donkey, the Asiatic asses have no domesticated descendants. If the domestic asses of Asia had been derived from the onager they would produce fertile offspring when mated with the wild species, but this is not so' (1992: 37). Moorey (1970: 36–38), argues that onagers, as well as hybrids, were used as mounts in second-millennium Iraq, but at least some of the material on which he bases this is ambiguous. Thus, for instance, it is curious that on his Plaque I (pl. 13/a), where he identifies the animal as a horse, the rider is sitting in the position appropriate for riding an ass, while on the plaque shown on his pl. 12/b, where he identifies the animal as an onager, the rider is seated as if on a horse. I am not certain that the manes and tails of these animals are drawn sufficiently clearly to allow identification of the species.

²¹ It does indeed look most like a mule. Clutton-Brock succinctly describes a mule as looking like 'a donkey with the body of a horse; its head is heavy, its ears long, its tail ass-like...' whereas a hinny (or jennet), the product of a stallion and a jenny (a female ass or onager), 'looks more like a horse with the body of a donkey; its head is lighter, the ears shorter, and the tail fuller' (1992: 45). She also explains that the advantage to man of a hybrid is that it 'is likely to be larger in body size, have greater endurance, and survive better on poor food than either of its parents' (1992: 42). A famous relief from Ashurbanipal's palace at Nineveh (British Museum 124882, illustrated in Clutton Brock 1987: 100) shows onagers being captured alive. Clutton-Brock is unable to explain the reason for this (1987: 101), but the breeding of hybrids would seem to be a reasonable possibility. In the Saffaitic inscriptions, a distinction is made between wild onagers, which are called **rd*, the horse, which is called *frs*¹ and a hybrid, which is called **r*.

²² While the rider's pose, twisted round to face out of the picture, is naturalistic in that he is turning to strike the horse's rump with his stick, it is also typical of North Arabian rock drawings of riders, as described above. On the fact that he appears to be naked and is bareheaded, see Crone 2008: 6, and 10, n. 37, and cf. the naked camel rider shown on her figure 4.

¹⁹ There is a thick line along the neck of the equid below the rider's hand, but it is uncertain whether this is original or a later addition. It is more carefully carved and is not as white as the additions (cf. the line behind the equid's head) and could possibly have been original and intended to represent the equid's mane. On the other hand, part of the line is not attached to the neck, and it is thicker than any of the lines used to represent the animal. It may be part of the outline, resembling a kneeling ibex (?), which surrounds the artist's 'signature' above the drawing.

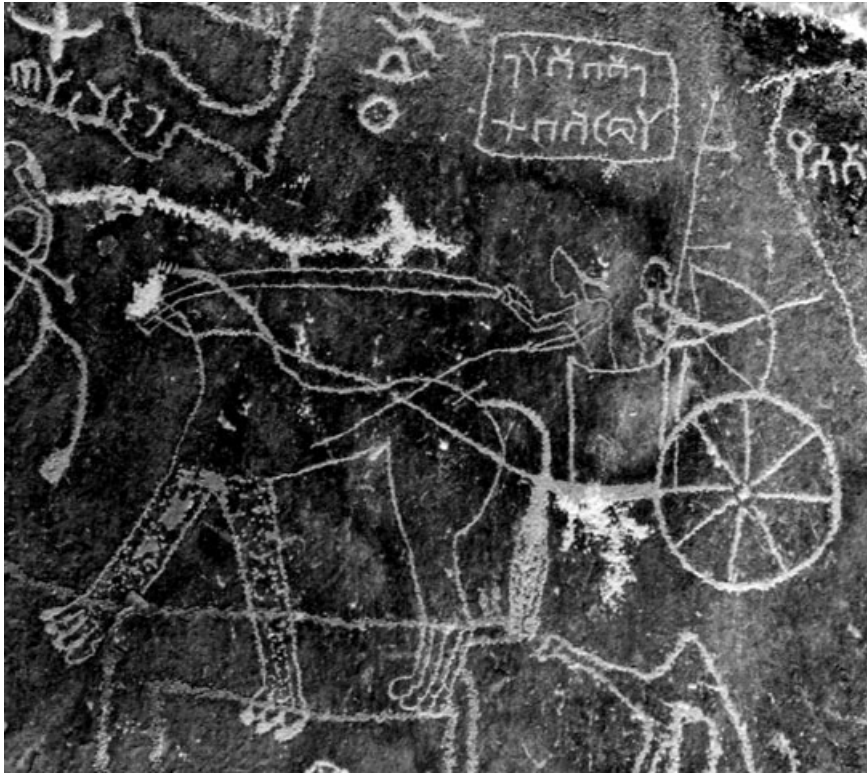


Fig. 15.
The central panel.

meets the end of the rider's right arm (no hand is shown). Naturally, one would expect a single rein held in the rider's right hand to be on the *right* side of the mount and so both here and on Figure 13 this is a non-inferential way of showing the presence of the rein.

The rider's left hand holds a stick with which he is striking the animal's flank. At his belt is a sword (?) with a short line crossing the blade just below the top, presumably representing a hilt,²³ and a curious S-like cross stroke at the tip. It is just possible that this latter represents an indistinct memory of the curling decoration towards the base of the scabbards of the soldiers of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC), as shown

on the reliefs at Nimrud (e.g. Fig. 14), and those of Shalmaneser III (858–824), as seen on the Balawat Gates (see Schachner 2007: Taf. 1, nos 8, 9, etc., and Fig. 1 here), though the similarity is probably coincidental. According to the 'caption' to the drawing (text no. 9 below), the rider is an '(enemy?) warrior'.

The central 'panel' (Fig. 15)

The central panel, by 'b'hl, shows an equid pulling a chariot in which there are two men.²⁴ The drawing of this equid is more careful and detailed than that in the left panel, and it has several unusual features. The animal is disproportionately large in comparison to the chariot, but this is probably accidental.²⁵

²³ What are apparently swords with a horizontal cross-stroke at the top are found in several rock drawings in Arabia, see, for instance, Anati 1968: 137, pl. 45/b (one held in the right hand and another at the belt); Al-Ansary 1982: 142, fig. 1 (at the belt); Nayeem 2000: fig. 68 (at the belt); as well as in drawings associated with Safaitic inscriptions (e.g. WH 576 [pl. 80], at the belt). However, it is difficult to see how these would work as fighting weapons.

²⁴ After the completion of the drawing, an unidentifiable felid similar to that below inscription no. 6 was scratched in outline across the lower legs of the equid pulling the chariot. Below the chariot itself is a female camel in outline, and below that is a modern Arabic inscription. None of these, of course, form part of the original composition (see Fig. 10).

²⁵ Gross discrepancies of size are a common feature of North Arabian rock drawings.



Fig. 16.
A detail from the reliefs showing the campaign of Ashurbanipal (669–627 BC) against the Arabs. (British Museum 136774, photograph by the author, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

Its forelegs are stippled and it is uncertain whether this is intended to represent markings or is simply decorative. Instead of hooves, its legs appear to end in 'toes'. This might suggest that the author was unfamiliar with equids, but it is difficult to believe this since in other respects the animal is well drawn. One would expect the chariot to be pulled by at least two animals and it seems likely that these curious 'toes' are a stylised way of indicating one or more equids hidden by the one before us, very much as in Assyrian and Egyptian art the outlines of the legs and heads of the horse(s) obscured by the one in view are shown.²⁶

²⁶ Note, however, that Littauer and Crouwel point out that in the eighth century BC Assyrian reliefs 'a pair of horses may have two facial profiles and only one set of legs' (1979a: 118). Indeed, in the seventh century BC, on the reliefs of Ashurbanipal, we find 'a single horse representing a team of four' (1979b: 114 and fig. 56). For an Egyptian example see Littauer & Crouwel 1979a: pl. 16/3 = Kestner Museum, Hannover inv. no. 2952. The 'toes' in the present drawing could therefore be a clumsy attempt at a similar solution to the problem of representing the presence of two animals, when one is obscuring the other, though here the artist has accidentally shown too many, rather than too few, hooves on the forelegs.

Here, this would seem to be clear in the case of the hind legs, where the single thigh splits into four fetlocks. In the case of the forelegs, the artist's attempt to indicate the presence of two animals appears to have become confused and he has given the right leg four 'hooves' and the left three, rather than ending each of them in two. Note also that four short vertical lines rise from the top of its head, suggesting two pairs of ears. I shall return below to the questions raised by this analysis of the artistic conventions.

The tail appears to be an accurate representation of that of a hinny, stalk-like at the root and ending in a long tassel (see the photograph in Clutton-Brock 1992: 45), as opposed to a tail consisting of individual hairs starting from the root which characterises the horse, or the long stalk-like tail with a short tassel of the donkey and the mule. It also has the small, horse-like head and short ears of the hinny, as opposed to the ass-like head and ears of a mule. No mane appears to have been shown, unless the slightly thicker line along the top of the neck is intended to represent the short upright mane of the ass, mule and hinny, as opposed to the flowing mane of the horse. The animal's apparent size might

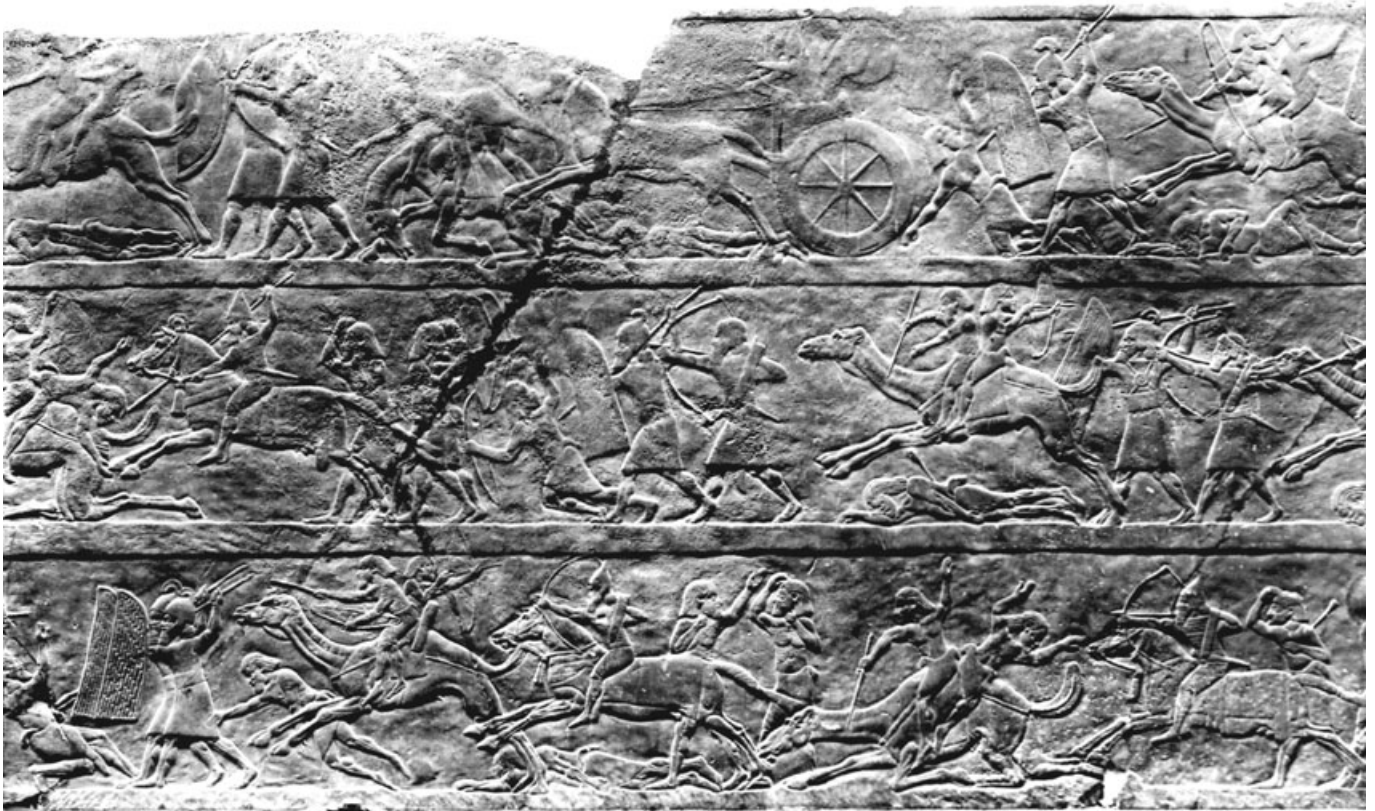


Fig. 17.

The campaign of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal (668–627 BC) against the Arabs. Assyrian cavalry pursuing Arabs. (British Museum 124926, photograph by the author, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

argue against its identification as a hinny,²⁷ but, as noted above, the animal is in any case out of proportion with the chariot, and therefore size is

²⁷ Clutton-Brock notes that mules and hinnies are 'larger than the ass and may also be larger than the horse' (1987: 95). However, elsewhere she writes that the hinny 'will not be much larger than the donkey mother' and this would seem to be confirmed by the photograph she published, if it is representative (1992: 45 and fig. 3/5). On the other hand, Potts (2006: 105–106) quotes a number of sources on the unusually large size of 'Arabian' and other Middle Eastern asses, and if these descriptions are really of asses and not of mules (and those writing them would surely have been able to tell the difference), it is possible that hinnies produced by mating them with stallions would have been considerably larger than those bred in the modern West. Clutton-Brock also suggests that donkey/horse hybrids were used as draught animals in Mesopotamia from the third millennium onwards and, following Zarins, that onager/horse and onager/ass hybrids may also have been used (1987: 101). However, to the best of my knowledge, the Neo-Assyrian reliefs do not show hybrids being used to draw Assyrian chariots.

probably the least reliable criterion for identification. However, the possibility that it is a horse cannot be entirely ruled out, since some Assyrian reliefs show the tails of cavalry and chariot horses tightly bound to a point roughly two-thirds of the way down, after which they are left loose (e.g. Figs 1 and 2), and this could be an attempt to represent that.²⁸

The driver holds two reins both of which run across the visible side of the equid's upper neck to its mouth, thus suggesting that they are attached to a bit. Unfortunately, the upper part of its face has suffered later damage but there is a thin line, which crosses the reins and the lower part of the head at a point where one would expect a bridle. The

²⁸ On other Assyrian reliefs, the tail is shown bound all the way down and with the end bound back and secured to the upper part of the tail in a 'mud knot' (see Littauer & Crowell 1979b: 112), presumably to avoid it getting caught in the chariot wheels (e.g. Fig. 16), though the tails of cavalry horses could also be bound in this way (e.g. Fig. 12).



Fig. 18.
The right panel and inscriptions 14–15.

arrangement would thus be very similar to that in *S²hr'*'s drawing of the horseman (Fig. 11). There is no indication of a breast band or a belly strap (as, for instance, on Fig. 16, and see Littauer & Crowel 1979b: 116–117, figs 55–56). Below the reins, what appears to be a continuous line runs from the lower part of the equid's head, across its neck and haunch to the bottom of the front of the chariot box. It is clear that the long, more or less straight section of the line, from the base of the chariot box to the back of the equid's neck, is intended to represent the pole of the chariot, albeit placed on the visible, rather than the invisible, side of the animal. It is, however, more difficult to decide whether the line crossing its neck and that running from the front of the neck to the head (the extension of which across the head may represent the bridle), are simply an erroneous continuation of the pole, despite being at different angles to it, or whether they represent other parts of

the harness. For instance, the line crossing the neck in this drawing could represent the neck strap, holding the yoke in place (cf. Fig. 16). On the other hand, this line and that running from the head to the front of the neck might be a misunderstanding of the outer rein which, on Assyrian reliefs from Tiglath-Pileser III onwards, is shown in this position, running from the bridle, back through the outer terret of the yoke (near the back of the neck), to be tied to a projection at the top of the front of the box (see Fig. 16, and Littauer & Crowel 1979b: 124, figs 56, 62). Indeed it is possible that *'b'hl* may have confused this outer rein and the pole (even though the former would be attached to the top of the box and the latter fixed to its base), in his attempt to show the pole, rather than let its presence between the horses be inferred.

The construction of the chariot is also very odd. Although the wheel itself is skilfully drawn, with a



Fig. 19. An unpublished Safaitic drawing showing a camel rider mounted on a cushion in front of the hump. (From the Basalt Desert Rescue Survey, courtesy of Dr Geraldine King).

thin, almost perfectly circular rim and eight spokes, its position suggests that the axle was placed some way behind the car. Obviously, this is not a feasible construction and I would suggest that the wheel may have been so placed by the artist to indicate that the axle was (as normal) at the back of the chariot, without confusing his drawing of the side of the car. The latter is shown as a box, reaching to the waists of the men within it, with a dip in the top of the side wall, between the front and the rear. It would appear to be open at the back and the far side of the opening is also indicated, in what almost

looks like an attempt at 'perspective'.²⁹ In the relationship of the driver and the archer to the car, 'b'hl has shown only the men's upper bodies, allowing those parts hidden by the side of the car to be inferred.

The eight-spoke wheel is shown on chariots on Assyrian reliefs from the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727) onwards.³⁰ Of course, we cannot know if the apparently very light rim in this drawing, which would contrast with the heavier rims shown on the Assyrian reliefs, is an accurate reflection of reality or whether it is simply a schematic representation.

In my previous study of this drawing (1996: 75 and pl. 2/b), I compared it with an Egyptian drawing on a limestone block showing a chariot with wheels with eight spokes, several features of which are similar to those of our drawing. Indeed, it provides a closer match than any other representation I can find, albeit far more finely drawn. Unfortunately, its lack of date or provenance and the fact that the chariot, though driven by an Egyptian, 'combines features of different Asiatic chariots over a fair range of time (late eighth to fifth or even fourth century B.C.) and place (Syria to Persia and beyond)'³¹ mean that it is of little help in identifying the origins of the vehicle in our drawing.

The occupants of the chariot are shown in outline and in this case the drawing is remarkably natural-

²⁹ Note, however, that the top of the vertical line representing the far side of the opening is not attached to anything, and so the illusion of 'perspective' is not completed.

³⁰ Before that, the wheels are shown with six spokes; see for instance the chariots on the reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC, e.g. Fig. 2 here), and on the Balawat Gates (Shalmaneser III [858–824 BC], e.g. Fig. 1 here). I am most grateful to Professor Bruno Jacobs for pointing out to me that the eight-spoke wheel remained the norm into the Achaemenid period, with some exceptions, e.g. the twelve-spoke wheels on the chariot in the Lycian delegation (Delegation VI) on the north side of the Apadana at Persepolis (see Curtis & Tallis 2005: 66, and the discussion of chariots on 212). There appears to have been a parallel increase in the number of spokes on Egyptian chariot wheels in the first millennium BC, although the evidence is much less abundant than for Assyria. See Littauer & Crowel 1979a: 112–119.

³¹ Littauer & Crowel 1979a: 118. The drawing is in Kestner Museum, Hannover inv. no. 2952, and is discussed in detail and illustrated in Littauer & Crowel 1979a: 117–118, pl. 16/3.



Fig. 20.
A bronze figurine from Yemen of a camel with a 'North African' (?) type of saddle. (British Museum 1992-6-23,3, photograph by the author, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum).

istic by the standards of Arabian rock art. The driver, who is shown with his head in profile but his body *en face*, holds the reins in his right hand and leans forward to touch the horse with the long stick in his left. He appears to be clean-shaven and his head is shown as pointed, suggesting perhaps a conical helmet similar to that of some Assyrian horsemen and charioteers (e.g. Figs 14 and 16). At the back of the head and sticking — or streaming — out behind is a straight line which, if it is part of the original drawing, could be intended to represent the driver's hair, cf. the loose hair of some Assyrian cavalymen (Fig. 14) and charioteers (Fig. 16). The bowman appears to be bareheaded and faces to the rear. He is using what is probably a large self-bow with curved 'nocks' at the extremities (Fig. 15),³² and is shooting a hail of arrows at an archer on foot and a

³² The curved nocks are suggested by the small projection at the top of the bow, above the bowstring, which could be compared with the forward curve at this point on the bows used by Assyrian archers on the reliefs (e.g. Fig. 14). According to the experts this is not sufficient to indicate a composite bow (see Collon 1983: 53). It is interesting to note that on the reliefs showing Ashurbanipal's campaign against the Arabs (Fig. 17), a clear distinction is made between the bows used by the Assyrians, which are large and which have these curved nocks, and those in the hands of the Arabs which are smaller and do not. If I am correct in my identification of the nock in this drawing, exactly the same distinction would be shown between the large bow of the charioteer, which has the nock, and the smaller one of the dismounted cameleer in the right panel, which has not.

camel, which form the right panel of the composition (Figs 10 and 18). The man on foot is returning fire and one of his arrows can be seen above the head of the archer in the chariot, at right angles to a long vertical line which rises from beside him in the car, and which presumably represents a spear,³³ while another is sticking in the rump of the equid drawing the chariot (Fig. 15). Curiously, while the archer on foot seems to be holding the bow with his left hand while drawing back the bowstring with his right (Figs 10 and 18),³⁴ the one in the chariot is not touching the bow at all but is holding the arrow with his left hand just in front of the bowstring, while drawing the bowstring with his right, a manoeuvre which is clearly impossible.

The right 'panel' (Fig. 18)

This right panel is by *S²hr*. It is enclosed in a border formed by a single incised line and shows an archer on foot and the female camel from which he has presumably dismounted, together with an inscription in two halves. The archer is in the act of fitting an arrow to his bow in preparation for shooting towards

³³ The long poles leaning diagonally backwards at the back of Assyrian chariots have often been taken to be standards, but I would agree with Schachner (2007: 155), that in most cases they are more likely to be spears, to which small pennants are sometimes attached (as possibly here, if the upper horizontal line at right angles to the vertical one can be interpreted as such). The spearhead is usually clearly visible, see for instance the chariots from the reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BC) in Budge 1914: pls 12, 15, 18, etc.; those from the reign of Shalmaneser III (858–824 BC) in Schachner 2007: Taf. 40/b upper register, where the man on foot is using a spear which is identical in form to the object at the back of the chariot, and Taf. 37/a lower register, where the object at the back of the chariot and the spear held by the man on foot just behind it are identical. A similar scene, this time from the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BC), can be seen in Barnett & Falkner 1962: pl. 9. In the reign of Ashurbanipal (668–627 BC) some battle chariots no longer seem to be furnished with a spear (e.g. Fig. 16 here, and Paterson 1904–1911: pl. 10), though it is present in other chariots used in battle (ibid. pls 42–43) and in those used in hunting (e.g. ibid. pls 32–33).

³⁴ There are two horizontal lines crossing the bowstring, the upper one, which runs from the end of the man's right arm and crosses the line of the bow must represent the arrow with the notch held to the bowstring, while the lower, which seems to be an extension of the left arm, stops at the line representing the bow and presumably represents the left hand holding it.



Fig. 21.
Inscriptions 1–7, on the left edge of the left ‘panel’.

the chariot and is surrounded by the arrows of his opponent.³⁵ He is wearing a garment, which appears to reach almost to the ground at the back, but to be open at the front, allowing his legs freedom of movement.³⁶ It would appear that the thick white line at the back of the head, presumably indicating long hair, has been added later (cf. the rider in the left panel). A line at his waist probably represents a sword rather than another of his opponent’s arrows, since it is at a different angle from the others. He appears to be using a small self-bow. The caption to this drawing (no. 21, below) runs from right to left, starting above the camel and then continuing above and to the left of the foot soldier. It identifies *S²hr* both as the artist and as the ‘foot soldier’ in the drawing.

³⁵ There is an arrow above the head of the foot soldier and another at the level of his knees and a third behind him, to the right of the cartouche. A fourth has struck one of the forelegs of the camel.

³⁶ It can be seen as a triangle behind his right (?) leg. For a discussion of this garment see Crone 2008: 6, 8, and compare those in her figures 1–3 and 9. It is not very clear on the drawing which is the left leg and which the right, and my identification is based simply on what would be the normal stance for a right-handed man (see n. 34) preparing to draw a bow.

The drawing of the camel is also of considerable interest. It has two tassels at the top of its neck, just below the head, a feature that is found in some Safaitic drawings.³⁷ The division at the front of its pads is clearly shown, but what makes it especially interesting is the structure in front of its hump, which must surely represent some form of saddle.³⁸ It appears to consist of a cushion, or possibly a solid construction, secured in front of the hump by a triple girth running behind the front legs of the camel. It is possible that a saddle of this sort is shown in an unpublished Safaitic drawing (Fig. 19)³⁹ where the camel rider is shown sitting on a pad or cushion on the forward slope of the hump. This is also fixed by a triple girth running behind the forelegs of the camel. In both drawings there is also another girth just in

³⁷ See, for instance, HCH 80, and British Museum 122182 in Ryckmans 1951: 84–85, pl. 1.

³⁸ It cannot be an arch securing a saddle of the *hawlānī*, or so-called ‘South Arabian’ type, since no structure is shown behind the hump.

³⁹ This drawing was found by the Basalt Desert Rescue Survey, on which see King 1990a. It will be published shortly, with the accompanying inscription, as KRS 1442 by Dr Geraldine King to whom I am most grateful for allowing me to show the drawing here.



Fig. 22. Inscriptions 3–14 and drawings on the central part of the rock face.

front of its hind legs⁴⁰ and it is unclear whether this has a connection, not visible in the drawings, with the riding pad or box, or has a quite different function, such as securing an udder-bag.

An alternative interpretation of the object in front of the hump in *S²hr'*'s drawing might be that it represents a saddle of the types now mainly used in North and West Africa, which consist of a wooden seat fixed on the front slope of the hump, attached by girths in front of the camel's belly.⁴¹ Something resembling this type of saddle is found on a bronze figurine of a camel from Yemen (see Macdonald 2002 and Fig. 20 here),⁴² but, to the best of my knowledge, there are no other representations of it from ancient Arabia. However, the shape of the object in *S²hr'*'s drawing in fact bears little relationship to that on the figurine or the modern North African camel saddles and I would suggest that this interpretation is less likely than the one suggested in the previous paragraph.

As was normal practice among the nomads of Arabia, the archer has dismounted to fight. There is no evidence that the bow was used from camel-back in Arabia in antiquity, except in pursuit of ostrich or in an emergency.⁴³

⁴⁰ In the Safaitic drawing, the oval on the camel's rump to the right of this girth is almost certainly the round shield used by the nomads who made these drawings, and indeed by Bedouin up to recent times. The shield is often shown being carried in this position both in Safaitic and other Arabian drawings and in some Palmyrene reliefs of deities in the guise of both nomads (e.g. Drijvers 1976: pl. 65) and of Palmyrene 'desert patrols' (e.g. 1976: 68/1, where note that it is borne by both the cameleer and the horseman).

⁴¹ Photographs of North African saddles can be found in Bulliet 1975: 122–124.

⁴² This looks closer to the *rahla* saddle used in Mauretania, as illustrated in Bulliet 1975: 124, than to the Tuareg saddles in *ibid.* p. 123.

⁴³ See, briefly, Macdonald 1991 [= 2009, vii]: 103; 1996: 75 and pl. 3/a. It will be clear from the Assyrian relief reproduced in Figure 17, that the Arabs on camels are in full flight and that the *rawādif* (i.e. those riding pillion) are trying ineffectively to ward off the Assyrian cavalry with their arrows. The Arabs who are *fighting* are facing the Assyrian onslaught *on foot*. A lost section of this relief, which fortunately was copied by the artist Boutcher (= Macdonald 1996: pl. 3/a), shows the Arabs, with their camels couched, going into battle on foot. For a drawing of a cameleer pursuing an ostrich see HCH 80.

There is an unintended symmetry between this scene and the famous reliefs showing Ashurbanipal's campaign against the Arabs (Fig. 17). There, the Arabs are shown in flight trying to ward off the Assyrian soldiers by shooting back at them from their fleeing camels. Here, it would appear that the 'enemy horseman' and the chariot are in flight and the archer in the chariot is shooting back at the nomad, who is on the attack, having descended from his camel to improve his aim.

The inscriptions and other drawings on this rock face⁴⁴

There are a number of inscriptions⁴⁵ and drawings on this rock face. From left to right these are:

1. (Fig. 21) To the left of a crude outline of a camel with its tail curled (hence probably a female), an inscription in the Hismaic⁴⁶ script running vertically:

l whbl̄----

By {Whbl̄----}

The tops of the *b* and the *l* and any letters after the *l* have been cut by the edge of the photograph. *Whbl̄* has been found once in Hismaic (KJC 581), but *whblh* is very common.

2. (Fig. 21) Below and to the right of no. 1. A text in the Hismaic script running vertically:

l hzn bn w'ln

By Hzn son of W'ln

Both names are known in Hismaic.

3. (Figs 21 and 22) Above and to the right of no. 2, next to a lively drawing of a male equid⁴⁷ facing right, with a stalk-like tail ending in a large tassel, suggesting that it is a hinny (see nn. 21 and 27). Two reins are shown crossing its neck from behind and just above its mouth although they do not reach the back of the neck and no rider is shown.⁴⁸ The hooves of the equid and the tip of its penis have been hammered at a later date, like the hooves and tail tip of *S²hr's* equid, part of which can be seen in the bottom right-hand corner of Figure 21. To the right of the drawing and running left to right is an inscription in the Thamudic C or D script.⁴⁹

l snd̄'

By Snd̄'

The name has not been found before and is difficult to explain. It recurs in no. 11, where it is written vertically.

4. (Figs 21 and 22) To the right of no. 3 on the same level. Thamudic C written vertically.

l 'hht

By 'hht

The name recurs in no. 8 and has been found once before in HU 716 from Jibāl Abū Mughayr, between Hā'il and Taymā'. Compare the Arab name *Uḥayḥah* (Caskel 1966, ii: 566b).

5. (Fig. 22) To the right of the end of no. 4. Two lines in the Thamudic B script, which appear to have been carved before no. 4, since its last letter swerves to avoid running into this text. Both lines read from right to left.

⁴⁴ In what follows I use the following editorial sigla: °over a letter in the transliteration means that the reading is uncertain; { } in the translations means that the name or word contains one or more letters the reading of which is uncertain; ---- marks a section of the inscription which is lost or invisible; italics are used for the transliteration of words which occur in writing, roman for words from spoken dialects and for vocalisations of words which occur in purely consonantal scripts; * marks reconstructed forms including proposed vocalisations.

⁴⁵ Inscriptions 7, 9, 10, 14 were first read, many years ago, by Dr Geraldine King from inadequate photos and bad hand copies sent to her. I am most grateful to her for allowing me to publish here the new readings I have been able to make from the excellent photographs which have since become available.

⁴⁶ See Macdonald 2000 [= 2009, iii]: 29, 35, 44–45 for the definition of this term.

⁴⁷ This drawing was first published in Nayeem 2000: fig. 60.

⁴⁸ The short rough vertical stroke above the back of the equid does not touch its back and is unlikely to be intended to represent a rider. Had the artist wanted to draw a rider, he was clearly capable of doing better than this.

⁴⁹ There are not sufficient diagnostic letter-forms in the text to allocate the text to one or other script.

nm hyr

h`lt`lw`b`mn w`bd

By Hyr

O !t exalt [?] the father of `mn and `bd

The pattern of an invocation with the author's name on a separate line is quite common in Thamudic B and can be found again in no. 10 below.

The verb *lw* probably represents the imperative of the second form, which with the accusative can mean 'exalt' (Lane 2143c, *s.v.* 4. *`a`lā-hu*). It is unfortunately unclear in what sense the goddess is being asked to 'exalt' *b`mn w`bd*.

The following words can either be taken as two names *b`mn* and *bd* (neither of which is known in Ancient North Arabian), or, as I have suggested in the translation, as *b`* 'father' and the names of his two sons. The name *mn* is common in Safaitic, but *bd* has not been found before and is difficult to explain. The letters are clear but the root is not found in Arabic.

The particle *nm* is the normal way of introducing the name of the author in Thamudic B (see Macdonald 2004: 519). Since diphthongs are rarely shown in the Ancient North Arabian orthographies (except in Dadanitic),⁵⁰ *hyr* is likely to represent not Hayr, but a diminutive *Huyayr. It has been found once before, in Safaitic (C 211).

6. (Figs 21 and 22) Below no. 5, written horizontally from left to right in the Hismaic script.

l bhm bn ghs²

By Bhm son of Ghs²

Both names are well known from Safaitic, and the second has also been found in Hismaic.

Above the text are three letters *h⁻-t* (or *t⁻-h*) which do not seem to be part of the inscription and could conceivably be a *wasm* (?). To the left of the text is a stick-figure drawing of what could be a gazelle and below it an outline of an unidentifiable felid with a long tail. Another of these is to be found drawn over the lower parts of the legs of the equid drawing the chariot in the central panel (Fig. 10).

⁵⁰ On the term 'Dadanitic', see Macdonald 2000 [= 2009, iii]: 29, 33, 41–42; and 2004: 490, 492. On its orthography see Macdonald 2004: 495, 497.

7. (Figs 21 and 22) To the right of no. 6, written vertically in the Hismaic script.

l`wd bn`ys¹

bt^c

By `wd son of `ys¹

May he be resolute [?]

Both names are well known in Hismaic.

To the right of the beginning of the text and parallel with it are three letters *b-t⁻*. The same three letters are also found by themselves in a Hismaic context in Wādī Ramm, in southern Jordan.⁵¹ In Dadanitic, they occur, possibly at the end of a damaged text, in JSLih 15 (known only from a copy and with no context given), and at the end of two other Dadanitic inscriptions, JSLih 209 and 282, while in a text some 75 km south-west of Taymā', they seem to occur after a name which is probably in the Dadanitic script (see Fig. 13). On all these, see the discussion in Macdonald (in press). There, I suggested that it could be connected with the verb *bitā*, *yabta* in the Bedouin colloquials of southern Syria and northern and central Arabia where it means 'to raid fearlessly at night' (Hess 1938: 98) or more generally 'to go about one's business resolutely, without wavering' (Kurpershoek 1995: 325).⁵²

In Macdonald (in press) I have suggested that it represents the third person singular of the suffix conjugation with an optative implication 'may he be resolute!'⁵³

⁵¹ See Campetti & Borzatti von Löwenstern 1983: Tav. 38. There, they are not far from a drawing of a man waving what may be a sword and a dagger, with beyond him what looks like a body lying on the ground. However, slightly nearer the inscription is a drawing of two feet to which the outline of a recumbent figure has been added. It is, of course, impossible to say whether the inscription is connected with either drawing.

⁵² Note that *bitū* (also *bātī* and *bātū*) means 'daring', 'decisive', 'a resolute hero', 'daring raider', 'a brave rider who does not shrink from the fight', in the dialects of the Nabaṭī poets of central Arabia (Kurpershoek 1995: 182, line 153/16, 274, line 560/3, 325) and of the Rwala (Musil 1928: 634, line 3).

⁵³ In the case of *bt^c* on Campetti & Borzatti von Löwenstern 1983: Tav. 28, this would, of course, only make sense if it referred to the drawing of the man waving a sword and dagger. If so, it could represent either the verb or the noun mentioned in the text and the previous note.

To the left of the text is a crudely hammered stick figure of an ibex.

8. (Fig. 22) To the right of no. 7 and directly above no. 9, in the Thamudic C script

l 'hht

By 'hht

See no. 4.

9. (Fig. 22) Written horizontally right to left in the Thamudic B script, immediately below no. 8 and above the drawing of a horseman in the left panel of the composition. It has been enclosed (together with the last letter of no. 8 in what appears to be an outline of a kneeling (?) ibex.

l s²hr h-ḥrb

By S²hr is the {enemy warrior}

The name *s²hr* is well known in North Arabian (including Thamudic B), in Qatabanian, and in Arabic, and is found in connection with the royal house of Liḥyān (see the 'new' Aramaic stela from Taymā').⁵⁴

A cross has been roughly hammered immediately above the last letter, obliterating any strokes that might have protruded from its top. It is thus theoretically possible that it could have been an ' or an *s*¹ (*k* is less likely since the base of the upper stroke would probably still have been visible). If the correct reading is *ḥrb*, it would presumably refer to the rider below, and be equivalent to classical Arabic *ḥarb* (which can mean 'an enemy', Lane 540c, at the end of the article) or *ḥarīb* 'enemy warrior' in the dialect of the 'Utaybah tribe of Central Arabia (see Kurpershoek 1995: 184–187, line 171/34, and 342).

But while this fits the context perfectly, there is one possible problem. The third letter from the end usually represents *t* in Thamudic B rather than *h*, as for instance in the names *ḥirt* in JSTham 318 and *!t't* in JSTham 328. The common form of *h* in this script being a vertical stroke with two diagonal side strokes at one end (see the script-table in Macdonald 2000 [= 2009 III]: 34; 2004: 496). However, in HU 748 and 782⁵⁵ the verb *ḥsy* 'protect' is written with the same

letter as here, in a context where /t/ would make no sense. See also the name *hgg* in Nayeem 2000: fig. 287 (if this is Thamudic B rather than Thamudic C), where this sign can only be a *h*. This suggests that this letter-form was used by some writers for *h* and by others for *t*, and is a further demonstration, if one be needed, of the deficiencies in our understanding of the texts labelled 'Thamudic'.⁵⁶

10. (Fig. 22) Two lines, written horizontally right to left in the Thamudic B script and enclosed in a cartouche, to the right of no. 5 and above nos 9, 11 and 12.

nm bn-'qzn

h 'trs¹m grm-n wdd-y l-'dn-k

By Bn-'qzn

O 'trs¹m, ...[?]

'trs¹m is the Thamudic B form of the divine name better known in its Aramaic form, 'Attar-Samain. For the interpretation of the Thamudic B form and a discussion of its significance, see Macdonald, Al Mu'azzin and Nehmé 1996: 479–480.

The rest of the prayer is difficult to interpret and I have not been able to find a convincing translation. In invocations of this type, the verb is usually in the imperative (addressed to the deity)⁵⁷ and it is therefore tempting to interpret *grmn* as a verb in the imperative with the first person singular pronominal suffix (*igrim-nī). However, it is difficult to find a meaning for a verb *grm* in Arabic or any other Semitic language that would be appropriate to this context,⁵⁸ especially since this interpretation would require *grm* to take two direct objects (*-n* and *wdd-y*).

An alternative would be to take *grmn* as the third person singular masculine of the suffix conjugation,

⁵⁶ An interesting Thamudic B inscription in this context is HU 724, which contains both the signs mentioned here plus a form of the sign for /d/ which resembles a 'Safaitic' *t*!

⁵⁷ For other examples in Thamudic B see HU 125, 126 (*tm-n* 'reunite [?] me with'), JSTham 294, 404 (*s¹d-n* 'help me'), HU 783 (*nṣr-n* 'aid me'), JSTham 255 (*wqy-n* 'protect me from'). These examples were collected by Geraldine King in her original study of this text and I am most grateful to her for allowing me to quote them.

⁵⁸ At first sight Targumic Aramaic *gārēm* (pa'el of *gōram*) in the sense of 'to strengthen, comfort' (Jastrow 269b) might seem appropriate to an invocation but I cannot see how it can be reconciled with the rest of the text.

⁵⁴ See Cross 1986: 391–392 for references, though I would suggest that his conclusions go somewhat beyond the available evidence.

⁵⁵ I am grateful to Geraldine King's study of this text for the reference to HU 782.

with the first person singular object suffix (*gar(r)ama-nī) with *wdd-y* ('my love', see below) as its subject. If we were to understand *grm* in the sense of the Arabic verb *garama* 'to lead, cause (someone to do something)' or 'to cause (someone) to sin' (Lane 412b) this would produce the statement 'my love has caused me...' or 'my love has caused me to sin'. The problem is then how to explain the last five letters. It is difficult to see them as anything except the preposition *l-* followed by *'dn* with the second person singular pronominal suffix *-k*. If *'dn* were a verb (in, say, the first person singular of the prefix-conjugation) it would have to be followed by an indirect object introduced by *l-* or *ilā*, rather than taking a direct object *-k*. If it is a noun meaning 'ear', 'will', 'permission' etc., the phrase does not seem to make sense in the context.

It is also unclear whether *wdd* refers to the author's human lover, the author's love for another human, or his love for the deity. To the best of my knowledge, the last would be a unique expression of love by a worshipper towards a deity in pre-Islamic Arabia and for this reason should be regarded as the least likely interpretation.

The name *bn-'qzn* has not been found before.

11. (Fig. 22) Written vertically below no. 10 and immediately to the right of no. 9 in the Thamudic C or D script.

lšnd'

By Šnd'

See no. 3.

12. (Fig. 22) Two horizontal lines reading right to left, in the Thamudic B script, enclosed in a rectan-

gular cartouche above the drawing of the chariot in the central panel of the composition.

l 'b'hl

h mrkbt

By 'b'hl is the chariot

The name 'b'hl has so far been found only in this inscription and one other (Nayeem 2000: fig. 24)⁵⁹ from the same area.⁶⁰ A name *bn'hl* may occur in JSLih 159,⁶¹ and the name 'hl is quite common in Safaitic, though it should be borne in mind that, given the lack of vocalisation, we have no way of knowing whether these consonantal skeletons really represent related names.

Compound names with the element 'hl are rare in Near Eastern onomastica. 'hl-l is found (as a personal [?] name) in a boustrophedon Sabaic inscription from Širwāh (CIS iv. 868/2), and the names 'hl-mlk (CIS i. 50/2) and 'hl-b'l (CIS i. 54) occur in Phoenician inscriptions from Larnaca, Cyprus, and *gr-'hl* in a Phoenician graffito from Abydos, Egypt (Lidzbarski 1915: 99, P). There are also a number of names in the Old Testament compounded with this element,⁶² including 'ohōl-î-'āb — the mirror-image of our name 'b-'hl — one of the two men appointed to build the tabernacle. As Noth remarks, 'neither the grammatical structure nor the meaning of 'hl are clear in these names' (1928: 159).

⁵⁹ This inscription is carved above a drawing of a camel with its tail up, showing that it is a female (see above). A *wasm* has been added to the camel at a later date. The text is in the Thamudic B script and reads *l 'b'hl h-bkrt*, 'By 'b'hl is the young she-camel'. The final letter can just be seen at the top edge of the photograph. A copy of the drawing is reproduced in Nayeem 2000: 302, where the end of the inscription has been muddled and the *t* omitted. Note that the reading of the inscription shows that Nayeem is incorrect in his analysis that 'the patination of the Thamudic inscription beside it suggests that the camel is a later carving' (2000: 60). A copy of the drawing and a more accurate transcription of the text had already been published, though without reading or comment, in Livingstone *et al.* 1985: pl. 120, D, 200-S516.

⁶⁰ According to Nayeem 2000: 57, his figure 24 comes from 'the outcrop of Jabel Raees in Wadi Bakqar, south west of Tabuk'. The Official Standard Names Gazetteer knows no Jabal Ra'īs, but there is an 'Ayn al-Ra'īs at 28° 20' N 36° 34' E, i.e. approximately the right spot, more or less due south of Tabūk (28° 23' N 36° 35' E). 'Wadi Bakqar' is presumably al-Baqqār, a wadi at 28° 27' N 36° 37' E, again in approximately the right place, due south of Tabūk, cf. the map on Nayeem 2000: 41.

⁶¹ It was tentatively read as *l bn 'm l* by Jaussen & Savignac (1909–1922, ii: 475), but the copy reads *l bn 'hl*.

⁶² These are 'ohōlī'āb, of the tribe of Dan (Exod. 31:6; 35:34; 36:1f. 38:23), 'ohōlībāmā a Horite wife of Esau (Gen. 36:2, 5, 14, 18 [x2], 25, 41) and the eponymous ancestor (?) of an Edomite tribe (Gen. 36:41; I Chr. 1:52), and the hypocoristic 'ohel, son or grandson of Zerubbabel (I Chr. 3:20). There are also two symbolic names used in Ezekiel, where Samaria is called 'ohōlāh 'who has her (own) cult tent' (Ezek. 23:4, 36, 44), and Jerusalem is referred to as 'ohōlībāh 'my cult tent is in her' (Ezek. 23:4, 11, 22, 36, 44). See also *hmy'hl* on a seal (Vattioni 1978: 253, no. 412). On these names, see Noth 1928: 158–159; Fowler 1988: 80–81, 162, 334; Zadok 1988: 53–54, 94.

These names can be divided into (a) those in which *'hl* is the first element and (b) those in which it is the second.

(a) It is the first element in *'hl-l* (Sabaic); *'ohōl-î-āb* (Hebrew); *'ohōlībāmā* (Edomite?)⁶³; *'hl-mlk* (Phoenician); *'hl-b'l* (Phoenician)

In Hebrew, *'ōhel* means 'a tent' and this would seem to be the primary meaning of the root, which developed in one direction (in Akkadian) into *āl* 'locality, town' and in another (in Arabic) into *ahl* 'family' (Cohen 1970: 10–11). As Noth points out, the image of the tent as a refuge (because, as a guest, you are under the protection of its inhabitants) is used of God's protection in the Old Testament, e.g. in Psalm 27:5 (Noth 1928: 159). Thus, the Hebrew name *'ohōl-î-āb* could be analysed as a nominal sentence 'tent [i.e. protection] is [Divine] father'.⁶⁴ This is probably the explanation for the Phoenician names as well, 'Protection is Moloch' and 'Protection is Ba'al', and for the one occurrence in a Sabaic inscription, *'hl-l* for which 'Protection is 'Īl' would seem a more plausible interpretation for a personal name than 'Family (i.e. family member) of 'Īl'⁶⁵ though it assumes, of course, a widespread use of the tent as an image for 'protection', which is unprovable.

(b) The names in which *'hl* forms the second element are: *'b-'hl* (Thamudic B, here and Nayeem

2000: fig. 24); *l'hl* (Dadanitic, JSLih 162)⁶⁶; *gr-'hl* (Phoenician, Lidzbarski 1915: 99, P),⁶⁷ *hmy'hl* (Hebrew, Vattioni 1978: no. 412).⁶⁸

Of these, the most relevant to our name is the Phoenician *gr-'hl*, if Lidzbarski was correct in his interpretation of the name as meaning 'Schutzbefehlener des Zeltes' in the sense of one who has sought protection in the tent of another (possibly, a deity). In Biblical Hebrew the word *gēr* means a person who has left his own home (usually perforce) and has sought shelter in another land, where he has no rights but can call on the hospitality (and hence protection) of a group within this land (Koehler & Baumgartner 1994–2000: 201a), and this would seem to fit this context very well. Unfortunately, this name occurs as a single-name graffito at Abydos, and so we have no clue as to the circumstances in which such a name was acquired by its bearer.

Allowing for the absence of vocalisation, the name *'b-'hl* would thus seem capable of two different explanations.

(1) a nominal sentence **'ab(i)-'ahl* '(My) [Divine?] father is a tent [in the sense of protection]';⁶⁹ or **'ab-'hl* '[Divine] father is a tent [in the sense of protection]';⁷⁰

(2) a construct **'ab-'ahl(i)* 'Father of a/(my) family-group'

The second would appear an odd name to give to a child, but could have been acquired as an honorary name in adult life. Names compounded with initial *'b* are relatively rare in Ancient North Arabian and (with the exception of *'b-'ns*¹) are usually attested

⁶³ This is thought to be the name of a tribe or a place and would seem to mean '[Cult?]-tent of the high place', or 'My [cult?]-tent is a high place', though see Zadok 1988: 50, n. 58 for a different explanation. On the different possible interpretations of the *-î-* see the next note.

⁶⁴ Zadok (1988: 45–46), by a comparison of compound names in which the elements A+î+B are matched by others in which the same elements are combined as B+A (where A in final position does not have the *î*), suggests that the *î-* should be regarded 'as a connective vowel and not as a suffixed possessive pronoun'. This, and his other arguments, are very persuasive, though I would suggest that some of the evidence he presents is perhaps capable of other interpretations, and presumably his tentative conclusion need not apply to every case. In *'ohōl-î-āb*, the *î-* must either be the *hīreq compaginis* (Gesenius, Kautsch & Cowley 1946: 252–254), in which case the name is a construct ('tent of father'), or is to be explained as Zadok's 'connective vowel' in a nominal sentence 'tent [protection] is [divine] father'. It would be difficult to take the *-î-* as the pronominal suffix here (*my* tent) since it is the owner of the tent (in this case the [divine] father) who extends his protection to the visitor. Thus, '*my* tent is [divine] father' would not make sense.

⁶⁵ See Tairan 1992: 78–79 and references there.

⁶⁶ Jaussen and Savignac (1909–1922, ii: 476) derive the first element from the Arabic root *Ṭ-L* for which they give the meaning 'être abondant', and interpret the name as meaning 'richesse de la tente'. However, in the Arabic lexica this root carries a pejorative sense, which makes it an unlikely element for a compound personal name of this sort. At present, I can offer no alternative interpretation for this name.

⁶⁷ Lidzbarski (1915: 99) translates this as 'Schutzbefehlener des Zeltes' commenting that it 'beduinische Verhältnisse voraussetzt.'

⁶⁸ Zadok takes this as a predicate-subject nominal sentence, interpreting it as '*'hl* is my father-in-law' (1988: 54). Fowler (1988: 68), on the other hand, takes it as a subject-predicate nominal sentence and translates 'The (divine) Uncle [*sic*] is a tent (i.e. protection).'

⁶⁹ See Zadok 1988: 47–48 (§4) for this type of name.

⁷⁰ See Zadok 1988: 47 (§3) for this type of name.

only once or twice. This might indicate that they were names given or adopted on particular occasions. Whether some, or all, represent personal names of a *kunyah*-form (as in Abū Bakr),⁷¹ or theophoric compounds with 'b as the divine element, or a mixture of both, remains to be demonstrated. I am sceptical of the former, since we have no clear evidence of the use of the *kunyah* proper in Ancient North Arabian. On the other hand, the name 'bd-'b in several Safaitic texts⁷² suggests that the concept of a divine father may have existed, at least in the place and at the time this name was created.

In Arabic a *markab* is literally 'a place of riding' and hence a saddle or any kind of vehicle, such as a litter, *carried on* a camel or other beast (Lane 1145a). From this, it came to be used of a ship. As far as I know, *markab* is not used of a vehicle that is *pulled by* a draught animal, and a word *markabah, does not seem to occur in the classical Arabic lexica.⁷³

⁷¹ This is the view of Hazim 1986: 1.

⁷² These are C 1427, 4531, 5001, SIJ 66, LP 944, 1042 (in both cases unnecessarily emended to 'bd's¹ by Littmann) and two unpublished texts from al-Īsāwī. Of these, C 4531 and SIJ 66 may refer to the same person, and C 1427 and 5001 may refer to another, who may also be the person mentioned in LP 944, 1042 and the two unpublished texts, all four of which come from al-Īsāwī. Thus, despite eight occurrences, we may in fact have records of only two individuals of this name. It may also occur in a Thamudic D text from near Ḥā'il, WHI 176, though note that the two letters read as *b* in this inscription have markedly different forms.

⁷³ It does, however, occur in modern written Arabic with the sense 'vehicle, carriage, cab' (Wehr & Cowan 1961: 357). It may have entered the language as a loanword from Hebrew or Aramaic through Jewish and Christian translations of the Bible into Arabic. It certainly appears in the translations made by foreign missionary societies in the nineteenth century, both to render Hebrew *merkābā* and Greek ἄρμα, presumably as a neologism based on the Hebrew word. However, it is interesting that in those parts which I have been able to consult of the earliest known translation of the Old Testament into Arabic, that of Sa'adyā Ga'ōn (AD 882–942), he appears to have had difficulty with rendering the Hebrew word *merkābā* 'chariot' into Arabic. In Genesis 41:43 he translates *bəmirkēbet hammišneh* ('in his second chariot') by *fi ḡanibatihī* ('on his spare horse', i.e. the one which is led beside the beast which is ridden), while in Genesis 46:29 he translates *merkabtō* by *dābbatahu* 'his beast of burden, mule'. Elsewhere, he uses *marākīb*, the plural of Arabic *markab* (on which see the text above), to translate the plural *markābōt*, in Exodus 14:25; Isaiah 2:7; 22:18; 66:15, etc. See Derenbourg 1893, and Derenbourg & Derenbourg 1896.

However, in the forms *mrkbt* (Ugaritic), *merkābā* (Hebrew), *markabtā* (Aramaic), etc., it is the normal word for 'chariot' in the North-West Semitic languages and, as a loanword, *merkbt*, in Egyptian from the New Kingdom (1560–1080 BC) onwards. By contrast, the equivalent word in Akkadian is *narkabtu* which, though it has the same origins, has suffered a sound change peculiar to that language. It seems likely that *mrkbt* in Thamudic B is a loanword from Aramaic (see the discussion below).

13. (Fig. 22) Two lines written diagonally in the Thamudic C script, to the right of no. 10.

lhnt
wdd s²m't
Lhnt
loved {S²m't}

The name *lhnt* has not been found before, though *lhn* is known from two Thamudic B inscriptions (Eut 81 and JSTham 308), from a text which is probably Thamudic D (HE 83),⁷⁴ and possibly from one which is Safaitic (SIJ 340).⁷⁵ *S²m't* is attested once in Safaitic.

An alternative interpretation would be:

lhnt
wdd f'm't
Lhnt
loved M't [?]

The name *m't* is probably known from Safaitic.⁷⁶ None of the interpretations so far suggested for the expression *wdd f* is very satisfactory (see Tsafirir 1996: 142–143).

⁷⁴ The text is known only from a hand copy. It is written vertically, like the majority of Thamudic D inscriptions. If it really contains the construction 'A son of B' (and there are other possible interpretations) one would have to assume that the *n* of *bn* had been omitted or miscopied. The use of *b* for *bn* is restricted to Taymanitic which is almost always written horizontally, and, as far as I know, has not been found at Madā'in Šālih.

⁷⁵ In the edition, this is read as *nln*, which is otherwise unknown. Unfortunately, no photograph is available.

⁷⁶ None of the three examples cited in Harding 1971a: 552 under this name is entirely certain. There is a more convincing example in WH 1463, which should be added to the list.

14. (Figs 18 and 22) The ‘caption’ in the right panel of the composition. An inscription in two parts, in the Thamudic B script, running from right to left. The first part is above the camel and the second above and to the left of the archer.

l s²hr bn m'dbt

w s²hr h-rgl h-'s¹y

By S²hr son of M'dbt

and S²hr is the 's¹y foot soldier.

On *s²hr* see the commentary to no. 9. *M'dbt* has not been found before but cf. perhaps Arabic *ma'dubah* ‘a feast to which guests are invited’ (Lane 35b). I have taken *rgl* as meaning a foot soldier, as it seems to do in certain contexts in Safaitic and in Sabaic (Beeston 1976: 69). The *nisbah h-'s¹y* may have been found once before in Ancient North Arabian, in a Taymanitic⁷⁷ inscription from Manṭār Banī 'Aṭīyah, near Taymā'.⁷⁸ It could indicate that S²hr belonged to a tribe called Aws although, given that no vowels or diphthongs are shown in the Thamudic B script, other vocalisations are equally possible. Naturally, even if it were possible to show that ‘Aws’ was the correct vocalisation, there is nothing to connect this group with the famous tribe of that name at Yathrib in the time of the Prophet.

15. (Fig. 18) To the right of the right panel, written vertically in the Himaic script.

l ls²ms¹ bn br'n d 'l ḥwlt.

By Ls²ms¹ son of Br'n of the lineage of Ḥwlt

The first name has not been found in Himaic before, though it is common in Safaitic. The reading of the second is clear, but far as I know, it has so far been found as a personal name only from Sabaic,⁷⁹

though *br'* is known in both Himaic and Safaitic. However, the most interesting aspect of this inscription is the name of the author's kin group, *Ḥwlt*. This group is frequently mentioned in the Safaitic inscriptions, almost always in negative terms, but this text is only the third inscription by someone claiming membership of the *Ḥwlt*. For the other two (one in the Himaic script and the other in Safaitic) see Macdonald 1993 [= 2009 II]: 308 and nn. 34–35.

Discussion

This composition raises a number of interesting — and largely unanswerable — questions. Firstly, it is difficult to identify the provenance or the date of the chariot, or to place the ‘event’ depicted in the composition into a particular historical context. As mentioned above, the possible parallels for the shape of the chariot are unfortunately of little help in dating it. Given that the chariot is not a form of transport likely to develop in, or be adopted by, a nomadic society in a region of sand or basalt desert such as northern Arabia,⁸⁰ it would seem unlikely that a native word would develop for it in the languages spoken by the inhabitants of the area.⁸¹ It is probable, therefore, that 'b'hl took the word for ‘chariot’ (*mrkbt*) from the same source as his image of the chariot and his awareness of ‘foreign’ artistic conventions. Unfortunately, this is little help in pinning down his source, since Aramaic — the most likely source language, in which the word for ‘chariot’ was *markabtā'* — was widely used in Mesopotamia and the Levant by at least the mid-first millennium BC, while, as pointed out above, even in Egypt a North-West Semitic loanword for ‘chariot’ (*merkobt*) had been in use since the second millennium.

As discussed above, the form of the chariot in this drawing shares features with representations of chariots from both Mesopotamia and Egypt, although in neither case is there a conclusive match. The eight-spoke wheel would suggest a date in or after the reign of Tiglath-Pileser III — thus late eighth

⁷⁷ On this term, see Macdonald 2000 [= 2009, III]: 29, 42–43.

⁷⁸ The text, HE 43, was read and copied as *l zkr h-'s¹y'*. However, on the photograph kindly made available to me by Peter Parr, it is difficult to see how the reading of the final ‘letter’ as ‘ was arrived at, since it does not appear to be a circle (as shown on the copy) and looks more like a stray mark. If I am correct, the final word would be the *nisbah, h-'s¹y*.

⁷⁹ Note that the reference to J 2104d in Harding 1971a *s.v.* *br'n* should be deleted.

⁸⁰ Note that ‘Aragdos the Arabian’ who, according to Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* II.i.5), brought some 10,000 horsemen and about 100 chariots to the coalition supporting Nabonidus the last king of Babylon against Cyrus the Great in 540/539 BC, inhabited an ‘Arabia’ in the northern Jazira of Syria or Iraq. See Macdonald 2003 [= 2009, VI]: 315–316.

⁸¹ See the commentary to inscription no. 12, and n. 73.

century BC onwards — if it is based on an Assyrian model, and probably also if the model was Egyptian, though the evidence there is much more fragmentary and difficult to interpret.⁸² It would seem that none of the other features of the vehicle provide sufficiently diagnostic evidence of a date or provenance.⁸³

Nor is there any clue in the treatment of the rider in the left panel. If he is indeed an *enemy* warrior, as seems to be suggested by the word *hrb* in the caption (inscription no. 9), there is nothing about his appearance that would identify him. Unlike the archer in the right panel, his clothes are not shown, and unlike the driver of the chariot he does not seem to be wearing a helmet. His sword is quite unlike those shown at the belts of Assyrian horsemen in, say, the reliefs of Ashurbanipal's campaigns against the Arabs (Fig. 17), and, as noted above, the slight resemblance to the scabbards worn by Ashurnasirpal II's soldiers (Fig. 14) is probably coincidental.

S²hr's drawings (the left and right panels) are mainly within the traditional 'conventions' of Arabian rock art of the literate period. As pointed out above, in the left panel (Fig. 11), the rein is, unrealistically, on the outer (visible) side of the equid's neck. The rider's position with his trunk *en face*⁸⁴ is also the norm in Arabian rock art (as explained above), and it is probably coincidental that it is also appropriate to his action of half turning to strike the animal's rump with his stick. In the right panel (Fig. 18), the camel is shown with its tail up, the conventional way of indicating that it is female, but the archer's position is relatively realistic, if we assume that his left leg is the one in front and that he is fitting the arrow to the bowstring.

By contrast, *b'hl* was clearly aware of different artistic traditions. He has shown the chariot car in true profile, hiding the lower bodies of its occupants, and has represented the two equids pulling it by showing one animal with multiple hooves, an adaptation of the convention used in Mesopotamian and Egyptian art, but one which is foreign to Arabian rock art, and which one would imagine to be counter-

intuitive. Yet, *b'hl*'s handling of this convention is far from assured — one of the equid's forelegs has three hooves and the other has four, when both should actually have two, to match the hind-legs; the stance of the equid(s) is also unrealistic; the position of the chariot wheel in relation to the car is also clearly impossible; and the archer in the chariot (in contrast to *S²hr*'s archer) is holding the bow in an unrealistic way (see above under the central 'panel').

Moreover, while *b'hl*'s drawing as a whole uses inferential conventions similar to those found in Egyptian or Mesopotamian art, it also contains elements which belong to the non-inferential conventions of Arabian rock art, as used in the drawings by *S²hr*. Thus, the equid drawing the chariot has four ears, i.e. both ears of each of the two animals are shown, even though in 'true profile' the ear nearest the viewer would normally hide the others;⁸⁵ both reins cross the visible side of the equid's neck; the pole of the chariot is on the visible side of its body, rather than disappearing behind it; and the far side of the opening at the back of the chariot is shown, even though in a true profile this would be invisible (Fig. 15).

Similarly, the driver of the chariot is shown with his head in profile and body *en face* as is common in Arabian rock art (cf. the driver in the Assyrian relief of Ashurbanipal, who is in true profile, Fig. 16), though it is still a fluent and much more realistic portrayal than is normal in Arabian rock drawings.⁸⁶ All this suggests a fairly skilled artist⁸⁷ using conventions with which he is not entirely familiar to represent a subject he does not know very well in a medium in which there is no opportunity to erase mistakes.

One could speculate that *b'hl* might have travelled to Egypt or Mesopotamia and seen wall paintings or reliefs of chariots. One could even suggest that Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, during his ten-year sojourn in Taymā' (c. 552–543 BC), had erected reliefs or wall paintings showing chariots, in public places in the oasis and that *b'hl* had had a chance to

⁸² See the discussion in Littauer & Crowell 1979a: 115–118.

⁸³ I am most grateful to the late Mary Littauer for confirming this frustrating conclusion.

⁸⁴ It is difficult to tell whether the head is intended to be in profile or *en face*. Both positions are used in drawings of horsemen in Arabian rock art.

⁸⁵ Both ears are also shown on *S²hr*'s 'non-inferential' drawings of the equid in the left panel and the camel in the right.

⁸⁶ By contrast, the archer in the chariot is in the natural semi-profile position required by his action (cf. the archer on Fig. 16).

⁸⁷ See for instance, the delicacy with which he has drawn the chariot and the men in it, and the way he has conveyed the movement of the driver.

study these. But there is at present no evidence to support this, and while the German expedition excavating at Taymā' has discovered fragments of sculpture, no narrative reliefs have yet come to light.⁸⁸

An interesting comparison may be made with the rock drawing of a horseman found some 75 km south-west of Taymā' (Fig. 13).⁸⁹ At first sight, this looks very similar to the portrayals of horsemen on the Assyrian reliefs. Yet a closer examination reveals that in many features it shares the non-inferential viewpoint of Arabian rock art. As Bruno Jacobs points out in his detailed discussion of the drawing (Jacobs & Macdonald, in press), the horse is presented as if transparent so that, for instance, the rein and the lower part of the rider's right arm — which one would expect to be on the far side of the horse — are visible and are crossed by the line of the horse's neck and mane. Similarly, the top of the bow-case is crossed by the rider's left arm and the horse's back runs across its lower part. This may partly be a result of the artist drawing the horse first, then the rider, and then the bow-case, in a medium where it is impossible to erase a line once it is drawn. But while this would explain the fact that the line of the horse's back crosses the rider's thigh and the lower part of the bow-case, and the line of its belly crosses the rider's shin and the saddle cloth, the artist could very easily not have shown the part of the rider's right arm and the rein which in reality would have been hidden by the horse's neck, and the fact that he *has* shown them must be taken as a deliberate decision on his part. On the other hand, the rider's right leg is not shown and only part of the hoof and fetlock of the horse's right hind leg are drawn, requiring the viewer to infer the rest.

In this mixture of conventions, it is very similar to S²hr's rider. Here, again, the line of the equid's back and belly cross the rider's left leg, but his right leg is not shown.⁹⁰ In this case, the rider's right hand is

above, not behind, the equid's neck but again the rein is shown, unrealistically, on the visible, rather than the invisible side of the animal's neck.

Thus, like the chariot and the equid(s) pulling it, the horseman from the Taymā' area is a mixture of the conventions of rock drawings and of inferential art, even though the finished product is more skilfully drawn than *b'hl's* chariot, and appears closer to its undoubted Mesopotamian models.

Sigla and abbreviations

ANA	Ancient North Arabian as a linguistic group and a family of scripts.
C	Safaitic inscriptions in <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> . Pars V. <i>Inscriptiones Saracenicae continens</i> , Tomus 1. <i>Inscriptiones Safaiticae</i> . Paris: Imprimerie nationale, (2 volumes), 1950–1951.
CIS i	Phoenician inscriptions in <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> . Pars I. <i>Inscriptiones Phoenicias continens</i> . Paris: Reipublicae Typographeo, 1881–1962.
CIS iv	South Arabian inscriptions in <i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> . Pars IV. <i>Inscriptiones Himyariticas et Sabaeas continens</i> . Paris: Reipublicae Typographeo, 1889–1932.
CSNS	Safaitic inscriptions and drawings in Clark 1979 [1983]
Eut	Thamudic inscriptions recorded by Julius Euting published in van den Branden 1950 and Jamme 1974.
HCH	Safaitic inscriptions and drawings in Harding 1953.
HE	Taymanitic and Thamudic inscriptions in Harding 1971b [1972].
HU	Thamudic inscriptions copied by Charles Huber and renumbered in van den Branden 1950.
Jastrow	Jastrow 1967.
JSLih	Dadanitic inscriptions in Jaussen & Savignac 1909–1922.
JSTham	Thamudic inscriptions in Jaussen & Savignac 1909–1922.
KJA	Hismaic inscriptions in King 1990b.
KJC	Hismaic inscriptions in King 1990b.
KRS	Safaitic inscriptions and drawings recorded by the Basalt Desert Rescue Survey (see King 1990a) and to be published by Dr G.M.H. King.
Lane	Lane 1863–1893.
LP	Safaitic inscriptions in Littmann 1943.
Moritz	Inscriptions in Moritz 1908: 407–408.
SIJ	Safaitic inscriptions in Winnett 1957.
WH	Safaitic inscriptions in Winnett & Harding 1978.
WHI	Thamudic inscriptions in Winnett & Reed 1973.

⁸⁸ I am most grateful to Professor Ricardo Eichmann, Director of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut, Orient-Abteilung, for this information.

⁸⁹ This was first published in *Al-Taymā'* 2006: 45, and subsequently in Jacobs & Macdonald, in press. I am most grateful to Professor Jacobs and to Professor Ricardo Eichmann for permission to publish here a different photograph of it from the one in the articles.

⁹⁰ This is common practice in Arabian rock drawings of riders.

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M.C.A. MACDONALD

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