Saudi Arabia

al-Ruwāfah

47. The archaeological site of al-Rawwāfah/al-Ruwāfah is placed 75 km southwest of Tabūk in modern day Saudi Arabia.[1]

The first mention of the monumental inscriptions of al-Ruwāfah is found in a report of journey of the 19th century,[2] while the discovery of a bilingual inscription (texts A, B and C), a Nabataean inscription (text D) and a Greek inscription (text E) came about only at the beginning of the 20th century.[3]

The bilingual text (A, B and C) is engraved on a lintel placed at the main entrance of the temple, while the Greek text (C) continues (lines 7-8) on the column that supported the left far end of the epistyle ending (lines 9-10) on the right column of the door. The other Nabataean inscription (text D) was found near the temple, while the

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[1] The correct spelling of the toponym is al-Ruwāfah (cf. Macdonald et al. 2015, 44 fn. 84).

[2] The description is given by Burton (1879, 1: 239) who says that some beduins showed him the fragment of a Nabataean inscription, which had been brutally broken, and of two other two slices that were lying on the ground.

[3] A. Musil (1926, 184-9, 258, 291, 312) came to the site on 25 June 1910 saying that he had found the ruins of a sanctuary and the inscriptions at issue. Later, H. St. J.B. Philby (1951, 448-59), staying at al-Ruwāfah from 20 to 24 January 1951, claimed to have found a fragmentary Greek inscription; when he came back the following year, he could no longer findeither the Nabataean inscription or the Greek fragment, which had probably been moved to the collection of Khalil al-Faraj. The Greek inscriptions (texts A, C and E) were published by Seyrig (1957, 259-61; *SEG* 19 no. 899).

Greek inscription (E) presumably comes from the capital of the column that supported the other part of the lintel.

Dimensions   Texts A, B and C (6 lines) length 230 cm 1st line: height of letters 2.5 cm; 2nd line 1.7 cm; 4th line (Nabataean text) 2.2 cm; 5th line 2.5 cm[4] Text C, lines 7-8 height 8 cm, length 35 cm; lines 9-10 height 8.5 cm, length 24.7 cm, height of letters 2.5 cm
Dating   2nd CE (164-169 CE)
Bibliography   *SEG* 45 no. 1995; Seyrig 1957, 259-61; Altheim, Stiehl 1969, 5: 548-51; Milik 1972, 54-8; Bowersock 1975, 513-22; Graf 1978, 9-11; *Quellen*, 295-302; Macdonald et al. 2015, 44-56

Text and translation[5]

A

1) Υπερ αιωνιου διαμονης κρατησεως (τ)ων θειοτατων
κοσμοκρατορ(ω)ν (Σ)εβα(στ)ων
μεγιστων (Α)ρμενια(κ)ων Μαρκου Αυρηλιου Αντωνεινου και Λουκιου
2) [Αυ](ρη)λιου Ουηρου (π)[*lacuna of approximately 14 letters*]ν
[Θ](αμ)ουδην(ω)ν
(ε)[θνος lacuna of approximately 60 letters] ΣΤΑ καθειδρυσεν μετα προτ(ρο)[πης]
3) [*lacuna of approximately 5 letters?*] και εκ (πει)[*lacuna of 25 letters* Κοι]ντο [υ *lacuna*]

B

4) *'l šlm' dy mt*[lacuna of approximately 30 letters *mrqs*] *'wrlys 'nṭwnyns wlwqys*
'wrlys [wr]s dy '[---]' [lacuna] *dnh nws' dy ʿbdt (š)rkt tmwdw qdmy šrk(t)h*
lmhw' [š](w)h mn ydhm wmšmš(h) [ml'l]m
5a) [lacuna] *wḥp(y)t* [lacuna of approximately 12 letters] *['](dw) nṭs (')*
(d/r/w)[.][.]ty [lacuna of approximately 10 letters] *w(r)mṣhm*

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[4]   Milik 1972, 55. The dimensions were provided by H.St.J.B. Philby who ignores lines 3 and 6.

[5]   The transcription and the translation of the present texts follow the reading of Macdonald et al. (2015, 50-1 and 54-5), and are adapted to the transcription conversions here employed.

C

5b) Επι νεικη και αιωνιω διαμονη αυτοκρατορων Καισα(ρ)ω(ν) [Μ](α)ρκο(υ) [Αυ]ρηλιου
Αντωνεινου
6) και (Λ)ουκ(ι)ου (Α)υρηλιου Ουηρου Σεβ(αστων) Αρμ(ε)νιακ(ω)ν [Μηδι]κων
(Πα)ρθικ(ω)ν με(γ)[ι](σ)των και του πα(ντος) (οι)[κου α](υ)τ(ω)ν το (τω)ν Θ(α)μου(δ)ηνων εθνος [*lacuna*]

7) τον νεω συνετελε(σε)ν
8) και το ιερον καθ(ε)ιερωσεν
9) [... Κλ]αυδιου Μοδεστου
10) [...](β) αντιστρατ(ηγου)

D

1) *(d)nh (by)t' dy [']bd (š)'dt 'pkl*
2) *(')[l](h)' (mg)yd(w) dy mn rbtw*
3) *l'l(h') 'lh [...(m)...(k)...]ḥ(p)yt mr'n' [ ] hgmwn'*
4) *mr'(n') (') [...] (h)gmwn'*
5) *(.) [...] (')mnw*

E

1) (Ε)/(C)YCΘA(I)/(T)O(Y) (Θ)[αμ](ου)δ(η)νω-
2) ν φυλης Ροβαθου οικοδο-
3) μησα<ν> το ιερον τουτο

A

1) For the eternal duration of the power of the most divine rulers of the world, the great (A)ugu(st)i, *(A)rme(n)iaci*, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius
2) [Au]relius Verus [*lacuna*] (*n*)*[atio]* of the [T](ham)ud has founded [*lacuna*] with the enco(u)[ra]gment
3) and through [*lacuna* Q]uintus [*lacuna*]

B

4) For the well-being of [*lacuna* Marcus] Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius (Ver)us who [*lacuna*]. This is the temple which the *(n)atio* of Thamud made, the commanders of their *natio*, for the existence of which it was set in place by their hand and their worship [will be there, for ever]
5a) [lacuna] and with the encou(r)agment of [*lacuna*] [A](dv)entus [*lacuna*] and at their request

C

5b) For the victory and the perpetual continuance of the emperors, the Caesa(r)s, [M](a)rc(us) [Au]relius, Antoninus
6) and (L)uc(i)us (A)urelius Verus, Aug(usti), *Arm(e)n(i)aci, [Me]dici, (Pa)rth(i)ci Maximi* and their wh(ole) (ho)[use] the *natio* of the Th(a)mu(d) [*lacuna*]
7) have comple(te)d the temple 8) and ha cons(e)crated the sanctuary.
9) [... of Cl]audius Modestus 10) [...] Proprae(tor)

D

1) (T)his is the (temp)le which (Š)a'aḏaṯ, the priest of
2) ('I)[la](h)ā son of (Mu)ḡīḏ(ō) who is from (*the tribe*) Roḇaṯō, [m]ade
3) for 'Ila(hā), the god of[...(m)...(k)...] the en(c)ouragment of
4) o(ur) Lord [...] the (g)overnor
5) [...] ('A)manō

E

1) (E)/(C)YCΘA(I)/(T)O(Y) of the tribe of Thamud
2) of the tribe of Robathos they bu-
3) -ilt this sanctuary

Commentary

Bilingual inscription (A, B, C)

It contains a dedication to commemorate the feats of the emperors Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Verus in the Near East; the campaign against Vologases IV, who attacked the Roman Empire in 162-166, is mentioned. The inscription indicates that the temple was erected by the Thamud tribe between the Roman victory over the Parthians and the death of Lucius verus, so between 166 and 169 CE.[6]

The semidivine image of the two winning *Augusti*, protectors of the Armenians (Σεβαστῶν μεγίστων Ἀρμενιακῶν), is highlighted by the label τῶν θειοτάτων κοσμοκρατόρων[7] to whom Milik maintains the Nabataean *mtmkyn*[8] corresponds. Conversely, Macdonald et al. (2015, 50), after a new revision of the epigraph, read only *mt*. As is clear from the two texts, the temple was built by the Thamud tribe. Even though the reference to Θαμουδηνῶν ἔθνος is difficult to read, we have a clear connection with it in the Nabataean part in which the sentence *šrkt tmwdw*[9] is mentioned. The substantive *šrkt* was translated by Milik (1972, 56) as 'fédération' rather than as 'tribe'.[10] On the basis of its mentions by Ptolemy and Stephanus of Byzantium some scholars have suggested that the term *Saracen* originated from the name of the tribe at issue through Greek Σαρακηνοί.[11] Macdonald (1995, 98-100) identified *šrkh* with 'military unit', but this implies that at al-Ruwāfah the Greek term ἔθνος took on the meaning of 'a

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[6] Graf 1978, 10.

[7] Other two dedications to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus come from Philadelphia (Amman), in an inscription dating back to 161-169 (*IGLS* 21,2 no. 18), and in a text from Gerasa dating back to 163 (*CIG* no. 4464); in both epigraphs the two leaders are called Αὐτοκράτωρ.

[8] If the reading is right, it is a participle form from the root *tmk* 'the rulers of the whole world (said of two Roman emperors)', 'to support' (*DNWSI*, 1221). The root is used in Hebrew *tāmak* meaning 'to take hold of' (Gesenius 1846, 872 = *DGes*, 1444; *KAHAL*, 659-60), so in Akk. *tamāḫu*, also *tamāku*, with the same meaning (*CAD* XVI-II, 107; *AHw* III, 1312).

[9] Actually, in the Greek version there is not a clear mention of Θαμουδηνῶν ἔθνος since during the recovery of Musil the stone had already deteriorated; in fact, Philby himself did not include this construction in his copy (Seyrig 1957, 260). This is also apparently confirmed by Altheim and Stiehl (1969, 5: 24) who do not mention it in their transcription of the epigraph.

[10] Cf. Ar. *šāraka* 'to share, to take part, to participate', Syr. *šrek* 'to be left, to end up in a state' (Payne Smith 1903, 598b; Sokoloff 2009, 1608-9), also Akk. *šarāku* 'to make a votive offering, to grant, to entrust' (*CAD* XVII, 40; *AHw* III, 1183-4).

[11] *DNWSI*, 1193; for a detailed examination, cf. Graf, O'Connor 1977, 52-66; O'Connor 1986, 213-29 and Macdonald 1995, 93-101 and especially Macdonald et al. 2015, 46-7.

group of people united in some way' as in Pseudo-Hyginus.[12] Milik does not specify that the first letters in line 3 do not begin at the left edge where the words of lines 1-2 are all aligned.[13]

In the Nabataean text, after the references to Antonius and Verus, Milik originally reconstructs *'rmny* 'Armenians', but Macdonald points out that there is not enough space between *m* and final *'* order to recreate the ethnonym.[14] After that there is the term *nws'* 'temple', a clear loanword from Greek ναός;[15] the latter is not visible in section A where only the verb καθείδρυσεν (< *καθδρύω) 'to settle, establish' (but Nabataean *'bd* 'to do') remains.

At the end of line 4 the verb *šmš* appears, here in *pa'el* form meaning 'to serve'[16] in the sense of 'divine service in the sanctuaries', the root was subsequently used by Christian Assyrians to identify the *diaconus*.[17]

In line 5a there is the verbal name *ḥfyt* that must not be confused with the Aramaic root *ḥpy* 'to cover a surface';[18] it is loanword from Arabic *ḥafiy bihi* 'to show someone honour, kindness, to manifest joy' = Gr. προτροπή.[19] In the same line Milik reconstructs *'nṭsṭys 'dwnts*

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12   In *De munitionibus castrorum* (§29 and §19, 43), a work probably dated to the period of the inscription of al-Ruwāfah, the term *natio* = Gr. ἔθνος is employed with the acceptation of military unit comprising particular ethnic groups. In Wadd. no. 2196 there is στρατηγοῦ νομάδων, a title referred to an Arab leader; these nomads erected a statue for an imperial legatus of the province (Wadd. no. 2203): οἱ ἀπό ἔθνους νομάδων. In this case the term ἔθνους refers to a 'military unity' of nomads, as it is clear from another inscription from Hauran (like the previous two texts) in which we read παρεμβολὴ νομάδων translated as 'escadrons de nomades' (*PPAES* IIIA, 752).

13   Macdonald et al. 2015, 50 fn. 120. In addition, Milik, after the quotation of Κοίντος, reconstructs the expression: [Ἀντιστίου Ἀδουεντου πρεσβευτου Σεβαστῶν ἀντιστρατέγου...] identifying the legatus Quintus Antista Adventus.

14   Macdonald et al. 2015, 50 fn. 122.

15   The word is also employed in Palmyrene, Galilean Aramaic and Syriac indicating the citadel, 'a palace area of a tell' (*DNWSI*, 723).

16   In Com., BA *ysamsûnēh* (Dan 7,10), Pal. (*PAT*, 416) 'to serve'; in Syr. *šameš* also 'to provide, to recite', while in JBA, PTA, and Gal. *šmš* + *'m* 'to lie with, copulate' (Jastrow 1903, 1602; Payne Smith 1903, 585; Sokoloff 2009, 1576; Cook, *Qumran*, 239; *DJPA*, 559a; *DJBA*, 1162a; *DNWSI*, 1168).

17   Cf. Syr. *mšamšayā* and Ar. *šammās* 'deacon, sacristan', he who serves Mass in the Christian oriental churches' rituals. The root, which may be confused with Sem. *šms/š* 'sun', is of uncertain origin. It seems without doubt to be of Egyptian origin or even an Egyptian loanword *šamš* 'to serve', rather than from the root meaning 'sun' in the sense of 'to serve the sun!' (Klein 1987, 668). Cf. Sem. **śamś-* = Pro. Afro-As. **šam-* 'sun' linked to the root meaning 'to burn, to shine' (*HSED* nos. 2328 and 2329).

18   *DNWSI*, 394-5.

19   Lane, 604-5. Cf. Arabic *ḥifāyah* (pl. *ḥufawā'*) 'care, attention'. In a bilingual Greek-Palmyrene inscription the term *ḥpyw* = Gr. σπουδή is found (*DNWSI*, 395).

hgmwn', i.e. legatus Quintus Antistius Adventus[20] who is identified through the title of *hgmwn'* 'governor, leader'; *hgmwn'* is evidently a loanword from Greek ἡγεμών. Macdonald does not agree with this reading and, conversely, he points out that there are two *ṭ* separated by a wide *lacuna* and in the space between *ḥfyt* and *'dwnṭs* about 13 letters fit in, too many to reconstruct what Milik proposed.[21]

At the end of the line we read the verb *rmṣ* probably meaning 'to pacify', used only in Nabataean with this meaning;[22] according to Milik, who proposed this interpretation, it is a loanword coming from Arabic *ramaṣa bayna* 'to make peace between', 'réconcilier des ennemis, mettre la paix entre eux'.[23] By contrast, Macdonald suggests that this translation is philologically impossible because here *ramaṣa* is not followed by *bayna*, but by the plural pronoun -*hm* whose translation 'made peace between them' appears to be unacceptable; so, according to Macdonald the form is a *maṣdār*, i.e. *ramṣ* and the sentence *wa-ramṣ-hum* would mean 'and at their request'.[24]

The text C includes the name of L. Claudius Modestus who probably was a governor of Provincia Arabia in the 2nd century.[25]

Inscriptions D and E

The two texts describe the building of the sanctuary. The Nabataean section (D) mentions *š'dt* (a name that recurs in no. 39), probably a minister who built the sanctuary. In the inscription we notice the term *'pkl* (also *'pkl'*), a loanword from Akkadian *apkallu* (< Sumerian *ab-gal*) used in Nabataean, Palmyrene and Hatraean meaning 'reli-

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20   He was legatus of the legion *VI Ferrata* in Syria Palaestina and commanded a legion, the II *Adiutrix*, in the war against the Parthian Empire (161-166). Probably from 165 to 167 he was governor of Arabia Petraea and he is cited in an epigraph from Bosra (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* III no. 92) and in another from Gerasa (*SEG* 7 no. 822).

21   Macdonald et al. 2015, 51.

22   *DNWSI*, 1078. More generally the root *rmṣ* in used in JBA 'to wink, to drip' and in LJLA and Sam. 'to embroider, to set (gems)' (Jastrow 1903, 1483; *DJBA*, 1088b; Tal, *Sam*, 839).

23   Kazimirski 1860, 1: 924-5.

24   See Macdonald et al. 2015, 51 fn. 126 and Macdonald 2009, 11-12.

25   The name may refer to the consul named in 155 CE in the Acts of Arval as *frater* (see *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* VI no. 2086). If this identification is right, he would be Claudius Modestus who became consul in 152 CE, as suggested a mutilated inscription from *Beneventum* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* IX no. 1574). According to some scholars, on the contrary, he could be the father of the governor of Arabia (for a detailed analysis of the question cf. Camodeca 1983, 207-12).

gious functionary, priest',[26] and 'exorcist-priest'[27] too. The personal name *mgydw* comes from Arabic *muǧīd*, another form of the name *mgdw* and *mgdyw* (see no. 36). The god ʾIlahā, to whom the temple is dedicated, seems to have assumed a special significance for the tribe,[28] whose name *rbtw* (/roḇaṯō/?) = Gr. Ροβαθου may be a literal translation of al-Ruwāfah.[29]

In the inscription E the initial sequence, which Milik originally read CICΘAIOI (on the copy of Philby), turns out to be problematic in its interpretation.[30]

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26   *PAT*, 342; *DNWSI*, 95-6

27   Healey 1995, 78. According to Kaufman (1974, 34) it is an Arabic title rather than Aramaic.

28   Milik 1972, 58.

29   Bowersock 1971, 231. The name appears in *Not. Dign.* [*occ.*] [*or.*] 34.27 as *Robatha*.

30   According to Van den Branden it could be a graphic representation of the Arab custom to cut the hair and to shave the temples, in fact, considering O rather than Θ, he reconstructs the word σισόη translating it as 'manière de couper les cheveux en rond', also 'roll of hair' (*LSJ*, 1601); but this suggestion proves to be contrived (Macdonald et al. 2015, 54 and fn. 138). For further considerations, see Graf 1978, 10.