

Two New Nabataean inscriptions from Wadi Lihyan in southern Sinai

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Abstract

Wadi Lihyan is located in southern Sinai, about 35 km from Serabit el-Khadim. It is accessed through Wadi al-Nasb through a winding and spiral road that passes through the areas of quarries and mines of the Manganese Company. Wadi Lihyan is a wide and spacious valley characterized by a large number of Nabataean inscriptions, in addition to a lot of Rock arts.

In November 2016, I was invited to participate in the training course “Archaeological Survey and Desert Survival Skills” at Sarabit El-Khadem Training Center, under supervision Mr. Mustafa Nour El-Din, who told me that there is a rock with Nabataean inscriptions in Wadi Lihyan. On examination, it was found that is a small fallen rock contains two Nabataean memorial inscriptions. In this paper, the researcher deals with an analytical study of these two Nabataean inscriptions.

Keywords: Nabataean inscriptions, Sinai, Wadi Lihyan.

Inscription no. 1 (Fig.2)

Transliteration

slm bṭb
ʿbdʿlhy br ḥr īšū

Translation

Good Greetings of ʿAbdallahi son of ḥrish.

Commentary

This text is carved into a small rock, its letters are well carved and some of them are joined together. The reading proposed above is quite certain. The first word is to be read as *slm*" Greetings", The second is *bṭb*" for good, well".

The first personal name is most likely to be read *'bd'lh* عبد الله, followed by *br* "son of", and The last personal name is clearly *ḥrīšū* حَرِيشُ.

slm:

"Greetings", a noun in the masculine singular absolute, found in Nabataean and other Semitic inscriptions⁽¹⁾

bṭb:

a noun (*ṭb*) in the masculine singular absolute preceded by the preposition (*b*), meaning "for good, well" ; known in Nabataean, as well as in many other Semitic inscriptions⁽²⁾ .

***'bd'lh* :**

"'Abdallahi الله عبد", a compound personal name meaning "servant of Allah", The name is frequently attested in other Nabataean and Semitic inscriptions⁽³⁾ .

br:

The son's name *br*, meaning "son of"; has been used a lot in Nabataean inscriptions⁽⁴⁾, and came here in the case of the masculine singular.

ḥrīšū:

"ḥarish حَرِيشُ ", A simple personal name, that came in other Nabataean inscriptions⁽⁵⁾ .

in the ancient Arabic inscriptions *ḥarsh حَرَشُ* , " who hunts lizards", and Lizards are similar to a hedgehog and a frog⁽⁶⁾ .

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(1) al-Theeb,S.,2000a:253–254.

(²)al-Theeb, S., 2000a: 107

(³)Milik, J., 1958: 231; al-Said, 1995:133; Branden, 1956: 99; Harding, 1952: 213.

(⁴)Al-Qudrah, H., Abdelaziz, M., (2008): p.195.

(⁵)Cantineau, J., 1978: p.100; Euting, J.(1981): No, 561.

(⁶)Harding, G., 1952:184.

Inscription no. 2 (Fig.3)

Transliteration

dkyr ḥnzlw

br ḡ'nū

snt 140

Translation

May be remembered Ḥanzal son of G'nyw, in year 140 [AD 246].

Commentary

The first word read *dkyr*, "may be remembered". The first personal name is *ḥnzlw* حَنْظَل, also followed by *br*, "son of". The father's name is *ḡ'nū* جَنْي. The last line contains Nabataean numerals: 100, 20, 20, preceded by the word *snt* "the year", it indicates that this inscription was written in the year 140 of Bosra [= AD 246].

dkyr:

"may be Remembered", a common adjective that often appears at the beginning of the Nabataean inscriptions⁽⁷⁾, and Semitic inscriptions⁽⁸⁾.

ḥnzlw:

"Ḥanzal", A simple personal name common in Nabataean⁽⁹⁾, and other Semitic inscriptions⁽¹⁰⁾.

Derived from the bitter melon tree الحَنْظَل, It is a tree with bitterness; to be characterized by its bearing bitterness, hardness

⁽⁷⁾ Cantineau, J., 1978:82; al-Theeb, S., 2000:71.

⁽⁸⁾ Brown, F., and others, 1906: 271.

⁽⁹⁾ al-Theeb, S., 1431h: 112; Littmann, E., and Meredith, D., 1953: 6.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Stark, J., 1971:105.

and strength⁽¹¹⁾. The name was known in Arabic classic as "Hanzlh- حَنْظَلَة"⁽¹²⁾.

ğ'nū:

ğ'nī جَنِي, A brief personal name occurs in other Nabataean⁽¹³⁾. Meaning "hidden-preserved", from the root *ğnn* ج ن ن "cover-save"⁽¹⁴⁾.

snt 140:

The importance of This inscription represented in its Nabataean numerals (Line 3): the first sign denotes 100, the second 20, the third again 20. So we have the year 140 of Bosra [= AD 246].



Fig.1: a small rock in w.Lihyan, contains two Nabataean memorial inscriptions.

⁽¹¹⁾ al- Theeb, S.,1998: 41.

⁽¹²⁾ abn mnzūr, (1956), ġ11: 183.

⁽¹³⁾ al- Theeb, S., 1431h: 794 -795.

⁽¹⁴⁾ abn mnzūr, (1956), ġ13, † 3: 92-93.



Fig. 2: Inscription no. 1.

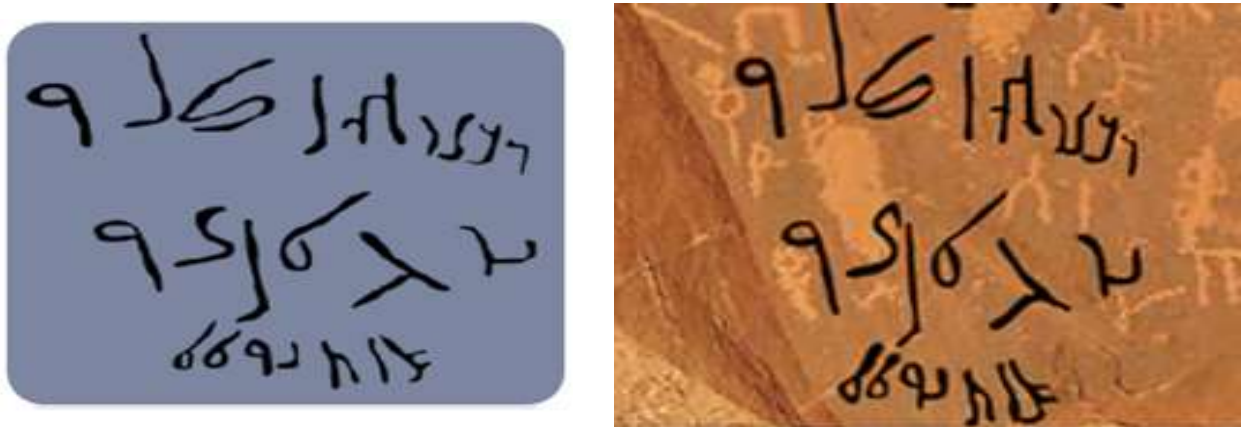


Fig. 3: Inscription no. 2.

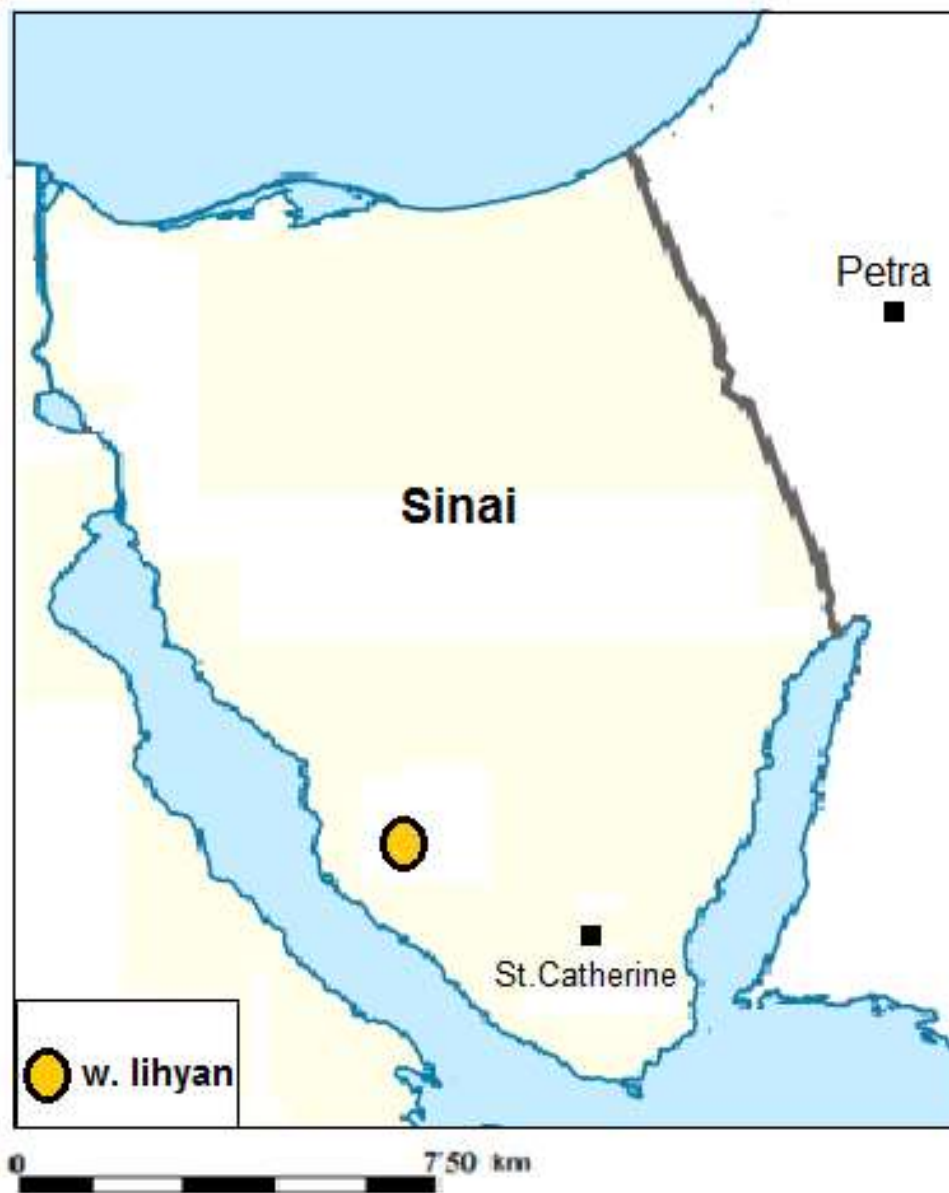


Fig.3: Map of Sinai showing location of Wadi Lihyan .

Arab arch epi :Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy.
BSOAS :Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African
Studies.

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