

The Eye in Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions and Monuments

العين في النقوش والآثار العربية الجنوبية القديمة

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Abstract:

This research paper explores the eye, the main part of the human body responsible for seeing, in ancient South Arabian inscriptions and monuments. It investigates the words used for the eye and their denotations and connotations in ancient South Arabian inscriptions such as r'y, nʒr, 'yn, trying to link its meanings in the inscriptions to Arabic dictionaries. Then, it studies the eye diseases among the Arabs in ancient Yemen and the thanks associated with the god for healing, seeking help from healing, thanking the god for the recovery of the inscription's owner, or seeking protection from diseases. After that, the study examines the eye in religious beliefs, looking for means to protect them from the evil eye and envy and making various amulets. Finally, the study discusses the forms of the eye in art. The eye is one of the most important organs of the human body because, so the ancient Yemeni artist cared for highlighting the eye and carving it very carefully in human heads, statues, and eye stelaes because it helps in the appearance of their owner's features. To increase the beauty and vitality of the eye, the artist inlaid the eyes with various available materials.

Keywords: eye, South Arabia, r'y, nʒr, 'yn, eye steala.

الملخص:

يدور هذا البحث حول العين- التي تعتبر الجزء الرئيس في جسم الإنسان والمسئولة عن الرؤية- في النقوش والآثار اليمنية القديمة، من خلال البحث عن ألفاظ ودلالات العين في النقوش العربية الجنوبية القديمة، ومحاولة ربط معانيها الواردة في النقوش بالمعاجم العربية، ثم يتناول أمراض العيون التي عانى منها العرب في اليمن القديم، وما يرتبط بذلك من شكر للمعبود على الشفاء من المرض، أو طلب الحماية للتحصن من الأمراض. ثم يتناول العين في المعتقدات الدينية، ومحاولتهم البحث عن وسائل تحميهم من الإصابة بالعين الشريرة والحسد، فصنعوا التماثيل بأشكالها المتنوعة. وأخيراً أشكلها في الفن، فالعين من أهم الأعضاء في جسم الإنسان لما لها دور حيوي في شكله، لذلك اهتم الفنان اليمني القديم بإبراز العيون، ونحتها بعناية شديدة سواء في الرؤوس الأدمية أو التماثيل أو شواهد القبور، لأنها تساعد في ظهور ملامح صاحبها. ولزيادة جمال وحيوية العين قام الفنان بتطعيم العيون بمواد مختلفة وفرتها له الطبيعة.

الكلمات الدالة: العربية الجنوبية، رأى، نظر، عين، اللوحات ذات العيون.

Eye-related words:

The ancient South Arabian inscriptions expressed the eye as 𐩦𐩣𐩪 'yn¹ and the plural 𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩠 'yn, ² which means "eye, sight³". It was used as a verb

¹ The researcher will handle the inscriptions with the word "eye" in the "eye diseases" section.

meaning “see” in the Minaean inscription Y.92.B.A 29/ 7 “w‘yn/ ’ns” which means “they saw men”.⁴ It resembles the word “eye”, which appears both in terms of form and meaning in standard Arabic. In Arabic, the eye is the organ of sight and vision. For example, it is used for the spy who spies the news. Additionally, it is used to mean envy.⁵

The ancient South Arabian inscriptions illustrated the close association between the eye and vision, using several words, e.g., 𐩧𐩨𐩣 hr’y, 𐩧𐩨 r’y, as a verb meaning “He saw, He sees, I see (someone)”.⁶ For example, the Sabaean inscription CIH 282/10 reads:

Transliteration:

9-...qs²d/

10-n/ ’l r’yw...

Translation:

9-... the destruction,

10- they didn't see it....⁷

The verb 𐩧𐩨𐩣 yr’yn has the same meaning. For instance, Sabaean inscription Ja 567 reads:

Transliteration:

7-...k/yr’y^h

8- w/ byn/ 𐩧𐩨𐩣/𐩧𐩨lf/ mšr’y/ Qs¹dm.

Translation:

7-...when he saw him

8- between the two bulls in the vicinity of the two gates of Qs¹dm.⁸

Similarly, the same word 𐩧𐩨𐩣 yr’yn in the Sabaean inscription CIH 456 expressed a prayer for protection reads:

² 𐩧𐩨𐩣 was mentioned in ancient South Arabian inscriptions as proper noun and name of a tribe as in the inscriptions CIH 313, CIH 107, CIH 287, and Gr 1218 , FB-Maḥram Biqīs 3.

³ Beeston, A., & Others, Sabaic dictionary (English, French, Arabic), Beirut, 1982, P. 23. ⁴ Ricks, S., Lexicon of Inscriptional Qatabanian, Roma, 1989, p. 23.

⁴ <http://dasi.cnr.it/> 1-6-2023 ‘Arbach.M, Lexique Madhabien Compare Aux Lexiques Sabeen, Qatabanite et Hadramawtique. Dissertation A ix –en- Provence, 1993, p. 22.

⁵ Ibn Manzoor, A., Lisan Alarab (Arabic Tongue), Vol. 4, Dar Al-Maaref, n.d., pp. 3195-1396.

⁶ Beeston, A., & Others, Sabaic dictionary, p. 112.

⁷ <http://dasi.cnr.it/> 1-6-2023.

⁸ Jamme, A., Sabaean Inscriptions from Maḥram Bilqīs (Mârib), Publications of the American Foundation for the Study of Man, 3, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1962, 49.

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Transliteration:

2-...lyr'

3- ynh/ 'ttr/ S²r^q4- n⁹

Translation:

2-... may he see him (protect)

3- 'ttr S²r^q 4-n.

The verb 𐩦𐩣𐩬𐩪𐩣 **yrt'yn** in the Sabaean inscription CIH 140/13 means “appear, look, seem, recognize”¹⁰ reads:

Transliteration:

12-...k'l/ys¹fhn/ lhw/ w y

13- rt'yn/ lhw/ s²wftm...

Translation:

12-...that he would not be neglectful towards him, but would

13- show Himself as a protection to him.¹¹

The name 𐩦𐩣𐩬 **r'y** was derived from 𐩦𐩣. The word 𐩦𐩣𐩬𐩪𐩣 **hr'yt** in the inscriptions was linked to vision and dreams, meaning “vision (with a good omen or choice”¹² as in the Sabaean inscription Ir 15 “1-...bhlmm/ w**hr'yt**/ hwd/ 'bdhw/ 'km...”, meaning “1... of an oracular dream and of the vision that He granted his slave 'km”.¹³

All these words and meanings are the same as those in classical Arabic. For instance, the verb “رأى” means: saw with eye, seeing with an eye, الرؤية the perception of things with sight. Additionally, see means look. The thing that appeared means seemed and was seen. Vision is the seeing by the eye and heart. Vision الرؤية is derived from “رأى” or what a man sees in dreams.¹⁴

⁹ Calvet, Y., and Robin, Ch., *Arabie heureuse. Arabie déserte. Les antiquités arabiques du Musée du Louvre*, Avec la collaboration de Françoise Briquel-Chatonnet and Marielle Pic, Paris: Editions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1997, 127- 128.

¹⁰ Biella, J., *Dictionary of old South Arabic Sabaean Dialect*, Harvard, 1982, pp. 473-474.

¹¹ Al-Otaibi, M., *War organizations and battles in Saba through texts since the 6th century BC. to the 6th G century*, Riyadh, King Fahd National Library, 2007, pp. 142-143.

¹² Beeston, A., & Others, *Sabaic dictionary*, p. 113.

¹³ Eryani, M., *On the history of Yemen - Musnad inscriptions and comments*, Sana 'a, Yemen Studies and Research Center, 1990, p. 129.

¹⁴ Ibn Manzoor, A., *Lisan Alarab (Arabic Tongue)*, Vol. 3, pp. 1537, 1540, 1542

Other expressions of vision include **𐩦𐩣 nꜩr**, which was used in some inscriptions, such as Ja 662/12 as a verb. It meant “look, observe, watch over, save, and protect”¹⁵ as follows:

Transliteration:

12- ...lqrn/ w**nꜩr**

13- bhgrn S²bwt...

Translation:

12-... to perform garrison duty and watch over

13- in the town of S²bwt.¹⁶

The word **𐩦𐩣 nꜩr** was used as a noun in some other inscriptions, including N 22/8, meaning “eye, eye evil”¹⁷, envy, look, defect, sight, and protection”, as follows:

Transliteration:

7- wl/ wz’/ mt’thw/ f

8- n/ b’sm/ w **nꜩr**/ w s²sy/

9- s²n’m...

Translation:

7- and to continue to save him

8- From harm, envy (a look), and harm

9- Enemy.¹⁸

Other meanings of **𐩦𐩣 nꜩr** J 616/22 include “counterparts, peers, observers (from courtiers and followers),¹⁹ and guards” who may be meant to report news without eyesight. Therefore, the sense is associated with the characteristic, and they are called “observers”. The inscription reads:

Transliteration:

22-... ’s¹dm/ bn/ s²’bhmw/ Yrs¹m/ wbn/ **nꜩr**/ mlkn

Translation:

22-... men from their tribe Yrs¹m and from the guard of the king.²⁰

Furthermore, the inscriptions included the word **𐩦𐩣𐩦 mnꜩr** which was not explained by the authors of the Sabaean dictionary. However, Arabic dictionaries illustrated that the word “منظر” is the name of a place of observation or a high place used to promote visibility, which aligns with the

¹⁵ A. Beeston and Others, Sabaic dictionary, p. 102.

¹⁶ Jamme, A., Sabaean Inscriptions, p. 167.

¹⁷ A. Beeston and Others, Sabaic dictionary, p. 102.

¹⁸ Nami, K., Publishing and Explaining Ancient Semitic Inscriptions from South Arabian Countries, Cairo, French Institute for Eastern Archaeology, 1943, pp. 36- 38.

¹⁹ A. Beeston and Others, Sabaic dictionary, p. 102.

²⁰ Jamme, A., Sabaean Inscriptions, pp. 114- 115.

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overall meaning of the inscription and the included vocabulary expressing construction. For example, in the inscription Robin-al-Ḥadara 9 reads:

Transliteration:

4- whqs²bn/ **mnz**rhmw/....²¹

Translation:

4- and they restored (renew) their place of observation (their tower)...

Eye Diseases:

Ancient Yemenis knew medicine and diagnosed human diseases. Ancient Yemeni inscriptions included eye diseases and relevant thanks to the god for healing, seeking help for healing, thanking god for the recovery of the owner of the inscription, or seeking protection from diseases.²² For example, -Inscription Ja 706:

Transliteration:

5- 'lmqh/ lh'nn/ 'mthw

6- Nḏrt/ bn/ mrḏ/ mrḏ(t)

7- 'ynhw/

Translation:

5- 'lmqh, in order to help His servant

6- Nḏrt from the disease she suffered

7- in her eyes....²³

Nḏrt, the owner of the inscription, made an offering to the god Almaqah because it healed her from an eye disease. However, she did not specify the kind of disease she had.

-Inscription CIAS 95.11/o 3 n° 2:

Transliteration:

6- ... 'yn/ 'ynyhw/hms¹/h

7- (ryf)/

Translation:

6- ... he had suffered from eye disease for five

7- (Years)....²⁴

The inscription shows a disease that affected the eye for five years.

²¹ Robin, Ch., *Les hautes-terres du Nord-Yémen avant l'Islam*, vol. 2, *Nouvelles inscriptions*, (Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch- Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 50), Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1982, p. 81.

²² Al meKhalafi, A., "Medicine in Ancient Yemen, *The Gulf Journal for History and Archaeology*, 8, 2013, p. 99.

²³ Jamme, A., *Sabaeen Inscriptions*, P. 195.

²⁴ Beeston, A., "Thank for recovery disease of the eyes", *Corpus des inscriptions et antiquités sud-arabes*, Vol. II, *Le Musée d'Aden*, Tome 1, *Inscriptions*, Louvain, Peeters (Académie des inscriptions et belles- lettres), 1986, p. 190.

–Inscription Raybūn-Ḥaḍrān 213:

Transliteration:

4- ‘lhn/’ brs²d/‘lhy/mr

5-ḍ/‘ yns³yw...

Translation:

4 for the sake of ’brs²d and for the sake of the

5- Illness of her two eyes....²⁵

–Inscription ‘Abdallāh 1996:

Transliteration:

4-.... wh’/rs¹‘t/mrḍtm/bn/‘ ynh

Translation:

4- ... She recovered from an eye disease.²⁶

The inscription was written in the ancient Yemeni Zabur script. It mentioned a woman called Ḥmwt, who had recovered from an eye disease, in a reproach letter to her two friends, indicating their knowledge of the medication for eye diseases.

According to a legislative inscription, losing an eye or العمى was punishment for anyone who might attack a cemetery. Thus, “losing an eye” was an eye disease that affected people at that time. One-eyed is a person injured in one eye or lost one of them. For instance, the inscription DJE 10:

Transliteration:

4-....Fl/ ylṣqnn/w ‘yr/kl/’ ns¹/yḥṭ’ n/bḍt/mqbrtn

Translation:

4- ... may he pursue and cause losing an eye (blindness) every man who wrongs this cemetery.²⁷

Although the abovementioned inscriptions indicated the nature of eye diseases known in ancient Yemen, they neglected the treatment, preparation, and medication. They focused on thanking the god for healing. This does not mean that they relied on making offerings to their god, but they might use plants and herbs in treating eye diseases, which were used in mummification and are still known in Yemen, such as peganum, blepharis edulis, aloe, celery

²⁵ Frantsouzoff, S., "The Inscriptions from the temples of Dhat Ḥimyam at Raybūn", *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies*, 25, 1995 p. 18.

²⁶ Al- said, S., "New Sabaeen Inscriptions on Disease," *Oussour*, No. 12, Vol. 2, 2002, p. 18, pp. 7-21. ‘Maraqten, M., ‘Sabäische Frauenbriefe’, *Neue beiträge zur Semitistik, fünftes treffen der arbeitgemeinschaft Semitistik in der deutschen morgenländischen gesellschaft vom 15.–17. Februar 2012 an der Universität Basel*, (Ugarit-Verlag, Münster, 2015), p. 184.

²⁷ Al Naeem, N., *Legislation in Southwest Arabia until the Late Himyarite Kingdom*, King Fahd National Library, Riyadh, 2000, p. 567; Rijziger, S., "Sabaeen inscriptions from Ḥāz, Yemen", *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, 29/2, 2018, p. 159.

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honey, and coriander. They might not mention treatment in inscriptions because of confidentiality.²⁸

Evil eye and envy in religious beliefs:

Ancient Yemenis believed in the evil eye and its ability to cause illness, misfortune, and bad luck. They pointed this out in their inscriptions, where they asked the god to protect them from the evil eye of their enemies. Thus, the evil eye was described as a bad eye in the inscription Pi. Baynūn 2 as follows:

Transliteration:

4-..... wlt' ḥrn/w' rm/kl

5- (s²n)' hw/wḍyr' yn hw/ b' yn/s¹w' m

Translation:

4-.....and May She remove and overthrow all

5- his enemies and who looks at him with bad eye.²⁹

Therefore, the ancient Yemenis sought to find ways to protect themselves from the evil eye and envy. They created various forms of amulets, such as the circle or crescent symbolizing the sun and the moon or crescent-shaped amulets surrounding the human palm.³⁰ The human fingered palm was one of the well-known religious symbols in the Arabian Peninsula used for the prevention of the evil eye or seeking protection from the evils. Other amulets included animals, reptiles, birds or parts from them, human heads or skulls.³¹ However, no eye amulets like those found in neighboring civilizations have been found in South Arabia yet. In Taymaa and Daddan, two amulets were found for Wdjat eye (the magical eye of Horus), one of the ancient Egyptian amulets used to prevent evil.³²

The ancient Yemeni referred to the eye as a symbol of protection and care. For example, the inscription Makyāsh - al-Zubaydī 2008 illustrated that

²⁸ Al mekhalafi, A., "Medicine in Ancient Yemen", pp. 113- 115.

²⁹ Pirenne, J., Documents inédites de Baynūn, in Christian Robin and Muḥammad Bāfaqīh (eds), Ṣayhadica, Recherches sur les inscriptions de l'Arabie préislamique offertes par ses collègues au professeur Beeston, (Arabie préislamique, 1), Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1987, p. 103.

³⁰ Grohmann, A., Gottersymbole und symboltier auf Sud Arabischen denkmalern, wein, denkschriften der kaiserlichen akademie der wissenschaften, philosophische klasse 58, 1, 1914, p. 44- 45.

³¹ Youssef, H., "Amulets in Ancient Yemen", Journal of the Saudi Historical Society, Vol. 24, 2011, p. 21-22, 26, and 28.

³² The eye of Horus (Wdjat) took the form of a human eye, topped with an eyebrow, with a line or spiral shape from the sides representing the eyeliner (makeup), and below a mark representing the falcon's cheek. Amar, H., and Abdul Basit, M., "Ancient Egyptian symbols of Timaa and its cultural connotations," Journal of King Saud University, Faculty of Tourism 2, Vol. 29, 2017, pp. 124 – 126.

its owner made all his property covered with the eye, guard, and care of the god as follows:

Transliteration:

10-... wkl/ ḏm/ qnyw/ wḏm/ ls¹m|

11- ‘**ynm**/ n^ʿm...

Translation:

10- ... and all that they possess and that may be a good

11- omen for them.³³

Inscription RES 2693 illustrated that its owner put himself, his senses, his son, his property, and the purity of his eye under the protection of the gods as follows:

Transliteration:

6-... nfs¹s¹/ w^ʿḏns¹/ww

7- lds¹/ wqnys¹/ wšbḥt/ ‘**yns¹**ww...

Translation:

6-... his life, his faculties

7- his children, his properties, the good sight of his eyes.³⁴

Eye in art:

The eye is one of the most important organs of the human body because of its vital role in shape. Therefore, the ancient Yemeni artist highlighted and carved the eye very carefully, whether in human heads, statues, or eye stelae, because it could help highlight its owner's features.

There were many types and forms of eyes in ancient Yemeni art, such as circular, oval, and almond. The latter was the most widely represented in the form of a well-shaped almond whose angle leant inward, rising towards the temple and reflecting Arabic features. The small, narrow eyes appeared rarely, as in the alabaster head of a woman whose face had carved narrow eyes.³⁵

The eyes were beautifully created as the artist carved the apparent parts of the eye, such as eyelashes and eyelids, upper and lower. He also highlighted the sclera, iris, and pupils by carving a circular hole in the middle of the iris. Additionally, he carved the canthus, i.e., the inner corner between the upper

³³ Makyāsh, ‘A. and al-Zubaydī, Kh., "New Qatabanic inscription from wādī Marḥa", *Journal of the Faculty of Arts, University of Aden*, 5, 2008, pp. 70- 71.

³⁴ Pirenne, J., *Les témoins écrit de la région de Shabwa et l'histoire*, Jean-François Breton (ed.), *Fouilles de Shabwa. 1*, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, 134, Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, Institut français d'Archéologie du Proche-Orient, 1990, p.76.

³⁵ Antonini, S., "South Arabian antiquities in a private collection in Ar-Riyad (Saudi Arabia)", *Arabian archaeology and epigraphy*, 9, 1998, p. 264.

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and lower eyelids from the right and left, indicating knowledge of the eye anatomy.

To increase the raising of the eye, the artist created the eyebrows clearly and sharply. In most human faces, the eyes clarified and determined the facial features.³⁶

Ancient Yemenis were interested in eye inlaying in facial formation because it is the most prominent organ of the face, which determined its features. The inlaid eyes provided vitality and beauty to the shape. Additionally, the artist often inlaid the eye with a stone of the same kind of face stone, which was primarily alabaster. On other occasions, he inlaid the eye³⁷ using different types of natural stones and minerals. He inlaid and defined eyebrows in black³⁸ in most faces, indicating interest in the main parts of the eye features.

The ancient Yemeni artist used different kinds of stones and minerals in the eye inlaying. He used semi-gemstones, such as brown agate, blue lazuli, and obsidian, as well as shell and onyx paste.³⁹ He used a blue glass material as an imitation of semi-gemstones and a black material or stone, probably volcanic glass or antimony, to inlay and define eye sockets from the outside. Moreover, he utilized a white color for the sclera, which could be plaster or gypsum. In addition, he employed several minerals for inlaying the eye, such as lead.

Despite the creativity of the ancient Yemeni artist in carving, polishing, and inlaying eyes, some heads and statues were found with closed eyes and not hollow with high relief.⁴⁰ He might use a colored paste to draw other eye parts. Other heads and statues were carved with empty, hollow eyes. However, the depth of the cavity indicated that they were inlaid with mostly precious materials, but they lost inlaying either because they were stolen or dropped over time, as in a human head preserved at the British Museum with remains of a crystal yellow color in the pupil of the eye (Fig. 1).⁴¹

The following section shows models of the shape of the eyes in ancient Yemeni monuments:

Eye in Human Heads:

³⁶Nur-Eddine, A., "Features of Ancient Yemeni Art: Painting, Carving, Inscriptions", *New Yemen Journal*, vol. 7, issue 14, 1985, p. 106.

³⁷Nur-Eddine, A., "Features of Ancient Yemeni Art", p. 100.

³⁸Legrain, L., "archaeological notes In the Land of the Queen of Sheba", *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 1934, p. 332.

³⁹Antonioni, S., *Pictures: Gods, Humans and Animals* ", Arab World Institute, Paris and Dar al-Ahliya, Damascus, 1999, p. 153.

⁴⁰Antonini, S., "Sculpture of Southern Arabia: autochthony and autonomy of an artistic expression (pl. 1- 5)", *Arabia*, I, 2003, p. 23.

⁴¹<http://dasi.cnr.it/> 22-6-2023.

Separate human heads are one of the most important artistic achievements, more widespread and more common in ancient Yemeni civilization, as an alternative to full statues, some of which were for women and others for men. These heads were carved out of various materials, especially alabaster. The most important feature of these heads were the finely curved eyes, which were often inlaid.⁴² For example,

- A head of a woman made and carefully carved from alabaster (Fig. 2) preserved in the British Museum with number BM 122007. It has wide eyes. The artist highlighted the fortunes and sculpted pupils of the eyes to inlay.⁴³ Eyes looked up as if contemplating or talking to someone else. Sabina argues that the eyes were directed in a straight line towards the temples in Baraqiṣ as followed in ancient Egyptian temples.⁴⁴

- A head of a woman made of white marble (Fig 3) from Tamna^c, called Mariam; this head differs in its characteristics from the other heads. The eyes were inlaid with a blue azure, which is similar to the inlaying of the eyes in ancient Egypt. The artist put colored stones on their inner to make the head of the statue look like natural or real eyes. The eyebrows were colored black, which defined the shape of the eyes.⁴⁵

- A head of a man (Fig 4) made of alabaster from a private collection in New York. This head had deep eyebrows, and wide eyes inlaid with white material, possibly from seashells, whereas the pupils were inlaid with blue glass.⁴⁶

- A head of a man (Fig 5) made of alabaster from Qatban from a private collection in Paris.⁴⁷ It had beautiful and realistic eyes. The iris was inlaid with black stone or volcanic glass, and the sclera could be made from plaster, gypsum, or seashells.

Eye in Statues:

⁴² Youssef, H., "Some aspects about stelae, grave stones and bust stelae in ancient South Arabia", The service center for research consulting, Faculty of Arts, Menoufia University, 2016, p. 2- 3.

⁴³ Antonini, S., *La statuaria sudarabica in pietra*, Repertorio iconografico sudarabico, 1, Paris: de Boccard/ Rome: IsIAO, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-lettres; Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001, p. 88.

⁴⁴ Antonini, S., "Statuettes from the excavations of the temple of Nakrah (Temple A) at Baraqish (Republic of Yemen)", *Arabian archaeology and epigraphy*, 10, 1999, p. 63.

⁴⁵ Phillips, W., *Qataban and Sheba*, London, 1955, p. 113; Avanzini, A., "The South Arabian Kingdoms, An Introduction to their history", In *Art and technique in Yemen, the bronzes from the museum of Baynun*, Piza, 2009, p. 54.

⁴⁶ <https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-4722433> 18-6-2023.

⁴⁷ Antonioni, S., *Pictures: Gods and Humans*, p. 156.

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The ancient Yemeni artist took care of the sculpture of the eyes in full statues and was creative in carving and inlaying their eyes, which made the face luminous and vibrant. For instance,

- A statue of a woman (Fig 6) made of alabaster from Ma'rib and preserved at the British Museum.⁴⁸ The eyes inlaid with seashells in the sclera and the pupils of the black obsidian stone⁴⁹ gave the statue a nice look and added highness to its face. Notably, the large pupil could be intentionally created to show wisdom and foresight.

The ancient Yemeni artist excelled in making and inlaying eyes in the bronze heads and statues by using metals such as lead⁵⁰ and tin. For example,

- A bronze head (Fig. 7) preserved in the British Museum. The eye pupils were inlaid with colored stones⁵¹ and sculpted in the Roman form in high relief. The sculptor showed the eyelid to be elevated from the flat eye muscle from the top and from the flat face from the bottom.⁵²

- A statue of a man (Fig. 8) made of bronze from Al Bayḍa preserved at the Sana'a National Museum had two wide eyes engraved lightly with tin remains. It was one of the unique statues in which the artist highlighted the eyelashes nicely.⁵³

A bronze statue (Fig 9) of King Zamar Ali Yehbar, from the Alnakhla Alhamraa area⁵⁴ had carefully crafted facial features with wide pupil-mediated eyes. The artist excelled in the representation of eyelids and eyebrows despite the thickening of bronze.⁵⁵

Eye Stelae:

⁴⁸ Doe. B., *Southern Arabia*, London, Thames and Hudson, 1971, p. 43.

⁴⁹ <http://dasi.cnr.it/> 5-6-2023.

⁵⁰ Aqīl, A., *Bronze in Ancient Yemen, part 1, Techniques, Statues, and Architectural Decorations*, Sana 'a, 2010, pp. 27- 28.

⁵¹ 'Aqīl, A., and Antonini, S., *Bronzi sudarabici di periodo preislamico. Repertorio iconografico sudarabico*, 3, Paris: de Boccard / Rome: IsIAO, 2007, p. 151.

⁵² Suleiman, H., *The Art of Sculpture in Arabia from Prehistory until the Third Century BC*, PhD Dissertation (Unpublished), Faculty of Fine Arts, Helwan University, 2009, p. 231.

⁵³ Arbach, M., and Audouin, R., *Collection of Epigraphic and Archaeological Artifacts from al-Jawf Sites, Ṣan'ā' National Museum*, 2, Ṣan'ā': UNESCO-SFD / Ṣan'ā': National Museum, 2007, pp. 32- 34.

⁵⁴ *Katalogteil Im land der Konigen Von Saba*, 71 M, Munchen, 2000, p. 314.

⁵⁵ Al- nady, A., *Internal and External Influences on Yemeni Art*, Master's Thesis (Unpublished), Higher Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations, University of Zagazig, 1992, p. 161.

A large number of eye stelae were carved into a pair of clearly high striped eyes, which were simple surface grooves on a stone.⁵⁶ They were U-shaped, round, or oval eyes (Fig. 10). The name of the owner of the painting was written below the eyes⁵⁷, in which the artist highlighted eyes without paying attention to the other parts of the face, probably for religious reasons. These eyes might represent a religious symbol expressing the god's eye, which guarded cemeteries against aggressors or could be a spell or an amulet that was thought to protect the painting's owner from evil eyes and dangers. This view is supported by the fact that the eye stelae YM 10881 at the top showed eyes below the person's name and then a human sculpture of a soldier holding a spear.⁵⁸ The function of these eyes probably was to protect the carved soldier in the painting, or it might be a primitive form of eye sculpture that evolved until it reached the normal shape of the eyes. In the 8th, 7th, and 6th centuries, eye stelae contained only grooved or raised eyes, and the entire face was rarely found. After that, the entire faces began to appear and were followed by eye stelae consisting of raised faces, carved heads, or human statues. For example,

- A limestone eye stela, inscribed with two almond-shaped eyes with inscription YM 30000 below:

Transliteration:

1- 'ws¹

2- l w-rt

3- d d-Zlm

Translation:

1- Aws'

2- il, and has confied

3- to dhu-Zalam.⁵⁹

The owner of the inscription put the painting under the protection of the god Zalam- dhu. Perhaps those eyes represented the eyes of the god that guarded and protected the painting from any evil.

- A limestone eye stela, with raised eyes contains pupils, with the inscription YM 28033 below:

Transliteration:

1- qyf|'b'

2- mr| rtd|M

⁵⁶ Schittecatte, J., "The Arabian Iron Age, funerary stelae and the issue of cross-cultural contacts", In *Death and burial in Arabia and beyond, multi-disciplinary perspectives*, Society for Arabian studies monographs, 10, Oxford, 2010, p. 197.

⁵⁷ Alnady, A., *Internal and External Influences on Yemeni Art*, p. 133.

⁵⁸ Arbach, M., Schiettecatte, J., Al- Hadi, I., *San'â' National Museum, Part III, Collection of Funerary Stelae from the Jawf Valley, Şan'â'*, 2008, p. 183.

⁵⁹ Arbach, M., Schiettecatte, J., Al- Hadi, I., *San'â' National Museum*, p. 37.

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3- tbzlm

Translation:

1- Memorial of Abī-

2- 'amar under the protection of Mu

3- tabazlim.⁶⁰

Eye Cosmetics (Kohl):

Kohl is one of the oldest cosmetics in all ancient civilizations, used for eye cosmetics (eyebrows and eyelids). The eyes with kohl appeared in several human statues and heads that appeared surrounded by black,⁶¹ indicating that the ancient Yemenis used kohl with eyes and showed them wide by adding a black frame, which gave an aesthetic shape to the eye. Furthermore, they believed that kohl had medical benefits, as it could prevent some eye diseases and envy. It is an ancient legacy to use kohl for newborns and toddlers to strengthen or protect the eye from the evil eye. Several heads and statues had eyes with kohl, such as:

- Alabaster head of a man (Fig 11) from Qataban was created carefully, showing hollow eyes, the edges of the eyes made of dark blue glass, and engraved eyebrows.⁶²

- Alabaster head (Fig12), from Ma'rib, preserved in the Sana'a National Museum, demonstrating Arab features with almond-shaped inlaid wide eyes, the eyes surrounded in black,⁶³ and the eyebrows were straight and inlaid with the same black color.

- Alabaster eye stelae (Fig13), from Qataban, possibly from the cemetery of Haid bin Aqil in Tamna^c, with inlaid pupils,⁶⁴ the edges of the eye, and eyebrows surrounded with a black color representing kohl that extended in line beyond the canthus towards the temples, making the eyes wider and brighter.

Regarding the vessels (kohl containers) in which the kohl is preserved, as far as the researcher knows, nothing has been found in South Arabia, but this does not mean that they did not exist. The kohl container was one of the most important cosmetic tools that women were keen to acquire in the ancient world. It was found in cosmetics in the north of Arabia. In Mada'in Saleh, a bone kohl container (Fig. 14) was found, and two others were discovered in Daddan (AlKhuraiba), one bronze and the other copper. In Qaryat al-Faw, a distinctive silver kohl container was found with three rings on the side to carry the

⁶⁰ Arbach, M., Audouin, R., *Collection of Epigraphic and Archaeological*, p. 90.

⁶¹ Antonini, S., "Statuettes from the excavations of the temple of Nakrah", p. 60.

⁶² Sabina A., *La statuaria sudarabica in pietra*, p. 91, C51.

⁶³ De Megré, A., "Funeral Rites" *Yemen in the Kingdom of the Queen of Saba*, Arab World Institute, Paris and Dar Alahaly, Damascus, 1999, p. 166.

⁶⁴ <https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/ancient-sculpture-and-works-of-art-part-i/a-south-arabian-alabaster-stele-qataban-3rd> 13-7-2023.

kohl pencil (Fig 15).⁶⁵ However, a group of kohl pencils (Fig 16) were found. In the site of Al- Hasma, kohl pencils were found in the shape of a long bronze rod, mostly in women's tombs, indicating the presence of kohl containers in ancient Yemen.⁶⁶

Kohl was made of antimony stone hammered until it turned into powder and used as kohl. Al-Hamdani mentioned that antimony kohl was known in ancient Yemen.⁶⁷ People also knew malachite, or green malachite, was widespread in all civilizations of the ancient Near East⁶⁸ as it was used as a kohl material. Yemeni people still use it for eye cosmetics and believe that it is a therapeutic material that helps prevent allergies and other conditions. They might use lazuli, which was used as a dye after grinding for makeup purposes in ancient times, as well as lead.⁶⁹ Mills and mortars found in various parts of Yemen might have been used to grind these materials.

The research paper highlighted an important civilization topic in ancient Yemen, i.e., "the eye in ancient Yemeni inscriptions and monuments". It concluded several findings as follows:

- The ancient South Arabian inscriptions illustrated the basic function of the eye, namely vision and sight, using many words, " **yn, r'y, nṣr**" which are used in standard Arabic.
- Inscriptions used the word " **nṣr**" to express a function in ancient Yemen, which was based on observation, guarding, and sharp sight.
- Ancient Yemenis knew and treated eye diseases without mentioning how to medicate them, perhaps because they thought they were secrets of medicine.
- The eye was associated with deep-rooted beliefs in ancient South Arabian thought, as people made amulets and spells to protect themselves from the evil eye and envy, as a part of the ancient Yemeni culture transmitted by generations.
- The ancient Yemeni artist's creativity and gradual creation of the sculpture of eyes were demonstrated from simple geometric lines until reaching the carving of eyes in detail.

⁶⁵ Abdul Basit, M., *Ornaments and Cosmetics in the Northwest of the Arabian Peninsula in the first millennium BC*, Saudi Society for Archaeological Studies, Riyadh, 2021, pp. 174- 175, 227.

⁶⁶ Hussein, S., *Burial Methods and Funeral Furniture in Ancient Yemen, Hasma-Shakra Site, An Applied Study*, Master's Thesis (Unpublished), Faculty of Arts, University of Aden, 2008, p. 114.

⁶⁷ Al-Jawish, A., *Mines and Minerals in Ancient Yemen from the 2nd century BC to the 6th G century*, PhD Dissertation (Unpublished), Higher Institute of the Civilizations of the Old Near East, University of Zagazig, 2021, p. 106.

⁶⁸ Legrain, L., "archaeological notes", p. 335.

⁶⁹ Al-Jawish, A., *Mines and Minerals in Ancient Yemen*, pp. 129- 130, 185.

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- The eyes were carved carefully, believing they defined the facial features. The ancient Yemeni excelled in sculpting eyes despite being the most difficult parts of man's body in sculpture for their small size.
- Ancient Yemenis were familiar with the anatomy of the eye. They knew the eye consists of several parts, such as eyelids, eyebrows, sclera, iris, and pupils. Furthermore, they showed these parts or some on human statues and heads.
- The ancient Yemeni artist excelled in inlaying the eyes with different materials to promote the beauty of the face. He used kohl to make the eyes vibrant.

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Figures

Fig 1



<http://dasi.cnr.it/>

Fig 2

Fig 3



Antonini, S., *La statuaria sudarabica in pietra*,
fig. C 41.

Phillips, W., *Qataban and Sheba*, fig.
41.

Fig 4

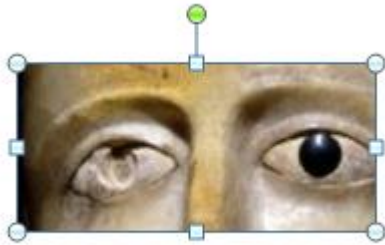
Fig 5



<https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot->

Antonioni, S., "Pictures: Gods, Humans and Animals, 156.

Fig 6



<http://dasi.cnr.it/>

Fig 7



‘Aqīl, A., and Antonini, S., Bronzi sudarabici di periodo di periodo preislamico, Fig. I.A.s.1.1, 151.

Fig 8



<http://dasi.cnr.it/>

Fig 9



Katalogteil Im land der Konigen Von Saba, p. 314.

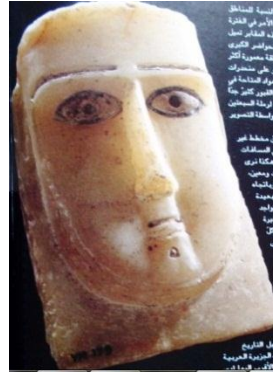
Fig 10



<http://dasi.cnr.it/> ‘Schittecatte, J., "The Arabian Iron Age", fig. 6 a, d, p.197.

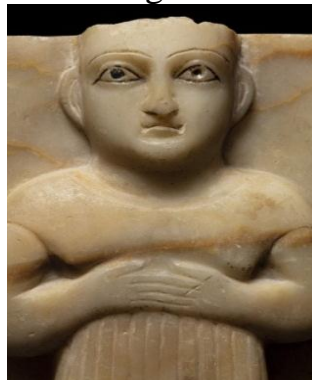


Katalogteil Im land der, 22 M, 297.



de Maigret, , "Funeral Rites", p. 166

Fig 13



<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2021/ancient-sculpture-and-works-of-art-part-i/a-south-arabian-alabaster-stele-qataban-3rd>

Fig 14



Abdul Basit, M., Ornaments and Cosmetics,
Fig. 152, 376.

Fig 15



Abdul Basit, M., Ornaments and Cosmetics,
Fig. 196, 388.

Fig. 16



Husseini, S., Burial Methods and
Funeral Furniture, Fig. 85, 229.