



Seminar for Arabian Studies 2016 Paper Abstracts

Session 7: Late Pre-Islamic Arabia. Chair: Michael Macdonald

The Cult of the god Wadd in pre-Islamic Arabia

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Wadd stands out among the gods of pre-Islamic Arabia because of the widespread attestation of his cult in epigraphic sources. Although he was mainly worshipped in the South Arabian kingdoms of Ma'īn and Awsān, temples and invocations of the god are documented in the rest of southern Arabia, in the Minaean commercial settlements in central and northern Arabia, and even in eastern Arabia. The paper intends to provide an overall and up-to-date study of the cult of the god; one which takes into account all the relevant aspects: his name and epithets, his position in the *panthea*, the geographic diffusion of his cult, the location and architecture of his temples and the references of their personnel, the rituals performed in his honour and the purposes of his invocations, the iconography of his representation and of his symbol. A better understanding of the figure and the role of this major god of pre-Islamic Arabia is now possible thanks to the archaeological and epigraphic material published in recent years. These enable me to contribute in a comparative perspective to the history of the ancient Near Eastern religions.

Keywords: Wadd; history of religions; pre-Islamic Arabia; epigraphy; water

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Chronology and Development of Monumental Tombs of the late pre-Islamic period at Mleiha (UAE).

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The first monumental tombs of the late pre-Islamic periods ((PIR-A and PIR-B, about third to the first century BC) at Mleiha in the Oman peninsula were excavated in the 1980s. The reconstructions that were proposed were heavily influenced by the concept of early Nabataean tombs. Also influential was a development from massive 'block shaped' square monuments on top of underground graves towards 'room-shaped' superstructures on top of complex underground burial chambers destined for multiple use. Recent excavations provide new data that indicate a different reconstruction of the superstructures and their decorative elements. The discovery of a dated inscription in one of the tombs profoundly changes the chronology.

Outline of the approach: a. survey of the current reconstructions and chronology; b. survey of new data from excavations (architectural elements and inscription); c. proposal new chronology and reconstruction of the monumental tombs. The topic is significant as it provides a new addition to the chronology and role of Mleiha in southeast Arabia and emphasizes the regional continuity in funerary architecture.

Keywords: Mleiha; PIR; funerary architecture; UAE; Abiel; Oman

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Foreign Women in the Kingdom of Maʿīn: A Sidelight on Ancient South Arabian

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This paper looks at patterns of intermarriage among Minaean men c.300–200 BC, based on a series of inscriptions from the Minaean capital of Qarnā. It argues that the distribution of the places of origin of foreign wives corresponds to the overland trade routes used by Minaean merchants during the second half of the first millennium BC and that much of this trade centred on the town of Gaza and involved the Minaean tribe of Gabʿān. An analysis of the places of origin of the foreign wives will be compared with what we know about Minaean long-distance trade from other epigraphic and archaeological evidence. The tribal and clan affiliations of the Minaean men will also be examined in order to shed light on which Minaean tribes were involved in trade with which regions. This paper will contribute to our knowledge of long-distance commerce and social interactions during the Hellenistic period, from a South Arabian perspective.

Keywords: Maʿīn; Qarnā; commerce; intermarriage; Gaza

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The Arabic Text in 'Ain Avdat': its category and function

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This paper aims to study the Arabic text in the Ain Avdat inscription in detail. The inscription was first published in Negev (1986). This paper will follow an interdisciplinary approach that uses Literary Criticism analytical tools and explores the functionality of the text rather than just revealing its literary type. This study will not limit itself to the previous discussion on the agreement of those lines with the metres of Classical Arabic poetry, summarized in Lacerenza (2000), but will also address the functionality of the Arabic text insertion regardless of its literary category. The study, therefore will to explain the function and the necessity of the Arabic text. This approach is based on exposing the text to external structures and their contextual interaction with the text that might have additional aesthetic, semantic and ideological interpretations. It will also address the following two questions: whether integrating the Arabic text contributed to current textual structure, and what is the functional value achieved by the Arabic text? This initial literary question will deal with the 'intertextuality' of the particular assumed function of the Arabic text in the inscription and its associated pragmatic suggestions.

Keywords: Ain Avdat; poetry metres; pragmatic role

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A new Safaitic Poetic Text from northern Jordan

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In the spring of 2015, the OCIANA project at Oxford, with the participation of the Leiden Centre for the Study of Ancient Arabia, led an epigraphic survey of several sites in north-eastern Jordan. This resulted in the discovery of approximately ten thousand new Safaitic texts. Among these, a single poetic text, from the region of Marabb al-Shurafat (Marabb al-Shurafā'), was identified, increasing the corpus of Old Arabic literary texts to three. While elements from a poetic register are occasionally encountered in other Safaitic inscriptions, only a single poetic text in this script, a mixed Safaito-Hismaic script, in fact, is known to have been dated: KRS 2453 (Al-Jallad 2015).

Unlike the aforementioned inscription, which recounts part of the Baal Cycle, and the En Avdat inscription, which seems to be a Nabataean liturgy, the text under consideration here does not seem

to be religious in nature. Rather, it can be best characterized as a battle chant, praising death in the battlefield. Like the previous two examples, however, it consists of a rhyming group of three lines, and shares with the En Avdat inscription the repetition of what appears to be a presentative particle *hn'* in second position. This talk will present the decipherment of the inscription, a discussion of the relevant linguistic facts, and will conclude with some remarks on pre-Islamic Arabic poetry in light of the documentary evidence.

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The Expression 'h-rhwy' in Thamudic B Inscriptions from north-western Arabia

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Thamudic B is a modern name applied to a category of Ancient North Arabian inscriptions found in north-western Arabia, mainly in the area between Taymā' and Madā'in Šāliḥ as well as around the Jabal Mismā to the west of Ḥā'il. Among those texts, that mostly consist of invocations to ancient Arabian deities or rock art 'signatures', the expression 'h-rhwy' has long ago been noted as occurring over a dozen times. Its sense remained a mystery though it was discussed by scholars until recently. They hesitated to interpret it as the author's *nisbah* (gentilic adjective) or as an adjective referring to the horse and camel drawings carved beside the graffiti. The present contribution aims to re-examine this issue on the basis of unpublished inscriptions recently recorded in Saudi Arabia and a rereading of those already known. It provides an updated list of texts and argues in favour of the existence of a population named Rhw in northern Arabia. This topic appears quite significant in view of the small number of identified lineage groups or 'tribes' from this area in antiquity.

Keywords: Ancient North Arabian; Thamudic; northern Arabia; tribe; epigraphy

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