

SOME EARLY ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS FROM AL-ḤANĀKIYYA, SAUDI ARABIA*

FRED M. DONNER, *University of Chicago*

DURING the spring of 1974, Dr. Michael Willis had occasion to visit a rock outcropping at al-Ḥanākiyya, Saudi Arabia, located about 110 km east-northeast of Medina. The rock outcropping is in the form of a large red sandstone butte standing isolated in the midst of otherwise rather flat terrain just to the left of the main highway through al-Ḥanākiyya as one travels towards the Najd. A second, smaller hill of similar appearance is located nearby. The steep rock faces of the larger butte contain numerous pre-Islamic inscriptions which appear to be known to those working on such materials but have not, to the best of my knowledge, found their way to publication.¹

In addition to the pre-Islamic inscriptions, however, Dr. Willis noticed a number of inscriptions of large graffiti in Arabic script, which he photographed as well as time and conditions permitted. These photographs he very kindly made available to me for study and publication, and they form the basis of the present article.

None of the inscriptions treated here is dated, but there are two reasons to assign them dates early in the Islamic era. The first is their color, which reflects the degree to which the naked stone has oxidized under atmospheric conditions. When freshly broken or incised, this stone is of a light pinkish-brown color, but over many centuries a broken surface weathers to a darker red-brown, the color seen on most exposed rocks in this outcropping. The coloration of a graffito etched into the rock surface can thus provide a very rough gauge of the age of the inscription; recent ones will show very pale against the dark rock on which they are inscribed, whereas the oldest will be weathered to the same dark color as the writing surface.² The majority of the

* A list of abbreviations used in the notes and text is found at the end of the article.

¹ Parts of some of these pre-Islamic inscriptions are visible in the photographs described in the next paragraph, and reproduced here. The Department of Antiquities and Museums of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia appears to be aware of the existence of inscriptions, and perhaps ruins, at al-Ḥanākiyya. Their photographic volume, *An Introduction to Saudi Arabian Antiquities* (Riyadh, 1395/1975) includes al-Ḥanākiyya on the "Geographical Map of Archaeological Sites of the Northwestern Region"

[Fred M. Donner is Associate Professor of Islamic History.]

[*JNES* 43 no. 3 (1984)]

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0022-2968/84/4303-0002\$1.00.

on p. 95, where it is marked with a symbol for "antiquities." But the volume contains no further mention of the site, even in the brief text devoted to the antiquities of this region (pp. 38-39), and no photographs of any inscriptions or monuments from al-Ḥanākiyya. Similarly, I have been unable to locate any reference to the site or its inscriptions in such surveys as that of M. L. Ingraham, T. D. Johnson, B. Rihani, and I. Shatla, "Saudi Arabian Comprehensive Survey Program: c. Preliminary Report on a Reconnaissance Survey of the Northwestern Province," *Atlāl* 5 (1401/1981): 59-84. Evidently that survey did not cover this particular corner of the Northwestern Province; nor did the earlier surveys of Philby-Ryckmans-Lippens (see *EPRL*), etc. Grohmann's summary of epigraphic discoveries in Arabia up to about 1960, which forms the introduction to *EPRL* (pp. x-xix), contains no mention of al-Ḥanākiyya, nor does his *AP* (published 1971).

² A similar process of weathering of basalt is described in Willard G. Oxtoby, *Some Inscriptions of*

inscriptions under consideration here are weathered to quite a dark tone; moreover, they are virtually the same shade as nearby pre-Islamic inscriptions on the same rock surfaces, which implies that they must be nearly as old. We might note, for example, the photograph of inscription W 2 (fig. 2), with the pre-Islamic inscription visible to the left (color relationships are clearer in the original color photograph). By the same process, we can deduce that W 5 (fig. 5) is much darker in color than a relatively recent mark (𐤀𐤃𐤃) made at the center of the surface.

The second, and more compelling, reason for assigning most of these inscriptions an early date relates to paleography. The form of a number of the letters used in them is archaic and conforms most closely to letter forms used during the first two centuries A.H. (seventh–eighth centuries C.E.). The paleographic aspects of each inscription will be examined separately and in detail below, but a few general remarks anticipating those conclusions can be made here. The majority of the inscriptions include one or more of the following noteworthy characteristics: final *nūn* curved only slightly to the left; *rāʾ* tightly curved on or near the base line rather than dropping below it; final *mīm* with a short, horizontal tail; medial and final *ʿayn* with an open top; *hāʾ* as a diagonal stroke crossing the base line; and the open form of final *tāʾ*, with no barb or vertical stroke at its end. Moreover, a very early style of diacritical dotting is used in some cases. While the appearance of one or another of these forms in isolation is not sufficient to assign an early date to an inscription, the fact that these forms are used repeatedly and in association with one another, combined with other general characteristics of the inscriptions, permits one to confirm an early date for most of them with great confidence.³

In content, the inscriptions studied here closely resemble other known Arabic inscriptions from western Arabia. Most are brief prayers for forgiveness or mercy, or religious invocations or confessions; one (W 5) is a set of religious maxims. Taken as a group, and in the light of other early Arabic inscriptions, they help us glimpse the religious and ethical concepts of their time. They also, of course, provide linguists with information on the development of the Arabic language and the Arabic script, information that is sometimes highly unusual (e.g., the reversed Arabic writing of W 7).

I would like to emphasize the fact that all the readings proposed here are tentative because all were made from photographs which, however clear, can be quite deceptive. In a number of cases, moreover, poor lighting conditions and the rough surface of the stone make many details of the inscriptions unclear. When other photographs become available, or—better yet—an opportunity to study the inscriptions on site arises, it will

the Safaitic Bedouin (New Haven, 1968), pp. 2–3: “If a basalt stone is broken, the fresh surface is gray; but on prolonged exposure to the air, the stone, through the chemical action of precipitation and atmospheric gases with its iron and manganese constituents, develops a patina which turns in the course of time to a dull red-orange and then to a brownish or purplish black. . . .”

³ I have tried to bear in mind the warnings expressed by Grohmann in *EPRL*, p. xxi: “. . . dating according to seemingly typical forms of letters—

which *look* old but in fact occur throughout nearly the whole period in which the old monumental angular style was used, e.g., open *ʿAin* or triangular *Mīm* or *Hā*—might be considered purely haphazard. Well known examples . . . show the danger of any such attempt. However, an obvious relationship between the style of writing, together with certain isolated forms on the one hand, and the style or writing and forms in certain dated parallels on the other, occasionally allow these texts to be dated.”

doubtless be possible to clarify some of the problems I have encountered in rendering the texts. One of the photographs provided was of an inscription that was apparently so weathered, or shallow in its engraving, that little more than an occasional word could be made out, although the inscription itself was relatively long (perhaps eight lines?). This inscription has not been included in the present collection; from its script, it appears to be somewhat more recent than the others considered here.

Note on the Figures

All the original photographs taken by Dr. Willis were 35 mm color transparencies. From these slides were made a set of ten 8" × 10" prints, most in color, and it was from these prints, in the main, that I worked, although for a time I consulted the original slides to attempt to resolve difficulties in inscription W 5. The relationship of the prints to the plates published here and to the inscriptions is as follows:

Print Number	Figure Number	Inscription Number
1 (black and white)	1	W 1
2 (color)	2	W 2
3 (black and white, same as 2)	—	W 2
4 (color)	3	W 3
5 (color)	4	W 4
6 (color—light photo)	5	W 5
7 (color—dark photo)	—	W 5
8 (color)	6	W 6–W 12
9 (color)	7	W 13–W 14
10 (color)	—	W 15 (omitted)

Prints number 2 and 3 were identical (made from the same slide original), except that number 2 was in color, number 3 in black and white, and not as clear as number 2. Print number 7, like number 6, showed inscription W 5, but in much poorer light, and is too dark to merit publication here, although ironically it turned out that by candling it against a bright light some of the inscription could be recovered from it more easily than from print 6. As noted above, the inscription W 15 was too indistinct in the photograph to warrant publication here.

W 1 (fig. 1)

Rock Graffito, First–Second Century A.H.

Confession

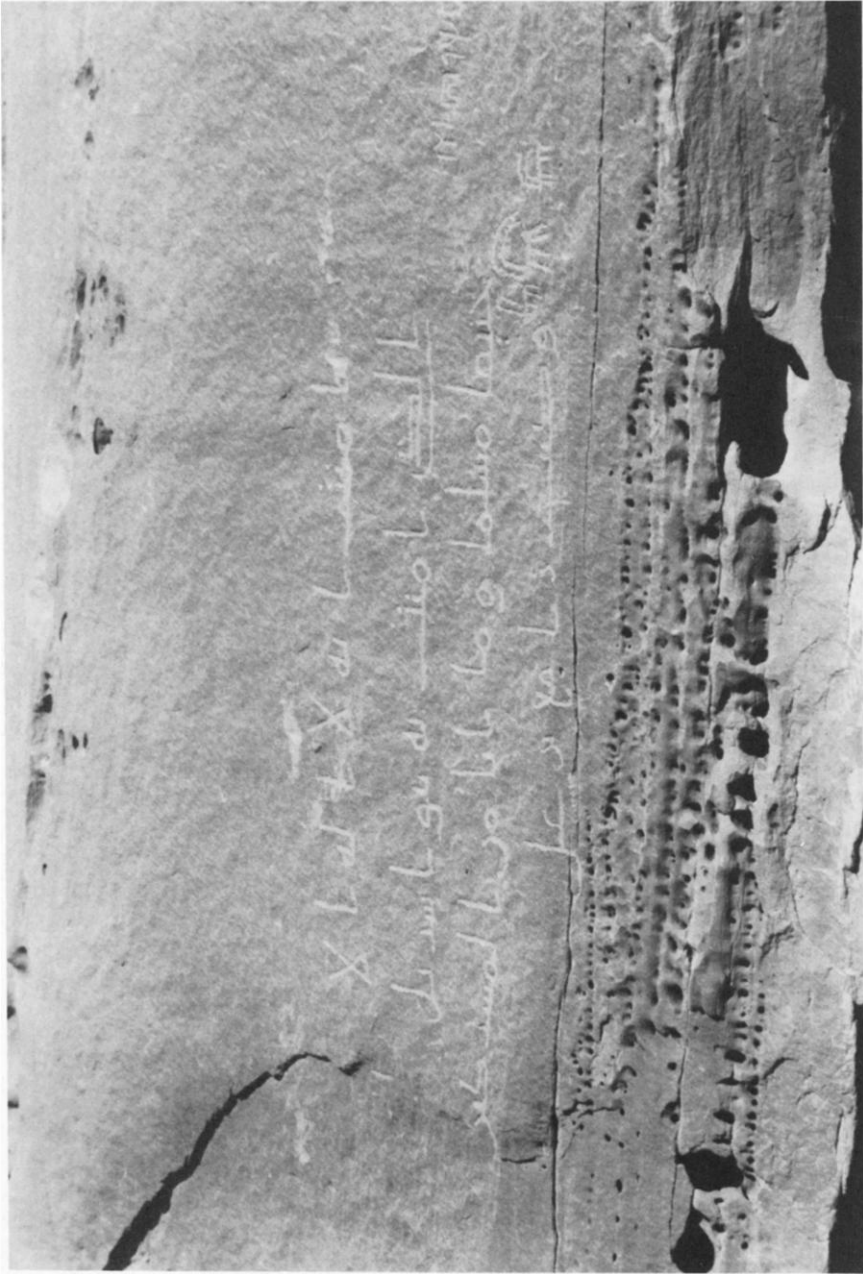


FIG. 1—Al-Hanakiyya inscription W 1

لا اله الا
 الذي امننت به بنو اسرئيل
 حنيفا مسلما وما انا من المشركين
 وكتبه رافع بن علي

امننت انه لا اله الا
 الذي امننت به بنو اسرئيل
 حنيفا مسلما وما انا من المشركين
 وكتبه رافع بن علي

1. I believe that there is no god except
2. Him in whom the children of Israel believed,
3. (believing as) a Muslim *ḥanīf*; nor am I among the polytheists.
4. And Rāfi^c bin ʿAlī wrote (it).

1–2. A verbatim quote of part of Qurʾān 10:90.

3. A close paraphrase of Qurʾān 3:67, *wa lākin kāna ḥanīfan musliman wa mā kāna min al-mushrikīna*, “but he (Abraham) was a Muslim *ḥanīf*, and not among the polytheists.”

4. The inscription has *عل* for *علي*; for another instance of this orthography, see W 2, line 2.

Confessions of this kind are encountered fairly frequently in early Arabic inscriptions. See, for example, *EPRL*, nos. Z 31, 33, 34, 40, 43, 46, 47, 53, 109–112, etc., mostly dated by Grohmann to the first–third centuries A.H.

Paleographically, the inscription shows many archaic features. These include the open-ended form of final *bā*^ʔ (line 4) and *tā*^ʔ (lines 1 and 2), without any trace of a barb or vertical stroke to close the letter; the swept-back form of final *yā*^ʔ (line 2); the large, angular *dāl* (line 2); the small, curved *rā*^ʔ (lines 2, 3, 4); the semi-circular form of *fā*^ʔ (lines 3, 4); and the open final *ʿayn* with a tail turning sharply to the right in a flattened hook (line 4). For most of these forms, the closest specific parallels are found in the graffito from Ḥafnat al-Ubayyid in Iraq, dated 64/684.⁴ The final *nūn* (lines 3

⁴ ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Ṣandūq, “Ḥajar Ḥafnat al-Ubayyid,” *Sumer* 11 (1955): 214 and plate facing p. 216 (Arabic).

and 4) may suggest a slightly later date, as it is somewhat more curved and closed than those in the Ḥafnat al-Ubayyid inscription.

Another interesting feature is the presence of diacritical dots, found over *nūn* and *tā*[◌] in lines 1 and 2 and over *nūn* and under *yā*[◌] in line 3. The arrangement of dots—two dots placed vertically directly under the vertical stroke of *yā*[◌], and over the vertical stroke of final *tā*[◌]—seems closely paralleled by the most ancient dotted inscription known, the dam inscription of A.H. 58/677–78 C.E. near al-Ṭāʿif.⁵ The next dated examples of dotted stone inscriptions following the dam inscription come only from the later third century A.H. and clearly betray their late date in their arrangement of dots.⁶ The first of them, dated 270/883, has the two dots of *yā*[◌] arranged horizontally, not vertically as in W 1 and the dam inscription of A.H. 58.⁷ The second, dated 272/886, displays the horizontal placement of dots both for *yā*[◌] and for final *tā*[◌].⁸ The third, dated 283/896, shows similar features.⁹ Moreover, all three of these later inscriptions have the forked or barbed *alif*, *lām*, *hā*[◌], *dāl*, etc., again clearly revealing their later date; W 1, on the other hand, has, as noted, uniformly archaic letter forms. Both from the letter forms and from the manner of dotting, then, it seems clear that we are dealing with an inscription of very early date; unfortunately, the absence of any dated and dotted inscriptions from the long span of time between the al-Ṭāʿif dam inscription and the third century inscriptions just described prevents us from narrowing down further the possible chronological range of W 1 on the basis of the paleography of stone inscriptions alone. If we broaden our view to consider early Arabic writing in other media, however, we find some further hints about the possible date of our inscription. The same arrangement of dots used in W 1 is found in the earliest dotted Islamic coins, dating to the latter years of the first century A.H.¹⁰ This method of dotting also is found in the oldest pointed papyrus, dated A.H. 22,¹¹ and conforms to the system of pointing used in some old Qurʾān manuscripts.¹² All considered, then, it seems very probable that W 1 was written during the first century or first half of the second century A.H.

W 2 (fig. 2)

Rock Graffito, First–Second Century A.H.

Prayer for Forgiveness

⁵ First published by George Miles, "Early Islamic Inscriptions near Ṭāʿif in the Ḥijāz," *JNES* 7 (1948): 236–42; republished in *EPRL*, no. Z 68. On this style of dotting, see *EPRL*, pp. 57–58.

⁶ Grohmann, *AP*, p. 41, mentions inscription no. 155 in the collection of R. Lepsius, *Denkmaeler aus Aegypten und Aethiopen*, vol. 11, pt. 6 (Berlin, n.d. [ca. 1846]), fig. 20, as being from the first or second century A.H. It has *yā*[◌] with two dots side by side, as well as a dotted *hā*[◌]. However, other features of this inscription suggest that it may be later than Grohmann proposes, notably the form of medial *hā*[◌] in line 2 (... *هـ*), not ... *هـ*), the elongated curve of final *nūn*, the closed medial *ayn*, and the drooping

tail of final *mīm* in line 1.

⁷ *SF*, vol. 3, no. 1168 (pl. 72).

⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, no. 1219 (pl. 3).

⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, no. 1359 (pl. 25).

¹⁰ *CMC*, vol. 2, p. 86, nos. 192, 193, and 194 (gold dinars, A.H. 82, 83, 84; no mint); p. 145, no. 366 (silver dirhem, A.H. 90, Damascus).

¹¹ The papyrus in question, PERF, no. 558 in the Archduke Rainer Collection in Vienna, was published by Grohmann in "Aperçu de papyrologie arabe," *Études de papyrologie* 1 (1932): 41f. and pl. 9. Cf. *EPRL*, pp. 57–58.

¹² See Grohmann, "The Problem of Dating Early Qurʾāns," *Der Islam* 33 (1958): 213–31.



FIG. 2—Al-Hanakiyya inscription W 2

اللهم اغفر لعاصم
بن علي الثعلبي ثم العوا (لي)
رب العالمين امين

اللهم اغفر لعاصم
بن علي الثعلبي ثم العوا (لي)
رب العالمين امين

1. O God, forgive ʿĀṣim
2. ibn ʿAl<ī> al-Thaʿlabī then al-ʿUwā<lī>.
3. Lord of the worlds, Amen.

1–2. The name is clearly ʿĀṣim ibn ʿAlī, even though the final *yā* in ʿAlī has been omitted, for we have in W 3 another inscription with the same name in which ʿAlī is written with the final *yā*. The name has a double *nisba*, the second separated from the first by the word *thumma* (“then”) and referring to a particular clan or lineage within the larger tribal group designated by the first *nisba*. Such double *nisbas* are encountered fairly frequently in the literary sources for the early Islamic period.¹³ Since the inscription is written without diacritical points, the first *nisba* could be read either as al-Thaʿlabī or as al-Taghlibī, both of which are fairly common tribal names.¹⁴ The latter possibility can be excluded for several reasons. First, the tribe of Taghlib historically occupied areas far from the location of the inscription in the early Islamic centuries, mainly along or north of the Euphrates in northern Syria and Iraq,¹⁵ whereas one of the important tribes of the region around Medina at that time was Thaʿlaba ibn Saʿd, part of the tribe of Dhubyān in the Ghatafān confederation.¹⁶ This initial conclusion in favor of Thaʿlaba as the referent for the first *nisba* is confirmed when we

¹³ See, for example, Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), p. 257: “Zuhra ibn Hawīyya ibn ʿAbdullāh ibn Qatāda al-Tamīmī *thumma* al-Saʿdī,” i.e., of the clan of Saʿd ibn Malik of Tamīm; *Tab.* i/2350: “ʿAbdullāh ibn Sinān ibn Jarīr al-Asadī *thumma* al-Ṣaydāwī,” i.e., of the clan of al-Ṣaydāwī ibn ʿAmr of Asad.

¹⁴ Many other possible readings could be formu-

lated in theory, given the basic letter-forms provided, but only these two correspond to any known tribal names. Cf. *Mushtabih*, p. 73.

¹⁵ See H. Kindermann, “Taghlib,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (first edition).

¹⁶ On Thaʿlaba ibn Saʿd ibn Dhubyān, see IK/Caskel, index s.v. and vol. 2, p. 13. For their location, see J. W. Fück, “Ghatafān,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (new edition).

scrutinize closely the second *nisba*. It is, unfortunately, incomplete as written; the photograph shows no trace of any additional letters either at the end of line 2 or the beginning of line 3, and although the identical name, with *nisbas*, appears in W 3 in a somewhat fuller form, the final letters in the second *nisba* in W 3 appear to be garbled and offer us little help in reading. The most plausible reconstruction of the second *nisba* is “al-^ʿUwālī,” referring to the clan of ^ʿUwāl ibn al-Ḥārith, part of the tribe of Tha^ʿlaba ibn Sa^ʿd.¹⁷ No other possible solution of the incomplete second *nisba* yields a satisfactory reading.

Of paleographic interest are the open medial ^ʿ*ayn* (lines 2 and 3); the final *nūn* extending nearly straight down with a slight bend to the left at the end (line 3), or simply arcing gently to the left from the base line (line 2); the open-ended form of final *bā*^ʾ (line 3); and the form of final *yā*^ʾ, sharply swept back parallel to the base line (line 2). All these features persist through the first and second centuries A.H., and virtually assure a date for the inscription within this time frame.

Other paleographic features assist us in narrowing the possible date of W 2. The *hā*^ʾ in the form of a large triangle or loop drawn above the base line and flattened on the left side, in which a diagonal stroke has been added (line 1), is similar to some first-century inscriptions, notably a milestone from Palestine dating to the reign of ^ʿAbd al-Malik (A.H. 65–86/685–705 C.E.)¹⁸ and an inscription dating from 72/691 in the Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem.¹⁹ Other letter forms, however, warn us against assigning to W 2 too early a date. One is the form of *mīm*, which appears as a small triangle (line 1) or as a rounded arc (lines 2, 3) above an essentially flat base line. While this form is first attested in another milestone from ^ʿAbd al-Malik’s reign,²⁰ it is lacking in other first-century inscriptions and appears more prominently in second-century inscriptions, such as those from Qasr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī (110/728)²¹ and the mosque of al-Baṣra (128/745–46).²² The barb drooping to the left from the peak of *lām* in line 1 may be nothing more than the result of an unintentional slip of the engraving tool. It is not repeated in the other *lāms* of this inscription, nor in those of W 3, which appears to have been inscribed by the same hand.

All considered, a date in the late first century or second century A.H. seems most plausible for this graffito.

W 3 (fig. 3)

Rock Graffito, First–Second Century A.H.

Prayer for Forgiveness

¹⁷ Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Durayd, *Al-Ishṭiqāq*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1854), p. 174; IK/Caskel, vol. 2, p. 580, s.v. “^ʿUwāl ibn al-Ḥārīṭ.”

¹⁸ *MCI*A, vol. 2.1, no. 2 (pp. 18–19 and 21).

¹⁹ Text in *MCI*A, vol. 2.2, no. 215 (pp. 228–46); drawing, see Charles de Vogüé, *Le Temple de Jérusalem*

(Paris, 1864), pl. 13.

²⁰ *MCI*A, vol. 2.1, no. 1 (pp. 17–18 and p. 21).

²¹ *RAO*, vol. 3, pp. 285–91 and plate VII A; cf. *RCEA* I, no. 28.

²² Jean Sauvaget, “Les Inscriptions arabes de la mosquée de Bosra,” *Syria* 22 (1941): 53–65, no. 2.



FIG. 3—Al-Hanakiyya inscription W 3

اللَّهُمَّ اغْفِرْ لِعَاصِمِ
 بِنِ عَالِي بْنِ عَاصِمِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ بْنِ الْعُو
 دِ الْيَافَانَةِ بِتَمْدَارِ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَ
 أَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا

اللهم اغفر لعاصم

بن علي بن عاصم الشكعلي ثم العو
 دي (؟) فانه يشهد ان الله حق و
 ان الساعة لا ريب فيها

1. O God, forgive ʿĀṣim
2. ibn ʿAlī ibn ʿĀṣim al-⟨Tha⟩ʿlabī then al-ʿUw-
3. ⟨ā⟩lī; he bears witness that God is truth and
4. that there is no doubt concerning the hour (of judgment).

1–3. The name, clearly referring to the same person as W 2, is here given in more complete form. The writer has inadvertently omitted the vertical stroke for the first letter after the article in al-Thaʿlabī (cf. W 2). On the other hand, he has included here the final *yā* in ʿAlī, omitted in W 2 (line 2) and also, apparently, in the different name in W 1, line 4. The second *nisba* seems at first glance to be given in more complete form here than in W 2, but reading the first group of letters on line 3 proves anything but straightforward. The initial vertical stroke may be a *lām*, or it may be an extension of the *alif* at the beginning of line 4. I favor the latter interpretation in view of the thinness with which it is engraved, which seems to conform more to the other characters in line 4, evidently written with a freshly-sharpened tool; the writing at the beginning of line 3, on the contrary, generally has the coarse character of work done with a dull tool.

3–4. The text is a close paraphrase of Qurʾān 18:21 and 45:26.

Paleographically, W 3 naturally resembles W 2, as it was doubtless written by the same person; but as it is longer than W 2, it provides a few additional letter-forms of paleographic interest. We note the final *qāf* in line 3, with its broken or recurved tail extending downward. Such recurved tails on *qāf* are found in some—but not all—early inscriptions, such as one of the first-century milestones from Palestine.²³ The

²³ *MCI*, vol. 2.1, nos. 1–4 (pp. 17–21); no. 1 has the recurved *qāf*, the remainder lack the recurve.

same recurved tail is also found in final *qāfs* in the legends of some early Islamic coins, including a copper coin minted in Damascus around 650 C.E., another minted there by ʿAbd al-Malik (65–86/685–705), and two silver dirhams from the 70s/690s.²⁴ Grohmann goes so far as to term this the “old form” of *qāf*, and traces it up to the end of the second century A.H.²⁵ We may note, however, that similar broken *qāfs* can be found at least as late as A.H. 304 in a road inscription of ʿAlī ibn ʿIsā of that date (line 6).²⁶ We may also call attention to the final *dāl* in line 3 of W 3, virtually identical in form to that of the dam inscription of A.H. 58 near al-Ṭāʿif, lines 2 and 4. Grohmann has noted the unusual character of this letter, close to the cursive form.²⁷

W 3 is provided with occasional diacritical dots in lines 3 and 4; over *fā* in both lines, over *nūn* in line 3, under *yā* in lines 3 and 4, under *bā* in line 4, and over *shīn* in line 3. The two dots under *yā* are arranged vertically, as in early inscriptions (see W 1). The dot under final *bā*, however, is not placed under the vertical stroke, but rather under the body of the letter. *Shīn* has three dots, one over each tooth, an arrangement found only in documents from the first and second centuries A.H.; it occurs in the earliest dated Arabic papyrus extant, no. 558 in the Rainer collection from A.H. 22/643 C.E., where the *shīn* in *shāh* at the end of line 6 is dotted in this way.²⁸ Dotted *shīn* with a horizontal row of points also occurs on some coins from the late first and early second centuries A.H.²⁹ No dated and dotted inscriptions from the first or second century A.H. provide us with a *shīn* to serve as a basis for comparison within this medium, but the first dotted inscriptions having a *shīn*, the grave stela of 270/883,³⁰ shows the three dots arranged in the triangular way found in later inscriptions.

Considering all factors of dotting, letter forms, and the general style of the inscription, it can be dated on paleographic grounds to the first or second century A.H., like its companion W 2, the dating of which appears to be confirmed by the further paleographic evidence provided in W 3.

W 4 (fig. 4)

Rock Graffito, First–Third Century A.H.

Prayer for Forgiveness

²⁴ *CMC*, vol. 2, p. 6 (no. 12); p. 37 (British Museum no. 121); p. 83 (Königsberg no. 1); p. 143 (British Museum no. 352).

²⁵ *EPRL*, p. 26.

²⁶ George C. Miles, “ʿAlī b. ʿIsā’s Pilgrim Road: an inscription of the year 304 H (916–917 A.D.),” *Bulletin de l’Institut Egyptien* 36 (1953–54): 477–87.

²⁷ *EPRL*, p. 57.

²⁸ Illustrated in A. Grohmann, “Aperçu . . .” (see n. 12 above), pl. 9. There are no dots visible over the *shīn* in *shāh* of line 7; the *shīn* in *shahr* in line 8 is not

clear in the photo but may also have a row of dots.

²⁹ *CMC*, vol. 2, p. 144, no. 359 (silver dirhem, A.H. 85, Damascus); p. 151, no. 397 (silver dirhem, A.H. 121, Damascus). But cf. p. 148, no. 381 (silver dirhem, A.H. 104, Damascus), with only two dots arranged at an angle over *shīn*. Is this due to a break or error in the die? Or does it represent a transition toward the triangular array of points that later predominates?

³⁰ *SF*, vol. 3, no. 1168, pl. 72. *Shīn* occurs in lines 13 and 17.



FIG. 4—Al-Hanakiyya inscription W 4

يعفد الله لآل
 الجلو اريد من
 نفع و لمد لله

يغفر الله لآبي
 الجلو (؟) اريد من
 نافع ويمد بيته (؟)

1. May God forgive Abū
2. al-Ḥulw (?) Arbad ibn
3. Nāfi^c, and succor his house (?).

1. On the imperfect used as optative, see *EPRL*, no. Z 2. The imperative mood, or the perfect used to express the optative, is much more common.

1–2. The name is problematic. “Al-Ḥulw” is rare but attested as a masculine proper name.³¹ However, there appears to be a diacritical dot below the letter τ , and if this is in fact the case, then we must assume that the name is an incomplete rendition of some other, such as Jalwān or Jilwān³² or Jiluwī—but all of these lack the definite article. Jiluwī is, of course, a fairly common name in the Saudi family.³³ For the name Arbad, see *IK/Caskel*, s.v., and *Tab. index*, s.v. J. J. Hess, *Beduinennamen*, p. 25, records the feminine form of the name, Rabdā. My restoration to “al-Ḥulw” is conjectural.

3. The last group of letters in this line is not clear in the photograph. The first letter following the wāw may be a lām, in which case we would read, “and (may God also forgive) . . .” followed by another name or designation of someone. No acceptable reading for a name, etc., seems possible on the basis of the letters given, however, and the reconstruction provided, though tentative, seems as likely as any. The verb *amadda* most commonly means “to assist” or “to reinforce” in a military sense, but it can also mean to aid by giving foodstuffs, etc.; indeed, it is used in this sense several times in the Qur^ʿān (e.g., Q. 52:22, *wa-ʿamdadnā-hum bi-fākihatin wa laḥmin mimmā yash-tahūn*, “and We succored them with fruit and meat that they desired”).

³¹ *IK/Caskel*, s.v. “al-Ḥulw b. Mālik.” But the name is not listed in *Mushtabih* in the index to al-Ṭabarī’s chronicle, etc.

³² *Mushtabih*, p. 169.

³³ Cf. also *Beduinennamen*, p. 16: “Ġlūwī.”

As in W 1–W 3, the letter forms of this inscription suggest a fairly early date, although the brevity of the text requires us to be a bit cautious. A date within the first three centuries A.H., however, seems assured by such features as the open medial ^ʿ*ayn* (line 1), the form of final ^ʿ*ayn* with open top and sharply bent tail (line 3), the large, rectilinear *dāl* (line 2), and the small, tightly-curved *rā*^ʿ (lines 1 and 2).

Once again, we have diacritical dots in the inscription; under *bā*^ʿ in line 1, over *nūn* in line 3, over *fā*^ʿ in lines 1 and 3, and perhaps under *jīm* in line 2. It is not clear from the photograph whether the two tiny, light points under the *yā*^ʿ of line 1 represent diacritical dots, or only extraneous scratches in the stone. If they are intentional dottings, their arrangement side-by-side may suggest a somewhat later date for the inscription, as the earliest dotted inscriptions have the two dots of *yā*^ʿ, etc., arranged vertically (see discussion of W 1, W 3). On the other hand, it is possible that these dots were added to the inscription at a later date—perhaps centuries later—in view of the fact that they are much smaller than other dots in the inscription, appear to be crowded in between the *yā*^ʿ of line 1 and the top of the *alif* at the beginning of line 2, and appear to be of a lighter coloration than the rest of the inscription, if we can trust the tones of the photograph. Only close examination of the original inscription in situ will permit us to decide this question with any certainty.

W 5 (fig. 5)

Rock Graffito, Second Century A.H

Religious Maxim

ا لله عبيد الله ابن العسر
 مال من ينصد الاحمر
 عليه ومه
 من يستمد في النسر بترك ما معه ومه
 لا ورد عن جاه
 وهو س

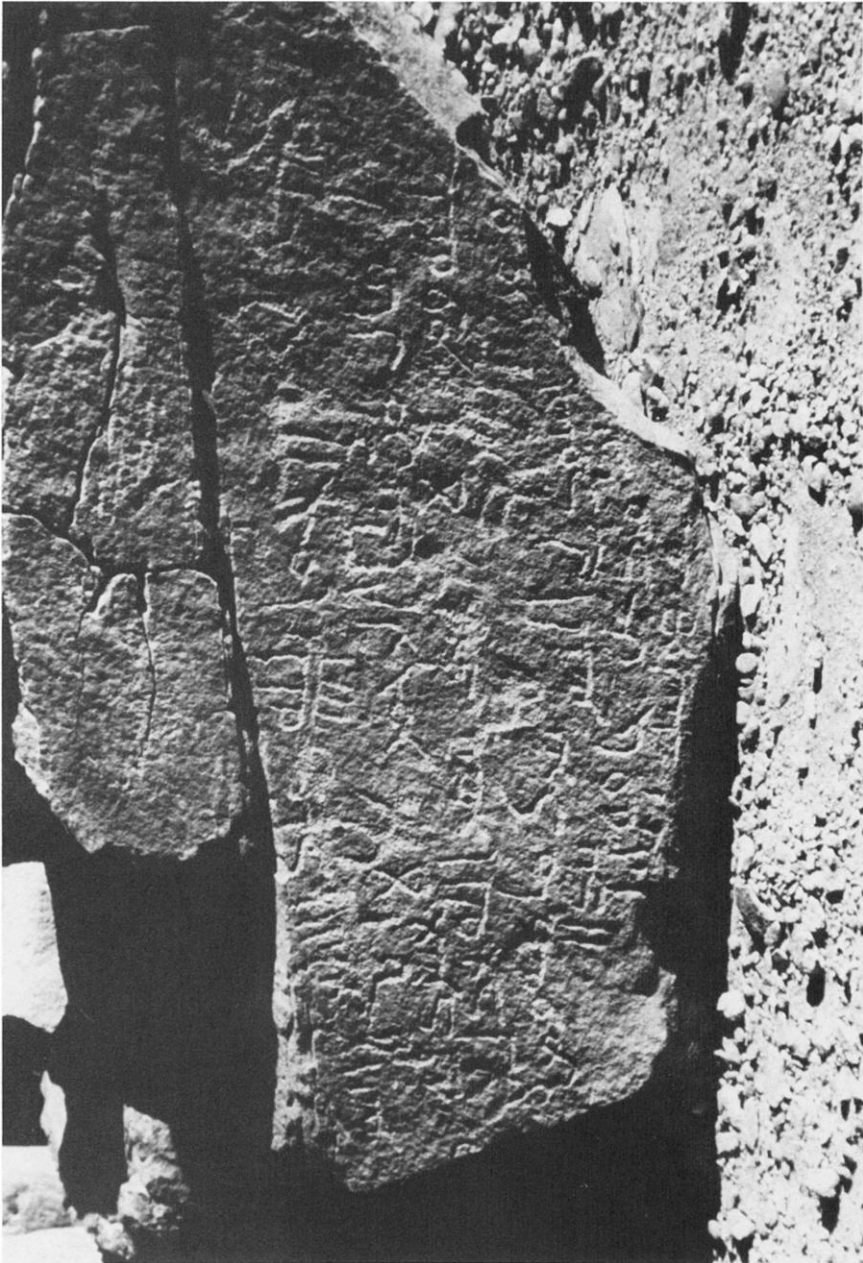


FIG. 5—Al-Hanakiyya inscription W 5

الله عبد الله بن (?)
 قال من ينصر الرحمن لا يجتنن (?) ذلّه (?)
 عليه ومن لا ينصر الله يخذل
 ومن يستمدّ لى التبين (?) يترك ما معه (?) ومن لا
 يذود عن حامه (?) بيد ال [. . . (?)]
 وهو

1. God. ʿAbdullāh ibn (?)
2. He said: whosoever assists the Merciful, his abasement shall not overshadow
3. him; and whosoever does not assist God will meet disappointment;
4. and whosoever seeks assistance (?) for me (?) leaves that which is with him (?);
and whosoever does not
5. protect his defender (?) by the hand of . . . [. . . (?)]
6. and he . . . [. . .]

The inscription is in general difficult to read, being very crudely inscribed on a rough surface that was apparently already partly covered with what appear to be, in part, animal drawings (note especially the form drawn below the word “God” in line 1). Numerous drawings of this kind not reproduced in the facsimile sketch can be found in the photograph to the upper right of the inscription. Other marks, probably tribal *wusūm*, are interspersed amid the words of the inscription, notably above line 2. Poor lighting makes the whole left side of the inscription very difficult to make out in the two photographs, and the lower left corner of the inscription has evidently flaked off. Even in places where the writing seems to be quite legible in the photographs, the letter groups sometimes yield no satisfactory reading.

1. The lower part of the name is obscured by an area of chips and scratches, and the reading should be considered only tentative.
2. The verb *naṣara*, “to assist,” is frequently used in the Qurʾān, but usually in the sense of God assisting believers. If we take *al-rahmān* to be the subject of the verb, however, (“whomsoever the Merciful assists . . .”), we would expect the verb to have an object pronoun (*man yaṣuru-hū al-rahmānu*). Since the pronoun is lacking, the reading “whosoever helps God . . .” seems indicated. The notion of believers assisting God is less common in the Qurʾān than the reverse but nonetheless attested (e.g., Q. 59:8 and Q. 47:7). The tribal mark (?) above *yaṣuru* is much lighter than the other markings and presumably is much more recent than the inscription and other drawings; the W-shaped mark between *al-rahmān* and *lā*, on the other hand, is much darker, and may antedate the inscription, which seems to have been written around the chipping beneath it. The last two words on the line are difficult to discern in the

photographs, and the solution proposed for them, while appearing to conform generally to the shapes visible, is not entirely satisfactory. The word rendered here as *yujanninu* appears to have two barbs between *jīm* and final *nūn* in the lighter photograph, but only one in the darker. The verb *janna* ^ʿ*alā* (form I) is used in the sense of “to overshadow” or “to cover (something) with darkness” in Q. 6:76, and form IV (*ajanna*) can also be used in this way. My reading, however, requires that form II (or the emphatic of I, *yajunnanna*) be used and must remain tentative. Probably only close examination of the original inscription will clarify this passage.

3. Unlike the preceding line, the readings here seem quite straightforward. The inscription appears at this point to be written around the designs scratched in the rock surface, and hence to be later than those designs. On the other hand, the fact that part of *man* near the beginning of the line has been effaced suggests that further flaking or chipping of the surface took place after the inscription was written. The mark at the far left of line 3 may or may not represent the beginning of another word which is mostly effaced by flaking.

4. The way in which the line is curved around the designs above it again implies that the designs are earlier than the inscription. As in line 2, many of the words here do not resolve themselves into readily acceptable readings, and satisfactory solutions may have to await examination of the inscription itself. The word *istamadda* occurs in the dictionaries but is not attested in the Qurʾān—nor is any other plausible reading of the apparently clear letters (*istafāda/yastafid*, etc.). The word following *lī* in this line is even more vexing. The article and initial letter *tā*^ʿ, with diacritical dots, seem clear enough, as do the two barbs and final *nūn*. But none of the possible readings that can be derived from these apparently clear letters (of which the proposed *tabayyun* is by far the most common word) makes much sense of the sentence. The *ma*^ʿ*a-hū* at the left of the line is very tentative; the other words, however, being written on a smoother spot in the stone, are more secure.

5. If the text is indeed to read “his defender” (*hāmī-hī*), the scribe has dropped the *yā*^ʿ that should stand before the enclitic pronoun. After *yadhūdu* ^ʿ*an* one would expect, of course, something in need of protection; is *hāmi-hī* an error for *himā-hū*, “his private pasture”? The reading *bi-yad* toward the end of the line is conjectural.

6. The last word before the break seems legible enough but can hardly be satisfactorily restored without further context.

The text of this inscription, being less formulaic than most, is among the most interesting of all in this collection. Despite the difficulty encountered in reading several parts of it, the general structure of the text is readily grasped. It takes the form of a series of parallel religious and/or ethical maxims of the form, “he who does A, does/suffers B; he who does C, does/suffers D; . . .” Maxims of this kind are found in the wisdom literature of the ancient Near East³⁴ and in the biblical wisdom literature. Single maxims of this form occur in many passages in the Qurʾān, such as Q. 6:48, “. . . whoever believes and acts justly, no fear shall be upon them. . . .” A few Greek maxims of this form, but different in content, circulated in Arabic translation.³⁵ The

³⁴ See, for example, W. G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature* (Oxford, 1960), pp. 113 and 133; most passages in his collection, however, do not show this structure.

³⁵ They were secular, not religious, in content. See Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Wisdom Literature in Arabic Translation* (New Haven, 1975), pp. 124–25 (no. 16).

closest analogue to W 5 in both structure and content is a set of parallel maxims found in *EPRL*, no. Z 137 (pp. 87–88), which reads, “whosoever trusts in God, God will spare him; and whoseover is spared by God, God will grant him security . . .”

Paleographic analysis of this inscription is complicated by the fact that it is inscribed very crudely on a rough stone surface, so that we may be dealing with distorted and atypical letter forms. Generally, however, the letter forms suggest a fairly early date, although probably not quite as early as some of the other inscriptions in this group. Several letter forms are common to the first two centuries A.H., such as those of final *rā*^ḥ as a tight curve near the base line, the angular *dāl*, the isolated *kāf*, and the medial *ḥā*^ḥ. Other letters, however, suggest a date after the first century A.H.; final *nūn*, for example, is more curved than those in first-century inscriptions, and initial *ḥā*^ḥ, with its overhang (lines 2 and 5), although paralleled at Ḥafnat al-Ubayyid (A.H. 64), is not commonly encountered until the second century A.H., at sites such as Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī and ʿAsqalān.³⁶ We find diacritical points used in several places, and showing the early vertical arrangement of dot pairs for *yā*^ḥ and *tā*^ḥ: note the *yā*^ḥ in lines 2, 3, and 4; *tā*^ḥ in line 4 and perhaps line 5; *nūn* with dot in lines 2 and 3, and possibly line 6; a dot possibly over *dhāl* in line 4; and possibly a dot under *fā*^ḥ in line 3, although I have preferred to read this letter as *mīm* in the restoration above. As noted in my examination of W 1 above, the vertical arrangement of dots for *yā*^ḥ and *tā*^ḥ virtually assures a date within the first two and one-half centuries A.H. All considered, a date in the second or early third century A.H. seems most probable for W 5.

W 6–W 12 (fig. 6)

Rock Graffiti

W 6

Prayer, First–Third Century A.H.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ
 یَرْحَمِ اللّٰهُ عَلٰی
 مِحْجَن (؟)

1. In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful
2. May God have mercy upon
3. Miḥjan (?)

³⁶ I. al-Ṣandūq, “Ḥajar Ḥafnat al-Ubayyid,” *Sumer* 11 (1955): 213–17; *RAO*, vol. 3, no. 53, pp. 285–91

and pl. 7A (Qaṣr al-Ḥayr); *RAO*, vol. 1, pp. 214–18 and pl. 11 left (ʿAsqalān).

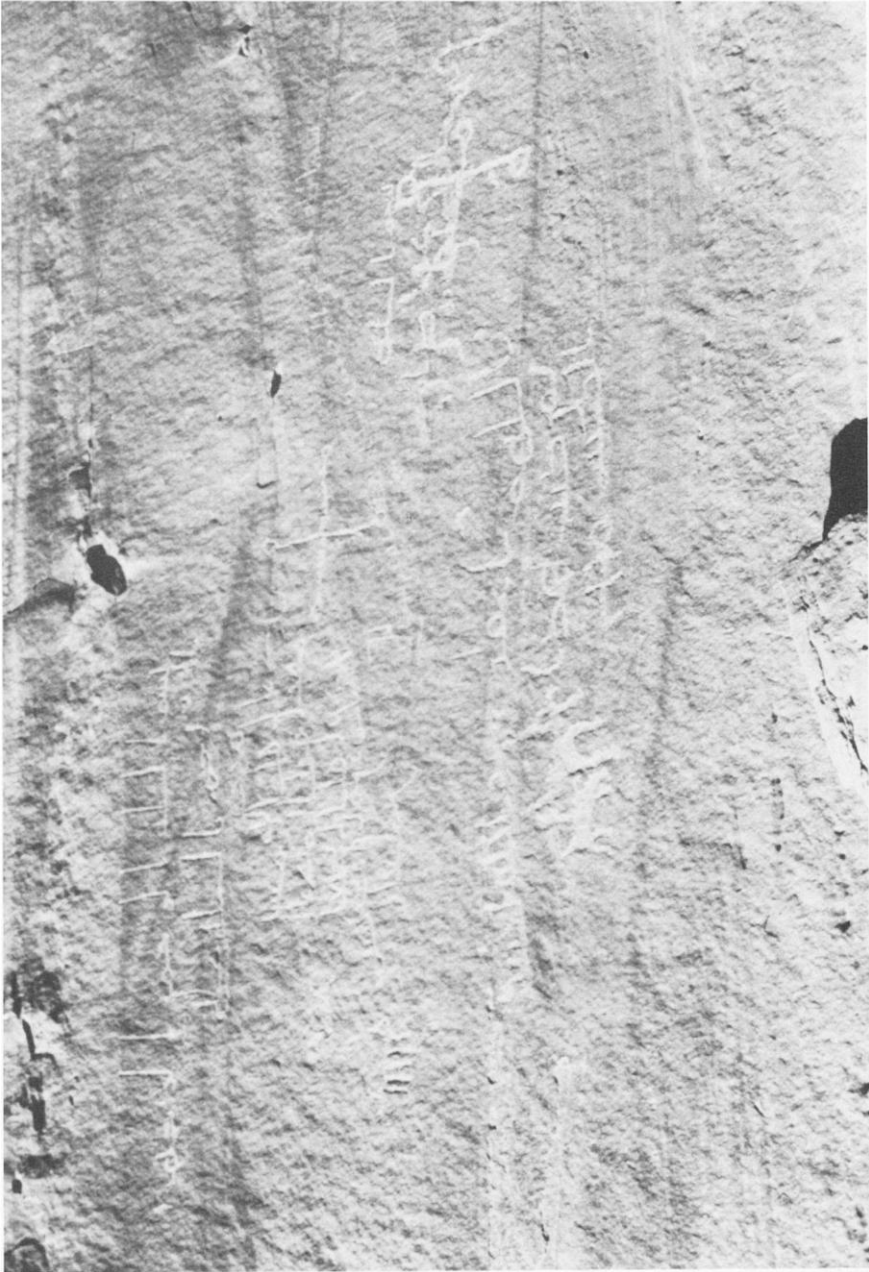


FIG. 6—Al-Ḥanākiyya inscriptions W 6—W 12

W 6
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
بسم الله على

W 7
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
بسم الله على
بسم الله على
بسم الله على

W 8
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
بسم الله على

W 10
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

W 9
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
بسم الله على

W 11
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
بسم الله على
بسم الله على

W 12
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

2. A few marks appear to precede *برحم* at the beginning of the line, but it is unclear whether or not they form part of the inscription (see p. 199 above).
3. The single name in this line is not clear in the photograph; it is perhaps Mihjan (cf. W 11).

Paleographically, this brief graffito provides hints suggesting a fairly early date: final *mīm* with a short stubby tail, *rā*³ in the form of a small, tight hook, final *nūn* a nearly straight vertical line with almost no bend or hook. A dating within the first three centuries A.H. seems likely. The form of initial *ḥā*³ in line 2 (ح) is unusual, and different from the more conventional angular *ḥā*³ used in line 1.

W 7

Prayer for Forgiveness, First–Second Century A.H.

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ
 الرَّحِیْمِ اللّٰهُمَّ اغْفِرْ
 لِعَبْدِ اللّٰهِ اِبْنِ
 ذَرَّ (؟) اَمِيْن رَبِّ
 الْعَالَمِيْنَ

1. In the name of God, the compassionate,
2. the merciful. O God, forgive
3. ʿAbdullāh ibn
4. Dharr (?). Amen, Lord of
5. the Worlds.

3. In view of the *alif* in *ibn*, we may wish to read ʿ*abd allāh* as a kind of honorific title, rather than as a personal name: “the servant of God, Ibn. . . .” This formula is quite common in early inscriptions.³⁷

4. The name rendered “Dharr” is not entirely clear in the photograph; are the letters *dāl* and *rā*³ followed by an *alif* with a floriated or split top, or is this just the top of *lām* from line 5 converging with the bottom of *dāl* from line 3? Dharr is a rare name, but attested in a few instances.³⁸

This inscription is most interesting for orthographic reasons, being to my knowledge the only example of a mirror-image Arabic inscription, that is, with the writing going from left to right. Reversed writing of this kind is also found in some early Islamic coin legends; on a copper Byzantine-Arab coin of about 650 C.E. from Damascus, for

³⁷ See, for example, the dam inscription of Muʿā-wiya at al-Ṭāʿif (*EPRL*, pp. 56–58).

³⁸ Beside the famous early companion of the prophet Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, see also IK/Caskel,

vol. 2, p. 235, s.v. “Dharr b. ʿAbdullāh.” *Mushtabih*, pp. 198–99, notes only al-Durr and al-Dharr with the article.

example, the word *jāʿiz*, “current,” is written in reverse, and in a few other instances of copper coins from the second half of the first century A.H. the mint names “Palestine” and “Aleppo” are reversed.³⁹ Such reverse writing on coins may not be fully analogous to the reverse inscription in W 7, however, because we may suspect that on coins the reversal was the inadvertent result of accidentally reversing part of the stamps used in making the die; for one thing, other Arabic phrases on the same coins are read normally, from right to left. The argument that reversed inscriptions on coins are essentially accidents rather than conscious efforts to write from left to right seems strengthened, moreover, by one coin from Damascus in which the initial *dāl* of *Dimashq* is engraved upside down and to the left of the letter group *m-sh-q*, which is engraved properly.⁴⁰ In the case of W 7, on the other hand, it is certain that the decision to write from left to right rather than vice-versa was an intentional one. Whether this phenomenon reflects a phase in the development of the Arabic script so early that even the proper direction of the script was not yet firmly set, or (more likely) merely the whim of the engraver, or even some neurological flaw in his brain, we cannot say.

Despite their reversal, the letters conform closely to the archaic style of writing found in most of the other inscriptions we have examined above. We may note the open medial *ʿayn* (lines 3 and 5); the final *mīm* with short tail (lines 1 and 2); *rāʾ* as a short, tight hook; and the final *nūns* of lines 3 and 5, with their straight, sloping stroke ending in a fairly sharp hook. The final *nūns* of lines 1 and 4, on the other hand, are more smoothly and fully curved.

W 8

Invocation, First–Second Century A.H.?

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ [.....]

1. In the name of God, the compassionate, the merc[iful]

Trailing diagonally across the rock face, this inscription is too small and indistinct in the photograph to read beyond the initial words.

Paleographically, the letters visible appear similar to those of W 6 and W 7. The final *nūn* of *al-rahmān*, barely visible, appears to be short and pulled under the line to the right, with no hook, closer to the Syriac *nūn* than to the usual Arabic form, even of an early date. I know of no other published inscriptions where this form is attested, but it is found in lines 5, 6, and 8 of the papyrus PERF, no. 558, which is dated A.H. 22/643 C.E.⁴¹

³⁹ *CMC*, vol. 2, p. 7, no. 17 (ca. 650 C.E., Damascus); p. 24, no. 81 (670–685 C.E., Jerusalem); p. 35, no. 117 (685–705 C.E., Aleppo). Note also *CMC*, vol. 2, p. 38, no. 129 (copper *fals*, 685–705 C.E., ʿAmmān), which has the phrase “ʿAbdullāh ʿAbd al-

Malik *amīr al-muʿminīn*” in reversed writing.

⁴⁰ *CMC*, vol. 2, p. 7, no. 18 (copper *fals*, ca. 650 C.E., Damascus).

⁴¹ See n. 12, above, for reference. “Ibn” appears as *ا* in lines 5 and 8, and as *ا* in line 6.

W 9

Prayer

يرحم الله
عياض ابن عبيد

1. May God have mercy on
2. ʿIyāḍ ibn ʿUbayd (?)

2. The name is difficult to read, and should be considered conjectural. If the reading is correct, the *alif* in *ibn* is a departure from standard orthography. The *nūn* of *ibn*—assuming it is a *nūn*—appears to be a hybrid of *nūn*, with the long tail, and *rāʿ*, with the tight curve.

A third line may be obscured by the left limb of the cross-like mark, but the marks there may just be more meaningless scribbling like that which seems to lie under the right limb of the cross.

W 10

Invocation

الله الروح (؟) <

1. God the mer<ciful?>

The inscription appears to be incomplete—interrupted when barely begun. It is, in any case, very fine and faintly scratched.

W 11

Prayer for Forgiveness

اللهم اغفر
لمن كتب هذا
الكتاب محجن

1. O God, forgive
2. him who wrote this
3. inscription, Mihjan (?).

3. The name is not very clear, but appears to be Miḥjan, which is well attested.⁴²

Although its brevity prevents any firm conclusions regarding its date on the basis of paleographical considerations, this inscription is noteworthy for the very primitive appearance of its letter forms. If we are correct in reading Miḥjan in line 3, then we have once again an instance of final *nūn* as a straight stroke swept back to the right under the base line, as in W 8. A diacritical dot is found below *bā*³ in line 2.

W 12

Prayer

[يغفر الله لعبيد]

1. [May] God [forgi]ve ⁶Ubayd.

We may also read ⁶Abīd. The beginning of the grafitto is evidently chipped or worn off. Paleographically, old letter forms predominate; note especially the open medial ⁶ayn.

W 13 (fig. 7)

Rock Grafitto, First–Third Century A.H.?

ايحسب ليلى ارامد هجر في (؟) ابنا هلج مهجور هو . .
 لا غفرت بموت بنى . . .
 الى (؟) . . . عليك (؟)
 هذا بعدك وهم . . . اللهم اغفر لسيار و . . .

1.–3. . . .

4. . . . O God, forgive Sayyār (?) and

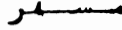
This is the most vexing of all inscriptions in the collection. Although the photograph is quite clear, the letters that can be recovered—written among pre-Islamic Arabic inscriptions and animal drawings—do not yield a satisfactory continuous reading. We may, to be sure, plausibly identify isolated words here and there, but only the formulaic *allāhumma ighfir li-*. . . in line 4 seems certain, and in this instance we can see how crude the writing is in some respects (e.g., the angular final *rā*³). Except for this phrase, all the restorations in the transcription must be considered conjectural.

⁴² See IK/Caskel, s.v.; a diminutive form is noted by Hess, *Beduinennamen*, p. 17: “Mḥeigīn.”



FIG. 7.—Al-Ḥanākiyya inscriptions W 13—W 14

Rock Graffito



1. Mushir

The name Mushir is fairly well known; cf. IK/Caskel s.v., where more than a dozen people with this name are listed. Another possibility is the much rarer name Mushhar (*Mushtabih*, 486).

The form of *rā*^ḥ suggests that this is a recent inscription, as does the pale coloration of the incised stone.

ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS CITED

- AP* = Grohmann, Adolf. *Arabische Paläographie*. Pt. 2. *Das Schriftwesen: Die Lapidarschrift*. Vienna, 1971.
- Beduinennamen* = Hess, J. J. *Beduinennamen aus Zentralarabien*. Heidelberg, 1912.
- CMC* = Walker, John. *A Catalogue of Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum*. Vol. 1. *A Catalogue of the Arab-Sassanian Coins*. London, 1941. Vol. 2. *A Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and Post-Reform Umayyad Coins*. London, 1956.
- EPRL* = Grohmann, Adolf. *Expédition Philby-Ryckmans-Lippens en Arabie*. Pt. 2. *Textes Epigraphiques*. Vol. 1. *Arabic Inscriptions*. Louvain, 1962.
- IK/Caskel* = Caskel, Werner. *Ġamharat an-Nasab. Das genealogische Werk des Hišām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī*. 2 vols. Leiden, 1966.
- MCIA* = van Berchem, Max. *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*. Vol. 2, pt. 1. *Deuxième Partie—Syrie du Sud. Tome Premier—Jérusalem "Ville."* Cairo, 1922. Vol. 2, pt. 2. *Deuxième Partie—Syrie du Sud. Tome Deuxième—Jérusalem "Ḥaram."* Cairo, 1927.
- Mushtabih* = Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī. *Kitāb al-mushtabih fī asmā^ḥ al-rijāl*. Ed. P. De Jong. Leiden, 1881.
- Q.* = Qur^{ʿān}.
- RAO* = Clermont-Ganneau, Charles. *Recueil d'archéologie orientale*. 10 vols. Paris, 1888–1906.
- RCEA* = Combe, Étienne; Sauvaget, Jean; Wiet, Gaston, eds. *Répertoire chronologique d'Épigraphie arabe*. Cairo, 1931–.
- SF* = Hawary, Hassan; Rached, Hussein; Wiet, Gaston, eds. *Catalogue général du Musée Arabe du Caire: Siècles Funéraires*. 10 vols. Cairo, 1932–42.
- Tab.* = Abu Ja^ʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī. *Ta^ḥrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*. Ed. M. J. de Goeje. Leiden, 1879–1901.