NOTE ON THE GRAFFITI OF THE CISTERN AT
WADY EL-JOZ.

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Prof. R. A. S. Macalister's report, and the documents which
accompanied it, were sent by the Committee in the first instance to
M. Clermont-Ganneau, who entrusted them to me some years ago,
with a view to the decipherment of the graffiti. I recently had
occasion to examine them when classifying the materials, gathered
at Jerusalem for the Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum, and here give
the results of that study.

The documents comprise a series of facsimiles (squeezes and
rubbings), and four sheets of pen-drawings. The facsimiles are too
numerous, and for the most part too indistinct, to be reproduced
here. It will be sufficient to publish the drawings, which are
conscientious copies from the facsimiles or, in some cases (marked *
in the report), from the original inscriptions. The graffiti are not
all represented in the drawings; there are others of which the
facsimiles are too indistinct to be drawn; but those which are here
reproduced suffice to give an idea of the characters. In spite of the
care taken in their execution these drawings include a few errors,
attributable to the bad condition of graffiti. My readings are
founded on both facsimiles and drawings; and where these differ
at all, I have preferred to follow the indications of the former.
I have not myself seen the original graffiti; but when I last visited
Jerusalem (April and May, 1914) Prof. Dalman sent me a brief
description of the cistern, with a copy of Nos. VII, VIII, and
XXV, which I have compared with Prof. Macalister's documents.

II. Perhaps [proper name] و [proper name] "Allah is
the friend of . . . ."; the proper names are legible neither in the
facsimile nor in the drawing. Below, to the right, one can still
read the words الله ولي، in another writing, and forming the
beginning of the new inscription.
IV. After the word الله, the facsimiles show certain undefined characters.

V. This graffito is turned the left side down, which gives the appearance of a rude design representing standing figures; on turning it to a horizontal position one can trace some characters defaced and illegible.

VI. في سبيله وحمزة (?), and Hamza . . . son of Hamid, and he prays Allah to grant him the shahada for His sake. The proper names are doubtful, even in the facsimiles, but the form of the shahada is certain; I will explain this presently.

VII. "Allah is the friend of Sa'id, and he begs of Allah the shahada for His sake" (for the love of God). The first word and some of the other letters, which are not shown in the drawing, can be clearly read in squeeze.

VIII. "Allah is the friend of 'Isa, son of Malih." The Alif of the word ابن can be clearly seen in the facsimile, and in Dalman's copy.

IX. [Proper name] حميد (?), "Allah is the friend of Hamid, son of . . . ." In the facsimile, the paternal name does not look the same as in the drawing: I cannot read it.

X. حميد (?), Ibn Bakr. Allah ولي بشر بن عبد الله ولد([

XI. اللهو ولي مسماً (?), son of 'Ubaidallah." On the facsimiles, the first name seems to be written مسماً; perhaps مسماً, or مسماً for موسى.

XII. [Proper name] الله ولي عمرو (?), "Allah is the friend of 'Amr, son of . . . ."

XIII. Except the first word الله, "Allah," the reading is quite uncertain; the letters are much defaced and apparently clogged with lime or corroded by saltpetre.
XIV. "Allah is the friend of Ahmed, son of al-Hasan." The letters are much defaced and the father's name is not quite sure.

XV. A mere scratching, or a crack in the plaster.

XVI. This drawing shows two different graffiti. On the right: 
الله ولي بكر (؟) "Allah is the friend of Sulaiman, son of Bakr." On the left: اللهم اغفر ليروب بن عبد الله... "Allah! forgive to Ayyub, son of 'Ubaidallah..." The other letters in the drawing are almost invisible on the facsimiles.

XVIII. "and he begs the shahada for His sake." These words belong to the right graffiti in No. XVI.

XIX. اللهم ولي بكر بن عمر "Allah is the friend of Bakr, son of 'Umar." The father's name may be read عمر, "'Amr," as the squeeze shows on the left a sign like a waw.

XX. اللهم أشهد (؟) "Allah! I testify..." Perhaps the beginning of the well-known testimony of faith; but the word ashadu is doubtful and, on the squeeze, there seems to stand a proper name in the third line.

XXI. اللهم ولي أوزب بن حرب "Allah is the friend of Ayyub, son of Harb." The father's name could be read حرب for حارث; حارث but this name is always used with the article: الحارث; The father's name is doubtful, and the following words are quite illegible (perhaps ولد الشهيد.

XXII. اللهم ارحم لزمع (؟) "Allah! have mercy on..." The name is sometimes used; but I do not know whether the form زمع occurs also. The father's name is doubtful, and the following words are quite illegible (perhaps ولد الشهيد...

XXIII. [Proper names] اللهم ولي. The names are illegible on the facsimiles, also on a pencil sketch of Prof. Macalister's, bearing the words: "Much clogged with lime."
XXIV. "Allāh is the friend of 'Ubaidallāh, son of Ḥasan." On the squeeze, the word is plainer than it is in the drawing; the father's name is not quite certain.

XXV. "Allah!"

XXVI. This text of four lines is the longest one of the series; but the letters are much defaced.

XXVII. Illegible, besides some loose characters.

XXX. Perhaps ... وصی بن أحمد ... الشهادة ... This graffito is much worn and the reading quite uncertain.

XXXI. "Ibrāhīm.”

XXXII. "Allāh is the friend of 'Umar.”

XXXIII. Five lines, illegible on the facsimiles.

XXXIV. Five lines, illegible, except the two first words (؟). Allah ولی؟

XXXV. "Allāh is the friend of Muhammad, son of Sinān, redactor (or reciter ?).” The father’s name is not quite certain, and the last word, which is certainly a relative, may be read otherwise, according to the different possible ways of dividing and dotting the letter's.

XXXVI. (؟) عبد الرحمن ولیً ایاس (؟) بن أحمد (؟) "Abd al-rahmān ... Allāh is the friend of Ayās (?), son of Ahmad.”

XXXVII. Some incoherent letters.

XXXVIII. As in No. XVI, the facsimiles show here two different graffiti. (1) On the right, on two lines: Allah ولیً عمرو بن فرح “Allāh is the friend of ‘Amr, son of Farḥ.” (2) On the left, on three lines: حضر؟ [يزيد (؟) في هذه المعادة] "Yazid (has been present?) in this shelter.”

XXXIX. [Two or three proper names] الله ولیً
GRAFFITI OF THE CISTERN AT WADY EL-JŪZ.

XL. The facsimiles show here thirteen lines of a minute and almost illegible writing, belonging to two or three different graffiti. In the third line, I believe, I can read: "Abd al-wāḥid, son of al-Sā'ib (?) .... "; the remainder is quite uncertain.

XLII. Beginning of three lines, with the letters: ... "Abd al-wāḥid, son of al-Sā'ib (?) .... "; the squeeze seems to be cut off on the left side.

XLIV. [Proper name] Allah wāli 'ād dīn bin Ṭāhā bin Rāmu'm (al-Thawrī). The names are uncertain, and the squeeze is cut off on the left. Dāwilābi is a well-known relative; see Yāqūt, Muʿjam, ed. Wüstefeld, II, p. 622; Samānī, Ansāb, ed. Margoliouth (Gibb Memorial Series, XX), p. 233a.

A few general observations may be useful in concluding the study of these graffiti.

At the first view these little texts afford but limited interest. They contain only proper names, and those are of obscure persons who have left no other traces of their existence. One can extract from them no precise dates, nor any allusion to historic facts. On the other hand, palaeography gives no indication of their age, since their cursive and rude characters possess no style.

I beg to lay stress on this point, because it is customary to class Arabic graffiti among the inscriptions called Kufic, and to assign to these last, as a matter of evidence, a considerable antiquity.

It has long been believed that the Arabs originally employed exclusively the angular characters known as "Kufic," and that, later on, these were replaced by the rounded character called Naskhi or Arabic. This too simple notion rests on an imperfect knowledge of documents and of the laws of palaeography. The latter shew us that the form of the characters does not depend upon the age only, but also upon the material used and the technical process employed; it is therefore necessary to distinguish between the writing in manuscripts and that of inscriptions on hard material. Moreover,
since the discovery of the Arab papyri of Egypt, we know that, from the first, Arab scribes made use of a cursive and rounded character, not for the sake of the style, but for practical reasons; in fact, when writing with the pen, it is both easier and more rapid to give the letters a rounded than an angular form. On the contrary, when inscribing stone, the chisel struck by a mallet lends itself more readily to rectilinear and angular forms. One might easily apply this observation to examples borrowed from the writing of the most diverse peoples. As to the Arabs, under the influence of their earliest artistic culture they began to give a style to their writing: this was the angular character which at first prevailed, and the Kufic, as a style, reigned not only in epigraphy but also in beautiful manuscripts. Towards the twelfth century of our era, by an inverse phenomenon, the rounded style took the place of the Kufic in books, and even on monuments.

We need not here go into the causes of these changes, because our graffiti are not inscriptions in a definite style of writing. Their palaeography depends upon none but the practical rules dictated by the material and the process, and which have from the beginning created a cursive writing for manuscripts and an angular writing for lapidary inscriptions. Moreover, in this case the material is plaster, and in one cistern wet plaster, that is to say, a substance much softer than stone, although presenting more resistance than papyrus or parchment, since it must be cut into; the method of execution seems to be a tool of metal or wood guided by the hand alone; in other words, a process midway between that of the lapidary epigraphy and that of the manuscript. In fact, one sees that the characters of these graffiti are sometimes angular, sometimes rounded, according to the humour of the scribe, or accidents of the surface. The angular form seems to prevail in those shown in the drawings; in others, as in example No. XXVI, the rounded form prevails. But it is not evident that these variations correspond to defined epochs; and, for my part, I should not like to say of any one of these graffiti whether it was inscribed yesterday or in the first century of the Hegira.