

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

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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] اللهُ، "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 اللهُ، اللهُ، 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. وحزمة (?) [a word] بن جهيد (?) وهو يسأل الله الشهادة في سبيله and Hamza . . . son of Hamid, and he prays Allāh to grant him the shahāda for His sake." The proper names are doubtful, even in the facsimiles, but the form of the shahāda is certain; I will explain this presently.

VII. الله ولي سعيد وهو يسأل الله الشهادة في سبيله, "Allāh is the friend of Sa'īd, and he begs of Allāh the shahāda 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. الله ولي عيسى ابن مليح, "Allāh is the friend of 'Isā, son of Malih." The Alif of the word ابن can be clearly seen in the facsimile, and in Dalman's copy.

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

X. حميد (?) بن بكر. الله ولي بشر بن عبد الله وكاتب وهو يسأل الله الشهادة في سبيله, "Hamīd, son of Bakr. Allāh is the friend of Bishr, son of 'Abdallāh, and he has written (?) and he begs Allāh to grant him the shahāda for His sake."

XI. الله ولي عسما [ر?] بن عبيد الله, "Allāh is the friend of Mismār (?), son of 'Ubaidallāh." On the facsimiles, the first name seems to be written عسما; perhaps عسماور, or عسا for موسى.

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

XIII. Except the first word الله, "Allāh," the reading is quite uncertain; the letters are much defaced and apparently clogged with lime or corroded by saltpetre.

XIV. (?) *الله وليّ أحمد بن الحسن* (?), "*Allāh is the friend of Ahmed, son of al-Ḥasan.*" 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 وليّ سليمان* (?) *بن بكر* (?), "*Allāh is the friend of Sulaimān, son of Bakr.*" On the left: . . . *اللهم اغفر لأيوب بن عبيدالله* . . . , "*Allāh! forgive to Ayyūb, son of 'Uбайдallah . . .*" The other letters in the drawing are almost invisible on the facsimiles.

XVIII. *وهو يسأل [الشهادة في سبيله]*, "*and he begs the shahāda for His sake.*" These words belong to the right graffiti in No. XVI.

XIX. *الله وليّ بكر بن عمرو*, "*Allāh is the friend of Bakr, son of 'Umar.*" The father's name may be read *عمرو*, "*Amr,*" as the squeeze shows on the left a sign like a *wāw*.

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

XXI. *الله وليّ أيوب بن حرب*, "*Allāh is the friend of Ayyūb, son of Harb.*" The father's name could be read *حرب* for *حارت*; but this name is always used with the article: *الحارت*.

XXII. . . . *اللهم ارحم لزمع* (?) *بن كدلان* (?), "*Allāh! have mercy on . . .*" The name *زمعة* 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* at the beginning of the second line).

XXIII. *الله وليّ* [Proper names]. The names are illegible on the facsimiles, also on a pencil sketch of Prof. Macalister's, bearing the words: "Much clogged with lime."

XXIV. *الله وليّ عبیدالله بن حسن*, "*Allāh is the friend of 'Ubadallāh, son of Hasan.*" On the squeeze, the word *وليّ* is plainer than it is in the drawing; the father's name is not quite certain.

XXV. *الله!*, "*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 . . . *الشهادة . . . موسى بن أحمد* . . . This graffito is much worn and the reading quite uncertain.

XXXI. *إبراهيم*, "*Ibrāhīm.*"

XXXII. *الله وليّ عمر*, "*Allāh is the friend of 'Umar.*"

XXXIII. Five lines, illegible on the facsimiles.

XXXIV. Five lines, illegible, except the two first words *الله وليّ (?)*.

XXXV. *الله وليّ محمد بن سنان (?) المنشئ*, "*Allāh is the friend of Muḥammad, 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 letters.

XXXVI. *عبد الرحمن [two words] الله وليّ اياس (?)*, "*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: *الله وليّ عمرو بن فرح*, "*Allāh is the friend of 'Amr, son of Farḥ.*" (2) On the left, on three lines: *حضر [?] يزيد (?) في هذه المعادة*, "*Yazīd (has been present?) in this shelter.*"

XXXIX. *الله وليّ* [Two or three proper names]

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: عبد [الو] احد . . . . .  
 (? بن السائب) “*Abd al-wāḥid, son of al-Sā’ib (?)* . . . . .”; the remainder is quite uncertain.

XLI. Some illegible characters.

XLII. Beginning of three lines, with the letters: . . . لله  
 . . . وك | عا ح . . . ; the squeeze seems to be cut off on the left side.

XLIV. [Proper name] الله وليّ.

XLV. الله وليّ [name] د بن رحمة (? الدولا [بي] ?) “*Allāh is the friend of . . . , son of Rahmat(allāh ?), al-Daulābi.*” The names are uncertain, and the squeeze is cut off on the left. *Daulābi* is a well-known relative; see Yāqūt, *Muʿjam*, ed. Wüstenfeld, II, p. 622; Samʿāni, *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.

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