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Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic: Selected Readings in the Nabataean, Musnad, and Akkadian Inscriptions

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With a Revealing New Reading in the Epic of Gilgamesh

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DEDICATION

In memory of my father, uncle, and aunt, who raised me in a nurturing and responsible environment.
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Some of the results of my research in this book—like my new readings of the al-Namārah and Umm al-Jimāl Nabataean Inscriptions—were first presented in my book “DeArabizing Arabia: Tracing Western Scholarship on the History of the Arabs and Arabic Language and Script”, which was published in late 2011. However, while translating that book to Arabic, I felt it was necessary to expand my research to further support my conclusions regarding the history of pre-Islamic Classical Arabic, or Standard Arabic, and to present all my inscriptional research as an independent book in both Arabic and English languages.

In this book, I will continue with my re-tracing and re-reading of the modern Nabataean inscriptional evidence introduced by Western scholars from the 19th century until today. This evidence is, according to many, the key evidence behind the new modern-day radical theories about the history of the Arabs and Arabic language and script. In this book, I will also read an important Akkadian inscriptional sample from the Epic of Gilgamesh. It is important to note here that the intended audience of this book is not limited to the professional scholars but to anyone interested in this field of knowledge, particularly among the Arabs and Muslims, who should be most concerned with studying their own history based on the important material evidence of modern findings.

As a matter of fact, I am not a professional Arabic linguist or an archeologist. I am an Electrical Engineer in my academic training, a professional Arabic type designer in my hobby, and a librarian specialized in Arabic, science, business, and library technology, in my
profession. However, I should bring to light here that the person who had finally succeeded in deciphering the Cuneiform symbols inscribed on key tablets of the Epic of Gilgamesh was not a specialist but a young English accountant working in a bank in Great Britain. That was in the early third decade of the twentieth century, sixty years after their discovery in a library of an Assyrian palace buried under a mound in the Iraqi providence of Mosul, and after their subsequent shipment to the British Library Museum.

To help the reader, I divided this book into three parts depending on the nature of the inscriptions being studied. Each part has its own introduction, chapters, and summary. I have also provided, in the beginning of the book, a detailed table containing the historical varied shapes of the Nabataean and Musnad scripts, to aid readers who are not familiar with these historical scripts.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank all those who helped me with the research and writing of this book, particularly my wife Sabine for her continued and unlimited support and understanding; Iraqi poets Saadi Yusuf, 'Abd al-Razzaq 'Abd al-Wāhid, and Salah 'Awwād for reviewing my readings of key historical Arabic poem verses; my brother Osama for providing me with high resolution pictures of the al-Namārah inscription; Denis Carter for sharing the Sa'adTa'lib Musnad inscription stone; The City University of New York Research Foundation (CUNY-RF) for their generous grants; Vladimir Wertsman for his inspiring friendship over 25 years; Rā'id Na'im for providing online al-Baḥīth al-ʿArabi database; University of Pennsylvania for providing the online Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (ePSD); Chicago University for providing freely the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD); Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies for providing the Romanized texts of the Epic of Gilgamesh.
A table with Nabataean and Musnad scripts letter shapes and their corresponding modern Arabic script letters, which was compiled by the author in his previous studies.
Introduction to the History of the Arabs and Classical Arabic

Most modern Western theories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries assume that Arabic language was a younger language compared to Hebrew or Aramaic. As for classical Arabic, many Arabists and Orientalists claim it was created by the Abbasids linguists based on the language of the Quran or the tongue of the Arabs of Hijāz. Most Orientalists believe the dialects of the Yemenis, Thamudis, Nabataeans, and other Arab groups are independent non-Arabic languages, and that modern post Islamic Arabic writing, and other writings of the region like Phoenician, are not related to the old Musnad Arabic writing. And much more.

For example, M. S. A. Macdonald, the respected Orientalist and expert in old Arabic languages, treated the above dialects as independent non-Arabic languages, which are related to each other through their classification as “Semitic” languages. As such, the relation of Nabataean to Thamudi would be similar to the relation of Hebrew and Akkadian. As for the Southern Arabian languages, Macdonald believes “neither the Ancient nor the Modern South Arabian languages are in any sense ‘Arabic’.” Then he adds “Old Arabic was a minority language in the Arabian Peninsula and only became the Arabic language for the majority after Islam”.\footnote{28} Generally, Western theories distinguish between the so-called “Classical Arabic” and “Standard Arabic”, also known as al-ʿArabiyyah al-fuṣḥā among Arabs. According to them, Classical Arabic is the language of the Quran and the words of Prophet Muhammad, or Ḥadīth, and Standard Arabic is the language used in modern day Arabic writing since
the Abbasids. I think this distinction is not only arbitrary but also not logical since it assumes, firstly, the two languages were static and not evolving over time, and secondly, their vocabulary and grammatical rules were significantly different and independent. It is not clear why wouldn’t Western scholars classify the two as “Old Standard Arabic” and “Modern Standard Arabic” as it is the case for English or German, for example.

Ironically, many of the supporters of the above views of MacDonald and other Arabists would rush to quote the following paragraph from the Introduction of Ibn Khaldūn to prove their thesis:

“.. the Muḍar tongue and Ḥimīr tongue were in a similar situation before the changes that occurred to many of the words of Ḥimīr tongue among the people of Muḍar. This is evident through available historical quotes, in contradiction with those who assume through ignorance that the two were one language and attempt to measure the Ḥimīr language based on the measurements of the Muḍar language and its grammar rules, as in the claims of some that the word al-qīl in Ḥimīr tongue is derived from al-qawl, and many other similar examples, which are not correct. The language of Ḥimīr is another language that differs from the language of Muḍar in many of its conditions, words’ roots, and vowels, as the language of the Arabs in our time differs from the language of Muḍar”. [15]

However, and as it is clear from Ibn Khaldūn’s paragraph, the Arabs seem to use the word “language” as a synonym to the word “tongue”, not in the meaning of independent language, and certainly not in the meaning of “non-Arabic” language. What Ibn Khaldūn meant to say is that the Arabs of Ḥimīr and the Arabs of Muḍar, and the Arabs of his times spoke Arabic in a different manner over the centuries, but he did not even hint that any of their languages were not substantially Arabic. In his introduction, he wrote
regarding the the Muḍar tongue that “if we took care of this Arabic tongue”, which clearly indicates he classified it as one of several Arabic tongues. His observations are obvious since languages are constantly evolving.

Regrettably, Ibn Khaldūn was not successful in choosing the right words to explain the evolution of the Arabic tongue from the Ḥimīr ages until his times. Following his accurate and correct explanation that the Muḍar and Ḥimīr tongues contained similar words and roots by saying “the Mudar tongue and Ḥimīr tongue were in a similar situation before the changes that occurred to many of the words of Ḥimīr tongue among the people of Mudar”, he then objected to the “claims of some that the word al-qīl in the Ḥimīr tongue is derived from al-qawl, and many other similar examples”. It is possible that Ibn Khaldūn wanted to say that some of the Mudar words have no roots in the Ḥimīr language and vice versa, which is an obvious fact since the two evolved independently.

In his classification of what he called “Mudar tongue”, Ibn Khaldūn seemed puzzled and unsure. At one point he says with absolute confidence that the “Qur’an was delivered and the Ḥadīth was transmitted in its language”. Then he says hesitantly that the Mudar language “was not created by this generation but it was inherited, and from that it seems to be the language of early Mudar people, and maybe the language of Prophet Muhammad, itself”. In other words, he mixed up between the Mudar tongue and Standard Arabic, which was possibly the closest to the Mudar tongue, not more than that. In the past, the term “Arabic tongue” meant Standard Arabic tongue, which is the tongue the Arabs compared their diverse tongues with, including the tongues of Makkah and Hijāz. We read in the Quran أَفْصَﺢُ مِنْي لِسْانًا, in the meaning of “with a clearer tongue than mine” or a closer tongue to the standard one. In another Quranic verse وَقَدْ كَتَبَ مُضَدَّقٌ لِسْانًا عَرَبِيًا, we read in the same
meaning. The Quran also used لسَانٌ عَرَبِيٍّ مُبِينٌ in other verses, in the meaning of standard or clear tongue.

It is an undisputed fact that Arabic, like most other languages, contains many locally evolving dialects, presently and in the past. Standard or Classical Arabic, which is the language of the Arabs for important and formal communications and poetry, is the common root of their tongues. It was considered their linguistic model, before and after Islam. In other words, it is the collective language which recorded over the ages the words of their prevalent and diverse historical groups. It is not an independent language that was spoken by any certain group or used in a certain geographic location, but rather the language of the elite learned community. In the Quran (13: 37) وَكَذَلِكَ أَنزَلْنَا هُوَ حُكْمًا عَرَبِيًا. This clearly means Standard Arabic was a measurement language that was used for reference purposes. Accordingly, the Nabataean, Yemeni, Aramaic, Akkadian and other tongues of the Arabian Peninsula are substantially linked with the Arabic language and particularly the Classical Arabic language. This is clear since Classical Arabic linguistic reference tools are the key tools to study and explain these languages, as we will demonstrate through the inscriptional evidence presented in this book.

At the heart of the Western classification system of the languages of the Arabian Peninsula lays their classification of its people. Modern Western theories deprive the overwhelming historical majority in the Peninsula from their undisputed Arab roots and characteristics in favor of a new classification system where each group of people is presumed to belong to an assumed mother “Semitic” people. While scholars of the Islamic Arab civilization called most people of the Northern Arabian Peninsula, the Nabataeans, the Orientalist theories speak of a pre-Islamic overwhelming Aramaic majority in that area. The Nabataeans, according to these theories, were a minority group with some Arab background and unknown precise origin, living
among a majority of Aramaic people. Because the classification by the scholars of the Islamic Arab civilization indicated otherwise, I will start by restating it to clarify the ambiguity and contradiction above. Particularly, I will start with what Ibn Manẓūr wrote in Lisān al-ʿArab, when he defined the word Nabaṭ, or Nabataean:

“... al-Nabiṭ and al-Nabaṭ like al-Ḥabīsh and al-Ḥabash in comparison: a generation that settled in Iraq. They are al-Anbāṭ and one who belongs to them is Nabaṭī. In al-Ṣaḥḥāḥ: they were settling in al-Baṭāʾih among Iraqis. Ibn al-Īrābī said: Nubāṭī, not Nabaṭī. In al-Ṣaḥḥāḥ: Nabaṭī and Nūbāṭī and Nubāṭ similar to Yamanī, Yumāni and Yumān; and Istanbaṭa (was Nabatized). Ayyūb bin al-Qaryah said: the people of ʿUmān are Arabs who were Nabatized, and the people of Bahrayn were Nabiṭ who were Arabized. It is said: Tanabbāta in the meaning that one became part of the Nabaṭ, and they were called Nabaṭ because they elicit or produce what belong in the ground. ʿUmar bin al-Khattāb said: Tamaʿdadū wa-lā Tastanbiṭū which means imitate Maʿad (of Yemen) not the Nabaṭ. In another saying: lā Tanbiṭu al-Madāʾin, meaning do not imitate the Nabaṭ in their style of residence and owning real estate properties. Ibn al-ʿAbbās said: we the people of Quraysh are part of the Nabaṭ of Kūtha Rabba (historical city of Ur), which was said to be the birthplace of Abraham and the Nabaṭ were its inhabitants. ʿAmru bin Maʿad Yakrub said that ʿUmar asked him through Saʿd bin Abī Waqqās and said: Īrābī fi Ḥabwatihi, Nabaṭī fi jabwatihi. He wanted to say he was skillful in his construction and taxing practices like the Nabaṭ, because they were the prominent people of Iraq. Ibn Awfā said: Kunna naslifu Anbāṭ al-Shām (we were before the Nabataeans of Syria), and in other sources: Kunna Anbāṭan min Anbāṭ al-Shām (we were Nabataeans from Syria)” [17]
Ibn a-Nadīm (929–996 CE) wrote in the introduction of his book *al-Fihrast* that the old language of Babylon (i.e. the Akkadian) was the language of the Nabataeans and that *al-Kīldaniyyūn* (the Chaldeans) and *al-Siryāniyyūn* (the Assyrians) spoke dialects that were derived from it. He also wrote, quoting one of the Nabataean magicians who was living during his time, that the Nabataeans were people "with black complexion", and that one of the contemporary Nabataean personalities, *Ibn al-Waḥshiya al-Kīldānī*, had translated many Nabataean texts to the Arabic of his time.[30]

The above quotations from *Ibn Manẓūr* and *Ibn al-Nadīm* are fairly clear. They indicate that the consensus among scholars of the Islamic Arab civilization was that the name Nabataean was used to describe generations of migrants from the Arabian Peninsula—not specific tribes—who had settled in Iraq and greater Syria, which included what we classify today as the Nabataeans, Aramaeans, and Akkadians. Accordingly, they believed that these early Nabataeans were Arabs in their roots who had migrated earlier from Southern Arabia, possibly historical Bahrain which extended then from Oman in the south to Basrah in the North, or possibly from Oman itself, and that their tongues had changed later on. They further believed that the Nabataeans of Iraq were older than those of Syria. Clearly, the Nabataeans according to their definition were open in their tribal backgrounds and varying in their composition. Based on their linguistic definition, the word Nabat was similar to the word Arab, not a specific name like *Nazār* or *Maʿad*. The above can possibly explain the overwhelming Arabian background of the Nabataeans of northwestern Peninsula, since they could be the latest Arabs to become Nabataeans, and the first group to established a strong large state using explicitly the name *Nabaṭ* to distinguish themselves from other Arabs.
Even though most Western Orientalists dismissed the classification by past Islamic Arab civilization scholars and assumed it was sort of confusion, I see it a very solid and analytical classification. It is well-known, names change and vary depending on who uses them and at which historical period. Despite the usage of the name ʿAjam by the Arabs to describe non Arab people, we are not aware of any group of people who call themselves ʿAjam. Since there is no historical evidence to prove that there was a group of people calling themselves “Aramaeans” as in the case of the Nabataeans and because the Aramaic people (even according to the Orientalists) were semi Bedouin people who settled later like the Nabataeans, I dont see why identifying them as Nabataeans by the Islamic Arab Historians was a wrong identification. As for the lack of Nabataean inscriptions from Iraq, similar to those discovered in Syria and northern Hejaz, that does not mean necessarily their theories were wrong. We have not discovered yet any pre-Islamic inscriptions with modern Arabic writings, even though this writing style was heavily practiced and had even evolved there during that historical period. Likely, the many Aramaic inscriptions found in Iraq are themselves the inscriptions of what the scholars of the Islamic Arab civilization era called “the Nabataeans of Iraq”. This may explain the reason why al-Namārah inscription used Aramaic shapes for the letters Rāʾ, Kāf, and Dāl rather than the usual Nabataean shapes found in Syria. As for using relatively varied languages in the Aramaic and Nabataean inscriptions, this proves the Nabataeans were of diversified roots rather than specific and definite ones.

The Arabs before Islam used the word arām to describe high signposts or markings, or high landmarks, which were usually built from stones to mark tombs. In the Quran (89: 7) أَلَمْ تُرَ كَيْفَ فَعَلَ رَبُّكَ ﴿7﴾Because the Quranic verses of the ʿUthmān’s edition were without soft vowel diacritics,
extra Alif's, or dots, scholars of the Islamic Arab civilization differed on the meaning of the above verse. However, they all agreed that the name of the people was 'Ād. Most assumed the three letters word 'rm was referring to a city. It is possible this word was pronounced 'Irama ʾIrama as many read it today, but some pronounced it Arām Arām and thought it was the name of the historical city of Damascus, according to Lisān al-ʿArab. The usage of this word in the Quran can explain the usage of the same word in the inscription of the Assyrian king Tukultī-abil-Ishāra the First to announce his victory over the army of Arām in Syria, which was written in the Akkadian language about one thousand years CE. It may indicate that many in the surrounding area identified the people of this location as Arām after the name of their main city, but the Arabs to the south called them ‘Ād. Again, names of an identical group of people or city can vary depending on who uses it and when.

The day-to-day usage of the late Cuneiform script, which became significantly phonetic based at that stage, declined and became fully restricted to literature writings around 600 BCE until its complete disappearance in the mid third century CE. The Cuneiform writing was the predominant writing of the people of Iraq, Persia, and Syria. In this decline period, the Aramaic script gradually emerged as the vernacular script of Iraq and Syria, side-by-side the scripts of the occupying foreign powers. In fact, the decline of the Cuneiform writing was synchronous in the whole area. The oldest discovered inscription with Aramaic script belongs to the period between the eighth and sixth century CE. The oldest Nabataean inscriptions discovered belong to the third century. The Aramaic and Nabataean writing styles and languages are almost identical, despite their relative diversities. The similarities of the time period of their discovered inscriptions, the shapes of their letters, and their vocabulary, undoubtedly support the theories of Islamic Arab scholars in
classifying the two as one group, namely the Nabataeans. Naturally, this does not mean the Nabataeans spoke one dialect, or that every Nabataean inscription was an inscription written by the Nabataean people. This script was also used by non-Nabataean Arab tribes and its spread was one of the main factors contributing to the gradual decline of the Arabic Musnad script.

Misnaming and denying the substantial Arab roots of the Aramaeans, Akkadians, Canaanians, and other population groups in the Fertile Crescent, and classifying them as independent and parallel ones, contradicts with the geographic and historical facts of the Arabian Peninsula. The anthropological and archeological evidence pointing to a gradual desertification of the Peninsula makes the case for repeated waves of migrations the north a very logical one. Besides, the current classification by western scholars does not seem more convincing than the one put forward by the Islamic Arab historians since it presents more questions rather than answering the original ones. If the people of the Fertile Crescent were not of Arab origin and background, what is their origin and who are the Arabs, then?

As for answering the second part of our question by the Orientalist theories, I will refer it to T. E. Lawrence, by quoting from his well-known book “The Seven Pillars of Wisdom: a Triumph” which was published in 1926 after he returned from his highly fruitful trip to the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt. In his years there, he succeeded to become one of the closest associates of the leaders of the Great Arab Revoltion against the Ottoman Empire, if not one of its actual leaders. Lawrence studied Arabic and archeology in the prestigious Oxford University. His final thesis was about the architectural accomplishments of the Crusaders, a subject he was fascinated with, according to his autobiography. After his graduation with distinction he joined the British Royal Air Force and worked in
one of the archeological expeditions in the early years of the twentieth century, like most other European archeologists positioned throughout the Ottoman Empire in preparation for World War I. According to Lawrence, "tribesmen and townsmen of Arabic-speaking Asia are of a different race", not "just men in different social and economic stages," because they have no "family resemblance" in the "working of their minds." To support and clarify his classification, he explained that the Arabs, "were a limited, narrow-minded people, whose inert intellects lay fallow in incurious resignation." "Their imaginations were vivid, but not creative." "They have no organizations of mind or body. They invented no systems of philosophy, no complex mythologies."

Despite his clearly extreme disdain of the Arabs, the key point of his view is not an isolated judgment, but the main theme of the Orientalist theories, past and current. It seems according to these theories, the Arabs cease to be Arabs once they settle down in cities and villages and evolve to different people, even if this was in the heartland of the Arabian Peninsula. Accordingly, the name Arabs is limited to the unsettled Arab tribes. At a first glance, the above Western classification does not seem to contradict with that put forward by the scholars of the Islamic Arab civilization in their distinction between the Arabs and Nabataeans. However, in actuality the two are substantially and radically different. The Orientalist’s classification seems to be a pure manipulation of words and labels while that by the Islamic Arab scholars seems more analytical and connected to the actual facts of history at their times. Because Western theories cannot be scientifically convincing without answering the second part of our question above regarding the origin of the peoples of the Arabian Peninsula, they put forward their theory of the original mother Semitic people. However, this answer, which is fully based on the Jewish-Christian theology, lacks any logical or
material evidence support, and therefore cannot be regarded as a scholarly or scientific answer, in my view. We do not have any scientifically-proven geographic, historic, or linguistic evidence, to prove the existence of an original Semitic group predating the rest.

Without a doubt, the success of the Orientalists in establishing the term “Semitic” as a “scientific” term to classify the languages and people of the Arabian Peninsula was the key factor behind the marginalization of the past Islamic Arab scholarly theories in our modern days. However, there is no science, whatsoever, behind this primarily theological, and even political term, which continues to play an important role in polarizing the people of the region and feeding their rivalries. Ironically, while Western theories dismiss past Islamic classification as a biased theological one lacking solid scholarly evidence, their core classifications are solely based on Jewish-Christian theology. While we continue finding Arabic names, poems, and texts on thousands of inscriptions throughout Arabia, we are yet to find one inscription that one can truly classify as a Semitic or proto-Semetic inscription.

The first scholar to use the term “Semitism” was the German seminarist, historian, and philologist August Ludwig von Schlözer, who coined it in the mid eighteen century, according to the Old Testament classifications of the peoples of Arabia and Egypt. He used it first to classify some languages of the Near East and North-East Africa, but today this term is used to classify both people and languages, and is regarded as a “scientific” fact by most specialists, including many Arab specialists, unfortunately. It may be useful to note here, even though the word Sām was not mentioned explicitly in the Quran, this name was not unknown to Islamic scholars. Some sources quoting al-Tarmadhī say Prophet Muhammad had said “Sam is the father of the Arabs”. Regardless, this is clearly not relevant to the modern Western classification “Semites”, which was
conceived as an alternative to the term “Arabs” as a broader classification term. To conclude, the Islamic Arab scholars classified the majority of the people of the Fertile Crescent as Nabataeans of Arab background, who had migrated at various stages north from the Arabian Peninsula. Yemen was the original land of all people of the peninsula according to their classification.

Today, and particularly during the last two decades, the Orientalist theories about the history of the Middle East have multiplied manyfolds to solidify older ones. Modern theories are building new and more elaborate theoretical structures by referencing earlier assumptions as undisputed historical “facts” that were proven by modern material evidence. The mass media and even some specialized Academic journals in the West are crowded with new theories claiming that the language of the Quran was translated with many mistakes from the Syriac, that Islam actually came two centuries after the currently agreed upon date by Muslims, that its geographical inception was not in Mecca or Hejaz, that Muhammad himself is not a real person but rather a legendary Persian personality, and that Islamic battles had never actually taken place. As for the verbally transmitted pre-Islamic Arabic poetry, many Orientalists claim it was fabricated by the Abbasid authors and historians after Islam, and would rush to quote from the doctoral thesis of well-known Egyptian historian Ṭāḥa Ḥusayn in the Sorbonne to support their arguments. Some would even go as far as assuming all references of the Islamic Arab civilization, particularly the Quran, are unreliable and cannot therefore be used for any truly scientific and scholarly research in the field of Arabic and Islamic history. And much more.

Naturally, not all Orientalists are of the same opinion. In fact, Western Scholars deserve most credit for discovering and reading crucial inscriptional evidence, which did not only enrich our detailed knowledge of past scripts and languages in the greater Arabian
Peninsula, but also verified, in my opinion, the validity of the theories and conclusions of the past Islamic Arab civilization. American scholar James A. Bellamy of the University of Michigan is just one out of many such scholars. Among his long list of accomplishments, was his re-reading of two of the most important pre-Islamic Standard Arabic Nabataean inscriptions, namely the al-Namārah and ʿAyn ʿAbdāt inscriptions. The first inscription, which contained the clearest and most comprehensive Standard Arabic text found so far, will be the subject of my detailed study later. Dated between 88 CE to 125 CE, the second inscription included the oldest fully Classical Arabic text recorded before Islam, in addition to being the only material evidence we have for the existence of Classical Arabic poem in that period. Together, the two inscriptions represent undisputed pre-Islamic evidence that Classical or Standard Arabic, and Classical Arabic poetry were deeply rooted in the Arabian Peninsula and were practiced many centuries before Islam. Since the ʿAyn ʿAbdāt inscription included Aramaic language text side by side Standard Arabic, it also proves my observations earlier, based on the theories of the scholars of the Islamic Arab civilization, about the roots and nature of the languages of the Arabian Peninsula and their relations to Classical and Standard Arabic. Because of its utmost importance, I will provide a detailed reading of the ʿAyn ʿAbdāt inscription in this introduction.

ʿAyn ʿAbdāt Inscription (88-125 CE)

This inscription was first introduced to the scholarly community in 1986, by Professor Avraham Negev of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. According to an article by Negev, it was discovered in 1979 by E. Orion, just outside the historical Nabataean city of ʿAbdāt, in the Negev desert. The city of ʿAbdāt was established around 300 BCE, and was the second most important Nabataean city
after Petra from the first century BCE until the beginning of the seventh century CE, when it was destroyed completely by a violent earthquake. It is believed that the Nabataean King Obados the First (96–85 BCE) is buried in this city.

The ‘Ayn ‘Abdāt inscription was first pictured and traced by Ada Yardeni in 1982. (5) It included six lines of text, all written in the Nabataean script. The first three and the sixth lines were written in the Aramaic language, according to Negev, but the fourth and fifth lines were clearly written in Classical Arabic language. The initial paragraph in the three Aramaic lines spoke of a person named Jurmillāhī bir Taymallāhī calling for prayers and offering a statue to his god ‘Abdāt, possibly King Obados the First (96–85 BCE). Unfortunately the second line was severely damaged and cannot be read. The sixth and last line restated the name Jurmillāhī, and indicated that he was the writer of the inscription, the author of the poem, or possibly both.

A picture of the ‘Ayn ‘Abdāt Inscription stone by Ada Yardanī. [31]
The entire inscription was initially read by J. Naveh and S. Shaked. In 1990, Professor Bellamy of the University of Michigan provided a new reading of the two Arabic lines, based entirely on Yardeni’s tracing of the stone. Despite their reading differences of the two Arabic lines, Naveh and Bellamy agreed on the main theme of the inscription, which they explained primarily through their readings of the Arabic poem.

According to Yardeni’s tracing, which was fully adopted by Bellamy except for reading the word ارد as ادد, the whole inscription can literally be translated from the Nabataean as follows: 

[....................]

In their readings, Naveh and Shaked translated the text of the two Arabic lines in modern literary Arabic and organized it as follows:

And he acts neither for benefit nor for favour. And if death claims us let me not be claimed. And if affliction seeks, let it not seek us.

Naveh and Shaked then explained the above as follows:

As mentioned above, Bellamy changed the word ارد ادد to ارد in his new reading of the two Arabic lines, citing a Bedouin conjuration from al-Zamakhshari. He then
assumed this word was أدادَ, a noun of a verb in the meaning of “become infected, suppurate”, which was combined with the following noun word to form the expression جرَحَ أدادَ. However, the soft diacritics of this combined expression do not match correctly according to the Arabic grammar rule regarding المضفِّع والمضاف إليه. Furthermore, according to Lisân al-ʿArab, the word أاد also means “an amazing or incredible matter” which is a more appropriate meaning. [17] Based on his reading, Bellamy re-wrote the two lines in the form of three classical Arabic poem hemistiches, as follows: [8]

فيفعلُ لَ فداً ولا اثرا
فكان هُنا يَبْعَنا الموتُ لَا أَبْغاهُ
فكان هُنا أدادَ جرَحَ لَا يَرْدِنا

Then, he explained the three verses together as follows:

For (Obodas -the god-) works without reward or favour, and he, when death tried to claim us, did not let it claim (us), for when a wound (of ours) festered, he did not let us perish. [8]

Both Bellamy and Naveh thought the writer was speaking about an actual wound. Naveh thought he was praying to the god to protect him from death or fatal injury. Bellamy thought he was thanking the god for his recovery from one. Thinking that this inscription was speaking about an actual wound is the common believe in the scholarly circles today. For example, based on Bellamy’s updated reading, Hoyland gave only a slightly different translation, as follows:

For he [Obodas -the god-] acts [expecting] no reward nor predilection. Though death has often sought us out, he afforded it no occasion; though I have often encountered wounding, he has not let it be my destruction. [14]
Because of the usual complex language and metaphors employed in Classical Arabic poetry, I believe a better reading of the two-line poem based on Yardeni’s original tracing and Bellamy’s reading of it should be:

فيفعْلُ لا فدا ولا أثرا فكان هّنَا يَبْغُن
الموتُ لا أبْغَهُ فِدا هّنَا أدَّدُ جَرْحَ لا يُرْدِنَا

However, after carefully tracing the inscription in Yardeni’s picture, I arrived to a new Arabic transliteration from the Nabataean, which differs with her tracing and Naveh and Shaked’s reading in four locations that will be pointed out in bold, below. Particularly, it updates Yardeni’s tracing in four words at the beginning of the first and fifth lines. It is very clear in Yardeni’s picture, and even in her own tracing, the letter Hāʾ of the word ابْغِه in the beginning of the sixth line was a medial shape Hāʾ. Furthermore, the letter Fāʾ of the following word فِدا was actually the letter Wāw and it was visibly attached to that letter Hāʾ. As for the letter Kāf in the word فِدا, it seems to me a clear letter Mīm.

After examining another zoomed-in image showing the first few words of the 3rd and 4th lines, I am convinced the letter sequence of the second line (4th line) was ادد ابْغِه مِن هنا ادد. Please examine that zoomed-in image and the tracing image below it, which are provided in the next page. Clearly the letter Hāʾ was in its initial shape and it was connected to the following letter Wāw, which was followed in turn by a classical Nabataean letter Mīm in its initial form. The sand specks below the lower left-pointing tail of the letter Wāw are not part of that letter.
A zoomed-in picture of the ‘Ayn ‘Abdât inscription stone area containing the first few words of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} lines which included Arabic poetry.

The following image incorporates my new tracing corrections and updates Yardeni’s original tracing image:

And here is my new updated literal translation of the inscription:

```
ذكير لمنفرا قدس عبد الها وذكير
]] من [........................]
جرم الهي بر تيم الهي صلم لقبل عبدت الها
فهمعلو لا فدا ولا اثرا فكن هنا بيفنا الموتو لا
ابفهو من هنا ادد جرحو لا بردنا
جرم الهي كتب يده
```
As for the word ًددٍ, I believe there are two other possibilities to read it. First, it could be أذ٠ or أذذ, in the meaning of suffering and pain, according to Lisān al-ʿArab. [17] Second, it could actually be the two words إذ ذا, also based on Lisān al-ʿArab, which explained that the demonstrative pronoun ذا was initially the letter Dhāl alone, used with soft fatḥah diacritic sound when pointing to masculine object and with soft kasrah diacritic sound when pointing to a feminine object. [17]

After re-arranging the words in the Arabic poem text of the fourth and fifth lines, and after adding soft vowel diacritics, dots, and missing letters Alif, I concluded four possible Classical Arabic poem readings, as follows:

Or:

Ifَيَفعَلْ لَا فِدا وَلَا أَثَرَا فِدَا وَلَا أَثَرَا أَذَذُ جُرَحَ لَا يُرْدِنَا

Or:

فِلَأِثْرَا وَلَا فِدَا أَذَذُ جُرَحَ لَا يُرْدِنَا

Or:

فِلَأِثْرَا وَلَا فِدَا أَذَذُ جُرَحَ لَا يُرْدِنَا

After discussing my first three readings with the prominent Iraqi poet Saadī Yūsuf, he suggested the forth one and corrected the soft diacritics in few words. He further indicated that these verses could be in al-Basīṭ البسيط not al-Ṭawīl الطويل, as Bellamy thought. An-
other prominent Iraqi poet, ʿAbd al-Razzāq ʿAbd al-Wāḥid, thought the two verses were not rymed according to any Classical Arabic poetry standard. The talented Iraqi poet, Ṣalāḥ ʿAwwād believes the fourth reading is the most likely one. He thinks while the verses do have some indications for al-Ṭawīl الطویل they were actually in al-Rajz رجز, and particularly in Majzūʾ al-Rajz (portioned Rajz) which is quite common in Classical Arabic poetry. My English translations of the two poem verses, based on the three distinct meanings of the word اد of my new four readings above, and even based on my new revised version of Bellamy’s reading of Yardeni’s tracing, are as follow:

It (death) will act regardless of offering or predilection, for it is in here (life) to seek us.

Death, which I do not seek from here (life), is an amazing act: a wound that does not kill us.

Or:

It (death) will act regardless of offering or predilection, for it is in here (life) to seek us.

Death, which I do not seek from here (life), is a suffering: a wound that does not kill us.

Or:

It (death) will act regardless of offering or predilection, for it is in here (life) to seek us.

Death, I do not seek from here (life), because it is only a wound that does not kill us.

To conclude my study of the ʿAyn ʿAbdāt inscription I think it is important to point out here three observations, in relation to our earlier discussion in this introduction:
First: Reading the Aramaic text in this inscription one can see clearly that the Aramaic language could not been an independent language parallel to Arabic in its roots or an older language, as most Orientalist theories claim, but a dialect of Nabataean Arabic, just as it was classified by the scholars of the Islamic Arab civilization. Evidently, any Arabic reader would find no dire difficulty understanding what the Aramaic line of this inscription wanted to say. All the following words clearly seem to have Arabic roots:

ذكير (كثير الذكر) لمنقرأ (لمن قرأ)، قدس (قداس)، إلهه (الله)، لقب

(لقبول)، صنم (صنمن)، بر (بين)، كتب يده (كتابة يده)

Second: The writer used Aramaic to call for prayers to the god, but he used Standard Arabic when writing his Classical poem about death. This support our observation earlier that Standard Arabic was not the tongue of Quraysh or Muḍar– since the city of ʿAbdāt was far north in the Nagev desert–, the tongue of another specific group, or the tongue of a specific geographical location. Standard Arabic was the poetic and formal communication language used by most people of the Arabian Peninsula, north and south. In a way, it is the collective record of the roots of their tongues.

Third: After reading the solid and eloquent two lines of the Classical Arabic poem in this inscription, which were written at least four centuries before the birth of Prophet Mohammad, one cannot even speculate that Classical Arabic or pre-Islamic Classical Arabic poems came after Islam, or were invented by the Abbasid linguists and historians, as many Orientalists claim today.

Because any original and scholarly research should be based first on material evidence, then secondly on documented historical references, and thirdly on a sound scientific analysis of the information provided by such evidence and references, I will restudy in
this book, with an open mind and a neutral approach, the key material evidence presented by Western scholars to support their mainstream theories and conclusions regarding the nature and history of Classical Arabic, and Arabic language in general, before Islam. Specifically, I chose for my study three inscriptive samples: Nabataean, Musnad, and Akkadian. The Nabataean and Akkadian samples are from northern Arabia, where a majority spoke Arabic with various dialects in a vast area extending from northern Syria to Anbar and Babylon of Iraq in the east and including northern Hejaz. The third sample is from Yemen in southern Arabia which is known for its unique dialect and whose people constituted an important source of repeated migrations to northern Arabia.

For Nabataean, I decided first to only read the *al-Namārah* inscription as a sample Nabataean inscription, but I then decided to add several additional inscriptions to explain and support my reading of that inscription. Particularly, I reread six other Nabataean inscriptions using the word *nafs* in the meaning of tomb, according to Western scholars’ interpretation, including the Nabataean *Umm al-Jimāl* inscription. These six inscriptions were the only inscriptions using this word in that possible meaning, among more than three hundreds Musnad, Nabataean, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Palmerian inscriptions I read to conduct my study. Because *al-Namārah* inscription is complex in its language and script, its reading occupied most of the pages of this book.

Without a doubt, the discovery of the *al-Namārah* stone occupied for more than a century the front stage among modern Western Nabataean discoveries. It was used heavily to support their theories about Arabic, language and script, and it is seen by many today as an undisputed evidence to the accuracy of their research and theories in comparison to that of the scholars of the Islamic Arab civilizations. The key importance of *al-Namārah* inscription accord-
ing to the Orientalist theories was in its usage of connected letters resembling cursive Arabic, which proved their assumptions regarding the origins of the modern Arabic script. This subject, which I discussed in an article regarding the history of the Arabic script, is a complex one, and is beyond the scope of this book. However, while studying al-Namārah, I was intrigued by the many differences in the readings of its Arabic language text. This was my major initial reason to conduct a comprehensive linguistic and historical research, which took me about a year to read the inscription.

As for the Musnad inscriptions of southern Arabia, I chose a new, never read before, inscription from Yemen. Even though it was the first Musnad inscription I read from scratch, and it was longer than al-Namārah inscription, its reading did not take me very long. All what I needed was Lisān al-ʿArab by Ibn Manẓūr!

Finally, for an Akkadian inscrptional sample, I chose to read part of the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh, the oldest discovered literary work in the world. Specifically, I did a comparative reading of the two dreams of Gilgamesh as told by two different tablet editions of the epic, 1000 years apart. The first from the Babylonian edition dated to about 2000-2100 BCE. The second is from the Assyrian edition dated to around 1000 BCE. In my readings, I utilized five historical Arabic etymological references and demonstrated that the Akkadian language was substantially Arabic, and that the Epic of Gilgamesh used Classical Arabic. This is not a personal speculation. I would like to invite the readers to decide on their own whether or not the following sample lines, transliterated from the epic as is, are old Classical Arabic or not:

جَحْمَشْنِ حَمْمَشْ إِنَّ ذَا أَروِكَ اِثْمَاَلَ شَأَّانَدَكَ
ذَوَو دَانَ أَشْتَدَّبْكَ كَا ذَا
Several respectable Western scholars have read and re-read key pre-Islamic inscriptions, including \textit{al-Namārah}, \textit{Gilgamesh Epic}, and \textquote{ʿAyn ‘Abdāt}. However, a number of their readings were weak in their language, contradicting in their meaning, and superficial in their analysis. Most orientalists read these inscriptions by referencing Aramaic, Hebrew, and even Greek, first. Many explained their non-harmonious Arabic readings by invoking their theoretical assumptions that the languages of the Akkadians, Nabataeans and Yemenis were not substantially Arabic languages and therefore cannot be measured and analyzed according to the Standard Arabic language grammar rules and tools, which were introduced centuries later. However, my objective reading of many of these inscriptions prove otherwise. Here is the fact: the linguists of the Abgasid era did not invent Standard Arabic grammar but extracted it, with an incredible skilfull and scholarly elegance, from the references of their time, like the text of the Quran, pre-Islamic poetry, and other available historical sources. Some of the Nabataean pre-Islamic inscriptions discovered today, like \textit{al-Namārah} and \textquote{ʿAyn ‘Abdāt}, can deservedly be among these reference sources.
PART 1

Nabataean Inscriptional Sample:
The *al-Namarāh* Inscription
Introduction to Part One

The inscription of al-Namārah is by far the most important, controversial, and challenging pre-Islamic Arabic inscription—it is the earliest discovered, but youngest dated inscription of only four Nabataean inscriptions, considered by Western scholars today as fully Arabic. According to some, it is the oldest Arabic document on record with relatively good classic Arabic language. Dated 328 AD and written in clear cursive forms, it was hailed by many scholars as definite evidence that the modern Arabic script had evolved from the late Nabataean script. Many prominent Muslim scholars (who lived only a few centuries after the script’s assumed birth around the 3rd century) believed it was derived from the Arabic Musnad script.\textsuperscript{[22]} al-Namārah inscription is also extensively cited by historians as an important reference to the historical events of the early decades of the prominent pre-Islamic Arab Lakhmid kingdom (al-Lakhmiyyūn) of Hīrah, modern day Iraq. Despite more than a century since its discovery in 1901, the reading of al-Namārah inscription is still questionable, even at present time.

Dussaud, the French archeologist who discovered al-Namārah stone near Damascus and transferred it to Paris for further examination, had possibly misread the most important part of the inscription—the first line. Based on his reading, it is generally be-
lieved today that al-Namārah was the gravestone of king Umruʾū al-Qays al-Bidʾ, the second king of the kingdom of al-Ḥīrah and the most significant pre-Islamic Arab leader. Dussaud’s reading was partially influenced by an unfortunate ambiguity in today’s Arabic language grammar textbooks. To make matters worse, other scholars who read al-Namārah in the past century uncritically strived to uphold Dussaud’s reading fundamentals thus reinforcing its equally uncritical acceptance. To prove, at any cost, that al-Namārah was Umruʾū al-Qayʾ’s tombstone, some were even willing to present readings that manifestly contradicted the rules of Arabic grammar, geographical facts, and recorded history.

In order to re-read al-Namārah inscription, I found it necessary to re-read the Umm al-Jimāl Arabic Nabataean inscription as well, since the two inscriptions had contained identical words and shared similar historical facts and timeframes. To read the two inscriptions, I had to also read the Raqqūsh and numerous other Nabataean, Palmyran, and Arabic Musnad inscriptions to study the linguistic usage of similar words and phrases.

Regarding al-Namārah inscription, I will demonstrate, using the tools of the Arabic language and through in-depth analytical reading, that it is not the tombstone of King Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū, or even about him. Written, most likely, several years after his death, the inscription recorded the important accomplishments of a previously unknown personality, ʿAkdi, who was possibly one of Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū army generals, an Arab tribal leader who collaborated with the Romans, or maybe a top ranking Arab soldier in the Byzantine Roman army. According to my reading, the opening sentence was only a swearing (vow) to the soul of King Umruʾ al-Qays bin ʿAmrū, similar to the customary opening sentence used by Arabs and Muslims since the 7th century, Bism Allāh al-Rahmān al-Raḥīm. The main topic of the inscription was
the apparent defeat of the prominent Midḥḥij tribe of southern Arabia, in the hands of ‘Akdi’s fighters and the possible subsequent control of part of Yemen by the Byzantine Roman Empire. The final sentence concluded the inscription by informing the reader about ‘Akdi’s death, maybe in the battlefield, and stating that his parents should be happy and proud of him. This narration is consistent with how soldiers are typically mourned.

As it is always true with reading historical inscriptions, no one reading can be definitely the correct one. Going over major previous readings of al-Namārah, particularly of the key disputable words in the text, I can not rule out completely other reading that concluded this inscription was actually about King Umruʾū al-Qays. The reading by Bellamy was by far the most observing of Classical Arabic sentence structures and worth full attention. I will therefore present an alternative reading taking into account his major conclusions, particularly regarding the word ‘Akdi.

I am hopeful that my new readings of al-Namārah and Umm al-Jimāl inscriptions would prompt scholars in this field to re-examine the current readings in a fundamentally different way. I hope that future history textbooks and the Louvre museum will not state as certain that al-Namārah inscription stone was the gravestone or epitaph of King Umruʾū al-Qays bin ‘Amrū. I also hope that future publications would correct the obvious current reading errors of the Umm al-Jimāl Nabataean inscription. As a linguistic benefit, I am optimistic that future Arabic language grammar textbooks would cease from repeating a common grammatical error regarding simple feminine demonstrative pronouns by re-examining a poem line from Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik. Certainly, my new readings could add even more critical, historical, and linguistic importance to al-Namārah inscription itself, since the language used in this inscription was clearly and essentially Classical Arabic. This can incontrovertibly prove that the
grammar and language of the Quran are deeply rooted and developed in Arabia, long before Islam. That is, they are not Islamic or Abbasid inventions as many Western scholars claim.

Because a successful reading of any involved inscription, like *al-Namārah*, requires a comprehensive and organized vision, I divided my reading into convenient sections corresponding to the main topics conceived as preliminary tools to read the full inscription. I have also provided detailed sketches and images to guide the reader into a full visual understanding of the topic of this particular study. Throughout this chapter, I will transliterate (following Library of Congress rules), translate, and write in Arabic various words and phrases to benefit the expert as well as the non-expert readers.
Historical and Geographical Overview

It is problematic to read the inscriptions of *Umm al-Jimāl* and *al-Namārah* without studying first the historical events taking place during the second and third centuries CE — particularly during the early decades of the third century CE and during the reign of King *Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū* of the city of *al-Hīrah*. The name of this king was mentioned in the first line of *al-Namārah* inscription. Arab and Muslim historians knew *Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū*, as *Umruʾū al-Qays al-Bidʾ*, meaning the first. (The desert town of *al-Hīrah* is located less than 30 miles south of Babylon, the famed Mesopotamian city that had fallen to the Persians over eight centuries earlier.)

The first question that comes to mind regarding *al-Namārah* inscription is the following: Why was this inscription written in the Nabataean Language and script, which was limited according to the Western scholars to southern Syria and northern Hejaz, while King *Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū* was from *al-Hīrah* of Iraq? I have answered this question in the introduction of this book where I pointed out that the Nabataean language was the pre-Islamic language of Babylon and nearby *al-Hīrah* city according to past Islamic Arab scholars.

Luckily, the *al-Namārah* inscription had provided a precise date that can easily be checked against the more accurate dates pro-
vided by the remains left by the three main power players in the Arabian Peninsula during that time: the Persians, the Roman Byzantines, and the Yemenite Arabs. Several other Arab kingdoms existed too, but they were either very weak or tightly under the control of either the Persians or the Romans who fought for the conquest of new territories in the peninsula. After the fall of the northern Arab Nabataean kingdom of Petra at the hands of the Romans (105 CE), the kingdom of Yemen became the only Arab power challenging their rule in the south. Because of repeated Roman attacks, and in order to defend their territory, the Yemeni kings had occasionally forged close ties with the Persians. \([6][40]\)

According to several Muslim scholars, 'Amrū bin 'Uday, the father of King Umruʿū al-Qays bin 'Amrū, was the first king of the ethnically Yemenite Lakhmid kingdom (later, called al-Manādhirah Kingdom by the Arabs) to designate al-Ḥīrah as the capital city. The Ḥīrah Kingdom became the most powerful member of a tribal alliance known as the Tannūkh Kingdom, which was established around the 1st century CE by Mālik bin Māhir of Yemen. The Tannūkh Kingdom controlled a vast area extending from ʿŪmān in the south to al-Ḥīrah and the Syrian Desert near Damascus in the north, occupying the entire west coast of the Persian Gulf, historically known as the Gulf of Baṣrah. Islamic Arab era scholars linked the Lakhmid and Tannūkh kingdom to the powerful Maʿad tribe of Yemen. The three kings who ruled Tannūkh before king 'Amrū bin 'Uday visited Ḥīrah extensively and regularly, but probably had their capital in Bahrain or even Yemen. Most of Ḥīrah's original population had eventually moved north to the Anbār area before it was made the capital city by King 'Amrū bin 'Uday. \([18][26]\)

King 'Amrū bin 'Uday's father was probably a northern Arab. His mother was the sister of Judhaymah al-Abrash who was the first king and the founder of the Tannūkh Kingdom dynasty. He main-
tained close relations with the Persians and ruled before and after the time of King *Ardashīr bin Bābik* (224-241 CE), the first king of the third and last Sassanid dynasty, and the son of the Zaradust priest, *Bābik*, who had earlier toppled the last king of the second Sassanid dynasty. \[^{[19]}\]

It seems that *Judhaymah al-Abrash*, a Yemenite Arab, had decided to offer his sister to a northern Arab from the *Ḥīrah* area to establish closer blood relation with the northern tribes. The practice of marrying sisters and daughters to link with other tribes is quite common among Arab tribes. As we shall see later, both of the words *Tannūkh* and *Judhaymah* will appear briefly in the important Arabic Nabataean inscription, *Umm al-Jimāl*, found south of Damascus and believed to be dated 250 CE. According to sources, King *ʿAmrū bin ʿUday* took advantage of the temporary weakening of the Sassanid Persian Empire after the death of King *Ardashīr bin Bābik* and decided to invade the Persian-controlled Arab areas of Bilād al-ʿIrāq (Mesopotamia) with the help of the Romans and the Arab tribes north and west of *Ḥīrah*. \[^{[26]}[^{[40]}\] His action had therefore reversed the traditional alliance of the previous, purely Yemenite, kings of *Tannūkh* with the Persians.

After the death of King *ʿAmrū bin ʿUday* in the year 288 CE, his son, *Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū* took over and decided to expand on his father’s attacks even further to include all Persian-controlled areas in Arabia. He was the first Arab leader who seriously attempted to unify all parts of the Arabian Peninsula in a single kingdom challenging both the Romans and Persians, and was therefore considered the most revered man in Arabia before Islam. Taking advantage of further conflicts within the Sassanid Persian royal family, he had even crossed the Persian (Arabic) Gulf to raid the heartland of Persia. Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry spoke of several virulent raids by the Arab tribes against the Persians in Bilād al-ʿIrāq. It is known that poems
are the most important record-keeping evidence of the Arab tribes who traditionally relied on memory, not writing, to document their events. King ʿUmruʾū al-Qays succeeded in bringing most of the Arabian Peninsula under his control except for the powerful Yemen and the Roman-controlled Arab kingdom in Syria, known as al-Ghasāsinah Kingdom. History recorded that, because the Romans supported the campaigns of ʿUmruʾū al-Qays, the Persians were forced to accept a deal with the Romans (298 CE) whereby they ceded many of their previously captured territories in Mesopotamia.

A decade later, a new powerful king took over Sassanid Persia. He was Shabur II (309-379 CE) known to the Arabs under the nickname Dhū al-Aktāf ذو الاكتاف (the owner of the shoulders). It was believed that he had pierced his Arab prisoners’ shoulders to tie them together after captivity. Shabur II regained control over most of the areas lost to the Romans and their Arab allies. It was said that he had captured Ḥīrah, the seat of King ʿUmruʾū al-Qays, after a bloody battle in the year 225 CE, three years before the date mentioned in al-Namārah inscription. [18][19] However, it is not known whether King ʿUmruʾū al-Qays had survived that battle. Only after the discovery of al-Namārah and subsequent Dussaud’s reading had experts claimed that King ʿUmruʾū al-Qays had escaped to Damascus and died in the city of Bosra on December 7th, 223 Bosra (equivalent to 228 CE), which is the date mentioned in the inscription.

I have to mention, however, that there is no other evidence supporting the above claim except the supposed evidence of al-Namārah inscription. Nonetheless, based on my reading of the first line of the inscription as a vow to his soul, I am prone to think that he died earlier, possibly in the battle of Ḥīrah, 325 CE. After the death of king ʿUmruʾū al-Qays, the Romans and Persians fought extensively all over Arabia until the year 363 CE when they finally signed a treaty acknowledging Persian supremacy over Iraq. [19]
Consequent to the fierce Arab attacks on the Sassanid forces stationed in Mesopotamia (330–370 CE), descendants of king Umruʾū al-Qays were allowed to go back to al-Ḥīrah and rule under the protection of the Persians. Finally, the Muslim Arabs defeated the Persians in the battle of al-Qādisiyyah (638 CE) which effectively put an end to the Sassanid Empire. [18][40]

In the early decades of the 4th century CE, Yemen, the seat of the oldest known Arab kingdoms in the peninsula, was a prime target for both the Romans and the Persians. The Yemenites were generally referred to by the rest of the Arabs as al-Ḥimīriyyīn, and depending on whom and when, Yemen was additionally known as Midhḥij or Maʾad. The tribes of Midhḥij and Maʾad are the largest and most powerful tribes in Yemen. Being the most powerful among the Arab kingdoms of that time, Yemen had maintained its status as an independent kingdom.

As mentioned earlier, King Umruʾū al-Qays was never able to control Yemen. In fact, during his time around the year 300 CE, a Yemenite king named Shammar Yuharʾish, was able to unify Yemen including Hadramawt to create a powerful kingdom. [6] If logic matters, it would be impossible that a defeated king Umruʾū al-Qays, who had just lost his capital city of al-Ḥirah in a bloody battle around the year 225 CE, would accomplish the highest military victory of his times—the conquest of Yemen—at the same time of al-Namārah (328 CE.)

Reportedly, king Shammar Yuharʾish had maintained close relations with the Persians by sending a diplomatic mission to the Sasanian court at Ctesiphon, al-Madāʾin, Iraq. [6] Khawārizmī, a prominent Muslim scholar who lived during the early Islamic centuries called him Shimr Yarʾish or Abū Karab Bin Ifrīqis, which could mean he was of African origins as per the use of the word Ifrīqis. No
diacritic vowel was placed on the first word *shimr* شمر. This could indicate that his name was either *Shimr* — a classic Arabic name—, or *Shammar* — a well-known name of a prominent Arab tribe in northern *Najd*. I do believe though, it is the former because *al-Namārah* inscription has one *mīm* letter in the name. *Khawārizmī* further wrote that King *Shimr* was called *Yarʿish* (trembling) because he was suffering of a nervous condition that made him tremble. According to *Khawārizmī*, King *Shimr Yarʿish* was, as claimed by some, nicknamed king *Dhū al-Qirnayn* (the one with two horns) contrary to the belief of many who thought this was a nickname for the Macedonian conqueror, Alexander the Great. Further, *Khawārizmī* listed King *Shimr Yarʿish* as the 20th king of Yemen before Islam and listed king *Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū* as the 21st king of *al-Ḥīrah* before Islam. [18] This means, the two kings had ruled approximately during the same period. In fact, the dates reported by *Khawārizmī*’s coincide well with the dates provided by historians today. Most importantly, this coincidence would make it highly probable that King *Shimr Yarʿish* was indeed the king of Yemen during the times of *al-Namārah* inscription.

While it is not impossible that King *Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū* could have died in the year 328 CE, the historical evidence, including *al-Namārah* inscription, indicates otherwise. Again, I do believe that he died between the years 309 CE after *Shabur II* took power, in 325 CE, the year *al-Ḥīrah* was captured. As we shall see later, when reading *al-Namārah*, the historical analysis above could become vital to the understanding of the events, dates, and names appearing in the inscription.
On the Usage of the Word *nafs* by the Nabataeans and Arabs

Before proceeding to the details of reading *al-Namārah* and *Umm al-Jimāl*, it is important to start with an introduction to the meanings and usages of the second word in both inscriptions. Specifically, one needs to answer the following question: Did the Arabs, and the Nabataean Arabs particularly, really use the word *nafs* in the meaning of tomb or funerary monument? According to Western scholars this word was individually used by the Arabs and Nabataeans in the meaning of stelé. In their reading of the word, they cited old Musnad inscriptions of Yemen and eastern Arabia, in addition to the Nabataean, Hebrew, and Palmarian inscriptions, as I will explain later.

As for the Musnad inscriptions, the Arabs of Yemen and eastern Arabia used the phrase *nafs wa-qabr* in the majority of their tomb inscriptions.

Although studying these Musnad inscriptions in details is beyond the scope of this book, the natural and obvious meaning of this term should be “soul and tomb”. Possibly, the Arabs believed historically the souls of the dead stay with them, but changed their beliefs after Islam, as it is clear from the following Quranic verse (39: 42)

لاَ تَيَوَفِّي الْأَنفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا

I believe the mere usage of the word *nafs* together with *qabr* indicates that it was used...
in the meaning of soul. According to what I learned from the Yemeni researcher Fu‘ād Yahyā Hamzah, a lecturer in the archeology department of the Dhūmār University, modern discoveries of ancient Yemeni tombs clearly indicated that the term nafs wa qabr was not the only term used on the burial stones. In the Jawf providence, according to Hamzah, inscriptions used nafs wa-naṣb, naṣb wa-bayt, or just nafs. Also, in some Sabaean tombs they used qayf rather than nafs, maskan rather than bayt, or nasb instead of naṣb, and possibly others.

The diverse linguistic usages above indicate, in my view, these words were utilized freely according to their meanings. Therefore, if the word nafs was used in the meaning of qabr, they would not have used the word qabr additionally. Arabic language references confirmed the appropriate usages of all the above words, but they did not hint of the usage of nafs in the meaning of qabr. For example, Lisān al-ʿArab clarified that bayt was used in the meaning of qabr, and that maskan (from sukun or stillness) was another word for bayt. As for nasb it clarified that it was used in the meaning of statue or just a stone to mark a location. If the word nafs was a synonym to the word nasb or funerary monument, they would not have used it together with nasb. It is not logical to assume that the word nafs was used alone and commonly for centuries in the meaning of qabr but had somehow disappeared from all Arabic linguistic references. It is also noteworthy to mention, that Musnad inscriptions from Yemen or elsewhere did not use demonstrative pronouns, as with the Nabataean inscriptions, which can complicate our analysis or the usages of the above words.

To enrich this study, I would like to bring attention to couple more reading possibilities of the phrase nafs wa-qabr. First, based on my reading of the Umm al-Jimāl (I will discuss in a later chapter) it is possible that this phrased was pronounced nafsu qabr in the meaning
of “itself tomb of” or “this is the tomb of” which is the common phrase used on the tombs of the Arabs after Islam, and of other neighboring people. Second, due to the similarity of the letters Fā’ and ʿAyn in the Liḥyānī and Sabāi styles of Musnad, the word nafs could possibly be naʿsh, which means coffin or death bed.

In Arabic, the three-letter word nafs is rather complex; consequently, I have some explaining to do. The root of the word is nafas, meaning “breath” from which two main types of usage were derived. The first includes “soul”, “life”, “person”, or “being”; the second “self” as in “same”, “identical”, “itself”, “herself”, and “herself”. [17] This first primary usage could even be traced to the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh where the god-man name Ut.napištu.m (the Sumerian Babylonian mythological prototype which inspired the story of Biblical Noah who survived the flood) can literally be translated as “eternal great soul-being”. The word napištu was used in Sumerian, Akkadian, and Babylonia in the meaning of “life” “being” or “soul”. Arabic used nafs, Hebrew used napšā and Aramaic Syriac used napištu. The Nabataeans used several of these words due to their geographical location and diversity. The Nabataean tomb inscriptions used l.napš.h extensively in the meaning of “for himself”; but the words napšā and napštā had also appeared in few other cases. [13]

Palmyrenes used to portray the dead either in relief or in statues placed on tombs.[33] They usually referred to a statue as salam (as in Arabic ṣanam). But they might have had also referred to it —although rarely— as napšā, or napes to mean “the same” or “the identical”, which 1) it conforms to the second main usage of the word in Arabic just mentioned, and 2) it fits well when naming a personal statue. The Nabataeans, instead, used an architectonic form (a cone topped by inflorescence) placed on a cylindrical or square base that they might have, arguably, referred to as napšā, or napes,
too. These memorial stones can be carved or engraved into rock faces with an identifying inscription that occasionally accompany them and is normally located in the base. In the graveyards of Umm al-Jimal south of Damascus, one can notice that most inscriptions included the name of the dead alone inscribed on individual rectangular stones placed vertically.

In his indispensable book about Madāʾin Šāliḥ tombs inscriptions, Healey further opined that this “Pyramidal stele carved in the rock” could explain the “mysterious” absence of inscriptions from the numerous tombs found in the city of Petra, which he believes had banned tombs inscriptions. Not surprisingly though, the al-Namārah and Umm al-Jimāl stones and their inscriptions do not even conform to the physical and inscriptional characteristics of a typical so-called Nabataean napš, which rarely included any type of text, except for an occasional name. Furthermore, the majority of the hundreds of Nabataean tombs’ inscriptions found so far had consistently used the introductory phrase dnh kaprʾ or dnh qabrʾ.

Although unlikely, it is not impossible that the Nabataeans had explicitly used the word nafash for their architectonic-shaped personal memorial monuments, instead of their frequently used word naṣb (as in Arabic نصب), and for monuments they erected for their idols. It is my firm opinion, though, that scholars who read Umm al-Jimāl, which was discovered after al-Namārah, rushed to replicate Dussaud and other scholars’ readings of the word napš to mean “memorial monument” or “funerary monument”. Some even stretched its meaning to shahidat qabr, which can be translated to “tombstone” or “burial monument”. To emphasize the usage of the word napš, Healey referenced Le Nabatéen, by the French scholar Jean Gantineau (1899-1956) who defined the word as such, offering only two Nabataean inscriptions as evidence: al-Namārah and Umm al-Jimāl which was called the Fahrū inscription, initially.
To be accurate, I must indicate here that the reading of the word *nafs* in the meaning of funerary monument by Gantineau and Healey was not only based on their reading of that word in *al-Namārah* and *Umm al-Jimāl*, but also on the reading by the German scholar Enno Littmann (1875-1958) of three inscriptions in his book “Semitic inscriptions of South Huran”, namely the *Umm al-Jimāl*, *Bin Ḥūr*, and *Milḥ* inscriptions. These three inscriptions were the only ones among more than 107 inscriptions he read in his book, which is thought to use the word *nafs* in that manner. In his study, Littmann based his reading on that of the German scholar Ulios Euting (1839-1913) and the French scholar Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau (1846-1923), who read two Nabataean inscriptions with that word—which were three centuries older than *Umm al-Jimāl*—, and the reading of the French Scholar Eugène-Melchior de Vogüé (1848-1910) of a third older inscription. The three inscriptions are: the Strasbourg inscriptions discovered by Euting in *al-ʿUlá* north of Ḥijāz and dated 8-9 CE, the Madeba inscription discovered by Ganneau in the Medeba area east of the Jordan river and dated 37-38 CE, and the *Bin Ḥur* inscription discovered by de Vogüé in *Umm al-Jimāl* and dated around 150 CE.

While Healey thought in his reading of only two out of around seventy skillfully read inscriptions in his book, that the word *napšʾ* was in the meaning of “the burial monument” and the other word, *napštʾ*, as “the two burial monuments,” my reading of the two inscriptions led me to a different conclusion. After analyzing their texts, I concluded that the word *napšʾ* was used in its common two meanings, namely “soul” or “itself”.

To illustrate the past readings of the word *nafs* —in the meaning of tomb—in the earliest discovered Nabataean inscriptions, and the disadvantages of referencing them in future studies, I will discuss the readings of the Strasbourg and Madeba inscriptions in the
mid nineteenth century, which are possibly the earliest references. Then, I will discuss the readings of the Milḥ and Bin Ḥūr inscriptions in the early twentieth century. As for the readings of al-Namārah and Umm al-Jimāl inscriptions, they are the main subject of this book and I will allocate separate chapters for them. Finally, I will discuss a newly discovered inscription in Umm al-Jimāl—the Shahīm inscription—whose initial readers’ haste in assuming the word nafs meant tomb was the key factor in preventing them from offering a lucid reading.

However, before delving into the reading details of these inscriptions, I must point out that I did not see pictures of three of the seven inscriptions above. Specifically, I was not able to obtain pictures of Strasbourg, Milḥ, and Bin Ḥūr. This prevented me from retracing them to make sure their earlier tracings were accurate, and would undoubtedly make them unreliable references, in my opinion. I say this not to question the integrity of anyone but to follow the scientific scholarly procedure. Tracing mistakes by scholars can play a decisive role in their inability to provide coherent readings. As we saw earlier, the unfortunate tracing mistakes of the ʿAyn ʿAbdāt inscription prevented a solid reading of its Arabic poem lines. And as we shall see later, Dussaud’s tracing mistakes of al-Namārah were among the main factors behind our inability to obtain a sound Arabic reading of its inscription for more than a century, and Littmann’s careless tracing of the Umm al-Jimāl inscription was the main reason to have a completely inaccurate reading of its text. Furthermore, because some of the Nabataean inscriptions did not contain complete texts, examining their actual pictures can play a crucial role in their readings. As we know, the meanings of words can change depending on their positions in sentences and paragraphs.
Strasbourg Inscription (8-9 CE)

The Strasbourg inscription was possibly the earliest Nabataean inscription used by Western scholars to define the word *nafs* as tomb, but its stone was lost according to Healey, who translated the inscription literally as follows:

```
دا نفشا دي ابر بر
مقيمو بر مقيممل دي بنه
له أبوهي ببرح ألو
شنت1 لحررت ملك نيطو
```

Healey translated the opening phrase in English as follows:

This is the funeral monument of Abār son of Moqimu son of Moqimel which his father built for him..

Translated to Arabic:

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لقتلب ترمابي لابا
ابورى مرممل دی بنه
له أبوهي ببرح ألو
شنت1 لحررت ملك نيطو
```

Healey’s reading is a good one if we assume that the word *nafs* meant soul, as in Yemen inscriptions, but the usage of the word *أب*, or “built”, afterward makes such reading unlikely as it is not possible to physically build a soul. Despite my reservation on reading an inscription without seeing its picture, or at least its tracings, I read it initially based on Healey’s literal translation as follows:

```
هو ذا نفسُ (نفسُ أو نفسه القبر أو النصب) ذي (العائد اللى) ابار بن مقيممل
بن مقيممال الذي بناه Leh أبوه...?
```

Translated to English:
This is the same one (possibly same tomb or monument) that belong to Abār son of Muqīm son of Muqīmʾl which his father built for him ...

In this reading, the first word دﻲ is from ذﻲ which means in this case “belonging to”. The word ذا in the beginning of the inscription seems to be the word ذا , the masculine demonstrative pronoun in Arabic, since the letter dāl and Dhāl have the same shape in Nabataean. The first question on this inscription should be, why did it use a masculine pronoun to point to a feminine noun, and why didn’t it use the common Nabataean demonstrative pronoun dnh? The explanations by some Western scholars that ذا was an Aramaic Hebrew feminine demonstrative pronoun with roots in Phoenician, which was used by the Nabataean, is simply not convincing. As we will see in a later chapter this word was used in the Raqqush inscription after a masculine, qabru, not a feminine word. See word #4 in Figure 6. I believe this word was not used by the Nabataean as a direct demonstrative pronoun to masculine or feminine nouns exclusively—in this or other inscriptions listed by Healey—, but rather as a neutral pronoun to define and confirm. It was probably used in the meaning of ذا as in ذا ِ ِ ِ and ذا ِ for masculine, or in the meaning of ذا as in ذا ِ ِ ِ or ذا ِ for feminine. The direct demonstrative pronoun used in the Nabataean burial inscription was undisputedly dnh or ذا.

To put it in its correct place we must go to the classic references of the Arabic language. Ibn Manẓūr wrote the following in Liṣān al-ʿArab:

The word ذا is a noun used to point to any object seen by the speaker or listener. It was said the noun of it is the letter Dhāl with fāṭḥah. It was also said: the letter Dhāl alone is the noun being pointed to, and it is unknown until what follows it is explained. [17]
Then he added:

They used the soft vowel fatḥah with the letter Dhāl to distinguish a masculine from feminine as in their saying ذا أخوك, but they say ذي اختوك adding soft kasrah vowel to the letter Dhāl for feminine; then they added alif with fatḥah for masculine, and added Ya’ with kasrah for feminine. [17]

We have two conclusions from the above. First, the letter Dhāl alone was possibly used as a demonstrative pronoun in older inscriptions. Second, the object being pointed to can either be visible or invisible and unknown until we read the rest of the text.

After my quick initial reading of the Strasbourg inscription, I decided to examine it further, especially after seeing another inscription (will discuss it later) using ذا نفس as its first two words. The two were the only ones among the hundreds of Nabataean inscriptions I read, all of which used the word dnh. Even though I could not find a picture of the second inscription either, fortunately Littmann provided a tracing of it. Based on my new information, I am able to give a second reading for the word nafs in the Strasbourg inscription.

According to my new modern Arabic reading, the opening sentence was either:

ذَانفْسٍ (هذا، اشارة الى قبر او نصب، إنفس، اي إلى نفس) ذي إبار (كنية) بن مقيم بن مقيمَاء الذي بناه له أبيه ...

Or:

ذَانفْسٍ (هذا، اشارة الى قبر او نصب، إنفس، اي إلى نفس) ذي إبار (كنية) بن مقيم بن مقيمَاء الذي بناه له أبيه ...

Translating both to English:
This (possibly tomb or monument) to the soul of Dhī Abār son of Muqīm son of Muqīmʾl which his father built for him ...

Accordingly, I believe the writer used the Arabic masculine demonstrative pronoun ذَا but either spelled it ذَا or just ذ. In the second case, the writer omitted the letter Alif as it was done in the rest of the inscription. In both cases the name of the object being pointed to is not listed but assumed, namely it is either qabr for tomb or naṣb for monument, both of which are masculine.

In other words, I read the phrase of the first two words together ذانّفﺲ. The letter Alif after Dhāl can be either part of ذَا or part of the following word إنّفﺲ in the meaning of إلَى نفس or إنّفﺲ. Not pronouncing the letter Lām before words like nafs or rūḥ is a common practice in the Arabic dialects of the region, until today. The rules of neglecting the sound of the preceding letter lam of these words in dialects are exactly the same as the rules for neglecting that of the article al of their Standard Arabic equivalents. As example, when reading the following verse in Quran (89: 27) يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْﺲُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ we pronounce the first two words as يَا أَيَّتُهَنْفْﺲُ. In other words we do not pronounce the letter lām of the article al. In the phrase أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْﺲُ we have the letters ا أ ﻞ ﻦ ﻒ ﺲ and we omitted the letters أ ل. In the phrase ذَا إلنفﺲ we have the letters ا إ ﻞ ﻦ ﻒ ﺲ and we omitted،إ ﻞ أ. In the later case the letter إ was not omitted and was part of the second word in the inscription إنّفﺲ. It is useful to point out here that the usage of phrases like “this to memory of” or “this to soul of” on burial inscriptions, is an old Roman practice and it can be seen until today in the West, even though it is rarely found on the discovered Nabataean graves.

Finally, and according to my new reading above, the title or nickname of the dead person was Dhī ʾIbār ذِي إبار or Dhī ʾIbr ذِي إبر which means “the owner or handler of needles”. This word is the
plural of ابارة which was used by the Arabs in the old days, and even now, to name the iron needle used in sewing cloths. The possibility that his name was Abār as Healey indicated is very slim. Occupational adjective nouns are usually used for titles not as first names.

**Madeba Inscription (37-38 CE)**

There are two stones for the Madeba inscription. The first is kept in the Vatican Museum and the second in the Louvre Museum. What is even stranger than having two historical inscriptions with the same text and letters is the fact that the two inscriptions differ in the position of one word out of its eight-line text, according to Healey.

![Figure (I)](image)

Healey’s line by line tracing of the inscription kept in the Louvre was:

دنه مقبرتا وترتي ننشتا دي علا
منه دي عبد عبيدعبدت أسرتجا
لأينببل أسرتجا أبوهي ولاينببل
رب مشريتا دي بلحيتو وعبرتا بر عبدعبدت
أسرتجا دنه ببيت شلطونهم دي شلطو
زمنين ترين شنين تلين وشش عل شني حرتت
ملك نبطو رحم عمه وعبيدتا دي
علا عبيدتا بشنت أربعين وشت له

Translated to English, Healey read the opening phrase of the inscription as follows:

This is the tomb, and the two funeral monuments above it which ‘Abd’obodat the governor made for Itaybel the governor, his father, and for Itaybel the camp commandant in Luhitu and for ‘Abarta, son of (this) ‘Abd’obodat the governor, in their territory...

In my initial study of this inscription I speculated if the word ترتي was actually تانيثي تانيثي or “three”, however after examining the picture of the inscription, I believe the word was actually نبتثي نبتثي from تنيثي تنيثي or “two”, exchanging the letter نون with را’, similar to exchanging بث by بن as practiced in most Nabataean dialects. Therefore I read this inscription in modern Arabic as follows:

دنه (إدانه) مقبرتا (مقبرته او المقبرة) وشنتي نفستا (واقعنتين مثلها او والواقنتين المماثلة) الاعلي منها الذي عبدها عبيدعبدت أسرتجا لأينببل أسرتجا، ابيه، ولاينببل أمر مشريتا في لحيتو، وعبرتا بر عبيدعبدت أسرتجا، هنا في بيت سلطانهم ...

Translated in English:
This is the tomb (or his tomb), and the two identical ones (or two identical ones) above it which ‘Abd ‘Abdāt the governor made for ‘Itaybel the governor, his father, and for ‘Itaybel the camp commandant in Luḥitu and for ‘Abarta, son of this ‘Abd ‘Abdāt the governor, here in their governing house ...

Accordingly, I do not believe the word nafshta in this text was a noun in the meaning of tomb. As for the letter Ṭāʾ, it is related to the Ṭāʾ in the previous feminine noun word مقبرتا, not to indicate the number “two” in a speculated word نشبتان which was possibly assumed by Healey, when he read the phrase ترتي نشبتا as “the two funeral monuments”. Since most Nabataean inscriptions used نشب without the letter Taʾ in relation to قبرا one can speculate that this inscription had used the word نشبta in relation to مقبرتا.

The most curious aspect in Healey’s reading of Madeba was his treatment of the three structures equally. He failed to explain why would ‘Abd ‘Abdāt build one grave and two funeral monuments to his father, son, and camp commandant in Luḥitu. Funeral monuments are usually built for the dead, but it seems possible his son and commandant were alive. On the other hand a tomb room, known in Arabic as مقبرة, is built many times for a living person in preparation to future burial. Then, what about the tomb room for ‘Abd ‘Abdāt, isn’t it logical that he would build one for himself next to the ones he built for his father and son? To answer this question, I think the letter Ṭāʾ in the word مقبرتا was to indicate that this tomb room belongs to him as well — this letter Ṭāʾ must be pronounced unlike the letter Ṭāʾ Marbutah, before pointing to the other two tomb structures above it. To support my proposed reading of Ṭāʾ as the ownership Taʾ, I would like to bring the attention of the reader to the usage of this Ṭāʾ in two other words in the inscription، مشريتا from مشرى in the meaning of “horse camp” and عبيدتا from عبيد in the meaning of “his structures”.

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Healey seemed confused and not confident of his reading of the word مَقَبَرَة. He speculated that the word miqbarah مَقَبَرَة, in comparison to qabr قَبَر, “could be a funeral monument indicating a less prominent structure than qabr”. [12] He proceeded in reading the letter تاء in مَقَبَرَة as an equivalent to the letter تاء Marbuṭah in the word مَقَبَرَة, and the final letter أَلِف as an indication to the article ال. Unfortunately, his reading ignores the Arabic language definition completely, where the word مَقَبَرَة is defined as an alternative word derived from the root قَبَر for grave or tomb, but is a more inclusive one used in the meaning of “tombs room”. The addition of the letter ميم before many words is a common Arabic usage to indicate a utilization role, as in بيت and بيت, for example. To support my reading, we notice that in the Turkumaniyah inscription the phrase مَقْبِرَة مَقْبِرَة but not مَقَبَرَة. In this inscription, Healey simply read the word مَقَبَرَة مَقْبِرَة as مَقْبِرَة مَقْبِرَة too, without giving any reason why there was no letter تاء there. [12]

In Medeba, Healey also seemed confused about his reading of the first word dnh. Without explaining why, he assumed it was the demonstrative pronoun to the feminine word مَقَبَرَة, but he then assumed it was the demonstrative pronoun to the masculine word أَسْتَرِجَا. I believe dnh was a gender neutral demonstrative pronoun used by the Nabataeans in the meaning of أدناه or هنا. I will discuss this in the next chapter.

As a final note, Healey and other Western scholars explained the usage of the letter أَلِف-حَامِزَة in the end of words like نَفْشا in Strasbourg, and أَسْتَرِجَا and أَسْتَرِجَا in Medeba as a parallel usage to the article ال in Arabic. This is possible but we cannot be sure how it was pronounced: heavy حَامِزَة or high أَلِف. I believe that the use of this final أَلِف is similar or even related to the adding of the letter وَوَ in most Nabataean inscriptions of later centuries, to emphasize, confirm, or identify. In Lisān al-ʿArab we read...
that *Hamzah* has many usages “among them the illusionary *Hamzah*, according to *al-Farāʾ*, where some Arabs would use *Hamzah* in words usually spelled without *Hamzah* when emphasizing such words”. [17]

Quoting al-Jawhary, we then read that “*Hamzah* is not stable in its spelling, since it can be written as letter *Alif*, letter *Yāʾ*, or letter *Wāw*” and that “the letter *Alif* has two types, soft and voweled, the first is called *Alif* and the second is called *Hamzah*”. [17] It is useful here to mention that the Arabs did not commonly use the article *al* when pointing to a grave. They did not use the phrase *هذا القبر لفَلَان* but the phrase *هذا قبر فَلَان*.

**Bin Ḥur Inscription (~150 CE)**

This inscription was discovered and was read for the first time by de Vogüé in 1875. It was estimated to belong to the year 150 CE. The stone of the inscription is 37 cm (1.2 ft) high, 72 cm (2.5 ft) wide. [20] Littmann said the stone of this inscription was part of the outer wall of a burial chamber that included also the Milḥ inscription, but he thinks it was placed originally over its door header. Despite the good and clear tracing of the stone by de Vogüé’s assistant, Littmann decided to retrace it to give a better sense of its dimensions. See Figure (2).

Littmann noticed that this inscription had used connected letters and new shapes not seen before, like the shape of final letter *Yāʾ* in the end of the second line, which was inverted both vertically and horizontally in comparison to its usual shape in Arabic and Nabataean. Littman believed it was an *Alif-Maqṣurah* shape. However, despite its peculiar look, this shape was commonly used by many of the Nabataean inscriptions discovered later. [38]
Part 2: Nabataean Inscriptional Evidence

Figure (2) Littmann’s tracing of the Bin Hur inscription based on de Vogüé’s original tracing. \[20\]

Littmann’s literal translation was identical to the one by de Vogüé 40 years earlier:

دا نفس أنعم
بر حور وعسي
النته ذي بنه حنأل
برهم

Littmann then translated it to modern language as follows:

This is the tomb of Anʿām, son of Ḥur, and of ʿUzzai, his wife, which was built by Ḥann-ʾīl their son.

Even though Littmann’s translation seems solid and clear, it did not actually reflect the original text. For example, he does not explain why he translated the word nafsh with the article al, even though it was without letter Alif at the end. As we will see, he did believe that the word nafsha was in the meaning of al-nafsh, like all other Western scholars believed.

It seems that Littmann was convinced that the letter Alif after the word nafs was not part of it because of the large space between them —possibly due to the disappearance of the left-pointing
horizontal stroke of the letter Shīn as a result of stone damage—or maybe because he believed that name can not be other than Anʿām. He referred his readers to another inscription in his book that listed the same name. However, when I looked into that inscription, I did not find the name, but another three-letter word nʿm. Still, the name can actually be Anʿām since, earlier, Littman read many Musnad inscriptions which included that name. However, one cannot be absolutely sure since, according to old Arabic references, the name Niʿām was another known name which was used for “tribe” and for two important geographic locations in the Arabian Peninsula. In such case, the Alif-Hamzah after the word nafs can be part of it, just as it was part of the same word in other Nabataean inscriptions, like Strasbourg and Madeba.

The possibility that the first word dha was used as a demonstrative pronoun to point to the feminine word nafs in the meaning of “soul” is slim since the inscription used the word bnḥ ʿalī, or “built”, afterwords. I think the writer of the inscription was particularly careful in spacing his words and in writing them completely in the same line before moving to new lines. This may explain why he used large spaces between the letters Dāl and Hamzah in the beginning of the text, and between the letters Hamzah and Nūn of the word Ānʿām. This observation is the reason why I believe that the letter Dāl was actually Dhāl, and was used alone as a masculine demonstrative pronoun, as I indicated in my reading of the Strasbourg inscription earlier. In this case, it is pointing to an invisible masculine name of what the inscription was about, namely tomb or monument, which are both masculine.

In other words, I read the phrase of the first two words together. The letter Alif after Dhal can be either part of ذا or part of the following word إنفس in the meaning of إلى نفس or إنفس, as I explained in my detailed reading of the Strasbourg inscription.
Therefore, my new literal translation based on Littmann’s tracing, is the following:

د انفش‌ا نعم
بر حور وعزی
النده ذی بنه حتال
برهم

And my translation in modern Arabic is:

ذّ انفِس (هذا، اشاره إلى قبر او نصب، إلى النفس، اي إلى نفس) نعام بن حور
وعزی أنتهی (زوجته)، الذي بناه جنشيل، ابتهم

Or:

ذا انفس (هذا، اشارة إلى قبر او نصب، إلى النفس، اي إلى نفس) نعام بن حور
وعزی أنتهی (زوجته)، الذي بناه جنشيل، ابتهم

As a final note regarding both this and the Strasbourg inscription, and regardless of which reading is the correct one, I think their extremely rare usage of the word نفِش as part of the phrase ذّ انفِس in the beginning of the text, can not be generalized when reading this word in other inscriptions.

**Milḥ Inscription**

As stated earlier, this inscription was discovered in the early years of the last century by Littmann in *Umm al-Jimal*, Syria. According to his description, the stone of the inscription was 30 cm (1 ft) high and 90 cm (3 ft) wide. It seems clear this stone was the right piece of a much wider stone that was estimated by Littmann to be 150 cm (5 ft) wide. [20] He also believed that this stone was used as main component of the structure of the room. Even though this stone was discovered placed on top of two columns on the right wall, Littmann
believes it was originally placed in the outside as a header over the main entrance of the room. However, I do not believe it was placed as a header for the door but as a lentel carrying the ceiling with the inscription showing inside the room. After reading the inscription of this stone, I am convinced it was part of a longer inscription that was probably displayed around the high perimeters of the room, from the inside. See Figure (3).

![Figure (3) Reduced tracing image of the right part of the Milḥ inscription that was offered by Littmann.][20]

Littmann’s line by line literal translation from the Nabataean was:

\[
\text{[د]د} \text{نفشا ذي عبد} \left[\ldots\right]
\]
\[
\text{لملحو بلته ول} \left[\ldots\right]
\]

He then translated it to:

This is the tomb which was made (by ... son of ...) for Milḥ, his daughter, and for (......)

In other words, he made several assumptions to read the inscription. First, he assumed that the right edge of the stone was the original edge. Second, he assumed the existence of the letter Dāl from the word \(dnh\). Thirdly, he assumed the existence of the letter Lām in the word لملحو. However, his last two assumptions are not possible because the very large letters of a high inscription cannot be inscribed exactly on the edges of a stone, since attaching neighboring stones requires building materials that can cover these edges. It is
clear to me that the right space on the stone, which was about 10 cm (4 in) wide, was an intentional empty space. Even if Littmann was right in assuming the existence of two letters in this space, it is too coincidental to assume that both would be damaged equally.

Littmann read the first, very clear, letter of the inscription as the letter ٍNūn, even though the writer had exaggerated in lengthening its vertical stem down and in pointing it up afterward, as Littmann himself noticed. The shape of this letter was identical to the last letter of the second line, which Littmann read correctly as the letter ٍLām. As for the very faded shape on the extreme right edge in the beginning of the second line, which Littmann read as the letter ٍLām, I think it is actually just a scratch. Finally, I think Littmann’s tracing of the letter ٍShīn was not very convincing as it appeared unusually small.

My reading of this inscription based on Littmann’s tracing from the Nabataean is as follows:

[....]
له نفشا ذي عبيد [....]
ملحو برهته ول [....]

Accordingly, I believe the first letter was actually ٍLām and the word nafs in this inscription meant نفسه or “same as”. Most importantly, I think one cannot fully read this inscription because its text was likely completing another text which was displayed on its right on a lost stone. It is also possible that this stone was broken in three, not two pieces. Besides, it is particularly hard to use this inscription as a solid reference, because I could not find any picture of it to make sure it was traced accurately. For example, the last letter ٍalif in nafsā could have been a final ٍHā’ making the beginning phraseله نفسه الذي
Shahîm Inscription

As mentioned earlier, assuming that the word *nafs* in the beginning of a Nabataean inscription means “tomb” can result in an overall inaccurate reading. To explain my point, I chose a recently discovered inscription from *Umm al-Jimāl* which was read for the first time by S. Said and M. al-Hamad in 2003, and was re-read by A. M. Butts and H. H. Hardy from the University of Chicago in 2010. [9] See Fig (4).

The four specialists read the first line identically, but differed on reading the second line. Said and al-Hamad translated the inscription literally from the Nabataean as follows:

[د] نبشا ذي بنه شهيمو
[بر] علت بنا له أبوهم
[.] لربئ لملك ملك نبط[و]...

They translated it into English as follows:

This is the tomb which *SHYMW* son of *ʿLT* built. He built (it) for himself *ʿBWHM* ... of king Rabel, king of the Nabataeans ...

Figure (4): High resolution picture of the Shahimu inscription according to Said and al-Hamad. [9]
It seems the two readers believed the word ﺪ was only an emphasis word, and the phrase should be read “He built it for ’BWHM, himself”. Because their reading did not clearly make sense, even in their own acknowledgement, they asked the scholarly community to help re-reading this inscription. [9]

Butts and Hardy accepted the challenge, according to their article, and provided a new literal translation of the second line only, as follows:

[Th]is is the tomb which SHYMW ... built ... [for P]N, his son, through (the help of) the god of their father ...

Restated in a clearer manner, their translation was:

[Th]is is the tomb that was built by SHYMW [.... for NAME’], his son, through (the help of) the god of their father ...

The reading of Butts and Hardy was clearly not reasonable in assuming the existence of the rest of Shahım’s name and the first part of the name of his son ending with the letter ‘Ayn and preceded by the letter Lām —in the meaning of “for”—, in the small space between the end of the first line and the beginning of the second line. Furthermore, they read an isolated letter ‘Ayn even though it was clearly attached to the first visible word of the second line. Their use of the word ﺪ for “god” was correct, linguistically, but it did not match in the overall reading of this inscription.
Despite several damaged areas in the inscription—indicated between square brackets—, which can force a reader to guess some words, we fortunately have a clear image of the stone. This image was instrumental in my ability to examine the Nabataean letters’ tracings of the first two lines by the four researchers, particularly, the first two clear words of the inscription, which were نبشا دﻲ according to them. According to Butts and Hardy, their retracing was based on this same picture that was published in the article by Said and al-Hamad. This image is exactly what I used too in my retracing of the two lines shown in the bottom of Figure (5) below.

Figure (5): Above is a tracing image of the first two lines of *Shahim* inscription according to Butts and Harding’s reading, and below it is the author’s new tracing, where the dotted lines could be part of actual letters or due to stone damage.

Because of the poor quality and missing letters of this inscription, one cannot provide one definite modern reading. However, I can provide a literal Arabic transliteration of the two Nabataean lines in Arabic, as follows:

[ذَي] عَبْد هُنَا لَه ابْوَهُم
[و] قَبْرَو بَنَهِ شَهِيمَو
My translation in modern Arabic language is one of the following:

دنه (ادننه) نفسو قبرو (روح وقبر هو قبر) بنه شهيمو (ابن شهيم) [الذي]
عبد (شيّد) هئنا له ابوهم (اي ابوهم او جدهم) ... 

Or

دنه (ادننه) نفسو قبرو (روح وقبر هو قبر) بنه شهيمو (ابن شهيم) [الذي]
عبد (شيّد) هئتأله (اسم) (اي ابوهم او جدهم) ... 

Or

دنه (ادننه) نفسو قبرو (روح وقبر هو قبر) بنه شهيمو (ابن شهيم) [الذي]
عبد (شيّده) له ابوهم (اي ابوهم او جدهم) ...

The first possibility above can be translated to English as follows:

Here is the soul and grave of son of Shahīm that was built here for him by Hanʾallah, their father ....

The English translation of the second and third possibilities is:

Here is the soul and grave of son of Shahīm that was built by their father ....

Accordingly, I do not think the large prominent shape following the letter Shin in the first line was the relatively small Naba- taean Alif-Hamzah, which can be seen in three other words in the inscription. One can clearly follow the small circle of the Nabataean letter Qāf, which started from the right in a counterclockwise direction then formed a straight downward line, before pointing left and proceeding upward to connect to the medial letter Bāʾ that was clearly connected to the following letter Rāʾ. As for the letter Yāʾ, which was read by the four specialists as part of the word dhī, I read it as Nabataean letter Wāw, whose top loop was a bit rectangular with its top line slightly extended to the right before connecting to
the previous letter راء, intentionally, or as a result of a scribe mistake or damage. We can clearly see that the shape of this letter و, including the downward line’s slightly left-pointing tail, was similar to that of the other two letters و in the inscription. One cannot rule out that the phrase نفسو قبرو in this inscription was altered later by the original writer or someone else. The inscription image shows an 8 or B-like shape, which I pointed out in dotted lines, and a small circle attached directly to the letter شين to possibly indicate the word should be read نفس.

My three proposed readings assume the existence of the word ذي in the meaning of “which” before the word عبد. This is a very reasonable assumption since the size of the space was very appropriate. Based on this reading, the word نهاب which was read by the four scholars as ناب in the meaning of “built” cannot be so, because, first, the writer used the word عبد in the second line, and second, it is after the phrase نفسو قبرو without the word ذي before it. I think نهاب means ابن and the final حاء indicates a fathah soft vowel or تاء Marbūṭah. In other words, it was part of the deceased nickname، ابن شهيم or “son of Shahim” where شهيم was possibly his father’s name. Generally, most Nabataean inscriptions used the word بن instead of ابن، but such usage was between two names, not as part of a nickname.

The first clear word of the second line was positively the word عبد because the letter عين was completely connected to it. Even though my tracing of the letters of this line was identical to that of Butts and Hardy, I believe the final letter حاء of the word عبد، according to their reading, was actually an initial letter حاء، which is very clearly connected to the following letter نين، which is also clearly connected to the letter ألف-حاء after it, producing the word هنا. This word could be the independent word هنا in the meaning “here” —as we have seen in the ‘عين ‘Abdat inscription, which
used it twice—, to form the phrase al lija in the meaning “here for him”. Or, it was connected to the following word al, forming the name alnija, or or alnija which is similar in its meaning to the name commonly found in the Musnad inscriptions سعد الله, سعدأله. Or, it was connected to the previous word, forming the word عبدنا in the meaning of “built it”. Possibly, the use of the final Hamzah was to point to the single masculine name قيرا, following the local dialect of the writer.

The usage of the last word in the second line، ابوهٍ or possibly ابوهَا، meaning “their father”, indicates that the father of the deceased was dead and the builder of the tomb was the father of both, which means he was his grandfather. As we saw earlier, the Strasbourg and Madeba inscriptions used ابوهي to indicate a single dead person, and the Bin Ḥur inscription used برهُ to indicate that the builder was the son of two dead persons. The above can explain why this inscription used the nickname ابن شهيم instead of his first name. However, it is possible that the word نا was إنا to indicate two sons, which would explain Hana’illah’s usage of the word ابوهم instead of ابوهَا. If we assume the word ابنه meant “built”, and the word عبد was part of the dead person’s name and was preceded by the letter Lām, we can read the two lines as follows:

دنه نفس وقبر بناء شهيم [بر اسم أو اسم] لعبد هنأله، ابوهم ...

Translated in English:

This is the tomb built by Shahim [(son of name) or (and name)] for Abd Han’allah, their father ...

This, however, is unlikely because, first, the name Abd Han’Allah does not make sense. Second, the space before عبد was too small to include a letter Lām preceded by the word ب and a father’s name, or
a letter Wāw and a brother’s name, to justify using the word ِابوهم instead of ِابومي.

To conclude this chapter, after reading more than three hundred Nabataean, Palmyran, Aramaic, and Hebrew inscriptions, I found only seven inscriptions using the word nafs alone in the opening phrase in the meaning of “tomb”, according to the current readings. After re-tracing and re-reading the seven inscriptions, I found two of them had used the word qabr too. As for the other five inscriptions, I found that the word nafs was used in the meaning of “same” or “soul”. It became clear to me that there was no solid evidence to presume that the word nafsh or nafs, in an opening phrase of an Arabic or Nabataean burial inscription, was used in the meaning of “funerary monument” or “memorial monument”. As a result of my study, I also concluded that any successful analysis of the Nabataean inscriptions must utilize standard Arabic references, since the Nabataen language was not a parallel language to Arabic but one of its derived tongues.
4

Detailed Rereading of the \textit{Umm al-Jimāl} 
Nabataean Inscription

As mentioned earlier, according to Western scholars, among the numerous Nabataean inscriptions discovered so far, only three were written fully in the Arabic language. Dated 328 CE, \textit{al-Namārah} was the latest inscription of the three. The two earlier inscriptions are \textit{Umm al-Jimāl}, found in the same area, around Damascus, where \textit{al-Namārah} was found, and \textit{Raqqūsh}, found in \textit{Madāʾin Ṣālaḥ}, not very far south of Damascus in Northern Hijāz. Both areas were previously Nabataean territories. \textit{Raqqūsh} indicated the date of 267 CE while \textit{Umm al-Jimāl}, which explicitly mentioned the names Judhaymah and Tannūkh, was dated around the year 260 CE, clearly a successful estimate when checked against our geographical and historical review in the previous section. The two inscriptions are therefore older than \textit{al-Namārah} by at least 60 or even 70 years. This would make them useful references for this study. As we shall see later, reading the three inscriptions together is valuable for the separate reading of each one of them correctly.

While \textit{Raqqūsh} and \textit{Umm al-Jimāl} were decidedly grave-stones, \textit{al-Namārah} could be either a gravestone or an honoring monument (I shall come back to this subject later.) Further, \textit{Raqqūsh} included several text lines while \textit{Umm al-Jimāl} was brief. Unlike in al-
Namārah and Umm al-Jimāl, the language used in Raqqūsh was not Classical Arabic entirely.

Both Umm al-Jimāl and Raqqūsh clearly started with the word *dnh* كعبو، حذتت لرقوش برت عبد منذرتو امه وهي هلكت في الحجو سنت مه وستين وتنين بيرخ تموز ولعن مري علما من يشنا القبرو ذا ومن يفتحه خشي و ولده ولعن من يقبر ويعلي منه

Figure (6) Current tracing of the Raqqūsh Arabic Nabataean inscription (left), with author’s improved modern Arabic reading. Numbers added to facilitate discussion.

Both Umm al-Jimāl and Raqqūsh clearly started with the word *dnh* كعبو، but scholars read the word differently in Raqqūsh where the first letter *Dāl* was slightly attached to the second letter *nūn* forming another possible shape. The Arabic word *qabrū* (tomb) was mentioned three times in Raqqūsh, and was read as such by all scholars. The same exact word though in Umm al-Jimāl was read as a personal name, *Fahrū*, which clearly was an error, as I will demonstrate later. [13]
Part 2: Nabataean Inscriptional Evidence

Figure (7) Top: A high resolution picture of the Umm al-Jimāl Nabataean inscription (right) with an enlarged picture of the left side of the stone. Bottom: current tracing and reading of the inscription (left) side-by-side author’s new tracing and reading. Numbers added to facilitate discussion.

Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain enough photographic details of either inscription. However, for the purpose of this study, I feel it is adequate to rely on the available Nabataean tracing of Raqqūsh. A word of caution: without retracing Raqqūsh personally, I would be reluctant to offer a full letter-by-letter transcription or modern Arabic reading. As for Umm al-Jimāl, examining couple
high-resolution pictures of the stone was very sufficient to illustrate the validity of my new tracings of a few key words in the inscription. Accordingly, I provided here the above original photo and another zoomed-in photoshopped image of the eroded re-traced area of the stone, along with current tracing — a letter-by-letter Arabic transcription and corresponding modern Arabic translation. Based on this new tracing, a new detailed reading emerges that significantly differs from the current reading.

In Figure (6), the first word in Raqqūsh and Umm al-Jimāl was clearly a three letter word dnh, but scholars differed both on its tracing and reading in Raqqūsh. Some read it as tah āî, claiming it was an Arabic simple feminine demonstrative pronoun; this is neither correct nor possible since the following word qabr is a masculine noun. Others read it as the Arabic letter dhāl, probably for the simple masculine demonstrative dhā یا, which would contradict directly with the reading of word #4 in the same inscription showing dhā spelled as letter dāl with dot above followed by alif. Yet, few traced it as dh.n.h for dhnāh یَا ها claiming this was a northern Arabic feminine demonstrative pronoun.

However, most scholars traced word #1 in both inscriptions as dnh, a word present in numerous other fully Nabataean inscriptions, and read it as an assumingly Aramaic demonstrative pronoun. I traced it in both as dnh, too, but I read it as adnāh, أدنى ها, a word used in Arabic to point to a nearby object or text that is located generally below the horizontal visual level. The beginning alif with hamzah above was possibly omitted because the word was possibly pronounced dnāh یَا ها, in the local Arab Nabataean dialect. Raqqūsh and most other inscriptions used several local dialect words, notably bir for bin, or ʿabd for ʿabdh. Otherwise, beginning alif-hamzah could have been omitted, just as the second alif between the letters nūn and hā’ was omitted, consistent with Arabic writing throughout the
8th century CE, as evident in all available inscriptions and manuscripts. Less likely, this word could be *Idnah* إدنه for the imperative: “come close to,” omitting beginning *alif-hamzah* with *kasrah*.

The Arabic word *adnāh* is utilized extensively today in the meaning of “see by, or near, you”, “see below” or “the following below.” It can be used effectively as a gender neutral demonstrative in the meaning of *hunāh lia* as in “here” or “here in”. When I searched for the use of this word in older Arabic references, I was surprised that I could not find any documented evidence of its usage in that contest. Assuming my reading is correct, this would make the two inscriptions the earliest Arabic references documenting the usage of the word in such manner. The word *danā*, a classical Arabic verb, means “became physically close or near to someone or some object.”

[17] Among numerous examples, the Quran (53:9) used it in *ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَى فَكَا نَ قَا بَ قوْسِينَ أَوْ أَدْنَا*.

Also, the Islamic Ḥadīth used *’adnāh min nafsīn* to describe how Prophet Muhammad had a visiting Arab king sitting —physically— very close to him. 

In his valuable doctoral dissertation on the Nabataean and Aramaic inscriptions, al-Dhuyayb wrote —possibly based on Western scholars’ readings— that the word *dnh* was used by the Nabataeans as “the singular demonstrative pronoun “this” for both genders”. However, he read inscription #6 in the dissertation as follows: *dnh nasbayyā dī ‘Hwā* ُدنه نصبِيا ذي أحوا explaining that the word *nasbayyā* meant more than one monument and it was in the form of *jamʿ al-mudhakkar al-sālim* (Perfect Masculine Plural). In other words, he contradicted his earlier definition of the word *dnh* as a *singular* demonstrative pronoun. 

[38] Clearly, one can only eliminate this and other contradictions by reading this word as a gender-neutral and number-neutral demonstrative pronoun word similar to Arabic *adnāh*.
Regardless of how one would read the first word *dnh*, the most important fact is that it was explicitly used as a word pointing to both a masculine object like *qabr* and a feminine *maqbarah*, and it was consistently used as an opening word for most Nabataean grave-stones.

In *Umm al-Jimāl* scholars spelled the next word after *dnh*, as *n.f.sh.ū*, and read it نفشو supposedly from a “Semitic” feminine noun *napšʾ* or from Arabic *nafs* as in the Quran (89:27) يَا أَيَّتُهَا النُّفْسُ الَّتِيَ امْتَازَتْ. This same word can also be pronounced in Arabic as *nafas* in the sense of “inhalation or breathing” which would be a masculine noun. It is not clear, how scholars pronounced this word found in various Nabataean inscriptions as *napš* or *napiš*. Still, it would be a feminine noun in both cases. Even before analyzing the meaning and usage of *nafsh*, one can already suspect through *Umm al-Jimāl* that its current reading is questionable since the word *dnh* was used in *Raqqūsh*, and many other Nabataean inscriptions to point to *qabrū*, a masculine noun. This contradiction can only be solved by reading *dnh* as *adnāh*, a neutral Arabic demonstrative pronoun, as I argued above.

Alternatively, and as a second possibility, the word *nafsū* was not a noun, and *dnh* was pointing to a third masculine noun following it (I shall discuss this later.) And yet a third possibility, the word *nafsū* was actually *naqshū* نقْشُ, for the Arabic masculine noun, *naqsh* (etching or inscription), used to indicate the act of writing or sketching on all mediums including epitaph’s stones and even sand. Unlike the Nabataean letter *Fāʾ*, which is a left starting loop with a right side downward vertical stem, the letter *Qāf* can look like a circle attached in the middle to a downward vertical stem. This was evident in the three inscriptions.

However, reading the second word (we call it #2) of *Umm al-Jimāl* as *naqshū* can conflict with the current reading of word #3
of the inscription, which is thought to be Fihrū for Fihrū, a classical Arabic name. Even though it is possible to read the opening phrase as adnāh naqshu Fihrū bin Sāllī, after examining the photo of Figure (7) and even according to the current tracing it is clear that word #3 of Umm al-Jimāl is not Fihrū. It is qabrū, followed by a first name containing the letters Fāʾ, Rāʾ and Alif/Hamzah as in Faraʾ or Fīraʾ, an old Arabic male name meaning “wild donkey” which is known for its excellent skills to escape hunters! This name was possibly modified to Faruʾ according to old Northern Arabic and Aramaic practice of using wāw sound at the end of names. In the Hadith, Prophet Muhammad told Abū Sufyān: “You are as they say, all hunting is in the belly of the wild donkey”. Translated from the Arabic text: 

The three partially damaged letters in the name Faruʾ can clearly be traced in the subsequent space, which is suspiciously wide for an intentional space! To illustrate my point, I provided a partial image of the stone utilizing the Brush Strokes filter utility in Photoshop to emphasize stroke edges and reveal the new traced letters.

Back to the the third word qabru (ndicated with #3), one can easily trace a prominent long horizontal stroke connected to the letter Rāʾ on the left, just as it was the case with medial letter Bāʾ in the words for qabru in Raqqūsh (words #3, #4, and #5). There is a short downward line pointing to the left that seems to be a stone discoloration, not a stroke. Nevertheless, even if it were a stroke, the formed shape would surely not resemble a Nabataean letter Hāʾ. A second short, left-pointing, downward line just below the letter Rāʾ is not a stroke either, as it resembles an extensive crack. The only difference between the word qabr we see in Umm al-Jimāl and the one in Raqqūsh is that the upward line stroke forming the medial letter Bāʾ in Umm al-Jimāl was not vertical. Instead, it was pointing left as it was the case with the previous word nafsū and the follow-
ing word *Fara’*—clearly a scribe handwriting style. One can even spot another faded parallel, left-tilted line connecting to the horizontal stroke of that letter thus forming a classic Nabataean medial letter *Bāʾ*, slightly affected by a possible scriber style or error, stone discoloration and crack, or a subsequent alteration. Moreover, the first letter of this word is clearly *Qāf*, not *Fāʾ*, which can easily be compared to the many letters *Qāf* in *al-Namārah* and *Raqqūsh*.

Reading word #3 in *Umm al-Jimāl* as qabrū or qabr would allow more possibilities for the meaning and usage of the previous word. A likely alternative to my earlier reading of the word as naqshū, is nafsū, in the meaning of nafsuhū, or *hūwa nafsuhū*, for “itself”, referring to qabr. This reading would fit well with reading *dnh*, either as a masculine, or as a neutral demonstrative. The beginning phrase could then be “this itself is the tomb of” similar to *hadhā hūwa qabr*،هذا هو قبر، a standard usage on gravestones in Arabic, or *hadhā nafsuḥū qabr*،هذا نفسُهُ قبر. To summarize, we have two initial readings of the opening phrase of the *Umm al-Jimāl* inscription: *dnh naqshū qabr Faruʾ bir Sālī* (هذا نقشور قبر فرُء بن سالی) (this is the inscription of Faruʾ bir Sālī), or *dnh nafsū qabr Faruʾ bir Sālī* (هذا نفسُه قبر فرُء بن سالی) (this is the tomb of Faruʾ bir Sālī).

However, I should now bring attention to a curious fact: my reading of the opening phrase in *Umm al-Jimāl* as nafsū qabrū or nafsū qabr is intriguingly identical to the usual opening phrase in the Arabic Musnad script found on eastern Arabian tombs’ inscriptions: *nafs.w.qabr*،نفس وقبر. King Judhaymah, whose name appears in the *Umm al-Jimāl* inscription, was linked to the eastern Arabian area where the Tannūkh kingdom was supposedly situated before moving to al-Ḥīrah, as I indicated in my review section above.

According to my analysis of the phrase *nafs wa-qabr* in the previous chapter and following my reading of the opening phrase in
this inscription as dnh nafsu qabr it is very likely the meaning of this phrase was روح وقبر (soul and grave). In other words, I can now offer a third possible reading of the Umm al-Jimāl inscription as follows: dnh nafs wa-qabr Faruʾ bir Sāllī (Here is the soul and tomb of Faruʾ bir Sāllī). Based on this reading, it would be impossible to assume that this inscription was only a “memorial monument” without an actual grave.

Before analyzing the final line of the Umm al-Jimāl inscription, it is worth mentioning that although this inscription was not a bilingual inscription, it was discovered next to a separate stone with a Greek inscription, which appears to be an exact translation of the Nabataean text. See Figure (8). Despite my belief that the Nabataean inscription should be the main reference to use in our ongoing analysis (pronouncing Arabic names can be deceiving in the Greek translation), I will analyze the first four or five words of the Greek inscription which, by all accounts, seems to support our new reading of the Nabataean text. Although there were no spaces in the Greek inscription, as evident in Figure 3.2, the words of the opening phrase were:

Η ΣΤΗΛΗ ΑΥΤΗ ΦΕΡΟΥ ΣΟΛΛΕΟΥ ΤΡΟΦΕΥΣ ….
According to my reading of the Greek text above, the first line can be translated in English as “This is the stele of Feroo Salleoo ..”. Clearly, the first name was ΦΕΡΟΥ (Feroo), not Fehroo — there is no indication of the guttural sound of the Arabic letter ʰāʾ anywhere in the word, unless the reader was invoking past Phoenician letter he origin of the Greek E! My belief, the inscription used the Greek sound ΟΥ (sounds like oo as in wood) at the end of the first name ΦΕΡΟΥ to substitute for either Alif-Hamzah or Dhammah-Hamzah. You may recall, according to my reading of the Nabataean inscription, the word was either Faraʾ or Faruʾ. The sound ΟΥ was repeated at the end of the last name ΚΟΛΛΕΟΥ (Salleoo) too — in spite of the existence of the letter ʾāʾ at the end of that word in the Nabataean text. The repeated use of the sound ΟΥ further indicates that the first name was not necessarily ending with a ʾaw as experts (evidently depending mainly on the Greek text) mistakenly assumed. I will discuss again this Aramaic and Northern Arabic usage of the sound ʾaw after names, later. In addition, using the word ΚΤΗΛΗ (Stele) would not necessarily mean that this word was an exact translation of ʾnafs, because translating a text is not linear; that is, it is not a word-for-word process. At best, this type of usage could mean that some Nabataean Arabs used ʾnafṣu qabr combined to mean stele.

More observations on the Umm al-Jimāl inscription reading include the following:

1. Most specialist read the word ʾRabbu in the meaning of “caretaker” or “gardian”. This reading is possible. However this word was used in other Nabataean inscriptions (Madeba for example) in the meaning of camp commaner. Among the many meanings offered in Lisān al-Arab, we have al-qayyyim and al-mudabbir, meaning “the one in charge”. Since the following word in Greek
was TROΦEYC, I think this word meant in this inscription the “top military leader”.

2. Word #4 was read by Littmann as *malk* for Arabic king. However, after careful tracing of the Nabataean text, I can clearly see a second letter *mim*; therefore, the correct reading should be *mmlk*, for classic Arabic *mumallik*, which literally means, “the one who crowned or gave kingship to”; meaning in current context: “the founder of the dynasty of”. Moreover, reading word #4 in this way would accurately fit the meaning conveyed by word #5 *Tannūkh*, king Judhaymah’s tribe, which, as you will see below, was inaccurately read as *Dannūkh*.

3. Word #5 (*Tannūkh*): The first letter of this word is clearly a Nabataean letter *tāʾ*, not a *dāl*. As stated earlier in our history review section, King Judhaymah al-Abrash, Umruʾū al-Qays’ uncle, was the founder of the *Tannūkh* kingdom, or, using the inscription words, he was the one who crowned them. This assertion can be substantiated by the fact that Arab history never recorded the existence of a tribe or kingdom in Arabia under the name *Dannukh*.

To summarize, a letter-by-letter transcription of *Umm al-Jimāl* is as follows: “*dn̄ n̄fsu q̣br fra bir sali rabu jdhimat mml̄k tann̄ukh*.” Line-by-line, the Arabic text is:

Translated to Modern Arabic after adding the missing letters *Alīf*, removing the letters *Wāw*, and adding punctuations:

أَدْنَاهُ (هَنَا) رُوحُ وَقِيْرُ فِرْعَأَ بِنْ سَالِيٍّ، رَبّ (آمِرُ جَيْشٍ أو رِبْما مَرْبُوٍّ) جَذِيمَةٌ،

مملَكَ (مَؤَسِسُ مَمْلَكَةٍ) تَنْوَخَ
Before proceeding to the next section, I need to elaborate on the important usage of the letter wāw at the end of nouns in most nabataean inscriptions. For example, notice the words qabrū for qabr, Kaʿbū for Kaʿb, and Ḥijrū, for Ḥijr in Raqqūsh. This practice is consistent with that of most pre-Islamic northern Arabic inscriptions that are available today, whether written in Nabataean or Arabic Jazm scripts. As we shall see later, al-Namārah added wāw after all names too. The Arabic inscriptions of al-Jazzāz (410 AD), Sakkākah (late 4th Century), Zabad (512 AD), and Ḥarrān (568 AD) had all added wāw after the names. This is a known Northern Arabic usage which has roots going back to old Akkadian and possibly Sumerian, and was likely incorporated into their languages due to the influence of the neighboring groups to the north of them. [1][27] In fact, this consistent use of final wāw is a solid proof that most, if not all, Arab tribes which migrated north—long centuries before the Tannūkh kingdom era—, had routinely adapted to neighboring cultures. On the other hand, classic Arabic teaches us that the wāw of ʿAmrū is added to distinguish the Arabic name ʿAmr from ʿUmar. My belief is that wāw originally existed in the name ʿAmrū, and should be pro-
nounced, at least when it is applied to ‘Amrū bin ‘Uday, father of Umru‘ū al-Qays, who was likely a northern Arab, not a Yemenite.
Arabic Grammar Prelude: Is ṭī a Simple Feminine Demonstrative Pronoun?

Before reading al- Namenrah, it is important to thoroughly examine the first word of the inscription. The word is clear and legible and has two letters: ṭī. Dussaud claimed this word was an Arabic simple feminine demonstrative pronoun, meaning “this is.” Throughout the 20th century, all subsequent readers of al- Namenrah agreed with him without any debate!

For example, in his comprehensive reading of 1985, Bellamy allocated only one line to address the word where he referred his readers to consult with two old reference books for further explanation. [7] The first book was an enhanced English translation of an older Arabic grammar textbook that was initially published in 1857 in German; and the second was a British book published in 1930 and had for a subject the history of the Arabs of the western peninsula.

The author of the first book listed among his other references, Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik, a long Arabic poem comprising one thousand verses summarizing the grammar of the Arab language. [42] Written by the great Arabic linguist, Ibn Mālik, about eight centuries ago, the Alfiyyah is the most authoritative reference for textbooks on modern Arabic grammar. Notably absent from his references was
Part 2: Nabataean Inscriptional Evidence

an important Arabic language reference book, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, written during the same period of *Alfiyyah* by another great Arabic linguist, *Ibn Manẓūr*. Both of these references are manuscripts that became widely available after the emergence of Arabic typography in the 18th century.

Being a collection of poems, *Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik* is only useful when read by a professional linguist. In fact, many revered scholars, like *Ibn ʿAqīl*, wrote volumes of manuscripts to explain it. Unfortunately, these scholars had to rely on a manuscript that could have possibly included unclear words, missing verses, and scribes’ mistakes. Contemporary scholars mainly rely on these older explanations of the manuscript, known as *tafsīr*. On the other hand, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, predating *Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik*, was written with explicit explanations by the original author along with generous examples from pre-Islamic poetry and the Quran.

To summarize the simple demonstrative pronouns in Arabic grammar, *Ibn Mālik* wrote a single line (verse) of a poem:

 بيذا لمُفرَدِ مَذكَرٍ أَشِيرَ   بَذي وْدِيّ ؟؟ تا على الأثنى اقتَصرٍ

Translated into English the line says “use *dhā* to point to a masculine noun, and limit yourself to *dhi* and *dhih ?? tā* for a feminine.” In the original manuscript, the unclear and disputed word between *dhih* and *tā* (marked with two question marks by the author) was either a genuine word, a corrected word, or a crossed out word. Researching several old *tafsīr* books, I discovered that scholars had read this unclear word quite differently. However, most scholars of the Islamic Arab civilization era decided to omit this unclear word and simply list the only three known Arabic simple demonstrative pronouns for a feminine noun: *dhi*, *dhih*, and *tā*. I am listing below in Arabic a few of these verse readings.
Apparently, some persistent scholars decided to read this unfortunate scribe’s error by replacing it with one or more words. Almost all of these scholars justified their readings in Islamic religious terms. Those who claimed it was \textit{tī}, explained how this reading would be consistent with the Islamic teachings allowing four wives for one man [sic]! With the passing of time, more Islamic scholars joined in to give more personal interpretations. Some had even claimed that Arabic has nine simple demonstrative pronouns for a feminine noun. Others claimed that, unlike a man, a woman does not have a specific social status; therefore, she must be pointed to with multiple pronouns. To conclude, unfortunately, the Arabic grammar textbook listed by Bellamy, which most likely was Dussaud’s main reference too, listed nine simple demonstrative pronouns including \textit{tī}, as many Arabic grammar textbooks do today.

It is inconclusive whether the scribe’s error in the manuscript of \textit{Alifiyyat Ibn Mālik} was the reason behind these claims. Clearly, \textit{Ibn Mālik} used the word, \textit{Iqtaṣir}, which is an imperative verb meaning “limit yourself to.” My impression is that some Muslim scholars during \textit{Ibn Mālik}’s time were busy making up feminine pronouns to support their religious claims and theories, a trend that evidently prompted \textit{Ibn Mālik} to write his grammatical poem in that strong manner to correct them. A simple online search today would lead to more of such Muslim scholars who are overly obsessed with the topic of females and Islam. Ironically —I must observe— to support their arguments, some Muslim scholars desperately tried to explain
that the imperative verb *iqtaşir* was referring to the masculine in the meaning of “do not use any of these pronouns for masculine” rather than what *Ibn Mālik* intended the meaning to be, which is, “use only these pronouns for feminine.”

Regrettably, I could not examine the original manuscript of *Alfiyyat Ibn Mālik*. Fortunately though, the text line being discussed is a poem text line; meaning it can easily be checked against the well-known Arabic poetry rhyming scale Arabic typography background with an eye to distinguish and to determine the correct reading. Coming from an understand Arabic letters’ shapes, and using the simple fact that *Ibn Mālik* had used *Wāw* between *dhī* and *dhih*, I concluded that the puzzling word before *tā* must be another *Wāw*, since in Arabic, one cannot add another item to an existing item without using *wa* before. It is my impression that the scribe had simply written a badly executed letter *Wāw* with very small loop and long downward stroke, which can easily be confused with final *Yā*. Here is what I believe *Ibn Mālik* poem line said:

أَشِرْ مُذكﱠرٍ لِمُفرَدٍ بِذا بِذِي وَدُه وَ تَا عَلَى الأَنثِي اقتِصِر

To test if my belief holds any truth, I sent an emil enquiry to *Sa‘dī Yūsuf*, one of the most prominent Arab poets, with the five versions of the *Ibn Mālik* poem verse, including mine, and asked him which one would be the correct one according to Arabic poem rhyming rules. He replied promptly, stating that the correct one was my version, using *Wāw* before *tā*. I was not surprised that this would be his answer since *Ibn Manẓūr*, who had studied the most important Arabic grammar books of his time, did not list *tī* as a simple feminine demonstrative pronoun in his dictionary textbook, *Lisān al-ʿArab*. [17]

The second reference listed by Bellamy for the word *tī* was page 152 of *Ancient west Arabian*, by Chaim Rabin. [7] Rabin hinted
that ُته was used as a simple feminine demonstrative noun by quoting from Bukhārī, who wrote that prophet Muhammad had addressed ʿĀʾisha, his youngest wife, with the phrase ِكةفا تْيكُم. كِيفَ تَيْكم Rabin must have thought that using ُته in the compound demonstrative word ُتْيَكُم would mean that it was also used as an independent simple feminine demonstrative pronoun. Writing his book three decades after the discovery of al-Namārah, he then listed the ُته of al-Namārah as second reference! [34] Plainly said, this is wrong and misleading. The ُته of ُتْيَكُم is derived from ُتا, the classic simple feminine demonstrative pronoun. Ibn Manẓūr extensively discussed this topic in his introduction to the letter ِتاء in Lisān al-ʿArab. He explained that ِتاء is the simple feminine demonstrative pronoun and that it can be used as a standalone word to point to a single feminine. He further explained: Tayyā is the diminutive demonstrative pronoun of ِتاء which can possibly be used for a younger female too. Clearly, when pointing to a single feminine noun as a third distant party, ِتاء can be combined to form a new compound demonstrative pronoun, as ُته, but one cannot use this part as a standalone word. For example, the words ُتْيَكُا, and ُتْيَلَكا are derived from ِتاء, not ُته. The Arabs used ُتْيَكُا instead of ُتْيَلَكا, but some had used ُتْيَلَكا, instead of ِتْيَلَكا, which Ibn Manẓūr called the ugliest usage in the language. [17].

It should be pointed out here that Lisān al-ʻArab did mention the word ُته, twice. Once, casually, in its extensive coverage of the origins of the simple demonstrative pronoun word ُهَدْحا in the chapter about the letter ِدحاء. Here is what it said:

Abā al-Haytham said: to use ُهَدْحا as feminine pronoun you use a prolonged ُهَدْحَيْهِي, as if pronouncing final letter ِياء at the end; some said: prolonged ُهَدْحِي, and prolonged ُته, and prolonged ِتاء.
Because *hādhihi* and many other demonstrative pronoun words are all derived from the main four simple demonstrative pronouns. In his explanation, *Ibn manẓūr* indicated that the letter *Hāʾ* in the beginning of *hādhihi* was *Hāʾ al-Tanbih*, which is used to bring attention. The prolonging of final sound is clearly to bring attention. Therefore, it is possible that the *tī*, which is likely derived from *tā*, was used to call attention, not as an alternative simple feminine demonstrative pronoun. This surely explain why *tī* was not even mentioned in the section for the letter *Tāʾ* and it was not mentioned in poetry or other historical texts.

I must point out here, *Lisān al-ʿArab* did mention *tī* for a second time, explicitly and clearly, under the dedicated entry for the word *tayā* لَعِ. Unfortunately, the online version I used originally placed this entry by mistake under the letter *Jīm*, not *Tāʾ*. However, I confirmed it’s listing in couple printed versions. The entry contained a single line of text stating the following: “*tī* and *tā*: feminine for *dhā*”. While this entry can indicate *tī* was possibly used as feminine demonstrative pronoun by some Arabs, it does not explain why it would be used in *al-Namārah* alone, out of thousands of inscriptions, in that meaning.

To summarize, I did not find any evidence for a usage of this word as a simple feminine demonstrative pronoun, be that in the Quran or Arabic poetry or anywhere else, except for the usage claimed by the readers of *al-Namarāh*. Even if one were to find such an example, it would be of a wrong usage and likely a post Islamic example. The three simple feminine demonstrative pronouns in Arabic are *tā, dhī, and dhih*.
Detailed Reading of the *al-Namārah* Nabataean Inscription

Taking into account the numerous *Musnad* Arabic inscriptions available today, *al-Namārah* or any of the three other known Nabataean Arabic inscriptions cannot be classified as the earliest Arabic language documents on record. Although the classic Arabic language of *al-Namārah* is truly remarkable, the inscription quality is not impressive. Moreover, the quality of the stone and the efforts put to prepare it, are much higher than the quality of the inscription and the efforts put by the scribe, and most likely, this scribe was definitely not the same person who prepared the stone. Surely, *al-Namārah* stone as a whole does not look like a stone worthy of a king’s tomb or monument. Despite visible damages, possibly including a complete breakup of the stone into two or more pieces, most of the words of *al-Namārah* inscription are uncomplicated to read by a person familiar with the Nabataean and Arabic scripts. Out of the several erosions that afflicted the stone, only one or two areas of erosion had somewhat affected the reading of the inscription. Although reading *al-Namārah*, a fascinating archeological and philological task, can be very challenging, it is not very complicated once the first two lines, and particularly the first two words, of the inscription are read correctly. Numerous scholars studied *al-Namārah* after Dussaud, but Professor Bellamy of the University of Michigan should get the highest credit for re-reading *al-Namārah* from scratch and
presenting original corrections along with fresh new pictures, in the eighties of last century.

The first time I read *al-Namārah* was in 2008, the year I published my first article about the history of the Arabic *Jazm* script. My involvement in Arabic typography brought me earlier into the field of history of the Arabic script. In my earlier readings, I utilized available pictures and tracings, particularly those provided by Bellamy. However, I was able to obtain numerous detailed pictures later which enabled me to carefully study the highly disputed area by previous readers including myself.

I have provided in Figure (10) below, the original Nabataean tracing of *al-Namārah* by Dussaud, along with his initial Arabic reading as referenced today by most textbooks. I have also provided my new tracing of *al-Namārah* with eleven new changes —out of the eleven, three are Bellamy’s and six are mine. See Figure (II). To assist the readers locating these new tracings and compare them with the old ones, I assigned a number to each affected area on Dussaud’s original tracing in Figure (10). Also, I provided in Figure (II) my own letter-for-letter Arabic transcription followed by my translation into Arabic of the inscription, where I added all necessary dots, diacritic vowels, punctuations, and missing letters *alif* in accordance with my new reading, with a full Arabic explanation of my reading. See an image of *al-Namārah* stone in Figure (9)

**Line 1**

Demonstrating that Dussaud’s reading of the first word *tī* was inaccurate, would most certainly open the way to question all current readings of the inscription. After all, if the writer of *al-Namārah* inscription had wanted to use a demonstrative pronoun for a tombstone, he would have certainly used *dnh*, the one utilized in *Umm al-Jimāl*, *Raqqush*, and all other Nabataean tombstone
Figure (9) A photo of al-Namārah stone hanging on a wall at the Louvre Museum, Paris. © Marie-Lan Nguyen/Wikimedia Commons.

Figure (10) Dussaud tracing of al-Namārah inscription with his revised letter-for-letter Arabic transcription and translation. [13]
**Part 2: Nabataean Inscriptional Evidence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>تي نفس مره لقيس بر عمرو ملك العرب كله ذو اسد النح وملك الأسديين ونزرو وملوكهم هرب مذحج عكدي وجو يزجه في رتج دجنين مدينت شمرو ملك معدو وبين بينه الشعوب ووكهلن فرسنلروم فلم يبلغ ملك مبلغ عكدي هلك سنت 223 يوم 7 بكسلول يسعد ذو ولده</td>
<td>Tī نفس مره لقيس بر عمرو ملك العرب كله ذو اسد النح وملك الأسديين ونزرو وملوكهم هرب مذحج عكدي وجو يزجه في رتج دجنين مدينت شمرو ملك معدو وبين بينه الشعوب ووكهلن فرسنلروم فلم يبلغ ملك مبلغ عكدي هلك سنت 223 يوم 7 بكسلول يسعد ذو ولده</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>تبا نفس امرؤ القيس بن عمرو ملك العرب كلهما ذو أسد الناح وملك الأسديين ونزرو وملوكهم هرب مذحج عكدي وجاء يزجه في رتج دجنين مدينة شمر ملك معد وبين بينها الشعوب ووكهلن فرسان الروم فلم يبلغ ملك مبلغ عكدي هلك سنة 223 يوم 7 بكسلول بالسعد ذو ولده</td>
<td>تبا نفس امرؤ القيس بن عمرو ملك العرب كلهما ذو أسد الناح وملك الأسديين ونزرو وملوكهم هرب مذحج عكدي وجاء يزجه في رتج دجنين مدينة شمر ملك معد وبين بينها الشعوب ووكهلن فرسان الروم فلم يبلغ ملك مبلغ عكدي هلك سنة 223 يوم 7 بكسلول بالسعد ذو ولده</td>
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**Figure (II)** New tracing by the author of the Nabataean text of *al-Namārah* inscription (top) with an equivalent letter-by-letter Arabic transcription (middle) and his modern classical Arabic translation (bottom)

inscriptions. Still, in order to fully accomplish the difficult task of challenging Dussaud’s reading, we are faced by an even more difficult task — how to read this unusual word? To begin, I started in
Aramaic where \( t\i \) is thought to be a simple demonstrative pronoun for a singular masculine noun. The name of the Syrian village \( T\i s\i \u r, \) \( T\ar \t\u s \) providence, is believed to be derived from an Aramaic compound name made of \( t\i \) (this) and \( s\i r \) (wall), a masculine noun in both Aramaic and Arabic. \[^3[11]\]

However, the second word, \( n\i s\) of al-\( N\i m\i r\)ah is a feminine noun — as I have pointed out when re-reading the \( U\i m\i m a l \) al-Jim\i l\ inscription. The extremely rare instance where \( n\i s\) can be treated as a masculine noun in Arabic is not applicable here. Considering that al-\( N\i m\i r\)ah language is clearly classical Arabic, it is seriously unlikely that it would start with an Aramaic word, let alone the wrong Aramaic word.

Regardless of the nature of the word \( n\i s\), feminine or masculine, one needs to first reinvestigate its meaning and usage in al-\( N\i m\i r\)ah. As I illustrated through my reading of the \( U\i m\i m a l \) al-Jim\i l, Madeba, Strasbourg, and other inscriptions in the previous chapters, this word was likely misread or even mistraced in these inscriptions. Among the long list of its usage in Arabic (compiled by major Muslim scholars who lived a few centuries after al-\( N\i m\i r\)ah), “tombstone” or “funerary monument” were both clearly absent. Two Arabic Nabataean inscriptions, dated few decades before al-\( N\i m\i r\)ah and found in the same geographic area, and numerous other Musnad and Nabataean inscriptions, had consistently used the word \( q\i b\i r \) in relation to a burial place. Why would al-\( N\i m\i r\)ah then use \( n\i s\) alone?

Even if the word \( n\i s\) was actually used individually in few inscriptions to mean tombstone, this should certainly not limit it to that usage or exclude others, especially since the absolute majority of the other inscriptions had consistently used it otherwise. The fact that \( U\i m\i m a l \) al-Jim\i l had used \( n\i s\i \) with final letter \( W\i w \), while al-\( N\i m\i r\)ah used \( n\i s\) without \( w\i w \), is by itself a significant piece of
information that needs to be examined closely. Furthermore, *al-Namārah* stone does not even resemble a typical Nabataean or non-Nabataean *nafesh*. I am of the opinion that in the context of *al-Namārah*, the word *nafs* should be read as “soul” — its common usage —, or “blood” — a less common but a very valid usage, given the events surrounding *Umruʾū al-Qays* defeat in *al-Ḥīrah*. As it will be emphasized throughout my re-reading, the overall text contents, paragraphs, sentences, and information on the events cited in the inscription — whether read with classical Arabic or having Nabataean Arabic in mind — do not match the current reading of this word as “funerary monument.”

My reading of *nafs* in the meaning of “soul” would leave only a couple of possibilities for the reading of the previous word *ṭī*. It was either used to swear by or call upon the soul or blood of *Umruʾū al-Qays*, a very common Arab practice even today; or to bring the attention to or call upon his glory. It was customary that the Arabs, even before Islam, use introductory sentences before starting with their main topic, just as Muslims routinely do today by starting with an attention-grabbing swear sentence such as, *Bism Allāh al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*. Accordingly, I believe there could be four possible readings for the word *ṭī*.

The first and most likely reading of *ṭī* is *ṭayā* تَيَا, a combined word composed of two parts, *ṭa* and *yā*. The first part is the swearing letter *ṭāʾ*, known as *ṭāʾ al-qasam* تاء القسم, as in *ṭa-Allāh* تَاللﻪ. Despite its exclusive usage with name of god, *Allāh*, after Islam, swearing letter *Ṭāʾ* was commonly used before. For example, the Arabs used *ta-Ḥayātika* when swearing by someone’s life. They also used *ta-rabbi al-kaʿbati* when swearing by the god of *kaʿbah* in Mecca — even before Islam. Based on this reading, they may have used *ṭayā rabbi al-Kaʿbati* تيَا رَبِّ الكعبة. The second part, the letter/word *yā* is *ḥarf tanbih* حرف تنبيه commonly used to
call, or call upon, the attention of someone or something as in yā Allāh, or yā fulān, or yā ‘Irāq. [17] Therefore, I read the first two words of al-Namārah as ta-yā nafs تَا-يَا نفﺲ as in qasaman yā nafs قَسَمَا يَا نفﺲ, or biki yā nafs بِكِي يَا نفﺲ which would mean, “swear by thee Oʾsoul of”, or “in thee, Oʾsoul of.”

The second possible reading is that tī could also be tayā تَاٰ, but this time the two parts are used together as ḥarf tanbih. Ibn Manẓūr listed several examples where Yā al-Tanbih, combined with additional letters before it were used as one word in the meaning of yā. The additional letters before yā were possibly used to add more emphasis, admiration, or to express feelings for revenge and sorrow. The few examples listed in his Lisān al-ʿArab included āyā ﺃٰي, ayā أٰي, and hayā هِيا, but not tayā تَاٰ. [17] My thinking, based on Ibn Manẓūr examples, is that tayā and several other combinations of yā had existed in classical Arabic.

The third possibility is that tī itself was a swearing letter Tā’ تاء القسﻢ with final letter Yā’ أٓم added to replace a kasrah diacritic. In this case it would be read ti nafs as in bi-nafs بِنفﺲ or wa-nafs ونفﺲ, commonly used to swear by someoneʾs soul. Swearing Tāʾ is normally attached to a word with a fatḥah diacritic added, but it is possible that in this case kasrah was needed because it was followed by a feminine noun, nafs. This would be consistent with the typical Arabic association of kasrah with feminine. Since pronouncing swearing Tāʾ with kasra when attached to nafs is awkward, a final letter Yāʾ أٓم was probably used to represent kasrah, as practiced in pre-diacritic Arabic poetry writings. [17]

The forth possibility is that tī تَي could actually be a feminine demonstrative pronoun like hadhihī ﻪذﻪ but is used here in the meaning of ḥarf tanbih or for swearing. Accordingly, tī would be pointing with admiration (or revenge) to the soul of the king within
an isolated, unrelated, opening sentence, before proceeding to the main subject of the inscription text. This usage is possible, since *tī* was mentioned casually in *Lisān al-ʿArab* in the meaning of *hadhihī* ṣadā, which according to that reference is a feminine demonstrative pronoun used to point at while call for attention. For example, one can say *hadhihi ummat al-ʿArab* before starting unrelated speech.

The fifth, an extremely unlikely possibility, is that *tī* could also be *tayā*, but in the meaning of *ṭawbá* طوبى or *tahyā* (long live.) The inscription may have started with the phrase *tahyā nafs* تحيا نفس but the letter Ḥaʾ after Tāʾ was possibly omitted by design or by mistake. This possibility is highly unlikely since I have not found any evidence linking *tī* or *tayā* with such usage. Also, *tahyā* is usually used with a living person, not the soul of the dead.

Reading the first two words of *al-ʿNamārah* is crucial to the reading of the rest of the inscription. In the case of the first four reading possibilities here above reported, swearing by or calling upon Umruʾū al-Qaysʾ soul, the phrase should then be followed by a single major action or event announcement, not a group of events. As for the fifth possibility, the non-swearing readings above, a list of accomplishments is certainly possible. Regardless of which reading is used, the inscription has become much less likely a burial epitaph than a memorial monument. The first four swearing readings open up other possibilities for reading the rest of the inscription, since they indicate that this inscription is not necessarily about Umruʾū al-Qays.

The next questionable word of the first line was *klh alḥ*. Dussaud traced the word as *klh* accurately, but read it wrongly as *kulluh*. It should be *kulluhā* (meaning, “all of them”) referring to the previous word *al-ʿArab* (the Arabs, or the Arab tribes); both are feminine nouns. However, the next challenging words of the inscription
are *dhū* and the two words following it. As I explained previously, in Arabic *dhū* is usually used in the meaning of *ṣāhib* or *wa-lahu* (“owner of” or “he who owns”), normally for *laqab* or *kunyah* (nickname), or in the meaning of “which belongs to”, “who belongs to”, or “of”. In both cases, it should be followed by a noun. However, in classical Arabic, *dhū* was also used in the meaning of *alladhī* (he who), followed by a verb. In *al-Namārah*, the next word was either *asad* (lion) or *asara* (took someone as prisoner). I believe it was the noun *asad*, and the previous word was either *dhū*, normally used for nicknames or other titles, or *dhū* in the meaning of “who belongs to”, not *alladhī*.

It follows, I read the last three-word phrase as *dhū asadu al-tāj* in the meaning of “the one who owned *asad al-tāj*,” possibly a nickname or a title referring to a figure of lion adorning the top of an actual crown. Or in the meaning of “the one who belongs to *asadu al-tāj*”. This refers to the *Asad* tribe as the one with the crown or the one whose kings wore a crown, a well-known history fact.

In order to read *dhū* as *alladhī*, to fulfill Dussaud’s and all current readings of the inscription, one must read the word after *dhū* as a verb. Scholars, who read the word after *dhū* as a verb, possibly *asara*, *assara*, or even *asada*, claimed that the word which followed and which can easily be traced as the noun *al-tāj* (crown,) was actually referring to the well-known historical city *Thāj* or *Thaʾj* near the modern-day city *al-Ḍahrān*.

Even so, if this were true, one would not refer to it as *al-Thāj* using *al*. In fact, Arabic poetry had never used *al* with city names like *Thāj* or *Najrān*. Additionally, in Arabic the object of the verb *asar* or *assara* must be people, not a city. One does take people, particularly soldiers, as prisoners and not a city! Tweaking the reading of *al-tāj*, some scholars claimed it was actually *al-Tājiyyīn*, possi-
bly a tribe name, or al-Thājiyyīn, the people of the city of Thāj. However, I was not able to trace the two or three additional letters needed for al-tāj to become al-Tājiyyīn or al-Thājiyyīn. Since those who read the word as the verb assara had also read each subsequent word mlk as the verb malaka, one may ask as why al-Namārah would use assar only for al-Taj or al-Tājiyyīn. A more pertinent question would be, why not use malaka? It would certainly fit the meaning better.

Those who opposed reading al-tāj as “the crown” explained that Arab kings had never wore crowns. This is erroneous. History teaches us that some of the northern Arab kings of Hirah and even Najd, home of the Bani Asad tribes, wore crowns. Even if this were not true, we do know that Umruʾū al-Qays had carried many attacks in Persia whose kings did wear crowns. Since Persia historically used a lion as a national symbol, we cannot exclude the possibility that Umruʾū al-Qays had managed to seize a crown with a lion effigy — this earned him the appellation: dhū asad al-tāj (the one with the lion of the crown), a valid Arabic phrase in terms of grammar and semantics. According to Muslim scholars, King Umruʾū al-Qays was known for his many appellations. Doing so, that is to have multiple nicknames, is an established Arab tradition since time immemorial, through the Abbasid times, and even today. One would be surprised, if al-Namārah would mention king Umruʾū al-Qays without following it with one of his many titles or appellations. It is unfortunate that the appellation listed in al-Namārah was not among those that Muslim historians accorded to him. [18][40]

Struggling to read the word following dhū as a verb to prove Dussaud’s general classification of al-Namārah, some scholars hypothesized that assar was an equivalent to the verb nāla (won). They read the second word as “is”; that is, as al-tāj (crown), and read the three-word phrase as alladhi nāla al-tāj (he who won the crown).
Yet, I found no evidence that the words *assara* or *asara* was used in such manner.

Bellamy read the last four-word phrase as *wa-laqabahu dhū Asad wa-Midhḥij* (and his appellation as “the one who owned *Asad* and *Midhḥij* tribes”). I do agree with his tracing of the loop following *Asad* as a possible letter *Wāw*, but disagree with his tracing of the word that followed as *Midhḥij*. Doubly important, why would *al-Namārah* lists *Umruʾū al-Qaysʾ* as king of *Asad* and vanquisher of *Midhḥij* in Line 2 (according to Bellamy’s reading) when his appellation already included them on Line 1? However, I believe Bellamy’s tracing of *alif* as possible letter *Wāw* would change *dhū asad al-tāj* ذو اسد التاﺞ to *dhū asadūl-tāj* ذو اسدولتاﺞ which would conform to the way with which *al-Namārah* pronounced the name *Umruʾū al-Qays* as *Umruʾul-Qays* وُرءلکیس and, as I shall discuss later, the way it pronounced *fursān al-Rūm* as *fursanūl-rūm* فرسانولروﻢ. On the other hand, even if all Bellamy’s tracing and reading of the last phrase of Line 1 were correct, this would still agree with my reading of *dhū* as the common *dhū* and not *alladhī*, and with my reading of the phrase as one of the king’s titles or appellations.

**Line 2**

Reading the first two and the last three words of the first line was, without a doubt, the most demanding task in reading the Arabic language of *al-Namārah*. In comparison, reading the rest of the inscription is straightforward. If *dhū* was *alladhī*, one would expect a series of action (i.e. verbs) afterwards, all connected by *Wāw* (and). If it was simply the typical word *dhū* for appellations, one should then expect either additional titles connected by *Wāw*, or an announcement for an extraordinary event or a decree. Only in the
second case could one start a new sentence with the letter Wāw (not in the meaning “and”), which would normally be followed by a non-verb, as in wa-qad, or wa-akīran. The fact that Umruʾū al-Qays was the king of Asad and Nazār, is neither new nor an extraordinary announcement. The Quran started many sentences with Wāw, but it consistently used non-verb afterwards, as in the example of Quran (53:1) wa-ṭal-najmi idhā hawā, where the word al-najm (the star) is a noun.

In my opinion, reading the word mlk ẓllā, which appears twice in the second line, as the verb malaka is a major mistake since the first one was preceded by the letter Wāw. I read both as the noun malik (king of), as this same word was read by all scholars in Line #1 in the phrase malik al-ʿArab. Muslim scholars wrote that Bani Asad of Najd and Bani Nazār of Hijāz, are ʿArabun mustaʿribah (Arabized Arabs), not ʿArabun ʿāribah (pure Arabs.) They are the descendants of ʿAdnān, not Qaḥṭān (presumably a “pure” Arab.) Accordingly, ʿAdnān, a descendent of Ismaʿīl, is the father (some wrote grandfather) of Nazār of Hijāz and Maʿad of Yemen, and great grandfather of Mudar. Depending on what time period, these mixed Arab groups were customarily referred to as Maʿad, Nazār, or Mudar instead of ʿAdnān. It is evident, therefore, that after stating that Umruʾ al-Qays was the king of all Arabs — the single largest group of people in the area — the writer of al-ʾNamārah needed to state that Umruʾū al-Qays was also the king of both Asad and Nazār, two of the largest three mixed tribes in Arabia. The third group is Maʿad of Yemen. Yet, it is also possible that the term “all Arabs” was referring to all nomadic Arab tribes as distinguished from tribes that had settled down in cities and specific geographic areas and established kingdoms.

Based on my readings of the word malik above as noun, I had suspected right from the begining, that the letter Wāw after the
next word, *mulūkahum*, should actually be a part of that word. This would make reading Arabic smoother, especially since the next word, *hrb* جزأ is a definite verb, as we shall see that later. This, of course, was not required for my reading of *al-Namaerah* up to the word *mulūkahum*. As explained above, a sentence announcing an extraordinary event, like defeating the powerful *Midḥḥiį*, can start with *Wāw* in the meaning of *wa-akīran* (at last or finally), or *hā-qad*. However, tracing and inspecting the Nabataean text, I can unmistakably see that the *Wāw* after *mulūkahum* is actually connected to it. The downward stroke of this *Wāw* is not vertical. It is pointing to the right. The final letter *Mīm* of *mulūkahum* has a prominent lower-connecting stroke fading just before it reaches the downward stroke of *Wāw*. I read this word as *mulūkahumū* not *mulūkahum*. This final *Wāw* is referring to the people of *Asad* and *Nazār*. In Arabic grammar, it is called *wāw al-Ishbaʿ* (saturation *Wāw*) or *wāw al-ṣilah* (relating *Wāw*) and is usually used after *mīm al-Jamʿ* (plural *mīm*) to emphasize its *dhammah* diacritic. The word *mulūkahumū* is the last word of the opening sentence of *al-Namaerah*. It does not only conclude the opening sentence in anticipation of the main subject of the inscription, but it surely makes the reading of the first word of *al-Namaerah*, *tī*, as a simple “this”, impossible.

The Arabic root of the word after *mulūkahumū* could either be *haraba* جزأ (run away) or *hadhdhaba* جذأ (disciplined), a verb in both cases. Tracing this word as *hrb* is accepted by all scholars. Since the word that comes after was *Midḥḥiį*, the name of the prominent Yemenite tribe, this verb must be in past tense and when read in Arabic must have a *shaddah* on the letter *Rāʾ* to become *harraba* جَذأ (forced the object to run away) in order to refer to the subject committing the action of the verb. If *Midḥḥiį* is the object, as I read it, the subject can then be a name appearing before or after the verb. The only other possibility is to treat *Midḥḥiį*, a feminine noun, as the
subject, not the object of the verb; in such case, one must say hara-bat Midhḥij, adding the feminine letter ʿTāʾ after Bāʾ. Since there was no ʿTāʾ, this word must be harraba (defeated them or made them run away.) Hadhdhaba would not make sense after reading the next line.

Given that harraba was the first word of the new main event announcing a sentence/paragraph that followed an unrelated opening sentence, and since it was definitely a verb followed by a name within a three-word sub-sentence, the next word ʿAkūdī must be the subject name according to classic Arabic. It cannot be an adjective or adverb since this would leave the three-word sub-sentence incomplete. I agree with Dussaud’s reading of the phrase as harraba Midhḥij ʿAkūdī, but I read it in the meaning of the phrase harraba ʿAkūdī Midhḥij, where ʿAkūdī is the subject فاعلٌ who defeated the object مفعولٌ بِه Midhḥij. In Arabic, one can use both phrases, but should differentiate between them by using appropriate vocal accents on the object and subject. This vocal differentiation was never marked in writing until after Islam. The Quran and Arabic poetry have plenty of similar examples. In the Quran (35:28) innamā yakhshá Allāha min ʿibādihi al-ʿulamāʾu إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللّٰهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ʿالُوْلَامَٰٓعُ, where the verb yakhshá is the first word followed immediately by Allāh, the object, and then comes the subject, al-ʿulamāʾu. [24][25]

However, assuming that ʿAkūdī was a name in the phrase harraba Midhḥij ʿAkūdī, one should also consider the possibility that Midhḥij was a personal name and is the subject. In such case, ʿAkūdī, as the object, would be the personal or tribe name of the defeated party. Although this possibility is valid from a grammar and language angle, it would not fit at all with all readings of the last line of the inscription where the victorious (either ʿAkūdī, or Umrūʿū al-Qays) was treated as a hero, not a villain. Similarly, the assumption that
ʿAkdi was a last name, as in haraba Midhhij ʿAkdi, would not work with the rest of the inscription.

Luckily, from the viewpoint of research, the word ʿAkdi appeared twice in the inscription. The last sentence started with the two-word phrase ʿAkdi halak (ʿAkdi died.) This phrase is, by itself, solid proof that ʿAkdi is a name of a person and that this inscription is about him, not Umruʿū al-Qays. The main event of the inscription was his triumph over Midhhij. Not a very common name, ʿAkdi sounds like a classic Arabic name. Many of Arabic names are formed by adding final Yāʾ after a noun or after another name derived from a three-letter Arabic root, as in Ramzī from Ramz, Saʿdī from Saʿd, Ḥusnī from Ḥusn, ... etc. The name of the hero of al-ʾNamarāh was ʿAkdi derived from the classic Arabic word ʿakd دک . It is that simple!

With a simple Arabic Google search for the name ʿAkdi, one can find many using it as a last name in an Arab desert town in Algeria, called Umāsh أوماش ! The fact that the name ʿAkdi was mentioned without the name of his father could mean that he was either an associate of Umruʿū al-Qays, from a slave background like the famous Arab hero ʿAntarah (who many think was originally a slave) or a high ranking Arab soldier of the Roman Army.

According to Lisān al-ʿArab, although the root word ʿakd can be used in a variety of meanings; however, its primary meaning is, “the lower back part of the tongue.” For that reason, it was used in the meaning of asl (origin) as Libzbarski suggested. The word is probably related to ʿiqd دق (tie). [7][17] Likely, the derived word ʿakdi does not mean “strong” or “powerful”, as most Arabic publications desperately claim today following Caskel’s reading, but “original” اصلي. Besides, one can not see how anyone could read the same word ʿakdi in two ways at the same time: as “the strong” القوي, and “with strength or strongly” قوياً!
Bellamy thought this word was ‘akkadá or ‘akdá which he derived from a two-word phrase ‘an kada assuming the letter Yā’ was Yā’ Maqṣūrah, the letter Nūn was assimilated, the letter Qāf was replaced by Kāf, and the letter Dhād was replaced by Dāl. His assumptions are possible. As we will see in Part Three, the Akkadian language included many Arabic words with assimilated letters and sounds. Bellamy gave this word the meaning “thereafter”, which is a good meaning in term of Classical Arabic. Surely, his reading of the word as an adverb would make sense if one would go along with Dussaud’s reading of the previous text and the inscription. But even then, his convoluted assumptions to arrive to this unknown word, ‘akkadá, raise more questions but give no answers. For example, why is there no reference to ‘akkadá in any historical Arabic reference? And why would the writer of the inscription use a non-crucial adverb twice, in the first place? Still, because Bellamy’s reading of this word as an adverb meaning “thereafter” is a very valid possibility and would fit well in both lines, I will provide an alternative reading in the summary section using the word ‘akdi in this meaning, not as a name. However, in such case, the word asada in the first line should be a verb, possibly in the meaning of “to wear”, which could have been derived from the Classical Arabic root verbs asada, sadada, or sadā. Historical Arabic references gave “clothing” as one of the meanings for all of three roots.

Line 3

Bellamy should be given due credit for tracing and reading two highly debated words in the beginning of Line #3. I verified his tracing and I agree with it. He traced the first word as yzjh and read it yazujjuhā. The missing final alif after the letter Hā’ is consistent with the word kulluh for kulluhā in Line #1 and with another
word *banīh* for *banīha*, in the end of Line #3. The word *Yazujju* has many meanings, but in *al-Namārah* context, it means, “to engage someone in a fierce battle.” Dussaud traced that word as *bzji* and read it as *bi-zjāy*, a non-existing Arabic word! The second traced word by Bellamy was *rtj ج rt*, which he read as *rutuji* in the meaning of “gates of”. I agree with his tracing of the word, but disagree with his Arabic reading and the meaning he gave to it. The presence of *fī* (in) rather than *ʿalá* (on) before the word indicates that it does not mean gates in this context. The word *fī* (in) needs a location where one can be physically “in” not “near to”. One cannot say in Arabic *fī abwāb Najrān* (in the gates of Najrān), but *ʿalá abwāb Najrān* (on/at the gates of Najrān.) I read the word *rtj* as *rutuji*, or possibly *ritāji*, in the meaning of “narrow roads of” or “narrow road of” as given by *Lisān al-ʿArab,* which indicated that the words *rutuj* or *marātij* are the plural forms of the word *ritāj* for “narrow road”, as in the Quran verse [17]

Categorically therefore, only this reading is grammatically correct as it is in agreement with the historical and geographical facts of Najrān and Yemen, which are known for their narrow roads and mountainous valleys. The use of the word *harraba* in the second line was apparently deliberate. The crushing battle was in and around Najrān, where Midhḥij had escaped to for cover. Further, scholars read the word *Shimr* as *Shammar,* probably hinting to the well-known Shammar tribe of northern Najd. Reading the word as a tribe name rather than an individual name is clearly influenced by reading the following word *mlk كلَّم as the verb malaka.* This hasty reading is yet another example of how scholars did all they can do to prove that al-Namārah was listing Umruʿū al-Qays accomplishments.

Two facts attest to the above conclusion: 1) geographically, in the sense of distance and location, the Shammar tribe had nothing to do with Najrān or Yemen, and 2) a renowned king of Yemen who
ruled in the time of al-Namārah carried the first name Shimr. Moreover, I wonder why al-Namārah, which had added the letter Wāw after every single name in the inscription, would skip that practice only with the name Shammar! I read the word Shmr and the wāw that followed as one word, Shimrū, referring to King Shimr Yar’ish of Yemen, and therefore, I read the next word that followed as mālik (king of), not the verb malaka (owned).

The last two words of the third line are wa-bayyana banihā, as in wa mayyaza bayna banihā (distinguished appropriately between its people). Bellamy read the two words as wa-nabala bi-nabahi (treated its nobles gently). His reading would fit fine with his and my reading of the fourth line, which included two important words, al-shu‘ūb followed by wa-wakkalahunna. For a victorious army, discriminating between the defeated (as in treatment of women, children, and elders differently) is contrary to the usual indiscriminate rampage. In other words, it is a sort of gentle treatment reserved for the vanquished. Tracing the first word by Bellamy as نبل nbl, which he read as nabala, is possible. Conversely, tracing the second word as بنبﻪ bnh, which he read as bi-nabahi is impossible since the third letter is clearly Yāʾ, not Bāʾ. I read the first word as bayyana, as did Dussaud even though the vertical stem of the final letter Nūn was unusually high.

In Arabic bayyana in the meaning of mayyaza (distinguished between) or in the meaning of wadhdaḥa (clarified) is the past tense for yubayyin. Among many diverse modes of usage, the Quran (2:118) used the following: قَدْ يُوقِنُوْنَ لِقَبيِّنَأَلَئِنَّا. The root word, bayn بين is among the few Arabic words that can be used to give an opposite meaning. Generally, it is used to express either separation or togetherness. As for the second word, I believe it is banihā بنين, as in abnāʾihā ابنائه (its sons or people). The word bnh should be read as banihā, since we are referring either to the Midḥḥij tribe or to Maʿad,
both of which are feminine nouns. Dussaud read this word *banyihi* بانيه، as in *quwwatihi* (his steadfastness). This would fit well with the rest, but it needs to be followed by *lil-shuʿūb*, not *al-shuʿūb* as illustrated in the next word of Line 4.

**Line 4**

The fourth line presents no obstacles to read. In the beginning, Dussaud read it correctly, but a few decades later, he reversed position. The word *wwklhn* ووكلهن should be read *wa-wakkalahunna* (put them under the protection of), a classic Arabic word that is grammatically correct. [17] As it happened, *al-Naṣrārah* included the required letter *Nun* with shaddah diacritic at the end, which is needed to refer specifically to the plural feminine noun *al-shuʿūb*. This word is the second widely-utilized taxonomic term used in the Arab tribal and modern systems as synonym for the word “people”. A tribe or *qabīlah* is divided into *shuʿūb*, plural for *shaʿb*, which in turn is divided into *butūn*. We read in the Quran (9:36)

\[
\text{إِنَّ عَدَّةَ الشُّهُورِ عِندَ اللَّهِ اثْنَإِشَرَ عِندَكُمَا فِي كُتُبِ اللَّهِ يَوْمَ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَاَلْأَرْضَ مِنْهَا أَرْبَعُ حُرُمٌ}
\]

The word *fīhhunna* فيهن is referring to the plural feminine word *shuhūr* (months); therefore the letter *Nun* was added in the end. [24][25] The word *shahr* (month) is a single masculine noun, but when converted to plural form, it becomes *shuhūr*, a feminine noun. Similarly, the word *shuʿūb*, plural of the masculine noun *shaʿb*, is a plural feminine noun. This may explain, at least partially, why the word *al-ʿArab*, a single feminine noun, in the first line was referred to with *kulluhā*, not *kulluhunna* or *kullahum*, and why the feminine noun, *Midhḥij*, for a single tribe, was referred to with the words, *yazujuhā*, not *yazujuhunna* or *yazujuhum*, and *banīhā* not *banīhunna*, or *banīhum*. 

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The contested word(s) of the fourth line was \textit{frswlrwm}. The first three-letter part \textit{frs} can be \textit{faras} (horse), \textit{fāris} (horseman or equestrian), or \textit{Fāris} (Persia). Reading the word as “horse” cannot be considered. To read history correctly, it is literally impossible for the word to be read as Persia and that is because the previous word was clearly \textit{wa-wakkalahunna}, and the following word was clearly indicating the Romans —there has never been an incidence in old Arabia where an area was put under the simultaneous protection of the Romans and the Persians. During the time of \textit{al-Namārah}, found in a Roman-controlled territory, these two powers were engaged in heated battles. Consequently, it was highly improbable to share domination of Arabia as partners.

At this point, we are left with only one possibility as how to read \textit{frsw}, which is \textit{fursānū} (horsemen) plural of \textit{fāris}. I am inclined to believe there is a medial \textit{nūn} between the letters \textit{Sīn} and \textit{Wāw}, which I will discuss in detail later. Accordingly, I read the two words as a compound: \textit{fursānūl-rūm}, \textit{fursān al-Rūm}, \textit{fursān} \textit{al-Rūm}, similar to the reading of \textit{Umruʾul-qays} earlier in the inscription for \textit{Umruʾ al-Qays}. The letter \textit{Alif} of the article \textit{al} in \textit{al-Rūm} was omitted because it was preceded by a word ending with the letter \textit{Wāw}, namely \textit{fursānū}. This practice has largely fallen out of use in modern Arabic writing. The name \textit{Umruʾ al-Qays}, is pronounced with heavy \textit{dhammah} accent (as if there was a letter \textit{Wāw}) after \textit{Hmazah} as in \textit{Umruʾul-qays} or \textit{Umruʾu-l-qays}. This is why the beginning letter \textit{Alif} of \textit{al-Qays}, not same as \textit{Hamzah}, was also omitted. In fact, in modern Arabic, a majority of people write the name with the letter \textit{Wāw} beneath \textit{Hamzah} as in \textit{Umruʾ al-Qays}. Some still write it as \textit{Umruʾu al-qays}. In comparison, the \textit{Alif} of the article \textit{al} is not omitted when the previous word ends with a soft \textit{dhammah} diacritic, like \textit{maliku al-Asadiyyin} in the second line. The letter \textit{Wāw} after
the Nnūn in fursānū could be the plural Wāw normally seen when a perfect masculine plural noun ending with Wāw and Nūn, is added to another noun to complete its meaning, as in Banū Asad for banūn Asad. This is known as jamʿ al-mudhakkar al-sālim جمع المذكر السالِم. The word fursān is called mudhāf ماضِف (qualified) or translated literally from Arabic “the added word,” while the word al-Rūm is mudhāf ilayh ماضِف اليِه (qualifier) or literally translated from Arabic “the word which has been added to.” Otherwise, this letter Wāw could also be wāw al-ṣilah or wāw al-ishbāʿ to emphasize the ḍam-mah diacritic on the nūn, as explained earlier when discussing the word mulūkahumū in Line #2.

Dussaud, who initially read the word frsw as fārisū فارسُو (plural for fāris?), appeared not convinced of his reading. This explains why he decided to get rid of that reading later (when he re-read al-Namārah in the 1950s.) A justification does exist to explain this obvious confusion: the area of the stone occupied by the letters frsw appears significantly damaged. However, all what the word needs to become fursānū is the letter Nūn between the letters Sīn and Wāw.

Fortunately, we do not need to dream up the letter Nūn. Retracing that area extensively by using several photos, I observed that the down stroke of the letter Wāw was pointing to the right, not perfectly vertical as traced by Dussaud. More important, the downward stroke of the previous letter Sīn is clearly making an upward u-turn, probably to form the small missing letter, medial Nūn, which was then connected to the letter Wāw just at the loop area. Furthermore, the space between the letters Sīn and Wāw is suspiciously wide. Nevertheless, and given that this particular surface is severely damaged, we may never know for sure if there was ever a letter nūn in that area of the inscription.
I believe my reading of \textit{frsw} as \textit{fursānū} is more convincing than Dussaud’s. It is surely more convincing than Bellamy’s reading of it as \textit{fa-ra’asū} (to appoint someone as their head or leader.) He read the two-word phrase \textit{fa-ra’asū li-Rūmā} I cannot see how he traced a letter \textit{Alif–Hamzah} between the tightly spaced letters \textit{Rāʾ} and \textit{Sīn}. Hamza, unlike \textit{Alif}, cannot be omitted in this case since \textit{al-Namārah} used it consistently everywhere else. Bellamy’s reading seems acceptable at first; but it would quickly crumple when combined with the previous word \textit{wa-wakkalahunna} (placed them under the protection of.) According to Bellamy’s reading, the defeated \textit{Midhḥij}, were put under the protection of the defeater (\textit{Umruʾ al-Qays}), and then accepted the Romans as their ultimate protectors. Why would an Arab king work so hard for the benefit of the Romans? The Arab kings were never enthusiastically subservient to either the Romans or the Persians. Their relation was primarily for mutual protection. Bellamy’s elaboration on the differences between \textit{raʾīs} and \textit{malik} is not convincing. Also, his reading of the last word as the city \textit{Rūmā} is confusing. Even though the Arabs called the Byzantine Romans \textit{al-Rūm}, these Romans were not the Romans of \textit{Roma} (current Rome of Italy). Why \textit{al-Namārah} would then speak of \textit{Rūmā}?

We have no clue as to how and why some readers read the word \textit{wwklhn} as \textit{wa-kullahum} in order to read the whole phrase as \textit{wa-kullahum fursānan lil-Rūm} (and made all of them knights for the Romans). This highly speculative reading adds arbitrarily an additional letter \textit{Wāw} and dreams up a final letter \textit{Mīm}, to replace the letter \textit{Nūn}, in \textit{wwklhn}. Additionally, it adds a letter \textit{Nūn} after \textit{Sīn} (as I did) and replaces the letter \textit{Wāw} by \textit{Alif with tanwīn} in the word \textit{frsw}. It also adds, arbitrarily, a second letter \textit{Lām} before the word \textit{lrum}. This and other peculiar readings are unfortunately the most popular ones in the Arab world to-
day; probably because the current major Western readings of al-
Namārah have failed to convince many! [36]

The last phrase of Line #4, fa-lam yablugh malikun mablaghah فلم يبلغ ملكه مبلغه which was read that way by all scholars, is clear but tricky. It can mean, “Not even a king could accomplish what he has accomplished” or “no other king has accomplished what he has accomplished”. There is a subtle difference between these two interpretations. The second could lead the reader to believe that it is referring to the only king mentioned in al-Namārah, king Umruʾū al-Qays. I beg to differ; that is, it refers to the first interpretation of the first phrase — that is, the one referring to the accomplishments of ʿAkdī. It is worth mentioning that it is common in the usages of Arabic to brag about something by stating, “not even a king has done such or had owned such.” As I have explained already, according to history textbooks before Dussaud’s reading of al-Namārah, king Umruʾū al-Qays was not able to control Yemen or Midḥḥij.

To summarize, the third and fourth lines of al-Namārah are describing the sole event of the inscription, namely the defeat of Midḥḥij, which was introduced in Line 2. Their specific purpose appears to be informing the reader about where the battle took place, how it was conducted, and what was its aftermath. All of the keywords appearing in the two lines, Midḥḥij, Najrān, al-shuʿūb, malik, Shimr, and al-Rūm are linked to one geographical location: Yemen, and to a single timeframe: circa 328 CE.

To continue, I read the single event paragraph starting by the word harraba (in Line 2) until the end of the Line #4 as follows: “ʿAkdī defeated Midḥḥij, then engaged them in a fierce battle in the narrow road(s) of Najrān, the city of Shimr, the king of Maʿad, and separated its people as it fits before placing them under the protec-
tion of the Roman cavalry, a task that not even a king had accomplished before.” This reading is by no means speculative. I based it on historical and geographical facts—especially on the linguistic aspects of the inscription itself.

**Line 5**

The final line of *al-Namārah* started with the word ‘Ākḍī, which we have already discussed (and seen) when we read the second line. Starting with this word in the final line was not a coincidence. The letters of the final word of the previous line, *mablaghahu*, were exaggerated in size and a generous space was left blank after it. It seems, therefore, that the scribe deliberately wanted to start the conclusive sentence in a new line. Starting with the name ‘Ākḍī, he wanted to remind the reader, once more, that the inscription was about him. The second word after ‘Ākḍī was clearly *halaka* (perished) therefore, the first phrase of the sentence was ‘Ākḍī halaka (‘Ākḍī perished) The subject name here is after the verb, exactly as it was in the older Arabic Nabataean inscription, *Raqqūsh*, which had used the phrase *hiya halakat* (she perished).[13] In good classical Arabic, the verb is usually placed before the subject, but this is not required for correct Arabic grammar.

After stating the year, month, and day of his death, the scribe concluded the inscription (according to Dussaud) with the phrase *bil-saʿd dhū waladahu*. In Arabic language terms, this interpretation is incomprehensible. That is, we cannot understand it in Arabic. However I do agree with his tracing with exception of the first letter, which I think was the letter *Yaʿ* not *Bāʾ*, as Bellamy correctly indicated. One can easily see that the stroke for the letter *Bāʾ* was a vertical straight line throughout the inscription,
unlike the stroke for the initial Yāʾ, which had always included a little dent. Nor can I understand the details of Bellamy’s reading of the phrase yā-la-saʿdi dhū wālawhu في السعد ذو والو ... in the meaning of, “O’, happiness for those who followed him”. I am unable to see the second letter Wāw of wālawhu that Bellamy traced with the intention to replace the letter dāl of wldh. It is my judgment that Bellamy’s reading of this word was clearly influenced by the assumption that al-Namārah was King Umruʿū al-Qays’ epitaph.

I read the last phrase as yā li-saʿdi dhū waladah يالسعد ذو ولَدَه (O’, the happiness of those who gave birth to him). The first word is the letter Yā known as yāʾ al-tanbih which is an exclamation letter used when calling upon for either attention or admiration. This is the same as the letter Yā of tayā, the first word of al-Namārah. It is used here to draw attention to the word saʿd (happiness). Unlike the earlier word dhū in the first line, dhū in this phrase was followed by a verb waladahu (gave birth to him), and therefore it is used in the meaning of alladhī (those who). The closing phrase should be read in the meaning of “Oh, how happy should his parents be,” a classic and familiar line used even today when bringing the bad news of a fallen young soldier, not a king, to his parents!
For more than a century, it was assumed that *al-Namārah* stone, which Dussaud discovered in 1901 was the tombstone of one of the most important pre-Islamic Arab kings, King Umruʾū al-Qays bin ‘Amrū. My tracing and reading of the inscription suggests that such an assumption (based on Dussaud’s initial reading) is inaccurate. In fact, by rereading *al-Namārah* and the two other known fully Arabic Nabataean inscriptions, *Raqqūsh* and *Umm al-Jimāl*, according to Western scholars, I found out that *al-Namārah* inscription was actually about a previously unknown military or tribal person named ʿAkdī, who, while working with or under the Roman Byzantine army, managed to defeat the powerful Midhḥij tribe of Yemen in the early 4th century. The inscription included only three parts: an opening introductory sentence swearing by the soul of king Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū, a long paragraph detailing the specifics of ʿAkdī’s accomplishments in a single battle, and a closing sentence announcing ʿAkdī’s death.

Below is my modern Arabic translation and explanation of the *al-Namārah* inscription:

نَبِيَّاً (فَسَّمَأْ يَا؛ وَأَنْ تَيَ: هَذِهِ) نَفْسُ (رُوحُ) امْرُؤُ الْقِيْسِ بِنِ عَمْرُو، مَلِكُ العَرَبِ كُلَّهَا، ذَو أَسْدَ الْنَّاجِحِ (كَنْنَى)، وَمَلِكُ الْأَسْدِيِّينَ (نَجَّدُ) وَنَزَارُ (بَنِو نَزَّارُ، الْحَجَارِ).
And the following is my reading of the inscription translated to English:

In thee O soul of Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū, king of all Arabs, holder of the crown lion, and king of al-Asadiyyin and Nazār and their kings. ʿAkdī has defeated Midhḥij engaging it in a heated battle in the narrow roads of Najrān, city of Shimr, king of Maʿad, and befittingly differentiated between its people and placed them under the protection of the Roman cavalry — not even a king could accomplish what he had accomplished. ʿAkdī died on December 7th, 223 AD, O' the happiness of those who gave birth to him.

Even if one assumes Bellamy's reading of the word ʿakdī as an adverb meaning "thereafter" was correct, this inscription would still be an example of solid pre-Islamic Classical Arabic text. Here is an alternative reading of the inscription based partially on Bellamy's reading of the word ʿakdī as ʿakdá:

In thee O soul of Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū, king of all Arabs, holder of the crown lion, and king of al-Asadiyyin and Nazār and their kings. ʿAkdī has defeated Midhḥij engaging it in a heated battle in the narrow roads of Najrān, city of Shimr, king of Maʿad, and befittingly differentiated between its people and placed them under the protection of the Roman cavalry — not even a king could accomplish what he had accomplished. ʿAkdī died on December 7th, 223 AD, O' the happiness of those who gave birth to him.

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The following is the English translation:

In thee O’ soul of Umruʾū al-Qays bin ʿAmrū, king of all Arabs, who wore the crown, and ruled al-Asadiyyin and Nazār and their kings, and then defeated Midhḥij, engaging it in a heated battle in the narrow roads of Najrān, city of Shimr, and ruled Maʿad, and befittingly differentiated between its people and placed them under the protection of the Roman cavalry. No king had accomplished what he had accomplished. Then, he died on December 7th, 223 AD, O’ the happiness of those who gave birth to him.
PART 2

Yemen Inscriptional Sample:
The *SaʿadTaʿlib* Inscription
Introduction to Part Two

Choosing a Musnad inscription from Yemen (or from anywhere else in the Arabian Peninsula) to support the research and main conclusions of this book is quite easy — there are more than 90,000 Musnad inscriptions found all over Arabia — from the farthest southern territory of Yemen to the farthest northern areas of the Fertile Crescent. Musnad is the oldest known pre-Islamic Arabic script. The mere abundance and vast geographical coverage of these inscriptions is, by itself, an extremely valuable piece of information. It confirms that in those historical times, an overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula shared a uniform linguistic tool — the script. Emphatically, despite local dialectical variations, all Musnad inscriptions shared uniform and universal linguistic characteristics. It is most certain (or logical to hypothesize) that other minor tongues (with significantly different linguistic characteristics) that existed in the areas bordering with the core of old Arabia, had evolved with time into distinct languages. Decidedly though, they could not have been sister-languages — they were only derivative languages or even dialects.

To illustrate the common linguistic characteristics between classic Arabic and any old Arabic dialect, I decided to read a typical Musnad inscription from Yemen which is known for its distinct Arabic dialect. Reading a Musnad inscription from scratch, for the first
time, I chose a never-read-before inscription to illustrate how easy can one, with proper classical Arabic background, read these inscriptions —more than eighty percent of all available Musnad inscriptions are yet to be read. Dennis Carter, a retired American finance executive who lived for 53 years in the Arabian Gulf region, brought this inscription to my attention in August 2009. In 1967, Carter’s father obtained the inscription, along with a few other alabaster heads and votive figures, when he visited southern Arabia. See Figure (12). He was told that the inscription stone (and the other pieces) were all found in the Maʾrib region of Yemen. For the purpose of this study, I named this inscription the “SaʿadTaʾlib Inscription,” after the man who scribed it (or had it scribed). The inscription appears to belong to the period 250-300 CE, and it recorded the gold offering by SaʿadTaʾlib to the south Arabian god al-Miqh (or al-Maqah) of the temple of Awwm, also known as Mahram Balqis, few miles from Maʿrib.

To be accurate, I did not personally inspect the SaʿadTaʾlib stone tablet. However, with Mr. Carter’s help, I was able to obtain high quality photographs. According to his description, the well-preserved stone is of a light color, possibly granite; it weighs about 13.64 Kg (30 lb), and is 30 cm (12 inches) high, 35 cm (14 inches) wide and about 5 cm (2 inches) deep. The overall quality of the inscription is good to excellent. It contained a total of eleven text lines in classic Sabaean Musnad script, all of which were written from right to left. The language of the inscription is — remarkably and clearly — Arabic. It included several solid usages of classic Arabic words, flavored by local south Arabian dialect that is no more complex than my southern Iraqi Arabic dialect, for example.
Reading my first Musnad inscription from scratch eliminated any remaining doubt that the old Yemeni language might not be Arabic. Not surprisingly, the only reference source I needed to read the inscription was the Arabic etymological dictionary: *Lisān al-ʿArab*, written by *Ibn Manẓūr* over one thousand years ago.\(^{[17]}\)

The *SaʿadTaʾlib* inscription is a valuable comprehensive inscription, in that, it coherently illustrates several usages in the old Yemen’s dialect, and sheds some light on the nature of the word *Sabaʾ* and a confusing period of Yemen’s history.
As with the language of similar old Yemenite inscriptions, reading the SaʿadTaʾlib inscription for the first time could induce one to believe that this language might not be Arabic. However, a more diligent examination would definitely reveal otherwise. To my surprise, reading this inscription was much easier than my first reading of a Nabataean Arabic inscription. This is because both grammar and vocabulary are clear and can be explained with classical Arabic tools. For example, the inscription used the definite article al four times for names and nicknames, which by itself is an overwhelming evidence of its “Arabicness.” All what I needed to read the text successfully was to follow several observations:

1. Written words are always spelled as pronounced in the dialect.
2. Each name mentioned in the inscription was followed immediately by either a nickname or a “wish verb,” which seems to be a common old practice, as evidenced by numerous other Musnad inscriptions found in Yemen.
3. The letter Mīm at the end of a noun adds a factor of “greatness” or “plentiful” to it. This is referred to as tamwīm and has some of the effects of the classic Arabic tanwīn, but it is not a Yemenite replacement of it, as some believe. Using Mīm to indicate greatness can even be seen in names used in other civilizations of the region, notably the Mesopotamian (Babylonian)
mythological figure *Ut.napištu.m* (the Sumerian Noah’s archetype who survived the flood in the Epic of Gilgamesh.)

4. The letter *Nūn* at the end of a word is actually the letter *Nūn* sound of Arabic *tanwīn*, not a Yemenite equivalent of the heavily used Arabic article *al* for “the”, as some scholars of Musnad believe today. Eventhough its use can lead to the same effect.

5. The letter combination *Alif* and *Lām* before a word is indeed the classic Arabic article *al* (the), which can be observed in several words in the current inscription.

6. The letter *Hāʾ* at the beginning of a verb indicates the letter *Alif* or *Hamzah* forming the special case past tense verb as in *ʾaʿṭá* (gave) from *yaʿṭī* (to give).

7. The letter *Hāʾ* at the end of a word could be the equivalent of classic Arabic usage of the letter *Tāʾ Marbūṭah*.

8. The letter *Dhāl* in the beginning of a noun or a verb could indicate *alladhī, dhī, dhā, dhū* الَّذِي، ذَي، ذَهَ، ذَوَ.

9. The letter *Yāʾ* was used to represent both heavy *Yāʾ* and *Alif Maqṣurah*.

10. Vertical slashes mark spaces or words’ separations.
Detailed Reading of the SaʿadTaʿlib
Musnad Inscription

To illustrate the details of my reading, I provided an Arabic line-by-line, letter-by-letter transcription of the Musnad text of the inscription along with a translation in modern Arabic. See Figure (14). Incidentally, I found no critical need to provide an image of my tracing since the picture of the stone, Figure (13), is remarkably clear. However, to help those who would like to learn Musnad, I included in that figure an image with Musnad the letters according to my tracing, using their modern general study shapes. Missing letters or separators, which I could not confirm physically, are added between square brackets. Note: I will only discuss selective words in my reading, since the majority of words in this inscription are self-explanatory to anyone familiar with classic Arabic.

Line 1

The first word SaʿadTaʿlib, or SaʿdTaʿlib (pronounced SaʿduTaʿlib) is the compound name of the person who initiated this inscription and presented the gift to the god of the temple. The first part of the name Saʿd or Saʿad is a very common Arabic name meaning “happiness,” which is often combined with a second noun in the
meaning of “joy of” as in Sa’du-al-Dīn for “joy of the religion” or Sa’d-Allāh for “joy of god”. The name Sa’adTa’lib means “joy of Ta’lib”, where Ta’lib is either a name of a tribe or one of Yemen’s gods. It should be noted, the combined name Sa’dTa’lib seems to be a common name at that time, since it had appeared in several other Musnad inscriptions and is also believed to be the name of the top military leader of the most famous king of Yemen, Shimr Yar’ish, who ruled, according to most accounts, c. 250-300 CE.

The following word Yaqliṭ يقلاط is a verb used as a “wish or desire” verb for that person; it should not be confused with a standard nickname, which is usually an adjective or a noun. Using verbs in such a manner is a common old southern Arabian practice seen in most Musnad inscriptions. As tradition had it, following a name with a “wishing verb” that is in the past tense when a person is dead, and in the present tense when the person is alive, was a common Arabian practice that survived till present time. After Islam, many “wish verbs” were linked to personal names as in raʿiyah Allāh ʿanh ﷲ (may God be pleased with or accept him), waffaqahū Allāh يوفقه اللﻪ (may God make him successful), yahfuẓuhu Allāh يحفظه اللﻪ (may God protect him), and many more. It seems that in southern Arabia, these “wish verbs” were more personalized, but some of them were reserved for a shared figure, too. A good example for reserving a “wish verb” to an important figure is the Islamic use of the phrase sallā Allāh ʿalayhi wa-sallam (God prayed for him and saluted him,) each time the prophet Muhammad is mentioned. The present tense verb Yaqliṭ used in the Sa’adTa’lib inscription, means “move ahead” or “move on.” This verb is still being used today in many Arabian regions, including southern Iraq.
Figure (13) The Saʿad Taʿlīb Musnad inscription stone, top, and an image of its letters using a modern font, Sultan Musnad, designed by the Yamani designer Sultān al-Maqṭarī
| سعدَةَ تَأْلِبَ | يَقَلْطَ | بَنْ | عَذَكَلاَنُ | عَصِيَّةً | وَ[بَنَ]ً |
|--------------------------------------------------|
| عَمْ | وَأَخْيَهُو | أَلْوَهُبَ | أَصْحَحُ | وَرَدَمْ | يَغْنُ |
| مَهَ مَوْضُعُ | هَقْتَيْوَ | ْعَلَمْقَهْ | ثَهُونَ | بَعْلَ | أَوْمَ | صَلَمَهُنَهْ |
| ذَهَبْنَ | لَوْفَيْ | مَرَأَيْهِمْ | الْشَّرْحٍ | يَحْضُبْنَ | وَأَخْيَهُو | [يَ] | 
| [أَيْل]ُ | بَيْنَ | مَلْكِيْ | سَبَأً/تَفْرُرُ | وَرُجَيْدَيْنُ | بَنِي | فَرْعُمٍ | يَذَهِبُ [أَ] | 
| عَلَكْ | سَبَأَ | وَلَوْفَي | عَبْدُهُمْ | سَعَدَةَ تَأْلِبَ | بَنْ | عَذَكَلاَنُ |
| مَوْضُعُ | وَأَخْيَهُو | أَلْوَهُبَ | وَرَدَمْ | بَنِي | مَوْضُعُ | وَ[لَ] | 
| وَرَدَمْ | يَذَتْ | لَوْفَيْ | أَلْمَقَهْ | عَبْدُوهُ | سَعَدَةَ تَأْلِبَ | بَنِيُّ | 
| [سُهْنَات]ُ | سِيَمَاً | بَعْمَوُهُ | هَذَنْ | لَخَيْرٍ | مَهْمَلٍ | بَحْمُلٍ | بَيْنَ | عَبْدَهُ | مَوْضِعٌ |
| أَلمَصْ | عَكنَاْ | لَوْفَيْ | عَبْدُهُ | مَوْضِعٌ | بَنِي | مَوْضِعٌ | عَذَكَلاَنُ | بَنِي | سَعَدَةَ تَأْلِبَ | وَحَلَيْ | عَنْ | هُمْ | ذَفَفُوُهُ | بَيْوَمٍ | ثَلَاثَمَاً | ... |

Figure (14) The SaʿadTaʾlib inscription with authors’s line-by-line and letter-by-letter transcription from Musnad and translation into modern Arabic.
The word *bin* after *Yaqliṭ* means “son of” but it can also be used in the meaning of *min* مِن (from), clearly a matching usage since a son is “from” his father. The word *ʿthkln* عثكلن which is likely *ʿAthkalān* (a well-known name of a contemporary tribe in Yemen) is actually the first name of his father. It was followed by the word *ʿṣyt* عصيت, which is possibly *ʿaṣayta*, past tense of *yaʿṣi* (to resist). A past tense verb was used in this case, maybe because it was assigned to him after he died.

**Line 2**

Unfortunately, the first word *بﻦ* of the phrase *bin ʿam waʾakhīhū* بن عﻢ واعخيﻪ had to be speculated based on parts of a letter in the damaged area at the end of the first line. The natural and likely way to read this phrase is “his cousin and brother;” however I think it meant “his cousin and stepbrother;” since there was no letter *Wāw* or *Hāʾ* after the *Mīm* in the word *ʿam*, it is possible that the *Wāw* of *waʾakhīhu* is referring or related to the first word *ʿam* (uncle), thus turning the phrase into *bin ʿammū akhīhū*, which literally means “his cousin, his brother.” The word *ʿam* does not fit here by itself without an attached referral article. The argument in this speculative reading is similar to my early argument on the topic of the introductory phrase *nafs wa-qabr* found in many eastern and southern Arabian tombs, which according to that reading was possibly pronounced *nafsū qabr*. Recall my reading in the *Umm al-Jimāl* and *Shahīm* Arabic Nabatean inscriptions.

Very likely, the word *ʾlwhb* لوهﺐأ is the name of *SaʿdTaʿlīb’s* cousin. It is possibly either *al-Wahb* or *al-Wahhāb* as in the common Arabic first names *Wahb* or *Wahhāb*. In such case, the addition of *al* in the beginning, is for extra recognition or acknowledgment, another common classical Arabic practice. The word *ʿṣḥḥ* أصحح is likely his
nickname. This word could be starting with *Alif-Hamzah* or the Arabic article *al* but with the letter *Lām* removed since it is not pronounced, as in the case of *al-Wahb*. There are two possibilities in reading this word. In the first one, it would be a wish verb in the meaning of *aṣḥiḥ* or *ṣaḥḥiḥ*, as in “make correct.” In the second and more likely one, the word could be *al-Ṣaḥḥāḥ* to mean “the corrector” or “the justice maker.” Another possibility for the second case is that this word stands for *al-Ṣiḥḥiḥ*, *al-Ṣiḥḥāḥ*, or even *al-Ṣaḥḥāḥ*, in relation to the Arabic verbs *ṣiḥ* or *aṣḥiḥ* from *ṣiḥḥah* which means “health.” Therefore, it would mean “the healer,” which is possibly his profession. The next word *Wirthdam* is *al-Wahb*’s father name, as in *Wirth al-Damm*. Alternatively, it could be another name with the added letter *Mīm* for “greatness.” The wish verb following his cousin and stepbrother’s father name, *yaghnīm* is a present tense verb in the meaning of “wish he becomes more prosperous.” Using a present tense indicates he is still alive.

**Line 3**

The first two words were traced as *Mwdhʿm haqnayū* موضعه هقنيو. The grandfather’s name *Mwdhʿm* is possibly *Mūdhiʿ* with the final letter *Mīm* added for “greatness.” The word *haqnayū* is derived from *aqnā* أقنا for “gave forever” or “granted.”

The next phrase is traced as *ʾlmqh thhwn baʿl ʾwm* المقه ثهون بعل أوم and is referring to their god. The first word *ʾlmqh* is claimed by some scholars to be derived from *ʾl* (supposedly the word god in Hebrew) and *maqah* (protecting.) I found no evidence supporting this reading. *Ibn Manẓūr* indicated in *Lisān al-ʿArab* that the root word *aṣaḥ* (no diacritics were added) has plenty of meanings, including “bright white.” According to his dictionary, *al-maqḥ* (could also be *al-miqḥ*) and *al-amqah* are all adjectives in the meaning of “the shin-
ing white.” It follows clearly, in this inscription, as in the numerous other Musnad inscriptions of Yemen, this word is *al-Maqh* or *al-Miqh*, using the Arabic article *al* (not Hebrew *il,* which is the name of the god in the meaning of *al-nāṣiʿ al-bayāḍ* (the shining white) or *al-nūr* (the light.) *Ibn Manẓūr* also listed the following Islamic Hadith which is the name of the god in the meaning of *al-nāṣiʿ al-bayāḍ* (the shining white) or *al-nūr* (the light.) *Ibn Manẓūr* also listed the following Islamic Hadith in which the word *al-Maqh* means “love”. It is very likely, that the word *al-Miqh* is referring literally to the shining “moon god,” as it is believed and agreed upon by most scholars, this what the Yemen’s god al-Maqah was. However, based on the rest of the inscription, it can be a name of a golden statue, too. The meaning of *al-Maqh,* which conveys the image of bright light, fits the description of a shining golden statue, as well as a bright white moon, which is the exact given meaning of the word *miqh* by *Lisān al-ʿArab.*

The following word is likely *thuhūn* or *thuhuna* لَهْدُن or *thuhuna*, but it can also be *thahwān* or *thāhūn* or *thahwān* or *thāhūn* or *thahwān* or *thāhūn* or *thahwān*, all of which are related to the verb *thahata* or *thahana* (to pray, or call upon someone for help while crying with tears). The word is therefore a verb or verb-like title for the god *al-Miqh* in the meaning of *ikhshaʿū lahu* or *ikhshaʿū lahu* or *idʿū lahu* or *al-duʿāʾ lah* (to pray to, or who is prayed to.) The practice of adding a verb after the name of a god is universal among the Arabs. Even after Islam, they used the verb *taʿālá* تعالى after *Allāh* (God.) Some believe *thuhūn* is a separate name, although based on the usage described in this inscription, such possibility is highly unlikely. It is possible though that this word was used alone (without *al-Miqh*) to refer to him, just as we say today *qala taʿālá* instead of *qāla Allāh taʿālá* قال الله تعالى both in the meaning of “God said”.

In the next phrase *baʿl ʾwm,* the word *baʿl* could either mean *ṣanam* (statue of an idol) or *rab* or *ʾIāh* meaning “god of”. In the Quran (37:125), we read the following verse أَنْذَرُونَ بِهِ لَا تَزْدُرُوْنَ أَحْسَسُنَ...
الْخَالِقِينَ which is translated “why do you pray to a statue and forget about the perfect God,” clearly using the word baʾl to mean either “a statue” or as a name of a specific statue. *Lisān al-ʿArab* explains that the word baʾl could mean “god” or “owner”; but it may have also been the name of a golden idol statue worshiped by the Arabs before Islam.

The word after baʾl is traced as ʾwm, as it did not include the *al* article. This word is most likely the name of the temple where the golden statue of the god al-Miqh is placed. The Arabic word *aww* أُوْ (sheltering or shelter) can be a noun of the verbs awā أُوْ or awá أُوْ (sheltered) according to *Lisān al-ʿArab*. Likely, the final letter *Miim* is added to make it sound as a “grand shelter.” Alternatively, the word can be a name, Awwām (the one -place- giving shelter,) but this is less likely because in standard Arabic the name should then be awwā, as in rawā and rawwā. To conclude, the phrase *Baʾl Awm* can therefore be “statue or idol of Awm”, “Baʾl of Awm”, or “god of Awm” where Awm is the temple name.

The first word, ṣlmnh صلمنه of the next two-word phrase is derived from *salam* صلَم, which was used throughout Arabia for a special type of *šanam* (statue of an idol). *Lisān al-ʿArab* indicates that the word *salam* was used to describe someone (including an idol statue), whose ears were either cut off or it was simply earless — which is the case with most alabaster heads and votive figures found in *Maʿrib* and elsewhere. See Figure (12). *Lisān al-ʿArab* also indicates that this word could be used as the verb *iqṭaṭaʿa* (cut from,) or the noun *qaṭʿ* (piece of.) Adding the letters *Nūn* and *Hāʾ* at the end would make it *ṣalmanah* in the meaning of *qiṭʿah* قطعة, or “piece” a feminine noun—that is how I read the word. Interestingly, the Hebrew Bible uses this word as the name of the geographical location, where according to the Jewish religion, Moses led his followers after speaking with God in Mount Sinai.
Line 4

The word dhahabun is dhahab ذهب with Arabic tanwin. Together with the previous word, the phrase becomes salamanah dhahbun for either “an earless female statue made of gold,” or “a piece of gold.” The word lwfi is li-wafyīι which means li-hifz لحفظ that is “to keep” or “to protect”. This word is related to the noun wafā’ وفاء. The word mrʾyhm is marʾayhumu مرهوهم derived from marʾء or ʾumruʾ(person). This word is used here in the meaning of “master.” You may recall the name of the most important pre-Islamic king Ūmruʾ al-Qays. Based on classic Arabic grammar, adding the letter Yāʾ after a noun as in marʾayhumu indicates that they were two masters. The name of the first king was al-Shirḥ ألسريج followed by the “wish verb” Yaḥdhib يحضب possibly in the meaning of “wish he will ignite more fire.” Some referred to him as ʾil Sharah, possibly hinting at the Hebrew use of ʾil for god, similar to ʾil Maqah. Again, this is very unlikely since the word al-Shirh appears as one word, clearly indicating that al is the Arabic article “the”—added for extra respect.

Line 5

The second king’s name is Yʾzil يأزرل followed by the word bayyin بين which is possibly a verb related in its meaning to yubah-yin, “to differentiate between” or “to clarify.” It may also be the adjective bayyin (clear.) The word that follows, malikay ملكي, is from malik (king.) It means “the two kings of;” this is another clear classical Arabic usage. The name Sabaʾ is for the city or the tribes of Sabaʾ. Originally, Sabaʾ was likely the name of a tribe father, but afterwards became a name of the whole group, and eventually the name of the city/state kingdom of Sabaʾ in southeastern Yemen.
The ensuing name *Dhrīdn* ذریدن is actually *Dhī Rīdin* ذي ريدن. As mentioned earlier, the letter *Dhāl* in the beginning of a noun is for *dhū*, *dhi*, or *alladhī*. This word means the people of *Rīdan*, a city (or the location or estate of tribe) near *Maʾrib*, which was conquered by the Kingdom of *Sabaʾ* and became the capital around a century later. The phrase, therefore, could be read as “the two kings of *Sabaʾ* and *Dhī Rīdan*.”

In examining the traced word *Sabaʾ* in this line, one could also trace another word placed over it. It seems that, at one point in time, someone tried to erase the word *Sabaʾ* to replace it with the word *ẓfr* ظفر. Convincingly, this could be the ancient city *Ẓafar* ظفار that was later replaced by the nearby city of *Ṣanʿāʾ* as the new capital of the Himyarite Kingdom of northern Yemen. In turn, this suggests that the Himyarite Kingdom was close to capturing the *Sabaʾ* Kingdom in that period thus required scribes to change the kingdom name from “*Sabaʾ* and *Dhī Rīdan*,” southeastern of Yemen today, to “*Ẓafar* and *Dhī Rīdan*,” which, not incidentally, are all situated in modern Yemen.

Alternatively, but more likely, the word *ẓfr* could be *Ẓifār* (Ḥaḍramawt), in modern Oman. This may suggest that the kingdom of *Sabaʾ* was taken over by *Ẓifār* under the rule of the two brother kings and renamed their kingdom, *Ẓifar* and *Dhī Rīdan*. Since most historians consider the Himyarite king, *Shimr Yarʿish*, as the first king to unify all of Yemen, including *Ẓifār* (c. 300 CE,) and that the two southern Yemenite kings cited in this inscription had ruled directly before (or directly after) him. Consequently, it is my conviction that this inscription should be dated c. 250-300 CE. Regrettably, the final line that most likely listed the exact date was partially damaged.
As for the name of the father of the two kings, it was either 
\(\text{Firʿ} \) or \(\text{Fāriʿ} \) and was followed by the letter \(\text{Mīm} \) for greatness. The “wish verb” after it, \(\text{Yanhib} \) possibly means, “Wish he get more war loots.” Because this was a present tense verb, I think the name \(\text{Fāriʿ} \) is likely a tribe name which would make him a great grandfather. Surprisingly, on the next line, the first word was not \(\text{malk} \), but clearly \(\text{ʿAk} \) a known Arabic first name, which could be the kings’ father’s name and in such case \(\text{Sabaʾ} \) could possibly be the name of their grandfather. As we have seen earlier, the inscription has already listed, in two other lines, a name of a grandfather: \(\text{Mūdhiʿ} \), without using the usual Arabic \(\text{bin} \) (son of.) Alternatively, \(\text{ʿAk} \) could be a title of some sort, and \(\text{Sabaʾ} \), is either their the name of the city/state or people. This fact would confirm Muslim historians’ classification of the word \(\text{Sabaʾ} \). In the Quran, for example, the word \(\text{Sabaʾ} \) appears twice. The first in \(\text{Sūrat al-Naml} \) (27:21) \(\text{وجئْتُﻚ} \).\(\text{مِﻦ سَبَإٍ بِنَبَإٍ يَقِيﻦٍ. إِنﱢﻲ وَجَدﺖﱡ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُﻢْ} \). The second in \(\text{Sūrat Sabaʾ} \) (34:15) \(\text{فِﻲ مَسْكَنِهِﻢْ آيَةٌ لسَبَإ لَقَدْ كَاﻦَ}} \). Both references use the word in the meaning of \(\text{Banī Sabaʾ} \) (tribe of \(\text{Sabaʾ} \)) similar to \(\text{Banī Asad} \), or \(\text{Banī Nazār} \) for example.

Line 6

The word \(\text{wlwfī} \) is actually \(\text{wa-li-wafyī} \), or \(\text{wa-li-hifzi} \) meaning “and to protect”. The following word \(\text{ʿbdhmy} \) \(\text{عبدهمي} \) is likely \(\text{ʿabdahumā} \) in the meaning of \(\text{ʿabdahumā} \) referring to \(\text{SaʾdTaʾlib} \) alone, as being the slave of the two kings; but it also possible the word was \(\text{ʿabdāhumā} \) \(\text{عبدهما} \), referring to both, \(\text{SaʾdTaʾlib} \) and his cousin \(\text{al-Wahhāb} \) as both being the slaves of the two kings.
Line 8

The word *bdht* بذتْ in the phrase *wlwrthdm bdht* ولورثدُم بذتْ means *bi-dhāta* بذاتَا or *bi-dhātih* (himself) referring to his uncle *Wirthdam*. Therefore, the entire phrase *wa-li-Wirthdam bi-dhāta* ولورثدُم بذتْ, extending from the previous line, would mean *wa-li-hifżi Wirthdam bi-dhātih*. Notice I have assumed the existence of the existence of the letter *Lām* in the damaged area. The word *hwfī* هوّفِى is *awfá*, replacing the letter *Alif* with *Hāʾ* according to local pronunciation, which means *ḥafaẓa*. This is similar to the word *haqnayū* for *aqnayū* in the third line. The letter *Yāʾ* of *hwfī* was *Alif Maqṣūrah* like we indicated in the word *ʿabdahumā* of the sixth line. Starting a sentence with a past tense verb is a standard Arabic practice in religious statements. Even today we say *ḥafaẓa Allāh Fulān* starting with past tense verb.

Line 9

The word *ʾmlṣ* أملِص which, according to *Lisān al-ʿArab*, means *inzilāq* انزِلَقِ (slipping,) or *infilāt*, which probably means in this context: “falling to temptations”, or “wrong doing”. This could also indicates that *ṢaʿadTaʿlib* was a young man. The last part at the end of the previous line above, shows the letter *Bāʾ* on its own. I tend to think though that this letter must have been followed by a partially damaged letter *Nūn* to make up the word *bin* used in the meaning of “from”, as I explained in my reading of this word in the first line.

The word *sayamlaʾ* سِيملِؤَ literally means “Will be filled up or completed.” Again, my opinion is that it means “will be raised appropriately” since the following word was *bi-ʿammahū* بعمه as in
bi-faẓl ʿammahu (by his uncle’s kindness.) This, necessarily, confirms that SaʿdTaʿlib’s father was dead.

The word ḥmdml is an interesting word as it appears in many other Sabaean inscriptions. It seems like a commonly used abbreviated vernacular phrase, in the meaning of present-day Arabic phrase “ḥamdan laḥ,” “ḥamdan lillāḥ,” or “al-ḥamdu lillāḥ.” I believe the letter mīm of ḥamdam (thanks to) is not Arabic tanwīn but Arabic tamwīm in the meaning of “ḥamdan kabīr” or “ḥamdan ‘adhīm” (many thanks to.) The following phrase dht khyr is dhāt khayr as in “generous one with good deed” or possibly “one who is well to do.”

Line 10

The word ḥlī or ḥalī takes the meaning of “dryness” among others. Possibly, it is used here in the meaning of “poverty” or “need” making the whole phrase read min marḍ wa-ḥalī in the meaning of “from sickness and poverty”. The use of the word bin in the meaning of from in this phrase confirms my tracing in the previous line of a missing letter Bā'.

Line 11

This line was, evidently, the final line of the inscription since it restated the name of the person adding it, the gold, or both to the temple. Sadly, it was badly damaged; hence, I was only able to read it partially. The first word, extending from the previous line, is ‘anhum as in bil-niyābati ‘anhum (for them.) A clear Classical Arabic usage. It was followed by the word dhzfhw ذو ضافهو or alladhi azāfahū (he who
added it, possibly referring to Sa’d Ta’lib, or his offerings. The final partially legible word of the inscription was *thlthm’hَاَلَل* for *thulthumā’ah*, or three hundreds, which was likely part of a precise date. Its final *Hāʾ* is an equivalent of *Tāʾ Marbūṭah*. 
Summary of Part Two

Reading this inscription, one can see without any doubt, the extent of classical (or standard) Arabic language used throughout the words of the inscription! According to my detailed reading above, I can summarize the detailed English translation with appropriate explanation as follows:

SaʿadTaʿlib (name of the presenter), Yaqliṭ (meaning “to advance”) son of ‘Athkalān (his father’s name) ‘Aṣayta (meaning “did not succumb”) and his cousin, (possibly and) his brother, al-Wahhāb (his name) al-Suḥāḥ (nickname meaning “the correct”) Wirthdam (his father’s name who is SaʿadTaʿlib uncle and possibly stepfather) Mūḍiʿim (Mūḍiʿ, their grandfather’s name) Yaghnim (meaning “to prosper”) offered al-Maqh (name of the god meaning “the shining light”) thuhūn (meaning “pray to him” or “the one prayed to”), golden statue of ʾAwwm temple, a piece (or earless statue) of gold, to protect their two masters, al-Shirḥ (his name) Yahḍib (meaning “to ignite”) and his brother Yiʾzil (his name) Bayyin (meaning “to clarify or differentiate”), the two kings of Saba’ (city or tribe) and Dhī (people of) Raydin (city or tribe), sons of Fāriʿim (Fāriʿ, their father’s name) Yanhib (meaning “to take over”) ‘Ak (their grandfather’s name, or a title) Saba’(name of a person or city/state name), and to protect their two slaves SaʿadTaʿlib son of ʿAthkalān
Mūḍiʿim and his brother al-Wahhāb Wirthdam, sons and grandsons of Mūḍiʿi, and to protect Wirthdam himself. May al-Maqh protect his slave SaʿadTaʿlib from wrongdoing, he will be raised by the kindness of his uncle who is, thanks to al-Maqh (the god), virtuous and prosperous, and may al-Maqh (the god), protect his slave SaʿadTaʿlib from sickness and poverty. For them, he who added it (the gold or inscription) in the day three hundreds .......

The above English reading can be translated in Arabic, with explanation, as follows:

Sعدتالبيب (اسم المتقدم)، يقلط (بمعنى ليتقدم)، بن عثكلاين، اسم ابيه، عضبزته (بمعنى عصى عليهم) وبن هم واخيه (وبن عمو اخيه، أو وبن عم واخيه، ربما هو اخيه من أمه ابضا) آلوه (وهاب، اسمه) أصح (بمعنى صحيح أو الصالح، لقبه) ورددم (اسم ابيه وهو عم سعدتالبيب) يقلط (بمعنى ليتقدم)، موضعهم (موضوع، اسم جديهما أو عشيرتهما)، هبند (أئسطب أو وهو) ألمقه (المعقه: اسم ابنته بمعنى الناصر الباض)، نَذَون (بمعنى الخشوع لده)، بعل (صنم أو إله) أووْم (معبد أم أو أموم)، صلى الله عليه وسلم، (بمعنى وضح أو ميز)، ملكي سبأ (اسم مدينة أو عشيرة) وذي (اهل، قوم) ريدن (اسم مدينة أو عشيرة)، بنو (ابناء واحفاد) فرعهم (قارع، اسم اب او قوم) ينهب (بمعنى ليسلب) عك (اسم أو ربما اسم وظيفي) سبأ (اسم أو ربما اسم مدينة أو قوم)، ولوْقَي (ولحظ) عبديهما (عبيدهما) سعدتالبيب بن عثكلاين واحدهما رهاب ورددم، بنو (بنو أو أبناء) موسمهم، ولورددم (ولحظ ورددم) بذته (بداته)، هبند (أووا أو حققه) ألمقه (الله المقه) عبدي سعدتالبيب بن (من) إملس (أي انزلق أو عمل فاحش) سبئي (سبعش برغد ويكتب أو يتربي) بعمة (بفضل عمره وربما زوج امه ابضا، ورددم)، حمدل (حماه عظيمًا له اي للله المقه)، ذت خير (انه)، اي ورددم، ذات خير، اي فاهل خير)، وهبند (حققه) ألمقه (الله المقه) عبدي سعدتالبيب بن (من) مرض (مرضي) وحل (فاقت، عوز، أو فقر)، عبدم (نبذة عبدهم) ذظهمو (الذي أضافه، ربما يقصد الذهب أو النقش) بيوم ثلثمته (ثلاث مئة) .............
PART 3

Akkadian Inscriptional Sample: The Epic of Gilgamesh
Introduction to Part Three

The Epic of Gilgamesh is the oldest human literary work discovered. Gilgamesh was possibly a real Mesopotamian king, because a similar name was mentioned as the sixth king of Uruk in the list of the Sumerian kings, which was found in the royal tomb of Ur. Accordingly, he had possibly ruled around 2750 BCE.

Originally, it is believed that the earliest epic consisted of 12 tablets. However, some scholars do not consider the 12th tablet as being part of it, because it only included poems. Each tablet included around six columns, three on each side. A column contained around 50 lines of text. Accordingly, the full epic contained around 3000-3600 lines in total. In total, and after taking into account all editions of the epic, about one sixth of these lines are still missing. There are several editions of the epic in Cuneiform writing, dated approximately between 2000 BCE and 136 BCE. The so-called “Standard Edition” of the epic consists mainly of the tablets discovered by Layard in 1854 in the library of King Ashurbanipal’s (668–626 BCE) palace in Nineveh (Mosul). These tablets are dated to about 1000 BCE. They are also referred to as the Assyrian tablets even though they were brought north, from Babylon. The additional tablets of the Standard Edition were discovered in Babylon and several surrounding areas.
Parts of what is believed to be an older edition of the Epic were also discovered. In total, we have two clearly older tablets, relatively in good shape, sharing similar writing style and physical characteristics. They belong to around 2000-2100 BCE. One is referred to as the “Yale Tablet” and the other as the “Pennsylvania Tablet”. Both are Babylonian tablets believed to be dated to the first Babylonian dynasty and are part of one edition. The Pennsylvania Tablet was acquired by purchase in the spring of 1914 by the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. The Yale Tablet was acquired around the same time by the Yale University. The Pennsylvania Tablet is considered the second of the older edition’s 10-12 tablets.

In this section, I will read first only one column of the Pennsylvania Tablet. The text of this column was read initially by Stephen Langdon and then by Morris Jastraw, in the beginning of the twentieth century. This column includes the two so-called dreams of Gilgamesh as told to Enkido’s female seducer, Samhat, who brought him out of the wild. Then, I will read the same two dreams as told by the Standard Edition, which consisted mainly of the Assyrian tablet and was compared meticulously and read by the British scholar, Andrew George, against fragments of several other tablets believed to belong to its same period. George also read the Pennsylvania Tablet. In my reading, I will refer to the first as the Babylonian tablet and to the second as the Assyrian tablet. I will allocate separate chapter for each tablet, numbering each text line as marked by George in his book *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, Penguin’s edition. In my reading of each line, I will comment about words and usages as needed.

The main purpose for my reading of the two corresponding sections is to point out their clear and undisputed usage of pre-Islamic Classical Arabic words and grammar. Reading the two text
samples utilizing Arabic did not only validate current readings, but also explained and corrected the mistakes currently circulated in the many modern translations of the epic. As my evidence, I will utilize five major historical etymological Arabic dictionaries by simply quoting from them in their original language, Arabic. These widely known Arabic references belong to 900-1300 CE making them ideal impartial material evidence. The five Arabic references are:

- Lisān al-ʿArab: لسان العرب
- Magāyīs al-Lughah: مقاييس اللغة
- al-Ṣaḥḥāh fī al-Lughah: الصحاح في اللغة
- al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīd: القاموس المحيط
- al-ʿUbāb al-Zākir: العباب الزاخر

Readers of this section should have a good understanding of the Arabic language. Translating what these references wrote can compromise their validity. I indicate each reference by name and place it between parentheses when quoting it.

As for modern Akkadian language dictionaries, I used several important ones. Among these references are:

- The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD)
- The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary - Online (ePSD)
- The Concise Dictionary of Akkadian (CDA)
- Qamūs al-Lughah al-Akadiyyah قاموس اللغة الأكادية (QAL)

I will indicate each of these references by its abbreviation when quoting from it.
The Babylonian “Yale Tablet” of the Epic of Gilgamesh, ~2100 BCE. © Yale University.
About the Akkadian Arabic Language and Gilgamesh

Despite its reading challenges, we are fortunate that the Cuneiform writing system used in the Akkadian tablets has pointed out plenty of built-in soft vowel sounds. Soft vowels are crucial to recognizing words' derivations and meanings in Akkadian, a substantially Arabic language as I will demonstrate through undisputable evidence. In a way, the Nabataean, Musnad, and early Arabic writing systems took a huge step backward in comparison to the Akkadian Cuneiform writing system. However, the inherited Sumerian Cuneiform symbols, which were arguably adequate for the Sumerian, were not sufficient to cover the many additional sounds of the Akkadian Arabic language. Utilizing identical Cuneiform symbols for multiple sounds had clearly misrepresented the language of the Akkadians in writing, presenting major difficulties for scholars studying it several thousand years later. Very likely, this practice had also played a key role in distorting the original language and creating new derived languages in the area. Clearly, writing is a key factor in preserving the integrity of any language.

After studying the so-called Akkadian language for the first time, utilizing modern Western Akkadian references, my initial thought was: what a scandal! It was not, and still not, clear to me
why did the European scholars decide to literally **construct** a new language complete with new independent dictionaries and new grammar rules, when the Akkadian language is undisputedly Arabic, a language well studied and equipped with many comprehensive historical etymological dictionaries and thesaurus, that were prepared by well-accomplished linguists and scholars many centuries ago. I can understand why Western scholars decided to transliterate the language as it was sketched on tablets. This is good intermediate classification methodology. However, I do not understand why one would recognize a word that is clearly Arabic, but call it otherwise. Such research approach cannot be justified by any scholarly reasons. This practice of reconstructing an Akkadian language separately from Arabic reminds me with modern attempts by some Western Scholars to reconstruct a new Quran from the early Kufic manuscript fragments found in Sana, Yemen!

Again and again, one reads unjustified and arbitrary claims by some Western scholars that we do not have neutral and unbiased etymological dictionaries for Arabic, a language as old as our earliest linguistic record, which contains plenty of archaic ancient marks. Some well-intentioned researchers have even created inferior manuals to fill this claimed etymological gap! One should wonder, if the etymological research of past Islamic Arab scholars was tainted by biased motives, as some Western accusers claim, why would one need to exclude similar motives from the work of modern day Western scholars! Historical Arabic etymological references, like *Lisān al-ʿArab*, are not only scientific, comprehensive, and unbiased, but because they were written centuries ago and include many older extinct usages, they are the best impartial and neutral references to consult with when studying a language like the Akkadian. The meanings of many Akkadian words in the modern Western dictionar-
Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic

...can easily be verified in these historical Arabic references. This by itself is undisputed evidence validating these old Arabic references.

Some may argue that the Akkadian language is much older than Classical Arabic as we know it. This is true. But Classical Arabic, as we know it, did not fall from the sky. At least one should call the Akkadian language, as evident in its inscriptions, old Arabic or proto-Arabic. It does not matter which language was recorded in writing earlier. The important fact is that all clear material evidence point out that the two languages are substantially the same. Hebrew, which some believe was recorded earlier than Classical Arabic, is equally important to the study of Akkadian. The Hebrew language was around during the late Akkadian period. However, as a distant geographically-limited transformed language of ancient Arabic, Hebrew's references are not the ideal ones to use to finalize Akkadian readings. Besides, as we will see after reading portions of the Epic of Gilgamesh, the remarkable Classical Arabic usages recorded in this great literary work leave us with no choice but to conclude that Classical Arabic was actually recorded long before Hebrew.

As for Sumerian, this language is still a highly speculative anthropological exercise, and will be “under construction” for a long time to come. The claim of some that Sumerian was “an isolate language” is highly debatable. Anyway, even if Sumerian was really a separate language, the fact is, we were only to decipher its sounds and words because we know Akkadian Arabic. In a way it is a “product” of modern Akkadian studies. In my opinion, it makes no sense to separate the two or to look primarily in Sumerian for Akkadian words’ roots.

Simply put, to understand the language of the Akkadians, one must master Classical Arabic and be familiar with the Iraqi dialects. Building a new speculative language solely based on inscrip-
tions is like building a "sand castle". Professor ‘Alî al-Jîbûrî, head of the Archeology department of the University of Mosul, and a well-known scholar of the Akkadian Language, has recently published a comprehensive Akkadian-Arabic dictionary, in 2009, based fully on the prominent Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD), which is sponsored by the University of Chicago. He pointed out in his introduction that Akkadian is the closest historical language to Arabic. He also put an asterisk next to every word still being used in today's day-to-day Arabic language, counting more than 1700 of such words! That is much more than the 200-300 words presented by some modern day Syriac scholars to prove that the old Syriac language was the actual language of the Akkadians, while ignoring Arabic entirely. What Professor al-Jîbûrî did not point out thought —possibly he did not know— is that most of the rest of the words in CAD and his dictionary are also from Arabic and can easily be verified when consulting the historical etymological Arabic references, which did not only record the Arabic word usages of their time, but those abandoned thousands of years before their time!

Reading in CAD or the Concise Akkadian Dictionary (CAD), it is astonishing how many words are marked by "meaning unknown". Many words in CAD have a large number of multiple meanings, which is also true in the etymological Arabic references. However, unlike CAD and other modern Akkadian dictionaries, the historical Arabic references give logically-derivable multiple meanings. Surely, I am not attempting to underestimate the value and importance of modern Western Akkadian dictionaries. The incredible work by many scholars over the past 100 years in these references is crucial to conduct any fruitful reading of the Akkadian texts. One dictionary, the Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (PSD), with its electronic version (ePSD) hosted and sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania, is an incredibly useful and promising tool to unlock the
language mysteries of not only the Sumerians, but also the Akkadians.

Still, one must be truthful and scientific. The Akkadian language claimed by today’s Western references is not only far from being complete or well-defined language, but is also highly misleading. These references have confused and mixed plenty of sounds and word roots. It seems that words were introduced when certain meanings were needed! Surely, one can claim that the American English words “gonna” for “going to”, and “wana” for “want to” are legitimate verbs in a non-British, independent language. However, it is deceiving to omit mentioning that English is the root of such words, let alone deriving new words and grammar rules for them. As for the so-called Akkadian grammar rules, assuming one manages to understand them, they are not only misleading, but lack connection even to other Semitic languages. To read an Akkadian inscription successfully one should consult old Arabic references, while keeping Arabic grammar rules in mind.

Based on the research of past Islamic Arab scholarship, it is my believe that the Akkadian people are indeed the earliest Nabataean Arabs who had migrated primarily from the Eastern and South Eastern Arabian regions of the Peninsula, carrying with them an earlier proto-Arabic language, which has evolved overtime, side-by-side the Arabic language of their ancestors. It is clear that the Cuneiforms symbolic writing system was not invented by the Akkadians, but the Akkadian Arabs should be credited as the earliest inventors of a semi-alphabetical Cuneiform writing system from the earlier primarily-pictorial one. The Akkadians are surely the first Arabs to create and maintain a civilization, which was not an isolated trend. More than 25 centuries later, newer Arab migrations triggered an equally important civilization in Baghdad, not far from where the Akkadians started theirs, Babylon.
After reading a number of important Nabataean inscriptions, I concluded that both linguistic and tracing mistakes are not only possible but unavoidable, no matter who the reader is. A final reading of an ancient inscription is difficult due to many factors. I have no doubt that there are many mistakes in the current tracings of Akkadian tablets. However, after accounting for a reasonable error percentage, the language of these tablets seems to me not only Arabic, but more Arabic than the late Nabataean Arabic.

To help the reader follow my examination of the Babylonian and Assyrian tablets, I have provided below a letter mapping table, linking the Roman letters used in the transliteration process of modern Akkadian dictionaries to the Arabic letters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A (aaaaa)</th>
<th>ا أ ع</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>ص ظ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>ب</td>
<td>Š</td>
<td>ش ض ذ ث ظ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>د ذ ض ص ط زي</td>
<td>Š</td>
<td>ض ظ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E (ēē)</td>
<td>إ ي ح غ ه</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>ط ث ذ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>ج غ</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>ط</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H (ḥ)</td>
<td>خ ه</td>
<td>U (ūū)</td>
<td>و ع</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I (īi)</td>
<td>إ ي ح</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>(و)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>ك خ</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>(ي)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>ل</td>
<td>Z</td>
<td>(ز) ق ص ظ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>م Hamzah</td>
<td>َ</td>
<td>أ ع ح ه ض ظ ث ذ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>ن</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>َ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>ف ب</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>َ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q (ḳ)</td>
<td>ق ك</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>َ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>ر</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>ُ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table should only be used as a general guide to de-root the Arabic origins of the Akkadian words. Although it is not complete, it is useful to start an investigation. To prepare it, I utilized the excellent tutorial provided in Qamūs al-Lughah al-Akkadiyyah al-ʿArabiyyah by al-Jibūrī and my personal observations. Please note, according to al-Jibūrī, a symbol for Hamzah (ʾ) was initially used by the Akkadians to represent all sounds/letters not available in the Sumerian Cuneiform writing system, which are أ ع غ ح خ. Later on, these sounds/letters were represented either by the vowels ā â ē ī ū, particularly ē, or by other consonant symbols. Also, please note, I have bolded the primary sound corresponding to each Roman letter and placed it between parentheses, followed by additional sound usages.

Explaining how many of the Akkadian words were transformed from Arabic words over more than two millenniums, al-Jiburī provided several observations like the one listed below. Although these observations are very useful, a reader of the Akkadian tablets should always, and additionally, sound out words with Arabic in mind, to arrive their correct, or most appropriate, roots.

Nūn with stop + Arabic lip letter -> Arabic lip letter repeated
kanpum -> kappum
anpum -> appum

Mīm + Arabic teeth letter -> Nūn + Arabic teeth letter
imtu -> intu
amiš -> aniš

Rāʾ + Nūn -> Nūn+Nūn
arnu -> annu
ibqurnisu -> ibqunnisu
Some assimilated repeated letter -> Nūn + single letter
inazziq -> inanziq
inaddi -> inandi

I would also like to offer here my own observation to help first-time readers of Akkadian inscriptions, with Arabic background, understand these inscriptions’ excessive use of the syllable parts ša lā, šī ẓā, šu ẓā, combined with verbs, nouns, and other words. Any confusion can easily be resolved—most of the time—, after replacing “š” with “t” or “h” in such words. This does not only make texts sound like Arabic, but can help tremendously with arriving to the right verb tense derivation and with identifying the correct subjects and objects. As for the –ma at the end of such words, it will be helpful to disregard the claim by some Western Akkadian dictionaries that this –ma was equivalent to “and”, and to read it with its usual Arabic meaning, instead. Even if –ma was really used in the meaning of “and”, such usage should be extremely isolated.

What does the name “Gilgamesh” really mean?

Before proceeding, I would like to discuss first the meaning of the word/name Gilgamesh, a highly debatable topic. According to the Epic of Gilgamesh, Gilgamesh was a large, powerful man. Some even thought he was half god half human. Enkindo, who came from the wild, was almost identical to him but smaller in size. Now, anyone with a minimum knowledge of Iraq, the Iraqis, and the strong Iraqi Arabic dialect, would not imagine for a moment his name would be as soft as “Gilgamesh”. Gilgamesh sounds more like a European French name than an Iraqi Arabic name! It certainly does not fit the description of the epic’s hero.
Furthermore, we do know that the earlier Babylonian tablets (~2000 BCE) used only Giš for the name Gilgamesh while the later Assyrian tablets (~1000 BCE) used Giš-gím-maš . This would certainly indicate that Giš was his actual name, while gím-maš is sort of a nick name, an adjective. According to my mapping table this Giš is clearly from Arabic root word jihš, in the meaning of “the defender” or “the mighty fighter”, or “the mighty”, a very common male name in Ancient Arabia. Old Arabic references listed many examples for its usage (see below). Even today, Iraqis call a strong mighty person jahash:

جحش (اللغة العربية)

جحشون ولد الحمار الوحشي
وجحش من القوم: دافع
وجاحش عن نفسه وغيرها جحاشا: دافع
كنتم أجاجش أي أهامي وأدافع

الجحاش أيضاً: القتال، ابن الأفرابي: الجحش الجهاد، قال: وتحوَّل الشين شيئا:
وأنشد: يوما تزانا في عراك الجحش، تنبو بأجل للأمور الرئيسي أي الدوائي والعظام.

وقد سموا جحاشا ومجحاشا وجحشنا

وينو جحاش بطان منهم الشماخ بن ضرار، الجوهري: جحاش أبو حي من غطفان، وهو جحاش بن ثعلبة بن ذبئان بن بقيض بن ريث بن غطفان، قال:
وهوم قوم الشماخ بن ضرار، قال الشاعر: وجاءت جحاش قضعا بقبضيضاها,
وجمع عوالف، ما أدق وألما

جحش (الصحاح في اللغة)
وجحاشة: أي دافعه
والجحيش: المنخي عن القوم
جحش (مقاييس اللغة)

 وكلمة أخرى: جاحشت عنه إذا دافعت عنه.
As for the word gím-maš, added in the newer Assyrian tablets, this word is most definitely an adjective, not part of his name. As we will see, the Assyrian tablets were far more elaborate and repetitive in comparison to the early Babylonian ones. The word Giš-gím-maš must be from Arabic words jahmash, Jamash, or jamas, all of which have the exact meaning: “stubborn”, “rough”, “rigid”, “very old”. Notice the use of “í” rather than “i” after the letter “g” in gím-maš. As I have indicated in my mapping table, the Akkadian words used the equivalent sounds of “i”, “ē” or “í” for the Arabic letter Ḥāʾ because the Cuneiform writing system had no symbol for it. We have numerous word examples attesting that.
Despite its misleading similarity in sound, the word gím-maš is not the same as Jamūs, from the Persian word kamūsh for bull. Gilgamesh could have been depicted as a bull with human head, but he was a human; neither parts of his name meant bull. Equating his strength and stubbornness to that of a bull is only a metaphor.

Therefore, I believe the combined name Giš-gimmaš means “the stubborn fighter”, “the steadfast fighter”, or “the stubborn defender” or the “mighty fighter”, and was pronounced initially as a compound name Jiḥši-jiḥmash similar to modern Arabic Jiḥš al-Jiḥmash. Although the Arabs used the article al, for “the”, long centuries before Islam, inscriptions show they only wrote it when fully pronounced. Many times they just used hamzah or the letter Lām alone in Musnad and Nabataean. This is not surprising since the writing systems for the Arabic language only matured after Islam, when it was finally capable of representing spoken Arabic accurately in texts, following the introduction of soft vowels and grammar rules. Here is how accordingly, the name was originally:

Giš: Jish: جَحْشِ
gím-maš: Jihmash جَمْشٌ or jimash جَمْش
Giš-gimmaš: Jišši-jiḥmash: جِحْشِجِحْمَشْ or Jiḥši-jimash جِحْشِجِحْمَشْ
According to al-Jibūrī, though, in the later Babylonian (i.e. Assyrian) time period, the letter Shīn was assimilated into the letter Lām in many Akkadian words when one stops on it (i.e. pronounce it with sukūn vowel). Here is his observation:

**Shin with stop + Arabic teeth letter -> Lām + Arabic teeth letter**

ištakana -> iššakana -> iltakana
išdu -> ildo
išṭur -> ilṭur
išši -> ilši

Note that according to *Lisan al-ʿArab*, the Arabic letter Jīm, Shīn, and Dād are in one sound category, coming from the front of the mouth: والجِيِم وَالشِّين وَالضَّاد ثَلَاثَةٌ فِي حِيْز وَاحِدٍ، وَهِيْ مِنَ الحَرَوْفِ الشَّجَرِيَّةِ وَالشِّجَرِ مُفَرَّجِ الفَمِ. This would make the rule above applicable to it.

Applying the excellent observation by al-Jibūrī with little help from the Classical Arabic etymological references, one can easily explain how Jiḥsh-ijiḥmash was eventually pronounced jilijiḥmash جِلِّجِحْمَش. Or, how Jiḥsh-ijimash was eventually pronounced jilijimash جِلِّجِمَش. It is also possible, jilijimash itself was eventually pronounced Jilijimash جِلِّجِمَش after further assimilation of the letter Ḥāʾ of Jiḥmash جِحْمَش. Accordingly, in the later Babylonian (i.e. Assyrian) time period, the combined name with nickname was transformed along one of two ways, depending on whether the second word was originally Jiḥmash جِحْمَش or jimash جِمَش. It is also likely, both of the letters Ḥāʾ and Shīn of the word Jiḥsh were assimilated. The two derivation scenarios shown below are based on the inscriptive facts of the Akkadian Arabic language and the impartial historical Arabic etymological references, not on linguistic speculations:
Jihshi-jimash -> Jishshi-jimash -> Jilli-jimash -> Jil-jimash  
Jihshi-jihmash -> Jishshi-jihmash -> Jilli-jihmash -> Jil-jihmash

To validate my above readings, I would like to point out two facts supporting my explanation of the name Gilgamesh. According to prominent Iraqi scholar of Akkadian and Sumerian, Ṭāhā Bāqir, some Akkadian texts indicated his name meant ‘the front fighter’ (Malḥamat Jiljamish: Ūdīsat al-ʿIrāq al-Khālidah, pg. 19). I think the Akkadian texts quoted by Bāqir are accurate, since Lisān al-ʿArab had clearly listed the word Jiḥsh in the meaning of “the defender”, or in other words “the fighter”.

The second fact I would like to point out here is that some Akkadian tablets listed Gilgamesh’s name as dGish-bil-ga-mesh or dGish-bíl-gi-mesh, both of which can literally be transliterated as “Jiḥshi-bil-Jiḥmish”, or “Jiḥsh abi al-Jiḥmish”, Ṣحِحَش ابي ال جحﺶ, meaning “Jiḥsh, the father of stubbornness”, which is a very common Arab and particularly Iraqi use of nicknames. It certainly indicates the word gím-maš was not part of his name.

To conclude, the evidence that the Arabic language was the language of the Akkadians is overwhelmingly clear. Classical Arabic tools are the key tools to use to understand Akkadian literature. Ignoring them would only lead to lost scholarly opportunities and inaccuracies. As I will demonstrate again and again, historical Arabic etymological references are the most valuable tools to map the Akkadian language, because they included tremendous information preserving the linguistic experience of Arabia for thousands of years.
A Comparative Detailed Reading in the Babylonian Tablets

In this chapter, I will read the first column of the so-called Pennsylvania Tablet where the two dreams of Gilgamesh were told. This tablet was the second of twelve tablets included in an earlier edition (~ 2100 BCE). According to Jastraw, the tablet measures 200.7 cm (79 inches) high, 40.6 cm (16 inches) wide, and 16.5 cm (6.5 inches) thick. It is about 17.8 cm (7 inches) taller than the Yale Tablet which belongs to the same Babylonian edition.

Below, I will first present the Roman transliteration of the text of the first column as traced by Jastraw and Langdon from Cuneiform. Next, I will transliterate the same text with Arabic letters, filling the sounds omitted due to both, the Roman transliteration process and the lack of equivalent Sumerian Cuneiform symbols for Akkadian sounds. Then, I will provide the translation by each of the three readers, Jastraw (“J”), George (“G”), and the author (“A”), in paragraph format, including punctuations. Finally, I will present a detailed comparative analysis and discussion of the three readings and translations:

1. \text{it-bi-e-ma} \text{dGiš šú-na-tam} \text{i- pa-áš-sár}
2. \text{iz-za-kár-am} \text{a-na} \text{um-mi-šú}
3. \text{um-mi i-na šá-at} \text{mu-ši-ti-ia}
4. šá-am-ḥa-ku-ma at-ta-na-al-la-ak
5. i-na bi-ri-it it-lu-tim
6. ib-ba-šú-nim-ma ka-ka-bu šá-ma-i
7. [ki]-iš-rù šá A-nim im-[ku]-ut a-na ṣi-ri-ia
8. áš-ṣi-šú-ma ik-ta-bi-it e-li-ia
9. ú-ni-iš-šú-ma nu-uš-šá-šú ú-ul il-ti-ʾi
10. Ûruk\textsuperscript{ki} ma-tum pa-ḥi-ir e-li-šú
11. it-lu-tum ú-na-šá-ku ši-pi-šú
12. ú-um-mi-id-ma pu-ti
13. i-mi-du ia-ti
14. áš-ṣi-a-šú-ma ab-ba-la-āš-šú a-na ṣi-ri-ki
15. um-\textsuperscript{d}Giš mu-di-a-at ka-la-ma
16. iz-za-kàr-am a-na \textsuperscript{d}Giš
17. mi-in-di \textsuperscript{d}Giš šá ki-ma ka-ti
18. i-na ṣi-ri i-wa-li-id-ma
19. ú-ra-ab-bi-šú šá-du-ú
21. it-lu-tum ú-na-šá-ku ši-pi-šú
22. ti-ṭi-ra-āš-[šú] [tu-ut]-tu-ú-ma
23. ta-tar-ra-[as-su] a-na ṣi-[ri]-ia
24. [uš]-ti-nim-ma i-ta-mar šá-ni-tam
25. [šú-na]-ta i-ta-wa-a-am a-na um-mi-šú
26. [um-mi] a-ta-mar šá-ni-tam
27. [šú-na-tu] [a-ta]-mar e-mi-a i-na su-ḵi-im
28. [šá Ûruk]\textsuperscript{fi} ri-bi-tim
29. ḥa-aš-ṣi-nu na-di-i-ma
30. e-li-šú pa-ḥa-ru
31. ḥa-aš-ṣi-nu-um-ma šá-ni bu-nu-šú
32. a-mur-šú-ma aḥ-ta-du a-na-ku
33. a-ra-am-šú-ma ki-ma áš-šá-tim
34. a-ḥa-ab-bu-ub el-šú
35. el-ki-šú-ma áš-ta-ka-an-šú
36. a-na a-ḫi-ia
37. um-mi ḫiš mu-da-at [ka]-la-ma
38. [iz-za-kár-am a-na ḫiš ]
39. [ ḫiš šá ta-mu-ru amēlu ]
40. [ ta-ḫa-ab-bu-ub ki-ma áš-sá-tim el-šú ]
41. áš-šum uš-[ta]-ma-ḫa-ru it-ti-ka
42. ḫiš šú-na-tam i-pa-šar

The following is a possible equivalent transliteration of the above text using Arabic letter and soft vowel diacritics:

1. اتيفم جيش شاؤتم يفسر
2. إذكرم عنى امي ذو
3. امي حين ساعة مسيدي
4. شمخكم أتتاك
5. حين بريت عتللوتم
6. ابذونم ككبو سماء
7. قصر دا أنيم إمفتعت عن ظهري
8. عسدوكم اكتبت حلي
9. ونسدوكم نسا ذو ول التعي
10. اروك مس في مركز حل ذو
11. عتللوتم أنشقو ظيف ذو
12. وأيمد فوني
13. يمدو اياتي
14. عسيأ ذوم أبعلي ذو عن ظهرك
15. ام جيش مهدبت كلام
16. اذكرم عن جيش
17. منذ جيش ذا كيما كان
18. حين ظهري أولدم
19. وربي ذو سعدو
Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic

Jastraw’s Translation

Gish sought to interpret the dream; Spoke to his mother:

“My mother, during my night I became strong and moved about among the heroes;
And from the starry heaven a meteor (?) of Anu fell upon me:
I bore it and it grew heavy upon me, I became weak and its
weight I could not endure.
The land of Erech gathered about it.
The heroes kissed its feet
It was raised up before me.
They stood me up.
I bore it and carried it to thee."

The mother of Gish, who knows all things, Spoke to Gish:
"Someone, O Gish, who like thee in the field was born and
whom the mountain has reared, thou wilt see (him) and [like a
woman] thou wilt rejoice.
Heroes will kiss his feet.
Thou wilt spare [him and wilt endeavor] to lead him to me."

He slept, he saw another dream, which he reported to his mother:
["My mother, ] I have seen another [Dream.] My likeness I
have seen in the streets [Of Erech] of the plazas.
An axe was brandished, and they gathered about him;
And the axe made him angry.
I saw him and I rejoiced, I loved him as a woman, I embraced
him.
I took him and regarded him as my brother."

The mother of Gish, who knows all things, [Spoke to Gish]:
["O Gish, the man whom thou sawest, whom thou didst em-
brace like a woman].
(means) that he is to be associated with thee."

Gish understood the dream.
George’s Translation

Gilgamesh rose to relate the dream, saying to his mother:
“oh mother during the course of my night I walked hale and hearty among the young men.
Then the stars of sky hid from me, a piece of the sky fell down to me.
I picked it up, but it was too heavy for me, I pushed at it but I could not dislodge it.
The land of Uruk was gathered about it, the young men were kissing its feet.
I braced my forehead and they helped me push, I picked it up and carried it off to you.”

The mother of Gilgamesh, well versed in everything, said to Gish:
“For sure, Gilgamesh, someone like yourself was born in the wild and the upland has reared him.
You will see him and you will rejoice, the young men will kiss his feet.
You will embrace him and bring him to me.”

He lay down, and had another dream. He rose and spoke to his mother:
“O mother, I have had another dream.
...... in the street of Uruk-the-Town-Square, an axe was lying with a crowd gathered around.
The axe itself, it was strange of shape; I saw it and I grew glad.
[Like a wife I loved it, caressed it and embraced it,] I took it up and set it at my side.”

The mother of Gilgamesh, well versed in everything, [said to Gilgamesh]:

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“….. so that I shall make him your equal.”

As Gilgamesh related the dream,

Author’s Translation

\textit{Jiḥsh} demanded his vision be explained. He recounted it to his mother:

\begin{quote}
    “Mother, during my early night hours, your mighty (loud voice?) came to you.
    While among the warriors, from between the stars of heaven,
    [like] a horse of Anim fell upon me.
    I roamed with him (flew?) in the dark, he held tight around me.
    And I rushed him, his speed did not scare me.
    Uruk-of-the-Fertile-Land gathered proudly around him.
    The warriors sniffed his legs, and laid down before me, helping me.
    We roamed him in the dark, carried him upon you.”
\end{quote}

The mother of \textit{Jiḥsh}, the guider of his vision, said to \textit{Jiḥsh}:

\begin{quote}
    “Since this \textit{Jiḥsh} existed, his look-alike existed.
    When my back delivered him and his high star reared him, seeing after him like a son you adopt, the warriors sniffed his feet.
    You will face him suddenly; you will take him like a twin.
    You will bring him upon me.”
\end{quote}

He wailed; he saw for a second time, a vision. He conveyed it to his mother:

\begin{quote}
    “Mother, I am seeing, for a second time, a vision.
    I am seeing a heated gathering (fight?) in the market of Uruk-of-the-Hill.
\end{quote}
An axe fell (thrown?) around (over?) a proud one (a miniature goat?).
The axe of (falling on) the shabby one (goat?) missed him.
I saw him, I took him myself.
I caressed him like a mother, kissing all over him.
I shaved (fed?) him, tamed (calmed?) him to (me) his brother.”

The mother of Jiḥsh, guider of his vision, [explained to Jiḥsh:]

[............................]
[............................]
this (means): his real-life transformed equal is selected to you.”

Jiḥsh, his vision became clear.

Discussion and Analysis

1. it-bi-e-ma ־Giš šú-na-tam i-pa-áš-šar
   אֲנוֹתִי־מִי יִפְסַרְשׁו גִּחֶשׁ שָאוֹנָתִי יִפְסַר

(J) Gish sought to interpret the dream;
(G) Gish rose to relate a dream,
(A) Jiḥsh demanded his vision be explained.

it-bi-e-ma:
Jastraw derived this word from Akkadian tibû meaning “to want”,
which is clearly from the Arabic root verb baghā بُغَا. This derivation
is possible, but I think the word here means “to demand”:

בָּגָא (לָשָׁן הָעָרֶב)
וַאֲבֵדֵחַ אֵלַיִּהּ אֲסַבֵּדֵחַ; בִּקְרֶהָ אָלֶּהּ טְלִיבָה
George derived the same word from Akkadian tebû, in the meaning of “rose up”. However, this word in CAD is not only a bad match, but is clearly mixing up two Arabic words. The first is تبَا طبا from root verb طبِيْبَيْا طبيا, in the meaning of “called upon him”, which would involve raising one’s hand. The second is the verb root word تبا تبا, meaning “to attack”, “to plunder”, or “to loot”:

ePSD: tebû: to raise the hand; to rise; to plunder; to loot; to levy; to muster; to swell

Although less likely, I believe this word could also been derived from baghama، بغم، meaning “spoke with deep voice”. We will see a possible similar word usage in line#28.

Although less likely, I believe this word could also been derived from baghama، بغم، meaning “spoke with deep voice”. We will see a possible similar word usage in line#28.
word above, it-bi-e-ma, was assimilated to heavy Yāʾ, a standard practice by the Gulf area Arabs—both letters had no symbols in Sumerian Cuneiform writing.

šú-na-tam:
Both Jastraw and George thought this word means “dream”. Jastraw derived it from Hebrew išênu, the verb underlying šittu, “sleep,” and šuttu, “dream” according to him. It is possible that šittu is from išênu. The letter Nūn assimilation into Tāʿ was common as we mentioned earlier. The word išênu, which means “asleep” or “old” in Hebrew is clearly related to the Arabic root verb shanana شَنِنَاء in a similar meaning. Therefore, I believe šú-na-tam is derived from Arabic shaʾn شَأْن rather than Hebrew šuttu. This would open the possibility that this word actually means “vision”, “insight”, “foretelling”, “prophecy”, “hallucination”, not necessarily “night dream”.

2. iz-za-kàr-am a-na um-mi-šú
إذكؤم عن أمي ذو
(J) Spoke to his mother:
(G) saying to his mother:
(A) he recounted it to his mother:

a-na:
This very 2-3 letter combining word is used in many meanings in old Classical Arabic, depending on the vowel sounds and other connected words. It could mean “from”, “in”, “about”, “over”, “within”, “how”, “where”, and a lot more. It is also possible that the word in the tablet was actually ‘ana ʿana ʿala على.

أَنّ (القاموس المحيط):
وأني: تكون بمعدّدٍ حديث، وكيف، وأين، وتنحنُّ حرف شرط.
وصولة للاسم الموصول: وأينباه من الكِثْرِ ما إنَّ مِفَاتِحهُ.
أَنّ (لسان العرب)
فلأَ تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ أنْ يَنْكِحْهُنَّ أَزْوَاجُهُنَّ.
واحتمل الكلام تقدير من أَو عن، وذكر آيات أخرى يقدر فيها حرف الجر من أو إلى.

وإنّ (لسان العرب)
وقال الأَزهر في ترجمة عدناء: قال المبدر: من وإلى ورب وفي والكاف الزائدة
والباء الزائدة واللام الزائدة هي حروف الإضافة التي يضاف بها الأسماء والأفعال.
إلى ما بعدها,
وربما وضعت موضع على
وهو الذي يقِبَل التوبة عن عباده؛ أي من عباده
وعنَّى: بمعدٍدٍ علىّ
قال: وقد جاء عن بمعدى بعد;

3. um-mi i-na šá-at mu-shi-ti-ia
ami حيِّن ساعة مسيَّتٍ

(J) “My mother, during my night
Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic

(G) “oh mother during the course of my night

(A) “Mother, during my early night hours,

mu-ši-ti-ia:

مساءً (اللغة العربية)
والمساء بعد الظهر إلى صلاة المغرب، وقال بعضهم إلى نصف الليل.

4. šá-am-ха-ku-ma at-ta-na-al-la-ak

(J) I became strong and moved about

(G) I walked hale and hearty

(A) Your mighty (loud voice?) came to you.

šá-aً (اللغة العربية)
الشامخة; العالياً,
سمخً (اللغة العربية)
وتعالى: صمخ الصوت صمَمًا فلانًا.
سمخً (اللغة العربية)
وتعالى: سمَخَتَي يجدة صوته و كثرة كلامه، ولغة تَميم الصمَخ.

5. i-na bi-ri-it it-lu-tim

(J) among the heroes;

(G) among the young men

(A) While among the warriors,

i-na:
This word is likely hīna حين which means “while”, “during”, “in”.
It is still being used in southern Iraq in these meanings and more.
bi-ri-it:
This word is bi-ni-it, “among”, from Arabic bayn بين. Exchanging the letter Nūn with Rāʾ is consistent with Nabataean inscriptions. Iraqis today say bināt بينات for “among”.

it-lu-tim:

Exchange the letter ن (Nūn) with Rāʾ is consistent with Nabataean inscriptions. Iraqis today say bināt بينات for “among”.

6. ib-ba-šú-nim-ma ka-kā-bu šā-ma-i

And from the starry heaven
Then the stars of sky hid from me,
from between the stars of heaven,

ib-ba-šú-nim-ma:
It seems that George read this word as ibdunima ابدونم، meaning “without”. However, even if it was correct, this usage does not fit with the meaning “to hide”. Besides, in the Assyrian Tablet, when Gilgamesh’s mother addressed him, repeating the events of his vision in his own words, she used the word ib-šu-nik-ka, instead. Specifically, she exchanged the word šú-nim-ma with šú-nik-ka. This indicates that this word is a demonstrative pronoun, from Arabic dū، but used to point to plural. The initial part ib-ba is not part of the word, but the equivalent of the letter Bā’. Iraqis pronounce it “ib” rather than “bi.”
7. [ki]-iṣ-rù šá A-nim im-ḵu-ut a-na ṣi-ri-ia

(J) a meteor(?) of Anu fell upon me:
(G) a piece of the sky fell down to me,
(A) [like] a horse of Anim fell upon me

[ki]-iṣ-rù:
I think this word means “horse”. Clearly, the meaning of “troop”, below, is consistent with horse.

ePSD: kiṣru: "troop"

im-ḵu-ut:

8. áš-ši-šú-ma ik-ta-bi-it e-li-ia

(J) I bore it and it grew heavy upon me,
(G) I picked it up, but it was too heavy for me,
(A) I roamed with him (flew?) in the dark, he held around me,

áš-ši-šú-ma:
Both Jastraw and George derived the verb áš-ši from našû which means “to lift”. However, the letter Nūn in this word is part of the root verb and cannot be omitted in any derivation:

ePSD: našû: to lift; to raise; to carry
I think the verb āš-šī is likely derived from the Arabic root verb ʿasasa, which means “to roam at night”:

I became weak and its weight I could not endure.
I pushed at it but I could not dislodge it.
and I rushed him, his speed did not scare me.
ú-ni-iš-šú-ma:
Both Jastraw and George derived the verb \( ni-iš-šú \) from \( enšu \), from Arabic \( ḥinṣ \), which means “weak”, possibly believing that the root was \( nšu \). However, the letters \( Ḥāʾ \) (or \( Nūn \) too) in this word is part of the root and cannot be omitted in any derivation:

\[
\text{ePSD: } enšu: \text{ (to be) weak; (to be) thin; (to be) low; weak person}
\]

The verb \( ni-iš-šú \) is likely derived from Arabic root verb \( nasasa \), which means “to rush” or “to drive fast”, including “to fly fast”, which fits well with the previous line:

\[
\text{nu-uš-šá-šú:}
\]

The noun word \( nu-uš-šá \) does not mean “weight”. It seems that Jastraw and George desperately linked it to \( enšu \) which they already got wrong earlier. The Akkadian word for “weight” is \( šuqultu \), from Arabic \( thuql \):

\[
\text{ePSD: } šuqultu: \text{ weight.}
\]

il-tiʿi:
This word is derived from Arabic \( laʿaʿa \) meaning “to be scared”.

\[
\text{il-tiʿi:}
\]
10. Uruk$^\text{ki}$ ma-tum pa-ḫi-ir e-li-šú

(J) The land of Erech gathered about it.
(G) The land of Uruk was gathered about it,
(A) Uruk-of-the-Fertile-Land gathered proudly around him.

ma-tum:
This word is from the Arabic root \textit{mayth} for “soft land”. Recall, Cuneiform had no symbol for the letter \textit{Thā’}. The word clearly points to the fertile marshland of southern Iraq, Sumer, and should be pronounced \textit{maythum}, the way it was pronounced in later editions.

ePSD: mātu: the Land (of Sumer)

11. it-lu-tum ú-na-šá-ku ši-pi-šú

(J) The heroes kissed its feet.
(G) the young men were kissing its feet.
(A) The warriors sniffed his legs,

ši-pi-šú:
The word ši-pi is from Arabic \textit{ẓifī}. Recall, Cuneiform writing did not include a symbol for the letters \textit{Zā’}. Also, Western scholars used the letter “p” to represent the letter \textit{Fā’}. 
وطُفُ (لسان العرب)
والوظيف لكل ذي أربع: ما فوق الرُّسُغ إلى مفصل الساق.
ووظيفاً يدي الفرس: ما تحت ركبتاه إلى جنبيه، ووظيفاً رجليه: ما بين كعبه إلى جنبيه.

12. ú-um-mi-id-ma pu-ti
وأهِمّ فوتي
(J) It was raised up before me.
(G) I braced my forehead
(A) and laid down before me,

مَدِيدٌ (لسان العرب)
وشيء مديد: ممدود
فوّتُ (لسان العرب)
الفوّتُ: الفوّات. فاتتى كذا أي سباقتي,
الفوّتُ:

13. i-mi-du ia-ti
يَدِوِ اياةي
(J) They stood me up.
(G) and they helped me push,
(A) helping me.

مَدِيدٌ (لسان العرب)
ومدّدنا القوم: صرنا لهم أنصاراً ومددناهاومددناهم بغيرنا.

14. áš-ši-a-šú-ma ab-ba-la-áš-šú a-na ši-ri-ki
عسّا ذوم أبعلي ذو عن طفرة
(J) I bore it and carried it to thee.”
(G) I picked it up and carried it off to you.”
(A) We roamed him in the dark, carried him upon you.”
áš-ši-a-šú-ma:
Notice, the writer used áš-ši-a, here, but used áš-ši earlier (line #8). This word should be pronounced ʿassaya عسّيَا for plural vs. ʿassa عسّا for single, exactly as Classical Arabic does.

ab-ba-la-áš-šú:

15. um-mi ḍGiš mu-di-a-at ka-la-ma

(J) The mother of Gish, who knows all things,
(G) The mother of Gish, well versed in everything,
(A) The mother of Jiḥsh, guider of his vision,

It seems that there are several contradictions in George’s reading of this line, which was repeated several times in both editions.

mu-di-a-at:
Both Jastraw and George derived this root word from idû or edû which according to CAD means “to clarify” or “to guide”. I agree with this meaning, as this word is derived from Arabic hadiya هديّة, since the Cuneiform writing system did not include a symbol for the letter Hāʾ and Western scholars unjustifiably used several sound symbols to represent it.

ka-la-ma:
This word was read by both scholars as the equivalent of Arabic kul كِلّ for “all”. That is possible. However, the addition of –ma indicates that the word here is likely a noun, particularly since this same
word was given by CAD the meanings “to clarify” or “to guide”, too. I think this word was from Arabic *kala'ma* كلام, in the meaning “his vision”.

كلا (لسان العرب)
وِبَقَالَ: كَلَّاتُ فِي أَمْرِكَ تَكْلِيمًا أَيْ تَأْمَلَتْ وَنَظَرَتْ فِيهِ، وَكَلَّاتُ فِي فَلاَنِ: نَظَرَتْ إِلَيْهِ مَتَأَمَّلًا،

16. iz-za-kàr-am a-na dGiš

اذاكرت عن جيشع

(J) Spoke to Gish:

(G) said to Gish:

(A) said to Jiḥsh:

17. mi-in-di dGiš šá ki-ma ka-ti

غيش سأ كيما كاه

(J) “Someone, O Gish, who like thee

(G) “For sure, Gish, someone like yourself

(A) “Since this Jiḥsh existed, his look-alike existed.

mi-in-di:

Jastraw thought this word meant “someone” while George thought it meant “for sure” or “truly”. However, neither claim can be supported by solid linguistic evidence. Here are the definitions of this word according to standard Western Akkadian references.

CAD: mindê: perhaps; since
ePSD: mindê: as if

I agree with the above two meanings. I believe this word is actually from Arabic mindhu منذ, but it was used in its original historical Clas-
sical Arabic equivalent *min idh kāna* من إذ كان meaning “since such was”.

*حذف* 

George desperately claimed this word meant “someone” because he needed the word “someone” to bring Enkidu in the scene. However, I think this word is the usual Arabic *dhā* for “this”.

*كِي مَـا* 

Both scholars read this word as *كيما* for “like”. I agree. However, I think here it meant “like him” or “his look-alike”, a remarkable old Classical Arabic usage.

*كا تِـِِْي* 

Western Akkadian references claim *ka-ta* meant “you”, just as the word at-ta did. The last one is clearly from Arabic an-ta meaning “you”, with the letter *Nūn* assimilated. I believe ka-ta is actually *kana-ta* for “s/he was” or “he existed”. The letter *Nūn* was assimilated here, too. The word *ka-ti* is therefore *kānati* referring to the look-alike existence. CDA listed kānu in the meaning of Arabic *kān* from *yakūn* يكوِن. Accordingly, the statement was “*min idh kāna Gish dhā, kima kānat*”. This would mean the next few lines are referring to the look-alike. In other words, this look-like (Enkidu) was possibly her son, too! Alternatively, it is possible the statement was “*min idh kāna Gish, dhā kima kānat*” من إذ كان جيش ذا، كيما كانت...
In such case dhā kima would mean together “his look-alike”.

كدَنَا كَنْتُمْ، كَاٰنَ جَيْشًا

كَوْنُ (لَسْانَ الْعَرَبِ)

الكُونِ؛ الحَدَّثُ، وَقِدْ كَانَ كُونًا وَكِتَابًا;

وَقَالَ الْجُوَهَرِيُّ؛ لَمْ يَكْ أَصَلَّ يَكُونُ، فَلَمْ دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ، لَمْ جُرَمَتْ فَاتْقَى سَاَكِنُانَ

فَحَذَفَتْ الْوَاوِ فِي بَيْنِي لَمْ يَكُنُ، فَلَمْ كُثُرَ استَعْمَالُهُ، حَدَفَوْا الْنُّونَ تَخْفِيَافًا، فَإِذَا

تَحَرَّكَتْ أَدْبِرُهَا، فَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَكْنُ الْرَجُلُ، وَأَجَازَ بُونَسَ حَدَفَهَا، مَعَ الحَرْكَةِ;

جِبَرُهُ؛ وَكَانَ تَدَلُّ عَلَى خَيْرَ مَاضِ في وَسْطِ الْكُلَّامِ وَآخَرِهِ، وَلَا تَكُونُ صَلِّةً فِي أَوْلِهِ

لَأَنَ الصَّلَةَ تَابِعَةَ لَا مَتِبَاعَةً;

رَوِيَ عِنْ أَبِنَ الْأَعرَابِيِّ فِي فَوْلَهُ عَزُوْ جَلَّ، كُنْتُم بَكْرَ أَمَّةٍ أَخْرَجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ؛ أَيْ أَنْتَمُ

خَيْرُ أَمَّةٍ، قَالَ: وَيَقَالُ مَعْنَاهُ كُنْتُم بَكْرَ أَمَّةٍ فِي عَلَمِ الْلَّهِ

18. i-na ṣi-ri i-wa-li-id-ma

جِينَ ظَهَرَهُ اِوُلَدَم

(J) in the field was born and

(G) was born in the wild

(A) When my back delivered him

ṣi-ri:

Jastraw and CAD claim this word, which means “back”, also means “field”. I think do not think this word was used in that meaning. According to CAD, the Akkadians used eqlu for “field”, clearly from Arabic ḥiql حَقِّلَ. George modified its meaning arbitrarily to “wild”, possibly because he was not convinced with CAD’s meaning. Additionally, both scholars misread the line grammatically. I think the word ṣi-ri meant “back”, which agrees with the way Iraqis refer to the process of giving birth to a child, even today.

19. ú-ra-ab-bi-šú šá-du-ú

وَرْبِيَ ذَوْ سَعْدٍ
whom the mountain has reared,
and the upland has reared him.
and his high star reared him,

Although šá-du from Arabic sadd can possibly mean “mountain”,
but the writer’s use of á rather than a indicates that the word was
actually sa’du from Arabic sa’d, which means star. The addition
of –ú makes it “his star”.

ePSD: šadû: mountain

20. ta-mar-šú-ma [kima sal(?)] ta-ḥa-du at-ta

Thou wilt see (him) and [like a woman] thou wilt rejoice.
You will see him and you will rejoice,
seeing after him like a son you adopt,

This unusual word is derived from amáru or amāru, meaning “to
see” according to Western Akkadian dictionaries. Even though this
word is a bit peculiar, but it still seems to be related from the Arabic
word ’ará أرى meaning “to see”, an already complicated word, or
from ’amar أمر, meaning “to see something happen” or “to order”.

Part 3: Akkadian Inscriptional Evidence
Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic

رأرأ (لسان العرب)

رأرأ : الرأرأة : تحريك الحدقة وتحديد النظر
من رأ رأ مثل معدنان بربع: إذا ما دفعنا طال على المطييه؟ ومن رأ رأ مثل معدنان بربع: إذا هبنت شامية عرية؟ أصل هذا: من رأي وجاء في الحديث: لا ينتمو لأخحك في الماء لا ينظر وقعة فيه،
تقول: جعلت الشيء رأي عينك وبمرأى منك أي حذاءك ومقابل بك بحيث تراه،
مرو (لسان العرب)
المرو : حرارة برض براحة تكون فيها النار وتقدح منها النار
أمر (لسان العرب)
رجل إذا نزل به أمر انتمر رأيه أي شاور نفسه وارت تبه فيه قلب موقعة الأمر ،
sal(?):

سلل (لسان العرب)
والسليل: الولد حين يخرج من بطن أمه

21. it-lu-tum ú-na-šá-ku ši-pi-šú

عتلوتكم انشقو ظيفي ذو

(J) Heroes will kiss his feet.
(G) The young men will kiss his feet.
(A) the warriors sniffed his legs.

22. tí-iṭ-ṭi-ra-áš-[šú] [tu-ut]-tu-ú-ma

تظرأ ذو تنتم

(J) Thou wilt spare [him and wilt endeavor]
(G) You will embrace him
(A) You will face him suddenly; you will take him like a twin.

tí-ṭ-ṭi-ra-áš-[šú]:
I am not sure how Jastraw came up with the meaning of “spare” for this word. Western Akkadian sources listed either šüzubu, clearly
Part 3: Akkadian Inscriptional Evidence

from the Arabic root verb *shadhaba* شذِّبَ، in the meaning of “to protect” or “to save from harm”, or *padû*, clearly from Arabic root verb *fadá* فدَى, in the same meaning. George thought this word meant “embrace”, but I found no trace to such usage. The word for “embrace” according to ePSD is *edēru*.

I think this word is derived from Arabic *ṭarʾa* طرأ, “to meet suddenly” particularly since the writer used –āš rather than –aš at the end of the word:

[tu-ut]-tu-ú-ma:
It is very likely that the damaged symbols were ti-it, not tu-ut. Regardless, there are several possibilities for the meaning of this word, but none of them relates to Jastraw’s “endeavor”. I think this word is Arabic *titawʾima* يتَوَأَم. It is either in the meaning of “take him like a twin”, or “to get along with”:

* نَتَوَأَمَّ (لسان العرب)
وَتَوَأَمَّ أَخاهَ: وُلِدَ مَعهُ،
قَالَ: وَالْتَوَأَمَّ فِي أَكْثَرِ مَا ذُكرَتَ الْأَصْلُ فِيهِ وَوَأَمَّ.
فَالْتَوَأَمَّ وَوَأَمَّ فِي الأَصْلِ
Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic

واَلْمَ (ِلَسَانُ ِالعَرْبِ)
وَفَهْقَةَ وَوَتَأَمًا وَمَوَاعِمَةً. وَواَلْمَ (ِلَسَانُ ِالعَرْبِ)
وَفَهْقَةَ وَوَتَأَمًا وَمَوَاعِمَةً. وَهِيَ الْمَوَاعِمَةُ أَنَّهُ تَفْعَلُ كَمَا يَفْعَلُ.
إِنَّهُ لْيَوْلَاءِنَّ أَيْ يُوَافِقُ وَقَالَ أَبُو زِبَدُ: هَوْ إِذَا أَتَبَعَ أَثْرَهُ وَفَهْقَهُ،

٢٣. *ta-tar-ra-[as-su] a-na ši-[ri]-ia*

(J) To lead him to me.”
(G) and bring him to me.”
(A) You will bring him upon me.”

ta-tar-ra-[as-su]:
Jastraw and George probably derived this word from tarû, likely from the Arabic root word *dharâ* ذَرَا. This is a good possibility. Recall, the letter *dhāl* did not have a Cuneiform symbol representation and was many times written with the sound of the letter *Tāʾ* تَاء. However, this word could also be from the Arabic root verb *tarar* تَرَر, in the meaning “to throw” or “push on”:

ePSD: tarû: to lay down, cast, place; to set in place, imbue; to throw down; to release, let go; to pour out; to lead away

ذَرَا (ِلَسَانُ ِالعَرْبِ)
وَأَذْرَىَ الشَّيْءَ إِذَا أَلْقَيْتَهُ
وَذَرَا الشَّيْءَ أَيْ سُقَطَ،
قَالَ: إِنَّمَا قَبْلَ أَذْرَىَ الشَّيْءُ عَنِ الشَّيْءِ إِذَا أَلْقَيْتَهُ؟
تَرَر (ِلَسَانُ ِالعَرْبِ)
وَتَرَرَ بَسْلَحَهُ بَرَرُ: قَذَفَ بَهُ.
وَتَرَرَ الْعَالِمُ: أُلْقَى ما فِي بَطْنِهِ.
وَتَرَرَ فِي يَدِهِ: دَفْعُ.
24. [uš]-ti-nim-ma i-ta-mar šá-ni-tam

(J) He slept, he saw another
(G) He lay down, and had another
(A) He wailed, he saw, for a second time,

[uš]-ti-nim-ma:
This word is very likely it-ti-nim-ma from Arabic nʿama لَمَّأَم meaning “to sigh” or “to wail”, possibly in a dream or in a day vision. This would agree with the Assyrian tablet which did not explicitly mention sleeping, as we will see. However, “slept” or “dowsed” are possible meanings here.

25. [šú-na]-ta i-ta-wa-a-am a-na um-mi-šú

(J) dream, which he reported to his mother:
(G) dream. He rose and spoke to his mother:
(A) a vision. He conveyed it to his mother:

i-ta-wa-a-am:
This is the same word we saw in line #22, but it is used in a different meaning here:
Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic

26. [um-mi]  a-ta-mar  šá-ni-tam
    أمي  اتأمر ثانِتم

(J) [“My mother,] I have seen another
(G) “O mother, I have had another dream.
(A) “Mother, I am seeing, for a second time,

27. [šú-na-tu]  [a-ta]-mar  e-mi-a  i-na  su-ḵi-im
    شأنت. اتأمَر حمِيّ حين سوقم

(J) [Dream. ] My likeness I have seen in the streets
(G) ….. in the street
(A) a vision. I am seeing a heated gathering (fight?) in the market

e-mi-a:
It is strange how Jastraw derived the meaning “my likeness” from this word. He read it as himiyya حميّا and thought it was related to himu حمو, which in Akkadian and Arabic stands for “in-law”. George conveniently ignored the word! This word is yet, another example of the fruitless approach of inventing sounds for a separate, made-up Akkadian language, rather than using existing historical Arabic etymological references. Let’s examine the following confused word entries in CAD:

CAD: emmu: hot    [related to Arabic ḥāmi حمي]  
CAD: emmûtu: hotness [related to Arabic humûtu حموتو]  
CAD: emu: in-law    [related to Arabic ḥamû حمو]  
CAD: emētu: aunt    [related to Arabic ‘ammitu عمِيتو]
Part 3: Akkadian Inscriptional Evidence

With a little help from the Iraqi dialect, e-mi-a is clearly hamiyah حَمِيَّة meaning “heated argument”, “heated fight”, “heated gathering”, or “heated contest”. This word is a solid classical Arabic word.

حَمِيَّةٌ (لسان العرب) 
حَمِيَّةٌ (لسان العرب) 
حَمِيَّةٌ (لسان العرب) 
حَمِيَّةٌ (لسان العرب)
ومِرآةُ وحَمُوها وحَمَاها 
وحميّة الشمس والنازُر حَمِيَّة حَمِيَّة وحَمِوها، الأخيرة عن اللحياني: أَشْتَدَّ حَرْها، وأَحَمِها الله، عنه أَيضاً. الصحاح: أَشْتَدَّ حَمِيَّةُ الشمس وحَمِوها. 
والحَمِيَّةُ والحميّةُ: ما حَمِيٍّ مِن شيء، وفلان دُو حَمِيَّةٍ مَثْقِرَةً إذا كان ذا غضب وأَذى، والحَمِيَّةُ شَدَّةُ الغضب وأَولَه.

28. [šá Uruk]ki ri-bi-tim

ذا أوروك ربيتم

(J) [Of Erech] of the plazas.
(G) of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
(A) of Uruk-of-the-Hill.

ri-bi-tim:

رِباٌ (لسان العرب) 
رِباٌ (لسان العرب) 
رِباٌ (لسان العرب)
والرِّبِّةُ والرَّبِّوٌةُ والرِّبِّيَّةُ والرِّبَّوَةُ والرَّبِّاةُ والرَّبِّاءَةُ والرَّبِّاءَةَ: كل ما ارتفع من الأَرض وربى;

29. ḫa-aṣ-ṣi-nu na-di-i-ma

خصينٌ نَدْيمٌ

(J) An axe was brandished, and
(G) An axe was lying
(A) An axe fell (thrown?)

ḵa-aṣ-ṣi-nu:

خَصِينٌ (لسان العرب)
 ابن الأعرابي: من أسماء الفَاس الخَصِينَ والحادَّاثَانَ والمُكِشَاحَ.
30. e-li-šú pa-ḥ-r ḫu-
(J) They gathered about him;
(G) with a crowd gathered around.
(A) around (over?) a proud one (a miniature goat?)

pa-ḥ-ru:
A similar word pa-ḥ-ir (gathered proudly, or prided itself), clearly a verb, was used in line #10 before e-li-šú (meaning “around him”) and after a subject, “Uruk”. This prompted both scholars to rush in explaining it identically! However, here it is after e-li-šú and after a verb, “thrown”. Most importantly, here, the word is pa-ḥ-ru, not pa-ḥ-ir, clearly a noun, following šú in the meaning “belong to”, to make the term dhū ḡakhr, either a nickname “the one with pride”, or “son of pride”, a classical Arabic usage. I think “e-li-šú pa-ḥ-ru” together means “around the one with horns”—a goat or gazelle—, or “around a proud one”—a person.

31. ḥa-āṣ-ṣi-num-ma šá-ni bu-nu-šú
(J) And the axe made him angry.
(G) The axe itself, it was strange of shape;
(A) The axe of (falling around) the shabby one (goat?) missed him.

\( \text{ẖa-as-ši-nu-um-ma:} \)
The previous word was \( \text{ẖa-as-ši-nu} \), axe, while this was \( \text{ẖa-as-ši-nu-um-ma} \), “axe of”.

\( \text{sá-ni:} \)
I think this word is either \( \text{sha’ni} \), meaning “someone with long, not groomed, hair”, or \( \text{sa’ni} \), meaning “a miniature goat”. If it is miniature goat, which was historically equated by the Arabs with bad luck, according to \( \text{Lisān al-ʿArab} \), this may indicate that the axe was intentionally targeting him. Both meanings fit well with the character of Enkidu in the epic.

\( \text{ bénéfic (لسان العرب)} \)

ashq عَ نَّ (الشعر)

وَالعَرَب تَقُولُ رَأَيْتُ فلَانًا مُشْعَانٍ الرَّأسِ إِذَا رَأَيْتُهُ شَغَثَتُ مُنْتَفِشَ الرَّأس مَعْبَرًا أَشْعَتْ.

وفي الحديث: فجاء رجل مُشْعَانٌ يَفْنِم يَسْوَقُهَا هُوَ المُنْتَفِشُ الشعر الثائر الرَّأس. يَقَالُ شَغَثَ مُشْعَانٌ وَرَجُلٌ مُشْعَانٌ وَمُشْعَانٌ الرَّأسِ والميم زائدة.

\( \text{sعين (لسان العرب)} \)

وقيل: السَّعَةٌ من المعْرَى صغار الأَجسَام في خُلْقها،

وقيل: السَّعَة المشؤومة

\( \text{bu-nu-šú:} \)
This word is the key word to understand the reason for the gathering. Jastraw correctly believed it was a verb, but his meaning, “made him angry” referring to “my likeness”, is wrong. Certainly, it does not explain or justify the astonished gathering mentioned in the Assyrian tablet as we will see in the next chapter. George thought the word was a noun, meaning “its shape”, referring to the axe, an even less astonishing event. Historical Classical Arabic teaches us that the verb/noun root, \( \text{bawn} \), relates to distance. In this case, it was used as a verb to indicate that the axe had \textit{miraculously} missed him
(or was visually diverted), falling next to him. This event can certainly justify a gathering and/or an astonishment!

32. a-mur-šū-ma aḥ-ta-du a-na-ku

أَمْرُدُومُ اخْتَذَى أَنَّكَ

(J) I saw him and I rejoiced,
(G) I saw it and I grew glad.
(A) I saw him, I took him myself.

aḥ-ta-du:
The meanings “became glad” or “rejoiced” for this word can both be correct. This word is from ʾakhadha, أَخَذُ, meaning “took”. Taking anything can bring joy. However, I think here it does mean “took”.

أَخَذُ (المكان العربي)

الَّذِي خَلَفَ الْعَطاءِ

وَقُولُهُمْ أَخَذَتْ كَذَا يَبْدُلُونَ الْذَّالُ تَأْثِيرَهُمْ فِي النَّاءِ، وَبَعْضُهُمْ يُظَهَّرُ

الْذَّالُ، وَهُوَ قَلِيلٌ.

a-na-ku:
This is an interesting word. Professor al-Jibūrī thought it was anā or “I” from anā+akū, أَنَا + أَكُو, using the well-known Iraqi word akū from ʾakun, أَكُنُ. He is right. However, I think it means “I, myself” not just “I” because the Akkadians also used anā alone in many cases.

33. a-ra-am-šū-ma ki-ma áš-sá-tim

أَرَأَمُ ذُوْمٍ كَيْبًا أَسَاتِمٍ

(J) I loved him as a woman,
Part 3: Akkadian Inscriptional Evidence

(G) Like a wife I loved it,
(A) I caressed him like a mother,

a-ra-am-šú-ma:

áš-šá-tim:

While it is possible that the Akkadians had used this word to mean “woman”, I think it was likely for an “adult woman” or “mother”. This word literally means “the one with the big bottom” in Arabic. Because this is not likely to refer to young women, and because the word was used with rʾama رَأْمَا for “motherly caressing”, it was very likely in the meaning of “mother”.

34. a-ḥa-ab-bu-ub el-šú

(J) I embraced him.
(G) caressed it and embraced it,
(A) kissing all over him.
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**a-ẖa-ab-bu-ub:**
Eventhough this word is related to ḥub حب, or love, Iraqis, even today, use it in the meaning of “kiss”. It is typical in southern Iraq to say “ḥib idah” meaning “kiss his hand”!

35. el-ki-şú-ma  āš-ta-ka-an-šú

(؟لكيإ) حلقٍ (ألكي؟) دوم استكن ذو

(J) I took him and regarded him
(G) I took it up and set it
(A) I shaved (fed?) him, tamed (calmed?) him

**el-ki-şú-ma:**
I am not sure how both, Jastraw and George, concluded that this word means “took” since there is no trace for it anywhere I looked. Possibly they thought it meant “to me” followed by šú (dhū), a far-fetched desperate reading. They possibly assumed -ki, Sumerian for “with (in math)” was used here to indicate “addition of something”.

I believe this word was either from Arabic ʾalaka اللカラー or ʿalaka عللカラー meaning “to make one chew” or “to feed”, or from the Arabic root verb hʾalaqa حلカラー meaning “to cut hair” or “to shave” for people and goats! Both meanings would fit with the events of the epic. The second word seems extremely old, because it has pages and pages of usages in the historical Classical Arabic references. The Akkadian words kasāsu and kuš, from Arabic root qaṣasa قصص، meaning “to cut”, are also used in Akkadian, but for lamb shearing.

ألカラー (لسان العرب)
في ترجمة عجل: يقال هذا ألونک صیدی وعلوک صیدی وعلوک صیدی لما يأكل، وما تلوكت بالوک وما تتفلجت بعلوک. اللب: الألوک الرسالة وهي المألك الک، على مفعلة، سميت ألونکا لأنه يأكل في الفم مشتق من قول العرب: الفرس يأكل
Part 3: Akkadian Inscriptional Evidence

اللُجُمْ، والمعروف يَلُوك أو يَمَّلُك أي يمضغ. ابن سيده: أَلّك الفرس اللجام في
فيه ياَلْكَ عَلّكَهِ.
عالِكَ (مفاعِيس اللَّغة)
العين واللام والكاف أصل صحيح يدل على شيء شبه المضغ والقبض على
الشيء. من ذلك قول الخليل: عَلّكَ المضغ.
ويقال: عَلّكَت الدَّابة اللجام، وهي تعلّكَه عَلّكَه.

ePSD: kasāsu: gnaw; to shear, pluck wool

ePSD: kuš7: horse (groom)

حلِق (لسان العرب)
والاحتِلاق: الحلَق، يقال: حلَق مَّعَه، ولا يقال: جَرَه إلا في الضَّن، وعنز مَّحُولَة،
وحلقة المعزي، بالضم: ما حلق من شعره.
ويقال: إن رأسه لجيد الحلِق، قال ابن سيدة: الحلَق في الشعر من الناس والمعز
كالجز في الصوف، حلقة يَحلَقه حلقة فهو حاق وحلقة واحترقة.

36. a-na a-ẖi-ia
عن أخِيّ

(J) As my brother.”
(G) at my side.”
(A) to (me), his brother.

a-ẖi-ia:
George read the word a-ẖi-ia, which means “my brother”, as “my
side”, a desperate attempt to justify his believe that this dream in-
volved the axe being transformed to a person! For this word, I agree
with Jastraw’s reading, which was in the meaning of “as a brother”.

37. um-mi ǧīš mu-da-at [ka]-la-ma
أمَّ جِيش مُعدِّيَت كلاَم

(J) The mother of Gish, who knows all things,
(G) The mother of Gish, well versed in everything,
(A) The mother of Jiḥsh, guider of his vision,

38. [iz-za-kàr-am a-na ʰGiš]
   [اذكرم عن جحش]
   
(J) [Spoke to Gish]:
(G) [said to Gish]:
(A) [said to Gish]:

39. [ʰGiš šá ta-mu-ru amêlu]
   [..........................]
   
(J) [“O Gish, the man whom thou sawest,]
(G) [..........................]
(A) [..........................]

40. [ta-ẖa-ab-bu-ub ki-ma áš-šá-tim el-šú]
   [..........................]
   
(J) [Whom thou didst embrace like a woman].
(G) [..........................]
(A) [..........................]

41. áš-šum uš-[ta]-ma-ḥa-ru it-ti-ka
   آذم استمخارو إتيك
   
(J) (means) that he is to be associated with thee.”
(G) .... so that I shall make him your equal.”
(A) this (means): his real-life transformed equal is selected to you.”

uš-[ta]-ma-ḥa-ru:
Although the previous three lines were damaged, this line is more or less clear. The root verb of this word is clearly makhara مخر. This
word was used several times in the Assyrian Tablet, too. However, the writer there used ul rather than uš, the usual Arabic language approach to either derive a noun or a certain verb tense. Compare the following usages of the word in both tablets. Notice that the “š” was assimilated to “l” in the later edition, as we saw when deriving the name for Gilgamesh:

uš-[ta]-ma-ḫa-ru
ul-ta-maḥ-ḫar-šú
tul-tam-ḫi-ri-šú
ul-tam-ḫi-ra-šú

The two primary meanings of the root verb behind this word in all historical Arabic references were “to sail or cut through” or “to choose a person”. In their explanations, they compared the process of choosing a person to sailing through in a “sea” of human waves to select that special someone. All this indicates that this word was possibly used by the Akkadians to mean some sort of a transformation/creation/selection process, likely done by a god or someone with special powers, to deliver an “equal”, “clone”, or a “chosen person”. This would agree with the readings by both Jastraw and George. Even though, the main meaning of the word maḥāru according to CAD and ePSD fully agrees with all historical Arabic etymological references, neither one listed the meaning “to choose”, indicated by the Arabic references:

ePSD: maḥāru: to confront; to oppose; to withstand; to face; to block

مَخْرَ (لسان العرب)
والمَخْرَ في الأصل: الشَّقُّ - مَخْرَتْ السفينةُ الماءَ: شقتِهُ يصدْرُها وجرَتْ.
ومَخْرَ الأرضَ إذا شقْها للزراعة.
واَمْتَخِرَ الشيءَ: اخْتَارَهُ.
ومَخْرَ البيتَ يَمَخْرَهُ مَخْرًا: أخْدَ خَيارَ مَتَاعَهُ فذُهِبْ بِهِ.
Gish understood the dream.

As Gish related the dream, Jiḥsh, his vision became clear.

i-pa-šar:

Notice the writer used the word i-pa-áš-šar in the first line, adding the part -áš- in the middle. This was not arbitrary. In the first line the word was equivalent to Arabic yufassar. In this line it is likely itfassar or yitfssar, in the meaning “was explained” or “became clear”.

فسر (لسان العرب)

الفسَرُ: البلدان. فَسَرَ الشيء يفسَرُه، بالكَسر، وتفْسِيرُه، بالضم، فسْرًا وفسَرَهُ.

أبانية، وتدَفَسْيرُ مثلاً. ابن الأَعرابي: التَّفسيرُ والتأوْل والمعتدى واحد.

وقوله عز وجل: وأَحَسْنْ تَفسِيرًا; الفَسَرُ: كشف المُطْطِئِ، والتدَفَسْيرُ كَشف

المُرَاد عن اللَّفظ المُشَكِّل، والتأوْل: ردَّ أحد المحتملين إلى ما يطابق الظاهر.

وإِسْتَفْسَرَهُ كذاً أي سأَلَتهِ أن يفسَرْهُ لي.
A Comparative Detailed Reading in the Assyrian Tablets

I will read in this chapter the section of the Standard Edition (~1000 BCE) —mainly from the Assyrian tablets—, where the two dreams of Gilgamesh were told. We are fortunate to have several copies of this edition. Many damaged areas were cross checked between them to fill in and confirm the actual Cuneiform text on lines.

Below, I will first present George’s Roman transliteration of the text of that section, which is part of the first tablet in the Assyrian edition. I will not list every line from other alternative tablets. Instead, I will only list one line incorporating the completed text. When an alternative word or line is listed, I will place them between curly brackets.

Next, I will transliterate the same text in Arabic letters filling the sounds omitted as a result of both, the Roman transliteration and the lack of equivalent Sumerian Cuneiform symbols. Then, I will provide two translations in paragraph format including punctuations, the first by George ("G"), and other one by the author ("A"). Finally, I will present a detailed comparative analysis and discussion of the two readings and translations. Note that many lines of these tablets included some assumed Sumerian Cuneiform words. I will only translate and analyze the Akkadian words and substitute most Sumerian words with an ellipsis “…” symbol:
Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic

244. \( ^d \) Giš-gím-maš ina ŠÀ UNUG\(^k\) i-na-at-ta-la šu-na-te-ka
245. it-bé-ma \( ^d \) Giš-gím-maš šu-na-ta BÜR-ár MU-ra a-na AMA-šú
246. um-mi MÀŠ.Gl\(_6\) at-tu-la mu-ši-ti-ia
247. ib-šu-nim-ma MUL.MEŠ AN-e
248. GIM ki-iš-ru ša da-«nim» \{im-ta-naq-qu-tú\}{im-taq-qu»-ta\} e-lu EDIN-ia
249. áš-ši-šu-ma «da»-an e-li-ia
250. ul-tab-lak-ki-is-su-«ma» ul e-le-’-i-a nu-us-«su»
251. UNUGki ma-a-tum iz-za-az ÜGU-[šu]
252. [ma-a-tu pu-uḫ-ḫu-rat] in[a muḫ-ḫi-šú]
253. [i-tep-pi-ir um-m]a-nu Ü[GU E]DIN-[šú] \{with line 254\}
254. [GURUŠ.MEŠ uk]-tam-ma-ru ÜGU-[šú]
255. [ki-i šèr-ri la]-«’»-i ú-na-šá-qu GÌR.[MEŠ-šú]
256. [a-ram-šú-ma Gl]\(M\) áš-šá-te ÜGU-šú aẖ-bu-[ub]
257. [áš-šá-áš-šu-ma a]t-ta-di-šú ina šap-li-[\(\text{ki}\)] \{ with 258\}
258. [u at-ti tul₃-t]a-mah-ri-šu it-ti-[i]a
259. [um-mi dGiš-gim-maš \{em-qet\}\{en-qet\} mu-d]a-at ka-la-ma i-de MU-ár ana EN-[š]á
260. [\(\text{fr-i-mat-dn}\)]in-sú-n \{em-qet\}\{en-qet\} mu-da-a-tú ka-la-ma i-de MU-ár ana \( ^d \) Giš-gimmaš
261. [\(\text{ib-š}\)u-nik-ka \{MUL AN-e\}\{ MUL.MEŠ [ ]\}]
262. [\(\text{ki}\]-<ma ki>-]sir šá da-nim \{im-ta-qu-ut e-lu [ ]\} \{[šá]
ŠUB.MEŠ ÜGU EDIN-ka\}
263. taš-ši-šu-ma \{«da»-nu\}\{ [ ]-an \} \{e-[i-k]a\} \{UGU-ka\}
264. tul-tab-lak-kit-su-ma ul te-le-’-i-a nu-us-su
265. taš-šá-áš-šum-ma «ta»-ad-di-šú ina šap-li-ia
266. u a-na-ku \{ul-[\(\text{ta}\)m-hí-raš-šú]\}{ [ -ma]h-ḥar-šú\}it-ti-ka}
\{KÌ(\text{DI})-[ ]\}
267. ta-ram-šu-ma «GIM» DAM \{e-li-šú taḥ-[bu-ub]}\}
268. il-la-«kak»-kúm-«ma dan»-nu tap-pu-ú mu-še-zib ib-ri
269. ina KUR da-an \{e-mu-qi-šú\}\{e-mu-qi i-[šu/i]\}
270. «ki-ma ki»-šir šá da-nim du-un-nu-nu e-mu-qa-a-šú
271. «ta-ram-šu»-ma GIM DAM {ta-ḥab-bu-bu UGU-šú} { e-li-šú tah-b[ u-ub]}

272. [«šu-ú dan»-nu uš-te-n]é-zeb-ka ka-[a]«šá» {«šu-ú dan»-nu ú-še-zeb ka-a-šú}

273. šá-ni-tum i-ta-mar šu-na-at-tú

274. [i]t-bé-e-ma i-te-ru-ub ana IGl dIš AMA-šú

275. «d»GIŠ-gím-maš ana šá-ši-ma MÚ-«ár» ana AMA-šú

276. [i]p-pu-un-na-a AMA-a a-ta-mar šá-ni-ta šu-ut-ta

277. [ina SILA] šá UNUGKi re-bi-tum :

278. ḫa-ṣi-nu na-di-ma UGU-šú {paẖ-ru}{paẖ-ri}

279. [UNUGk]i ma-a-tú iz-za-zu UGU-šú

280. [ma-a-tú puẖ]-ḫu-rat ina muẖ-ḫi-šú

281. i-te-ep-pir [ <ummānu > UG]Ü EDIN-šú

282. [GURUŠ.MEŠ u ]k-«tam»-mar UGU-šú :

283. áš-šá-āš-šum l-ma { at-ta-di-iš } { at-ta-di-šu } ina šap-li-ku

284. [a-ram-š]u-ma ki-i áš-šá-te UGU-šú ah-bu-ub

285. [ u at-ti t ]ul f-ta-mah-ḫa-ri-šu it-ti-ia

286. «AMA d giš-gím-maš» em-qet mu-da-at ka-lá-ma i-de MÚ-ra ana DUMU-šá

287. «fri-mat-dnin-sún en-qet mu-da-at ka-lá-ma i-de MÚ-ra ana dGIŠ-gím-maš

288. [DUM]U! ḫa-ṣi-in-nu šá ta-mu-ru ib-ri

289. ta-ram-šu-ma GIM DAM ta-ḥab-bu-bu UGU-šú

290. u a-na-ku ul-ta-mah-ḫar-šú it-ti-ka

291. il-la-ka-ak-kúm-ma dan-nu tap-pu-ú mu-še-zib ib-ri

292. ina KUR da-an e-mu-qa «i»-[šu ]

293. ki-ma ki-ṣir šá da-nim dun-nu-nu / e-mu-qa-a-šú

294. «d»GIŠ-gím-maš ana šá-ši-ma MÚ-ár a-na AMA-šú

295. [u]m-ma ina KA d en-lil ma-lik lim-qut-[m-ma ]

296. ib-ri ma-li-ku a-na-ku lu-ur- ur-ši

297. [tu-u ]r-ši-ma ib-ri {ma-li-ku} {ma-lik} a-na-ku

298. [ i-t]a-mar šu-na-t[i-šu :]
244. جِحْشجَحْمَش إنّا ذا أروك انظلّ شأناكَ
245. اتبغم جِحْشجَحْمَش شاَنت... عنّ امي ذو
246. أمي... أطلّ مسيتي
247. ابدونم...
248. كيما قصر ذا انيم امتتفتو (أمتفت) حلي
249. عسّ ذوم ذعن حلي
250. التبلك ذو ول الغي نس ذو
251. أروك ميّغم عزّ (حاي) ذو
252. ميّتم فّخرت إن محي ذو
253. انفر أعدّّنحو حولي... ذو
254. ... أقتمرو حلي ذو
255. كي سهري لعّي أنشقو (أرجله)
256. ارم ذوم، كيما أسّس ذوي ذو أحبيب
257. عمس ذوم أسّس ذو إن سفليك
258. وانت تلّتّمخر ذوي إتي
259. أمي جِحْشجَحْمَش عمقت مهديت كلام يذ... عنّ ذا
260. ريمتّ نينسون عمقت مهديت كلام يذ... عن جِحْشجَحْمَش
261. ابدونك...
262. كيما قصر ذا انيم إمتفت حلي...
263. تعسّي ذوم دعّ حلك
264. تّلبلك ذوم ول تلبع نس ذو
265. تعسّا ذوم تعدّ ذو إن سفلي
266. وانكو ألممحرا ذو إتيك
267. ترم ذوم كيما أسات، تحبّ حلي ذو
268. البلك كوم ذان تفو مشذب إبر
269. ان [ارض] ذعن حمقي يذو
270. كيما قصر ذا انيم ذعن حمقي أ ذو
271. ترم ذوم كيما أسات، تحبّ حلي ذو
George’s Translation

Gilgamesh in Uruk was seeing you in dreams. Gilgamesh rose to relate a dream, saying to his mother:

“O mother, this is the dream I had in the night —

“The stars of the heavens appeared above me,
like a rock from the sky one fell down before me.
I lifted it up, but it weighted too much for me,
I tried to roll it, but I could not dislodge it.

The land of Uruk was standing around it,
[the land was gathered] about it.
A crowd [was milling about] before it,
[the menfolk were] thronging around it.
[Like a babe-in]-arms they were kissing its feet,
like a wife [I loved it,] caressed and embraced it.
[I lifted it up,] set it down at your feet,
[and you, O mother, you] made it my equal.”

The mother of Gilgamesh was clever and wise, well versed in everything, she said to her son. Wild-Cow Ninsun was clever and wise, well versed in everything, she said to Gilgamesh:

“The stars of heaven [appeared] above you,
[like a] rock from the sky one fell down before you.
You lifted it up, but it weighed too much for you,
you tried to roll it, but you could not dislodge it.
You lifted up, set it down at my feet,
and, I, Ninsun, I made it your equal.

Like a wife you loved it, caressed and embraced it:
a mighty comrade will come to you, and be his friend’s saviour.
Mightiest in the land, strength he possesses,
his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky.
Like a wife you will love him, caress and embrace him,
he will be mighty, and often will save you”

Having had a second dream, he rose and entered before the goddess, his mother. Said Gilgamesh to her, to his mother:
“Once more, O mother, have I had a dream -
“[In the street] of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
an axe was lying with a crowd gathered around.
The land [of Uruk] was standing around it,
[the country was] gathered about it.
A crowd was milling about before it,
[the menfolk were] thronging around it.
“I lifted it up and set it down on your feet,
like a wife [I loved] it, caressed and embraced it,
[and you O mother,] you made it my equal”

The mother of Gilgamesh was clever and wise, well versed in every-
thing, she said to her son. Wild-Cow Ninsun was clever and wise,
well versed in everything, she said to Gilgamesh:
“My son the ax you saw is a friend,
like a wife you will love him, caress and embrace him,
and I, Ninsun, I shall make him your equal.”
A mighty comrade will come to you, and be his friend’s saviour,
mightiest in the land, strength he possesses,
his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky.”
Said Gilgamesh to her, to his mother,
“May it befall me, O mother, by Counselor Enlil’s command!
Let me acquire a friend to counsel me,
a friend to counsel me I will acquire”

[So did Gilgamesh] saw his dreams!
Author’s Translation

Jiḥshi-Jiḥmash in this Uruk saw ahead your (coming) visions. Jiḥshi-Jiḥmash demanded his vision be explained, he recounted to his mother:

“Mother, during my early evening, from between those stars of heaven, [like] a horse of Anim fell around me. I roamed with him (flew?) in the dark, he obeyed (wrapped around?) me.

I rushed him around, not afraid of his speed. Uruk-of-the-Fertile-Land gathered with honor around him. The land became proud by his purity (pure bones?). He astonished and puzzled a large crowd before him.

[Their men] gathered under moon light around him. [Like freighted babies] they smelled his legs. I caressed him, like his mother, kissing all over him. I roamed him in the dark, prepared him down at your feet. And you transformed/selected his real equal to me.

Mother of Jiḥši-jiḥmash thought deeply, the guider of his vision, said to him. The-Favorite-of-Ninsūn thought deeply, the guider of his vision, said to Jiḥši-jiḥmash:

From between those stars of heaven, like a horse of Anim fell upon you. You roamed with him in the dark, he obeyed (wrapped around?) you. You rushed him around, not afraid of his speed. You roamed with him in the dark, prepared him down at my feet. And I, myself, had transformed/selected his real equal to you. You will caress him, like his mother, kissing all over him. To you, he is a look-alike, a loyal mighty one, a saver of a comrade. On earth, he is obedient; (his) devotion is entirely to you.
Like the horse of Anim had obeyed, (with his) devotion to you. You will caress him, like his mother, kissing all over him. The mighty one will ask you to save (him), as he will (save) you.”
{The mighty one will save (you), as you will (save) him”}

For a second time he had his vision. He demanded, trembling, from the goddess, his mother; Jiḥši-Jiḥmash screamed to her, said to his mother:
“Help me, O mother, I am seeing for the second time his vision. [In the Market] of Uruk-of-the-Hill,
an axe fell (thrown?) around (over?) a proud one (a goat?).
Uruk-of-the-Fertile-Land gathered with honor around him. The land became proud by his purity (pure bones?).
He astonished and puzzled a large crowd before him.
[Their men] gathered under moon light around him. I roamed him in the dark, prepared him down at your feet.
I caressed him, like his mother, kissing all over him. and you, transformed/selected his real equal to me.”

Mother of Jiḥši-jihmash thought deeply, the guider of his vision, said to him. The-Favorite-of-Ninsūn thought deeply, the guider of his vision, said to Jiḥši-jihmash:
“My son, this axe saves (sees after? recognizes?) a comrade. You will caress him, like his mother, kissing all over him.
and I, myself, had transformed/selected his real equal to you. To you, he will be a look-like, a mighty loyal one, a saver of a comrade.
On earth, he is obedient; his devotion is entirely to you. Like the horse of Anim had obeyed, (with) his devotion to you.”

Jiḥši-jihmash, screamed to her, to his mother:
“O mother, by Counselor Enlil, let me have one to fall upon him. 
A comrade, I have for myself, to safeguard me. 
Let me safeguard a comrade, I have for myself.”

[So, Jiḥshi-Jiḥmash] saw your (coming) visions!

Analysis and Discussion

244. dGIŠ-gím-maš ina ŠÀ UNUGki i-na-aḥ-ta-la šu-na-te-ka

(G) Gilgamish in Uruk was seeing you in dreams:
(A) Jiḥshi-Jiḥmash in this Uruk saw ahead your (coming) visions:

This line illustrates remarkable usages of Classical Arabic words in a astonishing flawless Classical Arabic sentence! The meaning of the underlining word naṭālu in the Western Akkadian dictionaries is also given in the Classical Arabic etymological references. This word is from Arabic naṭala نطِل or naʾṭala نأطِل also indicating the meanings of “seeing ahead”, or “geniusely seeing ahead”.

CAD: naṭālu: to see ahead; to see, to watch; to examine;
245. *it-bé-ma* ḡīṣ-gīm-maš šu-na-ta BŬR-ár MŬ-ra a-na AMA-šú

(G) Gilgamish rose to relate a dream, saying to his mother:

(A) *Jihshi-Jihmash* demanded his vision be explained, he recounted it to his mother:

246. *um-mi* MĂŚ.Gī₆ aṭ-ṭu-la mu-ši-ti-ia

(G) “O mother, this is the dream I had in the night –

(A) Mother, during my early evening,

aṭ-ṭu-la:

247. *ib-šu-nim-ma* MŬL.MĔŞ AN-e

(G) “The stars of the heavens appeared above me,

(A) from between those stars of heaven,

248. GĬM ki-iṣ-ru ša da-«nim» {im-ta-naq-qu-tú}{im-taq-qu-ta} e-lu EDĬN-ia

(G) like a rock from the sky one fell down before me.

(A) [like] a horse of Anim fell around me.
Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic

249. áš-ši-šu-ma «da»-an e-li-ia
   عسن دوم ذعن حاليًّ

   (G) I lifted it up, but it weighted too much for me,
   (A) I roamed with him (flew?) in the dark, he obeyed (wrapped around?) me.

**da-an:**
This word can be from Arabic daʿan دعْن which means “wrapped around like in a net”, matching the meaning of the corresponding word used in line #8 of the older Babylonian tablet, ik-ta-bi-it. This word also means “to ride an animal until he is exhausted”. However, it is more likely that this word was from Arabic dhaʿana ذعْن, meaning “obeyed quickly and blindly”.

250. ul-tab-lak-ki-is-su-«ma» ul e-le-’-i-a nu-us-«su»
   التبلك ذوم ول العي لنس دو
Part 3: Akkadian Inscriptional Evidence

(G) I tried to roll it, but I could not dislodge it.

(A) I rushed him around, not afraid of his speed

ul-tab-lak-ki-is-su-ma:

Compare this word with the word ú-ni-iš-šú-ma used in line #9 of the older Babylonian tablet, which has a similar meaning: rushed him around. The word labaka means “to rush or pressure”, or “to confuse” someone, a word still commonly used by Iraqis.

لَبْكاً (لسان العرب)
اللَّبَكَةُ: الخَلْطُ، لَبَكَتْ الأمَرَّ لَبَكَةً.

251. UNUGki ma-a-tum iz-za-az UGU-[šu]

(G) The land of Uruk was standing around it,

(A) Uruk-of-the-Fertile-Land gathered with honor around him

ma-a-tum

Compare this word with ma-tum in the Babylonian edition. As I explained earlier, it is from Arabic mayth and should be pronounced māthum. Notice the usage of additional –a- in the middle of the word, which proves our point. The additional letter Mīm at the end is consistent with the Arabic usages in all Musnad inscriptions from Yemen. It is used to add importance.

252. [ma-a-tu pu-uh-ḫu-rat] in[a muḫ-ḫi-šu]

(G) [the land was gathered] about it.

(A) The fertile land became proud by his purity (pure bones?)
muḥ-ḥi-šū:
While historical Arabic references gave a clear meaning to this word, Western Akkadian dictionaries offered confused unconnected basic meanings. This word is derived from Arabic root *makhakha* meaning “to purify” or “to extrude”:

ePSD: muẖẖu: skull, pate; first section of a balanced account, capital; on, over, above; against; more than; top

253. [i-tep-pi-ir um-m]a-nu U[GU E]DIN-[šú] {with line 254}

(A) He astonished and puzzled a large crowd before him.

i-tep-pi-ir:
The usage of this word was confirmed in line #281. It is from the Arabic root verb *farā* meaning “to astonish”.

(G) A crowd [was milling about] before it,
um-ma-nu:
This word is possibly from Arabic ummah āml, meaning “the mass”.
It was possibly pronounced, earlier, umma’nu, from Arabic umma’a
أُمَّةً, meaning “followers”. The writer used ā for the letter ʿAyn.

CAD: ummānu: a crowd; common people, soldiers, masses
أمَمْ (لسان العرب)
وأمَّةُ الرجل: قومه.
أمَّةً (لسان العرب)
الإِمَّةُ والإِمَّةً، بكسر الهمزة وتشديد الميم: الذي لا رأي له ولا عزم فهو يتابع
كل أُحد على رأْيْه ولا يثبت على شيء، والهاء فيه للمبالغة.

254. [GURUŠ.MEŠ uk]-tam-ma-ru UGU-[šú]
... أقتعمو حالي ذو

(G) [the menfolk were] thronging around it.
(A) [Their men] gathered under moon light around him.

uk-tam-ma-ru:
This confirms that Gilgamesh’s vision and gathering took place in a
clear starry sky, contrary to George’s Babylonian tablet reading.

قَمْرٌ (لسان العرب)
ولأَقْمَرَ الرجل: ارتَقَب طَلْوَعّ القَمْرَ;

255. [ki-i šèr-ri la]-«ُ»-i ú-na-sá-qu GİR.[MEŠ-šú]
كِي سَيرِي لِعَيْ أَنشقو [أرجله]

(G) [Like a babe-in]-arms they were kissing its feet,
(A) [Like freighted babies] they smelled his legs,

šèr-ri:
This is an interesting usage of the Arabic root word sihr سُحر. Recall,
the sound of the letter Hā’ was not present in Cuneiform symbols.
Notice the misleading current Romanization system of the Akkadian words. Compare the words: ṣehru, šerru, and šèr-ri!

ePSD: ṣehru; šerru: child; small child; baby; (to be) babyish; weak; a low social class; (to be) small;

We saw this exact word in line# 9 of the Babylonian tablet with the same meaning, “scared”.

256. [a-ram-šú-ma GI]M áš-šá-te UGU-šú ah-bu-[ub]

(G) like a wife [I loved it,] caressed and embraced it.
(A) I caressed him, like his mother, kissing all over him.

257. [áš-šá-áš-šu-ma a]t-ta-di-šú ina šap-li-[ki] {with line# 258}

(G) [I lifted it up,] set it down at your feet,
(A) I roamed with him in the dark, prepared him down at your feet.

Notice, in this edition of the epic, no one laid down before him or gave him help, and no carrying was involved. He just roamed with the horse alone, then brought him to his mother. Hence, the writer used áš-ši-šú-ma or áš-šá-áš-šu-ma instead of áš-ši-a-šú-ma, which the writer of the Babylonian edition used to indicate a plural action.
at-ta-di-šú:

عتد (لغة العرب)

وأعَدَت الشيء؛ أعدة؛ قال الله عز وجل؛ وأعدت لهن مثكاً أي هياً وأعدت.

258. [u at-ti tul5-t]a-mah-ri-šu it-ti-[i]a

وانتَ تلمحتي ذو إتي

(G) [and you, O mother, you] made it my equal.”
(A) And you, transformed/selected his real-life equal to me.

259. [um-mi dGIš-gim-maš {em-qet}{en-qet} mu-d]a-at ka-la-

ma i-de MU-ár ana EN-[š]á

أمَّي جَحِشَجِحش عمكت مهديت كلام يد ... عن ذا

(G) “The mother of Gilgamish was clever and wise, well versed in everything, she said to her son-
(A) Mother of Jiḥši-jiḥmash thought deeply, the guider of his vision said to him.

em-qet:

This word (sometimes was en-qet) was not used in the Babylonian tablet. George thought it meant “was clever and wise”, based on the CAD definition of the word. The meaning of this word fits well with the Arabic root word ‘imq عمق for “deep”. However, em-qet should be a past tense verb, here, indicating a feminine subject.

ePSD: emqu: wise, clever
Wild-Cow Ninsun was clever and wise, well versed in everything, she said to Gilgamesh:

(A) The-Favorite-of-Ninsūn thought deeply, the guider of his vision said to Jiḥši-jihmash:

(210) fri-mat-dnin-sūn:
The known name of the Mesopotamian goddess was “Ninsun” or “Ninsuna”. I am going to use this name “as is” without analyzing it. Evidently, the compound term fri-mat-dnin-sūn is transliterated into Akkadian as rīmat-nin-sūn. This clearly sounds Arabic for “the gazelle of Ninsūn”. However, since we know that Gilgamesh’s mother was a human, and since we also know that the Arabs used the gazelle as a symbol of beauty and preference for women, I think this compound term means “the favorite of Ninsūn”.

(211) ib-šu-nik-ka (MUL AN-e) {MUL.MEŠ [ ]} {MUL.MEŠ UGU EDIN-ka}...

(G) “The stars of heaven [appeared] above you,
(A) From between those stars of heaven,

(212) ki-šir šá da-nim {im-ta-qu-ut e-lu [ ]} {šá ŠUB.MEŠ UGU EDIN-ka}...

(G) [like a] rock from the sky one fell down before you.
(A) like a horse of Anim fell upon you.

263. taš-ši-šu-ma {«da»-nu}{[ ]-an} {e-1[i-k]a} {UGU-ka}

(G) You lifted it up, but it weighed too much for you,
(A) You roamed with him in the dark, he obeyed (wrapped around?) you

264. tul-tab-lak-kit-su-ma ul te-le-’-i-a nu-us-su

(G) you tried to roll it, but you could not dislodge it.
(A) You rushed him around, not afraid of his speed.

265. taš-šá-áš-šum-ma «ta»-ad-di-šú ina šap-li-ia

(G) You lifted up, set it down at my feet,
(A) You roamed with him in the dark, prepared him down at my feet.

266. u a-na-ku {ul-[ta]m-hi-raš-šú}{[ ]-ma}h-har-šu}{it-ti-ka}

(G) and, I, Ninsun, I made it your equal.
(A) and I, myself, transformed/selected his real-life equal to you.

267. ta-ram-šu-ma «GI» DAM {ta-ḥab-bu-bu UGU-šú}{e-li-šú tah-[bu-ub]}
Like a wife you loved it, caressed and embraced it:
You will caress him, like his mother, kissing all over him.

Eventhough, according to George’s transliteration this line was identical to lines #271 & #289, he translated it with a past tense verb, while translating the other two with a future tense verb using “will”. I think it should be read the same as way the other two.

268. il-la-«kak»-kúm-«ma dan»-nu tap-pu-ú mu-še-zib ib-ri

(G) a mighty comrade will come to you, and be his friend’s saviour.
(A) to you he is a look-alike, a loyal mighty one, a saver of a comrade.

This is another very remarkable and clear Classical Arabic sentence with solid old Classical Arabic usages.

il-la-ka kúm-ma:
It is very likely this word is actually two words: il-la-ka kúm-ma. The word il-la-ka, is clearly from Arabic ilayka إلیکّ for “to you”. The use of the word kúm-ma here, from Arabic kama كامّ, is similar to the usage of the word ki-ma in line #17 of the Babylonian tablet. Regardless, in both cases it means “look-alike”.

tap-pu-ú:
Clearly from Arabic root word wafī وفی, meaning “to be loyal”.

dan-nu:
George probably confused this word with another word used extensively in the tablet, da-ān, which was either from daʿna دعّن or dhaʿna ذعّن, as explained earlier. After comparing dan-nu with da-ān, I believe the word dan-nu is from the Arabic root word dhaʿn ذعّن,
meaning “mighty” or “strong”, which matched Western Akkadian references.

eSPD: dannu: strength; force; (to be) strong, powerful, mighty, great; (to be) resistant, obstinate, combative, quarrelsome; a noble; (crook of the) arm; wrestler; to reinforce; to provide for.

mu-še-zib:
Compare how the ePSD pronounced the two related words, having similar meanings, then examine the Arabic word shadhaba شذب. This is one more misrepresentation of a word by the Western Akkadian dictionaries. The letter Shīn cannot be omitted in any derivation.

ePSD: šūzubu: to spare
ePSD: ezēbu to set aside, leave behind; to save, keep back, hold back
While it is possible that this word was used in the meaning of “friend”, I think, based on Arabic references, it was more likely “comrade” or “associate”.

CAD: ibru: associate; friend; co-worker
CAD: ibertu: forearm bone;

أَبْرَعْ (لسان العرب) والابرب; العاميل.
وابرابرة الذراع; مستَدْفَهَا. ابن سيده: والابربة عظيم مستو مع طرف الزند من الذراع إلى طرف الإصبع؛ وقيل: الإبرة من الإنسان طرف الذراع الذي يدرك منه الذراع؛ وفي التمهيد: إبرة الذراع طرف العظم الذي منه يدرك الذراع، وطرف عظم العضد الذي يلي المرفق يقال له القبيح، وزج المرفق بين القبيح وبين إبرة الذراع، وأنشد: حتى تلقي الإبرة القبيها وإبرة الفرس: شطيبة لاصة
بالذراع ليست منها

269. ina KUR da-an {e-mu-qí-šú}{e-mu-qí i-[šu/i]}

ان [ارض] ذعن حمقى يذو

(G) Mightiest in the land, strength he possesses,
(A) On earth, he is obedient; (his) devotion is entirely to you.

e-mu-qí-šú:
This word is from Arabic ḡimq حمق. It can sometimes mean “enthusiasm” or “excessive devotion”. Its main meaning in Arabic is “foolish” or “crazy”, but it can be used indirectly for “fanatic”, or “extreme”.

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270. «ki-ma ki»-ṣir šá da-nim du-un-nu-nu e-mu-qā-a-šú

(G) his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky.
(A) Like the horse of Anim had obeyed, (with his) devotion to you.

e-mu-qā-a-šú:
Notice the usage of -a-šú rather than -šú by the speaker to point to Gilgamesh, possibly an old Classical Arabic usage.

271. «ta-ram-šu»-ma GIM DAM {ta-ḥab-bu-bu UGU-šú} { e-li-šú tah-b[u-ub]}

(G) Like a wife you will love him, caress and embrace him,
(A) You will caress him, like his mother, kissing all over him.

272. [«šu-ú dan»-nu uš-te-n]é-zeb-ka ka-[a]-«šá»
{«šu-ú dan»-nu ú-še-zeb ka-a-šú}

(G) he will be mighty, and often will save you”
(A) The mighty one will ask you to save (him), as he will (save) you.”
(A) The mighty one will save (you), as you will (save) him.”

Although George was able to arrive to the appropriate meaning of this line, which was written with a completely different style on two
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separate tablets, he was unable to illustrate the remarkable Classical Arabic grammar usage in the line. I included my Arabic transliteration of both lines for the interested reader, to illustrate why I believe that the Akkadian language was substantially Arabic, and the Epic of Gilgamesh was written in the earlier Classical Arabic.

Notice the derivation and transformation of the verb *shadhaba* شذب. Also, notice the careful usage of *dhū*, ذو, *dhawū*, ذوو, and *dhā* ذا!

273. šá-ni-tum i-ta-mar šu-na-at-tú

ثانيّم إتأمر شنّتو

(G) Having had a second dream,

(A) For a second time he had his vision.

274. [i]t-bé-e-ma i-te-ru-ub ana IGI d15 AMA-šú

ايطم يترعٍب عن... امي ذو

(G) he rose and entered before the goddess, his mother.

(A) He demanded, trembling, from the goddess, his mother;

*i-te-ru-ub*:

This word is from the Arabic root word *raʿaba* رعاب, meaning “to scare”. George used *erēbu*, in the meaning of “to enter”. Examining Western Akkadian dictionaries, it is possible that this word was actually used in the meaning of “to enter” or “to leave”, but I think only with an additional “scare” element added to it.

ePSD: erēbu: to enter; take away; to remove, to bring out; to leave; a bird of prey or a vulture;

CAD: erēbu: enter on a goddess; attack; to enter; to leave

رعب (لسان العرب)

َرَعْبُ وَالرَّعِبُ; الفَزْعُ والخَوْفُ.
Compare this line to line #24 of the Babylonian edition. Notice there is no mentioning of “sleep” here, which confirms that the word uš-ti-nim-ma meant “wailed” or “sighed” rather than “slept”.

275. «d»GIŠ-gim-maš ana šá-ši-ma MU-«ár» ana AMA-šú

.. جَجْشَجْجَحْمَش هِنَّ سَاسِمَ .. عَنِيَّ امِيَ دَوُّ

(G) Said Gilgamesh to her, to his mother,

(A) Jiḥshi-Jiḥmash screamed to her, said to his mother:

šá-ši-ma:
George simply ignored this word from the Arabic root ’asasa أَسَسٍ which can also mean “to scream”. It is confirmed by CAD, which listed ša-sù in the same meaning. However, it is a very important one as it confirms that Gilgamesh was angry after his second vision.

CAD: ša-sù: shout

أَسِسٍ (لسان العرب)
وَأَسَّ سَهَا زَجِّرَهَا
سُوسٍ (لسان العرب)
وَالسُّوسِ الْرِّيَاْسَةُ، يَقَالُ سَاسُوْهُم سَوْسَا، وَإِذَا رَآَسُوهُ قَيْلُ: سَوْسُوهُ أَسَاسُوهُ.
السُّوسُ (القاموس المحيط)
وُسْتَ الرُّعِيْةٌ سِيَاسَةً؛ أَمْرُهَا وَنَهَيْتُهَا.
شَساً (لسان العرب)
أَبُو مَنْصُورٍ فِي قُوَّلِهِ مَكَانٌ شَسُّسٌ، وَهُوَ الْخَشْشَن مِنَ الْحَجَارَةِ، قَالَ: وَقَدْ يَخْفِفُ،
فِي فَالِلْمَكَانِ الْغَلْبِيْثِ: شَسُّسُ وَشَأْرُ، وَيُقْالُ مَقْلُوْبُهُ: مَكَانُ شَاسِئٍ وَجَاسِئٍ غَلِبٍ.
شَشَشَ (لسان العرب)
الْتَّهْدِيبِ فِي الْمُعْتَلِ: اِبْنُ الْأَعْرَابِيَّ الشَّشَشَ الْبُسْرُ الْبَيْسِ.
276. \[ p-pu-un-na-a A M A-a a-ta-mar šá-ni-ta šu-ut-ta \]

\[ \text{أَفَنَا أَمَّا أَعَامِرُ ثَانِيَةَ سَأَنَتَ} \]

(G) “Once more, O mother, have I had a dream -
(A) “Help me, O mother, I am seeing for the second time his vision.

**ip-pu-un-na-a:**
One more word confirming Gilgamesh was stressed and mad after his second vision. It is from Arabic *faniya* فَنِي “to calm” or “to help”. Therefore, *iffunā* إِفْنَا would mean “help us” in Classical Arabic. I am not sure how George arrived at the meaning “once more”.

\[ \text{فَنِي} \text{ (لسان العرب)} \]

\[ \text{والْمُفَانِة} \text{: المُدَارِة} \]

\[ \text{وِفَامِيَة} \text{: الرِجْل} \text{: دارِيْتُه وسَكْنَتُه؟} \]

277. \[ \text{[ina SILA] šá UNUGki re-bi-tum :} \]

\[ \text{إِنَّ ... أَروَاكَ رَبِّيَّم} \]

(G) “[In the street] of Uruk-the-Town-Square,
(A) “[In the market] of Uruk-of-the-Hill.

278. \[ ḥa-ṣi-nu na-di-ma UGU-šú \{pah-ru\}{pah-ri} \]

\[ \text{خَصِيْنَ} \text{nَديْمَ حَلَى ذَوْ فَخْرُ} \]

(G) an axe was lying with a crowd gathered around.
(A) An axe fell (thrown?) around (over?) a proud one (a miniature goat?).

Notice this sentence is identical to the corresponding one in the Babylonian tablet, lines #29 & #30. Also notice that the word used here was either pah-ru or pah-ri, both of which are nouns. In lines #252 & #280, the word pu-uh-ḥu-rat فُخْرَت was used, a verb.
279. [\text{UNUGk}]i ma-a-tú iz-za-zu UGU-šú
\begin{align*}
\text{أروك مّينا عزّحليفّذو} \\
\text{The land [of Uruk] was standing around it,} \\
\text{(A) Uruk-of-the-Fertile-Land gathered with honor around him.}
\end{align*}

280. [ma-a-tú puẖ]-ẖu-rat ina muẖ-ẖi-šú
\begin{align*}
\text{خّ ي ذومَ  نَأرَت خُفُ  ثويمَ} \\
\text{(G) [the country was] gathered about it.} \\
\text{(A) The land became proud by his purity (pure bones?)}
\end{align*}

281. i-te-ep-pir [\text{<ummānu>} UGU] EDIN-šú
\begin{align*}
\text{إثْرُ أَمْعَنُ حَلَٰي ... ذو} \\
\text{(G) A crowd was milling about before it,} \\
\text{(A) He astonished and puzzled a large crowd before him.}
\end{align*}

282. [\text{GURUŠ.MEŠ u}]k-«tam»-mar UGU-šú :
\begin{align*}
\text{أفتَمرو حوليّذو ...} \\
\text{(G) [the menfolk were] thronging around it.} \\
\text{(A) [The crowd] gathered under moon light around him.}
\end{align*}

283. áš-šá-áš-šum-[ma {at-ta-di-iš} { at-ta-di-šu} ina šap-li-ku
\begin{align*}
\text{عِدّدٌ ذو إن سَفاكل ق} \\
\text{(G) “I lifted it up and set it down on your feet,} \\
\text{(A) I roamed with him in the dark, prepared him down at your feet.}
\end{align*}

Notice that, here, we are not dealing with a horse. Therefore, there were no additional lines about rushing someone or sniffing his legs.
Gilgamesh simply roamed with, without riding, the person or goat before bringing him to his mother.

284. [a-ram-š]u-ma ki-i áš-šá-te UGU-šú aḥ-bu-ub

أرَّام ذُوم كَي أَسَاّت حلَي ذُو أَحْبَب

(G) like a wife [I loved] it, caressed and embraced it,
(A) I caressed him, like his mother, kissing all over him.

285. [u at-ti t]ul5-ta-mah-ha-ri-šu it-ti-ia

وَأَتَّ الْتَمْحَرْيِ ذُو إِتِّي

(G) [and you O mother,] you made it my equal.”
(A) and you, transformed/selected his real equal to me.”

286. «AMA dgiš-gím-maš» em-qet mu-da-at ka-lá-ma i-de MU-ra ana DUMU-šá

امِي جِبْشَجَحْمَش عَمْقَت مُهْدِيت كَلَام بَد ... عَن ذَا

(G) “The mother of Gilgamesh was clever and wise, well versed in everything, she said to her son-
(A) Mother of Jiḥši-jiḥmash thought deeply; the guider of his vision, said to him;

287. «fri-mat-d nin-sún en-qet mu-da-at ka-lá-ma i-de MU-ra ana dGiš-gím-maš

رَيْمَت نَنْسَون عِمْقَت مُهْدِيت كَلَام بَد ... عَن جِبْشَجَحْمَش

(G) Wild-Cow Ninsun was clever and wise, well versed in everything,
she said to Gilgamesh:
(A) The-Favorite-of-Ninsūn thought deeply; the guider of his vision said to Jiḥši-jiḥmash:
288. [DUM]U! ḫa-ṣi-in-nu šá ta-mu-ru ib-ri

(G) “My son the ax you saw is a friend,
(A) My son, this axe saves (sees after? recognizes?) a comrade.

This line is the key to understand the second vision by Gilgamesh in this tablet. George thought the word “friend” or “associate” was linked to the axe because his mother was referring to the axe as the object. Not so. Analyzing the line carefully with Arabic grammar in mind, it is clear that the axe was the subject here and the friend/associate was the object.

ta-mu-ru:
The spelling of this word, assuming it means “saw”, is a bit different than previously written. It was written everywhere as ta–mar or ta–mur, not ta-mu-ru. Let’s examine this word from the previous texts in both tablet versions. The asterisks indicate what I believe was a wrong reading by both, Jastraw and George:

i-ta-mar šu-na-at-tú (having had seen) إتمأر (line # 273)
a-ta-mar šá-ni-tum (I have seen)* آتمأر (line # 276)
i-ta-mar šu-na-ti-šu (he saw) إتمأر (line # 298)
a-mur-šú-ma (I saw him) مذورؤأم (line # 32)
a-ta-mar šá-ni-tam (I have seen)* آتمأر (line # 26)
i-ta-mar šá-ni-tam (he saw) آتمأر (line # 24)
a-ta-mar e-mi-a (I have seen)* آتمأر (line # 27)
ta-mar-šú-ma (will see (him)) تمأَر (line # 20)

It is possible that this word was actually “saw”, as both scholars thought. However, I think it could also be derived from the Arabic root verb mʿara معر, meaning “to miraculously escape a hit”. This would be a good match to what really happened: the axe miraculously made the person or goat miss a hit. Similarly, “saw” can also
match the meaning, assuming his mother was telling him that this axe had missed a special person because it saw or distinguished him.

289. ta-ram-šu-ma GIM DAM ta-ẖab-bu-bu UGU-šú

(G) like a wife you will love him, caress and embrace him,
(A) You will caress him, like a mother, kissing all over him.

290. u a-na-ku ul-ta-mah-ḥar-šú it-ti-ka

(G) and I, Ninsun, I shall make him your equal.”
(A) and I, myself, had transformed/selected his real-life equal to you.

291. il-la-ka-ak-kúm-ma dan-nu tap-pu-ú mu-še-zib ib-ri

(G) A mighty comrade will come to you, and be his friend’s saviour,
(A) To you he will be a look-like, a mighty loyal one, a saver of a comrade.

292. ina KUR da-an e-mu-qa «i»-[šu]

(G) mightiest in the land, strength he possesses,
(A) On earth, he is obedient; his devotion is entirely to you.
293. ki-ma ki-ṣir šá da-nim dun-nu-nu / e-mu-qa-a-šú

(G) his strength is as mighty as a rock from the sky.”

(A) Like the horse of Anim had obeyed, (with) his devotion to you.”

294. «d»GIŠ-gím-maš ana šá-ši-ma MU-ár a-na AMA-šú

(G) Said Gilgamesh to her, to his mother,

(A) Jiḥshi-Jiḥmash screamed to her, said to his mother:

(G) “May it befall me, O mother, by Counselor Enlil’s command!

(A) O mother, by Counselor Enlil, let me have one to fall upon him.

This line and the next two lines are truly eloquent. They sound like Classical Arabic poetry. Notice the use of the word lim-qut-am-ma, li-amqutama لامقعتما. This is derived from the same word used in line #248 in the beginning of the text.

295. [u]m-ma ina KA d'en-lil ma-lik lim-qut-ā[m-ma]

(G) “May it befall me, O mother, by Counselor Enlil’s command!

(A) O mother, by Counselor Enlil, let me have one to fall upon him.

This line and the next two lines are truly eloquent. They sound like Classical Arabic poetry. Notice the use of the word lim-qut-am-ma, li-amqutama لامقعتما. This is derived from the same word used in line #248 in the beginning of the text.

296. ib-ri ma-li-ku a-na-ku lu-ur- ur-ši

(G) Let me acquire a friend to counsel me,

(A) A comrade, I have for myself, to safeguard me.

lu-ur- ur-ši:

This word is derived from the classical Arabic root verb rasā لوذ, meaning “to settle down” or “to safeguard”.

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297. [lu-u]r-ši-ma ib-ri {ma-li-ku} {ma-lik} a-na-ku
لَأُرْسِيِمْ إِبِّيَ مَلِكُو أَنْكُو

(G) a friend to counsel me I will acquire”
(A) Let me safeguard a comrade, I have for myself.

lu-ur-ši-ma:
Notice the classical Arabic use of –ma in this word and in many other lines, compared to previous line. Jastraw, and the most updated Concise Dictionary of Akkadain (CDA), which Andrew George helped editing, claim that a final –ma could mean “and”. In other words, it could be like Arabic Wāw for “and”. I disagree. From reviewing all its usages in both tablets so far, I see no indication it was used to mean “and”.

298. [i-t]a-mar šu-na-t[i-šu :]
اتَأَمَرْ شَنَّانِي ذَوَ...

(G) [So did Gilgamesh] saw his dreams!
(A) [So, Jihshi-Jihmash] saw your (coming) visions!
Summary of Part Three

A comparative study of the section containing the two dreams/visions by Gilgamesh, as told by two editions of the Epic of Gilgamesh separated by about 1000 years, was performed. In the study, the author compared his reading, utilizing historical classical Arabic etymological references, with other readings, by Jastraw and George, utilizing modern Western Akkadian dictionaries.

Western Akkadian dictionaries, which are primarily derived from the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD), utilize new speculated grammar rules, and new "invented" root words rather than using Arabic. Because they use inscriptions alone as primary sources, a fruitless approach plagued with expected imperfections and incompleteness, these dictionaries contain plenty of inaccuracies and contradicting entries. It seems that, often, the authors of these references arrive to the meanings of words based on their assumed readings of inscriptive texts. As a result, many meanings are not logically connected. The current Akkadian dictionaries do not only deprive the Akkadian language from its overwhelmingly-clear Arabic etymological roots, but they lack any consistent and verifiable word root system, of their own. They are very poor etymological references, and certainly inferior to the available historically-established Arabic etymological references.
In comparison, the historical Arabic dictionaries, which were written many centuries before the discovery of the Akkadian and Sumerian tablets, are based on solid and consistent word roots and meanings. Checking Akkadian words against these references and observing Arabic grammar rules and sentence structures, I produced a much clearer and coherent translation of the two sample texts, arriving to identical, non-contradicting translation of the two dreams in both the Standard and Babylonian editions. Eventhough, I analyzed and translated only a small portion of the Epic of Gilgamesh as a sample, my conclusions should be valid for the rest of the epic.

Despite the clear inaccuracies of the Western Akkadian dictionaries, they are very valuable and even crucial linguistic tools to use in any translation process. The Chicago Assyrian Dictionary, for example, accumulated over many decades a large number of actual transliterated words taken directly from a wide range of inscriptive tablets. However, while these dictionaries are excellent initial references to consult, they should be treated only as secondary references to conclude words’ meanings in Akkadian texts. Surely, one should consult the authoritative historical Arabic etymological references to both confirm and derive actual meanings.

The above point can clearly be illustrated by observing the contradictions in the translations of both Jastraw and George of the two dreams of Gilgamesh. For example, in Jastraw’s reading regarding the meteor, Gilgamesh was able to carry it, initially, which is very unreasonable assumption. In fact, I am not even sure if the Akkadians knew what a meteor is! Besides, why would the people of Uruk kiss the feet of a meteor, or even better, why would a meteor have feet to start with. Furthermore, according to Jastraw’s reading, Gilgamesh was soon unable to carry the meteor anymore and he was
abandoned by the crowd, but then he picked it up and carried it to his mother. This contradicting story is not even possible in a dream.

Similarly, George wanted to convince us that the whole people of Uruk have gathered around an axe laying on the ground for some reason. Let’s suppose that the axe had a strange shape, as he claimed, why would the writer of the epic neglect to inform his readers what kind of shape abnormality it possessed. George needed to translate the word “brother” as “my side” to fit his story. Even worse, after Gilgamesh carries the axe to his mother, she made it equal to him. Why should a small abandoned axe become equal to the mighty Gilgamesh?

It is important to realize that the process of tracings historical inscriptions cannot be 100% accurate due to many factors. Besides, the authors of these inscriptions can also make mistakes. However, the tracing of the Epic of Gilgamesh is fairly accurate. Regardless of whose translation was the correct one, the reader of Part Three should realize that all of the words of the sample text being studied were present, with matching meanings, in the historical Arabic etymological references. This, by itself, is a powerful undisputable evidence that the language of the Akkadians was substantially Arabic, and that Classical Arabic was at the heart of the Akkadian literature. Any translation of the Epic of Gilgamesh will undoubtedly include mistakes because of several factors, among them our lack of in-depth knowledge of historical Classical Arabic. However, the fact that the epic was written with an early proto Classical Arabic is unmistakably clear.
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Arabic type designer, librarian, systems engineer, and independent scholar. Born 1958 in Sacramento, California, and grew up in Karbala and Baghdad, Iraq. Moved in 1979 to New York, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering and a Master of Science in Library and Information Science. Served for 12 years as a Senior and Supervising Librarian in the New York Public Library, specializing in Arabic, Science, and Business subjects. Served for 15 years as a Systems Librarian and a library Director of Technology in the City University of New York (CUNY.) A known and active Arabic type designer especially noted for his non-traditional, innovative, Arabic typeface designs. Awarded a US design patent in 2000 and a utility patent in 2003 for his Mutamathil Type Style, an open template for simplified, technology-friendly, Arabetic font designs. Published a book and several articles in scholarly journals about Arabic language and script’s history, typography, and computing. Contributes regularly to discussions of Arabic related topics on international typography and archeology forums.
At the heart of the Western classification system of the languages of the Arabian Peninsula lies the classification of its people. Modern Western theories deprive the overwhelming historical majority of the Peninsula from their undisputed Arab roots and characteristics in favor of a new classification system where each group of people is presumed to belong to an assumed “Semitic” mother people.

While we continue finding Arabic names, poems, and texts, on thousands of inscriptions throughout Arabia, we are yet to find one inscription that one can truly classify as a “Semitic” or “proto-Semitic” inscription.

Standard or Classical Arabic, which is the language of the Arabs for important and formal communications and poetry, is the common root of their tongues. It was considered their linguistic model, before and after Islam. In other words, it is the collective language, which recorded over the ages the words of their prevalent and diverse historical groups. It is not an independent language that was spoken by any certain group or used in a certain geographic location, but rather the language of the elite learned community.

Accordingly, the Nabataean, Yemeri, Aramaic, Akkadian and other tongues of the Arabian Peninsula are substantially linked with the Arabic language and particularly the Classical Arabic language. This is clear since Classical Arabic linguistic reference tools are the key tools to study and explain these languages.

After studying the so-called Akkadian language for the first time, utilizing modern Western Akkadian references, my initial thought was: what a scandal!

Simply put, to understand the language of the Akkadians one must master Classical Arabic, and be familiar with the Arabic dialects. Building a new speculative language solely based on inscriptions is like building a “sand castle”.

After reading the solid and eloquent two lines of the Classical Arabic poem in this inscription, which were written at least four centuries before the birth of Prophet Mohammad, one cannot even speculate that Classical Arabic or pre-Islamic Classical Arabic poems came after Islam, or were invented by the Abbasid linguists and historians, as many Orientalists claim today.

— Excerpts from Inscriptional Evidence of Pre-Islamic Classical Arabic