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Review

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Reviews

MOHAMMED ALI AL-SALAMI, *Sabäische Inschriften aus dem Ḥawlān* = Jenaer Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient 7, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011. Pp. vii + 265, 4 maps, 116 figures. Price: € 68,-. ISBN: 978-3-447-06446-0.

This book by Mohammed al-Salami presents a large amount of new texts from pre-Islamic South Arabia. They have been discovered during several surveys in the area of Ḥawlān at-Ṭiyāl and were the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation in Jena.

Ḥawlān is the name of several South Arabian tribes now divided into two main branches: Ḥawlān Quḏā'a located in the area around Ṣa'da (north-west Yemen) and the Ḥawlān at-Ṭiyāl located in the south-east of Ṣan'a', in the upper course of wādī Ḍana, a mountainous region between the Yemenite capital and the ancient site Ṣirwāḥ. It is generally believed that this is a later, purely geographic division and that the two groups share a common origin. The Ḥawlān tribe has in fact a long history, as it is known both in Islamic Medieval sources as well as in ancient South Arabian inscriptions (*Ḥwln*), where it is identified with several associations (*Ḥḏlm*, *Rdmn*, *Gḏdm*). The most ancient attestation of the name is probably in RES 3946/3 by Karib'il Watar bin Ḍamar'alī (early 7th century B.C.), but this tribe is also present along with Saba' in the Minaic text RES 3022/2 (mid 4th century B.C.), in the Qatabanic text RES 4274/1, as well as in Sabaic texts from the Awwām temple in Mārib. It is also generally assumed that this name is behind Biblical Ḥawilā (Gen. 10: 7, 29; 1 Chr. 1: 9, 23), which could more probably be associated with the northern Quḏā'a branch.¹

Despite the fact that Ḥawlān at-Ṭiyāl was first described by Carsten Niebuhr in 1763 and visited by Joseph T. Arnaud in 1843 and Eduard Glaser in 1885–1886, pre-Islamic textual documentation from the region (apart from the site of Ṣirwāḥ) is still quite scarce. This is the reason why this book is a particularly welcome help in covering the gap.

In any case there is no doubt that the area was inhabited for a considerable lapse of time, and it is not by chance that the first traces of the Yemenite Bronze Age were discovered there.² The geomorphology of the region prob-

¹ W. W. MÜLLER 1992, "Havilah", in: D. N. FREEDMAN (ed.), *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, III, New York: Doubleday, pp. 81–82.

² A. DE MAIGRET 1990, *The Bronze Age Culture of Ḥawlān at-Ṭiyāl and al-Ḥadā (Republic of Yemen): a First general Report*, Roma: IsMEO.

ably avoided the establishment of large urban communities or extensive agricultural activity, but the position of a natural barrier was strategic, dividing the desert fringe where the capitals of the powerful South Arabian kingdoms of the 1st millennium B.C. flourished, and the inner Highland where the Himyarite centres grew during the 1st millennium A.D.

The corpus counts 163 new texts, which are naturally very heterogeneous: we have in fact dedicatory inscriptions and construction inscriptions, but the vast majority is very fragmentary or only contains personal and group names. From a palaeographic point of view the differences are remarkable as well, first of all because the texts span a very long period (from the middle of the 1st millennium B.C. to the 5th century A.D.), but the impression is that, apart from some exceptions, we are dealing with a production originated in a peripheral area in this region, far removed from the writing schools of the political centres. An impression that is naturally stronger in relation to the numerous graffiti. This, far from being depreciative, adds interest to this group of texts, in particular those written with red ink.

Among the most interesting texts are the two inscribed on a same stone placed in the pass of Naqīl Šiḡā^c, ca. 45 km from Ṣan^cā^o (on this pass see also Ry 544). The first one (MS Šiḡā^c 1) is a dated inscription (539 Him = 429 A.D.) where the famous King Abīkarib As^cad recalls one of his hunting expeditions. The second text (MS Šiḡā^c 2) has been considered as a hymn, but its interpretation is highly obscure (no translation is in fact proposed). This is then to be added to the small number of poetic texts found in South Arabia.³

The majority of monumental texts are those from Tan^cim al-Qarya, the site of the ancient tribes *Tn^cm* and *Tn^cmt* where the ruins of a temple dedicated to god Almaqah are still visible (figs. 25a–b). Very often such inscriptions are unfortunately too fragmentary. In the same book section we also find the inscribed column from the ar-Rummāna mosque in Tan^cim, which was already known thanks to W.W. Müller,⁴ and later also considered by G.W. Nebe.⁵

The book is very well edited and all texts are presented with a comprehensive commentary on linguistic and historical matters. Very often the author also relies on medieval sources, in particular al-Hamdānī and Ibn al-Kalbī, that frequently mention Ḥawlān al-^cĀliya (which corresponds to contemporary at-Ṭiyāl). What clearly emerges, especially in the Introduction (pp. 1–9)

³ See also P. STEIN 2008, “The Himyaritic Language in pre-Islamic Yemen: A Critical Re-evaluation”, *Semitica et Classica* 1, esp. pp. 204–206.

⁴ W. W. MÜLLER 1973, “Ergebnisse der Deutschen Jemen-Expedition 1970”, *Archiv für Orientforschung* 24, fig. 27 a–e.

⁵ G. W. NEBE 1991, “Eine spätsabäisch-jüdische Inschrift mit satzeinleitendem doppelten Amen aus dem 4./6. Jahrhundert n. Chr.?” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 22, pp. 235–253.

and in the Third Chapter (pp. 143–168), is the strong connection the author aims to establish between the pre-Islamic data and the information preserved in the Islamic documentation, effectively widening the scope of this research. Historical and social dynamics in this area between the 3rd and 5th centuries A.D. are clarified thanks to a general analysis of epigraphic data, pointing out tribal geography, especially concerning Tan‘im-Tan‘ima, Ġaymān, Ḥawlān Ḥaḍilum and Šaddād (cf. also Karte 4, p. 180). This completes what we already know from the same period in the area just south of Ḥawlān proper.⁶

The book is enriched by four very well charted maps which are very useful in placing all the sites where the inscriptions have been found in contrast to the morphological situation of the area – a datum that should always be kept in mind when interpreting the diffusion or limitation of cultural and social elements. Unfortunately, the pictures of the inscriptions are sometimes of poor quality and, if we also consider the poor preservation of the majority of texts, checking the proposed transliteration is often problematic. The reader would have also appreciated a more detailed index at the end of the book, where all the data of the inscriptions could have been better organized: e.g. onomastics, toponyms, and possibly a list of all the inscriptions mentioned in the commentary, which could have given a general epigraphic repertoire to connect with the investigated area.

Besides these minor shortcomings, this work will be useful to all specialists in South Arabian epigraphy and history thanks to the solid methodology of which the author gives proof throughout his study.

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WALTER RAUNIG – PRINZ ASFA-WOSSEN ASSERATE (Hrsg.), *Orbis Aethiopicus ውርሰ ኢትዮጵያ Beiträge zur Geschichte, Religion und Kunst Äthiopiens*, Band XIII: *Juden, Christen und Muslime in Äthiopien – ein Beispiel für abrahamische Ökumene. Beiträge der Jahrestagung 2008 in Pinneberg*, Dettelbach: Verlag J.H. Röhl, 2010. 191 pp., 116 colour pls. Price: € 79.–. ISBN: 978-3-89754-354-6.

The present volume of the “Orbis Aethiopicus” Society Proceedings for the 2008 annual meeting opens with the obituary by Angela Raabe (pp. 7–9) for Peter Roenpage (1924–2008). Roenpage was one of the founders of “Orbis

⁶ Cf. C. ROBIN 1987, “L’inscription Ir 40 de Bayt Ḍab‘ān et la tribu Ḍmry”, in: C. ROBIN – M. BĀFAQĪH (éds.), *Ṣayhadica. Recherches sur les inscriptions de l’Arabie préislamique offertes par ses collègues au Professeur A.F.L. Beeston = L’Arabie préislamique*, Paris: Geuthner, pp. 113–164.