P. Yadin 1: Notes on Moabite Toponymy and Topography*

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It is a great pleasure to have, at last, the entire Babatha archive in our hands.[1] The following notes on *P. Yadin* 1 are meant as a modest tāmartu — 'welcoming tribute' for the fine volume.

1. מאוב — Moab (lines 2, 12, 15). The form 'reflects a progressive sound shift known in certain dialects', according to the editors (p. 187). I must confess that I do not understand this statement: which sound(s) shifted and from what to what, and which are the 'dialects' attesting the same shift? What we do see is the Nabataean-Arabic[2] predecessor of Classical Arabic Ma'āb (usually referring to Moab's central place in early Islamic times, the ancient Rabbath Moab — Rabbathmoba and present er-Rabbah). It is not by accident that Nabataean-Arabic can explain how Mō'ab became Ma'āb: Ancient North Arabian and Early (or Old) Arabic had to pass through the 'Nabataean bottleneck' on their way to becoming the language of the Koran.[3] Together with some West Arabian dialects,[4] Nabataean participated in the sound shift /ā/ -> /ō/, exemplified,

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1 Y. Yadin, J.C. Greenfield, A. Yardeni and B.A. Levine, *The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters: Hebrew, Aramaic and Nabataean-Aramaic Papyri*, Jerusalem 2002 (henceforward Yardeni-Levine).

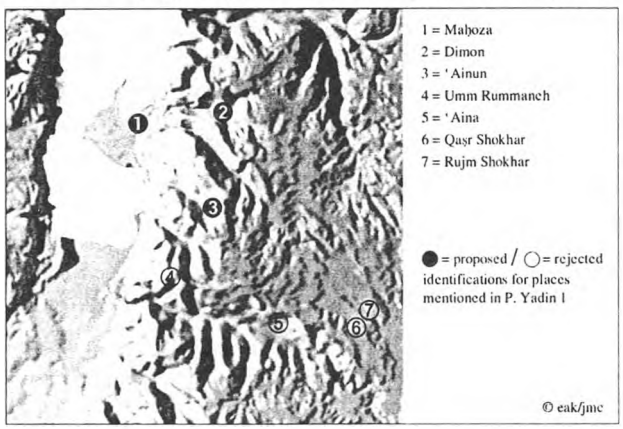
2 The language spoken by the Nabataeans, or at least a large group of people living inside Nabataea, as opposed to the written language of the kingdom, Nabataean Aramaic; cf. further Appendix below.

3 W. Diem, 'Untersuchungen zur frühen Geschichte der arabischen Orthographie I: Die Schreibung der Vokale', *Orientalia* 48 (1979) 207-57; K. Vollers, *Volkssprache und Schriftsprache im Alten Arabien* (Strassburg 1906) has not, however, lost its relevance.

4 C. Rabin, *Ancient West Arabian* (London 1951); S. Hopkins, *Studies in the Grammar of Early Arabic* (Oxford 1984) 9 does not (as quoted by Yardeni-Levine, 31) object; he rather throws a caveat into the ring (based on the evidence of the papyri) and then adds two more examples in favor of Rabin's (and earlier) positions. Yardeni-Levine's explanations for the other attestations of the a -> o shift in the Babatha papyri is unnecessarily complicated, as is Diem's attempt (*Orientalia* 48, 219-22; 243) to explain the representation of /ā/ by <*w*> as purely orthographic in Nabataean (!) as well as in the Koran, necessitating quite a range of *ad-hoc* explanations for nearly every single case instead of a sound-change which is widely attested in the area of 'West Arabian' both before and after the period in question (viz., in Canaanite, West [Jacobite] Syriac, Tiberian Masoretic Hebrew and Aramaic, and, e.g., the present dialect of Aleppo). It seems as if some German comparative semiticists of the second half of the 20th century were desperately bound to contradict the insights of the 19th- and early 20th-century giants like Nöldeke, Wellhausen, Brockelmann and Littmann instead of carrying their sound approach beyond the sterile selection constituted by the few written Semitic languages.

e.g.,[5] by עדנן for ʿAdnān, מנותו for Manātu and חורוא for Ḥaurāʾ. Canaanite[6] Mōʾab could easily have been rendered in Classical Arabic as *Mauʾab (pattern mafʿal or fauʿal) or *Mūʾab (pattern mufʿal). In Nabataean Arabic, however, Mōʾab was analyzed as representing the fāʿal-pattern (—> fōʿal) which does not exist in Arabic noun formation[7] and therefore had to be replaced by a faʿāl-form as represented by Classical Arabic Maʾāb.

2. דמון — Dīmōn (line 12). Concerning the place where *P. Yadin* 1 was written, the editors opt for *rmwn* instead of *dmwn*, without, however, giving a reason for their decision. On the exquisitely executed drawing (p. 175 fig. 19), the *d/r* of the toponym looks distinctively different from the *d* of *dy* in the same line, which recalls, however, the *r* of *rbʾl* in the preceding line. The difference of the two letters in question in line 12, then, is not the difference between *d* and *r*, but the difference between *d/r* in a standard formulaic context (*dy*, *rbʾl*) and a non-formulaic context (a toponym). It seems safe to apply to this case, too, the basic insight of the editors that *d* and *r* are graphically indistinguishable in Nabataean writing (p. 27). They probably made their decision with an eye to their identification of the place with Khirbet Umm er-Rummāneh directly north of Wādī l-Ḥasā (p. 187). There is, however, another site closer to Māḥōzā which would favor the reading *dmwn*: biblical Dimon (Isa 15:9), present ed-Dimnah.[8] The Miller Survey[9] records 5 Nabataean sherds for ed-Dimnah (site #64), which is a large village site commencing in the Nabataean/Early Roman period, and 18 Nabataean sherds for Khirbet Umm



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5 These and further examples are provided by Diem, *Orientalia* 48, 219-23, except for Ḥwrwʾ, nisbah ḥwrny — cf. R. Wenning, *Die Nabatäer — Denkmäler und Geschichte* (Freiburg and Göttingen 1987) 81; J. Patrich, *The Formation of Nabataean Art* (Jerusalem and Köln 1990) 63 (both with the impossible vocalisation 'Horawa'. Wenning correctly compares *Auara* (present el-Ḥumēmeh) without reconstructing the Arabic name (said to mean 'white') behind the Greek transcription.

6 The Tiberian lengthening of the stressed syllable hardly applies to ancient Moabite.

7 Similar repatterning due to intralingual restrictions on specific sound- and syllable-combination lead to Nabataean Aramaic *ʾsṛtgʾ* < Greek *stratēgos*, and Greek *Byblos* from Phoenician *Gubl(a)*.

8 Dimon did not fare any better in Biblical studies than it did in the edition of *P. Yadin* 1: for a long time, the name was regarded as a corruption of the better attested Moabite toponym 'Dibon' and therefore does not exist in a number of Bible translations. Cf. U. Worschech and E.A. Knauf, 'Dimon und Horonaim', *Biblische Notizen* 31 (1986), 70-95.

9 J. Maxwell Miller ed., *Archaeological Survey of the Kerak Plateau* (ASOR Archaelogical Reports 1. Atlanta, Georgia 1991).

Rummāneh (site #404), which represents the remnants of a *villa rustica* or a hamlet.[10] The reading and interpretation *rmwn*/Umm Rummāneh cannot be ruled out, but comparing the sizes of the sites, it seems more probable that *P.Yadin* was written at Dimon/ed-Dimneh than at Rimmon/Umm Rummāneh. The defective writing of the /i/ agrees with the general habit observable in the papyri not to use two *matres lectionis* in consecutive syllables (other than the plural ending; Yardeni-Levine, pp. 27f).

3. עינא שחרו — ʿAinūn (line 14). Whereas Amat-Isī, the beneficiary of the debenture, obviously lives at Dimon, where the deed is contracted, her husband Muqīmu is reported to stem from, reside in, or have property at עינא שחרו, which the editors identify with 'Rujm Shūḫār', 30 km to the east of Khirbet er-Rummāneh (p. 187); and, accordingly, they vocalise the genitive after ʿAinā as 'Shuḥaru' (p. 179). Here, a number of problems arise.

שחרו is certainly a personal name of Arabic origin, characterized by the ending *-w*.[11] עינא, on the other hand, is not a common noun in the construct state, but a toponym in its own right. Otherwise, the place-name would read עין שחרו or די שחרו עינא. Names, being *per se* determined, can nevertheless take another name as *nomen regens* if the divine, human or geographic entity designated by this name has to be distinguished from other entities going by the same name; so there is an 'Athtar of Tîn at Ebla, an 'Athtar(t) of Chemosh in the Mesha Stela, and an 'Anat of Yaho at Elephantine.[12] There were indeed two places called ʿAinā in 1st century CE Moab (see *infra*), and one of them was specified as the 'Aina of שחרו'. As for the reading and vocalization of the name, I am at a loss,[13] but any connection with the 'Shūḫār' of Rujm Shuḥār is unjustified. First, the element עינא should be expected to be much more stable in the course of the toponym's transmission than the temporary epithet שחרו. Then, the record of the modern toponym is problematic and contradictory: Šawhar (A. Musil), Šōḫar (Brünnow-v. Domaszewski and Glueck), and finally Šūhār (Wenning).[14] Its further elucidation is quite unnecessary, because, in the end, it is an area designation which determines at least two ruined sites, Rujm eš-Šōḫar and Qaṣr eš-Šōḫar. Both sites are

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10 The absolute sherd count is misleading as Dimneh is covered by modern buildings and heavy debris from Middle Islamic to Modern periods (106 sherds), whereas at Umm Rummāneh, less Islamic occupation (38 sherds) obliterates the Nabataean remains (a site's surface is *not* a representative sample of its ceramic contents).

11 On the question of whether this final *-u* was long or short, E.A. Knauf, 'Sprachen die vorklassischen Araber in Pausa *'Amru:?' *Orientalia* 55 (1986), 452-3.

12 Cf. D.N. Freedman, 'Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah', *Biblical Archaeologist* 50 (1987), 241-9.

13 Due to the ambiguity of both ש and ח, the name could be reconstructed as *Sḥr* (2 attestations), *Sḫr* (110), *Śḥr* (traditionally *Šḥr*; only attested in Ancient South Arabian) and *Śḫr* (5). Frequencies according to G.L. Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (Toronto 1971). If Greek *Siros*, listed by A. Negev, *Personal Names in the Nabataean Realm* (*Qedem* 32; Jerusalem 1991) 62 #1120 belongs here, the name might be vocalized *S/Śiḥr*.

14 Wenning, *Die Nabatäer*, 73f L 100; L 110; A. Musil, *Arabia Petraea* I (Wien 1907) 5; 83; R.E. Brünnow and A. v. Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia* II (Strassburg 1905) 21-3; N. Glueck, *Explorations in Eastern Palestine* III (AASOR 18/19; New Haven 1939) 78f.

nothing but watchtowers on the desert fringe and quite unsuited to being the hometown, or rural estate, of Amat-Isi's husband.

Two עינא there were indeed. One of them is a large oasis on the descent from the Moabite Plateau into Wādī l-Ḥasā which has preserved this very name up to the present.[15] North of it and west of the Via Trajana, there is ʿAinūn (Miller's site #264 with 62 Nabataean sherds), the name representing Canaanite *ʿAinōn. The *-n* being optional in the Canaanite toponymic suffix *-ō(n)* (cf. the case of Megiddo/(h)Armageddon), *-ā* is its normal Aramaic rendering (the Nabataeans spoke Arabic, but some, if not most, of their soil-tilling subjects spoke Aramaic and continued to do so until the 13th century CE). It is most probably this northern ʿAinā which needed a specification, because the southern ʿAinā, by virtue of its prominent position on the major north-south route, was most probably the better known of the two. In the present form of the toponym the Canaanite, not the Aramaic, form has survived, probably for the same purpose (i.e., to differentiate between ʿAina and ʿAinūn), and is by no means the only occurrence of an Arabic place name continuing the Canaanite original and not the Aramaic intermediary. Hebron was known as Ḥabrā in the 10th century,[16] but resurfaces as Ḥabrūn in Yāqūt's *Muʿjam.*

4. מחוז עגלתין — al-Ḥadīṯā (*P.Yadin* 2, line 2, e.g.). Because proximity to Mahoza, through which *P.Yadin* 1 must have passed on its way to Engedi and finally to the 'Cave of the Letters', has been used as an argument for the determination and location of *d/rmwn* (*supra*, § 2), a brief remark on its location is in order, even though the place is not mentioned in *P.Yadin* 1. Mahoza is usually sought in the immediate vicinity of Tell Šēḫ ʿIsā, the location of Nabataean/Roman and early Islamic Zoar/Ṣuġar.[17] Various surveys in the Ghōr eṣ-Ṣāfī have not revealed a substantial Nabataean-Early Roman settlement on its coast. S. Mittmann and U. Worschech have proposed — and convincingly, in my opinion — locating biblical Eglataim at el-Bulēda on the Lisān.[18] In this case, the harbor of Eglataim/Eglatain should be sought at el-Hadīṯā, or between el-Hadīṯā and the sea. Given its road connections (the shore of the Dead Sea was completely impassable until very recently between the Lisān and Kallirhoë/ez-Zārah), Mahoza would still have fallen into the District of Zoar, and it would not have been too difficult to travel from Mahoza to Rabbathmoba (er-Rabbah) on other affairs.[19]

Mahoza appears in the payri as a conglomerate of houses (at least some of them two-storied), courtyards (or rather compounds, *dārīn*), palm groves, other plantations, and

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15 Wenning, *Die Nabatäer*, 74 L 108a; Glueck, *Explorations* III 103. That Glueck found relatively few Nabataean sherds only attests to the place's being continually inhabited since, at least, the arrival (or emergence) of the Nabataeans.

16 Cf. Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan at-taqāsīm fī maʿrifat al-aqālīm* (ed. de Goeje), 172; 192.

17 H.M. Cotton and J.C. Greenfield, 'Babatha's Patria: Mahoza, Mahoz, 'Eglatain and Zo'ar', *ZPE* 107 (1995) 126-34.

18 S. Mittmann, 'The Ascent of Luhit', *SHAJ* 1 (1982) 175-80, 178 with nn. 12 and 13; U. Worschech, *Das Land jenseits des Jordans* (Wuppertal 1991) 190; his remarks on Mahoza are less fortunate (ibid.), claiming el-Bulēda also as 'das ʿgltyn des Baba-Batha Archiv, in dem ʿgltyn als Hafen (maḥōz) bezeichnet wird'.

19 U. Worschech and E.A. Knauf, 'Alte Strassen in der nordwestlichen Arḍ el-Kerak. Ein Vorbericht', *ZDPV* 101 (1985), 128-33.

various kinds of waste land in between, a swamp to the north (*P.Yadin* 2 and 7), and various plots with place names of their own.[20] The picture of Mahoza that emerges from the papyri is that of an Arabian oasis town on the model of Medina by the time of Muhammad or 19th century el-Jōf.[21] It received water from various irrigation installations, privately owned springs, and not least from a river (*nahrā*) flowing through the town — the lower course of the perennial Sēl Banī Ḥammād, called for its final stretch near the Dead Sea Sēl el-Ḥadīṯā by Alois Musil's times.[22] There is no comparable river or rivulet in the Ghōr eṣ-Ṣāfī. Archaeological survey (in so far as this is feasible in the dense vegetation) will probably encounter Nabataean/Early Roman sherd scatters over a very wide area, while the mudbricks of the houses are long since gone with the wind.

One might further speculate that the irrigation infrastructure was probably installed by the Nabataean king Rabb'el II (not necessarily by the Nabataean state), so that he could ask for rent (not taxes) in return.[23] It has long been assumed that Rabb'el II earned his epithet 'who kept his people alive and delivered them' by promoting agricultural investment and development in order to make up for the lost profits from the now defunct caravan trade in incense.[24] The Babatha archive might shed some light on the details of this development.

I cannot but agree with Yardeni-Levine's statement on the problems of the toponyms in *P.Yadin*: 'We have no way of identifying the locales mentioned in the present document with certainty'. Informed guesses — or reasoned speculations — as offered in this contribution may, however, help to distinguish between the probable and the scarcely possible.

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20 Cf. H.M. Cotton, 'Land Tenure in the Documents from the Nabataean Kingdom and the Roman Province of Arabia', *ZPE* 119 (1998) 1-11, 11.

21 J. Wellhausen, 'Medina vor dem Islam', *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten* 4 (Berlin 1889) 1-64; E.A. Knauf, *Ismael*^{2} (Wiesbaden 1989) 70f. and n. 356.

22 Musil, *Arabia Petraea* I, 158-63 with 159 fig. 54; ibid. 160 he describes the irrigation works of the Ghawārinah. The harbor of the Lisan, opening to the north, i.e. towards Engedi (cf. Ezek. 47.10) was called el-Baladīye 'town hall, mairie' by his time (p. 168). Ezek. 47.10 thinks of a line of fishing boats across the Dead Sea, not along its western shore.

23 The Romans seem to have regarded Mahoza as part of the imperial domaine, i.e. a private possession of the emperor by way of 'inheritance' from his local Nabataean predecessors, not as 'state land' (cf. Cotton, 'Land Tenure'). How far the Nabataeans already made the same distinction is unclear, because there is no evidence on taxation in Nabataea at all, the 'state revenue' consisting of the private income of the royal family from their trade and agricultural investments — and fines, which, in the case of religious violations, went largely to the temple, and in case of violations of private law, to the king (P.Yadin 2,15).

24 Cf. most recently J.F. Healey, *The Religion of the Nabataeans* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 136; Leiden 2001), 31f.; G.W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge MA 1983) 59-75 assigns much of the agricultural colonization observable in 1st century CE Nabataea to the reign of Aretas III — too early, in this writer's opinion.

Appendix on Nabataean languages

Nabataean Aramaic is not an Aramaic 'dialect';[25] it was the official written language within the Nabataean realm (read and pronounced, in all probability, rather differently by different groups of its inhabitants) and, after the demise of the Nabataean state, the written language of the oasis dwellers, traders and caravaneers of the Hijaz well into the 4th century CE. As opposed to the personal experience of most, if not all, Anglo-American, French and German Near Eastern scholars who grew up with the standard language of their respective cultures as their spoken language in daily and familiar use, diglossia (or even multiglossia), i.e. the fact that people speak languages or dialects quite different from the language(s) they write (if they write at all), is the rule rather than the exception in the world and especially in the ancient and not so ancient Near East,. Within the temporal and spatial distribution of Nabataean Aramaic no fewer than five Ancient North Arabian languages co-exist with it: Taymanite and Dedanite/Lihyanite (these two no longer written by the 1st century CE), Safaitic, Hismaic (or South Safaitic) and 'Thamudic' D.[26] Even in their vowelless, written form these languages exhibited phonological features which raise doubts about over-confident claims that they were mutually compatible.[27] The absence of a supra-tribal Arabic standard language prior to the 4th century CE was in all probability the reason, why, within their own political entity, the Nabataeans continued the use of Official Aramaic as their supra-tribal and interregional *koine* as it was already well established in that region by the Persian administration. The command of Nabataean Aramaic among their subjects probably varied widely, from being a native or first language among the settled communities in Moab to being a pidgin or creole when used (if at all) by tribes in the Hijaz. Nabataean Arabic[28] is

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25 *Pace* M. Morgenstern, 'The History of Aramaic Dialects in the Light of the Discoveries from the Judaean Desert: The Case of Nabataean', *ErIs* 26 (1999) 123*-42*.

26 Cf. for a competent survey of scripts (and less competent remarks on the languages) of pre-Islamic Arabia M.C.A. Macdonald, 'Reflections on the linguistic map of pre-Islamic Arabia', *Arabian archaeology and epigraphy* 11 (2000) 28-79. To the present author's western ear, 'Dedanite/Lihyanite' still sounds better than his proposed 'Dadanitic'; Macdonald's vehement opposition to the term 'South Safaitic' for Hismaic (not a bad term either) is incomprehensible; note that, *pace* p. 44, nobody ever claimed that these inscriptions form a 'subgroup' of Safaitic — they are, however, in script and literary patterns much closer to the Safaitic assemblage than to any other 'Thamudic' group.

27 *Pace* Macdonald, *Arabian archaeology and epigraphy* 11, 45, 48; it is easy to complain of the absence of phonological studies on Ancient North Arabian (ibid. 43) if those that exist are ignored; cf., e.g., R.M. Voigt, 'Notes on South Safaitic', *ADAJ* 28 (1984) 311-14, for one example of phonological conclusions to be drawn from the written evidence. The dialects of extreme northern and extreme southern Germany clearly are not mutually understandable, nor are the dialects from the extremes of the present Arabic speaking world (Khuzistan, Yemen [Modern South Arabian being not regarded], and the Maghreb).

28 The objections raised by M.C.A. Macdonald, *Arabian archaeology and epigraphy* 11, 46-8 against the scholarly consensus concerning the language spoken by the Nabataeans, are based on a theoretical failure to perceive the evolution of Arabic (even where it is in the process of evolving before the eyes of the perceiver). The numerous Arabic loans in the Nabataean-Aramaic papyri (Yardeni-Levine, 28f) are a case in point. The writer hopes to address this issue at length in another context.

attested by the majority of the Nabataean personal names (which cannot be regarded as fossilized because they distinguish correctly well into the 1st century CE between the Arabic genitive and nominative, something the bearers of these names cannot have picked up from Aramaic), by Arabic loan words in Nabataean Aramaic (the number of which has increased dramatically with the publication of the Nahal Hever archives), and by phonological features in both (like the *ā*-> *ō* change). That spoken Nabataean Arabic knew at least two dialects is attested by the name of the Nabataean god, Dusares, in Safaitic and Hesmaic. Whereas in the north the name was borrowed as /dūśarā/, in the south it was /ḏūśarā/, i.e. Arabic /ḏ/ was preserved in the south, but had coalesced with /d/ in the north (as in present Syrian Arabic dialects).[29]

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29 To regard the northern form as an attestation of spoken Aramaic, as Macdonald (*Arabian archaeology and epigraphy* 11 [2000] 46) does, is impossible, since it was only Arabic that preserved the lateral character of /ś/ (classical /š/) and /ź/ (classical /ḍ/) until the early Islamic period, amply attested also by transcriptions in other languages (thus Assyrian [rulday] for /Ruḍay/, [ilte'ri] for /śahrī/, Spanish *Alcalde* from /al-qāḍī/). Aramaic developed the laterals differently as early as the 8th century (when the Assyrians rendered the name of the Damascene king Raźyān as [raḫyan]. By the 1st century CE, the laterals seem to have become /ʿ/ and /s/ in all attested dialects; cf. for the laterals and their development R.M. Voigt, 'Die Laterale im Semitischen', *WO* 10 (1979) 93-114.