

## Place names in the Dadanitic inscriptions of al-‘Uḏayb<sup>(1)</sup>

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**Abstract:** *The aim of this article is to analyse the place names found in the Dadanitic inscriptions from al-‘Uḏayb, in al-‘Ulā (northwest Saudi Arabia). The etymology of these place names reveals that in most cases, they are related to either agriculture or the geographical context. In addition, inscriptions’ authors owned possessions which are connected with agricultural produce, land and property. These inscriptions record the performance of a particular ceremony or rite called ḏll. The formula used is: ‘ḏll h- ḏll l- Dḡbt. The place where this performance was made is Khl in the great majority of the inscriptions; the other places being the sites where the inscriptions’ authors have their possessions.*

The site of al-‘Uḏayb, in the oasis of al-‘Ulā, is about five kilometers north of the modern town of al-‘Ulā, in north-west Saudi Arabia. It is located to the west of the railway line and its southern limit is the massive rock of *Ġabal al-‘Ikma*<sup>2</sup>. Over one hundred inscriptions have been recorded on three blocks of stone, which Stiehl (1971: 4) calls A, B, C, as well as on the sides of the gorge itself. The inscriptions are votives; the majority of these is dedicated to *Dḡbt*, the principal god of the Dadanitic pantheon. They record the performance of a particular ceremony or rite called *ḏll*. The formula used is: ‘ḏll h- ḏll l- *Dḡbt* ‘he performed the *ḏll*-ceremony for *Dḡbt*<sup>3</sup>. However, in several inscriptions, the verbs ‘organized’ or ‘accomplished’ are used instead of ‘ḏll’. According to Sima (1999) these texts divide into three sections: *superscriptio*, *narratio* and *invocatio*. Several place names appear in the *narratio* section, which relate to offerings to the god or to the possessions of the inscriptions’ authors.

All the inscriptions presented here have been read and interpreted by me directly from the photographs (published and unpublished).

Only when photographs were unavailable the interpretation was based on the authors’ reading and Abū l-Ḥasan’s copies (1997)<sup>4</sup>. The concordance of the sigla of the inscriptions can be found in Farès-Drappeau (2005: 238-241).

### 1. Etymology

#### BṬR

This place name only occurs in one inscription of al-‘Uḏayb:

U 79bis/3-4: ---- *bḅṭr b’d n{ḥ}l -h w dṭ’ -h b-d’mn*

The reading of this inscription proposed in this article differs in some respects from that of Sima (1999: 25). He interprets neither *Bṭr* nor the place name *D’mn* on line 5 despite the fact that they can be clearly read in the photograph.

The etymology of this place name can be explained by the Arabic *baṭr* ‘sandy terrain scattered with white stones’ (Ibn Manẓūr, s.v. *bṭr*).

#### BDR

The place name *Bdr* occurs in the following inscriptions:

- AH 10/6-7: *bt b'd d- kn l- -h b- bdr frd -h*  
 AH 61/3: *dt' -h b- bdr frd -h w 'hrt -h*  
 AH 67/4: *b'd ---- 'lf---- b- bd[r]----*  
 AH 68/3: *b'd d- kn l- -h b- bdr frd -h w 'hrt -h*  
 AH 69/5: *y d- kn l- -h b- bdr frd -h*  
 AH 70/4: *'l d- kn l- -h b- bdr frd [-h] w 'tb -h*  
 AH 71/4: *'[l]y d- kn l- -h b-bdr frd -h w 'tb -h*  
 AH 75/3: *l- dgbt 'ly d- kn l- -h b- bdr frhd -h*  
 AH 77/4: *d- kn l- -h b- bdr mn nhl {-h} frd -h l-dgbt*  
 AH 80/4: *b'd ml -h b- bdr l- dgbt frd -h w 'tb -h*  
 AH 99/4-5: *d- {k}n l- -h b- bdr [w] [']tb-h*  
 AH 120/6: *ml kn [l-] -h b- bdr l- dgbt frd -hmy*  
 AH 125/5: *'l m- kn l- -h l- dgb[t] b- bdr frd -h w 'tb -h*  
 AH 142/3: *l- dgbt b- khl b'd d- l- -h b- bdr frd -h w ---- [h]*  
 AH 163/4<sup>5</sup>: *d- kn l- -h b- dbr frd -h w 'hrt -h*  
 U 9/3: *w dt' -h b- bdr frd -h w 'hrt -h*  
 U 11/4: *b'd nhl -h b- bdr frd -h w 'hr -th*  
 U 12/5: *b'd ml -h b- bdr frd -h w 'hrt -h*  
 U 19/5-6: *b'd ml -hm b- bdr frd -hm w 'hr -thm*  
 U 23/4: *w 'tt -h 'mtb 's'mn grs'w b- bdr [w] b{n}'l*  
 U 41/4: *b[']d hrf -h b- bd[r] frd -h w 'hrt -h*  
 U 44/6: *kn l- -hm b- bdr frd -hm*  
 U 46/4: *w d- kn l- -h b- bdr l- dgbt f {r} d -h w ---- h*  
 U 50/4: *'zlt 'ly {d-} kn {l- }-h b- bdr fr{d} -h*  
 U 58/5: *w dt' -h b- bdr fr{d} -h w 'hrt -h*

- U 64/6: *kn l- -hm b- bdr frd -hm*  
 U 65/5: *b'd d- kn l- -h b- bdr frd -h*  
 U 71/4: *b- k{h}l 'l{y} ml -h b- b{d}{r} w b- blh ----*  
 U 73/5: *'l d- kn l- -hm b- bdr frd -h*  
 U 80/3: *l- dgbt b- khl b'd d- l- -h b- bdr frd -h w {s'}{'}{d} -h*  
 U 83/3: *'zlt l- dgbt b- bd[r] frd [-h][w][s'] 'd -h*  
 U 85/4: *'zll b'd d- kn l- -h b- bdr frd -h*  
 U 87/4: *l- dgbt 'ly d- kn l- -h b- bd[r] frd -h kl -h*  
 U 92/4: *b'd d- [l-][-h][b-] bdr l- dgbt*  
 U 93/4: *w dt' -h b- bd[r] frd -h*  
 U 95/6: *b'd nhl -h w dt' -h b-bdr frd -hm w [']hrt [-h]*  
 U 102bis/3: *l- dgbt b- khl b'd -h w b'd '---- b- bdr frd -h*  
 U 126/3: *n{h}l -h l- -h b- bdr [w] b- d' dn frd -h w s' 'd -h*

In Arabic topography the form *Baydar* means 'threshing floor; a heap of grain. A place for drying dates' (Groom 1983: 61). In accordance with this, Lane (1968: 166a) states that *Baydar* is: 'A place in which wheat, or grain, is trodden out. A place for drying dates'. The diphthong (\*-ay) in *media* is not represented in the Dadanitic script (see Macdonald 2004: 503).

### BLḤ

The place name *BlḤ* occurs twice in the inscriptions of al-'Uḏayb:

- U 71/5<sup>6</sup>: *'l{y} ml -h b- b{d}{r} w b- blḤ frd -h*  
 U 72/6<sup>7</sup>: *---- l- -h b- blḤ [f] [r]d -h w s' 'd -h*

The Arabic root B-L-Ḥ means 'to be dry, drain (applied to the land, floor)' (de Biberstein-

Kazimiriski 1860: 158; Cohen 1970ff.: 67), *bāliḥ*, pl. *bawāliḥ* 'wasteland' (Ibn Manzūr, s.v. *blḥ*).

### BN'L

The place name *Bn'l* appears in the following inscriptions:

AH 12/2: *hʒll b- khl b'd nḥl -h b- bn'l frḍ -h w s't'd -h*

AH 74/5: *b'd n'm -h b- bn'l frḍ -h w ḥrt -h*

AH 76 3: *b'd n'm -h b- bn'[l] frḍ -h w [ ]ḥrt -h*

AH 100/4: *'z[l]t b'd nḥl -h w s'ym -h b- bn'l ʒll b- khl*

AH 141/4-5: *b'd ml -h b- tqmm w b- [b][n]l f rḍ -h*

U 23/4: *w 'tt -h 'mtb 's'mn ḡrs'w b- bdr [w] bn'l*

U 24/3: *b'd nḥl -h [b-] bn'l frḍ -h w s't'd -h w ḥrt -h*

U 25/3: *b'd nḥl -h b- bn'l w tqmm frḍ -h w s't'd -h*

U 38/3: *hn'fkl b- bn'l frḍ -h w ḥr[t] -h*

The etymology of *Bn'l* is explained by its being a compound name of the root B-N-Y and the theophoric element 'l, 'Il, 'God'. The root B-N-Y is widely known in Semitic to mean 'set up', 'build, construct' (Cohen 1970ff.: 71; Beeston et al. 1982: 29; Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 173ff). It appears in Arabic as *bunyān* and *bināya* with the meaning of 'building, construction' (de Biberstein-Kazimiriski 1860: 169). Regarding the toponymic evidence in al-'Uḏayb, we have to bear in mind Michael Macdonald's observation (2004: 509) that in the Dadanitic language the third radical from verbs III (w/y) is always retained. For examples of this, see the verb *bnyw* in U 8/3 (Sima 1999: 7, 94) and AH 200/2 (Abū l-Ḥasan 2002: 46-48)

or the verb 'fy in A 16/2 (Stiehl 1971: 22-23), D 116/2 (Farès-Drappeau 2005: 203-205), U 35/3 (Sima 1999: 15). Hence, the name *bn'l* can only be seen as a nominal sentence \**bināy-'il* in the sense of 'building of God or 'Il' or \**bannāy-'il* with the meaning of 'God or 'Il is the builder' since nouns formed with 'alif *mamdūda* in Classical Arabic are usually spelt with a final -y in Ancient North Arabian, e.g. Arabic *samā'*, Safaitic *s'my* (Macdonald 2004: 501).

### BYR

The place name *Byr* occurs once in the inscriptions of al-'Uḏayb:

U 108/5-6: *ḡgbt b- khl b'd ḡ- kn l- -h b- yr f-rḍ -h*

Stiehl (1971: 35-36, D 7/5-6), followed by Sima (1999: 29, U 108/5-6), reads *byr* at the end of line 5, and at the beginning of line 6 he reads a second *r*, hence *b Yrr*. However, the photograph clearly shows that there is no *r* at the end of line 5, and the sequence of letters is therefore *by//r*. Abū l-Ḥasan (1997: 351-353, AH 185/5-6) interprets the word as *f 'r*. Farès-Drappeau (2005: 210-211, D 131/5-6) prefers to read the place name *Bdr*.

In this case, I would suggest that *byr* is haplography for *b- byr*. The word *Bayyāra* means 'irrigation wheel, plantation' in Arabic topography (Groom 1983: 61). On the other hand, the word *byr*, *b'r* 'well', 'cistern' is a common Semitic noun: *byr* in the Moabite and the Aramaic (Old and Official) inscriptions (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 155), Classical Ethiopic *barbir* (Leslau 1987: 102), *b'r* in Sabaic (Beeston et al. 1982: 25), Akkadian *būrtu(m)* and *būru(m)* (Black et al. 2000: 49), Hebrew *bə'ēr* (Koehler and Baumgartner 2001: 106) and Arabic *bi'r* (Ibn Manzūr, s.v. *b'r*). Garr (2004: 36) notes that the Old Aramaic form *byr* is the result of the loss of the Aleph, producing a

long vowel. In Arabic the form *bīr* is to compare with the form *bi'r* (Lane 1968: 36).

### TQMM

The place name *Tqmm* occurs in the following inscriptions:

AH 96/3: *b'd hl -h b- tqmm frd -hm w s'd -hm*

AH 141/4: *b'd ml -h b- tqmm w b- [b][n]'l frd -h*

Ryckmans 3.30/4: *b'{d} ml- -h b- tq{m}m l- dgbt frd -h w 'hrt -h*

U 2/4: *l- [d][g][b][t] [b- ]khl b'd -h ---- b- tqmm [f] [r]d {-h}*

U 6/4: *l- dgbt b'd ml -h b- tqmm frd -h*

U 22/2: *hzll b'd dt' [-h] b- tqm[m] frd -h*

U 25/3-4: *b'd hl -h b- bn'l w tqmm frd -h w s'd -h*

U 29/4(?): *b'd ml -h b- t[q]m{m} frd -h*

U 43/5(?): *b'd tbrt -h b- tqmm frd -h w 'hrt -h*

U 48/4: *b'd ml -h b tqmm frd -h w s'd -h*

U 68/6: *l- dgbt b'd nhl -h [b-] tqmm frd -h w 'hrt [-h]*

U 70/4-5(?): *gr 'wl -h b- t[q]mm frd -h*

Stiehl (1971) followed by Farès-Drappeau (2005) reads this name as *Tymm* rather than as *Tqmm*. On that basis, Stiehl considers the toponym as the city of *Taymā'*. However, these inscriptions (with the exception of U 2 and Ryckmans 3.30) were read in situ by Abū l-Ḥasan, who interprets the place name as *Tqmm*. In addition, from the unpublished photograph the reading is clearly *Tqmm*.

The etymology of the word *Tqmm* can be explained through the Arabic root Q-M-M in the V stem *taqamama* 'to be located on the upper part of a thing' (de Biberstein-Kazimirski 1860:

808) see also Sabaic *qmm* 'summit' (Beeston et al. 1982: 105) and Ugaritic *qmm* 'top' (Del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2003: 703).

### TR

The place name *Tr* appears in the following inscriptions:

AH 65/3: *b'{d} [']gw b- tr frd -h w 'tb -h*

AH 79/3: *s'lm 'gt zll 'ly ml -h b- tr frd -h w s'd -h*

AH 109/4: *'gw h- zll b'd tr mr----*

AH 157/2: *zdhmn ds'bn 'gw [b-] tr*

U 10/3: *b- khl b'd ml -h b- tr frd -h w s'd -h w 'hrt -h*

U 33/4: *b'd nhl -h b- tr w dt' -h b- d'mn*

U 42/6: *h- zll ---- dt' [-h] b- tr*

U 117/3<sup>8</sup>: *b'd dt' -h b- tr w nhl -h b- tr frd -h w '[h]rt -h*

The substantive *tarr* is known in Arabic as meaning 'abounding with water' (de Biberstein-Kazimirski 1860: 220; Groom 1983: 291).

### D'DN

The place name *D'dn* occurs twice in the inscriptions of al-'Udayb:

AH 66/4: *b'd dt' -h b- d'dn frd -h w s'd -h*

U 126/3: *n{h}l- -h b- bdr [w] b- d'd{n} frd -h w s'd -h*

The first element of this compound place name is the relative pronoun *d*, *dū*<sup>9</sup> meaning 'belongs to'. The element *'dn*<sup>10</sup> is based on the Sabaic root W-D-N 'prepare fields for flood-irrigation', *dyn*, and the plural form *'dyn* 'irrigated field' (Cohen 1970ff.: 254, 502; Beeston 1974: 37, 156).

### D'DN

The place name *D'dn* occurs once in the

inscriptions of al-'Udayb:

U 13/5: *b'd tbrt -h {b-} d'dn frd -h w h[r]  
[t] [-h]*

The occurrence of the place name in the inscription U 91/4-5 seems uncertain since the last two letters cannot be read clearly in the photograph. Sima (1999: 27) restores it as *d'[dn]*. However, he passes over the fact that the place names *D'dn* and *D'dn* both occur in the inscriptions of al-'Udayb, leaving no reason to restore it as *d'[dn]*.

This place name is a compound of the relative pronoun *d* (see *D'DN*) and the personal name *'dn*, which can be translated according to common Semitic as 'ear' (Cohen 1970ff.: 9). The personal name *'dn*<sup>11</sup> is attested in Dadanic (inscriptions JaL 28f, JaL 59h and JaL 59l). It can therefore be interpreted as meaning 'what belongs to *'dn*'.

### **D<sub>T</sub>'L**

The place name *D<sub>T</sub>'l* appears in the following inscriptions:

AH 72/2: *b'd d- kn l- -hm b- d<sub>T</sub>'l frd -h w hrt  
-h*

U 59/3-4: *'ly m- kn l- -h b- d<sub>T</sub>'l mn d<sub>T</sub>' w hrf*

U 69/4-5: *b'd tbrt -hmy b- d<sub>T</sub>'l f[r]dhy -hmy  
ws<sup>1</sup>*

U 84/5-6: *b'd d<sub>T</sub>' -h b- d<sub>T</sub>'l frd -h w {}'tb -h*

U 91/4: *b'd tbrt -h b- d<sub>T</sub>'l w- b- d'---- frd -h  
w hrt -h*

The etymology of the second part of this compound place name is difficult to explain due to the double consonant in the second radical. The Arabic root *T'-L* does not exist in the II stem nor is it found in other Semitic languages. The one possible explanation is to consider a case of dittography in the double ' although this is highly unlikely in five different texts. In

this case, the etymology of this word could be explained by the Arabic *tu'āla* 'dray fodder, dry grass' (de Biberstein-Kazimirski 1860: 225). For the first element, see *D'DN*.

### **D'MN**

The place name *D'mn* occurs in the following inscriptions:

AH 6/3: *b'd nhl [-h] b- d'mn frd -h w s'<sup>1</sup>d  
-h*

AH 62/3: *b'd nhl -h [b-] d'mn frd -h*

AH 73/4: *l- dgbt b'd mrb[d]h b- d'mn frd -h  
w [h][r][t] [-h]*

AH 89/4-5: *'ly ml- -hm b- d'mn frd -h*

AH 92/5: *----zll [b-] d'm[n] frd -h*

AH 94/4: *[b-] khl b'd nhl -h [b-] [d]mn frd  
-h*

AH 111/4: *zdlh bnt rfh s'<sup>1</sup>t s'<sup>1</sup>t d'm{n} s'nt r{t}*

AH 134/2: *l- -h z'gn rbm 'gw [b-] d'mn*

AH 140/3: *b'd ml -h b- d'mn frd -h w hrt [-h]*

U 20/3: *b'd nhl -h b- d'm{n} l- dgbt b- khl  
f- rd {-h}*

U 28/4-5: *b'd d<sub>T</sub>' -h b- d'mn frd -h w hrt -h*

U 31/4: *b'd d<sub>T</sub>' -h b- d'mn frd -h w s'<sup>1</sup>d -h  
w hrt -h*

U 33/5: *l- dgbt b- khl b'd nhl -h b- tr w d<sub>T</sub>'  
-h b- d'mn frd -h w*

U 35/4: *b'd ml -h b- d'mn frd -h w hrt -h*

U 55/3: *l- dgbt b'd n{h}l -hm b- d'mn frd  
-hm*

U 63/3: *{w}ybm w s'<sup>1</sup>t d'mn hggw [l-] dgbt  
b- khl frd -hm*

U 64/5: *b'd nhl -hm b- d'mn w d- kn l- -h  
b- bdr*

U 66/4: *'zll ' frd -h w s'm' l- -h hy n{h}l b-*



**ḏ'mn**

U 79bis/5: *b'd n{h}l -h w dt' -h b- ḏ'mn l- ḏḡbt frḏ -hm*

U 82/3: *b'd ml -h b- ḏ'mn frḏ -h w ḥrt [-h]*

The first element of this compound place name is the relative pronoun *ḏ* (see D'DN). The second is the word *'mn*. This can be interpreted according to the Sabaic *'mn* 'flat, land(?)' (Beeston et al. 1982: 17). In Arabic topography we find *'amīna* meaning 'plain or soft land' (Groom 1983: 39).

**KHL**

The place name *Khl* occurs in the following inscriptions:

AH 3/5-6: *'zll l- ḏḡbt hzll b- k[h][l] frḏ -h w ḥrt -h {w} s' d -h*

AH 10/4: *'zll h- zll b- khl l- ḏḡbt b' d ḏ- kn l- -h b- bdr frḏ -h*

AH 12/2: *'zllt h- zll b- khl b' d nhl -h b- bn' l frḏ -h w s' d -h*

AH 13/5-6: *'zlt h- zll l- ḏḡbt b- khl hm -ḏ ndrḏt fr{ḏ} {-h} w {s'} d -h*

AH 15/3: *'ft h- zll b-khl nfy {-h}*

AH 32/3: *'zlw zl[l] h- nq b- khl*

AH 62/2: *'zlt b- khl h- zll ḏh l- ḏḡbt b' d nhl -h [b-] ḏ'mn frḏ -h*

AH 63/3: *'[z]l h- zl l- ḏḡbt b- khl frḏ -h w ḥrt [-h] s'nt 's'rn tlmy*

AH 64/3-4: *'zlt l- ḏḡ[b]t b- khl s'tt 's'r mn s'nt mt 'lh*

AH 68/2: *'zll h- zll b- khl l- ḏḡbt b' d ḏ- kn l- -h b- bdr*

AH 72/1: *'[z]ll b- khl l- ḏḡbt b' d ḏ- kn l- -hm b- dt' l*

AH 81/3-4: *'zlw b- khl zll h- nq l- ḏḡbt frḏy -hm*

*w ḥrt -hm*

AH 94/3: *'zllt l- ḏḡbt [b-] khl b' d nhl -h [b-] [ḏ] 'mn frḏ [-h]*

AH 96/2: *'zll h- zll b- khl l- ḏḡbt b' d nhl -h b- tqmm*

AH 97/3: *'zll h- zll b- khl l- ḏḡbt frḏ -h w s' d -h*

AH 100/5: *nhl -h w s'ym -h b- bn' l zll b- khl*

AH 113/2-3: *'gw b- khl l- ḏḡbt frḏ -h w ḥrt -h*

AH 119/4: *'zlt l- ḏḡbt 'zll ḏh b- khl frḏ -h w ḥrt -h*

AH 140/2: *'gw h- zll b- khl b' d ml -h b- ḏ'mn*

AH 142/2: *'zll l- ḏḡbt b- khl b' d ḏ- l- -h b- bdr*

AH 163/2: *'zllt b- khl b' d ḏ- kn l- -h b- bdr*

Ryckmans 3.30/3: *'zll h- zll b- khl b' {ḏ} ml -h b- tq{m}m l- ḏḡbt*

U 1/4: *'gw [h-] zll l- ḏḡbt [b-] [k]hl frḏ -hm w ḥr[t] [-h][m]*

U 2/3: *----[h-] zll l- ḏ[ḡ][b][t] [b-] khl b' d ---- b- tqmm*

U 4/4: *'fy h- zll l- ḏḡbt ḏh b- khl frḏ -h w s' d -h*

U 5/4: *'ft h- zll ḏh l- ḏḡbt b- khl b' d ml -h*

U 9/2: *'zll l- ḏḡbt b- khl b' d nhl -h w dt' -h b- bdr*

U 10/3: *ndr h- zll l- ḏḡbt b- khl b' d ml -h b- tr*

U 11/3: *'zll h- zll b- khl l- ḏḡb{t} b' d nhl -h b- bdr*

U 12/3-4: *'zll h- zll l- ḏḡbt b- khl b' d ml -h b- bdr*

U 13/3: *'zlt h- zlt b- khl l- ḏḡbt b' d tbrt -h {b-} ḏ' dn*

|                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
| U 16/4:                | 'zlt b- <b>khl</b> l- dğbt h- zll b 'd t̄b{r}t -h                           | blh  |
| U 19/4-5:              | 'zlt h- zll l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd ml -hm<br>b- bdr                     | U 80/2: 'zl{l} l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd d- l- -h b-<br>bdr   |
| U 20/4:                | b 'd nhl -h b- d 'm{n} l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> f<br>rd -h                     | U 81/2: 'zll b- <b>khl</b> l- dğbt b 'd ml -h frd -h w<br>'hrt -h  |
| U 24/2:                | 'zll h- zll b- <b>khl</b> b 'd nhl -h [b-] bn 'l                            | U 82/2: 'gw ---- b- <b>khl</b> b 'd ml -h b- d 'mn   |
| U 25/2:                | 'zll h- zll b- <b>khl</b> l- dğbt b 'd hhl -h<br>b- bn 'l                   | U 84/3: 'zll h- zll b- <b>kh[l]</b> l- dğbt b 'd dt' -h<br>b- dt' 'l   |
| U 28/3:                | 'r---- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd dt' -h b- d 'mn                              | U 89/2: 'zll h- zll b- <b>khl</b> b 'd ml -h b- mhm(g)<br>t l- dğbt  |
| U 31/3:                | 'fy h- zll l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd dt' -h b-<br>d 'mn                    | U 93/3: 'zll l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd nhl -h w dt' -h<br>b- bd[r]  |
| U 33/3:                | 'zll h- zll dh l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd nhl -h<br>b- tr w dt' -h b- d 'mn | U 94/2-3: 'zlt l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd n 'm -h frd -h<br>w 'hrt -h  |
| U 34/1:                | 'yđ bn hr b- <b>khl</b> 'zll zlln b 'd -h w<br>b 'd nhl -h l- dğbt          | U 95/3: 'gw l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> [h-] [z][l]l b 'd<br>nhl -h w dt' -h b- bdr  |
| U 41/3:                | hzll [l-] dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b ['d] hrt -h b-<br>bd[r]                      | U 102bis: 'zll h- zll l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd -h w b 'd<br>'---- b- bdr   |
| U 44/5:                | 'zlw l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd m- kn l- -h<br>b- bdr                       | U 108/4: 'zll l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd d- kn l- -h b-<br>yr  |
| U 46/3:                | 'zll h- zll dh b- <b>khl</b> b 'd h- 'rd w d-<br>kn l- -h b- bdr            | U 112/3: 'zlt h- zll l- dğbt b- <b>kh[l]</b> frd -h w<br>'hrt -h b 'd t̄brt -h   |
| U 56/3:                | 'zll l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd {d}t' -h frd -h                             | U 117/2: 'zll l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> b 'd dt' -h b- tr w<br>nhl -h b- tr  |
| U 58/3:                | 'zll h- zll {b-} <b>khl</b> l- dğbt b 'd {n}hl<br>-h b- bdr                 | U 125/3: 'zl l- dğbt b- <b>khl</b> 'ly ----  |
| U 59/2:                | dğbt 'zll b- <b>khl</b> 'ly m- kn l- -h b-<br>dt' 'l mn dt' w hrf           | The occurrence of this place name in the<br>inscription NUHA 97, pl. CLVIII (Nasif, 1988:<br>97) is very uncertain. Sima (1999: 33) restores<br>the place name. Scagliarini (1999: 144-145),<br>followed by Farès-Drappeau (2005: 189-190,<br>D 93), prefers not to interpret this word. |
| U 63/4 <sup>12</sup> : | {w}ybm w s't d 'mn hggw [l-] dğbt<br>b- <b>khl</b>                          | Sima (1999, for commentaries p. 99), following<br>Stiehl (1971), considers the expression b- <b>khl</b><br>as the preposition and the noun meaning<br><i>nach Vermögen</i> . However, unsurprisingly,<br>he acknowledges the difficulties involved in                                    |
| U 65/3:                | 'zll h- zll b- <b>khl</b> l- dğbt b 'd d- kn l-<br>-h b- bdr                |  |
| U 69/3:                | 'zllw h- zll b- <b>khl</b> b 'd t̄brt -hmy b-<br>dt' 'l                     |  |
| U 71/3:                | 'gw h- zll b- <b>khl</b> 'l{y} ml -h b- b{d}<br>[r] w b blh                 |  |
| U 72/5:                | 'zll l- dğb[t] b- <b>khl</b> b [d] ----l -h b-                              |  |

interpreting such an expression. Abū l-Ḥasan (1997, for commentary pp 66-67) prefers to translate the word *khl* as the name of a month<sup>13</sup>. It is Beeston (1974: 172), in the review of Stiehl, who rightly refers to it as a place name: ‘South Arabian inscriptions quite regularly and frequently name the place where the inscription actually stands. The toponymic interpretation seems to me much more plausible than Stiehl’s (...) ‘nach Vermögen’’. This interpretation is followed by Scagliarini (1996: 93), Farès-Drappeau (2005) and Farès (2009).

It is *common opinion* that the place Qaryat dāt Kahl (modern Qaryat al-Faw) was named after the god *Khl*. From an etymological point of view, it is uncertain whether *Khl* was derived from the root K-H-L from Classical Arabic *kahala* ‘to be filled, covered with flowers (said of a garden)’ (de Biberstein-Kazimirski 1860: 939), or from an earlier linguistic stratum. The god name *Kāhil* and *Kāhilān*, which appears in Thamudic (Höfner 1965a: 449) and Minaic inscriptions (Höfner 1965b: 512), is also frequently used to refer to God in Ethiopian Christian literature (Ryckmans, G. 1934: 16). For more information about Qaryat al-Faw see Al-Ansary (1982 and 2002).

Out of the entire corpus of Dadanitic inscriptions, *Khl* only appears as a place name in the inscriptions of al-‘Uḏayb. *Khl* is found as a personal name in the inscription JSLih 188/2 (Jaussen and Savignac 1914: 482). All the occurrences of *Khl* are in the expression *w ʿ zll h- zll b- khl* (see Section 4), and none of them says ‘he/she/they performed the *zll*-ceremony for their possessions in *Khl*’. This suggests that *Khl* was al-‘Uḏayb, or at least that it was the specific place where the ceremony was performed. However, at present this can be no more than a hypothesis and we can only

hope to find more texts that might allow us to test it.

### MS<sup>2</sup>HL

The place name *Ms<sup>2</sup>hl* only occurs in the inscription:

U 26/5: *ysʿrg ʿbhm w{m} ʿn -h[m] wm fhm*  
*b- ms<sup>2</sup>hl*

The Classical Arabic root Š-H-L refers to a mixture of two colours, primarily in the eye. However, in the adjective *ašhal* it is also extended to mean ‘dust-coloured inclining to whiteness’ as applied to a mountain (Lane 1968: 1613c). If its meaning in Dadanitic was broader than that in Classical Arabic, and simply meant ‘two-coloured’, *ms<sup>2</sup>hl* could be a place name referring to this feature.

### MHM/GT

The place name *Mhm/gt* occurs once in the inscriptions of al-‘Uḏayb:

U 89/3: *h- zll b- khl b ʿd ml -h b- mhmt(mhgt)*  
*l- dğbt frd -h*

Abū l-Ḥasan (1997: 231-233, AH 85/3) reads *Mhgt*. On the contrary, Sima (1999: 27, U 89/3) interprets the name as *Mhmt*. The symbols for the letter *m* and *g* are extremely similar in Dadanitic, so on occasion it is difficult to differentiate between both letters. Unfortunately, this is the only occurrence of this place name, not only in the inscriptions from al-‘Uḏayb, but in all Dadanitic inscriptions, so that it is impossible to compare the reading with other texts. The photograph shows what can be read as *m*, although its shape is quite different from the other *m* in the same word and those of lines 1 and 2. The practice of using different form-shapes of the same letter is not unusual in Dadanitic<sup>14</sup>. However, the reading of this letter as *g* should not be excluded. Both interpretations must be accepted.



**Mhmt:**

The substantive *mahma*, *mahmā* and *mahmahīya* meaning 'far-extending desert' from the four-root *mahmaha* is attested in Arabic only (Lane 1968: 3025c; Groom 1983: 164).

**Mhgt:**

The etymology of this word is hard to explain. In the Classical Arabic is attested the word *hā'igāt* with the sense '(of land) where leguminous plants have dried up' (Groom 1983: 100), from the root H-Y-Ġ 'to have only plants, dried herbs (said of the earth)' (De Biberstein-Kazimirski 1968: 1465), see also Yemeni Arabic *hayjā* 'woods in an uncultivated sandy region', 'open country land' (Piamenta 1990-1991: 515).

**h-MDHB**

The place name h-*Mdḥb* occurs once in the inscriptions of al-'Uḏayb:

U 75/3-4: *b 'd dt' -h b- hmdḥb frd -hm*

The name h-*Mdḥb* is a compound of the definite article *h-* and the substantive *Mdḥb*. This is comparable to the Sabaic *dḥb* meaning 'alluvial valley, semi-annual irrigation' and *mdḥbt* 'alluvial land below dam' (Beeston et al. 1982: 38). The possible existence of a dam in this area is attested by Nasif (1988) see footnote 2.

The place name *T'mm* needs to be classified as an uncertain place name. The only author who interprets this name is Sima (1999: 11) in the inscription U 23/7, but unfortunately the inscription is damaged and it cannot be read clearly. Because this is the only instance where it appears, it is impossible to offer an interpretation based on its occurrence in another inscription. Drewes (1983: 428, no. 16), followed by Abū l-Ḥasan (1997: 140-141, AH 41), does not read line 4-7.

**2. The etymological meaning of the place names and the meaning of the possessions.**

The following list shows that the etymology of the place names reveals that they relate either to agriculture or to geographical context. With the exception of the place name *Bn'l* 'building of God or 'Il', the place name *D'dn* 'what belongs to' *'dn*', and the place name *Ms<sup>2</sup>hl*, which cannot be classified due to its very uncertain etymology.

**Agricultural work:**

*Bdr* 'threshing floor; a heap of grain', 'a place for drying dates'

*Dt' l* 'dry fodder, dry grass (?)

*Mhgt* (?) '(of land) where leguminous plants have dried up'

Desert:

*Blḥ* 'be dry, drain (applied to the land, floor)'. 'wasteland'

*Mhmt* (?) 'far-extending desert'

General topographic terms:

*Tqmm* 'to be located on the upper part of a thing', *qmm* 'summit'

*D'mn* 'plain or soft land'

Water:

*Byr* 'irrigation wheel', 'plantation'

*Tr* 'abounding with water'

*D'dn* 'irrigated field'

*h-Mdḥb* 'alluvial land below dam'

Furthermore, the inscriptions' authors owned possessions from these places and the description of their possessions relates to agriculture produce, land and property (the

latter expressed by the words *ml* and *n'm*):  
*tbrt*<sup>15</sup> 'grain' was found in *Tqmm*, *D'dn* and *D't'l*

*hrf* 'crops of the season of the first rains' was found in *Bdr* and *D't'l*

*dt'* 'crops of the season of the later rains' was found in *Bdr*, *Tqmm*, *Tr*, *D'dn*,

*D't'l*, *D'mn* and *h-Mdhb*

*s'ym* 'field' was found in *Bn'l*

*rd'* 'valley' was found in *Bdr*

*ml* 'property' was found in *Bdr*, *Bn'l*, *Tqmm*, *Tr*, *D'mn* and *Mhm(g)t*

*nhl* 'palm garden' was found in *Bdr*, *Bn'l*, *Tqmm*, *Tr*, *D'dn*, *D'mn*

*n'm* 'property'<sup>16</sup> was found in *Bn'l* and *Tqmm*

In addition, 'to own something' can be expressed *d/m -kn l-h/hm* 'what he/she/they has/have', and this was found in *Bdr*, *Blh*, *Byr*, *Tqmm*, *Tr*, *D'dn*, *D't'l* and *D'mn*. The author of the inscription U 059 used *m- kn l- -h* to express that he owns some things and then he adds the names of these things: *dt'* 'crops of the season of the later rains' and *hrf* 'crops of the season of the first rains': *m kn l- -h b- dt' l mn dt' -h w- hrf-h*

The following table sets out the place names relating their etymological sense with the possessions that the inscriptions' authors have:

## PLACE NAMES

|   | Agricultural work            | Desert          | General topographic terms | Water                                   | O t h - e r s |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|---|---------------|
| <b>POSSESSIONS</b>                                  |                              |                 |                           |   |               |
| <i>tbrt</i> 'grain'                                 | <i>D't'l</i>                 |                 | <i>Tqmm</i>               |   | <i>D'dn</i>   |
| <i>hrf</i> 'crops of the season of the first rains' | <i>Bdr</i> , <i>D't'l</i>    |                 |                           |   |               |
| <i>dt'</i> 'crops of the season of the later rains' | <i>Bdr</i> , <i>D't'l</i>    |                 | <i>Tqmm</i> , <i>D'mn</i> | <i>D'dn</i> , <i>Tr</i> , <i>h-Mdhb</i> |               |
| <i>s'ym</i> 'field'                                 |                              |                 |                           |   | <i>Bn'l</i>   |
| <i>rd'</i> 'valley'                                 | <i>Bdr</i>                   |                 |                           |   |               |
| <i>ml</i> 'property'                                | <i>Bdr</i> , <i>Mhgt</i> (?) | <i>Mhmt</i> (?) | <i>Tqmm</i> , <i>D'mn</i> | <i>Tr</i>                               | <i>Bn'l</i>   |
| <i>nhl</i> 'palm garden'                            | <i>Bdr</i>                   |                 | <i>Tqmm</i> , <i>D'mn</i> | <i>D'dn</i> , <i>Tr</i>                 | <i>Bn'l</i>   |
| <i>n'm</i> 'property'                               |                              |                 |                           |   | <i>Bn'l</i>   |

As we can observe in this table, the etymology of the place names is what we would expect based on the possessions associated with them. The place name *Tqmm* is the only instance in which this is not the case. Here we find words for the agricultural work *tbrt*, *dt'* and *nhl* – conversely, these types of word are unlikely to be undertaken at the site indicated by *Tqmm* 'to be located or on the upper part of a thing'.

### 3. The position of place names in the inscriptions

Most of these place names occur at the end of the *narratio* section, just before the prayer. Only a few names appear just after the main verb, where the action takes place. Farès-Drappeau (2005: 103-104) explains that *Khl* is the place where offerings to the god were made, whereas the other places are the locations of possessions belonging to inscriptions' authors. Farès-Drappeau's proposal is absolutely correct, but offerings to the god were made in other places as well as *Khl*. The standard order in which place names appear in the texts is first the place where the offering was made and second the location of the possessions

Site of offerings:

1. After the expression 'zll h- zll<sup>17</sup> 'he performed the zll-ceremony': *Khl* and *Btr*. The place name *Bdr* occurs following the verb 'zll in inscription U 83/3.

2. After other verbs: 'gw 'he organised (related to a religious ceremony)' in *Tr*, *D'mn* and *Khl*, and 'fy/t 'accomplished' in *Khl*. The place name *Bdr* and *B[n]'l* appears before the verb *grs'w* 'they planted' in just one example (inscription U 23/4).

Location of the possessions.

As we have seen above, these are: *Bdr*, *Blh*, *Bn'l*, *Byr*, *Tqmm*, *Tr*, *D'dn*, *D'dn*, *Dt'l*, *D'mn*,

*Mhm(g)t*, *h-Mdhb*

In some cases there is a sequence of two or three place names in the same inscription:

1. *Bdr*, *Btr*, *Bn'l* or *Khl* as the site of the offering, followed by the location, or locations, of possessions:

*Bdr* and *Blh*: U 71/4-5

*Btr* and *D'mn*: U 79bis/3-5

*Bn'l* and *Khl*: AH 100. This sequence is unusual since *Khl* is where offerings to the god are made and *Bn'l* is where the owner's possessions are found. The inscription is badly composed: the two elements of the expression 'zll hzll appear separately in different lines (2, 4-5). It is possible that the author or the mason was not an expert, or that he forgot to write the expression together and tried later to amend his error.

*Khl* and *Bdr*: AH 10/4, 6-7; AH 68/2-3; AH 142/2-3; AH 163/2-4; U 9/2-3; U 11/3-4;

U 12/3-5; U 19/4-6; U 41/3-4; U 80/2-3; U 93/3-4; U 95/3,6; U 102bis/2-3

*Khl* and *Blh*: U 72/5-6

*Khl* and *Bn'l*: AH 12/2; U 24/2-3

*Khl* and *Tqmm*: AH 96/2-3; Ryckmans 3.30/3-4; U 2/3-4

*Khl* and *Tr*: AH 33/3-4; U 10/3

*Khl* and *D'dn*: U 13/3,5

*Khl* and *Dt'l*: AH 72/1-2; U 69/3,5; U 84/3,5

*Khl* and *D'mn*: AH 62/2-3; AH 94/3-4; AH 140/2-3; U 20/2-3; U 28/3-5; U 31/3-4;

U 33/3-5; U 82/2-3

*Khl* and *Mhm(g)t*: U 89/2-3

*Khl* and *Byr*: U 108/4-6

*Khl* and *Bdr* and *Blh*: U 71/3-5

*Khl* and *Bn'l* and *Tqmm*: U 25/2-4. The second personal place is not preceded by the preposition *b-* 'in' as is usual in the texts of al-'Udayb.

*Khl* and *Tr* and *Tr*: U 117/2-3. This inscription is of some interest because the name *Tr* appears twice. This might be considered redundant.

2. The same possession in two place names:

*tbr* 'grain' in *Dl'l* and *D'----*: U 91/4-5

*ml* 'property' in *Bdr* and *D'dn*: U 126/3

*ml* 'property' in *Bdr* and *Blh*: U 71/4-5

*ml* 'property' in *Tqmm* and *Bn'l*: AH 141/4-5

*nhl* 'palm garden' in *Bn'l* and *Tqmm*: U 25/3-4

3. Two different possessions in two different places:

*dt'* 'crops of the season of the later

rains' in *Tr* and *nhl* in *Tr*: U 117/3

*nhl* 'palm garden' in *Tr* and *dt'* 'crops of the season of the later rains' in *D'mn*: U 33/4-5

*nhl* 'palm garden' in *D'mn* and *d- kn l- h* 'what belongs to him' in *Bdr*: U 64/5-6

As noted above, the vast majority of these names appear in the *narratio* section of the inscriptions. However, there is one instance in which the place name appears at the end of the inscription in the prayer section<sup>18</sup>:

U 26/5: *ys'rg[/]'bhm/wb'nh{m} wmrhfm/bms<sup>2</sup>hl[.]*

*their pasture may be beautified and the[ir] abode and their cultivated land in Ms<sup>2</sup>h(l) [..]*

The prayer in this inscription differs considerably from the other in the inscriptions at al-'Udayb. It is therefore difficult to interpret the end of this inscription and to consider this part as the prayer.

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**ملخص:** يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل أسماء الأمكنة الواردة في نقوش دادانية من موقع العذيب في العلا (شمال غربي المملكة العربية السعودية); إذ يكشف أن أسماء الأمكنة في معظم الحالات ترتبط إما بإطار زراعي أو جغرافي. إضافة إلى ذلك، كان كتبة النقوش لديهم ممتلكات لها ارتباط بمحاصيل زراعية وأراض وملكيات تخصهم. وتسجل هذه النقوش أداء حفل أو طقس يسمى ظل ل (zll)، والصيغة المستخدمة هي (ظل ل هل ل ل ذ غ ب ت)، أما مكان تأديتها فهو «كهل» (Khl) في معظم النقوش؛ بينما تشير إلى المواقع التي احتفظ كتبة النقوش فيها بممتلكاتهم.

**Abbreviations**

|               |                                       |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| AH            | Abū l-Ḥasan 1997 and Abū l-Ḥasan 2002 |
| D             | Farès-Drappeau 2005                   |
| JaL           | Jamme 1974                            |
| JSLih         | Jaussen and Savignac 1914             |
| Ryckmans 3.30 | Scagliarini 1999                      |
| U             | Sima 1999                             |

## Notes

- (1) I am extremely grateful to Mr. Michael Macdonald for his helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. He is, of course, in no way responsible for any errors.
- (2) Nasif (1988: 26) explains the placement of the inscriptions of al-'Uḏayb as follows: 'On the western side of the valley, there are the remains of a wall or dam, which seem to extend from the base of the 'Ikmah mountain on the western side up to the heights in the centre of the valley (...). It is possible that this was originally a dam built for the purpose of blocking the flood of the small Wādī 'Ikmah, or perhaps it was a wall blocking the entrance to Wādī al-'Ulā on the north-western side (...). South of these remains there is a similar wall stretching from the base of Mu'allaq al-Ḥammādī, to the base of the northern side of al-Kathīb (...). Between these two walls or dams there are Liḥyānite inscriptions at the base of Jabal 'Ikmah, which have been published by Ruth Stiehl'.
- (3) This expression has been thoroughly studied by Farès-Drappeau (2005: 92-93) who, after analysing the etymology of the words in this expression, proposes 'offrir le sacrifice (de la camelle)'. See also Scagliarini (2001-2002) against Sima's (1999) interpretation. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine this expression. The translation offered here seems to me the most suitable to the context of the inscriptions.
- (4) The inscriptions from which we only have copies are: AH 61/3; AH 62/3; AH 67/4; AH 68/3; AH 69/5; AH 70/4; AH 71/4; AH 72/2; AH 73/4; AH 79/3; AH 80/4; AH 94/4; AH 111/4 and AH 134/2.
- (5) There is a methathesis in the place name *Dbr* > *Bdr*.
- (6) The place name is read by Stiehl (1971: 31, D2) followed by Farès-Drappeau (2005: 208, D 126) as *S<sup>2</sup>blḥ*. The name can be read clearly *Blḥ* on the photograph and on the Abū l-Ḥasan's copy. There is an unusual word-divider between the preposition *b-* and the place name (*b/blḥ*) which causes confusion in interpreting this part of the text. In the photograph a vertical line can be seen (a word-divider) rather than the Dadanitic letter *s<sup>2</sup>*, which has a triangular aspect.
- (7) Sima (1999: 23) restores *[nh]l -h*, but there are other possibilities such *[m kn] l -h*, *[m] l -h* or *[d] l -h*.
- (8) Abū l-Ḥasan (1997: 319-321, pl. 18, AH 150/3) interprets the first occurrence of the name as *Tr*. Due to the fact that the vertical stroke of the *t* can be seen clearly on the photograph, this interpretation should not be followed.
- (9) In Dadanitic *q* followed by the name of a social group is the normal way of expressing group affiliation (see Macdonald 2004: 508, 4).
- (10) One could perhaps try to explain this name though the Phoenician 'dn 'base, foundation-platform' (Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995: 17), and the Ugaritic *udn* 'place of dominion' relating to the form *and* 'lord, master', 'noble father' (del Olmo Lete and Sanmartín 2003: 18-20), see also 'dn, 'adōn, the name of the god of vegetation in the Syrian area (Pope & Röllig 1965: 234-235). However, this sense does not fit in the context of agricultural works.
- (11) The use of a body part as personal name is not confined to Semitic languages. In the case of 'd/dn, which can be translated as 'small ears', it could be that parents gave this name to a son or a daughter due to the fact that the child was born with unusually large ears (Nöldeke 1982: 101-106). As a personal name 'dnt/'dynt is widely known in the Semitic onomasticon (Harding 1971: 34; Stark 1971: 65; al-Khaysheh 1986: 27; Tairan 1992: 61; Sholan, 1999: 93-94; Shatnawi 2003: 644); in the Arabic tradition it is found in the form of 'Uḏaina (Caskel 1966: 565). 'dnt (*Aḏanat*) is used as place in Yemen, where it was the ancient place name of the present Wādī Ḍana (Al-Scheiba 1982: 37).
- (12) Sima (1999: 21) reads erroneously the place name *Khl* after the prayer *frdhm* in this inscription.
- (13) He explains that the majority of the inscriptions in which the month *khl* appears refer to the offering of the fruit of the palm to the god *Dḡbt*. As this fruit is harvested at the end of summer and the beginning of autumn, he thinks that *khl* may be the month of October.



- (14) See discussion in Macdonald (forthcoming).
- (15) Stiehl (1971: 33, D6/4), followed by Farès-Drappeau (2005: 210, D 130/4), reads *tmrt* rather than *tbrt*. The latter can be read clearly on the photograph. Cf. the letter *b* in the words of the previous lines: *bn* (line 1), *bnt* (line 2) and *b'd* (line 3).
- (16) The substantive *n'm* can also mean 'cattle, camels, sheep and goats', cf. Arabic *na'am* (Lane 1968: 3035b), 'n'm 'goods, property' in Sabaic (Beeston et al. 1982: 90). The expression *trw/n'm/b- -h* appears in the inscriptions JSLih 138/2. The verb *trw* is cognate with Arabic *tarā* 'was or become abundant in cattle or property' with the preposition *b-* meaning 'became abundant [in property] by means of' (Lane 1968: 335b). I think that this inscription shows us the generic sense of *n'm*. This therefore could be understood as 'property' in the sense of the things that belong to one, including animals.
- (17) This expression is attested in variations such as number and gender in the verb, and with the name of the god between it and the place name. See under the place name *Khl*.

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