

NEW ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS, DATED TO MAMLUKE PERIOD FROM WADI  
AL-ĠUŞAIN IN THE EASTERN JORDANIAN DESERT

Al-Jbour, Kh.

<sup>1</sup>Archaeology dept., Faculty of Tourism and Archaeology, Jordan Univ., Amman, Jordan.

E-mail address: [k.jbour@ju.edu.jo](mailto:k.jbour@ju.edu.jo)

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**Abstract:**

*This study is concerned with three new Islamic inscriptions which were discovered in one of the stones cairn in wadi al-Ġuşyian, which is famous for water wells- dug in along the course of the valley - known as Biār al-Ġuşyian (wells of al-Ġuşyian). These inscriptions that are carved on smooth basalt stone are composed of thin letters, making it difficult to read these inscriptions at first. However, I was able to analyze and read the inscriptions correctly. The importance of the inscriptions is that they were engraved by three different persons in the cursive writing on the surface of the stone; the stone's surface measures 30 cmx33 cm, two inscriptions are dated but the third one is undated. One of the inscriptions contains the name of the person as "Al-Ġuşyian" and so the site was named after this name that is the wells of "Al-Ġuşyian". Another inscription that mentions a geographical site in neighboring Syria, called "cUrmān" from the Mamluke period includes in the first inscription some ascetic poetic verses which were in vogue back then.*

**1. Introduction**

The inscribed basalt stones, which are scattered throughout the eastern Jordanian Badia, called "Al-Ĥarra"<sup>(a)</sup>, make for a record of different historical epochs featuring the Mamlukian period, to which the inscriptions of this study refers to, which is the main theme of this paper. Al-Ĥarra is an area for the inhabitants of the Badia people (Bedouins), from ancient periods and until now, in addition to being a passage for the traders' caravans and for pilgrimage, which is near water springs (Ġudrān) across the various valleys. Most of these springs and wells were distributed in Wadi Rajel and Wadi al-Ġuşyain, where the inscription of the study was discovered because it was

a safe region in the Mamluk and Ayyubid periods to be away from crusaders' attacks; and because of the availability of water and vegetation for the grazing herds of livestock. These inscriptions were engraved in irregular stone plaque. They are three inscriptions, without any decoration, slightly inscribed on the surface of the soft stone originally of basalt, with a pointed tool such as the metal screw. Alternatively, the inscriptions were recorded on a pointed flint stones, which made reading accompanied them difficult. However, the three inscriptions where decipherers the texts of the three inscriptions except one of the names in the first inscription. Two of inscriptions were dated to

different years. The first inscription dated 769 H./1367-1368 A.D., at the period to the rule of the Sultan Zain Al-Din Shaaban [1]. The third inscription dated to the year 778 H./ 1376-1377 AD during the period of Sultan Al-Mansour Aladdin Ali bin Shaaban [2].

## 2. The Methodology of the Study

These inscriptions were found in the Jordanian Badia in a region called Al- Ḥara, in a northeastern area called Biār al-Ḡuṣayin, on one of cairn of block stones overlooking the valley from the west direction, fig. (1-a), which is located about 34 km west of the town of Al-Riwiyṣed. This valley begins from southeast Syria, passing through the Jordanian border to flow in the mud-flat of Abu Al- Ḥuṣayin [3]. The inscriptions which were engraved on the stone plaque were photographed, taken measurements of, read and sketched. The study was conducted according to the formulas that appeared and which were compared with other inscription formulas in Jordan and other in Saudi Arabia. This study will be accompanied with a map of the location of the site of discovery a photo of the inscriptions, fig. (1-b & c).

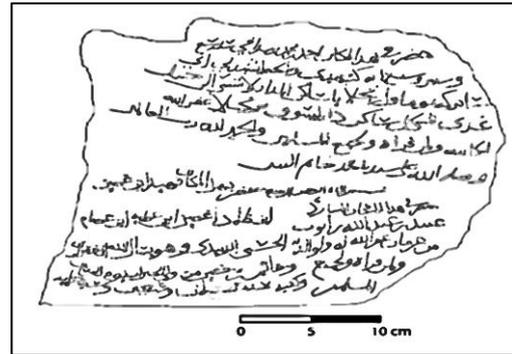
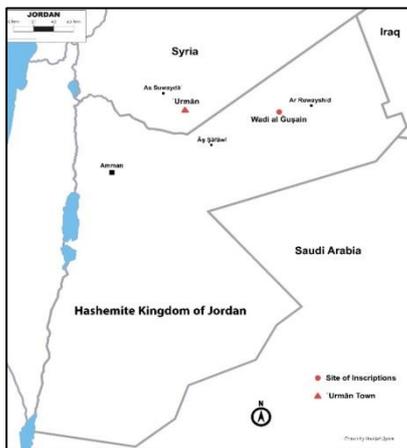


Figure (1) Shows **a.** a map of the location of the inscriptions, **b.** the photo and tracing of the inscriptions, **c.** tracing of the inscriptions

### 2.1. Reading inscriptions

#### 2.1.1. The 1<sup>st</sup> inscription

1. حضر في هذا المكان احمد بن محمد بن ... في سنة تسع
2. وستين وسبع مائة كتبته بيدي والخط يشهد لي أنني
3. ساتركه يوما وارتحلا يا ساكن الدار لا تنسى الرحيل
4. غدي (هكذا) فكل ساكن دارا سوف يرتحلا (هكذا) غفر الله
5. لك [اتبه] ولمن قرأه ولجميع المسلمين والحمد لله رب العالمين
6. وصل الله على سيدنا محمد خاتم النبيين

1. Attended this place Hmad bin Moḥammad bin ... in the year nine
2. and sixty-seven hundred, I wrote with my own hands and this writing will testify to me that I
3. I will leave it one day, and quit life, O inhabitant in this life, do not forget that you will leave (die)
4. Tomorrow (future), every inhabitant of a house (life) will quit it, O god forgiveness
5. For a writer and for whoever reads it and for all Muslims, and praise to God, the Lord of the worlds
6. May God bless our master Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets

#### 2.1.2. The 2<sup>nd</sup> inscription

1. حضر في هذا المكان المبارك
2. عبيد بن عبد الله بن ايوب
3. من عرمان غفر الله له ولوالديه
4. ولمن قرأه ولجميع
5. المسلمين

1. Attended at this blessed place
2. cubayid bin <sup>c</sup>Abdullah bin Ayoub
3. From <sup>c</sup>Urman, O God forgive him and his parents
4. And for whomever read it and for all
5. Muslims.

### 2.1.3. The 3<sup>rd</sup> inscription

1. بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم حضر في هذا المكان فهيد

ابن غصين

2. ابن ظماد [ابن] غصين ابن عطيه ابن عصام

3. الحسنى الزبيدي وهو يسال الله الغفران

4. وخاتمة خير من ولي الخيرات يوم الحساب

5. كتبه سنة ثمان وسبعين وسبعماية

1. *Basmalah, came to this place, Fuhyad Ibn Ġuṣyian*

2. *Ibn Zamaḍ a[ben] Ġuṣyian Ibn cAttieh Ibn cIṢām*

3. *Al-Ḥasani Al-Zubayidi, asking God for forgiveness*

4. *And a finale Goodness from God who is the patron of good things on the day of judgment*

5. *He wrote it in the year seventy-eight and seven hundred.*

## 2.2. Formulas in the inscriptions in question

### 2.2.1. Religious formulas

The inscriptions of the study included a number of religious formulas, such as “Basmala” in the third inscription. This feature is a follow-up to Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him), where he said: “Abu Hurira said that the prophet said: Every matter of significance that does not begin with the name of God, the compassionate, the Merciful, it is cut off or amputated [4]”. The “Basmala” has appeared in an integrated way in the third inscription; more of the Arabic inscriptions and manuscripts begin with Basmala, such as the messages of prophet Muḥammad to kings and rulers to invite them to Islam, and on tomb stones [5]. There are shortened Basmala occurrences (in the name of God) as in the Sassanid coins used in the early Islamic periods [6]. They appear in the inscription of Zuhayr which dated to 24 H. [7]. The inscriptions of the study also included different forms of invocations for Muslims in general. The engraver of the inscription, and for the reader, these types of sentences appeared in different periods since the Umayyad until Mamlukian periods as characteristic of these religious formulas of this period. Abu al-Darda said, “The Messenger of God, (peace and blessing be upon him), said;

No Muslim servant supplicates for his brother behind his back that the angel says: And for you the same.” This was included in the first inscription “God forgive its writer, to those who read it and to all Muslims”. The engraver concludes it with praise, “Thank God and prayers to the Messenger of God”, peace be upon him. In the second inscription, he asked for forgiveness for its writer, his parents, for those who ever read it and for all Muslims, while in the third inscription the engraver requests forgiveness and good things and good benevolent from the Guardian of goodness on the day of judgment. These formulas are mentioned in inscriptions from the Jordanian Badia in various locations such as Jawa and Tal al-Abd [8,9]. In Saudi Arabia many of these methods are mentioned in the form of a request for forgiveness and mercy; in Ghaban on the inscriptions of wages [10]; in southern Jordan as prayers for seeking forgiveness for the parents and for those who read these inscriptions. This comes from the filial piety and respect for parents through prayer and invocations for theme [11]. One of the formulas at the end of the inscriptions is the formula of prayer on the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) that is mentioned in the first inscription, which is common in Arabic inscriptions and on daily conversations among Muslims.

### 2.2.2. Ascetic poem formula

In the first inscription, there are two verses of poetry in asceticism and wisdom: I wrote with my own hands and this writing will testify to me that I. I will leave it one day, and quit life, O inhabitant of this life, do not forget to leave (die). Tomorrow (future), every inhabitant of a house (life) will quit it. These verses of poems of wisdom and ascetic appear in many Arabic inscriptions and specially manuscripts in the Mamluk era. The writers record different types of information and memories, such as verses of poems, or geographical places or wise sayings. Others comment on the backs or covers of books, and these comments refer to scientists or researchers

in ancient periods. Al-Kafti, who was born in Qaḥṭi in Egypt and died in 646 H, refers to these comments on the covers of manuscripts [12]. One of the most prominent aspects of these comments is the ascetic poetry at the cover of the last page of the manuscript, which the writer includes to refer to what he wrote in this life and that it shall be counted as a good deed in hereafter when he leaves this world because everyone will eventually leave this life. Such verses were seen in the inscriptions of a study, on the back of the manuscript of the al-ʿaqed al-fareed, in the vol. 2 of the of Ibn ʿAbed Rabbo al-Andalusi by Muhammad bin Musa bin ʿUmar bin ʿAllāq, who dated the verses in *Ḍu al-Hajjah* in 799 H (Manuscript of the Damascene Rifai Library, 589/1r). That is, the date of our inscription is thirty years earlier than the manuscript of al-ʿAllāq. Therefore, this inscription confirms that this inscription is the most ancient among the manuscripts and historical sources that mentioned these verses in the inscriptions of Jordanian Badia. This indicates that this type of ascetic was widespread and preserved by the engraver of the inscription and the faithful between the society of region in Jordanian Badia and their knowledge of the person who engraved the inscriptions. This was not mentioned in other sources before this inscription, which means that this discovery is an ancient one, documenting for these verses as we have from historical information available before al-ʿAllāq.

### 2.2.3. Geographical formula

The second inscription mentioned the name of a town ʿUrmān, located in the southern Syrian region, where the engraver of the second inscription indicates that he is from ʿUrmān, which is from the towns of Ḥwran and from the area of Ṣarḥad or Ṣalḥad and Suwayda in southern Ḥwran [13], fig. (1), which indicates that the engraver of the inscription moved to the region of Biār al-Ġuṣyian in Jordan now from the town of ʿUrmān in Syria now, for various reasons. This may include searching for a better pasture for livestock, due to the

presence of water sources in the valley, or pursue the track of roads which was used by pilgrims or as a passage of traders' caravans in the Mamluk period. One of the inscriptions discovered from the same period mentions something about a person who performed pilgrimage. This confirms that human immigration in that period did not stop from eastern Jordan and the Badiat al-Šamm among the Arab tribes before the arrival of immigrants from Lebanon and from the tribes of Bani Maʿrouf or al-Druze to the region in 1685, to reside in the high areas of Ḥwran, which was a rich environment of agricultural investment, where Prince Ḥamdān al-Ḥamdān was able to extend his influence over the entire areas of the mountains [14]. Among those who belong to the town of ʿUrmā, is the poet Abu Faḍal Moḥammed bin Mayās al-ʿUrmani [15], who lived in the area back in 1857. The town was built with basalt stone; its inhabitants worked in agriculture, livestock breeding, and manufacturing molasses and raisins [16].

### 2.2.4. Tribal descent formulas

The new Arabic inscriptions of the study documented two names of tribal descent. The first is al-Ḥasani and the second is Al-Zubayidi with Ḍamah of the letter Z. Al-Ḥasani is relative to the al-Ḥassan tribe of the Jabal al-ʿArab (mountain al-ʿArab) in southern Horan in Syria and it is divided into several families, including *Al-Sabbour*, *Ḥawāshamh* and *Mazāwadah* [17]. Al-Ḥassan is considered as one of the tribes of Jabal al-ʿArab in Horan and they are Bedouins that travel from one place to another until now [18]. Wasfi Zakaria indicates in his book that the tribes of al-Šamm descend from as branch of Zubayid tribe, such as al-Ḥassan, [19]. Al-Ḥassan is a branch of Zubayid with evidence in the third inscription of this study when the engraver records the descent of the tribe of al-Hasani's before Al-Zubayidi. As for the second descent, Al-Zubaydee with Ḍamah in the letter Z, they have many tribal branches in Bilad al-Šamm, as Al-Qalqaṣandee mentions in the *Ṣubaḥ* of

al-<sup>°</sup>Aaša, as Zubayd Ḥoran and Zubayd al- Šāmm, as well as Zabid Šarḥad [20]. Al-<sup>°</sup>Umare mentions that Al-Zubaydee has many branches in Šarḥad, including Al-Mayas, Al-Šaifi, Al-Marra, Al-Muḥsen, Al-Raja and Al-Jaḥš [21]. Thus, the person who is mentioned in the inscription of the study is closer to being from Zubayid Ḥoran because of its geographical proximity to the region of the site of discovery of the Wadi in the Ḥarra, eastern of Jordan. Whatever that the name of Fuhayd that it is cited in the inscription, it should be a clan that is well-known in Beni Fuyhyad and which belongs to Zabid, that is an inhabitant in Ḥwran now. It is possible that the name of Fuhayd at that time is common between the members of the tribe which is a tribal traditional usually in the Badia. Al-<sup>°</sup>Umare cited through the study of tribes in the southern Syrian region now that the Zubayd Ḥwran themselves of Zabid Šarḥad that one of these tribes is called the al-Ġuṣian tribe [22]. One of their branches is called al-Sulutt whose chief figure was Mohammed bin Ahmed al-Ġuṣyain [23]. I think this tribe al-Ġuṣyain is descent to the name Ġuṣyain which is mentioned in inscription no. 3 in this study.

### **2.3. The language of inscriptions**

These three inscriptions were engraved on a plaque stone in a slightly grave way, without any decorations except for what appeared on the letter (S) in several words such as, nine, Sakin, Soufal-Ḥasani. It appears like the form of an English V shape, and possibly to distinguish it from the letter Š; it could be considered as decorative ornament that it was popularized in the Ayyubid and Malmukian period. It appeared in many calligraphic manuscripts which appear in al-Qalqašandee book *Šubaḥ of al-<sup>°</sup>Aaša* above the letter S [24]. It also appeared in one of the memorial inscription in <sup>°</sup>Ajloun castle in Jordan which used this type of singe which is like a decoration (v shape above letter S)) to show the beauty of the inscription and to be in a good appearance [25]. It is also for the mistakes made by the engraver of inscriptions to overlook the points of letters (I<sup>°</sup>jām, consonant poi-

ning) as in the second inscription, as it appears that the inscriber in the first inscription has added the letter A instead of Fathā (short vowel of A). This indicates that the inscriber wrote in the spoken language when he inscribed the letter A instead of Fathā at the end of the word *Yartaḥla* (move away). The most important character is the letter A in these inscriptions which has a lower end is slightly turned to the left as a curve [26], and there is a distinguishes syneresis's of two the letters ensemble which appeared in the word Bin [26]. The inscriber in the first inscription misspelled the word Ġadan (tomorrow) by adding the letter "E" according to his pronunciation dialect.

### **3. Results**

The study showed that many Arab tribes in the Area of Badia of Jordan and south of Horan were moving and recording their memories in different types of invocation and historical events at that time. This indicates that there an educated society exited at that time, and people used to memorize areligious texts. It shows that people, such as the asceticism poets, were able implement and record these invocations in the surface stones in a correct orthographic form, which was common at that time. The second inscription mentioned the name of the town of <sup>°</sup>Urmān which was located in south Horan from the area of Šalḥad whom confirmed his arrival to wadi al-Ġuṣyain in Jordan and who took his name from the person Fuhayd Bin Ġuṣyian in a more modern period; this is an important result of this study. It is common that sites are named after the names of people, and this is evidence of the origin of the name of the site known in Wadi Al-Ġuṣyain. This study focused on the methods of invocation formulas that were common at the time and compared inscriptions from south of Jordan and others countries as Arabia Saudi. It was found that that these formulas are similar because they have the same origin, which is the teaching of Islam.

#### 4. Discussion

The inscriptions generally are contemporary historical documents of human activity, recording information in their simplest content. As for the new inscriptions of the study, which have not been published before, they included much information about religious invocations, historical events, geographical information, onomastic names and tribal genealogy in the region of Badia of Jordan, which is part of Badiat al-Šāmm that indicates the movement of many tribal members in the region of Badia, especially livestock owners. If we know that many names are mentioned in different areas and periods in Jordanian Badia, as the people belonging to the al-Jašmi tribe and al-Zubaydee in the Mamluk period [27], the inscription points to the formulas of the Mamlukian period as that he attend (Ḥaḍar) in the site. We also find similar formulas in southern Jordan [28], as well as from Saudi Arabia, dated back to the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.H., where the word "Mara" (attend) was commonly used [29] and was found in early inscriptions. The engraver of the inscription referred to two verses of poetry on wisdom and asceticism for the life in a correct orthographic form except for two linguistic mistakes, which indicates the spread of the phenomenon of preserving poetry and wisdom among the people of Badia and indicates that they were literate and well-educated. The inscriber of the second inscription mentioned one of the geographical sites that are now found in Syria called °Urmān. Perhaps the most important topic is the name of the person in the third inscription, which mentions his name as Fuhayd Bin Ğuṣyian Bin Zmād Bin Ğuṣyian Bin °Atiyah Bin °Išām al-Ḥasani Al-Zubayidi. I believe that he was from the public because I did not find his name in the historical resources; his name indicates to the name of the site now, which is known as Wadi Ğuṣyian. It has undoubtedly been attributed to that person. It should be noted that the forms of the invocations in the Mamluk period in the Jordanian Badia, characterize by skin-

for mercy, and the request for forgiveness of the reader of his writing (inscriptions) and the prayer for all Muslims were common at that time, as this a historical document mentioned names of tribe's descent in the third inscription.

#### 5. Conclusion

*It is clear from the study of these new inscriptions from the Mamlukian period, that the region was the residence and a passage of many tribes at that time, especially if we consider the concentration of the tribal name around the area of the site of discovery and in southern Ḥwran in Syria now. The inscribers had knowledge and religious asceticism represented by the prayers and preservation of poetry in asceticism and their accuracy in the implementation of these inscriptions on basalt stones. One of the most important characteristics of the third inscription mentioned one of the towns that still preserves its name until now, which is called °Urmān. Regarding the ascetic poetry, it appears recorded after many historical sources of that period. This means that the inscription is the oldest of these verses. In addition, they indicate to their knowledge of the calendar of period even though they are in the Badia. Furthermore, we confirmed the origin of the name of the Wadi Al-Ĝuṣyian or Biār Al-Ĝuṣyian as well-known at recent time in this study.*

#### Endnote

Yaqout al-Ḥamawee mentioned a number of Harat like Harat Rajel in Jordan, and he describes Ḥarra in which basalt rocks exit in abundance..."it was as if the rocks have been baked in hell". (al-Hamawe vol. 2: 1977 p 246 )

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