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## Hadramitic documents written on palm-leaf stalks\*

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One of the most important results obtained by the Soviet Yemenite Joint Complex Expedition (SOYCE) during its nine campaigns of field work in 1983-1991 consists in the discovery of approximately 22 inscribed palm-leaf stalks at the site of Raybūn I in the western part of inland Ḥaḍramawt.<sup>1</sup> The majority of them (six in 1986, of which five are illustrated in Figure 1, and at least nine<sup>2</sup> in 1987) were found in the ruins of private houses (Raybūn I, building 6 and Raybūn I, area I). Of the seven documents revealed in 1989, six were found in the room east of the southern staircase of building 4 of the Raḥbān, temple of the goddess Dhāt Ḥimyam, and one was discovered north of the same building.<sup>3</sup> These Hadramitic texts are still the only Old South Arabian documents on wood found in the course of scientific archaeological excavations.<sup>4</sup> In some cases it seems possible to establish a certain correlation between their dating and the development of a local variety of the minuscule script.

For instance, the only Hadramitic text on wood published so far was discovered north of building 4 in the rubbish layer formed during the construction of this building and is to be traced back to the sixth century BC or even earlier.<sup>5</sup> It is worthy of note that its script, which bears a close resemblance to the monumental one (Bauer, Akopjan & Lundin 1990: 170, fig. 2, 172),<sup>6</sup> has proved to be the most archaic. There are good reasons to consider this document as the unique specimen of the initial, or 'quasi-monumental', stage in the evolution of minuscule writing.

The translation proposed by Bauer and Lundin seems dubious, especially of the interpretation of 'm as '110 (animals offered in sacrifice)' (Bauer, Akopjan & Lundin 1990: 172-173). Firstly, no occurrence of South Arabian numerical symbols in any Hadramitic inscription has yet been attested. When these symbols are used in the documents on wood, they are put, as usual, between special figure brackets (see, for instance, Ryckmans 1997a: 211-2). Moreover, it is hardly possible to explain the abnormal order of the signs used here, 'm instead of m' which would designate '110'. The number of animals or other objects of sacrifice denoted by the term *dbḥ-m/zbḥ-m* as in the present document is never referred to elsewhere in the inscriptions of Raybūn. It should also be noted that the goddess Dhāt Ṣaḥrān mentioned in this text on wood in the form of Zāt Ṣaḥrān (*ZT-ṢHR-n*)<sup>7</sup> belonged to the Qatabanian pantheon whose principal deity was 'Amm ('M). Dedications to this god are attested at Raybūn, although in texts from a private house (Raybūn I, building 6), rather than from the temple of Raḥbān.<sup>8</sup> Thus a more probable interpretation of this document, which is here designated with the siglum X.Rb-89 no. 7, would be:

'Amm. And Zāt Ṣaḥrān appointed a sacrifice  
(<sup>1</sup>)*cM/w-tḥm-m/ZT-ṢHR-n* / (<sup>2</sup>)*zbḥ-m*<sup>9</sup>

The meaning of the verb *ḥm*, here attested in Hadramitic for the first time, which fits this context perfectly, is based on analogy with the Arabic geminate verb *ḥamma* used in the expression *ḥamma* (or *aḥamma*) *la-hu kaḏā* 'He (God) decreed, or

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FIGURE 1. *Hadramitic documents on wood discovered at Raybūn in 1986.*



appointed, to him, or for him, such a thing' (Lane 1863-1893: 635).<sup>10</sup> In any case the document does not represent a complete text, but a draft probably compiled with the intention of offering a dedication, or two different dedications, to the god 'Amm and the goddess Zāt Ṣahrān.

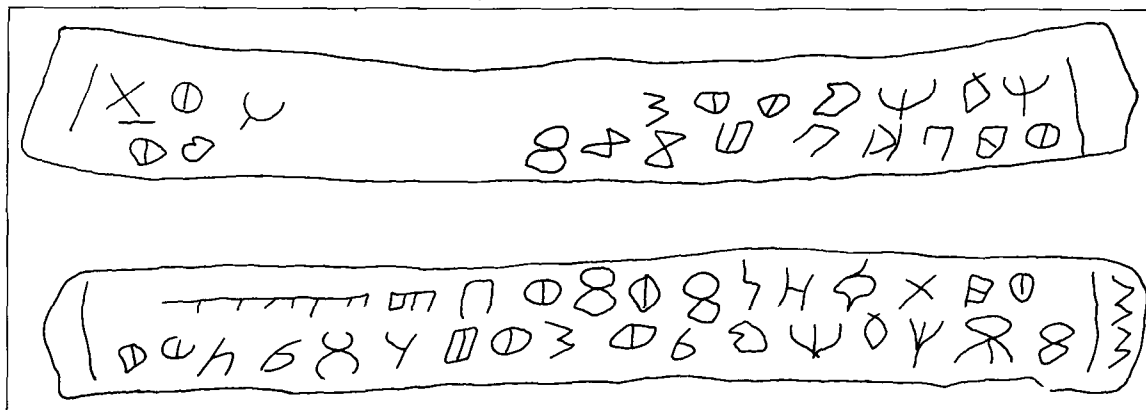
The greatest problem in the interpretation of the other Hadramitic texts inscribed on palm-leaf stalks lies in their rather poor state of preservation and in the lack of direct parallels among the documents on wood from Nashshān. In the opinion of A.G. Lundin, even the script of the texts from Raybūn differs from the varieties of minuscule writing already attested. But sometimes, when the main part of a document is extant and its script is not far from the monumental one, it seems possible to propose a decipherment which, given the present level of our knowledge must remain hypothetical. From this point of view, the document on a palm-leaf stalk which has been given the siglum Rb I/87 bld. 6 no. 37 = X.Rb-87 no. 4, appears to be suitable for publication. More than three-quarters of this fragmentary text is preserved. It was discovered, together with five other inscribed stalks, in room XXVIII of building 6. Originally this room was used for the storage and processing of grain, but then was adapted for keeping of livestock (Vinogradov 1996: 77-79). According to the epigraphic diary of A. G. Lundin, the stalk X.Rb-87

no. 4 was found in the lower level of room XXVIII, which on the basis of the radiocarbon dating goes back to the fifth-fourth centuries BC (Popov *et al.* 1996: 196). It is very significant that its script represents a stage after that of X.Rb-89 no. 7 in the development of Hadramitic minuscule writing. The shape of some characters, such as 'alif, b, d, d, f, k, m, n, t has begun to change to a greater or lesser extent, while others, for example, d, s<sup>1</sup>, s<sup>2</sup>, s, t, t, w, z, remain for the most part similar to their monumental prototypes. It seems reasonable to denote this stage as 'proto-minuscule'. A detailed analysis of these letter-shapes is given below in the commentary. In this connection, Prof. J. Ryckmans has drawn my attention to the archaic abecedary written on a palm-leaf stalk, LO 37, which he has published (Ryckmans 1997b). The forms of some characters in this, especially of s, f, t, z, t, are quite close to those of the present text.

The most striking feature of X.Rb-87 no. 4 is the absolute lack of word-dividers. Apart from some short graffiti, no other example of this text can be found in South Arabian epigraphy. Though the reading of almost all the signs, with two or three exceptions, has been established,<sup>11</sup> the interpretation of this document is not completely certain and to some extent remains obscure. However, I dare propose it, if only to start the discussion.<sup>12</sup>

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FIGURE 2. The inscribed Hadramitic palm-leaf stalk X.Rb-87 no. 4 (tracing).



**X.Rb-87 no. 4**

**Dimensions**

(Figs 2 and 3). Length: 14 cm; width: 1.6-2 cm. The right and left margins are each marked by a vertical line drawn approximately 0.6 cm from each end of the stalk. It should be noted that the documents on wood from Nashshān are also characterized by margins clearly drawn at both ends of the text. The dimensions of the signs fluctuate from 0.2 x 0.3 to 0.5x 0.7 cm.

**Transliteration**

1. HF hmw WS<sup>2</sup>..... hwt
2. w-dbd b(?) -wzz-t .....mw.
- right margin: s<sup>2</sup> 3. wd<>t >dn-t w-tw̄b-[a long horizontal stroke with small vertical lines showing that there was no text on this spot]
- right margin: s<sup>2</sup> 4. t shf hmk w-s<sup>2</sup>w t h(?) -tk-s'ww

**Translation**

<sup>(1)</sup>Haff, father-in-law (or brother-in-law) of W-sh...., ... cried <sup>(2)</sup>and disturbed her comfort (?) ..... <sup>(3)</sup>She manifested her goodwill and her forgiveness. <sup>(4)</sup>He wrote down a draft and inscribed a stick because of his two wicked acts (sins).

**Commentary**

**Line 1**

HF hmw: of these five characters the form of the first h and both w's are very close to those of the corresponding monumental letters. A similar h has

already been found in X.JRy b-2, l. 3 (Ryckmans 1994: 259, table; Ryckmans & Lundin 1997: 174 pl. I, 175 fig. 1). The sign after the first h has been read as f, rather than 'ayn, and this is confirmed by the use of the same character in the verb shf at the beginning of l. 4. The shape of the m here slightly resembles that of the minuscule m in X.JRy b-1 (Ryckmans 1994: 259, table). The second h with a larger and lower cup differs considerably from the first. Although the interpretation of this group of signs as a proper noun HFHMW seems tempting, especially in view of the very frequent occurrence of the element -HMW in the onomasticon of Raybūn,<sup>13</sup> it cannot be accepted, since the vertical bar of the second h clearly passes through its cup. The personal name HF is already attested in Ṣafaitic as well as the names HFF and 'HFF derived from the same root (Harding 1971: 27, 194, 195). It should be emphasized that in the inscriptions from the temple of Ḥadrān at Raybūn a large number of proper nouns which have parallels in North Arabian epigraphy have been found, such as BNN-m, HQM, HDT HṢR-m, LHM-m, NDB-m, QML-m, YDR, etc., and some of them (for example, HQM, YDR) occur here for the first time in the South Arabian onomasticon.<sup>14</sup> Hmw seems to be the common Semitic term expressing the relationship 'father-in-law' / 'brother-in-law', used here in the status constructus (compare bn and bnw (sing., st. constr.) in Sabaic, see Beeston et al. 1982: 29). It fits the general context rather well, since in other Semitic languages this term can signify a woman's husband's male relative and in this text

**FIGURE 3.** *The inscribed Hadramitic palm-leaf stalk X.Rb-87 no. 4. a: The whole document before restoration; b: lines 1-2 before restoration; c: after restoration; d: lines 3-4 before restoration; e: after restoration.*



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the suffix pronoun *-t* (sing. f.) occurs three times (ll. 2-4). If our interpretation of *hmw* is correct, it would be the first attestation of this noun in South Arabian epigraphy. The mention of women's relatives sometimes occurs in the monumental inscriptions of Raybūn. In Rb I/89 bld. 4 no. 143 – SOYCE 2306/1-2, for instance, the 'brothers of the woman', probably the author's wife (*ḥhy/s<sup>3</sup>t-n*), are referred to.

**WS<sup>2</sup> [lacuna]:** both characters are very close in shape to their monumental prototypes. In all probability these are the first two letters of a woman's personal name. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain to whom the pronoun *-t* at the beginning of l. 2 refers, since the size of the lacuna in l. 1 is large enough for only five-six signs and the name of a goddess would not be appropriate in the context. The strongest objection against such an interpretation is the lack of women's names beginning with *WS<sup>2</sup>* in the onomasticon of pre-Islamic Arabia. Even men's names beginning with these letters are rare (Harding 1971: 643). On the other hand, several names have been attested at Raybūn for the first time.

**hwt:** all three characters greatly resemble their equivalents in the monumental script, but the cup of the *h* is too large and too low. Verbs derived from the root *HWT*, which means 'cry, shout', occur in some dialects of Arabic (*hawwata* [against the Classical form *hayyata*] *bi*-... 'call out to someone', 'cry out to someone and call him', see Lane 1863-1893: 2905), including Dathīna (*hawwata* 'crier', see de Landberg 1920-1942: iii 2885), and in Biblical Hebrew (*hāt/HŪT* 'shout at', see Brown, Driver & Briggs 1974: 223). This significance fits perfectly with that of the next word.

**Line 2**

**w-dbd:** while the forms of *d* and *b* have remained close to their monumental prototypes, the shape of *d* has become similar to the minuscule *d* in X.JRy b-1 (Ryckmans 1994: 259, table). The identification of the sign after *d* with *b* is confirmed by the photograph made before the stalk's restoration, on which the distinction can clearly be seen between the bars of this letter and the fissures in the middle of it and under it (compare figure 3a and b with 3c). In Classical Arabic *dabad* signifies *ḡayz*, i.e. 'anger',

'wrath', and the denominative verb *ḍabbada* (*ḍabbadtu-hu*) is interpreted as *ḍakartu-hu bi-mā yaḡīzu-hu* 'I spoke to him something that angered him' (Ibn Manẓūr 1300-1307 H: iv, 251)<sup>15</sup> or 'irriter, mettre quelqu'un en colère en lui rappelant quelque chose' (de Biberstein Kazimirski 1860: ii, 5). Thus the meaning 'irritate someone', 'make someone angry', 'disturb someone's quiet' can be ascribed to the Hadramitic verb *ḍbd*, in which case its mention directly after *hwt* 'cry' seems logical.

**b(?) -wzz-t:** it is very difficult to establish the correct reading of the first sign. The comparison between its appearance before and after the stalk's restoration allows us to suggest that it was *b*, but considerably slanted, unlike the *b* in *ḍbd*. One of the semicircles of the *w* is open, just as in X.JRy b-2, especially at the beginning of l. 5 (see Ryckmans & Lundin 1997: 175 fig. 1). The next two characters are definitely *z*, and their shapes are very similar to those of their monumental counterparts. The letter *t* has a very close parallel in LO 37 (Ryckmans 1997b: 15) and slightly resembles its minuscule analogue in X.JRy b-1 (Ryckmans 1994: 259, table). No derivative from the roots *BZZ* and *BDD* provides any sense suitable to this context. So it seems reasonable to consider *b-* as the preposition by which the verb *ḍbd* governs its object. If this is so, the only root whose general significance would be appropriate to the meaning of the preceding verb is *WDD* in Mehri (*hēwḍūḍ* 'make someone comfortable', *šēwḍūḍ* 'to be comfortable', *wēḍayḍ* 'comfortable, pleasant (person)', see Johnstone 1987: 422).<sup>16</sup> The interpretation of *ḍbd b-wzz-t* as '(he) disturbed her comfort' appears plausible.

Unfortunately it is not possible to propose any restoration for the lacuna in the second half of l. 2.

**Lines 3-4**

**wd<?>t ḍn-t w-twb-t:** while the forms of *w*, *d*, *t* still resemble those of their monumental prototypes and *t*, used here three times, retains almost the same minuscule form as in l. 2, 'alif, *d* and to some extent *n* are hardly recognizable. It is worthy of note that though 'alif has acquired a minuscule shape, there is a certain difference between it and other varieties of this letter discovered in documents on wood from north Yemen (cf. Ryckmans 1994: 259, table). The reading of *d*, *n* and *b* is confirmed by one of the

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photographs (Fig. 3a) and by the tracing of these signs made by A. G. Lundin before the restoration. There is a rather remote parallel to this expression in the dedicatory inscriptions of Raybūn, *i.e.* the formula  $tq^l/b-^2dn$  + a deity's name + objects of dedication (usually including  $^2dn$ ) 'he placed under the will of a certain deity ...'.<sup>17</sup> The omission of  $^2alif$  in  $wq^l<^2>t$  is not unique in South Arabian epigraphy. A similar situation is attested in the penitential text on bronze, Haram 40/9, where the jussive form  $yhl<^2>n$  'let him be forgiven' is written without  $^2alif$ . In both cases it is difficult, however, to decide, whether this represents a linguistic peculiarity or simply negligence on the part of the inscriber.<sup>18</sup> In this expression only  $^2dn$  'will' or 'goodwill' (see Beeston *et al.* 1982: 2) can easily be interpreted. Another spelling of  $twb$  has already been attested in Rb V/91 no. 61 *etc.*/10 ( $b-s^3wbh-s^1$  'by his offering' or 'by his repentance'),<sup>19</sup> but these meanings are not appropriate to the present context, where some wrong actions committed by a man, not by a woman, are implied. In all probability this Hadramitic term was ambivalent, like the Arabic verb *tāba*, derived from the cognate root, which is used both in the expression *tāba min danbi-hi* 'he desisted from his sin' and in *tāba-llāhu* '*alay-hi* 'God returned to forgiveness towards him' (Lane 1863-1893: 321). The sense 'forgiveness' or 'reward' (cf. *twb* in Sabaic, see Beeston *et al.* 1982: 152) would be suitable for our document too. As the verb  $wq^l<^2>t$ , it should be remembered that the meaning 'place (under a deity's will)' is restricted to its *t*-prefix (or *t*-infix) stem ( $tq^l$ ), while here its ground-stem is employed. A comparison with *wada'a* 'present, offer' in Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic (Piantenta 1990-1991 ii: 525-526)<sup>20</sup> seems more promising. As a result, the interpretation of the whole expression as 'she manifested her goodwill and her forgiveness (for the author of the text)' can be proposed with some hesitation. But the action described in these terms would be more suited to a divinity than to a woman. It is not impossible that by his shout the author insulted not only his daughter-in-law (or sister-in-law), but also the goddess she worshipped. Similar cases are referred to in SOYCE 705 and 706 (Frantsouzoff 1997). Perhaps the lost fragment at the end of l. 2 contained the name of this goddess.

**Line 4**

*shf*: the forms of *ṣ* and *ḥ* are quite similar to their monumental counterparts. The third sign must be identified as *f*, not *ʿayn* (cf. Ryckmans 1994: 259, table), since *shʿ* makes no sense at all. The discovery of the verb *shf* in one of the Hadramitic documents written on wood is probably the most important result of this study. It has already been found in Sabaic (Beeston *et al.* 1982: 142), Minaic (RÉS 2869/6) and Qatabanic (RÉS 3688/2, 6, 8), but only the last, which is one of the so-called Labakh texts,<sup>21</sup> is relevant here. It gives an account of the 'written agreement' (*shf-n*) established by Shahr Ghaylān, son of Abshibām, king of Qatabān, between a body of people called *ʿrby* of the god *ʿAmm* of Labakh and the tribe Kaḥad dhū Datinat (of Dathīna). The verb *shf*, employed in the form *l-(/y)shf*, was translated as 'register' or 'record' (Beeston 1971: 13). However, in the expression *hg/dt/shft-n/w-ʿs<sup>1</sup>tr-s<sup>1</sup>* 'according to this written document and to its inscriptions' (RÉS 3688/10)<sup>22</sup> the term derived from the root *SHF* and that for 'engraved texts' are juxtaposed. Moreover, the formula *ʿlm<sup>2</sup>y/d/S<sup>2</sup>HR* 'signed by Shahr' is used two lines later (RÉS 3688/12). According to another Qatabanic text RÉS 3566/21, the original of an important state document was to be inscribed 'on wood or stone' (*b-ʿd-m<sup>2</sup>w<sup>2</sup>bn-m*). It seems that in Qatabān official decrees and orders were sometimes written first on wood and then reproduced on stone. In this regard *ʿs<sup>1</sup>tr-s<sup>1</sup>* are to be interpreted as 'the engraved copies of *shft-n*'.<sup>23</sup> Thus the use of *shf* and its derivatives in RÉS 3688 and the occurrence of the same verb in the text on a palm-leaf stalk from Raybūn allows us to suggest that in Qatabanic and Hadramitic<sup>24</sup> it was used as *terminus technicus* meaning 'write on wood', like *zbr* in Sabaic (see TYA 5/6-7, Ryckmans, Müller & Abdallah 1994: 30,<sup>25</sup> 35-39).

*hmk*: *ḥ* with a large and very low cup and with almost no 'staff' differs greatly not only from the monumental prototype, but also from the *ḥ*'s at the beginning of l. 1 and in *shf*. The letter *m* has become very rounded with a small concave angle on the left just as in X.JRy b-11/1,3 (unpublished). The shape of the *k* here and at the end of l. 4, is closely paralleled in X.JRy b-2, l. 2 (see Ryckmans & Lundin 1997: 174 pl. I, 175 fig. 1) and X.JRy b-11/4-6. In Arabic, *ḥamak* has a wider range of





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FIGURE 5. The inscribed Hadramitic palm-leaf stalk X.Rb-89 no. 1 (undeciphered).



was considered to be a breach of religious regulations and required repentance on his part, then took this document to a stone-engraver (*grby-hn*)<sup>26</sup> to order a dedicatory inscription. Having offered the letter to a deity (probably Dhāt Ḥimyam), he then threw away this draft, written on wood, in a service room of his house.

On the basis of the reading, established for X.Rb-89 no. 7 and X.Rb-87 no. 4, the palaeographic study of Hadramitic minuscule writing can be initiated (see Fig. 4). In all probability the next, third, stage of its development is represented by the texts on wood found in the room east of the southern staircase of building 4 at Raḥbān, the temple of the goddess Dhāt Ḥimyam, and dated from the third-first centuries BC, for instance, by X.Rb-89 no. 1 (Fig. 5) which remains undeciphered. Only at that stage did the genuine minuscule script come into being in Ḥaḍramawt.

#### Notes

\* I express my profound gratitude to Professor Jacques Ryckmans who made important critical remarks on the present paper and kindly permitted me to refer to some unpublished documents on wood from the collection of the Oosters Instituut in Leiden.

<sup>1</sup> Some stalks were prepared for inscribing, but remained unused (see, for instance, Bauer, Akopjan & Lundin 1990: 173 fig. 4).

<sup>2</sup> The total number of documents on palm-leaf stalks discovered in 1987 is not known exactly, since the epigraphic documentation for this year

in the archives of the SOYCE is unfortunately incomplete.

<sup>3</sup> This is the only Hadramitic text on wood published until now (Bauer, Akopjan & Lundin 1990: 170 fig. 2, 172-173).

<sup>4</sup> Apart from the Hadramitic documents written on wood, the other inscribed sticks and palm-leaf stalks originate in north Yemen and seem to have been discovered during illegal excavations at the site of as-Sawdā' (ancient Nashshān) (Beeston 1989: 15; Breton 1994: 1-4).

<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Alexander V. Sedov for information on the dating of the archaeological strata at Raybūn.

<sup>6</sup> Because of this, the edition of this text appeared without delay.

<sup>7</sup> The use of *z* instead of *d* in spelling of some words seems to be a specific feature of Hadramitic minuscule writing (cf. *zbh-m* in this text and *dbh-m* attested many times in monumental inscriptions of Raybūn). In the epigraphy of the temple of Raḥbān some dedications to Dhāt Ṣahrān (*DT(//)ṢHR-n*) also occur (Rb I/84 bld. 2, lev. I no. 104 a-c = SOYCE 777/2-3; Rb I/84 bld. 3, room A, lev. I no. 113 a-c = SOYCE 637/2; Rb I/84 bld. 3, room A, Lev. I no. 116 = SOYCE 635/1; Rb I/89 bld. 4, lev. I no. 299). As for *ṢHR-n*, it was probably a local orthographic variant of *ZHR-n*, since in the Hadramitic text Hamilton 8/3 found at Shabwa, capital of the ancient kingdom of Ḥaḍramawt, the name of this goddess has the

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same spelling as in the majority of Qatabanic inscriptions, i.e. *DT/ZHR-n*.

- <sup>8</sup> Lundin 1996: 85-91, figs 1-3.
- <sup>9</sup> Although the reading *hm-m* is clearly discernible on the photograph as well as on the tracing (Bauer, Akopjan & Lundin 1990: 170 fig. 2), the editors of the text transcribed this word, by a strange mistake, as *thrm-m* (Bauer, Akopjan & Lundin 1990: 172). As a result, their translation needs to be revised. No interpretation has yet been proposed for the last two signs of the document, whose shape is close to that of *h* in monumental script (see Bauer, Akopjan & Lundin 1990: 172), but it is interesting to note that in a considerable number of the inscriptions of Raybūn analogous signs, which sometimes resemble South Arabian characters, occur outside the main text. G.M. Bauer suggested that these might be masons' marks and this may also be the explanation of the two *h*'s at the end of the present document.
- <sup>10</sup> The mīmation at the end of the imperfect form *thrm-m* was correctly interpreted by the editors as a suffix of the energetic mood (Bauer, Akopjan & Lundin 1990: 173). This phenomenon is quite widespread in the Hadramitic texts from Raybūn (Frantsouzoff 1995: 15, 19, 23 n. 5, 25 n. 24).
- <sup>11</sup> Like several other inscribed palm-leaf stalks from Raybūn, X.Rb-87 no. 4 underwent restoration in the laboratory of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg Branch) which consisted of cleaning the dirt from the stalk's surface, stabilizing it and filling in the fissures. As a result, some characters, which were not visible before, are now legible. But at the same time the traces of certain former fissures became almost indistinguishable, at least on photographs, from the lines of the letters. Thus, in order to establish the correct reading of this document it is necessary to compare the photographs made before the restoration (Fig 3a, b, d)) and after it (Fig 3 c, e).
- <sup>12</sup> It should be noted that I have had a chance to examine this stalk, which is now kept in the Museum of Say'ūn (Ḥaḍramawt, Republic of Yemen), *de visu* in October 1998.
- <sup>13</sup> Thirteen names of this type have been found in Mayfa'ān, four in Raḥbān, one or two in Ḥaḍrān, one in Kafas/Na'mān and one in the private house Rb I bld. 6. Many of them are attested for the first time in South Arabian epigraphy.
- <sup>14</sup> A detailed analysis of the onomasticon of Ḥaḍrān is presented in the first part of the volume *Raybūn*, where all the texts of this sanctuary are edited. Its publication in the series *Inventaire des inscriptions sudarabiques* is imminent.
- <sup>15</sup> See the exact meaning of the expression *ḍakara-hu bi...* in Lane 1863-1893: 968-969.
- <sup>16</sup> Thanks to the documents from Raybūn, it is now established firmly that in epigraphic Hadramitic the sounds represented by *z* and *ḍ* had fallen together under a single phoneme probably because of the disappearance of interdentals in this language (Frantsouzoff, forthcoming, b: II. 1; cf. Beeston 1984: § H 2: 2). However, unlike the monumental inscriptions, the local minuscule writing seems to have retained both letters *z* and *ḍ* to render this one phoneme (see n. 7 above and n. 17 below).
- <sup>17</sup> The analysis of this formula is given in Frantsouzoff 1995: 21-22. Probably because of its frequent occurrence in the texts of Raybūn, the spelling of *ḍn* with *ḍ* was preserved even in minuscule writing, where *ḍ* was often replaced by *z* (see X.Rb-89 no. 7 above).
- <sup>18</sup> The omission of *ʿayn* in another penitential text on bronze, Haram 33/9 (*ts<sup>2</sup><ʿ>r*), for instance, was obviously an error on the part of the inscriber.
- <sup>19</sup> This text is edited in Frantsouzoff 1998.
- <sup>20</sup> It is clear that in this Hadramitic root *ʿalif* corresponds to Arabic and common Semitic *ʿayn* (see Pirenne 1979: 206-7).
- <sup>21</sup> See the most reliable edition in Beeston 1971: 9-18 and plate.
- <sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, this expression is omitted in Beeston's translation of RÉS 3688 (1971: 13). The term *ṣḥft* is attested once in the epigraphy of Raybūn (Rb I/84 passage, lev. I no. 199 a-b = SOYCE 737/1), but in a fragmentary context which cannot contribute at all to its true interpretation.
- <sup>23</sup> It is interesting to note that N. Rhodokanakis translated *ṣ<sup>l</sup>ṭr-s<sup>l</sup>* as 'seinen Ausfertigungen' ('its duplicates') (RÉS, s.v.).

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- <sup>24</sup> Probably also in Minaic. In connection with the occurrence of the verb *ṣḥf* in X.Rb-87 no. 4/4 Prof. J. Ryckmans has pointed out that the term *ṣḥft-n* is already attested in the unpublished Minaic document on wood LO 30/2 in a very significant context *b-ḥg/s<sup>1</sup>tr/dt/ṣḥft-n* which appears to mean 'according to the engraved copy of this document'.
- <sup>25</sup> The verb *zbr* is mentioned in TYA 5, not in TYA 6 which is cited there in error.
- <sup>26</sup> The status of stone-engravers in the society of Raybūn has been examined in Frantsouzoff, forthcoming, a.

#### Sigla of the inscriptions cited

Ghul A & B	Ryckmans 1993
Hamilton 8	Brown & Beeston 1954: 55-56, fig. 2, pl. 18; Pirenne 1990: 69 and pl. 53a.
Haram 33, 40	Robin 1992: 100-102, 109-110, pls 11a, 15a.
LO	Oosters Instituut Leiden.
RÉS	<i>Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique</i> . Paris, 1900-1968. 8 volumes.
TYA 1, 5	Ryckmans, Müller & Abdallah 1994: 74 (photograph), 75, 83 (transcription), 43-4, 51-52 (description and interpretation).
X.JRy b-2	Ryckmans & Lundin 1997.

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