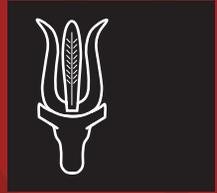


ARABIA ANTICA 8

PHILOGICAL STUDIES

INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE SOUTHERN
HIGHLANDS OF YEMEN

ALESSIA PRIOLETTA



«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER

ARABIA ANTICA 8
Philological Studies

collana diretta da
Alessandra Avanzini

to my father and my mother

Alessia Prioletta

INSCRIPTIONS FROM
THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS OF YEMEN

The Epigraphic Collections
of the Museums of Baynūn and Dhamār

«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER

ALESSIA PRIOLETTA
Inscriptions from the southern highlands of Yemen.
The epigraphic collections of the museums of Baynūn and Dhamār

Redazione e impaginazione a cura di Alessandra Lombardi

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Editor's Preface

There are various reasons why I am particularly pleased to see the publication of this book by Alessia Prioletta in the series *Arabia Antica*. It represents the first volume by one of my former students, who attended my lectures at the University of Pisa and chose me as her thesis advisor when she was studying for her doctoral degree at the University of Florence. Subsequently, she has been a close collaborator and the moving force behind many of the projects undertaken by our group in recent years.

Furthermore, I may say that the region of Dhamār, which is the focus of her research, has occupied a very important place in my work and my life. It was the first area of Yemen that I had the opportunity to visit, at the beginning of the 1980s. I carried out an epigraphical survey at Dhamār for several years as part of a very small group consisting of three young women – myself, Stefania Mazzoni and Lidia Bettini. The mission was directed by my professor Pelio Fronzaroli of the University of Florence. Daniela Amaldi collaborated on two of these expeditions.

It became immediately clear that the zone was of interest, and in particular concealed a wealth of undiscovered epigraphic material, whose historical context however long continued to elude us. From the beginning the documentation, the identity of the tribes from the Dhamār region, their relationship with the great civilization of Saba³ were all problems that we investigated without succeeding in finding clear answers. The region seemed to be almost completely devoid of archaic documentation and marginal to the early phase of the history of ancient South Arabia.

Among the projects that I have directed in recent years, the cataloguing of the vast corpus of inscriptions conserved in the museums of Yemen as part of the CASIS project has without doubt yielding some of the most interesting and in some ways unexpected results. The two museums in Dhamār and the museum in Baynūn have provided us with an abundance of historical documentation that has led to a new and better understanding of the history of the region.

To the epigraphic sources stored in museums we soon added other inscriptions more recently brought to light in the region through the dedicated and extremely competent efforts of Khaldūn Nuʿmān, material that has been studied and published by him in his doctoral thesis in the University of Pisa.

For the first time therefore it is possible to retrace, over the entire, long course of the history of ancient South Arabia, the political and cultural contribution of the populations dwelling on the high plateau of southern Yemen. This will prove crucial to our understanding of the complex civilizations of the region (in particular the relationship between the kingdoms of Saba⁹ and Qatabān), a region which in geographic terms formed a bridge between the desert and the ocean, between the caravan routes and the maritime trade.

The book by Alessia Prioletta provides a comprehensive overview of the region and concrete evidence of the progress that has been made in our knowledge of its history and languages.

Alessandra Avanzini

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank first of all Prof. Alessandra Avanzini, who gave me the opportunity to work in Yemen and study this splendid material. I also thank her for the advice, encouragement and confidence she gave me during the long preparation of this volume. I am very grateful to Prof. Christian Robin, who offered to read and comment on these pages, giving me numerous and challenging insights. I am indebted to Khaldūn Nuʿmān, a generous friend and colleague who shared with me his epigraphic material and his great knowledge of the region of Dhamār.

I thank the Yemeni authorities for their cooperation during the cataloguing work: the GOAM, the University of Dhamār, Prof. Yūsuf ʿAbdallāh, ʿAmīda Shuʿlān, Aḥmad al-ʿUzayzī, ʿAli al-Sabanānī and Muḥammad al-Shariʿ; my friends and colleagues in Pisa for their daily support, Jérémie Schiettecatte for providing me with his maps, and Megan Donovan for the English revisions.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to Alessandra Lombardi, the copy-editor for this book, for her competent work, suggestions and patience.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

LANGUAGES

Ar.	Arabic	m	masculine name
ASA	Ancient South Arabian	n	nisbe
Can.	Canaanite	p	patronymic
HAD	Ḥaḍramitic	sb	sacred building
MIN	Minaic	tp	toponym
QAT	Qatabanic	tr	tribe
SAB	Sabaic		
SEM	Semitic		

LINGUISTIC TERMS

0 ₁	base stem of the verb	()	uncertain reading
0 ₂	unaugmented derived stem of the verb	[]	restored lacuna
H	causative stem of the verb	[., [... ...]	unrestored lacuna
neg.	negative particle	< >	added omitted text
T ₁	t-derived stem of the verb (reflexive of the 0 ₁ stem)	{ }	deletion
T ₂	t-derived stem of the verb (reflexive of the 0 ₂ stem)	* *	emendation
		(())	variant
		–	broken word
		-	clitic
			word separator
		→	turn side

SYMBOLS

PROPER NAMES

Ḥim	era of Ḥimyar
e	epithet
f	feminine name
g	god
l	lineage

MEASURES

D	diameter
H	height
LH	letter height
TH	thickness
W	width

FOREWORD

Project CASIS

This volume examines the epigraphic collections preserved in the three museums of the governorate of Dhamār: the Museum of Baynūn (BynM), the Regional Museum of Dhamār (DhM), and the Museum of the University of Dhamār (ThUM).

The corpus includes 235 inscriptions: the most numerous collection is that of the Regional Museum (116 inscriptions), followed by the Museum of Baynūn (89) and the University Museum (30).¹

The Museums of Dhamār were inventoried within a cooperation project between Italy and Yemen called CASIS (Cataloguing and Fruition of South Arabian Inscriptions through an IT Support).²

Comprised of Italian and Yemeni researchers, the first cataloguing campaign was held in November 2007, when the entire collection of each mu-

¹ Some very small fragments of a few signs have not been included in this catalogue but are consultable on the DASI website (<http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/>).

² CASIS was part of the projects approved by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) within the Executive Programme of Scientific and Technological Cooperation between Italy and Yemen during 2006-2009 and was funded by the Italian Ministry for University and Research (MIUR) from 2007 to 2010. The project was based on a cooperation agreement signed by the University of Pisa, the Ministry for University and Research of Yemen and the General Organization for Antiquities and Museums of Yemen (GOAM). The scientific coordinators of the projects were Alessandra Avanzini, Yūsuf ʿAbdallāh and ʿAmīda Shuʿlān. Extensive information on the activities and results of CASIS may be found on the Arabia Antica website under the subheading “Epigraphy/Past projects/CASIS” (<http://arabiantica.humnet.unipi.it/>).

seum was photographed and catalogued.³ In 2008, the inscriptions were published in the “Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions from the Yemeni Museums” section of the CSAI database.⁴ In July 2009, the CASIS team returned to the museums of Dhamār to catalogue the newly acquired inscriptions and re-photograph some of the old ones.⁵

The collection of bronze objects in the Museum of Baynūn – a collection that includes two inscribed objects republished in this catalogue as well as number of anepigraphic artefacts – was brought to Pisa in 2008 and restored by Gianluca Buonomini of the Department of Historical Sciences of the Ancient World of the University of Pisa. The collection was later shown in an exhibition held in Pisa (May-June 2009) and at the National Museum of Ṣan‘ā’ (July-August 2009).⁶

Organization and edition criteria of the texts

The three museum collections are presented separately and all objects are labelled according to a progressive numbering system. Within each museum collection, a subdivision according to textual typology was adopted, and the main categories designating these inscriptions are “Construction inscriptions” and “Dedicatory inscriptions”. The Regional Museum has a single inscription that, for its particular type, is classified as a “Commemorative inscription”. Many fragmentary inscriptions, often problematical to classify, were ultimately designated as “Minor fragments of uncertain typology”. Inscriptions that contain only names, including funerary stelae with the name of the object and author, are categorized as “Onomastics” in each museum collection. In this category, items are presented according to the

³ The 2007 team was comprised of Alessia Prioretta (University of Pisa), Ekaterina Gushchina (University of Pisa), Muḥammad al-Ḥāj (University of Ṣan‘ā’), ‘Abdallāh Makyāsh (University of Aden), Khaldūn Nu‘mān (University of Dhamār), Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥusaynī (GOAM) and ‘Abdulḥakīm Qāyd (GOAM). The inscriptions were photographed by Ṣalāḥ al-Ḥusaynī.

⁴ CSAI (Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions; <http://csai.humnet.unipi.it/>). From September 2013, CSAI has been incorporated into the new database DASI (Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions), a website that will include the whole epigraphic corpus from the pre-Islamic Arabian peninsula (<http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/>).

⁵ In 2009, Alessia Prioretta, Gianluca Buonomini and Khaldūn Nu‘mān worked in the museums; during that campaign, the pieces were photographed by Gianluca Buonomini.

⁶ A catalogue of the bronze collection has also been published (Avanzini 2009 a).

type of artefact and in a sequence that generally includes stones, slabs, incense burners, stelae, etc. Some special groups of artefacts, such as the Regional Museum of Dhamār's "Inscribed bronze objects" and "Inscribed pottery vessels and figurines," are collected together regardless of their textual typology.

The editing criteria by which the inscriptions are presented generally follow those adopted in the CSAI edition and later revised for the edition on the new DASI website. Each inscription's subsidiary information is included in a caption listing its bibliographical and concordance reference (if any), language, provenance, and object measures.

With regard to language, the dedicatory inscriptions in non-Sabaic language that are conserved in both the Museum of Baynūn and the Regional Museum of Dhamār were gathered in specific sub-chapters. Most of the inscriptions in the museums of Dhamār come from either Ḥimyarite or Sabaean sites, and are therefore written in Sabaic. In this case, the inscriptions were divided according to the Sabaic linguistic chronology, which includes the following subdivisions: early Sabaic, middle Sabaic and late Sabaic. As for the middle Sabaic, an additional subdivision was adopted, whenever possible, on the basis of internal textual data or of the provenance of the item: southern middle Sabaic (for inscriptions that originate from the southern Yemen plateau); central middle Sabaic (inscriptions from central areas of Saba⁷, from the northern plateau and from some sites of the Jawf); and middle Sabaic (when no sub-categorisation was possible).

The use of palaeography was mainly limited to a general description of the graphic style and rarely used as a dating tool, following, depending on the chronological period and the type of documentation, the lines employed in the groundbreaking studies by J. Pirenne,⁷ and, especially for Qatabanic documentation, those by A. Avanzini.⁸

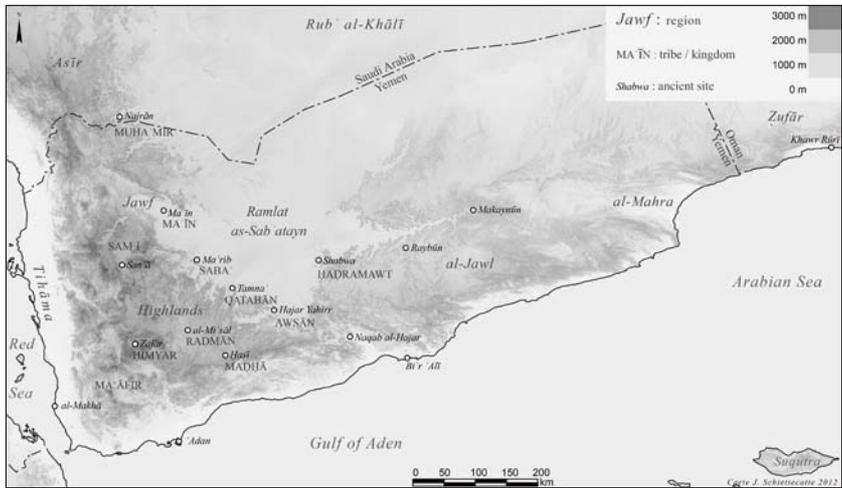
In most cases, proper names have remained unvocalized in translation, with the exception of names well known in the Arabic tradition (particularly for the Ḥimyarite kings) or names whose vocalization has become common among scholars, such as those of the important tribes and cities.

The edition of the epigraphic collections of the three museums is preceded by a general presentation of the material. Since most of the inscriptions

⁷ Pirenne 1956.

⁸ Avanzini 2004.

preserved in these museums are sourced locally, and, in consideration of the huge amount of new historical, linguistic, and cultural information provided by these texts, a more in-depth study has been devoted to the inscriptions from Dhamār so as to draw attention to the importance and novelty of this documentation. Together with the discoveries made in recent years throughout the region, the inscriptions preserved in these museums highlight an area that in antiquity was extraordinarily vital and varied, often playing a crucial role in the destinies of the different South Arabian kingdoms and whose careful understanding can significantly enhance our knowledge of pre-Islamic South Arabia.



Map of Ancient South Arabia.

INTRODUCTION

I. INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE REGION OF DHAMĀR

PREVIOUS STUDIES AND FIELD RESEARCH

The Dhamār governorate,¹ which takes its name from its capital and largest city, lies in the middle of the Yemen plateau, between the governorates of Ṣan[°]ā[°], to the north, and Ibb, to the south. Extending towards the northern and southern boundaries of the governorate, the great plain of Qā[°]c Jahrān occupied the central part of the region. Topographically, the governorate boasts numerous volcanic mountains such as the Jabal al-Lasī and Jabal Isbīl, as well as the mountains of Ḍūrān, °Utma, and Ūṣāb.

As a result of the number of ancient pre-Islamic sites discovered, the areas most historically significant for the purposes of our research are the district of Jahrān (Ḍāf, Ma[°]bar) occupying the north-central part of the governorate, the largest district of al-Ḥadā[°] (Yakār, Būsān, Baynūn, al-°Aqm, Ḥammat al-Qā[°]c, Kawmān, Madīnat al-Ahjur) to the east, and Ḍūrān Anis (Ḍūrān, °Āthayn, Madhāb) to the west. In the southern sector, the most important areas are the Dhamār district (with Dhamār, Hirrān, Rakhama), °Ans, an area even further south (Maṣna[°]at Mariya, Afq), and finally, in the eastern province is Mayfa[°]at °Ans (al-Aqmār, Kharibat al-Ahjur, Hakir, Ḥammat Dhiyāb, Sanabān, Ḥammat aḍ-Ḍab[°], Jarf an-Nu[°]mīya).

¹ Henceforth mostly referred to as the “region of Dhamār”.

The territory of Dhamār was densely inhabited since the highest antiquity. Between 1994 and 2002, the Dhamār Survey Project, a research project conducted by the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute reviewed about 400 sites dating from the Neolithic to the Islamic period. Of these sites, there were approximately 50 dating from the Bronze Age – one of the best examples being that of Ḥammāt al-Qā⁶² – that have helped to fill the “virtual demographic vacuum” that seemed to have preceded the birth of the Ancient South Arabian civilization.³ Additionally, these studies have shown that large sedentary sites located in the hilltops continuously occupied the highlands around Dhamār from the 3rd millennium until the end of the 1st millennium BC.

However, a number of changes are evident in the settlements dating from the 1st c. BC. Firstly, many of these sites moved away towards lower slopes in order to be closer to the region's large, cultivated fields that were a result of a highly effective network of dams. Secondly, from an architectural point of view, it was during this period that the typical architecture of the “tower houses” began to emerge. And, lastly, from the 1st c. BC the buildings more frequently became embellished with decorations carved in not only the local style, but also styles that were clearly inspired by external cultures, the Greco-Roman world in particular. From a historical standpoint, it is particularly important to note that T. J. Wilkinson considered these innovations in relation to the rise of Ḥimyar and the formation of the Ḥimyarite confederation. These changes can be linked to other important cultural innovations that, as will be seen, involved the populations of the region during that historical period.

The monumental Ancient South Arabian ruins of the region also stirred the imagination of the 10th c. versatile Arabic scholar al-Hamdānī, who saw them as the product of an advanced civilization and culture. Among the sites of the Dhamār region, al-Hamdānī considers Baynūn to be among the wonders of the ancient Yemen, noting that it is “a great settlement, full of wonders”. Al-Hamdānī goes on to mention other places like Afīq, Hakir, Aḍru⁶a, Madīnat al-Aḥjur, ⁶Utma.⁴

At the end of 1800, the first epigraphic documents from the region of Dhamār become known and were collected by E. Glaser, the last of the great

² On this site, and for an exhaustive bibliography of studies devoted to the Bronze Age in this region, see Schiettecatte 2011: 248-250.

³ Cf. Wilkinson 2005: 5-14.

⁴ Cf. Faris 1938: 40, 55-56.

pioneers of South Arabian epigraphy. During the last of his four expeditions in Yemen (1892-1894), the Austrian explored the road that leads from Ṣanʿāʾ to Aden, and then visited the area of Maʿbar and Dhamār.⁵ The inscriptions found in the area were published in the collections of CIH and RES, publications promoted by the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres in Paris.⁶ However, it was not until the sixth and seventh volume of the *Sammlung* Eduard Glaser were published that more information about the important inscriptions copied by Glaser in Būsān, Maḍīnat al-Aḥjur, and especially Baynūn became available.⁷

Following the excursions of German explorers such as C. Rathjen during the 1930s,⁸ the region was once again visited when the explorations and epigraphic missions started up again in the 1960s, when P. A. Grjaznevič visited numerous sites in the Dhamār region during his trip of 1966-67.⁹

During M. al-Iryānī and A. Parrinello's visit to the site of Maṣnaʿat Māriya, the famous 4th c. AD inscription was discovered engraved on a rock along the road that leads to the top of the mountain, where the site is located.¹⁰ On that occasion, the inscriptions reused in the modern village of Māriya, located below the site, were also photographed.¹¹

⁵ Weber 1909: 5-32; Werdrecker 1939: 20f.

⁶ Glaser copied some of the following inscriptions, which were seen few years before by Siegfried Langer in his trip of 1882: CIH 40 (Madhāb), CIH 41-45 (Ḍāf), CIH 46 (Yakār), CIH 47 (al-Waṣṭā) and CIH 48 (Maʿbar). Other inscriptions from Dhamār are GI 807=GI 1044=CIH 569 (copied by Glaser), CIH 662 (seen by G. Beneyton), as well as GI 801=RES 3639 and GI 804=RES 3640. See also the two inscriptions from this site published in Mordtmann and Mittwoch 1931: 174 (no. 149) and 175-181 (CIH 448).

⁷ GI 1591-1592 (al-Aḥjur), GI 1593-1596 (registered as coming from Būsān, but found at Nūna by Kh. Nuʿmān: Kh-Nūna 1A); GI 1536-1543 (Baynūn). In 1952 A. F. L. Beeston published another interesting inscription from Baynūn that is conserved at the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul (Ist 7630=GI 1544).

⁸ Cf. Rathjens 1953, specifically pp. 111-130.

⁹ Gr 29-34 (Dhamār), Gr 40-44 (Hakir), Gr 45-47 (Ḥammat Dhiyāb); see Južnaja Aravija 1978.

¹⁰ Al-Iryānī and Garbini 1970: 405-408. The inscription was then restudied, with the initials DJE 25, by Müller (1978: 137-148). The site of Maṣnaʿat Māriya has been the object of multiple survey campaigns conducted by K. Lewis and L. Khalidī, who highlighted the continuity of occupation of the site, from the Neolithic to the Ḥimyarite periods (Lewis and Khalidī 2005: 215-230). The inscriptions from Maṣnaʿat Māriya belonging to the tribe of Muḥaqrāʾum have been collected and studied by Ch. Robin (2006: 104-107).

¹¹ Moretti 1-7 (Moretti 1971: 119-122).

Meanwhile, G. Garbini visited the site of Hakir, where the city walls were found partially preserved. And reused as a lintel in a private house, the inscription CIH 448, which Glaser had described and that was also seen by the German H. Burchardt in one of his travels to Yemen in the early 1900s. In addition to five other inscriptions, Garbini's visit to Hakir also led to the discovery of a fragment that constituted the right segment of CIH 448.¹²

The German Mission to Yemen that included W. Radt, W. Diem, and W. Müller organized a campaign in October 1970 and visited numerous sites of the Yemeni plateau, such as Maṣnaʿat Māriya and Baynūn. They described the ancient town of Baynūn as perched on a rocky outcrop, with two rock tunnels and an impressive irrigation system that is still visible in the valley below of Numāra, a site that retains the same name of the ancient valley mentioned in the tunnel inscriptions.¹³

Impressed by the ruins of Baynūn's sophisticated water management and irrigation system, J. Pirenne visited the site in 1978 and found some rather interesting inscriptions and fragments of artefacts.¹⁴

¹² Hakir 1-6 (Garbini 1971 a: 303-311). Some of these epigraphs had already been discovered by Grjaznevič: Gr 40(=Hakir 2), Gr 42(=Hakir 6). In 1975, on his way back from the visit to the site of al-Miʿsāl, in the hills of Ḥammāt aḍ-Ḍabʿ, near Sanabān, A. Jamme discovered a rock inscription commissioned by an individual who referred to himself as an “inhabitant of the town of Hakir” (Ja 3199=Nāji 1: ḥwr hgrn Hkrn; see Jamme 1988: 69f). The inscription has been restudied by Nuʿmān, who gave it a new translation and historical interpretation (Kh-Ḥammāt aḍ-Ḍabʿ 19).

¹³ Radt 1971: 253-293, specifically 279-289. Of note are the maps of Maṣnaʿat Māriya and Baynūn, as well as numerous photos of the two sites. For his part, W. Müller is so impressed by the magnificent ruins of Baynūn he recited an old saying for them, stating “once you see Baynūn, you will forget Azhāl (i.e. Ṣanʿāʿ) and Zafār, and, because of the splendour of its magnificence, the night will appear you as bright as the day” (W. Müller 1973: 150-161, in particular p. 159). In this study, the splendid *sʿhr*-stela with bucranium YM 383=DJE AfO 7 is also reproduced (fig. 12).

¹⁴ Pir Baynūn 1-3 (Pirenne 1987: 99-112). The inscription Pir Baynūn 1, a boustrophedonic fragment published as coming from Baynūn, was found in the modern village of Māriya by Nuʿmān. His new reading testifies that, in addition to the god ʿAthtar dhu-*Sʿmʿn*, the text contains the invocation to the god ʿAthtar dhu-*Ṭmm*. The two main deities of Maṣnaʿat Māriya are then attested since the earliest period, reflecting an exceptional continuity of this cult, as well as the occupation of the site. Pir Baynūn 3 is dated to 420 of the era of Ḥimyar and mentions the ancient name of the site, *Bynn*. In this study, Pirenne once again reproduces the sketch of the plan of Baynūn made by Radt.

The site of Madīnat al-Ahjur, located where wādī Nab^cā and wādī Ḥaykān converge, held an important role in ancient times as a node of communication between the southern and the north-eastern regions of Dhamār and Ma³rib, respectively. In 1980-1981, the site was the subject of an archaeological investigation undertaken by the Italian Archaeological Mission in Yemen and led by A. de Maigret.¹⁵ Research focused on a study of the local pottery and brought to light some notable objects and inscriptions, the most interesting of which is a fragment of stela decorated with an ibex and bearing a boustrophedic inscription, an object certainly belonging to the early period.¹⁶

The Italian mission work continued further south, into the area that lies to the east of Dhamār and up to the mountain of Jabal al-Laṣī. The surveys led to the discovery of numerous archaeological Ḥimyarite sites around the village of Warāqa, the most impressive of which being Kharibat al-Ahjur, a location where the city gate, buildings, paved streets, and nearby necropolis have been recognized. S. Antonini dug two hypogean tombs that were particularly notable with respect to the quality of the grave goods discovered. The items found were comprised of not only local material, but also imported objects¹⁷ that, according to Antonini, reveal the existence of an elite class of individuals – most likely warriors – within the rural population of Kharibat al-Ahjur.¹⁸ On the basis of not only the pottery found inside the tombs, but also of the important hoard of coins that belonged to the Ḥimyarite king ^cAmdān Bayān Yuhaqbiḍ's series,¹⁹ the tombs are dated to the 1st – 2nd c. AD.

At the same time, another Italian mission, coordinated by the University of Florence, focused on archaeological-epigraphic and dialectological-ethnological research in the area that extends from the Jabal Kanin to Jabal Isbīl, thus encompassing the entire region of al-Ḥadā³, including its northern and

¹⁵ Y.81.C.0/1, Y.81.C.0/2 (De Maigret 1981: 198-201). Compare, also, in this study, the map of the eastern sector of the area that goes from Ṣanf^cā³ to Dhamār with the catchment basin of the wādī Dhana. Cf. also de Maigret 1982: 237-253. On Madīnat al-Ahjur, see recently Schiettecatte 2011: 251-253.

¹⁶ Antonini 1989: 41-127. The fragment is reproduced in fig. 4.

¹⁷ Antonini 1992: 3-12.

¹⁸ Antonini 2005: 53-90. During the surveys, numerous rock inscriptions have also been discovered (see pl. 48 b with the photo of an inscription from al-Ḥājib, near Warāqa). A short inscription can be seen reused in the castle of Warāqa (pl. 51).

¹⁹ Cf. Davidde 1992: 41-54.