CHAPTER 16

Ancient North Arabian

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1. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

In the western two-thirds of the Arabian Peninsula, from southern Syria to Yemen, inscriptions testify to the use of a number of different ancient languages and scripts. In the southwest, these inscriptions may date from as early as the thirteenth century BC and continue up to the seventh century AD, while in central and north Arabia they seem to be concentrated in the period between the eighth century BC and the fourth century AD. Some languages, like Aramaic and, later, Greek, came to the region from outside, but the rest were indigenous tongues expressed in scripts developed locally.

Literacy seems to have been extraordinarily widespread, not only among the settled populations but also among the nomads. Indeed, the scores of thousands of graffiti on the rocks of the Syro-Arabian desert suggest that it must have been almost universal among the latter (see Macdonald 1993:382–388). By the Roman period, it is probable that a higher proportion of the population in this region was functionally literate than in any other area of the ancient world.

1.1 North Arabian

The ancient languages in the southwest of the Peninsula are known as Ancient (or Old) South Arabian (see Ch. 15), while those in central and northern Arabia and in the desert of southern Syria are classed as North Arabian. This latter category is divided into two subgroups. The first of these is Arabic, which is subdivided into (i) Old Arabic (that is Arabic attested in pre-Islamic texts which have survived independently of the early Arab grammarians, thus the Namārah inscription but not the “Pre-Islamic poetry,” see Macdonald, forthcoming); (ii) Classical and Middle Arabic; and (iii) the vernacular dialects. The second subgroup is called Ancient North Arabian. The most striking difference between the two subgroups lies in the definite article, which is ‘al- in Arabic, but is h- or zero in Ancient North Arabian (see §4.3.1). Until recently, this division was largely unrecognized by linguists working outside the field, and Ancient North Arabian (which was sometimes misleadingly called “Proto-Arabic”) was usually treated as a collection of early dialects of Arabic. However, it is now clear that Ancient North Arabian represents a linguistic strain which, while closely related to Arabic, was distinct from it (Macdonald 2000:29–30).

1.1.1 Arabic

Arabic, and thus by implication the North Arabian group as a whole, has traditionally been classified, along with the Ancient South Arabian, Modern South Arabian and Ethiopic
languages, as South West Semitic (e.g., Brockelmann 1908–1913: i, 6). However, more recently, it has been grouped instead with Canaanite and Aramaic, under the rubric Central Semitic (e.g., Faber 1997; see Ch. 6, §2.3), and this classification is certainly more appropriate for Ancient North Arabian.

Old Arabic seems to have coexisted with Ancient North Arabian throughout north and central Arabia but, in contrast to Ancient North Arabian, it remained a purely spoken language. The earliest Old Arabic inscriptions in what we think of as the Arabic script (in fact the latest development of the Nabataean Aramaic alphabet) date from the early sixth century AD. Before that, Old Arabic was written only on very rare occasions and then, necessarily, in a “borrowed” script (Ancient South Arabian, Dadanitic, Nabataean, or Greek). At present, seven such documents in Old Arabic have been identified, and in a number of others, Old Arabic features occur in texts which are otherwise in Sabaic (an Ancient
1.1.2 Ancient North Arabian

Ancient North Arabian is made up of a number of interrelated dialects, attested only in inscriptions. These are dated roughly between the eighth century BC and fourth century AD, after which the language disappears from the record. Well over forty thousand of these texts have been discovered so far and it is known that scores of thousands remain to be recorded. However, approximately 98 percent of these are graffiti, informal inscriptions the majority of which consist only of names. The amount of linguistic evidence they can provide is therefore relatively meager and our knowledge of the structure of these dialects is extremely fragmentary – a situation exacerbated by the nature of the writing systems used (see §2). Despite this, a surprising amount of information is to be found in these inscriptions, and more is being identified every year.

Ancient North Arabian was used by the settled peoples and nomads of central and north Arabia and by the nomads in what is now southern Syria and eastern and southern Jordan. It is attested in the following dialects (see Macdonald 2000:29–30, 32–36, 40–46): (i) Oasis North Arabian (ONA), consisting of Taymanitic, Dadanitic, Dumaitic, and Dispersed Oasis North Arabian; (ii) Safaitic; (iii) Hismaic; (iv) Thamudic B, C, D, and “Southern Thamudic”; and, possibly, (v) Hasaitic.

1.1.2.1 Oasis North Arabian

Of these dialects, the earliest attested are those belonging to the group known as Oasis North Arabian. From at least the middle of the first millennium BC, local dialects of Ancient North Arabian were spoken in the major oases of northwest Arabia: Taymā‘, Dadan (modern al-‘Ulā; for the spelling Dadan, see Sima 2000 and Macdonald 2000, n. 1) and probably Dūmā‘ (modern al-‘Gawf); see Figure 16.1. The populations of these settlements were heavily involved in the trade in frankincense and other aromatics which were brought from South Arabia to Egypt, the Mediterranean coast, Syria, and Mesopotamia where there seems already to have been a considerable Arab presence. It is therefore not surprising that brief texts in scripts similar to those used in these oases have been found outside Arabia, principally in Mesopotamia. In the past they have been known by such misnomers as “Chaldaean” and “Old Arabic,” but I have recently suggested that a better term would be Dispersed Oasis North Arabian (Macdonald 2000:33), a label which I hope emphasizes the fact that they are a heterogeneous collection of texts which have in common only the fact that they are written in varieties of the Oasis North Arabian alphabet and that they were found outside Arabia.

Dumaitic is so far represented by only three brief texts found near Sakākā in northern Saudi Arabia (Winnett and Reed 1970:73, 80–81 [WTI 21–23], 207, 216, where they are called “Jawfian”). They are in a distinctive variety of the Oasis North Arabian script (see Fig. 16.3) which differs in certain important respects from Taymanitic and Dadanitic. At present they are undatable, but they may be from the middle of the first millennium BC.

Taymanitic refers to the dialect and script used in the oasis of Taymā‘ and its surroundings, probably in the sixth and fifth centuries BC. It is represented by short inscriptions with very distinctive linguistic and orthographic features. The number of known Taymanitic texts has recently been doubled (from c. 200 to c. 400) by Kh. M. Eskoubi’s edition of new texts, including two which mention nbnd mlk bbl “Nabonidus king of Babylon,” who spent ten years of his reign 552–543 BC, in Taymā‘ (Eskoubi 1999: nos. 169 and 177; Müller and Said 2001).

Dadanitic is a new term which covers the inscriptions in the local language and script of the oasis of Dadan. These were formerly divided into “Dedanite” and “Lihyanite,” following

South Arabian language), Dadanitic, Safaitic, Nabataean, and possibly East Arabian Aramaic (see Macdonald 2000:50–54 and forthcoming).
Figure 16.2 Examples of the Ancient North Arabian scripts
the nomenclature of successive kingdoms in the oasis, but, needless to say, linguistic and
paleographical developments did not necessarily parallel political changes, and this par-
ticular subdivision has proved misleading. Dadanitic is the only Ancient North Arabian
dialect and script in which large numbers of monumental inscriptions were written. These
are concentrated in and around the oasis, with only occasional examples found elsewhere.
In addition, there are hundreds of Dadanitic graffiti in and around the settlement. There is
no firm dating evidence for the inscriptions of Dadan, though dates ranging from the sixth
century BC through the first century AD have been proposed. Dadan was also the site of a
South Arabian (Minaean) trading station and there are numerous monumental inscriptions
and graffiti in Madhābic, the South Arabian language used by the Minaeans (see Ch. 15).
The prosperity of Dadan may have been eclipsed in the first century AD by the neighboring
oasis of Ḫegrā (modern Madāʾin Ṣāliḥ), some twenty kilometers to the north, which became
an important city of the Nabataean kingdom.

1.1.2.2 Safaitic
This is the language of most of the graffiti found in the deserts of black, broken-up lava in
southern Syria, northeastern Jordan, and northern Saudi Arabia. The vast majority were
written by the nomads who lived in this area between roughly the first century BC and the
fourth century AD. So far, some twenty thousand Safaitic inscriptions have been recorded,
and there are many times this number still awaiting study, as can be seen by any visitor to
these desert areas.

1.1.2.3 Hismaic
Hismaic was the language of the nomads of the Ḫismā sand-desert of southern Jordan and
northwest Saudi Arabia, and some of the inhabitants of central and northern Jordan. They
were contemporaries and close neighbors of the Nabataeans, whose capital, Petra, was not
far away from the northern end of the Ḫismā in Wādī Ramm, southern Jordan. Thus, they
probably date to the first centuries BC/AD and possibly a little later. In the past, Hismaic has
been called “Thamudic E” (see below), and misleadingly “Tabuki Thamudic” and “South
Safaitic.” The last-mentioned is a complete misnomer since the dialect and script are quite
distinct from those of Safaitic.

1.1.2.4 Thamudic
Thamudic is not the name of a dialect or script but of a sort of “pending” category into
which are placed all texts which appear to be Ancient North Arabian but which are not
Oasis North Arabian, Safaitic, or Hismaic. Both Taymanitic (formerly “Thamudic A”) and
Hismaic (formerly “Thamudic E”) were originally included in this category until the advent
of properly recorded texts and intensive studies made it possible to define them as dis-
tinct dialects with their own scripts (see Macdonald and King 1999). The rubrics “B,” “C,”
“D,” and “Southern Thamudic” represent relatively crude subdivisions of those texts still
in this “pending” category. There is no way of dating most of these inscriptions, though
one Thamudic B inscription (Ph 279 aw) appears to mention a “king of Babylon” and so
presumably dates to a time before the fall of the Babylonian Empire in 539 BC. By contrast,
a Thamudic D inscription (JSTham 1) at Madāʾin Ṣāliḥ (ancient Ḫegrā) gives a summary of
an adjacent Nabataean tomb inscription which is dated to AD 267. The vast majority of the
Southern Thamudic texts remains unpublished, but for an excellent summary presentation
see Ryckmans 1956.

1.1.2.5 Hasaitic
This term refers to the language of a number of inscriptions, almost all gravestones, most of
which have been found in northeastern Arabia. They consist almost entirely of genealogies
and exhibit very few linguistic features. The language is regarded (provisionally) as Ancient North Arabian because of certain characteristic expressions such as *dˤl* "of the lineage of" (see §3.1.1). They are written in the Sabaic (Ancient South Arabian) script, with certain minor adaptations.

1.2 Sources of Ancient North Arabian

A large number of the Safaitic, and the vast majority of the Thamudic, inscriptions published so far, were recorded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and are known only from hand copies, often by copyists who could not read the script. Many of these copies are inaccurate, and, in the case of the texts classed as Thamudic, this has proved a major obstacle to their successful interpretation. It is only since large numbers of texts have been photographed that the study of Taymanitic, Safaitic, and Hismaic has been placed on a secure footing.

The dialects of Ancient North Arabian on which we have most information are Dadanitic and Safaitic. The discussion below will therefore concentrate mainly on these, with details from the others where they are available.

The principal resource in the interpretation of the Ancient North Arabian inscriptions has always been the grammar and vocabulary of Classical Arabic and this has been both a blessing and a curse. On the credit side, Classical Arabic has provided a model against which the linguistic phenomena attested in Ancient North Arabian can be evaluated, though there is always a temptation to interpret the, often enigmatic, data in such a way as to make them fit this model, thus obscuring real differences (as is the case in Caskel 1954). Moreover, it should never be forgotten that, unlike most languages, Classical Arabic represents a conscious choice and amalgam of dialects and, to a greater or lesser extent, a systematization of grammatical structures by Arab scholars of the eighth and ninth centuries AD.

Similarly, it should be remembered that the concept of a descriptive dictionary of a living language is no older than the nineteenth century. Prior to that, the purpose of a dictionary was prescriptive, fixing the language in what was considered to be its most “correct” form. Thus, even the immensely rich vocabulary of Classical Arabic represents a choice by the grammarians and lexicographers of what was available to them, and much that might have helped in the reconstruction of Ancient North Arabian was no doubt excluded. Arabic dictionaries can anyway be a trap to the unwary, since they contain meanings which have developed over a wide geographical area and many centuries of intense literary activity, but with little or no indication of when and where a particular sense is first attested. Moreover, as in all languages, words can have meanings which are restricted to certain contexts, and, unless these are quoted (as they are in the great Arabic-Arabic lexica, but not in shorter European compendia), a completely false interpretation can be given. The widespread misapprehension that Ancient North Arabian texts can be read simply by using an Arabic dictionary has led many astray and has resulted in a far greater degree of uncertainty in the interpretation of Ancient North Arabian than in most other ancient languages.

One further point should be noted. In the past, some discussions of Ancient North Arabian grammar have sought to identify linguistic features in the personal names found in Ancient North Arabian inscriptions and have then treated these as if they represented the language of the texts (e.g., Littmann 1943:xii–xxiv; Caskel 1954:68–71; and even sporadically in Müller 1982). Not surprisingly, this has led to confusion, with marked differences appearing between the apparent linguistic features of the names and those of the language used by their bearers. It is important to remember that a name does not “mean” anything except the person, group, place, and so forth to which it refers. It is usually only in exceptional
circumstances that parents invent one (e.g., the seventeenth-century English Puritan called “Praise-God Barebones”). Names often continue in use over a very long period and can travel extensively, so the vast majority of names available to parents in any particular society at any particular time have been inherited, often from a linguistic environment very different from their own. The etymology of a name, while interesting in itself, is therefore linguistically irrelevant to the text in which it appears.

In this chapter, the following conventions will be used: /d/ = the etymological phoneme; [d] = the sound; d = the letter in a particular script. Letters between { } are doubtful readings. Many Ancient North Arabian texts have been reread or reinterpreted since their original publication, so in some cases the readings and interpretations quoted here will differ from those in the original editions. All examples quoted have been checked on photographs whenever these are available.

## 2. WRITING SYSTEMS

It is generally held that the Semitic consonantal alphabet was invented in the first half of the second millennium BC (see Ch. 12, §2.2). Later in the same millennium, two separate traditions developed out of the proto-alphabet, each with its own letter-forms, letter-order and (possibly) letter-names. One was the Phenoico-Aramaic (or Northwest Semitic), from which are ultimately derived almost all traditional alphabetic scripts in use today. The other was the Arabian (or South Semitic) alphabetic tradition, which was used almost exclusively in Arabia in the pre-Islamic period and which was the basis of the Ethiopic syllabary (see Ch. 14, §2), the only form in which it survives today (Macdonald 2000:32).

The Arabian alphabetic tradition is subdivided into two families: (i) the Ancient South Arabian, of which Sabaic is the most famous and from which the Ethiopic syllabary was developed; and (ii) the Ancient North Arabian. While the Ancient North Arabian scripts are clearly related to each other and to the Ancient South Arabian, the exact relationship has not yet been established. One problem is the lack of securely dated texts from both North and South Arabia; a second has already been touched on – the fact that so many Ancient North Arabian inscriptions are known only from unreliable hand copies. However, the major obstacle to a paleographical analysis of the Ancient North Arabian inscriptions is the fact that the vast majority of them are informal texts written by innumerable individuals who learned to write, not in schools, but casually from a companion, and whose letter-forms were not therefore part of a slowly evolving tradition, but represent a multiplicity of individual choices (Macdonald 1993:382–388; 2004a).

An indication of this is provided by the four Safaitic abecedaries which have been discovered so far. Each is in a different letter-order and none of them bears any relation to the inherited orders of the Northwest and South Semitic alphabets. The letters have simply been arranged according to the writers’ differing perceptions of similarity in their shapes (see Macdonald 1993:386 and Macdonald et al. 1996:439–443). By contrast, the only known Dadanitic abecedary is in the South Semitic letter-order, while the unique Hismaic example more or less follows the Northwest Semitic order, but with significant differences which suggest that it was unfamiliar to the writer (Macdonald 1986:105–112).

The alphabets of Dadanitic, Hismaic, and Safaitic are each made up of twenty-eight letters. This is probably also true of Thamudic B, C, and D and Hasaitic, though some signs have yet to be identified in these scripts. Taymanitic seems to have had a slightly different phonemic repertoire from the other Ancient North Arabian dialects (see §3.1.2), and only twenty-six or twenty-seven letters have been identified with certainty.
Figure 16.3 shows the most common letter-forms in the different Ancient North Arabian scripts. With the exception of the sign for ʿ and the leftmost sign for ʾ, the forms in the Hasaitic row are those of the South Arabian alphabet. It will be noted that the forms of some letters are remarkably stable throughout all the scripts: for example, ṣ, ʿ, ʾ, w, and y. On the other hand, in some cases the same, or very similar, shapes are used in different alphabets to represent quite different phonemes. Thus, the sign used for ʿ in Hismaic is identical to that for ʾ in Thamudic B, Safaitic, and South Arabian/Hasaitic; while the sign for ʾ in South Arabian (and Hasaitic) is used for ʿ in Thamudic B, C, and D and in Safaitic, but for ʾ in Hismaic. The reasons for this are not yet understood.

In the scripts used by the inhabitants of the great oases, namely, Dumaitic, Taymanitic, and Dadanitic, the direction of writing is almost always right-to-left. In Taymanitic, texts of more than one line were often, but by no means always, written boustrophedon (i.e., continuously, with the lines running in alternate directions). However, the practice of breaking at the end of the line and placing the beginning of the next line under that of the one before is also quite common in Taymanitic and is the norm in Dadanitic. Texts were written without spaces between the words, but word-dividers are the norm in Dadanitic monumental texts and are commonly, though not consistently, used in Dadanitic graffiti and in Taymanitic and Dumaitic. Hasaitic is written either in separate lines or boustrophedon and, since it uses the South Arabian script, employs word-dividers.

By contrast, the scripts used primarily by nomads (Thamudic B, Hismaic, and Safaitic) can be written in any direction (left to right, right to left, downwards, upwards, in a circle or coil, etc.). They meander across the uneven surfaces of the rocks on which they are carved, over the edge onto an adjacent face and occasionally onto an adjacent rock. They are written continuously without word-dividers (Macdonald 2004c). This absence of word-dividers applies equally to Thamudic C and D, which were probably also written by nomads, though these show a marked preference for writing in vertical columns.

In common with all Semitic alphabets, the letters of the North Arabian scripts represent consonants only. However, in contrast to most of the Northwest Semitic scripts, none of the South Semitic alphabets, with the exception of Dadanitic, developed matres lectionis, letters which, in addition to their consonantal values, can in certain contexts represent a long vowel. It has been suggested that in Safaitic the letters ʾ, w, and y were occasionally used to represent long vowels (Winnett and Harding 1978:12; Robin 2001:553), but this is incorrect and the handful of examples quoted can all be more convincingly explained in other ways.

However, in Dadanitic, final /aː/ was usually represented by -h (as in Hebrew) and final /uː/ by -w, though the evidence for other matres lectionis is less convincing (Drewes 1985). In contrast to the Northwest Semitic scripts, the letter ʿalif does not seem to have been used to mark a vowel in Ancient North Arabian.

The diphthong /ai/ is represented in final position in Dadanitic (pace Drewes 1985:170–171), though the representation of final /au/ is much less certain. However, diphthongs (if they existed) are rarely if ever represented in the other Ancient North Arabian scripts. Thus, in Safaitic the word for “death” appears as mt (cf. Arabic mawt), that for “raiding party” as gs (cf. Arabic ḡays), and so forth. Littmann claimed that Greek transliterations of names apparently similar to those found in the Safaitic inscriptions showed that the diphthongs /ai/ and /au/ had been monophthongized to [e] and [o] respectively (1943:xiii). However, by the Roman period, there were no appropriate diphthongs left in Koine Greek with which to transliterate any which may have existed in Safaitic, so the question must remain open.

As in all Semitic alphabets, doubled consonants are written singly in the Ancient North Arabian scripts (e.g. *ʾumm “mother” appears as ʾm). However, it has been suggested
Figure 16.3  Letter-forms in the Ancient North Arabian scripts

N.B. There are no chronological implications in the order in which the scripts are arranged. The numbers above the letter-forms in the "Dispersed ONA" row refer to the photographs of the inscriptions in which they occur, published in Sass 1991.
that doubled /l/ and /n/ are occasionally expressed in writing. This is based mainly on the spelling kll “all” (cf. Classical Arabic kull) which is found in Dadanitic, Hismaic, and Safaitic (Littmann 1943:xiii). But it is perfectly possible that the word was pronounced with a short vowel between the two l’s (e.g., *kulil). The other supposed examples of this feature are also capable of alternative explanations (see §4.2.1) and at present the hypothesis must be regarded as not proven.

3. PHONOLOGY

3.1 Consonants

Given the nature of the sources, our knowledge of the phonology of the dialects of Ancient North Arabian is necessarily fragmentary. Most dialects appear to have had a consonantal phonemic repertoire of roughly twenty-eight sounds. Unless there is evidence to the contrary, these are usually assumed to have been similar, though not always identical, to their equivalents in Classical Arabic. They are presented in Table 16.1 using the Roman letters with which Ancient North Arabian texts are conventionally transliterated, rather than phonetic symbols, to emphasize that this is a purely hypothetical schema based partly on the traditional pronunciation of the cognate phonemes in Classical Arabic, as described by the early Arab grammarians (eighth century AD), and partly on reconstructions (see below).

The phonemes /b, /d, /d̪/, /h/, /k/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /t/, /t̪/, /w/, /y/, /z/ were probably pronounced more or less like their equivalents in Classical Arabic. There is no way of telling whether certain phonemes had aspirated allophones (the so-called “bghadhkhphath”), as, for example, in Masoretic Hebrew and Aramaic of the Christian era. The phoneme shown here as /f/, could have been pronounced [p] in some or all positions (as in Ugaritic, Hebrew, Aramaic, Akkadian, etc.) or as [f] throughout, as in Arabic. It is worth noting that in Safaitic (as also in early Arabic) the letter f is used to transliterate both Greek ϕ and π (e.g., ϕλς, ϕλί).
3.1.1 Stops

In Hismaic, there is a small amount of evidence for the occasional confusion of /d/ and /t/, probably under the influence of the Aramaic used by the neighboring Nabataeans: for example, ʼd-s2ry for the divine name ḍ-sūry; dkrt for ḍkrt; and ʼdt “he of the lineage of” for ʼdt (Macdonald 2004d). However, there is no evidence for the supposed alternation of /t/ and /d/ in this dialect. On both these, see King 1990:69–70. However, in Dadanitic the numeral “three” is found as ʼṭlt, ʾṭlt, and ḏlt (see §4.4.1 and Table 16.2) which might suggest a weakening of the distinction between these two sounds in this dialect, though it may equally have been confined to the phonetic conditions of this particular word.

It is impossible to tell whether /g/ was pronounced [ʾg], as in some Arabic dialects, or [g] as in Classical Arabic, or even [j] as in some dialects of Syria and Southern Iraq. It is also impossible to determine whether /k/ had an allophone [ç] in certain positions, as in many dialects in Syria, Iraq, Arabia and the Gulf Coast.

The phonemes /h/ and /ʾg/ were probably realised as [x] and [γ] respectively as in Arabic. The consonant transcribed /q/ in Table 16.1 may have been a uvular stop as in Classical Arabic, or, alternatively, an “emphatic” correlate of /k/ (i.e., /kʾ/), as in Hebrew and Aramaic. Whatever its exact pronunciation it appears generally to have remained distinct since only one instance has so far been identified in which it is confused with another phoneme. This is in an unpublished Safaitic text in which the author spells the word ʼqyz “he spent the dry season” as ḏy in an unequivocal context. This is the earliest attestation of a pronunciation in which the etymological phonemes /q/ and /z/ had fallen under /d/ and /t/ respectively, a feature of modern urban Arabic in such cities as Damascus, Jerusalem, and Cairo.

In the orthography of the Ancient North Arabian scripts, the letter ʼ represents a phonemic consonant in all contexts and never the equivalent of Classical Arabic hamzat al-wasl, that is, a prosthetic glottal stop, the sole function of which is to carry an initial vowel and which disappears when the latter is assimilated to a preceding vowel. Thus ʼbn (“son,” in all positions) as against Classical Arabic (ʼ)ibn. This contrasts with Old Arabic personal names found in Nabataean orthography (for instance in the Nabataean inscriptions of Sinai), where ʼ is regularly written in ʼbn (e.g., the name ʼbn-ʾl-qyny). For a discussion of this phenomenon see Macdonald, forthcoming. There are a few personal names in Safaitic texts written with two successive ʼs, e.g., ʼʾs1d (cf. Classical Arabic ʾasud < *ʼaṣūd; see Littmann 1943:xii–xiii), but as yet no examples in words have been identified, so we do not know whether this was a living feature of the language or merely a fossil inherited in particular names.

Very occasionally, ʼ is found unexpectedly in medial position and it has been suggested that this may represent a medial /a:/ (Winnett and Harding 1978:12). However, this is highly unlikely and the few examples cited are all capable of other explanations.

The ending which in Arabic appears as -ʾah in pause but -ʾat before a vowel (i.e., ʾtà marbūṭah), is always written as -t in Ancient North Arabian, implying that it was pronounced *-at in all contexts.

3.1.2 Fricatives

The voiceless nonemphatic sibilants in Ancient North Arabian, Ancient South Arabian, Old Arabic, and Classical Arabic up to the ninth century AD, present a complex problem (see...
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Beeston 1962). Proto-Semitic had a voiceless dental fricative */s/, a voiceless palato-alveolar fricative */ʃ/, and a third sibilant, conventionally written */š/, the exact nature of which is uncertain but which may have been a lateral dental fricative [ɻ]. While the Ancient (and Modern) South Arabian languages (in common with Hebrew and early Aramaic) retained all three, in Arabic and, with one possible exception, the Ancient North Arabian dialects they were reduced to two:

(1) The voiceless nonemphatic sibilants in Ancient North Arabian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Semitic (except Taymanitic)</th>
<th>Ancient North Arabian</th>
<th>Proto-Semitic</th>
<th>Taymanitic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*/š/</td>
<td>*/š/</td>
<td>*/š/</td>
<td>[ʃ] (written s₁)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*/ʃ/</td>
<td>*/ʃ/</td>
<td>*/ʃ/</td>
<td>[ʃ] (written s₂)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*/s/</td>
<td>*/s/</td>
<td>*/s/</td>
<td>[s] (written s₃)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We know from the phonetic descriptions by the early Arab grammarian Sibawaih (died c. AD 796) that in early Classical Arabic, the reflex of Proto-Semitic */s/ + */š/, was pronounced something approaching [ʃ], and that the reflex of Proto-Semitic */ʃ/, was pronounced something approaching [ɻ]. It was only subsequently that the pronunciation of כ to the [s] (sīn), and that of כ to the [ʃ] (šīn) of later Arabic. This can be tabulated as follows:

(2) The voiceless nonemphatic sibilants in Arabic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proto-Semitic</th>
<th>Arabic before the 9th century AD</th>
<th>Arabic after the 9th century AD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*/s/</td>
<td>[ʃ] (written כ)</td>
<td>[ʃ] (written כ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*/š/</td>
<td>[ʃ] (written כ)</td>
<td>[ʃ] (written כ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*/ʃ/</td>
<td>[ɻ] (written כ)</td>
<td>[ʃ] (written כ)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This means that Ancient North Arabian /s₁/ (which is cognate with later Arabic כ sīn) was actually pronounced like something approaching [ʃ], while Ancient North Arabian /s₂/ (which is cognate with later Arabic כ šīn) was probably pronounced something like Welsh -ll- [ɻ]. These findings are confirmed by the treatments of loans from Aramaic. Thus, for example, the Aramaic name of the great Syrian sky-god, באל-שלום “lord of heaven,” was borrowed into Dadanitic and Safaitic as באלישמ, that is, with Aramaic */š/ represented by Ancient North Arabian כ, not כ.

It follows from this that Ancient North Arabian (and Arabic before the ninth century AD) had no [s]. However, there is one possible exception. Taymanitic appears to have had a letter, graphically related to South Arabian כ (≡ [s]), which seems to represent [s] in transliterations of the name of the Egyptian god Osiris occurring in two personal names. Rather different forms of what is probably the same letter have been identified in two other Taymanitic texts (see Müller and Said 2001:114–116) and there is one further example on a seal of Babylonian design, but in a context which raises considerable difficulties. Since, at present, only a little over four hundred Taymanitic inscriptions are known, and few of them are more than twenty letters long, no firm conclusions can be drawn from this until more evidence appears. However, it seems unlikely that the Taymanitic alphabet would have employed a letter to represent a sound which did not exist in the Taymanitic dialect, and
so there is certainly a possibility that, at some stage in its history, Taymanitic used all three voiceless nonemphatic sibilants (see Macdonald 1991).

In Taymanitic, Thamudic D, and possibly Thamudic C, it seems that /d/ had probably merged with /z/ (as in Hebrew), since the z sign is used for both phonemes.

3.1.3 Emphatics

The etymological phonemes /s/, /t/, /d/, and /z/ are emphatics. In most Semitic languages /s/ is the emphatic correlate of [s]. However, since there was no [s] in Safaitic and Hismaic, $ is often used in these dialects to transliterate Greek sigma (e.g., $qr for κοισαρ [“Caesar”]; $fl$ for ΦΙΩΛΠΠΟΣ [“Philip”]; etc.) and in the Hismaic abecedary $ is put in the position of Phoenico-Aramaic samek (=[s]). It is not certain whether this implies a weakening of the “emphatic” quality or whether it was simply felt to be the nearest equivalent to the foreign sound. The fact that in other transliterations the letter $ (approximately $) was used for Latin $ (e.g., $ts for Titus) and Greek sigma (e.g., $grs for Γεωργός [George]), points perhaps to the latter (see Macdonald 1992b).

The phoneme /t/ was almost certainly the emphatic correlate of /t/, and /d/ was, at least in origin, that of /d/. However, the Akkadian transliteration of the Ancient North Arabian divine name rdw as Ruldaiu points to a strongly lateralized pronunciation of /d/, at least in North Arabia in the seventh century BC. It has also been suggested that the god Ὄροστος, who Herodotus says was worshipped by the Arabs in eastern Egypt in the fifth century BC, represents a garbled transliteration of a similar pronunciation of the divine name rdw, though this is more speculative. On the other hand, in the Roman period, Greek transcriptions of names which include /d/ always represented it by sigma (e.g., Σαῦρης for ἡ-δήσ, “the ἄγιος”, Macdonald 1993:306). In Nabataean, native Aramaic words show the cognate of North Arabian /d/ as /, (e.g., Nabataean / from Arabic d. “trench, cist,” or the name / as against Safaitic rdw “earth, land”), as is normal from Imperial Aramaic onwards. However, in loanwords and transcriptions of names which are linguistically North Arabian, /d/ is consistently represented by $ (e.g., Nabataean / from Arabic d. “trench, cist,” or the name / as against Safaitic rdw “earth, land”). Kofler quotes examples of the confusion of /d/ and /s/ in early Arabic dialects and suggests that /d/ may have been pronounced more as a fricative than a stop (1940–1942:95–97). There is no example in Safaitic and Hismaic of a confusion of /d/ and /s/, so the two sounds seem to have remained distinct in these dialects. However, if /d/ was pronounced as the emphatic correlate of /d/ (rather than of /d/), i.e., as an emphatic interdental fricative, as it is in all modern Bedouin dialects, it would have shared its place of articulation, emphatization, and fricative release with /s/, and the two sounds would have been sufficiently similar for /d/ to be transcribed by /s/ in scripts such as Nabataean Aramaic which had no letter for /d/ (I owe this interesting observation to Professor Clive Holes).

The conventional symbol $ (originally taken over from the Cairene pronunciation of Classical and Modern Standard Arabic) is unfortunate since the phoneme it is intended to represent was probably the emphatic correlate of an interdental (/t/, or perhaps /d/), and not a dental sibilant. The former would be more likely, at least in Hismaic and Safaitic, if, as suggested above, /d/ was pronounced as the emphatic correlate of /d/. In Dadanitic, Hismaic, and Safaitic, /z/ is clearly distinguished from other phonemes except in the one example of /yd/ for qyz mentioned above. It has been suggested that, in Dadanitic, /z/ might have fallen under /t/ (as in Aramaic), but no conclusive evidence has yet been presented for this shift and the two phonemes appear to be represented by distinct letter-forms. A sign for $ has not yet been identified in Dumaitic, Taymanitic, Thamudic B, C, and D, or in Hasaitic, but since it is a relatively rare phoneme, it is, at present, impossible to determine whether this is significant.
3.1.4 The sounds /w/ and /y/

In Safaitic, there is considerable alternation of /w/ and /y/, which when represented in the Ancient North Arabian scripts are always consonants, not vowels (Robin 2001: 553 is incorrect on this point). This variation is found in all positions, e.g., \textit{wrh}/\textit{yrh} “month”; \textit{ts2wq}/\textit{ts2yq} (unpublished) “he longed for”; \textit{s2ty}/\textit{s2tw} (CSNS 324) “to winter.” In each case, the first item in these pairs is the common form and the second a much less frequent variant. Given the difficulty of dating most of the texts, it is impossible to say at present whether these variations represent chronological developments or synchronic dialectal differences.

However, forms with -\textit{w} and -\textit{y} are almost equally common in the divine name \textit{rd. w}/\textit{rd. y} in Safaitic inscriptions. This deity is also found in Dumaitic and Thamudic B texts, but there only as \textit{rd. w}. The Dumaitic, and at least some of the Thamudic B inscriptions, are considerably earlier than the Safaitic, and this might seem to suggest that the form \textit{rd. w} is the older and that the advent of \textit{rd. y} marks a change of pronunciation. However, the Akkadian transliteration \textit{Ruldaiu}, which is securely dated to the early seventh century BC, implies a pronunciation \textit{∗rud. ayu} (i.e., \textit{rd. y}), and it therefore seems more likely that the two spellings represent dialectal (?) differences. It is not yet possible to tell whether the same is true of the other cases of \textit{w}/\textit{y} variation.

In a number of other cases, Safaitic and Hismaic have /-y/ where Classical Arabic has /-a:/ or /-a:/i, thus Safaitic \textit{s1my} “sky, clouds,” as against Arabic \textit{sam¯a}; or Safaitic and Hismaic \textit{bny} “he built” and \textit{byt “he spent the night,” as against Arabic \textit{ban¯a} and \textit{b¯ata}. In some of these cases, there is evidence that Dumaitic and Thamudic B agreed with Arabic. Thus, the divine name \textit{tr-s1m}, which occurs in Dumaitic and Thamudic B texts and in which \textit{s1m} is the word for “heaven,” implies a pronunciation \textit{∗s1am¯a} (in which the /-a:/ would not appear in the consonantal script), as opposed to Safaitic \textit{s1my} (*s1umiyy ?), see Macdonald et al. 1996:479–480.

Conversely, there are some words in which final /-a:/ is written with a -\textit{y} in Arabic, but which in Ancient North Arabian did not end in consonantal /\textit{y}/. These are most notably the prepositions which in Safaitic, Hismaic, and Thamudic B appear as \textit{l} (cf. Arabic \textit{‘il¯a}) “towards, for,” and \textit{‘l} (cf. Arabic \textit{‘al¯a}) “on, over, against.” In Dadanitic, both \textit{l} and \textit{ly} are found, though the former is more common. This implies that the final sound may have been a diphthong -\textit{ay} (/-ai/), which would have been left unwritten in all the Ancient North Arabian scripts, except Dadanitic (see §2), where it would appear as -\textit{y} (pace Drewes 1985, who believes diphthongs had been monophthongized in Dadanitic and that final -\textit{y} represented [e:]). The forms without -\textit{y} in Dadanitic may then represent either an uncertainty about writing diphthongs or a pronunciation with a final short vowel, as in some modern Arabic dialects (i.e., \textit{∗ai} > \textit{∗a} (as in Classical Arabic) > \textit{∗a}).

3.1.5 Nasal assimilation

As in Hebrew and Aramaic, but in contrast to Arabic, vowelless /n/ is frequently assimilated in most Ancient North Arabian dialects. This is particularly common in Safaitic and Hismaic where, for example, \textit{mn} (cf. Arabic \textit{min}) “from” and \textit{mn} (cf. Arabic \textit{man}) “whoever” are sporadically reduced to \textit{m} (though curiously not in \textit{mn ngd “from high ground,” CSNS 381}). Thus, the plural of \textit{nfs1t (“funerary monument”) sometimes appears as \textit{fs1} (< \textit{∗anfus1}), and the verb \textit{∗intaz.ar (“to wait for”) always appears as \textit{tz. r} (= \textit{∗ittaz.ar ?}). Similarly, in Taymanitic, Thamudic B, Hismaic, and Safaitic (though rarely in Dadanitic), \textit{bnt (“daughter”) is occasionally spelled \textit{bt. However, this feature has not yet been identified in Hāsaitic, where we find \textit{bnt (passim) and ’ntt, “wife” (CIH 984a) compare Dadanitic and Thamudic B \textit{yf}, though
the corpus of Hasaitic texts is as yet so small that no firm conclusions can be drawn from this. Assimilation of vowelless /n/ would also account for a feature characteristic of Taymanitic, that is the reduction of bn to b (“son of”) in genealogies, which contrasts with bn (= *bani, lit. “the sons of”) where the /n/ is followed by a vowel (Macdonald 1992a:31).

3.2 Vowels

Little of substance can be said about the vowels of Ancient North Arabian. The vowel inventory is assumed to have consisted of both short and long /a/, /i/, and /u/, but there is no evidence for or against this, except for final /a:/ and /u:/ in Dadanitic (see §2). Attempts to show that the diphthongs /au/ and /ai/ had been monophthongized to /o:/ and /e:/ respectively (as in many spoken Arabic dialects) are not convincing, though they cannot entirely be refuted either (see, again, §2).

4. MORPHOLOGY

Since Safaitic and Dadanitic are by far the best attested of the Ancient North Arabian dialects, the morphological descriptions below will concentrate on them, with information from the others when it is available.

It should be noted that several unusual forms have been attributed to Dadanitic on the basis of their apparent occurrence in JSLih 71 (= CLL 91). However, it is now recognized that, with the exception of the article hn- in the tribal name, the language of this text is Old Arabic, not Dadanitic. See Beeston et al. 1973:69–70 and Macdonald 2000:52–53 and forthcoming.

As in all Semitic languages, the morphology of the Ancient North Arabian dialects is based on the triliteral root, found in its simplest form in the third singular masculine of the suffix-conjugation (often known as the “perfect”).

The fact that, in most dialects of Ancient North Arabian, final -y is written in words such as bny “he built,” smy “sky, clouds” and the gentilic ending (e.g., Safaitic h-nbty “the Nabataean” which in Arabic would be al-nabati) suggests the presence of final short vowels, since without them the /-yl would have become a long vowel [i:] or a diphthong [ai], and would not then have been represented in the orthography of any of the scripts, except in the case of the diphthong, that of Dadanitic. By contrast, the tiny amount of evidence available suggests that final short vowels may not have been present in the forms of Old Arabic represented in the documents so far identified (see Macdonald, forthcoming).

4.1 Nominal morphology

Nouns, adjectives, and pronouns will be discussed in this section. The purely consonantal Ancient North Arabian scripts must often conceal distinctions of number and possibly of case which would have been marked by changes in vowels. As in Arabic, the endings of nouns and adjectives can vary according to whether they stand alone (“in pause,” “pausal forms”) or are annexed to another noun or to an enclitic pronoun (“in construct”), see §5.1.3 below and Ch. 6, §3.3.2.1.

4.1.1 Gender

The normal feminine singular ending in all Ancient North Arabian dialects is -t (even in pause; see §3.1.1): for example, mr’t “woman,” Dadanitic (JSLih 64/2); frs’t “mare,”
Ancient North Arabian

Thamudic B (e.g., HU 494); bkrt “young she-camel,” Safaitic (e.g., WH 344). Participles (see §4.2.6) are also marked for gender, and the feminine singular takes the -t ending of the nominals, as in ṛgmt (*raḡīmat) “humbled” (fem.). Safaitic (NST 2).

The word “ym “day” (attested only in the dual ymn and the plural ym) appears to have been treated as feminine in Dadanitic and Safaitic, as it is in Jibbālī and Mehrī, though it is masculine in most other Semitic languages (see §4.4.1).

4.1.2 Number

Nominals in Ancient North Arabian have three numbers, singular (unmarked), dual and plural. On “external” (§4.1.2.2) and “internal” (§4.1.2.3) plurals in Semitic, see Chapter 6, §3.3.2.4.

4.1.2.1 Dual

Clear evidence of the dual is found only in Dadanitic, Thamudic B, and Safaitic.

“In pause” (see §4.1), the normal ending of the dual is -n (cf. Classical Arabic -āni): for example, Dadanitic ḥ-mṭ-br-n “the two tomb-chambers” (JSLīh 45/3); Thamudic B, ḥ-gmt-n “the two camels” (HU 296/2); Safaitic, ḥ-bkrt-n “the two young she-camels” (e.g., WH 402, beside a drawing of them), ym-n “two days” (CSNS 796 and see p. iii).

A curious, and as yet unexplained, form of the dual in pause is found in one Safaitic text (LP 305), where dll-y “lost” (i.e., “dead”) refers to two people and is contrasted with dll-n, referring to three, in the same text (see §4.1.2.2). Dll-y is similar to the form of the dual which, in Classical Arabic, would be used in the oblique case “in construct” (see §4.1), namely dalilay. However, in LP 305, while it would be in the oblique case (if this existed in Safaitic), it is clearly in pause and one would anyway not expect y to be used to represent a diphthong in the Safaitic script.

In Classical Arabic the -n of the dual is dropped in construct, leaving a long vowel (-ā), in the nominative, or a diphthong (-ay) in the oblique case. In Dadanitic, the only dialect with an orthography that represents some final long vowels and diphthongs, the ending seems to be a diphthong, represented by -y, regardless of case (if, indeed, this existed); thus, “nominative” ḫbr ṣ’t h-ntṣj, “the two kabirs of the company of H-NS” (JSLīh 72/3–4; cf. Arabic kabīrā); “oblique” b-hṭqvy ḫfr, “on two sides of a tomb” (JSLīh 77/7; cf. Arabic ḥṭqway). As yet, there are not enough examples to assess the significance of this. Compare the situation in the modern spoken Arabic dialects where the dual ending in nouns is always -ē(n) (presumably <*ay(n)) regardless of whether the noun is grammatically in the “nominative” or “oblique” case. Again, this is a feature found in the early Arabic papyri (see Hopkins 1984:98–104).

When the second element of the construct was a pronominal suffix, the diphthong (*-ay) was considered to be medial and was therefore not represented in the Dadanitic script. The result is that the form ḫw-hm (JSLīh 79/3) could represent either the dual “their two brothers” (*aḥaway-hum, cf. Classical Arabic ḥaḥa-ḥum, since the context requires it to be in the nominative) or the plural “their brothers” (cf. Classical Arabic ḥuwwuḥum).

A similar problem is found in Safaitic, where one of the few examples of the dual in construct yet identified is ḫw-h “his two brothers” (see LP 386, where the two persons are named). However, in C 657 ḫw-h is followed by the names of three persons, and in the other examples the numbers are not specified. It therefore appears that the form ḫw in Safaitic probably represents both the dual (*aḥaway) and the plural (*uḥuww) as in Dadanitic. The supposed plural ḫw-h (in C 2534, 2779, 2955, cf. Arabic ḥaḥawāḥ) should almost certainly be read ḫw-l (plural of ḥl “maternal uncle”).
The form *bny-*h in Safaitic has also been regarded as a possible dual (e.g., in C 3365, WH 1249, 3838, cf. Arabic *ibnay-*hi “his two sons,” oblique case). However, since Safaitic orthography does not show diphthongs, it is more likely that *bny-*h represents a diminutive (cf. Arabic *bunayyi-*hi, “his little son”), as it must do in C 4076, where it refers to only one person.

4.1.2.2 External masculine plural

In pause this is formed by adding -n to the singular and is thus indistinguishable in the purely consonantal script from the regular form of the dual in pause. In construct the -n is dropped:

(3) A. Dadanitic
   In pause  *ḥdqn “rightful heirs[?]” (CLL 65/2)
   In construct  *bnw s1 d l “the sons of S1 d l” (AH 1/2–3, see Sima 1999:35–36)
B. Safaitic
   In pause  *ḥbyn “male gazelles” (CSNS 550 beside a drawing of six, cf. Ar. *ḥabyān)

Participles (see §4.2.6) are similarly marked: thus, *dlin “lost” (i.e., “dead” in LP 305, referring to three people, cf. Arabic, oblique case, *dālīlīn).

4.1.2.3 Internal masculine plural

In Arabic, this type of plural is often marked by changes in vowels within the word, and such changes would be invisible in the Ancient North Arabian consonantal scripts. Still, a few types have forms which show up even in the Ancient North Arabian orthographies, such as the following:

(4) Pattern Dadanitic
   *afَāl  *ym (sg. *ym, “day," e.g., JSLih 68/4, 349, cf. Ar. *‘ayyām)
   *‘zd (sg. *zd, “zull-ceremony”, U 43, 115, etc. see Sima 1999: 95–96)
   *zd (sg. *zd, “zull-ceremony”, U 50/3)

Note also Dadanitic *ḥw-hm (“their brothers,” JSLih 79/3, *uḥwmm as in Safaitic, see §4.1.2.1).

Pattern Safaitic
   *af‘āl  *ṣjy (sg. *ṣj, “companion,” cf. Ar. *‘asyā)
   *ḥwjl (sg. *ḥl, “maternal uncle,” e.g., HCH 71, cf. Ar. *ḥalwāl)

Note also Safaitic *ḥw-*h, see §4.1.2.1.

4.1.2.4 External feminine plural

This is -t, and so is identical in appearance to the singular (see §4.1.1), the change presumably lying in the vowel of the ending (cf. Arabic sg. -ah/at; pl. -āt); thus Safaitic *ḥyt “female gazelles” (WH 3373, the plural confirmed by the accompanying drawing); and Hismaic *nrt “girls” (unpublished).
4.1.2.5 Collective nouns

These are represented in Safaitic by *bl* (“camels,” cf. Arabic *’ibil*), and *m’zy* (“goats,” cf. Arabic *mi’zan*). It is not clear whether they are grammatically feminine, as in Classical Arabic.

4.1.3 Case

Since the Safaitic script shows no vowels, it is impossible to be certain whether case endings existed. However, by the same token, the spelling of such nouns as *m’zy*, *zby*, and the gentilic (see §4.1.6) – for example, *h-yhdy*, “the Jew” (which in Arabic would be *al-yahüdi*) – imply that the final -y was pronounced with a short vowel, since, if it were not, it would itself become a long vowel and so would not be shown. Beyond this, little can be said with certainty at present. The same applies to Dadanitic.

4.1.4 State

Caskel argued that the expression *h-*ṣ₁lmn (CLL 19/3–4 = JSLih 62/3–4) indicates that, at an early period, a determinate state, marked by a suffixed -n, existed in Dadanitic, as in the Ancient South Arabian languages (1954:68). However, such an explanation would mean that the word was doubly defined (with a prefixed article *h-* and the suffixed -n), and Caskel’s attempt to explain the former as a demonstrative is unconvincing in view of the fact that elsewhere in Dadanic the demonstrative adjective always follows the defined noun, thus *h-*ṣ₁lmn ḫdh (JSLih 82/1). It is much more likely that *ṣlmn* is a dual or an external plural, or perhaps a diminutive (see Brockelmann 1908–1913: i, 394), with a specialized meaning such as “statuette” as opposed to “statue” (cf. Aramaic *ṣlmnyt* which seems to mean “small female idols” in *Israel Exploration Journal* 29 (1979), p. 119).

4.1.5 Determination

There is no visible mark of indetermination (comparable to *tanwin* in Arabic), and had *tanwin* been present it would have been represented in the Ancient North Arabian scripts. Determination is marked by the definite article (see §4.3.1) or annexation either to another noun or to a pronominal suffix.

4.1.6 Diminutives

If diminutives were formed in Ancient North Arabian in the same way as in Arabic, by use of the fu’ayl form, they would be invisible in the Ancient North Arabian orthographies. Only exceptional forms such as *ḥyt* (cf. Arabic *’uhayyat* “little sister”, C 893) and *ḥny* (cf. Arabic *bunayy* “little son”, WH1249) can be identified.

4.1.7 Adjectives

These follow the noun and agree with it in gender, number, and determination: for example, in Safaitic *h-gs² h-radf* (“ha-gays² h-radif) “the rear guard” (LP 146); or *kl* ʾṣ²r ṣdq “every true kinsman” in Safaitic (HCH 191) and Hismaic (MNM 6).

As in Arabic, an adjective referring to a noun in the plural signifying nonsentient beings is put in the feminine singular, thus *rtd jds’t* (cf. Arabic *r투q qadisah*) “sacred portals” (CLL 85/3).
4.1.8 Pronouns

Independent and enclitic personal pronouns are attested in Ancient North Arabian, as are relative and demonstrative pronouns.

4.1.8.1 Independent personal pronouns

Only three independent personal pronouns are so far securely attested in Ancient North Arabian:

1. First singular ‘n: There is only one certain example in each of Safaitic (WH 1403b) and Dadanitic (JSLih 347/2). It is found occasionally in Hismaic (unpublished) and Thamudic D (e.g., JSTham 637), and is frequent in Thamudic B and C. It has not yet been found in Hasaitic.

2. Second singular ‘t: Two possible examples are known so far, both in Thamudic B (HU 796 and 627?).

3. Third plural masculine hm: Known from only one example in Dadanitic (JSLih 79/3).

4.1.8.2 Enclitic personal pronouns

Enclitic personal pronouns can be attached to verbs representing the object (e.g., qtl-h “he killed him”) or to nouns indicating possession (e.g., b-h “his father”) or to prepositions which govern them (e.g., l-h “for him”). Those so far attested on verbs in Ancient North Arabian are shown in 1 through 4.

1. First singular or plural -n: If the enclitic pronouns of the first persons singular and plural on verbs were similar to those in Classical Arabic (i.e., -nī = “me,” -nā = “us”) they would be indistinguishable in all Ancient North Arabian scripts except Dadanitic, where no certain example of either has yet been found. Thus, in Safaitic ‘wd-n “protect me/us” (unpublished); in Hismaic dkrt-n lt “may Lt be mindful of me/us” (unpublished); and in Thamudic B, where it is best attested, as in flt.-n “deliver me/us” (LP 495).

2. Third singular masculine or feminine -h: This occurs in Dadanitic: for example, rd-h w-s‘ld-h “favor him and help him” (e.g., U 4/4); rd-h w-’hrt-h w s‘ld-h “favor her and her descendants and help her” (U 6/4–5). It is surprisingly rare in Taymanitic and Thamudic B, C, and D, but is found in both Safaitic – thus y’wr-h “he will scratch it out” (e.g., LP 329), qtl-h “he killed him” (LP 385, etc.); and in Hismaic: for example, htt-h “he inscribed it” (JSTham 665).

3. Third dual -hmy. Several examples are found in Dadanitic, such as s‘ld-hmy “help both of them” (U 69/5–6). This presumably represents a diphthong *-humay in contrast to Classical Arabic -humā.

4. Third plural -hm: This is found in Dadanitic rd-hm “favor them” (of four persons, AH 1/5 [see Sima 1999:35–36]).

On nouns and prepositions, the following enclitic personal pronouns are found:

5. First singular: If the enclitic pronoun of the first person singular was *-ī on nouns and prepositions, as in Arabic and most Semitic languages, one would not expect it to show up in any of the Ancient North Arabian orthographies. However, there are a
handful of possible examples in Thamudic B: for example, wdd-y “my beloved” (HU 736), s'm l-y “listen to me” (HU 713). Since, the orthography of Thamudic B does not represent vowels in other cases, as far as we can tell, it would seem that the enclitic pronoun may have been pronounced *i'ya or *ayya, as when in Classical Arabic it is attached to a word ending in a long vowel, a diphthong, or ‘alif maṣūrah.

6. Second singular -k: Safaitic ‘wd-k “your protection” (referring to one deity, unpublished) and Thamudic B b-k “in you” (e.g., HU 207, WTI 25, etc.) are attested. It is not yet identified in Dadanitic, Thamudic C and D, Hismaic, or Hasaitic.

7. Third singular masculine and feminine -hm: This is common in Safaitic ‘b-h “his father” (e.g., WH 1275), l-h “for him” (e.g., WH 3420), “for her” (e.g., CSNS 412). The frequent omission of the definite article h- immediately after the third singular enclitic personal pronoun (e.g., l-h rgm “the cairn is his/hers,” as in the examples above) suggests that the suffix may have been pronounced *-uh (masc.) / *-āh (fem.), as in many Arabic dialects, rather than *-hu (masc.) / *-hā (fem.), as in Classical Arabic. The /h/ of the article may have been assimilated to that of the enclitic pronoun, leaving only its vowel and the possible reinforcement of the initial consonant of the following word (see §4.3.1), thus *l-uh ha-(r)rgm > *l-uh-a-(r)rgm “the cairn is his.” See also s'd-h-rdw for s'd-h h rdw “help him O Rdw” (CSNS 2), though this could also represent an optative perfect s'd-h rdw “may Rdw help him.” In Hismaic we find kll-h “all of it” (unpublished), b-h “in it” (unpublished); and in Dadanitic ml-h “his winter crop” (e.g., U 35/5), “her winter crop” (U 6/3). In Hasaitic there is l't-h “her sister” (Ja 1046). The nature of the texts in Taymanitic and Thamudic B, C, and D means that no certain examples of this suffix have yet been identified.

8. Second dual -km: In Safaitic there is wd-km, “your protection” (referring to two deities, unpublished); compare Classical Arabic -kumā.

9. Third dual -hm: This is found only in Dadanitic: trium-hm “their fruit-trees” (U 69/4); compare Classical Arabic -humā.

10. Third dual -hm: In Dadanitic there are also examples of -hm being used to refer to two people. This could represent a difference in orthography or in pronunciation, or could simply be the use of the plural instead of the dual (see §5.2). Thus ml-hm “their winter crop” (referring to a man and a woman, following a verb in the dual U 19/5); ml-hm (referring to two men but following a verb in the 3rd pl. masc., U 36/4). In contrast to Dadanitic (cf. 9), this is the form which would be expected in the Thamudic B and Safaitic orthographies which show neither vowels nor diphthongs. There is one possible example in Thamudic B, l-h-gml-n kl-hm “both the camels” (HU 160) and one in Safaitic, l-hm “on account of both of them” (HCH 34, referring to two persons).

11. First plural -n: Safaitic provides lhl-n “our god” (C 2526), l-n “for us” (C 2840). Hismaic has s'j-n “our companions” (unpublished); w'q-n “our inscription” (MNM 6).

12. Third plural masculine -hm: Examples include Dadanitic lyrt-hm “their descendants” (referring to three persons, U 90/5); Thamudic B: kl-hm (? “all of them” (HU 160); Safaitic l'h-hm “their brother” (LP 413); Hismaic kll-hm, “all of them” (unpublished).

13. Third plural feminine: At present there is no certain evidence for this, though Caskel sought unconvincingly to restore one, -lhn, in CLL 69/1, 2.

4.1.8.3 Relative pronouns

1. mm/m “who, whoever”: Compare Arabic man. In Safaitic this relative pronoun occurs in the very common curse *wr m(n) y’wr “blind whoever scratches out [the writing],”
and in Hismaic in the expression kll mn yqry “anyone who may read” (MNM 6). No certain example of mn has yet been found in the other dialects. There is no example in Ancient North Arabian of mn or m used as an interrogative pronoun, but this is probably due to the nature of the texts.

2. mh “which, that which”: So far this has been found only in Dadanitic: for example, mh|j|’hd “that which has been taken” (CLL 82/2–3); and m-l-hm “that which [belongs] to them” (U 19/5, where the three elements are treated as one unit and the *ā of mh is not shown by a mater lectionis since it is no longer in final position).

3. d “who, whoever, which, that which”: Compare the relative pronoun dū which was particularly characteristic of the early Arabic dialect of the tribe of Ṭayy (Wright 1896–1898:i, 272–273; Kohler 1940–1942:259–260; Rabin 1951:203–205). In Safaitic, this relative pronoun has so far been found only with reference to people, thus in the very common wr d y’wr h-s|ŷr “blind whoever scratches out the writing,” or yr m-d qtl-h “recompense from him who killed him” (LP 385). In Dadanitic, however, d- is found referring to both people and things. Thus, d-kn l-hm b-bdr “that which [belongs] to them at Bdr” (U 73/4–5) which parallels m-kn l-h b-d’t“I “that which [belongs] to him at D-ṭ” (U 59/3–4). There are as yet no certain occurrences in the other dialects.

4. d followed by the name of a social group is the normal way of expressing group affiliation in Dadanitic (cf. 5), as in South Arabian (e.g., AH 1/1–3 [see Sima 1999:35–36]: N w-N w-N w-N bnw N d-N.Trib., see also JSLih 197/2, 216/2).

5. d l: This phrase is used as one of three ways of expressing affiliation to a social group in Safaitic and is the only method used in Hismaic and Hasaitic. There is no certain example of d l in Dadanitic, where d- plus the ethnicon is the norm (cf. 4, the apparent example in AH 19/2 [= U 47/2] has been reread from the photograph as d l’h and interpreted as an error for d l’h l (?) in Sima 1999:19, 84–85). It is not found at all in Taymanitic, where l is simply placed after the last name in the genealogy (see Macdonald 1992a:31, 40, n. 74). There is also no certain example in any of the types of Thamudic. The phrase d l is made up of a particle d l, a noun meaning any social group from immediate family to nation (cf. Arabic ‘āl). It is placed before the name of the group, thus d l ḥzy “of the lineage of Ḥzy.” The masculine d seems to have been considered an inseparable particle, since in texts employing word-dividers it is always attached to l, in contrast to the feminine d l, which is always separated from l. The feminine, d l, is found in Safaitic (e.g., CSNS 412), Hismaic (unpublished), and Hasaitic (e.g., Atlal 6, 1982:139, lines 6–7). Here the ’ is consonantal, in contrast to Classical Arabic dāt (perhaps < *dāt [?]; cf. the Hebrew feminine demonstrative zō’t < *zā’t?). A possible plural is found in Safaitic dw l yzr “members of the l Yzr” (C 2156); compare Classical Arabic dawā. Littmann (1943:xvi) compared this particle d to Classical Arabic dū “possessor of” (“he of . . .”). This is probably also the case with d (without l) in Dadanitic (see 4). The exact relationship of this particle to the relative and demonstrative pronouns (§4.1.8.4) is not yet clear.

4.1.8.4 Demonstrative pronouns

A demonstrative pronoun, zn (or perhaps dn) is found in Thamudic D (zn N, “this is N”) and is used for both masculine and feminine: thus zn ġnm bn ‘bdmnt “this is Gnm son of ‘bdmnt” (JSTham 584); and zn rqṣ bnt ‘bdmnt “this is Rqs2 daughter of ‘bdmnt” (JSTham 1, and another example in 219). It has been suggested that another demonstrative pronoun, zt, is attested in Thamudic C, but this is highly questionable. No demonstratives have yet been identified in Taymanitic or Thamudic B.
Ancient North Arabian

The only evidence at present for a demonstrative pronoun in Dadanitic is the adverb **b-dh** “here”, literally “in this”, (Jshih 279). Caskel (1954:64) suggested that some Dadanitic inscriptions begin with a demonstrative pronoun **d**, “this”: for example, **d / ml’mnh** “this is Ms’il mh” (CLL 102); **d / l’m fjkl l’t** “this is lm priest of Lt” (CLL 104). However, the **d**-sign at the beginning of these graffiti is almost certainly an apotropaic sign (perhaps **d** for the deity **d-gbt**); see JSLSih 284, where it occurs at the beginning and the end of the text and 297, where these signs are excluded from the cartouche around the name.

4.2 Verbal morphology

The different dialects of Ancient North Arabian contribute fragmentary evidence on verbal inflection for three persons (first, second, and third), three numbers (singular, dual, and plural) and two genders (masculine and feminine), at least in the third-person singular in which the vast majority of these inscriptions are couched. The various verb-stems (see §4.2.2) are inflected in two conjugations – one suffixed, the other prefixed (see §4.2.3). The verb appears in active and passive voice, though the morphology of the latter is difficult to identify, as discussed in §4.2.4. In a similar fashion, modal distinctions are obscured by the orthography; see §4.2.5.

A notable difference between Arabic and Ancient North Arabian lies in the treatment of verbs in which the third radical is /w/ or /y/. In Arabic, even in the pre-Islamic period, verbs of the form **ˇsatawa** (“to pass the winter”) and **banaya** (“to build”) appear to have been contracted to **ˇsatâ** and **ˇbanâ** respectively, since in purely consonantal scripts (e.g., Sabaic) they appear with no final radical (e.g., **bn** for **ˇbanâ** in the ‘Igl bn Hf’m inscription from Qaryat al-Faw, see Beeston 1979b:1–2) and in those which use *matres lectionis* (e.g., Nabataean) they appear with final -á. However, in Ancient North Arabian the third radical is always retained, thus **s2tw** (more commonly **s2ty**, see above) and **bny** (see Macdonald, forthcoming).

This feature is also found in verbs which have a middle radical /w/ or /y/. In Classical Arabic, this is commonly reduced to -á- when between two short vowels: for example, **hawara > ʰāra**, and **bayata > bāta**. But in Safaitic, these verbs are written with the middle radical intact, both in the base stem (cf. Arabic Form I), for example **hrw** “he returned,” **byt** “he spent the night,” etc.; and in the - prefix stem (cf. Arabic Form IV), for example, **wr** “he blinded in one eye” (MSTJ 11, cf. Arabic ‘ā’āra but also ‘a’‘ara). It has been suggested that verbs of this type are sometimes found in a contracted form in the base stem (e.g., Safaitic **sf** [supposedly representing *ṣāfa*] for **sf** “he spent the early summer”), and that the forms with medial **w** or **y** represent the equivalent of the Arabic Forms II (fā‘ala) or III (fā‘ala), where the middle radical has a consonantal value (for Dadanitic, Caskel 1954:67; for Safaitic, Littmann 1943:xvii–xviii). However, the only plausible case of such contraction yet identified in an Ancient North Arabian text is **kn** (cf. Arabic **kāna** “he/it exists”) in the Dadanitic phrase **d kn-l-h** “that which is to him” (i.e., “is his,” e.g., in U 85/3). In most cases, the sense requires the verb written with medial **w/y** to be the equivalent of Classical Arabic Form I rather than Forms II or III, though it should be noted that in most modern Arabic dialects forms I and II of many verbs are used interchangeably with little discernible difference in meaning (I am most grateful to Professor Clive Holes for this information).

There appears to be an interesting difference between Safaitic and Hismaic as regards verbs which (in Arabic) have **¨a** as their third radical. Thus, **yqr** “he may read” (C 4803) in Safaitic (and Classical Arabic) as against **yqry** in Hismaic (MNM 6). On this root’s significance for
the etymology of Classical Arabic qara’a (meaning “to read”) in Ancient North Arabian, see Macdonald, forthcoming. See also Safaitic ks la ‘a ‘track’ (C 523, cf. Arabic kus ‘rear, behind”) as against Hismiac ksr ‘pursuing’ (unpublished, cf. Arabic kas’). It is also possible that this ‘/y contrast is sometimes found in medial position. In one Hismiac text (CTSS 3) we find dyt for dyt, the normal marker of affiliation to an ethnic or social group. However, this example is so far unique, and elsewhere in Hismiac we find dyt as in Safaitic. All in all, there are at present too few examples of this apparent ‘/y contrast to be sure that it is really a dialectal feature.

In certain cases, Safaitic has a geminate verb where the equivalent in Classical Arabic has w or y as the third radical. Thus Safaitic gzz “to raid” as against Arabic gaza (root g-z-w, see Beeston 1979a:134).

4.2.1 Verb patterns

Arabic grammar knows fifteen possible forms or patterns of the verb (conventionally illustrated by the verb fa’ala), of which only the first ten are common. Several of these are distinguished by vowel lengthening or by doubling of the second or third radical. Since vowels and doubled consonants are not expressed in the Ancient North Arabian scripts (apart from some final long vowels in Dadanitic which are irrelevant in this case), it would be impossible to distinguish between the equivalents of Arabic Forms I (fa’ala), II (fa‘ala), and III (fɑ’ala), all of which would appear simply as *f’il, except possibly in the case of geminate verbs (see below). Similarly, V (tɑfa‘ala) and VI (tafa‘ala) would both appear as *tf’il. This means that there is no way of telling whether Ancient North Arabian had a structure of verbal Forms similar to that of Classical Arabic. It therefore seems more prudent to describe the stems simply by the ways in which they appear in the texts.

It might be thought that the geminate verbs would be an exception to the above, since one would expect the equivalent of the Arabic Form I to appear as hilt (*ḥalla), and the equivalent of the Arabic Form II to appear as hilt (*ḥallala). However, the hilt form is rare in Safaitic and is always found in exactly the same contexts as hilt with no apparent difference in sense between the two. Similarly, the verb wdd “he loved,” which is very common in Thamudic B, is rarely, if ever, found as wd. In Dadanitic, there is no clear example of the hilt form in the base stem, though there is considerable variation in the ‘-prefix stem, namely: ẓill (U 14/2, etc.) as against ẓl (U 18/2, etc.); ẓilt (U 68/4, etc.) as against ẓlt (U 6/2, etc.); ẓilh (U 119/5, etc.) as against ẓlh (U 90/3, etc.) – where Arabic would have ‘azalla, ‘azallat, ‘azallū, respectively. Similarly, in Dadanitic, the active participle ‘ar (HE 1) implies a pronunciation such as *ārir, in contrast to Arabic ‘arr. This suggests that in most contexts the second and third radicals of geminate verbs were separated by a vowel in Ancient North Arabian (at least in the pronunciation of some speakers), thus *ḥalal, *ārir, *ażlal, and so forth, in contrast to Classical Arabic where they were not, thus halla, ‘arr, ‘ażall. These verbs cannot therefore be used as evidence of a fa‘ala (Form II) in Ancient North Arabian.

4.2.2 Verb-stems

Before presenting the Ancient North Arabian verb-stems, three things must be noted. First, because in Arabic, verbs which contain one or more of the phonemes /j/, /w/, or /y/ behave somewhat differently from those which do not, examples of such verbs in Ancient North Arabian are listed below with the form of the cognate verb in Classical Arabic given for comparison. Second, reconstructions of the vocalized and unassimilated forms of Ancient
North Arabian verbs are purely hypothetical and are based on the equivalent forms in Classical Arabic. They represent only one of several possible realizations of the forms found in the texts, and should not be taken as anything more than a working hypothesis. Finally, references to texts are usually given only for unique or unusual occurrences.

4.2.2.1 Safaitic verb-stems

(5) Base Stem f’l (cf. Arabic Forms I, II, and III)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radicals</th>
<th>Safaitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ʾdh</td>
<td>“he sacrificed”</td>
<td>ʾdabaha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = ʾ</td>
<td>ʾḥd</td>
<td>“he took possession of”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = ʾ, III = y</td>
<td>ʾby</td>
<td>“he came”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = w</td>
<td>ʾwgm</td>
<td>“he grieved”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = y, II = ʾ</td>
<td>yʾl</td>
<td>“he despaired” (SIJ 118)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = w</td>
<td>ʾhwr</td>
<td>“he returned”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = w, III = y</td>
<td>nwʾy</td>
<td>“he migrated with the whole tribe”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = y</td>
<td>btʾy</td>
<td>“he spent the night”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III = ʾ</td>
<td>dtʾ</td>
<td>“he spent the season of the later rains”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III = w</td>
<td>sʾtw</td>
<td>“he spent the winter”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III = y</td>
<td>ʾbnʾ</td>
<td>“he built”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = III</td>
<td>ʾhll</td>
<td>“he camped”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three derived stems can be identified in Safaitic: (i) the ʾ-prefix (ʾfʾl) stem (cf. Arabic Form IV ʾafʾala); (ii) the t-prefix (tfʾl) stem (cf. Arabic Forms V tafaʾala and VI taffaʾala); and (iii) the t-infix (ftʾl) stem (cf. Arabic Form VIII iftaʾala). These are illustrated below.

(6) ʾ-prefix stem ʾfʾl (cf. Arabic Form IV)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Safaitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ʾsʾrq</td>
<td>“he migrated to the inner desert”</td>
<td>ʾašraqa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = y, II = ʾ</td>
<td>ʾyʾl</td>
<td>“it drove to despair” (root yʾl-sʾl, WH 1022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = w</td>
<td>“wr” “he blinded in one eye” (root šʾl-w-r, MSTJ 11)</td>
<td>ʾaʾrāra / ʾaʾwara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III = y</td>
<td>“ly” “he raised up” (root ʾl-y, WH 1696)</td>
<td>ʾaʾlā</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that ʾyʾl presents a rare occasion when a diphthong may have been expressed in Safaitic (*ʾayʾasa), unless a short vowel or, more likely, a shewā was inserted to ease the transition to the second base.

Safaitic t-prefix stems are illustrated by the following:

(7) t-prefix stem tfʾl (cf. Arabic Forms V and VI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Safaitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I = n</td>
<td>tngʾr “he looked out for” (root n-ʾl-r, WH 3294)</td>
<td>tanazzara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = w</td>
<td>tʾsʾwq “he longed for” (root šʾl-w-q)</td>
<td>tašawwaqa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(8)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Safaitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>$t$-$n$</td>
<td>$t$-$n$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$t$-$n$ “he waited” (root $n$-$z$-$r$)  

$t$-$s$ “he didn’t” (root $y$-$s$-$l$, U 679)  

On the assimilation of $n$-$t$-$z$-$r$ to $t$-$z$-$r$, see §3.1.5.

4.2.2.2  

**Dadanitic verb-stems**

The Dadanitic base stem can be illustrated by $n$-$d$ “he vowed” (U 10/2). Examples of base stems with $t$, $w$ and $y$ radicals and with geminate radicals are presented in (9):

(9)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Dadanitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>$n$-$d$</td>
<td>$n$-$d$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$w$</td>
<td>$w$-$d$</td>
<td>$w$-$d$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding $g$-$w$, note, however, that Sima (1999: 93–94) takes this as an $t$-stem of a verb $n$-$g$-$w$ which he interprets as “to clear out [an underground water channel].”

Dadanitic is the only Ancient North Arabian dialect in which there is clear evidence of a $h$-prefix stem (10) and even here it coexists with the $t$-prefix (11) which is the norm in Safaitic. There are insufficient clear examples of verbs in the other dialects to draw any conclusions:

(10)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Dadanitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$h$</td>
<td>$h$-$d$</td>
<td>$h$-$d$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The retention of the initial $w$ of the root in $h$-$d$-$q$-$w$ may reflect uncertainty about representing diphthongs in the Dadanitic script.

(11)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Dadanitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t$</td>
<td>$t$-$d$</td>
<td>$t$-$d$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is possible that $t$-$q$ (e.g., in JSLih103) represents a $t$-infix stem (ft$l$) in Dadanitic. Caskel interpreted this as a metathesized $t$-infix stem of $q$t, thus $i$q$t$a > $i$q$t$a (CLL
p. 64). However, this is improbable. More likely it represents the *-infix stem of a root *wqṭ (*ittaqaṭa), or of a root *nqṭ (*intaqaṭa which, with the expected nasal assimilation (§3.1.5), would become *ittaqaṭa).

Caskel sought to identify one verb with an *n*-prefix (equivalent to the Arabic Form VII) and another with a *st*-prefix (equivalent to the Arabic Form X), but in both cases the interpretations are very uncertain (Caskel 1954:64–65).

### 4.2.3 Verb conjugations

Two conjugations are identifiable in Ancient North Arabian, one in which person, number and gender are indicated by suffixes and one in which these are indicated by prefixes (and in some persons suffixes as well). If two prefix-conjugations existed, as in some Semitic and Hamitic languages, the Ancient North Arabian writing system, which shows neither vowels nor doubled consonants, has rendered them indistinguishable. On the uses of the suffix- and prefix-conjugations see §§5.3.1 and 5.3.2.

#### 4.2.3.1 Safaitic verb conjugations

Examples of those forms which are attested for the suffix-conjugation in Safaitic are listed in (12).

(12) The suffix-conjugation in Safaitic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base stem</th>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Safaitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd sg. masc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = 'III = y</td>
<td>ḏbḥ “he sacrificed”</td>
<td>ḏabaha</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = y</td>
<td>ṣy “he came” (e.g., NST 3)</td>
<td>ṣaṭa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III = y</td>
<td>r'y “he pastured”</td>
<td>r'aṭa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = III</td>
<td>ḥl “he camped” (Form I)</td>
<td>ḥalla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ḥll “he camped” (Form II)</td>
<td>ḥallala</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd sg. fem.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = y</td>
<td>g̣ḷṣḷt “she stopped briefly” (SIAM i 30)</td>
<td>g̣lasat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ṃṭt “she died” (NST 2)</td>
<td>ṃṭat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2nd sg. fem.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>whb̀t “may you give”</td>
<td>wahabti</td>
<td>(C 4037, optative §5.3.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>'t-prefix stem</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd sg. masc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = w</td>
<td>ṭ̣ṣ₂ẉq “he longed for”</td>
<td>taṣawwaqa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd sg fem.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ṭ̣ṣ’ẉq̣t “she longed for”</td>
<td>taṣawwaqa</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>t-infix stem</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3rd sg. masc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = n</td>
<td>ṭzr “he waited”</td>
<td>intażara</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The terminations of the dual, if it existed (cf. Dadanitic and Classical Arabic -ā) and the plural (cf. Dadanitic and Classical Arabic -ā) of the suffix conjugation are not visible in Safaitic orthography.
Examples of those forms which are attested for the prefix-conjugation in Safaitic are listed in (13).

(13) The prefix-conjugation in Safaitic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Safaitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. masc.</td>
<td>I = w</td>
<td>yhbl “he may damage”</td>
<td>yahbalu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III = ʔ</td>
<td>yqr’ “he may read” (C 4803)</td>
<td>yaqra’u</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III = y</td>
<td>yqyr “he may read” (Hismaic, MNM 6)</td>
<td>ya’urina</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = III</td>
<td>yrrb “he is training” (C 1186)</td>
<td>yurabbibu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl. masc.</td>
<td>II = w</td>
<td>y’wrn “they may scratch out” (WH 2112)</td>
<td>ya’awwiruna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl.</td>
<td>III = y</td>
<td>nngy “may we escape” (WH 135)</td>
<td>nanā’u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = III = y</td>
<td>nnyy “may we live prosperously” (Thamudic B, LP 495)</td>
<td>nahyā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-prefix stem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Safaitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. masc.</td>
<td>yst rq (in l-yst rq “in order to go into the inner desert”, LP 180)</td>
<td>yuṣrīq</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| t-prefix stem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Safaitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. masc.</td>
<td>II = n</td>
<td>ytgr “he will wait for” (?) (WH 3929)</td>
<td>yantaziru</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.3.2 Dadanitic verb conjugations

(14) The suffix-conjugation in Dadanitic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Radical</th>
<th>Dadanitic</th>
<th>cf. Arabic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. masc.</td>
<td>I = ʔ</td>
<td>ḥd “he took possession of” (e.g., JSLih 45/3)</td>
<td>ʾahada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I = ʔ, III = w</td>
<td>ḡw “he made provision for” (?) (U 71/2) (see Müller in Stiehl 1971:566)</td>
<td>banā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III = y</td>
<td>bny “he built” (CLL 74/1)</td>
<td>banā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II = III</td>
<td>ṛr “may he dishonor” (HE 1/4, see §5.3.1)</td>
<td>ʾarrā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg. fem.</td>
<td>nṛt “she vowed” (JSLih 73/4–5)</td>
<td>nadarat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl. masc.</td>
<td>I = ʔ</td>
<td>ḥdw “they took possession of” (JSLih 79/2)</td>
<td>ʾahadū</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III = y</td>
<td>bnyw “they built” (CLL 26/2)</td>
<td>banaw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On this last, bnyw, compare the form binyaw (instead of Classical Arabic banaw) in some “old sedentary dialects” of eastern Arabia and many others in Saudi Arabia [Clive Holes].
4.2.4 Voice

Since no short vowels are expressed in the Arabian consonantal scripts, it is impossible to tell whether the Ancient North Arabian verbal system had a fully operational passive voice, indicated by changes of internal short vowels, as in Arabic. Thus, *ṣnt qtl mʾn (LP 297) presumably means “the year Mʾn was killed,” but it is not clear whether qtl here is a verb in the passive of the suffix-conjugation (equivalent to Arabic qutīla), or a masdar, or verbal noun (equivalent to Arabic qutāl, i.e., “the year of Mʾn’s being killed”), or even a passive participle (cf. Arabic and Aramaic qatīl acting as a verb to produce a virtual relative (i.e. “the year [in which] Mʾn [was] killed”), as, for example, in Nabataean (Cantineau 1930–1932:i, 108); see §5.4.

In Dadanitic, a verb in the passive can occasionally be identified. Thus, for instance, the context in CLL 82/3 requires *ḥd to be a third singular masculine passive of the suffix-conjugation in mḥʾ *ḥ’d l-hmy “that which has been acquired on behalf of both of them.” A possible example of the passive of the prefix-conjugation is ḥyʾd “he will not be threatened” (root *w-ʾ-d, CLL 31/6, cf. Arabic lā yūʾudu).

4.2.5 Mood

Similarly, the fact that no short vowels are indicated in the scripts makes it impossible to tell whether there were indicative, subjunctive, and jussive moods in the prefix-conjugation, distinguished by final short vowels (or lack of them) as in Classical Arabic.

The absence of short vowels in the scripts also means that the imperative can only be identified from context, and there is no visible distinction between the masculine and
feminine forms. Thus, in Safaitic, for example, flt “deliver!” occurs in some contexts where it must be masculine (cf. Arabic ifliṭ [masc.]) and others where it must be feminine (cf. Arabic ifliṭ [fem.]); similarly with ‘wr “blind!” (masc. and fem.; cf. Arabic ’awwir [masc.], ’awwiri [fem.]).

In Dadanitic, many inscriptions end with invocatory formulas consisting of a series of verbs in the imperative or in the suffix-conjugation with an optative sense (see §5.3.1). The most common of these formulas is f-rd-h w-s’ d-h w-ḥrt-h “and so favour him and help him and his descendants” (see JSLih 8, where the deity is mentioned, and U 14/5–6, etc., where it is not; see Sima 1999:105 for the variants of this formula at al-Udayb). Here rd is the masculine imperative of rd. y “to favor” (equivalent to Arabic ird. a) whereas s1 can be compared with the Arabic Form III imperative sā‘id.

In the case of verbs whose first radical is w there seems to be a distinction between Safaitic and Thamudic B, though the small number of examples is restricted to the verb whb, which in Classical Arabic is exceptional in this respect (see Wright 1896–1898:i, 78–79). We cannot therefore be certain how widespread a phenomenon this was. In Safaitic (in all but two examples), the initial w of whb is retained in the imperative, whereas in Thamudic B it seems to be dropped (as in Classical Arabic). Thus, in Safaitic we find w-whb l-h nqmt “and give to him booty” (C 1808, cf. Classical Arabic ḥab); and h rdw whb l-h . . . “O Rdw give to him . . .” (WH 190). On the other hand, there are two Safaitic texts in which the imperative appears as hb: h rdw hb l- bd’l nqmt “O Rdw give to ‘bd’l booty” (LP 460) and h ‘lt flt l-bg’ w-hb l-h n’m “O ‘lt [grant] deliverance to Bg’ and give to him prosperity” (LP 504), though in both cases this could be due to haplography, as it could be in the Thamudic B text h rdw hb s’km “O Rdw give a gift” (unpublished).

4.2.6 Participles

As a verbal noun, the participle in Ancient North Arabian was inflected according to gender, number, and voice. On the uses of the participle see §5.4.

4.2.6.1 Active participle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base stem</th>
<th>sg. masc.</th>
<th>II = w</th>
<th>II = w, III = y</th>
<th>III = y</th>
<th>II = III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>qtl (cf. Ar. “qātil”): Safaitic, in ṭr mn qtl-h “revenge on his killer” (CSNS 1004);</td>
<td>qtl (cf. Ar. “qātil”)</td>
<td>ḥbrn (cf. Ar. qābirūna): Safaitic, in ḥbrn ḥw ’l yzr “members of the ’l Yzr having performed the burial” (C 2156), see §5.4;</td>
<td>m’wr (cf. Ar. mu’awwir): Safaitic, in ’wr l-m ’wr “blindness to a scratcher-out” (WH 408, etc.)</td>
<td>mwy (cf. Ar. nāwin): Safaitic, in r’y h-nhl mwy “he pastured this valley while on migration” (C 3181)</td>
<td>r’y (cf. Ar. rā’in): Safaitic, in syr r’y ḥrt “he was on his way to permanent water pasturing the ḥarrā [basalt desert]” (C 3131)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.6.2 Passive participle

There appear to be two morphological types of passive participle in the base stem – the fa‘il-type and the maf‘ul-type. Safaitic singular and plural examples of each follow:

1. The fa‘il-type: Singular masculine qtl “killed” (e.g., LP 658; see §4.2.4); singular feminine (i.e., of the form fa‘ilat) trh “untimely dead” (e.g., NST 2); plural masculine hrbn “plundered and left destitute” (C 657, pace ed.; cf. Arabic ḥarībīn, oblique case).

2. The maf‘ul-type: Singular masculine mqtl “killed, murdered” (e.g., HCH 76; cf. Arabic maqṭūl); plural masculine mh. rbn “plundered and left destitute” (HCH 71; cf. Arabic maḥrūbin, oblique case).

In Dadanitic, the only clear participial form, h-mqtl (JSLih 40/9), is in a damaged context and could represent either an active participle (cf. Arabic muqattil “mass killer”) or a passive (cf. Arabic maqṭūl “killed, murder victim”). There are no certain cases in the other dialects.

The feminine, dual, and external masculine plural forms of participles are similar to those of other nouns; see §4.1.2.

4.3 Particles

4.3.1 The definite article

The most obvious difference between the two branches of North Arabian lies in the form of the definite article. In Old and Classical Arabic and the majority of the vernaculars, it is /halfringrightsuperscriptal-, while in Ancient North Arabian it is either /halfringrightsuperscripth- (hn-) or in some dialects possibly zero.

The earliest evidence for both comes from the fifth century BC in the epithet of a goddess which Herodotus (3.8) quotes in its Old Arabic form, ‘A /halfringrightsuperscriptilat, and which occurs in its Ancient North Arabian form, /halfringrightsuperscripthn-‘il, in a number of Aramaic inscriptions on silver bowls found at Tell al-Maskhūtah in northeastern Egypt (Rabinowitz 1956). In both cases, it means literally “the goddess.”

A definite article has not yet been identified in Hasaitic (except in names) or in Thamudic C and D, and there are doubts whether Hismaic employed one at all (see below). In Taymanitic, Thamudic B, and Safaitic, it is /halfringrightsuperscripth- in all contexts. Since the script shows neither vowels nor the doubling of consonants, it is impossible to tell how this /halfringrightsuperscripth- was vocalized and whether it was followed by systematic strengthening or doubling of the following consonant (as, for instance, in Hebrew, but in contrast to Arabic; see Macdonald, forthcoming, contra Ullendorff 1965). In Dadanitic (and in some names spread over a wide geographical and chronological range) it has the form /halfringrightsuperscripthn- before ‘and ‘. In an inscription in the Safaitic script, the gentilic /halfringrightsuperscripthn-hwly (a tribe apparently from the region of Dadan) attests to the use of this form before /halfringrightsuperscripth (Macdonald 1993:308). There are as yet no examples of the article before a word beginning with /halfringrightsuperscripth, but it is possible that it was /halfringrightsuperscripthn- here as well.

Traditionally, it has been assumed that this /halfringrightsuperscripthn- in Dadanitic was the survivor of the original form of the article before all phonemes, in all Ancient North Arabian dialects. However, had this been so, we would expect to find scattered examples of this form in other dialects (which so far we have not) and in front of other phonemes in Dadanitic (see Macdonald 2000:41–42). At present, therefore, it seems more likely that this was a development peculiar to Dadanitic and that, even there, it was simply a euphonic or dissimilatory phenomenon before glottal and pharyngal consonants.

It was once thought that a definite article /halfringrightsuperscripthl- existed in Dadanitic. However, the only examples were in two texts, one of which has now been identified as being an abecedary in the South Semitic order (JSLih 158, see Müller 1982:22); while the other is not in the
Dadanitic language but in Old Arabic written in the Dadanitic script, where h-l- represents a proposed demonstrative, h-, plus the Old Arabic definite article (‘)l- (JSLih 71/8, see Beeston et al. 1973:69–70 and Macdonald 2000:70, n. 90 and forthcoming). Compare the situation in many modern Arabic dialects, where an invariant demonstrative ha- with a relatively weak demonstrative force is placed before the article (e.g., ha-l-bêt “this house,” ha-s-sana “this year”; Holes 1995:152–153).

In Safaitic, the distinction between the definite article and the nearer demonstrative (“this”) is not always clear and it is possible that the article had a mild demonstrative implication (e.g., h-dr “the/this place,” h-s’1 nt “this year”), as it can have in Arabic (e.g., ’al-yawm “the/this day,” i.e., “today”). This, of course, is different from the case in JSLih 71/8 and the modern Arabic dialects mentioned in the previous paragraph, where the demonstratives h- and ha- respectively are prefixed to the article. In Hismaic, on the other hand, h- is relatively rare in contexts where it would appear to represent the definite article. Thus, for instance, there is, as yet, no example in Hismaic of affiliation to a social group being expressed by the nisbah (see §4.1.6), in contrast to Safaitic where it is common (e.g., h-gdly “the Gd-lite”), while in “signatures” to rock drawings IN bkrt alternates with IN h-bkrt, “by N is the young she-camel,” where in Safaitic only the latter is found. The few possible examples of h- as definite article in Hismaic could equally well represent the nearer demonstrative “this” and there is, as yet, no case where it could not. It is therefore an open question whether Hismaic employed a form of determination which does not show up in the script (e.g., a final vowel, as in the Aramaic “determined state”), or had no definite article (as, in effect, in Syriac).

4.3.2 Demonstrative adjectives

In Dadanitic and Hismaic demonstrative adjectives are formed with d and follow a noun defined by the article or a pronominal suffix.

In Dadanitic the masculine demonstrative adjective is dh (probably *dā), for example h-s1fr dh “this writing” (HE 1) and the feminine is dt (probably *dāt), for example h-sfrt dt “this section of cliff” (JSLih 66/2). The demonstrative adjective hdh (probably *ḥādā) is found in h-(ṣ)lmn hdh “this statuette (?)” (JSLih 82/1, cf. Arabic ḥādā).

In Hismaic, a demonstrative adjective d’ is attested only once, in wq ‘n d’ “this our inscription” (MNM 6, pace ed. who reads dh, though ‘ is clear on the photograph). This is a curious form since it would be highly unusual for the ‘ to represent a vowel in Hismaic. If the ‘ represents a consonant, perhaps compare d’t in §4.1.8.3, 5. It seems possible that in the relatively rare cases in Hismaic where h- is prefixed to a noun with no other visible form of definition, that this represents a demonstrative adjective rather than the definite article. See the discussion in §4.3.1.

In Safaitic, the prefixed h- is the only form of demonstrative so far clearly attested (see §4.3.1).

4.3.3 Introductory particles

Most of the Ancient North Arabian graffiti and the majority of the Dadanitic monumental inscriptions begin with the name of the “author” (see §5.1.1). In the Taymanitic, Thamudic B, C, and D, Safaitic, and some Hismaic graffiti, the name is usually introduced by a particle. In Taymanitic, this is often l (known as the lām auctoris), which is probably the preposition “for, of” (see §4.3.4) which in this context means “by” in the sense of authorship, as it can in Arabic. However, a particle lm is also used, apparently with the same meaning (perhaps cf. Hebrew ṇmō, found only in the Book of Job, the language of which is thought to exhibit many
North Arabian features). This particle is characteristic of Taymanitic (Winnett 1980:135–136). What is possibly a dialectal variant of this, *nm,* is found as an introductory particle in Thamudic B, while Thamudic D texts often begin *zn* “this is . . . .” In Safaitic, all but a handful of texts begin with the *lām auctoris,* while in Hismaic the author’s name can be introduced by the *lām auctoris,* or by the conjunctions *w* or *f* (see §4.3.6). In Dadanitic, no introductory particle is used (except possibly in JSLih 128). Since most of the Hasaitic inscriptions are gravestones they begin *wgr w-qbr* “tomb-chamber and grave” (see Livingstone 1984:102) or *nfs* *w-qbr* “memorial and grave.”

### 4.3.4 Vocative particles

The vocative particle is *h* in Dumaitic, Dadanitic (JSLih 8), Thamudic B, Safaitic, Hismaic, and Hasaitic (sole example unpublished). None has yet been identified in Taymanitic and Thamudic C and D. Given the nature of these texts it is not surprising that it has been found only in prayers (e.g., *hr d. ws 1* “O Rd. wh e lp N”; *hl ts 1lm,* “OL t[grant] security”). In origin, it was probably a sound used to attract attention (*hā*), and can be paralleled in Arabic by the *hā* which forms the initial part of a number of interjections and of the demonstrative *hādā* “this” (Wright 1896–1898:i, 268, Brockelmann 1908–1913:i, 503).

It has been suggested that in Safaitic the forms *hylt* “O Lt” (or “O Ylt”) and so forth represent a variant vocative particle, *hy,* equivalent to Arabic *hayā* (Winnett and Harding 1978:47) or *’ayyuhā* (Littmann 1943:21), though other explanations for this are possible.

In some Hismaic texts an *-m* is suffixed to the divine names *Lh* and *Lt* in invocations, thus *h lh-m,* *h lt-m* (King 1990:80). This is probably an asseverative particle which may be compared with the *-mma* in Arabic *allāhumma* (sometimes *yā allāhumma*), and possibly the *-m-* in such names as *’abīm¯a* *¯el* (Genesis 10:28), and *’bm tr,* and others from Haram and its environs on the northern borders of Yemen, where the local form of Sabaic may have have included a number of North Arabian features (Müller 1992:20).

### 4.3.5 Prepositions

1. *l* “towards” (cf. Arabic *’lā*), “for” (after the verb *ts* *wq* “to yearn”): Safaitic and Hismaic.
2. *dky* “up to”: Dadanitic (JSLih 72/6, see Müller 1982:33 and Beeston 1979a:4).
3. *l* “over, on, for, against” (cf. Arabic *’alā*): Safaitic and Hismaic; in Dadanitic it is usually found as *ly* with nouns (e.g., JSLih 81/4, 5) but as *l* with pronominal suffixes (e.g., JSLih 77/3). This suggests that the final sound was a diphthong, which would not be represented in the Safaitic and Hismaic scripts. Since Dadanitic orthography only shows diphthongs in final position, the *-y* was not written when followed by a pronominal suffix. However, there are also a few examples in Dadanitic of the form *l* without a pronominal suffix (e.g., U 73/4) which may indicate a pronunciation with final *-i* or simply an uncertainty about the representation of diphthongs.
4. *n pace* Caskel (1954:72), there is no clear evidence in Ancient North Arabian for a preposition *n* “from” (cf. Arabic *‘an*).
5. *b* “in, at, with, by” (cf. Arabic *bi-*): Taymanitic, Dadanitic, Thamudic B, Safaitic, and Hismaic.
6. *b’d* “after” (cf. Arabic *ba’d*): Safaitic (e.g., SIJ 787).

The preposition occurs in Dadanitic with the meaning “for the sake of” (e.g., U 5/4, etc.). Compare Hebrew *ba’ad* which is used in this sense and in a very similar context in Ezekiel
45:22 and Job 42:8 (see Stiehl 1971:9). Clive Holes informs me that in eastern Arabia a woman will plead with a loved one yā baʿad rūḥ-il yā baʿad ʾēn-il yā baʿad ʾibd-il, which is usually explained as “O you who are [the dearest thing to me] after my spirit/eyes/liver,” but may in fact mean “please, O X, for the sake of my spirit/eyes/liver” (personal communication). Note that Sima (1999:99–105) interprets bʿd as “in the direction of” in the same Dadanitic texts.

7. bn “between” (cf. Arabic bayna): Safaitic, in h l tht sʿnʿ-h bn yd-h “O Lt may you give his enemy into his hands” (C 4037). In Arabic, the expression bayna yaday-hi, “between his hands,” has come to mean “in front of,” but in Safaitic it seems to retain its literal sense. In the phrase sʿnt wsʿq bn rm nbt, which appears to mean “the year of the conflict between the Romans and the Nabataeans” (C 4866), either the connective w (see §4.3.5) was not considered necessary between the two nouns (as it would be in Arabic), or it was accidentally omitted by the author or the copyist.


11. Ḳ “to, for, on behalf of” (cf. Arabic lī-): Taymanitic (nṣ r l-sm, “he gave help to Slm,” e.g., WTay 15), Dadanitic, Thamudic B, Safaitic, Hismaic. The preposition is attested in several additional uses:

A. Indicating possession: Safaitic (e.g., l-N bn N h-rgm “the cairn is N son of N’s”, WH 329); Dadanitic (e.g., l-N bn N h-qbr dh “this grave is N son of N’s”, JSLih 312).

B. In dating formulas: Dadanitic (e.g., sʿnt hmsʿ l-hnʿ sʿbn tlmy mlk l hyn “year five of Hnʿ sʿ son of Tlmy, king of Lhyn”, JSLih 75/5–7).

C. Indicating motion: Safaitic (e.g., l-mdbr “to the inner desert”, LP 180).

D. Indicating purpose: Safaitic, used with verbs in the prefix-conjugation (e.g., l-ysʿrq “in order to migrate to the inner desert”, LP 180).

12. ldy “to, up to” (cf. Arabic lādā): Dadanitic (JSLih 77/3).

13. mʿ “in company with” (cf. Arabic maʿa / maʿ): Safaitic (e.g., LP 325); Dadanitic (JSLih 52/3).

14. mn/m “from” (cf. Arabic min): Thamudic B, Dadanitic, Safaitic, Hismaic passim. In Safaitic also with the sense “on account of” (e.g. SIAM:34).


4.3.6 Conjunctions

Two conjunctions, w “and” and f- “and (so) “and (then),” are attested in Ancient North Arabian. The former is found in all dialects, the latter so for only in Dadanitic, Safaitic, and Hismaic (see the discussion in Sima 1999:110–114).

4.3.7 Other particles

1. ʿdh “when” (cf. Arabic ʿidā): Dadanitic (JSLih 55/2).

2. Ṣn “that” (cf. Arabic ʿan): Safaitic, in sʿmʿ ṣn myt ḋḥs “he heard that Philip had died” (MHES p. 286).

3. Ṣn “if” (cf. Arabic ʿin): Dadanitic (JSLih 40/6, in a very damaged context).

4. Ṣn “verily” (cf. Arabic ʿinna): Dadanitic (JSLih 40/7, in a very damaged context).
5. *lh* negative particle (cf. Arabic *lā*): Dadanitic, *f-lh y’d*, “and so he will not be threatened” (?) in a very damaged context (JSLih 40/6).

6. *lm* negative particle followed by the prefix-conjugation (cf. *lam* plus the jussive in Classical Arabic): Safaitic (unpublished). This particle, which is characteristic of North Arabian, is also found in some of the texts from Haram on the northern borders of Yemen which are in Sabaic with some North Arabian features (see Macdonald 2000:49–50, 55–56).

4.4 Numerals

4.4.1 Cardinal numbers

These are attested in Dadanitic, Safaitic, and Hasaitic.

4.4.1.1 Cardinal numbers in Dadanitic

The Dadanitic cardinal numbers are presented in Table 16.2.

The final entry in the table is so read by Sima, though the first and last words are more or less invisible on the published photograph and these lines were not copied by Abū al-Ḥasan.

It will be seen from Table 16.2 that there are some interesting similarities and differences between the treatments of numerals in Dadanitic and in Classical Arabic.

1. As far as we can tell on present evidence, numerals precede the nouns to which they refer; nouns following the numbers three to ten are in the plural, while those following eleven and upwards are in the singular, as in Classical Arabic. However, the situation is obscured by the fact that, in Dadanitic, the vast majority of the examples of numerals are in dates, where the noun (sʾнт) precedes the number and is, by definition, singular.

2. The principles of agreement in gender with the preceding or following noun appear to be roughly the same as in Classical Arabic, namely that numerals of a feminine form refer to nouns which (in the singular) are masculine and vice versa. Since *ʾym* “days” follows the forms of numerals referring to a feminine noun in both Dadanitic (*ʾsʾr ʾym*) and Safaitic (*ʾsʾ tʾʾym*), it seems probable that the word *ʾym* “day” must have been regarded as feminine in these dialects (see §4.1.1).

3. If this is correct, it is probable that the final *t* in *ʾlt* (*ʾlt ʾym*) is part of the root (*ʾlt < *ʾlt*) rather than the equivalent of Arabic *tāʾ marbūtah* (see §3.1.1). Unfortunately, the word *mʾn* in *ʾlt mʾn* has not yet been satisfactorily interpreted and so we cannot be certain whether or not it is the plural of a feminine noun and therefore whether the second *t* in *ʾlt* should be explained in the same way. However, it should be noted that the development *ʾ/ʾ/ > ʾt/ is not typical of Dadanitic and so far appears to be peculiar to this word. The Dadanitic form, *ʾlt*, used with masculine nouns and Safaitic *ʾltʾlt* are identical to the Classical Arabic forms.

4. In compound numbers, the units continue to take the opposite gender to the noun, but from twenty upwards the tens are (probably) of common gender, again as in Classical Arabic. However, an interesting difference is observable in the numbers thirteen through nineteen, where in Classical Arabic (and Safaitic, see §4.4.1.2) the ten takes the same gender as the noun and the unit the opposite. In the only Dadanitic example available so far, sʾнтʾʾʾsʾ rʾʾʾsʾʾʾ bʾʾʾ (where Classical Arabic would have sanat sabʾaʾʿāʾṣrata), either the ten was regarded as of common gender (like twenty, etc.) or it behaved in the same way as the units, taking the opposite gender to the noun.

5. In the compound numerals, the larger unit is generally placed before the smaller, contrary to the practice in Classical Arabic. This occurs both in the numbers from thirteen through nineteen (e.g., *ʾsʾ rʾʾʾsʾʾʾ bʾʾʾ “seventeen,” cf. Classical Arabic sabʾaʾʿāʾṣrata and Safaitic
Table 16.2 The cardinal numerals in Dadanitic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Common</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>s₁nt hādy “year one” (CLL 26/4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>s₁nt tṭn “year two” (JSLih 45/3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>tlt tṣlt “three zll ceremonies”</td>
<td>tlt ūm “three days” (JSLih 68/4) notes 2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(U 32/3–4)</td>
<td>tlt m’n “three…” (? , JSLih 47/2) note 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>s₁nt ḫms¹ “year five”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(JSLih 75/5; Scagliarini 1996:96–97)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>s₂rt mnḥ{ḥ} “ten canals”</td>
<td>s₂r ūm “ten days” (CLL 86/3) note 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(JSLih 177/1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>s₁nt {s²}r w-s₁b² “year seventeen” (U 8/4–5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>s₁nt s₂rn “year twenty”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(JSLih 68/2–3; AH 63/5, 64/7–8? see Sima 1999:38)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>s₁nt s₂rn {w}-tṭn “year twenty-two”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(JSLih 77/11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>s₁nt s₂rn w-ts¹ “year twenty-nine”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(CLL 86/2–3; JSLih 83/6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>s₁nt tṭn ḫms¹ “year thirty-five”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(JSLih 82/3–4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>’rb’n s₁l’t “forty drachmas” (JSLih 177/2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>m’t w-s₂rn… (JSLih 77/5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>m’t w-’rb’n… (CLL 33/2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>m’t w-’rb’n ḫms¹ mlḥl? “one hundred and forty-five palm trees” (U 23/4–5 = AH 41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The form tṭn, ‘s²rt, see §4.4.1.2), and from twenty onwards (e.g., ḫms¹ w-ḥms¹, cf. Classical Arabic ḥamsun wa-talātūna). Note also that, in the teens, unit and ten are connected by w- in Dadanitic but not in Arabic. See the discussion in Sima 1999:119, but note that the supposed examples of s’tt ‘s²r and s’lt ‘s²r are very doubtful and that the restoration ‘s²r w-t[s¹]tʃ’ in AH 81/6 (n. 28) looks unlikely on the published copy.

6. The form tṭn may have resulted from an original *ṭinta (i.e., without a prosthetic initial vowel, cf. Classical Arabic ṭinta beside ṭinta, also ṭinta in modern dialects of central and eastern Arabia) with the assimilation of vowelless /n/ characteristic of Dadanitic and other Ancient North Arabian dialects (see §3.1.5).

4.4.1.2 Cardinal numbers in Safaitic

In Safaitic no example of the numeral “one” has yet been found, though a verb ṣḥd “he was alone” is well attested. The dual is used for “two”. The other Cardinal numbers attested in
Safaitic are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(16)</th>
<th>Masculine</th>
<th>Common</th>
<th>Feminine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>ilt $s^2/hr$ “three months”</td>
<td>ilt $s^1nn$ “three years”</td>
<td>(WH 3792a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>’rb $s^1nn$ “four years”</td>
<td>(WH 3094)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>$hms^1t$ ‘mny “five minas”</td>
<td>$lms^1$ $ws^1q$ “five herds of camels”</td>
<td>(C 3916)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>$s^1t$ ‘ym “six years”</td>
<td>(unpublished)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>$s^1nt$ ‘mnr $s^2rt$ “year eighteen”</td>
<td>(LP 1064)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>$m’t$ fr$^3$ “a hundred horsemen”</td>
<td>(WH 1849)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast to Dadanitic, the rules of agreement in gender and number between a numeral and the noun to which it refers appear to be the same in Safaitic as in Classical Arabic, except in the case of $s^1t$ ‘ym (see note 2 above). Similarly, the form of the single example of a compound number in $s^1nt$ ‘mnr $s^2rt$ is paralleled almost exactly by Classical Arabic sanat $t$amāniya ‘ašrata.

4.4.1.3 Cardinal numbers in Hasaitic

The following cardinal numbers, all feminine, are attested in Hasaitic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(17)</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>$s^1nt$ $s^1t$ (unpublished)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
<td>$s^1nt$ ‘$w^2$ {rn} w $s^1b$ {?’} (Robin-Mulayhya 1, contra ed.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34</td>
<td>’rb ‘w $ilt$ $s^1nt$ giving a person’s age (Livingstone 1984:100)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.2 Ordinal numbers

No ordinal numbers have yet been identified.

4.4.3 Totality

The notion of totality is expressed in Safaitic, Hismaic, and Dadanitic by $kll$ (“kulil (?)”, cf. Arabic kull). As in Arabic, when $kll$ is followed by an undefined entity it means “each, every”: for example, $kll$ ‘$s^2rdq$ “every true kinsman” (HCH 191, Safaitic; MNM 6, Hismaic). When it is followed by a defined entity (so far only pronominal suffixes are attested), it means “all” or “the whole”: for example, in Dadanitic $h$-mq$d$ $kll$-h “the whole sitting-place” (HE 1); Safaitic $s^2$‘$h$ $kll$-hm “all his companions” (LP 243).

5. SYNTAX

Given the fragmentary and formulaic nature of the available documents, no coherent description of Ancient North Arabian syntax can yet be attempted. The following notes represent some miscellaneous features which can be gleaned from the Dadanitic and Safaitic texts.
5.1 Word order

5.1.1 Word order in verbal sentences

5.1.1.1 Dadanitic

The majority of Dadanitic inscriptions begin with the subject followed by the verb followed by the object (i.e., they are SVO) and then adverbial or prepositional phrases:

(18) 1. N bn NN qrb h-slml dgtb
       “N son of NN offered the statue to Dgtb” (JSLihih 41/1–3)
2. N ktb-h b-dh
       “N wrote it here” (JSLihih 279)
   [prepositional phrases]
   “N₁ and N₂ have performed the zll ceremony for Dgtb in Khl for the sake of their winter crops in Bdr” (U 19/1–6)

This order may not reflect normal practice but rather the nature of the texts, which are mainly dedications, records of the performance of religious rites, and graffiti, in which the name of the “author” was inevitably given prominence.

By contrast, the VSO (or VOS) order, which is the norm in Classical Arabic, is very rarely attested in the Dadanitic inscriptions:

(19) hls₁ N₁ bn N₂
died N₁ son of N₂
“N₁ son of N₂ died” (literally “was carried off,” CLL 78, 79, 80)

5.1.1.2 Safaitic

Unlike the Dadanitic inscriptions, the Safaitic graffiti usually begin with the lām auctoris (see §4.3.2) followed by the author’s name and part of his genealogy. Any statement is then linked to the genealogy by the connective w “and.” This permits a natural word order within the statement, in contrast to the Dadanitic texts where it may have been distorted by the need to begin the first sentence with the author’s name for the sake of emphasis.

The usual word order in Safaitic is VSO or VOS, as in Classical Arabic. Even if they existed, case endings, being short vowels, would not show up in Safaitic orthography and it is therefore sometimes impossible to decide which is the subject and which the object in a sentence. Thus:

(20) 1. s₁nt hrbd t 'wd l ṣbḥ,  
       “the year the 'wd made war on [or “plundered”] the l ṣbḥ,” or vice versa  
       (SJI 59, see also C 2577)
2. s₁nt s₁lm t b'dt t 'wd,
       “the year the l B'd made peace with the l 'wd,” or vice versa
       (C 4394, wrongly transliterated in C)

The indirect object can also precede the direct object:

(21) 1. ngy b-h-bqr h-nyḥl,  
       he fled with-the-cows the-valley  
       “and he fled the valley with the cows” (LP 90)
2. bny l-s’d h-rgm,  
he built for-S’d the-cairn  
“he built the cairn for S’d” (WH 421)

Verbs in Safaitic can take multiple direct objects: for example, r’y h-’bl h-nhl bql, “he pastured the camels (h-’bl) [in] the valley (h-nhl) [on] spring herbage (bql)” (C 2670). Compare r’y h-nhl bql n’m-hm, “he pastured their small cattle (n’m-hm) [in] the valley [on] spring-herbage” (C 1534).

5.1.2 Word order in nominal sentences

In common with Arabic and other Semitic languages, the Ancient North Arabian dialects used nominal sentences instead of employing the verb “to be” as a copula. Thus in Dadanitic: w-’n N bn N, “and I [am] N son of N” (CLL 57/2; also in Thamudic D e.g., JSTham 637, and Hismaic e.g., King 1990: KCJ 646)

l-N h-mthr (literally “to/for N [is] the grave-chamber”), i.e., “the grave-chamber belongs to N” (JSLih 366/1)

There are numerous examples in Safaitic. Thus

l-N w-h-h’tt, “By N [are] the carvings” (e.g., WH 368)  
l-N w-h-h’t, “By N and the carving [is by him?]” (WH 353)  
l-N w-h-rgm, “For N and the cairn [is his]” (HCH 1, 2), where we know from other texts that this person was the occupant of the grave under the cairn.  
l-N w-l-h bkrt, “By N and the young she-camel [is] his [or “is by him”?)]” (WH 2833b)  
l-N w-l-h-rgm, “For N and for him/her [is the] cairn” (WH 3420, etc.); for the assimilation of the article to the preceding enclitic personal pronoun, see § 4.1.8.2, 7.

w-b’s’l-h, literally “and distress [was] to him”, i.e. “he was in distress” (CSNS 779)  
l N h-dr, literally “by/for N the place”. This ia a very common expression in the Safaitic inscriptions. It is unlikely to be a claim to personal real estate, something which is impractical in the nomadic life. Instead, it almost certainly means simply “N was here”.  

Note also the word order in the nominal phrase

l-N b-ms’rt rt l ‘mr’t frs’l, “by N, a horseman (frs’l) in the unit (ms’rt) of the ‘mr’t” (Macdonald 1993: 374).

5.1.3 Annexation

Annexation (the idafa of the Arab grammarians) is a fundamental feature of Semitic grammar (see Ch. 10) in which two or more elements are bound together to form a grammatical and semantic unit. Nothing is allowed to intervene between the elements (except in certain very specific circumstances of which we have no examples in Ancient North Arabian) and thus items such as adjectives (including demonstrative adjectives) follow the final element even if they refer to the first. The unit as a whole is defined or undefined according to the nature of the final element even if one of the preceding elements would otherwise normally take the definite article (see under Safaitic, below).  

Examples of annexation in Dadanitic are:

Undefined b-hqwy kfr (*haqway) ‘on two sides of a tomb’ (JSLih 75/3)  
Defined 3-element annexation kbry s’l t h-nš “the two kabırs of the association of H-NŠ” (CLL 77/3-4)

Defined + a demonstrative ‘rr h-s’l fr dlh “the dishonorer of this inscription” (HE 1/5-6).

Examples of annexation in Safaitic are:
**5.1.4 Demonstrative Adjectives**

When the modified noun is part of a noun phrase, two constructions are possible:

(i) \( h^\cdot zll \ d^\cdot l^\cdot gbt \) (U 33/2-3) or

(ii) \( h^\cdot zll \ l^\cdot d^\cdot gbt \ d^\cdot h \) (U 4/3), both of which mean “this zll-ceremony for D\( gbt \).” The second construction is bizarre and may be an error on the part of the engraver.

**5.2 Agreement**

In Ancient North Arabian verbs agree with their subjects in gender and number, regardless of their position in the sentence (in contrast to Classical Arabic, Wright 1896–1898: ii, 289–290).

In Dadanitic, the only dialect in which it is identifiable, the use of the dual in verbal agreement is erratic. Thus, it is used after two subjects in some texts:

(22) \( N_1 \ w\-N_2 \ 'zlh \ h^\cdot zll \)  

“\( N_1 \) and \( N_2 \) have performed the zll-ceremony” (U 19/1–4)

whereas in others the plural verb is used:

(23) A. \( N_1 \ w\-N_2 \ wdyw \)  

“\( N_1 \) and \( N_2 \) have erected (?)” (JSLih 77/2)

B. \( kbry \ s^\cdot t \ h^\cdot ns. \ h^\cdot d^\cdot w \)  

“The two kab\( r\)îrs of the association of H-NS. have taken possession” (CLL 77/3–4)

The same variation can be seen in the use of enclitic personal pronouns (§4.1.8.2). Thus, in U 19 the two subjects are followed by a verb in the dual (’\( zlh \)), but are later referred to by the plural enclitic personal pronoun -hm lines 5–7). By contrast, in U 69, the two subjects are followed by a verb in the plural (’\( zllw \)), but are referred to later by the dual nominal suffix -hm. See Sima 1999:117–118 for tables showing the variations in agreement in the inscriptions from al-’Udayb. Compare the situation in the modern spoken Arabic dialects, where the dual is in general use on nouns, but requires plural concord in the verb, adjectives, and pronouns (Clive Holes). This is a very old feature in the dialects which can already be seen in the earliest Arabic papyri (see Hopkins 1984:94–98).

**5.3 Verb conjugations**

The suffix- and prefix-conjugations are each associated with particular usages.

**5.3.1 The suffix-conjugation**

In Dadanitic, the suffix-conjugation is used of completed acts, e.g., \( N \ hdl \ h^\cdot mgb \), “\( N \) has taken possession of the tomb” (JSLih 306), and for the optative: \( rrd^\cdot gbt \), “may D\( gbt \) dishonor” (HE 1/4–5); or \( rdy\-h \), “may he [the deity] favor him” (U 18/4–5) in contrast to the imperative, \( rdl\-h \), “favor him,” which is more common in this formula.
In Safaitic, the suffix-conjugation has four distinct functions. First, it is used for completed acts and, in particular, acts which preceded the author’s present state or actions (where Classical Arabic would have the perfect, or kāna + the perfect, or qad + the perfect): for example, nfr mn rm “he had fled from Roman territory” (e.g., C 3721); wgd ṣr’n-h f-ng, “he had found the inscription of his grandfather and so he was grieving” (e.g., C 793); wgm ʾIN maqṭ qtl-h ḫwlt, “he was mourning for N, a murder-victim, whom the ḫwlt had killed” (lit. “. . . killed the ḫwlt killed him,” HCH 126); sʾmʾ ṣ Ṯf ḥs “he had heard that Philip had died” (MHES p. 286).

Second, the suffix-conjugation is used for descriptions of the author’s state, or acts which were not complete, at the time of writing: dt “he is spending the season of later rains”; ṭy “he is pasturing”; wgm “he is grieving”; ṣr “he is keeping watch” (where Arabic would use the imperfect).

Third, in Safaitic, as in Classical Arabic, it is used for the optative: f-h lt whbt ᵚʾn-h bn ydl-h “and so, O Lt, may you give his enemy into (lit. between) his hands” (C 4037). This construction is also frequent in Hismaic: for example, in ḏkrt ṭ, “may Lt be mindful of” (e.g., TIJ 58, etc.).

Fourth, the suffix-conjugation can be used as a virtual subjunctive: sʾlm l-ḍ sʾr w-ʾwr l-ḍ ʾwr ṣʾfr, “security to whoever leaves (i.e., “may leave”) intact and blindness to whoever scratches out (i.e., “may scratch out”) the inscription” (e.g., LP 361). Compare the same formula using the prefix-conjugation in §5.3.2.

5.3.2 The prefix-conjugation

The handful of Dadanitic examples of the prefix-conjugation are all in damaged or doubtful contexts.

However, four distinct uses of the prefix-conjugation can be identified for Safaitic. First, it is used in clauses expressing purpose: l-ṣrʾn ṭ “in order to migrate to the inner desert” (LP 180).

Second, the Safaitic prefix-conjugation occurs with a jussive implication: nngy “may we escape” (WH 135). Note also nhʾy “may we live prosperously” in Thamudic B (LP 495).

Third, after the negative particle lm the prefix-conjugation has a perfect implication as in Classical Arabic (in an unpublished text).

Finally, the prefix-conjugation is used with a subjunctive implication: sʾlm l-ḍ sʾr w-ʾwr l-ḍ ṣʾr, “security to whoever leaves (i.e., “may leave”) intact and blindness [cf. Arabic ʾawar] to whoever scratches out (i.e., ’may scratch out’)” (e.g., LP 391). There seems to be no difference in meaning between invocations which use the suffix-conjugation (see §5.3.1) and those which use the prefix-conjugation.

5.4 Participles

Several different uses of participles are attested in Safaitic. An active participle can function as a finite verb with a perfective sense: for example, w-wgd ṣʾr ḡʾʾ h qbrn ḯʾl ʾẓr “he found the traces of his raiding party, members of the ḡʾʾ tribe of T. yʾ)” (C 2156); whl ᵚʾẓʾʾ ʾḥʾn ḥʾn ṭ(y) “he grieved for his companions [who were] raiding [ʾḥʾrib] the tribe of Ty” (C 2795). In addition, active participles often form a circumstance clause (in Arabic grammar, a ḥāl): for example, w-wḥd ʾṭ ʾ “and he was alone on a raid” (WH 128), where ʾṭ is an active participle (ʾāẓīz); ḥʾl ḥ-ḍ ṣʾ ʾḥʾbr ṭ[ḥb in] “he camped at this place while returning to permanent water [ḥʾ] from the inner desert” (C 2590), where ṭ[ḥb in] is an active participle (ʾṣʾyrt).
Participles can be used as virtual relative clauses (see §5.5). The active participle can take a direct object, as in C 2795 above, while a passive participle can be used either on its own (e.g., wgm ’l s’yd mtql “he mourned for S’yd who had been killed”); CSNS 1004), or in construct with another word (e.g., N mtql ty’ “N victim of [i.e., who had been killed by] Ŷy”; CSNS 1011). This is probably the explanation of the passive participles which often follow the names of those for whom an author mourns: thus N trh (*tariḥ) “N who is untimely dead”; N rgm mny (*raḡim manāyā) “N who has been humbled by (lit. “of”) the Fates.”

### 5.5 Relative clauses

In Safaitic, relative clauses can be formed with the relative pronoun d (see §4.1.8.3, 3).

(24) h lt ’yr m-d qtl-h
O Lt recompense from-who killed-him
“O Lt [grant] recompense from [him] who killed him” (LP 385)

and with the relative mn (*man; see §4.1.8.3, 1):

(25) ’wr l-mn y’wr h-s1 fr
blindness to-whoever scratches out the writing
“And blindness to whoever scratches out the writing” (SIJ 284)

Relative clauses can also be formed without a relative pronoun simply by using the prefix-conjugation with an implied or explicit reference back to the antecedant. This type of relative clause can be used in Safaitic even after a defined antecedent, contrary to the practice in Classical Arabic, though it is found at earlier stages of the language (cf. Beeston 1970:50, n.1):

(26) l-h h-mhrt yrbb-h
to-him [is] the-filly he is training-it
“He is the filly which he is training” (C 1186)

Such a relative clause can also be constructed using the suffix-conjugation, and again can be employed even after a defined antecedent:

(27) wgm . .. ́l n’m qtl-h ́l sbḥ
he mourned . . . for-’n’m killed-him ́l sbḥ
 “He mourned . . . for ’n’m whom the ́l sbḥ had killed” (C 4443)

### 5.6 Invocations

In Safaitic, invocations can be expressed in three different ways: (i) by the vocative particle h + divine name + imperative + predicate (e.g., h lt ’wr d y’wr h-s1 fr “O Lt blind whoever scratches out the writing”); (ii) by the vocative particle h + divine name + an understood verb + noun (e.g., h lt ġnmt “O Lt [grant] booty”; cf. Arabic ḥanānayka yā rabbī “O Lord have mercy on me” for taḥannan ‘alayya ḥanān, Wright 1896–1898:i, 73); and (iii) by a verb in the suffix-conjugation with an optative implication + divine name + predicate. This is particularly common in Hismaic: for example, dkrt lt N., “may Lt be mindful of N.”

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### 6. LEXICON

Since Ancient North Arabian is known only from inscriptions, 98 percent of which are graffiti, there is a vast disproportion between the size of the recorded onomasticon and...
the surviving lexicon. The former is huge, perhaps the largest collection of personal names in any group of Ancient Near Eastern texts. Indeed, in reality it is even larger than it appears, since no vowels or doubled letters are shown and in many cases the same group of consonants must have covered several different names distinguished only by their vocalizations or by consonant doubling (e.g., Sīlm could represent *Sīlʾalm, *Sīlʾālim, *Sīlʾālim, etc.).

By contrast, the lexicon that has survived is tiny and is severely limited in range by the subject matter of the texts. This is particularly true of Dadanitic, where the vast majority of the monumental inscriptions are dedications, or record the performance of religious duties, whereas the graffiti consist almost entirely of names. Similarly, since the Hasaitic inscriptions found so far are virtually all gravestones, they have yielded a very limited vocabulary. On the other hand, the Safaitic (and, to a lesser extent, the Hismaic) graffiti deal with a wide range of subjects, albeit very laconically.

In the past, the main resource for interpreting the Ancient North Arabian lexicon has been Classical Arabic. However, Modern Arabic dialects are being used increasingly to help explain features in Ancient North Arabian (particularly Safaitic) which do not occur in the Classical language. For instance, the word ʾṣaʾrq (found in Safaitic) has traditionally been translated “he went east,” based on Classical Arabic ʾṣaraqa. However, it is clear from the texts that their authors used ʾṣaʾrq in the same way as the modern bedouins of the same area use ʾṣaraqa, in the sense of “he migrated to the inner desert,” regardless of whether that meant traveling north, south, east, or west. There are also a number of words where the meaning has not been preserved in Arabic, but can be found in the cognate in another Semitic language, for example the word ʾnhl in Safaitic which means “a valley” (cf. Hebrew and Aramaic ʾnahal), as opposed to Arabic ʾnahal “a palm tree.” Similarly, the word ʾṣl in Taymanitic and possibly Lihyanite is probably to be interpreted as “leader” on the basis of Sabaic (see Macdonald 1992a:30–31).

However, there are also a number of words for which etymology does not seem to provide an appropriate meaning and which therefore, at present, have to be explained from their context: for example, ʾhš in Safaitic which appears to mean “he kept watch,” or wgm, which seems to be one of the numerous words for “to mourn” in that dialect. Sima argues that the key words in the Dadanitic vocabulary of the inscriptions from al-ʿUḍayb (a side-valley near al-ʿUlā) relate to the maintenance of the irrigation system (1999:90–105), but this is often difficult to justify philologically, and the context usually seems to point to the performance of a religious ceremony.

Given the nature of the material, a complete description of Ancient North Arabian will never be possible. However, large numbers of new, well-recorded texts are becoming available (particularly in Safaitic) and much careful analysis is being undertaken. It may therefore not be too long before it will be possible to present a rather more detailed description than that offered here.

7. READING LIST

In Macdonald 2000, I have discussed the languages of pre-Islamic Arabia (i.e., not just Ancient North Arabian) at a more general level and explained the terminology. For a masterly brief discussion of Ancient North Arabian (with some different views from those expressed here) see Müller 1982. Sass 1991 presents a detailed analysis of the dispersed ONA texts though for a brief critique of his use of paleography see Macdonald 2004a. Caskel 1954 is
still the most recent published overall description of Dadanitic (Liyanite), though a number
of unpublished doctoral theses have been devoted to the subject. Caskel’s work is marred
by many strained interpretations of the texts and an attempt to force the language into the
mold of Classical Arabic. However, Sima 1999 presents an excellent edition and analysis of
an important group of Dadanitic texts and, although some of his conclusions are disputed,
this marks a significant advance in our knowledge of the language. For a brief general outline
of the present state of Thamudic studies (plus Taymanitic and Hismaic), see Macdonald and
King 1999 and references there. For a similarly brief outline of Safaitic, see Müller 1980 and
Macdonald 1995. Readings of the full corpus of the Hasaitic inscriptions (though regrettably
without photographs) together with an excellent study can be found in Sima 2002. Finally, it
should be noted that readings and interpretations of Ancient North Arabian texts published
by A. Jamme and A. van den Branden should be treated with great caution.

Abbreviations

AH           Dadanitic inscriptions originally published in Abū al-Ḥasan 1997 and
             republished in Sima 1999
AZNG         Safaitic inscription in Abbadī and Zayadine 1996
C            Safaitic inscriptions in Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum. Pars V. Paris,
             1950–1951
CIH          South Arabian and Hasaitic inscriptions in Corpus Inscriptionum Semiti-
             carum. Pars IV. Paris, 1889–1932
CLL          Dadanitic inscriptions in Caskel 1954
CSNS         Safaitic inscriptions in Clark 1979
CTSS         Hismaic inscriptions in Clark 1980
HCH          Safaitic inscriptions in Harding 1953
HE           Dadanitic and Taymanitic inscriptions in Harding 1971b
HU           Taymanitic, Hismaic, and Thamudic B, C, and D inscriptions copied by
             C. Huber and renumbered in van den Branden 1950
Ja 1046       Hasaitic inscription in Jamme 1966:72–73
JSLih         Dadanitic inscriptions in Jaussen and Savignac 1909–1922
JSTham        Taymanitic, Hismaic, and Thamudic B, C, and D inscriptions in Jaussen
             and Savignac 1909–1922
LP           Safaitic and Thamudic B inscriptions in Littmann 1943
MHES         Safaitic inscriptions in Macdonald 1995b
MNM          Hismaic inscriptions in Milik 1958–1959
MSTJ         Safaitic inscriptions in Macdonald and Harding 1976
NST          Safaitic inscriptions in Harding 1951
Ph           Taymanitic, Hismaic, and Thamudic B, C, and D inscriptions copied by
             H. St. J. B. Philby and published in van den Branden 1956
Robin-Mulayha 1 Hasaitic inscription in Robin 1994:80–81
SIAM i        Safaitic inscriptions in Macdonald 1979
SIJ          Safaitic inscriptions in Winnett 1957
TIJ          Hismaic inscriptions in Harding and Littmann 1952
U            Dadanitic inscriptions from al-‘Udayb published (and republished) in
             Sima 1999
WH           Safaitic inscriptions in Winnett and Harding 1978
WTay         Taymanitic inscriptions in Winnett and Reed 1970
WTI          Dumaitic, Hismaic, and Thamudic B, C, and D inscriptions in Winnett
             and Reed 1970
Bibliography

In the bibliography, works are listed alphabetically by author, but each one is marked with one or more of the following letters which give an indication of the subject matter:

- **D** Dadanitic
- **G** General
- **H** Hismaic
- **Ha** Hasaitic
- **OA** Old Arabic
- **ONA** Oasis North Arabian
- **S** Safaitic
- **T** Taymanitic
- **Th** Thamudic, B, C, D, Southern Thamudic


Abu al-Hasan, H. 1997. *Qir'a li-kitabat lihyaniyya min gabal akma bi-minaqqat al-'ulä*. Al-Riyadh: Maktabat al-malik fahd al-wataniya. [Note that the inscriptions in this work were published in facsimile without any photographs and the author's readings must therefore be regarded as unverified. However, most of these texts, together with photographs of almost eighty of them, have now been republished in Sima 1999. References to “AH [= Abu al-Hasan] + number” are therefore to Sima's edition not to the *editio princeps*.] **D**


Eskoubi, Kh. 1999. *An Analytical and Comparative Study of Inscriptions from “Rum” Region, South West of Ta'yma* (in Arabic). Riyadh: Ministry of Education, Deputy Ministry of Antiquities and Museums. [This book reached me too late to permit the data from these new inscriptions to be included in this survey. While the photographs of each inscription make this an important publication, it should be remembered that it is an M.A. thesis and that the author’s interpretations of many of these difficult texts are disputed.] **T, Th**


———. Forthcoming. Old Arabic and its Rivals in the Age of Ignorance. Six Studies on the Emergence of Arabic as a Written Language. OA


Sima, A. 1999. Die lihyanischen Inschriften von al-‘Udayb (Saudi-Arabien). Epigraphische Forschungen auf der Arabischen Halbinsel 1. Rahden/Westf.: Leidorf. [Note, I am not convinced by Sima’s interpretation of these inscriptions as referring to the maintenance of the underground water system of al-‘Ulā, hence my translations of the vocabulary of these texts frequently differ from his.]


———. 1956. Les textes thamoudéens de Philby. Bibliothèque du Muséon 39 and 41. Louvain:

Winnett, F. 1957. Safaitic Inscriptions from Jordan. Near and Middle East Series 2. Toronto:


