

CLUES FOR MINAEAN HISTORY.
A CHRONOLOGICAL REASSESSMENT IN LIGHT OF NEW EPIGRAPHIC
AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL DATA FROM BARĀQISH
(5TH AND 4TH CENTURIES BC)

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A considerable amount of new data, both archaeological and epigraphic, were discovered during the Italian excavations at the site of Barāqish (ancient Minaean Yathil). The present paper discusses the most relevant additions to our knowledge base as a result of those excavations, particularly in relation to the succession of kings in Maʿīn during the 5th and 4th centuries BC. At this time, the kingdom arrived at its apogee under the reigns of Abīyadaʿ Yathaʿ and his son, Waqīhʿil Riyām.

The findings rely on new radiometric analyses and fresh epigraphic documents, concerning sectors of the temple Qabḍum and the area external to the southern urban walls. Improvements are made to the relative sequencing and absolute dating of kings, with the support of recent methodological contributions to the scholarly literature.

Keywords: Ancient South Arabia; Maʿīn; Barāqish; epigraphy; chronology

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the general historical framework of the Minaean kingdom has emerged more clearly over the past decades, there remain many shortcomings relating to specific historical points; for example, our understanding of the succession of Minaean kings presents several issues and is certainly open to further scrutiny. The Minaean site of Yathil (present day Barāqish, in the Jawf region), with its vast epigraphic documentation, represents a primary source of data for the history of this South Arabian kingdom (fig. 1). In the 1990s and 2000s, new findings were produced because of various investigations in several sectors of the site by the Italian Archaeological Mission to the Republic of Yemen (MAIRY). The present paper presents a synthetic overview of some of the most significant results, pertaining to the chronology of Maʿīn, especially during the 5th and 4th centuries BC.¹ In particular, the excavations resulted in improvements to both the relative sequencing and absolute dating of Minaean kings at this time, with the support of a new radiometric analysis. The findings offer some significant historical data relating to the Minaean dynastic succession.² The most relevant material was produced from the excavations of the

¹ The general archaeological report of the last campaigns to Barāqish is ready to go to press with the provisional title *Barāqish/Yathil. Excavations of the ʿAthtar dhu-Qabḍ temple and extramural areas* and is edited by Sabina Antonini and Francesco G. Fedele. The present author was entrusted with studying the epigraphic documentation coming from several sectors of the site (sacral area and urban walls), as well as analyzing the archaeological data from the temple of ʿAthtar dhu-Qabḍ. The study was conducted in collaboration with Sabina Antonini and Vittoria Buffa, who studied the artifacts and pottery, respectively. Francesco G. Fedele kindly provided useful advice on chronological issues and was invaluable for the radiometric analyses. The present author is deeply grateful to A. de Maigret and S. Antonini for allowing him the opportunity to study these important materials.

² All inscriptions are organized in tab. 1 and are cited according to the open Digital Archive for the Study of Pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions - DASI (<http://dasi.cnr.it/>), where further details and a bibliography can be

temple Qabḏum³ and a small external area close to the southern urban walls. The present discussion is consequently limited to these sectors.

2. A 14C DATING FOR THE TEMPLE QABḐUM

The *intra-muros* campaigns in Barāqish between 2004 and 2006 concentrated on the sacral area, focusing on the temple Qabḏum (Temple B) - dedicated to the Minaean god 'Athtar dhu-Qabḏ - following the excavations in the 1990s of the adjacent temple Barān (Temple A) - dedicated to the god Nakrah (fig. 1).⁴ During this work, Qabḏum's hypostyle hall and propylaeum were entirely unearthed, exposing a monumental building that was occupied by the Minaeans until the end of the 1st century BC. The temple was later used as a sacral monument by the Amīr - an intrusive group that briefly installed on the site until sometime between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD *ca.* The excavations documented three intense Islamic phases (Ancient, Middle, and Recent), which revived the area after a long period of abandonment and a partial spoliation. These episodes seem to have affected the underlying archaeological context of both temples (Qabḏum and Barān), though with differing intensity. A general assessment of the archaeological results from the temple Qabḏum is beyond the scope of the present paper,⁵ but it may be useful to convey that this imposing building is characterized by a large internal quadrangular hall (each side approximately 13 m) sustained by 12 pillars and organized into 4 lateral cenacles, with 2 on each side; these are divided by a central corridor that leads to a slightly raised longitudinal transept.⁶ In this area, just opposite the entrance, the central *cella* also opens, with two large rooms on each lateral side; these were originally closed and probably used as *sacraria*. The temple Qabḏum is an example of a Minaean *intra-muros* hypostyle temple, even though the possible presence of an upper story is unprecedented in this tradition.⁷

In the internal transept - precisely towards the southeastern limit (i.e. locus L110, near wall M118) - a piece of burnt wood (*siglum* Bar.05.B/2a) was recovered on the surface of the floor at the Minaean level. This was the only specimen considered suitable for radiometric analysis, because it pertained - with certainty - to the Minaean phase of the pre-Islamic temple. While it may have originated from an unidentified movable wood furniture item, it was more likely part of the door of the southern *sacrarium*, which was accessible through this exact portion of the hall. Judging from the thickness of the remaining door jambs, the door was likely quite heavy. The wood charcoal was collected on 29 December 2005 and later submitted to the CIRCE laboratory.⁸ The result was communicated to

found. Vocalization of proper names follows the usual conventions, which do not necessarily reflect the original South Arabian forms.

³ Agostini 2015; see also fn. 1.

⁴ de Maigret - Robin 1993; de Maigret 2009.

⁵ A preliminary notice is in de Maigret 2009 and Agostini 2015.

⁶ Agostini 2020.

⁷ Jung 1989; Schmidt 1997.

⁸ Center for Isotopic Research on Cultural and Environmental Heritage, supported by the Innova consortium and the Department of Environmental Sciences (Second University of Naples, now Università degli Studi della Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli', Caserta). Further dating, as well as a re-assessment of previous analyses from the temple of Nakrah, will be provided by Francesco G. Fedele in the forthcoming general archaeological report (cf. fn. 1); see also below.

Alessandro de Maigret, then director of the MAIRY, who was unable to work on the specimen immediately. After de Maigret's passing, the datum remained unnoticed in his archive and was only recovered once the complete documentation from the campaign was reassessed during work on the general field report.

The result of the charcoal analysis is as follows:

Bar.05.B/2a | DSH-375 | 2438 ± 27 | preliminary calibration 750-687, 593-406 BC
Probability for dating to the 6th-5th century BC 70%.

This calculation is of major importance because of the archaeological context in which it was found, and it deserves to be considered within the history of the temple's foundation. According to this result, we can infer that the piece originated from the ancient phase of the temple, pertaining to the previous Minaean frequentation. This is probably because it was part of an internal fixed element that remained undisturbed, even during the passage of the Amīr tribe, which occupied the temple around the 1st century BC/AD.⁹

On the other hand, this datum is limited by the weakness of the single measurement. A radiometric analysis cannot be considered alone, as it rarely provides a clear absolute dating within a precise interval. Nonetheless, when considered in light of epigraphic evidence, it may be extremely valuable in directing and specifying a chronological issue.

3. EPIGRAPHIC DATA RELATING TO THE FOUNDATION OF THE TEMPLE QABDUM

The Minaic epigraphic documentation from the temple Qabḏum is rather clear, as far as the foundation of the building is concerned, and it can be combined with the archaeological datum.¹⁰ Inscription Y.05.B.B.13 was found inside the hypostyle hall and recalls that the temple was realized “from foundation to the top” (*bn 's'rs'm 'd s'qrn*) by Ya'ws'il, son of Yisma' il dhu-Ġazīr Saḥfān, under the auspices of the Minaean King Waqih'il Riyām. The text is engraved on a panel that had collapsed on its back side in the transept - not far from the source of the charcoal sample - but was originally used to screen off the transept from the southern cenacles. It was initially believed to be the upper part of a smooth anepigraphic slab that remained in place in the same nave. Although the inscribed slab was broken in several pieces, the text was easily recomposed. At the time the slab fell, the area was already covered by several centimeters of sandy deposit; thus, the structure had already been abandoned for some time. Another inscribed panel was found *in situ* in the southern nave, contiguous to the nave in which the previous panel was found. This second inscription (Y.05.B.B.12) appeared to be the second part of an inscription that began on an upper vertical slab that was apparently no longer in place (fig. 2). The text concludes with the commitment of the dedications and inscriptions (*s'l'-s' w-'s'tr-s'l'*) to the gods and kings of Ma'in, with the usual formula used to celebrate the conclusion of construction works.

⁹ During the crisis of the Minaean realm at the end of the 1st millennium BC, some parts of the southern Jawf were occupied by scattered groups of diverse origin. Among these were the Amīr, who probably originated in the Najrān region (Agostini 2018). At the same time, late post-Minaean levels do not show any significant variation in pottery shapes and techniques.

¹⁰ The following is an update of the discussion in Agostini (2011).

The author is the same Ya'ws'il, son of Yisma'il dhu-Ġazīr Saḥfān, and the King Waqih'il Riyām is again remembered, but here in a coregency with his son Aws'il, who seems to have never succeeded him - at least not with this name (see below). The two inscriptions can be considered in strict succession, if not collated, as they describe consecutive moments: the commitment of the temple's works under Waqih'il Riyām and the completion and inauguration of the temple in a later phase of Waqih'il Riyām's reign, when he was associated with a coregent.¹¹

Although isolated, the radiometric datum from the temple Qabḍum is indirectly supported by a couple of earlier radiometric datings from charcoals collected from the neighboring temple Barān during excavations in the 1990s. We know from written documents that the temple Barān pre-existed the temple Qabḍum, as it already had some refurbishments at the time of King Abiyada' Yatha', father of Waqih'il Riyām.¹² These interventions may be tentatively connected with the Minaean phase B of the temple Barān, which was dated to 590-380 BC, 82% probability (based on sample Y.92.B./138), while the most ancient Minaean phase C was dated to 800-510 BC, 99% probability (sample Y.92.B./135).¹³

4. DATING OF KING WAQIH'IL RIYĀM

The excavations of the temple of 'Athtar dhu-Qabḍ provided the first independent archaeologically-based dating for King Waqih'il Riyām, whose chronological positioning had previously been inferred from an interpretation of the so-called "Persian-Minaean synchronism." This highly controversial external connection was recorded during the reign of King Waqih'il Riyām's father, King Abiyada' Yatha', and it is dated to the mid-4th century BC by the majority of scholars (RES 3022, see below). In the following, we discuss the new archaeological datum and consider whether it can clarify the dating of King Waqih'il Riyām.

As previously stated, the calibrated radiometric result of a date between the 6th and 5th centuries BC indicates that the sample belonged to a piece of finishing that was original to the temple and remained there until its dismissal/abandonment. Its discovery on the floor may be a consequence of a fall following deterioration and burning, which further excludes the possibility of an attribution to the final phase of the temple. However, it would be wise

¹¹ The possibility of a collation of fragments Y.05.B.B.13 and Y.05.B.B.12 cannot be excluded, but was initially ruled out due to their discovery sites: Y.05.B.B.13 appeared to have been originally placed in the nave contiguous to that in which Y.05.B.B.12 still stood. There are fairly good arguments to support a reciprocal collation: the phrasing at the end of Y.05.B.B.13 does not contrast with the beginning of Y.05.B.B.12; the two slabs are not identical in width, but the difference is marginal; moreover, Y.05.B.B.13 mentions the king alone, whereas Y.05.B.B.12 refers to him in coregency with his son: this does not necessarily suggest that slab Y.05.B.B.12 is younger, as some Minaic texts omit coregency, though indicate it in different passages of the same inscription; this could also be intentional, as a reference to different temporal circumstances (cf. RES 2771: 'lyf' Rym w-bn-s' Hwf't mlky M'n [line 2] and ['l]yf' Rym mlk M'n [lines 8-9] and RES 2952: 'byd' Yt' w-Wqh'l Ry[m mlk]y M'n [line 1] and 'byd' Yt' mlk [M]n [line 4]; this latter text is contemporary to the historical scenario discussed here).

¹² Cf. inscription Y.92.B.A.21+30.

¹³ de Maigret - Robin 1993, 455. The measurements presented here follow the careful re-evaluation made by F.G. Fedele.

to consider this result a *terminus post quem* and to cautiously date within the lower end of the identified interval (i.e. late 5th century BC). Of note, the temple Qabḏum was inaugurated close to the end of Waqih'il Riyām's reign, as he is mentioned together with a coregent; we should conclude that he had a fairly long reign, concentrated in the last decades of the 5th century BC. This may be a good working hypothesis to evaluate in light of the wider historical panorama, with the support of further documentation. Inscriptions realized under this sovereign reveal a congruent paleographic style, sensibly evolving from E2 to E3 (according to Pirenne's framework).¹⁴

5. SUCCESSOR TO KING WAQIH'IL RIYĀM

The abovementioned Y.05.B.B.12 appears to associate Waqih'il Riyām with his son, Aws'il, as coregent; however, Waqih'il Riyām also had a further son and coregent, Ḥuffān Ṣadiq (RES 3051+3052a; RES 3040+3039+3049). Therefore, the identity of the successor to Waqih'il Riyām remains in doubt. There is no evidence that a King Aws'il ever reigned alone, as the name Aws'il is undocumented in royal onomastics, though it appears quite regularly as a personal name for commoners;¹⁵ should we thus hypothesize that Aws'il was a birth name that was eventually replaced by an official name - maybe after the formal enthronization as coregent? In this case, Aws'il and Ḥuffān Ṣadiq could hypothetically be the same person. The possibility that Ḥuffān Ṣadiq ever succeeded to Waqih'il Riyām is also very doubtful: though some inscriptions mention a King Ḥuffān Ṣadiq, they do not use a patronymic, thus it is impossible to say if he is the same Ḥuffān Ṣadiq previously mentioned as coregent; moreover, graphic documentation is lacking for these texts and we cannot comment on their paleographic style and, consequently, their relative chronology (RES 2886 and M 414).¹⁶

The possibility that Waqih'il Riyām's successor was another of his sons has been raised, citing evidence of a couple of texts in a style close to E3, in which a King Abīkarib Ṣadiq is mentioned with the patronymic Waqih'il (Robin-Barāqish 80 and Shaqab 4).¹⁷ At present, this King Abīkarib Ṣadiq is not attested to have been coregent with Waqih'il Riyām, unless we recognize him as Aws'il - but this would be too speculative. In any case, this phase remains quite nebulous, but we can perceive that the end of Waqih'il Riyām's

¹⁴ Pirenne 1956, 218-224. Bron 2013 is the funerary stela of King Waqih'il Riyām (fig. 3) and can be consequently attributed with certainty to the final period of his reign (Bron 2013, 173-174, fig. 1).

¹⁵ Approximately 13 Minaean funerary stelae bear this name, either isolated or as a first name, suggesting that it was a fairly common name in the Minaic onomastics. Other attestations from Barāqish are in M 283 (three times, as a name of commoners and as a patronymic); and as-Sawdā' 16, where it is the first name of the priest (*s²w*) of dhu-Garbum and dhu-Raṣfūm.

¹⁶ Von Wissmann postulates the presence of two kings named Ḥuffān Ṣadiq: the king mentioned in RES 2886 and RES 2762 is a more ancient homonym, to be distinguished from Waqih'il Riyām's son (von Wissmann 1976, 373). The highly incomplete text RES 3050 has seldom been attributed to this coregency, but this is only due to a strong integration; therefore, it is not considered in the present discussion: [*Wqh' l Rym bn 'b]yd' w-bn-s' Ḥfn Ṣdq* (cf. Pirenne 1956, 218).

¹⁷ RES 2965 might also be considered even if without the patronymic: the text is in fact still *in situ* in the southern portion of the urban walls of Barāqish, an area involved in strong architectural interventions at the time of this dynasty (cf. fig. 1); Robin-Barāqish 80 reveals some paleographic dissimilarities compared to RES 2965 and Shaqab 4 (Robin 1979, 193-194).

reign must have been quite turbulent. He had at least two consecutive coregents among his sons, potentially because one was disowned or died prematurely.¹⁸ Finally, it is highly probable that his successor was another of his sons, Abīkarib Ṣadiq, and, if Ḥuffān Ṣadiq was one of his successors, we cannot exclude the possibility that he was temporarily deposed by Abīkarib Ṣadiq (his brother?) - a possibility that is unverifiable until the paleography of the texts pertaining to this king are tested.

6. DATING OF KING ABĪYADA' YATHA' AND THE PERSIAN-MINAEAN SYNCHRONISM

The dating of King Waqih'il Riyām must be considered together with the chronology of his father and predecessor, King Abīyada' Yatha'.¹⁹ This requires a retrospect of the major epigraphic document realized under the reign of Abīyada' Yatha', i.e. RES 3022 - still engraved on the southern portion of the Minaean walls of Barāqish (fig. 4). This well-known, fundamental document is one of the few South Arabian texts indicating an external synchronism. The text has been at the center of a long debate since the first copies by Halévy and Glaser were made available (late 19th century). An overview of the still growing bibliography concerning this text reveals how its dating has been far from unanimous, spanning the late 6th to the late 3rd century BC.

In the present paper, it is sufficient to briefly recapitulate only the most sensitive points of the very well-known debate over this text.²⁰ The text was commissioned by members of a Minaean caravan after their return to their homeland following a long and difficult commercial trip to the north of the peninsula and Egypt. During their journey, they witnessed several military clashes, which they briefly recorded in the text while thanking the divinities for their protection.²¹ Among these events, one apparently had a vast resonance:

... *w-ywm mt'-'s'm w-'qny-s'm 'tr d-Qbdm w-Wdm w-Nkrḥm bn ws't Mṣr b-(3)mrd kwn byn Mdy w-Mṣr* ... (RES 3022/2-3).

“... and when 'Athtar dhu-Qabḏum, Waddum and Nakraḥum saved them and their goods in the middle of Egypt, during the conflict which occurred between Persians and Egypt...” (DASI translation).

While the term *Mṣr* does not pose any problem, as its connection with the toponym Egypt is clear, the most critical issues pertaining to this text are the identification of the term *Mdy* and the semantic nuance of the term *mrd*.²² With respect to *Mdy*, which is

¹⁸ Agostini 2011.

¹⁹ In turn, a dating of King Abīyada' Yatha' would also affect that of the contemporary King of Ḥaḍramawt, Ilīsami' Dhubyān, according to RES 2775 (Ma'in 8).

²⁰ An updated review of the secondary literature is in Multhoff (2019); see also Gnoli 1996; Lemaire 2010; Avanzini 2016, 159-162.

²¹ In addition to trading with Egypt, they also connected with Assyria ('s'r) and Transeuphratene ('br nhrn). They escaped attacks from Saba' and Khawlān, while also surviving a war between “the one of the south and the one of the north” (*dr kwn byn d-ymnt w-d s'2'mt*).

²² Lemaire 1996, 44-47; Lemaire 2010, 381-383.

generally referred to as an ethnonym, several definitions have been proposed, including: the Medes,²³ the Persians (the vast majority of scholars), and the Seleucids.²⁴ These hypothetical identifications could be accepted, in principle, as all of the abovementioned entities have been indicated in ancient documentations as Medes - even the Seleucids.²⁵

The difficulty of translating the term *mrd* was initially raised by André Lemaire, who noted that the usual translation of “war, conflict” is not appropriate, as the South Arabian term for “war” is *ḍr* - a lexeme that is in fact used for this semantic purpose in the same RES 3022 (line 2). Lemaire consequently proposed the translation of “revolt,” but the use of the preposition *byn* (“between”) would indicate that this action had a reciprocal nature, which is not entirely suitable as far as a revolt is concerned. Considering all these premises, the actual event may have occurred within the timespan of 525 to 217 BC. During this long interval, several possible events known to us could fit with the Minaean synthetic account, but none imposes itself as a clear, unambiguous solution. In particular, Mlaker sustained the possibility that the event was the invasion of Egypt by Cambyses in 525 BC, while Pirenne proposed the war between the Seleucids and Lagidis in 217 BC.²⁶ Currently, the identification that has received the most consensus is the Persian invasion of Egypt by Artaxerxes III Ochus in 343 BC, which was suggested by F.V. Winnett, accepted by W.F. Albright, and finally backed by G. Gnoli, not without some hesitation.²⁷ As already anticipated, Lemaire noted that the event may have been a revolt, and he suggested a couple of events in the 5th century BC, such as those under Inaros (463-454 *ca.*) and Amyrtheus (405-398 *ca.*), with a slight preference for the latter.²⁸ However, as rightly pointed out by Beeston, the possibility that the event was actually one of a number of «minor brushes which, though they do not catch the attention of the historian, may have had a lasting impressions on the Minaeans», should also be considered.²⁹

The debate over RES 3022 has been recently revived, thanks to a penetrating article by Anne Multhoff, whose main topic was the inscription of Demirjian 1 (=B-L Nashq ?). This Sabaic text appeared in 2009 and has great historical implications, as it mentions several events - both internal and external - including a controversial war between Chaldea and Ionia (lines 15-16: *ḍr Ks²dm w-Ywn*).³⁰ According to Multhoff, Demirjian 1 and RES 3022 reveal a similar historical background, and thus their dating may not be too distant. This inductive approach relies on the observation that both seem to reflect a similar external political situation and share a few lexical and stylistic parallelisms.³¹ Paleographic comparison may also be employed, even if Demirjian 1 is a bronze plaque while RES 3022 is engraved on the limestone blocks of urban walls, apparently by different scribal

²³ Mlaker 1943.

²⁴ Pirenne 1956.

²⁵ Gnoli 2005.

²⁶ Mlaker 1943, 97; Pirenne 1956, 211-213.

²⁷ Winnett 1939; Albright 1953; Gnoli 1996; Gnoli 2005.

²⁸ Lemaire 1996, 47; Lemaire 2010, 383. This hypothesis is also supported by Sørensen - Geus (2019, 203).

²⁹ Beeston 1984, 4.

³⁰ The subject, a contemporary of the Sabaean King Yada‘il Bayyan, son of Yatha‘mar, recalls an attack against a Minaean caravan, an expedition to the land of Ḥaḍramawt, and several other commercial expeditions to Dedan, Gaza, and the cities of Judah, having also established contacts with Kition (Cyprus).

³¹ Multhoff 2019, 8.

schools.³² Although lacking indisputable evidence, this hypothesis is very interesting; however, even if we were to accept it, we must still reflect on the contentious dating of Demirjian 1, which has been dated by the first editors to 600 BC³³ and 550-525 BC³⁴; furthermore, a younger date of the early 4th century BC was proposed by Peter Stein, backed by Sørensen and Geus from the classicist historian's perspective, and finally accepted by Multhoff, as well.³⁵ An early 4th century BC dating for Demirjian 1 would also confirm a dating of RES 3022 to the late 5th century BC.³⁶

This archaeological datum could enable us to clarify the age of this important epigraphic material without falling victim to circular reasoning. The hypothesis that Waqih'il Riyām reigned in the late 5th century BC is suggested by the radiometric result, as well as by the historical deduction based on inscriptions. Consequently, Abīyada' Yatha's long reign could have spanned the mid-5th century, and the redaction of RES 3022 should be placed at the apogee of his reign, as he reigned alone. With respect to the Minaean-Persian synchronism, a possible adjustment could be admitted, as a certain interval must be considered between the event recorded and the realization of the inscription. In this perspective, the identification of the Minaean-Persian synchronism would point more closely to an event that occurred between the revolts under Inaros around the middle of the 5th century BC (463-454), or to an unregistered event that occurred a few years later, but before the brief insurrection in the second year of Darius II (422 BC), as reported by Syncellus.³⁷

7. ABĪYADA' YATHA' WITH A NEW COREGENCY, AND ITS HISTORICAL SETTING

The enlargement of the small *extra-muros* sector corresponding to recesses 44-45 of the southwest urban walls permitted the exposition of some rows of the urban walls that had previously remained covered by external debris. This led to the discovery of new inscribed blocks pertaining to the walls, which notoriously present a huge number of inscriptions. Particularly interesting are a series of three blocks that were not *in situ* but repositioned during the Islamic restoration of the walls; even if displaced, they certainly pertained to this area of the walls (fig. 5). Their inscriptions were collated to reveal an incomplete text commemorating the dedication of a new building operation in the walls (in this case, relating to the tower dhu-Nabdān and its curtain Tafish). The combination of fragments also discloses a royal name, Abīyada' Yatha' - seemingly the same king mentioned in RES 3022 and the father of Waqih'il Riyām. The paleographic analysis of the text (style E2) confirms

³² Multhoff 2019, 10-11 (see also Appendix 2 by P. Stein at the end of Multhoff's article).

³³ According to Bron - Lemaire (2009, 19-29), the war between "Ionia" and the "Chaldeans" may have occurred during the Neo-Babylonian period, probably under Nebuchadnezzar II.

³⁴ According to de Maigret - Robin (2009, 93, 95-96), relying on the historical synthesis by S. Anthonioz, the war could be placed under the reign of Neriglissar (559-556 BC) or Nabonidus (556-539 BC).

³⁵ The war between the Persians and Euagoras could be the most probable solution for this synchronism, according to Stein (2017, 100), Multhoff (2019, 12-13), and Sørensen - Geus (2019, 199-200).

³⁶ Multhoff (2019, 12-13) postulates that RES 3022 may be older than Demirjian 1 by some decades. If so, the Persians would be indicated by two different ethnonyms: *Mdy* in the Minaic text and *Ks²dm* in the Sabaic text; this would be the main weakness of this hypothesis. The lowering of the date of Demirjian 1 to the early 4th century is not accepted by Arbach (2019).

³⁷ Lemaire 1996, 47.

this identification. The text also indicates a new coregent to Abīyada' Yatha', who had previously been thought to have a single coregent: his son and successor, Waqih'il Riyām. The new collated text indicates:

'byd' ± Yl' w-bn-s^l Hywm mlky M'nm (Y.03.B.R44-45.2bis + 2ter + 2/2)

The presence of multiple coregents with Abīyada' Yatha' resembles the situation of his son, Waqih'il Riyām. While Ḥayyūm was not previously associated with Abīyada' Yatha', his name is already cited in the royal onomastics (without mimation): M 283 includes it as a royal patronymic, together with an epithet (line 5: *'byd' Rym bn Hyw Šdq*), while the royal status of the individual *Hyw*, mentioned together with *Yl'* in RES 2772 and Ma'in 18, is probable but not proven. In both cases, we can safely exclude an identification with our newly attested Ḥayyūm, because of the paleographic and chronological distance. While the swapping in the role of coregent is highly unusual, we can resume the hypotheses already put forward in the case of Aws'il, Waqih'il Riyām's son; however, it is remarkable that this phenomenon occurred twice, in two consecutive reigns. The existence of these multiple coregencies leaves the Minaean institution rather unclear: as already pointed out by Jacques Ryckmans, the function of the coregencies may not have been limited to assuring smooth successions.³⁸

Another fragmentary text (Y.03.B.R44-45.3) from this same sector can be considered contemporary to Abīyada' Yatha'. Again, this hypothesis relies on a paleographic analysis, as well as the mention of a *kabīr* of Yathil named 'Ammīsami', because RES 3022, RES 2959, and Y.92.B.A. 21+30 (all from the time of Abīyada' Yatha') indicate that a man called 'Ammīsami'dhu-Baliḥ was *kabīr* of Yathil. The historical importance of this new text relies on a brief mention of a "siege of the town of Yathil" (*s³wkt hgrn Yl'*), before the interruption of the block in line 4. This brief reference likely reflects an important event during the reign of Abīyada' Yatha', and it should be considered in our reconstructed historical panorama. We know that during the reigns of Abīyada' Yatha' and Waqih'il Riyām, the Minaean kingdom consolidated its political position and gained great prosperity, as also revealed by the extensive building activity that was launched - especially at the site of Yathil, which was then firmly under the control of the Minaeans, following a long period of Sabaean rule. This new situation was probably reached with some conflict, especially in this area at the border with the Sabaean kingdom. Ma'in struggled to dominate the entire Jawf, and the epigraphic documentation from this period reveals several tensions between Saba' and Ma'in. As already stated, RES 3022 recalls that the Minaean caravan suffered a Sabaean attack at the beginning of their journey through the north. Some time later, Waqih'il Riyām may have experienced further instability relating to the Sabaean neighbor, as a dedication made to some Sabaean divinities could be symptomatic of a Sabaean hegemony over Ma'in, if only temporary (Shaqab 18). Thus, it is quite probable that Abīyada' Yatha' experienced some violent attacks with Saba' during his reign, and Saba' is likely to have been the opposing force associated with the siege mentioned in this newly uncovered fragmentary inscription from the urban walls.

³⁸ Ryckmans 1951, 42-46.

8. THE PREDECESSOR OF KING ABĪYADA' YATHA'

The beginning of the dynastic segment that comprises the reigns of Abīyada' Yatha' and his son Waqīh'il Riyām remains greatly uncertain. Abīyada' Yatha' is never mentioned with a patronymic, nor is he clearly attested as a coregent in second position. An Abīyada, without epithet, is associated with an Ilīyafa' Yatha' in RES 2789, in the formula *b-ywm 'lyf' Yl' w-'byd'*. Pirenne classified this inscription as style C4; however, the identification of this Abīyada' with Abīyada' Yatha' is admitted by von Wissmann.³⁹ The occurrence of Ilīyafa' Yatha' as a patronymic in the fragmentary RES 2835 could be more solidly attributed to this period, as its paleography is closer to Pirenne's "E stage." A connection between Abīyada' Yatha' and a King Ilīyafa' Yatha' could be further sustained by the reference to the "sons of Ma'dikarib son of Ilīyafa' Yatha' King of Ma'in" (*bhny M'dkrb bn 'lyf' Yl' mlk M'nm*) in RES 3012 - again evoked in the final dedication of RES 3022 - which is clearly contemporary to Abīyada' Yatha'. This Ma'dikarib, son of King Ilīyafa' Yatha', is certainly a member of the royal family - possibly an older relative of Abīyada' Yatha' - representing a collateral dynastic line with influence in Minaean society.⁴⁰ Thus, there is strong evidence to suggest that Ilīyafa' Yatha' preceded Abīyada' Yatha', though this is not entirely proven.

9. NEW ATTESTATIONS OF KING ILĪYAFĀ' YAFASH

The Minaean King Ilīyafa' Yafash is rarely mentioned, and only in fragmentary texts. Pirenne considered him a grandchild of Abīyada' Yatha', while von Wissmann and Kitchen considers him a predecessor.⁴¹ In fact, the placement of Ilīyafa' Yafash within the Minaean royal succession is still quite problematic, because a clear connection between the sovereigns is lacking, given that they are not linked by any coregency, patronymic, or direct succession. A king named Ilīyafa' Yafash was seemingly a coregent with Ḥuffān Ṣadiq, as he is cited in second position in a very fragmentary text, probably from Haram (RES 2762). Although the text does not preserve the royal title, there is little doubt that the two shared the throne, with Ḥuffān Ṣadiq as first king. As previously anticipated, all inscriptions pertaining to King Ḥuffān Ṣadiq are lacking iconographic documentation and paleographic analysis; thus, it is difficult to detect possible homonyms or to pinpoint a clear relative chronology (see above, § 5.). A second very partial inscription mentioning Ilīyafa' Yafash is RES 2982, in which only a few letters are preserved; again, this inscription is not supported by any figurative documentation.

Considering the paucity of the documentation pertaining to a King Ilīyafa' Yafash, the discovery of two new texts mentioning this royal name is particularly significant. Y.06.B.B.11 was found re-employed in an Islamic wall built over the area occupied by the ancient temple Qabdum, and it is a legal prescription relating to the agricultural domain, devoid of any further historical information.

³⁹ All the inscriptions pertaining to these kings are classified in his *Paläographische Stufe III* (von Wissmann 1976, 382-386).

⁴⁰ Pirenne 1956, 222-224.

⁴¹ Pirenne 1956, 222-224; Kitchen 1994, 51-56; von Wissmann 1976, 66-67, 101.

A King Ilīyafa‘ Yafash is also mentioned in a newly exposed but again very incomplete text from the external sector, in proximity to the urban walls (Y.04.B.T45.1). The paleographic style of this text is closer to general style E, but quite dissimilar to the style of Y.06.B.B.11. Therefore, we cannot exclude that the name Ilīyafa‘ Yafash mentioned in Y.04.B.T45.1 and Y.06.B.B.11 could refer to two different kings of the same name, but the slight paleographic discrepancy between these two texts could also be explained by their different textual typology. However, a connection with the Ilīyafa‘ Yafash mentioned as coregent in RES 2762 still remains doubtful, just as the entire last segment of the dynasty following the reign of Waqih‘il Riyām.

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Sigla Inscriptions	Citation	Style Pirenne 1956	King(s)	Other historical and archaeological data
RES 2835	'lyf' Yt' mlk M'n		Ilyafa' Yatha'	
RES 2789	b-ywm 'lyf' Yt' w-'byd'	C4	Ilyafa' Yatha' and Abiyada'	
GOAM 315	'byd' Yt' mlk M'n		Abiyada' Yatha'	Synchronism: Iḥṣami' Dhubyān, son of Malkīkarīb, King of Ḥaḍramawt
RES 2774	'byd' Yt' mlk M'n	E2		
RES 2775	'byd' Yt' mlk M'nm	E2		
RES 2959	'byd' Yt'			
RES 2972+2970+2971+2971bis B+2971bis A	'byd' Yt' mlk M['nm]			
RES 3006	[']byd' Yt' ...]			
RES 3022	'byd' Yt' mlk M'n	E2		
RES 3029	'byd' Yt'			
Y.92.B.A 21+30	'byd' Yt'	E2		
Y.03.B.R44-45.2bis + 2ter + 2	'byd' Yt' w-bn-s' Ḥywm mlky M'nm	E2		
Bauer 5 [=Gr 301+Gr 299+RES 2962+Gr 303]	'byd' Yt' w-Wqh' l Rym mlky M'n [']byd' Yt' w-bn-[s' Wqh' l]Rym mlk M'n	E2	Abiyada' Yatha' and Waqih' il Riyām	
RES 2929	'byd' Yt' w-Wqh' l Rym			
RES 2942+two fragments	[... w-Wqh' l Rym mlky M'nm			
RES 2944	[']byd' Yt' w-Wqh' l [...]			
RES 2952	'byd' Yt' w-Wqh' l Ry[m mlk]y M'n	E3		
RES 3012	['byd'] Yt' w-Wqh' l [Ry]m ['byd'] Yt' [w-Wqh' l Ry]m	E2		
RES 3013	['byd'] Yt' w-Wqh' l Rym mlky M'n			
RES 3535	'byd' Yt' w-Wqh' l Rym mlky M'n	E1-E2		
Bron 2013	Wqh' l Rym	E3	Waqih' il Riyām	
M 415	Wqh' l [Rym ...]			
RES 3005	[W]qh' l Rym			
RES 3055	[W]qh' l Rym bn 'b[yd' ...]			
Shaqab 18	Wqh' l Rym bn 'byd' mlk M'nm	E2-E3		
Y.90.B.ext.2	[W]qh' l Rym mlk M'n	E3		
Y.05.B.B.13	Wqh' l Rym mlk M'n	E3		
Y.06.B.B.6	Wqh' l Rym mlk M'nm	E3		
Y.05.B.B.12	Wqh' l Rym w-bn-s' 'ws' l mlky M'nm	E3	Waqih' il Riyām and Aws' il	Bar.05.B/2a [14C: 593–406 BCE]
RES 3040+3039+3049	Wqh' l Rym w-bn-s' Ḥfn' Ṣlq mlky M'n	E3	Waqih' il Riyām and Ḥuffān Ṣadiq	
RES 3051+3052a	Wqh' l Rym w-bn-s' Ḥfn' [Ṣlq ...]			

RES 2965	<i>'bkrb Ṣlq mlk M'n</i>	E3	
Robin-Barāqish 80	<i>'bkrb Ṣlq bn Wqh'l</i>	E?	Abīkarib Ṣadiq
Shaqab 4	<i>'bkrb Ṣlq bn Wqh'l mlkh M'n</i>	E3	
M 414	<i>[... Ḥḥfīm Ṣlq mlk M'n ...]</i>		
RES 2886	<i>Ḥḥfīm Ṣlq mlk [M'n ...]</i>		Ḥuffān Ṣadiq
RES 2762	<i>Ḥḥfīm Ṣlq w-'lyf' Yfs²</i>		Ḥuffān Ṣadiq and Ḥḥyafa' Yafash
RES 2982	<i>'lyf' Yfs² ...]</i>		
Y.04.B.T45.1	<i>'lyf' Yfs²</i>	E?	Ḥḥyafa' Yafash
Y.06.B.B.11	<i>'lyf' Yfs² mlk M'n</i>	E3	

Tab. 1 - The possible succession of the Minaean kings during the 5th and 4th centuries BC, according to the epigraphic and archeological documentation discussed (new data in bold). Dashed lines indicate uncertain successions. Most of the inscriptions are from Barāqish, except RES 2835, RES 2789, RES 2774, RES 2775 (from Ma'in), Shaqab 4 and Shaqab 18 (Shaqab al-Manaṣṣa), RES 2886 (as-Sawdā'), RES 2762 (prob. Haram), and Bron 2013 (origin unknown).

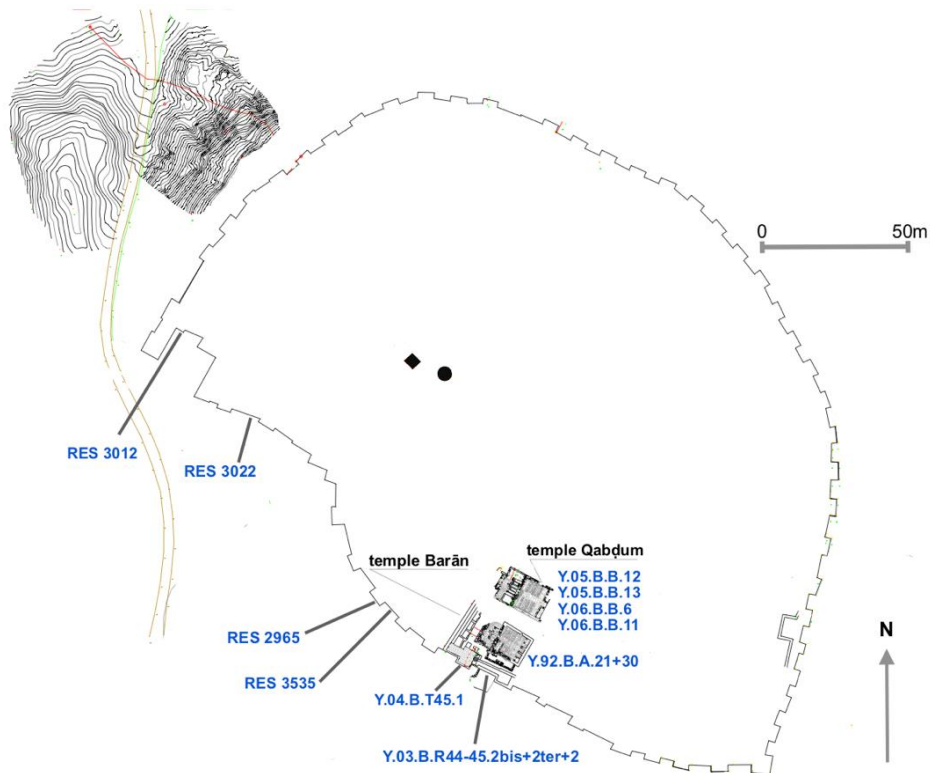


Fig. 1 - Plan of the site of Barāqish, with localization of the most relevant inscriptions discussed (© MAIRY, elaboration by A. Agostini).

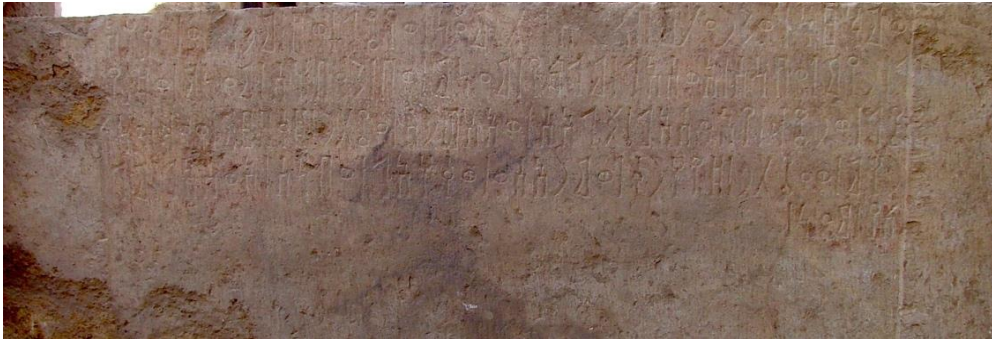


Fig. 2 - Y.05.B.B.12, time of the coregency of King Waqih'il Riyām and his son Aws'il (©MAIRY).



Fig. 3 - The funerary stela of King Waqih'il Riyām (Bron 2013, fig. 1).

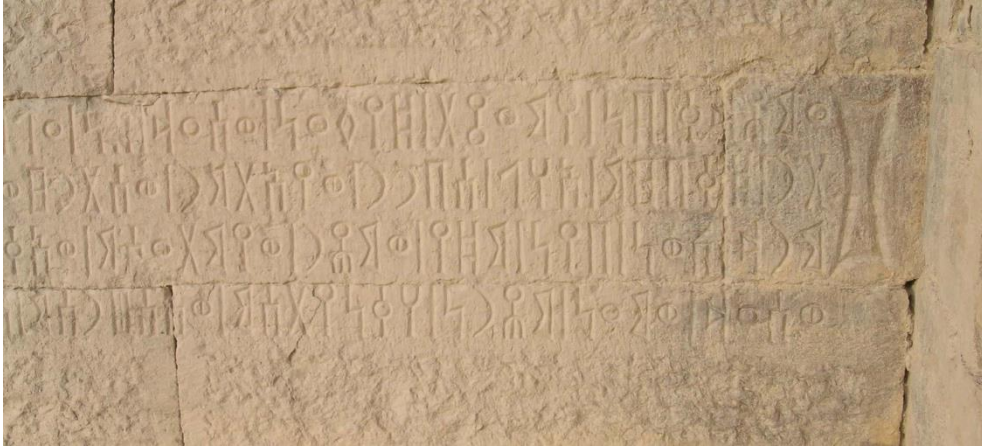


Fig. 4 - RES 3022, beginning of the right section; time of King Abīyada‘ Yatha‘; the Persian-Minaean synchronism is at line 3 (photo by A. Agostini).



Fig. 5 - Y.03.B.R44-45.2, time of the coregency of King Abīyada‘ Yatha‘ and his son Ḥayyūm (©MAIRY).