

1 Introduction

1.1 Legal documents in ancient South Arabia

The large number of legal documents produced in ancient South Arabia clearly demonstrates the sophistication and importance of the law in this society. In addition to shedding light on the functioning and role of ASA¹ law, close analysis of these documents can also significantly contribute to our understanding of the languages and history of this region. Furthermore, research on ASA law enriches a larger debate on the legal traditions of the ancient Near East.

ASA legal documentation has not been fully examined thus far, its value having been severely underestimated². A systematic investigation of ASA legal documents is now particularly valuable, especially given that increasing numbers have been discovered in recent decades³.

The inscriptions on the southern gate of Timna^c and on a flank of the Ġabal Labaḥ form the most important group of royal edicts that illustrate how the law operated in the kingdom of Qataban during its height (See figure 1 on page 480). Despite their publication by Rhodokanakis almost a century ago, a systematic and thorough analysis of the linguistic, cultural and historical aspects of these documents was lacking until now⁴.

This new edition of the texts identifies the main lexical and stylistic traits characterising Qatabanic legal language⁵. In addition, important legal issues, political institutions and traditions have been observed that reveal significant aspects of the law and social dynamics in Qataban. A discussion of all these features within the wider framework of ASA legal documentation is presented to show the existence of a strong local tradition of law in ancient South Arabia, and the crucial role it played in this civilisation. Furthermore, parallels have been drawn between Qatabanic law and legal traditions attested throughout the ancient Near East.

¹Note that ASA is used to indicate “ancient South Arabian” referring to the language as well as various historical and cultural aspects.

²Note that Rhodokanakis significantly contributed to the analysis of this documentation during the first three decades of the last century. However, his pioneering work did not establish a tradition of ASA legal studies. Only a relatively small part of ASA legal documents have been published with a new translation in the 1983 and 2004 volumes of the series “Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments” by W.W. Müller and Nebes respectively. Studies on various ASA legal texts have also been published occasionally over the years. The exclusion of this documentation from the last comprehensive study “A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law” (WESTBROOK 2003a) is a very serious omission, and reflects the lack of attention that this documentation has received.

³In addition to a large number of new texts on monumental surfaces, the “minuscule documents” (written with the minuscule script, a variant of the ASA script, on palm-leaf stalks and sticks) are a significant development in ASA studies. The recent publications of these documents (RYCKMANS - MÜLLER - ABDALLAH 1994; STEIN 2010a; MARAQTEN 2014a; DREWES - RYCKMANS 2016) include a large amount of legal texts that have substantially enriched our knowledge of ASA law.

⁴These documents with a translation and a brief commentary by the author were included in AVANZINI 2004a, 270–278; 281–284; 293–298. This translation, however, is now superseded, and is not discussed in the present work. New photographs of these inscriptions were published in AVANZINI 2004a, 305–307, 309, 314–315, 316, 317, 309. Note that AL-NA^cTM 2000, 656–659 has proposed a translation in Arabic of these texts. Such a translation, however, is essentially an Arabic rendering of previous translations, and it is not discussed in the present work.

⁵The importance of this linguistic analysis lies in the fact that there is no grammar of Qatabanic, and the only dictionary by RICKS 1989 is substantially outdated. Furthermore, there are no general studies on the style, structure and genres of ASA documentation as a whole (see for example the approach proposed by GRUNTFEST 1986). In this study, particular emphasis has been placed on these subject areas in order to address these lacks, which is essential in the identification of the distinctive features characterising legal Qatabanic documents.

1.2 The inscriptions on the southern gate of Timna^c and on the Ġabal Labaḥ

Many Qatabanic⁶ inscriptions, including those on the southern gate of Timna^{c7} and on the Ġabal Labaḥ, were recorded during Glaser's fourth journey to Yemen between 1892–1894⁸. The archaeological site of Haḡar Kuḡlān (ancient *Tmn^c*, Timna^c) was visited and identified by Bury in 1900⁹, as part of the “Südarabische Expedition der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften”, under the supervision of H.D. Müller¹⁰. Bury partially cleared the area of the southern gate¹¹, photographed the building, recorded all the inscriptions with squeezes, and took an additional photograph of the two inscriptions CSAI I, 204=R 3878 and CSAI I, 211=R 3879 (see the observations below in the Introduction)¹². A complete excavation of the southern gate was carried out by the American Foundation for the Study of Man (AFSM) led by Phillips in 1950–1951¹³. In 1994, Breton published a description of the structure, where he also indicated the location of each inscription¹⁴. The preservation of the building, as presented by Breton, and confirmed by the author in February 1996 (See figure 2 on page 481)¹⁵, had significantly

⁶The vocalisation of the names Qataban, Qatabanic and Qatabanian is conventional, and reflects the association with the name *Kattabaneis* offered by STRABO, Geography, 16.4.2 (RADT 2005, 360; 2009, 342). Other possible vocalisations are /*Qitbān*/ and /*Qutbān*/ proposed by MÜLLER 1982a, 414, footnote 230; 2005a, 245 and ROBIN 1998a, 121, footnote 1; 2006a, 7–8; 2016, 23. Note that “Qatabanic” is specifically used for the language and the written sources, while “Qatabanian” designates all the cultural and historical aspects.

⁷The vocalisation Timna^c for the ASA name *Tmn^c* is conventional. The alternative vocalisation /*Tamna^c*/ (reported by STRABO, Geography, 16.4.2; see RADT 2005, 360; 2009, 342) remains equally hypothetical. ROBIN 2006a, 8–9; 2016, 23 suggests that the vocalisation *Tamna^c* is preferable on the basis of Modern Yemen toponomastics. If one accepts that *tmn^c* is a verb pattern, Robin's argument is misleading, as Modern Yemen toponomastics is in Arabic, and the *a* in the prefix *ta-* is characteristic of Classical Arabic. The vocalisation of the ASA verb prefixes is unknown, and any identification with Classical Arabic is unjustified. Notably, there are indications that the vowel of the ground stem of the verb prefixes may have been /*i*/, which would support the form Timna^c (see the observations below in the philological commentary on CSAI I, 204=R 3878, Unit 7). Furthermore, the hypothesis of a *u*, excluded by ROBIN 2006a, 8–9; 2016, 23 (but possibly suggested even by the classical source, *Thumna*, in PTOLEMY, Geography, 6.7.31; see HUMBACH - ZIEGLER 1998, 112–113; this vocalisation may also be reflected in the name *Thomna* reported by PLINIUS, Natural History, 12, 64; see MAYHOFF 1967, 397) should be considered in view of the toponomastic expression *hgrn thryb* (attested in the Sabaic inscription C 375=Ja 550, 2, but not identified), which is interpreted as a passive (/ *tuhargab*/) by MÜLLER 1980, 64–66 “*die Stadt, die verehrt wird*” (according to MÜLLER 1980, 66, this town is Marib, but it could be a Qatabanian town, as suggested by ROBIN 2016, 23, footnote 23). Other names occurring in the present work have a conventional vocalisation such as Almaqah, Awsan, Haram, Ḥaḡramawt, Ma^cin, Marib, Saba³ and Karib³il Watar (specifically referring to the king mentioned in the inscription R 3945). The name of the town *Ns²n* has been mentioned with the vocalisation /*Naššān*/ according to the reconstruction by ROBIN 2003. The term *kbr* has been conventionally vocalised *kabir* according to Classical Arabic *kabir*, although the original vocalisation remains unknown. The majority of the ASA names are not vocalised, and any attempt to reconstruct their vocalisation mainly remains hypothetical.

⁸See RHODOKANAKIS 1919, 4–5; 1924a, 6 and MÜLLER 2002a, 205–206; 2005a, 244.

⁹On the figure of George Wyman Bury, see MACRO 1983, 96; 1990, 102. BURY 1911, 231–258 described his visit of the Wādī Bayḡān, but he did not provide any information on his activities at the archaeological sites.

¹⁰See in general STURM 2015.

¹¹This gate is usually called “the southern gate”, although it is specifically located on the south-western side of the city wall of Timna^c. Note that on the south-eastern, the north-eastern and the north-western sides there are three more gates. Only the gate on the north-western side (called “the northern gate”) has been partially excavated (see the observations below in the Introduction).

¹²The photograph of the southern gate was published by RHODOKANAKIS 1924a, 51, fig 1 with a sketch showing the distribution of the inscriptions (RHODOKANAKIS 1924a, 51, fig 2).

¹³See the observations by LEBARON BOWEN 1958, 5 and more in general PIRENNE 1961, 75 and ROBIN 2016, 22.

¹⁴BRETON 1994, 68–69. Unfortunately, the results of the excavation carried out by the American mission have never been published (despite the statement by LEBARON BOWEN 1958, 5), and the only available information is reported in PHILLIPS 1955, 94–97.

¹⁵Other more recent photographs show the same state of preservation.

deteriorated since the excavation by the American mission in 1950–1951, as is visible in the photograph of the recently excavated gate published by Phillips (See figure 3 on page 482)¹⁶.

The inscriptions on the flank of the Ġabal LabaḤ were recorded by Glaser as being situated in the Mabilaqa pass¹⁷, while their exact identification on the Ġabal LabaḤ, in the Wādī LabaḤ, was provided by Groom¹⁸.

Twelve inscriptions have been found on the stone surface of the gate¹⁹. They are royal edicts with the exception of two construction inscriptions commemorating the building of the southern gate. The edition of the inscriptions presented in this work is based on a personal inspection by the author during a survey of the archaeological site of Haḡar Kuḡlān in February 1996.

Despite the significant deterioration that has affected the building since Bury's first visit to the archaeological site, most of the inscriptional material is still *in situ*, and can be described as follows (See figure 4 on page 482).

The inscription CSAI I, 208=R 3566 is located on the external façade of the western bastion (on the left-hand side facing from the outside) of the southern gate. The text runs over two stone blocks, that are still *in situ*, placed one above the other, and can be read in its entirety, except for some lacunae in the lower stone. These lacunae occurred in a period after Glaser's and Bury's squeezes were taken. In the present work, the text of the lower stone is presented according to the edition by Rhodokanakis²⁰, which was based on Glaser's and Bury's squeezes. A photograph of the inscription was published by G. Ryckmans in 1951²¹, but new photographs are provided here (See figures 5 to 20 on pages 483–492).

Four inscriptions are located on the inner left-hand wall of the southern gate (See figure 21 on page 492), namely CSAI I, 200=R 3692, CSAI I, 201=R 3693, CSAI I, 202=R 3854 and CSAI I, 199=R 3691. The inscription CSAI I, 200=R 3692 is inscribed on the upper part of the wall with CSAI I, 201=R 3693 located underneath. The inscription CSAI I, 202=R 3854 is inscribed under CSAI I, 201=R 3693 on its right-hand side, while the inscription CSAI I, 199=R 3691 is inscribed on a slightly upper level next to CSAI I, 202=R 3854, on the left-hand side under CSAI I, 201=R 3693. Two large sections at the beginning (right-hand side) and end (left-hand side) of CSAI I, 200=R 3692 are now missing, affecting the first four lines (with the first line almost in its entirety). This damage occurred after Glaser's squeezes and the copies of Bury's squeezes²². A fragment containing a large section of the inscriptions CSAI I, 200=R 3692 and CSAI I, 201=R 3693 originally on the right-hand side, was found on the ground in front of the main wall, below the inscription; it was housed in the Bayḡān Museum during the author's visit in 1996 (See figure 22 on page 493). In the present work, the missing parts of text are presented in their original form according to Rhodokanakis's edition²³ based on Glaser's squeezes. The other inscriptions, CSAI I, 199=R 3691 and CSAI I, 202=R 3854, are completely preserved. Photographs of these documents are presented here (See figures 23 to 26 on pages 493–494).

¹⁶PHILLIPS 1955, figure opposite pg. 189.

¹⁷RHODOKANAKIS 1919, 4–5.

¹⁸GROOM 2002, 83. This information was incorporated in the publication by BEESTON 1971a, 5–6. On the location of the Ġabal LabaḤ and the Wādī LabaḤ, see the observations below in the introductory remarks to CSAI I, 197=R 3688 and figure 38 on page 500.

¹⁹Note that the inscription CSAI I, 213=R 4931 is on a stone block in front of the gate (see the observations below in the Introduction).

²⁰RHODOKANAKIS 1924b, 22–24. RHODOKANAKIS 1924b, 22 pointed out that he was also able to use a hitherto unknown photograph of the inscription taken by Bury.

²¹G. RYCKMANS 1951a, pl. IV. This photograph is of little use, because it is hardly visible, and does not show the context in which the document is located.

²²RHODOKANAKIS 1919, 6 pointed out that he was not able to use the original squeezes made by Bury but “*die Tafeln (... ..) welche mein verewigter Lehrer D. H. Müller vor vielen Jahren nach den (leider übermalten) Abklatschen G. W. Burys für die von ihm geplante Ausgabe der Inschriften hat anfertigen lassen*”.

²³RHODOKANAKIS 1919, 130.

The inscription CSAI I, 204=R 3878 was originally located in the projecting inner section facing the entrance of the left wall of the southern gate (See figure 4 on page 482). Unfortunately, only four fragments have survived today. One large fragment is still lying where the original wall was located, and contains part of the last nine lines. There are also three more fragments, namely R 3902 n. 140, R 3902 n. 144 A, in the National Museum of Aden, and Sem 701 in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. They contain parts of the first eight lines, the last ten lines and the last seven lines respectively²⁴. The photographs of these fragments were published by Pirenne²⁵. Bury took a photograph of this inscription that was subsequently published by Pirenne²⁶. Rhodokanakis used Glaser's and Bury's squeezes for his edition. The inscription in Glaser's squeezes and Bury's photograph is in the same state of preservation, being severely damaged on its right-hand side²⁷. Rhodokanakis's edition and Bury's photograph have been used in the present work²⁸. The photograph of the fragment still in the gate is provided here (See figure 27 on page 495) in addition to Bury's photograph (See figure 28 on page 495) as well as the photographs of the fragments mentioned above (See figures 29 to 31 on page 496).

The inscription CSAI I, 211=R 3879 was originally located underneath the inscription CSAI I, 204=R 3878 (See figure 32 on page 497), but only a fragment, with a small part of the left section of the text, has survived close to its original location. Two more fragments are preserved in the National Museum of Aden, R 3902 n. 144 B with a small part of the first line²⁹, and NAM 2135=AM 24.35 with a part of the central section of the inscription. Bury's photograph of the inscription CSAI I, 204=R 3878 also contains a picture of this inscription³⁰. The lacuna on the lower right-hand side had already appeared at the time of Bury's photograph. Rhodokanakis's edition and Bury's photograph have been used in the present work³¹. The photographs of the surviving fragment still in the gate (See figures 33 to 34 on page 498) and of the fragments in the National Museum of Aden (See figure 30 on page 496 and figure 35 on page 499) are presented here, in addition to Bury's photograph (See figure 36 on page 499).

The inscription CSAI I, 213=R 4931 can be found on a stone block lying in front of the main entrance of the gate. The original location of the inscription remains unknown. The entire left-hand side of the stone is missing, and a significant portion of text is lost. This inscription appears to have been identified by Perowne in 1938³² who took a photograph³³ that was published by G. Ryckmans³⁴. A new photograph of the inscription near the gate is provided here (See figure 37 on page 500).

The inscriptions CSAI I, 197=R 3688 and CSAI I, 198=R 3689 are located on a flank of the Ġabal Labaḥ in the Wādī Labaḥ (See figure 38 on page 500). The two inscriptions are inscribed one next to the other with CSAI I, 197=R 3688 positioned on a lower level than CSAI I, 198=R 3689 (See figure 39 on page 501). A photograph of the inscription CSAI I, 197=R 3688 was

²⁴See the observations by PIRENNE 1956, 273–275.

²⁵PIRENNE 1956, pl. XXXIV, c (Vienna), d (Aden), e (Aden). In Bury's photograph a small section of text is missing as opposed to the text edited by Rhodokanakis, which is based on Glaser's squeezes that were recorded earlier than Bury's photograph. This small section of text, originally located at the end of the inscription, is part of the fragment Sem 701. On the two fragments in Aden, see also JAMME 1952a.

²⁶PIRENNE 1956, pl. XXXIV, b.

²⁷Note that in Bury's photograph a small section of text is missing, which corresponds to the fragment Sem 701 (see the observations above in the Introduction).

²⁸RHODOKANAKIS 1924a, 15

²⁹The fragment reports part of the royal name in the first line with the mistaken reading H|ll bn Yd^cl instead of Y|gl bn Yd^cb (see the observations below in the introductory remarks to CSAI I, 211=R 3879).

³⁰PIRENNE 1956, pl. XXXIV, a. ³¹RHODOKANAKIS 1924a, 25–26

³²Perowne visited the Wādī Bayḥān in 1938; see PEROWNE 1939. Perowne did not specifically mention this inscription, he only observed that "another inscribed stone lies in the door-way itself" (PEROWNE 1939, 136); this corresponds to the actual location of this inscription.

³³According to the report by PEROWNE 1939, 136. ³⁴G. RYCKMANS 1939, 64–65, pl. IV.

published by Beeston³⁵, while a photograph of both inscriptions was published by Pirenne³⁶ (See figures 40 to 41 on pages 501–502).

On the inner right-hand wall of the gate, there are two unpublished inscriptions that can be called Unpubl. Timna^c-gate1 and Unpubl. Timna^c-gate2. The first inscription, Unpubl. Timna^c-gate1, visible above Unpubl. Timna^c-gate2, is a smaller document which is completely illegible, except for some letters or parts of letters. The second document, Unpubl. Timna^c-gate2, is a large inscription that is almost completely illegible, except for the last few lines and some small sections (See figure 42 on page 502). As the last lines only report a list of personal names, the content of the document remains unknown.

All the mentioned inscriptions are royal edicts, while the two inscriptions CSAI I, 5=CIAS 47.11/ b 2 and CSAI I, 12=Ja 2437 commemorate the construction or restoration of the gate. The inscription CSAI I, 5=CIAS 47.11/ b 2 is located on the external western façade on the left-hand side above CSAI I, 208=R 3566. It originally ran over two stone blocks lying one next to the other. The stone block on the left-hand side, however, has been detached from the upper part of the wall, and today lies in front of the main entrance of the gate. This damage is already documented in Bury's photograph of the gate³⁷.

The inscription CSAI I, 12=Ja 2437 was originally inscribed on the projecting inner section of the right-hand wall of the gate facing the entrance and opposite the wall with the inscriptions CSAI I, 204=R 3878 and CSAI I, 211=R 3879. It was still *in situ* at the time of the excavation carried out by the American mission in 1950–1951, but it is missing today³⁸.

1.3 Chronological framework of the inscriptions

The attestation of king *S²hr Ġyln bn ʿbs²bm* in the construction inscriptions CSAI I, 5=CIAS 47.11/ b 2 and CSAI I, 12=Ja 2437 provides crucial information for reconstructing a chronological framework of the inscriptions presented in this work. These inscriptions report that the southern gate was built or restored under this king. In addition, king *S²hr Ġyln bn ʿbs²bm* commissioned the edict CSAI I, 197=R 3688, one of the two edicts inscribed on a flank of the Ġabal Labaḥ. This implies that all the inscriptional material contained in the southern gate as well as the other edict on the Ġabal Labaḥ, CSAI I, 198=R 3689, postdate CSAI I, 197=R 3688.

The edict CSAI I, 198=R 3689 on the Ġabal Labaḥ was commissioned by king *S²hr Ygl bn Yd^cʿb*, and its copy, CSAI I, 200=R 3692, was inscribed on the southern gate under the same king. Furthermore, king *S²hr Ygl bn Yd^cʿb* appears to have commissioned the edict CSAI I, 211=R 3879 (see the observations below in the introductory remarks), and there are several indications that these two figures are the same king (see the observations below in the introductory remarks to CSAI I, 197=R 3688). Significantly, the individual *Nbt^cm bn ʿls¹m^c bn Hybr* is attested in both CSAI I, 197=R 3688 and CSAI I, 198=R 3689 as the official in charge of the written recording of the two edicts (see the observations below in the introductory remarks to CSAI I, 197=R 3688). This is strong evidence that there was a short period of time between the two kings. As a consequence, the rest of the inscriptions on the southern gate are to be considered posterior to the group CSAI I, 197=R 3688, CSAI I, 198=R 3689/CSAI I, 200=R 3692 and CSAI I, 211=R 3879, which were commissioned by the two aforementioned kings *S²hr Ġyln bn ʿbs²bm* and *S²hr Ygl bn Yd^cʿb*. This is further confirmed by the following observations.

As previously noted, the inscription CSAI I, 211=R 3879 was originally located just beneath the last line of CSAI I, 204=R 3878 (as the fragment still lying near its original location clearly indicates). When observing the ductus of each line composing the inscription CSAI I, 204=R 3878 (See figures 30, 32 and 34 on pages 496–498), it becomes evident that the last seven lines

³⁵BEESTON 1971a. ³⁶PIRENNE 1991, 164. ³⁷See AVANZINI 2004a, 53–54.

³⁸See JAMME 1972, 44–45, pl. 12 and AVANZINI 2004a, 60.

appear to reduce gradually in height, with the last line being remarkably shorter than the first line. This observation leads to the conclusion that CSAI I, 204=R 3878 was inscribed after CSAI I, 211=R 3879, and hence it was also posterior to the other inscriptions CSAI I, 197=R 3688 and CSAI I, 198=R 3689/CSAI I, 200=R 3692 mentioned above. This is also true for CSAI I, 213=R 4931 which is very likely to have been commissioned by the same king as that of CSAI I, 204=R 3878 (see the observations below in the introductory remarks to CSAI I, 213=R 4931). The inscriptions CSAI I, 199=R 3691 and CSAI I, 201=R 3693 are clearly posterior to CSAI I, 198=R 3689/CSAI I, 200=R 3692 due to their content and arrangement on the inner left-hand side wall of the southern gate. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suggest that CSAI I, 199=R 3691 is prior to CSAI I, 201=R 3693 (see the observations below in the introductory remarks to CSAI I, 197=R 3688).

However, the relative chronology of the inscriptions posterior to the group CSAI I, 197=R 3688, CSAI I, 198=R 3689/CSAI I, 200=R 3692 and CSAI I, 211=R 3879 still remains a difficult issue, and the various proposals suggested thus far are hypothetical.

Pirenne pointed out that king *Yd^{c**o**b} Dbyn bn S²hr*, who commissioned CSAI I, 204=R 3878 and CSAI I, 213=R 4931, was the son of *S²hr Ygl bn Yd^{c**o**b}* of CSAI I, 198=R 3689/CSAI I, 200=R 3692 and CSAI I, 211=R 3879³⁹, as suggested by the context and by the patronymic (*bn S²hr*, referred to *S²hr Ygl bn Yd^{c**o**b}*). This would imply that CSAI I, 204=R 3878 was the first inscription to be inscribed on the southern gate after the group CSAI I, 197=R 3688, CSAI I, 198=R 3689/CSAI I, 200=R 3692 and CSAI I, 211=R 3879. By contrast, Arbach⁴⁰ puts forward the hypothesis that *Yd^{c**o**b} Dbyn bn S²hr* of CSAI I, 204=R 3878 and CSAI I, 213=R 4931 is the same king as *Yd^{c**o**b} Dbyn Yhn^{c**m**} bn S²hr*, another important king attested in documents where the palaeography is very similar to that of CSAI I, 204=R 3878 and CSAI I, 213=R 4931⁴¹; in addition, Arbach suggests that king *Yd^{c**o**b} Dbyn Yhn^{c**m**} bn S²hr* was the son of *S²hr Ġyln bn ²bs²bm*. As a consequence, CSAI I, 204=R 3878 and CSAI I, 213=R 4931 would have been inscribed after CSAI I, 197=R 3688, the first edict of Labaḥ commissioned by *S²hr Ġyln bn ²bs²bm*. The association between the two kings *Yd^{c**o**b} Dbyn bn S²hr* and *Yd^{c**o**b} Dbyn Yhn^{c**m**} bn S²hr*, however, implies that ASA royal names could be shortened (*Yd^{c**o**b} Dbyn bn S²hr*, in CSAI I, 204=R 3878 does not bear the epithet *Yhn^{c**m**}*).

According to Arbach⁴², king *S²hr Hll Yhn^{c**m**} bn Yd^{c**o**b}*, who commissioned CSAI I, 199=R 3691, should be identified with *S²hr Hll* of the inscription CSAI I, 201=R 3693⁴³, and he also assumes that this king is the same as king *S²hr Hll Yhn^{c**m**} bn Yd^{c**o**b}* who was the grandfather of *S²hr Ygl Yhr**g** bn Hwf^{c**m**}*⁴⁴. By contrast, Avanzini⁴⁵ considers that these two kings bearing the same name, *S²hr Hll Yhn^{c**m**} bn Yd^{c**o**b}*, are independent figures belonging to different historical periods. The difference between the palaeographic styles in the two groups of documents that attest the two kings, bearing the same name, is so substantial that their association is difficult.

The inscription CSAI I, 202=R 3854 was commissioned by king *S²hr Hll bn Dr²krb* who is an isolated figure amongst the Qatabanian kings (see the observations below in the introductory remarks to CSAI I, 202=R 3854). Its arrangement centrally on the wall with CSAI I, 199=R

³⁹PIRENNE 1956, 226, 227, 275. Pirenne corrected the reconstruction by RHODOKANAKIS 1924a, 9–10, who suggested the reverse, namely *S²hr Ygl bn Yd^{c**o**b}* was the son of *Yd^{c**o**b} Dbyn bn S²hr*.

⁴⁰ARBACH 2002a, 11; 2005–2006, 121–122, 129–130 in line with VON WISSMANN 1976, 457–458.

⁴¹PIRENNE 1956, 228–230, BRON 1999a, 70–71, AVANZINI 2004a, 44; 2016, 179 and GAJDA - AL-HAJJ - SCHIET-TECATTE 2009, 171–172 consider this identification of the two kings doubtful. By contrast, KITCHEN 1994, 72 identifies this king with *Yd^{c**o**b} Dbyn Yhr**g** bn S²hr*. On the problem of the use of the epithets with royal onomastics, see the observations below in the Introduction.

⁴²ARBACH 2002a, 11; 2005–2006, 124, 130.

⁴³This identification is accepted by AVANZINI 2016, 174–175. By contrast, BEESTON 1971a, 17 stated that the identification of king *S²hr Hll Yhn^{c**m**} bn Yd^{c**o**b}* remains uncertain.

⁴⁴On this genealogy, see VON WISSMANN 1976, 452–455; KITCHEN 1994, 37–38; ARBACH 2002a, 11–12; 2005–2006, 130–131; AVANZINI 2004a, 47–48; 2010, 185.

⁴⁵AVANZINI 2004a, 46, 142–143; 2016, 175, 180.

3691 on its left-hand side may suggest that it was inscribed before CSAI I, 199=R 3691, and hence also before CSAI I, 201=R 3693, which is posterior to CSAI I, 199=R 3691. Despite this, the chronological relationship of this inscription with CSAI I, 204=R 3878 and CSAI I, 213=R 4931 remains uncertain.

As mentioned previously, the inscription Unpubl. Timna^c-gate1 cannot be read except for a few letters. The palaeographic style of these letters seems to be similar to that of the inscriptions on the opposite wall (CSAI I, 200=R 3692; CSAI I, 201=R 3693; CSAI I, 202=R 3854; CSAI I, 199=R 3691), and may be dated to the same historical period of these documents.

The inscription CSAI I, 208=R 3566 can be considered as the last to have been inscribed. This is due to the fact that it was commissioned by king *S²hr Ygl Yhr gb bn Hwfc^m* who can be dated with certainty to a later historical period than all the aforementioned kings of the southern gate (see the observations below in the Introduction). The inscription Unpubl. Timna^c-gate2 may also be dated to the same period. Although most of this document can no longer be read, it is possible to find in the last lines the expression *w-t^{clm} yd S²hr*. Given that the palaeographic style of this inscription is identical to that of CSAI I, 208=R 3566, it is likely that this *S²hr* is king *S²hr Ygl Yhr gb bn Hwfc^m* of CSAI I, 208=R 3566.

The observations above indicate that there are two major problems involved in the reconstruction of the chronology of the inscriptions on the southern gate of Timna^c and the Ġabal Labaḥ.

The first is the use of palaeography. It should be noted that all the documents under examination exhibit a very homogeneous type of script, except for CSAI I, 208=R 3566 and Unpubl. Timna^c-gate2. This seems to point to a group of documents all dating to within a short period of time, with CSAI I, 208=R 3566 and Unpubl. Timna^c-gate2 being inscribed at a later period. However, a chronological arrangement strictly based on palaeography can strongly misrepresent the data. A significant example from Qatabanic documentation is provided by the inscription Lion 1 inscribed on the base of two bronze lions. This inscription mentions Qatabanian king *S²hr Hll* with his son *Hwfc^m Yhn^{c^m}* as well as Minaic king *Wqh^{ʔl} Yt^c*. It is possible, therefore, to identify Qatabanian king *S²hr Hll Yhn^{c^m} bn Yd^{c^{ʔb}}*, the grandfather of king *S²hr Ygl Yhr gb bn Hwfc^m* of CSAI I, 208=R 3566, and the document can be dated to the mid-first century BC⁴⁶. However, the iconography of the two lions appears to be influenced by Achaemenid art, and, most crucially, the palaeographic style of the script is very different from that used at the time of king *S²hr Hll Yhn^{c^m} bn Yd^{c^{ʔb}}* in the first century BC. By contrast, the palaeographic style of Lion 1 is very close to that of all the inscriptions on the southern gate of Timna^c and the Ġabal Labaḥ, while strongly differs from that of CSAI I, 208=R 3566 and Unpubl. Timna^c-gate2 (king *S²hr Ygl Yhr gb bn Hwfc^m*) which dates to a period close to *S²hr Hll Yhn^{c^m} bn Yd^{c^{ʔb}}*, the king mentioned in Lion 1. The case of the inscription Lion 1 suggests the possibility that ASA scribes could for whatever reason choose to employ a style of script that was older than that which was typically used during their own historical period⁴⁷. This practice is not surprising⁴⁸, given that it is attested in many other areas of the ancient Near East. In this regard, the monumental inscription on the Iṣṭar gate in Babylon dating to the end of the seventh - beginning of the sixth

⁴⁶ARBACH 2005a, 28–29. Significantly, this dating is also consistent with the reconstruction of the final historical period of the kingdom of Ma^cin proposed by ROBIN 1998b, as pointed out by ARBACH 2005a, 28. This dating, however, is not accepted by AVANZINI 2010; 2016, 184.

⁴⁷It is remarkable that a parallel problem exists with regard to the dating of the Minaic inscription R 2999=M 222, a document that is contemporary to Lion 1 and CSAI I, 208=R 3566. ROBIN 1998b demonstrates that king *S²hr Ygl Yhr gb bn Hwfc^m*, mentioned in R 2999=M 222, is the same as that of CSAI I, 208=R 3566, despite the stylistic differences of the script between the two texts. This palaeographic inconsistency has led many scholars to date the two texts to different periods.

⁴⁸However, this practice in ASA epigraphy has never been thoroughly examined. In this connection, ROBIN 1998b, 182 states “*il n'est pas rare que des textes mentionnant le même personnage présentent des styles nettement différenciés*”. The author also mentions the case of the two inscriptions MQ-al-Hayd 1=R 4196 and MQ-al-Hāṭ 1 (see also ROBIN 1998a, 144–147) and other examples of palaeographic inconsistencies in the Sabaeen High Plateau (see ROBIN 1982 I, 111–113) See also the observations by NEBES 2007, 33, footnote 42; 2016, 48–53.