Remarks on some processes of assimilation and innovation in the language and culture of Ḥaḍramawt during its ancient history

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[Until recently, Ḥaḍramitic was the least known and least studied among the Ancient South Arabian languages. A further difficulty concerning the study of Ḥaḍramitic inscriptions is the fragmented nature of the corpus in terms of both its chronology and its geography. The paper offers some reflections on the history and unique traits of the language and culture of pre-Islamic Ḥaḍramawt, taking into account some of the most topical issues in Ancient South Arabian studies. The paper shows how the kingdom of Ḥaḍramawt, while bearing certain traits that were shared by all of the south Arabian kingdoms, was able to re-elaborate and assimilate them at a precocious stage. During its mature period, owing to the presence of a variety of cultural poles in the country, Ḥaḍramawt was able to maintain and expand its unique set of linguistic traits, often passing its stylistic models on to the other south Arabian kingdoms.]

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1. *Introduction*

Until recently Ḥaḍramitic (HAD) was the least known and least studied among the Ancient South Arabian (ASA) languages. Although archaeological excavations in Ḥaḍramawt began very early, during the 1940s,[1] and continued intensively compared to research on the other ancient south Arabian kingdoms, the number of inscriptions brought to light remained limited for many decades, and scholars have tended to focus first and foremost on Sabaic (SAB) and secondarily on Qatabanic (QAT) and Minaic (MIN). In his SAB and ASA grammars, A. F. L. Beeston provided only a brief outline of the main characteristics of HAD.[2]

However, regular archaeological expeditions to Shabwa by the French mission and to Raybūn by the Russian mission over the past decades have led to the discovery of a large number of HAD inscriptions,

1. Caton Thompson 1944.
2. Beeston 1962; Beeston 1984: 67-69.

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and a total of about a thousand have now been published.[3] S. Frantsouzoff dedicated great effort to the study and publication of these texts and his work has done much to stimulate the interest of scholars in HAD and its somewhat bizarre traits, apparently so unlike those of the other South Arabian languages.[4]

The typological subdivisions adopted by us for the publication of the HAD inscriptions on the CSAI website[5] have yielded a clearer picture of this corpus on both the synchronic-descriptive and diachronic-evolutionary levels. Despite various difficulties, study of the language has gone forward and distinctive elements regarding its grammar and formularies have been identified, allowing us to retrace in broad outlines its stylistic evolution.[6] Even so, detailed analysis of the language's grammatical systems and their development over time are lacking in contrast, for example, to the research that has been conducted in recent years on the linguistic chronology and geography of SAB and QAT.[7]

A further challenge facing us is the fragmented nature of the corpus in terms of both its chronology and its geography. We may cite, as one example of the lack of continuity in the documentation of most HAD sites, the case of the capital – Shabwa – where less than one hundred inscriptions for a period of over a thousand years have come to light, of which few are of historical significance.

This paper will offer some reflections on the history and unique traits of the language and culture of pre-Islamic Ḥaḍramawt, taking into account some of the most topical issues in ASA studies.

2. *The formative period: the origins of HAD and the role of "Sabaeization"*

One of the most important issues in ASA studies today revolves around the origins of the various ASA cultures, their affinities, and their differences. Scholars now believe that, just as we refer to south Arabian kingdoms in the plural, we should regard the south Arabian languages and cultures as a diversified rather than a monolithic phenomenon.[8] At the same time, a fundamental homogeneity united the different entities of ancient South Arabia in areas ranging from their script to the worship of the same supreme god, a number of linguistic isoglosses, and certain aspects of their material culture.

3. The complete list of references to the corpus of published HAD inscriptions can be consulted online in the website DASI "Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions" (http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/).

4. .Perhaps Robin's declaration, also cited in Frantsouzoff 2003: 40, that HAD is "la langue ancienne la plus éloignée de l'arabe et la plus mal comprise" (1991-1993: 99) remains just as true today as two decades ago.

5. As of May 2013, the website CSAI "Corpus of South Arabian Inscriptions" has been replaced by a completely new archive, the DASI "Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions" (http://dasi.humnet.unipi.it/), realised in collaboration with the LARTTE research centre of the Scuola Normale Superiore of Pisa as part of the ERC–AdG DASI project (principal investigator: Alessandra Avanzini).

6. The periodization adopted for the HAD texts is the same as that proposed for the corpus of QAT inscriptions (Avanzini 2004): periods A (early 1st millennium BC), B (second half of the 1st millennium BC), C (1st century BC – 1st century AD), and D (2nd – 3rd centuries AD). Concerning the inscriptions from Raybūn and other sites in the Ḥaḍramawt valley, a subdivision of the documents on the basis of broad stylistic criteria has been carried out by Prioletta 2005: 309-323; Prioletta 2006a: 269-286. The grouping of the texts that emerged from this comparative analysis differs from the subdivisions suggested by Frantsouzoff 2005: 9-16.

7. Stein 2003; Stein 2004: 225-245; Stein 2005: 179-189; Stein 2008: 203-212; 2012: 503-522, Avanzini 2004; Avanzini 2005a: 318-323; Avanzini 2005b: 47-57.

8. On this issue, see Avanzini's recent study 2009: 205-220, in particular pp. 210-212. The term "language" was applied by Stein (2003 and 2011) to SAB and the other ASA languages, whereas Nebes & Stein retained the use of the word "dialects" (2008: 145-146).

2.1 *The supposed Sabaean origins of the Ḥaḍramitic cities*

In recent years the traditional view that the homogeneity of the south Arabian kingdoms could be explained by a shared process of Sabaeization during their formative phase has been challenged on various levels.[9]

This early hypothesis had far-reaching consequences for the study of Ḥaḍramawt, even more than for Qatabān and Ma'īn. J. Pirenne went so far as to suggest that the archaic inscriptions found at the site of al-Barīra in wādī Jirdān, which contain the "Sabaic" dedicatory verb *hqny*,[10] were commissioned by Sabaean immigrants who originally founded the settlement.[11] According to Pirenne, a group of Sabaeans may have even occupied the capital Shabwa during its archaic phase.[12]

The presence of Sabaeans at Shabwa appeared to be corroborated by the discovery of some fragments of Sabaean votive stelae in 1938 by R.A.B. Hamilton in the vicinity of buildings 72-74.[13] A.F.L. Beeston believed that the phrase *kbr nzḥt* found on one of these pieces[14] could be translated as "kabir-magistrate of the Outlanders", supporting the notion that a foreign community of Sabaean colons settled in the Ḥaḍramitic capital.[15] However, for a number of reasons this theory, while intriguing, remains unlikely. That the complex of buildings originally served as a temple remains in dispute among archaeologists. The varied nature of the documents found *in situ* suggests that this may have been an area of the city where, for some specific but as yet unidentified reason, objects of different provenance − probably war booty − were stored.[16]

Inscriptions mentioning the Sabaean deity Almaqah have in fact been discovered in limited numbers at Raybūn and other sites in the Ḥaḍramawt valley.[17] That any of the Ḥaḍramitic cities may have been founded by Sabaeans remains only a remote possibility, although it seems reasonable to hypothesize that groups of Sabaeans settled in some of the towns, as did Qatabanians and Minaeans, based on evidence such as dedications to the divinities of these reigns.[18]

9. Avanzini 2009: 205-220.

10. See the following section and fn. 19.

11. Pirenne 1990: 35-39. The archaic inscriptions from al-Barīra in which the verb *hqny* appears are Barīra 8, Barīra 10.

12. Pirenne 1990: 46-49.

13. See Breton 1998a: 39-48, 1998b: 49-55.

14. Cf. Hamilton 4/1-3: *S[1]mhrym bn Yqh[... ...] [2][... ...]l w-Yṯ''mr kbr [3]Nzḥt*.

15. Beeston linked the word *nzḥt* to the Arabic nazaḥa "to be distant" (Brown and Beeston 1954: 53). The only occurrence of *nzḥt* in ancient SAB seems to be in Hamilton 4. Subsequently, during the middle SAB period, *nzḥt* was used as the name of a clan. Cf., CIH 601/3*: w-'hrw Fys[2]n w-Nzḥt* "and the nobles of Fayshān and Nazaḥat".

16. Among the less than ten inscriptions found in this area, in addition to the ancient SAB stelae mentioned above, there is a middle SAB dedication from Maḥram Bilqīs (Hamilton 9), a late SAB text (Hamilton 11), and one QAT inscription (Hamilton 7). Fragments of reliefs in the late style that include human figures and faces or vegetal motifs have been found (Brown and Beeston 1954: pls. XIX, XX). There is also a frieze of bulls' heads, which is a very rare decorative motif for Ḥaḍramawt (Brown and Beeston 1954: pl. XXII, fig. 2).

17. E. g., SOYCE 834 from Raybūn. On the foreign deities worshipped in Ḥaḍramawt, see Sedov 2005: 31-33.

18. Cf. the archaic inscriptions found at Raybūn in sector I (a quarter of private buildings) dedicated to Sīn and the Qatabanian god 'Amm (e. g. Rb I/85 n. 344). The fragment of a votive text mentioning the Minaean god 'Athtar dhu-Qabḍ has been found at Shabwa (Shabwa S/75/27).

2.2. *H- forms*

Scholars have traditionally held that the most important evidence of a process of Sabaeization is the use in all ASA languages − principally during the archaic phase − of the verb *hqny* and the *h*-based suffix pronouns.[19]

In recent years, however, this view has been cast into doubt as well, and the forms with *h* are now considered by some scholars to be a shared archaism rather than a Sabaeism adopted for stylistic reasons by other, non-Sabaean kingdoms.[20]

In any case, what should be underlined is the fact that this linguistic trait was modified and employed in different ways by each of the non-Sabaean centres. In MIN we find the use exclusively of the noun *hqnyt* "dedication" in a small group of inscriptions that dates back to the post-archaic phase.[21] The majority of these texts report the involvement of Minaeans in matters of trade, and often mention the foreign countries through which their caravans passed, or clashes with non-Minaean communities, especially from Saba' and the oasis of Najrān (another town engaged in this trade, as it was located along the Arabian caravan route heading north). This consideration, together with the fact that the word *s*^{1}*qnyt* (which would be the MIN counterpart to *hqnyt*) is almost unknown in the language[22], makes it likely that this use of *hqnyt* was merely a borrowing from SAB.

In QAT evidence of the verb *hqny* is limited to a few occurrences during the A period, while the suffix pronoun *-hw* is widely employed and seems to have been a stylistic choice that remained in general use until quite late, e.g. in the texts of the B2 period.[23]

In HAD a linguistic process in the opposite direction took place; while the pronoun *-hw* disappeared quite early (during the A period),[24] the verb *hqny* continued to be used until the 4th or 3rd century BC (the early part of the B period). In documents from both phases, however, *hqny* has been found together with the HAD pronouns in sibilants and interdentals:

> CT 31 (period A): *Ḥmhmw bn D̲*^{2}*'rrm* ***hqny*** *S*^{1}*y*^{3}*n nfs*^{1}***-s***^{1} "*Ḥmhmw* son of *D̲'rrm* dedicated to Sīn his life".
>
> Rb I/84 no. 253a-e (period B): *T̲mkhmw bn [N]dbm* ^{2}***hqny*** *ḏt-Ḥm[y]m … w-tḍ' b-'ḏn ḏt-Ḥm*^{5}*ym nfs*^{1}***-s***^{1} "*T̲mkhmw* son of *Ndbm* dedicated to dhat Ḥimyam … and he placed under the will of dhat Ḥimyam his life".

2.3. *Boustrophedon*

The same can be said with regard to the boustrophedic *cursus*. This stylistic trait was typical of Saba', and not only appears regularly in documents from the period of the mukarrib of Saba', but was also reiterated in the following centuries. Quite late, at the beginning of the 3rd century BC when Yada''īl

19. As is well known, one of the main isoglosses that distinguish the non-SAB languages of South Arabia is the *s*^{1}-based pronouns and causative verbal stem, as opposed to the *h*-based forms of SAB.

20. See Avanzini 2006: 79-85, in particular pp. 81-83.

21. The use of *hqnyt* as a noun has only been found in the long inscriptions on the city walls of Baraqish and Ma'īn (e.g., M 247/4).

22. The only occurrences of the noun *s*^{1}*qnyt* are found in the MIN inscriptions from marginal areas such as the al-'Ula and Qaryat al-Fā'w oases (e. g. M 316/5). It would be interesting to study the sociolinguistic factors that led the Minaean communities settled in these foreign countries to use a word that was unusual in the inscriptions of their homeland.

23. The few verbal forms with the causative pre-formative *h-* that can be assigned to a period as late as C appear in a text referring to the king Shahr Yagill Yuhargib from the territory of the tribe of Radmān, and can be ascribed to the influence of SAB in that region (CSAI I, 49=MQ-Maqṣara al-Abraq1, l. 1: *hnql* and l. 4: *hbr'*).

24. Raybūn-Kafas/Na'mān 38 is the only inscription whose script is post-archaic and that uses the pronoun *-hw*.

Bayān son of Karib'īl Watar, the king of Saba' used it in his royal edict CIH 562,[25] the boustrophedon script had obviously become much more than a matter of style; it acquired strong ideological connotations, linking the king to the glorious tradition of the greatest Sabaean mukarribs.

In contrast, the other ASA kingdoms seem to have regarded boustrophedon as an archaic and outdated element with no particular ideological associations, and it fell into disuse.

A rock inscription, Arbach-Bāfaqīh al-'Uqla 1, is one of the few HAD texts in boustrophedic script that have come to light:

> Ll. 1-3: *Yd''l Byn mlk Ḥḍ*^{2}*rmt mḫḍ Qtbn b-ḫl S*^{1}*yn* ^{3}*[w]-ḫl Ḥwl* "Yada''īl Bayān king of Ḥaḍramawt defeated Qatabān by the power of Sīn and the power of Ḥawl".

Commissioned in the 7th or 6th century BC by one of the earliest Ḥaḍramitic kings to celebrate his victory against Qatabān,[26] the text is written in an extremely archaic language with a marked Sabaean character. The divine couple Sīn and Ḥawl are invoked as the founding deities of the state, with a status equal to that of the Sabaean gods Almaqah and Hawbas, and the verb *mḫḍ* "to break" – a verb that was used by the first Sabaean mukarribs, symbolizing the act of breaking the enemy − is employed.[27] At the same time the text contains some interesting HAD innovations, such as the formula *b-ḫl* "by the power of", which represents the earliest occurrence of this noun in ASA.[28]

2.4. *The motif of the ibex in the visual arts*

In the domain of the arts, the ibex illustrates how a Sabaean motif could be assimilated in different ways by the other ASA kingdoms. It was a favourite iconographic element in Sabaean-Madhabean culture from the earliest times. The animal was often used to decorate votive stelae bearing inscriptions, in which recumbent ibexes were depicted either in profile in recessed squares or frontally as theories of heads.[29] In Qatabān it was included frequently in architectural friezes, but was not considered suitable by artists as a motif for dedicatory stelae. The handful of known examples comes from wādī al-Jūba, a region that was once Sabaean and then fell under Qatabān rule.[30]

Examples from Ḥaḍramawt are rarer, but the ibex has been found on archaic objects that can be linked to the Jawf tradition, such as the pedestal from Ḥurayḍa, Musée de Mukallā 219.[31] Nevertheless, variations in the motif were introduced, especially on dedicatory stelae; for example, in the shape of the protomes'

25. The exact date of this text can be established with confidence, because its author – the king Yada''īl Bayān, son of Karib'īl Watar – is thought to be the same Yada''īl Bayān referred to in SAB inscription A-20-216. The inscription can be placed at the very end of the 4th century BC based on its citation of the Greek king Seleucus I (Prioletta 2011: 283-294).

26. The date is uncertain (cf. Arbach and Bāfaqīh 1998: 109-126), but the text should surely follow the reign of the Sabaean mukarrib Karib'īl Watar son of Dhamar'alī (first quarter of the 7th century BC), because in the long commemorative inscription of this king, RES 3945, Qatabān and Ḥaḍramawt are mentioned together as allies of Saba'.

27. It is worth noting that the only example in QAT where the verb *mḫḍ* has this particular connotation is to be found in CSAI I, 31=RES 4932/3-4, an inscription dating to a few centuries after Arbach-Bāfaqīh al-'Uqla 1 and commemorating the victory of Qatabān over Ḥaḍramawt: *ywm rd' 'ṯtr w-'lhw S*^{1}*qmtm S*^{2}*hr-Ġ[yln]* ^{4}*mḫḍ Ḥḍrmt w-'mrm* ("when 'Athtar and the gods of *S*^{1}*qmtm* helped Shahr Ghaylān in the defeat of the Ḥaḍramawt and Amīr").

28. This represents a unique instance in HAD; elsewhere it seems to appear by preference in the *scriptio plena ḫyl*/'*ḫyl*. The noun is found in middle SAB only from the Christian era onwards.

29. The ibex appears among the decorative motifs in the so-called Banāt 'Ād temples in some cities of the Jawf, such as Nashshān, as early as the 8th century BC (e.g., SW-BA/I/1 and 2).

30. Cf. the alabaster stelae CSAI I, 293=CIAS P/22/s 4/46.11 n. 1 and CSAI I, 295=CIAS P 32/s 4/46.11.

31. Compare this object to the Minaean examples of ibexes in LuBM 2 and Garbini-Francaviglia 1 and 2.

horns, the development of stylistic conceits such as paired rampant ibexes framing a scene, or their combination with other decorative motifs such as the crescent moon and disc (figs. 1-3).[32]

Therefore, like certain traits in the language (e.g., forms with the *h*- affix), the ibex allows us to see how an iconographic element might be assimilated differently in different non-Sabaean kingdoms.

3. *The mature period: contacts with other languages and the contribution of the ḥaḍramitic writing school to the diffusion of stylistic models*

As has been shown above, Sabaeization appears to have been a secondary phenomenon in ASA, but we have given it increasing attention in our studies because it is so closely linked to the origins of these cultures and languages during their early formative period.

At the same time, in addition to its SAB traits HAD shares various isoglosses with QAT and MIN.[33] The crucial point that scholars must establish is whether these traits are to be explained as archaisms, shared innovations, or isolated interference phenomena that can be ascribed to occasional contacts during specific historical phases.

Likewise, the specific peculiarities of HAD could be explained either as genuine innovations or as stylistic choices arising out of reforms in a single writing school that remained isolated and did not spread through the language system as a whole. In fact it is known that, in contrast to the other kingdoms, there were several writing centres in Ḥaḍramawt and the main school in Shabwa did not always succeed in imposing its style on the other cities.

3.1. *Relations between the centre and the periphery in Ḥaḍramawt*

Recent studies conducted by the Italian Mission to Oman (IMTO) at the site of Sumhuram, an ancient seaport founded on the distant Omani coast of Dhofar, have contributed to our understanding of how such a large kingdom as Ḥaḍramawt could be organized and managed by the authorities in the capital.

It appears that while certain economic activities were centralized – Sumhuram was an important port whose commercial trade was rigidly controlled by the central authority, which was represented by the state but also, according to the classical sources, the temples and priests – on the other hand, this was counterbalanced by a stratification of political power. The kings of Ḥaḍramawt created a bureaucracy and a hierarchy of political offices in order to govern the most far-flung cities of their kingdom.[34] It is interesting to note that the construction inscriptions displayed on the façades of monumental buildings – the preferred medium for the conveyance of the royal ideology – were rarely commissioned in Ḥaḍramawt, let alone in Sumhuram, by the king himself.[35]

32. See the various examples in Sedov 2005: 47, figs. 1:1-2; 49, fig. 2:3; 50, fig. 3:4. The use of the ibex motif in Ḥaḍramawt should, however, be looked upon as an archaism rather than as an assimilated Sabaean motif, since it could already be found on the pre-classical pottery from Raybūn dating to the proto-historic period between the end of the 2nd millennium and the early centuries of the 1st millennium BC (Sedov 2003: 174-177, 181-182).

33. On a linguistic level, for instance, Frantsouzoff pointed out that the dual suffix pronoun *–s¹my* constitutes a QAT-HAD isogloss, whereas the form *–s¹mn* is a MIN-HAD isogloss (2003: 44).

34. See, in particular, Avanzini 2008: 622-625.

35. Apart from the above-mentioned epigraph Arbach-Bāfaqīh al-‘Uqla 1, the only known royal inscription from the 1st millennium BC is Hamilton 2 A+B + Shabwa S/75/128, which concerns the construction of the city walls of Shabwa by the king Yada‘’īl Bayān son of Yada‘’ab. The handful of other royal texts found (comprising less than ten examples) were commissioned by the kings who ruled during the late D phase (the latter part of the 2nd to the 3rd centuries AD).

The practice of religion also appears to have been highly centralised in Sumhuram, as the inhabitants adopted the cult of Sīn with his epithet dhu-Alīm (*ḏ-’lm*), the same god to which the main temple in the capital, Shabwa, was dedicated.[36]

On the other hand, clear evidence of a process of cultural fragmentation can be found in the written script, because the city had its own – albeit marginal – writing school, which remained active during its entire history, as can be seen in its epigraphs. The concept of monumentality, namely the style of a celebrative inscription meant for public display, in this coastal city was quite different from that of Shabwa, a city that paralleled more closely the other ASA kingdoms in the evolution of its calligraphic style (figs. 4-5).[37]

3.2. *HAD innovations and peculiar traits*

The mechanism of cultural fragmentation also manifested itself in the HAD corpus on the linguistic level. Important innovations such as the emergence of a singular feminine suffix pronoun that was phonologically distinct from the masculine suffix *-ṯ/-s*^{3} came into general use and appear throughout the documentation:

> Suna/79/L/1 (period A): *Nbḥm hqnyt* ^{2}*Bnht-’l h-bn-**ṯ*** “*Nbḥm* made a dedication to the Banāt Īl for her son”.[38]

Another peculiar trait that regularly distinguishes HAD from the other ASA languages is the use of the preposition/conjunction *’d* “to(wards)” or “in order to”, as opposed to ASA *‘d*. [39]

> MAFYS-Naqb al-Hajar 2/2 (B period): *hn ‘s*^{1}*nm **’d** mn‘ym* “from foundation to top”.[40]

At the same time HAD is known to have retained the ending *-hn* for the determinate state, unlike the other ASA languages which only utilized *-n*. Whatever meaning may have been assigned to the laryngeal consonant *-h*,[41] although it is found as a feature of HAD during its entire history, it was used much less systematically:[42]

> ***bḥthn*** (Rb I/84 no. 197a-e/1-2, period B) vs. ***bḥtn*** (Rb I/84 nos. 178 etc., period B) “inscribed slab”.

36. Cf. Ja 402/3-4: *S*^{1}*yn ḏ-*^{4}*lm b-S*^{1}*mhrm*. In the other cities of Ḥaḍramawt where Sīn was worshipped, the deity was usually assigned a variety of epithets (e.g., *S*^{1}*yn ḏ-Ḥls*^{1}*m* at Bā-Quṭfa or *S*^{1}*yn ḏ-Myf‘n* at Raybūn).

37. The differences relate primarily to the script, but in some cases to the formulary and the lexicon as well. In terms of graphics this emerges clearly from a comparison of the inscription Hamilton 8 from Shabwa with the group of inscriptions KR 2, 3, 4 and 5 from Khor Rori, which all possibly date to the reign of the same king, Ilī‘azz Yaluṭ.

38. One of the latest occurrences is in RF-Alīm 1/3, 4 (2nd/3rd centuries AD).

39. A. Sima has shown that *’d* is an isogloss that HAD shares with Akkadian, Ethio-Semitic and Modern South Arabian; this particle is not etymologically related to the corresponding *‘d* in other ASA languages (1999-2000: 213-215).

40. See also Ja 1007/2-3 (D period): *bn-mw* ^{3}*mwṯrm ’d s*^{2}*qrm*. The use of *’d* before verbs was more limited, being confined to texts from Raybūn; Rb XIV/87 no. 105/4-5: *’d ymrd m[r]ḍ mrḍ S*^{2}*‘rwd* “so that *S*^{2}*‘rwd* would recover from the illness he fell into”.

41. The consonant *-h* could represent either a *mater lectionis* for a long vowel *ā* or reflect the original form **hn* of the definite article. On this subject, see Tropper 2001: 1-31.

42. In addition to the *-hn* ending, use of the “normal” *-n* in inscriptions has also been found, though less often. Cf. also *bytn* “palace” in Ja 949/2 from period D.

The preposition/conjunction *h-* "to", "in order to" corresponding to *l-* in the other ASA languages[43], was an innovation whose use was restricted to the dative case and the subordinate final clause:

> KR 6/1-2: *br' w-s¹ḥdṯ* ***h****-mr'-s¹ ml²k Ḥḍrmt mḥfdhn Ḏ'nm* "constructed and restored for his lord, king of Ḥaḍramawt, the tower *Ḏ'nm*".[44]

The precative and jussive were introduced by *l-*, which is most often found in the formula *l-s³twr*, typical of the dedications to dhat Ḥimyam at Raybūn:

> Rb I/84 no. 197a-e 3/4: w-*bn-mw Fṭnm* ***l****-s³twr ḏw* ⁴*yḥr 'm 's³tm* "and may it be far from *Fṭnm* that he may have a sexual intercourse with a woman". [45]

The orthographic reform introduced by the writing school of Raybūn during the fourth quarter of the 1st millennium BC, which replaced the grapheme *-ṯ* with *-s³*, provides an example of the lack of uniformity in the HAD script. This modification, which developed in part for linguistic reasons, was adopted by the cities of the Ḥaḍramawt valley, but was not accepted by the central school of Shabwa apart from isolated occurrences.[46]

An even greater refinement can be seen in the dual masculine suffix pronoun, whose three forms seem to be a matter of variations in language. The form *-s¹my*, analogous to the SAB *-hmy* and the QAT *-s¹my*, seems to have been intended for dedicatory inscriptions, i.e. situations of a more "private" nature:

> BAQ 55: *[... ... w-]G's¹m bn {|}S²rḥm tḍ'²[w b-'ḏn S¹yn nfs¹-****s¹****]****my*** *w-'ḏn-****s¹****my*
> "[… …] and *G's¹m* son of *S²rḥm* placed under the will of Sīn their life and their wills".

In contrast, the *-s¹mn* variant which also exists in MIN, could in HAD have been linked to more official contexts. In fact, this variant is found regularly in the commemorative inscriptions associated with monumental constructions in the sites of Khor Rori and al-Binā':[47]

> KR 4/1-3: *S²'ṯm bn Frṭm w-Mw[.. bn]* ²*Mt' bn ḥwr S²bwt tb[' w-s²]*³*y' mr'-****s¹mn*** *'byṯ' bn Ḏmr['l[y]*
> "*S²'ṯm* son of *Frṭm* and *Mw[..]* son of *Mt'*, inhabitants of Shabwa, followed and gave service for their lord Abīyatha' son of Dhamar'alī".

Finally, there is a third form of the dual suffix pronoun, *-s¹myn*, a diachronic innovation that appeared much later, in the 3rd century AD:[48]

43. Sporadic occurrences of *l-* as a dativa preposition are only to be found in the late D phase and must be considered diachronic innovations, possibly due to a SAB influence: *l-mnḍḥ S²b'n* "for the tutelary deity of *S²b'n*" (UPC 28/1); *l-mr'-s¹ S¹yn ḏ-'lm* "for his Lord, Sīn dhu-Alīm" (Wādī Ḍura' 1/1). A single exception dating to the B period has also been recorded, in RES 3512B/1: *w-ms¹lmhn ḏ-l-s¹m* "and the altar that belongs to them".

44. See also KR 4/4-5: *mt tb' bn S²bwt h-ybny 'by⁵ṯ' hgrhn S¹mrm* "when they came from Shabwa so that Abīyatha' should build the town of Sumhuram".

45. This translation was recently suggested by A. Multhoff (2009: 297) and differs from the version by S. Frantsouzoff (1997: 153).

46. On this phenomenon, see the detailed discussion in Prioletta 2006b: 249-267.

47. Cf. also KR 8/5, 6; RES 2687/3. The only dedicatory inscription in which *-s¹mn* occurs is CT 4/6, a text that was commissioned by the kabīr of Ḥurayḍa to celebrate the construction of a well for the city. As a single exception, *-s¹mn*, has been found in Ja 402/3, a dedication to Sīn on a bronze plaque from Khor Rori.

48. Cf. also the other rock inscriptions from al-'Uqla, Ja 923/2, 5, Ja 948/2 and RES 4691/4, 6 from Shabwa.

> Ja 969/1-4: *S[1]'yklm w-Mlkm bny* | [2] *T̲‘dlt s[2]w‘w mr'-* ***s[1]myn*** | [3]*Yd‘'l Byn mlk Ḥḍrmt* [4]*bn Rbs[2]ms[1]* *“S[1]'yklm* and *Mlkm* sons of *T̲‘dlt* followed their lord Yada‘'īl Bayān king of Ḥaḍramawt son of Rabbīshams".

3.3. *Linguistic interference between HAD and the other ASA languages*

Many examples of linguistic interference between languages have been identified in ASA texts, and these can be attributed to the contacts between different cultural centres during their history. Examples of the influence exerted on HAD by important cultural poles such as Saba' during the archaic period have already been cited. At the same time the HAD writing school was a centre of stylistic trends that spread to other ASA kingdoms. To illustrate this phenomenon, two cases of reciprocal interference between HAD and MIN will be discussed here.

The formula *tḍ' b-'ḏn* (also to be found, although less frequently, in the variant *wḍ' b-'ḏn*) followed by a divine name is a distinctive trait of the HAD formulary. Its use as a closing phrase in dedicatory inscriptions, beginning in the archaic period and continuing for nearly a millennium, has been amply documented.[49] However, this expression has been found in only scattered cases in SAB and in MIN inscriptions. Its occurrence in some highly archaic SAB inscriptions[50] could lead one to assume that originally this syntagm formed part of the ASA linguistic substratum, and that it was adopted only afterwards as a feature by the HAD language. The formula, in which the subject is the dedicant, has been generally translated as "to place under the god's will" (see the example of Rb I/84 no. 253a-e shown above).[51]

There are two examples of this formula in MIN.[52] The form *wḍ'* has been found in Ma‘īn 8, an inscription on the city wall of Qarnaw:

> Ll. 2-3: *w-**wḍ'** 'ls[1]m[‘] **b-'ḏn** ‘ṯtr ḏ-Q[3]bḍm w-S[1]yn [w-]Wdm w-Nkrḥm nfs[1]-s[1] [w-'ḏn-s[1] w-w]ld-s[1] w-[qny]-s[1]* "and Ilīsami‘ placed under the will of ‘Athtar dhu-Qabḍ, Sīn, Wadd and Nakraḥ, his life, his will, his children and his possessions".

It is certainly pertinent to note that this text, written in the 5th or 4th century BC,[53] was commissioned by the HAD king Ilīsami‘ Dhubyān to commemorate the renewal of the kingdom's alliance with its Minaean partner Abīyada‘ Yatha‘, first established by an earlier king of Ḥaḍramawt, Shahr ‘Alhān son of Yada‘'īl. The second MIN inscription in which the formula *tḍ' b-'ḏn* appears is as-Sawdā' 20, where the verb *tḍ'* is used:

49. A dedication from Ḥurayḍa, CT 34, is one of the most archaic inscriptions containing this formula (early A period), while its occurrence on the bronze plaque RES 2693/4 from Shabwa represents the latest known example, dating to around the 1st century AD.

50. In ancient SAB, the formula *wḍ' b-'ḏn* already appears in CIH 955+418/5 and Ja 557/1. Recently, in Moscow during the 2011 *Rencontres Sabéennes*, M. Arbach presented some new inscriptions written in very archaic *ductus*, originating from the territory of the tribe of Sam‘ī in the northern highlands of Yemen and containing the formula *wḍ' b-'ḏn* (cf. Arbach and Schiettecatte 2012: 37-68).

51. Pirenne 1979: 206.

52. To these, an occurrence in the marginal MIN text M 366/3 from al-‘Ula should be added.

53. As opposed to the traditionally attributed date of the middle of the 4th century BC, a date from the middle of 5th century BC to the beginning of 4th century BC has recently been suggested by A. Lemaire (2010: 381-383). The inscription refers to a historical event, a well-known and much discussed Minaean-Persian synchronism mentioned in the MIN inscription M 222=RES 3022, ll. 2-3: *b-*[3]*mrd kwn byn Mḏy w-Mṣr* "during a revolt that occurred between the Medes and Egypt". This inscription dates to the reign of the king Abīyada‘ Yatha‘, who is also mentioned in Ma‘īn 8.

> Ll. 7-8: *w-**tḏ’** S[1]‘d’l w-R’b’l w-Hwf‘t̲t w-Hwf’l w-D̲ḫyr **b-’ḏnh** ‘t̲tr ḏ-Qbḍm ’nfs[1]-s[1]m w-’’ḏn-s[1]m w-[8]’wld-s[1]m w-’qny-s[1]m w-’ḫh-s[1]m* “and *S[1]‘d’l, R’b’l, Hwf‘t̲t, Hwf’l* and *D̲ḫyr* placed under the will of ‘Athtar dhu-Qabḍ, their lives, their wills, their children, their possessions and their brothers”.

Recently, A. Multhoff revised this translation,[54] assuming a semantic difference between *wḍ’* (perhaps a 0_2 form meaning “to let go”, and then “to give”, from the original meaning “to go”) and *tḍ’* (a derived t-form/t_2 stem), meaning “to seek”. Therefore, *wḍ’ b-’ḏn* + divine name would be translated “he placed in the ear of” + divine name while *tḍ’ b-’ḏn* would be translated “he sought the ear of” + divine name.[55] Although largely convincing, her analysis cannot be accepted in its entirety, in part for reasons relating to the formulary and the strength of the context.[56] It seems to me, in fact, that *wḍ’* is being used here as a variant of *tḍ’* not involving any particular semantic change. The two examples in MIN have *wḍ’* and *tḍ’* appearing in identical contexts, so it is reasonable to conclude that these forms were regarded as interchangeable.[57]

Whatever the meaning of the formula might be, I believe that these occurrences in MIN can be regarded as examples of the sporadic adoption of fixed formulae from a foreign language as a result of contacts between two cultural centres. Ḥaḍramawt and Ma‘īn are known to have been very close allies, particularly during the middle of the first millennium BC, due to their shared interest in gaining as much profit as they could from the incense trade.

A parallel case, which illustrates this phenomenon of reciprocal linguistic influence but in the opposite direction, has been identified in one HAD inscription from Naqb al-Hajar, dating to the same period as the kings associated with Ma‘īn 8:

> RES 3869/5-6: *w-l ys[1]‘ḏb ḫbl yhr s[1]‘[6]ḏbm w-ḏ-’l yhr s[1]‘ḏbm* “but let him [the kabir] properly repair any damaged part which is standing, as well as the part which is not standing”.

Certain traits in its lexicon and syntax are clearly rooted in MIN, such as the verbs *s[1]‘ḏb* “to repair” and *ḫbl* “to be damaged”, which have been documented in this single instance in HAD but were used regularly in MIN:

> Ma‘īn 63/2: *bny w-ġwṯ w- s[1]‘ḏb ḏ-ḫbl b-mḥwlh* “(he) constructed, restored and repaired what is damaged of the boundary wall (?)”.

Furthermore, a new SAB inscription suggests that the alliance between the kingdoms of Ḥaḍramawt and Ma‘īn may date back to at least one hundred years earlier. In B-L Nashq=Demirjian 1, Ḥaḍramawt

54. Very recently, some important points in the formulary of HAD dedicatory inscriptions have been clarified by this scholar (Multhoff 2009: 295-302; Multhoff 2010a: 20-69; Multhoff 2010b: 7-40).

55. Multhoff 2010a: 60-66.

56. When perfectly analogous contexts are being analysed, I do not believe that forcing semantic components into the same grammatical systems will always lead to the correct conclusion. For example, the word *’ḏn* is translated “ear” when it appears in the formula *wḍ’ /tḍ’ b-’ḏn* and refers to the god, but “mind” when the word is a direct complement of the dedication verb *hqny/s[1]qny* and appears alongside such nouns as *nfs[1]* “soul”, *qny* “possessions”, etc., all referring to the dedicant. In my opinion, in the syntagm *b-’ḏn* as well (followed by a god’s name), which has been documented in other ASA languages, the word means “the will” (of the god).

57. In HAD *tḍ’* appears regularly, but *wḍ’* has also been found once, in a fragment from Raybūn (Raybūn-Ḥaḍrān 106/2). In HAD dedicatory inscriptions from the late period, *tḍ’* is replaced by the verb *rṯd*. This could constitute further proof of a meaning close to that of *rṯd*, namely “entrust” or “commit” to the will or protection of the god, for both the regular *tḍ’* and the occasional *wḍ’*.

and Ma‘īn are named as the principal rivals vying with Saba’ for control of the incense trade.[58] Saba’ was even forced to undertake a military expedition against Ḥaḍramawt in the distant region of Mayfa‘at, and to temporarily seize control of the city itself:

> Ll. 5-10: *ywm ḍb’ b-‘m S*^{1}*b’ w-rkb*^{6}*n rglm w-b‘w mṣr M‘nm b-’s*^{17}*fl ’tmy w-ywm ḍb’ b-‘m s*^{2}*‘b-*^{8}*hw rkbn b-‘m mṣr S*^{1}*b’ ‘d ’r*^{9}*ḍ Ḥḍrmt w-yṯbrw s*^{2}*l[ṯ … …]*^{10}*bn w-b‘w Myf‘t* “when he fought with Saba’ and the riders on an expedition (?) and overcame the army of Ma‘īn below Atmā, and when he waged war with his unit of riders following the Sabaean caravan in the land of Ḥaḍramawt, and they destroyed three [… …] and they assaulted Mayfa‘at”.

4. *Conclusions*

Recent archaeological research at sites such as Sumhuram, combined with the discovery of new inscriptions, allow us to backdate the history of important cultural centres in the kingdom. Thus, more weight can be assigned to Ḥaḍramawt, which appears to have been an autonomous and powerful kingdom since the archaic period.

The same applies to the linguistics and culture of these civilizations. As has been shown here, while the language of Ḥaḍramawt bore certain traits that were shared by all of the south Arabian kingdoms, it was able to re-elaborate and assimilate these traits into its own idiom at a precocious stage, thus allowing us to hypothesize a fairly long proto-phase of development. During its mature period, owing to the presence of a variety of cultural poles in the country, Ḥaḍramawt was able to maintain and expand its unique set of linguistic traits, often passing its stylistic models on to the other south Arabian kingdoms.

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58. This inscription, which appears on a bronze plaque, commemorates a trade expedition that was conducted by the dedicator as far as Gaza and Cyprus while a war was going on between Chaldea and Ionia, which scholars believe corresponds to the Neo-Babylonian wars in Cilicia. The expedition referred to can be dated to around the end of the 7th and the beginning of the 6th centuries BC or slightly later (see Lemaire 2010: 383-386).

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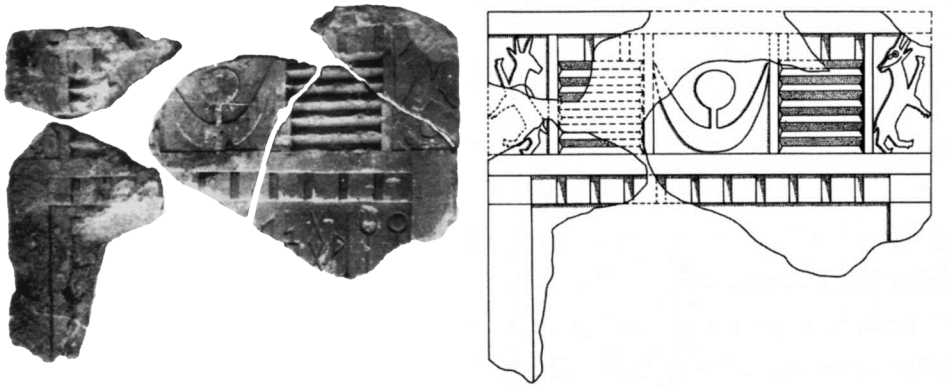
Fig. 1: pedestal with ibex (Musée de Mukallā 219)



Figs. 2-3: dedicatory stela (Rb XIV/87 no. 98)

Fig. 4: Hamilton 8

Fig. 5: KR 2