



Herbert Niehr

Professor Dr. University of Tübingen (Germany), Stellenbosch University (South Africa)

7. NORTHERN ARABIA

Herbert Niehr

1. *The Cultural Influence of Aramaeans in Northern Arabia*¹

At various sites in northern Arabia, there are clear signs of the cultural influence the Aramaeans exerted on the language and religion of that region.

Fundamental to these cultural contacts were trade connections that existed between northern Arabia, Syria, and Mesopotamia. Cuneiform inscriptions from the 9th century B.C. onward document these trade relations especially well.² There were also continued attempts by Mesopotamian rulers to gain military dominance over northern Arabia. Sources tell of the capture of Duma (modern al-Ğawf), an oasis town in northern Arabia, by King Sennacherib (704–681 B.C.) in 691 B.C.³ After his victory, Sennacherib not only had the royal family deported to Ashur but the city's gods as well. His successor, Esarhaddon (681–669 B.C.), had the divine statues returned to Duma.⁴ King Ashurbanipal (669–627 B.C.), who succeeded his father Esarhaddon, also led campaigns against the Arab tribes as his grandfather had done before.⁵

The Old Eastern Aramaic language must have arrived in northern Arabia, at the latest, with the Babylonian ruler Nabonidus (555–539 B.C.), who went on to spend ten years in Tayma. Mention must also be made of the use of Aramaic by the north Arabian rulers of Qedar during the 5th century B.C.⁶ Even more recent are Aramaic attestations in the Gulf region in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula.⁷

As far as religion is concerned, there is a definite Aramaean inheritance visible in the gods Attaršamayin⁸ and Ba'alšamayin.⁹ The royal name Haza'il also stems from Aramaic.¹⁰ Furthermore, the personal name

¹ I would like to thank my colleague Wolfgang Röllig (Tübingen) for reviewing and discussing this article, and Jessica Baldwin (Tübingen) for the English translation.

² For an overview, see Eph'al 1982: 21–59 and Retsö 2003: 119–211.

³ See Eph'al 1982: 41; Retsö 2003: 154f, 158; Potts 2010: 75.

⁴ See Knauf ²1989: 81–88; Retsö 2003: 158f; Potts 2010: 75.

⁵ Cf. Gerardi 1992 and Retsö 2003: 161–171.

⁶ Lemaire 1995c: 70f; on the dating, cf. *ibid.*: 68–70.

⁷ See Potts 1983; Puech 1998; Healey – Bin Seray 1999–2000; Healey 2000.

⁸ See Knauf ²1989: 81–84.

⁹ See Niehr 2003: 281–302.

¹⁰ See Retsö 2003: 154f, 158–161.

rmnntn (“Ramman has given”) is found in inscriptions (CIS II 117) from the region of Tayma. The theophoric element “Ramman” is an epithet of the god Hadad of Damascus.¹¹

The most prolific sources of Aramaean cultural influence in northern Arabia originate from the oasis town of Tayma. This town shall be described in detail below.

2. *Tayma and the Aramaeans*

Geography, nature, history, trade, and politics integrated the north Arabian oasis town of Tayma and its hinterland¹² into a web of international relations.

It was connected to Syria in the northeast via Duma and Wadi Sirhan. Contact to southern Mesopotamia was established via Thaj on the Persian Gulf. The Incense Route passing by Tayma to the west near Heġra provided contact with the north. It led via Petra to Gaza, joining in Petra with the King’s Highway, which continued on to Damascus.

The western route to Egypt was also important. One was able to reach the seaport of Leuke Kome by way of Heġra, from which it was possible to cross the Red Sea and thus enter Egypt. The Nile River then provided the main route to Upper and Lower Egypt.¹³ The importance of Tayma lay in its function as oasis town and trading post along this very important route from west to east.¹⁴

Despite numerous claims, cultural contact between Tayma and Anatolia has not been proven.¹⁵

Especially important, though, are the contacts between Tayma and Mesopotamia.¹⁶ The earliest mentions of Tayma in Mesopotamian sources date to the beginning of the 8th century B.C. Several members of a caravan

¹¹ Cf. Greenfield 1976 and Schwemer 2001: 623–625.

¹² Regarding the topography and history of this oasis town, cf. Bawden – Edens – Miller 1980: 69–81; Edens – Bawden 1989: 52–76; MacDonald 1995: 1361, 1362–1368; Hausleiter 2010: 223–239.

¹³ Cf. the map in Grohmann 1963: fig. 1 and the illustration of northern Arabia in Wenning 1987: 112–125; Edens – Bawden 1989: 84–93; MacDonald 1995.

¹⁴ See Edens – Bawden 1989.

¹⁵ The mention of Tayma script in the Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription of Prince Regent Yariri from Carchemish, dating to 800 B.C., refers to an Aramaean tribe and thus to Aramaean script in northern Mesopotamia and not to Tayma in northern Arabia. The inscription KARKAMIŠ A15b in Hawkins 2000: 130–133; regarding its interpretation, cf. Starke 1997a: 389–392; Hawkins 2000: 133; Rollinger 2006: 77f.

¹⁶ Cf. especially Potts 1991; Beaulieu 1989: 178–180; Hausleiter 2010: 220f.

from Tayma to Saba were arrested somewhere in the Middle Euphrates region when they refused to pay tribute.¹⁷ Inscriptions of King Tiglath-Pileser III (745–727 B.C.) mention tribute coming from Tayma that included gold, silver, camels, and spices.¹⁸ Tribute from Tayma is also attested for the year 691 B.C. during King Sennacherib's (704–681 B.C.) reign.¹⁹

Much more substantial, historically speaking, are the Aramaeans, or, more precisely, the influence the Aramaeans in Syria had on northern Arabia from the 6th century B.C. onward, that is, from the time the Babylonian king Nabonidus (555–539 B.C.) resided in Tayma. He had crushed an anti-Babylonian insurgence in the Ammonite region²⁰ and moved further south to Edom, where he had himself depicted on a rock relief at Sela', about 50 km north of Petra, worshipping the gods Sin, Šamaš, and Ištar. This relief commemorated his presence in that region.²¹ From there, not later from Babylonia,²² Nabonidus must have immediately traveled onward to Tayma.²³

The motives for Nabonidus' extended stay in Tayma seem to be clear. On the one hand, they lie with his religious beliefs and the internal, religious, and political tensions resulting from those beliefs in Babylonia and the surrounding region.²⁴ On the other, they are rooted in the substantial economic interest Babylonia had in consolidating the caravan routes of Arabia under its own auspices.²⁵ These two reasons augment each other well.²⁶

King Nabonidus remained in Tayma for ten years (about 552–542 B.C.). During this ten-year absence, his son Belshazzar ruled as his proxy.²⁷ Nabonidus' stay in Tayma is mentioned in Babylonian sources from

¹⁷ Cf. Cavigneaux – Ismail 1990: 339, 346, 351.

¹⁸ Cf. the summary inscriptions 4 27'–33' and 7, 3'–5' in Tadmor 1994: 142f, 168f.

¹⁹ Regarding inscription T 13 VII, 37', cf. Frahm 1997: 93, 95.

²⁰ Cf. Lipiński 2006: 315.

²¹ See Dalley – Goguel 1997; Zayadine 1999; Schaudig 2001: 544; Wartke 2004; Crowell 2007: 80–83. See also the cuneiform tablet from Tell Tawilan/Harran, dating to 521/520 B.C., reporting that two inhabitants of Harran sold livestock to an Edomite; cf. Dalley 1984: 19–22 and the picture in Rautenstrauch – Joest – Museum 1987: 178 no. 196.

²² Cf. the consideration in Knauf 1989: 75 and Wartke 2004: 130.

²³ So Eph'al 1982: 185–188; Dalley – Goguel 1997: 174; Zayadine 1999: 88; Crowell 2007: 78–80, 83–85; Hausleiter 2010: 220; Weippert 2010: 434.

²⁴ Cf. Lambert 1972: 60–62; Dandamayev 1998–2001: 10; Beaulieu 1989: 183–185; Weippert 2010: 435.

²⁵ Cf. Röllig 1964a: 246–252; Beaulieu 1989: 178–183; Müller – al Said 2002: 115f; Hausleiter 2010: 220f.

²⁶ Cf. Röllig 1964a: 252; Bawdens – Edens – Miller 1980: 72; Beaulieu 1989: 178; d'Agostino 1994: 97–108; Schaudig 2001: 19.

²⁷ Beaulieu 1989: 154–160, 185–203.

Mesopotamia (Harran-Stele, Verse Account of Nabonidus, Babylonian Chronicles),²⁸ in sources from Tayma and the surrounding region,²⁹ as well as in an Aramaic text from Qumran (Prayer of Nabonidus).³⁰ Added to these textual mentions is the upper part of a stele from Tayma showing Nabonidus before Sin, Šamaš, and Ištar, its inscription almost illegible,³¹ and an inscribed plinth of Nabonidus.³² In 2009, the fragment of a cuneiform inscription was found with a mention of Nabonidus.³³ As yet, no architectural remains from the time of Nabonidus have been found at Tayma.³⁴ An iconographic remain of Nabonidus' stay in Tayma is a rock drawing of a horseman in Neo-Assyrian style.³⁵

3. Aramaic Inscriptions from Tayma and Vicinity

It remains unanswered at what point the Aramaic language and script were introduced to Tayma. Considered possible, it could have been during Nabonidus' time,³⁶ but all known Aramaic inscriptions from that region date to the end of the 5th century B.C. and are thus not directly connected to Nabonidus' stay in Tayma.³⁷ For more precise information we must await the results of ongoing archaeological excavations at Tayma and the possible epigraphic finds that they may uncover.

The epigraphic exploration of Tayma is closely connected to the expeditions Charles Huber and Julius Euting undertook to Arabia in 1884 and 1885. During their stay in Tayma they rediscovered the so-called "Tayma Stone," which Huber had already found in 1880. At the time of its rediscovery, the large stele with its important Aramaic inscription (CIS II 113 = KAI 228) was used as spolia in a local building. Today it

²⁸ Cf. Röllig 1964a; Lambert 1972: 53–60; Grayson 1975 = 2000: 104–111; Eph'al 1982: 179–182; Beaulieu 1989: 149–174; d'Agostino 1994: 53–59; Crowell 2007: 78–80; Schaudig 2001: 335–449, 563–578; Eichmann – Schaudig – Hausleiter 2006; Weippert 2010: 440–449 nos. 268–270.

²⁹ Cf. Eph'al 1982: 182–185; Beaulieu 1989: 174–178; Hayajneh 2001; Müller – al Said 2001; iid. 2002; Livingstone 2005; al-Said 2009; Weippert 2010: 435.

³⁰ Regarding 4QOrNab, edited by Collins 1996, see below, section 5.

³¹ Cf. Eichmann – Schaudig – Hausleiter 2006; Hausleiter 2010: 233; Hausleiter – Schaudig 2010a.

³² Cf. Hausleiter – Schaudig 2010b.

³³ Cf. Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (ed.) 2010: 277f with fig. 13.

³⁴ Cf. Hausleiter 2010: 233.

³⁵ Cf. Jacobs – Macdonald 2009.

³⁶ E.g., Altheim – Stiehl 1973: 248.

³⁷ So Lemaire 1995c: 70f and id. 2006a: 182f.

is on exhibition at the Louvre (AO 1505), together with smaller Aramaic inscriptions³⁸ found by Huber and Euting.

As of 2010, there have been several different compilations of the Tayma Aramaic inscriptions, notably by R. Degen,³⁹ A. Livingstone,⁴⁰ K. Beyer, and A. Livingstone,⁴¹ A. Lemaire,⁴² as well as F. Briquel-Chatonnet and Chr. Robin.⁴³

4. Religion

Based on epigraphic and archaeological finds, three areas can be distinguished in the religion practiced at Tayma. They are the pantheon, temples and cultic activity, and burial practices.

4.1 *Aramaeian Deities in Tayma*

Several Aramaean deities have been recognized at Tayma. Their identification is sometimes controversial since further context, especially mythological background information, is lacking.

Ṣalm, Ṣengala', and Ašima' appear as the principal deities in inscriptions and iconography at Tayma. The interpretation that these three gods are in fact the gods in question, results, for lack of other more definite sources, from the etymology of their names and is, therefore, uncertain in some cases. The following points may illuminate the state of discussion regarding their identification.

Ṣalm definitively occupies the highest position among the Aramaean deities at Tayma. At what point his cult was introduced is much debated among researchers. Possibilities range from the 8th century B.C.⁴⁴ and later dates.⁴⁵ In comparison with the divine names Ṣengala' and Ašima' it is apparent that the name Ṣalm is written without a determinative. Since this deity is also connected with several place names in the region of the Arabian Peninsula (see below) it becomes evident that he does not originate with the Aramaean culture but belongs to northern Arabia.

³⁸ Cf. Briquel-Chatonnet – Robin 1997: 261 with bibliography, also add Euting 1914: 157–161.

³⁹ Degen 1974.

⁴⁰ Livingstone, in: Livingstone – Spaie – Ibrahim – Kamal – Taimani 1983: 104–111 and id. 2005.

⁴¹ Beyer – Livingstone 1987.

⁴² Lemaire 1995c.

⁴³ Briquel-Chatonnet – Robin 1997.

⁴⁴ E.g., Maraqten 1996: 20.

⁴⁵ Cf. van den Branden 1949: 108 who pleads in favor of the 6th or 5th century B.C.

In research, *Ṣalm* has received several interpretations. While the etymological meaning (“picture”) of the divine name is clear, the inscriptions remain vague as to whose picture is referred to by the divine name. Thus, suggestions range from the sun-god,⁴⁶ the moon-god,⁴⁷ the morning star,⁴⁸ or even a deified King Nabonidus.⁴⁹ It is not only because of iconographical considerations (see below) that the interpretation of the god *Ṣalm* as sun-god is most plausible.

Inscriptions offer different cultic manifestations of *Ṣalm*, *ṣlm zy rb*, *ṣlm zy hgm*, and *ṣlm zy mḥrm*.⁵⁰ In all of these cases, a place name is appended to the divine name and signifies a major temple of *Ṣalm*. Therefore, these names should be understood as *Ṣalm* of Rb, *Ṣalm* of Hgm, and *Ṣalm* of Mḥrm. In the last two cases the place names might even be known.⁵¹

Another source for the religion of Tayma worth mentioning is personal names with a theophoric element *Ṣalm* from Tayma and its vicinity as well as the analyses conducted with this corpus.⁵²

The great Aramaic inscription (CIS II 113 = KAI 228) reports on the introduction of the god *Ṣalm* of Hgm to Tayma:⁵³

1. (On the ...) in the 22nd year of ... (the king)
2. *Ṣalm* [of Mḥrm and Ṣengala’
3. and Aš]ima’, the gods of Tayma (gave entrance into Tayma) to *Ṣalm*
4. [of Hgm. Therefore] they have appointed him this day (a place) in Tayma
5. ... which
- 6.–7. *Missing*
8. ... Therefore ... [this monument],

⁴⁶ Hehn 1913: 130; id. 1915: 40; Gibson 1975: 150; Dalley 1985; ead. 1986; Beyer – Livingstone 1987: 287f; Beaulieu 1989: 177; Maraqtén 1996: 19, 27. According to Lemaire 1995c: 69 it is an “interprétation ... incertaine.”

⁴⁷ Teixidor 1977: 74f; Aggoula 1985b: 71f; Knauf ²1989: 79; Novák 2001: 448–451; id. 2005a: 256.

⁴⁸ Cross 1986: 392f.

⁴⁹ On the discussion, cf. Winnett – Reed 1970: 92f; Harding 1971: 451; Beaulieu 1989: 176f; Knauf ²1989: 78f; Maraqtén 1996: 19; Hayajneh 2009: 65.

⁵⁰ Cf. the instances in Maraqtén 1996: 20.

⁵¹ For Mḥrm a town located 300 km to the east of Tayma is suggested, for Hgm a town in Yemen; cf. Gibson 1975: 150 and Maraqtén 1996: 20.

⁵² Cf. the overview in Winnett – Reed 1970: 90 n. 19; Harding 1971: 358, 374f; Dalley 1986: 96f; Maraqtén 1996: 19–21.

⁵³ Translation after Gibson 1975: 150; on the translation, cf. also Euting 1914: 160; Donner – Röllig ³1973: 278–280; Teixidor 1977: 71f; Aggoula 1985b: 61–65; Beaulieu 1989: 176–178; Briquel-Chatonnet – Robin 1997: 261–263.

9. which Šlmšzb, son of Pṭsry, [has set] up
10. [in the temple of Š]alm of Hgm. Therefore the gods
11. of Tayma have dealt [gene]rously with Šlmšzb, son of Pṭsry,
12. and with his seed, in the temple of Šalm of Hgm. If any man
13. harms this monument, let the gods of Tayma
14. remove him and his seed and his posterity from
15. Tayma. This is the grant which
16. Šalm of Mḥrm and Šengala' and Ašima',
17. the gods of Tayma, shall [give] to Šalm of Hgm, namely
18. from the (temple) estates 16 palms and from the property
19. of the king 5 palms, making
20. 21 palms in all, year by year. Neither gods nor men
21. shall ej[ect] Šlmšzb, son of Pṭsry,
22. from this temple, or his se[ed o]f his posterity,
23. priests in this [te]mple for ev[er].

According to the inscription the god Šalm of Hgm is brought to Tayma with the approval of the old local deities Šalm of Mḥrm, Šengala', and Ašima', and a new cult is established for him there. In other Tayma inscriptions both rejection and approval of the god Šalm are visible. The latter is exemplified by the use of *šlm* as a theophoric element in personal names.⁵⁴ The priest Šlmšzb is given twenty-one palms for his own livelihood and the assurance that he and his descendants will forever remain priests in this temple.

Šlmšzb is depicted on the narrow left side of the stele in an *orante* posture in front of a bucranium on an altar. Beneath the image is the inscription *šlmšzb kmr'* ("Šlmzšb, priest").

The god Šengala' was also interpreted differently by researchers. Due to differing etymologies, he is identified either as the great moon-god,⁵⁵ the moon-god of the palace,⁵⁶ the queen,⁵⁷ the Esangil,⁵⁸ or as a combination of the gods Sin and Ningal.⁵⁹ Fundamentally, though, he is the moon-god, as the iconography (see below) also documents.

⁵⁴ Cf. Roschinski 1981: 51; Maraqtén 1996: 21f; Hayajneh 2009.

⁵⁵ Maraqtén 1996: 27 and Lemaire 1995c: 69 n. 52.

⁵⁶ Lipiński 1975a: 98f and Novák 2001: 449.

⁵⁷ Caquot 1951–1952: 58.

⁵⁸ Tallquist 1905: 60, 180 and Knauf ²1989: 151.

⁵⁹ Leemhuis 1982: 54 n. 34.

Ašima' is already documented in Syria from the 8th century onward. According to the Old Testament, Ašima' is the god of the Aramaean population that was deported from Hamath to Samerina (2 Kgs 17: 30). This god is best documented in the Judeo-Aramaean documents from Elephantine in Upper Egypt. Ašima' occurs there in comparatively close connection with the god Yahu and also appears as Ašim-Bethel.⁶⁰ In the Tayma context, he is identified with Venus.⁶¹

There are several possibilities on how Ašima', a god originally from Hamath, made his way to Tayma. For one, trade or cultural contacts between the two cities could have facilitated the exchange.⁶² It is also possible that the deportation of Arab tribes to Samaria by Sargon II (721–705 B.C.) was responsible.⁶³ One also cannot rule out the possibility that, since direct contact was maintained with Egypt,⁶⁴ Ašima' was passed to Tayma via Aramaeans living in Egypt.

The mention of deities in the Aramaic inscriptions gives a glimpse into the structure of the Aramaean pantheon at Tayma. The sequence of Šalm, Šengala', and Ašima' remains constant. Two conclusions may be drawn from this. First, Šalm is the principal god of the Tayma pantheon and based on later Thamudic inscriptions he is the "Schutzherr und Repräsentant der Stadtoase."⁶⁵ Second, Šengala' and Ašima' are not his partners. They are placed lower in the divine hierarchy of Tayma. This is substantiated by the inscription reporting on the construction of thrones for Šengala' and Ašima' before Šalm.⁶⁶ It is also evident that these three gods do not constitute the entire pantheon of Tayma.

The iconographic representation shows Šalm as sun-god. This motif is found on the narrow left side of the Tayma Stone, where above the depiction of a priest, a king is shown standing beneath a winged solar disk.⁶⁷ Below them is the above-mentioned cultic scene with a bucranium on

⁶⁰ On Ašima' cf. van der Toorn 1992: 86; Cogan ²1999b; Niehr 2003: 191–195; Merlo 2009.

⁶¹ Beyer – Livingstone 1987: 287 and Maraqtan 1996: 27.

⁶² Cogan ²1999b: 105. Regarding the discussion on northern Arabian personal names attested at Hamath, cf. Otzen 1990: 280f, 286f.

⁶³ The textual references from the Nimrud Prism DE IV, lines 37–49, is found in Gadd 1954: 179f; those from the cylinder inscription from Chorsabad, line 20, and the annals, lines 120–123, in Fuchs 1994: 34, 290, resp. 110, 320; cf. also Aggoula 1985b: 70; Cross 1986: 393; Lemaire 1995c: 70; Retsö 2003: 147–150; Weippert 2010: 301f no. 151 and 305f no. 158.

⁶⁴ See note 13, above.

⁶⁵ Roschinski 1981: 51.

⁶⁶ See below, section 4.2.

⁶⁷ Also Rashid 1974: 158f and Novák 2001: 449.

an altar. The bucranium, in this instance, represents the newly inducted god *Ṣalm* of Hgm.

The close connection between winged sun disk and bucranium becomes clear when one recalls the uninscribed pedestal found at the so-called Qaṣr al-Ḥamra near Tayma in 1979. It dates to the 5th or the 4th century B.C. and shows the god *Ṣalm* as a bull with a sun disk between his horns.⁶⁸

As an explanation of the representation, it is convenient to refer to Egyptian influence and interpret the bull as an Apis bull. In favor of this interpretation, one can point to the Eye of Horus on the stele, and Pṭsry, the Egyptian name of *Ṣlmšzb*'s father.⁶⁹ This interpretation is undermined by several arguments. On the one hand, the solar disk above the supposed Apis bull is lacking, and on the other hand, the Uraeus snake and the Apis theology itself played no part in Tayma. Furthermore, the composition of the stele is based on Syro-Mesopotamian principles in which an Apis bull would simply not fit.⁷⁰ A Syrian interpretation of the iconography would fit well, though, as it also has the added advantage of the Syrian provenance of the Tayma gods.

This bull is a symbolic representation of the Syrian storm-god,⁷¹ which in this case has been transformed into a solar deity. This makes the connection between *Ṣalm* as winged sun in the sky and *Ṣalm* as principal deity in the guise of the storm-god. Compare to the solar conversion of the storm-god's bull the representation of the storm-god as a lunar deity on a stele from Betsaida and other locations.⁷² The bull from Tayma does not represent, as is frequently assumed, the moon-god.⁷³

Furthermore, the god *Ṣengala*' is depicted as the moon-god and *Ašima*' as an eight-pointed star on the pedestal from Tayma. Consequently, the Tayma triad covers the entire course of the day, the sun-god for daytime, Venus for the evening and morning, and the moon for night time.

The pre-eminence of the god *Ṣalm* is also visible in the epigraphic and iconographic record on the stele from Qaṣr al-Ḥamra (see section 4.2). It depicts in its upper register the sun-god and in the one below, the moon, and Venus as a star. The pictorial representations agree well with the

⁶⁸ Cf. Dalley 1986: 87 fig. 2; Beaulieu 1989: 175f; Hausleiter – Schaudig 2010c.

⁶⁹ Dalley 1986: 86–88.

⁷⁰ Rashid 1974: 155–160 and Novák 2001: 450.

⁷¹ Cf. Vanel 1965: 31–41, 58–63 and Ornan 2001.

⁷² See Niehr 2010a: 306f.

⁷³ For example Winnett – Reed 1970: 93, 100–104; Bawden – Edens – Miller 1980: 83f; Novák 2001: 448–451.

inscription, which reports that the donor of the stele had erected thrones for Ašima' and Šengala' before Šalm.⁷⁴

4.2 *Temples and Cults*

In excavation area E in the center of Tayma archaeologists uncovered a large building identified as a temple.⁷⁵ In 2004, a stele was found next to it, which names King Nabonidus and shows him worshipping the celestial gods Šamaš, Sin, and Ištar.⁷⁶

Two kilometers away, in Qašr al-Ḥamra,⁷⁷ remains of another sanctuary were found in 1979. Included were offering tables, ash residue, and remains of bones, the aforementioned cultic pedestal, and a stele with a relief and with an inscription of ten lines.⁷⁸

According to this inscription a throne (*mytb*) is built for the gods Šengala' and Ašima' before the god Šalm of Rb:

1. [Stele which in the temple] of Tayma
2. set up Pšgw šhdw, son of
3. [M]alky, for life. He made an offering in the temple
4. to Šalm of Rb; and as to his pedestal, thus
5. he set up this throne in front of
6. Šalm of Rb as the pedestal of Šengala'
7. and Ašima', the gods of Tayma
8. for the life of the soul of Pšgw
9. šhdw and his seed. May the lord [..]
10. [.] his soul. Of [...]⁷⁹

In the great inscription (CIS II 113 = KAI 228) the cult of the god Šalm of Hgm was brought to Tayma with the approval of the god Šalm of Mḥrb. One further god is mentioned, the god Šalm of Rb.

⁷⁴ Cf. Kottsieper 2001: 187.

⁷⁵ Cf. Hausleiter 2010: 227 fig 4; 233.

⁷⁶ See note 31.

⁷⁷ On the archaeology of Qašr-al Ḥamra, cf. Bawden – Edens – Miller 1980: 79, 82–85; Abu Duruk – Murad 1985; Abu Duruk 1986; Hausleiter 2010: 233f with fig. 10.

⁷⁸ On the inscription and its translations, cf. Livingstone in: Livingstone – Spaie – Ibrahim – Kamal – Taimani 1983: 108–111; Aggoula 1985b: 66–68; Cross 1986: 388f; Beyer – Livingstone 1987: 286–288; MacDonald 1995: 1361; Kottsieper 2001: 187–189; Hausleiter – Schaudig 2010d.

⁷⁹ Text and translation according to Livingstone in: Livingstone – Spaie – Ibrahim – Kamal – Taimani 1983: 109.

The inscription CIS II 114 (= KAI 229) also reports on the donation of a *mytb* to Ṣalm.⁸⁰ A *mytb* is a throne or cultic pedestal for the deposition of a betyl. Mentions of *mytb* donations are attested especially in the Nabataean religion.⁸¹

4.3 *Burial and Afterlife*

This chapter will not discuss the tombs and necropoleis of Tayma⁸² but will focus on the Aramaic inscriptions on the funerary monuments. These inscriptions reveal the use of the Aramaic term *npš* in the sense of “spirit of the dead.” All twelve inscriptions on the monuments, which were also accompanied by a schematic rendering of a face, follow the same model: *npš* of PN, son/daughter of PN and sometimes a further filiation.⁸³ This combination of a *npš*-stele and schematic face is typical for Tayma and unique in this regard. Looking for the background on this particular combination one finds the stele of Kuttamuwa from Sam’al dating to the second half of the 8th century B.C.⁸⁴ This stele shows the deceased at his funeral banquet and for the first time in West Semitic epigraphy the designation of the stele as *npš* occurs.⁸⁵

One specimen of the funerary monuments from Tayma shows on its upper register a face and on its lower a funeral banquet.⁸⁶

Furthermore, an export of these types of funerary monuments to south Arabia can be established. There the heads of the deceased, modeled in alabaster, were set into the funerary stelae on which their names were recorded. Most of these stelae date to between the 3rd century B.C. and the 1st century A.D.⁸⁷

However, evidence on the use of *npš* in the sense of “funerary monument” cannot be found in the inscription CIS II 115 (= KAI 230) from Tayma.⁸⁸ It is rather the last line of an originally much longer inscription,

⁸⁰ Inscription found in Livingstone in: Livingstone – Spaie – Ibrahim – Kamal – Taimani 1983: 111.

⁸¹ Cf. Healey 2001: 158f.

⁸² Cf. Hausleiter 2010: 230–233.

⁸³ Cf. Kühn 2005: 137f.

⁸⁴ Cf. section 3.6 in H. Niehr’s article on religion in this volume.

⁸⁵ On the important attestations of *npš* in Nabataean epigraphy, cf. Kühn 2005: 101–282.

⁸⁶ Cf. Knauf 1989: XII fig. 6.

⁸⁷ For an archaeological overview, cf. Antonini 2001: 127–173 and on the concept, cf. Kühn 2005: 157–162.

⁸⁸ Contra, e.g., CIS II 115; Donner – Röllig 1973: 281; Briquel-Chatonnet – Robin 1997: 264 no. 203.

which must be completed by: [... *lhyy*] *npš 'ln brt šb'[n]* (“[for the life] of the spirit of ‘ln, daughter of Šb'[n]”).⁸⁹

The installation site of these *npš*-stelae must be on top of the tombs at Tayma, even though only two stelae were found in situ by regular archaeological excavations.⁹⁰

5. Perspectives

A papyrus was found in Cave 4 at Qumran, which, paleographically, dates to the second quarter or the middle of the 1st century B.C. The surviving four fragments of the Aramaic text contain about 13 lines of the so-called “Prayer of Nabonidus” (4QOrNab). The text recounts that when Nabonidus suffered from boils for seven years while in Teman (the southern lands) and all other healing methods failed, an exiled Judaeen finally cured him.⁹¹ The mention of ‘Teman’ is based either on an error, on an identification with Teman from the Old Testament,⁹² or possibly an extension of the place name ‘Tayma’.⁹³

The Prayer of Nabonidus also affects the interpretation of the Old Testament. After the publication of 4QOrNab, there was no denying the previously stated opinions that the textual passage about the fate of King Nebuchadnezzar in the Book of Daniel (Dan 3: 31–4: 34) was based on King Nabonidus and his extended stay at Tayma.⁹⁴

The “boils” that Nabonidus suffered from may have been an affliction such as leprosy. For the duration of such an illness, a king would have been unable to perform cultic activities or even, temporarily at least, to rule.⁹⁵ An example is the narrative of King Azariah of Judah, who became afflicted with leprosy and was required to live in a separate house until his death. During that time his son Jotham took over state affairs (2 Kgs 15: 1–5). The discrepancy between the seven-year stay of Nabonidus at

⁸⁹ Livingstone in: Livingstone – Spaie – Ibrahim – Kamal – Taimani 1983: 105 and Kühn 2005: 138 n. 167.

⁹⁰ Cf. Hausleiter 2010: 256.

⁹¹ See the text in Meyer 1962; Röllig 1964b; Collins 1996; Kratz 2011: 254–260. On the relevance of this text on the interpretation of the Book of Daniel, cf. Meyer 1962: 34–94; Dommershausen 1964; Collins 1996: 85–87; Koch 2005: 408–415; Lemaire 2010a: 126–129; Kratz 2011: 262–266.

⁹² Milik 1956: 410 n. 2.

⁹³ Meyer 1962: 21.

⁹⁴ For the research history, cf. Dommershausen 1964; Müller – al Said 2002: 117–119, and on the text from Daniel, cf. Koch 2005: 376–415.

⁹⁵ Cf. Röllig 1964b: 30 and Knauf 1989: 75.

Teman in contrast to his historically proven ten-year stay in Tayma has been explained by the seven-year-long construction period of the Temple at Jerusalem under Solomon (1 Kgs 6: 37–38), after which Nabonidus came to worship the one true God.⁹⁶ In general, one could also point to the importance of the heptad as the number of completion⁹⁷ or to a connection with the seven stages of the destruction of the world tree in Dan 3: 22–23.⁹⁸ The transfer of the Nabonidus material to Palestine has probably been made via the Jewish diaspora in Babylonia.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Cf. Lipiński 2006: 223.

⁹⁷ Cf. Dommershausen 1964: 72f; Röllig 1964b: 29; Beaulieu 1989: 153; Lemaire 2010a: 128.

⁹⁸ Cf. Meyer 1962: 45–48.

⁹⁹ Cf. Lemaire 2010a: 129, 134–138.