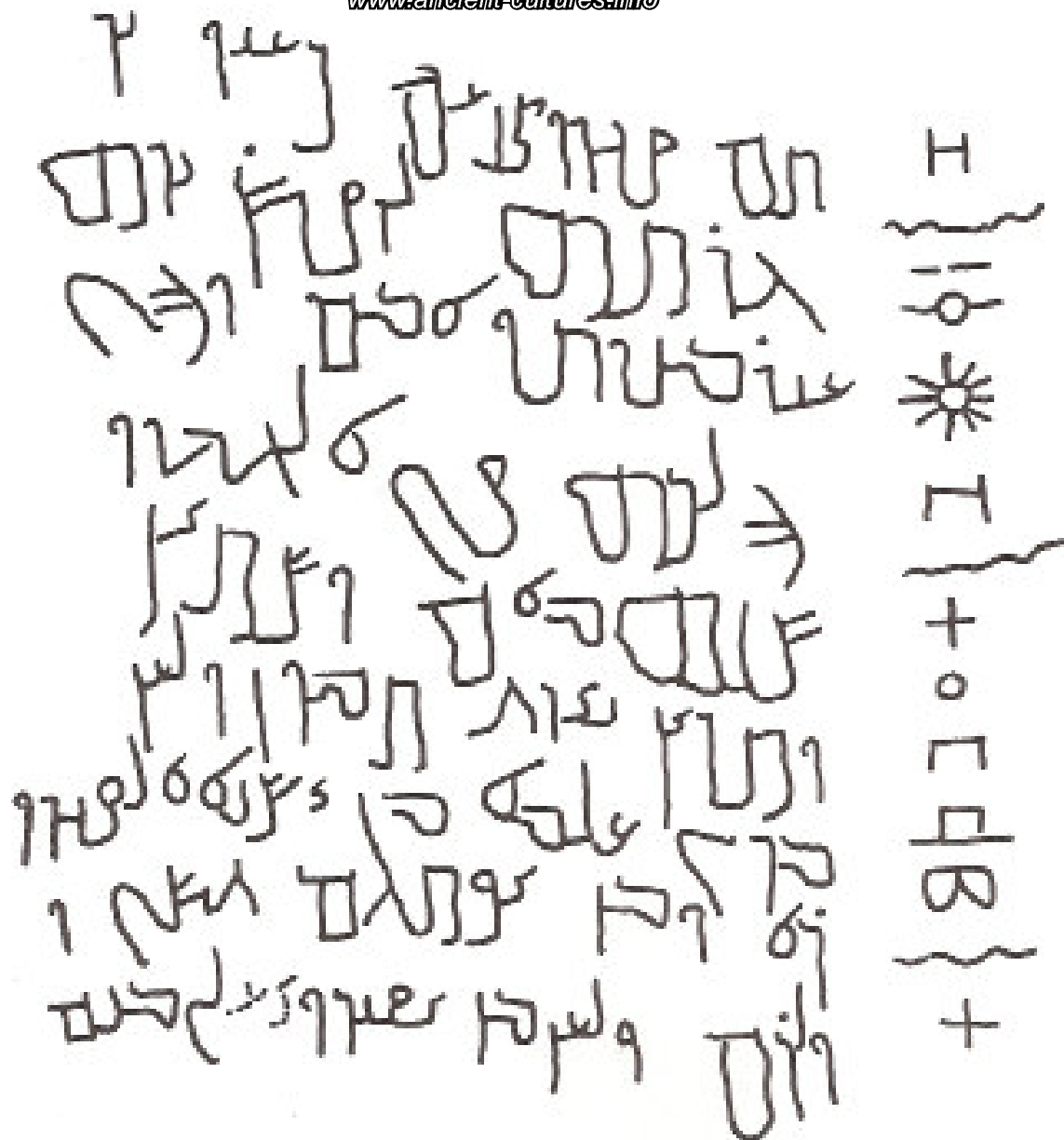


# Nabataean Script: The Basis of Arabian Writing

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**This is really a success story written by the least expected suspects in history, our little known Nabataeans.**

Arab nomads from the Nafud desert in Saudi Arabia are the true creators of our modern Arabic alphabet and were the first to write letters together, which is common standard today in most parts of the world, except in certain countries in Asia.

## Look at History

Let's take a step back and start at the beginning. About 2,200 years ago the first Nabataean script was carved into rock faces based on today's archeological

research results. To date over 4,000 Nabataean texts carved into rock were found across the Arabian Peninsula, on some Mediterranean islands and even in the capital of the Roman Empire in Italy.

Now imagine that Nabataeans developed a sophisticated script, but never recorded a detailed account of their history and successes, as many ancient cultures did, like Egyptians and nearly all Mesopotamian empires. What could explain the reason for this?

Well the answer is rather simple. Nabataeans were very secretive and did not keep any written record. This was their key

strategy to stay independent from other powers. The less they know the less probable they will attack and subject you. Their trade routes and locations of water filled cisterns along their desert caravan routes were kept as a trade secret and were disguised in tales only told from father to son.

## Religious Nature

All Nabataean rock inscriptions are therefore of religious nature. Over 80% of those found in their capital Petra are names of worshippers and devotion messages next to votive niches.

At temples and major ritual



Inscription at the "Niche Gorge" in Petra

sites numerous inscriptions incised by worshippers are found often grouped together to record their praying and respect paid to dedicated gods and goddesses.

One fact is little known, Nabataeans also used leather and papyrus as written medium, but only few fragments have survived and have been so far found.

#### **Aramaic Basis**

The Nabataean script is an offshoot of the Imperial Aramaic script, which is closer to western Aramaic dialects. Aramaic is part of the ancient Semitic language group, to which also belongs the Canaanean language with Hebrew and Phoenician as subgroups.

Aramaic was used throughout

the Near East and in parts of Persia as official language and for business purposes. Therefore the Nabataean script is also close to the Palmyrian script.

Not surprisingly Nabataeans used the Aramaic script for business only, but as language they spoke north Arabian dialects.

Remember they were excellent traders travelling between two world, Arabia Felix as Yemen was called by the Greeks at the time and where the incense was sourced and sold to the Egyptians, Greek and later Romans.

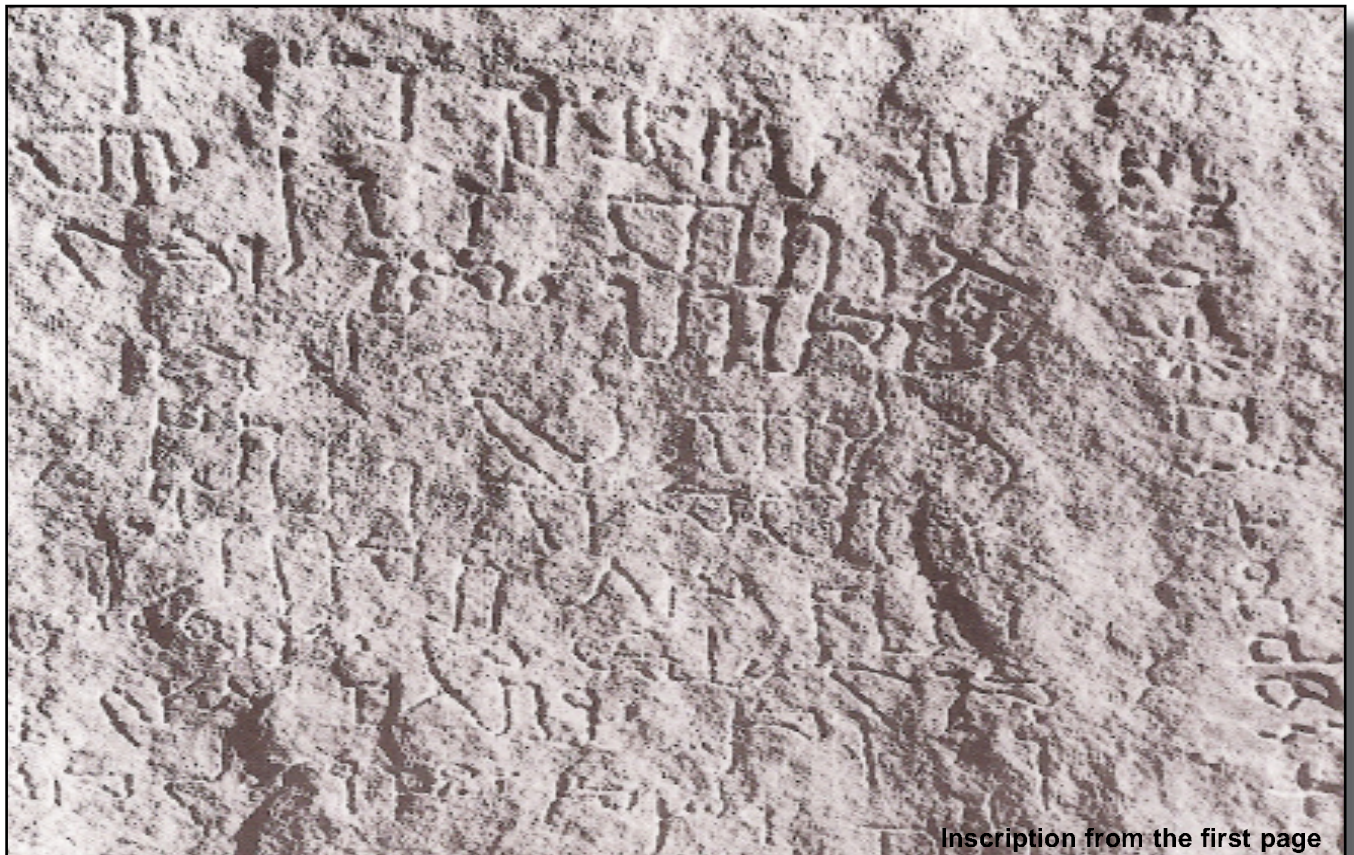
In one world Arabic language was necessary for survival and in the other Aramaic was the most helpful tool to do business.

#### **Nabataean Alphabet**

So the Nabataean alphabet was developed from Aramaic. First Nabataean letters were written straight, but slowly letters started to lean over. Nevertheless the Arabic influence was seen by the use of loan or imported words and changing the "l" and "n".

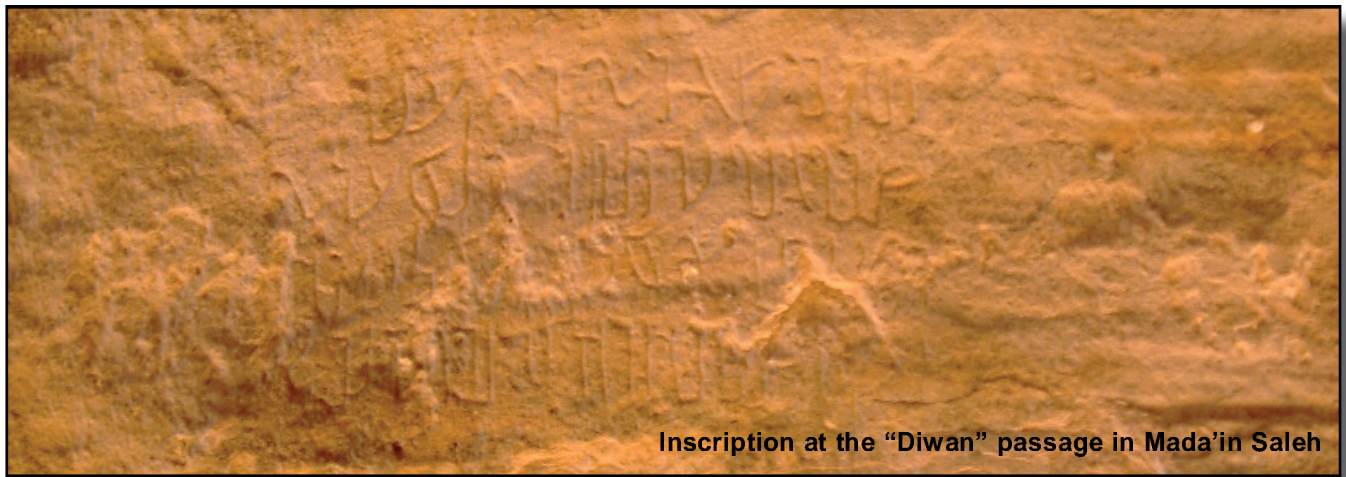
Nabataean script was written from right to left like Arabic. It consists of 22 consonants with inferred vowels sounds. The Arabic alphabet developed out of the cursive variants of Nabataean script by around 500AD and the language shifted seamlessly into Arabic after about 400AD.

At this point they were the first to write letters together.



Inscription from the first page





Inscription at the "Diwan" passage in Mada'in Saleh

It was German Professor Eduard Beer at the University in Leibzig, who first deciphered the Nabataean script 150 years ago. This is interesting when we consider that important inscriptions in both Nabataean and Greek script were carved on to the walls of the Rawwafa temple south west of Tabuk around 200AD by the Roman governor of Arabia. So there was an easy way, but this inscription was only discovered afterwards.

#### Nabataean Names

Archaeologists have learned a lot from Nabataean inscriptions. They have compared various devotional messages carved on rock surfaces to study the use of Nabataean names.

Since there are thousands of inscriptions, popular names could easily be established, as well as

names linked to profession, gods, events, and locations. The name "Paran" for example was given to people born in the town of Paran, an important Nabataean oasis in Sinai. "Adnun" is connected to the ancestors of this southern Arabian tribe. Names like "Amat", "Aphityu", "Hana", and "Zabin" were discovered to be actually the names of slaves.

In Sinai some names used were derived from Cain, such as "Ibn al Cain". Cain had a professional meaning such as smith or artisan, and can be compared with Genesis 4:22, where a man named "Tubalcain" was the master of all coppersmiths and blacksmiths.

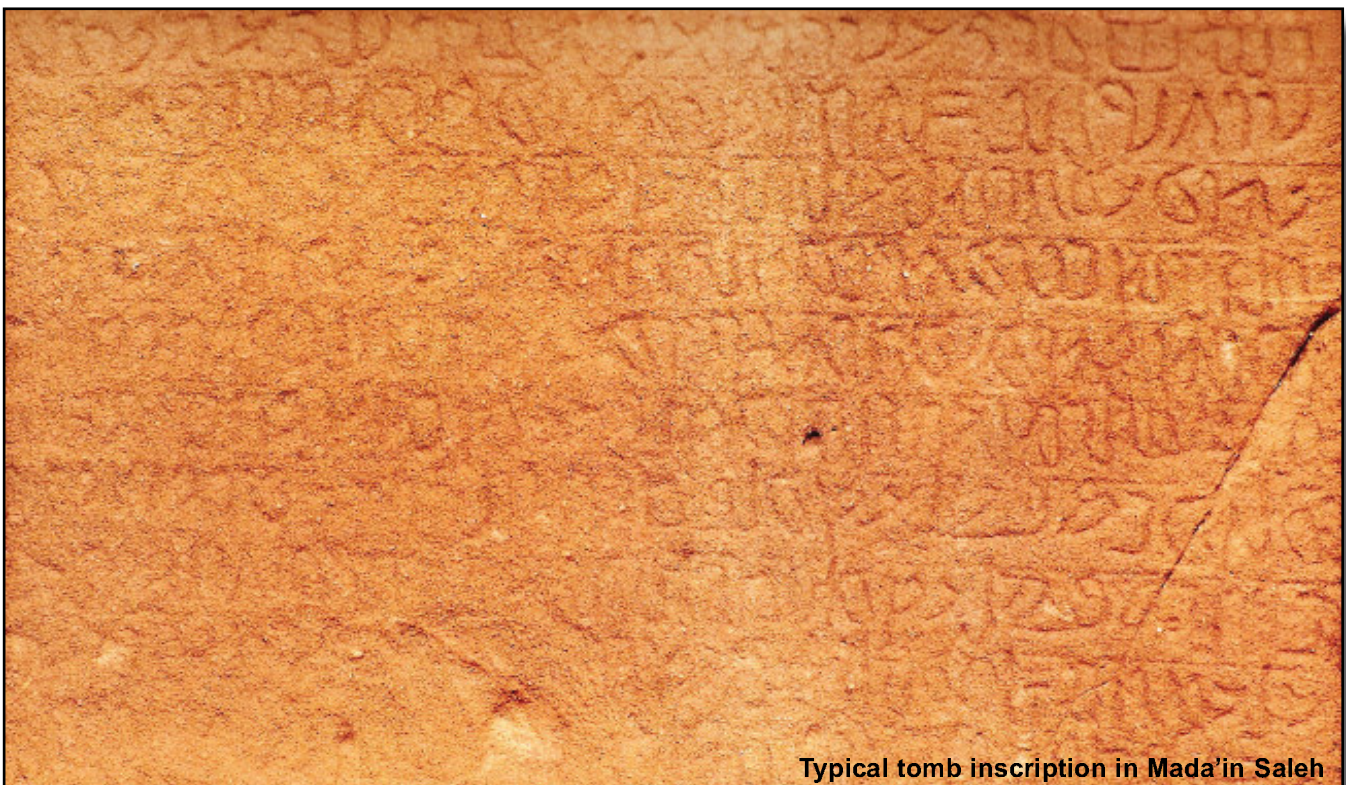
Numerous Nabataean inscriptions have been found in Wadi Nasb where copper was mined. There the name "Waqilu" is quite common, meaning steward, manager, or deputy. Many names

seem to denote the skill or class to which the person belonged. For instance "Nashgu" a common name representing weaver, and "Shumrahu" standing for a branch of a palm tree laden with dates, possibly indicating a farming profession.

There are also names related to deity Ba'al, such as "Ushba'al" meaning gift of Ba'al, "Garm'alba'ali" signifying Ba'al has decided, or "Thaim'alba'ali" indicating servant of Ba'al.

None of these composite names occur in any other Arabian languages. Some Ba'al names are also found in Petra, but mainly they were dominant in Sinai and were not used in other Nabataean regions.

Another ancient god was favoured for names such as "Wadal-el" meaning friend or lover of El,



Typical tomb inscription in Mada'in Saleh





**Tomb inscriptions are found on Mada'in Saleh tombs, Petra tombs do not have tomb inscriptions**

“Dani’el” signifying judged of El, or “Waqi’ha’el” indicating El protects.

Surprisingly the main Nabataean deity Dushara is not commonly used as name and only two examples were found - “Abd Dushara meaning slave of Dushara and “Tym-Dushara” indicating servant of Dushara.

One name “Rav’el” signifying that god El is great, was used only by two Nabataean kings, but never by any ordinary men. In contrast in other Arabian languages such as Safaitic, Thamudic, Himyarite, Qatabanic, Sabaic, and Palmyrene it is found quite often. In the Greek form it became Rabbelos.

As time progressed Nabataeans began using more and more Greek names, and slowly Nabataean names disappeared. This clearly demonstrates how Nabataeans adopted the Hellenistic culture.

### **Mada'in Salah Inscriptions**

This Nabataean city called in antiquity Hegra lies in the north of Saudi Arabia and offers the most

informative and long inscriptions. Different to Petra they were all carved above tomb entrances to declare ownership, burial rules and penalties if rules were broken.

In total there were over 20 inscriptions discovered at the Mada'in Salah site. Most were carved in Nabataean script, but some also used Imperial Aramaic, Aramaeo-Nabataean, Dedanic, Safaitic, Hismaic, Minaic, Semitic, Greek, Latin and various forms of Bedouin Thamudic script.

### **Hegra Tomb Rules**

Out of the over 130 monumental tombs in Mada'in Salah, some 34 tombs don inscriptions. At the beginning tombs had names of the deceased and the date of death recorded above the entrance. Later warnings with financial fines for misuse were added.

Let me quote here a nice translation example: *“...and whoever does not abide to the above shall be liable for the sum of one thousand Haretite coins of*

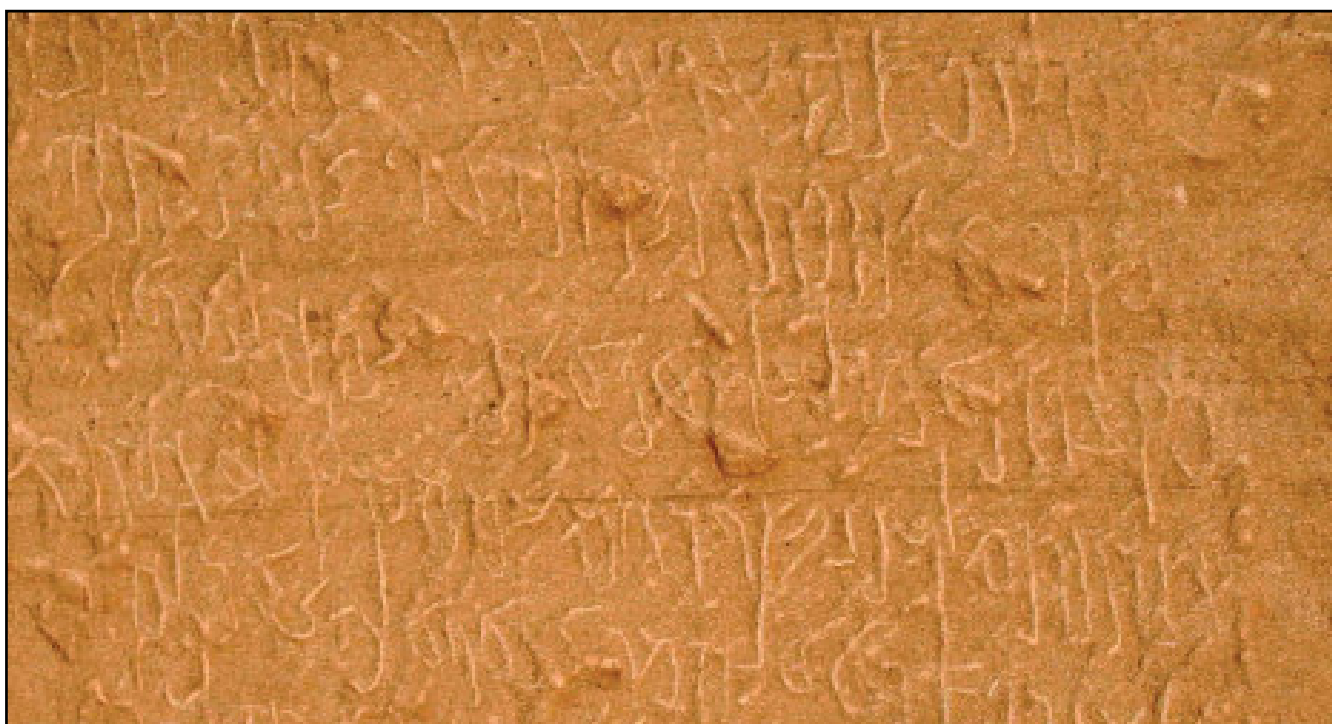
*the Sela type...”*.

Written rules also specified which part of the family was assigned a specific space in the tomb, as tomb chambers were spacious enough to house over 50 burials as found in one Mada'in Salah tomb.

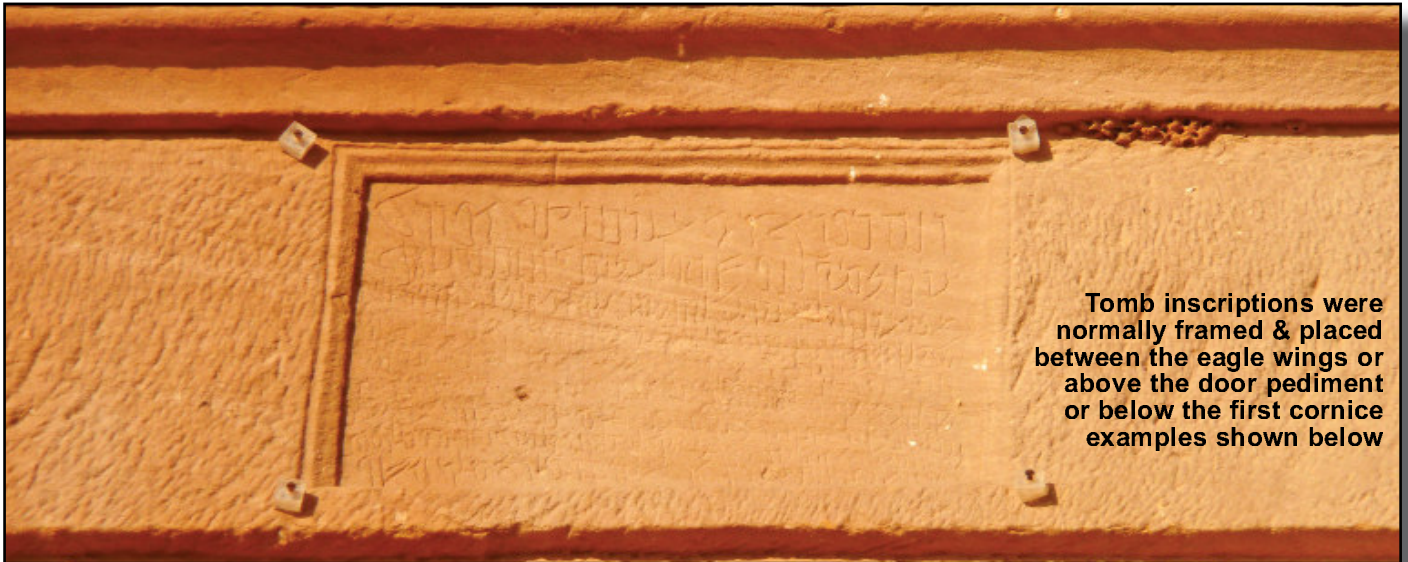
One text even mentioned that a copy of the tomb inscription was logged at the city temple, suggesting that priests had religious and legal status and executive powers, or acted as guardian of law similar to later Islamic scholars. In addition specific rules for the usage of tomb space were defined: *“...the female side of the family should not occupy the whole tomb...”*.

Some tombs were even built by women for themselves and their daughters. This strongly suggests that Nabataean women could run family clans and even become and act as female merchants and establish female inheritance lines.

### **English Translations**







Tomb inscriptions were normally framed & placed between the eagle wings or above the door pediment or below the first cornice examples shown below

*"...this tomb was built by Ka'ab ibn Harithah for his mother Raqash bint Abd Manat, who died in Hegra in July 162 AD, may the master of the world curse whoever detests this tomb or opens it, except for her son, and curse whoever changes what is on it..."*

This inscription is important because it was written in Nabataean script, but using pure Arabian text and language, which makes it unique. This proves a stronger Arabian cultural influence in Mada'in Salah compared to Petra.

There was also an added text to the left in Thamudic or Badiya *"...this is Raqash daughter of Abd Manat..."*. The style and text is very close to other texts found further south in Wadi Al-Arab between Madinah and Makkah and assumed to be added for clan members speaking and only understanding this language.

The following translation example shows how long certain Mada'in

Salah tomb inscriptions actually were:

*"This is the tomb which Hani'u son of Tafsa made for himself and for his children, his sons and daughters and for whoever produces in his hand a deed of entitlement from the hand of this Hani'u to the effect that he may be buried in this tomb, and let no stranger be buried in this tomb and let it not be sold nor any deed of gift or lease or deed of entitlement be drawn up, other than if this Hani'u writes it or this Hani'u or his legitimate heir after him buries in it whoever he wishes, and if anyone does other than this, he shall be liable to our lord in the sum of 1,000 Haretite selas in the month of Nisan the 40th year of Haretat King of the Nabataeans lover of his people. Huru the mason, son of Uhayu made it"*

#### Ancient Alphabet Tables

The table extract shown below should give you a basic idea of

the identification of Nabataean letters, which originated from the old Imperial Aramaic script. A new Sandladder article about all the different scripts and languages used on the Arabian Peninsula is in preparation. This article will cover Sabaic, Safaitic, Dedanic, Lihyanite, Taymaic and the various forms of Thamoudic.

#### Nabataean Script Translation

When Mada'in Salah inscriptions were more closely investigated by French Dominican priests Jaussen and Savignac during three visits in 1907, 1909 and 1910, they were the first to record various Nabataean inscription, two of which we use as an example below.

The first inscription has nine lines and is situated at the Qasr al Bint rock formation between tomb 40 and 42 and was translated by Healey in 2002. Please remember that the Nabataeans only used

ARAMIC 900 B.C.-272 A.D.	𐤀	𐤁	𐤂	𐤃	𐤄	𐤅	𐤆	𐤇	𐤈	𐤉	𐤊	𐤋	𐤌	𐤍	𐤎	𐤏	𐤐	𐤑	𐤒	𐤓	𐤔	𐤕	𐤖	𐤗	𐤘	𐤙	𐤚	𐤛	𐤜	𐤝	𐤞	𐤟	𐤠	𐤡	𐤢	𐤣	𐤤	𐤥	𐤦	𐤧	𐤨	𐤩	𐤪	𐤫	𐤬	𐤭	𐤮	𐤯	𐤰	𐤱	𐤲	𐤳	𐤴	𐤵	𐤶	𐤷	𐤸	𐤹	𐤺	𐤻	𐤼	𐤽	𐤾	𐤿	𐥀	𐥁	𐥂	𐥃	𐥄	𐥅	𐥆	𐥇	𐥈	𐥉	𐥊	𐥋	𐥌	𐥍	𐥎	𐥏	𐥐	𐥑	𐥒	𐥓	𐥔	𐥕	𐥖	𐥗	𐥘	𐥙	𐥚	𐥛	𐥜	𐥝	𐥞	𐥟	𐥠	𐥡	𐥢	𐥣	𐥤	𐥥	𐥦	𐥧	𐥨	𐥩	𐥪	𐥫	𐥬	𐥭	𐥮	𐥯	𐥰	𐥱	𐥲	𐥳	𐥴	𐥵	𐥶	𐥷	𐥸	𐥹	𐥺	𐥻	𐥼	𐥽	𐥾	𐥿	𐦀	𐦁	𐦂	𐦃	𐦄	𐦅	𐦆	𐦇	𐦈	𐦉	𐦊	𐦋	𐦌	𐦍	𐦎	𐦏	𐦐	𐦑	𐦒	𐦓	𐦔	𐦕	𐦖	𐦗	𐦘	𐦙	𐦚	𐦛	𐦜	𐦝	𐦞	𐦟	𐦠	𐦡	𐦢	𐦣	𐦤	𐦥	𐦦	𐦧	𐦨	𐦩	𐦪	𐦫	𐦬	𐦭	𐦮	𐦯	𐦰	𐦱	𐦲	𐦳	𐦴	𐦵	𐦶	𐦷	𐦸	𐦹	𐦺	𐦻	𐦼	𐦽	𐦾	𐦿	𐧀	𐧁	𐧂	𐧃	𐧄	𐧅	𐧆	𐧇	𐧈	𐧉	𐧊	𐧋	𐧌	𐧍	𐧎	𐧏	𐧐	𐧑	𐧒	𐧓	𐧔	𐧕	𐧖	𐧗	𐧘	𐧙	𐧚	𐧛	𐧜	𐧝	𐧞	𐧟	𐧠	𐧡	𐧢	𐧣	𐧤	𐧥	𐧦	𐧧	𐧨	𐧩	𐧪	𐧫	𐧬	𐧭	𐧮	𐧯	𐧰	𐧱	𐧲	𐧳	𐧴	𐧵	𐧶	𐧷	𐧸	𐧹	𐧺	𐧻	𐧼	𐧽	𐧾	𐧿	𐨀	𐨁	𐨂	𐨃	𐨄	𐨅	𐨆	𐨇	𐨈	𐨉	𐨊	𐨋	𐨌	𐨍	𐨎	𐨏	𐨐	𐨑	𐨒	𐨓	𐨔	𐨕	𐨖	𐨗	𐨘	𐨙	𐨚	𐨛	𐨜	𐨝	𐨞	𐨟	𐨠	𐨡	𐨢	𐨣	𐨤	𐨥	𐨦	𐨧	𐨨	𐨩	𐨪	𐨫	𐨬	𐨭	𐨮	𐨯	𐨰	𐨱	𐨲	𐨳	𐨴	𐨵	𐨶	𐨷	𐨸	𐨹	𐨺	𐨻	𐨼	𐨽	𐨾	𐨿	𐩀	𐩁	𐩂	𐩃	𐩄	𐩅	𐩆	𐩇	𐩈	𐩉	𐩊	𐩋	𐩌	𐩍	𐩎	𐩏	𐩐	𐩑	𐩒	𐩓	𐩔	𐩕	𐩖	𐩗	𐩘	𐩙	𐩚	𐩛	𐩜	𐩝	𐩞	𐩟	𐩠	𐩡	𐩢	𐩣	𐩤	𐩥	𐩦	𐩧	𐩨	𐩩	𐩪	𐩫	𐩬	𐩭	𐩮	𐩯	𐩰	𐩱	𐩲	𐩳	𐩴	𐩵	𐩶	𐩷	𐩸	𐩹	𐩺	𐩻	𐩼	𐩽	𐩾	𐩿	𐪀	𐪁	𐪂	𐪃	𐪄	𐪅	𐪆	𐪇	𐪈	𐪉	𐪊	𐪋	𐪌	𐪍	𐪎	𐪏	𐪐	𐪑	𐪒	𐪓	𐪔	𐪕	𐪖	𐪗	𐪘	𐪙	𐪚	𐪛	𐪜	𐪝	𐪞	𐪟	𐪠	𐪡	𐪢	𐪣	𐪤	𐪥	𐪦	𐪧	𐪨	𐪩	𐪪	𐪫	𐪬	𐪭	𐪮	𐪯	𐪰	𐪱	𐪲	𐪳	𐪴	𐪵	𐪶	𐪷	𐪸	𐪹	𐪺	𐪻	𐪼	𐪽	𐪾	𐪿	𐫀	𐫁	𐫂	𐫃	𐫄	𐫅	𐫆	𐫇	𐫈	𐫉	𐫊	𐫋	𐫌	𐫍	𐫎	𐫏	𐫐	𐫑	𐫒	𐫓	𐫔	𐫕	𐫖	𐫗	𐫘	𐫙	𐫚	𐫛	𐫜	𐫝	𐫞	𐫟	𐫠	𐫡	𐫢	𐫣	𐫤	𐫥	𐫦	𐫧	𐫨	𐫩	𐫪	𐫫	𐫬	𐫭	𐫮	𐫯	𐫰	𐫱	𐫲	𐫳	𐫴	𐫵	𐫶	𐫷	𐫸	𐫹	𐫺	𐫻	𐫼	𐫽	𐫾	𐫿	𐬀	𐬁	𐬂	𐬃	𐬄	𐬅	𐬆	𐬇	𐬈	𐬉	𐬊	𐬋	𐬌	𐬍	𐬎	𐬏	𐬐	𐬑	𐬒	𐬓	𐬔	𐬕	𐬖	𐬗	𐬘	𐬙	𐬚	𐬛	𐬜	𐬝	𐬞	𐬟	𐬠	𐬡	𐬢	𐬣	𐬤	𐬥	𐬦	𐬧	𐬨	𐬩	𐬪	𐬫	𐬬	𐬭	𐬮	𐬯	𐬰	𐬱	𐬲	𐬳	𐬴	𐬵	𐬶	𐬷	𐬸	𐬹	𐬺	𐬻	𐬼	𐬽	𐬾	𐬿	𐭀	𐭁	𐭂	𐭃	𐭄	𐭅	𐭆	𐭇	𐭈	𐭉	𐭊	𐭋	𐭌	𐭍	𐭎	𐭏	𐭐	𐭑	𐭒	𐭓	𐭔	𐭕	𐭖	𐭗	𐭘	𐭙	𐭚	𐭛	𐭜	𐭝	𐭞	𐭟	𐭠	𐭡	𐭢	𐭣	𐭤	𐭥	𐭦	𐭧	𐭨	𐭩	𐭪	𐭫	𐭬	𐭭	𐭮	𐭯	𐭰	𐭱	𐭲	𐭳	𐭴	𐭵	𐭶	𐭷	𐭸	𐭹	𐭺	𐭻	𐭼	𐭽	𐭾	𐭿	𐮀	𐮁	𐮂	𐮃	𐮄	𐮅	𐮆	𐮇	𐮈	𐮉	𐮊	𐮋	𐮌	𐮍	𐮎	𐮏	𐮐	𐮑	𐮒	𐮓	𐮔	𐮕	𐮖	𐮗	𐮘	𐮙	𐮚	𐮛	𐮜	𐮝	𐮞	𐮟	𐮠	𐮡	𐮢	𐮣	𐮤	𐮥	𐮦	𐮧	𐮨	𐮩	𐮪	𐮫	𐮬	𐮭	𐮮	𐮯	𐮰	𐮱	𐮲	𐮳	𐮴	𐮵	𐮶	𐮷	𐮸	𐮹	𐮺	𐮻	𐮼	𐮽	𐮾	𐮿	𐯀	𐯁	𐯂	𐯃	𐯄	𐯅	𐯆	𐯇	𐯈	𐯉	𐯊	𐯋	𐯌	𐯍	𐯎	𐯏	𐯐	𐯑	𐯒	𐯓	𐯔	𐯕	𐯖	𐯗	𐯘	𐯙	𐯚	𐯛	𐯜	𐯝	𐯞	𐯟	𐯠	𐯡	𐯢	𐯣	𐯤	𐯥	𐯦	𐯧	𐯨	𐯩	𐯪	𐯫	𐯬	𐯭	𐯮	𐯯	𐯰	𐯱	𐯲	𐯳	𐯴	𐯵	𐯶	𐯷	𐯸	𐯹	𐯺	𐯻	𐯼	𐯽	𐯾	𐯿	𐰀	𐰁	𐰂	𐰃	𐰄	𐰅	𐰆	𐰇	𐰈	𐰉	𐰊	𐰋	𐰌	𐰍	𐰎	𐰏	𐰐	𐰑	𐰒	𐰓	𐰔	𐰕	𐰖	𐰗	𐰘	𐰙	𐰚	𐰛	𐰜	𐰝	𐰞	𐰟	𐰠	𐰡	𐰢	𐰣	𐰤	𐰥	𐰦	𐰧	𐰨	𐰩	𐰪	𐰫	𐰬	𐰭	𐰮	𐰯	𐰰	𐰱	𐰲	𐰳	𐰴	𐰵	𐰶	𐰷	𐰸	𐰹	𐰺	𐰻	𐰼	𐰽	𐰾	𐰿	𐱀	𐱁	𐱂	𐱃	𐱄	𐱅	𐱆	𐱇	𐱈	𐱉	𐱊	𐱋	𐱌	𐱍	𐱎	𐱏	𐱐	𐱑	𐱒	𐱓	𐱔	𐱕	𐱖	𐱗	𐱘	𐱙	𐱚	𐱛	𐱜	𐱝	𐱞	𐱟	𐱠	𐱡	𐱢	𐱣	𐱤	𐱥	𐱦	𐱧	𐱨	𐱩	𐱪	𐱫	𐱬	𐱭	𐱮	𐱯	𐱰	𐱱	𐱲	𐱳	𐱴	𐱵	𐱶	𐱷	𐱸	𐱹	𐱺	𐱻	𐱼	𐱽	𐱾	𐱿	𐲀	𐲁	𐲂	𐲃	𐲄	𐲅	𐲆	𐲇	𐲈	𐲉	𐲊	𐲋	𐲌	𐲍	𐲎	𐲏	𐲐	𐲑	𐲒	𐲓	𐲔	𐲕	𐲖	𐲗	𐲘	𐲙	𐲚	𐲛	𐲜	𐲝	𐲞	𐲟	𐲠	𐲡	𐲢	𐲣	𐲤	𐲥	𐲦	𐲧	𐲨	𐲩	𐲪	𐲫	𐲬	𐲭	𐲮	𐲯	𐲰	𐲱	𐲲	𐲳	𐲴	𐲵	𐲶	𐲷	𐲸	𐲹	𐲺	𐲻	𐲼	𐲽	𐲾	𐲿	𐳀	𐳁	𐳂	𐳃	𐳄	𐳅	𐳆	𐳇	𐳈	𐳉	𐳊	𐳋	𐳌	𐳍	𐳎	𐳏	𐳐	𐳑	𐳒	𐳓	𐳔	𐳕	𐳖	𐳗	𐳘	𐳙	𐳚	𐳛	𐳜	𐳝	𐳞	𐳟	𐳠	𐳡	𐳢	𐳣	𐳤	𐳥	𐳦	𐳧	𐳨	𐳩	𐳪	𐳫	𐳬	𐳭	𐳮	𐳯	𐳰	𐳱	𐳲	𐳳	𐳴	𐳵	𐳶	𐳷	𐳸	𐳹	𐳺	𐳻	𐳼	𐳽	𐳾	𐳿	𐴀	𐴁	𐴂	𐴃	𐴄	𐴅	𐴆	𐴇	𐴈	𐴉	𐴊	𐴋	𐴌	𐴍	𐴎	𐴏	𐴐	𐴑	𐴒	𐴓	𐴔	𐴕	𐴖	𐴗	𐴘	𐴙	𐴚	𐴛	𐴜	𐴝	𐴞	𐴟	𐴠	𐴡	𐴢	𐴣	𐴤	𐴥	𐴦	𐴧	𐴨	𐴩	𐴪	𐴫	𐴬	𐴭	𐴮	𐴯	𐴰	𐴱	𐴲	𐴳	𐴴	𐴵	𐴶	𐴷	𐴸	𐴹	𐴺	𐴻	𐴼	𐴽	𐴾	𐴿	𐵀	𐵁	𐵂	𐵃	𐵄	𐵅	𐵆	𐵇	𐵈	𐵉	𐵊	𐵋	𐵌	𐵍	𐵎	𐵏	𐵐	𐵑	𐵒	𐵓	𐵔	𐵕	𐵖	𐵗	𐵘	𐵙	𐵚	𐵛	𐵜	𐵝	𐵞	𐵟	𐵠	𐵡	𐵢	𐵣	𐵤	𐵥	𐵦	𐵧	𐵨	𐵩	𐵪	𐵫	𐵬	𐵭	𐵮	𐵯	𐵰	𐵱	𐵲	𐵳	𐵴	𐵵	𐵶	𐵷	𐵸	𐵹	𐵺	𐵻	𐵼	𐵽	𐵾	𐵿	𐶀	𐶁	𐶂	𐶃	𐶄	𐶅	𐶆	𐶇	𐶈	𐶉	𐶊	𐶋	𐶌	𐶍	𐶎	𐶏	𐶐	𐶑	𐶒	𐶓	𐶔	𐶕	𐶖	𐶗	𐶘	𐶙	𐶚	𐶛	𐶜	𐶝	𐶞	𐶟	𐶠	𐶡	𐶢	𐶣	𐶤	𐶥	𐶦	𐶧	𐶨	𐶩	𐶪	𐶫	𐶬	𐶭	𐶮	𐶯	𐶰	𐶱	𐶲	𐶳	𐶴	𐶵	𐶶	𐶷	𐶸	𐶹	𐶺	𐶻	𐶼	𐶽	𐶾	𐶿	𐷀	𐷁	𐷂	𐷃	𐷄	𐷅	𐷆	𐷇	𐷈	𐷉	𐷊	𐷋	𐷌	𐷍	𐷎	𐷏	𐷐	𐷑	𐷒	𐷓	𐷔	𐷕	𐷖	𐷗	𐷘	𐷙	𐷚	𐷛	𐷜	𐷝	𐷞	𐷟	𐷠	𐷡	𐷢	𐷣	𐷤	𐷥	𐷦	𐷧	𐷨	𐷩	𐷪	𐷫	𐷬	𐷭	𐷮	𐷯	𐷰	𐷱	𐷲	𐷳	𐷴	𐷵	𐷶	𐷷	𐷸	𐷹	𐷺	𐷻	𐷼	𐷽	𐷾	𐷿	𐸀	𐸁	𐸂	𐸃	𐸄	𐸅	𐸆	𐸇	𐸈	𐸉	𐸊	𐸋	𐸌	𐸍	𐸎	𐸏	𐸐	𐸑	𐸒	𐸓	𐸔	𐸕	𐸖	𐸗	𐸘	𐸙	𐸚	𐸛	𐸜	𐸝	𐸞	𐸟	𐸠	𐸡	𐸢	𐸣	𐸤	𐸥	𐸦	𐸧	𐸨	𐸩	𐸪	𐸫	𐸬	𐸭	𐸮	𐸯	𐸰	𐸱	𐸲	𐸳	𐸴	𐸵	𐸶	𐸷	𐸸	𐸹	𐸺	𐸻	𐸼	𐸽	𐸾	𐸿	𐹀	𐹁	𐹂	𐹃	𐹄	𐹅	𐹆	𐹇	𐹈	𐹉	𐹊	𐹋	𐹌	𐹍	𐹎	𐹏	𐹐	𐹑	𐹒	𐹓	𐹔	𐹕	𐹖	𐹗	𐹘	𐹙	𐹚	𐹛	𐹜	𐹝
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consonants. Therefore the Nabataean script was first translated into Latin letters and then into English meaning.

th qbrw sn`h k`bw br	this is the tomb which built Ka'bū
hrtt lraqwš brt	Hārītāt for Raqūš daughter
`bdmnnwtw `mh why	'Abdmanātū his mother and she
hlkt py `lhgrw	died in al-Hijr (old name for Mada'in Salah)
šnt m`h wšty	the year one hundred and sixty-
wtryn byrh tmwz wl`n	two in the month of Tammūz (July 162 AD) and may curse
mry `lm` mn yšn` `lqbrw	the lord of the world (Dūšarā) any-one who alters this tomb
d` wmn ypthh hšy {w}	or opens it apart from his
wldh wl`n mn yqbr w{y`}	offspring and may be cursed any-one who buries and removes (a body) from it
ly mnh	

The second example text is also inscribed at the Qasr al Bint rock formation in Mada'in Salah.

wdkyr `dmn hw`	and remembered be 'Admān
ktb ktb` d` b, b wbšlm	who wrote this inscription for good and for peace
dkyr bny` {h}n`w w` h{b} r{w}	remembered be the builder Hani'ū and his companions
h d{y} bnw qbrw `m k`bw	who built the tomb of the mother of Ka'bū

### Settlement Inscription

A Latin inscription was recently discovered during excavations in the residential area of Mada'in Salah. Nine lines carved in a red sand stone slab translated as follows:

*"For the welfare of Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antonius Augustus Armeniacus Parthicus Medicus*

*Germanicus Sarmaticus Maximus the community of the Hegreni restored the wall, destroyed by the passage of time, at its own expense, under the governorship of Lulis Firmanus, legate of the Emperor with the rank of Praetor, the work being arranged by Pomponius Victor centurion of Legion III Cyrenaica and his colleague Numisius Clemens and construction being supervised by Amrus son of Hainan the headman of their community".*

Taking the full list of titles into account this inscription can be dated between August 175AD to March 180AD. It is actually a rare complete inscription from the time of Emperor Marcus Aurelius not found elsewhere in the East Roman Empire and giving account of the restoration of a public square.

It further gives proof that Mada'in Salah was still inhabited 100 years after 75AD when the last tomb was built and that the city was still important enough to have a public square rebuilt.

In Petra tomb inscriptions are rare, but one was found at the famous Turkamaniya Tomb is translated as follows:

*"This tomb and the large and small chambers inside, and the grave chambers, and the courtyard in front of the tomb, and the porticos and dwelling places within it, and the gardens and the dining hall, the water cisterns, the terrace and the walls, and the remainder of the whole property which is in these places, is the consecrated and inviolable property of Dushares, the God of our Lord, and his sacred throne, and all the Gods in deeds relating to consecrated things according to their contents. It is also the order of Dushares and his throne and all the Gods that, according to what is in the said writings relating to consecrated things; it shall be done and not altered. Nor shall anything of all that is housed in them be withdrawn, nor shall any man be buried in this tomb except him who has in writing a contract to be buried according to the said writings relating to consecrated things, for ever."*



Tomb inscription translated above