

## INSCRIPTIONS

BILINGUAL INSCRIPTION  
BY G. W. BOWERSOCK

The stone is white marble and has no significant context as it was found among material in the shaft of a robbed Nabataean tomb (locus 905).

The inscription is bilingual in Nabataean and Greek, and it could be more accurately described as an incised graffito. It consists of two lines, the 1st with two words in Nabataean and the second with one word in Greek. The second line is not broken off where the Greek ends, and it is therefore possible that there was no word following. But the stone looks abraded, and I have assumed that there was a second word of Greek to match the second word of Nabataean. The following reading may be proposed:

הגר[ו] סליתא  
Αγαρη [     ]

Both lines of the text begin with a feminine name, *hgrw* in Nabataean and *Αγαρη* in Greek. The restoration of the initial *he* in the 1st line is certain. The name Hagaru is well documented in Nabataean onomastics: (Negev 1991:21, no. 293; Healey 1993: H 13, 14, 30). Furthermore, Hagaru has long been supposed



Fig. 7.XX. NRP catalogue number 373; photograph by Bruce Zuckerman and Marilyn Lundberg, West Semitic Research Project

to be the Nabataean equivalent of the name *Αγαρη* (cf. Wuthnow, 1930:11, 135; Negev 1991: 21, no. 293). In addition to the texts cited in Wuthnow, the Greek form is documented in the Hawrān by M. Dunand (cf. *Bull. épig.* 1953. 228 [p. 188]) and M. Sartre, *IGLS* 13. 1 Bos-tra no. 9315. The new Petra bilingual proves that *Αγαρη* is indeed Greek for Hagaru. Breathing and accent are unclear, and both are therefore omitted

here. Hagaru and its Greek equivalent are widely distributed in Nabataean Arabia, from Madā'in Šālīḥ to the Hawrān to Jawf (cf. *IGR* 3. 1249). It would be imprudent to associate this name with any particular region.

Unfortunately we do not have the Greek for the second word in the Nabataean, and the word in Nabataean is problematic. The last three letters can be read with relative certainty, but the 1st two present difficulties. The 1st letter most closely resembles the cursive *samekh* as it is known from papyri: see A. Yardeni (2000, 2:227, chart B, B/7), who generously drew my attention to this occurrence. It also resembles, though less exactly, the *sade* of late date with a closed loop, as can be seen in a good example from the Sinai (Yardeni 2000, 2:230 [*CIS* 793]; and 258–9). The tall letter after the *samekh* or *sade*, with its curve to the left at the bottom, would most reasonably be read as *lamed*, but

*beth* or *nun* might also be possible. John Healey, who has helpfully replied to my questions about the second Nabataean word, prefers to read the 1st letter as a *tet* together with the second read naturally as *lamed*. This would produce the word טליתא, “the girl.” But it is not immediately obvious why a feminine name would need to be qualified in this way, and I can find no example at all of a *tet* in which the quasi-vertical stroke downwards extends well below the right-side loop, as here. The loop, when closed, normally comes at the bottom of the down stroke, just in the Arabic *tet*. By contrast, *samekh* and *sade* in this form can, as indicated above, be paralleled. If we insist on *sade*, sense would dictate that the second letter be read as *beth*, i.e. “the desired one” or “the wished-for one”. But *samekh* seems more likely, and in this case the word might be related to the Nabataean proper name סלי (Negev 1991:45, no. 769). One of the proposed etymologies of that name is the Arabic root س ل و (سلا) which produces سلى as well as سلو I. “neglect,” “forget,” II. “console,” “comfort”. Agare may be described as a comfort or consolation. But this must remain a guess since a parallel Greek word is missing, and the root is attested in Nabataean, if at all, only in a proper name.

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