

Note on Maʿġn 9
R ʿw-â fnwt vs rbʿâ Mnwt and the North-Arabian origins

³ ... *ywm whb mēy Wd w&-r ʿw-â*

⁴ *[f](n)wt w-ywm ʾbʿâ ʾétr ʾ-Qb ʿ b-ʿ(ʾʿ)[r] #/7/...*

Bron's edition of the inscription Maʿġn 9 records the presence of the goddess *Mnwt* in the context "ywm whb mēy Wd w-rbʿâ [M]nwt" ("lorsqu'il a offert des offrandes à Wadd et à sa divinité tutélaire [Ma]nawt", ll. 3-4)¹. In the chapter dedicated to the study of Maʿġn's religion, Bron points to this theonym as a hapax in the South-Arabian corpus and the earliest mention at all of this divinity, found later in North-Arabian inscriptions, in few theophoric proper names of South-Arabia and finally in the Koran. According to Bron, the mention of the goddess is connected here with the northern origins of the man who dedicates the inscription, a provenance which Bron detects in his North-Arabian name *āmʿ* and in the inclusion of ʾ-āmwy ʾ-Rgmt in the final gods' list².

However, considering the name *āmʿ* as typically North-Arabian has been disputed for many reasons³. This man's clan *Gbʿn* is one of the main Minean clans, which probably was in charge of a great part of the trading activities of the kingdom⁴. Secondly, it seems not so odd that a man involved in the trade included in the final list of gods ʾ-āmwy as worshipped in the oasis of Najrān, that was a stop along the route towards the North.

Finally, checking the inscription's photo one sees that the reading of the word *rbʿ* is far from being sure and that the possible alternative reading *r ʿw* suits better the typical phraseology of Minaic inscription "w-r ʿw-â fnwt", often following the phrase "whb mēy" + theonym⁵. The best restoration of 1.4's first word is therefore "[f]nwt", a consideration which entails for us the absence of the goddess *Mnwt* in the Minaic pantheon.

¹ Bron 1998, 49-51.

² ʾ-āmwy is the god of the *āmrm* tribe, which was settled from the very beginning of the documented South-Arabian history on the edges of the Jawf valley, on the north-eastern mountains along the route to Najrān. The epithet ʾ-Rgmt, as Bron suggests, is probably to be connected this very oasis (*Rgmtm*).

³ Macdonald 2002, 123-125.

⁴ Beeston 1972 suggested the possibility to identify Pliny's Gebbanites with this very clan.

⁵ See B-M 179, l. 3: w-r ʿw-â fnwt; Kamna 6, l. 3: w-mēy (Wd) w-r(ʿ)[w-â; Kamna 14 A and B, ll. 1-2: mēy[ʿ] # (étr) ʾ-(R)[ʾbh ...] (w-)r ʿ[w-â] # (nw)t; M 246, l. 3: w-ywm whb (Zy)[dā m]ēy Wd(m) [w+]r ʿw-â fnwtm w-ywm ʾbʿâ ...; Maʿġn 99, ll. 7-8: w-ʿb mēy Wd w-r ʿw-â fnwt; Shaqab 1, ll. 9-10: w-ʿb ʾmāi mēyt Wd b-ām w-(r) ʿw-ām fnwt. As-Sawdā 76 (ʿ-â fnwt) and M 374 ([.....]ʿbʿ fn[wt ...]) are Halévy's copies. The first one could be an error too (ʿ instead of w); in any case, the context is too fragmentary. The second one could effectively report [... ..]ʿbʿ and not *r ʿw*, meaning in this case "four canals"; anyway it does not mention *Mnwt*.

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