



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

Ancient and early Islamic rock inscriptions of the Ḥisām plateau

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Abstract

This paper deals with the rock inscriptions of the Ḥisām plateau within the NEOM region of northwest Saudi Arabia, with a particular focus on the Ḥalāqān area surveyed twice in 2023 by the Saudi Japanese Archaeological Project (Heritage Commission and Kanazawa University) and by the Heritage Commission, respectively. Since prehistory, the Ḥisām plateau has been a crucial crossroads connecting Arabia with the Levant, Sinai, and beyond. In addition to the abundance of prehistoric rock art, the area encompasses numerous ancient and early Islamic inscriptions, showing the presence of South Arabian incense caravans of the first millennium BCE, Nabataeans and local Arab tribes of various periods, and Muslim travellers, including pilgrims of the first and second centuries after Hijra (the seventh and eighth centuries CE). Among the inscription sites of Ḥisām, Ḥalāqān, located near the Jordanian border, exhibits a unique composition of inscriptions: Thamudic D and Pre-Islamic Arabic, in addition to Himaic and early Islamic Arabic inscriptions, which are common across Ḥisām. A comparative study of the Thamudic D, pre-Islamic and Islamic Arabic inscriptions of Ḥalāqān suggests the possible continuity of epigraphic tradition from late antiquity to the early Islamic period despite changes in script.

Keywords

Ancient North Arabian, Thamudic D, Early Islamic inscriptions, Hima', Ḥalāqān

Session

3. Heritage and archaeology

Workshop

A15745PS - NEOM, a land for the future of Arabian archeology: surveys, excavations and heritage management in North-West Arabia

Type of paper

Oral presentation

