

SL ‘ AS A COINAGE TERM IN THE SOUTH SEMITIC AND NABATAEAN INSCRIPTIONS

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Through the examination of direct epigraphic sources, this paper will trace the South Semitic (Ancient South and North Arabian) and Nabataean inscriptions, whereas other Semitic texts will be studied later in a separate study. The paper studies the historical background of coin usage in the Ancient Near East, mainly in the area of ancient South and North Arabia. In addition to the occurrences of the term, an etymological attempt will also be put forward that explains the origins of the term within the Semitic languages.

Key words: SL ‘, South Semitic, Sabaeen, Minaean, Qatabanian, Lihyanite, Thamudic, Nabataean.

Historical Background

Coins had been known in Mesopotamia since the time of Old Babylonians during the 2nd millennium BC. They were made out of a small piece of silver to be used in trade business (Ḥammūd 2007, p. 10; Al-Qudrah – Šadaqah 2014, p. 88).

However, in Mesopotamia, silver was used as a form of money even before coins were invented; it was weighed in the transactions (Schaps 2006, p. 3). The sealed silver *kaspum* was used by the Old Babylonians in the 2nd millennium BC, and there were also other items used as a kind of coin; for example, *kankum* “silver in lumps-sealed in a bag”, and *kanīku* “x silver which is placed in its sealed bag” (CAD 1998, pp. 136, 150). The Old Assyrian documents display the usage of silver “marked” *uddû* with its weight, and they called the packed copper *hurshianu* (Silver 2006, p. 187).

Another kind of coin was used by the Late Assyrians at the end of the 8th century BC, which had been called “*Head of Ishtar*”, the equivalent of half a shekel. It was a small piece of copper and the Temple of Ishtar was in charge of issuing it

(Aubet 1993, p. 116). In the time of Sennacherib (704–681 BC) who also ordered to instrument other kinds of coins such as “shekel”, there were silver disks with definite weights and shapes. Shekels featured the images of the Sun god and the goddess ‘Ištār (Al-Hāshimī 1985, p. 233; Ḥamīd 2008, p. 19).

The concept of coinage production-development was transferred from Ancient Near East to the Lydians who were settled in Asia Minor. They took the currency system idea from the Assyrians in the 8th century BC (Al-Hāshimī 1985, p. 233; Ḥamīd 2008, p. 22). The coinage mint and its usage spread through the neighbouring cultures and civilisations such as Greece, Cyprus and Asia Minor in the middle of the 5th century BC (Al-Khayrī 2014, p. 40). These coins were made of electrum “mixture of gold and silver”, and had the shape of disks. The obverse of the coin carried intaglio design, and the reverse showed the mark of the hammer as an incuse square (Silver 2006, p. 187).

Coinage use in the Levant (“Bilād eš-Šām”) went back to the middle of the 5th century BC when the earliest coins were minted in Tyre by the Phoenicians between 450–425 BC, then followed by Aradus, Sidon and Byblos. Those appeared as commercial centres at the eastern Mediterranean coast (Moscatti 1970, p. 78). Then, this traditional technique of coinage production was spread in Palestine and among other neighbours in about 400 BC. A small silver fractional denomination was issued bearing Persian and Greek design. This one was known as “Philisto-Arabian” (Butcher 2003, p. 210).

The time of appearance of the Ancient South Arabian inscriptions is still disputed. It may have begun at the time of the federation of “Sabaeans, Minaeans, Qatabanians and Ḥaḍramites” between the end of the 5th and the middle of the 4th century BC. They used the imitation of the Athenian Tetra drachms style. Athenian coins had also been chosen as models for Ancient South Arabian coinage. This issue is known as “old style” imitation, and circulated throughout the federation, from Al-Jawf Valley in the north to Ḥaḍramawt Valley in the south. And it continued to be circulated until a new type of coinage (“national coinage”) appeared in the late 3rd or early 2nd century BC (Sedov – ‘Aydarūs 1995, p. 40).

The Arabian Peninsula’s coins of “Jabal Kenzan 2” northeastern Saudi Arabia can be regarded as the first accurate example of the Athenian Tetra drachms imitation and perhaps they are the earliest coins known in the Gulf region. However, the Athenian coins were widely circulated in the eastern Mediterranean in the 5th and 4th century BC due to the broad trading activities (Howgego–Potts 1992, p. 183).

In Northern Arabia, the Nabataeans were able to absorb and adapt other civilisations, and lived peacefully together with the civilised societies at that early stage. They created a somewhat cosmopolitan culture, between the 4th and 1st centuries BC (Macdonald 1992, p. 115). They were able to establish a highly organised society and exploit the land for planting and rearing crops (Glueck 1942, p. 3).

Similarly to the influence of Egyptian and Phoenician lifestyle on the Nabataean society in general, their impact can also be observed in the monetary system. Phoenician coins from the 3rd century BC were discovered in some street pavement

in Petra (Zayadine 2000, p. 60), which proves that Petra was settled before the Nabataeans changed to sedentary life there.

Hoover and Barkay (2010, p. 198) wrote that Petra used the foreign Phoenician and Ptolemy currency during the Hellenistic period. Some scholars claim that these coins had been re-struck and known as Proto-Nabataean coins. This kind of currency was in circulation until the 80s of the 1st century BC. After that, the Nabataean kings minted their own coins to be circulated in the kingdom.

Etymological Study

Etymologically, this term could be represented by three forms: *sl'*, *sl'* and *slh* as attested in Hebrew and stands for "to weigh" (Klein 1987, p. 447), and in Sumerian *silā*, *sil* and *šāl* "measure of capacity" (Halloran 2006, p. 126). It was also used in Ancient Mesopotamia during the third millennium BC, 6 *silā* ZĪ-KAL "six *silā*/ measures of flour of KAL kind" (Al-Šaffār 2011, p. 34), in addition to the form *sala'a* in Classical Arabic which signifies "offer money" (Al-Zabīdī 1994, *sl'*, Vol. 5, p. 384). Concerning the phonology and etymology of the term, there is agreement among the scholars.

The word has three phonetic variants as far as the final sound is concerned: the glottal plosive laryngeal (*hamza*), the voiceless laryngeal fricative *hā'* and the voiced pharyngeal fricative *ʿayn*. However, the three final radicals belong to the same voice stratum, and their articulations in the pharynx and uvula are very close.

So we have three variant guttural consonants at the word end, *hamza*, *hā'* and *ʿayn*. Arabic grammarians called this phenomenon "alteration" (*al-ibdāl* الإبدال). The Classical Arabic language examines this kind of changes when *hamza* (') alternates with *ʿayn* (') in e.g. *'an* and *'an*, *ista'daytu* and *ista'daytu* "أَنْ وَعَنْ، اسْتَأْذَيْتُ وَاسْتَعْدَيْتُ", or, when *hamza* alternates with *hā'* in *'ayā* and *hayā*, *'iyyāka* and *hiyyāka* "أَيَّا وَهَيَّا، إِيَّاكَ" (Al-Suyūṭī n.d., Vol. 1, p. 460).

This phenomenon can be found in other Semitic languages as well. In Ugaritic, for example, the personal names show occasional changes (') < (') e.g. *'bdhr* < *'bdhr*, in Aramaic *B'l* and *B'l* (Lipinski 1997, p. 19), in Ḥadramite *'d* is equivalent to the Sabaic, Minaean and Qatabanian *'d* "to" (Arbach 1993, p. 10; Lipinski 1997, p. 19).

Likewise, we noticed in Aramaic the (*h*) was converted to (') in the divine name *hdd* > *'dd*. This case may have happened under Assyro-Babylonian influence. Similar changes occurred in Syriac proper names, the velar fricative (') was altered into (') e.g. *'bdnhy* < *'bdnhy* "servant of Nuḥay" and *'bd't* < *'bd't* "servant of 'Attā" (Lipinski 1997, p. 19).

In Phoenician personal names, the (') was replaced by ('), e.g. *'bd'strt* and *'zb'l*, and the (') was replaced by (') e.g. *mtn'l* and *'bd's* (Benz 1972, p. 203). In Ancient South Arabian inscriptions, shifting (*h*) to (') is recognised in the prefix of the verbal form *af'ala* < *haf'ala*, and the particle *'in* < *hin* "if" (Lipinski 1997, p. 19).

Sl' Connotation in Semitic Languages

From the linguistic point of view, the Classical Arabic lexicons connected the term *sl'* to the concept of “breaking”. We found that the forms of *al-sal'* and *al-sil'* denoted the concept of “splitting in a mountain” (Al-Ḥimyarī 1999, p. 3149), also, it means “a mountain”. In addition, the fortress in Wādī Mūsā in Southern Jordan carries the name *sil'* (Al-Zabīdī 1994, *sl'*; Zayadine 2000, pp. 57–60). The same concept occurs also in Hebrew (Brown–Samuel–Briggs 1979, p. 700).

A. Irvine pointed out that the root *sl'* is well attested in Modern South Arabic conveying Landberg’s terms *sul'* as “dommages-intérêts pour homicide” and *sil'a* as “ware”. Thereafter he compared *sl'* with the Tigrini *sāl'e* “partagea, repartit, fit les parts (e.g. distribua à chacun son salaire)” and *sāla'* “part, portion; salaire revenant à chacun”. He mentioned that the Sabaic term *'sl'm* (CIH, No. 548) in the monetary context referred to a specified sum of money or quantities of bullion, coined or otherwise, and was perhaps used when making large payments. He pointed out that *sl'* is similar to *sul'* “a forfeit of some sort whose nature and content would be well known to the people” (Irvine 1964, p. 32).

In view of contextual points, we must pay attention to the verb *sl'w* in Sabaic (CIH, No. 211) which is interpreted as “lay the foundation of a building” and as “cut stone benches out of the rock” (Nebes 2011, p. 161).

The root *sl'* occurs in a number of lexemes in other Semitic languages: in Syriac we find *sl'yn* and *sl'n* “coin, shekel” (Smith 1903, p. 379), in Hebrew *silā'* and *sela'* “scale, weight, coin, weight of coin” (Brown–Samuel–Briggs 1979, p. 700), in Palmyrene *sl'yn*, *sl'n* and *sl''* “certain coin” (Hoftjizer–Jongeling 1995, p. 788), and in Jewish Palestine Aramaic during the Byzantine period it is represented as *sl'* and *sil'a* in addition to the plural form *sil'in* “coin unit” (Sokoloff 1990, p. 364).

Furthermore, the term could be externalised by *sil'at'* and *silā' و سِلْعَة* in Classical Arabic “merchandise”, and to the *s'l'm/ d-ğlğlm* “merchandise of sesame” (Rykman–Müller–Abdallah 1994, p. 54) that occurred in texts inscribed on wooden sticks in a minuscule script (Stein 2010, p. 330).

This technical term could be considered analogous to the Hebrew expression “*hlin sāl'in dābia šar'n*” which shows the meaning “circle” (Sokoloff 1990, p. 364). On the evidence of the meaning “circle”, the Egyptian unit of weight *dbn* “diban” means “ring” (Castle 2000, pp. 43, 49). The two concentric circles that appear on the handles bearing the *lamelekh* Hebrew stamp, from the Gibeon, and interpreted as “cancellation of the royal stamp, some kind of mark or receipt and indicated that its contents had been received or paid for”. This gives valuable evidence that the circle which appeared on some Nabataean coins shows them as the most authoritative and standard ones (Pritchard 1959, p. 20).

The interpretation fits well in the coin context that consists of a drawing-sign-circle. The circle was viewed next to *h* on some Nabataean coins, which is referring to a logograph representing the Nabataean king Aretas. This name was also represented by the Greek (Λ) or (ΡΑ) “ΛΙΣΤΟY/ APETO”. The two shapes (the circle

and the letter *h*) have appeared since the era of the Nabataean king Malichus I (60–30 BC).

Schmitt-Korte and Prise reviewed several opinions trying to interpret the circle and (*h*); some scholars compared the circle shape to the Nabataean samekh letter shape, others assumed that they represent the Nabataean capital where the coins were struck, which is RQMW, a Nabataean name for the Greek name Petra. However, they conclude that both “the circle and the letter are tended to view a shortage form for the term *sl' hrtt* “sela of Aretas”, and have the general meaning of Nabataean money (Schmitt-Korte–Price 1994, p. 91).

Otherwise, the circle could represent a logogram for a unit of weight in ancient Egypt; some Egyptian weights bear concentric circles ☉ before the numeral, i.e. the Fourth Dynasty weight bears the cartouche of Khufu with the legend ☉∩, the sign ☉ followed by the numeral 10 (Castle 2000, p. 48).

Mention must be made of Greek στατήρ “a weight, gold-silver coin of a certain weight”. This case implies that the name of the coin derived from a religious term, the name of Ishtar, the Babylonian goddess (Mundell 2002, p. 3).

Therefore, one should focus on the divinity aspect of the circle, mainly related to Dusares “Du-š-Šarā”, that is, on the view of the bearded head of Dusares appearing on the unique Nabataean *sela'im/ sl'*, coin of the tenth year (21 BC) of Obodas III “30–9 BC”, and on the drawing of the camel concomitant with the circle that appeared on a coin of the third year of Obodas III (27/28 BC) (Hoover–Barkay 2010, p. 201).

In the cultural–religious aspect, this scene is related to the similar one that appeared in Petra (Kropp 2009, p. 53). In this form, the camel gives a sacred impression to Dusares and actually becomes his sacred symbol (Kindler 1983, pp. 58, 60; Morey 1914, p. 13, No. 21). This idea can be supported by the appearance of Dusares mounted on a camel on some Bostra coins; conversely, on other coins the camel did not appear together with Dusares.

The sacred connotation that confirms the religious impression about Dusares was shown during the holy ceremony that occurred in the 2nd century BC in which the camels were offered to Dusares (Kindler 1983, p. 109). Further reinforcement to that notion is the Nabataean inscription from Puteoli, dated to the 20th year (AD 11/12) of the reign of Aretas IV (9 BC–AD 40): (1) [*l*]*h/ try/ gml'y/ dy* (2) *qrby/ zydw/ w'bd'lg'* (3) *bny/ tymw/ br/ hn'w/ ldwšr'* (CIH, No. 159).

At this point, the term *sl'* means either “a piece of coin” or “a circle”, similarly to the circle depicted on the Nabataean coins. This view is apparently supported by the idea of the concentric circles ☉, “circle or ring”, an abbreviation of *deben* (Castle 2000, p. 50). The fact that two lexemes of the Post-Classical Yemeni Arab, *sul'ah* and *sula'*, have a sense of circle shape such as “a round piece of bread”, may corroborate the idea (Piamenta 1991, p. 229).

***sl'* in the Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions**

Undoubtedly, the word *sl'* designates a certain value of a coin that was discovered in some places in Ancient South Arabia and on Nabataean inscriptions (Healey 1993, No. H1/8p; Sima 2000, p. 186).

A. Sima (2000, p. 197) opined that the word *sl't* had come from the Yemeni Jawf area, and the use of the word for a coin belonged to the people of Al-Ameer in the northern part of South Arabia. But Müller (2013, p. 98) has doubts concerning that idea, and Sima's argument is not justifiable for the time being. His vision is reasonable since the term is attested in Sumerian as *sila*, *sil*, *šál* to mean "measure of capacity, liter" = 0.842 modern litres in the Neo-Sumerian period.

The term *sl'* was mentioned in many inscriptions belonging to various dates. However, the most ancient one went down to about the 4th or 3rd century BC, that is Al-Jawf 04.23, which is subjected to the royal decisions of the king 'myt', king of Ma'in ('Arbach–Schittecatte 2006, p. 38). Another one "ATM 869" was dated to the 1st century AD "period B2". The inscriptions "Haram 13 and FB-Hawkam 3" belonged to period C (Bron 2009, p. 124).

This lexeme is examined in a few Ancient South Arabian inscriptions, in Sabaeana it occurs in a plural form *'s'l'm* (CIH, No. 548), in Minaean there is a feminine singular in genitive case *s'l'th* ('Arbach–Schittecatte 2006, p. 38). And it is attested in Qatabanian inscriptions in the singular feminine forms *l'tm* (Bron 2009, p. 124; 'Arbach–Bā-Ṭāyi'–Al-Zubaidī 2013, No. 869/2, pp. 68–69).

***sl'* in the Ancient South Arabian Inscriptions**

I. Sabaean Inscriptions

Inscription No. 1: L7. .../ dyndyn/ mr'm L8.mn/ mḥrmn/ lyz'n/ ḥms'/ 's' L9. l'n (CIH, No. 548).

Translation: "L7–9 ... who drives out a man from the temple, he will pay five of *'s'l'm* 'sum of money' exacted as a penalty".

Inscription-Minuscule No. 2: L5. wbhn/ t'd/ 'wrd/ qnt/ š'r/ whn/ t'd/ n{my} 6. r/ 'rb'/ 'šrt/ s'l't/ 'w/ rhn/ w s'l't/ bl{t} 7. n (Faq'as 2013, No. 6).

Translation: "L5. when you return, please, bring a measure of weight 'dry measure' of barley, and (in return) when you get back we provide you with food/ sustenance 6–7 which equaled the value of fourteen *s'l't* 'coins', or give guarantee, and *s'l't* coins of *bl'n*".

II. Minaean Inscriptions

It is one legal inscription and its language goes back to the Central Minaean.

Inscription No. 1: L3. [... ...]/ngw/ šltn/ w'dm'y/ ymm/ bys³qn L4. ...]lytlwn/ wlšq/ w'tllm/ kl/ dy'wd L5. ...] mn/ bn/ s'l'th/ wqr't/ s'l'/ w'wd ('Arbach–Schittecatte 2006, p. 38).

Translation: "L3. [... ...] and he (the king) has ordained the decrees forever, according to these offerings L4. [... ...] and because he has persecuted and borne a grudge against, and then he has asked for the intercession in favour of you what he has given back L5. [... ...]of sum of money *s'l'* and the command he requested and he returned".

III. Qatabanian Inscriptions

Inscription No. 1: L4. tnty/ s¹qnytnyw/ t/ dt/ šrfn/ k L5. wn/ mddts¹/ hms¹y/ s¹l'tm/ wt/ dt/ dh L6. bm/ dt/ 'šr/ s¹l'tm/ 'd/ mhrms¹/ mn'm/ fr' L7. m/ ks³/ lmr's¹m/ hwm/ bhgnyhn/ zfr L8. wmyrtm/ hg/ wqh/ bmsl¹ls¹/ (Bron 2009, p. 124).

Translation: "L4. two dedications, one of them was made of silver L5. and accounted five *s¹l'tm* (sum of money), and the other was made of bronze with account L6. of ten *s¹l'tm* (sum of money) in his temple MN'M (from) season of early crops L7. That he gathered in favour of his Lord "god" HWM from the two cities ZFR L8. and MRYMTM, (that was) according to the divine ordinance ...".

Inscription No. 2: L1. nb'tly/ bn/ brntm/ qyl/ (l) š'bn/ dmyrtm L2. s¹qny/ wrd'/dt/ zhrn/ 'šr/ s¹l'tm/bn/'šq 'Arbach–Bā-Ṭāyī–Al-Zubaidī 2013, No. 869, pp. 68–69).

Translation: "L1. nb'tly son of Brntm 'qyl' chief of tribe dmyrtm L2. offered and dedicated to (the goddess) dt/ zhrn ten *s¹l'tm* 'sum of money' from the terracing".

Inscription No. 3: L1. [... ...]yt/ bn/ 'brn/ wqhdm/ s³hr/ 'm L2. [r]y'n/ rd'/ dt/ zhrn/ s¹l'tm/ bn/ 's²q L3. [.]btn/ wdt/ zhrn/ ltrd's¹m n'[mtm] (Al-Ḥasanī 2011, No. 519).

Translation: "L1. [... ...]yt member of the family 'brn and qhdm, priest of 'm L2. ry'n dedicated to the (goddess) dt zhrn one *s¹l'tm* (sum of money) from the terracing L3. And dt zhrn gave them assistance in prosperity".

Inscription No. 4: L1. [... ...] L2. m/ šbhm/ bnw/ s²ytm/ rd'/ dt/ zhrn L3. hwrtm/ whms¹/ s¹l'tm/ bn's³b/ blq/ ms¹hḏr L4. tnyhn/ wdt/ zhrn/ ltrd's¹m/ bn'ymn (Al-Ḥasanī 2011, No. 539).

Translation: "L1. [... ...] L2. M šbhm of the family s²ytm dedicated to the (goddess) dt zhrn L3. Five *s¹l'tm* (sum of money) from production of the two festival halls limestone construction L4. and dt zhrn gave them assistance in prosperity".

Sl' in the Ancient North Arabian Inscriptions

The Ancient North Arabian inscriptions rarely included the term *sl'* exception one Liḥyanite and in one Thamudic E inscription.

However, the term *sl't* that appeared in Thamudic E in plural form, has not been interpreted in a satisfactory manner. J. King (1990, p. 416, No. 539) understands it in the meaning of “women”, whereas judging by the context, it seems more appropriate to interpret it as a coinage term. The term, which also appears in several Nabataean texts, corroborates the meaning of *sl't* as a coin term in the Thamudic E inscriptions (Bikai–Al-Khraysheh 2002, p. 215).

I. Liḥyanite Inscriptions

Inscription No. 1: L1. 'fšy L2. bn/ m'n L3. 'tll/ 'n/ frdh/ wsl'lh L4. (w'n) nhl/ bd'mn (Abūal-Ḥasan 1997, No. 128).

Translation: “L1. 'fšy L2. son of m'n L3. he offered in favour of his poor rate, tax 'statutory portion / assigned task / divine precept', and he offered him a sum of money 'sl'lh' L4. (and in favour) of his palm in d'mn”.

Inscription No. 2: L1. Hnmnt šgrt 'gy 'šrt mnhl 'yd[h]n L2. [w]mšhn 'n 'l' mzn' b'rb'n sl't mn'n'mfkw' (Jaussen–Savignac 1909–1914, No. 177).

Translation: “L1. Hnmnt Šgrt has ten irrigation sets, which (the water) he had strengthened and pumped from a reservoir L2. for forty silver drachmas of 'n'm, also of kw”.

II. Thamudic Inscriptions

Inscription No. 1: L3. wndr 'rb't (')sl't (Bikai–Al-Khraysheh 2002, p. 215).

Translation: “...., and he vowed four *sl'* coins”.

Inscription No. 2: rb šq w sqm w srr b hd 'l n'rt w glmt w bkrt w 'rhl w sl't w hd bn sm'n ḥtt (King 1990, p. 416, No. 539).

Translation: “Hd has felt desire and illness and happiness in favour of pregnant woman and slave/young girl, and camels and sheep and *sl't* coins, and Hd son of Sm'n wrote”.

Sl' in the Nabataean Inscriptions

The so-called Nabataean tomb inscriptions of Madā'in Sālīḥ “the historical village of al-Ḥijr”, is the source of our knowledge about the usage of the term *sl'* in the Nabataean kingdom. Virtually, the term was used in a phrase together with Ḥrtt “Aritas”, *sl'yn ḥrty sela's* (Healey 1993, p. 263; Al-Theeb 2010, p. 1181). It was more popular at the time of Aritas IV (9 BC to 40 AD).

However, it was rare at the time of king Mlku "Mālik II" (40–70 AD) and during the reign of king Rb'l "Rab'ēl II" (70–106 AD). The first presence of *sl'yn* is noted in the years 4–5 AD, then the issuance of this kind of money *sl'* was continued in the following years: 21st, 35th, 40th, 43rd and 44th years under the reign of Ḥrtt "Aretas IV", king of the Nabataeans (Al-Theeb 2010, Nos 190, 218), in addition to the 16th year of his reign (Healey 1993, No. H30).

Furthermore, there was an issue in the 24th year of Mlku "Mālik II" (Al-Theeb 2010, No. 228), and another issue was in the second year of Rb'l II (Al-Theeb 2010, No. 224).

The term *sl'* is recorded in many Nabataean inscriptions two examples of which are quoted below:

Inscription No. 1: L8. Ldmymgmr *sl'yn* 'lf ḥrty w lmr'n' ḥrtt mlk' kwt (Al-Theeb 2010, No. 190).

Translation: "L8. for the full price of a thousand Ḥaritite *sela's*, and to our lord king Al-Ḥarīt for the same amount".

Inscription No. 2: L8. l mr'n' ksf *sl'yn* 'lfyn tryn ḥrty (Al-Theeb 2010, No. 198).

Translation: "L8. for our lord sum of two thousand silver Ḥaritite *sela's*".

Conclusion

This study has highlighted the usage of the term *sl'* in coinage, and came to the conclusion that it was a joint formula in coins written in Semitic scripts. The monetary contexts, which invoke *sl'*, reflect a primary purchase dealing, a specified usage for fine-payment coins, otherwise it signifies a term of payment.

There are no coins with absolute certainty that can be designated with the term. In fact *sl'* turns up only in a number of Ancient North and South Arabian inscriptions, in addition to the Nabataean ones.

According to this study, we might determine the term *sl'* as of South Arabian origin. The usages of *sl'* that took the form of monetary allocation in the published inscriptions had already been originated from Ancient South Arabian inscriptions dating back to the 4th or 3rd century B.C. It was older than Nabataean civilisation. In addition to this, the Nabataean usage of coins came later.

However, at this stage of study, we cannot be sure whether the word emerged first in South Arabian or in other Semitic languages.

Finally, it is noteworthy that in the Ancient North Arabian inscriptions, especially the Thamudic and Safaitic ones, this formula can rarely be found. This may be due to the fact that these tribes did not have kingdoms or systematic political organisations which would have needed coins.

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