

## Fragment of an Old-South-Arabian Dedicatory Stela IA17.127

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**Abstract:** The paper identifies object IA17.127 as a fragment of an Old-South-Arabian stela from Qataban (east of Saba/Sheba), of 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC/AD, recording a family's offering to the deity Anbay; only the top right-hand section survives.

This fragment of a stela of calcite preserves part of the first 5 lines of an inscription expressed in the Qatabanian dialect of Old-South-Arabian (Figure 1). It is in the collection of the Australian Institute of Archaeology and was obtained in 1956 from A.G. Hamad, Cairo. Its present-day maximum dimensions are width, 24.0 cm (8 in.), height, 20.5 cm (2 $\frac{3}{8}$  in.) and thickness 6.5 - 8.0 cm (2 $\frac{1}{2}$  - 3 in.). At the right-hand side, there survives part of its original twin-fluted margins. The top and left-hand margins are wholly lost, plus any further lines after the 5<sup>th</sup>, such that three-quarters of the original text are now missing. It is probable that at least half of our longest-preserved (= second) line is now missing, and proportionately more of the other four.

Both the forms of the script and the mention of the deity An[bay] indicate the region of origin of this piece. The fact that the surviving text is not funerary in content but records offering(s) to that deity may suggest that it had originally been set up in Anbay's temple, probably in Tamna' (or, Timna'), capital of Qataban, now the archaeological site known as Hajr Kohlan. On Anbay, cf. the account by M. Höfner, in Haussig (1965: 496-7). The script-forms point to the turn of the Era; - so, the very shallow angle of *r*; the tall, narrow *f* with absolutely straight sides and angles; the *m* with sloping top and foot, and slightly angled curve, and the form of *z*'; cf. the palaeographical charts in Kitchen (2000: plates XLIII - XLVIII).



**Figure 1:** Photo of IA 17.127 - fragment of an Old-South-Arabian stela, 24 cm wide and 20.5 cm high.  
Photo H. Huggins

We may transliterate the extant text as follows:

- (1) [.....] *traces traces* [.....]  
 [.....] (2) *k [y/l/g] / bn / H z' w [° / .....*  
 (3) *s q n y w / ' n [b y / .....*  
 (4) *f r ° m / f r ° [w / .....*  
 (5) [.....] / [.....] ' [..... *rest lost* ..].

And translate with possible restorations, as follows:

- (1) [\*A son of B, C son of D,  
 [...]] (2) *ka[y/l/g], son of Khaz'wa[° , and E son of F]*  
 (3) *have dedicated (this stela), (to the god) An[bay, ...  
 epithets, lost ...],*  
 (4) *(as) an offering (that) [they] have offer[ed to him,  
 .....*  
 (5) [.....] *traces traces* [... *rest of text, lost*  
 .....

Here, the god Anbay is attested as the second most important deity in ancient Qataban, runner-up to Amm, head of their pantheon (cf. Höfner, *op. cit.*, above.) The terms for 'offer', 'offering', are well attested from other Qatabanian inscriptions, as instanced by Ricks (1989: 131), under FR° I-II.

Our sole surviving personal name is found in one other Qarabanian piece, a statuette also dedicated at Tamna', now in Aden Museum in Yemen, published by Pirenne (1962: 258, pl. XV, top left), and the name booked-in by Harding (1971: 224).

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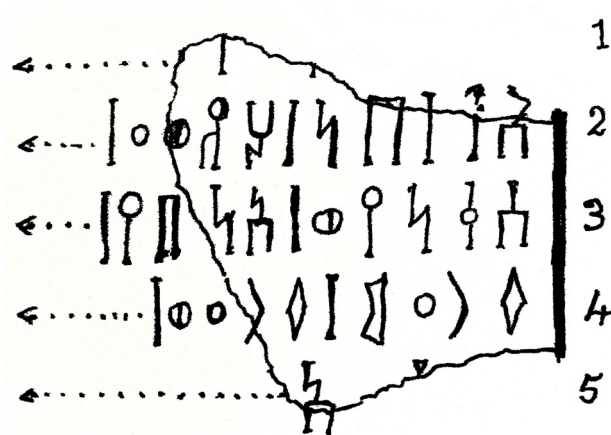


Figure 2: A hand copy of IA 17.127 - fragment of Old-South-Arabian stela

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