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# European Cultural Heritage Expeditions in Saudi Arabia (1850-1970)



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# **Medes and Persians in Ancient Arabian inscriptions**

**Jan Tavernier**

**Université catholique de Louvain**

# Medes and Persians in Ancient North Arabian inscriptions: Safaitic

- Lexeme: Mḍy
- Meaning
  - ≈ Eg. *mḍy* “police officers”: Glaser 1889, 60; Hommel 1892, 127-128; Glaser 1895, 76-77
  - Medes: Hartmann 1895, 32; Lagrange 1902, 260-261, etc.
  - Unknown Arabian tribe: Caquot, apud Macdonald et al. 1996
- Anthroponym: 39 texts
  - ≈ Eg. *mḍy*
  - ≈ Iranian Māda-: “the Mede” (also in Lycian: Mede-)
  - ≈ Arabic *mḍy* “to let a horse graze” (Harding 1971, 536)
  - ≈ Arabic *māḍiyy* “honey”
- “Medes” as indication for Iranians

# Medes and Persians in Ancient North Arabian inscriptions: Safaitic

- Specific examples

- Šmkrn the Persian (RMSK 1)

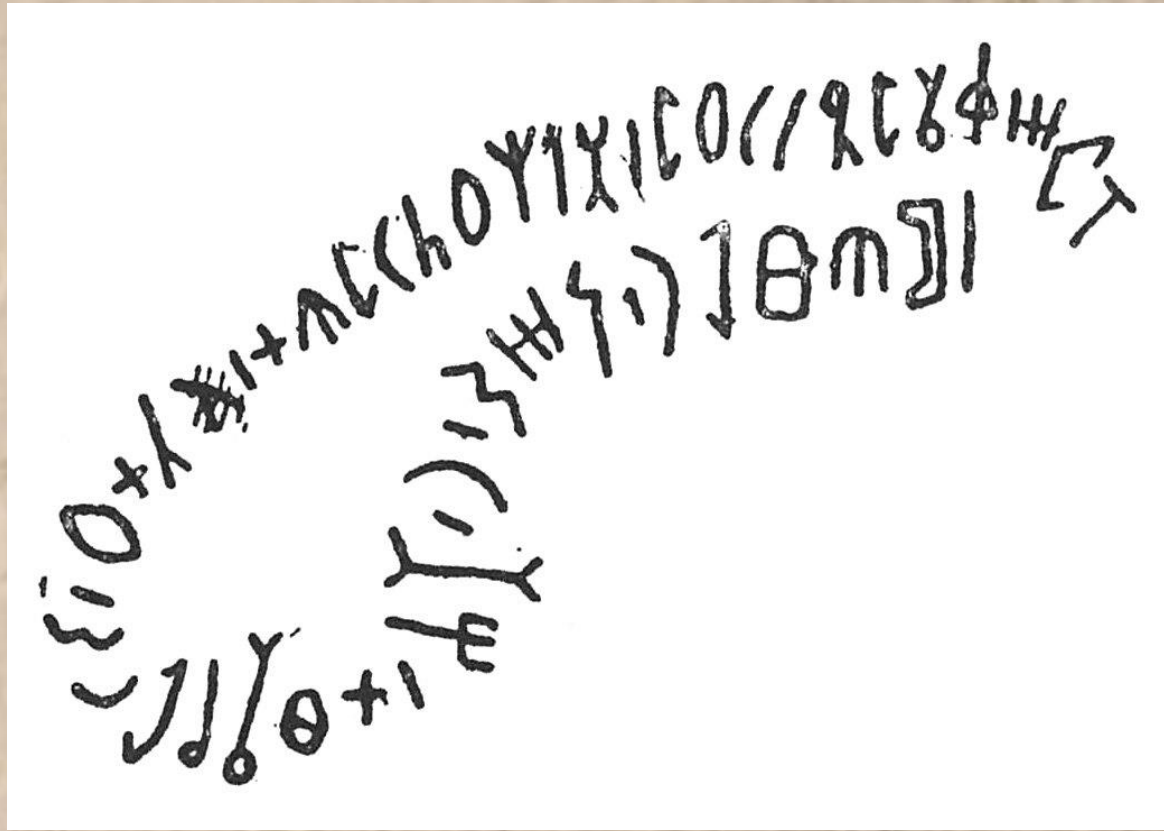
- *l s<sup>2</sup>ʿr bn kḥs<sup>1</sup>mn bn ʿk<sup>1</sup>ḥs<sup>1</sup>mn bn ḏnn bn s<sup>2</sup>ʿr bn gnʿl d-ʿl kn w s<sup>1</sup>rt s<sup>1</sup>nt ngy ʿmd bn ʿs<sup>1</sup> hdy w s<sup>1</sup>nt drg-h šmkrn h-mḏ f h gddḏf s<sup>1</sup>lm w ḡnmt l-d dʿy h-s<sup>1</sup>fr w nqʿt l-d mḥy h-s<sup>1</sup>fr*
    - “By S<sup>2</sup>ʿr son of Kḥs<sup>1</sup>mn son of Kḥs<sup>1</sup>mn son of Ḍnn son of S<sup>2</sup>ʿr son of Gnʿl of the lineage of Kawn and he served in the military the year ʿmd son of ʿs<sup>1</sup> was announced commander and the year Šmkrn the Persian made him (?) surrender so, O Gddḏf, may he be secure and may he who reads this writing have spoils but may he who erases the writing be thrown out (of the grave)”

- Sasanian expedition of Shapur I (256 CE)

- SIJ 78: w mrd ʿl-rm s<sup>1</sup>nt ʿty h-mḏy bšry “And he rebelled against Roman [rule] the year the Persians came to Bošrā”
    - CIS V 4448: s<sup>1</sup>nt ḥrb h-mḏy ʿl rm b-bšr “The year the Persians fought the Romans at Bošrā”

## A photograph of a fragment of a clay tablet with cuneiform inscriptions. The fragment is irregularly shaped and shows several lines of text in a cuneiform script. The background is dark.

**C 4448**



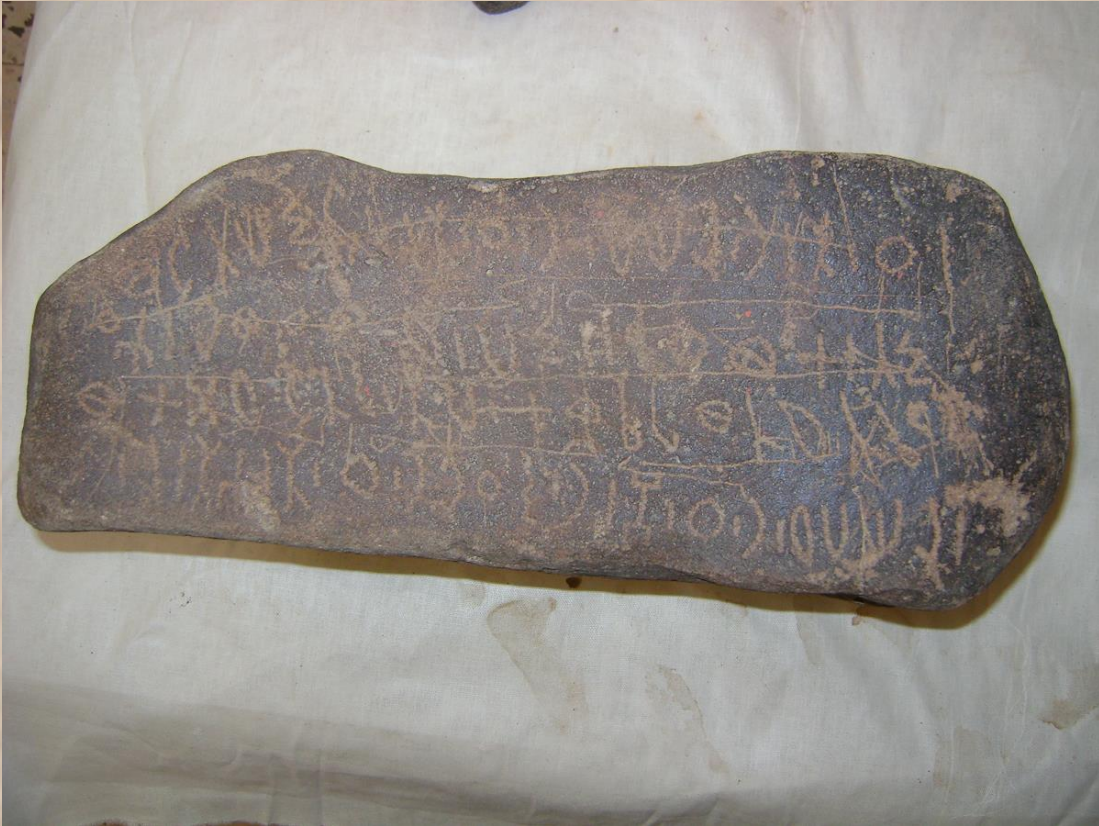
# Medes and Persians in Ancient North Arabian inscriptions: Safaitic

- **Specific examples**
  - **Caesar and the Persians (Al-Mafraq Museum 14 and SIJ 88)**
    - Al-Mafraq Museum 14: t'mr h-śn' snt qsr w h-mḏy "And adversity was widespread the year of Caesar and the Persians"
    - SIJ 88: l ḏ'n bn kḥs'mn bn ḏnn ḏ-'l ḏf w hdy s'nt ngy qsr h- mḏ f h lt s'lm "By Ḍ'n son of Kḥs'mn son of Ḍnn of the lineage of Ḍf and he was a commander the year Caesar ejected the Persians and so Lt may he be secure"

# Medes and Persians in Ancient North Arabian inscriptions: Safaitic

Al-Mafraq Museum 14

SIJ 88



# Medes and Persians in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions: Minaic

- Lexeme: mḍy
- Medes: RÉŠ 3022 = M 247
  - Known since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (copies by Halévy 1872 et Glaser, apud Winckler 1898)
  - Engraved on the southern portion of the Minaic walls of Barāqīš
  - Contested date: 6<sup>th</sup> to late 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE
  - Relevant text (RÉŠ 3022:2-3):
    - w-ywm mt'-sm w-'qny-sm 'ttr ḍ-qbḍm w-wdm w-nkrḥm bn wsṭ mṣr b-mrd kwn byn mḍy w-mṣr w-ymt'-sm w-'qny-sm 'ttr ḍ-qbḍm slmhm w-wfyh 'd 'rb hgr-sm qrnw
    - “And when 'Aṭṭar ḍū-Qabḍim, Waddum and Nakraḥum saved (both) them and their goods from within Egypt during the revolt that occurred between the Medes and the Egyptians, and (subsequently) 'Aṭṭar ḍū-Qabḍim kept them and their goods sound and safe until they arrived at their city of Qarnāw”

# Medes and Persians in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions: Minaic

RÉS 3022 = M 247



# Medes and Persians in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions: Minaic

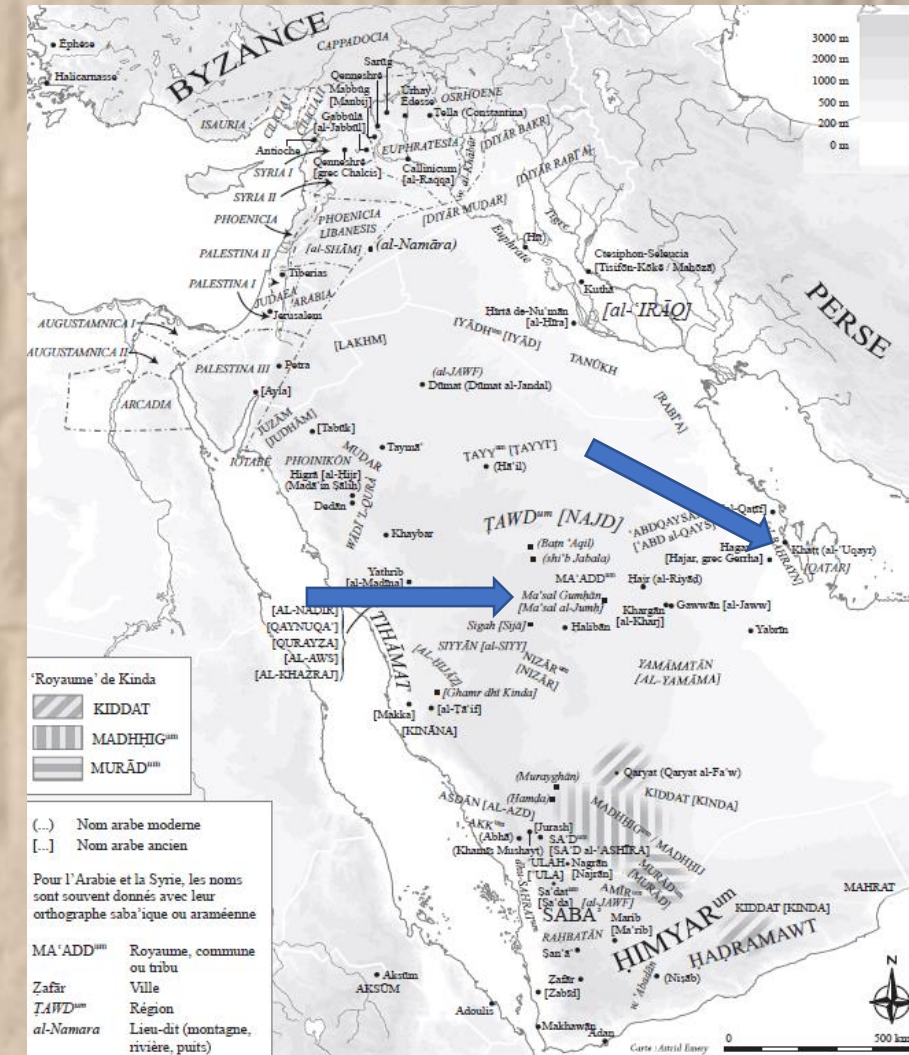
- **Dating the text**
  - **Uncertain: Prioletta & Mounir 2016**
  - **Seleucid period**
    - **217 BCE: wars between Seleucid and Ptolemaic Empires (Pirenne 1956, 211-215)**
    - **After 202: invasion of Egypt by Philip V of Macedonia and Antiochus III of Syria, starting from 202 BC (Ryckmans 1961, 58)**
    - **But:**
      - **Greek dynasty is never called Median or Persian, with one exception (Eg. Mty for Antiochos IV)**
      - **Core area is not Iran but Syro-Mesopotamia**
      - **Seleucids never call themselves Median, whereas the Median element was very important to the Achaemenids**
      - **The word 'Mede' never used by Arsacids or Sasanians**
      - **Sequence Mšr, "s<sup>2</sup>r, 'br Nhr reflects the Achaemenid provincial structure: Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syro-Palestina**
      - **Archaeological confirmation of Abīyada' Yatha ca. 450 BCE (Agostini 2020)**
  - **Achaemenid period**

# Medes and Persians in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions: Minaic

- **Dating the text**
  - **Achaemenid period**
    - 525-522: Persian annexation of Egypt by Cambyses (Lagrange 1902; Mlaker 1943)
    - Late 5<sup>th</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> century: Lemaire 2010, 383
    - 343: conquest of Egypt by Artaxerxes III (de Maigret & Robin 1989, 274; Gnoli 1993; Kitchen 1994; Gnoli 1996, 25; Gnoli 2005; Agostini 2011)
    - BUT: Mrd = “rebellion”, not “war” (Lemaire 1995, 1996, 1997, 2010)
      - Minor revolts
        - Rebellion of Inaros (460-454 BCE)
        - Various rebellions (422, 414-413, 411-408 BCE)
        - Rebellion of Amyrtaeus (404 BCE): Multhoff 2019, 250-251
    - Minor conflict: Beeston 1984

# Medes and Persians in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions: Sabaic

- Lexeme: frs<sup>1</sup> = Sasanians
- Examples
  - Sh. 31
    - Reign of Shammar Yuhar'ish (early 4<sup>th</sup> century CE)
    - w-wz' mz' 'dy Qṭwṣf w-Kwk mmlkty Frs<sup>1</sup> "he went there twice and continued until reaching Ctesiphon and Seleucia, the two royal cities of Persia"
  - Ma'sal
    - Seat of the Himyarite power in Central Arabia (Robin)
    - Various royal inscriptions: Ma'sal 1, Ma'sal 2 and graffiti
      - Studied by the Philby-Ryckmans-Lippens Expedition
  - Ma'sal 3 (ca. 474 CE)
    - Himyarite expedition against the land of Ḥaṭṭ
    - 'hgr ḥṭn 'rḍ Frs<sup>1</sup> "The cities of Ḥaṭṭ, the land of the Persian"
  - CIH 541 (Marib; ca. 548 CE)
    - Reign of Abraha
    - Account of reception of diplomatic representatives of the main powers of the time: Rome, Persia and their allies, the kingdom of Axūm, al-Ḥīra and several other Arab tribes
    - Mlk Frs<sup>1</sup> = Khosrow I (531-579)



# Medes and Persians in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions: Sabaic

Wadi Ma'sal



Ma'sal 3

# Medes and Persians in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions: Sabaic

Ma'sal 1



Ma'sal 2



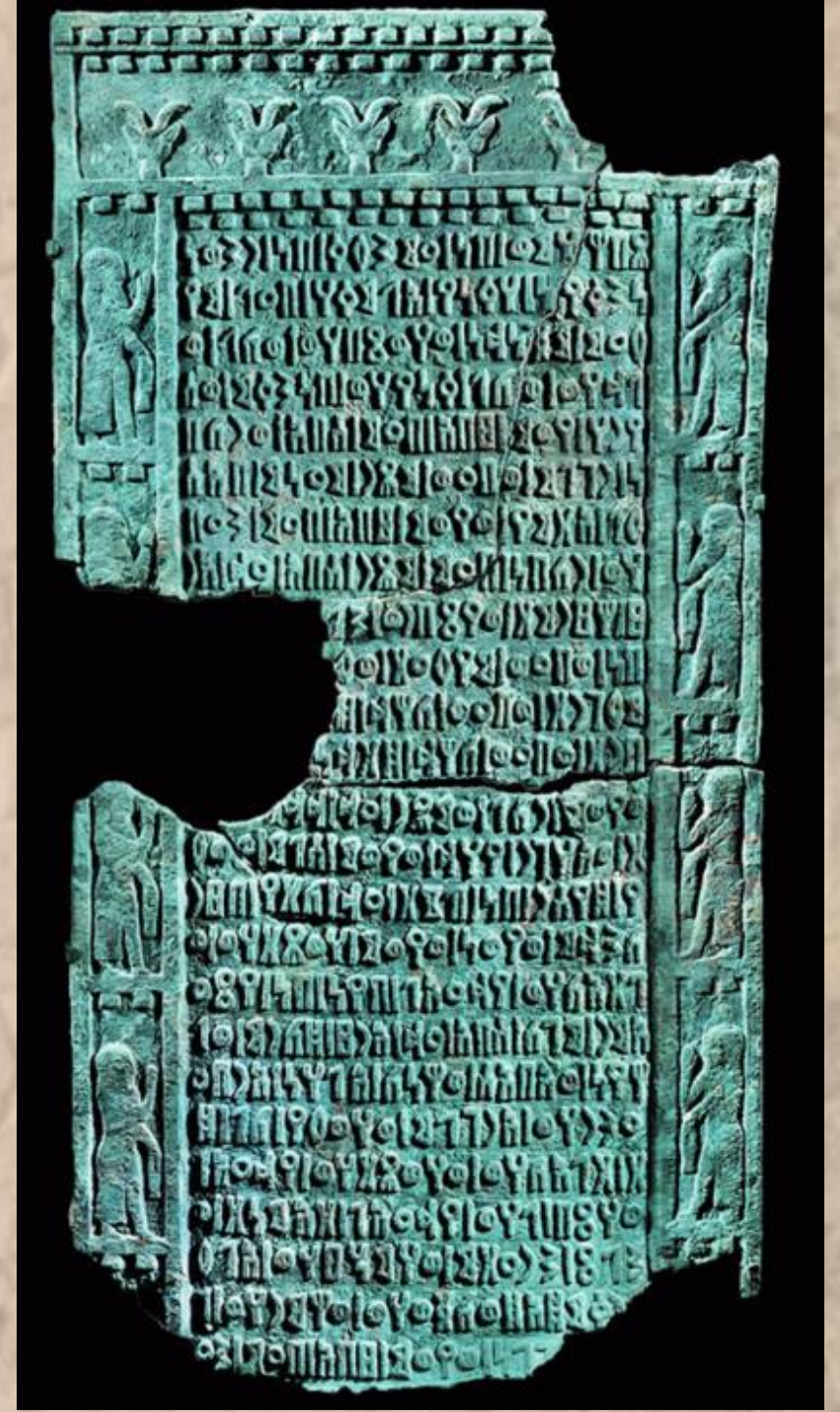
# Medes and Persians in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions: Sabaic

CIH 541



# Medes and Persians in Ancient South Arabian inscriptions: Sabaic

- Lexeme: Mḍy
  - Derived anthroponym Mḍyn?
- Lexeme: Kšdm
- Example
  - Demirjian 1 (Multhoff 2019)
    - Early 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE
    - b-ḍr kšdm w-ywn “A war between the Chaldeans and the Ionians”
    - Possibly the conflict between Euagoras and the Persians (390-380 BCE)
    - Why “Chaldeans”?



# Medes and Persians in Ancient North Arabian inscriptions

- **Mdy: Safaitic and Minaic (Achaemenid and Sasanians)**
  - Aramaic Mdy
  - Babylonian Mada
  - Hebrew Māday
  - Demotic Mdy/Mty
- **Frs: Sabaic (Sasanians)**



Many thanks for your attention

شكراً جزيلاً لاهتمامكم