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Ādiyya (am-)

Jérémie Schiettecatte

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Investigating and mapping Ancient Arabia

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'ĀDIYYA (AM-)

Ancient settlement on the southern edge of the al-Bayḍā' plateau in Yemen. The site is strategically located on the trail connecting the kingdoms of Qatabān and Awsān to the Gulf of Aden. In the early Christian era, the site was one of the largest cities on the territory of the tribal principality of Maḍḥā.

Location

The site lies on the saddle of two granite outcrops, on the southern edge of the al-Bayḍā' plateau in central Yemen, 21 km east of al-Bayḍā', 11 km east-northeast of Mukayrās and 150 km northeast of Aden.

Discovery and exploration

British officers and archaeologists based in the Protectorate of Aden first located and surveyed the site: S. Perowne in November 1937 (Perowne 1939), G. Lankester Harding in 1959-60 (Lankester Harding 1964: 25–27), and D.B. Doe in 1963 (Doe 1963, 1971: 169–73, 1983: 132–33). The latter drafted the first map of the site (Doe 1963: fig. 5).

The French 'Mission Qatabān' (dir. Ch. J. Robin) surveyed the site in the early 2000s and completed the map (**fig. 1**).

Place name

G. Lankester Harding named the site Karīsh, after a nearby village. Nevertheless, the ruins are known as am-'Ādiyya.

The site has been successively identified with three ancient place names. None of these hypotheses is certain. The first was Ma'adī (*M'ady*), after [graffiti](#) carved along a paved road leading to the site (Doe 1963: 2). It was rejected by Von Wissmann, who proposed the name Shahr (*S²hr*) after a parallel drawn between a local toponym and an ancient Qatabanian lineage from the capital city, [Tamna'](#) (Von Wissmann 1968: 69). The last is Raḥab (*Rḥb*) (Robin & Frantsouzoff 2001: 181), an ancient city (*hgrn*) mentioned in inscription [CSA/III, 8](#). The provenance of the inscription, deposited in Mukayras by a local, is unclear. Van Lessen attributes its provenance to am-'Ādiyya, while D.B. Doe affirms that it originated from Raḥaba (Wadi Raḥab) (Doe 1971: 148).

Archaeological remains

The U-shaped site covers an area of 9 hectares. Two stepped paved roads provide access to the northwest and southwest of the site (**fig. 2**). A defensive system follows the topography of the natural relief. The intermediate spaces are enclosed by [rampart](#) sections. There are three gates, the main one to the southwest, a double-bend gate to the north, and a third to the southeast. The uneven ground is covered with the ruins of several structures built in granite. The most significant are a large rectangular [cistern](#) with drains running towards the south, the [house](#) Shab'ān (*byt S²b'n*), inserted in the western rampart, and the house Yaf'ān (*byt*

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VERSION

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Yf'n), in the centre of the site (**fig. 3**).

Not far from am-ʿĀdiyya, the ancient [dam](#) of Sadd Bādī was built around the 6th-5th cent. BCE according to a foundation inscription ([CSAI I, 15](#)).

History

In the absence of diagnostic [ceramics](#), inscriptions are the only available chronological marker to date the occupation of the site. So far, twenty-two [Ancient South Arabian](#) inscriptions have been discovered, mainly in [Qatabanic](#), but also more rarely in [Sabaic](#) ([Im-ʿAdiya 2](#), [Im-ʿAdiya 5](#)). The earliest are dated to ca. 6th-5th cent. BCE ([CSAI I, 15](#), [NAM 223](#)), most can be dated to the 1st cent. BCE/CE and a single graffiti postdates the 3rd cent. CE (Im-ʿAdiya 11).

The change in language observed in the inscriptions reflects the evolution of the political umbrella. The site was under the authority of the rulers of [Qatabān](#) from the 6th cent. BCE to the 1st cent. CE, as evidenced by the use of the Qatabanic language, by the royal inscription [CSAI I, 15](#) (ca. 6th-5th cent. BCE), and an inscription by officers of a Qatabanian king in the ca. 1st cent. CE ([CSAI I, 160](#)).

From the end of the 1st-beginning of the 2nd cent. CE, the site came under the authority of the princes of [Maḍḥā](#), a tribal principality emancipated from Qatabanian rule shortly beforehand (Robin 2006). This is evidenced by the gradual abandonment of Qatabanic in favour of Sabaic and the mention of the princes of Maḍḥā ([Im-ʿAdiya 2](#)).


Inscriptions from the vicinity of am-ʿĀdiyya (Wādī Shirjān, al-Jifjif) suggest that in the 2nd-3rd cent. CE, in the principality of Maḍḥā, members of the lineage of Yaʿguf (*Yʿgf*) had authority over the Datīnat region from their Yasrān palace (Robin 2006: 54). Ch. Robin hypothesizes that this palace was in all likelihood located at am-ʿĀdiyya, which would make the city the political centre of the [Datīnat](#). An unpublished inscription found at the site (am-ʿĀdiyya 2008-1 - **fig. 4**) is authored by members of this lineage and supports this hypothesis.

From the 4th cent. CE onwards, evidence of site occupation is scarce.



Jérémie Schiettecatte

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Alternate spellings: am-ʿĀdiyya, am-ʿAdiyya, am-ʿAdiya, 'am'adiya, Im 'Adiya, al-'Adiya, al-'Adiyya, al-Adiya, am-Adiya, am-Adia, im-Adiya, Karish.