Nabataean Religion and Its Pantheon Through Pre-Islamic and Early Islam Sources: al-Lāt, al-ʻUzzā and Manāt

Lamia Kenoussi[1]

Abstract

In 106 AD, the Nabataean kingdom was annexed by the Roman Empire. However, the culture and religion of the Nabataeans persisted until the coming of Christianity and later, as witnessed by some Islamic sources. This contribution presents several aspects of Nabataean religion, using the example of three major deities, the triad al-Lāt, Al-ʻUzzā and Manāt, which are attested by some pre-Islamic archaeological evidence and reported on by early Arabic-Muslim sources. Two major Arabic sources dealing with this triad are the Qur'ān and subsequent the Arabic historiography which has been transmitted to us by Ibn al-Kalbī, Ibn Hishām and Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī. The method used in the article includes an inventory of relevant texts found in the Qur'ān, an analysis of this inventory, as well as the commentary on the verse mentioning our three goddesses, and another part in which we will elucidate the relevant data provided by archaeological finds. The conclusions reveal that archeology confirms a number of data from the Arab documents, but only to some extent because these historical sources are influenced by their authors and the historical and cultural context where they appear.

Keywords: Nabataean religion, al-Lāt, deities, Qur'ān, Arabic historiographers.

Introduction

John Healey noted in his book *The Religion of the Nabataeans: A Conspectus*[2]: "The Arabic sources are fundamentally polemical, i.e. they are basically hostile to the Jahiliyyah, though they often contain snippets of information which are useful and they do have the merit of coming from the same north Arabian cultural and religious milieu as the Nabataeans themselves".

Many Arab / Muslim historians, from the Middle Ages, endeavored to report every move and gestures, the words of the Qur'ānic Messenger and events that are said to have occurred during the pre-Islamic period, and which then allegedly passed over to the collective memory of the Arabs and later Muslims.

One of the best-known and most detailed Arabic references is that of the

[1] Corresponding author: email, lamia.kenoussi@gmail.com, (Kenoussi, Lamia). Orcid number: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8914-7548, Strasbourg University, in cotutelle with Humboldt Universität, Germany.

Received on 6/9/2020 and accepted for publication on 24/11/2020.

[2] 2001, p.7, Brill, Leiden.

 © 2020 DSR Publishers/The University of Jordan. All Rights Reserved.

historian Ibn al-Kalbī (737-819) who, by his own account, used contemporary Bedouin oral traditions, reported on pre-Islamic deities and their respective cults, in his *Kitāb al-Aṣnām* ("The Book of Idols"), also providing a list of gods and goddesses. Nevertheless, in light of current research, it seems that much of what the author report to us would appear to some extent anyway, to stem from his imagination. We will also rely on Ibn Hishām's *Sīra al-Nabawiya* (??? – 834?), which is no more than a reworking of *Sīra al-Nabawiya* written by Ibn Isḥāq (704-767), as well as on one of the works by Yāqūt (1179-1229), *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, completed in 1228.

The other obvious source for this study, which should therefore not be ignored, is the Qur'ān. The Qur'ānic text mentions a number of deities and /or idols. Some were reportedly denounced in the Bible and associated with a biblical character (such as Noah / Nūḥ or Elijah / Ilyās) or an otherwise unspecified group of people included among those who had received the order not to believe in such divinities, but only in the one true God. They were subsequently punished for turning away from this message and for associating God with idols and pagan deities who cannot be neither useful nor harmful to them.

The following inventory is organized in two primary parts, the Arabic texts, and the archaeological evidence. The first part includes an inventory of relevant texts found in the Qur'ān, an analysis of this inventory, as well as the commentary on the verse mentioning our three goddesses in the second part, we will elucidate the relevant data provided by archaeological finds.

Deities and idols in the Arabic texts

In order to study these three goddesses in their qur'ānic context, it is first of all necessary to draw up, an inventory of the terms it employs, or rather implies, pertaining to divinities and their respective cults.

I- The Qur'ān

In the 114 chapters (Sūrat) that constitute the Qur'ān, we have listed forty (Denise Masson forty-two, since her inventory also includes some allusions) that mention idols or pagan deities. This notwithstanding, we would argue that this number must be (128) revised upwards. In compiling the following table, we have employed data gleaned from Denise Masson's index of proper and common names in the bilingual edition of the Qur'ān.[3], as well as data taken from *Mu 'jam al-mufahras li-alfāḍ al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*[4] by Muhammad Fu'ād 'abd al-Bāqī.

Due to the large number of occurrences, we have included in the table only the most representative ones.

[3] *Essai d'interprétation du Coran inimitable*, Trad. par Masson D. et revue par Dr. Sobḥi El-Saleḥ, Dār al-Kitāb Allubnānī, Beyrouth, (version bilingue), 1967.

محمد فواد عبد الباقي "*المعجم المفهرس لألفاظ القرآن الكريم*"، المكتبة الاسلامية، تركيا، 1984.

	Terms	N° Sūrat	N° Verses	Verses	Contexts
Plur.	**Andād (rivals / equals) 6 occurrences**	Sūrat al-Baqara II	22	Do not attribute to God rivals (equals)	God to the human being
Sing.	**Šarīk (associated) 3 occurrences**	Sūrat al-Isrā' XVII	111	He has no associate!	God to the Messenger
Plur.	**Šurakā' (associated) 29 occurrences**	Sūrat al-An'ām VI	100	They attributed to God the Djinns as associates	God to unbelievers
		Sūrat Yūnes X	71	Agree with your associates	Noah to his people
Plur.	**Arbāb (lords) 4 occurrences**	Sūrat Yūsef XII	39	O you, my two fellow prisoners! Would several separate teachers be better for you than God, the one and the supreme ruler?	Joseph to his two fellow prisoners
		Sūrat al-Tawba IX	31	They took their teachers and their monks and the Messiah, son of Maria, as lords, instead of God. But they have received the order to adore only one God...	God about unbelievers
Plur.	**Shufa'ā' (intercessors) 4 occurrences**	Sūrat al-Rūm XXX	13	They will not find intercessors among those whom they associate with God, and they will be unfaithful to those whom they associate with him.	God about unbelievers
Plur.	**Awliyā' (master / protectors) 8 occurrences**	Sūrat al-Shūrā LXII	6	God is the one who carefully observes those who take masters outside of him	God about unbelievers
		Sūrat al-Baqara II	257	God is the Master of the believers: He brings them out of the darkness into the light. The unbelievers have for boss the Ṭāġūt	God to unbelievers
Sing.	**Ilāh (deity) 22 occurrences**	Sūrat al-Mu'minūn XXIII	91	God did not give himself a son, there is no god next to him, otherwise every deity would attribute to himself what she would have created...	God to those who say he gave himself a son
		Sūrat Ta. Ha. XX	97	Moses said, go away! you will be forced to say, during this life: "do not touch me!" and an appointment is assigned to you, you will not miss it. Consider your god, you remained attached to it all day, we will burn it and we will disperse the ashes in the sea	Moses to the Sāmirī
		Sūrat al-Šu'arā' XXVI	29	Pharaoh says: if you adopt another god than me, I will put you in prison	Pharaoh speaking to Moses

	Terms	N° Sūrat	N° Verses	Verses	Contexts
		Sūrat al-Namal XXVII	60 61 62 63 64	Is there a deity next to God?	God speaking to à Lot
		Sūrat al-Zuḫruf XLIII	45	Ask those of our prophets whom we sent before you, have we established, beside the Merciful, a deity whom they should adore?	God speaking to the Messenger
Duel	**Ilāhayn**	Sūrat al-Naḥl XVI	51	God says, do not revere two gods. There is, in truth, only one God. So dread me!	God to unbelievers
Plur.	**Alihat (deities) 34 occurrences**	Sūrat Hūd XI	53	They said: oh Hūd! You have not brought us a decisive proof, we will not abandon our deities on your word	The ‘Ād to Hūd
		Sūrat al-An‘ām VI	74	Ibrāhīm says to his father Azar: will you take idols for divinities?	Ibrāhīm to his father
		Sūrat al-A‘rāf VII	127	The leaders of the people of Pharaoh said, Will you let Moses and his people corrupt the land and leave you and your deities?	Pharaoh and his leaders to his people
		Sūrat al-Kahf XVIII	15	These people, who are of ours, have adopted, apart from him, divinities	The people of the Cave
		Sūrat Nūḥ LXXI	23	They said: never give up your divinities: do not give up on Wadd, Suwa', Yaġūṯ, Ya'ūq, or Nasr!	Noah and his people
Plur.	**Aṣnām (idols) 5 occurrences**	Sūrat al-A‘rāf VII	138	We made the Israelites cross the sea, they came to a people attached to their idols...	Moses and his people
		Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ XXI	57	I will set traps for your idols!	Ibrāhīm speaking to his father and his people
Plur.	**Tamāṯīl**	Sūrat al-Anbiyā’ XXI	52	What are these statues before which you stand?	Ibrāhīm speaking to his father and his people
Plur.	**Awṯān (statues) 3 occurrences**	Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt XXIX	17	You worship, apart from God, only idols	Ibrāhīm to his people
		Sūrat al-Hajj XXII	30	Avoid the taint of idols	The Messenger speaking to the polytheists
Sing./Plur.	**Ṭāġūt 8 occurrences (proper name**	Sūrat al-Nissā’ IV	51	Have you not seen those to whom part of the Book has been given? They believe in Jibt and Ṭāġūt, they	God to the Messenger

	Terms	N° Sūrat	N° Verses	Verses	Contexts
	which designates deities)			say, speaking of unbelievers: they are better led than believers	
		Sūrat al-Mā'ida V	60	God has turned into monkeys and pigs those whom he cursed, those against whom he is angry, and those who worshiped the Ṭāġūt	God to unbelievers
	Wadd, Suwa‘', Yaġūṯ, Ya‘ūq, Nasr	**Sūrat Nūḥ LXXI**	**23**	**They said: never give up your deities: do not give up Wadd, Suwa'', Yaġūṯ, Ya'ūq, or Nasr!**	**Speech attributed to the people of Noah**
	‘Ijl jasad (calf without life, metallic calf)	**Sūrat Ta. Ha. XX**	**87-90**	**They replied: We have not failed in our commitment to you, but we have been forced to carry loads of adornment belonging to this people, we have thrown them, so the Sāmirī them He threw out a calf, a roaring body. And they said, This is your god, and the god of Moses!**	**The people of Moses speaking about the calf**
	al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, Manat	**Sūrat al-Najm LIII**	**19-23**	**Have you considered al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā, and the other, Manat, the third? Is the male for you, and for him, the girl? These are just names that you and your fathers assigned to them, God did not give them any power**	**The Messenger spoke to the unbelievers**
	Ba‘al	**Sūrat al-Sāfāt XXXVII**	**125**	**Do you call on Ba 'al? Will you leave the best of the creators**	**Elijah to his people**

Comment of the board

1. The terms of designation of false deities

a - Abstract designations (functional terms):

In the above table, we first of all list those words that designate “false” divinities in an abstract manner, vis à-vis their relationship to the God of the Qur’ān.

*Andād (*sing. *Nadd),* mentioned in six verses, refers to beings which were seen as his 'rivals' or 'equals' depending on the context.

Šurakā ' (singular *Šarīk*, three occurrences) refers to such “false” divinities allegedly viewed as associates of God (29 occurrences).

The uses of these two terms implies a priori that those who worshiped such deities were aware of the existence of a single god, superior to others. The notions which they refer to presuppose indeed a god to whom they give associates or equals / rivals.

The word *Awliyā'* (masters: eight occurrences) designates mostly “protectors” devoid of any real power, in comparison with the one God.

Shufa'ā (four occurrences) refers to false deities as ineffective intercessors, naturally with reference to the true God. The same also applies to the term Arbāb (lords four occurrences).

b - Generic designation:

Ilāh, plur. Aliha, divinity (-ies), is the most widely attested term (22 singular, 34 plural). In the singular it designates exclusively the one God (i.e. Allah), with the exception of verses XLV23 in which it designates a human passion XXVI, 29 Pharaoh who calls himself by this term, and XX, 87-88 and 97 the "lifeless" calf. In the plural, it designates false deities.

c - Concrete designations and names given to false deities:

After these abstract terms, we next give those which indicate on the one hand the material aspect of these divinities: *Aṣnām* (sing *Ṣanam* idols), *Tamāṯīl* (Sing, *Timṯāl*, carved image), *Awṯān* (Waṯan sing, statues), and on the other, the proper names of some of them. The case of Ṭāġūt is somewhat different since it is used as a proper name, but at the same time it is also a designation for a collective of deities. So too does the "lifeless calf", which corresponds to the biblical golden calf, refers to an idol by its form and condition.

2. Thematic analysis

This analysis is based in the first place on the synthesis which the Qur'ān makes between abstract designations of deities and their concrete aspects, as well as their names, in the context in which they are mentioned[5].

- *Aṣnām (*idols) is used four times in stories about Abraham and twice Moses. It is associated three times with the generic term *Aliha.*
- The single instance of *Tamāṯīl* (statues) referring to false deities is also in a story from the time of Abraham [6].

Awṯān is twice associated with Abraham and once with Qur'ānic messenger as part of the pilgrimage, perhaps as a reminder of representations of deities present in the Ka'ba during the Jahiliyya.

- The lifeless calf is related to *Ilāh*, the Sāmirī taking him for their divinity.
- Deities from Noah's period, called *Suwa',* Nasr, etc. are also referred to as *Aliha* LXXI, 23.

The first conclusion which we can draw from the preceding is that terms which designate material manifestations of divinities which also serve as their names relate only to antique or at least very ancient gods. On the other hand, these terms are associated only with the generic term *Aliha* which, unlike the names of functions like *Šurakā'* and *Andād*, do not suggest the existence of any main deity of reference. Their worship seems to correspond to what might be called a "primary polytheism" in the sense that, in addition to the material nature of their representations, there appears no hierarchy between them which

[5] I thank Genevieve Gobillot for her advice and for allowing me to benefit from some of her unpublished works.

[6] The other occurrence of the term, in (XXXIV, 13), designates statues made by the jinns in the service of Solomon, and thus, destined for the worship of God.

could even make one think of a henotheism.

If we go on to consider the [polemical terms] terms representing the functions: *Andād, Šurakā', Awliyā', Shufa'ā'* and *Arbāb*, on the contrary it appears that there is a kind of henotheism or even of association, by people who have received a revelation, from one or more entities to God. For the first two, as previously noted, they contain in themselves a reference to the unique and true deity to which they are either associated, or in a situation of rivalry or equality. For *Awliyā'*, in most cases, this reference to the True God is given by the context.

However, other verses simply evoke the fact of taking demons as masters or protectors, without it being specified if in this case, they are completely assimilated to divinities.

The *Shufa'ā*' (intercessors), in verse XXX, 13, are likened to *Šurakā'*, namely associates of the True God. It is the same in VI, 94. In XXXIX, 43 and in X, 18 where they are associated to *Him (God)*.

Finally, *Arbāb* (lords in the plural as opposed to the singular which designates the unique God) conveys a very special meaning, relating to the People of the Book, namely warning against the deification of Jesus, but also of other entities or personages, as indicated by the verses (III, 64: none among us takes lords as his lords) and III, 80: God does not order you to take for lords angels and prophets) and finally IX, 31: they took their teachers and their monks, as well as the Messiah son of Mary as lords instead of God).

Here we must also discuss the term *Ṭāġūt* which in verse II, 257 is related to *Awliyā'* as part of a statement that the one God is the only protector of men. It presents a certain relation to the context of the verses in which *Arbāb* appears, as the two following occurrences of the term confirm: IV, 60: "Have you not seen those who claim to believe what we have revealed and what has been revealed before you? They want to relate to the *Ṭāġūt* (*yataḥākamū ilā*), although they have been ordered to reject it. The Demon wants to throw them into a deep misery."

IV, 62 "They say," We only sought charity (*iḫsānan*) and success in our enterprises (tawfiqan)" implied: relying on *Ṭāġūt*.

From the use of the terms *Arbāb* and *Ṭāġūt* it is clear that the Qur'ān refers to characters contemporary to its revelation, to two specific modalities of polytheism attributed to People of the Book or to believers المؤمنون in the Qur'ānic word. The first is a polytheism that could be described as "theological". It concerns the person of Jesus, but also the angels, the Virgin Mary, the prophets and even religious leaders who although they may not have been divinized in the true sense of the word, who as teachers though were thought to think that they were to be trusted more than to the word of God. On the other hand, the Qur'ān describes a situation in which believers increase

their faith in revelation, relation to the worship of demons and various idols[7] in the sense that they compete with the one God.

It would seem that this last situation is that of the audience to whom the Qur'ānic messenger addresses himself when he speaks of the three deities: al-Lāt, Al-'Uzzā and Manāt.

3. Comment of the passage (LIII, 19-23)

" *Have you considered al-Lāt, Al-'Uzzā and the other Manāt, the third? Is the male for you and for Him (God) the females? These (really) are only names that you and your fathers have attributed to them. God did not give them any power. Your fathers only follow a conjecture and what passionate souls*". C LIII, 19-23.

These three goddesses, probably all of Nabataean origin, and the subject of the famous satanic verses, were considered, among other things according to *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, as the daughters of Allāh, the primary deity worshiped in the Ka' ba before Islam. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī states that the Qur'ānic expression concerning them represents the beginning of the glorification formula pronounced for them by their worshipers: "Have you considered al-Lāt, Al-'Uzzā and the other, Manāt, the third? They are sublime cranes and their intercession is certainly desired (implied: with their father, the greatest god, Allāh or Hubal according to tradition)". This information, which is also found at al-Suhaylī[8] on the one hand can illuminate the rest of the verse: "Is the male for you and for Him (Allāh, father of these three goddesses) the females?" as verse XVI, 57 confirms: "They attributed daughters to God - Glory to Him - while they do not want them themselves! ". this on the other hand highlights the caustic tone of the remark "they are just names" that appears as an answer to this question, which in reality is purely rhetorical. This last expression is attributed to Joseph in XII, 40. What you worship outside him are only names that you and your fathers attribute to them. It confirms that these are ancient deities, although they continue to be revered during the revelation of the Qur'ān.

The example given here has a twofold purpose: to denounce the insignificance of these divinities, which exist only as the names that men have given them and to show that they owe them only to the fact that these polytheists had found in their misguidance an outlet for one of their dominant

[7] See Manfred Kropp, « Beyond single words, *mā'ida – šaytān* --jibt and *Ṭāġūt,* Mechanisms of transmission into the Ethiopic (Ge'ez) Bible and the Qur'ān text » in: *The Qur'ân and its historical context*, edited by Gabriel Saïd Reynolds, Routledge, Taylor and Francis group, London and New-York, p. 204-215, p. 209. Let's specify here why we did not mention jibt, quoted once with Ṭāġūt, in verse (IV, 51). It seems to us that W. Atallah's work on this point in his article "Jibt and Ṭāġūt in the Qur'an," Arabica, 17. 1970, 69-82 gives convincing arguments that this term does not designate a false divinity, but the sorcerer who serves it and makes it known, this word from Qibt, which means the Egyptians, known at the time for their magical practices. In general, the referencing is rather chaotic: every reference is presented in a different style!

[8] Sīra Ibn Hishām, tome 2, p. 3, note 1.

passions, namely the desire to breed boys they are proud of and contempt for girls whose birth was still considered a shame at the time XVI, 58-59. So, they were not just content to invent divinities, but they relegated them to a lower position according to their criteria of judgment, giving them feminine names. They thus virtually satisfied a greed for boys that was so large that they could not even concede possession to their gods (see LIII, 19-23).

Several textual clues also show that the ancient Arabs were not primarily polytheists, but rather henotheists and, probably for the most part, "People of the Book," or at least familiar with the religious culture of the latter. Indeed, if we consider how the Messenger addresses his contemporaries, we realize that their worship of these idols (and demons - a real distinction between the two was seemingly often non-existent -) presents all the features of an association, a principal deity linked to purely immediate interests. They say that these divinities bring them closer to God XXXIX, 3, and that the one God created them XLIII, 87.

The veneration of these three goddesses at the time of Revelation would have been, according to the Qur'ān, a secondary polytheism, even "adventitious" and much more of superstition and an exclusively social and traditional adherence (imitation of their fathers of old) to old customs disguised as religious conviction. In this sense, the Qur'ān clearly shows that the motivations of these pseudo-polytheists correspond basically to a single impulse, that which drives one to take one's passion for a deity XLV,23)

The whole question centers on whether or not we can admit that the Qur'ān is able to convey any testimony of historical significance. A rapprochement of it with the texts of the Arab-Muslim historiographers can illuminate this point at least in part.

II- The three goddesses in the pre-Islamic pantheon according to Arab historiographers. The information in this section is based largely on *Kitāb al-Aṣnām* of Ibn al-Kalbī, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiya* of Ibn Hishām and *Mu'jam al-Buldān* of Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī. Some additional details are drawn from *Rawd al-Unuf* of Suhaylī.

n the book "Kitāb al-Aṣnām" Ibn al-Kalbī gives a list of idols in Noah's day[9]: The words of Ibn al-Kalbī, who cites his father as a source here, are related: 'During Noah's time, there were five virtuous persons: Wadd, Suwa', Yaġūṯ, Ya'ūq and Nasr. They died all five in the space of a month. In memory of them, statues were carved in their image. Out of solidarity with the relatives of the deceased, people also began to honour these statues, conferring on them supernatural powers, which in turned increased their paganism. To remind them

[9] P.23 in: Ibn Al- Kalbī, *Le livre des idoles / Kitāb al 'Aṣnām*, Traduction du texte intégral, enrichie de notes, accompagnée de cartes et d'index, par Ahmed Benjelloun, d'après le texte arabe établi par Ahmad Zaki Pacha, Publication: Alqalam, Paris, 2014.

of the right path, Allah sent them the prophet Idrīs, the Biblical Enoch. Without success though. It was then that God brought forth to these people a great prophet Nūḥ, and after his remonstrances also went unheeded, the Deluge overwhelmed the entire earth, the deities eventually being buried'. Ibn al-Kalbī also seeks to explain how man, monotheist at the time of creation, came to adore such a large number of deities.

He assumes that originally Wadd was a righteous man; after his death he came to be honoured by a statue and was raised to the rank of divine intercessor. It was the Flood that brought his idol to Arabia near Jeddah; which was found there by 'Amr b. Luḥayy who apparently entrusted it to the tribe of Kalb (§45e-47b). According to Ibn Hishām (p.79) his person had gone to Damascus for business and when he arrived he found the 'Amāliq tribe who worshiped idols. They gave Hubal to Amr, who deposited him in the Kaaba at Mecca to be worshiped. According to Suhaylī, quoted by the publisher of the Sīra, the Arabs made it a *rabb*, i.e. Lord, of a sacred place. He adds that there was also a stone on which barley was ground for pilgrims. It was called al-Lāt and it is said that a man of Ṯaqīf, when he died, was declared by 'Amr ibn Luḥayy as not really dead, but incorporated into this stone and thus became worthy of worship (p.79). We can see here that this theme of worshipping a deceased person by means of an idol is somewhat reminiscent of the information given by al-Kalbī concerning the deities of Noah's time. According to Ibn al-Kalbī and Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Al-'Uzzā was a more recent to the pantheon than al-Lāt and Manāt, since (p.86 Ibn Hishām') the Arabs mentioned these two before. Note that the Qur'ān proposes a different order: al-Lāt, Al-'Uzzā and Manāt. The two historian also report that Al-'Uzzā was the idol in Mecca most respected by the Quraysh. According to the publisher of the Sīra, Al-'Uzzā was a bouquet of palm trees and, on the other hand 'Amr Ibn Luḥayy said that the Rabb, (Hubal or Allāh) lord of the Ka'ba wintered with al-Lāt in Ṯaqīf and summer in Mecca with Al-'Uzzā (p.241, Volume 1, Ibn Hishām[10]).

1- Al-Lāt

The meaning of al-Lāt's name remains unclear. Two interpretations have been suggested:

The first derives it from the root l t t. Arab lexicographers are unanimous in considering that al-Lāt derives from the verb latta "to mix, to knead barley flour (sawīḳ)". Ibn al-Kalbī speaks of a lātt al-sawīḳ who was Jewish and whose square rock at Ṭā'if was asymbol of al-Lāt, from which it takes its name. This allows us to deduce that a ritual similar to the Hebrew ritual of "the oblation of jealousy" placed in the temple of Jerusalem (Ezekiel, V, 15) was practiced near the sacred stone symbolizing al-Lāt and that it was considered as one of the multiple representations of the Semitic goddess Ba'lat.

The second interpretation, considers al-Lāt to be the consort of Allah or his

[10] *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiya*, Dār Ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabiyya, Beyrouth, Liban.

prototype. Either he or El, simplifies the problem, by making al-Lāt a female form of Allah or al-Ilāh, an anonymous god of the pre-Islamic Arab pantheon (Pantheon, 41-4)[11].

Ibn Hishām furthermore reports that when Abraha wanted to go to Mecca to destroy the Ka'ba he passed by Ṯaqīf. The inhabitants of this city said to him: This is not our temple that you want to destroy. They meant that of al-Lāt. But in reality, you really want to destroy the one which is dedicated to this goddess in Mecca.

2- Al-'Uzzā:

A pre-Islamic Arab feminine deity. The name means "The very powerful" or "The all-powerful". Employed alone, i.e. without a theophoric element, in the pre-Islamic period, the name always takes the article (liḥyanite hn-'zy, ancient Arabic'l-'zy, Nabatean'l-'z' with Aramaic form'zy', and South-Arabic 'zyn).

Al-Kalbī suggests that before the seventh century worship of Al-'Uzzā was firmly established in and around Mecca.

Its main sanctuary was located in a valley called Ḥurāḍ in the Nakhlat al-Sha'miyya on the Meccan road to al-Ṭā'if. He insists on the extreme devotion of the Ḳuraysh to this goddess. According to Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, Al-'Uzzā was an acacia tree which the Ghatafân worshiped and later built a temple for. (p. 116 volume 4). According to Ibn Ḥabīb Al-'Uzzā was a tree[12]. A tradition dating back to Ibn 'Abbas reports that Al-'Uzzā was a demon that haunted three acacias inside a palm grove[13].

3- Manāt:

Concerning the third pre-Islamic deity in the triad, we have but few information. The sacred site of al-Mushallal in Ḳudayd, about 15 km from Yathrib, became the rallying point of the Aws and Ḳhazradj who were the most fervent worshipers of Manāt.

According to Ibn Al-Kalbī[14]: she was a goddess, being the oldest of the triad. Venerated by all the Arabs: Quraychites, Lihyanite, Nabataeans and Palmyrians.

According to Yāqūt, the Aws and the Khazraj preferred Manāt since the Ṯaqīf preferred al-Lāt and the Quraysh al-'Uzzā (Yāqūt, p.118, volume 4). He adds that the Azd and Ghassan considered her to be a deity to whom they devoted a pilgrimage (p.204, volume 5). According to Ibn al-Kalbī Manāt was a Hudhayl

[11] Toufic Fahd: *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'Hégire*, Paris, 1968.

[12] Christian J. Robin, « Matériaux pour une typologie des divinités arabiques et de leurs présentations », *Dieux et Déesses d'Arabie: images et représentations. Actes de la Table ronde tenue au collège de France (Paris) les 1ers et 2 octobre 2007*, Sachet I., Robin C.J. (Édit. Scientifique), Orient & Méditerranée n°7 Boccard, Paris, 2012, p51.

[13] Jackie Pigeaud, *L'arbre et la raison des arbres: XVIIe Entretient de la Garenne Lemot*, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2019, p. 313.

[14] Ibn al-Kalbī, p.59.

stone in Qudayd and his feminine identity came from this representation.

Synthesis of information transmitted by Arabic texts

The Qur'ānic data on pre-Islamic deities and those derived from the texts of laster islamic historiographers have both points in common, but display at the same time important differences. They converge on the names of the deities, and, for the three goddesses in question, the fact that in Mecca they were considered to be the daughters of the Lord of the Ka'ba, which is even found in the formula used for their worship. This loyalty to the expression of a *realia*, which the Qur'ān presents in its detail to better criticize it, may have been, as Suhaylli reports, the occasion of a confusion which led to the famous history of the Satanic verses[15].

The differences are found in the presentation of polytheism. Historiographers describe situations that may suggest that at the time of the Qur'ānic revelation and even thereafter, a so-called "primary" polytheism remained in Arabia. On the contrary, the Koran suggests that this form of worship, inherited from Antiquity, no longer existed in its time. However, some Arabs, more or less steeped in monotheism, still worshipped idols, often confused with the spirits of the dead, the jinns and the demons. this attitude seems to have corresponded to residual superstitions such as those which, throughout the world, have survived the implantation of the religions of the Book.

<u>The archaeological evidence of Al-Lāt, Al-'Uzzā and Manāt:</u>

This second part is intended to illustrate the textual analysis made about deities and idols in the Arabic texts, from archaeological and epigraphical evidence found in the field and identified by the majority of the scholars working on the Nabataea world (Nehmé & Villeneuve 1999 p.75, Zayadine 1991 p.283-306, L. Tholbecq 1997 p.1069-1095, Nehmé 1997 p.1023-1067, M-J Roche 2004 p.163-180, Zayadine 1991 p.37-52, Moutsopoulos 1991 p.53-76, as being associated to or representing these three goddesses.

[15] The question of "satanic verses" has long been dealt with by the Orientalists who wrote about the prophet: this is the case of Montgomery Watt (1958), Gaudefroy-Demombynes (1957), and M. Rodinson (1961). But the theme had been dealt with for a long time by the Arab sources to be discussed particularly in Ibn Hichâm Abû Muḥammad `Abd al-Mâlik S.D.*Al-Sīra al-Nabawiya*, 4 tomes, Dār Ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabiyya, Beyrouth, Liban. To summarize the question of the satanic verses, it is reported that the prophet Muhammad, in the first stage of his career, in Mecca, facing strong opposition from his entourage, was tempted to recognize the goddesses of his opponents, either by political calculation (which is generally rejected), either by the devil's trick (the accepted hypothesis), or inadvertently, or by personal desire (a hypothesis that must be considered, but which is considered inadmissible by Muslims). The so-called Surah of the Star includes two verses stating that the three goddesses were worthy of esteem. Because of this, the unbelievers rallied to Islam, and the rumor also spread to Abyssinia which caused the return of some emigrants. But these, on their return, found the situation changed. Indeed, after a certain time (from one night to a few months, we do not know) the angel Gabriel, his usual inspirer, had made Muhammad aware of his error, who then abrogated the verses in question, which thus do not appear in the Qur'an. The result was a resurgence of the hostility of the Meccans, which was to lead to the departure (hegira) of Muhammad for Medina.

In order to present the archaeological evidence concerning these three deities, it is necessary to place them in their context, both historical and environmental (the place in which they were found), describe in what form they are attested (iconography) and finally, to determine who, why and how they were worshiped.

The Nabataean population being very diverse, from an ethnic and cultural point of view, mixing sedentary tribal groups and nomadic ones, it is not surprising that its pantheon is in its image, multiple[16]. This Nabataean society shows characteristics specific to nomadic Arab societies, but it also reveals an administration modeled on the Hellenistic models. The population is very heterogeneous, the different Nabataean clans, those of the Arab tribes and the sedentary live side by side, foreigners are quite numerous, especially Greeks, Romans and Jews, mainly in Petra and on the margin of Judea[17]. There are non-Nabataean populations in these Arab tribes, among them Safaitic and Thamoudeans in the south of Nabatene.

The religion of these groups of populations occupying the territory of the Nabatene or, more broadly, of pre-Islamic, pre-Islamic Arabia (before the advent of Islam in the seventh century AD), is a dead religion. John Healey draws the analogy between dead language and dead religion, as well as the comparison between dead language and religion and living language and religion. It demonstrates that "with living languages and living religions we have the possibility of a virtually infinite resource in our attempts at understanding: we can observe or question native speakers and members of the faith community. With dead languages and dead religions, we cannot find a complete answer to the questions we might have answered."[18].

I- The expression of religion in Nabatene:

1- Places:

Spaces devoted to worship are generally dissociated from the tombs, even if they are sometimes placed under the protection of betyls. On the other hand, the worship space and the inhabited space are strongly mixed. The most numerous religious monuments are mainly small rock monuments: the smallest is a niche housing a betyl of 6cm high and 3 cm wide. (See Nehmé, Villeneuve 1999, p.76).

-The temple built

One of the most famous examples of the Nabatene *is Qasr al-Bint or Qasr al-Bint Fir'aoun "Castle of Pharaoh's daughter"*.

Example of inscriptions referring to a temple dedicated to a deity:

"*Temple of Wadd at al-'Ulā (ancient Dedān):* according to RES 3695 = M

[16] Marie-Jeanne Roche, 2009, p.143.
[17] Marie-jeanne Roche, 2009, p.79.
[18] John Healy, 2001, p.4.

356, reinterpreted by A. F. L. Beeston, the goods (traded in *Byt Wd*, l. 2) which do not comply with the regulations are placed under the prohibition of *Nkrḥ (ḥrm ḥrmn Nkrḥ*, l. 8); See as well

RES 3894 A / 2 and 3695 / 2. "[19]

-**The sanctuary** (Sudarabic *mḥrm*, Arab *ḥaram*): these terms derive from the root ḥrm, which can designate both the sacred and the illicit. This is the sacred space reserved for divinity.

Example: the primitive sanctuary of al-Lat (see Tholbecq 1998, p.241).

-**The mountains and rocks**: some divinities may have for residence a mountain or a rock. Example: the rock sanctuary of 'Ayn as-Sallāleh in Wādī Ramm[20].

It is common in the Semitic world to establish isolated sanctuaries on summits accessible during pilgrimages. These places are all the more spectacular in Petra that they are mainly cut in the rock (see Nehmé & Villeneuve 1999, p.76).

2- Iconography: representation of the deity:

In Nabatene, the deity is worshiped above all in the form of betyl:

Byt: from the Semitic *Beth-'l* "dwelling of God", *Nb* in Nabataean, from the Greek *Baitulos*[21]. This space was considered the habitation of the deity. This divinity is represented in the form of a sacred stone, most often non-figurative and unadorned.

There are some examples of betyls carved inside a grave or burial chamber. In Petra, in the Al-M'eiṣrah massif, six betyls are carved in the tombs No. 550 and M15, named "Triple Dūšarā complex"[22]. Most of them, on the other hand, are cut outside, ready for the tombs (example in Umm al-Biyarah, a betyl is on the left of the entrance door of the tomb n ° 390)[23].

Standing stones are often objects of worship characteristic, submitted to regional beliefs and constituted part of the ancient religious background. Nabataean betyls represent gods in the form of a rectangular stone representing the house of the deity, *byt'l*. Mostly without distinctiveness, some Nabataean betyls are adorned with two stylized eyes, a nose and a mouth.

“Cult-niches and steles are common in the Nabataean sites. They are very numerous at Petra and in the Jabal Ithlib at Hegra. Many niches contain plain stone pillars or betyls carved out of the rock and often probably representing Dūšarā, sometimes with one, two or three additional pillars representing the deities associated with him.

“It is clear from the inscription accompanying two betylic figures of this

[19] Christian Robin, 2012, p.22.
[20] Saba Farès-Drappeau, 1996, p.269-283.
[21] Leïla Nehmé et François Villeneuve, 1999, p.73.
[22] Isabelle Sachet, 2012, p.245, tire de Horsfield (A. et G.) 1938, fig. 13, pl. LVI.
[23] Isabelle Sachet, 2012, p.246.

kind at Ramm that Al-'Uzzā and al-Kutbā are being represented in that case"[24].

3- Who, why, how:

The Nabataean religion, is a complex cosmos where a crowd of both anonymous and non-figured gods rub shoulders, and on the other a hierarchy of named and figured gods (see Nehmé & Villeneuve 1999, p.71). Many small religious monuments are dedicated to great gods, including Dūšarā, while most large sanctuaries are not clearly dedicated to a major god. For the main temples, especially in Petra itself, the inscriptions are rare, and it seems clear that it was not in the Nabataean usages to inscribe great dedications in the stone, unlike many civilizations of Antiquity (see Nehmé & Villeneuve 1999, p.72). Priest and various associations organized religious processions and ceremonies. The course of these ceremonies can be reconstructed thanks to information provided by texts and monuments. The sacrifice of animals took place on an altar situated in the sanctuary but not in the temple proper. Human sacrifice, meanwhile, did not exist. According to all evidence, incense and wine were the main offerings. Religious banquets were celebrated, and the meat of sacrifices consumed (see Healey 2001, p.161). "There is little evidence of personal cult. To judge from the slightest evidence of pre-Islamic Arabia, custody of sanctuaries was probably family (Henninger 1981, 5), and it may have been no sacrificial priesthood[25].

"For the Nabataeans we currently only have scraps of evidence and even the most fundamental data which is taken for granted. There is no continuous native account of any aspect of Nabataean religion written by a Nabataean, there is no account of Nabataean cult, there is no surviving Nabataean mythology. And even in relation to the main deities worshipped by the Nabataeans, Dūšarā and his partner al-Lāt/al-'Uzzā, we have very little idea of the nature and characteristics of the deities concerned"[26].

II- Al-Lāt, Manāt, Al-'Uzzā:

1. Al-Lāt/اللات

The cult of al-Lāt is attested over a vast geographical area, from Palmyra[27] to Mecca[28], of the pre-Islamic Middle East (before the VIIe century).

The Arab goddess al-Lāt is generally identified with Athena and corresponds to the Greek goddess Aphrodite. His name would be a contraction of al-Ilahat "the goddess", in Arabic, and recalls the *Alilat* evoked by Herodotus. In contrast, in Roman times, she is associated with Athena, while the other Arab goddess, al-'Uzzā, is associated to Aphrodite. We find the name of the goddess

[24] John Healey, 2001, p.155.
[25] John Healey, 2001, p.163.
[26] John Healey, 2001, p.6.
[27] Aziz al-Azmeh, 2014, p.168.
[28] Toufik Fahd, Encyclopédie de l'Islam, 2010.

in the form of Ilat in the Nabataean inscriptions and Ilat/Lat in the Safaïtic inscriptions.

No inscription evoking al-Lāt has been attested in Petra, but the presence on a relief near the area of Qasr al-Bint, depicting a bust of Athena, suggests that it is the Arab goddess[29].

She was both the goddess of shepherds, from the Ḥijāz to the Ṣafā, and that of caravan traders, from Mecca to Petra and Palmyra[30]. She is known since the fifth century BC (mentioned in the form of *Alilat* in Herodotus *Enquête*)[31] although it was only during the Roman period (1st-3rd century AD) that her cult became widespread among Arab tribes.

Figure 1. Wadi Ramm, ‘Ayn Shallāleh, *al-Lāt of Bosra* betyl, 2004. Jane Taylor Collection at ACOR.

[29] Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo, Eugenia Equini Schneider, 1997, p.87.
[30] Toufik Fahd, Encyclopédie de l’Islam, 2010.
[31] Toufik Fahd, Encyclopédie de l’islam, 2010.

1 *l-Ġṯ bn 'slh bn Ṯk=*
2 *m w-bny bt lt*
3 *ḏ-'l 'Ād*

Figure. 2. Inscription from the temple of *Al-Lāt* in Wādī Ramm. Farès-Drappeau, 1996, p. 276-277.

Al-Lāt in the Wādī Ramm (Fig. 1,2).

From a geological point of view, wādī Ramm is the natural extension of the Arab-Nubian Shield, of which Ḥijāz is the southernmost extremity. The wādī is crossed by a source 'Ayn as-Shallāleh, which allowed the development of an entire agglomeration, the construction of a temple dedicated to the goddess al-Lāt, at the foot of the mountain, and the presence of a rock sanctuary at the source itself (see Farès-Drappeau 1996, p.269).

The first who had reported the inscriptions at 'Ayn as-Shallāleh in the Wadi Ramm was Lawrence of Arabia in 1926 in his book The Seven Pillars of Wisdom. In 1932, Georges Horsfield and Dominican Father Savignac went to, among other places, 'Ayn as-Shallāleh where they copied many inscriptions published in the Biblical Review of 1932 and 1934. In 1934, they explored the temple of al-Lāt, whose report was also published in the Biblical Review of 1935 (see Farès-Drappeau 1996, p.270). One of the most important discoveries made in the 'Ayn as-Shallāleh is the presence of a niche (Savignac 1934, 584: fig.7, pl xxxix, 1933, 411-12: no.2)[32] beside which is an inscription: *'il' lht 'd (y) bbsr'*, 'Al-Lāt the goddess who is on Bosra...'. (see Fig. 1).

The temple of al-Lāt, located at the foot of the Jabal, was excavated by Diane Kirkbride in 1959. In 1960, she published a first chronology of the occupation of the site (see Kirkbride 1960, p.65-92).

But it was during temple restoration work, conducted by the Department of Antiquities in Jordan since April 1997, that an inscribed stone was found in the chapel, the inscribed face being until now hidden on the ground.

The cut block measures 55cm long, 27.5cm wide and 23cm thick. The spiral text extends over three lines (see Fig. 2). Here is the translation: A Gayt, son of Aws-Lah, son of Takam, who built the shrine of al-Lāt (for) the clan of Ad. This is a Thamoudean inscription indicating that the temple of al-Lāt was built for / by the tribe of 'Ad. (See Farès-Drappeau 1996 and Tholbecq 1998).

The fact that the block with the dedicatory inscription was later re-used for the foundation of the first temple phase, indicates that the sanctuary preceded that building. Around the late first century BC to early first century AD, a rectangular podium had been erected in front of the aforementioned sanctuary[33]

Al-Lāt in Petra

The city of Petra has its own triad formed first by the supreme god Dushara among the Nabataeans, Dusarès in Greek, Dhū Šar ذو الشرى, in Arabic. God of the Mount (Mount Shara), and two deities are associated with him: al-Lāt, the warrior goddess Arab form of Athena and the celestial deity of al-'Uzzā, whose main temple located in the Temple to the Winged Lions[34]. He is associated to al-‘Uzzā as his consort[35], or his mother[36]

[32] John Healey, 2001, p.58.
[33] Laurent Tholbecq, 1998, p. 241-254.
[34] Henri Stierlin, 2009, p.150.
[35] Robert Wenning, 2016, p.192

2. Al-'Uzzā/العزى

The name al-'Uzzā means "The powerful" or "The all-powerful". During the centuries preceding the advent of Islam, the name always takes the article (liḥyanite hn-'zy, ancient Arabic'l-'zy, Nabataean'l-'z' with the Aramaic form'zy', and South-Arabic'zyn). (See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Macdonald, Nehme, 2010).

"Al-'Uzzā is likened to the goddess Aphrodite (see HWJ Drijvers, Cooks and beliefs at Edessa, Leiden 1980, 185), to Ruḍā (AG Lundin, in RG Stiegner (ed.), Al-Hudhud, Graz, 1981, 215-16), at 'Azīzū in Palmyra (Drijvers, op.cit., 152, 162-4), to al-Lāt (Wellhausen, 44-5), to al-Lāt and Manāt (Fahd, The pantheon of Central Arabia, Paris 1968, 176-7), and finally to a "great Semitic common goddess" which represents a great variety of astral and chthonic forces (Wellhausen, 45, Lundin, cit., Fahd, loc cit.).

The only explicit assimilation of al-'Uzzā to Aphrodite can be read in a bilingual, Nabataean / Greek inscription from the 1st century BC-AD 1st century AD J.-C, from the Greek island of Cos (F. Rosenthal, Die aramaitische Forschung, Leiden 1964, 86 and 91 No. 4)[37].

"The only representations of al-'Uzzā that are identified as such in the inscriptions are Nabataean: simple rectangular betyles, with stylized eyes (eg MR Savignac, in Biblical Review, XLIII [1934] 586-9), a type well attested throughout western Arabia both as divine symbols and as tombstones. However, there are betyles similar to Petra and in the surrounding area representing al-Kutbā, Atargatis, Isis, etc. In the first centuries of the Christian era, we find the worship of al-'Uzzā in Ḥawrān (RES, 2091,'l-'z"lht bṣ [r'], "the goddess of Bosra"), in Petra (ex., RES, 1088), in the Wādī Ramm (Savignac, loc, cit.), In Sinai (CIS, II, 611, 1236, each time by a kāhin of al-'Uzzā), in Dédān (JSLih, 58), in a Sabeo-Arab text of Ḳaryat al-Faw in Central Arabia (Ja 2138, see J. Ryckmans, in JSS, XXV [1980], 197-8), and (probable importation from the North) in inscriptions in Sabean, in qatabanite and perhaps one in Minaï (same author and book, 196-97). In the fifth century AD J.-C, Isaac of Antioch speaks of the "Arabs" ('arbāyē) sacrificing to al-'Uzzī (Bickell ed., I, 210-11) and, in the sixth century, there is evidence that the deity was worshiped by the royal family Lakhmids in Southern Mesopotamia »[38].

[36] Robert Wenning, 2013, p.340.
[37] Michael Macdonald et Leïla Nehmé, *Encyclopédie De l'Islam*, 2010.
[38] Michael Macdonald et Leïla Nehmé, *Encyclopédie De l'Islam*, 2010.

Figure 3.
Petra, Idol of *al-'Uzzā / Isis* from Temple of the Winged Lions, 1994.
Jane Taylor Collection at ACOR.

The temple takes its name from the ornamentation of some of its capitals. Excavations carried out in 1970 permitted to clear the temple and a part of its temenos. The temple stands on the steep slopes north of the Wadi Mūsa, overlooking the Qasr al-Bint temenos gate. The end of its construction is known thanks to an inscription on marble plate, dated before 27 apr. J.-C[39]. It is in this temple that was found an anthropomorphic stele (see fig.3) with an inscription engraved on its base "Hayyān son of Nībat"[40]. Although not mentioned in the inscription, the represented goddess is generally considered to be al-'Uzzā or Isis.

[39] Nehmé L. & Villeneuve F., 1999, p.80.
[40] Nehmé L. & Villeneuve F., 1999, p.75.

Figure.4

Figure.5

Figures. 4,5. Wādī Ramm, Ain Shallāleh, *al-'Uzzā* and al-Kutbā of Gaia, 1999. Jane Taylor Collection at ACOR.

The walls of the sanctuary of Ayn as-Shallāleh are adorned with "star-studded" idols representing the god al-Kutbā of Gaia and the goddess al-'Uzzā [41].

The god Kutbā appears in four Nabataean inscriptions: to Petra even in the form of kwtb '. It is found in the form of 'lktb', in three other sites including wādī Ramm, north of Sinai at Qasr Gheit, and along the Egyptian border at Tell esh-Shuqāfiyeh. It is in Liḥyānite texts of Dédān that we find most of the attestations of al-Kutbā. (See M-J Roche in TRANSEUPHRATENE 27, 2004, p.167).

We have other examples attesting to the presence of the worship of al-"Uzzā in Nabatene for example among other, an inscription discovered north of the site of Madā'in Ṣāliḥ, the ancient Hegra. It is a bilingual dadanito-Nabataean inscription, engraved not far from two contiguous betyls, incised on the rock wall.

Here are the translations by Michael Macdonald for dadanite and by Leïla Nehmé for Nabataeans:

The dadanitic inscription reads: *ḏs'ry / l ['fn] / bn / ['] ml / [.*; what Michael Macdonald translates as "*Oususa'ray / [may you be] for ['fn] sons of ['] ml [.* ". It is therefore a simple invocation of Dūšarā, whose name is spelled in an ancient North Arabian form, and this is the first attestation of the name in Dadanitic; it is an Arabic name which means "that of the Sharā", and it is also attested in north-arabic, safaïtique, which is more recent (1st century BC-2nd century AD). The second line, below, in Nabataean, was written after the dadanitic, because the n 'fn was damaged by the Nabataean of al-'Uzzā. The Nabataean text is: *dnh gbl '' l 'z' w mr byt '*, what Leila Nehmé translates as follows: "This is the mountain of al-'Uzzā and the Lord of the Temple." (See Nehmé 2005-2006 p.188-225 and F. V. Winnett and G. L. Harding 1978 p.30).

3. Manāt/ منوة

We have little information about Manāt. It is seemingly the name of one of the oldest deities in the Semitic pantheon, being already attested during the pre-Sargonic period in the form of Menūtum and is one of the names of Ishtar (see *Manāt*, T. Fahd, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2010, in J. Bottéro, "Les divinités sémitiques anciennes en Mésopotamie", dans S. Moscati (éd.), Le *Antiche Divinité Semitiche*, 30; Tallqvist, Götterepitheta, 373-4).

It is thus found in an Aramaic inscription of Taymā', dating to the 4th-3rd centuries BC, where it is invoked as *Mnwh' lht 'lt'* « Manawat Goddess of the Goddesses » (See K. Beyer And A. Livingstone, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft&* 137, 1987, p. 290-292). In the Idumean ostraca of an economic nature dating from the same period, IV century. BC. J. - C., published by André Lemaire (see A. LEMAIRE, New Aramaic inscriptions of Idumée with the Museum of Israel, II, Paris 2002), one notes two theophoric anthroponyms containing the theonyme Manāt; *zydmnt, Zaydmanat and 'bdmnt' Abdmanat* in an inscription on jar. These anthroponyms, in particular theophores, testify to the variety of the population of Edomite or Idumean, Jewish, Phoenician,

[41] Fawzi Zayadine, 1991, p.284, tiré de: Savignac, *Revue biblique*, 43, 1934, p.587, fig.10.

Arab origin. The name of Manāt appears in Nabataean, in the form mnwtw to Madā'in Ṣāliḥ: the goddess is quoted there with her ***qyš***, that is to say her "measure", alongside Dūšarā and al-Lāt, on a large funerary inscription (CIS II, 198); in a theophoric anthroponym of an inscription from Transjordan, we read *Whbmnwt / Wahbmnawtu* (l, 3). The theophoric name *Qys1mnwt* is attested in a South Arabian inscription from Qaryat al-Faw (Ja 2122/1).

It also appears in Thamoudean, where it has the defective form *mnt*; it is also known in Palmyrenia and Dacia, the present-day Rumania, where a Latin inscription emanating from a Palmyrenian, found at Sarmizegetusa, mentions it; his name is transcribed in Latin *Manavat*. (K. Beyer and A. Livingstone 1987 pp. 290-292, A. Negev 1971 pp. 50-52, J. Mckenzie et al 2013. In Marie-Jeanne Roche, Introduction to Pre-Islamic Religions of Northern Arabia. On the divinities of Arabic paganism, through epigraphy and iconography, seminars of the École Pratiques des Hautes Études, from 2008 to 2012).

The variants in the spelling of the name of the goddess and her Arabic spelling have received several interpretations; Christian J. Robin believes that there is a difference of spelling between the north and south of the peninsula[42].

The role of Manāt as Goddess of Destiny, and therefore of the passage of time, as well as its assimilation with Tyche, goddess of Fortune, can explain the presence of a bust of Tyche in the center of a zodiac of the Nabataean temple of Khirbat aṭ -Ṭannūr, Roman period[43].

4. Banāt ’Il

According to Christian Robin, the three principal goddesses of the pre-Islamic Arabs, al-Lāt, al-'Uzzā and Manât, were worshiped in Yemen, Syria and western Arabia as "Daughters of He" (*Bnty 'l* and variants), "Daughters of God" (*Bnt-'l*) or "Daughters of God" (Banāt Allāh)[44]. In the temple of al-Sawda site (the ancient Nashshan)[45], a representation of the god Aranyada ', was found on two pillars. Now, in a lower register of these pillars is a procession of four young women similar to each other, waving a curved object, they are described as "Daughters of II", *[b] hnt '(1)* (see Robin 2012, p.72) (fig.6).

Christian Robin makes the following analysis: "Certainly supernatural beings, they are nevertheless inferior to divinities since they have no personal name and are represented under the appearance of sequences of identical young women. Their role is perhaps that of intermediaries and messengers. ".

[42] Christian Robin et al., 2004.
[43] Marie-Jeanne Roche, Introduction aux religions préislamiques d’Arabie du Nord. Recherche sur les divinités du paganisme arabe, à travers l’épigraphie et l’iconographie.
[44] Christian Robin, 2000, p.117.
[45] Christian Robin et al., 2004, p.23.

Figure 6. *Banāt 'Il*. Robin, 2012, p.72-73.

In conclusion

Archeology confirms a number of data from the Arab documents: the ancient existence of these deities, their names, the regions concerned by their worship and some of their representations. There is no doubt that, when the Qur'ān mentions them, it refers to a still contemporary reality of its apparition. But as we have seen, it carefully points out that in its time those were no more than residual superstitions within a monotheistic religion universe. On the other hand, Muslim historiographers, anxious to show their erudition and not very disposed to qualify the situation of the Arabs in the Jâhilî period, describe them without any field depth nor historical contextualization, a problem which an attentive scientific reading can overcome to a great extent.

Contributor

Lamia Kenoussi:

PhD student in Classical Studies-Archaeology, Ecole Doctorale 519, UMR7044 – ARCHIMÉDE Archaeology and Ancient History: Med. and Europe, Strasbourg University, in cotutelle with Humboldt Universität. She is an associate member of the Center for Studies of Cultures and Religions CERC, Catholic University of Lyon. Her field of research connects the archaeology of northwestern Arabia, including southern Jordan, with monotheistic religious texts.

ديانةُ الأنباط ومعبوداتهم الرئيسة خلالَ فترة ما قبل الإسلام وبدايته: اللاتُ والعُزّة ومناة

لمية كنوسي

ملخص

ضُمَّت مملكةُ الأنباط إلى الإمبراطوريّة الرومانيّة في عام 106 ميلاديّ، ومعَ ذلك استمرت الثقافةُ والديانةُ النبطيّتان حتى دخول المسيحيّة وبعد ذلك كما يتّضح من بعض المصادر الإسلاميّة. وعليه، فتقدِّمُ هذه الدراسةُ جوانبَ عِدّةً منَ الديانة النبطيّة مستخدِمةً المعبودات الثلاث الرئيسة مثالاً: اللات والعزّة ومناة، التي أُشيرَ إليها في الدليل الأثريّ من فترة ما قبل الإسلام، وَذُكِرَت في مصادرَ عربيّة – إسلاميّة مُبَكِّرة. وهناك مصدران عربيان يتناولان هذا الثالوث، هما: القرآنُ والتاريخ العربي اللاحق الذي نقله لنا ابنُ الكلبي وابن هشام وياقوت الحموي. إنّ المنهجيّة المتَّبعة في هذه الدراسة تشتملُ على قائمة للنصوص الموجودة في القرآن، وتحليلها، والتعليق على الآية التي تذكرُ هذه المعبودات الثلاث، وتفسير المعلومات ذات الصِّلة بهذا الموضوع، التي جرى الحصولُ عليها منَ المكتشفات الأثريّة. وتشيرُ الاستنتاجاتُ إلى تأكيد علم الآثار عددًا منَ المعلومات التي وردت في الوثائق العربيّة إلى حدٍّ ما؛ لأنّ تلك المصادر التاريخيّة متأثرةٌ بمؤلّفيها وبالسياق التاريخيّ والثقافيّ للمناطق التي ظهرت فيها.

الكلمات الدالة: الديانة النبطيّة، اللات، المعبودات، القرآن، المؤرّخون العرب.

جامعة ستراسبورغ ، في كوتوتيل مع جامعة هومبولت، المانيا

تاريخ استلام البحث 2020/9/6م، وتاريخ قبوله للنشر 2020/11/24م. .

REFERENCES

Al-Azmeh A., 2014, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and his People*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Atallah W., 1970, "Jibt et taghût dans le Coran," *ARABICA* 17, p. 69-82.

Arbach M., Audouin R., Robin, Chr., 2004, « La découverte du temple d'Aranyada' à Nashshan et la chronologie des Labu,ides », *ARABIA* 2, p.23-41.

Farès-Drappeau S., 1996, « Wadi Iram: un lieu du culte et de rassemblement des tribus arabes dans l'Antiquité. Les premiers résultats de la mission épigraphique 1997 », *ARAM* 8, p. 269-28.

Amadasi Guzzo M.G., Equini Schneider E., 1997, *Pétra*, Paris, Arthaud.

Fahd T., 1968, *Le panthéon de l'Arabie centrale à la veille de l'Hégire*, Institut Français d'Archéologie de Beyrouth, 1968 Paris, Paul Geuthner.

Healey J., 2001, *The Religion of the Nabataeans: A Conspectus*, Leiden Brill.

Ibn Al-Kalbī Hishâm, 2014, *Le livre des idoles / Kitāb al-Aṣnām*, Traduction du texte intégral, enrichie de notes, accompagnée de cartes et d'index, par Ahmed Benjelloun, d'après le texte arabe établi par Ahmad Zaki Pacha, Paris, Publication: Alqalam.

Ibn Hichâm Abû Muḥammad `Abd al-Mâlik, S.D., *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiya*, 4 tomes, Beyrouth, Liban, Dār Ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabiyya.

Lammens H., 1920, « Le culte des bétyles et les processions religieuses chez les Arabes préislamités », *BULLETIN DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ARCHEOLOGIE ORIENTALE*, p. 39–101.

Kropp M., 2007, "Beyond single words, mâ 'ida – Shaytân --jibt and tâghût, Mechanisms of transmission into the Ethiopic (Ga'az) Bible and the Qur'ān text", in *The Qur'ân And Its Historical Context*, edited by Gabriel Saïd Reynolds, London and New-York Routledge, Taylor and Francis group.

Masson D., 1967, *Essai d'interprétation du Coran inimitable*, Trad. Par Masson D. et revue par Dr. Sobḥi El-Saleḥ, Beyrouth, Dār al-Kitāb Allubnānī, (version bilingue).

MoutsopoulosN.C., 1990, "Observations sur les representations du pantheon nabatéen", *Petra and the caravan cities: proceedings of the symposium organized at Petra in September 1985 by THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES OF JORDAN AND THE ICONOGRAPHIC LEXICON OF CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY* (LIMC), Amman.

Nehmé L., 1997, « Espace cultuel de Pétra à l'époque nabatéenne », *TOPOI 7/2*, p.1023-1067.

Nehmé L. & Villeneuve F., 1999, *Pétra: métropole de l'Arabie antique*, Paris, Seuil.

Pigeaud J., 2019, *L'arbre et la raison des arbres: XVIIe Entretiens de la Garenne Lemot*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes.

Robin Chr.J., 2012, « Matériaux pour une typologie des divinités arabiques et de leurs présentations », *Dieux et Déesses d'Arabie: images et représentations. Actes de la Table ronde tenue au collège de France (Paris) les 1ers et 2 octobre 2007*, (Édit. Scientifique) Sachet I., Robin C.J., *ORIENT & MEDITERRANEE n°7*, Paris, De Boccard.

Robin Chr.J., 2000, « « Les filles de dieu » de Saba' à la Mecque: Réflexion sur l'agencement des panthéons dans l'Arabie ancienne », *SEMITICA 50*.

Roche M-R, 2009, *Pétra et les nabatéens*, Guide des civilisations, Paris, Belles Lettres.

Sachet I., 2012, « Dieux et hommes des tombeaux d'Arabie Pétrée: iconographie et aniconisme des élites nabatéennes », *Dieux et Déesses d'Arabie: images et*

représentations. Actes de la Table ronde tenue au collège de France (Paris) les 1ers et 2 octobre 2007, (Édit. Scientifique) Sachet I., Robin C.J., *ORIENT & MEDITERRANEE n°7,* Paris, De Boccard.

Stierlin H., 2009, *Pétra: Capitale Du Royaume Nabatéen, IIIe siècle avant - IIe siècle après J-C*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale Éditions.

Tholbecq L., 1998, "The Nabataean-Roman Site of Wadi Ramm (Iram): A New Appraisal", *ADAJ* 42, p. 241-254.

Teixidor J., 1979, *The Pantheon of Palmyra*. Leiden, Brill.

Suhaylî, 1967, *al-Rawḍ al-unuf fī šarḥ al-Sīra al-Nabawiya li-Ibn Hishām. wa-maʿahu al-Sīra al-Nabawi*yya (7 volumes).

Wenning R., 2016, "The Many Faces of Dushara – a Critical Review of the Evidences", *SHAJ* XII, p.189-209.

Wenning R., 2013, "North Arabian deities and the deities of Petra: an approach to the origins of the Nabataeans", *Men on the Rocks, The Formation of Nabataean Petra*, editors: M. Mouton & S.G. Schmid, *TOPOI*, Berlin, p.335-342.

Yāqūt Al-Shaikh al-Imām Shihāb al-Dīn Abī ʻAbd Allāh Yāqūt Ibn ʻAbd Allāh al-Hamawī al-Rūmī al-Baghdādī, Dār al-Kutub al-ʻIlmiyya, 1990, *Muʻjam al-Buldān*, tahqīq Farīd ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz al-Jundī, Beyrouth, Dâr al-Kutub al-'ilmiya.

Zayadine F., 1990, "Petra and the caravan cities: proceedings of the symposium organized at Petra in September 1985" by *THE DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES OF JORDAN AND THE ICONOGRAPHIC LEXICON OF CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY* (LIMC), Amman. 1991, L'iconographie d'Isis à Pétra, *MELANGES DE L'ECOLE FRANÇAISE DE ROME*, tome 103-1, p. 283-306.

Zayadine F. & Farès-Drappeau S., 1998, « Two North-Arabian Inscriptions from the Temple of Lāt at wādī Iram », *ADAJ* XLII, p.255-258.

محمد فواد عبد الباقي, *المعجم المفهرس لألفاظ القرآن الكريم*, المكتبة الاسلامية، تركيا، 1984.