

**NEW LIGHT ON THE RELATIONS
BETWEEN AKSUM AND THE SOUTHERN ARABIAN STATES
DURING THE 2ND AND 3RD CENTURIES A.D.**

By

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The southern part of the Red Sea is an integral cultural area in which the Red Sea and the straits of Bab El-Mandab constitute an unifying rather than separating factor. Accordingly Southern Arabian cultural influences extended to Aksum and embraced language, cults, methods of agriculture and irrigation and so on. Aksum, on the other hand, was often capable throughout its history of interfering in rivalries between Southern Arabian Kingdoms. And since the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. it was strong enough to take over that part of Southern Arabia situated to the north of the Sabaean territory.(1)

Though we are quite certain of the strength of these ties, very little is recorded of them. Therefore, the discovery of any new inscription concerning these relations is a treasury in itself since it can shed so much light on unknown chapters of the history of this region.

Mutathar Ali El-Iryani, an Yemeni researcher, contributed to the discovery of new chapters in the history of this region through the Publication of 34 Sabaean inscriptions, (2) from the collection of an Yemeni judge, Ali

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(1) Fawzy Mikawy, *Mamlakit Aksoum* (The Aksumite Kingdom), an unpublished doctoral dissertation in Arabic, Cairo, 1974.

(2) Muttahar Ali El-Iryani, *Fi Tarikh Al-Yaman* : (in Yemen History, 34 new inscriptions, explanation and interpretation), in Arabic, Cairo 1973. These inscriptions are unpublished with the exception of four texts : Nos. 1, 12 and 14 (published in Ahmed Sharaf El-Din, *Al-Tarikh Al-Thaqafi El-Yamani*, Part III under Nos. 11, 20 and 29). and No. 3, published by Jamme, A., *Sabaean Inscriptions from Mahram Bilqis (Marib)*, Baltimore 1962, No. 627) ; See, El-Iryani Op. cit., P. 31.

Abdullah Ali-Kuhali. (3) Of this collection, only four inscriptions deal with the relations between the Southern Arabian states and Aksum in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. These inscriptions derive their significance from the contribution and provision of new data concerning the relation of these kingdoms at that time. The inscriptions also confirm or modify some other information about the history of that region.

The first text (no. 12 in Al-Kuhali's collection) deals with these relations in the 2nd cent. A.D., whereas the other three texts (nos. 19, 28 and 20) deal with them during the 3rd cent. A.D.

— I —

The map of the southern parts of the Red Sea basin during the 2nd century A.D. indicates Aksumite expansion on African territory extending the kingdom's frontiers to the boundaries of Egypt in the north and to Somalia in the south. Aksum also expanded into Arab territory with the occupation of *kinaidocolpita* and *Arrabita* which lay beyond the Sabaeen territories (4). South of these territories lay a set of warring Arab states such as *saba*, *Himyar*, *Qutaban* and *Hadramwt*.

The presence of the Aksumites on Arab territory helped them to interfere in the Arab affairs. It all began when 'Ihn Nhfñ revolted against his master, the sabaeen king, and styled himself as king. Then he started to consolidate his standing so as to be able to resist any attempt to divest him of the throne which he had usurped. He therefore allied himself with Jada'ab Ghailan king of Hadramwt. He also allied himself with GDR king of Aksum. This alliance provided that « ... they plighted themselves to make war and peace together against everyone who should raise himself up against them as enemies and that they would be sincere, faithful brothers ...» (5)

(3) The owner of this collection managed to obtain it written in four note books from a Yemeni Soldier who acted as guard for an American Mission that worked at Mahram Bilqis in 1952, and ; See, Ahmed Fakhry, *Dirasat fi Tarikh A-Sharq Al-Qadim* (Studies in ancient Eastern history) 2nd ed., Cairo, 1963, P. 157.

It seems from the story told by Muttahar El-Iryani that the writer of this collection was a member of that mission. It seems also that during enforced departure of the mission, the collection was lost. Hence it came into the possession of Al-Kuhali and he handed it over to his friend Muttahar El-Iryani. Muttahar found most of these inscriptions in the four note-books some of which were published by Jamme, A., op. cit. However Muttahar found among them the collection which he published for the first time; See, El-Iryani, op. cit.

(4) Winstedt, E.O., *The Christian Topography of Cosmas Indicopleustes* Cambridge 1909, pp. 72—73.

(5) Pankhurst, S., *Ethiopia a cultural history*, London, 1955.

This alliance served both parties. The Sabaean king managed to retain his rule and the Akumites created peaceful conditions in their colony north of Sabaean territory. Nevertheless, matters changed with the death of the Sabaean king 'lhn Nhfn and the advent of his son S'rm 'wtr as a sole ruler. The amity of the kings changed into animosity, which caused so many battles and victims.

In fact we do not know exactly why these friendly ties collapsed? especially as king S'rm 'wtr shared the crown with his father during the last phases of the father's life.(6) This naturally implies that he witnessed a phase of the friendly ties that linked Aksum and Saba. However the study of king S'rm 'wtr's life indicates that he sent many military expeditions against diverse opponents. These military expeditions covered a very wide area in Southern Arabia.(7) It is highly probable that king S'rm 'wtr was ambitious to expand his sphere of influence. Therefore, he conflicted with all powers prevalent at that time in Southern Arabia which refused to pay him allegiance. King S'rm 'wtr neither wielded a Free hand nor enjoyed full power during his father's reign and was hence relatively handicapped till he ruled alone.

Among those powers with which king S'rm 'wtr fought were the Aksumite Forces residing at their colony on the northern Frontiers of his domain. The Aksumites did actually manage to make alliance against the expanding influence of king S'rm 'wtr. This might explain the presence of Aksumite forces in areas far away from their colony through out the various battles they fought with S'rm 'wtr.

The fact that these battles were actually fought between the Aksumites and king S'rm 'wtr during the 2nd cent. A.D. is confirmed by basic evidence i.e. an inscription written by Qataban Awkan, one of the military commanders of king S'rm 'wtr as dedicated to thank the god 'llmqh "... because he has protected his worshipper Qataban Awkan, descendant of Grt, when his lord, S'rm 'wtr king of saba and Raydan, sent him into the land of the the Habasites against Gadarat, king of the Habasites(9) and of Aksuman...(10)

(6) Many inscriptions implied that S'rm 'wtr shared his father s crown ; See, Jamme Op. cit., P. 290 and El-Iryani, op. cit., PP. 60—61.

(7) Jamme, op. cit., PP. 300—304.

(8) Jamme, Ibid., P. 361.

(9) Habasites is the term used by Jamme to translate the Sabaean word 'hbsn which often (applied to the Aksumites in the sabaean inscriptions.

(10) Jamme, Ibid., No. 631, LL, 11—13.

It is believed that that conflict caused the limitation of Aksumite dominion and sphere of influence in Southern Arabia, though its possessions since the time of the monumentum Adulitanum remained(11), apparently, intact.

However, such along established point of view needs reconsideration since the publication of a new inscription which speaks of a later period of conflict between the Aksumites and the Sabaeans after the expedition of Qataban Awkan.

Wfy 'drh, one of the military commanders of king s'rm 'wtr, wrote the inscription which implicitly indicates that that man had been exercising more than one military function related to the conflicts with the Aksumites. He led the sabaean forces against the Aksumite enemy, then he took upon himself the responsibility of revenge against the Aksumites' Arab auxiliaries. That last task confirms of course, his fulfillment of the first one.

This inscription which I shall refer as no. 12 Alkuhali, after the owner of the collection and number of the inscription in El-Iryani's work, says.

1— wfy 'drh son...ms... praying to 'lmqh Thwn lord of 'wm with a statue and an ox both of gold ; for his lord S'rm ' wtr king of saba and Drydn issued a decree to appoint him as a commander over the troops which were camping on the frontiers of the Hsdm tribe because of the war waged by the ' hbsn and by those who assisted them from the tribes of Swhrn and Khwlhn.

2— Wfy encamped on all the frontiers of the Hsd with their urban and bedouin population and with all those who were assisting them from the Dbn arabs. He established military posts all along the frontier of the Hsd tribe during his years of rule and command. When the 'hbsn launched their assault again, they attacked the Dbn arabs in the valley of Dw'rm, on the west frontier of the Hsd. with a force totalling 2500 warriors.

3— Then wfy 'drh, commanding a force of 170 warriors of (D) bn arabs, overtook them ('hbsn) on the second night at Mqrn D srhtn, and launched a sudden attack upon them. He (wfy) reached the centre of their encampment by midnight then he defeated, killed and expelled them ('hbsn) from their camp. Besides he imprisoned 500 of them and took many sr' and 'lb'...(?)

(11) i.e. from the early beginnings of the 2nd cent. A.D

4— Wfy ' drh also offered hid oblation (to ' lmqh) because his lord s'rm ' wtr king of saba and D rydn with his brother (S'rm's brother) Hyw 'ttr YD', both sons of 'lhn Nhfn king of saba, appointed him to command a special troop of the army totalling 600 warriors to fight ' zd Gysm and Hrbm son of 'lyn ' khwln.

(5) And He (Wfy) fought their forces (the forces of 'zd and Hrbm) at Ngd Mhrbn within the territories of Dshrtm. 'lmqh Thwn lord of 'wm clped his worshipper wfy 'drh and his forces and brought them back safe and sound.

(6) The number of the victims was 210 killed with the edge of sword, 130 captives, 400 prisoners, boys and girls 300 camels, 1300 cows, 270 asses and 10.000 sheep.

(7) May 'lmqh Thwn go on blessing wfy 'drh by finding the favour with his Lord (s), s'rm 'wtr king of saba and Drydan and his brother Hyw 'ttr yd', both sons of 'lhn Nhfn king of saba.

(8) May the god 'lmqh lord of 'wm give his worshipper wfy booty and money wherever he goes to help lords, S'rm' wtr king of saba and Drydn and his brother Hyw 'ttr YD' and wherever they send him either to fight or to reside and to guard either here or there.

(9) May 'lmqh bestow upon him (wfy) good senses and faculties and save them (his lords) from evils of all envious enemies here or there, invoking the right of 'lmqh lord of 'wm and invoking the right of his lords s'rm 'wtr king of saba and Drydn and his brother Hyw 'ttr Yd' both sons of 'lhn Nhfn.'(12)

Studying this text, we draw the following conclusions :—

The events mentioned in the text witness developments of the Sabaeen throne. The first decision appointing wfy 'drh as commander over the forces encamped on the frontiers of the Hsdm (Hasid) tribes was issued by king S'rm 'wtr whilst he was ruling alone. The second decision appointing the same person as commander over retaliation forces against the Aksumites and their Arab allies was also issued bearing the seal of king S'rm 'wtr and his brother Hyw 'ttr Yd' after the latter had joined his brother on the throne (13) .

(12) El-Iryani, op. cit., PP. 67—73.

(13) Some inscriptions say that Hyw 'ttr Yd' shared the crown with his brother (e.g. Jamme, op. cit., P. 304). However the novelty in this inscription that one event was attributed to King S'rm 'wtr exclusively and the other was attributed to the King and his brother.

Naturally these Two events are separated by a number of years as mentioned by wfy 'drh when he said that his first task took him many years whilst encamped on the frontiers of the Hsdm.

The fact that hyw 'ttr yd' participated government obviously indicates that the new inscription followed that of Qataban Awkan (Ja. 631) and is therefore evidence for the continuation of the Sabaeen — Aksumite conflict in the reign of S'rm' wtr after the battles of Qataban Awkan.

Though S'rm 'wtr had fought so many wars to realise his ambitions, wfy 'drh says in this text, as mentioned before by Qataban Awkan, that the Aksumites were the first to attack. However Srm' 'wtr might have committed so many acts of aggression against the presence of the Aksumites that their forces were forced to launch a preemptive attack upon him.

A certain degree of exaggeration is noticeable about the Sabaeen victory over the Aksumites. Wfy 'drh remarked that he, aided by 170 soldiers, had killed 210 and captured 530 men, women and children and carried off 11,870 animals. It is quite obvious that these figures are far bigger than the capability of wfy 'drh's forces.

Eventually, if the conflict between S'rm 'wtr and the Aksumites had led to the limitation of the Aksumite presence within their old colony, situated at the northern end of the Sabaeen territory, this should have taken place after the new war mentioned in the text, not as a consequence of the operations of Qataban Awkan mentioned in his inscription (Ja 631.).

II

The conflict between the Aksumites and their allies, on the one hand, and the Sabaeans, on the other hand, continued throughout the 3rd century A.D. This conflict reached its zenith during the reign of 'L srh Yhbd and his brother Y 'zl Byn.

These two Sabaeen kings mention the minute details of that conflict in a number of inscriptions. The Sabaeans marched in an expedition against the Aksumites who were around the citadel of Wahadat (70 km to the north-east of Mokha). Then the expedition assaulted the Aksumites in valley of Akkites (152 km to the north of Hudeida). At last the Sabaeans marched eastwards to fight the remaining allies of the Aksumites. They engaged with them at 'ynam (40 km. to the north of San'a). and Huwan (35 km to the north - west of 'mran).

(14) Jamme, *Ibid.*, PP. 315—316.

In a second expedition, the Sabaean forces marched to fight the alliance of the Aksumites and the D Shrtm is Wadi Surdad (40 km to the north of Hudeida). The Sabaean forces achieved victory which compelled the allied forces to ask for Peace.

The Aksumites withdrew to the frontiers of their old colony north of the country. El-Iryani published the inscription (no 19 in Al-kuhali's Collection) which speaks about one of the battles of this conflict. This inscription says :

1. Krb 'tt ydf and s'd 'ttr Yskr, both sons of Grt Dzbnr and Tz'd the commanders of the Dmry tribes, who are allies of Smhrm. These commanders offer to 'lmqh Than lord of 'wm an idol of gold, thanking him for the safe return of their lords, 'l srh Yhdb and his brother Y' zl Byn, kings of Saba and Drydn, both sons of Frm Ynhb kig of Saba, and (the safe return of) their (=the kings') army and cavalry from an expedition in which the two kings attacked Hbst and D Shtrm and all those who were at Shtrn. They (= the two kings) returned from this expedition safe and sound with captives and booty which were large enough to satisfy their lords, 'Lsrh Yhdb and his brother Y'ZL Byn kings of Saba and Drydn.

2. They (=the writers) thank him ('lmqh) because he brought back his worshipper krb 'tt son of Grt from the expedition which he conducted following and supporting his lords the two kings, 'Lsrh Yhdb and his brother Y'ZL Byn kings of Saba and Drydn. He (=Krb) came back safe and victorious with booty and captives which Fully satisfied him. May 'lmqh Thwn lord of 'wm continue humiliating and deriding all combatant and envious enemies of his lords 'lsrh yhdb and his brother Y'zl Byn kings of Saba and Drydn. They also thank 'lmqh thwn, the lord of 'wm, because he fulfilled all the hopes of his worshippers, krb 'tt and s'd 'ttr sons of Grt, for which they asked him during the years and the seasons preceding this oblation.

3. Krb 'tt and s'd 'ttr the sons of Grt also thank him ('lmqh) for his bestowment when he enabled them to establish and found their house, the house of the sons of Grt in town of N'd (40 km to the south of san'a). May 'lmqh Thwn lord of 'wn bestow his blessings on his worshippers, krb 'tt and s'd 'ttr the sons of Grt, to find the favour with Their lords 'lsrh Yhdb and his brother Y'ZL Byn kings of saba and Drydn. May he ('lmqh)

(15) Jamme, *Ibid.*, PP. 317—318.

also give them (=the writers) sound senses and faculties and good male children and plenty of good spring, winter, autumn and summer crops. May he ('lmqh) provide them with good and fertile seasons, rains and abundant good fruits in all their lands which they plough and will plough in the east and on the mountains. May 'lmqh Thwn lord of 'wm save them from all kinds of evil of enemies either known or unknown to them.

4. Invoking the right of 'lmqh Thwn lord of 'wm and invoking the right of their lords 'lsrh Yhdb and his brother Y'Zl Byn kings of Saba and Drydn. »

We learn from this text that it was offered by the two commanders krb 'tt Ydf and s'd 'ttr Yskr. both sons of Grt to thank 'lmqh for four different things :

a) The victory achieved by the two Sabaean kings 'ls rh Yhdb and his brother Y'zl Byn over the Aksumites and their allies and the booty they have won.

b) The safety of the commander krb 'tt of Grt and the triumph of the expedition in which he supported his lords, kings of Saba.

c) The Fulfillment of the hopes of both the writers of the inscription giving them good crops and the construction of their house at the town of N'd.

d) The continuation of the god's support and care to his worshippers the writers of the inscription, giving them wealth and sons and saving them from all enemies ... etc.

It is obvious that the first two matters pertain to the Aksumite - Sabaean relations where the writers of the inscription mentioned the assault of the Sabaeans upon the Aksumites. This is also the same subject mentioned in the inscriptions (Ja. 574, 565, 590 and 576 published in Jamme's book.

However, it is irrelevant to believe that such a text deals with a new expedition especially as it does not provide exciting details. These two commanders might have been offering their oblation and thanks to 'lmqh for the victory in one of the expeditions mentioned above.

(16) El-Iryani, op. cit., PP 114—118.

(17) It seems that worshippers did not perform such an act after all events, but offered thanks for many deeds in one inscription only.

(18) Jamme, op. cit.

It is interesting to note here that though this inscription was dedicated to the god by two commanders, one of them only, namely Krb 'tt of Grt, had participated in the expedition to support his lords, the kings of Saba.

After the Aksumites withdrew to their old colony because of their defeat at the hands of 'Isrh Yhdb and his ther Y'zl Byn, during the first phase of the conflict, no other strong rival appeared. Hence, both Sabaean kings attempted to extend their possessions at the expense of their neighbours and accordingly they go into conflict with some commanders of Arab monarchies.

King Krb'l of Rydn was subject to a sabaean in which he faced defeat at Wadi Aswar and was forced to retreat to Abwan and Yalka. Jamme says that krb'l of Rydn was forced to surrender to the sabaean kings who dominated the country. However, it seems that king Krb'l of Rydn renewed the struggle and thus invoked a new Sabaean invasion. Though king Krb'l of Rydn was encamped within Hakirum, he was nevertheless besieged by the sabaean until he surrendered.

If krb'l of Rydn and krb'l Wtr Yhn'm were one and the same person, (19) it is clear that he allied himself with the Aksumites against the Sabaean. The timing of this alliance coincided with his new struggle. Naturally, he found the Aksumites fully prepared to help him as they were harbouring a grudge against the two sabaean kings because of their past defeats. The details of the endeavours to establish the alliance of the Aksumites and the Rydnis against the Sabaean were mentioned by the ambassador Srh 'tt 'sw'

(19) I tend to support the view of El-Iryani about the correlation between Krb'l of Rydn mentioned in the texts of 'Isrh Yhdb and Krb'l wtr Yhn'm, King of Saba and Rydn and Hdrmt and Ymnt, mentioned in the inscriptions Ja 666—667 and the text No. 28 of the Al-Kuhali collection as Jamme could not trace back his lineage to any Arab dynasty (Jamme, *op. cit.*, P. 376). Therefore Jamme came to believe that Krb'l wtr Yhn'm ruled after the dynasty of Yasrum Yuhan'm and nobody succeeded him after his death. It is likely that he should be correlated to an already present King mentioned in the texts of his enemies, though they spoke of him by his abbreviated name and nomenclature. This indicates the animosity between them at that time. It is also more appropriate to delineate the period of his rule as contemporary to the Aksumite presence in Southern Arabia (the Aksumite presence there came to an end during the late 3rd century A.D.) as he contacted the Aksumites and allied himself with them. To say that he ruled from 325—330 A.D., as claimed by Jamme, can easily be refuted as he would be, in that case, contemporary with Ezana the Aksumite King who left many inscriptions which recorded his deeds, either significant or otherwise. If Ezana was the Aksumite King, who concluded a treaty of alliance and peace with the King Krb'l Wtr Yhn'm, this would have been mentioned by Ezana in his inscriptions.

Dhbb , who headed the delegation of Rydn to Aksum. The ambassador wrote an inscription (no.28 of the Al-kuhli collection) to offer his thanks to 'lmqh for success in performing his mission. The text goes as follows.

"1. Srh 'tt 'sw 'Dhbb the commander of the tribes of Srwh and khwln khdlm offers a statue of gold to his god lmqh lord of 'wm thanking him because of his (=the writer's) safe return from overseas, where his lord, krb'l wtr Yhn'm king of Saba and Drydn and Hdrmwat and Ymnt, sent him with (an official) delegation to the land of Hbst and 'ksmn to the Negus.

His god 'lmqh favoured him when he retruned with peace accompanied by 'hqm and zlns, And He (=the god) favoured him when he enabled him to move for seven days and nights, then he arrived safely at the city of Mkhwn (Mocha). (20)

2. He thanks his god 'lmqh for his safe return with the 'hbsn delegation, after he had spent in that commission seven months overseas. He also thanks 'lmqh because he found his lord, kr'l wtr Yhn'm king of Saba and Drydn and Hdrmwat and Ymnt, in full health.

May he ('lmqh) bestow his blessings on his worshipper, Srh'tt to keep his hand and tongue, and to find the favour with his lord krb'l Wtr Yhn'm king of Saba and Drydn and Hdrmwat and Ymnt, and to bring for the for him fruits and crops of wheat, barley and other grains from all his lands."

from this text, we draw the following conclusions :

— It seems that this treaty was of special significance to the king. Since the inscription mentioned above is wholly devoted to its conclusion and Srh 'tt was proud because it was he whom the king had cohosen to lead the side of Rydn in the delegation.

— Srh 'tt spent seven months in this mission. But if we suppose that the march from the capital of Rydn to Mokha took a week and crossing the Red Sea to Adulis took another week, and as we know that the distance from

(20) Procopius wrote in his book (the history of the wars) that " ... about opposite to Homeritae on the main land dwell the Aethiopians who are called Auxomitae because their King resides in the city of Auxomis. And the expanse of sea which lies between is crossed in a voyage of five days and nights, when a moderately favouring wind blows for here they are accustomed to navigate by night also since there are no shoals at all in these parts ... "

Procopius, *The histlry of the wars*, Loeb classical Library Bk. XIX.

(21) El-Iryani op. cit., PP. 147—150.

Adulis to Aksum took from eight to fifteen days according to the route followed by the traveller,(22) the voyage would have thus taken from 22 to 29 days for the outward journey and the same for the return , i.e. a total of two months .

This means that the ambassador remained in Aksum for about five months , which is a relatively long period for negotiations and the conclusion of a treaty especially as such a treaty does not refer to any difficulties in its conclusion.

The reason for such a delay could be either that the ambassador waited for the return of the Aksumite king from his regional wars, or that he had been performing other auxiliary tasks on route, which he did not mention because of their insignificance.

— However, whether this correlation between *krb'l of Rydn* and *krb'l wtr Yhn'm* was true or not,(23) it is doubtless that such a text deals with Aksum as a power sought by the southern Arabian king who was asking for peace and alliance.

The alliance between Aksum and Himyar against Saba continued into the reign of Samir of Rydn, who, as the inscriptions mention, succeeded in concluding an alliance with the Aksumite king Adbah, which provided for the participation of Aksumite forces with the Himyarites against the Sabaeans.

The Aksumite forces were led by Garmat son of the negus and Sabqulum one of his commanders. Samir and his Aksumite allies were able to inflict upon 'Isrh Yhdb king of Saba, heavy losses in the beginning and hold the city of Sawum for about two years and a half. However, ultimate victory was on the side of the Sabaeans.

Wissman believes that these battles caused the final abolition of the Aksumite presence in Southern Arabia.(24) But the new inscription published by Muttahar El-Iryani which dates back to the reign of king *Ns' Krb Y'mn yhrhb*, king of Saba and *DRydn*, son of 'Isrh Yhdb, challenges such an opinion, as this inscription deals with the continuation of the Sabaeans and Aksumite conflict after the death of 'Isrh Yhdb and his son and successor *watarum Yuhamin* and the coronation of his son *Ns' krb Y'mn Yhrhb*. This text (no .20 the Al-Kuhali collection) says :

(22) Mikawy, op. cit., P. 228.

(23) See, F.N., No. 19.

(24) Wissmann, H.V., Himyar, ancient history, *Museon* 77 (1964).

«H'n one of the commanders of Ns' K (r) b Y'mn Yhrhb, king of Saba and Drydn, son of 'lsrh Yhdb and Y'tl(25) Byn Kings of Saba and Drydn offers to 'lmqh lord of 'wm a statue of gold, thanking him (=the god) because he fulfilled a'l his (the writer's) hopes when he (H'n) led the military expedition west-ward on behalf of his lord, the king.

He (H'n) came back vitorious with captives and booty from the 'hbsn, who were enemies (of his lord) and with them Rsm and the sons of 'shrn.

2. He (H'n) is also thankful for the might of 'lmqh as he (=the god) saved and cured him form a long illness. And he asks him (=the god) to go on fulfilling all his hopes and give him good male children and abundance of corn, and big incom so that he might feel happiness and satisfaction. He also asks him (=the god) to save him from diseases and evils sought by the enemy, either near or far away, and asks for his (the god's) past and future bestowments and righteously invokes 'lmqh lord of 'wm.»

H'n mentions in this text his war against the Aksumites for his lord's (... NS'Krb) sake. He also notes the continuation of the alliance between the Aksumites and the 'Shrn, as mentioned in other inscriptions. However, this text does not contain details about the battles. It is still important as it confirms the continuation of the conflict after the death of 'lsrh Yhdb. Hence it would be appropriate to say that the date of the eventual decline of the Aksumite presence in Southern Arabia during the third century A.D. was later by some years than the date defined before, so as to coincide with the continuation of the conflict between them in the reign of NS' Krb Y'mn Yhrhb.

* * *

The following conclusions can be drawn from this study :

— As regards Aksumite- Southern Arabian relations during the second century A.D., the text of wfy 'drh. (No. 12 of the Al-Kuhali collection) confirms the extension of the confrantation between the two powers, as it encompasses new areas not dealt with in the inscription of Qataban Awkan on the same subject (Ja. 631). Wfy's text refers also to the continuation of the conflict for many years after the period of expeditions in which Qataban Awkan participated.

— As for the same relations in the third century A.D., however varied and diverse were the inscriptions discovered before, these new texts add the following facts :

a) The text (No. 19) confirms the existence of military conflicts between 'lsrh Yhdb and Y'zl Byn and the Aksumites.

(25) Y'Zl.

b) The text (No. 28) adds new information about the attempts of the Himyarites to conclude alliance treaties with the Aksumites which do not only date back to the reign of Samir of Rydn, but also precede that reign, as Krb of Rydn had concluded before a similar treaty (which is almost the theme of the text).

c) The text (No. 20) sheds new light on the date of the termination of this phase of conflict through its reference to the continuation of the fight against the Aksumites during the reign of NS' Krb Y'mn Yhrhb son of 'lsrh Yhdb, which points to the delay of the Aksumite evacuation from Arab territory for some years to come after the date defined by previous researchers.

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اضواء جديدة على العلاقات بين اكسوم وممالك جنوب الجزيرة العربية خلال القرنين الثاني والثالث الميلاديين

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الشواهد الحضارية كثيرة على قدم وعمق الصلات بين اكسوم وممالك جنوب الجزيرة العربية ومع ذلك فالمعروف عن أحداثها قليل ، من هنا تظهر أهمية النقوش الأربعة الجديدة التي نشرها مطهر على الاريانى ، الباحث اليمنى ، ضمن مجموعة تربو على ثلاثين نقشا جديدا باللغة السبئية .

هذه النقوش الأربعة (أرقام ١٢ ، ١٩ ، ٢٨ ، ٢٠) تتعلق بأحداث العلاقات الاكسومية السبئية خلال القرنين الثاني والثالث الميلاديين ، وهى تضيف عددا من الحقائق التاريخية الجديدة كما تعدل أو تؤكد عددا آخر . ويمكننا أن نوجز مجمل ما قدمته هذه النقوش الأربعة فيما يلى :

(أ) يتحدث النقش رقم ١٢ عن الصراع العسكرى بين الاكسوميين والسبئيين خلال القرن الثاني الميلادى ، وهو يعتبر مصدرا تاريخيا جديدا يضاف الى نص قتيان أوكان الذى كان مصدرنا الرئيسى عن هذا الصراع حتى نشر النقش الجديد . وهذا النص يقدم معلومتين هامتين الأولى اتساع نطاق المواجهة العسكرية بين الطرفين عما ذكره نص قتيان أوكان ، أما المعلومة الثانية فهى الإشارة الى تأخر انسحاب الاكسوميين الى مستعمرتهم القديمة الى ما بعد وقت قتيان أوكان .

(ب) لا يضيف النقش رقم ١٩ أى جديد ولكنه يؤكد حدوث الصراع بين شعار أوتر والاكسوميين خلال القرن الثالث .

(ج) يتحدث النقش رقم ٢٨ عن ابرام معاهدة سلام بين الاكسوميين والحميريين فى وقت سابق على عصر شامير الريدانى .

(د) تعود أهمية النقش الرابع (رقم ٢٠) الى أنه يعدل الاعتقاد بانتهاء الوجود الاكسومى فى جنوب الجزيرة العربية على يد الشرح يحضب ، حيث يتحدث عن استمرار الصراع فى عهد ابنه نشأكرب يأمن يهرحب الذى حكم بعد وفاته بعدة سنوات .

ويتركز هدف هذه المقالة فى محاولة إعادة صياغة أحداث هذه العلاقات على ضوء ما قدمته النصوص الجديدة من معلومات .

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