

The Campaign of Mesha against Horonaim

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1. Lines 31-33 of the Moabite Stela

The conquest of Horonaim is the last episode in Mesha's royal inscription (lines 31-33). No other city south of the Arnon River is mentioned in the text, and the campaign south of the river appears as a kind of an appendix to the king's extensive operations on its northern side.

The text of lines 31-33 is badly broken. The second half of line 31 runs as follows: וְהוֹרְנַיִם יִשָּׁב בָּהּ
 xšwaxx בְּתַאֲרִיִּם CLERMONT-GANNEAU 1887:107-109; LIDZBARSKI 1898:416 and pl. I; 1902:9;
 DUSSAUD 1912:5 and photo) The ך is clear both in the photo published by DUSSAUD (1912) and in
 LIDZBARSKI's facsimile (1898:pl. I). For the ף, see LIDZBARSKI 1902:9.

I would like to suggest the following restoration for the episode in lines 31-33:

- .31 וְהוֹרְנַיִם יִשָּׁב בָּהּ בְּתַאֲרִיִּם [ו]אש[א]
 .32 [ידי אל כמש וי]אמר לי כמש רד הלתחם בחורני וארד [ואל]
 .33 [תחם בקר ואחזה ויש]בה כמש בימי

And Hawronen, there lived the House of [D]WD[H]. [So] I raised my hands to Chemosh. And Chemosh said to me: "Go down, fight against Hawronen". So I went down [and fought against the city and took it and] Chemosh [rest]ored it in my days.

Notes:

For the restoration וְהוֹרְנַיִם, see line 12 and the discussion below.

For the lifting of hands to a God in prayer, see Hab 3:10; Ps 28:2, 63:5, 134:2; Lam 2:19. The restored sentence finds an exact parallel in line 11 of the Zakkur stela (וְאִשָּׁא יָדַי אֶל בְּעַלְשָׁמַיִן). The scribe may have designed a play on the meaning of the verbal form וְאִשָּׁא: "I carried" (line 30); "I raised" (line 31). Another play on words is in בְּהַ/וִישָׁבָה; other instances of a play on words may easily be detected in other parts of the inscription.

For the restoration of the gap at the beginning of line 33, see DUSSAUD 1912:5.

2. The Identity of DWDH

The reconstruction of the passage is relevant for the understanding of the old crux interpretum 'r'l *dwdh* in line 11 (see e.g., COOKE 1903:11; DONNER and RÖLLIG 1968: 175; GIBSON 1971:80; BEESTON 1985:144-145; JACKSON 1989:112-113; MATTINGLY 1989:236-237). *Dwdh* was sometimes regarded as either the name or the divine epithet (the "beloved") of Ataroth's local deity. However, provided that the suggested restoration is valid, *DWDH* would be the name of the founder of the dynasty whose seat was at Horonaim (Hawronen). 'r'l must have something to do with a lion, and may be understood as either an

altar-hearth or a pedestal (for a cultic stand or a statue) on whose sides were figures of lions (see 1 Kgs 10,19,20) (GIBSON 1971:80). The object would have been dedicated by *DWDH*, the founder of the dynasty, in the city of Ataroth and brought by Mesha to Chemosh's sanctuary at Kerioth.

Who was *DWDH*, the founder of the dynasty of Horonaim? Or, to put it more directly: may we identify him with David, king of Israel, who established the Dynasty of Jerusalem? The basic meaning of the two names is identical: "darling, beloved" (for discussion and extensive literature, see SANMARTIN-ASCASO 1978:150-156; CARLSON and RINGGREN 1978:157-159). David's ancestors arrived from Moab according to biblical tradition (Ruth 4; cf. 1Sam 22,3-4). Moreover, we are told that David conquered and subjugated Moab (2Sam 8,2), whereas the fate of the land in the time of his heirs is nowhere mentioned. Plausibly one may assume that *DWDH* is a variant form of David (*DWD*) and that the Dynasty of Jerusalem dominated southern Moab until it was conquered by Mesha.

However, David's name is never written in the Bible with a final *h*. Moreover, the House of David (*bytdwd*) is mentioned in a ninth century Aramaic stela fragment recently unearthed at Tel Dan (BIRAN and NAVEH 1993:87, line 9, 93), and David's name is inscribed there with the same three letters as in the Bible. Variant forms of the name might be an indication of its popularity in this early period. In any event, it would seem best not to conflate the names David (*DWD*) and *DWDH*.

DWDH must have been the founder of a local dynasty who ruled the southern Moabite plateau from his capital of Horonaim. He was influential enough to erect a monument (either a pedestal or an altar-hearth) in Ataroth, north of the Arnon River. It remains unknown whether he actually dominated Ataroth - in that case his dynasty ruled Moab in its entirety until Omri conquered Moab's northern parts - or was its strong neighbour in the areas south of the Arnon River.

3. The Location of Horonaim

What was the location of Horonaim, the seat of the dynasty? Scholars have suggested various sites for Horonaim (SCHOTTROFF 1966:190-208, with earlier literature; WORSCHKECH and KNAUF 1986:80-85; DEARMAN 1989:188-189, with earlier literature; DEARMAN 1992). However, all these places (e.g., Kathrabba, Tell Meidan, ^cAi, ed-Deir, el-^cIraq, Kh. ed-Dubab) are small sites located on roads in southern Moab. For a place which served as the seat of the dynasty and was mentioned in Mesha's inscription as his major conquest on the plateau south of the Arnon River one would rather expect a more central site.

SMELIK (1992:85-89) has recently suggested dissociating biblical Kir-Hareshet from el-Kerak and identifying it with Kirchoh, Moab's capital near Dibon. This plausible suggestion removes the main obstacle that has stood in the way of the correct identification of Horonaim. It seems to me that el-Kerak, the central site of southern Moab, exactly matches all the available evidence regarding Horonaim. This will be demonstrated in the following discussion.

A fragment of inscription generally assigned to Mesha was unearthed at el-Kerak indicating his activity there (REED and WINNETT 1963; FREEDMAN 1964; WEIPPERT 1966:328-330). The road that ascends from the southern edge of the Dead Sea to the Moabite plateau passed through Kathrabba (biblical Luhith; see MITTMANN 1982) and reached el-Kerak. Like other biblical roads it was named after its destination, namely, "the way of Horonaim" (Isa 15,5). This road is delineated in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah

by its two ends, Zoar and Horonaim (Isa 15,5; Jer 48,3-4, 34a) (SCHOTTROFF 1966: 189). The "descent of Horonaim" (Jer 48,5) refers to the city's topographical location, situated on a high steep hill and depicted in literary juxtaposition to the "ascent of Luhith".

Oronaim (= Horonaim) is one of the towns taken by Jannaeus from Nabateans and restored to them by Hyrcanus II (Josephus, Ant. XIII 397; XIV 18) (SCHOTTROFF 1966:192-196; MÖLLER and SCHMITT 1976:139-146, with further literature). According to the list of towns, the entire Moabite area between Heshbon in the north and Zoar in the south was conquered by Jannaeus. One may ask why el-Kerak, the major city of south Moab, is missing from the list of towns. My identification of Oronaim/Horonaim with el-Kerak immediately solves the problem. It seems that Josephus deliberately used biblical names, hence the close correlation of the list of conquered places with the towns mentioned in the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah (see SCHALIT 1970:42-50; MÖLLER and SCHMITT 1976:141-143). The more familiar name of the place, Charachmoba, is known mainly from documents of the Byzantine period, but is already mentioned by Ptolemaios (AVI-YONAH 1976:48). At first, Charachmoba may have been a categorization ("the city of Moab") later becoming the town's exclusive name.

4. Conclusions

Before summing up the evidence, it is worth reminding the reader that part of the conclusions are based on textual reconstruction which naturally cannot be verified. Granted this uncertainty, the following historical scenario may be suggested. Prior to Mesha's operations, Moab was divided into two parts. Its northern area was conquered and ruled by the Dynasty of Omri. Mesha's ancestors became their vassals, holding a relatively small territory between the Arnon River and Wadi Wala. This kind of city-state composed of an urban centre and peripheral settlements is similar to the kingdom of Sihon of Heshbon as it was depicted in the earlier biblical sources (VAN SETERS 1972:192-195; WÜST 1975:10-11, 243; WEIPPERT 1979:16-23; but see KNAUF 1990). The area south of the Arnon River was dominated by the Dynasty of *DWDH* whose seat was at Horonaim (el-Kerak). Mesha rebelled and conquered the Mishor as far as the line of Nebo and Bezer. It remains unclear whether the territory of Heshbon, up to Wadi Kefrein, was conquered by him or by one of his successors.

Only late in his reign did Mesha decide to conquer the territory south of the Arnon River. He first built the road that crossed the river (Mesha Stela, line 26) and then attacked and conquered Horonaim, the seat of the dynasty of *DWDH*. More details are missing, but it seems that either Mesha or his successor was able to subdue the entire area up to Nahal Zered (Wadi el-Hesa), thus uniting, for the first time, what is known from later sources as the Land of Moab.

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