



# The battle of dhū-Ḥurmat

## Comparison between Sabaic and Ḥimyaritic epigraphic sources

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The battle of dhū-Ḥurmat, dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, represents one of the most significant events in the history of Southern Arabia. The battle saw the confrontation between the army of the kingdom of Saba', ruled by the two brothers and co-regents 'Is<sup>2</sup>rḥ Yḥḏb and Y'zl Byn, and the army of Ḥimyar, under the command of Krb'l 'yf'. The importance of this battle lies in two main reasons: first, the presence of written sources from both sides; secondly, the absolute dating attested in one of these texts.

Analysing and comparing the two inscriptions related to this event, Ja 578 for the Sabaean side, and al-Mi'sāl 2 for the Ḥimyarite side, some relevant elements have been identified: the textual typology and its related aspects, the clients of the two texts, the royal titles and, above all, the final result of the battle.

### •Textual typology and related aspects

Both texts are dedicatory, Ja 578 being addressed to 'Imqh Ṭhwn, Master of 'wm, and al-Mi'sāl 2 to the goddess Shams, Lady of the citadel S<sup>2</sup>ḥrrm. The inscriptions are located, respectively, in the temple of Ma'rib and on the rock face nearby the sanctuary of Shams at al-Mi'sāl.



Part of the inscription al-Mi'sāl 2

### •Clients of the inscriptions

Ja 578 was commissioned by Rbs<sup>2</sup>ms<sup>1</sup>m Yzd and his brother Krb'tt 's<sup>1</sup>d, qayls of the tribe Bklm, hamlet ḡ-Rydt, and high officials of the two kings, whereas al-Mi'sāl 2 was written by Lḥy't 'wkn, the qayl of Rdmn and Ḥwln, one Ḥimyarite tribe.

Although the inscriptions are of the same typology, in al-Mi'sāl 2 are used the two verbs *hgl* "make know" (also read as *hll* "show his exultation") and *s'tr* "write", instead the usual dedication verb *hqny*.



Temple of 'Imqh in Ma'rib

### •Royal titles

In the two inscriptions, the rulers of both Saba' and Ḥimyar claim the title of "king of Saba' and dhū-Raydān". Furthermore, they never refer to the opponent king with the full title. Infact in Ja 578 the king of Ḥimyar is named as *Krb'l ḡ-Rydn* and vice versa, in al-Mi'sāl 2, the king of Saba' is named as *'Is<sup>2</sup>rḥ Yḥḏb mlk Sb'*, without naming the brother in co-regency.

### •Final result of the battle

The battle of dhū-Ḥurmat happened on the 248-249 AD (179 of the era of Radmān and 363 of the era of Ḥimyar) near Dhamār. Both the documents report the victory of the author's army.

Ja 578/5-8: "The God favoured and helped their lord (...) to beat, destroy, defeat and rout Krb'l ḡ-Rydn and all the army, the tribes and the troops of Ḥimyar, the children of 'Amm, when they made the battle in the plain of Ḥurmat".

The text also reports the other stages of the battle between the two kingdom, until the surrender and submission of Krb'l and his army in the city of Hakim.

In al-Mi'sāl 2/4-5 we read: "The army of Ḥimyar (...) fought and met in battle the king from dawn to the end of the day, in the plain of Ḥurmat. From there they came back with spoils and victims, men and horses killed in the battle and alive".

And again in L.9: "After this victory, the king of Saba' with his army came back three times, but then he came back in his country".



### CONCLUSION

Taking into consideration all these elements analysed, it is clear that the two inscriptions represent the political propaganda for the supremacy of one kingdom on the other.

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A. Avanzini  
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