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## Some Features of Middle Sabaean Political Culture: Clan Alliances

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The wide spread practice of clan alliances is one of the most important features of Middle Sabaean political culture.<sup>1</sup> It seems to have played a very significant role on every level of its socio-political system.

Clans of commoners would ally, establishing a joint clan, to obtain the dominant position within their local community, *sha<sup>c</sup>b* of the third order (*sha<sup>c</sup>b3*).<sup>2</sup> E.g. Robin/al-Mašamayn 1 evidences such a dominant position within the local community of MDRM belonging to the alliance of Banū ĠḌBM and ḌRMT (see also C 340). There are also certain grounds to suppose that for some part of the Middle Period in the *sha<sup>c</sup>b3* of DMHN this dominant position belonged to the alliance of the clans Banū RMSM and Banū SMY<sup>c</sup>M (C 19; 341; 343; DJE 17; R 4030; 4031; 4039 [= Radt 82]; 4338; 4344; see also Müller 1972, 106) &c.

Some Qaylite clans would form allied clans with the prominent lineages of their subjects,<sup>3</sup> this policy appears rather reasonable as it would secure effectively the support of these clans, thus raising significantly the cohesion of the respective *sha<sup>c</sup>bs2*. Naturally, the clans of the subjects would be always integrated into the Qaylite clans in the position of junior partners.

For example Banū dhū-Ghaymān, the *qayls* of the *sha<sup>c</sup>b2* Ghaymān, appear to have incorporated the clan ḍ-N<sup>ʿ</sup>SM (Ja 626, 2, 8, 18-19; Na NAG 17, 5 &c) which is most likely to have been the dominant clan of N<sup>ʿ</sup>SM, one of the local communities, “quarters” (*rb<sup>c</sup>w*), of which the *sha<sup>c</sup>b2* Ghaymān consisted (e.g. Er 22 §1).

Banū MWD<sup>c</sup>M appears to have been the dominant clan in the *sha<sup>c</sup>b3* ḍ-ḤMR (Khamir) and LH<sup>y</sup>M (Chelhod 14; MAFY/Ḥamir 1, 1; Robin/Ḥamir 1, 3-4). It formed an alliance with the Qaylite clan Banū S<sup>ʿ</sup>RN (Er 27; 69; C 314 + 954; Na NAG 11; Na NNSQ 59; R 4139). Robin seems to have sufficient grounds to maintain with respect to this alliance that it was actually dominated by Banū S<sup>ʿ</sup>RN. “*La mention de Mwḍ<sup>m</sup> dans la chaîne de noms propres qui constituait l’identité des qayls S<sup>ʿ</sup>r traduisait sans doute une certaine primauté (ou peut-être une domination) de S<sup>ʿ</sup>r sur Mwḍ<sup>m</sup>.*” (Robin 1982 a, I, 103). It is also very likely that the other non-Qaylite clans which formed the alliance with Banū S<sup>ʿ</sup>RN (Banū MḤYLM,<sup>4</sup> Banū S<sup>ʿ</sup>MKM,<sup>5</sup> Banū ḍ-RSMM<sup>6</sup>) were also the dominant clans within certain local communities of the *sha<sup>c</sup>b2* Bakīl-dhū-Raydat.<sup>7</sup>

Yet Robin’s supposition that the incorporation of Banū MWD<sup>c</sup>M into the clan Banū S<sup>ʿ</sup>RN was a sort of the “legal formalization” of the subjugation of the community of Khamir (and LH<sup>y</sup>M) by the *qayls* of Raydat (Robin 1982 a, I, 102-104)<sup>8</sup> does not seem completely implausible. Due to a very small

1. Yemen, the 1st - 4th centuries AD. For the definition of the Middle Sabaean cultural-political area see Korotayev 1994.

2. See Korotayev 1993, 156.

3. Incidentally such facts show that the border between Qaylite clans and ordinary tribesmen was not as impenetrable as seems to be supposed by some scholars (e.g. Robin 1982 a, I, 83-84; Bāfaqīh 1990, 65-66).

4. C 281; 282; 314 + 954; Er 6; 26; 27; 69; Ja 572; 578; 632; MAFY/Ḥamida 5; Na NAG 11; Na NNSQ 59; R 4139.

5. C 314 + 954; Er 69; Ja 578.

6. Er 27; Na NAG 11.

7. The fact that the clan of the subjects could be incorporated into the clan of their patrons is clearly evidenced by Mü 1 and Ja 656: Banū RSMM, the clients of Banū ṬKLN (Mü 1, 1) formed an alliance with their patron clan (no doubt, as their junior partners) establishing the joint clan *bnw ṬKLN w-ḍ-RSMM* (Ja 656, 4-5).

8. This supposition implies that Khamir did not belong to *sha<sup>c</sup>b2* Bakīl-Raydat before the formation of the alliance between Banū S<sup>ʿ</sup>RN and Banū MWD<sup>c</sup>M.

number of the relevant inscriptions, it appears impossible to establish finally if Khamir had belonged to *sha'b2* Bakīl-dhū-Raydat prior to the incorporation of Banū MWD<sup>c</sup>M into Banū S'RN. Hence, there does not seem to be sufficient grounds to decide if this alliance was made by Banū S'RN to strengthen their control over the community which had already belonged to their tribe, or was the formulation of the inclusion of Khamir (and LHYM) into the *sha'b2* Bakīl-dhū-Raydat dominated by Banū S'RN.

In any case it appears rather plausible that the formation of the alliances between the Qaylite clans and non-Qaylite ones dominant within certain local communities was used frequently to include the autonomous local communities into the *sha'b2*, as a way of expanding the territory dominated by the Qaylite clan (and consequently the territory of the respective tribe).<sup>9</sup>

For example, Banū dhū-Ḥabāb seem to have been dominant originally within the community of Ṣirwāḥ only.<sup>10</sup> Yet later through a series of alliances with several clans dominant within the local communities in the territories adjacent to Ṣirwāḥ (Banū S'RYN,<sup>11</sup> HYNN,<sup>12</sup> T'RN, d<sup>c</sup>MD, ḤWLM<sup>13</sup>) they managed to establish their control over a vast territory of *HWLN HDLM w-HYNN* (Er 23 §1; 28 §1; Fa 3, 2; Ja 649, 1-4 &c).

The Qaylite clans would form alliances very often; it was an immanent and very important feature of the Middle Sabaean political life. We know such clan alliances as Banū Hamdān and Banū dhū-Ghaymān (Ja 577; 716; MAFY/Ḥaywān 2), Banū Bata<sup>c</sup> and Banū Hamdān (C 2; 295; 296; 352; 353; 605 bis; Ghūl-Ḥūth2; Gl 1365; Na NNSQ 26; MAFRAY/Kuḥl 1; MAFY/al-Ḥaḡar 2), Banū Hamdān and Banū Sa'rān (Er 17; Ja 544; 708 = NAM 1626 [CIAS II 39.11/o2 N6]; Ry 534 + MAFY-Rayda 1), Banū Sa'rān and Banū dhū-Na'āmat (Er 27; Na NAG 11; R 4139), Banū dhū-Kabīr-Aqyān and Banū Marāthid (C 141 = Chelhod 29 [CIAS I 32.1/h9]), Banū dhū-Kabīr-Aqyān and Banū Sukhaym (led by the non-Qaylite aristocratic Sabaean clan Kabīr-Khalīl: Ja 684; 711; 739; 758) &c.

One point should be kept in mind. The Qaylite clans and their respective tribes accreted to such an extent that they appear to have been conceived as inseparable. As a result the Qaylite clan of a certain tribe could not simply conquer the neighbouring tribe, drive away its Qaylite clan and annex its territory. The only possible legal way for the spatial expansion of the power of a given Qaylite clan was to establish a clan alliance with the neighbouring Qaylite clan so as to include it in one's own clan in the position of the junior partner, and in this way to get control over the tribe of the neighbour. That seems to be one of the main reasons for such a prevalence of alliances between the Qaylite clans.

Some of these alliances left a significant trace on the whole history of Yemen, first of all the incorporation of Banū Sa'rān (the *qayls* of Bakīl-dhū-Raydat) into Banū Hamdān (the *qayls* of Ḥāshid) which was the crucial landmark on the way towards the creation of the Hamdanite tribal confederation including both Ḥāshid and Bakīl (see e.g. Robin 1978; 1982 a, I, 101-109).

These alliances do not appear to have been always completely voluntary. For example the above mentioned incorporation of Banū Sa'rān into Banū Hamdān is very likely to have been actually a sort of a legal formalization of the transfer of Raydat to Banū Hamdān by the Himyarite conquerors for their help in the suppression of insurgent Raydat which appears to have actively resisted the Himyarite occupation of the Sabaean cultural-political area in the late 3rd century AD (C 353).

9. This does not appear surprising. Within the Middle Sabaean cultural-political area the domination of certain clans within their communities was usually very stable. The idea that clan A dominating within community X could be simply forced out of it by neighbouring clan B and the domination of this clan could be imposed instead, seems to have been rather alien to the Middle Sabaean political culture. The only legal way for clan B to subjugate community X appears to have been to form an alliance with clan A so as to incorporate Banū A into it forming the clan *bnw B w-A*, and hence acquiring the legal control over community X.

10. See e.g. Gl 1533 = Ja 2855.

11. Er 23 §1; Ja 617, 7-8, 11, 14; 649, 2 &c.

12. E.g. Ja 649, 1.

13. E.g. Ja 649, 2.

In the period after the Himyarite “unification” of Southern Arabia the practice of clan alliances was most successfully applied by Banū dhū-Yaz’ān who managed to incorporate in their clan not less than 22 other powerful clans from Zafār in the East (in present-day Oman) to the Sabaean<sup>14</sup> Highlands in the West, including aristocratic Sabaean Banū Gidān and qaylite Banū dhū-Ghaymān (‘Abadān; C 541; 621; Ja 1028; 1030; MAFRAY/Abū Ṭawr 4; R 4069; 5085; Ry 508; Yanbuq 23; 47; see also Bāfaqīh 1979; Robin, Bāfaqīh 1979; Robin 1986). In this way they acquired control over most of the Southern Arabian territory and finally achieved royal power.

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14. Korotayev 1993, 156 n. 2.

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## SIGLA OF THE INSCRIPTIONS CITED

- °Abadān – Pirenne 1981  
 C = CIH – Corpus 1889-1908, 1911, 1929  
 Chelhod – Bron 1992; Corpus 1977  
 CIAS = Corpus 1977, 1986  
 DJE = Deutsche Jemen-Expedition – Müller 1972  
 Er - Eryānī 1973; 1988  
 Ghul – Bron 1992  
 Gl – Inscriptions from E. Glaser's collection – Schaffer 1972; Höfner 1973  
 Ja – Jamme 1955; 1962; 1966; 1976  
 MAFRAY – Robin 1986  
 MAFY – Robin 1977; 1982 a  
 Mü – Müller 1974  
 NAM = National Aden Museum – Corpus 1986  
 Na NAG – Nāmī 1958; 1962  
 Na NNSQ – Nāmī 1943  
 R = RÉS – Répertoire 1929; 1935; 1950  
 Radt – Radt 1973  
 Robin – Robin 1982a, II; Robin, Ryckmans 1978  
 Ry – Ryckmans 1953; 1955  
 Yanbuq – Robin, Bāfaqih 1979

## Des allusions polémiques du pape Jean III

Y. Nessim Youssef – Le Caire

La vie de Jean III (le patriarche 40) connu par l'*Histoire des patriarches* vient d'un original copte perdu<sup>1</sup> ainsi que l'histoire de Joseph évêque de Fowah<sup>2</sup> donne un résumé de ce qui est déjà connu dans l'*Histoire des patriarches*. Nous pouvons résumer la vie de ce patriarche en quelques étapes.

1. J. Den Heijer: *Mawhub Ibn Mansour Ibn Mufarrig et l'historiographie Copto-Arabe*. (C.S.C.O. 513), Louvain 1989, pp. 7 et 142-144.

2. Samuel el Suriani: تاريخ الابهاء البطركية للانبا يوساب استنب فوة. Le Caire, pp. 50-51.