The city-states of the Jawf at the dawn of Ancient South Arabian history (8th-6th centuries BCE). I. From cities to kingdoms

Mounir Arbach

▶ **To cite this version:**

Mounir Arbach. The city-states of the Jawf at the dawn of Ancient South Arabian history (8th-6th centuries BCE). I. From cities to kingdoms. L'Erma di Bretschneider. L'ERMA di Bretschneider, 2022, Arabia Antica, Alessandra Avanzini, 978-88-913-2290-6. hal-04000893

HAL Id: hal-04000893
https://hal.science/hal-04000893

Submitted on 22 Feb 2023

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ARABIA ANTICA 17/1
Philological Studies

collana diretta da
Alessandra Avanzini

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THE CITY-STATES OF THE JAWF AT THE DAWN OF ANCIENT SOUTH ARABIAN HISTORY (8TH–6TH CENTURIES BCE)

I

Mounir Arbach

FROM CITIES TO KINGDOMS

«L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER
Roma - Bristol, CT

The city-states of the Jawf at the dawn of Ancient South Arabian history (8th–6th centuries BCE)
I. Mounir Arbach, *From cities to kingdoms*

Translated by Isabelle Ruben
Editing and page layout by Alessandra Lombardi
Maps by Astrid Emery

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The city-states of the Jawf at the dawn of Ancient South Arabian history (8th–6th centuries BCE)
I. Arbach Mounir, From cities to kingdoms
- Roma: «L'ERMA» di BRETSCHNEIDER, 2022. - p. 242; 22 cm. -

ISBN: 978-88-913-2290-6
E-ISBN: 978-88-913-2292-0

DOI: 10.48255/9788891322920

CDD: 900
1. Storia antica – 2. Epigrafia

This publication benefited from the institutional and financial support of the CNRS, UMR 5133 Archéorient – Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée (MOM) – Université Lumière Lyon 2 – CNRS, Agence nationale de la recherche (ANR) – CNRS, USR 3141 Centre français de recherche de la péninsule Arabique (CEFREPA), Kuwait.

To Emmanuelle

Order of South Arabian letters and transliteration

ʾ	*n*
ʿ	*q*
b	*r*
d	*s*¹
ḏ/dh	*s*²
ḍ	*s*³
f	*ṣ*
g	*t*
ġ/gh	*ṯ/th*
h	*ṭ*
ḫ/kh	*w*
ḥ	*y*
k	*z*
l	*ẓ*
m	

Order of Arabic letters and transliteration

ʾ	*ḍ*
b	*ṭ*
t	*ẓ*
ṯ	ʿ
g	*ġ/gh*
ḥ	*f*
ḫ/kh	*q*
d	*k*
ḏ/dh	*l*
r	*m*
z	*n*
s	*h*
sh	*w*
ṣ	*y*

Long vowels: *ā*, *ū*, *ī*; diphthongs: *aw*, *ay*; *alif maqṣūra*: *ā*; *tāʾ marbūṭa*: *a/at*

Nota bene: the South Arabian script has no vowels. The vocalisation of proper names – anthroponyms, ethnonyms, toponyms, theonyms, etc. – is hypothetical, if they are not known in Arabic.

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Preface

The epigraphic documentation from the archaeological sites of the Jawf region (Yemen) has doubled in the last two decades. Nearly a thousand new inscriptions, unfortunately often coming from clandestine excavations, have been published, including numerous texts from the 8th–6th centuries BCE. These have shed new light on the ancient history of the city-states which flourished in this region and on their relations with their neighbours, especially the kingdom of Saba'.

Although large gaps still remain in the epigraphic record, which only scientific archaeological excavations could fill, this three-volume work entitled *The city-states of the Jawf at the dawn of Ancient South Arabian history (8th–6th centuries BCE)* aims to provide an overall, updated view of the current state of knowledge on these political entities during the earliest historical phase of the South Arabian civilisation, whose history in all its facets remains to be written.

The first volume by Mounir Arbach *From cities to kingdoms* updates the chronology of the formation of the city-states and the political dynamics of the Jawf region in the light of archaeological and epigraphic data. The constitution of a *Corpus of the inscriptions* in Volume II, by Irene Rossi, provides a commented edition of the sources of linguistic, historical and social information relating to those political entities. Finally, Volume III, *A lexical and onomastic index of the inscriptions* by both authors, is the first linguistic index systematically covering the earliest attestations of the Minaic language; it also shows the level of penetration of Sabaic into the epigraphic usage, reflecting the historical vicissitudes of this key region of ancient Yemen.

Our gratitude and appreciation go to Alessandra Avanzini, for accepting and supporting this work for publication in the valuable collection she directs: *Arabia Antica, Philological Studies*.

For the publication of this book, we have benefited from the financial and logistical support of the CNRS, the Maison de l'Orient et de la Méditerranée (Lyon 2, UMR 5133 Archéorient), for which we would like to warmly thank its successive directors Christophe Benech and Frédéric Abbès, as well as Gwenaëlle Pequay, administrative and financial manager of Archéorient, for her efficiency and availability.

We also received financial support from the French National Research Agency, through the *Ancient and Modern Languages of South Arabia* (ALMAS) project, directed by Julien Dufour, Habilitation (HDR) lecturer at the École Normale Supérieure (ENS) (Lattice Laboratory, Paris), to whom we are very grateful.

We also thank the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS), the Agence nationale de la recherche (ANR) and the Centre français d'archéologie et de sciences sociales (CEFAS) in Kuwait, now the Centre français de recherche de la péninsule Arabique (CEFREPA).

Mounir Arbach and Irene Rossi
April 2022

Acknowledgements

This book is drawn from an unpublished dissertation for the HDR (Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches), which I presented in 2018 at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, under the supervision of Professor François Villeneuve, before a jury presided over by Françis Joannès, Professor Emeritus at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, and including Alessandra Avanzini, Professor at the University of Pisa, Jean-François Breton, Director of Research at the CNRS-Nanterre and Serge A. Frantsouzoff, Professor at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg. I would like to express my gratitude for their valuable comments, which have been incorporated into this volume, as well as for the updated bibliography.

This volume is also the fruit of long reflection and research that I have been carrying out for several years in France and in the field, in Yemen. It has been enriched by numerous exchanges, remarks, suggestions and advice from my colleagues and friends, whom I would like to thank here. A special and moving thought goes to the memory of three of our colleagues and friends who have gone to rest for eternity. Alessandro de Maigret (February 2011) to whom we owe a vision of the archaeology of South Arabia. Rémy Audouin (September 2016), archaeologist and natural artist, whose adventures in the Jawf region have left a lasting impression on us.

Christian Darles (June 2021), who has left us a corpus of scientific work on the architecture of South Arabia in all its facets. In Yemen, our thanks go to the General Organisation of Antiquities and Museums (GOAM) and the National Museum in Sanaʾa, for the enormous efforts made to ensure the success of our seasons in the Jawf region during the years 2004 to 2010. We remember especially our recently departed Yemeni colleagues and friends,

Muhannad Aḥmad al-Siyyānī (August 2020), Yūsuf Muḥammad ʿAbdallāh (April 2021), both of whom headed GOAM, as well as ʿAbdu Ghālib ʿUthmān (March 2021), Professor of Archaeology at Sanaʾa University.

I am particularly indebted to Jérémie Schiettecatte (CNRS, Paris), for his critical archaeologist eye, his wise reading, his rich and enlightened remarks and his availability, without which this work would not have seen the light of day in its present form. My nearly twenty years of collaboration with J. Schiettecatte has always been beneficial to me. I would like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to him.

Special thanks go to Isabelle Ruben who, with great professionalism and dedication, translated our text from French into English, a text that was revised by Geoffrey Phillips, whom I warmly thank.

To illustrate this book with maps, I called on the valuable expertise of Astrid Emery, who made five maps corresponding to the themes and periods studied. I am also indebted to her valiant and meticulous reading of the French text, as well as her artistic eye, which considerably enriched our text. I thank her sincerely and warmly.

The final layout of the work was done with great artistic style by Alessandra Lombardi, to whom I am extremely grateful.

I would like to express my gratitude to my family in Syria, Belgium and France, who always accompany me and give me encouragement and unfailing support.

Finally, my wife Emmanuelle has played an undeniable role in the conception and the culmination of this work.

Foreword

The idea of writing an outline of the history of the formation and constitution of the cities and kingdoms of South Arabia arose from the discovery in 2004, with the late Rémy Audouin, of an *intra-muros* temple at as-Sawdāʾ, ancient Nashshān, adorned with exceptional bas-reliefs.[1] Following this discovery, hundreds of previously unpublished texts from ancient sites in the Jawf region, including as-Sawdāʾ, Kamna, Maʿīn and Haram, were brought to light, but unfortunately from clandestine excavations.[2] These new texts, most of which are thought to date to the 8th–6th centuries BCE, have greatly enriched our epigraphic corpus, hitherto very limited for this period, and have thus revealed a part of the history of South Arabia that has been little known until now.

It was also in the Jawf region that we discovered, in 2007, an *intra-muros* temple dedicated to the god Nakraḥ, with ten inscribed pillars, at the site of Qarnā, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Maʿīn.[3]

Finally, in 2009, we discovered inscriptions from the same site dating back to the 8th century BCE, which for the first time attested the existence of a city-state at Qarnā and provided synchronism with neighbouring states, thus allowing us to establish a solid chronology of this

---

[1] For the history of this discovery, see Audouin, Arbach 2004a, 2004b; Arbach, Audouin, Robin 2004.

[2] These objects and inscriptions, currently deposited at the National Museum in Sanaʾa, have been the subject of three catalogues: Arbach, Schiettecatte 2006; Arbach, Audouin 2007; Arbach, Schiettecatte, al-Hādī 2008.

[3] Arbach 2011a, 2013; Arbach, Rossi 2012.

period.[4] These new texts provided additional historical evidence for the existence of Maʿīn as a city-state in the 8th century BCE, like its neighbouring cities, before becoming a kingdom in the 7th century BCE.[5]

Other important archaeological and epigraphic discoveries marked South Arabian studies during the decade 2000–2010; they were made by the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut* in Sanaʾa, at the Sabaean site of Ṣirwāḥ (inscription DAI Ṣirwāḥ 2005-50), confirming Assyrian-Sabaean synchronism in the last quarter of the 8th century BCE and for the first time providing historical information on the political situation of South Arabia in the 8th century BCE.[6] This major discovery now makes it possible to identify with more clarity the main political actors during the 8th century BCE better, as well as to identify with certainty the role and centrality of the kingdom of Sabaʾ in South Arabia, from this time onwards, in the aromatics trade with the Levant (Map 1).[7]

Finally, the spectacular discovery in 2006 by J. Schiettecatte of some twenty inscriptions from the site of Jabal Riyām, north of Sanaʾa, dating to the early 7th century BCE, also provides the first direct evidence of the existence of highland city-states in the region of Sanaʾa, and of their presence on the political scene that early on. Before this it had been commonly thought that the highlands were absent from the political scene throughout the 1st millennium BCE, and had only entered history at the turn of the 1st century BCE.[8]

An update of our knowledge of the history of South Arabia in the 8th–6th centuries BCE has become necessary due to the constant flow of new epigraphic and archaeological documentation.[9]

Politically speaking, these new texts from the 8th and 7th centuries BCE reinforce the idea of the political fragmentation of South Arabia during this period of the formation of the South Arabian kingdoms,[10] which resulted, as we shall see, in the gradual disappearance of small political entities in favour of large kingdoms encompassing a larger territory.[11]

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[4] Arbach, Rossi 2012; Schiettecatte, Arbach 2020.

[5] On the history of the kingdom of Maʿīn, see Robin, de Maigret 2009 and recently Schiettecatte, Arbach 2020, 2021.

[6] Nebes 2007, 2011, 2016; Arbach 2014, 2019b; Robin 1996b, 2016; Avanzini 2016.

[7] Nebes 2016; Avanzini 2016.

[8] Schiettecatte 2011; Arbach, Schiettecatte 2012; al-Salāmī 2011.

[9] Breton 1998b; de Maigret 2002; Avanzini 2016.

[10] Robin 1996a, 1996b; Arbach 2010.

[11] *Ibid*.

The theme of this book is the history of the formation of political entities in South Arabia (8th century BCE), particularly the city-states of the Jawf region (Yemen), and their disappearance (6th century BCE). Amongst its pages, this book aims to provide a better understanding of the historical context in which the process of transition from city to kingdom took place, of its actors and above all of the political consequences of this great upheaval, which ultimately led to the formation of the four South Arabian kingdoms.

Nota Bene

For the inscriptions from the city-states of the Jawf region cited or discussed in this volume, see Volume II, by Irene Rossi.

For the abbreviations please refer to Kitchen 2000, as well as to the online archive, DASI - *Digital Archive for the Study of pre-Islamic Arabian Inscriptions* [http://dasi.cnr.it/], where all inscriptions that are already published and are cited in this book, as well as their bibliography, can be consulted.

A list of inscriptions cited in this volume is provided at the end of the volume.

INTRODUCTION

At the dawn of South Arabian civilisation

Reconstructing the history of the early civilisation of South Arabia is a difficult, even perilous task. Difficult, because the historical documents from this period – the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE – that have come down to us are rare and archaeological data are also insufficient, or even absent, especially for the transition period, from the 12th–10th centuries BCE, that can be described as proto-South Arabian.[12] Perilous, because the question of origins, which has been debated many times, often raises ideological and cultural debates dominated either by 'Hellenic-centrism'[13] or by Levantine 'cultural diffusionism'.[14]

There is no unanimity among scholars on this issue and the two approaches are opposed. The first considers, for convenience, that South Arabia, given its distance from the centres of Near Eastern civilisations, was not in a position to develop a new form of civilisation with writing, architecture and art on its own.[15] This diffusionist theory is largely based on the Levantine origin of South Arabian alphabetic writing and on the cultural and material break between the Bronze and Iron Age in the late 2nd and early 1st millennium BCE.[16] According to this reasoning, South Arabia at

[12] Schiettecatte 2011.
[13] Pirenne 1956, 1961, 1974, 1990.
[14] Garbini 1984, 2004; Nebes 1999.
[15] Pirenne 1956, followed by Garbini 1984.
[16] Lundin 1987; Nebes 2001; Robin, de Maigret 2009.

the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE would not have been able to make the qualitative leap necessary for the changeover from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age, through the use of writing, monumental architecture, and the establishment of a new social, political and religious organisation of society. Still according to the promoters of this theory, it is the massive arrival of people from the Levant into South Arabia which would have introduced the constituent elements of South Arabian civilisation.[17]

The second vision, which we share, is based on the observation that Arabia in general and South Arabia in particular drew on a Semitic cultural fund common to the Arabian and Levantine civilisations (Syria-Palestine and Mesopotamia).[18] It is this common fund that would have been at the origin of the cultural convergences that can be observed at the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age in Arabia and in the bordering regions of the Levant, Sinai and Syria-Palestine. As J. Schiettecatte and R. Crassard have recently observed, the cultural and material break, as well as the supposed massive arrival of Levantine populations in South Arabia at the end of the Bronze Age, have been disproved by archaeological data brought to light in recent years in several regions of South Arabia.[19] South Arabia was not the graveyard of the cultures of the great Levantine civilisations. On the contrary, from the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE, it was able to develop, within its territory, a flourishing and original civilisation marked by the adoption of alphabetic writing, by the appearance of cities with cut stone monuments and by the creation of cities and kingdoms endowed with rather complex political, religious and social systems, to which the earliest inscriptions bear witness.[20]

Linguistically, the South Arabian population used four languages, namely, Sabaic, Minaic, Qatabānic and Ḥaḍramatic. These languages are certainly of the large family of Southern- and Ethio-Semitic languages, but in many respects they have linguistic particularities, both morphologically and lexically, reflecting a culture specific to South Arabian civilisation.[21]

The adoption in South Arabia of the alphabetic script, which originated in Syria-Palestine, as well as the presence of linguistic similarities with other North

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[17] Knauf 1989.

[18] Robin 1991-93, 1996b; Avanzini 2009.

[19] Crassard, Schiettecatte 2012.

[20] Robin, Vogt 1997; Schiettecatte 2004, 2011; Avanzini 2016.

[21] Avanzini 2009.

Semitic languages, do not in any way help to support the theory of cultural diffusionism and the massive arrival of Levantine populations in South Arabia.

The problem is that the transition between the Bronze Age and the historic period is still very poorly understood. In other words, there are at least two centuries between the appearance and spread of alphabetic scripts in Syria-Palestine, in the 14th–13th centuries BCE,[22] and the first attestations of South Arabian inscriptions, in minuscule script, in the 11th–10th centuries.[23] Let us remember that the first monumental inscriptions mentioning historical information date to the beginning of the 8th century BCE. Moreover, it is not clear by what intermediary the Ugaritic-type alphabet, originally of 27 letters, arrived in Arabia, with 28 letters in Dedān and 29 letters in Sabaʾ (addition of the letters *s*³ and *ẓ*).[24] This proto-Taymānite model must have existed before the appearance of the first texts in South Arabian writing, incised on wooden sticks, around the 11th century BCE.[25] If this hypothesis proves correct, a century would have elapsed between the appearance of the Ugaritic alphabet and the proto-Taymānite model, from which those of Dedān and Sabaʾ derive. The trading links between Taymāʾ and Sabaʾ, often mentioned in Assyrian texts of the 8th century BCE and also in the Hebrew Bible, could be explained by this very ancient link that bound Sabaʾ to Taymāʾ, the origin of which must go back to even before the rise of the incense trade.[26]

In the present state of research, it is generally agreed that around the beginning of the 1st millennium BCE, with the development and growth of trade, the very first texts in South Arabian alphabetic script appeared in South Arabia together with an emerging political organisation of South Arabian society. The South Arabian inscriptions are a direct expression of this new authority.

Writing and trade: catalysts of a civilisation

Recent radiocarbon dating of inscribed wooden sticks from sites in the Jawf has for the first time, and to everyone's surprise, given very early dates:

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[22] Ryckmans 2001.
[23] Drewes *et al.* 2013; Stein 2013.
[24] Robin 2008.
[25] Drewes *et al.* 2013; Stein 2013.
[26] Robin 1996b.

1055–901 and 820–670 BCE.[27] Other more recent sticks date to between 733 and 399 BCE. Finally, the radiocarbon analysis has made it possible to date some inscribed sticks to the last centuries of the history of South Arabian civilisation, in the 4th–6th centuries CE. For monumental inscriptions, there are few dates from such an early period.

If we accept these dates, with a margin of error of a few decades, the oldest surviving South Arabian inscriptions would probably date to the 11th–10th century BCE. This date would correspond to the spread of alphabetic scripts (Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew) in the Near East.

The dates obtained from the inscribed sticks confirm dating obtained from other sources. In the 1950s, the American excavations of part of Hajar Ibn Ḥumayd dated inscribed sherds from archaeological layers to the same period (10th–9th century BCE).[28] These dates are now supported by the results obtained at the sites of Yalā,[29] Raybūn in the Ḥaḍramawt[30] and Barāqish.[31] Finally, the French Archaeological Mission at as-Sawdāʾ obtained, during the excavations of the *extra-muros* temple, radiocarbon dates from fragments taken from the mortar of the wall of the western portal, dating to between 830 and 780 BCE.[32] These dates most probably correspond to the date of the construction of the temple that can be associated with a foundation inscription, which is repeated four times on the pillars of the temple entrance.[33]

As with the first appearances of writing in Mesopotamia, one may well ask whether these early attempts at South Arabian writing served a commercial purpose, to note down transactions. If such was the case, the invention of alphabetic writing and its dissemination in the Near East would be, along with the rise of the aromatics trade, a determining factor in the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age in South Arabia.[34]

For our purposes, the sticks and the few inscribed sherds dating to the very beginning of the 1st millennium BCE are very sparse, even laconic, and

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[27] Stein 2013.
[28] Van Beek 1969.
[29] de Maigret 1988, 1990; Robin, de Maigret 1989.
[30] Sedov, Grjaznevich 1996.
[31] Robin, de Maigret 2009.
[32] Breton 1992.
[33] Breton 2011; Arbach, Rossi 2011.
[34] Macdonald 1997.

are thus insufficient for a historical and political reconstruction of the South Arabian kingdoms. It was not until the beginning of the 8th century BCE that the first historical testimonies by important figures, often rulers, appeared, allowing us today to reconstruct the history of this formative period of the South Arabian kingdoms.

Epigraphic sources

Inscriptions are in fact our main source for the reconstruction of the political, social and religious history of South Arabia in the 8th–6th centuries BCE. Given the lack of any significant documents to help us, we consider that the establishment of the South Arabian kingdoms began around the early 8th century BCE. In view of the dates of the earliest known sticks, this date (8th century BCE) is relatively late, but it allows us to set a time-frame for the chronological classification of the inscriptions from this period of the formation of the South Arabian cities and kingdoms (8th–6th centuries BCE).

For the 8th century BCE, we now have a corpus of texts that is rather limited in number but significant with regard to the political, social and religious situation in part of South Arabia. This corpus comes exclusively from the Marib-Ṣirwāḥ region and the city-states of Jawf. The Jawf texts, it should be remembered, are unfortunately mostly from clandestine excavations.

Thanks to the cross-checking of internal data and the synchronism with the kingdom of Saba', some thirty texts from the Jawf can be dated to the 8th century BCE.[35] These inscriptions are the only historical evidence that has come down to us so far from these city-states, but they render the establishment of a chronology of the rulers mentioned, and an outline of the history of these city-states in the 8th century BCE, possible. Unlike the texts from the Jawf region, those from the area of Marib, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Saba', and Ṣirwāḥ, despite their scarcity, come mostly from archaeological contexts. As we shall see, some of them constitute a valuable marker for the chronology of South Arabia in the 8th–6th centuries BCE, thanks to synchronism with external sources and with other South Arabian kingdoms.[36] These new texts allow us today to propose a histori-

[35] Arbach, Rossi 2011, 2012, 2014, 2020.

[36] Nebes 2016; Robin 1996b; Arbach 2014.

cal reconstruction of South Arabia in the 8th century BCE, at the time of the city-states and principalities, which has been largely unknown so far.

The kingdom of Sabaʾ: the main actor in South Arabia

The kingdom of Sabaʾ, by virtue of its decisive and even hegemonic political role from the middle of the 8th century BCE, will hold an important place in the pages that follow, due to the fact that the rulers of Sabaʾ alone dominated the great historical events that marked the history of South Arabia for nearly two centuries. The few known historical texts were left by the victors: the Sabaeans. However, there are a few allusions that appear in inscriptions from the cities of Jawf that help to counterbalance the victors' official history.[37]

It is beyond the scope of this book to review all the Sabaean texts and trace the history of Sabaʾ during this period, known as the time of the 'federating' *mukarribs* of Sabaʾ (8th–6th centuries BCE).[38] This glorious period of the kingdom of Sabaʾ, marked by the reign of Karibʾīl Watār son of Dhamarʿalī, in the early 7th century BCE, has previously been the subject of a landmark study.[39]

New Sabaean texts (DAI Ṣirwāḥ 2005-50, AO 31929, etc.), as well as those from the Jawf region, allow us to date the political supremacy of Sabaʾ over the other political entities of South Arabia to the 8th century BCE,[40] and to draw up an enriched chronological and historical picture of South Arabia at that time.

Given the scarcity of texts dated by archaeology and the absence of royal chronicles with continuous lines, the establishment of a chronology, even a relative one, makes it possible to set out in space and time the key events of this period. For we believe that there is no history without a chronology of events.

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[37] Arbach, Audouin, Robin 2004.

[38] On the meaning of this title of 'federator', 'king-priest', 'emperor', etc., which was borne at first by the rulers of Sabaʾ and Awsān (8th and 7th centuries BCE), and later by the rulers of Qatabān, Ḥaḍramawt and Ḥimyar, see Lundin 1971; Robin 1996b; Drewes 2001; Gajda 2009; Avanzini 2016.

[39] Robin 1996b.

[40] Nebes 2016; Arbach 2014; Avanzini 2016.

This is the most difficult task, to which we devote the first chapter of this book. In it we outline the foundations of the chronology of South Arabia,[41] as well as the difficulties and problems we face due to the nature of the inscriptions, the scarcity of texts describing events, the absence of lineage sequences, and the lack of sufficient and reliable archaeological data to establish a solid chronology.

After establishing a chronological framework and the problems inherent in it, the second chapter is devoted to the political situation of South Arabia in the 8th century BCE. This was marked by political fragmentation that resulted in the existence of a multitude of small political entities, cities/tribes governed by local chiefs, who, from the 7th century BCE onwards, bore the title of 'kings'. To date, the city-states of the Jawf are the best documented; this book is devoted to them.

The other principalities or small kingdoms of the Southern Highlands are known only indirectly from Sabaean texts (DAI Ṣirwāḥ 2005-50 and *RES* 3945-46). Finally, the small kingdom of Samʿī, north of Sanaʾa, is now documented by a few inscriptions dating to the 7th–6th centuries BCE.[42]

In this chapter we will try, in the light of new discoveries, to reveal the political role of each city, as well as its relationship with its neighbours and with the kingdom of Sabaʾ. From the middle of the 8th century BCE, the latter attempted to impose its political hegemony and supremacy over the other regions of South Arabia. It is in this chapter that we propose a new relative chronology for the city-states of Jawf and Sabaʾ, based on new epigraphic discoveries, in particular on an Assyrian synchronism mentioning Sabaʾ and its rulers, as well as on new synchronisms in South Arabia, from Sabaʾ, Nashshān, Kamna and Maʿīn.

In addition to the linguistic specificity of the cities of the Jawf, which are characterised by the use of the Minaic language, a specific pantheon for each city and the presence of temples with decorations, known as 'Banāt ʿĀd', the 'Daughters of ʿĀd', constitute the main religious and artistic characteristics of the Jawf cities.[43] For each city-state we shall give a general outline of its pantheon and temples.

It was not until the 7th century BCE that the kingdom of Sabaʾ succeeded in imposing itself, thanks to the political ambitions of its famous ruler,

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[41] Robin 1996; Avanzini 2009; Arbach 2014.

[42] Schiettecatte 2011; Arbach, Schiettecatte 2012.

[43] Breton 1998a; Audouin, Arbach 2004; Antonini 2003; Arbach, Darles 2019.

Karibʾīl Watār son of Dhamarʿalī Dhāriḥ, who is mentioned in Assyrian sources.

We believe that, like the civilisations of the Near East or Greece, South Arabia underwent a political process reflected in the transition from city-states to kingdoms with control over a large territory.[44]

This is the premise that we formulate in order to understand this period and which forms the main thread of this book. It will be set out in the third chapter by emphasising the role of Sabaʾ, which was the driving force and trigger of this process, which resulted in the Sabaeanisation of South Arabian society – the use of the Sabaic language throughout South Arabia, the generalisation of its onomasticon, the spread of its pantheon and its linguistic and artistic model – and the collapse of the city-states and principalities. As in the previous chapter, a relative chronology of the rulers of kingdoms and city-states will be provided.

Finally, the fourth and last chapter will be devoted to the political situation of South Arabia in the 6th century BCE. It is during this century that the small kingdoms finally lose their political autonomy and are integrated into the four South Arabian kingdoms, namely Sabaʾ, Maʿīn, Qatabān and the Ḥaḍramawt. It was also the end of the period of the *mukarribs* of Sabaʾ, which spelled the end of Sabaean hegemony and the rise to power of Qatabān, the Ḥaḍramawt and Maʿīn in the international trade of aromatics.[45]

There are still many problems with the chronology of this period, namely the date of the last *mukarribs* and first kings of Sabaʾ. This date is related to the conflicts that broke out between Sabaʾ and Qatabān,[46] which resulted in the rulers of Qatabān adopting the title '*mukarrib* of Qatabān'.[47]

Our discussion is illustrated by maps of South Arabia, specially made by Astrid Emery for this book. Chronological and synoptic tables are also provided for each period studied. Photographs of some important historical

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[44] As Prof. F. Joannès has pointed out on the occasion of my HDR dissertation (see p. 9), it was Sargon of Akkad (18th century BCE) who imposed a centralised power in Mesopotamia, and it was in the 1st millennium BCE that the Neo-Assyrian state, under Tiglath-Phalazar III, founded a true Assyrian imperial political structure, to the detriment of the city-states, which had been autonomous until then.

[45] Robin, de Maigret 2009; Arbach, Rossi 2011; Schiettecatte, Arbach 2020.

[46] Robin 1996b; Avanzini 2004, 2009.

[47] Arbach 2005-2006; 2014; Avanzini 2004, 2009; Robin 2016; Mazzini 2020.

inscriptions, often quoted in this book, are also inserted in the text, with as best a translation as possible.

To facilitate research in this book, we have compiled a *List of figures, maps and sites photographs*, a *Glossary*, an *Index of inscriptions* and an *Index of names*.

This book will be neither the first nor the last to deal with the history of South Arabian civilisation during its phase of formation of cities and kingdoms (8th–6th centuries BCE). It is fully in line with the historical research on the civilisation of South Arabia, already carried out by my predecessors, whose work has enriched my thinking and served as a basis for this study. It is beyond the scope of this book to deal with all the facets of South Arabian civilisation, its cities and monuments, its economy, its languages, its social and religious structures, etc. The masterly synthesis on South Arabian cities by Jérémie Schiettecatte, today a work of reference, has been of great help to us.[48] The same applies to the monographs already published on the ancient sites of the Jawf region which are treated here.[49]

[48] Schiettecatte 2011.

[49] Robin 1992; Gnoli 1993; Breton 1994; Avanzini 1995; Bron 1998; Arbach, Rossi 2011, 2012, 2014, 2020.