

The Second Campaign of the Abyssinian King Kaleb [Ella Asbeḥa] on Southern Arabia, 525 AD

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Abstract

South Arabia, in particular Najran, was the scene of many political, social, and religious events before the king of Aksum, Kaleb Ella Asbeḥa, gained the justification he needed to launch a large-scale attack with a Byzantine support. The justification was that Yūsuf dhū Nuwās persecuted Christians in southern Arabia. This attack began in 525 AD and ended with the death of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās and the occupation of a large part of southern Arabia by Abyssinian forces under the so-called Second Abyssinian Occupation.

This paper aims to shed light on the factors that prompted the Abyssinian king Kaleb to launch this campaign, the external roles in supporting him, and the situations of King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās on external roles in southern Arabia.

Keywords: Christianity, Judaism, South Arabia, Najran, Dhū Nuwās, Ella Asbeḥa, Himyarites, Abyssinian king, Byzantium.

When the news of the killing that took place in southern Arabia after Yūsuf dhū Nuwās returned to power reached the Byzantine Emperor through his ambassadors in al-Hira, and to the Abyssinian king through some Himyarite Christians, the Byzantine Emperor sent a message to the Abyssinian king about the necessity of launching a military campaign against the Himyarite King, Yūsuf dhū Nuwās, who harmed Byzantium's commercial interests, killed its subjects, and deprived it of the trade route linking it to India, and at the same time sought an alliance with the Persians¹.

The period between Yūsuf dhū Nuwās' persecution of Christians and the second Abyssinian campaign is estimated at seven years². During this

¹ Pigulevskaya, Nina, "Ethiopia and Himyar in the fifth and sixth centuries AD," translated by Qaid Muhammad, *Al-Ikleel Journal*, No. 27. (2002): 48-64; Fell, Winand. "Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien Und Die Himjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung," *Zeitschrift Der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 35, no. 1/2 (1881): 1-74; Shahid, Irfan. "Byzantino-Arabica: The Conference of Ramla, A. D. 524." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 23, No. 2 (1964): 115-131.

² Al-Jarw, Asmahān, *Al-Tārīkh al-siyāsī li-Janūb al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyyah, al-Yaman al-Qadīm*, [Political History of the South Arabian Peninsula, Ancient Yemen],

period, the Abyssinians did not react to the religious wars taking place in southern Arabia. There are those who explain the reasons for this delay by the preoccupation of the Abyssinian and Byzantine allies with their internal situations: Abyssinia witnessed a political struggle for power, and Byzantium was preoccupied with its foreign policy and managing its relations with its traditional enemy, Persia³. There are those who believe that the Abyssinian king spent seven years preparing for the campaign and building ships⁴.

Greek evidence estimates the period between the persecution and the Abyssinian campaign to be only two years, as it dates the time of the second Abyssinian intervention to the year 525 AD and the date of the persecution to the year 523 AD⁵. Although this evidence is unique among contemporary sources, and is the closest to the logic of the events, it is difficult to support it due to the criticisms directed at the dates by provided it due to the great confusion in the dates of the events of this period.

Preparations for the joint Byzantine-Abyssinian role, politically and militarily, began. Politically, the presence of the Himyarite King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās, the king of the Jewish faith, in power poses a clear threat to its interests of both parties on the eastern trade route through the Red Sea. Byzantium may lose its influence if the Jewish king remains in power. Therefore, preparing for the campaign required a diplomatic effort before taking any military step, and it also required an attempt to isolate King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās from his potential allies, the kings of Persians and al-Hirah. The Ramla Conference was an excellent opportunity to achieve this goal. These diplomatic efforts succeeded in isolating King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās from the only power that could have helped him confront the Christian alliance⁶.

Mu'assasat Ḥamādah, Irbid, 1996, 284; Philby, John, *The Highlands of South Arabia*, translated by Hassan Mustafa, vol. 1, 1st ed, Obeikan Library, Riyadh, 2005, 502; Shahid, Irfan, *The Martyrs of Najrân*. New Documents, Bruxelles, 1971, 235-242.

³ Al-Jarw, *Al-Tārīkh al-Siyāsī li-Janūb al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyyah, al-Yaman al-Qadīm*, 284; Kudryavtsev, Mikhail. *The History of Northeastern Africa in the Early Middle Ages and its Relationship with the Arabian Peninsula from the Sixth to the Middle of the Seventh Century*, translated by Saladin Othman, Jordanian University, 1988, 60.

⁴ Al-Na'īm, Nūrah, *Al-Tashrī'āt fī Janūb Gharb al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyyah ḥattā nihāyat Dawlat Ḥīmyar*, [Legislations in Southwest Arabia until the End of the Himyar State], Maktabat al-Malik Fahd, Riyadh, 2000, 338-339.

⁵ Mordtmann, Johannes, Heinrich, "Die himjarisch-äthiopischen," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Vol. 35. (1881): 693-710; Beaucamp, Joëlle, "Rôle de Byzance en mer rouge sous le règne de Justin.": mythe ou réalité? In: *Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et VIe siècles*, (2010): 197-220.

⁶ Some people think that the large ransom that the Byzantines offered to Al-Mundhir III in exchange for the release of the prisoners tempted the king of al-Hira, leading to his

After the success of the first step, military preparations began. The Abyssinian King Kaleb was able to form a large fleet that came to Abyssinia from various ports. The total number of these ships is questionable. In the Greek version of the Martyrdom of Harith, the numbers reached 60 ships⁷. In the Arab version, the number reached 209⁸. The Abyssinian records, it reached 354 ships⁹.

In this context, it is difficult to rely on previous sources to determine the size of the Christian fleet, or the identity of the largest contributor to providing ships: the Abyssinians or the Byzantines?¹⁰. Especially since the Greek sources are silent about any Byzantine contributions¹¹. The Editor of the Arabic version of the martyrdom of Al-Harith bin Ka'b believes that there is difficulty for the Abyssinian king to gather this number of ships in a short time, and the Roman merchants must have volunteered their ships to help their co-religionists¹².

This fleet consisted of large ships to carry fighters and others to carry horses¹³. All these ships gathered in the port of Adulis¹⁴ by order of the

rejection and making King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās demands unacceptable. In addition to al-Mundhir's pledge to treat Christians well. See: Shahid, "Byzantino-Arabica: The Conference of Ramla, A. D. 524." 115.

⁷ Detoraki, Marina, *Le Martyre de saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons (BHG 166)*, traduction par Joëlle Beaucamp, Paris, 2007, 262.

⁸ Ibrāhīm, al-Ab al-Ḥārith, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyah min istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, [the Arabic version of the martyrdom of Saint Al-Harith bin Ka'b and his companions in Najran], Institute of History, Antiquities and Oriental Heritage, Beirut, 2007, 112-126.

⁹ Letter of Shimon Bishop, "Shuhadā' Najrān," [Martyrs of Najran], Bayt Arsham, Arabicized by John Ezzo. *Al-Mashreq Journal*, No. 5, (1933): 409-417, 405-406; Fell, "Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien Und Die Ḥimjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung," 96.

¹⁰ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Book I, translated by H. B. Dewing, 1914, XX.

¹¹ Pigulevskaya, "Ethiopia and Himyar in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries AD," 56.

¹² Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyah min Istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, 52.

¹³ Al-Ṭaḥāwī, Ḥātim, "Al-Baḥr al-Aḥmar fī al-maṣādir al-Bīzanṭīyah, al-qarn al-sādis al-Mīlādī," [The Red Sea in Byzantine Sources, Sixth Century AD], *Journal of the College of Arts*, No. 55. (2010): 71-103, 89.

¹⁴ Adulis was the main port of the Kingdom of Aksum, located on the African coast of the Red Sea, and it was one of the most important centres of trade exchange between the ports of the Arabian Peninsula and India. See: Makkāwī, Fawzī, "Al-'ilāqāt byn Aksum wa-Janūb al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyah khilāl 'Ahd al-Malik Kitāb," [Relations between Axum and South Arabia during the reign of King Kaleb], *Journal of Yemeni Studies*, No. 3. (1979): 80-94; 'Ābidīn, 'Abd al-Majīd, *Byn al-Ḥabashah wa-l-'Arab*, [Between Abyssinia and the Arabs], Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī. (n. d.), 18; Hourani, George, *Arabs and Navigation in the Indian Ocean in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, translated by Yacoub Bakr, Anglo-Egyptian Library, 1965, 100-101.

Abyssinian king¹⁵, and it represented power in terms of the number of ships¹⁶.

After the general preparations for the attack were completed and the decisive moment arrived¹⁷, King Kaleb, according to the Arabic version of the martyrdom, sent a small exploration campaign across the land, consisting of a thousand soldiers, and ordered them to stay in a specific place located east of the country of Himyar. However, all of these soldiers died of thirst before they reached the place to which the Abyssinian king directed them¹⁸.

Syriac and church sources describe the Axumite campaign and Kaleb's most important actions before its beginning. Book of the Himyarites indicated that King Kaleb consulted on the eve of the campaign with Bishop Euprepios about how to deal with apostates from Christianity in Himyar. King Kaleb headed to the church in which the kings of Abyssinia and their bishops were buried and prayed there. The Abyssinian king's campaign left in 525 AD, and his fleet was divided into two groups at sea, the first of which was the smallest and was under the king's command. It consisted of 20 ships that docked in the nearest place on the coast, and there is evidence that they disembarked in the port of al-Mukhā in South Arabia¹⁹.

The Himyarite army had extended chains along the coast up to the Bab al-Mandab Strait to obstruct the arrival of the Abyssinian ships²⁰, but

¹⁵ Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyyah min istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, 126; Kudryavtsev, *The history of northeastern Africa in the early Middle Ages and its relationship with the Arabian Peninsula from the sixth to the middle of the seventh century*, 76.

¹⁶ Iwona, Gajda, *Le royaume de Himyar à l'époque Monothéiste*, Paris, 2006, 103.

¹⁷ Beaucamp, "Rôle de Byzance en mer rouge sous le règne de Justin," 213.

¹⁸ Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyyah min istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, 127; Fell, "Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien Und Die Ḥimjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung," 70.

¹⁹ Letter of Shimon Bishop, "Shuhadā' Najrān," [Martyrs of Najran], 407; Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyyah min istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, 130; Ḥabtūr, Nāṣir, *Al-Yazanīyūn mawḥinuhum wa-dawruhum fī Tārīkh al-Yaman al-Qadīm*, [The Yazanians are their homeland and their role in the history of ancient Yemen], 1st ed., Dār al-Thaqāfah al-'Arabīyyah, Shatjah, 2002, 350; Kudryavtsev, *The history of northeastern Africa in the early Middle Ages and its relationship with the Arabian Peninsula from the sixth to the middle of the seventh century*, 81; Hourani, *Arabs and Navigation in the Indian Ocean in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, 100-101.

²⁰ Kudryavtsev, *The history of northeastern Africa in the early Middle Ages and its relationship with the Arabian Peninsula from the sixth to the middle of the seventh century*, 57; Gayda, Iwona, *South Arabia united under the banner of Himyar*, Yemen in the land of the Queen of Sheba, translated by Badr al-Din Ardkouki, Arab World Institute, 1999, 190; Sayyid, 'Abd-Almun'im, "Al-dawāfi' al-ḥaqīqīyyah li-ghazw al-

the high waves lifted the ships off those chains and they were able to bypass them²¹. It is likely that these chains were prepared by King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās to protect against any external attack.

Near the site where the first Abyssinian forces anchored, the Himyarite King sent 30 thousand men and ordered them to enter the water with their horses to fight the Abyssinians. Yūsuf dhū Nuwās did not have a fleet to fight the Abyssinians when they landed on the coast²². Three days after the first group anchored on the coast of southern Arabia, the second, larger group arrived with a fleet of 40 ships. This group had retreated due to a sea storm that threw it backward, but it was able to reach the coast of southern Arabia within three days²³. In the meantime, King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās learned that he had anchored the great Abyssinian fleet in another area, so he headed to him with the largest part of his forces to obstruct any Abyssinian landing operation and left one of his leaders or relatives to confront the smaller group. Dhū Nuwās thought that the Abyssinian king was in the other 40 ships²⁴.

Moberg believes that the landing of the Abyssinian took place in two different places, based on what was indicated in the Book of the Himyarites: that the leadership of the Abyssinian fleet was divided between two commanders: the first was Kaleb, and the second was Z'WNS²⁵.

Inscription CIH 621, also indicates that the landing of the Abyssinians took place in two different places. This is inferred from the word *zarfatan* (-زرقتن), meaning an army division, as in the Sabaean dictionary. As for the Abyssinian inscription, RIE195, it mentions that the Abyssinian king directed half of his forces to one side and the other half to another. The essence of the Abyssinian plan was to launch a surprise attack

Aḥbāsh li-l-Yaman fī al-qarn al-sādis al-mylādī fī ḍaw' al-nuqūsh al-Yamanīyyah al-qadīmah," [The real motives for the Abyssinian invasion of Yemen in the sixth century AD in light of ancient Yemeni inscriptions], Vol. 12, No. 12. *Journal of the Arab Historian*, (2004): 9-28.

²¹ Fell, "Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien Und Die Ḥimjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung," 71.

²² Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyyah min istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, 131; Hourani, *Arabs and Navigation in the Indian Ocean in Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, 101-102.

²³ Letter of Shimon Bishop, "Shuhadā' Najrān," [Martyrs of Najran], 413-414; Kudryavtsev, *The history of northeastern Africa in the early Middle Ages and its relationship with the Arabian Peninsula from the sixth to the middle of the seventh century*, 81.

²⁴ Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyyah min istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, 131.

²⁵ Moberg Axel, *The Book of the Himyarites*, CWK Gleerup, London, 1924, XXXV-CIV.

simultaneously on the two most important strategic points on the coast. In doing so, it relied on the assumption that King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās would not be able to rely on the support of al-Aqīl (القبيل-الأقيال) of the coastal areas²⁶.

After King Yusuf dhū Nuwās left the first location where the small group landed, thinking that the Abyssinian king was in the other large group, the forces of the small group were able to descend to the coast and engage in a battle with the Himyarite forces stationed there. They defeated them, and the Himyarite leader was captured. The Abyssinian king took him as his guide in the country, and the Abyssinians were able to penetrate into the Arabian Peninsula and seize the capital, Ḥaḍramūt²⁷.

In the atmosphere of victories that the Abyssinian king Kaleb was experiencing, these reached the Himyarite King, who was besieging the second group of Abyssinian forces. The soldiers of this group had begun to get tired of the length of the siege, and because the ships had run out of supplies, they decided to disembark and fight, and they came up with a plan that consisted of linking the ships held each other with ropes, then they began to descend, and as soon as they reached the coast, the two teams clashed in a battle in which the victory went to the Abyssinians. After news of the entry of the Abyssinian King Kaleb into his capital reached him, the Himyarite King ordered his soldiers to chain him and his senior commanders in the tent he was using as his headquarters. When the Abyssinians finished killing the Himyarite soldiers, they arrived at the king's tent and found him and his senior commanders chained, so they arrested them and took them to the Abyssinian king, who built an altar to kill Yūsuf dhū Nuwās, the Jewish king, and his senior leaders, according to the Arabic version of the martyrdom of Al-Harith bin Ka'b²⁸.

According to the Book of Himyarites, the killing of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās was at the hands of an Abyssinian soldier. The soldier was able to catch King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās and drag him to the seacoast in shallow water, then cut off his head with a sword²⁹. The book provides a description of

²⁶ Jawād, 'Alī, *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-'Arab qabla al-Islām*, [the detailed history of the Arabs before Islam], Vol. 3, 1993, 378; Kudryavtsev, *The history of northeastern Africa in the early Middle Ages and its relationship with the Arabian Peninsula from the sixth to the middle of the seventh century*, 82; Lundin, A. G., "Yemen during the sixth century BC," translated by Muhammad Ali al-Bahr, *Al-Ikleel Journal*, No. 3 and 4, (1988):10-35.

²⁷ Letter of Shimon Bishop, "Shuhadā' Najrān," [Martyrs of Najran], 417; Detoraki, *Le Martyre de saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons*, 278.

²⁸ Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyah min istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣṣhābuhu fī Najrān*, 134-135.

²⁹ Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, CXXXV.

this soldier, saying that he was Christian, strong, religious, and that he had one eye³⁰. The characteristics of this fighting soldier are similar to those of Abraha, who later assumed power in the south of the peninsula, according to Kudryavtsev³¹. As for the Greek version of the martyrdom of Al-Harith, it indicates that King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās was captured first and then killed later³².

After their victory over the Himyarite forces, the Abyssinian forces entered the country of Himyarites according to the consensus of the ecclesiastical and Syriac sources, plundering and destroying; even the city of Najran was not spared from these acts. The Abyssinian king released all the Christians who had been imprisoned by Yūsuf dhū Nuwās upon his exodus from Najran. With the killing of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās, the Himyarite resistance collapsed, and the Himyarite soldiers began preparing their horses to escape, and the Abyssinians hurried to catch up with them, either to kill them or take them prisoner³³. When the Himyarite Christians saw this, they decided to draw the sign of the cross on their hands so that if the Abyssinians saw it, they would release them. This is because they cannot tell the Abyssinians that they are Christians due to their ignorance of their language. The Abyssinian king had warned his soldiers against killing those who found the sign of the cross on his hands, and when the news spread, the Jews also marked that sign so that they would be spared from being killed. After Kaleb finished pursuing the Jews and those involved with Yūsuf dhū Nuwās, both leaders and soldiers, he began spreading the Christian religion. He sent a message to the Patriarch of Alexandria, informing him of the victory. The latter sent a message to the Byzantine Emperor informing him of this³⁴, and the Patriarch sent a bishop to the south of the Arabian Peninsula, and Kaleb established monks in the cities and went to the city of Najran, built it and renovated its churches, appointed a deputy over it³⁵, and appointed a

³⁰ Bausi, Alessandro, "The massacre of Najrān," in: *the Ethiopic sources, Juifs et chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et VIe siècles* (2010): 241-254.

³¹ Kudryavtsev, *The history of northeastern Africa in the early Middle Ages and its relationship with the Arabian Peninsula from the sixth to the middle of the seventh century*, 84-85.

³² Detoraki, *Le martyre de saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons*, 272-273.

³³ Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, CXXXV.

³⁴ Ibid, CXXXVIII. Also, King Kaleb carried out a terrible massacre between Jews and converts in southern Arabia. See: Zāzā, Ḥassan, *Al-Sāmīyūn wa-lughātihm ta'rīf bi-Alqrābāt al-lughawīyyah wa-l-ḥaḍārīyyah 'inda al-'Arab*, [The Semites and their languages, an introduction to the linguistic and cultural Relationships of the Arabs], al-Dār al-Shāmīyyah, Beirut, 1990, 113; Christides, Vassilios, "The Himyarite-Ethiopian war and the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia," in the acts of Gregentius (ca. 530 A.D.), *Annales d'Ethiopie*. Vol. 9. (1972): 115-146.

³⁵ The Abyssinian king appointed a governor of the city to succeed Al-Harith ibn Ka'b, who was killed by Yūsuf dhū Nuwās. In the Arabic and Abyssinian documents for the

bishop and ten thousand Abyssinian Christian soldiers at his side. Then the Abyssinian king returned to his country, and the Arabic and Greek narratives indicate that he became a monk³⁶.

The Book of Himyarites states that Kaleb "took a man, one of the notables of the Himyarites, who was also of the royal family there. And because he had seen in him good to be baptised and to be a Christian, and made him his spiritual son"³⁷.

The Abyssinian king resided in Himyar for seven months, during which he was concerned with establishing the foundations of the Christian religion in a country on which Judaism had been forcefully imposed. He appointed a king over the region, imposed taxes on it, and left the elite of his army to guard the new king and the churches he had built. He took with him many prisoners from the people of Himyar and 50 princes from the royal family³⁸.

The Arabic evidence conveys another picture of the Abyssinian-Byzantine roles in the sixth century AD, Arab historians, provide multiple narratives that do not differ much in essence from what was mentioned previously, and their information is limited to explaining only the formal pretexts for the Abyssinian campaign³⁹. In the first narration, "When Dos dhū Thalaban came with Caesar's letter to the Negus, the ruler of Abyssinia, he sent with him seventy thousand Abyssinians and commanded over them 'Ariat and entrusted him, if you appear against them, then kill a third of their men, devastate a third of their country, and capture a third of their women and children. So, 'Ariat went out, and with him in his soldiers was Abraha Al-Ashram, and he embarked on the sea, along with Dos dhū Thalaban, until they landed on the coast of the southern Arabian Peninsula, and Yūsuf dhū Nuwās heard about them, so

martyrdom of Al-Harith, it is stated that the son of Al-Harith ibn Ka'b was appointed governor of Najran. There are indications of the appointment of Dos Dhu Thalaban as leader of his people. See: Kitchen, Kenneth, *Documentation for Ancient Arabia*, Bibliographical Catalogue of Texts, part I, Liverpool University, Press, 2000, 230; Fell, "Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien Und Die Himjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung," 73; Christides, "The Himyarite-Ethiopian war and the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia," 115-146; Bausi, "The massacre of Najrān," 244; Wahb ibn Munabbih, *Kitāb al-Tījān fī Mulūk Ḥimyar*, [The Book of Crowns on the Kings of Himyar], 1st ed., Markaz al-Dirāsāt al-Yamanīyyah, San'a, 1928, 349.

³⁶ Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyyah min istishād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, 139-340; Detoraki, *Le martyre de saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons*, 248.

³⁷ Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, CXL-CXLI.

³⁸ Ibid, CXLII-CLIV.

³⁹ Al-Jarw, *Al-Tārīkh al-Siyāsī li-Janūb al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyyah, al-Yaman al-Qadīm*, 288.

he gathered Himyar and those who obeyed him from the tribes of the southern Arabian Peninsula, but there was no war except that Yūsuf engaged in some fighting, and then they were defeated. And 'Ariat entered it, and when Yūsuf dhū Nuwās saw what had befallen him and his people, he turned his horse into the sea and threw himself into it"⁴⁰.

The second narration lists other details of the stages of that role, and according to the narration, after the ships arrived from Caesar, the Negus carried his army in them, and they went out on the coast of the Bāb al-Mandab. When Yūsuf dhū Nuwās heard, he wrote to al-Aqīl inviting them to demonstrate with him and that their command in fighting Abyssinia be one, but they refused and said: Each one fights for his area. When he saw that, he made many keys, then carried them on several camels, and went out until he met their group and said, these are the keys to the treasuries of South Arabia. I have brought them to you. You have the money and the land. They spared the men for it. Their leader wrote to the Negus about this, and he wrote to him saying that they accepted that from them. Yūsuf dhū Nuwās followed them until, when he entered Sana'a⁴¹ with them, he said to their leader, direct your trustworthy companions to seize these treasuries. So, his companions dispersed to seize them, and he gave them the keys. Yūsuf dhū Nuwās had secretly written to all al-Aqīl (القبيل-الأقبيل), ordering them to slaughter every Abyssinian soldier who came to them. Thus, all the Abyssinian leaders were killed, leaving only the fugitive among them⁴². When the Negus heard this, he became angry and prepared a second army numbering seventy thousand, with two commanders, one of whom was Abraha Al-Ashram, and in another narration, 'Ariat and al-Ashram, and he ordered them not to accept peace, and this was in reference to the first peace with which he deceived the Abyssinians. When they reached the south of the peninsula and Yūsuf dhū Nuwās saw that he had no strength to fight them, he rode his horse, crossed the sea, and broke into it, thus marking the end of his era, and he established Abraha the Abyssinian as king of the south of the Arabian Peninsula⁴³.

⁴⁰ Ibn Hishām, *Al-sīrah al-Nabawīyah*, [The Biography of the Prophet], commented on 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām al-Tadmurī, Vol. 1, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, Beirut, 2006, 37.

⁴¹ Al-Dīnawarī says: "Ariat entered Sana'a, and its name is Ḍamār, but San'a is an Abyssinian word meaning fortified, so it was called Sana'a". See: Al-Dīnawarī, Abū Ḥanīfah, *Al-akhbār al-Ṭawwāl*, [Long news], edited by 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Āmir, 1st ed., Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Irshād al-Qawmī, Egypt, 1912, 62. The city of San'a may have been a part or extension of the city of Ḍamār at that time, especially if we look at the distance between them, which is around 100 km.

⁴² Al-Dīnawarī, *Al-Akhbār al-Ṭawwāl*, 61-63; Al-Tabarī, *History of Nations and Kings*, 325.

⁴³ Ibn Qutaybah, Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh, *Al-Ma'ārif*, [Knowledge], edited by Tharwat 'Ukāshah, 4th edition, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, (n.d.), 637; Al-Maqdisī, al-

Al-Samarqandī narrates in his interpretation that the man who came to the King of Abyssinia said to him: "Indeed, the people of your religion were kindled with fire, and they were burned with it, and their books were burned, so he saw what he had brought, so the king was alarmed by that, and he sent to the Roman ruler and wrote to him asking for carpenters to build ships for him. So the Roman ruler sent him someone to build the ships for him, and he loaded the people into them. So he went out with it. So they went out from the coast of Aden to the coast of Jazān (جازان), and the people of Yemen went out to them, and they met them in Tihāmah (تهامة), and they fought, but the king of Himyar did not see that he had any strength to defeat them, and he feared that they would take him, so he struck his horse until he fell into the sea and died in it"⁴⁴.

Ibn Habīb refers to that invasion by saying: "Because of him, Abyssinia came to the south of the Arabian Peninsula and defeated it because of what the Christians did, and when Yūsuf dhū Nuwās attacked Abyssinia, they eliminated his army, and he intercepted his sea horse and drowned for fear of being captured, so it was the last of the era with him"⁴⁵. Al-Himyari Nashwān points out that the southern resistance continued after the killing of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās: "Al-Nu‘mān ibn ‘Afir Abū Sayf gathered a group of people from the south of the peninsula and fought the Abyssinians in the plains, and they defeated him. And among those who followed him from the people of the south, the Abyssinians caught up with them and fought them, but they had no strength, and Abyssinia took control of the south of the Arabian Peninsula"⁴⁶. In another narration, the resistance leader was called Dhū Jadān, and he met the same fate as Yūsuf dhū Nuwās. He took refuge in the sea and stormed it⁴⁷, and that was the last time he lived there. One researcher believes that

Muṭahhar, *Kitāb al-Bidāyah wa-l-Tārīkh*, [Book of Beginning and History], Vol. 3, Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-dīmiyah, 1903, 184; Al-‘Askarī, Abū Hilāl al-Ḥasan, *Al-Awā’il*, [The Firsters], 1st ed., Dār al-Bashīr li-l-Thaqāfah wa-l-‘Ulūm al-Islāmiyyah, Tanta, 1987, 29; Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, [Complete in history] edited by Omar Tadmūrī, Vol. 1, 1st ed, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1997, 393; Al-Nuwayrī, Aḥmad, *Nihāyat al-‘Arab fī Funūn al-‘Adab*, [The end of the need in the arts of literature], vol. 15, 1st ed, Maṭba‘at Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, 1949, 304.

⁴⁴ Al-Samarqandī, Abū al-Layth Naṣr, *Baḥr al-‘Ulūm*, [Sea of Science], Vol. 3, 1st ed., Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1993, 565.

⁴⁵ Ibn Habīb, Abū Ja‘far, Al-Muḥabbar, [Inkwell], edited by Ilse Lichtenstädter, *Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmāniyyah*, Ḥaydar Ābād, 1942, 378.

⁴⁶ Al-Ḥimyārī, Nashwān, *Mulūk Ḥimyar wa-‘qyāl al-Yaman*, [The Kings of Himyar and the leaders of Yemen], 1st ed., Dār al-‘Awdah, Beirut, 1978, 76.

⁴⁷ Al-Aṣfahānī, Ḥamzah, *Al-Tārīkh al-Sunnī mulūk al-arḍ wa-l-anbiyā’*, [Sunni History of the Kings of the Earth and the Prophets], Maktabat al-Hayāh, 1961, 113; Al-Ḥadīthī, Nizār, *ahl al-Yaman fī Ṣadr al-Islām*, [The people of Yemen at the beginning of Islam] al-Mu‘assasah al-‘Arabīyyah li-l-Dirāsāt wa-l-Nashr, n.d, 81-82.

this resistance did not last long, and the defeat of Dhū Jadān occurred in the same year in which Yūsuf dhū Nuwās was killed, so Dhū Jadān's role was overlooked⁴⁸.

The Byzantine sources also touch on the Abyssinian role in the religious war in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, as Procopius reported, as previously mentioned, that the Abyssinian king mobilised a war fleet with which he fought the Himyarites and defeated them, killed the Himyarite King, appointed his deputy in the region called Esimiphaeu, and imposed tribute on him⁴⁹. Mordtmann and Malalas provide other details about that role. After the Himyarite King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās killed the Roman échants and prevented them from passing through the Himyarite country, trade between the Romans, the Indian kingdoms, and the Kush interior stopped, so the King of Kushite sent a letter to the Himyarite King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās blaming him. In order to cause harm to his kingdom, war broke out as a result of these actions, and Ayduk decided that if he defeated the Himyarite King, he would embrace the Christian religion. Indeed, the Kushite king defeated the Himyar king and was able to capture him, kill him, and subject the country of Himyar to his rule. He converted to Christianity after that victory⁵⁰.

All sources agree on the Judaism of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās and the Christianity of King Kaleb. The previous narration indicates that the Abyssinian king was a pagan during his campaign against the country of Himyar and that he converted to Christianity after his victory over Yūsuf dhū Nuwās⁵¹. Some researchers support this narration and argue that there was a return to paganism in the Kingdom of Aksum in the fourth and fifth centuries and that Kaleb was a recent convert to Christianity to get closer to Byzantium⁵². Some reject this opinion because all sources documenting the events of the period confirm the Christianity of the

⁴⁸ Fell, "Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien Und Die Himjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung," 33.

⁴⁹ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, XX.

⁵⁰ Malalas, Ioannes, *Editio Emendatior et Copiosior Consilio*, B.G. Niebuhrii C.F., *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, XIV, Bonn, 1831, 433; Mordtmann, "Die himjarisch-äthiopischen," 705-706.

⁵¹ Jawād, *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-'Arab qabla al-Islām*, 396; Mordtmann, "Die himjarisch-äthiopischen," 705; Munro, Stuart. "A Sixth Century Kebra Nagast? In: *Annales d'Ethiopie*. Vol. 17. (2001): 43-58.

⁵² Mahrān, Muḥammad, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyah min al-Qur'ān al-Karīm fī Bilād al-'Arab*, [Historical Studies of the Holy Qur'an in the Arab Countries], 2nd ed., Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyah, 1988, 385; Sahab, Victor, *Elaf Quraysh*, The Journey of Winter and Summer, 1st ed., Arab Cultural Center, Beirut, 1992, 130-131; Pigulevskaya, "Ethiopia and Himyar in the fifth and sixth centuries AD," 48; Munro, *A Sixth Century Kebra Nagast*, 51.

Abyssinian king and that jealousy over his religion was what prompted him to wage war against the Himyar king⁵³.

There are those who believe that there were two wars that took place after the Judaization of the Himyarite Kings, one between Damian the Abyssinian and the other between Yusuf dhū Nuwās and Kaleb Ella Asbeha⁵⁴, and others believe that the Ayduk mentioned in this narration is one of the pagan Al-Aqīl of the southern Arabian Peninsula, and he protested to the Himyarite King, Yusuf dhū Nuwās, for his bad policy directed against Christian merchants, and he fought Yusuf dhū Nuwās and killed him, then he converted to Christianity⁵⁵.

We conclude from all of the above that the narratives and opinions related to the Abyssinian-Byzantine role in the religious conflict and the story of the Himyarite-Abyssinian war came from sources of diverse origins and different information. At the same time, if we exclude the inscriptions, we find that they do not mention much information about the Aksumite-Byzantine role in southern Arabia in the sixth century AD. The inscription (CIH 621. Figure 1) is the only inscription that indicates one of the results of the external roles, which was the killing of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās, the king of the Jewish faith⁵⁶.

This text embodies a military battle of the Abyssinian in the south of the Arabian Peninsula⁵⁷ and the works of fortifications and restorations carried out by Sumyafa‘ Ashwa‘ and his sons, Sharhabal Ekml and Mu‘dī Karab Yafer, after they had just returned from the land of Abyssinia, and that their return accompanied the arrival of the Abyssinian, who swept through the country of Himyar and killed the king of Himyar and his leaders⁵⁸.

⁵³ Jawād, *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-‘Arab qabla al-Islām*, [the detailed history of the Arabs before Islam], 37; Mordtmann, “Die himjarisch-äthiopischen,” 709; Christides, “The Himyarite-Ethiopian war and the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia,” 115-146; Munro, *A Sixth Century Kebra Nagast*, 49-51.

⁵⁴ ‘Ābidīn, *Byn al-Ḥabashah wa-l-‘Arab*, 46.

⁵⁵ Al-‘Aqīlī, Muḥammad, *Al-Yahūd fī Bilād al-Yaman*, [Jews in Yemen], 1st ed., Amman, 1954, 81; Wolfensohn, Israel, *The History of the Jews in Arab Countries in Pre-Islamic times and the emergence of Islam*, Al-I‘timād Press, Egypt, 1927, 47-47.

⁵⁶ Beeston. Alfred, *Chronology Problems of Ancient South Arabian Culture*, Studies in the History of Arabia, vol 2, King Saud University Press, 1984, 3; Iwona, *Le royaume de Himyar à l’époque monothéiste*, 103.

⁵⁷ Fell, “Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien und Die Himjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung,” 39.

⁵⁸ Bāfaqīh, Muḥammad, *Fī al-‘Arabīyyah al-Sa‘dah, Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyah Qaṣīrah*, [In Arabia Felix, Short Historical Studies], Markaz al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Yamanīyyah, 1987, 36; Hommel, *Ancient Arab History*, 109.

The opinions of researchers in interpreting the information in this inscription varied greatly⁵⁹. Where is the origin of this al-Aqīl? His loyalty, his subordination to Yūsuf dhū Nuwās, and the identity of the murdered king, and what corresponds to the date of the text in AD, and whether this al-Aqīl (القبيل-الأقبيل) was the one who was installed by the Abyssinians over the country of Himyar after the killing of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās or by someone else? Was the Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘ in this text the same as that mentioned in the previous three Yūsuf dhū Nuwās inscriptions or not?

Most researchers' points of view tend to be that the Himyarite King who was killed by the Abyssinians in the country of Himyar, as in the previous text, was Yūsuf dhū Nuwās, even if the inscription does not indicate that⁶⁰. It is known from the writings of historians that Sumūyafa‘ Ashwa‘ is one of the al-Aqīl of dhī Yazan who sided with King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās in his wars against the Christians⁶¹ and that the Abyssinians installed him as king of the southern Arabian Peninsula who owed vassalage to them after their victory over Yūsuf dhū Nuwās⁶², as in the text (Ist 7608 bis. Figure 2)⁶³, and as Procopius believe⁶⁴.

The Abyssinian inscriptions also embody the external roles in the religious conflict within the Himyarite state in the second decade of the sixth century AD, as the inscription RIE195 refers to a topic related to the

⁵⁹ Winand believes that the opinions of researchers in interpreting the information in this inscription varied greatly due to the erroneous copying of this inscription. See: Fell, “Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien Und Die Himjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung,” 39.

⁶⁰ Jawād, *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-‘Arab qabla al-Islām*, 462; Pigulevskaya, “Ethiopia and Himyar in the fifth and sixth centuries AD,” 36; Smith, Sidney. “Events in Arabia in the 6th Century A. D.” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London 16, No. 3 (1954): 425-468; Donald, Brian, *Southern Arabia* (New Aspects of Archeology), Thames and Hudson, 1971, 29; Christian, Robin. “La persécution des chrétiens de Nagrān et la chronologie Himyarite,” *ARAM Periodical* 11, no. 1 (1999): 15–83.

⁶¹ Ḥabtūr, Nāṣir, “Qirā’aha fī al-qyāl wa-l-ādhwā’yh wa-‘ilāqatuhā bi-al-nizām al-Markazī fī al-Yaman,” [A reading of al-Qayyala and al-Adhawi and their relationship to the central system in Yemen], *Yemeni Research and Studies Center*, No. 19. (2004): 149-161; Lundin, “Yemen during the sixth century BC,” 120.

⁶² Ḥabtūr, *Al-Yazanīyūn mawḥnuhum wa-dawruhum fī Tārīkh al-Yaman al-Qadīm*, 362; Al-Sayyid, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Sālim, *Tārīkh al-‘Arab fī ‘aṣr al-Jāhiliyah*, [The History of the Arabs in the Pre-Islamic], Mu’assasat al-Shabāb, Alexandria, 2002, 134.

⁶³ Ryckmans, Jack, *La persécution des chrétiens himyarites au sixième siècle*, Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten Leiden, 1956, 9.

⁶⁴ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, XX.

presence of the army and South Arab port, the pursuit of fugitives, the arrest of prisoners, and the killing of people⁶⁵.

The author of the text, as historians believe, is the Abyssinian king Kaleb. It refers to the entry of the Abyssinian campaign army and ships, crossing the Red Sea and landing in two places, and that the battle took place on the coast. It is believed that the port referred to is Adulis, and it records the victory of the Abyssinian army⁶⁶.

Based on everything mentioned in the previous sources, which documented the external roles in the religious wars in southern Arabia in the sixth century AD, we find that they agreed that the primary motive for the two Abyssinian-Byzantine campaigns against southern Arabia was the persecution that Christians were suffering there from Jews; this is the apparent cause of these wars, as mentioned above. The sources also agreed that the Himyarite forces led by Yūsuf dhū Nuwās confronted that Christian aggression, and they also agreed on the defeat of the Himyarite army and the killing of King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās when he was stationed on the coast with his Himyarite leaders⁶⁷.

It seems that each source has its own way of documenting how Yusuf dhū Nuwās was killed. In the Syriac sources, the Himyarite book mentions that King Yūsuf dhū Nuwās was killed by an Abyssinian soldier who beheaded him at sea, and in the Arabic account of Al-Harith's martyrdom, he was killed by the hand of the king⁶⁸, and the Ethiopian account is not different. From the Arabic narration, it refers first to the arrest of the king of the Jewish faith and those close to him; then King Kaleb ordered their heads to be cut off⁶⁹. As for the Byzantine

⁶⁵ George, Hatke, *Africans in Arabia Felix: Aksumite relations with Himyar in the Sixth Century C.E.*, 2011, 365.

⁶⁶ Kudryavtsev, *The history of northeastern Africa in the early Middle Ages and its relationship with the Arabian Peninsula from the sixth to the middle of the seventh century*, 84; Christian, "La persécution des chrétiens de Najrān et la chronologie Himyarite." 40; Iwona, *Le royaume de Himyar à l'époque Monothéiste*, 107; Bausi, "The massacre of Najrān," 242.

⁶⁷ Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyyah min istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, 134; Ḥabtūr, *Al-Yazanīyūn mawḥūnuhum wa-dawruhum fī Tārīkh al-Yaman al-qadīm*, 351; Muller, Walter, *Sabäische Inschriften nach Ären datiert*, Bibliographie, Texte und Glossar, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010, 106.

⁶⁸ Ibrāhīm, *Al-Nuskah al-'Arabīyyah min istishhād al-Qiddīs al-Ḥārith ibn Ka'b wa-aṣḥābuhu fī Najrān*, 134-135.

⁶⁹ Fell, *Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien Und Die Himjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung*, 73.

Detoraki discusses the reasons for the incompatibility of the ecclesiastical and Syriac accounts of the death of the Himyarite king and believes that the ecclesiastical sources want to exaggerate the role of the Abyssinian king Kaleb, while the Himyarite book's account makes more sense. For more see: Detoraki, "Un hagiographe à l'œuvre: le martyre de saint Arethas et ses sources, 183.

sources, they differ in how King dhū Nuwās was killed, as Procopius indicated that the killing of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās was at the hands of the Abyssinian king Kaleb⁷⁰, while Malalas refers to his capture first and then his killing⁷¹.

Islamic historical narratives are unique in how they document the killing of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās and believe that he committed suicide. "Yūsuf dhū Nuwās saw that he had no strength to fight them, so he rode his horse, crossed the sea, and broke into it, thus marking the end of his era"⁷².

It is difficult to accept this account of Akhbārīs because the logic of events does not accept this ending for a king who wasted his years of rule in jihad in order to rid his country of foreign tutelage. If we look at his situations and efforts in confronting the Abyssinian campaign by building fortifications on the coast to confront his enemies, it makes us rule out the hypothesis of his escape, even though he had previously fled from facing the first campaign, but his escape was to restore and gather his supporters and rearrange his situation. It's possible that he actually stormed the sea because he thought he could defeat the Abyssinians more easily than if they were able to descend to the sea and rest or seek refuge in positions that would help them hold out until the completion of the disembarkation of their forces⁷³. Akhbārīs' accounts are also contradictory about how the battle took place in Sana'a⁷⁴. The Himyarite King is heading to the sea. Did he come all the way to the beach to throw himself into the sea?⁷⁵ There are those who assume that he was killed in the midst of the turmoil of the battle that took place on the coast, where the campaign landed, without his matter being known⁷⁶.

The reasons for the defeat of the forces of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās were numerous, and many researchers and historians cite the reasons for the defeat of these forces, some of which relate to the internal conditions of

⁷⁰ Procopius, *History of the Wars*, XX.

⁷¹ Malalas, 433.

⁷² Munabbih, *Kitāb al-Tījān fī Mulūk Ḥimyar*, 349; Al-Ḥimyarī, *Mulūk Ḥimyar w'qyāl al-Yaman*, 176.

⁷³ 'Ābidīn, *Byn al-Ḥabashah wa-l-'Arab*, 51; Ḥabtūr, *Al-Yazanīyūn mawḥnuhum wa-dawruhum fī Tārīkh al-Yaman al-Qadīm*, 352.

⁷⁴ Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad, *Tārīkh al-'Umam wa-l-Mulūk*, [History of Nations and Kings] ed.1, al-Maktabah al-Miṣrīyyah, Beirut, 2009, 326; Al-'Askarī, Abū Hilāl al-Ḥassan, *Al-Awā'il*, 29.

⁷⁵ Moberg, *The Book of the Himyarites*, XIV.

⁷⁶ 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, Zaghlūl, *fī Tārīkh al-'Arab qabla al-Islām*, [On the History of the Arabs Before Islam], Dār al-Nahḍah al-'Arabīyyah, Beirut, 1975, 197-198.

the state, others to the military preparation for the campaign, and international positions towards the Judaized state of Himyar⁷⁷.

It is likely that the reasons for the defeat of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās are related to the time and place in which the engagement occurred, the amount of southern presence, the king's negligence in his perception of it, and the failure of the Himyarite army's deployment plan on the coast and its reliance on fortifications⁷⁸.

If we want to follow the approach of Akhbārīs in considering Yūsuf dhū Nuwās as the hero of the story of the people of the groove, then the method of killing the groove's hoof differs from all the methods previously mentioned in the Arab and ancient sources. Some commentators' interpretations are that the killers of the Groove died by burning in the fires they lit. In light of this, is it possible to be measured by the person responsible for torturing the people of the Groove mentioned in the Holy Quran?⁷⁹

Based on all of the above, the Abyssinians and Byzantium succeeded in playing the most important role in the religious conflict in southern Arabia during the sixth century AD and in igniting the Christian persecution of Najran. The actions of persecuting the Christians there and their seeking help from these allied forces were nothing but a green light that both forces worked to obtain to interfere in the affairs of the region and control its trade route. Taking the region as a point of pressure on Sassanian Persia in its ongoing wars with Byzantium, and with the two allies destroying the Jewish state in southern Arabia⁸⁰, the entire region

⁷⁷ 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Luṭfī, *Al-'Arab fī al-'Uṣūr al-Qadīmah*, [Arabs in Ancient Times], Vol 1, 2nd ed., Jāmi'at Dār al-Ma'rifah, (n.d.), 333; Fārūq, Abāzah. "Al-Tadakhkhul al-Ajnabī fī al-Yaman fī Nihāyat 'ahd ḥaḍāratuhu al-qadīmah," [Foreign Intervention in Yemen at the End of the Ancient Era of Its Civilization], *Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies journal*, No. 17. (1987): 65-94; Sahab, *Elaf Quraysh*, 139; Al-Jarw, *Al-Tārīkh al-Siyāsī li-Janūb al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyah, al-Yaman al-Qadīm*, 282; Bāwazīr, Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh, "Al-Ṣirā' al-Yahūdī al-Masīḥī fī al-Yaman al-qadīm", [The Jewish-Christian Conflict in Ancient Yemen], MA thesis, University of Aden, 1997. 270-271.

⁷⁸ Ḥabtūr, *Al-Yazanīyūn mawḥnuhum wa-dawruhum fī Tārīkh al-Yaman al-Qadīm*, 354; Bāwazīr, "Al-Ṣirā' al-Yahūdī al-Masīḥī fī al-Yaman al-Qadīm", 91-272; Kitchen, *Documentation for Ancient Arabia*, 5-6.

⁷⁹ Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr Āyāt al-Qur'ān*, [Statement Collector in Interpretation of Verses of the Quran], Vol. 30, Egypt, 1954, 132; Mahrān, Muḥammad, *Dirāsāt Tārīkhīyah min al-Qur'ān al-Karīm fī Bilād al-'Arab*, 316; Al-Anṣārī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān wa-Āl Mryḥ, Ṣāliḥ, *Najrān Munṭalaq al-Qawāfil*, [Najran the starting point of the caravans], Dār al-Qawāfil, Riyadh, 2003, 26.

⁸⁰ 'Abd al-Hamīd, Raa'fat, Al-Ṣirā' al-dawlī ḥawla Shibh al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyah fī al-qarn al-sādis al-Mīlādī, [The international conflict over the Arabian Peninsula in the sixth century AD], *Journal of the Arab Historian*, Vol. 2, No. 2. (1994): 263-326;

came under Christian Abyssinian occupation for more than fifty years⁸¹. The Christian religion regained its position, and a group of southern and Abyssinian kings took over the administration of the country on behalf of the Negus.

These conflicts left a clear and significant impact on the political life of southern Arabia, as the region was subject to Abyssinian occupation and direct Byzantine influence. The Abyssinians extended their complete control over the region through a number of rulers who were classified as kings of the country by King Kaleb the Abyssinian. At the forefront of them is King Sumyafa' Ashwa', who was a tool used by the Abyssinians to extend their control over southern Arabia. When matters settled for them, they did not delay in removing him and replacing him with an Abyssinian ruler, Abraha Al-Ashram, who made the region of southern Arabia a region revolving directly in the orbit of Abyssinian and Byzantine politics, despite his political independence from those powers.

Perhaps, in Abraha's military campaign against the tribes of central Arabia, as in the inscription (Ry 506. Figure 3), and in the famous campaign against Mecca, there is evidence that the political trend of southern Arabia follows the orbit of the Byzantine camp against the Sassanian Persians, and in his adoption of the Chalcedonian doctrine, the doctrine of Constantinople, there is another indication that confirms that⁸². It is known that Abraha's campaign against Mecca failed miserably, and as a result, he died. His sons Yaksum and Masruq succeeded him, but in 571 AD or 579 AD⁸³, the Persian campaign that put an end to the second Abyssinian occupation of southern Arabia overthrew them from power. The Persian occupation is one of the most severe political consequences of the religious conflicts in southern Arabia, as the Persians finally succeeded in winning the last round in the international conflict over southern Arabia against the traditional enemy, Byzantium.

Shahid, Irfan, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, Vol. 1, Part 2, *Ecclesiastical History*, 1995, 729; Bausi, "The massacre of Najrân," 242.

⁸¹ Fell, *Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien und Die Himjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung*," 47.

⁸² Al-Azraqī, Abū al-Walīd, *Akhbār Makkah*, [Mecca News] ed. by Rashīd Ṣāliḥ, Vol. I, 3 ed., Maṭba'at Dār al-Thaqāfah, Mecca, 1978, 141-147; Sahab, *Elaf Quraysh*, 142; 'Abd al-Hamīd, Al-Ṣirā' al-dawli ḥawla Shibh al-Jazīrah al-'Arabīyyah, 298-300; Lundin, "Yemen during the sixth century BC," 23-24; Shahid. Irfan, "Byzantium in South Arabia," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 33.1979, 27; Smith, "Events in Arabia in the 6th Century A. D." 435.

⁸³ Al-Azraqī, Abū al-Walīd, *Akhbār Makkah*, Vol. I, 141-147; Ibn Qutaybah, *Al-Ma'ārif*, [Knowledge], 638; Fell, *Die Christenverfolgung in Südarabien Und Die Himjarisch-Äthiopischen Kriege Nach Abessinischer Ueberlieferung*," 47; Christides, "The Himyarite-Ethiopian war and the Ethiopian occupation of South Arabia," 115-146.

Conclusion

We can say that the external roles in the religious conflicts in southern Arabia in the sixth century AD were part of the global conflict between the traditional enemies of Persia and Byzantium. The presence and strong influence of the two allies Axum and Byzantium in the south of the Arabian Peninsula, before Yusuf dhū Nuwās assumed power, played a very important role in Yūsuf dhū Nuwās's hostile situation against the Christians of his citizens and subjects of those powers, and in the city of Najran reaping the largest number of those situations.

Accordingly, it can be said that the situations of Yūsuf dhū Nuwās on the Jewish and Christian religions and the Abyssinian-Byzantine roles before the persecution of the Christians of Najran led to the ignition of the religious conflict in South Arabia. It was the city of Najran that felt the full impact of these different situations, both internally and externally, before the ignition of the Himyarite-Abyssinian War, and then the impact of these situations spread to the entire region after it was subjected to the second Abyssinian occupation.

Appendices

Fig. 1, Inscription CIH 621

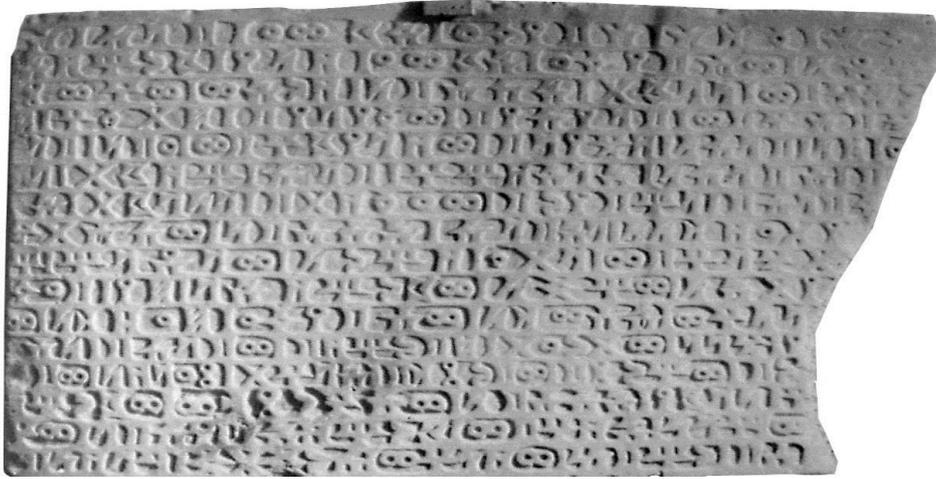


Transliteration: (1) S¹myf¹ 's²w¹ w-bny-hw S²rḥb¹l Ykml w-M¹dkrb Y¹fr bny Lḥy¹t |(2) Yrḥm 'lht Kl¹'n w-ḡ-Yz¹'n w-Gdnm w-Mṭln w-S²rqn w-Ḥbm w-Yṭ¹'n (3) w-Ys²rm w-Yrs³ w-Mkrbm w-'qht w-Bs³'yn w-Ylḡb w-Ġymn w-Yṣbr (4) w-S²bḥm w-Gdwyn w-Ks³rn w-Rḥyt w-Grdn w-Qbln w-S²rgy w-bny Mlḥm (5) w-'s²'b-hmw Wḥzt w-'lhn w-S¹lfn w-Dyft(n) w-Rṭhm w-Rkbn w-Mṭlf<t>— (6) n w-S¹'kln w-S³krd w-kbwr w-mḥrg S¹ybn(ḡ) (ḡ)-Nṣf s¹ṭrw ḡn ms³ndn b-'— (7) rn Mwyt k-ṭwb-hw ḡn¹t-hw w-ḥlf-hw w-m¹ḡlt-hw w-mnqlt-hw (8) k-s¹tṣn¹w b-hw k-ḡb¹w bn 'rḡ Ḥbs²t w-'s¹yw 'ḥbs²n zrf— (9) tn b-'rḡ Ḥmyrm k-hrgw mlk Ḥmyrm w-'qwl-hw 'ḥmrn w-'rḥbn (10) wrḥ-hw ḡ-Ḥltn ḡ-l-'rb'y w-s¹t m¹tm ḥrftm

Translation: (1) S¹myf¹ 's²w¹ and his sons fils, S²rḥb¹l Ykml and M¹dkrb Y¹fr, sons of Lḥy¹t (2) Yrḥm, those of Kl¹'n, ḡ-Yz¹'n, Gdnm, Mṭln, S²rqn, Ḥbm, Yṭ¹'n, (3) Ys²rm, Yrs³, Mkrbm, 'qht, Bs³'yn, Ylḡb, Ġymn, Yṣbr (4) S²bḥm, Gdwyn, Ks³rn, Rḥyt, Grdn, Qbln, S²rgy, banū Mlḥm (5) and their tribes Wḥzt, 'lhn, S¹lfn, Dyftn, Rṭhm, Rkbn, Mṭlf— (6) n, S¹'kln, S³krd and the kabirs and the governors of S¹ybn ḡ-Nṣf wrote this inscription in the (7) fortress of Mwyt, when they repaired its walls, its gate, its cisterns and its routes of entry, (8) when they are fortified in it, when they came back from the land of Abyssinia, and the Abyssinians sent the army (9) to the land of Ḥimyar, when they killed the king of Ḥimyar and his 'qwl, Ḥimyarites and Raḥbanites. (10) The month of Ḥltn of the six hundred forty.

Context: Sumyafa Ashwa wrote this inscription in the fortress of Hisn Alghurab when they repaired its walls, its gate, its cisterns and its routes of entry, when they were fortified in it when they came back from the land of Abyssinia, and the Abyssinians sent the army to the land of Himyar when they killed the king of Himyar and his leaders.

Fig. 2, Inscription Ist 7608 bis.

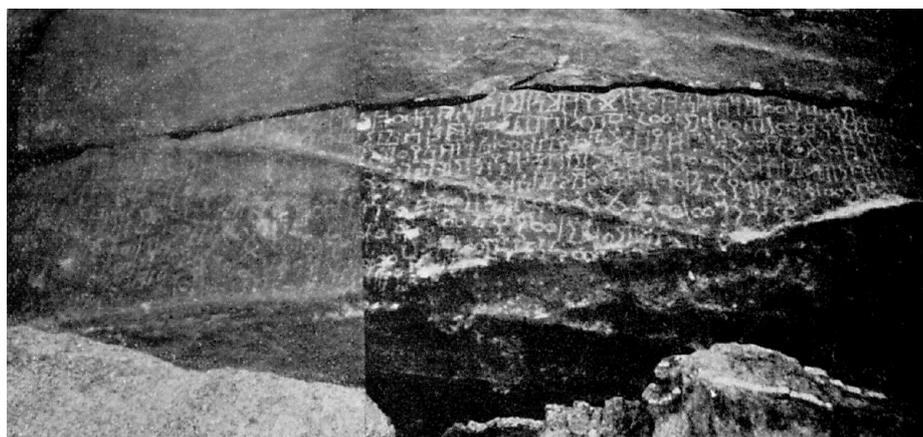


Transliteration: (1) [... .. w-mn]fs¹ qds¹ S¹myf¹ 's²w¹ mlk S¹[b'] (2) [... .. 'h]ḥsn w-S¹myf¹ 's²w¹ bny S²rḥb¹[l] (3) [... .. 'm]r¹-hmw ngs²t 'ks¹mn br¹w w-hwt[rn] (4) [... .. 'h]ḥms¹-hmw mlykym w-qylym ḍ-tqh ḍ-[... ..] (5) [... ..]' ḍn mlkn b-ḥylm w-b-gys²-hmw 'mn ml[kn] (6) [... ..]m s¹-mlkn 'l'<ṣ>bḥh mlk Ḥbs²t l[... ..] (7) [... ..]'mlkm l-Ḥmyrm w-'qbtm l-ngs²t '[ks¹mn] (8) [... ..]yt¹'bdnn l-'mlk 'ks¹mn w-k-s¹th[... ..] (9) [... ..]tḥl-hmw l-z¹ bḥrn w-l-ṣlh Ḥ[myrm] (10) [... .. ḍ]-Yz¹n w-Ḥs³n w-S²rḥb¹l ḍy M¹f[rn] (11) [... ..]ln-hw 's¹wdn w-S¹myf¹ ḍ-'bdn w[... ..] (12) [... .. ḍ]y Ḥll w-Zr¹t ḍ-Mrḥbm w-Mlkm Ns¹[... ..] (13) [... ..]rm w-Ḥrtm w-Mrtm 'lht T¹lbn w-M[... ..] (14) [... ..]'l'ṣbḥh ngs²y 'ks¹mn w-k-hrtḍw w-s²rḥ [n] (15) [... ..] w hgn 'b-hmw S²rḥb¹l Ykml w-h [... ..] (16) [... ..] s¹m Rḥmnn w-bn-hw krs³ts³ ḡlbn [... ..]

Translation: (1) [... ..] Holy Spirit. S¹myf¹ 's²w¹, king of Saba' [... ..] (2) [... ..] 'hḥsn and S¹myf¹ 's²w¹, sons of S²rḥb¹l [... ..] (3) [... ..] their lords, the negus of Axum built and laid the foundation [... ..] (4) [... ..] their royal force and those of the qayls, who concluded [... ..] (5) [... ..] this king with strenght and with their army together with the king [... ..] (6) [... ..] toward 'l'ṣbḥh, king of Abyssinia in [... ..] (7) [... ..] kings for Ḥmyar and governors of the negus of Axum [... ..] (8) [... ..] submitted themselves to the kings of Axoum and when [... ..] (9) [... ..] he appointed them for the defense of the sea and the maintenance of order in Ḥmyar [... ..] (10) [... ..] ḍ-Yz¹n, Ḥs³n and S²rḥb¹l those two of the family M¹f[rn [... ..] (11) [... ..] 's¹wdn and S¹myf¹ ḍ-'bdn [... ..] (12) [... ..] two sons of Ḥll and Zr¹t ḍ-Mrḥbm and Mlkm Ns¹[... ..] (13) [... ..] and Ḥrtm and Mrtm 'lht T¹lbn and M[... ..] (14) [... ..] 'l'ṣbḥh negus of Axum and when they entrusted and preserved [... ..] (15) [... ..] the bastard of their father S²rḥb¹l Ykml and [... ..] (16) [... ..] in name of Rḥmnn and his son Christ, the victorious [... ..]

Context: This inscription was written by Sumyafa Ashwa, stating that he appointed the king of Himyar and established a royal army under his command and subordinate to the Abyssinian king.

Fig. 3, Inscription Ry 506.



Transliteration:(1) b-ḥyl Rḥmnn w-ms¹ḥ-hw mlkn 'brh z-b-Ymn(('brh Zbymn)) mlk S¹b' w-ḏ-Rydn w-Ḥḏrmwt (2) w-Ymnt w-{r}' 'rb-hmw Ṭwdm w-Thmt s¹ṭrw ḏn s¹ṭrn k-ḡzyw(3) M¹dm ḡzwt n rb' tn b-wrḥn ḏ-Ṭbtn k-qs¹dw kl bny-'mrm(4) w-ḏky mlkn 'bgbr b-'m Kdt w-'l w-Bs²rm bn-Ḥṣnm b-'m(5) S¹'dm w-Mr(dm) w-(ḥ)ḏrw qdmy gys²n 'ly Bny-'mrm Kdt w-'l b-wd (ḏ)-Mr(ḥ)(w)-Mrdm w-S¹'dm b-wd(6) b-mnhl Trbn w-hrgw w-'s³rw w-ḡnmw ḏ-'s¹m w-mḥḏ mlkn b-Ḥlbn w-dnw (7) (k)-zł M¹dm w-rhnw w-b¹d-n-hw ws³'-hmw 'mrm bn Mḏrn(8) w-rhn-hmw bn-hw w-s¹ṭḥlf-hw 'ly M¹dm w-qflw bn Ḥl (9)[b]n [b-]ḥyl Rḥmnn wrḥ-hw ḏ-'ln ḏ-l-ṭny w-s¹ṭy w-s¹ṭ m' tm

Translation:(1) By the power of Rḥmnn and his Messiah, the king Abraha who is in Yemen, king of Saba', ḏu-Raydān, Ḥaḏramawt,(2) Ymnt and his nomads of Ṭwdm and Thmt wrote this inscription when he had raided M¹dm (3) in the fourth raid, in the month ḏ-Ṭbtn, and when all the Bny-'mrm had revolted.(4) Now the king sent 'bgbr with Kinda and 'l, and Bs²rm son of Ḥṣnm with (5) S¹'dm and Mrdm, and these two commanders of the army were present (= fought), (namely) Kinda and 'l against Bny-'mrm, in the wadi ḏ-Mrḥ and Mrdm and S¹'dm in the wadi (6) at the well of Trbn, and they slew and made captive (the enemy) and took booty in great numbers. And the king did battle at Ḥlbn, and M¹dm submitted (7) to (his) protection and gave hostages. And then 'mrm bn Mḏrn negotiated (with Abraha) (8) and gave him his son as hostage, and (the king?) appointed him as viceroy on M¹dm. So (Abraha) returned from Ḥl-(9) bn by the power of Rḥmnn, in the month of ḏ-'ln, of (the year) 662.

Context: The inscription tells us that Abraha went on a campaign to the centre of the Arabian Peninsula against the Maad tribe. He camped around the Halban region and sent companies from there to several places until the tribes submitted to him, and a treaty was reached authorizing Amr ibn al-Mundhir to manage the affairs of the Maad tribe. Then, he returned by the power of Raḥman.

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