DHĪBĀN RECONSIDERED: KING MESHA AND HIS WORKS[1]

by
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As I write, we are rapidly approaching the fortieth anniversary of the first campaign, in November 1950, to carry out archaeological investigation at the site of Dibon, the capital of ancient Moab. That first season's sounding, initiated by the late Dr. Fred V. Winnett for the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, was followed by a major campaign in the spring of 1951; it was continued through two more years — 1952 under Dr. William Reed (*Dhībān* I) and 1952-53 under the present writer (*Dhībān* II).

All of these seasons were devoted to the southeast corner of the tell as the probable site of the building programme described by King Mesha in his famous inscription (*MI,* as transcribed, translated and discussed at length in Dearman 1989), for there was general agreement that the stele bearing the inscription was found there (*Dhībān* I:7, f.n. 18).

Work on the mound was continued by the late Dr. William H. Morton in 1955, 1956 and 1965 (Morton 1989). He, however, abandoned the Southeast area to concentrate on the summit and north side of the tell because, as he says, of "the absence of materials or Iron Age structures in the southeastern quadrant that would seem to conform to the specifications demanded for a palace and sanctuary" apparently required by the text of *MI* (Morton 1989: 239). His results, unfortunately published only in summary form, provided for the first time what appears to be a complete archaeological history of the site which includes the Early Bronze Age, Iron Age I and II and — after a 500-year break — Nabataean, Roman, Byzantine and Arab occupations.

Attributed to the Iron Age period were a gateway, assumed to belong to a contemporary city wall lying beneath the Nabataean wall, and a large "palace" structure on "the absolute summit of the mound" which might have housed both a palace and a sanctuary (Morton 1989: 243-246). Morton comments: "The proximity of the excavated incense stand and the figurines of the mother-goddess of Moab, Ashtar-Chemosh, would seem to be more than purely accidental since Mesha claims to have made a 'high place' at Dhībān as well as building a royal palace (lines 3, 23)" (Morton 1989: 246). The implication is that Mesha's building project took place on the major fortified tell and that Mesha's "royal quarter" of *Qarḥoh* should be sought there rather than at the Southeast corner where the excavations of 1950-53 took place. The argument has weight because of the clear stratification and the major buildings revealed by Morton as compared with the "paucity of the evidence for Mesha's building projects in the two published excavation reports" (Dearman 1989: 173). Still, as Dearman continues "it is still a better working assumption that *Qrḥh* was a suburb of Dibon and a royal administrative center".

The time seems suitable to reconsider the evidence from the Southeast area, particularly in light of the major contributions to the study of ancient Moab and the Mesha Stone recently published with Professor Dearman as editor (1989). In undertaking this re-assessment, the writer must remind the readers that much has happened in the last forty years. We who were responsible for those early excavations in 1950-53 had little experience of the revolu-

1. The following abbreviations are used in the text:
Dhībān I: F.V. Winnett and W.L. Reed, *The Excavations at Dibon (Dhībân) in Moab. AASOR* 36-37. 1964.
Dhībān II: A.D. Tushingham, *The Excavations at Dibon (Dhībân) in Moab. AASOR* 40. 1972.
MI: Mesha Inscription.

tionary new approach to archaeological method and technique introduced by Kathleen Kenyon, beginning at Jericho in 1952 (her contribution to pre-World War II excavations at Samaria appeared only in 1957) and we possessed even fewer of the exacting skills and experience necessary to digest and apply the new knowledge to our own field work. For interpretation of our discoveries, again, we had excavations in Palestine proper but very little in Jordan to provide useful comparative material. There is little one can do now to remedy our defects; one can, however, recognize the shortcomings and do what can be done to mitigate the difficulties. Perhaps, in the process, we may participate in the debate over the significance of the work at Dhībān which will, no doubt, continue until new expeditions to the site, armed with more experience and information, will finally settle the important issues.

What I propose is a re-interpretation of my synthesis of the results of investigations carried out in the Moabite levels during the first three seasons at Dhībān as set forth in *Dhībān* II: 5-26. There I recognized three periods extending from *ca.* 850 B.C. to the end of the kingdom in 582 B.C. at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. The periods were in large part dependent on the dating of pottery: I now recognize that this process was faulted by the lack, even where the drawn stratification is clear, of uncontaminated deposits and, perhaps, a lack of creative imagination.

It is necessary, first of all, to re-iterate the facts of the original topography of the Southeast area. Wherever excavation reached, or proceeded deeply, towards bedrock, great artificial fills were encountered. The relevant evidence for the depth of fills under the Hall (10.00 m), within and supported by the rectangular tower *(ca.* 10.00 m), below the Nabataean temple (over 3.50 m without reaching bedrock), and in the Gateway area (over 2.00 m), with their supporting walls is provided in *Dhībān* II: 5-16. It should be noted here that the term "Gateway" is something of a misnomer. This easy approach to the tell from the south is a result, basically, of the erosion and collapse over the paved staircase leading up to the Nabataean temple precinct. At all other periods, this approach was blocked by transverse walls (in the Iron Age), a church (in the Byzantine period), and by a major domestic establishment in the Umayyad and Ayyubid periods (*Dhībān* II: Plans 2,5,6). Dearman (1989: 172) has been misled in his belief that "the excavators discerned an Iron Age gateway" in this area.

The term may be used as an easy designation for the area but it must be remembered that the Gateway area was distinguished by two knolls — one surmounted by the Nabataean temple and the sheikh's tomb, the other to the west of it still uninvestigated; between them, there is a depressed area rising slowly towards the north. Only in this Gateway area was there found evidence of occupation preceding the fill. It was here that Reed discovered, on bedrock, the remains of a dwelling containing bins, an oven, two jars and a quantity of grain. He also recorded a mudbrick wall and a (contemporary?) stone wall which we first considered to be a possible town-wall. All of this can be dated about 850 B.C. For other features, walls B21, 23-25, and a drain (*Dhībān* I: Pls. 88, 91) there is little evidence except that they may be sealed by a floor contemporary with a bin containing late 8th century B.C. pottery. We now allot all of this material to our Period 1. It is clear that there is little reason for this area — obviously lacking any economic or defensive potential — to have been included within the city's walls. As Winnett has pointed out (*Dhībān* I: 7), Mesha's statement (*MI* 24-25) that *Qarḥoh* had no cisterns suggests that the site was unoccupied previously. That there are traces of a domestic occupation in one small part of the area may be construed as signifying, at most, a minor extramural suburb.

What is surprising is that this barely occupied quarter should suddenly achieve a status and importance that would make it the citadel and royal quarter of the city of Dhībān. As we have seen, wherever archaeological probes have penetrated to

bedrock or even short of it, great fills are the characteristic feature. Such a massive artificial build-up of the area must be retained by walls. These walls, together with the fills supported by them were originally assigned to our Period 2. They included (*Dhībān* II: Plan 2) walls C12 and B7 in the Gateway area, wall O/M as a casemate construction with crosswalls M1, M2, L, and H (south and east of the Nabataean temple), the rectangular stone tower, and walls I and IV (with buttress) north of the tower.

All of these walls are vertical and, in most cases, invite serious doubts as to their effectiveness, even if there were occasional exterior buttresses which have not appeared in any of our excavations. Wall C12 is 3.58 m thick but is "faced with unhewn stones between which was rubble fill" resting "on bedrock in places" (*Dhībān* I: 42; Pls. 46.1; 48.1,2). Only a single course of wall B7 was recorded but it resembles wall C12 and appears to be rather feeble (*Dhībān* I: Pl. 49.1). Wall O/M (each wall 2.40 m broad at base) as a casemate wall with crosswalls (*Dhībān* II: 5-9; Pl. 2; Section G-G) has an overall width of *ca.* 5.50 m and was probably capable of supporting the fill behind it. The vertical walls retaining the 10.00 m deep fill under the Hall were woefully inadequate to withstand the pressure behind them. Winnett's description of them (*Dhībān* I: 14; Pls. 4.2,4; 24.1) and our plan and section (*Dhībān* II: walls I and IV in Section F-F) make their weakness and deficiency quite obvious. One can only regard them as temporary retaining walls, based on or near bedrock but strengthened where needed to retain the fill as it was inserted behind them. The tower obviously played, in the first instance, an essential role in the retaining of the fill but served also to link and help support the weak walls to the north and south of it. It, too, must have been built as the fill behind it rose; its threshold (at *ca.* 98.40 m or slightly higher[2]) marked the level of the top of the fill when it was complete.

Yet, two observations make one wonder about the whole fill operation. It was assumed, in our earlier discussions of the tower and these retaining walls, that these walls also served a defensive purpose. We therefore assigned them to our Period 2. This assessment now seems most unlikely. Their rubbly construction (except for the tower itself) and their innate weakness and liability to collapse would make them a poor defence against a determined attacker. Some additional, effective and permanent structural element was needed to carry the whole grand design to completion. We may say, even, that the builder's desires could only be achieved if his defensive works were not merely adequate but superior in quality and regally imposing.

The obvious recourse in the circumstances was a rough sloping revetment (wall II) consisting largely of stones and *ḥuwwar* chunks built like a glacis against the walls and tower; this would serve as the sloping foundation for wall III, the heavy battered stone wall which is, today, the most conspicuous and noteworthy evidence for Moabite occupation on the tell (*Dhībān* I: Pls. 3; 4.1; *Dhībān* II: Pl. 14.2; Plan 2; Section F-F). It rests on scarped bedrock at 86.05 m (east of the Hall) and still stands to a height of 96.00 m. The wall, after running southward, turns to the east at right angles and south once more to enclose the tower. Its course south of this point remains untraced. It re-appears briefly, however, as wall P in the Gateway area (*Dhībān* II: 16-17; Pl. 5.1,2; Plan 2; Section G-G) where, as one would expect, it seems to run parallel to wall B7.

The lack of evidence for its existence northeast, east, and south of the Nabataean temple area is difficult to explain. Possibly, it is merely a matter of further excavation to discover that it did originally continue in a southwesterly direction. Another possibility, however, may be considered. If, as seems possible, the casemate

2. All height measurements on the site depend on the 100 m datum established in 1950-51 (*Dhībān* I: 12).

construction south and east of the Nabataean temple area were capable of retaining the fill behind it and serving as a defensive wall, the break in wall III/P may have been to allow the insertion of one entrance to the *Qarḥoh* quarter. A gate at this point would give access to the main east-west route crossing the saddle between the Moabite city and the mound south of it (the site of the present village). Nevertheless, a gateway here would require a rather complex indirect-access approach to permit a rise in level from the valley to the east (which, today, even with a depth of fill caused by erosion, has a level of approximately 90.00 m, *Dhībān* I: Pl. 85) to the level of occupation at between 98.00 m and 100.00 m within the walls.

If the *Qarḥoh* quarter was as we have reconstructed it, the pottery from the fills behind its retaining walls should provide evidence for dating it. Most important is the pottery described as from north of walls C12 and B7 in the Gateway area (*Dhībān* I: Pls. 72-76). This material was segregated and restudied in *Dhībān* II: 20, Table V. Although the parallels quoted are in some respects outdated, we can probably rely on them (Dornemann 1983: 35, f.n. 3). With the few queries noted (*Dhībān* II: 21), we can safely date the fill to early in Iron Age II, i.e. to the second half of the 9th century B.C. It follows that the retaining walls are to be dated to this period. The matter is complicated by the contents of the fill in "Area B Central", also restudied in *Dhībān* II: 18, Table IV. The fill here, although apparently a continuation of the fill behind walls C12 and B7, is sealed by a Byzantine floor which also cuts a plaster-lined bin (in Area B) whose contents are definitely of the late 8th century B.C., *not* late 7th-6th century as dated in *Dhībān* II: 19. No Iron Age floors or occupation levels are recorded below this level; we must therefore assume that the Iron Age floors, to one of which the bin belonged, were higher than the level of the Byzantine floor. Other evidence (*Dhībān* I: Pls. 46.2; 87, 91) leads us to believe that the bin *may* seal features (walls B21, 22-25 and a drain) which must precede it; we have already tentatively assigned them to our Period 1. We can only explain the 8th century B.C. pottery in this fill as a result of contamination of the original fill due to an undetected robber trench or other intrusion. In our original synthesis we assumed that the building of the battered walls III and P could be a corollary of an 8th century B.C. occupation of some importance. This decision, however, depended upon an attribution of a defensive role to the vertical walls and tower which we then attributed to our Period 2. We now recognize that such an assumption is most unlikely and combine our original Periods 1 and 2 into one period. Our earlier distinction of three periods in the Moabite period are reduced to two — that on bedrock and that which witnessed the major development of the Southeast quadrant into the royal quarter, *Qarḥoh*.

Independent dating evidence for walls III and P is scanty. The evidence from 1950-51 (*Dhībān* II: 14) should at least date wall II, which was the battered revetting wall supporting wall III. Of the eight sherds noted by Morton, he ascribed two to the Early Bronze Age, five to Iron I and one to Iron I or II. In other words this material parallels the selection of types found in the earliest fills under the Hall (*Dhībān* II: 11; Table II), in and around the tower (*Dhībān* II: 12-14) and from behind walls C12 and B7 in the Gateway area. There is nothing to contradict the treatment of the creation of the fill with its retaining walls and the building of walls III and P to one period — the period of Mesha. The few sherds found in the deposits at the foot of wall III on bedrock (*Dhībān* II: 14-15; Fig. 4.35-39) contain debris and stone blocks from the upper courses of walls II/III and may date the partial collapse of the wall to the late 8th century B.C. This date may provide an archaeological clue to the fate of the city; did the Assyrians exploit and — to maintain their authority — force the Dibonites to dismantle parts of their wall, or was it simply lack of maintenance by the citizens of the city?

It may now be asked how this revision of our 3-period division of the Moabite occupation at Dhībān (*Dhībān* II: 23-25) into a 2-period division changes the picture as far as the identification of major works attributed to Mesha in the *MI* is concerned.

There are, first, several conditions which must be kept in mind when attempting to locate and identify the various building operations which he carried out. Obviously, these were executed after his military exploits had achieved economic prosperity. Such success, arising from his control over the trade passing along the King's Highway, and his power over the labour and produce of the cities and territories under his sway, provided the justification and the funds for such ambitious projects. At least, when he erected his stele, his authority was still unchallenged by the Israelites and Aramaeans who had their own problems (the Assyrian threat) to cope with. However, we know nothing of the history of the city after his reign, apart from outside sources which indicate that it still existed and played a minor role in international politics until its final end as a state.

Further, while we can assume that the creation of *Qarḥoh* and its state monuments was carried out roughly in the third quarter of the 9th century B.C., we cannot take it for granted that the political situation remained the same over the next two and a half centuries. It may have changed even before Mesha's death. Changes of dynasty, new building programmes, incursions by local enemies, the demands for heavy tribute from Aramaeans, Israelites or Assyrians, perhaps even damage from earthquake or fire (although no evidence for such events has yet been noted in the archaeological record of the Iron Age) — these and many other occurrences could well have altered the face of the city and of *Qarḥoh*, its citadel, during their existence until their demise at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Unfortunately, from an archaeologist's point of view, the complete lack of surviving occupation levels and floors during the Moabite period (except for the clues afforded by the bin in Area B of the Gateway area and the threshold of the doorway leading on to the rectangular tower) make the reconstruction and chronological ordering of buildings and other vestiges of human occupation most difficult. Such eventualities in those centuries could account, at least in part, for the existence of structures which must be Moabite (for they underlie and precede the Nabataean deposits) but which cannot, at present, be interpreted as parts of complete buildings. Nor can they be ascribed, at least at present, to any specific period in the Moabite monarchy. See, for instance, the "apsidal wall" and walls J, K and H (*Dhībān* II, Plan 2). The apsidal wall is certainly of the Mesha or post-Mesha period, for it assumes the existence of wall O (*Dhībān* II, Section G-G). The other walls cannot, at present, be explained.

If, further, Mesha's building programme covered the whole of the Southeast quadrant, we cannot hope to identify all of the locations mentioned in the *MI* when we have excavated so restricted a part of the area which we can, with some reason, assign to the complete *Qarḥoh*. Even where excavation has taken place, it has not always (as for instance in the area north of the Nabataean building or between it and the square tower) descended below the Byzantine levels (*Dhībān* II, Plan 5), or northwest of the temple where only the Arab levels have been investigated. It can be asserted, I believe, that not more than one-quarter of the Southeast quadrant has been investigated and less than one-eighth has reached clear Moabite levels. It is to be assumed, therefore, that certainty in reaching identification of all structures mentioned in the *MI* with building remains recognized in deposits so far excavated will not be achieved. At least it is possible, I believe, to make some tentative identifications and even adduce some evidence for doing so.

A Reconstruction of Mesha's Building Programme at Dhībān

(1) The first strong assertion is that a site like the Southeast quadrant at Dhībān,

with its massive artificial fills, retained by walls which are revetted with a magnificent battered stone wall which has no parallel in known Iron Age sites east of the Jordan River and with few, if any, parallels in Palestine, should be considered sufficient reason to ascribe it to Mesha. We may even compare it with the great battered substructure of David's Stronghold of Zion (2 Sam 5:7,9) excavated by Shiloh (1984, 1985). Mesha's *Qarḥoh* must have been, and still potentially is, as imposing as David's foundation, but was even more difficult to construct. *Qarḥoh* depended on the creation, *de novo,* of a substructure of artificial fills retained by walls, not — as was David's citadel — built over the stone terraces and compartments which stepped up the steep slope and had supported the earlier Canaanite acropolis.

(2) The ascription of this monument to Mesha can be supported by the almost unanimous agreement that the Mesha stele was discovered in the Southeastern part of the tell — not only in the *Qarḥoh* area but, possibly, in a location mentioned by Mesha. Schick, on a visit to Dhībān in 1877 "was struck by the fact that the *MI* had been found — according to his guides there — within a large cromlech or ring of stones which was still revered by the local populace as the grave of a prophet". Musil, in 1902, referred to "the ruined building near the spot where the monument had been discovered ... and to the east of it there was the grave of Salîm ibn Misleh" (Graham 1989: 85). It is possible that Mackenzie may have referred to the same spot when writing of his visit to Dhībān (1913: 57-59). His plan shows several sheikhs' tombs in the Southeast quadrant, but none on the knoll where the tomb of Sālim Muṣliḥ al-Ibṣarawiyye (Tomb R9, a re-used Byzantine tomb) was located and over which the cenotaph was (only later?) erected (*Dhībān* II: 85, f.n. 40; 107, f.n. 19; Plan 9; Section A-A). Mackenzie comments: "In the southeast part of the *Area of the Moabite Stone* on a somewhat more elevated position by itself, in the northwest part of E6 [on his map], stands a small ruined building which may be the remains of a Moslem shrine. The position of this might then contain a reminiscence of the 'Temple of Chemosh'." The "small ruined building" to which he refers is apparently that shown on his plan as part of a rectangular structure on top of the eastern knoll which is most evocative of the only partially excavated remains of the Nabataean temple as shown by Winnett (*Dhībān* I, Pl. 23). Was the stele originally located on the eastern knoll? While Musil's reference to the tomb of "Salîm ibn Misleh" lying "to the east of it" is puzzling, it is possible that the tomb was moved and the cenotaph built on the knoll at some later time.

While it must be admitted that the find-spot of the stele cannot be demonstrated with absolute certainty, no alternative site for its discovery has found any real support among scholars. This agreement that the *MI* was found in the Southeast quadrant — and perhaps on the east knoll — constitutes overwhelming evidence for the location of *Qarḥoh,* the royal citadel of Mesha. The construction of this new and impressive quarter is enough to memorialize him even if all the details of his works cannot — at least at present — be verified.

(3) Before leaving the powerful wall system of *Qarḥoh,* we should note Mesha's remarks in *MI* 25-26: "I dug the ditches for Qarḥoh with Israelite captives". The massive earth-moving operation to transport fills, and the construction of walls to retain them while that work was in progress, may have been accomplished by his own subjects "for all Daibon was obedient" (*MI* 28). Such labour may have been like the corvée imposed by David (2 Sam 20:24), Solomon (1 Kgs 4:6; 5:13-17; 9:15-22) and Rehoboam (1 Kgs 12:18). Whether or not the digging of ditches was considered slavish work or there only happened to be Israelite captives available at the time when such work was needed, there seems to be evidence for such "ditch-digging". The great battered wall III rested on "bedrock scarped to receive it" (*Dhībān* II: 14; Plan 2; Section E-E) although this

may have involved a trenching operation to bedrock before scarping could be done. The picture in the Gateway area is perhaps more illuminating (*Dhībān* II: 17; Plan 2; Section G-G). Wall M, as the outer element of the casemate wall, rests on or near rock on its inner, northern face (*Dhībān* I: Pl. 25.2), but its outer, southern face is masked by later Nabataean walls. Our section G-G, therefore, shows only a theoretical line of bedrock from its north side to the bedrock at the foot of wall P. Obviously, the casemate wall M/O would have no stability on such a slope. We must assume, also, that walls C12 and B7 would have been supported on rock. If so, the section of *Dhībān* I: Pl. 93 probably does not indicate the level of bedrock south of wall C12 (*Dhībān* I: Pl. 48.1,2) but only the level which excavation reached. All of these walls must have rested on bedrock (leveled or not) at about the level of wall O's base (*ca.* 97.12 m).

For the construction of wall P, however, a new bedrock level was prepared. Section G-G shows a *ḥuwwar* deposit more than 1.00 m deep resting on bedrock at 91.58 m between the Nabataean wall N and the aqueduct which ran parallel to it. To prepare a footing for wall P at this level, we can estimate that up to 6.00 m of *ḥuwwar* and bedrock was removed. The purpose, of course, was to cut a trench through the saddle which joined Dhībān to the mound south of it and establish in it the base of a strong battered wall (P) which would provide defence in that direction. If such excavation and scarping were the tasks assigned to "Israelite captives" one may wonder whether, in good Near Eastern tradition, Mesha had carried off experienced stone workers who assisted in building for him a fortress similar to what they had seen in Jerusalem!

(4) In *MI* 5, we have the first reference to Mesha's works in *Qarḥoh:* "I made this high place for Kemosh in *Qarḥoh*". It may be significant that the verb used here for the activity of construction is the root *'sh*, "made", not *bnh*, "built". The latter root occurs in lines 9 (twice), 10, 18, 21, 22 (twice), 23, 26, 27 (twice), and 29. The root is used for the building of *Qarḥoh* (21), for the building of "the walls of the parks and the walls of the acropolis", "the gates", "the towers", and "the palace". It is also, in all other instances, used for the building or rebuilding of cities. On the other hand, the root *'sh*, "made" is used for the *bmh*, "this high place" (line 3), for "the reservoir" (line 9), for "the retaining walls of the reservoir" (line 23), for the making of "a cistern" (lines 24-25) and for the building of "the highway" (line 25) in the Arnon.

There seems to be a clear distinction in the *MI* between construction of such things as reservoirs or the retaining walls of a reservoir, for the digging of cisterns and for road-building — that is, for construction where walls, particularly stone walls, are not the issue, and earthen construction is entailed. As Mesha's "high place" was "made", not "built", should we not assume that it was literally a "high place" — a sacred hill, whether natural or artificial? If so, one could well assume that it occupied the height underlying the Nabataean temple — still preserved to 100.00 m (*Dhībān* II: Sections A-A and C-C). This was an artificial hill consisting of *ḥuwwar*, soil and stones containing pottery and other artifacts; it may well have reached much higher originally, before 500 years of erosion followed by the construction of the Nabataean temple reduced it considerably. Supporting the proposal of locating the *bamah* of Kemosh on this knoll is the re-use of the site for the Nabataean temple even though it meant that the undefended temple and its sacred precinct (*Dhībān* II: 49-51) lay well outside the Nabataean walled city (Morton 1989: 241-246). We have already noted that Mackenzie referred to "a small ruined building which may be the remains of a Moslem shrine", which seems to have stood on the eastern knoll where the Nabataean temple stood. Holiness or sanctity adheres persistently to certain sites in the Near East and such a tradition may well go back to the *bamah* first made here by Mesha. The stone-built shrine posited by Morton (1989: 245-246)

on top of the tell may be the sanctuary of Ashtar-Kemosh referred to in *MI* 17.

(5) In the *MI,* lines 21-22, there is reference to the "building" (not "rebuilding") in *Qarḥoh* of "the walls of the parks" (*hy'rn)* and "the walls of the acropolis" (*h'fl).* Could the "walls of the parks" refer to a grand reception hall akin to the "House of the Forest (*y'r)* of Lebanon" built by Solomon (1 Kgs 7:2)? As it would have been a wooden building, it could easily have been destroyed by fire or enemy action, although no archaeological evidence for such an event in the Moabite period is attested at present. No evidence of a special "citadel" has been found but it is possible to imagine a stronghold built high up above wall III where it turns north after its circumvallation of the stone tower (*Dhībān* II: Plan 2).

(6) The *MI* 22 refers to the building of the "gates" in *Qarḥoh.* So far, there is no direct evidence for gates in the Southeast quadrant but we have, in our treatment of the evidence for the course of the battered walls M and P and the casemate wall O/M, suggested that an indirect-access gateway might have been built in the area between the rectangular tower and the Nabataean temple. Only excavation can prove or disprove such a thesis.

(7) The "towers" referred to in *MI* 22 have at least one representative in the rectangular structure excavated by Winnett (*Dhībān* I: 15-16). It was he who first ascribed the tower to Mesha. It seems probable that excavation further to the west of the Gateway area could reveal at least one more tower.

(8) Mesha's "palace" (*MI* 23) has not been located, nor is there any clue as to where it should be sought unless it could be near or under the western knoll.

(9) Mesha's references to the provision he made for the quarter's water supply are contained in *MI* 23-25. They refer to two separate operations:

A: The first is translated (Jackson 1989: 98) as follows: "I made the retaining walls of the reservoi[r for the spr]ing inside the city". As he has indicated, there are two problematic renderings here, arising from damage to the text.

1. The word *h'shūḥ* (reservoir) has, without doubt, been correctly completed.

2. The word following it, translated "for the spring", is most improbable. There is no evidence for the existence of a spring, now or in the historic past, at or in the neighbourhood of Dhībān. A reservoir does not require a spring; it can be the tank or pool in which the run-off of the winter rains is collected. In place of *lm'yn,* "for the spring", read, with Winnett, (*Dhībān* I: 9, f.n. 35), *lmyn,* "for the water". That Dhībān had such reservoirs can be demonstrated. Winnett noted a small cement-lined reservoir in a house of the Arab period (*Dhībān* I: 21). Reed (*Dhībān* I: 46-47; Pls. 28.2; 85) discussed the whole question and noted that "the only trace of such a structure now known at *Dhībān* is located in the valley east of the *tell.*" His aerial view and contour plan show a circular basin, apparently with a raised rim. It was probably lined with plaster or cement. Such reservoirs would be fed from the run-off from the wadi-slopes but also by drains leading down from the tell. Reed was probably correct in interpreting his arched wall 4, that ran outside and parallel to the outermost southern wall of the Nabataean temple complex, as an aqueduct (*Dhībān* I: 46 ; Pls. 33.1,2; 34.2; 32.1; and *Dhībān* II: Plan I, Section G-G). It could have collected rain water from the roof of the temple (note the sloping gutter or drain at the southwest corner of the temple, referred to by Winnett [*Dhībān* I: 21; Pl. 9.2; *Dhībān* II: Plan 1, "drain"]) and from the paved courtyard west of the temple, and channeled eastward — perhaps to the reservoir documented by Reed. This might even be possible if the aqueduct is of the Roman period, as it is dated by Reed.

3. The most difficult phrase is "inside the city". A reservoir inside the city would demand that water be led to it from the

roofs and streets in the vicinity. This is possible. The main difficulty is the context. The *MI* 21-26 appears to be devoted entirely to *Qarḥoh* and its buildings. The reference to "inside the city", presumably means the city proper higher up the hill. This phrase is immediately followed by references to the fact that "there was no cistern inside the city — in *Qarḥoh*". The last word is parenthetical and sounds as if the scribe or engraver of the text had, for a moment, nodded and sought to correct himself. He could not, however, correct his earlier reference to "the city". If this is a logical explanation, one could hope to find a reservoir in *Qarḥoh*. Such a structure, in *Qarḥoh*, would be understandable, for water could be led to it, by gravity, from the slopes and the city proper above *Qarḥoh*. Such speculation is useless, but can avoid possible difficulties in imagining a reservoir in the upper city.

B: The second reference, treating of "cisterns" (*MI* 24-25) has been considered by Winnett and Reed (*Dhībān* I: 5-6, f.n. 8; 46-47). Mackenzie (1913: 76) also comments on the number of cisterns. Cisterns made in *Qarḥoh* in Moabite times would have had to penetrate down through the deep fill on which this quarter was built into the bedrock below. The shaft or neck would require a strong lining (probably stone) and the cistern proper, when cut out of the rock would have required some impermeable lining — probably plaster. In fact, the cistern described, planned and sectioned by Reed (*Dhiban* I: 47; Pls. 36.1; 86, 89), still in use in the 12th-13th century, may be as close to the type of cistern required by Mesha as is possible to find. Further excavation may locate more of them.

Conclusion

If we have encouraged readers to weigh the evidence for identifying, without question, the amazing and impressive defensive works discovered in the Southeast quadrant of Dhībān with the one structure of such character described in a contemporary literary document, we shall have achieved our purpose. We may also have provided the initiative for some qualified scholar to turn once more to the elucidation of the as yet unknown features of that Moabite "royal quarter". Such a project has the potential to reveal historical and architectural surprises and (need we say) a superb heritage for citizens of the Kingdom of Jordan and for many foreign visitors as well.

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