

## THE KINGDOM OF QADE

During the first millennium BC the Oman peninsula was known in Mesopotamian documentation with the name of Qade, while the ancient designation Magan was not more in use.

We know that relations existed between Qade and the powerful Assyrian Empire. One of the most celebrated Assyrian kings, Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC), recorded in an inscription placed in the Ishtar temple at Nineveh, and dated to 640 BC, that he received gifts/tributes from Pade, king of Qade, the capital of which may have been located at *Izkie*:

*«...Pade, king of the land of Qade, who dwelt in the city of Izkie, [of which...] no (previous) king had trodden the boundary of Assyria: by the command of Ashur and Ninlil their envoy for good will and peace with their rich tribute, travelled a journey of six months, coming to my presence.»*

It is highly probable that *Iskie* can be the modern Omani Izki, a large oasis town with more than 10,000 date palms, not far from Salut in central Oman. Izki is located in the upper part of Wadi Halfain, near the Samail gap, one of the most important passages through the al-Hajjar mountains range, used since prehistoric times. From this point of view it is important to remember that Izki, in local tradition, is considered the oldest town in Oman. Recent international archaeological surveys revealed remains from the Bronze Age to the Late Iron Age at the oasis of Izki.

The document of Ashurbanipal places the Oman of the Iron Age on a precise historical context, attesting the existence of a kingdom located in a strategic spot, not faraway from Salut, a datum confirmed by archaeological evidence.

The land of Qade is known also from the Achaemenid documentation: the trilingual inscription (in old Persian, Elamite and Assyrian) of the king Darius I at Naqsh-i Rostam and Susa, in correspondence with Qade of the Assyrian version, mentions a land named Maka, a toponym which recalls Magan, the ancient designation of the Oman peninsula in use during the Bronze Age. This is another important element that supports the identification of Qade/Maka with the ancient Magan and so with the Oman peninsula.

The large-scale statue of Darius I, found in Susa in 1973 and housed at the National Museum in Tehran, represents another important document in this regard. The statue, clearly fashioned in Egypt, stands on a massive base on which twenty-four 'nations' – part of the Achaemenid Empire – are carved. Each 'nation' is represented by a human figure above a cartouche with the corresponding name in Egyptian hieroglyphic. These human figures are depicted in the typical Egyptian fashion: kneeling, with arms lifted to the heaven. However clothes, headdresses and facial features are descriptive of the various nations. In particular, on the right side of the base, the Omani people, named Maga (hieroglyphic transcription of the Old Persian Maka), appear similar to the Indian one: bare-headed and wearing a long shawl wrapped around the body, in a conventional costume that does not clearly distinguish the two peoples.

It is important to remember that the *Mykoi* are mentioned by Herodotus (III, 93), as part of the fourteenth Achaemenid satrapy located near the Erythraean Sea.

On the whole, these documents attest the inclusion of Maka in the Persian Empire, evidently since the kingdom of Darius I (522-486 BC). However, we know very little about the character of the Persian 'rule' on this region, both during the Achaemenid period and afterwards (under the Parthian and Sasanian dynasties). Probably, it was a control limited to a military presence along the coasts.

The Achaemenid control in Oman echoes in the later Arabic tradition about the battle of Salut and the end of the Persian rule in this region. The battle occurred during the Sasanian Empire, but the *Kitāb al-ansāb* (The book of genealogies) refers to a Persian king named Darius, a clear anachronism mirroring the memory of an important royal name, used to identify the Persian. (AL)