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## DIBON: THE CITY OF KING MESA AND OF THE MOABITE STONE.

By DUNCAN MACKENZIE, Ph.D.

OUR expedition to Moab in 1910 included a visit to the site of Dibon.

Our starting-point for Dibon was Madeba. Here, unfortunately, Mr. F. S. Newton only arrived to be laid up with a bad attack of fever which was brought to a head as the effect of sun-glare and excessive fatigue. At Madeba we had to thank Father Paupil, Superior of the Latin Convent there, not only for very courteous hospitality but for the kindness and solicitude with which he nursed Mr. Newton back to health. Altogether we lost nearly three weeks in this way and we were naturally anxious to make up for lost time. But the Father Superior was thoughtful enough to warn us that any over exertion or fatigue during the period of convalescence might expose Mr. Newton to a relapse which would probably be much more serious than the first attack. Therefore we proceeded slowly and decided to explore one or two sites somewhat in detail rather than attempt to carry out our original plan of seeing as many as possible of the monuments that might lie within our itinerary.

In this way the great megalithic settlement at Mareighat had to be sacrificed in favour of Dibon: the City of King Mesa (Mesha) and of the Moabite Stone.

The journey was some good eight hours' riding from Madeba. It was through undulating country that was partly of the plateau of high Moab but was partly a land of valleys and streams.

When we arrived at Dibon our first vision of the ancient city showed at once that it was of the valleys and yet to east and west was the perpetual plateau. This is characteristic of the great cities of Ammon and Moab. It is pre-eminently true of Rabbath Ammon: the City of Waters and at the same time mistress of the table-land. It is true of Heshbon whose pools in the days of her glory were famous and were pools of living water. It is true of

Dibon. It is true of Kir of Moab which still survives a city to-day by the name of Kerak and still dominates the wide plateau though herself a city of valleys and deepest gorges.

It is not true of one great city of Moab we were to see later and this is Rabbath Moab. Anyone who visits Rabbah of to-day will see it is a site of the table-land. For that very reason it is perhaps more truly Moabite than any of the others and one would like to know what its earliest history was: whether Rabbath Moab indeed did not begin her existence as a Canaanite city.

It is in a general way observable that cities of Ammon and Moab that are of valleys and streams and dominate the plateau are at the same time environments of an earlier megalithic civilization.

This once again is true of Rabbath Ammon *par excellence*. Here we have not only the earlier megalithic period represented by the dolmens put on record by Conder and Mantell but an entire series of megalithic forts of an extraordinary character, illustrative of the later prime of the Megalithic Civilization, we had just visited ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

It is possible indeed that Rabbath Ammon is the greatest centre of Megalithic Civilization east of the Jordan until we come to the Land of Bashan whose megalithic monuments to-day give so strong a stamp of its own to the whole country of the Gebel Drus.

Dolmenic monuments occur at Heshbon, and Musil has put on record the existence in the environments of Heshbon of megalithic forts like those of Rabbath Ammon.

It would seem strange if Dibon, a city of valleys, were an exception to this rule. It is true we saw nothing of the kind near at hand but then we were so busy about the ruins of the city that no time whatever was left to explore the immediate environment.

We arrived at Dibon just before twilight. As we approached the site from the north and then from the north-east and east coming along the road from Madeba to Kerak we were at once struck by the extent of the ruins. We left the camel-track by a bridle path which passes north-west and west and crosses the ruins by a low saddle which divides the site into two great mounds. The two mounds with the saddle between them have their long axis running north-north-west, south-south-east. As one comes

<sup>1</sup> Some account of these will be found in the *Pal. Expl. Fund Annual*, I, 1-40, Pl. I-VI.

along the pathway one sees that the mound to the right is much the more important of the two. It stands out more, and its isolation makes it seem naturally much stronger in position than the other.

One at once detects lines of strong wall cropping out at intervals along its nearer or east side and there seemed to be line within line of fortifications.

These hasty observations were made in the waning light while we were looking out for suitable ground wherein to pitch our camp. Our search led us in the direction of the south mound which had level ground to the east of it. On getting near the ruins the frequent occurrence of arched chambers struck the eye even in the gathering darkness, and this betrayed the Arabic character of most of what was in sight. It was these walls that had made the site stand out so impressively as we approached. As we settled in camp for the night we had to confess to a feeling of disappointment, if not of actual dismay, at the discovery. The fact of the presence of these walls on apparently so large a scale will have to be reckoned with by anybody interested in the history of the site, and especially by archaeologists contemplating excavation there.

The special reason why the presence of such arched walls is a great drawback is the following. To support such massive arched roofs the walls themselves must be very strongly constructed and must go down to virgin rock if they do not rest on earlier solid wall. Any shifting or subsidence of the walls brings with it the collapse of the arch however strongly cemented. The laying of such deep foundations means the removal of all the earlier deposits in their line down to the rock. One is thus left with only the deposits between the walls and underneath the house-floors or in areas that have not been built over with such arched houses. To all this have to be added the processes of levelling away preliminary to building operations and the disturbance to earlier remains consequent thereon. As we retired for the night we could see that the problem of exploring or excavating a site like Dibon was one of excessive difficulty.

#### *The South Citadel.*

Our reconnaissance of the two mounds in their relation to each other took the greater part of next day,

We had rather hoped the previous evening that the Arabic and probable Byzantine remains might prove to be confined to the south mound especially as this unlike the other did not at the first glance give any indication of fortification and might thus, we hoped, turn out to be a settlement of much later date.

To understand the topographical relation of the two mounds to each other it will be best to consult in advance the paced Plan of the site prepared by Mr. F. S. Newton. Here the mounds appear as North Citadel and South Citadel respectively.

The South Citadel then is connected with the general undulating plateau land to east by level ground already referred to in connection with our plans for pitching camp. It was given up because it was too high and too much in full view of the high-way to Kerak and we ultimately camped in the low ground to right of the bridle path and to east of the saddle across the site. The level ground we had abandoned runs west from the road to Kerak at the same general height as the natural surface of the south mound. Thus the area covered by the South Citadel is merely a projection of the plateau country so as to form a sort of terrace spreading out west where the citadel is and then descending on the other side of this into the river valley on the west side of the site. The difficulties of proper defence and fortification on the east or plateau side are thus at once apparent.

It might indeed be said that from the strategic point of view it would have been better not to have occupied this terrace at all. But one consideration alone made this occupation a necessity. As Mr. Newton observed in the course of his investigations the terrace site stands higher than the North Citadel and thus commands it. The terrace is indeed so near on the south side of the saddle that the North Citadel has hardly any command of view in its direction.

The saddle itself again has no view at all except to east and west. It had to be defended and this is the meaning of the bastion on either side where the bridle-path passes.<sup>1</sup> It was a sort of fortified gateway between the two parts of the site which could be closed at will and was probably always shut at night.

This gateway itself affords clear indication that the south mound was fortified as well as the north. It connects the two mounds and there is a bastion on the south side. Connected further with this bastion can be traced here and there on the right

<sup>1</sup> C-D, 6-7, on the Plan.

hand or east side a line of Strong Wall which runs a little south of east and then curves rapidly south as it skirts the east boundary of the South Citadel. This and what would be the corresponding wall on the west side are indicated conjecturally on the Plan by means of black dotted lines.

It was, however, not possible to trace any certain indications of Strong Wall on the west side of the south site. But this is not to be wondered at considering how almost everything ancient at Dibon is overlaid and encumbered with Byzantine or Arabic remains. Not only was the Strong Wall amply made use of as a convenient quarry but later arched constructions were built on to it. This comes out very clearly on the east side where the fortifications could be traced with some certainty. At one point it was noticeable that a whole row of arched chambers had been built on to the Strong Wall on its internal side. Having to set their foundations solidly nothing could have suited the purposes of the builders better. Similar arched chambers occur all over the site within. At the north end, however, in the direction of the gate bastion there is a free area and this may have been in the great days of Dibon a sort of *Piazza d'Armi*.

Of this whole south site a general observation is that the deposits seem to be much shallower than appears to be the case with the North Citadel. Again the east part is much shallower than the west where there is the steep slope down the valley. On the east side where the plateau joins on to the terrace the rock crops up to the surface over wide areas. The numerous cisterns afford a means of estimating the depth of the deposits above the rock and it is noticeable that this gets deeper and deeper as one proceeds in a westward direction and down the slope into the valley.

#### *The North Citadel.*

The relatively greater importance of the North Citadel as compared with the South is apparent at once from the Plan. That it is much more massively fortified strikes the eye at the first glance. A puzzling feature which may or may not be fortification is the walled enclosure on the east side crossed by the bridle-path towards the saddle. The straight line of wall going south from the enclosure might seem at first sight the outer wall of a ramp way to the South Citadel. But the enclosure could never have been part of the fortifications without blocking the saddle-way

much more completely than the gateway there. Its presence does not seem to be consistent with the important route of traffic between east and west which crosses the site just where it intervenes. The construction of the enclosure is also such as to awaken suspicion. This consists for the most part of a double row of rough slabs set upright so as to stick out of the ground, and it is not certain whether there was ever much above them in the way of wall. The method of setting the slabs on end appears at first sight primitive but it occurs on quite unimportant Arabic sites of late date and the whole enclosure may not be more than a sort of sheep-fold. It must be said, however, that on the north and west side it has a semblance of fitting on to a system of wall which is undoubtedly part of the fortifications of the North Citadel. At one point it comes inconveniently near a strong angle in this and this is where "Sheikh's Tomb" is marked on the Plan. But this may have been done on purpose so as to leave as narrow a passage as possible between the two sets of walls. If it is part of the fortifications it looks like the deliberate closing, for strategic or other reasons, of an old right of way athwart the city. One has to reckon with the possibility that the Royal Palace of Dibon was on the spot alongside marked on the Plan "Area of the Moabite Stone." In that case in the great days of Mesa or some other king of Moab it may have been found inconvenient to have a public thoroughfare pass so near the windows of the palace.

In this connection it has to be observed that another road track between east and west passes the site to south of the South Citadel and this may ultimately have come to be the only one allowed in use.

Whatever opinion we form about this enclosure there is no doubt that the relation of the two citadels is best understood if it is thought away. Then one sees at once how the ancient thoroughfare, marked in a general way by the bridle-path, passed westward through the fortified gateway between the two parts of the city. The roadway then goes down into the valley and after crossing it ascends on the other side in such a way as to skirt a tributary stream on the right-hand side. So it gains the open plateau again and has connections in this westward direction as far as the Dead Sea.

The valley already mentioned is of prime importance for the site. It skirts the two citadels on the west side and then passes

away to the north. It is marked as Wady el Jebel on the Plan. It has water now only in times of winter rain. But even in ancient days the numerous cisterns show that the city could never have depended upon the stream for its main water supply.

Outside the north-west region of the site the main valley is joined by a tributary stream from the east which skirts the whole North Citadel on the north side.

*The Fortifications of the North Citadel.*

Let us now by help of the Plan consider the North Citadel and its fortifications somewhat in detail. We shall best do so if we start from the natural approach to the city on the east side, that is to say, by turning off westward from the high-road between Madeba and Rabbath Moab which to-day is represented by the caravan route to Kerak from the north.

As we are seeking the approach to the North Citadel and not to the city as a whole we may expect at once that it will not be one with the bridle-path across the saddle. That in its ancient form was a middle thoroughfare past the two parts of the city but passing directly into neither.

The true entrance from the east into the North Citadel is to be sought further north. And if we consult the Plan we shall see that it skirts the walled enclosure referred to previously on its north side. Here a passage-way between walls goes west and is joined by a somewhat wide branch roadway on the north or right-hand side as one approaches.<sup>1</sup> A few steps further on one finds that one is actually entering the city between double walls of the fortifications which between them form a sort of ascending ramp.<sup>2</sup>

If one goes on further in the same west-north-west direction one finds that the ramp wall on the left-hand side comes to an end and that one is entirely inside the city. Going on further one skirts the interior of the city on the north-east side in such a way as to have what appears to be a double line of Strong Wall on the right-hand side, the one wall being at a considerable interval from the other on the steep slope down north-north-east. Proceeding still further in the same direction one arrives at the north-west internal limits of the city. Here one notices that the two lines of Strong Wall on the right-hand side are joined together by a cross wall

<sup>1</sup> F 4 on the Plan.

<sup>2</sup> E 4 on the Plan.



which goes straight down the slope in a north-west direction and on the Plan points towards the confluence of the two valleys on that side.<sup>1</sup> This wall makes a strong dividing line in the system of fortification. It separates the fortifications on the east and north-east side of the citadel from those on the west, south-west, and south sides. It will be noticed on the Plan that the two lines of Strong Wall on the north-east side show no entrance to or exit from the interval between them except the one at the beginning of the system in F 3. At the end the cross wall referred to above makes this interval end in a *cul-de-sac*.

The strategic meaning of this arrangement may have been to provide a convenient trap for hostile persons unwary enough to take the entrance to this enclosed area instead of the real entrance to the citadel alongside referred to already and shown on the Plan in E F 4. Once inside short work could be made of them from the internal line of battlements above.

It seems to be clear that the Moabite kings of Dibon had learned to do a thing or two in the way of strategy at home before King Mesa could boast of victories over foreign enemies as he does in the Moabite Stone.

But we have been all this time in the north-west region of the city and we have said that the cross wall of the *cul-de-sac* makes a strong dividing line in the fortifications on either side of it. Some excavation might show that this is true. It will be seen, however, from the Plan that the system of double lines of wall continues on the west side. But there is one great difference. The arrangement here does not end in a *cul-de-sac* but in entrance gates into the city. There seem to be at least three of these and they were to be seen just in front of us where we were standing all the time. To anybody coming up in a northerly direction in the interval between the two walls they would be on the right-hand side at the end. This interval, like almost the whole interior of the city, is now blocked up with arched Arabic houses (shaded on the Plan) but we have not to suppose that it was occupied by habitations in analogous fashion when King Mesa reigned at Dibon.

The whole arrangement has rather the appearance of an approaching ramp strongly protected on either side and with entrances into the city at the end of it. What would seem to be a

<sup>1</sup> See Plan, centre of B C, 3-4. The wall in question can be distinguished in Fig. 1.

third, outer line of wall further south (A 4 on the Plan) may be the prolongation of reinforced defences connected with the entrance to the ramp.

What we seem to have here then is the city entrance to Dibon from the west, or speaking more precisely, the entrance to the lower city, which in this round-about way came to be really from the north-west.

The still more warily guarded entrance on the east side referred to already (E F 4 on the Plan) would then be more especially the way of access to the upper citadel and the Royal Palace itself.

If we now put into connection with all these strategic arrangements the Saddle Gate of Dibon with its bastions which controlled so well the transit of external traffic (with probable dues on the same) we can see that in the days of King Mesa, if not long before, the defences of the Royal City were pretty well provided for.

But it must always be remembered that all this wiliness of arrangement in civic defence is not entirely the outcome of personal initiative, even if it were of King Mesa, but of a long previous collective tradition. The ramp with its labyrinthine suggestions and its provision of a round-about way of access is a primeval institution in fortification and has a very wide area of distribution in regions where fortification has played a dominant rôle in early history.

It is present already in the Bronze Age on native soil and we ourselves had just seen curious and interesting examples of it illustrated by the Megalithic Monuments of Rabbath Ammon which with their dolmenic associations belong to a much earlier period than the great days of Dibon.<sup>1</sup>

It will be noticed that the West Ramp at Dibon goes left as one approaches the city from without and faces the walls. It follows from this that any invading army carrying shields and advancing up the ramp would have these on the wrong side and have the exposed right side of the person open to "fire" from the interior ramparts on that side.

This leftward arrangement of the entrance ramp is a favourite one in ancient military architecture and has once more very early associations in the Bronze Age wherever it occurs. The Megalithic Forts at Rabbath Ammon show more than one example of its use and it is likely to occur elsewhere as in the similar forts of the

<sup>1</sup> See *Pal. Expl. Fund Annual*, I, Pl. IV and p. 24; Pl. VI and p. 32.

Land of Bashan. There is thus every probability that it penetrated from the earlier Megalithic Civilization into the military architecture of Canaanite Ammon and Moab.

But further, until there is evidence forthcoming to the contrary, the Megalithic Civilization of Syria whether east of the Jordan or west has to be associated in its affinities with that of the Mediterranean and its littoral elsewhere. Now, it is remarkable that the leftward arrangement of the entrance ramp referred to is found very widely in use in the Bronze Age Civilization of the Mediterranean Area. To speak of the East Mediterranean alone: it is found to occur commonly in the Aegean, as at Kasti in the island of Syra, at Hagios Andreas in Siphnos and in a palatial connection as an outstanding feature of the Palace of Hagia Triada in Crete.

Not so long ago the unfortified character of the Cretan Palaces might seem to make a palatial entrance ramp like that referred to appear anomalous if not inexplicable. Now, however, the fact has begun to emerge that fortified townships were by no means unknown in the earlier periods of Minoan Crete. And the analogy of other islands would lead us to expect that the kind of ramp we refer to was already there in its true primitive character as an essential element in fortification before it ever had anything to do with palatial arrangements.

On the mainland of Greece again the leftward orientation of the entrance ramp is preserved to us in a typical example at the Citadel of Tiryns. Here it has a monumental connection with the palatial system as in the somewhat analogous case instanced, at Hagia Triada in Crete; but it at the same time preserves the true character of fortification which in Crete has become a mere reminiscence of a state of things that must have been much more general there in a previous age.

Thus also while the affinities are there between the orientation leftwards of the entrance ramp at Tiryns and that at Hagia Triada in Crete we have to be careful not to assume any derivative relation either way. The conclusion ought rather to be that the ramp was already there as an intrinsic element in the fortification of primitive townships before there ever was any Royal Palace at Tiryns or Hagia Triada.

Not only so but the kind of ramp in question has associations that are much wider than the boundaries of the Hellenic World as, indeed, if we are not mistaken the Royal City of Dibon shows.

But these associations, wherever they occur, begin not with the palaces of kings but with the fortification of early townships. And we have already given reasons for the suggestion that in the valley region east of the Jordan and the Dead Sea the art of fortification had already developed the entrance ramp among the megalithic people long before any Canaanite kings ruled over the plateaux of Ammon or Moab.

We were even able to give instances of such ramps from the Megalithic Forts at Rabbath Ammon. One fact that was characteristic of these, wherever they occurred, was that the ramp always had a direct connection with the river valley. Now, keeping this in view, it is rather startling to find that the West Ramp at Dibon is also entered from the valley which is as we have seen likewise on the west side. We have thus on the spot what appears to be a distinctive megalithic characteristic in fortification surviving in Moab into the Canaanite times of King Mesa and his dynasty.

It is a prior question whether the megalithic people themselves may not once have been in settlement on the spot. The analogy of the somewhat similar character of the landscape at megalithic Rabbath Ammon with its peculiar conjunction of river valleys and table-land might make this seem possible, but only excavation could settle the question as to whether this earlier period were at all represented at Dibon. One way or the other there is every reason in any case for concluding that the Canaanite ramp is a survival from that earlier time.

To understand the later forms in which the ramp appears we have to follow the probable course of its development in primitive times.

1. It started its existence as a round-about way of entrance left or right, and in course of time preferably left, to a primitive fortified settlement. This was with or without the personality of a tribal or communal chief as its head standing out so markedly as that the external and internal disposition of the entrance was affected by the position of his residence. The settlement had either a more or less autonomous existence as a tribe or community or it consisted merely of the retainers of the chief who lived in his castle and around it. The latter seems to have been the case with the Megalithic Forts of Rabbath Ammon. Here, however, there is at least one instance in which the community seems to have played

a somewhat more independent rôle in relation to its chief. This is the settlement with dolmenic tomb at the west end of Rujm el-Melfûf near Amman.<sup>1</sup> Here an important entrance ramp ascending from the stream on the north side skirts what is possibly the residence of the chief on the east and south sides and turns sharply west before reaching the settlement behind on that side. The ramp appears deliberately put into direct touch with the principal residence and it is laid out with the approved orientation leftward in relation to that. But its connections are not only with the residence of the chief, for as we have seen it passes on to the settlement.

We have now to observe that not far away, at Humrawiyeh, we have an entrance ramp set in direct systematic connection with a residential fort as an intrinsic part of it and there is no trace at all of a corresponding tribal or communal settlement.<sup>2</sup> And in this connection it has to be observed that the fortified settlement with residence and associated dolmenic tomb at Rujm el-Melfûf is, on the face of it, earlier than the fortified residence at Humrawiyeh.<sup>3</sup>

At Humrawiyeh indeed we have got so far in the way of development that the entrance ramp is found there to play in relation to a residence a function, which though on a small scale, is not too far removed in its analogies from that of Tiryns itself. At one more remove a glorified Humrawiyeh with entrance ramp palatial and decorative would be like the Palace of Hagia Triada in Crete. The essential affinity in the course of culture is this: that in both cases once the chief or dynast, as the case may be, has managed to isolate himself securely the inhabitants are of no account! At Tiryns itself once the entrance ramp is appropriated to exclusive palatial use the city becomes degraded to the Lower Town. The Palace of Hagia Triada is royal in its isolation, but what about a city there?

All this represents the end of a civilization not the beginning. As regards the residential forts at Rabbath Ammon we have said elsewhere that they illustrate the final stage in the Megalithic Civilization of Ammon and Moab.<sup>4</sup>

In that same connection we have suggested that the earliest

<sup>1</sup> *Pal. Expl. Fund Annual*, I, Pl. II and p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, Pl. VI and p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

phase in this Megalithic Civilization east of the Jordan is represented by tribal or communal settlements with dolmen tombs of simple type like that at Mareighat near Madeba.<sup>1</sup> And it is probable that it was in connection with the walling of such settlements in course of time that the entrance ramp or way set parallel to an inner line of wall first emerged into existence as an intrinsic element in the early fortification of cities.

In this earliest phase of development the town entrance or ramp would have been one, for in such primitive fortified settlements to multiply entrances is to multiply the risk of attack from without.

2. The time would inevitably come, however, when the head man would seek to establish his own kin more securely as head family of the community. If the settlement is fortified the result of this endeavour soon becomes apparent in the effort to give his own habitation a position of vantage in relation to the rest of the settlement. He will make it stand out more and stand higher. It becomes the principal building and will be next the High Place or Shrine or Temple if there is one. He may himself be high priest and his sacred office may be hereditary as such.

As the desire for isolation and seclusion becomes stronger he will end by wanting a separate way of access to his residence and perhaps even a separate way of entrance to it from without the settlement. But if he is wise and a Canaanite he will not proceed to do what the head men of the Megalithic People before him did and isolate himself entirely from the common rabble of the town in a fortified residence outside with a body of retainers and favourites about him to do his personal will. This is the very negation of civic life and sooner or later the towns will rise against that sort of thing and annihilate it. Our Canaanite head man if he is wise will rather keep in touch with the beginnings of civic life and seek his own superior place and standing in a separate area within the town walls. It is through this process of development that the head family of the settlement becomes the natural nucleus for the formation of the dynasty of a Royal City. If we are not mistaken it is the natural culmination of this process that we see in the stage of development reached by the dynasty of King Mesa at Dibon.

The manner of fortification of the city and the arrangement of entrances in relation respectively to a lower and higher town would seem to indicate so much. Here we have got the separate entrance

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.

on the east side put more in touch with the higher citadel. Excavation might also show that the inmost line of wall here, that on the left-hand side as one ascends the ramp (seen curving west in E 4 on the Plan), swept round in such a way as to include the Royal Quarter within it on the south side. And this would then include that very region where (according to the native Bedouin of the spot) the Moabite Stone itself was discovered.

On the other hand the entrance ramp on the west side of the site would be more directly in connection with the lower city. It would be thus in a position which was subordinate to that of the other. But the fashion of the ramp itself with its leftward orientation bears the marks, as we have suggested, of a much earlier tradition of arrangement.

It would be interesting to know through excavation whether what we have suggested was the Royal Quarter was so enclosed within the inner line of wall as to have a separate entrance of its own giving access respectively to the Palace of King Mesa and the Temple of Chemosh. The Moabite Stone entitles us to speak of both and its place of provenance ought to afford a much more definite topographical clue as to locality than has ever yet been available for any Palestinian or Syrian site. What a luminous flash of light this one stone throws on contemporary history—a flash of light that reaches to the very Palace of Samaria. Not only so but it gives the spot itself where it was found a local habitation and a name that are eloquent of the abode of kings. But the stones of the walls themselves are silent and only the arduous toil of excavation might peradventure make them speak.

The walls within as they are visible to-day say nothing, but at the entrance of the East Ramp (in E 4) they are not altogether silent. Here the ramp in its ascent is so disposed as to seem quite clearly a common way of access not only to the Royal Quarter but to the adjoining part of the lower city towards the north end of the site. It was, indeed, this very way we ourselves had taken in our first *passeggiata archeologica* over the city. It was thence we made our way amid the maze of Arabic houses to the North-West Entrance and the West Ramp of Dibon.

This common way of access to city and palace which we seem to have before us in the East Ramp throws its own ray of light on the civic arrangements of the time in relation to the presence of royalty. King Mesa and his dynasty evidently did not live in

complete isolation from the common people of the town. They neither lived entirely outside with their own retainers like the over-lords of Megalithic Ammon nor did they isolate themselves within like the dynasts of Tiryns.

3. This third phase in the development of civic fortification which completely isolates the palace from the rest of the city by means of a separate entrance way or ramp of its own is apparently not represented at Dibon. It is possibly not represented at any royal Canaanite site in Moab or Ammon. As we have indicated it was reached elsewhere as in the typical case of Tiryns well-nigh a thousand years earlier and in the Bronze Age.

But history repeats itself and without going so far afield as the Hellenic world we find on Palestinian soil itself the fortified royal palace subsisting for itself in a state of greater isolation than was ever possible at Tiryns.

This is at Samaria! And it was the work not of a dynasty bringing about its own fall through the gradual process of isolation in course of time, but the iniquity of one man, King Omri, who brings about the fall of his own dynasty in advance by the personal act of buying the hill of Samaria where there never had been any city before and building his own palace thereon—all for himself!<sup>1</sup> But the cup of King Omri's iniquities, as we read, was full and brimming over.<sup>2</sup> And in fulness of time we find the Moabite King Mesa of Dibon inflicting dire defeat on the armies of Israel as the votary of his god Chemosh. It is the strong city and palace of Dibon against the corrupt city-less palace of Samaria. And that is the stern historical significance of the contrast as it comes out not merely by inference from the Moabite Stone but by contemplation of the ruins themselves.

But there are other interesting analogies for the nemesis that overtakes the pride of kings who isolate themselves in royal palaces. And the horror of it survives in legendary story to our day.

The iniquity and infamy of Crete were pictured in the Labyrinth of Knossos and the Minotaur. The whole monstrous legend, whether as of Troy or Crete or Egyptian Hawara, has its beginnings in reality before the dawn of history with the entrance ramp (going left) to a fortified city. And this now in a time of kings living within fortified cities becomes the true foundation for

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings xvi, 24.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



the Legend of Troy Town. This also is pictured as a labyrinth to our own day.

But it is doubtful whether the story would have taken its definitive form with sinister meaning as we have it told of Crete and pictured on the coins of Knossos without that isolation of royal palaces which represents the final phase in the history of ancient civic fortification.

Tiryns as we have seen has got the entrance ramp as the Cretan palace of Hagia Triada has got it. At Royal Knossos the ramp is no longer there. But it is present on the labyrinth coins of Knossos and there we are startled to see that it takes its way left before going through all the fatal windings of the maze.

The Palace of Knossos *is* the Labyrinth. But for the people of cities and for popular fancy it is now at length the abode of infamy and of the Minotaur.

At Knossos the Minotaur, devourer of the tributary youths and maidens of Athens. At Samaria Queen Jezebel, slayer of the prophets.

The isolation of palaces is the end of royalty and this is not less true of the Palace of Samaria and the Petit Trianon of Hagia Triada in Crete than it is of Royal and Imperial French Versailles.

And it must never be forgotten of Nero that in the fulness of time the Imperial Nostril began to be offended at the common smells of the town and so he sets fire to the City of Rome—to slow music. Then he sets himself up in the splendid isolation of the Golden House and the Roman Minotaur, destroyer of Christians, is already there!

At Dibon King Mesa has not got so far as this in royal isolation, for his palace, as it would seem, is within the city walls and he even appears as vice-gerent of the God of Israel against the armies of offending Samaria. But the iniquity of overweening royal might is seen at last when in honour of his god Chemosh he puts the Israelite garrison of Ataroth to death.

And even if we make the Legend of the Labyrinth but a wonderful piece of symbolism with its own profound ideal inner meaning we should not fail to notice, as the Plan shows it, that the walls of Dibon with their double and triple lines and round about ramp entrances have already their own distinct character of the maze and the spider's web. Once you are entrapped within the winding meshes of that maze there is imminent risk you never may

get out again and that is from first to last the inner fatal truth that is preserved to us forever in the pictured Legend of Troy Town.

*The Area of the Moabite Stone.*

As long as investigation is restricted to what is visible on the surface it is hardly possible to do more than conjecture from topographical considerations the position of the Royal Quarter at Dibon. But the Moabite Stone itself comes in here to afford a valuable clue. And it is rarely, indeed, that on any oriental tell site an indication so clear is forthcoming as the result of an accidental discovery. Blocks of so considerable a weight as that on which the Moabite inscription has been carved do not easily get removed far from their original surroundings even if they have been re-used for building purposes. They are generally so re-used where they happen to come in handily on the spot. The antiquarian interest is never found so strong in ancient days as that such inscribed stones could readily come to be removed from their true environment for their own sake. In antiquity if such relics were removed they were carried off bodily usually as trophies of victory. We have a celebrated example of this in the Laws of Hammurabi. This great inscribed stone was found by the French Mission of J. de Morgan not in the Ebabbara Temple of the Sun at Sippar where it originally belonged but on the Acropolis of Susa where it was set up by the Elamite King Sutruk-Nahhunte (Shutruk-Nachunte) as a trophy of his victories in Babylonia.<sup>1</sup>

The Moabite Stone had a very different fate. It remained concealed for ages in the fallen Temple of Chemosh until one day some Bedawi of Moab unearthed it thence by purest chance. And when it was carried off at last it was to the Louvre at Paris where it now remains not, this time, as a trophy of the victory of kings but of French triumph in an archaeological contest in which three great European Powers were involved. One of the strangest romances of discovery ever heard of!

According to the general consensus of opinion among savants and of the Bedawi on the spot the Moabite Stone was found in that region of the City of Dibon marked on the Plan in D E 5-6 as

<sup>1</sup> *Délégation en Perse—Mémoires*, Tome IV ; *Textes Elamites-Sémitiques*, deuxième série, par V. Scheil; see also Winckler, *Die Gesetze Hammurabis in Der Alte Orient*, 4 Jahrgang, Heft 4, pp. 5-6.

*Area of the Moabite Stone.* It is here that for quite independent topographical reasons we have suggested the Royal Quarter of the city. The two sets of considerations thus tend to confirm each other.

*The Temple of Chemosh.*

If now further this important record of the victories of King Mesa can with considerable probability be conjectured to have been set up in the Temple of Chemosh this temple itself should be situated where the stone was found. It is here we have got the greatest possibility of similar discoveries on the same spot. Such records though they may, do not usually stand alone and the Moabite Stone itself is of so well marked an oriental type that it can hardly be regarded as unique in all Moab. A type so usual must be represented on other sites in Moab and it is difficult to believe that Mesa was the only King of Moab to whom it ever occurred to set up such a monument. Having got so far there is quite the possibility of other similar stones in the Temple of Chemosh itself. How interesting it would be, besides, to identify this building itself for its own sake.

And here is a suggestion which may be taken for what it is worth. In the south-east part of the *Area of the Moabite Stone* on a somewhat more elevated position by itself, in the north-west part of E 6, 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 actual position of the Temple of Chemosh. If it did there would then be, of course, the difficulty that the local Bedawi would probably have to be reckoned with in case of any scheme for excavation on the spot. A sheikh's tomb is marked alongside on the Plan (south-east corner of E 5) and we ourselves noticed other more summary Bedawi burials in the same environment. All this has to be taken into account in considering what the possibilities would be of a successful investigation of the area.

*The Palace of King Mesa.*

If we take the usual oriental custom in ancient times into consideration we have to conjecture that the Royal Palace could not be at any great distance from the Temple of Chemosh.

The reasoning has been that the place of finding of the Moabite stone affords a probable clue as to the locality of the temple and

that the locality of the temple in turn indicates the probable environment of the palace. And we have already seen that from independent topographical consideration of the North Citadel as a whole we were led to locate the Royal Quarter in that same southern region which as it happens includes the *Area of the Moabite Stone*.

The one set of indications thus supports and confirms the other. And all the clues we have including the provenance of the Moabite Stone itself converge in this region as the most important in the whole city. Besides, from our general description of the site it will have been seen that this region stands out in itself as contrasted with the lower areas within the walls in the more northern quarter of the city. Command of the passing highways and of the surrounding country especially to east and west is just what we should postulate for the Royal Quarter and the higher citadel and this is what they have.

In the absence of knowledge it may not be too far-fetched to imagine King Mesa not merely as the author of the Moabite Stone dedicated in the Temple of Chemosh but as the possible recipient as well of documents stored up in the palace. Will such be forthcoming? That could only be decided by excavation on the spot.

#### *The Prospects of Excavation at Dibon.*

From what has been said above it seems clear that any scheme for excavation at Dibon would have to concentrate attention on the *Area of the Moabite Stone* and this would mean in the first instance the Temple of Chemosh and the Royal Palace.

We have more than once referred to the presence of massive Byzantine and Arabic buildings all over the two citadels. These present serious obstacles to any plan that might be proposed for a systematic excavation of the whole site. Such an excavation would involve an enormous outlay of funds probably without any corresponding result.

The area covered by those arched buildings is indicated on the Plan by shaded lines and these lines practically extend over the whole site.

It is very noticeable, however, that the only part of the Plan not so shaded is the *Area of the Moabite Stone* itself. All over this region the arched buildings are lacking and the possible explanation is the presence of the burying ground and of the Moslem

shrine. These might conceivably prove an obstacle to excavation but on the other hand the shrine is in ruins, the burials seem to be only very occasional and the only important sepulchre is the Sheikh's Tomb.

It would thus seem as if the one feasible scheme for an excavation at Dibon would have to be of the nature of a roving commission to explore the Royal Quarter of the city with a view to discovering the Temple of Chemosh and the Palace and in search always of possible inscriptions.

General topographical interests would be satisfied by some exploration of the city walls with a view to settling the question of gates and any other interesting details in the defences of the city.

Lastly would come the search for tombs. Undisturbed tombs of any period would be a discovery of exceptional importance. The reason is that in this way there would be some hope of making up to some extent for the poor chances of important finds in all quarters of the city covered by the arched Arabic and Byzantine buildings.

In the opinion of the present writer, shared also by Mr. Newton as the result of conclusions arrived at on the spot, any other more elaborate undertaking would be pre-doomed to failure. Arched buildings as a necessity of their construction must always have their foundations going down to the bed rock. In the course of laying these trenches have to be dug and earlier deposits displaced and removed. These trenches can be assumed to exist wherever the Arabic walls are. It can thus be imagined what the condition of the earlier remains is all over the areas of the city covered by these massive walls.

Dibon is a city of cisterns like many other ancient sites in Moab. The mouths of many of these still remain open. It is thus possible to observe the amount of deposit reckoning from the surface to the rock into which the cisterns have been hewed. This is remarkably thin in many parts of the South Citadel and all over the North Quarter of the city. Judging from surface indications the deposits are deepest just where one would wish them to be so: in the *Area of the Moabite Stone*.

We thus come back once more to our suggestion that any expedition having in view an excavation at Dibon should concentrate attention almost exclusively on that Royal Quarter of the city where the Moabite Stone itself was found.

In the case of a country so much out of the way as Moab with its nomad hinterland it would be difficult indeed to say when and by whom Dibon is likely to be excavated. Such an enterprise would be weighted at the start through the lack of a fellahin population in the country. The Bedawi are not tillers of the soil and scorn such manual work. Labour would thus probably have to be imported.

Such an investigation of Dibon as is suggested above could best be carried out in connection with an expedition on a larger scale such as might be interested in the archaeological exploration of other sites in Moab and Edom as a whole. An expedition like this would not have to stake its chances of success on a site like Dibon alone.

Enterprize of this kind is bound to come from one quarter or another before long. Archaeological problems of a certain character have a way of forcing themselves upon attention at the psychological moment and scholars who are interested in Semitic origins as they bear upon the early history of the Hebrew race will hardly be satisfied to remain indefinitely content with the extraordinary fact that no single site east of the Jordan has been investigated through excavation. The nearest we have got is with the Austrian excavations at Jericho under the enlightened auspices of the Vienna Academy of Sciences. Why should not Vienna go further and afford us a happy augury that all this neglect of the true Palestinian hinterland is going to be changed quite soon?

Then there is Germany with the grand example set at Baalbek by Puchstein. And it will be in accordance with the cherished ideal of a man too early lost to archaeological science if his scheme for excavations on a grand scale in Roman Syria especially east of the Jordan turns out to be realized as prospects would seem to show.

Work of this kind can only progress through the friendly co-operation of the nations and archaeology is in this respect the most international of the historical sciences.

There is no doubt at all, however, that the most pressing practical need of excavation for the moment lies east of the Jordan as against even the urgency of the Philistine and Phoenician problems in the west, and for the following reasons :—

The ancient sites of Moab are being rapidly re-occupied as a result of the constant migration of Orthodox and Catholic Bedouin

on to the plateau from Madeba and Kerak. Fifty years ago what now is Christian Madeba was as desolate as Dibon is to-day.

As regards Kerak, again, a quarrel with the sullen and intolerant Moslem Hebronites settled there is enough to lead to such a migration of Christians. Alongside of this we have then a very envious concomitant phenomenon of migration. The Moslem Hebronites of Kerak, presumably as a result of quarrels between themselves, or of feuds with the indigenous Kerak Moslems develop a similar tendency to migrate to the table-land. Kasr Rabba north of Rabbath Moab is one of the sites now occupied in this way and there are many others. The strongly marked Hebronite quality of sullenness is in no way changed through the freer life of the plateau or any sort of intercourse with the calm and gentle Bedawi. The Moslem lady of Hebron has still got her yashmak and is as much veiled as ever. The result is that one may be quite innocently curious, not about the lady who is usually very old and quite ugly, but about a really fascinating Roman Corinthian capital from the building called the Kasr near by. One is warned off! Think of excavation in such a place! One bad result is that this intrusive Hebronite element has done much to vitiate the naturally amiable manners of the Bedawi of the land. And this will one day prove a new obstacle to excavation.

It is if possible worse in the land of Ammon. The equally sullen and fanatical Cirkess population there consists of refugees of the seventies of last century as a result of the Russian aggression on Turkish territory which ended in the taking of Kars and had as further sequel the treaty with Turkey in virtue of which England now occupies Cyprus.

These Cirkess aliens always armed to the teeth and, until recently, at least, exempt from military service, lord it over the native Bedawi with a truculent air as of conquerors who are there by right. The result is that the gentle Bedawi with his immemorial independence so racy of the desert soil is made to feel like an alien in his own very land. Yet what could be less suited to the ardent sun and climate of the desert south than the dull and stolid northern temperament of those Cirkess refugees. It might be said that in contrast with the Bedawi they are cultivators of the soil and so might form an element of social progress which would do the nomad tribes of the desert no harm and the arable land much good. Anybody who has been to Ammān and has once seen the

hideous filth of the town and pollution of the river there where all might be a garden will soon be disabused about that. They always have the forlorn air of the refugee and of strangers in a strange land which they can never love. They have no attachment to the soil, no sort of old-world interest, such as the Bedawi have, in the monuments which are the glory of Ammān. They are entirely indifferent to all that. The only thing they are not indifferent to is the possibility of the cryptogram and of hidden treasure. "One half to you one half to us, you find the treasure we do the work," they bargained with us one day as we were measuring the Megalithic Forts at Rujm el-Melfūf. They go on destroying the monuments piecemeal. Thus the Odeon one of the most recent victims of this indifferent spirit of destruction is rapidly disappearing. We saw its stones built into a hideous new government house being erected alongside on the stage of the theatre. Thus do the splendid monuments of Rabbath Ammon vanish every day.

ATHENS, *September*, 1912.

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## THE BEDOUIN OF THE SINAITIC PENINSULA.

By W. E. JENNINGS-BRAMLEY.

(*Continued from Q.S.*, 1913, p. 38.)

### XXXI.—*The Wādy el-Arish and its Tributaries.*

THE great Wādy el-Arish rises in the escarpment of the hills which divide North and South Sinai. Its first tributary is the Wādy Hattia.

The Wādy Hattia, rising in the same escarpment though further west than the Arish, is called by some the Arish itself, although most agree to call Wādy Arish the wādy that runs along the base of the Egma hills. The Hattia is a very important wādy, in which, besides the usual undergrowth, there are a good many large trees. All the country to the south-west of the Arish is rocky, with very little vegetation, and the wādies have cut for themselves deep