



Qedarite

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The **Qedarites** (also **Kedarites**/**Cedarenes**, **Cedar**/**Kedar**/**Qedar**, and **Kingdom of Qedar**) were a largely nomadic, ancient Arab tribal confederation. Described as "the most organized of the Northern Arabian tribes", at the peak of its power in the 6th century BC it controlled a large region between the Persian Gulf and the Sinai Peninsula.^{[1][2][3][4]}

Biblical tradition holds that the Qedarites are named for Qedar, the second son of Ishmael, mentioned in the Bible's books of Genesis (25:13) and 1 Chronicles (1:29), where there are also frequent references to Qedar as a tribe.^{[2][5]} The earliest extrabiblical inscriptions discovered by archaeologists that mention the Qedarites are from the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Spanning the 8th and 7th centuries BC, they list the names of Qedarite kings who revolted and were defeated in battle, as well as those who paid Assyrian monarchs tribute, including Zabibe, queen of the Arabs (šar-rat KUR.a-ri-bi).^{[6][7]} There are also Aramaic and Old South Arabian inscriptions recalling the Qedarites, who further appear briefly in the writings of Classical Greek, such as Herodotus, and Roman historians, such as Pliny the Elder, and Diodorus.

It is unclear when the Qedarites ceased to exist as a separately defined confederation or people. Allies with the Nabataeans, it is likely that they were absorbed into the Nabataean state around the 2nd century AD. In Islam, Isma'il is considered to be the ancestral forefather of the Arab people, and in traditional Islamic historiography, Muslim historians have assigned great importance in their accounts to his first two sons (Nebaioth and Qedar), with the genealogy of Muhammad, a Messenger of God in Islam, alternately assigned to one or the other son, depending on the scholar.

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Etymology

It has been suggested that the name of the Qedarites is derived from the name for Ishamel's second son Qedar.^[8] Though the tribal name is Arabic, it was first transcribed in Assyrian (8th century BC) and Aramaic (6th century BC), as the Arabic alphabet had not yet been developed. In the Mareshah onomasticon, the Qedarites are listed as an ethnic group whose name in Aramaic transliteration is *QDRYN*.^[8]

The Arabic trilateral root *q-d-r* means "to measure, compute, estimate"; "to decree, appoint, ordain"; and "to have power, or ability." *Qidr*, a noun derived from the same root, means "cauldron, kettle", and also gives the verbal derivation, "to cook".^[9] Ernst Axel Knauf, a biblical scholar who undertook a historical study of the Ishmaelites and determined that they were known in Assyrian inscriptions as the Šumu'il, surmises that the name of the Qedarites was derived from the verb *qadara*, with its meaning of "to ordain, to have power".^[10] As this etymology is a deduction based solely on the prominence of the Qedar among the Šumu'il tribes, it is viewed as inconclusive by other scholars.^[11]

Geographical scope

The Qedarites were an "Arab tribal confederation," or "alliance of nomadic Arab tribes."^{[3][4]} According to Philip J. King, theologian and historian, they lived in the northwest Arabian desert and were "an influential force from the 8th to 4th centuries BC."^[3] Geoffrey Bromiley, historical theologian and translator, transcribes their name as *Kedar* and states they lived in an area southeast of Damascus and east of the Transjordan.^[5]

8th century BC Assyrian inscriptions place the Qedarites as living in the area to the east of the western border of Babylon.^[2] Moving further east into areas of the Transjordan and southern Syria in the 7th century BC, by the 5th century BC they had spread into the Sinai and as far as the Nile Delta.^{[2][12]} Qedarite domination of northwest Arabia involved alliances between the kings of Qedar and the kings of Dedan (Al-`Ula).^[13] Historian Israel Eph'al writes that the "breadth of Qedarite distribution suggests a federation of tribes with various sub-divisions."^[2]

Oases in the largely desert region lived in by the Qedarites - such as Dedan, Tayma, and Dumah - played an important role as sites of settlement, trade, and watering-places.^{[a][14][15]} Dumah, a remote desert city to the west, known later as Dumat Al-Jandal and today as al-Jawf, was the most important of these, sitting as it did between the empires of Babylonia and Assyria. Serving as the base for Qedarite religious ceremonies, Dumah's strategic position on the north-south trade route in the area meant that relations with its inhabitants were sought after by both empires, though Dumah and the Qedarites were closer in both geographical and political terms to Babylonia. Those coming from the south and wishing to access Mesopotamia were obliged to pass through Dumah, which also lay on an alternate route to the northwest, leading to the city of Damascus, and from there, on to Assyria and Anatolia.^[15]



A map of the Assyrian Empire and the Region about the Eastern Mediterranean, 750 - 625 BC from William R. Shepherd's "Historical Atlas" (1911) - Early Qedarite rulers are listed in 8th and 7th century BC Akkadian cuneiform inscriptions as vassals of the Assyrian empire

During the period of Persian imperial rule in the region (c. 550–330 BCE), the Qedarites exercised control over the desert areas bordering Egypt and Israel and the traffic related to Arabian incense trade upon which Gaza depended.^{[16][17]} Herodotus (c. 484–425 BC) writes of their presence in the northern Sinai near the Egyptian border where they may have been engaged by the Achaemenids, the Persian imperial authorities, to keep that border secure as well as their control of the city of Gaza.^[2]

Historical references

Extrabiblical

Assyrian inscriptions

The first documented mention of Qedar is from a stele (c. 737 BC) of Tiglath-Pileser III, a king of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, that lists leaders from the western part of Mesopotamia that pay him tribute.^{[2][18]} To the Assyrians, the Qedarites were known as *Qidri* or *qi-id-ri* with other cuneiform inscriptions also using *Qadri*, *Qidarri*, *Qidari* and *Qudari* (Neo Babylonian).^{[5][10][12]} Zabibe (c. 738 BC) is listed among those paying tribute under the title "queen of the *Qidri* and the *Aribi*" (*Aribi* meaning "Arabs").^[19]

Also mentioned in Assyrian royal inscriptions is Zabibe's successor Yatie (c. 730 BC), who sent forces headed by her brother Baasqanu to aid Merodach-Baladan in his bid to hold onto power in Babylon.^{[20][21]} Together with an army from Elam, this alliance faced the forces of Sennacherib, on the Assyrian king's first campaign in 703 BC.^[22] The events of the battle are recorded in the annals of Sennacherib which describe Yatie as "queen of the Arabs," and tell of the capture of her brother Baasqanu in battle. Israel Eph'al writes that this is the first mention in Assyrian documents of Arabs as an ethnic element in Babylonia.^[22]

Statements about the Qedarites in the annals of the Assyrian kings of Ashurbanipal and his son Esarhaddon indicate that the term *Kedar* was almost synonymous with *Arabia*.^[5] Hazael, who ruled c. 690–676 BC, is described as a Qedarite king by Ashurbanipal and "king of the Arabs" by Esarhaddon.^{[23][24]} After Sennacherib's invasion of Babylonia in 691–689 BC, Hazael fled to Dumah.^{[25][26]} Dumah is referred to as *Adummatu* by the Assyrians, and the city is described by them as the seat of the Qedar confederation and the base of their cult.^[26]

Te'elkhunu and Tabua, both referred to as both "queens of Qidri" and "queens of *Aribi*," have *Adummatu* explicitly denoted as their seat and capital city in the inscriptions.^[27] While the capital city for the three other queens referred to as "queens of *Aribi*" (Samsi, Zabibe and Yatie) is not explicitly mentioned, it is thought to have been *Adummatu* as well.^[27] Numerous inscriptions discovered in Dumah itself are further indications for a strong Qedarite presence, one of which asks of three deities known to the Assyrians as gods of Qedar (Ruda, Nuha and Atarsamain) for "help in the matter of my love."^[26]

The conquest of *Adummatu* by Sennacherib in 690 BC and the capture of a Qedarite queen, Te'elkhunu, who was brought back to Assyria with other loot, including divine images, is also mentioned in the annals of the Assyrian monarchs.^[28] Esarhaddon eventually returned the "renewed" images of the Arab gods to *Adummatu* with Tabua, "who grew up in the palace of Sennacherib," and was appointed Qedarite queen by Esarhaddon to replace Te'elkhunu.^[28] However, strained relations between the Assyrians and the Qedarites meant that she ruled for only a brief period, with Esarhaddon recognizing Hazael as the king of Qedar after he increased his

tribute to the Assyrian monarch by 65 camels.^[29] Esarhaddon then appointed Yauta, son of Hazael, as a Qedarite king, following Hazael's death.^[28] That Yauta paid a tribute in the form of 10 minas of gold, 1,000 precious stones, 50 camels, and 1,000 leather pouches of aromatics is also recorded.^[30]

The defeat of Ammuladi and Yauta after they mounted Qedarite forces to march against the kings of the Amurru is recorded by Ashurbanipal.^[5] Yauta is said to have "roused the people of Arabia to revolt with him."^{[5][31]} His wife, Adiya, is the only woman mentioned in Assyrian inscriptions as both a Qedarite queen and the wife of a Qedarite king, and is thought to be the only woman who was not a ruler in her own right.^[28] The inscriptions record how Adiya was sent by Yauta to accompany Ammuladi and the Qedarite forces, and their subsequent defeat and capture in 604 BC by the forces of Kamushaltu, king of Moab and a loyal vassal of the Assyrian empire.^{[28][32]} Yauta is said to have "fled to the Nabataeans."^[31] His subsequent capture and sentencing in Nineveh are recorded by Ashurbanipal who relates that, "I put a dog chain upon him and made him guard a kennel."^[5] Abiyate was appointed as Yauta's successor, and soon joined with the Nabataeans to revolt against Assyria again, prompting Ashurbanipal to launch a three-month campaign to end it, beginning in Palmyra, continuing on to Damascus and ending in the southern part of al-Leja.^{[31][33]}

Old South Arabic and Aramaic inscriptions

Old South Arabic inscriptions mention *qdrn* ("Qadirān" or "Qadrān") as a person or people.^[5] Graffiti found in al-Ula, known as the Graffito of Niran at Dedan, mentions Gashmu I, son of Shahr I, as King of Qedar.^[35]

A "king of Qedar" is also mentioned in a late 5th century BC Aramaic inscription on a silver vessel found at Tell Maskhuta in the eastern Nile Delta in lower Egypt.^[36] The inscription names him as "Qainū son of Gashmu," with the vessel described as an, "offering to han-'Ilāt".^{[2][36]}

While it does not specifically mention the Qedar and is therefore a subject of debate, an Aramaic inscription dating to 5th century BC discovered on an incense altar at Lachish and dedicated to, "Tyas, son of Mahaly, the king," is interpreted by André Lemaire as a possible reference to kings of Qedar.^[37]

Classical Antiquity

Herodotus has documented that the Qedarites were called upon to assist Cambyses II of the Persian empire in his invasion of Egypt in 525 BC.^{[12][33]} The Qedarites and Nabataeans were known to enjoy close relations, even engaging as wartime allies against the Assyrians.^[38] It is possible that the Qedarites were eventually incorporated into the Nabataean state which emerged as the strongest Ishmaelite presence in northwestern Arabia c. the 2nd century AD.^[38] In *The Cambridge Ancient History*, some of the (*Arab*) *Nabataeans* mentioned by Diodorus in his retelling of events that took place in 312 BC are said to be Qedarites.^[39]

Pliny the Elder (23–79 AD), who refers to the *Cedrei* and *Cedareni* ("Cedarenes") in the context of other Arabian tribes, placing their domain to the south of the *Conchlei* and adjacent to that of the *Nabataei*, is thought to be referring to the Qedar.^{[10][40]} Jerome (c. 357–420 AD), also writing in Latin, transcribes Qedar as *Cedar*, and refers to it as a region.^[41] In one entry, he describes it as, "a region of the Saracens, who are called Ishmaelites in scripture"; in another, he writes that it was a "once uninhabitable region across Saracen Arabia"; and in a third, he writes that it is a "deserted region of the Ishmaelites, whom they now call Saracens."^[41] According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, Theodoret (c. 393 – c. 457) mentions that in his time, the Qedar lived near Babylon.^[42]

19th century

There are brief references to the Qedar in the writings of Western travellers to the Levant in the 19th century. Drawing on biblical motifs, comparisons are made between the Bedouins and the Qedar. For example, Albert Augustus Isaacs describes the imposing spectacle of a Bedouin encampment on a plain upon which, "the black tents of Kedar were spread far and wide."^[43] An earlier account by Charles Boileau Elliot describes the Arabs as falling into two main groups, Fellahs and Bedouins, and identifies the latter with Ishmael and the Qedar as follows:

[...] the Bedouins still retain the wandering habits of their father Ishmael; their 'hand is against every man, and every man's hand is against' them; the wild desert is their home; the ground their pallet and their canopy the sky; or, if luxurious their choicest place of sojourn is a little tent 'black as the tents of Kedar' their progenitor [...]^[44]

Names and approximate dates for rulers of NW Arabia, Qedar, and Dedan

Name	Years of reign	Alt spellings	Notes
Gindibu, of Arabia ^[34]	c. 870–850		First mention of "Arabs" in Assyrian texts. Not explicitly associated with Qedar.
Queen Zabibe of Arabia and Qedar ^[34]	c. 750–735 BC	Zabiba	First monarch explicitly associated with Qedar in Assyrian texts.
Queen Samsi of Arabia ^[34]	c. 735–710 BC	Shamsi, Samsil	
Queen Yatie of Arabia ^[34]	c. 710–695 BC	Iati'e, Yatie	
Queen Te'elkhunu of Arabia ^[34]	c. 695–690 BC	Te'elhunu	
Hazael, King of Qedar ^[34]	690–676 BC	Hazail, Khaza'il	
Tabua ^[29]	?		Appointed queen by Esarhaddon.
Yauta, son of Hazael (ibn Hazael), King of Qedar ^[34]	676–652 BC	'Iauta, Iata, Uaite or Yawthi'i ^[b]	
Abiyate, son of Teri (ibn Teri), King of Qedar ^[34]	652–644 BC	Abyate	
Mati-il, King of Dedan ^[34]	c. 580–565 BC		
Kabaril, son of Mati-il (ibn Mati-il) King of Dedan ^[34]	c. 565–550 BC		
Nabonidus, King of Babylon ^[34]	c. 550–540		Ruled from Tayma
Mahlay, King (of Qedar?) ^[34]	c. 510–490	Mahaly	Mentioned in Lachish inscription.
Iyas, son of Mahlay	c. 490–470		Also named in Lachish inscription.
Shahr I, King of Qedar ^[34]	c. 470–450 BC	Shahru	
Gashmu I, son of Shahr (ben Shahr), King of Qedar ^[34]	c. 450–430 BC	Geshem	
Qainu, son of Gehsem (bar Geshem), King of Qedar ^[34]	c. 430–410 BC	Kaynau, Qaynu	

Charles Forster identifies the Arab tribe of the Beni Harb as the modern descendants of the Kedar.^[45] He proposes that Beni Harb ("sons of war") is a patronym and nom de guerre that was adopted by the tribe at least 2,000 years ago, replacing Kedar as the national moniker.^[45]

Biblical



Hagar and Ishmael in the Wilderness, painting by Karel Dujardin

The descendants of Abraham and Hagar are called Ishmaelites, after Ishmael, their firstborn, and the Qedarites are named for his second son, Qedar.^[46] The Bible refers to both the Qedarites and Qedar frequently.^[3] Old Testament references include Genesis (25:13), Isaiah (21:16-17, 42:11, 60:7), Jeremiah (2:10, 49:28-33), Ezekiel (27:21), and Chronicles (1:29).^[12] Twice, Qedar is used to refer to the actual son of Ishmael, as in the books of Genesis and Chronicles, while remaining references are to his descendants, referring either to his most prominent North Arabian sons, or to the Arabs and Bedouins as a more general collective.^[47] The "tents of Kedar" equated with "the peace-hating Meshech" mentioned in the Book of Psalms (120:5) were likely a Qedarite sub-group.^[47]

In Canticles (1:5), the tents of the Qedarites are described as black: "Black I am, but beautiful, ye daughters of Jerusalem / As tents of Qedar, as tentcloth of Salam black."^{[47][48]} Their tents are said to be made of black goat hair.^[3] A tribe of Salam was located just south of the Nabateans in Madain Salih, and Knauf proposed that the

Qedarites mentioned in this Masoretic text were in fact Nabataeans and played a crucial role in the spice trade in the 3rd century BC.^[48]

Biblical descriptions indicate there were two major types of Qedarites: nomads (Arabic: *wabariya*) living in tents and sedentary people (Arabic: *ḥaḍariya*) living in villages.^[5] Jeremiah describes them as "a nation at ease, that dwells securely" (49:31) and notes that they engage in the pagan practice of shaving their temples.^{[3][5]} Isaiah recalls their warrior activities and skill with the bow. (21:16f) ^[5] Ezekiel associates, "Arabia and all the princes of Kedar," and indicates that they engaged in sheep/goat trading with the Phoenicians.^{[5][47]} The three books list the flocks of the Qedarites as including lambs, rams, goats and camels.^[5]

Jeremiah also tells of a campaign by Nebuchadnezzar (630–562 BC) against the Qedarites during the Babylonian period.^[33] Gashmu, the king of the Qedarites mentioned in the 5th century BC Aramaic inscription described above, is also referred to as "Geshem the Arab" or "Geshem the Arabian" by Nehemiah who lists him as one of his adversaries, since Gashmu stands opposed to Nehemiah's governorship over Judea in 447 BC.^{[5][33][49]}

Culture and society

Biblical and extrabiblical evidence suggests that of the Arabian tribes, the Qedarites were most prominent in their contacts with the world outside of Arabia.^[50] Like other nomadic groups, they lived primarily in unfortified encampments.^[51] Pastoralists and traders in livestock, such as male lambs, rams and goats, they also played a key role in the prosperity of Gaza's incense trade, controlling traffic in the desert regions between Egypt and Palestine.^{[16][50]} As a result of their trading activities, there were clans from among the Qedarites that became wealthy.^[52]

Though they were vassals under Assyrian rule and were often engaged in rebellion against that empire, the rise to dominance of the Persian empire proved beneficial to the Qedarites.^[52] Qedarite control of the trade routes and the access they afforded the Persians translated into what Herodotus described as a friendly relationship.^[c]

Language

The Qedarites are among a number of North Arabian tribes whose interactions with Aramean tribes beginning in the 8th century BC resulted in cultural exchanges between these two large Semitic groups.^[53] Early Arab tribal groups like the Qedarites spoke early Arab dialects, but as the Arabic alphabet had not yet been developed, they used the Aramaic alphabet to write.^{[53][54]} "The tongue of Kedar" is used in rabbinical sources as a name for the Arabic language.^[55]

Papponymy, the practice of naming boys after their grandfathers, was common among the Qedar.^[56] Some Qedarites had Aramaic personal names (e.g. Hazael or *Haza-el*), while others had Arabic personal names (e.g. Gashmu and Zabibe).^{[54][57]} Aramaic civilization and its peoples were gradually absorbed by the Arabs with Arabic dialects in Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Iraq in particular exhibiting the influence of Aramaic.^[53]

Religion

Religious worship among the Qedar, as was the case for most of the inhabitants of Arabia until the 7th century AD, was centered around a polytheistic system in which women rose to prominence. Divine images of the gods and goddesses worshipped by Qedarite Arabs, as noted in Assyrian inscriptions, included representations of Atarsamain, Nuha, Ruda, Daa, Abirillu, and Atarquruma. The female guardian of these idols, usually the reigning queen, served as a priestess (*apkallatu*, in Assyrian texts) who communed with the other world.^[58] As mentioned above, there is also evidence that the Qedar worshipped Al-lāt, to whom the inscription on a silver bowl from a king of Qedar is dedicated.^[52] In the Babylonian Talmud, which was passed down orally for centuries before being transcribed c. 500 AD, in tractate Taanis (folio 5b), it is said that most Qedarites worshiped pagan gods.^[59]

Tomb

There is a mausoleum assigned to him in Qeydar city Zanjan Province, Iran

Genealogy

The biblical view of the late Iron Age political and cultural map describes it as a set of branching genealogies. Biblical figures three generations forward from Terah are invariably described as the



Qedarite tomb in Qeydar city

eponymous founders of different tribes and polities that interacted with the Kingdom of Judah between the 8th and 6th centuries BC. Such is the case of the Qedarite Arabs, who according to biblical tradition, are the offspring of the Abraham-Ishmael-Kedar genealogical line.^[60]

The majority of Sayyid believe they are one of the modern day descendants of Muhammad, and that they are therefore the descendants of Ishmael and his second son Qedar.^[61] Abu Ja'far al-Baqir (676–743 AD) wrote that his father Ali ibn Husayn informed him that Mohammed had said: "The first whose tongue spoke in clear Arabic was Ishmael, when he was fourteen years old."^[62] Hisham Ibn Muhammad al-Kalbi (737–819 AD) established a genealogical link between Ishmael and Mohammed using writings that drew on biblical and Palmyran sources, and the ancient oral traditions of the Arabs. His book, *Jamharat al-Nasab* ("The Abundance of Kinship"), seems to posit that the people known as "Arabs" are all descendants of Ishmael.^[63] Ibn Kathir (1301–1373) writes, "All the Arabs of the Hijaz are descendants of Nebaioth and Qedar."^[62] Medieval Jewish sources also usually identified Qedar with Arabs and/or Muslims.^{[55][64][d]} According to author and scholar Irfan Shahîd, Western scholars viewed this kind of "genealogical Ishmaelism" with suspicion, seeing it as,

[...] a late Islamic fabrication because of the confusion in Islamic times which made it such a capacious term as to include the inhabitants of the south as well as the north of the Arabian Peninsula. But shorn of this extravagance, the concept is much more modest in its denotation, and in the sober sources it applies only to certain groups among the Arabs of pre-Islamic times. Some important statements to this effect were made by Muhammed when he identified some Arabs as Ishmaelites and others as not.^[38]

Ishmaelism in this more limited definition holds that Ishmael was both an important religious figure and eponymous ancestor for some of the Arabs of western Arabia.^[38] Prominence is given in Arab genealogical accounts to the first two of Ishmael's twelve sons, Nebaioth (Arabic: نَبِيْث, *Nabīt*) and Qedar (Arabic: قَيْدَار, *Qaydār*), who are also prominently featured in the Genesis account.^[38] It is likely that they and their tribes lived in northwestern Arabia and were historically the most important of the twelve Ishamelite tribes.^[38]

In accounts tracing the ancestry of Mohammed back to Ma'ad (and from there to Adam), Arab scholars alternate, with some citing the line as through Nebaioth, others Qedar.^[65]

Footnotes

- [^]**a** The place names of Dumah and Tayma (or Tema') also happen to be the names of two of Ishamel's sons as recorded in the Bible, and Tayma was also the name of a tribe.^[66]
- [^]**b** It should be noted that in the original Akkadian, *Ú-a-a-te* is used to refer to the first names of both Yauta ibn Hazail (son of Hazael) and Uayte ben Birdadda (son of Birdadda).^[67] The latter is also sometimes referred to as *Ia-u-ta-* and in the inscriptions of Ashurbanipal, the two spellings were confused, with both written *Ú-a-a-te*.^[67] The transliteration of the original Akkadian into English is highly unstable and only some of the alternate spellings appear in this article.
- [^]**c** For example, in a love poem by Moses Ibn Ezra centering on a beautiful Muslim boy he met, he refers to him as, "a son of Qedar," another way of saying he is "Arab".^[68]
- [^]**d** Herodotus described the relationship between the Qedarites and the Persians as follows: "they did not yield the obedience of slaves to the Persians, but were united to them by friendship for having given

Cambyases passage into Egypt, which the Persians could not enter without the consent of the Arabs."^[52]

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