EGYPTIAN REFERENCES
TO THE EDOMITE DEITY QAUS

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A topographical list of Ramesses II at Karnak 1 contains four names prefixed by the consonants q and š (Nos. 7, 11, 13, 21) and one prefixed by the letters q and š (No. 8). This group of names is also inscribed in a list of Ramesses III at Medinet-Habu (Nos. 85, 89, 100, 101, 103). 2 S. Yeivin suggests 3 that these names “compounded with a prefixed q3wš” refer to “five ethnic names of five Kushite clans, each characterized by a different suffixed clan-name.” 4 In my opinion it is more likely that the words under discussion are theophorous names prefixed by the divine name šp (Qōs; Assyrian Qaus), the name of the Edomite national deity. 5 This interpretation is based on the following arguments:

(1) It is not possible to indentify the prefix q-š/š with the ethnic name šwr since, on the one hand, this word is written in the Egyptian documents as k(w)š(w) and, on the other hand, the West-Semitic consonant š is not normally represented in Egyptian literature as q. 6 The Egyptian š usually represents š or ʾ, but it may also represent the West-Semitic consonant

4 Ibid., p. 177.
5 On Qos-Qaus see Th. C. Vriezen, Oudtestamentische Studiën, XIV (1965), 331-353.
6 Yeivin tries to explain this difficulty by assuming that “the different signs may even have been used intentionally to differentiate between this Asiatic šwr and the Kush of Egyptian texts, namely (originally), the southern part of Nubia,” Yeivin, op. cit., p. 177.
Yeivin bases his interpretation on the assumption of a similarity between \(q3\text{w}s3n\text{rwm}\) (according to Yeivin’s transcription of Ramesses II, No. 13; Ramesses III, No. 89) and “Cushan (Rishathaim, the King of) Aram (Naharaim),” saying: “The biblical parallel . . . makes it quite clear that, in spite of the consistent use of \(q\) and \(s\) in the prefix, the latter is most probably to be transcribed as \(\text{wnc} (=\text{Kush}).\)” Unfortunately, the Biblical “Cushan Rishathaim” is still enigmatic and subject to an abundance of old and modern interpretations. Moreover, it is very doubtful whether one should read \(\text{Nor}a\) and not \(\text{Nrc}n\). As Yeivin himself says: “it would be highly surprising to find Aramean admixtures thus far in the SW, especially at this early date.”

(2) Seir, that is Edom (Gn 36), is mentioned in the inscriptions of Ramesses II and Ramesses III, and there is clear

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7 See Helck, *op. cit.*, pp. 568 (Nos. 189, 192), 569 (No. 209), 590, 591. We have no explanation for the variants qa, qu(q3w), and qi (cf. the Assyrian Qauš). However, there is nothing in this to refute my argument. The “syllabic orthography” used by the Egyptians for foreign words and names is still a subject of controversy. See lately K. A. Kitchen, *BiOr*, XXVI (1969), 198-202.

8 Yeivin, *op. cit.*, p. 177.


10 Yeivin, *op. cit.*, p. 177, n. 19. Since the assumed parallel of \(q3\text{w}s3n\text{rwm}\) with \(\text{Nrc}m\) or \(\text{Nrc}\) is used by Yeivin as a starting point for establishing the identity of Qauš with \(\text{wnc}\) we are not convinced that “it makes little difference whether we read this name as \(\text{Nrc}m\) or \(\text{Nrc}\)” Yeivin, *op. cit.*, p. 177. “Aram” (p3’rm) is explicitly mentioned in an inscription of Amenophis III (ca. 1406-1370), see E. Edel, *Die Ortsnamenlisten aus dem Totentempel Amenophis III.*, “Bonner Biblische Beiträge,” XXV (1966), 28, 29.

"evidence for the activity of Ramesses II (or at least of his forces) in both Edom and Moab."  

Edom is explicitly mentioned in Papyrus Anastasi VI, of the late 19th Dynasty.  

Archaeological findings in Transjordan have vindicated the assumption that the Edomites were already in southern Transjordan during the reign of Ramesses II. Hence it is not surprising to find a reference to the Edomite deity in the inscriptions of Ramesses II and Ramesses III.

(3) The interpretation of the five names as representing five chiefs or clans accords with the information in the Egyptian sources, relating to the way of life and social organization of the dwellers in the land of Seir/Edom. Papyrus Harris I mentions "the people of Seir among the Bedouin tribes" and an Egyptian frontier official reports to his lord thus: "[We] have finished letting the Bedouin tribes (Ṣṣw) of Edom pass the fortress (of) Mer-ne-Ptah." It follows that "the Edomites were partly sedentary...but still nomadic enough to abandon their homes in or near Seir and seek refuge in Egypt during a severe drought...the Egyptians regarded the peoples of Seir as still essentially nomadic."

The name qaus (according to Yeivin's transcription of Ramesses II, No. 7; Ramesses III, No. 102) is a semantic equivalent of one of the chiefs mentioned in the genealogical list of Esau (Gn 36:17). The second element Ra-'a is probably equivalent to the Semitic word roeḥ, namely, evidence that Ramesses II or his forces were in south Transjordan. See infra, n. 12.

12 Kitchen, JEA, L (1964), 67.
13 J. B. Pritchard, ANET, p. 259.
14 N. Glueck, The Other Side of the Jordan (New Haven, 1940), pp. 145-149.
15 Yeivin, op. cit., p. 177.
16 ANET, p. 262.
17 Ibid., p. 259.
“shepherd, herdsman,” 20 which accords with the pastoral life of Edom.

On the basis of this evidence we may reasonably assume that the names under discussion represent Edomite chiefs or clans, 21 each one bearing a name composed of the theophoric טבּ.

To sum up: there are good reasons for considering the prefixes q-ס/ה as naming the divine deity טבּ. From Egyptian documents we may infer that the Egyptians were active in south Transjordan against Edomite tribes, which is another good reason for assuming that the five names in question are theophorous names of Edomite chiefs or clans.

20 Yeivin, op. cit., p. 177.
21 Compare with the term ‘allüp (Gn 36) which stands for clan or group. See E. A. Speiser, Genesis (New York, 1962), p. 282.