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DIVINE REVENGE IN SABAEAN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS IN LIGHT OF MUSNAD INSCRIPTIONS

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Abstract:

The study aims to highlight a major aspect of religion in South Arabia, i.e., divine revenge, which was highly important in the thought and rituals of the ancient Yemeni. It adopts a descriptive and analytical aspects of the Musnad inscriptions, primarily concentrating on the Sabaeen texts, Musnad inscriptions employed a set of vocabularies and terms denoting divine revenge using direct forms, e.g., “𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩬𐩪” take revenge, another suggesting the stages and patterns of revenge, including guidance and material revenge, and a third moral set, e.g., the base form “𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩬” denoting deprivation from divine care. Hence, Sabeen texts utilized rhetorical forms and structures for the concept and stages of divine revenge lexically and contextually, similar to the Arabic language and Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh). Additionally, the study tackled the stages of divine revenge, revenge conflicts among deities in South Arabia, the deities of administering revenge, and causes and methods of divine revenge, including the transmission of diseases and pandemics, inciting enemies, or kings. It addressed the philosophy of divine revenge, either retaliation or punishment and its impact on the improvement of human behavior in South Arabia.

1. Introduction

Religious belief had the greatest influence on material and spiritual life of the ancient Yemeni, His inscriptions clearly demonstrate how deeply he was connected and attachment to deities, which were present in all aspects of his private and public life—surrounding him and affecting everything, from his residence and movement, to his happiness and sadness, and even his health and disease. Thus, the ancient Yemeni linked his happiness in both this life and the afterlife to the satisfaction of those deities. This deeply rooted concept made the ancient Yemeni constantly alert and watchful of divine anger, the causes of divine displeasure, and the vengeance of the deities that he could not bear. Accordingly, the present significant study analyzed this human feeling and the fear of the ancient Yemeni, as expressed in his inscriptions. Based on the descriptive and analytical study of the Sabaeen inscriptions, the study aims to answer some questions that have not been previously addressed or analyzed yet about the vocabularies denoting divine revenge and their origins and implications, And what is its connotation in expressing the degree and intensity of divine anger, For example, “𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩬” take revenge, which agreed in form and meaning with the Arabic word (intqm / al-niqmah), causes of divine revenge and rage, degrees of such revenge, stages from educational

to retaliation, And what was the reflection of the stages of revenge on the concept of divinity in ancient Yemen that these stages revealed new concepts of divinity, making it as a standard for mercy and pardon more than being an expression of wrath and revenge. This contrasts with human behavior, which is often motivated by a desire for revenge. In contrast, divine conduct, through all its stages, represents a unique expression of the sacredness and sublimity of the deities.

2. Methodology

This study dealt with divine revenge and its stages in beliefs in ancient Yemen through an analytical and descriptive study of the Musnad inscriptions in general and the Sabaeen inscriptions in particular, with comparisons to some Minaean and Qatabanian inscriptions.

3. Results

The study highlights the importance of the Musnad inscriptions as primary sources for reconstructing the history and philosophy of divine revenge among the ancient Yemenis, particularly the Sabaeans, especially given that the authors of these inscriptions were direct witnesses to the

events they documented. Sabaeen inscriptions involved rich vocabulary with various meanings and indications of the concept and stages of divine revenge, such as explicit, e.g., the verb “*nqm*”, implicit ones indicating the earliest stages of revenge, and a third type with emotional significance highlighting mental revenge. In total, they indicated divine ability and revenge. The reasons for divine revenge in the texts showed the ancient Yemenis’ inner essence and complete trust in deities and their absolute divine justice. Inscriptions highlighted three successive or mutual stages of divine revenge in ancient Yemeni beliefs. The first was warning punishments, which were intended to warn humans against violating the prohibitions of the gods by imposing minor or severe punishments. Their purpose was to return the guilty to the right paths with mercy and without inflicting divine oppression. Grace was the second stage of divine revenge, which was an indefinite period whose goal was for the guilty person to remember their sins and hasten to repent. Its goal was not to be a period of temptation toward destruction and divine revenge. The 3rd stage of revenge was the most severe. Gods inflicted people with various forms of punishment, including diseases, epidemics, famines, volcanoes, or the destruction of homes. This stage aimed to get rid of the evils of humans. Its goal was to be a strong warning to return and repent of sins, as clear proof of the sublimity and elevation of deities from the total destruction of people. Sabaeen inscriptions highlighted that Sabaeen deities (especially Almaqah) inflicted revenge on the enemies of the state and the rebellious peoples, such as burning, captivity, killing, siege...etc. Rather, revenge, including humiliating gods, was one of the cruelest types of revenge that befall rebellious peoples. Hastening to repent, offering atonement, confessing sins, and pledging not to repeat them was the way to ward off divine vengeance. It was also a way to calm the anger and revenge of the gods. The study points to the urgent need for further archaeological excavations, as many aspects of the concept of divine punishment, such as divine revenge in the afterlife, remain unclear. Moreover, numerous features of ancient Yemeni civilization are still unknown and have not received adequate scholarly attention.

4. Discussion

4.1. Revenge: lexically and contextually

Lexically, *alintiḡām* “revenge” is derived from “to take revenge”, denoting denial and criticism of something. It is sometimes said, “*Lam arḡa minhu ḡttā naqamtu wantaqamtu*”, i.e. I was not satisfied until taking revenge; *alniḡmtu* “revenge” means punishment; *intaḡam Allhu minhu* means Allah punished him; *naqamtu wnaḡimtu* means I severely hated something [1], and imply the infliction of punishment with hatred and indignation or depriving blessing by torment [2]. Similar to the concept of revenge in Arabic, revenge in the beliefs of South Arabia expressed the relation between deity and people. Musnad inscriptions extensively expressed revenge directly or indirectly to denote the divine will and ability that could take revenge whenever and however choo-

ses. Such rich vocabulary expressed, using eloquent rhetorical forms, divine revenge and discontent, as well as its degrees and manifestations, which sometimes align with the concept of divine revenge in Islam, as demonstrated in the following examples: *) 𐩦𐩣𐩪 *nqm*. v, i.e., punish, take reprisals on; present 𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩦 *yhqm*, i.e., avenge; imperative 𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩦𐩦 *yhnm* to take revenge [3]; n. *nqm*, i.e., vengeance, reprisals [3]. It appeared in Aramaic lexis in the field *nqm* to avenge or take revenge. Additionally, the people of al-Shiḥr used to say “*nqmt*”, suggesting a misfortune or evil that befalls someone. The infinitive *nqmm* was used to indicate a deity or mountain [4]. Its examples appeared in the Minaic Inscriptions, e.g., (Haram 12/1) [5] and the Qatabanic Inscriptions as a part of the proper nouns (CIAS 95.11/ o2n°2/ 4) [6]. In the Sabaeen language, it expressed the highest degrees of divine rage. Furthermore, it appeared in contexts (Ja 574/12-13, CIAS 39.11/ o 2 n° 2/8-9, Ir18/10, Ja 576+Ja 577/3) related to a set of verbs “ 𐩦𐩣𐩪 *s²kr*”, i.e., crush/break/vanquish, “ 𐩦𐩣𐩪 *qtl*”, i.e., killed, and “ 𐩦𐩣𐩪 *tl*”, i.e., destroyed to complete the idea and manifestations of revenge and denote the divine anger and discontent related to revenge. *) 𐩦𐩣𐩪 *ṭʿr*. v, i.e., exact revenge on; n. “*ṭʿr*” blood-revenge [3], pl. (𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩦 *ṭʿr*) [7]. It took the same meaning in inscriptions (Ja 725/7-8- CIH 344/7). *) 𐩦𐩣𐩪 *ḡdr*, v. means bring to account, exact reprisals on [3] or take revenge from someone as (𐩦𐩣𐩪𐩦) in the inscription (CIH308/22) [8], add to it is L of reasoning, i.e., and to take revenge from and the inscription (Ja601/7-8). *) 𐩦𐩣𐩪 *nkr*. v, i.e., afflict, punish; n. *tnkr*, i.e., affliction, suffering from malady [3]. It was used with these meanings indicating divine punishment and revenge in the (Ir 9/ 5- CIH 81/6) inscription. Its examples appeared in the Minaic and Qatabanic Inscriptions(A-20-850/3- RES 4337A/24- RES 4337B/21- CIAS47.82/j1/7) [9] *) 𐩦𐩣𐩪 *V. Lsq*, i.e., hunt down (deity) [3]. It took the same meaning in the Minaic Inscriptions *) (al-Jawf04.23A/4) [10] and Qatabanic Inscriptions (RES 3854/8-9) [11].

4.2. Stages and degrees of divine revenge

Musnad inscriptions highlighted fear and hopefulness among the people of South Arabia as the most significant causes of life. Their hopefulness was uninterrupted in deities, as they always sought from her satisfaction and happiness in this life and the hereafter. On the other hand, they were full of fear of their deities’ anger, indignation, as well as severe punishment, causing eternal misery in life and the hereafter. This well-rooted feeling made them link their calamities and disasters and their mistakes. That is, anything that triggers deities’ anger is a sin, causing divine punishment and revenge. This concept of the divine power denoted another aspect of the ancient Yemeni’s confidence of the ultimate divine justice, as their deities were universal powers that did not commit mistakes or punish but due to a sin by common people of the royal family, not for personal desire or characteristics, as perceived in the beliefs of contemporary cultures, e.g., Mesopotamia^(a) [12]. Divine justice was always related to human sins by common people or kings. Studying Sabaeen inscriptions showed that deities did not afflict revenge on

4.2.1. Warning punishments

፳፻፲፱ | ክፍለታ | ህዋሳ | ፳፻፲፱ | ወህዋሳ | ፲፱

$$^8 l \text{ hwfyhmw ffg } ^9 r \text{ s}^2 \text{ rghmw bdt 'n whr } ^{10} \text{ fn}$$

mentioned (probably was a small financial **fine**). It confirmed that the punishment that resulted in the god's anger was a guiding punishment to the worshiper to gain satisfaction and not to commit this sin again. Inscription (CIH 547/8-10) reveals that the punishment inflicted by the god Halfan on the clan 'itr was a guiding one so that they would not delay the time of his sacred hunting again beyond its time. It seems that their mistake was unintentional, as illustrated by the verb "ወከከዎ *wns' t' w'*", i.e., delayed or postponed [5,16].

The author argues that this verb may mean forgetting about something. Accordingly, the meaning of line 7 is “and they forgot to hunt for *d-’itr*.” which agrees with the punishment that God Halfan inflicted on them, i.e., water scarcity, as water in their canals decreased [16], but God did not take revenge on them withholding water totally. The text reads [5,16] “⁸*𐤔𐤕𐤓 | 𐤌𐤖𐤑𐤍𐤏𐤗 | 𐤇𐤎𐤊𐤚𐤋 | 𐤆𐤁𐤒𐤈𐤙 | 𐤉𐤕𐤂𐤀𐤃.*, “⁸I hwfyhmw ffg ⁹r sʳghmw bdt n whr ¹⁰fñ”, i.e., “And (God) did not grant them water) that would overflow their canals (with the rains) of spring and summer.” Using the verb “wfy” in the previous text means granting or giving someone something. It was mentioned in the text in the negative form to mean “they were not granted”. Comparison reveals that when the writer wanted to express drought in the Sabaeen inscriptions, he used the verb “*hhb*”, which means “to withhold or retain rain” (J 735/5) [3] or the noun (*hhby/hhbtm*) (GI14441/3,5 [17]- Ir 24/3) [18]), meaning drought or retention of rain [3] or the verb “*s¹qy*” in the negative form to mean lack of watering [3], indicating that god employed the scarcity of water as a punishment and guidance against Dhu Athtar so that they did not commit such a crime again.

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retaliatory punishments (diseases, epidemics, drought, etc^(b)). Sometimes, punishments were not mentioned (as previously mentioned in the guidance punishment). In contrast, most texts mentioned strict material punishments in the form of divine documents and laws and other human laws under divine care enacted to regulate specific matters related to deities or society. Such laws regulated the rules intended to be implemented and the punishment for violating or not implementing them. Additionally, punishments included in the divine laws and commands were mostly limited to financial fines, beatings, flogging, etc. They indicated guidance and reform and did not reach complete indignation against their worshippers, which had to coincide with the degree and severity of punishment through human powers. These punishments were carried out by the ruling authority or the priest according to the sin or offense, as well as its type and place. Here, we give some examples to indicate the type of punishment contained in Sabaeen inscriptions with divine commands and laws. For instance, the inscription (Haram 13= CIH 548/3-7,10-15) indicates the prohibition of entering the temple of the god Halfan, especially on the feast, with an impure weapon stained with blood (blood was impure in the ancient Yemeni belief). The laws of this temple involved a financial fine if the visitor violated the limits and prohibitions therein. Notwithstanding, the fine increased according to the crime and sin. If a visitor had a weapon, the penalty would be five coins only. If the weapon and clothes were impure, the legislator doubled the financial penalty. The text reads [5]: “³lyngs'n s'lhhw wdmwm bs² y'hw (l) y(z)l'n l'lt ttr⁵ w'rs²wnn 's²r hy'lym w⁶ hm lm ydmw lyz(l')n hm⁷ s' hy'lym” i.e.,³” (as) his weapon becomes impure (and there is) ⁴blood on his clothes shall pay a fine to those of ttr, ⁵and to the priests ten hy'l-coins, and if ⁶he did not spill blood, [he shall] pay the fine of five hy'l-coins.” Note that the financial fines were doubled in the case of violations and sins (in the inscription). For instance, a sinner had to offer food, milk, honey, and palm hearts. He also had to offer a bull and perform the pilgrimage ritual for ten years because his actions disturbed the peace of the temple and the worship therein, and he would be violating the sanctity of this sacred place [5]. The inscription (Robin/al- Mašamayn1/11-13) indicated the punishment of flogging against those who disobeyed the commands of goddesses, such as bathing in the sacred pool in the temple of Nawšum. without permission. A sinner, in this case, was flogged fifty lashes in the same place of the violation. The text reads [19]

ṢḤḤḤ|ḤḤḤḤṢḤ|ḤḤḤ|ḤḤḤḤḤḤ¹¹ ḤḤḤḤḤḤ|ḤḤḤḤ¹²

¹¹ wḡyrhḡ bhw lys' bṭn ḡms' y¹² s'ḡṭm bmqmnn”, i.e.,

“and the one who washes in it is to be flogged fifty¹² in the same place.” The inscription (Nāmī NN7/12-13) highlighted the punishment of flogging and a fine for transgressors of the etiquette of visiting the temple of the goddess Dhat-Badan [20,21]. Some Sabaeen inscriptions highlighted the punishment of stealing from temples, ranging from a financial fine, as in inscription (CIH522(BM 102457)/4) [22] to murder, as in inscription (CIH 972=RES 3247/1), indicating

that murder was the divine punishment for anyone who dared to transgress and steal the temple of the god Sumou (the short name of Dhū Sa-mawi) [23]. This preview of the divine commands and laws shows that punishments indicated two things. *Firstly*, legislated punishments were limited to financial fines or floggings. *Secondly*, they were enacted as a sophisticated form of divine discipline to deter and warn those tempted to violate them. However, the inscriptions highlighted harsh punishments, such as murder, execution, or amputation of the hand, denoting divine wrath. These divine punishments were only mentioned in a few instances. The author argued that such scarcity was due to two reasons. *) clerics desired to show their deities in a sublime and transcendent form, who could avenge their rights when they wished to do so, but accompanied by endless forgiveness, and that when they wanted revenge, they did so in more harsh ways using divine soldiers, such as diseases (as highlighted later) not worldly authorities. *) reviewing the texts on severe punishments, such as murder, revealed that this punishment was prescribed in part for those who attempted to steal the temples of the gods, as in the inscription (RES 3247= CIH 972). In contrast, the punishment for theft was in other texts a financial fine and the return of the stolen item, e.g., inscription (CIH 612= CIH 522), or the return of the stolen item only without a financial fine (CIH 30/5^(c)), or not mentioning the nature of punishment and revenge (CIH398/11). Was divine punishment and revenge enforced due to the specific nature of each deity? Was theft for Dhū Samawi something that could not be tolerated and was punished by death? Was it taken less and punished differently by other gods? Theft was unacceptable to most gods, whose temples were homes for them and their worshippers. How could they not preserve and defend them? It could be argued that the general rule for all deities was to establish rules to preserve the sanctity of their temples and the etiquette of visiting them and performing rituals. Violating such rules was not common among ancient Yemeni because they considered the temples' sanctity and prestige. Thus, there was no urgent need to establish strict divine laws to protect temples from theft. Some laws, such as those mentioned in the inscription (RES 3247=CIH 972/4), could be discussed that Dhū Samawi was prompted to do so due to the frequent attacks on his temple, probably due to wars, famines, or drought at certain periods. In inscription (CIH522 (BM 102457)/4), this god's punishment was limited to a fine and returning the stolen item to a temple. Punishment also included the amputation of the hand that Nawšum dedicated to grazing on the lands of the god “T'lb Rym” during drought (MAFRAY-al- 'Adan 10+11+12/12-13) [24]. In sum, physical retaliation punishments from the gods, such as killing and amputation of the hand, were not the same. Most were applied because of specific circumstances and reasons.

4.2.2. Grace period and luring

Grace is the second stage of divine revenge before the final form of revenge. Sabaeen inscriptions indicated that this stage included salvation and destruction; salvation for the one who repented from the transgressions committed against god as the path to salvation and divine satisfaction, or des-

13 (ፀ)ሃጥፋኩ፣ ማጥጥጥ፣ ማሰጥ፣ ፀዕዳ፣ ፈጣ 12 ሄ 11
 .(ካ)ፈኒሂ ጥፋ፣ ማጥጥጥ፣ ፀሃጥ፣ ሃጥ፣

⁴¹the city of ¹Sana'a in a torn dress so she was punished by Almaqah and He imposed on her a punishment for two years." Analyzing the text revealed that the deity's revenge on the mother and her daughter took a long time because they committed several transgressions. First, the mother failed to fulfill a vow she had made to her deity that if the god cured her daughter of a nine-month illness, she would bring her daughter with her to his prayers, perhaps (for pilgrimage), but she did not fulfill her vow. The daughter probably accompanied her mother to another temple of Almaqah in Sana'a in a torn robe. Consequently, she aroused the wrath of the deity, so he took revenge and made the girl sick for two years, highlighting that failing to fulfill the gods' vow was one of the most severe causes of the gods' wrath^(e). It is noted that this divine revenge was bitter for two reasons. *First*, it was against the mother through her daughter (as shown in several texts, such as the inscription (CIH 504/1-6) [27]). It included two types of torture, sick for the daughter and revenge from the mother. It was a severe psychological and material revenge, especially with reference to the love of parents for their children. Yemeni society was most keen on reproduction and offspring, as shown in the inscriptions and vows. *Second*, revenge lasted for two years. It indicated the mother's lack of submission and confession of her sin to the deity, which lasted for a long period and denoted the god's revenge and hatred for the actions of the mother and daughter.

criptions, either religious or literary, indicated severe fear among the inhabitants of ancient Yemen of the deadly effects of those phenomena, such as drought and famine, that afflicted the areas subjected to thirst and drought. Although literary texts were rare, the discovered texts might be called religious literature in ancient Yemen and took the form of two poems or hymns, each of which was supplications for rain and seeking divine help in order to relieve the drought and thirst that afflicted them [28]. Sabaean confession, atonement, and war inscriptions included several examples of seeking divine help against drought and giving them safe rains and floods. Although gods kept people from drought and gave them floods, they caused them drought and rare rains as the most important means to take revenge on sinners. This type of revenge was not directed at humans as a result of individual sins and transgressions but was a result of collective sins. It affected all, including the royal class. For instance, the inscription (MB 2002 1-28) indicated the supplication of the king of Saba' and dū-Raydān *Ns²'krb Y'mn Yrḥb* and all people from Saba' and Fayshān, and the inhabitants of the valleys to the god Almaqah to reduce his revenge. The text reads [29]:

⁵ ⁶ *r*ḥm̄ 'l s'qyhm̄w qdm brq ḍt' ḍhr̄f Ns² 7 [k]rb bn
M'dkrb bn Fḍh̄n t̄nyn w's'm q⁸ [l]mtm w'rbym ḍkw̄n
b'rḍthmw", i.e.,

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“⁵ldt hmr ‘bdhw⁶ S²rhs’md bn Yt’r w’lfm nqm w⁷ tws³’
 dhr-ghw b’br mr’hw “, i.e.,

“⁵ Because he granted his servant ⁶ S²rhs’md, of the family Yt’r and ‘lfm revenge⁷ and defeat of the accused one before his master”. Perhaps these wishes and supplications were nothing but a kind of curse, as they sought the help of divine power to expel and curse those enemies who attacked them. They were one of the most severe types of divine revenge. Cursing meant expulsion from the mercy of the god, and expulsion agreed with the power of the most powerful gods that they sought help from. This definition probably depicted that type of revenge when concluding that most invocations were directed at Almaqah and ‘Attar, the most powerful Sabaeen gods. Furthermore, these curses were a way to intimidate enemies, denoting the inability of the owners of these texts to avoid the evil of their enemies. Thus, the Sabaeans established their tombs and gravestones with examples of these curses, seeking the protection of the god ‘Attar, so that they and their possessions would not be tampered with, as they could not defend them in the case of death. The latter form of curses appeared in many texts, such as the inscriptions (CIH 419, CIH 420, CIH 442, CIH 443, and CIH 452) [31] that contained the word “○]ϕ qm” to describe punishment by the god ‘Attar against anyone who vandalized the tombs under his protection, whether by expulsion (*thw*), deterrence and suppression (*qm*), or stalking and tracking (*lšq*) (DJE 10/3-4) [32]. Second: Retaliatory revenge against the enemies of the state: Southern Arabia had many wars with various goals and causes, from expansion and glory to defensive and vengeful reasons. Generally, they constantly endeavored to give their campaigns and wars a religious form. Belief played a key role in consolidating the foundations of rule in ancient Yemen. For example, the kings of Sheba fought and concluded alliances under the umbrella of religion and divine commands. Thus, their lands and alliances belonged to the god Almaqah primarily, the king, and then the Sabaeen people, known as the Sabaeen unity or tribal union. This alliance linked the state with a single bond, and any transgression or rebellion was against Almaqah. Sabaeen inscriptions showed various forms of revenge against the enemies of the state, as follows: **a) Revenge against rebellious peoples**: Rebellion against Sabaeen sovereignty was a reason for the god’s anger and revenge through the king, his representative on earth, as the tool that expressed the god’s desire and a means of expressing anger and taking revenge on those who infringed on the sanctity of his lands. The command came from the god to wage war on rebels against his authority or breaking his covenant, with divine promises, securing success, victory, good spoils, and safety. Once declaring rebellion against the sovereignty of the god, revenge was the most severe, as illustrated in the words of the Sabaeen inscriptions, e.g., (defeated- oppressed- burnt- killed- captivated- destroyed), which totally highlighted the divine wrath on such peoples and cities. For instance, the victory inscription (RES 3945) of King “Krb’l Wtr”

revealed the dominion of this king, by the commands of Almaqah and ‘Attar, over the enemies of the Sabaeen state, such as killing, burning, captivity, and destruction. In some examples of this long inscription, “And he defeated Dbhn of Qs²rm and S²rgband and burned their cities...and gave them to Almaqah and Sheba... And on the day of defeating Awsān, he killed sixteen thousand (Paragraph 4).” Another part reads, “He destroyed its fields... He destroyed Awsān (5).”, “As for the people of Awsān, he sentenced them to death and captivity (5).”, “he demolished his palace (called) Ms’wr (6).”, “took their children captive (13).”, “and took and seized all their livestock and possessions (14-15)” [29]. Analyzing these paragraphs and verbs revealed that the king’s wars on rebels against his authority and the authority of Almaqah were wars of revenge in which he employed many methods of violence, such as killing, burning cities, capturing people, and abolishing some cities. He employed other methods of intimidation, e.g., sieges, transferring the inhabitants to other cities, and settling the Sabaeans in the cities of their enemies, as was the case with Osan. He also humiliated some kings of these cities and took their children captives. Such methods appeared in many Sabaeen inscriptions^(h). **b) Revenge against the deities of the Sabaeen state’s enemies**: The revenge of Almaqah included the enemies’ deities as the ultimate revenge. It was a religious humiliation for those peoples, which was an undesirable aspect of the psychological wars and a harsh test for the clergy and deities of these cities, indicating the inability of these (defeated) divine powers. They could not protect their lands, which were viewed as the property of deities, as well as their homes and sacred places (temples), which deeply impacted those peoples, as they lost some respect for their deities who could not preserve their lands or defend themselves or their temples against the victorious gods, such as Almaqah. That revenge was achieved by demolishing the temples of the rebels against the sovereignty of the Sabaeen state and attacking their sanctities, such as the inscription (Ja 629/28-29) [7]:

ሂኒ ኦሐክ | 1ፋ | ዐፀገገዐ | ገዐፀፀ | ከኒ ገሂ²⁸
 | ጸ1ፋ²⁹ ዓሃዐ | ጸ፲፭፻፶ | ዐ፲፭ዐ | ኦፀዐዐ | ዐ፲

“²⁸ hgrn Hlzw m wgbzw kl ‘s’rrhmw wwtr wqm ‘mhrrmt
 why²⁹ kl”, i.e.,

“²⁸The Hlzw city, destroyed all valleys and demolished and suppressed temples.” Analyzing this text showed that “Drhn of the family Grfm” attacked some Awsān cities in support of the two kings S1’d²ms’m ‘s’r’ and his son Mrtdm Yhmd in their war. It illustrated that he destroyed Hlzw city and all its property, including temples. This total destruction suggested that the temples were attacked in wars with their valuable belongings, as shown also in the inscription (Ja 576) that reads: “wwtrw kl ‘b’r-hmy wqm ‘w hgrn Qrs’ “, i.e., “¹²They filled up all their wells and suppressed the city of Qrs’.” The case was not limited to destroying temples and taking their valuable belongings. The texts illustrated that some rebellious cities were forced to convert to the worship of Almaqah. Hence, the god could take revenge by imposing

religious dominance on worship to complete the political dominance of the Sabeen state. It is shown in the previous text that reads, “And that a person called S'mhyf, and (the inhabitants of) Ns²n, shall build Almaqah Temple in the center of the city of Ns²n”. When analyzing this inscription, it becomes clear that the rituals of worship of the god Almaqah, the victorious god, were imposed in the heart of the lands of Ns²n [29]. and building this temple was obligatory for the king and the people. On a similar face, it happened in the reign of Minaean King “Waqah'il Sadiq”, whose Kingdom was forbidden from establishing temples to its main deity and was forced to accept the doctrine of the temple of Wad, built in the lands of the Kingdom of Sheba. It was also forced to accept the religious and political subordination to Almaqah by performing pilgrimage. Those affiliated with the Kingdom of Sheba had to perform a pilgrimage to Almaqah in Dhu Abha. Such issues were illustrated in the decree of “T'lb Rym” (RES 4176/1) [33], in which he instructed the people of S'm'y to perform the pilgrimage to the God Almaqah in the main temple in Mrb. Such gatherings added to the political character and purpose of the pilgrimage rituals, i.e., gathering in a central temple of the kingdom or the tribal entity to demonstrate its control and authority over the tribes and political entities affiliated to the union of the kingdom, on the one hand, and to renew political loyalty annually, on the other.

4.4. Warding off divine revenge

Hastening to confess sin was the first aim of every sinner who feared the wrath of deities. The ancient Yemeni believed that there would be no revenge if there was haste in repentance, humiliation, submission to deities, and a pledge not to repeat that, as confirmed by the inscriptions that indicated the lack of divine vengeance directly after disobedience. They highlighted this aspect in several instances despite the transgression of the sanctity of deities if the guilty hastened to repent and offer atonement. Many texts indicated such issues, including the inscription (Haram 40= CIH 523) that reported several transgressions of |Ḥṛm bn Ṭwbn against his deity that were worsened by being committed in the temple of Dhū Samawī. That sinner had intercourse with a woman in the temple sanctuary during the pilgrimage period, another during the postpartum stage, and a third while she was menstruating. However, he did not wash. The text reads: “²qrb m ³r'tm bḥrm(h)w“, i.e. [5], “he had intercourse with a woman in the temple sanctuary”. In another context, it reads: “wmlt ḥyd(m)”, i.e., he had intercourse with (a menstruating woman). In a third text, it reads [5], “⁴whn bh' ly nfs'm“, i.e., he had intercourse with a postpartum woman. Analyzing these transgressions illustrated two issues. *First*, the deity Dhū Samawī forgave the sinner when hastening to repent, as was the case of most deities in Southern Arabia. The inscriptions demonstrated their forgiveness and mercy in this case. The text did not mention any type of punishment or revenge on that person. *Second*, it highlighted the mental status of the sinner after committing

a forbidden issue, including a feeling of grief, distress, and humiliation (See page. 11-12 in the paper). This feeling that overwhelmed him after worry, grief, and anticipation of the anger of God was replaced by great psychological relief because he was confident in the divine pardon and forgiveness in case of confession and offering atonement. Moreover, his fear was changed to see-king blessings and goodness from god, as seen in the text understudy [5]: “w'nw wyhl(°)n wlyṭwbn i.e., “he felt distressed and offered atonement that Dhū Samawī would bless him with grace”. In other texts, the sinner begged gods for good for himself, as well as his money, children, and livestock (YM 10703/7-8) [34,35]. Perhaps this human behavior and trust in the pardon of gods remind us of what is stated in Islam about changing sins into good deeds if the worshipper hastens to repent to Allah (Al-Furqan: 70). Hastening to repent and offering atonement was the basis for warding off revenge. It was also a way to calm the anger of the gods, ward off their revenge, and gain their satisfaction and protection. For instance, the inscription (MB 2002 1-28) illustrated that Almaqah, after taking revenge from the classes of its people, pardoned and protected them all when they realized their mistake, pledged not to return to those sins again, and offered atonement. It mentions: “³⁵fšry 'bdhw (...the name and title of the king, the name of his father, and their people) ³⁸bn rgm wfqd wglyt ³⁹lbhw b'lmqh”, i.e., “Let him protect his servant (the name and title of the king and the name of his father and their people) ³⁸from oppression, impatience, and anger ³⁹of Almaqah.

5. Conclusion

This study has revealed the extent to which divine revenge permeated the religious doctrine of ancient Yemen, particularly within Sabaeen beliefs, and its deep interconnection with the intellectual and behavioural framework of the ancient Yemeni people, as reflected in the Musnad inscriptions, especially the Sabaeen texts. Divine revenge was not merely a punitive act but a complex religious phenomenon with educational, psychological, and spiritual dimensions, indicating an advanced and sophisticated conception of divinity in the Sabaeen consciousness. The study further showed that the Sabaeans did not perceive divine revenge as an immediate and constant punishment but rather as a gradual process aimed at reforming human behaviour, achieving divine justice, and preserving the moral and religious order. Moreover, the inscriptions clarified that certain deities most notably Almaqah and Dhū-Samawī played a central role in inflicting divine revenge, whether upon individuals, groups, or even the deities of rebellious cities. This clearly reflects the dominance of Sabaeen religious beliefs over the intellectual and cultural life in ancient Yemen and highlights the political and religious sovereignty of the Kingdom of Saba' across the entirety of ancient Yemen. The findings of this study affirm the critical importance of the Musnad inscriptions as primary sources for reconstructing the ancient Yemeni conception of the relationship between humans and the divine. At the same time, they call for continued archaeological research and excavation to uncover additional texts that may broaden our understanding of religious thought in South Arabia, particularly concerning the concepts of justice, punishment, and mercy within the divine context.

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Endnotes

- (a) The myths of Mesmotopia, e.g., the flood, illustrated that divine justice was criticized, even by gods themselves, as shown in the speech of goddess Aya, suggesting that the flood was an unjust and foolish action. Concerning people, the ancient Iraqi did not find nor feel divine justice in the decision of Anlil to destroy all by flood.
- (b) See the paper pp. 175-177.
- (c) CIH I, 49.
- (d) Albert Jamme's translation of the inscription highlighted that the owner of the inscription caused seduction and incitement to illegal acts, as well as not giving water to animals. In contrast, Atboush argued that Almaqah's revenge was on a priest called Thob-il because he did not prepare his water bowls (water supply) in the middle of the sacred storeroom (Abtoush, 65-66).
- (e) Compare: Gr 137/ 12-15, CAIS 39.11/03 n^o 6/12-13.
- (f) For texts on qmlmtm, see CIH 352/17-CIH74/ - Cullen 2/11- FB-al-Bayda1/21- Ja 567/27-Ja 610/9-MB 2002-1-28/8.
- (g) Compare between these Inscriptions: (Ja 567/7- Ir24/3)-(MŞ1/11, Ja 610/8, FB-al-Baydā' 1/21)
- (h) Compare: (Ja 576, Ja 629, Ja 601)

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