ḤORVAT QITMIT: A NEW LIGHT ON EDOMITE RELIGION

THE STRIKING FIND OF AN EDOMITE CULT PLACE IN THE NEGEV DESERT

Hedwig Oldenkamp
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Hedwig Oldenkamp, s1110756

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Prof. Dr. J. Zangenberg

Specialization: Archaeology of the Near East

Leiden University, Faculty of Archaeology

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Contact:

Email: hedwig.oldenkamp92@gmail.com

Phone: +316 346 808 43
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1. Introduction

Although there has been a lot of disagreement and conflict within the religion, Christianity has played a major part in history. Especially in the Western world where Christian faith got sturdy foothold since about the 11th century its influence is visible, for example in scientific developments. For a long time science was seen as heresy and it is not surprising that even after it became “acceptable” to conduct scientific research, the Church (as institute) wanted to influence the course taken. Archaeology is one of the sciences that has been influenced to a large extend by Christianity, in particular the archaeology of the Southern Levant and it is only since a few decades that this part of the discipline took its independent path.

Until the 18th century little interest was taken in the archaeology of the ‘Holy Land’. A metaphysical view was taken on the part of the world where the True Faith had emerged (Whiting 2007, 7). Israel and its surroundings were seen as the landscape of the Bible, as though time had stood still. Everything that happened after the Biblical narrative was excluded, the contemporary situation was not of interest (ibid., 5). Though the age of the industrial revolution brought some changes to this vision, it was not until the 19th century that a historical view was taken. This historical perception was the start of scientific research in the Southern Levant (ibid., 10).

Research was now possible in Israel and Palestine, but the Bible still stood on the base of this research; on the one hand archaeologists searched for places that could be linked to Biblical places, events or people, on the other they tried to link discoveries they made to Biblical models. Though there has been a lot of critique on this approach by later archaeologist, the result is that many sites have been identified and all those sites give us information about the history of the Near East. This may be the case, but many interpretations made in this period are biased and should not be too easily accepted as truth. A reason for this is that the largest part of the Old Testament has been written during and after the 7th century B.C.E, causing the document describing an earlier period to be influenced by the political and religious situation of that day (Holladay 1995, 368).

As a result as many sites and material cultures found in Israel, Palestine and Jordan have been named based on Biblical attestations of places and cultures as there are reliable identifications, even if there is no compelling archaeological evidence. This complicates
contemporary research, which in the last decades has become more and more detached from this Biblical approach. To date most archaeologists have fully taken on the historical approach and are weary to rely too much on the Bible.

One of these cultures named after Biblical reference is that of the Edomites. Based on attestations in the Bible this is the people that inhabited contemporary southern Jordan; the area south of the Dead Sea and east of the Wadi ‘Araba. Later they made their way into the Negev area (Edelman 1995, 2). Until some fifty years ago this culture got little attention, though some attempts to write an overview were made. There was a strong increase of interest in and research to this culture after World War II (ibid., xi), especially in the 1980s, but it seems to have decreased somewhat again. Until today there is still little known for certain about the Edomites and much information available is biased or out of date. Nelson Glueck is still seen as a pioneer in the search for the Edomites, but many of the conclusions he drew based on his findings are now, almost a hundred years later, being proven untrue (below). Bartlett, who was one of the first to write an overview of the Edomites based on the Bible and Archaeology combined, and Bienkowski, who describes the Edomite culture mostly from archaeology, are examples of researches that contributed to our knowledge of the Edomites.

Religion is one of the most complicated aspects of a society and of a people where little is known from, even less is known about their religion. Until relatively recently only a few non-datable Edomite sites that may have been religious and the building at Buseirah that may be a temple or a palace were known (Bartlett 1989, 187-9). A little over thirty years ago excavations at Horvat Qitmit started, the results of which were published in 1995. Already from the survey finds on the surface it became clear that this was most likely not a settlement site but a site with complexes used for religious practices (Beit-Arieh 1995, xv). A few years earlier excavations at Horvat ‘Uza yielded another probable temple complex. Due to the uncertainty of the date and function of many of these sites little trustworthy interpretations can be made. The only site that can give us any reliable information is Horvat Qitmit and though a publication of the site and its interpretations has appeared, no intensive comparison to the available textual sources seems to have been made. Based on the pottery the site has been dated to the Late Iron Age II; the end of the 7th to the beginning of the 6th century. The 8th – 6th century was the period during
which the Edomites flourished. The site has been quite specifically dated and it is interesting to compare the findings of that site with the textual sources, on which most of the information so far available is based.

The above has led me to the following research questions:

What can be said about the religion of the Late Iron Age II Edomites based on the site of Horvat Qitmit in the Negev?
- What is known about the Edomites?
- What has been found at Horvat Qitmit and how are these finds interpreted?
- What can textual sources contribute to archaeological interpretations of the religion of the Edomites?

Methods

My entire research on these questions has been done from literary sources. Though I would have liked to see the material found at Horvat Qitmit, it was not accessible in the Netherlands nor was it essential for the completion of this research. Critical comparison of the available literature provides enough information to answer the questions asked. After a short overview of the research history an introduction to the age of the Edomites will be given. The research history and the complications with the term ‘Edomites’ will explain to the reader the difficulties with using interpretations made in the past. The site of Horvat Qitmit will be discussed in as much detail as possible in this thesis and the interpretations made will be critically evaluated in the light of the most recent developments of looking at the archaeology of the Biblical regions. After this the available textual sources will be laid next to the case study to see if new information can be given.
2. Research history

Since the early 19th century the amount of people travelling in the area started to increase. Buckhardt’s rediscovery of Petra in 1812 made him famous, but he was also the first to give a detailed description of the land of Edom and its habitation (Bartlett 1995, 16). After Buckhardt many others travelled through this part of the world, mostly attracted by Petra. Some of them described their visit or made drawings, for example Léon de Laborde (ibid., 19), but a systematic synthesis of the history of Edom did not yet appear. In 1893 century Frants Buhl’s Geschichte der Edomiter was published and some three years later Joseph Lurry’s Geschichte der Edomiter im Biblischen Zeitalter (Edelman 1995, xi), which are both still valuable reference works today, though Semitic scholar Buhl himself had never been to Edom and his overview is completely based on Biblical information.

It was Nelson Glueck who was the first to take a less Biblical approach, though he did not doubt the existence of the Edomites in general. Spread over several trips in the early 1930s he made a survey of the whole Edomite area in about three months (Bartlett 1995, 28). The reason Glueck’s work is so pioneering is that he was the first to use pottery sherds to date the sites he encountered (Glueck 1935, 3). He placed the different types of pottery (below) in the Early or Middle Bronze, Early Iron, Nabataean and more recent. Within the Early Iron Age he made further distinctions, dividing it in two (Bartlett 1995, 29). The interpretations he made based on the earthenware lead him to the following (summarized) conclusions;

- Though not explicable by climatic changes, Edom and Moab were occupied at the same time, following more or less the same development curve. Explanations for this should be found in human factors. The inhabitants were certainly sedentary during various periods, based on the contemporary climatic possibilities, which seem to have changed little.

- In the Early Bronze Age a highly developed civilization occupied Edom (and Moab), until it disappeared completely in the 18th century BC.

- The next five centuries both Edom and Moab are completely absent. Nothing was found to indicate people inhabited the land.
- From the 13th to the 8th century the civilization of the Edomites flourished. They were advanced and engaged in trade, agriculture and industry (mining and smelting). They built fortifications, which could not prevent their downfall through political and physical quarrels with neighboring people at the end of the eight century BC.

- From relatively the 8th century BC until the Nabateans there is another occupation gap in Edom. These Nabateans adopted the way of living the Edomites had (Glueck 1935, 137-40).

Now, close to a hundred years later, the picture is very different. First, we know now that there certainly were people in the area between the 18th and 13th century. Though still underrepresented in the most southern part of Transjordan, occupied sites and tombs of the Late and Middle Bronze age are now well attested (Sauer 1986, 4-8; Bartlett 1989, 30). One of the researchers that contributed much to a more comprehensive picture of the area is Burton MacDonald. Though he did not find many architectural remains and only a small amount of pottery, it is nonetheless enough to prove the presence of people in the Bronze and Early Iron Age. Based on his findings there appears to be some sedentary behavior and some of the sites are continuous over different periods (Bartlett 1989, 71-2).

Crystal Bennett’s excavations in the 1960s and 1970s shed new light on Glueck’s conclusion of a thriving civilization in the 13th to 8th century and the supposed decline after that. The settlements demonstrate that their most flourishing period was the Iron Age II, not the Late Bronze and Iron Age I (ibid., 31). More archaeological finds have shown that the painted pottery (below) Glueck ascribed to the Iron I is more likely to be dated to the Iron II, influenced by Cypro-Phoenician cultures (Sauer 1986, 14). The sparse findings of Iron Age I sites indicate that the land was not densely occupied during this period and it is unlikely they had a well organized and political developed state at that moment (Bartlett 1989, 31). The critique on Glueck brought to light that there is no gap between the 13th and 8th century BC, but in the Iron Age I. This means there is no connection between the Edomites and earlier cultures. If the early cultures are not connected, it also means the both north and south Transjordan followed their own development course.
Since the 1980s research started to concern itself more with an ethno-archaeological component and also new studies on the influence of environmental factors were taken (ibid., 32). With the conclusions found by Glueck now mostly being revised, the way in which researchers looked at the Edomites also shifted. During the last decades the history of the Edomites is being addressed with a more critical eye. The view of Edom as a ‘Greater state’ is also being revised. This vision originated mostly in the early twentieth century Germany, where scholars projected the German historiography ‘nation-state model’ on Biblical history (Whiting 2007, 37). Though Edom is described little in the Bible, their existence alongside Israel led to the assumption of a similar origin and development (ibid.). Both of these and other groups mentioned in the Bible (e.g. Ammon and Moab, see below) were seen as political entities with fixed boundaries. It is, however, very unlikely this was the true situation. Whiting addresses the issue of complexity and diversity of cultures. She shows that artefacts do not reflect one group. Material cultures are influenced by each other and have small differences over small distances and material was used in dynamic practices (Whiting 2007). This makes it impossible to completely separate one culture from another and thus identify groups by their material culture. This and the complicated use of the Bible as a historical source – since it is so politically biased and according to many scholars not reliable – led her to the conclusion that the evidence of the presence of the Edomites is unreliable and she seems to imply it is best to discard the term Edomites altogether since there are only few other textual sources that use the term Edomites besides the Bible (ibid., 133). However, written sources from for example Assyria mention kings of Edom, which implies they existed. Though I think one should indeed be aware of the complications with the term and be careful to make too many assumptions, it seems somewhat radical to discard it altogether. At present, there are no better alternatives and it is, after all, only a name. It is going to take some time to lose the association of Edom with a nation-state, but this process is developing along an upwards line. Knowing the difficulties and taking them in account is better and less confusing than giving the culture an entirely new name or none at all as a way of starting over.
3. Introduction to the land of the Edomites

3.1 Geography

The Edomites initially lived in what is today the southern part of Jordan; the area between the southern border of the Dead Sea to roughly the northern shore of the Red Sea (Fig. 1, pag. 12). During the Late Iron Age they were able to expand to the Negev area to the west and became the southern neighbors of the Judahites. This was probably a result of the shifting political powers, most importantly those of Assyria and Israel. Due to tectonic activities the western border of Edom is significantly higher than most of its surroundings. From the west, mountains rise suddenly from the Wadi ‘Araba, up to a height of 1500 meters. To the east, the plateau gradually decreases, sloping down into the desert. Water erosion created deep cloughs, meandering through the mountains. This resulted in a natural border with Moab in the north; the Wadi el-Hasā. To the south Wadi Hismā marks the end of the plateau (Bartlett 1989, 34). The highlands consisted mostly of rock formations and a dens cover of natural vegetation (Finkelstein 1995, 352). Thanks to the inhospitable landscape on all sides, the people of Edom were naturally protected from mass attacks and thus suppression from the great powers of that time (ibi, 353). The steep slopes could not easily be climbed. Only small tracks led up and down, not big enough for an army. The paths that led down to the Wadi’s were not wide enough to let many people trough at once. Though on the east side the gradual sloping of the mountains provided easy access, the enormous desert in which the highlands ended was another barrier that was not easily taken.

Though it protected the people from most human enemies, the landscape itself was not easy on the people. With an average rainfall of 100-200 mm a year and only five to ten days where it exceeds 10mm a day (LaBianca and Younker 1995, 403) the ground was not really suited for agriculture. Other than small production of cereal, olives and grapes in the most northwestern part of the area, pasturing animals was the main way of living for the Edomites (Herr and Najjar 2008, 327). In the seventh century BC, when Edom was a vassal of the Assyrian Empire, they traded in several materials and provided labor (Bartlett 1989, 138; Edelman 1995, 94).
3.2 Neighboring people

The Edomites were not the only people in Iron Age Transjordan. They inhabited the most southern part of the region. Directly north of them, on the other side of the Wadi el-Hasā, lived the Moabites, who had the land of Ammon lying north of them (Fig. 2).

East of Edom was the desolated desert. Some tribes lived in this desert, but they never formed a homogenous people or state. West of Edom, on the other side of the Wadi ‘Araba and the Dead Sea, lay Israel and Judah. Southwest of Israel lived the Philistines. Though some maps show the Midianites – living southwest of the Edomites and south of Judah – the existence of this people has never been archaeologically confirmed. It stays to be debated who inhabited the southwest area.

Israel, Judah, Ammon, Moab and Edom are the groups that gained political power in the Iron Age (LaBianca and Younker 1995, 399). The exact origin of these last three remains unclear. They either originated from semi-Bedouin tribes that migrated to the almost uninhabited area, refugees from Palestine after a Late Bronze Age urban collapse and
possibly they came forth from the preexisting population of the region (ibid, 401-2). The most likely scenario is a combination of the different theories.

Of the three people living east of the Dead Sea, Ammon was most sedentary. Ammon has a number of fortified (walled) settlements dating from the Late Bronze Age continuing into the Iron Age. These were clearly inhabited, though this does not mean Ammon did not know pastoralists. They coexisted with the sedentary people, but with a minimum rainfall of 200 mm annually – even in the dry years – Ammon was well suited for agriculture, mostly fruit trees and cereals. The Ammonites could depend on the land to feed them and walled cities show a more permanent tie with the surrounding plough land (ibid, 403/7).

Archaeological research in Moab has yielded only a couple Bronze Age and Early Iron Age walled settlements, for example Tell el-Umayri, but nevertheless it is certain that there were sedentary villages (LaBianca and Younker 1995, 407). Lying intermediate of Ammon and Edom, the rainfall is more than in Edom, less than in Ammon. This results in a less agricultural commitment than in Ammon. But they also had a less pastoralist way of living than the people in Edom (ibid, 403).

Another factor that probably influenced the development and settlement history of both Ammon as Moab – and of Edom, to some extend – was their proximity to the Assyrian Empire. Ammon bordered Assyria and was thus easily influenced and more able to take over organization patterns and new developments. Though Moab lay farther to the south, they were also able to profit from the influence of the Assyrians.

The origin of Israel and Judah is somewhat clearer, because more research has been done on this subject. During the early Iron Age, the northern part of Israel was mostly sedentary. Like the landscape of Edom, the topography of the area south of Judah was mostly rough and inhospitable. This area was frequently inhabited by pastoralists, but it was not until the Late Iron Age that sedentary people occupied the rock formations (Finkelstein 1995, 352, 356).

From the tenth century onwards, Israel developed quickly. Urbanization and centralization of political and economic institutions transformed the society into a highly stratified one. Cities became fortified, indicating an insight in military strategies. Although this may initially have created a strong system, corruption and bureaucratic
bungling eventually weakened the organization so much Israel and Judah were easily conquered by the Assyrians in the eight and sixth century BC (Dever 1995, 419-22).

3.3 The Edomites

The origins of the Edomites are as much debated as those of the Moabites and Ammonites. There is evidence for occupation of the southern Transjordan area from the Paleolithic to the Early Bronze Age, after which there seems to be a decline in population, though absence of archaeological remains does not necessarily mean absence of people. In the Middle and Late Bronze Age little archaeological evidence for occupation is found. In the Early Iron Age this evidence increases, though it is not until the 7th century BC that evidence of settlement is found (Bienkowski 1992, 7-8). The earliest reference to people living in the area is in a late 13th century Egyptian text, though it is under the Shōsu name (Edelman 1995, 2) and there is no evidence that these can be associated with the later Edomites.

On the one hand there is the theory of the Edomites expanding from these indigenous people from earlier times (Bartlett 1989, 65). Another theory is that migrating people merged with the indigenous people, bringing new knowledge and thus (economic) advantages (LaBianca and Younker 1995, 402).

The evidence of sedentarization comes mostly from the Late Iron Age II. This indicates a more organized system, though there are no supporting textual sources from Edom that describe political organization. However, their increasing social organization may have come from the influence of the Assyrians. As the Assyrian Empire expanded, their influence to regions that were not under its direct control did too. Archaeological evidence shows no evidence of a fully united nation-state and it is probably best to describe Edom as a tribal-kingdom (ibid, 400); a unit with in-group loyalty brought together for many purposes by social and political forces (ibid, 403-5). Bartlett argues that Edom had a king from the mid-ninth century (1989, 126-7), but there is little archaeological evidence to confirm this. Buseirah is generally seen as the capital city of Edom in the Late Iron Age and there is a public building which is possibly a palace, but this is not certain (Edelman 1995, 1; Herr and Najjar 2008, 327). The contemporary buildings of the city make a full excavation impossible, so the plan is not clear and finds seem to fit for both a palace and a temple.
Bartlett gets his evidence for the presence of a king mostly from the Bible and there are several places where a king in Edom is mentioned (e.g. 2 Kgs 2.9,12,26; Jer 27.3). Other places, written within more or less the same political situation, mention chiefs (e.g. 1 Chron. 1.51, 54). The most likely explanation would be that individuals who appropriated the term were not necessarily rulers over an empire or state, but over a tribe or a settlements and the surrounding area, with some more power than a general bedouin sheikh or village headmen (LaBianca and Younker 1995, 408).

During the Iron Age II, the Edomites appear to have been vassals with the Assyrians (Millard in Bienkowski 1992, 36). Several epigraphic finds of Assyrian origin mention Edom as a tribute.

Under the Assyrian influence, they seemed to gain some power and were able to extend their habitation into the Negev area, though they never got full authority here. Judahites seem to have been present at the same time the Edomites were. Both were unwilling to give the area up, since the Wadi ‘Araba contained many mineral deposits and was the access to the Red Sea (Glueck 1935, 139). It was the route through with much of the Arabian trade caravans travelled. Access to this area meant influence on the trade and both Judah and Edom could profit from this. This explains their hostility towards each other and may be more compelling than just the hostility coming from a broken brother relation, which is the main cause in the Bible. This close contact between the two also meant they got to know each other cultures more. They may have discovered there were as many similarities as differences. For Judah especially this may have been cause for more hostility, since according to their inheritance Jacob and Esau (the ancestors of resp. Judah and Edom) had grown apart because of their differences. Association with this condemned enemy conflicted with this inheritance.
Edomite Pottery

For a long time material culture has been a link between ethnic groups and their presence on sites, and it is only since about 50 years that a critique has been going on towards this approach. It is not possible to connect static material to dynamic ethnic groups (Whiting 2007, 41). These groups interact with each other and these connections influence the material, creating a diverse and complex assemblage that does not identify one specific ethnic group.

This is also the case with the Edomite pottery. Though there are some characteristics that distinguish it from the pottery from the surrounding regions (such as Moab, Judah and Philistia), there are also many similarities between them. These similarities are mostly visible in type, shape and some characteristics such as the spatulate bar handle and the button handle. These characteristics, storage jars and cooking pots resemble each other in shape from Palestine to Syria and Mesopotamia (Glueck 1935, 123-37). In the Bronze Age wavy ledge handles, inverted rims and a band of notches or incisions are

Figure 3 Small selection of Edomite pottery (Glueck 1935, 191).
typical for pottery found in this area, though one has to be careful to ascribe this early pottery to the Edomites. Some of these characteristic continue into the Iron Age and some new shapes develop, such as flaring rims, but in the Late Iron Age it is mostly the patterns of painted and burnished decorations that distinguish the Edomite pottery from surrounding assemblages from then on (ibid.).

The checker and crisscross patterns made of black painted lines are very typical for Iron Age Edomite pottery, though this feature is also seen in Late Bronze Age Palestine and is frequently seen in Philistia (Fig. 3, pag. 16). It is the slight regional differences that enable researches to distinguish them. For example, the material of which the pottery is made. Edomite pottery has a gray core with a buff inner and outer surface. It may or may not be burnished and painted, but painting seems to replace the burnishing that is known from other cultures (ibid., 133). Though the painted pieces are described in most detail, it is the plain rims that are most frequently found, certainly in the Bronze Age (ibid., 124).

The descriptions Glueck gave concerning the differences and resemblances between Edomite and other pottery are still used today, though the several types of Edomite pottery are now differently dated than a hundred years ago. There is still discussion going on about the exact date of the pottery types and whether or not they strictly belong to the Edomite culture (e.g. Bienkowski 1992a, Finkelstein 1992c). The differences are small and clearly regional, probably partly influenced by the availability or absence of certain materials. The overall pottery assemblage of Israel, Judah, Ammon, Moab, Edom and other cultures is the same, indicating a possible similar origin and a close network of cultures. Characteristics of other ethnic groups prove a dynamic cultural organization wherein one ethnic group cannot be seen completely separate from another.
4. Case Study Horvat Qitmit

Horvat Qitmit is one of the most important sites to give us information about the religion of the Edomites. Situated in the Biblical Negev it differs from ‘typical’ Judahite material culture and is thus intriguing for archaeologists specialized in Near Eastern or Biblical Archaeology. After a short introduction on the site, this chapter discusses it and its finds in detail. For reasons such as time, space and relevance not all the objects found at the site are discussed. Often more than one object of a certain shape or animal form is found and it would go too far to describe them all. The different groups will be mentioned, but only those best preserved will be described in detail here and some others are used more as an example to support a statement. A general overview of the pottery types found at the site will also be given, since this is one of the major factors used to date and identify the site. For a more detailed catalogue of all the finds I direct the reader to the publication made on this site: ‘Horvat Qitmit: An Edomite Shrine in the Biblical Negev’ by Itzhaq Beit-Arieh.

4.1 Location, date and excavation history

Discovered in 1979 during a survey as part of the excavation of Tel ‘Ira, the excavations of Horvat Qitmit started in 1984 and ended in 1986. Spread over these two years, the excavations lasted a total of three months (Beit-Arieh 1995, xv). The 1979 survey yielded much Iron Age II pottery and non-utilitarian vessels that were not known in the Judean material culture. A large part of the pottery appeared to be Edomite and together with the small extent of the site – indicating it was not a habitation site – this was intriguing enough to excavate the place (ibid.). After the excavations ended processing and restoration of the data was done by the Institute of Archaeology of Tel Aviv University. Chemical analyses have been done by the Institute of the Archaeology of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (ibid.).

Horvat Qitmit is situated in the Negev Desert in southern Israel, the Arad basin, some 15 km. southwest of the contemporary city Arad (Fig. 1, pag. 12). Due to the position on a hilltop there is a clear view in all directions. The hill itself is visible from three contemporary sites in proximity of 5-10 km (ibid., 1). The Wadi Qatamat separates the
hilltop on which the site is located from the range of hills to the east. Geographical circumstances of the surrounding elevations resulted in the existence of aquifers, able to hold a large amount of groundwater. The thin cover of loess created agricultural opportunities, though the annual precipitation of approximately 200 mm. annually does not allow for intensive agriculture. Next to low-yielding farming, pastoralism is the main way of living (ibid.).

Based on the pottery found at the site and the dating of sites in the nearby area, Horvat Qitmit seems only to have been in use during the Iron Age II (ibid., xv; 3), from the end of the seventh to the beginning of the sixth century BC. After this period the site appears to have been abandoned, though there are no indications for human destruction or another disaster (ibid., 3).

The location of the site – visible from a distance – makes it very suitable as a cultic place, the architecture of the site is another clear indication the site was rather used for religious practices rather than habitation. The next paragraph describes and interprets the various elements of the site and their cultic value.

Figure 4: Schematic overview Horvat Qitmit (Beit-Arieh 1995, 6).

Figure 5: Horvat Qitmit, photographed northward (www.pcchong.com).
4.2 The architecture

The architecture of a site is very important in identifying a site. Both the spatial structure and manner of building can tell us a lot about a site. Comparison with other sites of which the culture who built it is known can include or exclude the possibility of this culture in the site one is researching. Spatial structure and the character of the building yield information about the function of buildings and structures and, thus, the site itself. Horvat Qitmit consists of two complexes, each with several separate elements, covering an area of about 1300 sq. m. (Fig. 4 and 5, pag. 19) (Beit-Arie 1995, 3; 304). The general character of the site shows this site was not used for habitation. The different elements all appear to have a cultic meaning and this paragraph gives an objective description, after which the architecture will be interpreted.

4.2.1 Description of the architecture

Complex A, on the sloping southern part of the side, includes a structure and two enclosures. The structure is rectangular, 10.5 m. x 5 m., and has three rooms. All rooms are open on the south side, the remains of the walls are made of flint, the floor is covered with a layer of crushed and beaten lime on top of a thin layer of gravel (ibid., 9). Added stones to the inside of the walls of the rooms lying on top of the lime cover indicate two building phases. In the later phase two rooms were made smaller. In all three rooms a ‘table’ of some sort was put up, constructed of flint. In the west room a bench was erected and at the entrance of the middle room a threshold was built (ibid., 12).

Some 11 m. south of the structure there is a platform of 1.25 m. x 1 m. It is closed in by walls on all sides except the north, the side that faces the structure. This wall seems to be shaped like a trapezoid. During the excavations part of the platform collapsed and a Bedouin grave disturbed part of the west wall, meaning some parts of this element had to be reconstructed (ibid., 13-4). In the publication about Horvat Qitmit this element is called the ‘Bamah enclosure’. The floor of this enclosure was covered by a layer of white plaster. Most of the finds from Complex A were found here (ibid., 14).

Another enclosure, named the ‘altar enclosure’, is also situated south of the structure, lying against the east wall of the bamah enclosure. This enclosure seems to have been a
complete circle, although only a small part of the wall has survived. Inside, some features were found, which the excavator interpreted to be an altar, a basin and a pit. The 50 cm. high altar consists of a large flint slab placed on smaller stones. The basin is a round installation close to the altar of which the inside is covered with a thick layer of white plaster, as on the floor of the bamah enclosure. Close to this basin a pit had been hewn of 80 cm. deep, possibly lined on the inner wall with limestone slabs (ibid., 18-9).

Complex B, consisting of one structure, also seems to have two building phases. In the first phase there was one (or maybe two) rooms against the west wall, which seem open on the east side, apart from two pillar-like supports, and there was a small room in the northeastern corner of the structure (ibid., 21). At the end of the southern wall (lined from west to east), there was a large boulder found in situ, with possible cultic meaning (see below). An area of approximately 1 sq. m. was paved with rectangular flint slabs. In the later phase the southern part of the west room seems to have been blocked on purpose. The northern part of the room was divided into two rooms. Indications for cooking suggest these rooms did not have a roof (ibid.). The area between the room against the west wall and the small room against the east wall is called a courtyard and most of the finds of this complex were recovered from this area (ibid.). During this later phase an extension of the east wall was built, made of one course of stones. Another possibility is this was done after the second building phase. After the site had gone out of use, a wall of monoliths was constructed, lining from east to west in the courtyard (ibid., 24).

Apart from these two complexes, two enclosures were found on the hill. The large enclosure is situated close to complex A’s structures northwestern corner and has a diameter of a minimum of 11 m. and a maximum of 13 m., with an opening on the northeastern side. In this enclosure there was an in situ stone on the southeastern side with a bench in front of it (ibid., 24).

The small enclosure is located on a distance of about 11 m. southwest of the bamah enclosure. Compared to the other features of the site this enclosure is small, with a maximum diameter of 6.5 m. and a minor axis of 3.5 m.. As with the large enclosure, the wall of this feature was probably only one or two courses high. Also similar to the large
enclosure is one particularly big in situ stone, on the northeastern side. The beaten earth floor is a little lower than the surrounding area, possibly as a result of clearing and the compression by the beating. In a later stage of the use of the site the floor was covered with a layer of small and medium-sized stones, filled with a layer of soil. Possibly this was done to prevent the wall from collapsing inward (ibid., 25-6).

4.2.2 Interpretation of the architecture
Though the basic constructions of the Complexes are the same, suggesting a chronological and cultural connection, it is not clear whether they functioned as one shrine for one deity or two shrines for more than one deity. Each Complex has its own elements, which indicates different rituals. Both Complexes have an internal courtyard and the range of cult objects found is the same, although the assemblage is much smaller in Complex B (Beit-Arieh 1995; 307). The structure with three rooms is unique for Complex A. The clear division into three rooms that are identically arranged, suggests a possibility that three different deities were worshipped in this structure (ibid., 306). It is clear that the stone tables in the three rooms did not have a constructional function, but since no similar furniture has been found in Israel and its surroundings, understanding their meaning is difficult. The layers of ash containing sherds and animal bones found in all three rooms and the general cultic nature of the site could suggest a function of offering-tables, used for the placement of vessels or ritual related objects (ibid., 12). It is also possible the priests who performed the ceremonies occupied the rooms during their stay. Possibly each priest was dedicated to a specific god or goddess and stayed in the room associated with that deity. If one is to accept Larry Herr’s assumption that the three rooms (in combination with the find of the sphinx) show a parallel between the Edomite religion and the YHWH cult (Herr 1997, 176), this is indeed possible. According to Herr the three rooms indicate a triad of deities. However, it contradicts his parallel with the Israeli religion, since they absolutized YHWH and did not accept other deities. And if this were an indication for a relation, the amount of finds also contradicts this. At a Judahite temple complex at Arad little ritual objects were found as opposed to Ḥorvat Qitmit (Beit-Arieh 1995, 308). An explanation for this may be that in the Yahwistic religion depiction of their God was forbidden (see the Third Commandment, Deut 5:8).
The shrine may thus not be closely related to the Judean cult, but Horvat Qitmit has all the elements a temple (Judean or not) had in those days; a building, a courtyard, an elevated platform, an altar, a water installation and massebot (ibid.). There is no certainty in saying if the Complexes were part of a whole the ceremonies held were unrelated to each other, but the fact that each complex contains elements the other Complex does not (e.g. Complex A does not have massebot, Complex B does not have a bamah), suggests both Complexes were part of the same series of rituals. The orientation of both Complexes is also the same; south-southeast. This differs from almost all other temple complexes found dated to the Iron Age, which are mostly westerly orientated. An explanation for this may be that Edom, the land where the people that used the shrine presumably came from, lay to the southeast; this way they were connected with their roots (ibid., 307).

The large amount of finds suggests that Complex A was the center of the ceremonial practices, particularly the bamah enclosure (building II, fig. 5, pag. 19). The location of the altar within the enclosure supports this. All finds associated with fertility are found in the bamah enclosure; the head of the deity, the pregnant female figurines and all pomegranates. This suggests that at least the goddess was worshipped in this part of the shrine. Since the other deities worshipped at the site are unknown, it is impossible to say if the bamah enclosure was also their center of ceremony, but it is likely it was. Judging by its elements – an altar, water basin and pit - the Altar enclosure seems to have been another important center for ceremony. However, the finds from this structure are much smaller in amount and more fragmented than those of the bamah enclosure, making it more difficult to interpret the meaning of structure in relation to the objects. It is even possible the objects found in this enclosure are washed or purposely swept down from the bamah enclosure (ibid., 20).

The function of the building of Complex A is, as said above, not clear. However, in the most eastern room – the room closest to Edom – remnants of many burned bones have been found, suggesting this room was used for offering or disposal of the animal used in the ceremony (ibid., 297). The bamah enclosure and the Altar enclosure hardly contain any bones, suggesting offering of animals did not take place here (ibid., 290). The rooms of Complex B are too small to have been a place to hold ceremonies. They may have been used as cooking places (ibid., 308). However, the large in situ stone at
the end of the most southern wall of the structure appears to have had a ritualistic purpose, since the ground around it was paved and seems to have been an offering place. Such a massebah was also found in both enclosures apart from the Complexes (ibid., 20-6). This means both enclosures probably also played a part in the cult of the site, though it remains unclear what their purpose was.

The architecture already conveys the ritualistic character of the site. Though it differs from known temple plans from this period, it does have the same features and most of them appear to have had some purpose for the cult; the altars, the water basin, the offering tables and the massebot. However, the objects found at the site are most explanatory for the character of the cult. Above the location of some of the objects has already been used to interpret the function of the architecture. In the next paragraphs, the objects themselves will be described and their meaning will be interpreted.

4.3 The cult objects and material

The publication of the Ḥorvat Qitmit excavation catalogued about a quarter of the total of finds; these 220 identifiable items have been described in detail, the other objects are listed in the appendix (Beit-Arieh 1995, 27). In this section a summary of the types distinguished in the catalogue is given, to provide an overview of what has been found at the site. Under ‘interpretations’ some objects will be discussed in more detail, as they are the most indicative for a cult present at the site and their fashion is strongly associated with these interpretations.

4.3.1 Description of the cult objects

Stands

A total of 22 stands have been described in the catalogue, of which little more than half used to have an animal or human application. None of these applications are complete and although a distinction can be made between human and animal, the kind of animal can never be determined with certainty (ibid., 28-39). Though the tops of the stands have a great amount of diversity, all stands seem to be cylindrical; a form that has been in use in the ancient Near East since the third millennium B.C.E. These stands are not
unique for Horvat Qitmit, they have been found at other (Levantine) sites, as are the attachments of solid figurines. The presence of hollow figurines¹, as a few have been found here, is however not known from other sites (ibid., 42).

Not all stands had figures attached to them and of those that had, none survived in good enough order to reconstruct the figure or perhaps the scene. Most of the human applications are associated with scenes involving a deity (see below), compared with examples from northern Israel and Syria (ibid., 43).

The human figurines
This group is the largest of the catalogue and divided in many sub-categories. It comprises almost a hundred objects, none of them complete, except for one almost intact figure of a pregnant female.

The two large anthropomorphic statues with a jar-shaped body of approximately 60 cm. (Nos. 23 and 24) and the head of the deity (No. 68) are probably the most appealing to the imagination because of their relatively good preservation. These will be discussed in more detail below.

34 fragments that have been catalogued probably belonged to statues or figures of the same size of Nos. 23 and 24. These fragments are: parts of a jar-shaped body, faces (eyes, noses) and arms with or without hands (ibid., 50-69). Some of the hands appear to hold something or are raised in a way suggesting a gesture of some kind. Of these hands, Nos. 45 and 48 are described below. 22 of the fragments, mostly heads or parts of faces are clearly from smaller figurines. The head of the deity is listed in this category. The other fragments are mostly heads of men (indicated by the presence of a beard) (ibid., 70-90²). All of these fragments are of hollow objects. 13 fragments of seemingly completely solid figures have been found. The majority of these are female, with three exceptions. Where body parts of the females were found they were naked (ibid., 99-104). The almost complete pregnant female figurine (No. 107) falls within this category.

¹ The use of the term figurines does not indicate a human figure as it often does in other paper (for example the ‘female figurines of Tell Sabi Abyad’). It can mean either a human or animal figure.

² Due to a misprint the page numbers intermingle. The numbering in the publication is: 88-91-92-89-90-95-96-93-94. The numbering of the catalogue items thus also intermingles, making the reading of the list a little more complicated, because one has to flip back and forth between the sub-categories.
This and the one of a find of an interestingly fashioned man (No. 119) are discussed below. Only a few figurines appear to have a hollow body and a solid head (ibid., 90-2). Apart from these, a number of 24 body part fragments has been found, mainly arms with hands – many of them holding something, feet (some of them possibly animal) and ears (ibid., 92-9).

**Animal figurines**
33 of the objects are catalogued as animal figurines (ibid., 125-41). The majority of these fragments are legs or hindquarters. A few horns have been found and also a couple of heads. Though the fragments are often clearly of an animal, determining what kind of animal figurine is hardly ever possible. A pair of antithetic ibex figures is discernible, two heads are listed as being of a bull and one figure could well be a dog (ibid., 125-8).

All the animal figures used to be attached to stands. It is likely that a single stand had more than one animal figure applied to it, depicting a scene (ibid., 140), though the bad preservation of the overall assemblage prevents any reconstruction. The two ibex figures, however, most likely belonged to the same scene. Based on findings from other sites all over the Ancient Near East it is possible that they were attached to a tree, maybe symbolizing the fertility of nature (ibid.).

Bovines were no major part of the economy in the region, they are relatively well presented in the animal figures at the site (ibid.). Analysis of the faunal bones excluded the presence of the animal on the site, thus making it tempting to ascribe their depiction as symbolic. This possibility is fortified by the association of the bull with a male deity in large parts of the Ancient Near East (ibid., 141).

Worth mentioning is the absence of the depiction of horses or horses and rider. These are common in whole Transjordan, but apart from one possible head of a horse, no fragments of this kind have been identified at Horvat Qitmit (ibid.).

**Bird figures**
A forth group in the catalogue is that of the birds. The identifiable objects are almost all ostrich, with the exception of the head of a cock (ibid., 141-51). The unidentifiable parts are listed as wings, but this is more uncertain than definitive. Where the cock was not well represented on depictions until the Neo-Babylonian period, ostriches regularly
appear since the third millennium B.C.E (ibid., 150). Because of their swiftness and their potential danger they have high mythological value, mostly negative. However, except for Horvat Qitmit, they have never been found in direct association with a shrine (ibid.).

Apart from the ostriches some other birds were found, with similarities to birds found in amongst other Phoenicia and Jerusalem (ibid.).

*Other*

Though catalogued under different groups in Beit-Arieh’s publication, I will discuss the remaining objects in one ‘bulk’.

Some pomegranate bowls and chalices have been found, all made of clay (ibid., 155-61). Both in the Classical world and the ancient Near East the pomegranate is a symbol for fertility and though most of the finds at other sites are made of metal, their meaning is probably the same. Clay may be a cheap substitute and fits within the material culture of Horvat Qitmit, since no metal has been found there (ibid., 160).

One composite creature was found and has been identified as a sphinx. The sphinx has the face of a man which is covered in red slip except for the eyes. Sphinxes are known from the Levant and Cyprus in royal or cult context. A depiction was found on the seal of an Edomite king (Qosgabar) (ibid., 152-4).

A small amount of musical instruments has been found at Horvat Qitmit. They represent a lyre and some tambourines. The lyre is one with horizontal strings, of which examples are also found in the Levant. The tambourines are of different kinds; held in different hands in various ways. These instruments are found throughout the entire ancient Near East, though Horvat Qitmit did not yield the type that is found in Transjordan and Punic regions. The double-pipe is also a common instrument from this region and period.

Many examples are known from Phoenicia, Israel and Jordan (ibid., 165-6).

Various other objects have been discovered at the site. Some of them seem to be part of a model shrine. Others are handles, cowrie shell-shaped fragments, spirals and (parts of) weapons. The meaning of many of these objects, especially of those seemingly of a model shrine – is uncertain. It is not clear what they might represent (ibid., 177-8).

### 4.3.2 Interpretation of the cult objects
Since none of the finds described so far seem to have been utilitarian, they most likely had a more spiritual and ritual meaning. Many of the finds have parallels with religious objects from sites from nearby cultures. By interpreting the finds we may find out more about the nature of the religious practices that were performed at the site.

As shown above, the objects found carry features of many different cultures known in the Iron Age. They form a mixture between Phoenician, Levantine, Palestinian and Transjordan cultures, but have some unique features at the same time. The different resemblances also carry various cult meanings. Are there things that can be said about the way religion was practiced at the site based on the objects and their possible meaning?

**Anthropomorphic figurines**

The entire assemblage of the site is interesting for analysis, though some objects reveal more than others. While the cylindrical stands are the main cult furniture, the human and animal depictions, most of which were originally attached to the stands, tell us most about the religion (Beit-Arieh 1995, 180). Most animal figures are small, which suggest they were part of a scene with one or more figures attached to a stand. Nonetheless, a fairly large amount of human fragments has been found which belonged to relatively large human figurines. They were probably more or less the same size as figures Nos. 23 and 24; the almost complete anthropomorphic male figurines (Fig. 6 and 7, pag. 31). Of neither figure the arms remain, the arm of No. 24 is preserved until the elbow, but the heads are in good shape and here even paint residue remains. On No. 23 some red paint is visible on the face, as is black paint on the rim of the krater, the eye sockets – though the eyes themselves have not been preserved – and the beard and mustache. The black paint probably has no real ritualistic meaning, but is used to indicate facial hair and features. Of the red paint the meaning is less clear. It may be the exposed skin was painted red to separate it from other features, but it may also be an indication of a ritualistic profession of the depicted person. On other finds the red paint seems to be a ritual indicator. The eyebrows are made of incised strips of clay attached to the head, the nose is prominent and a little on the left of the face. The mouth is an incised line and the beard is a clay application (ibid., 45). The body of the figure resembles an upside
down storage jar to which arms have been attached, of which only one shoulder remains. On the body nine cowrie shell-shaped attachments and remnant of the attachments of the hands are visible. It is plausible that the shells mark the hem of a garment. The marks of the hand applications make speculation of the position of the arms possible. It is likely that they were folded before the chest and possibly held an object (ibid.). Statue No. 24 resembles this description, though it is in lesser state. On the face black paint is visible on the beard, mustache, eye and eyebrow. The eyebrows are not incised, but are formed by slanting ridges (ibid., 50). Both shoulders have survived and as a result the statue looks quite broad-shouldered. As in No. 23 the arms appear to have been folded before the chest.

The various arms and hands found at the site could give suggestions for how the hands of Nos. 23 and 24 may have been positioned and what they may have been holding, though most of these are hollow, as opposed to the arms of the statues. No. 45 is a left hand holding an object painted black on the lower part (Fig. 8, pag. 31). It is unclear what that object is, but according to Beit-Arieh a weapon is excluded. He suggests it is the stem of a lotus flower, as is seen in representations of Ammonite kings (ibid., 115). It does, however, not seem to droop, as is the case in known examples of figures holding a lotus flower. Beit-Arieh argues the lotus flower may have been upright and represents a living king, as opposed to the drooping lotus flower that indicates a deceased one (ibid.). Since only a small part of the object survived, two strips of clay, and remnants of black paint are visible on the lower part, this seems an unlikely possibility. On the drawing of the object it looks like the object curves downward and the suggested reconstruction shows a dead flower (ibid., fig. 3.33). Total exclusion of a weapon seems somewhat premature. The weapon may have been a sling. Until now there is no indication that this is a weapon with ritual value like a sword, nor does it belong to a person of status such as a king or a priest. But based on the knowledge we have of the Edomites and their main way of living (chapter 2) it is not impossible shepherds were represented as worshippers or that one of the worshipped gods was god of shepherds and protected the herds. Based on only a hand with a broken object it is impossible to say with certainty who or what is represented, though the assemblage of the site makes a deity a less likely option. The object could also be another flower or maybe a rope of some sort. The only other hand found grasping an object is No. 46. A sword is held in a left hand,
the blade broken off, nothing but the hilt remains. Both hand and sword are covered with red slip (ibid., 62). Based on this hand and a sword found on the site (Fig. 10, pag. 32) it is suggested that warriors were represented at the site (ibid., 181). However, the red slip is used as a ritual indicator on the faces of the anthropomorphic vessels, the head of the deity, the right hands (below) and the sword has seven painted horizontal red bands, also indicating ritual value. If both swords indeed are representatives of ritual actions, it is possible they were meant for those rituals only and not for fighting. In that case, they also not necessarily belonged to depicted warriors. It may have been the priests that were associated with the swords.

The only clear object thus found held in hand is a sword. No remnants of flowers have been found and the evidence for a lotus flower is too sparse to draw conclusions from, but is seems unlikely. The sword (remnants) found probably has a higher ritual than usage value, indicated by the red covering.

With the exception of some bird fragments that may have been attached to the hands of anthropomorphic figures no other indications for held objects are found. It is, however, possible that some of the pomegranates found were not part of a chalice or bowl, but held in hand. These symbols of fertility may indicate the presence of a fertility goddess such as Kubaba (Beit-Arieh, 183). For Nos. 23 and 24 this is a very unlikely possibility, since both statues are male, indicated by the beard. Another possible object that could be held is a musical instrument. Lyres were mostly held in left hands and tambourines could be held in both hands (Beit-Arieh 1995, 165).

Only two right hands have been recovered on the site and both are fashioned flat and raised (Fig. 9, pag. 31). A likely explanation is a gesture of greeting or benediction. This assumption is strengthened by the application of red slip on the wrist and parts of the hand, indicating it is a ritual gesture (ibid., 65).

The absence of divine markers on both statues may lead to the conclusion this were no representations of a god, but of humans. The cowrie shell-shaped applications forming a hem could be of a priestly garment, but may also have been of a regular person. Little is known about the way people dressed in the Late Iron Age II. Based on the way the arm of No. 24 is bent, it is unlikely that the greeting or benediction gesture is made. Both arms seem to have been held in front of the chest. The marks on the body of statue No. 23 indicate the same position. Possibly they held a somewhat larger object with two
hands or one object in each hand. The most likely scenario is that the statues (or one of them) held a sword or maybe a bird figure. They may have been representations of priests or warriors.

Figure 6: Anthropomorphic statue No. 23 (Beit-Arieh 1995, 47).

Figure 7: Anthropomorphic statue No. 24 (Beit-Arieh 1995, 49).

Figure 8: Left hand grasping an object, No. 45 (after Beit-Arieh 1995, 61).

Figure 9: Right raised hand in benediction (after Beit-Arieh 1995, 64).
Of the smaller figures, most of which possibly were attached to a stand, the head of the deity is the most striking find (Fig. 11). Residue of red paint is found on the entire face, including the cheeks and the chin, emphasizing the absence of a beard, black paint was found on the hair applications (Beit-Arieh 1995, 79). This and the applications of hairdo indicate the figure is female. It has large, seemingly staring eyes, the effect of which is somewhat undone by the lively fashion of the smiling mouth. It has, as most of the faces found at the site, a prominent nose. Three horns have been attached to the head of which the left one has broken off entirely as has the tip of the right one. Both horns at the side of the head start at eyelevel; the one in the middle is attached to the forehead. The horns indicate the figure is not human. So far, a three-horned mitre has only been found on female deities (ibid., 121), though in a different fashion than found at Horvat Qitmit. Most of the known examples come from bronze statuettes and the horns issue from a cap. In the example from Horvat Qitmit, no indication for a cap is found. This does not necessarily mean the depicted gods are different. The differences may be the
result of the use of clay instead of bronze or another metal or of regional differences (ibid.).

The examples to compare this find with come only from the Levant, for example the bronze statuette from Syria, and they all are ascribed to the Smiting Goddess class (ibid.). The presence of swords and possible warrior statues at Horvat Qitmit support the possibility that this is also the case in this find. However, the head of the deity has been found in the bamah enclosure, where, as mentioned by the interpretation of the architecture, many finds that can be associated with fertility have been found. It is assumable there is a relation between the pomegranates, the pregnant figurines and the head of the deity. Possibly the deity represented fertility in some way. It is not uncommon to find the two realms fertility and war combined in one goddess.

The appearance of the goddess thus resembles closely to finds from the Levant. From this period, however, this is the only head of a deity found in Palestine (ibid., 120) and thus a comparison from another region than the Levant cannot be made. For sustainable conclusions reference material to be found in the future is necessary.

The figurines that are possibly closely connected to the head of the deity are the pregnant females, two of which were found, of one only the lower part of the body. They are described as nude, though the black paint remnants on the legs and pubic area may have been used to indicate a skirt or dress (Beit-Arieh 1995, 122). No. 107, which is almost complete, apart from a little damage to the face, holds her breasts with her hands (Fig 12, pag. 34). Both this position and her pregnancy emphasize her fertility (ibid.). She wears a necklace of alternating solid lines and beads. On a figure in Buseirah (the supposed “capital city” of Edom) the exact same necklace fashion was found. Nimrud (contemporary Iraq) has also yielded a figure with the same necklace. The flat back of both figures suggest they were attached to a stand or possibly a shrine model (ibid.). Examples of this last possibility are found throughout the entire Levant. In Cyprus nude females were found attached to the base of stands. It is not to say with certainty whereeto the figures from Horvat Qitmit were attached.

The possible connection between the pregnant figurines and the head of the deity proposes the possibility that the figurines were attached to a shrine dedicated to (or as a small replica of a shrine for) the deity.
The dancing man (No. 119) presents a small mystery. No other figures fashioned this way are found at Horvat Qitmit, both in production and posture. Even with one of the legs broken off below the knee, it is clear he was not kneeling or running. A likely possibility is that he is depicted in a dancing pose (Fig. 13). His hairdo finds resemblance to that of the figures from Malhata and el-Medениyeh, though in a simplified form compared to the last one. However, his face – nose, eyes and beard – resembles that of other figures found at the sites and connects it to these finds. It shows the figure does belong to the site and is not part of another assemblage from another place, deposited by accident at Horvat Qitmit. The instruments found at the site support the interpretation of the dancing pose. Finds from Ashdod, Nebo and a prism from unknown provenance show various musicians next to or in front of a god or shrine (Beit-Arieh 1995, 167), some of them dancing. Dancing and music have always been an important part of ritual and it is very likely the processions were guided by dancers, possibly also playing the instruments. Whether this was a ritual dance, associated with the god or goddess the procession was held for, is impossible to say and everything concerning this subject remains speculative.

Figure 4: Pregnant female, No 107 (Beit-Arieh 1995, 100).

Figure 5: Dancing man, No 119 (Beit-Arieh 1995, 111).
Animals

Besides the many anthropomorphic statues, a large amount of animal figures has been found. These also seem to have played an important part in the cult life of Horvat Qitmit.

The ibex figures are, as mentioned, probably part of the same scene and may have symbolized the fertility of nature. Since they were found at the bamah enclosure, they may be associated with the deity, though there are no other indications for this assumption.

Among the animals, the bull and the ostrich are the most abundant. Among the remnants of bone found in the ashes of the site, only little bovine bones were found, and this seems to suggest the animal had a mostly symbolic function at the site (Beit-Arieh 1995, 140). In Anatolia and Syria, the bull is one of the representations of the Weather God, their most important god and sometimes the god was depicted standing on a bull (ibid., 141). There are no finds at Horvat Qitmit that indicate a human standing on a bull and since none of the bovine animals has been found as part of a more or less complete scene, it is difficult to say whether or not it depicts a god.

However, the tripartite building of Complex A caries the suggestion of more than one deity being worshipped at the site and next to the female goddess, a male god would not be unlikely. The warriors found at the site may support this assumption, since they not necessarily belong to the goddess, but may have been associated with the male deity. That most of the identifiable bovine figures were found at the bamah enclosure, the apparent center of the ceremonies, may also contribute to this assumption.

The ostriches are another interesting feature of Horvat Qitmit. They represent the major part of the bird figures found at the site. Beit-Arieh mentions sideways the possibility of a connection between the ostriches and the female deity. However, most of the ostriches were found in the Altar enclosure as opposed to the head of the deity, undermining this assumption somewhat. Also, ostriches are hardly ever depicted as benevolent. On the contrary, they are often a sign of evil and mischief. Sometimes they appear as advisories of a hero (ibid., 150), but this is not necessarily a positive depiction. It is thus difficult to interpret their meaning at Horvat Qitmit. Were they positive symbol here? Did they play a significant part in the rituals? Or were they just an obvious choice
for the users of the shrine since the ostriches were a common inhabitant of the desert and thus easy to recreate and had no specific meaning besides being an offering? There are no other sites where ostriches were found in this way, therefore there is no reference material and their meaning will remain unclear until there is.

4.4 The pottery
Horvat Qitmit yielded many finds of many different kinds. The 220 items catalogued are little more than a quarter of the total amount of finds that are possibly related to cult actions at the site. Many of the uncatalogued items are arms, legs, horns and spirals, but the majority is not identified (ibid., 198-208). Next to all these objects, over 2000 pottery sherds and vessels that are not directly associated with cult but are seen as parts of utilitarian vessels were found. These do not contribute to the cultic interpretations, so they will not be discussed in detail here.

Nonetheless, some remarks concerning the pottery assemblage have to be made, because the pottery is used to date and identify the site (ibid., 255). At the time Horvat Qitmit was excavated little stratigraphic analyses had been done (as is still the case) and this made thorough comparison to other sites impossible (ibid., 254). But though there was possibly some settlement in the north of Edom before the 7th century, not many other sites predating this century have been found (Bienkowski 1992, 8). As mentioned above it appears the kingdom of Edom ended somewhere in the 6th century BC, but continued to exist under Babylonian and Persian administration until the 4th century BC (Bartlett 1989, 161-3). It was also not until the later Late Iron Age that the Edomites settled in the Negev area. This relatively small time span allows dating of Horvat Qitmit into the end of the Late Iron Age (Beit-Arieh 1995, 255), despite the discussion of Finkelstein and Bienkowski (see above, chapter 3).

The amount of painted and unpainted is similar to pottery found at other sites in Judah – mostly the Negev area – and in Edom and the Assyrian influences resemble that of Transjordan more than that of Judaea (ibid., 254). Despite the ongoing critique on the cultural-historic approach of linking ceramics to ethnic groups since the 1960s, Beit-Arieh connects the pottery directly to the presence of Edomites at the site, thus

4.5 Conclusion

Its size, location, architecture and finds show that Horvat Qitmit was not used for habitation. The site consists of two complexes and two enclosures, all of which seem to have had a ritualistic function, though often unclear. The tripartite building suggests a possibility of a triad deity. However, only one depiction of a goddess has been found, which cannot be identified with certainty. Resemblances to finds from other parts of the Near East suggest a possibility of an association with fertility. The pomegranates, pregnant females and possibly the ibex figures support this possibility. It is not uncommon to find this realm combined with that of warfare, of which the goddess also seems to have some characteristics. The two anthropomorphic figures, No. 23 and 24, both holding an object which was possibly a sword or other weapon, may have been warriors that can be associated with the goddess, but they also may have been priests, holding ceremonial swords.

The animal fragments that could be identified as bull may be associated with the goddess. They also may be associated with a male deity, possibly the Weather God. All these finds come from the bamah enclosure, suggesting this element played the most important role in the ceremonies.

The elements of the Altar enclosure also suggest a dominant part, but the small amount of finds contradicts this. Most of the identifiable ostriches were found here, though this does not help with the function of both the enclosure and the ostriches. Ostriches mostly have a negative association and their abundance at Horvat Qitmit cannot be explained, other than that they were natural inhabitants of the desert.

The building of Complex B seems to be too small to have been used for ceremonies with a large group of people, though the massebah at the end of the south wall had a ritualistic purpose. These massebot are also used to identify the two single enclosures of the site as ritual rather than an animal pen.

The elements of the architecture are known from other temple complexes in the surrounding regions, though the plan differs. The architectural features are also not unknown from other places (e.g. Cyprus and Jordan). The cultural mix is also visible in
the objects. Most of the objects bear elements known from the different regions of the Near East, though Horvat Qitmit is quite unique in its use of clay and has certainly characteristics of its own.

The two complexes have a clear cultural and chronological connection. Their different elements suggest that both complexes were used in ceremonies, rather than that unrelated ceremonies were performed in each complex. The places that were the main part of the ritual performances are open and did not have a roof. This identifies Horvat Qitmit as an open air shrine, of which both architecture and objects have a high ritualistic value.

Though many finds have a resemblance to known artefacts, many have also unique characteristics not known until now. The nature and the amount of the finds distinguish it from Judahite sites and based on the pottery Horvat Qitmit can be identified as Edomite.
Chapter 5 – written sources

Making interpretations based on archaeology alone is often very difficult and at least partly speculative. There is hardly ever a written explanation accompanying the finds we encounter. Texts that are recovered are often partial and sometimes difficult to translate, but can nonetheless give a large amount of information; about social, economic and political structure, religion or warfare. Archaeologists rely heavily on texts and inscriptions to explain the archaeology they find. In the case of the Edomites this is complicated since no texts from the Edomites themselves have survived and only little inscriptions. However, the Edomites are mentioned in texts from a small number of other people that inhabited the surrounding regions or were in contact with them. In this chapter the available written sources from Egypt, Assyria, Judah, Israel and Edom itself will be discussed and whether or not they are helpful in deciphering the religion of the Edomites. Other written texts will not be taken into account, since most of them – for example the Moabite Stela – do not contribute significant information to the knowledge of the Edomite religion.

5.1 Non-Biblical sources

5.1.1 Egyptian sources

Drawing information about Edom from Egyptian sources is difficult, since only a few are known and they are all speculative at best. A scribe from a border fortress in the Wadi Tumilat mentions shōsu tribes from Edom moving to Egyptian territory (13th century BC) (Redford 1992, 228). Though they are not named Edomites, the land Edom is mentioned and this is the earliest reference we have. However, there is no evidence that these shōsu, who lived sixth centuries before the Edomites, are related in any way to the Edomites, nor is anything else said about them, making this text, and all others found in this period, useless for our cause.

However, Oded and Knauf have argued that in the topographical list from the time of Ramses II mentions different names with the theophoric element Qos (Edelman 1995, 123). This is not impossible, but there is no evidence that links the list to the area of the
later Edomites. Both Oded and Knauf admit that their reasoning is not supported by the interpretations of Egyptologist, making for an even less compelling argument. The Egyptian sources do not clarify anything concerning the Edomite religion. Possibly they had little contact with the Edomites and did not have control in the area in the period we are speaking of. It was the Assyrian Empire who had the most political control in the Late Iron Age.

5.1.2 Assyrian sources
At the end of the 7th century BC, close to its demise, the Assyrians had grown to a large empire and expanded itself to the south as far as Egypt, including the area inhabited by the Edomites. That these were never under the direct control of Assyria is indicated by the reference to Edomite kings in Assyrian texts (Millard in Bienkowski 1992, 35-7). They were, however, an ally of the Assyrian Empire. Almost all texts that mention Edom, mention them as tribute and ally. The earliest mention on the Nimrud slab of Adadnirari names them as subjugated and later texts tell about Edom paying tribute to the Assyrian king. Of the less than ten inscriptions and texts that have been found, only two mention Edom in other contexts. One is a list of places from when the Assyrians actually enter Edom in the middle of the 7th century BC and the other is a list with place-names that may or may not mention Edom. The tablet is damaged in such a way the mention of Edom cannot be certain (ibid., 36). Since the Edomites thus almost always are named in context with bringing tribute, they tell little about the Edomites and even less about their religion. It is generally assumed that their alliance with the Assyrians contributed to a more stable economy. As mentioned above, the King’s Highway crossed Edomite country, increasing their influence on the trading routes. The Assyrians either asked for copper as tribute or traded gold en silver to get it from the Edomites and it is likely this was their main interest in Edom (Edelman 1995, 113). This enabled the Edomites to develop a more flourishing economy. This closer contact not only influenced their economy, but probably also their social organization and material culture. It is also very likely the Edomites took over certain aspects of the Assyrian religion. Though these texts give us thus information about the economic structure of the Edomites, they do little to enlighten us about their religion. Nonetheless, some
information can be found in the names of the kings of Edom. Two kings are named; Qosmalak and Qosgabri. Based on only these two names, little can be said about whether or not these names contain a theophoric element, but in combination with other names found at different places and on several seals, it is possible that these names indeed have the name of a god imbedded. However, there are several other possibilities (see below) and two names are not enough to draw valid conclusions from. Let us therefore turn to the evidence that Edomite sources can give us.

5.1.3 Edomite sources
One of the most problematic issues concerning getting valid information from Edomite written sources is the scarcity of the textual assemblage. No monumental texts have been found and apart from one cuneiform tablet with a probable contract of sale all we have is a number of inscriptions, mainly on seals and ostraca (incised pottery) (Bartlett 1989, 209). Edelman (1995, 138) describes three criteria for the identification of Edomite script; provenance, the appearance of the name Qos and paleography. One of these proposes a problem. The appearance of the divine name Qos as an independent name or as part of a personal name is here an indication that an inscription is Edomite. At the same time, it is assumed that the Edomites venerated Qos (Edelman 1995, 121). This creates a circular argument; the name Qos is used to define something as Edomite and Edomite cult must have had Qos as national deity. Due to this, sites that yield inscriptions with this element are easily defined as Edomite, though this might not be the case.

One has to be careful to ascribe Qos to the Edomites, since the origin of the theophoric element is unclear. Rose objected to the conclusion that Qos was a national deity, because it was and still is based on such scarce recourses (Rose 1977). One of his arguments against this assumption was that during the time to which most of the inscriptions are dated, the seventh-sixth centuries BC – the oldest inscription dates to the eighth century BC – Edom was in a state of decline caused by the increasing pressure of Arab Bedouin tribes from the west (ibid., 29). We now know this was, in fact, not a period of decline, but the Arab influence one Edomite religion may still be valid. It is a generally accepted that the name Qos has Arab origins, though this is not the case for the deity that carries this name (Bartlett 1978, 28-34). It is true that the earliest
evidence of the deity is found in Edomite context, but the chance that an Edomite god had the potential to expand as far as the Arab areas is small and seems unlikely (Rose 1977, 29). And the name Qos is found many inscriptions all over the Middle East (Whiting 2007, 40). Through the intensive contact Edom had with its different neighbors (above), including the Arabs, it is possible that an Arab and early Edomite god (and others) influenced each other and submerged into a “new” god. However, it is also possible that this was not the name of a specific god, but just a word for god in general. Like Theophilus means ‘son of god’, a name with the theophoric element Qos could mean for example ‘given by god’ or ‘blessed by god’ instead of ‘given by Qos’ or ‘blessed by Qos’. It is not impossible that Qos is a theophoric element, but assuming that it is also the name of a specific god might be premature.

Another possibility is, according to Rose, that Qos is a derivation from the same god YHWH supposedly derives from; an El-deity (Rose 1977, 31), though there is only suggestive evidence for this theory (Bartlett 1978, 32-3). The origin of Qos remains unclear. There is no conclusive evidence for an Edomite origin, an Arabic influence nor that it is a derivation from an older god. However, Bartlett does not mention the issues surrounding the origin of the god in Edom and the Edomites and seems to take the theophoric element in a number of inscriptions for granted, thereby depriving the reader of an understanding of the complications around this element. This would be less of a problem if the evidence was clearer. Unfortunately, this is not the case, and because of the fact that of the twenty-eight inscriptions he discusses only six contain a Qos-element (Bartlett 1989, 209-28), the omission of the discussion becomes a less excusable decision.

Not only is the origin of Qos debatable, his status as a nation deity is too. This view was developed during the nineteenth century and thus accordingly influenced (see above, chapter 2). It is highly debatable that the Edomites, even if they were organized in a state-like manner, had a national deity (Whiting 2007, 40). In this I agree with Charlotte Whiting, not only because the evidence is so scarce and inconclusive, but also because of the circular argument surrounding Qos (see above). It is therefore only with much precaution that interpretations based on text containing Qos – either as name or “theophoric” element – should be attempted.
5.2 Biblical sources

The Bible is one of the most important sources we rely on in containing information about the Edomites. From all the sources available, it gives us by far the most information. However, one must keep in mind that the Bible contains many politically and religiously biased texts and they should not be accepted as truth without considering the complications.

Most of the books of the Old Testament have at least partly been written after the time they describe and often the political, social and economic situation had changed over the time that had passed. The books of the Bible Genesis to Kings were not written as a whole book at once. Each book probably came into existence piece by piece over a period of about 500 years (approximately from 1000 to after 515 BC). Some texts are much older than others (De Jongerenbijbel 2006, 67). It is therefore difficult to determine the reliability of the texts. At the time of the kings of Israel and Judah, the hostility between Edom and Judah was well established – since both wanted the monopoly on the trade routes to the Red Sea – and this hostility is visible in the books of the Bible. Almost always, they are mentioned in association with war or their own doom – foretold by Judahite prophets.

Nonetheless, the Bible has been helpful to some degree in determining the approximate borders of the land of Edom (Edelman 1995, 1-11). In this paragraph, I will discuss if it is possible to retain information about the religion of the Edomites based on Biblical attestations.

It is remarkable that not once a god of the Edomites is named in the Bible, whereas the gods of the Moabites and Ammonites (resp. Chemosh and Milcom) are mentioned by name and their abomination (2 Kgs 23.13). Only in 2 Chron. 25.14-15 a reference to the gods of the Edomites is made:

Now it was so, after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up to be his gods, and bowed down before them and burned incense to them. Therefore the anger of the LORD was aroused against Amaziah, and He sent him a prophet who said to him, “Why have you sought the gods of the people, which could not rescue their own people from your hand?” and in verse 20:
But Amaziah would not heed, for it came from God, that He might give them into the hand of their enemies, because they sought the gods of Edom.

No names are mentioned and it is clear that the writer of the Chronicles knows little about Edomite religion. This is not surprising, since Edom as a kingdom ceased to exist almost two centuries before Chronicles was written (Bartlett 1989, 195). It is, however, also clear that the Chronicler wants to point out that the gods of Edom are inferior to God and are thus not to be bowed down to. This inferiority indicates that the gods were abominable, but still the hostility seems less severe than the hostility towards the gods of Moab and Ammon (ibid.).

The absence of references to Edomite religion supports this assumption. Many scholars argue that this may be the result of a certain similarity between the religion of Edom and the religion of Israel and Judah (e.g. Bartlett 1989; Edelman 1995). If this was indeed the case, writers may have forgone mentioning the Edomite gods, because they could not be as scolding as they could be towards other cultures. Admitting similarities would undermine the hostile relationship between Judah en Edom. As the similarity in culture, a similarity in religion is also possible. 1 Sam 21.7 mentions a certain Doeg, an Edomite, who ‘detained before the LORD’. He might have done this because YHWH was known in Edom and worshipped there among others. On the other hand, he may have been forced to do so or maybe he converted to the Israelite religion. The verse where Doeg is mentioned has a slightly different scope in different translations. In the English versions ‘detained’ is alternated with ‘a religious obligation’ and ‘worshipping’. In Dutch translations these variations are the same (‘een of andere religieuze verplichting’, ‘voor het aangezicht van de HEER afgezonderd’, bevond zich in de tegenwoordigheid van de HEER’). These different translations complicate the interpretation of the verse. It is not possible to say with certainty with what intent Doeg was present at the temple. The seemingly ‘random’ placement of the verse in the story of David and Ahimelech is also of interest. Why would the author of Samuel mention the presence of an Edomite servant of Saul whereas he plays no further part in the story? As Chronicles and Kings, Samuel too was written a long time after the original events. Mentioning an Edomite present in the temple of the LORD could be because it was so remarkable that an Edomite converted, or maybe it was an indication that in that time the Edomites were subjugated to Israel. There is no clear explanation for this fact, but it may contribute to
the argument that finding clear religious indications from this text is more guesswork than anything else.

Another indication for possible similar religious practices is mentioned in Jer. 9.25-26:

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised—Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.”

The Edomites appear to have circumcised their children, like Israel did. Both Rose and Bartlett use this as an argument to point out the possible relation between the two religions (Rose 1977, 30; Bartlett 1989, 196-7). However, many others are mentioned in this text and of those people we know that they did practice very different religions than Israel. Circumcision in itself is thus not a valid argument to draw a parallel between Israelite and Edomite religion.

There are several verses in the Bible where YHWH is linked to Edom (e.g. Deut. 33.2, Judg. 5.4) and it is certainly possible that He was known in Edom. But there is no indication, in the Bible or any other text, that the Edomites absolutized one god, like Judah did. On the contrary, at sites such as Ḥorvat Qitmit different gods appear to have been worshipped (see below).

Although different verses in the Bible refer to the Edomites in association with religion, none of these texts is clear enough to draw conclusions from and every attempt to say something about Edomite religion based on these texts is, mostly, speculation.

However, the fact that the gods of Edom are not as specifically named as those of Moab and Ammon may indicate that their religion was indeed somewhat closer to their own or that the Edomites were not particularly religious. The latter, however, seems unlikely.

the absence of Edomite gods is more likely the result of the polemical character of the Bible, since there was always hostility between Edom and Judah. The Edomites lived in a world where every region had its gods. Material culture shows all these people were connected to each other and it is improbable that Edom resembles those material cultures so close, but took nothing of their religion.
Moreover, the cultic character of Horvat Qitmit shows that they did indeed practice religion. In the next paragraph the findings from the site will be compared to the information from the sources mentioned above.

5.3 Comparison with Horvat Qitmit

As seen above, the information the written sources are for a large part speculative and different scholars present different possibilities. The circular argument between Qos and an Edomite definition complicates things even more. However, the inscriptions of Horvat Qitmit may contribute to our knowledge of the Edomite gods. The interpretations of this site, which is so clearly a cult site, were not yet fully available to most of the scholars who took the time to analyze the Edomite religion. To Whiting the publication of the site was available, but since religion was not the main aim of her thesis (2007), she only mentions (and discards) Qos briefly, without going into detail.

Seven inscriptions – one on a stamp seal – were found at Horvat Qitmit. Four of the seven inscriptions contain the element Qos (Fig. 14, pag. 47) (Beit-Arieh 1995, 258-67). One of these four only has the first two letters, but it is a likely possibility that Qos was indeed part of the inscription. It is not clear whether these letters (qws) were part of a personal name or stood on themselves (ibid.). In the first case the inscription may have mentioned the person who donated the vessel – like the names of the kings found in Assyrian texts. In the latter it may have been a dedication to Qos, whether this was a specific god or not.

Four inscriptions is too small an amount to base any conclusive interpretations on, but this is the first time inscriptions containing Qos have been found at a cultic place. Thus for the first time Qos can be directly associated with ritualistic practices. It is unlikely the head of the female deity can be associated with the name Qos, since it is generally assumed Qos indicates a male deity. It is probable more than one deity was worshipped at Horvat Qitmit; thereby it seems unlikely Qos is a general name for god. The most likely probability is that Qos was indeed a specific god worshipped at the site.

The identification of the site has been done based on the pottery assemblage. The paleography of the inscriptions seems to support this. The letters resemble those known from Ammonite, Moabite and Judahite inscriptions, but can be distinguished based on
their own characteristics (ibid. Fig. 5.8, 266). They look most like Edomite script found at other places.

Based on the paleography and the pottery assemblage Ḥorvat Qitmit appears to be indeed Edomite. Despite the small amount of inscriptions it is likely Qos was worshipped at the site, next to the female deity and it is probable Qos was indeed an Edomite god. However, Ḥorvat Qitmit does not give any indications for the importance of Qos. Whether he was a national deity or “merely” a tribal god cannot be distinguished.

It does however seem to support the text from 2 Chron. 25.14-15 (see above), where Amaziah is said to take the gods of Seir. The plural form indicates, of course, more than one god, which the finds of Ḥorvat Qitmit also seem to suggest. Unfortunately, it does not clarify any other attestations from the Bible.

Ḥorvat Qitmit is certainly of great value to understand the religion of the Edomites. However, one site is not enough to draw conclusions from and more research and excavations are necessary to clarify the complex picture further.

Figure 6: Inscription with the element Qos, found at Ḥorvat Qitmit (Beit-Arieh 1995, 261).
6. Conclusion

Compared to what is known about people from nearby regions our knowledge of the Edomites is small. Relatively little sites have been found and even less contain conclusive evidence (e.g. the building of Buseirah).

Though their origins are unclear, we know the Edomites occupied the area south of the Dead Sea and north of the Red Sea in the Bronze and Iron Age. The scarcity of sites in this area is the result of the rough geography and their distance to the Assyrians. The landscape was unsuited for agriculture, resulting in a main way of living of pastoralism, even in their heyday; the 7th century BC. In general, this leaves less archaeological marks than permanent settlements and agriculture. Their material culture is very similar to those of the other cultures in the Near East, though it has its own characteristics; most importantly the decoration patterns of the pottery, making it possible to distinguish them.

Though they were never under their direct control, they paid tribute, probably with manpower and products from their mines. This increased contact effected their economy, social structure, material culture and religion. Probably due to this increasing influence of the Assyrian Empire, they were able to expand to the Negev desert in the Late Iron Age II. An area also inhabited by the Judahites.

Their relationship with Judah has always been hostile. The most important factor for this was probably that both wanted the monopoly on the trade routes through the Wadi ‘Araba. This hostility is also visible in the Bible, though it is said to be the result of the quarrel between their ancestors Jacob and Esau. Apart from a few other texts found in Assyria and Moab, the Bible is still the most rich and important textual source for information about the Edomites, however biased it may be. The difficulty with all known texts is that they give little information about the Edomites in general. It is therefore important to combine archaeology and epigraphy, especially in the search for religion. Religion is always a difficult aspect of a society to grasp, the more so in a society so little is known about. It was not until Horvat Qitmit was found that a more comprehensive picture of Edomite religion began to form, though it is still far from clear.

The single-period site Horvat Qitmit, situated in the Negev Area, was already described cultic from the survey finds, through which it also became clear this was not a Judahite
place, since those often lack anthropomorphic objects. The abstention of statues in Judahite sites may be an indication for an important difference between the two religions. The architectural plan shows it is too small for a habitation site and though the different elements of the architecture are known from other cultures in the Near East, the organization of its plan is unique for Horvat Qitmit and distinguishes it from temples of known cultures. This and the pottery contributed to the identification of the site as Edomite and the latter also dates it to the end of the 7th century BC. Many of the interpretations based on the architecture are speculative, though the three-roomed building may suggest three different deities and the bamah enclosure was apparently the most important for the rituals.

Many of the objects found are not utilitarian and have a mere symbolic value. The head of the deity is the most striking find, which can be associated with fertility, both through its resemblances to goddesses from other cultures and its proximity to many other objects that can be associated to fertility. If the anthropomorphic statues are warriors they may also be associated with the female deity, adding a martial aspect. However, warriors may also be associated with a possible male deity, whose presence, though not found in clear depiction, is indicated by the finds of bulls and Qos inscriptions. The identity of the statues cannot be firmly established, however, and their meaning will remain uncertain.

Though the material culture of the site bears many characteristics from other cultures, e.g. Phoenician, Philistine, Moabite, Judahite and Palestine, none of the objects are a perfect match to objects found at sites of these cultures. Most of the objects have their own features to distinguish them. It is therefore unlikely this site belonged to one of these cultures. Its proximity to the trade routes arouses the possibility the site was used by different people from traveling caravans, but the sites belonged to the Edomites. The site also contributes some to our understanding of Qos. Though small in number and thus inconclusive, this is the first time inscriptions imbedding Qos are found in direct relation with a cultic site. If there are personal names, they confirm that Qos is indeed a theophoric element, as is also seen in the Assyrian texts.

Based on the Bible, a similarity between the religion of the Edomites and the Judahites is suggested. However, Horvat Qitmit does not seem to conform this. Judah absolutized YHWH, whereas the Edomites appear to have had more than one god, at least one of
them female. The Bible is therefore not of help in explaining Edomite religion, at least not in comparison with Ḥorvat Qitmit.

Unfortunately, it’s this uniqueness that complicates the interpretations that can be made based on Ḥorvat Qitmit regarding the Edomite religion. There is no opportunity to compare this site to a very similar one and thus any interpretations made remain uncertain and open for discussion.

Based on Ḥorvat Qitmit one may say the Edomites had a high religious component, accompanied with many rituals. They appear to have had a female deity associated with fertility and a possible martial aspect. There is no conclusive evidence for other deities present at the site, but the three-roomed building, the bull figures and the Qos-inscriptions indicate the presence of a second, male, deity. Qos is the most likely option. There is, however, no evidence for the identity of other deities.
7. Summary

Finding information about the religion of an ancient society is always difficult, especially in the case of an archaeology scarcely represented society like the Edomites. The Edomites inhabited a region of the ancient Near East. Research to this part of the world has been greatly influenced by the political and religious ideas of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, it helped to enlarge our knowledge of this part of the world and recently scholars have become more and more focused on what archaeology can tell us without using the Bible as primary source.

The material cultures of the people in the region are similar in many ways, with only regional differences, making it difficult to distinguish different cultures. However, it became clear from the beginning that Horvat Qitmit was not Judahite, though situated in the Negev. The Edomites expanded to the Negev desert in the seventh century BC and Horvat Qitmit can be dated to this period based on pottery.

The entire site shows the cultic character of the site; its location, its architecture and its objects. The objects are the most explanatory. The head of the female deity is likely to be associated with fertility and possibly a more martial component. The presence of bull figures suggest a male deity and based on the inscriptions it may have been Qos. The architecture raises the possibility of a third deity, but no other indications are found.

Comparison to available textual sources is difficult. Few texts are available and most give little information concerning religion. The names of the Edomite kings from the Assyrian texts are said to contain the theophoric element Qos, supported by the finds of Horvat Qitmit. The site contradicts interpretations based on the Bible. A similar religion was expected between Judah and Edom, the absence of Edomite gods ascribed to its polemical character. Horvat Qitmit suggests otherwise.

The site shows highly intercultural connections and influences, tough it resembles the culture of the Edomites most. Their culture had a high religious aspect, but much is still unknown.
8. Summary in Dutch

Aanwijzingen vinden voor religie is altijd moeilijk, des te meer in een archeologisch slecht gerepresenteerde cultuur zoals die van de Edomieten. De Edomieten bewoonden een gebied in het oude Nabije Oosten. Onderzoek naar dit deel van de wereld is in grote mate beïnvloed door de politieke en religieuze ideeën van de negentiende eeuw. Toch heeft dit onderzoek veel bijgedragen aan onze kennis over dit deel van de wereld en tegenwoordig baseren onderzoekers hun interpretaties steeds meer op archeologie, met de Bijbel als secundaire bron.

The materiale cultuur van de verschillende volken in het gebied lijkt sterk op elkaar en er zijn voornamelijk regionale verschillen. Dit maakt onderscheid tussen culturen moeilijk, maar toch was het gelijk duidelijk dat Horvat Qitmit – hoewel gelegen in de Negev – niet Judees was. De Edomieten breidden zich in de zevende eeuw v. Chr. uit naar de Negev woestijn en Horvat Qitmit kan op basis van het aardewerk met deze cultuur en datum geïdentificeerd worden.

Alles aan de site laat het cultische karakter zien; de locatie, architectuur en vondsten. De voorwerpen zijn het veelzeggendst. Het hoofd van de vrouwelijke godheid kan geassocieerd worden met vruchtbaarheid en mogelijk met oorlog. De aanwezigheid van stierfiguren indiceren een mannelijke godheid, welke gebaseerd op de inscripties Qos zou kunnen zijn. De architectuur rijst de mogelijkheid voor een derde godheid, maar daarvoor zijn verder geen indicaties.

Vergelijking met textuele bronnen is moeilijk; van de weinige bekende teksten zijn er nog minder die te associëren zijn met religie. De Edomitische namen uit de Assyrische teksten zouden een theoforisch element bevatten, wat ondersteund wordt door de inscripties van Horvat Qitmit. Interpretaties op basis van de Bijbel conflicteren met Horvat Qitmit. Gelijkheid tussen de twee godsdiensten werd verwacht, de afwezigheid van Edomitisch goden toegeschreven aan het polemische karakter van de Bijbel. Horvat Qitmit is een mix van verschillende culturen en laat vele connecties en invloeden zien, maar lijkt qua materiële cultuur het meest op die van de Edomieten. Hun cultuur had een rijke religieuze component, maar er is nog steeds meer onbekend dan bekend.
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