



Wardheer News

NEWS FROM AFAR!

THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF PUNT AND ITS FACTOR IN EGYPTIAN HISTORY

Archaeology and Culture

Part IX

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November 20, 2015

The diverse archaeological and cultural aspects observed in Somalia in relation to the case of the Land of Punt are further plausible data and must determine the location of that land. These findings might even adequately constitute a conclusive evidence for the location without a need for the above-discussed information. Somalia shares these archaeo-cultural aspects with the ancient Egypt. The similarities of many, peculiar shared objects and ideas are absolutely beyond expectation.

They consist of new and old archaeological discoveries, and previously-known an unknown extensive ethno-cultural phenomena. It was traditionally known that the northern Somalia was a home of pre-historic painted pastoralist culture and numerous semi-pyramid monuments, but more paintings and new sculptures have recently been discovered in that region.

1) Previously-noted Archeo-cultural Connections

As first-known artifacts, Neolithic blades found in the Doy region, west of Muqdisho, were culturally connected with those discovered at Hilwan in the south of Cairo. Arrows from the same Doy were also found to be similar to others unearthed at Fayyum and Kharjah in Upper Egypt also. These Last Stone Age tools have not been found at any other place in sub-Saharan Africa.¹

Since we are discussing previously-observed ethno-cultural similarities in this section, we mention these artifacts here which are otherwise supposed to be included the below-undertaken archaeological findings.

In general, there is no big difference among the discussion points in this article as a material. But our categorization of the points just relates to the nature of information or the period in which it has been noted by the scholars. If these artifacts were excavated at the beginnings of the

archaeology work in Somalia, the traditional readily-made earthworks play a good role for covering the shortfalls in the work.

Taalla-Tiirriyaat

One of the best examples of these earthworks is the renowned monuments in Somalia which is known as Taallo-Tiirriyaat, the monuments of Tiirri. These unusual ancient cairns are also archaeo-cultural facts for the case. Although these monuments were known by the scholars on Somali studies, they have never been studied adequately.

To draw our attention to this important earthwork which did not receive the required focus, Neville Chittick wrote, “The existence of cairns in many areas of Somaliland, particularly in the North, has long been known. Little work however has been directed towards the archaeological investigation of these monuments termed in Somali Taalo and very few indeed have been excavated”.²

These Taallos or cairns have been identified with the Egyptian pyramids.³ They are culturally identical to the funerary structures in Egypt and Sudan. Seemingly, the two types of structures were built for the same purposes, but the techniques in erecting the Somali one were poorer than that of the Nile valley. The primary aims behind the building of the Taallos were satisfying funeral requirements and preserving the memories on the important persons or ancestors. As it was in Egypt, most of these persons were buried with some of their material possessions.

However the Somali monuments are two numerous and are extensive. They number hundreds of thousands or even millions and they are found on the top or the slope of every stony hill and mount. Their number may vary from one region to another. Their shape is not uniform likewise. Some were formed as a pyramid; others are almost oval; some tombs are encircled by semi-quadratic, rectangular, or round dry stones. However, the differences are largely insignificant in the shape of tombs. They were mostly extended according to the length and width of the deceased. In this respect, the people were tall.⁴

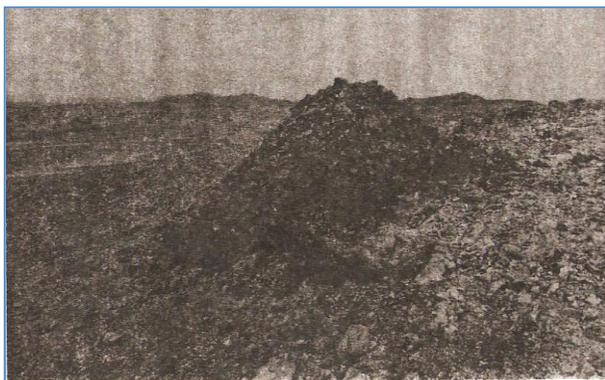


Figure 11: A pyramid-like Taallo, 6.5 m in diameter and 2.0 m high, just outside Ceelayo, immediate west of Bosaso, after Sune Jonsson 1984, in T. Labahn, ed.



Figure 12: semi-pyramid Taallo on the slope of a hill, 2m high, 6m in diameter, Sallaxley valley, 8 KM south of Garowe, by the author.



Figure 13a, Taallo on top of a hill, Geelnoojis 70 KM west of Garowe, by the author.



Figure 13b: the former Taallo in a closer look, by the author.



Figure 14: a Taallo on a slope of a hill in Geelnoojis, 70 KM west of Garowe, by the author.

The high number of the cairns, the vast area they covered, and the similar models they sustained suggests that their construction was continued for thousands of years by a determined culture. Their distribution makes clear that the ancient Somalia was relatively well populated.

Besides the structural uniformity among the models of the monuments, artifacts in excavations at Mandhera (1933) and Harar (1970s) are found to be very similar and belong to a unique culture that existed in the Peninsula. The main item in the artifacts is pottery. A distinctive three-legged type of pottery on a base plate is found in Mandhera and Harar discoveries. The type of Harar however is judged to be more sophisticated for there is a circular and cellar, constructed of dry stone blocks, beneath the cairns.⁵

The distribution of the Taallos mirrors the direction of population movement in the Peninsula. On the basis of the distribution of their number, it is believed that their base was the northeastern Somalia while they are still found in a decreasing number as far as Harar uplands in the west, and the Malindi coast in the south.⁶

Generally, Cal chains, the aromatic highlands looking down the northeastern coast of Somalia, hold the tallest and most well-shaped pyramid tombs across the Peninsula. After these northern littoral heights, the hills of relatively-watered valleys, from Dharoor in the west of Raas Casey to the foothills on the Awdal Plains, contain the largest number of the Taallos in the Somaliland. The reasons appear to be the extent of the period of the work and the size of the population distribution in the area during the era. Still, there is a difference in their quantity and quality across that belt. As regards the western part of the region, the stone-less plains of Awdal in the east and the north of Harar, could not topographically create many Taallos, so the recompense was made in Harar plateau. But in the east, there is different scenario. In the district of Caynabo, for example, in the northwest of Nugaal basin, many cairns can easily be seen on the top of the hills when driving over the highway below the hills.

The more easterly part of the region, the present-day Puntland State of Somalia, contains the highest quantity, and quality, of the Taallos as has been observed. By that observation, in Nugaal basin, seventy five of them can be seen in one site.⁷ Moreover, in the Sallaxley valley, just in the southern suburban of Garowe, at least three types of Taallos can be observed in one of such sites. Like those seen at the coast,⁸ one group of Sallaxley can be judged to be the oldest type of them: they are on the top of a gently-sloping hill with slope-length of about one kilometer; their shape is semi pyramid; there is no big difference in the size of individual stones on the heap; the size is not large because of the kind of the stones used; the heap however is large; the volcanic stones, shiila madow, is strictly used.



Figure 15: oval-shaped Taallo on the top of a hill, 1.5m high, 8m in diameter, field-mate of figure 12, Sallaxley, by the author.



Figure 16: oval-shaped tomb on the foot of the hill, walled by dry stones, Sallaxley, by the author.



Figure 17: Nearly ten tombs on the top of the hill, Sallaxley, Garowe, by the author.



Figure 18: Nearly ten tombs on the foot of the main hill across the former one, Sallaxley, by the author.

In the lower part of the slope, the case is quite different. The cairn is divided into two parts: a tomb in the middle; and separate surrounding wall of larger flat rocks. The wall is circle; and both the tomb and wall, the stone pile is not so large, (figs. 16&18).

But among this type of the cairns, there is very special tomb in a different structure. The tomb in the middle is about 4m in rectangular diameter, and > 1m high; the stones are carefully selected and neatly stacked, then a lot of gravel is put on the flat top of the tomb. The wall is about 8m in diameter, about 1m high; the pile is also bigger. It is generally made of dry stone slabs. It seems that this grave was very important person, probably the chief of the area, (fig. 19).



Figure 19a: well-set dry stone slabs of rectangular tomb, Sallaxley, by the author.



Figure 19b: semi-rectangular wall of the tomb, Sallaxley, by the author.

In general, the latter group of tombs appears to be the last type of the pre-Islamic Taallos. It is possible that they were constructed in the early Islamic era and thus represent transitional stage between the ancient and Islamic models. Their location and features are neither purely Islamic nor pre Islamic. They cannot be assumed to be a lately developed variation. Similar structures can be seen on the summit of some hills which means that the walled and semi-pyramid models existed side by side before Islam. In fact, it also appears that the ongoing Islamic form of the tombs had been modeled from this particular type of Cairns.

As the modern villagers are residing the foothills over these historically fertile valleys and herding their livestock there, hundreds and even thousands of years ago a people who were not much different from them and apparently evolved their language, were similarly grazing their animals in these watered valleys and burying their deceased on the top of these rolling hills.



Figure 20: Modern Sallaxley villagers in herding, by the author.

Across the northern plains towards the South, there is Hawd. Hawd is the central Woodland of Somaliland southeast of Garowe to the southwest of Harar. Nearly hundred years ago, an access to the most of this belt was not easy owing to the scarcity of the ground water, the thickness of the bush and the danger of its ferocious animals like the lion. During the era of building the Taallos, Hawd was apparently a thicker forest and access to it was more difficult. We would expect that the region was scarcely populated at that time, but the earthworks suggest the opposite. Although the region's monuments might be fewer in number and shorter in length still its beautiful hills hold a good number of them seemingly because of the duration of their constructions.

Actually, the deepest and most difficult wells among the strange watering earthworks across the Somaliland were dug in Walwaal fields about 400 KMs west of Garowe. This shows that the struggle of ancient Somali communities to position themselves in this less-watered plateau.



Figure 21: hills of Hawd, Geelnoojis valley, by the author, see also figures 13 & 14.

The number of Taallos decreases in the southeast and the south central due to the size of population distribution at the time and the stone-less open valleys in the area between lower parts of Shabeelle and Tana-Galana rivers. But the number increases in Mandhera-centered Dawa region, in the west of Central Jubba. And even it is not bad in Malindi area where Galana River empties on the coast.⁹

Who built the Taallos?

The construction of the Taallos from the northern coast to Shabeelle Valley is mainly credited to Tiiirri, a people of giants who were most powerful group among the pre-Islamic Somali clans. The Taallos are also sometimes named 'Xabaala Arra-weelo, Arrawelo Tombs, whereas Arrawelo (potentate of the land), was a legendry queen in the era of Tiiirri dominance. We don't know the beginnings of this age-old generation.

In Jubba-Galana region, the tradition attributes these Taallos and other earthworks including Dams; iron-cut, narrow, deep wells; and ruined cities on the coast to madalle generation. Madalle was the most powerful group among the ancient Somali clans in that region. However, it seems that the building of the monuments was started before the era of madalle. With their origin presumed to date back to 3000 years ago, Madalle are considered to be younger than Tiiirri.¹⁰

These ancient funerary earthworks which are identical to the Egyptian pyramids are regarded to be part of Puntite legacy. And the pattern of their distribution excellently conforms to the order of the population expansion in ancient Somalia.

Why did the ancient Somalis erect all the Taallos on the top of stone hills and mountains then put a lot of boulders or basalts on the tombs? The ancient Somalis could not technically erect pyramid-like tombs but they liked to do so by elevating the height of the tombs. The fact that the cairns were put in these high places may indicate the people's recognition of their inability to

construct like Egyptian pyramids and struggle to build them on naturally elevated rocky places as a compensation for the unfinished job.

It may also indicate that, it was not actually due to technical shortfall but it was due to a realistic condition. The construction of the Taallos was not an expensive occasional project that was supposed to be carried out by an order of a king, but it was a routine job that was supposed to be conducted at the death of every important person. Such a job could secure the necessary means for its fulfillment which was not available for such a project. The quantity was then preferred over the quality.

But in vice versa, the topographical circumstances in Egypt might have led the Egyptians to the creation of miracle structures which were modeled from the high-positioned Taallos in Somalia. This means that, the idea of elevating the monuments might had been originated from Somalia but because of their stone-less valleys the Egyptians felt that they are forced to invent an artificial funerary hills remaining devoted to the idea of macro lithic tomb.

Bakhar or Makhar

If the ancient Somalis devoted to maintain the memorization of their forefathers by overground structure they also dedicated to preserve the freshness of their harvests by underground structure. Another fascinating shared earthwork is a grain reservation technique that is called bakhar or makhar system. The practice carries archaeological, economic, and linguistic information. Both in Somalia and ancient Egypt the technique regards the augmentation of crop consumption. The crops are stored in underground hole or in another storing device. There are two main purposes for storing the food this way:

- Saving a portion of the harvest for a future consumption in case the agricultural production fails in the future by one reason or another.
- Preserving the freshness of the grain by this storing system, bakhar/makhar, for an extended period of time.

In ancient Egypt the practice was mentioned in a story that relates to the experience of Joseph, son of Jacob, in Egypt about 3800 years ago. In the Qur'anic story that beautifully details the experience, we are told that the Egyptians were storing some of their harvests within their ears for the future consumption.¹¹ The existence of the practice is affirmed by the archeology. It shows that even the pre-dynastic Egyptians were storing the surplus of their harvests in large clay bins.¹² At the time of Joseph, the Egyptians developed underground or over ground food storing system named makhar.

Similarly, the Somalis adopted a long time ago underground crop storehouse for the above-mentioned aims. The Somali farmers dig a 4 to 6 meter hole, quadratic or semi-quadratic, to preserve some of the newly harvested crops within its ears and a convenient bag for the long term consumption in case the future harvests fail. This system is called Bakhar or Bakar, Bakhar

Bakar. (It will be remembered that the biggest business center in Somalia at muqdisho today is called ‘Bakara-ha, the Bakara, referring to the historical role of the site for being a center for Bakhar system.)

Apparently the two terms, bakhar and makhar, have emanated from the same root. In both languages the term literally means store or food storing system. The similarities in the name, the purpose, and the technique are self-explaining scientific evidence for a millennia-old cultural relationship between the two people.

Bakhar/makhar is not the only food production term rooted in the origins of the two cultures.¹³ Other terms for the case, for instance, include:

Som	beer	sarey	coot	dhef	adab	hoy	wado
Egy	Pert	saren	cot	defa	adb	ho	wada
Eng	Farm/Crop	wheat	livestock	food	farmland	environment	street

Dhabshid: a Solar New Year

If the agricultural system shows the connections, so do the timekeeping system. Timekeeping system is another area of reference for the shared traits. Both Somalia and ancient Egypt, the beginning of the new traditional year is marked by similar kind of feast named Dabshid in Somalia, and falls on around July 20th. The feast is mainly characterized by kindling a huge fire,¹⁴ games and songs around the bonfires, and prayers and special eating at home. Apart from this general festivity for the New Year, rural areas near Muqdisho and in rural Egypt a stick-fight sportive competitions known as Istun in the former and Tahdiib in the latter are part of the celebrations. Both terms mean stick fight.

In fact it’s not less indicative that this practice relates to the traditional Somali solar calendar and its Egyptian counterpart. Each one of these Solar years consists of 365 days and both based upon the sun. The Somali Solar year is also based on the weekly cycle. Its months are tabulated by a formula of $(7 \times 30 + 5 \times 31)$ months = 365 days. And the number of its days is equally derived from a formula of $7^3 + 7 \times 3 + 1 = 365$ days.¹⁵

Time-related or astronomical cognates have been observed between the Somali and Egyptian calendric systems as shown by the following:

Som	qo-rrax/orra	cir/cirit	dayah	jer	maanta	cawo
Egy	rac	xirit	yacah	ter	manta	khawo
Eng	sun	sky/sunnysky	moon	time	today/day	night

(As we have addressed in section VI, the emphatics x or ḫ and c or 'a, which are not found in the English phonetics, are interchangeable in the Somali and Egyptian as rax and rac; cirit and xirit; and perco and perxo).

Barkin

Besides the public way of life, the examples of the connections similarly appear in the personal lifestyle. The nomadic Somali have had a costume to grow his hair to certain length. In order to straight up the hair in an Afro shape, he applies herbal oil or animal fat to the hair. To manage better the hair style and to protect his Cushitic coiffure from dust and disarray, he always carries a wooden headrest known as Barkin, Barshin or Barshi. This headrest is identified with its ancient Egyptian counterpart which is also known as Barsi. Both Somali and Egyptian terms literally mean Pillow.



Figure 22: The Somali Nomadic Barkin, headrest, (by unknown Somali artist)

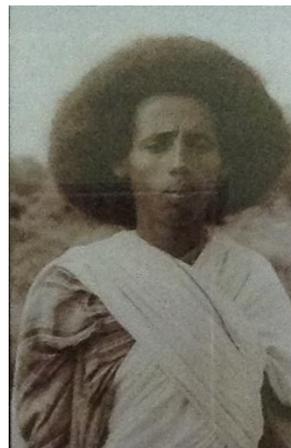


Figure 23: A Nomadic Somali with hair for Barkin, (by unknown Somali artist)

2) Groundbreaking Discovery

“Although a more thorough discussion of the significance of our finds must await completion of detailed analyses, it is clear that northern Somalia holds great promises for providing valuable new data on Quaternary paleoenvironments and the tempo and mode of human cultural evolution in East Africa and the Horn.”, according to Steven Brandt, et al.¹⁶

This was the hope of Mr. Brandt and his team in early 1980s when an archaeological work within a new dimension was directed to northern Somalia. Unfortunately, the destructive Civil

war in Somalia has interrupted maintaining this work and hope. But fortunately, the Somalis have managed to show, in one way or another, that the land really holds that great promise of providing 'valuable new data' especially for the case of the location of Punt.

Not only more informative series of rock painting culture have been revealed in early 2000s in Hargeysa district,¹⁷ but one of the most fascinating archaeological findings have also been discovered in 2012 in the same area by a group described as 'a bare-foot Somali team led by a self-made archaeologist', Moxamed-dheere Cabdi.¹⁸ These sculptured findings substantiate the role of archaeology on the Somali history, and almost decisively the location of Punt.

Ahmed I. Awale, who brought these idiosyncratic discoveries to our attention, compares the statuettes in the discovery with prominent Egyptian statuettes, and finds unequivocal similarities between the two of them. Both types of pictures contain human beings and other important artifacts. "In total, the team unearthed 24 pieces consisting statuettes reminiscent of the pharaohs; huge stone spoons very similar to the traditional Somali wooden spoon 'Fandhaal; terra cotta stone bowls with covers made from the same material, and a strange looking stone made into the form of a vulture." Awale observed.¹⁹

He concludes that the Somali artifacts represent the Puntite culture and thus Punt cannot be other than northern part of the Somali Peninsula. The details of the discoveries are undertaken on his work '*The Mystery of Land of Punt Unravelling*', but here we will show only the personages and the notes of their comparison. Awale calls these human beings 'Puntites'. These objects contain information concerning culture and physical anthropology. The information thus covers comparing people with people and also culture with culture. These sculptures and paints actually further explain the idea of community and culture emigration from northern Somalia to Egypt at the beginning of dynastic era in Egypt. The evidences are challenging us in raising a question of why had the Somali and Egyptian artists have same things in mind as shown by the following:



Figure 24: a Puntite king with crook, flail, divine, osird beard, the cobra snake and vulture, after Ahmed Awale, 2013.



Figure 25: Pharaoh Tutankhamun with the flail and crook, divine osird beard, the cobra snake, and vulture, after Awale.



Figure 26: a Puntite looks like Tutankhamun or Hatshepsut, with a headgear, cobra, vulture, and beard, after Awale.



Figure 27: young Tutankhamun, after Awale.



Figure 28: a long-headed Puntite looks like Tutankhamun, after Awale.



Figure 29: a Puntite with human and animal heads looks like the Egyptian crocodile god, Sobek, after Awale.

Awale reports that among the discoveries “there is a stone chiseled into the full shape of a crocodile.”



Figure 30: bronze oil lamp in honor of Sobek, the Egyptian Crocodile god, Awale.

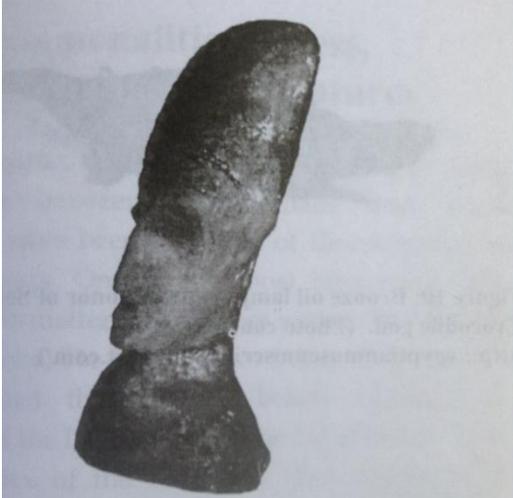


Figure 31: a long-headed Puntite among Hargeysa artifacts, after Awale. As it's known, the Somalis are race of long, narrow skulls with prominent chins and noses. It is not then surprising if ancient artist was preoccupied to elongate their heads.



Figure 32: supposedly a Puntite king with a long head, after Awale.



Figure 33a: a living Somali by the author.

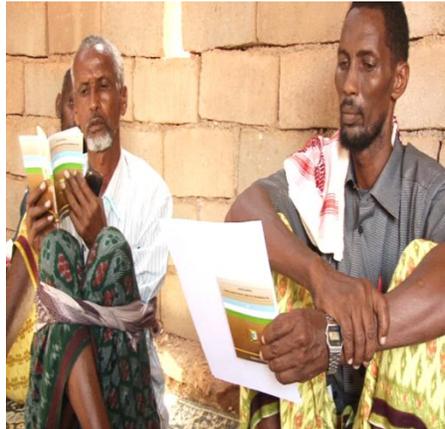


Figure 33b: Living Somalis, after PDRC, 2015.



Figure 34: modern fellah from Upper Egypt, after Gaston Maspero, 1968, V.1, p. 48, from 1894.

As shown by these paintings and the sculptures discovered in the area, Hargeysa district was one of the centers of Pastoralist civilization that begun to flourish in the northern part of the Somali peninsula approximately 5000 years ago. The new excavations give a great impetus to previously known data.

Although the new artifacts are yet to be radiocarbon-dated, their archeological characteristics suggest that their date fall on the general period of the rise of Puntite Kingdom. Since the site of excavations is just few miles away from the center of rock paintings in the area, the two works

must belong to same civilization. Even if the work belong to later ages, it is almost clear that they still trace to Somalo-Egyptian culture whose archaeological older phase in Somalia is yet to be unearthed or simply is represented by the other earthworks.

These statuettes were apparently the kings of this cattle herding society who also invented a kind of script. But still we don't know if these kings were regional leaders of a relatively large nation or if Hargeysa district was once a center for that nation. Most of the evidences on which we base this study suggest that the Raascaseyr-Harar belt, which is centered by Sanaag and Hargeysa regions, was the ancestral home of the Somalis. At the time of Hatchepsut's contact, the base of the major king of that nation is believed to be in the district of Calula, west of Raas Caseyr, the heart of the land of Kheto Anti, as the queen's fleet visited him there. In fact, as we have mentioned above, Calula district is one of the centers of 'the tallest and most well-shaped pyramid tombs' in the country.

When the sculptured art can be assumed as manifestations of political life, the expressions for the economic life are more conceivable. Economic priorities and practices, and the features of their similarities between the two countries were clearly expressed in the painted art.



Figure 35a: a cattle herding Somali scene with cows and regarding people in cave paintings near Hargeysa, after Gutherz, et al. 2011.



Figure 35b: Hargeysa rock paintings, after Xavier Gutherz et al. 2011.

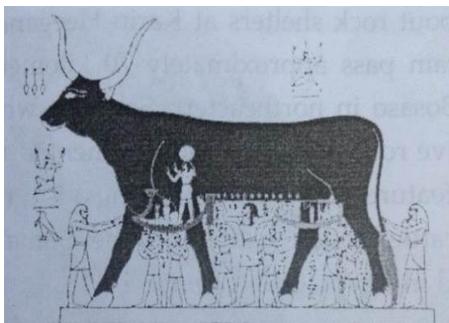


Figure 36: Hathur at Deir-el-Bahri with regarding somebodies, after Awale.

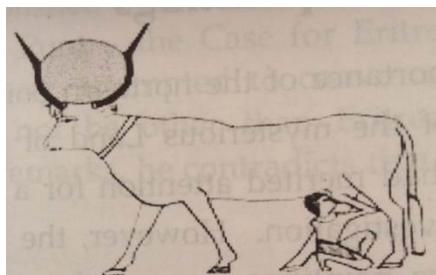


Figure 37: as cattle was a major economic factor in Egypt, Hatchepsut is suckling Hathur, after Awale.

As it well-known, the ancient Egyptians regarded a cow or cattle that were attributed to Punt. The Egyptians told us that the milch cow, Hathur had been originated from Punt and they were accordingly calling her the lady of Punt. It was one of the main deities of the country. This means that some of the cattle, one of the primary income sources in the country, were rooted in Punt.

On the other hand, the scholars on the Somali history today agree on that the inhabitants of pre-historic Somalia attached a great importance to the cattle economically and spiritually. They have engraved that from 5000 years ago towards on the numerous rock paintings which are common in the northern half of the Somali Peninsula.

Why did the Hatshepsut's delegation declare after they were received by the Puntite monarch that the gifts they brought with them were sent by 'the lady of Punt', and show that the most appreciable economic setting of the Puntites was the cattle? We do not have many choices of answers for the question. The only apparent answer is that, because these Puntites were representing that cattle-loving nation in the Peninsula.

It is difficult to think about any difference between the ideas behind the Somali-Egyptian painted pictures regarding the case of the cows and the culture they carry and transmit to us, except that the art was always more fine in Egypt. Like there is artistic difference between the Somali Taallos and the Egyptian pyramids, there is a technical disparity between the other artifacts of the two sides although they still unambiguously show that they represent two interlinked cultures. The difference is always in the quality of the art and not in the background of the idea.

3) Survival of Puntite Attire

The Egyptian-depicted Puntite lifestyle, be it cloth or food, has not only been recognized in the traditional Somali way of life, but it still persists to be part of their ongoing culture. The noticeable livelihood source of the Puntites is represented by cattle whose case we have just addressed. As an element of artifact, the dress of the Puntites contributes well to the understandings of the identity of that nation of tall men. The main attire of the king and his men consist of three features: dagger, leather skirt, and hairstyle.

Let us examine why these apparels were displayed as an important items in the Puntite culture under the light of their history in the Somali culture. The king dresses a leather skirt, a dagger, and beard. The regular men wear the same leather but since they were loading the products of their country on the Egyptian ships, they do not show having a dagger. However, their hair is covered with a thick liquid, a solution made of limestone.

The case of the dagger in relation to the case of Punt and to the Somali costume has been noted by a number of scholars. Vinigi Grottanelli, who was so reluctant to give credit to the Somalis for the origin of many historical items that had been collected from Somalia by colonial

authorities, particularly those involve metal work or artistic phenomenon, is in exceptional view on the case of one item, a dagger.

In general, we know that the type of the dagger in question has historically been made and worn at the belt by only the Somalis, Afars, and Yemenis. But he asserts that, among the variations of this type of dagger, the Somali one is absolutely a unique indigenous model. The investigator observes, “The Somali ... have long had, and still retain, a typical cutting weapon, a straight bladed dagger of a design peculiar to them alone. That this weapon is traditionally old among them, is proved by the ancient Somali rock-engravings ... which faithfully reproduce the unmistakable shape of their hilts and straight double edged blades.”

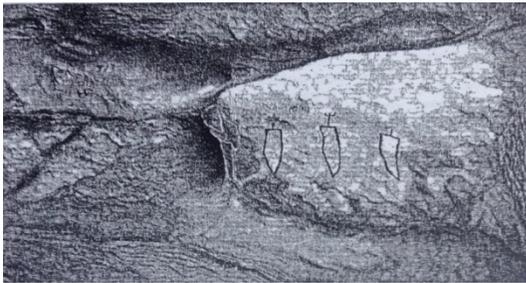


Figure 38: Buur Haybe ancient rock engravings, west of Muqdisho, documented by P. Graziosi, 1940, after Grottanelli, 1947.



Figure 39a: a model of Somali Toori, after Grottanelli, 1947.



Figure 39b: models of Somali Toori, in private possession, unknown artist.



Figure 40: a Somali Toori and its cover, by the author.

Grottanelli continues to explain that even when the Somalis adopted a long time ago manufacturing what was called ‘Somali dagger-sword and sabre’, they just modeled these weapons from the original dagger: “It is a fact that the Somali departed so unwillingly from this particular type, that when they started forging swords for themselves they remained faithful to the same model, merely making the blade longer.”²⁰

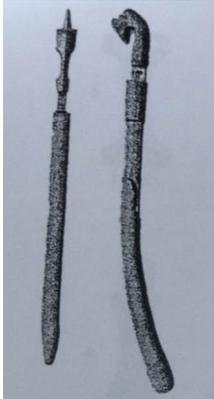


Figure 41: Somali dagger-sword & sabre, after

Since 1880s, a number of scholars including Grottanelli, have maintained to identify the Somali model of dagger or daggers “with that worn at the belt by Punt chiefs as depicted in the Deir-el-Bahri wall paintings.”²¹ As has been noted by most of these authorities, the dagger has many names in the Somali such as Billaawe, Amley, Toorri, Golxob.

The dagger’s antiquity in Somalia is not only shown by these ethnographical facts but also by linguistic facts. Linguistically, the origins of the item appear tracing back to Proto Somali if not Proto Eastern Cushitic. A number of nations relate the weapon to the Somali in one way or another. The Oromo borrowed the terms ‘amley and billaawe’ from the Somali. The East Africans call it ‘Seef Somali’ (Somali sword).

And other nations in the region borrowed the item directly or indirectly from the Somali under the term ‘toorri’ such as following:

- Yaku, Eastern Cushitic in Kenya: toor
- Mbugu, Southern Cushitic in Tanzania: toora
- Some Omitic groups: toora
- Amharic: toor.²²

Since the term appears in different places of Cushitic sphere that may suggest that it is not only from the Somali origin but also from a common Cushitic heritage. Even if that is the case, the fact that the Somalis have had an opportunity to use the iron over the Cushitics other than Afar-Saho, and the item’s outstanding status in the Somali culture still maintain its unique position in the Somali history.

The second case of the attires in point is that of the Puntites’ skirt. As Ahmed Awale reminds us, the Puntite leather kilt can easily be identified with the ‘Dhuu’,²³ a dress made of hide and have been worn by the Somalis from time immemorial. The dhuu is made of soft hides of the animals and it is attired when the clothes are not available by one reason or another.

A definite description of the ‘Dhuu’ is found Chinese old record. Tuan Ch’eng-shih wrote around 850 CE and his book contains information on the Somali’s culture and trade. In this information regarding the people of the land of ‘Berbera’, he tells us: “They have no clothes, but they wrap around their waist a sheep’s skin witch hangs down and covers them. Thier women are clean and well behaved.”²⁴ Clearly, this is the today’s dhuu and Puntites’ kilt.

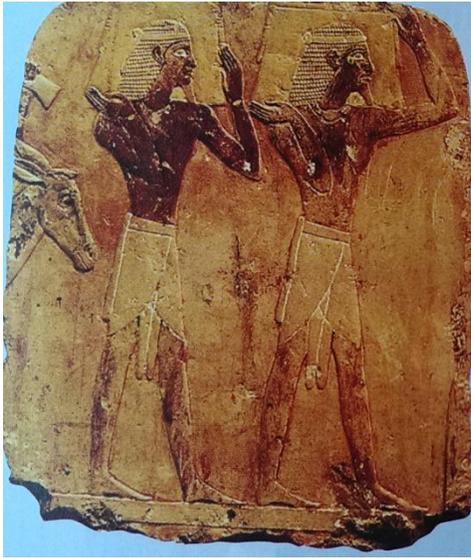


Figure 42a: reproduction of Puntites in figure 3 in section 3.



Figure 42b: reproduction of Puntite king in figure 4 in section 3.

Was the dhuu only available cloth for the Somalis and was that the reason it has persisted in the culture? Clearly, again, it was not. The Chinese author himself attests that hundreds of Persians who were trading with the Somalis were bringing with themselves ‘strips of cloth’, whatever this does mean. Additionally, periplus told us nearly 2000 years ago that the Somalis were importing cotton cloth, girdles from India; and Roman tunics, expensive special dress, from Egypt. It is therefore clear that the clothes were part of merchandises that the ancient Somalis, at least those in the cities, were receiving from their international customers, if they were not themselves weaving a sort of cloth.

But it is equally clear that they have resisted against giving up wearing the dhuu, the attire they inherited from their forefathers. The dhuu was again a subject of interest for medieval observer. A Portuguese writer mentioned in 1569 that the Somalis in the hinterland of Malindi²⁵ had been wearing dhuu and growing the big hair of Barkin that we have noted above. “They cover their heads with stinking clay, the smell being caused by its being mixed with different oils, and to them it is very delicious. ... Their dress consists of the skin of animals”.²⁶

Even the late years of the World War II, when the international trade was interrupted, some Somalis in the rural areas went back to dress up the dhuu. And the name dhuele, the one who wears dhuu, is common among some of the living Somalis as a last name. As we shall mention soon, the tendency of preserving the old norms is noticeable among the Somalis.²⁷

Another feature of this kilt is that, it can be related to the kilt which was worn by the Egyptian men. Unlike the ancient Semitic *qamis* (shirt) which covers the upper part of the body, from the shoulders to the knees, and is not opened in the sides; the Somali and Egyptian kilts

cover the lower part of the body and are opened in the front side. Visiting Egyptians of Hatshapsut's mission clothed exactly the same as the Puntites.²⁸

The resemblance of women's dress is not less obvious. We are reminded again: "Maro, the traditional dress of Somali women dress, is a sheet of cloth wrapped intricately around the body with an elegant shoulder knot, a colorful sash dangling from a waist down, and a decorative belt with a plum dangled from the side which is very similar to the attire of early Egyptian women."²⁹ Aroma-loving behavior of the two people and practices of using the aroma, cosmetics and perfumes, can also be compared.

With the dhuu, the women were wearing a leather coat to cover the upper part of the body almost like maro. The belt on the waist and hanging ribbon which is fixed down from the belt to adorn the dress, be it dhuu or maro, can also be seen both in the Puntite and Egyptian attire. It is called dhacle or faraq, as it is always said: 'dhex-xir iyo dhacle' – belt and dhacle, 'boqor iyo dhacle' – king (special belt) and dhacle, or dhuu faraq leh' – dhuu with faraq.



Figure 43: modernized medieval apparel adopted from the old attire, showing the old shoulder tie (garraar), keydmedia.net, 2012, Muqdisho.



Figure 44a: both male and female clothes are tracing to the old attire. The female dress is particularly remodeled from the fashion in figure 43 and it still recalls the old boqor and dhacle, after Puntland State University, Garowe, 2014.



Figure 44b: Recalling traditional family life, after PSU, Garowe, 2014.

When the Chinese writer was saying nearly 1150 years ago: ‘there women are clean and well behaved’, he was probably referring to the origins of this tradition.

These young men and women have no idea about the existence of Deir-el-Bahri Puntites but they are unknowingly surviving part of their lifestyle because the tradition has just transmitted to them the costume. Although it can be detected that the Somalis have a tendency to accept some drastic changes, they generally hate to abandon the old traits. Rather, they tend to remodel them. We have seen that the name of pre-Islamic God, Waaq, was just transferred to Allah in the Islam. On the same token, like other aspects of the old traditions have been preserved in the ongoing culture of the Somalis, the dhuu has remained in their mind. As the sword was derived from the old dagger, the way of wearing the traditional cloth was modeled from the dhuu.

As there has been a long process of dress style developments, there has also been equal process of dress language developments. The oldest known terms for clothing are hoy and hu. Hoy does not literally mean clothing for its actual meaning is home, housing, shelter, etc. But the word hu seems to be derived from hoy. ‘Hu’ literally means clothing. Hu’ consists of two kinds of clothing: dhuu (leather clothing) and dhar (cotton cloth).

Maro, which means wrapping around the body, was initially a singular word for dhar (plural). But later it formed its own plural (maryo). With this dress style history in Somalia, it is interesting that a common heritage between the Somali and the Egyptian also appears in the language of clothing. Both ‘hoy and hu’ or at least one of them corresponds to the Egyptian word ‘ho or hu’ which means home or environment.

As part of the attire, applying a solution made of limestone to the hair is another case in point. The Somalis, particularly the young male, have long been practicing an action of Shampooing and conditioning the hair by a natural solution called ‘darro’. As the young ladies were taking care of their hair by a process of brightening and braiding (Tima-tidic), their counterparts were buying the public attention by a process of *darrizing*.

Darro is made of water-washed lime-stone found in the rocky seasonal rivers or 'togs'. After the stone is pounded to powder and mixed with clean water, it is applied to hair like a shampoo. Besides making up the hair, the aim of the operation is to absorb and clean up from the scalp and the hair together the body discharges like dampness, moisture, and dandruff; and also intruders such as dust and lice.

Depending on the requirements of this multi-purpose operation, the darro might be left on the hair a number of hours or even a number of days. Although those young pastoralists have liked to carry out the action at all convenient times, they have been feeling that it is almost necessary to conduct it for special personal actions or community events like intending a marriage or attending at conference.

After the hair is plastered up, it is properly combed to manage the mix as required. The neatly *darrized* hair of the Puntite men is identified with this traditional practice. The Somali term for hair is tema or timo. The Egyptian word for it is sema.

The Puntite king's hair was not however *darrized*. It is not still usual for elders to do that today. Rather the king is depicted as his hair is neatly prepared and his beard is carefully shaped. The beard of another Puntite is equally shaped. As we know, the Egyptians loved to grow a long beard. Even queen Hatshepsut was sometimes wearing such a beard to hold up the norm. The form of Egyptian beard was carefully equated to the form of the Puntite one.

Giving special care to growing the beard has evidently an important place in the Somali culture. Many of the founding fathers of living Somali clans had names that refer to having a beard as a manner of respect. Such names include Garre, the one who nurtures beard; Gardheere, the one who grows a long beard; Garweyne, the one grows a thick beard; and Gar-jante, the one who loves having beard. These ancestors lived approximately prior to the arrival of Islam and early era of Islam.

The only practice that we cannot be observed from today's Somali men is the metal ring on the right leg of the Puntite king. Since the Somali women still place metal rings on the neck and hands, it's possible that the men in ancient times were doing the same on one part of the body or another, but they abandoned that after the arrival of the Islam since the Islam discourages that action from the men.

4) Case of the Religion

A basic religious convergence between the two cultures is quite obvious whereas there was unmistakably a tremendous divergence in the case.

The ancient Egyptians were seen, and still seen, that they were strangely worshipping various animals or the animal form of deities such as cat, cow, ram, bull, falcon, jackal, crocodile, snake, serpent, dog-headed deity, or even non-animal object. Even the pre-Christian Romans who were

themselves worshipping idols ridiculed the images of Egyptian worship as one of the Roman writers, Clement of Alexandria wrote:

“But if you enter the penetralia of the enclosure, and, in haste to behold something better, seek the image that is the inhabitant of the temple, and if any priest of those that sacrifice there, looking grave, and singing a paean in the Egyptian tongue, remove a little of the veil to show the god, he will give you a hearty laugh at the object of worship. For the deity that is sought, to whom you have rushed, will not be found within, but a cat, or a crocodile, or a serpent of the country, or some such beast unworthy of the temple, but quite worthy of a den, a hole, or the dirt. The god of the Egyptians appears a beast rolling on a purple couch.”³⁰

The Egyptians were even prepared to accept foreign deities to fill spiritual and theological gaps that the traditional deities could not supposedly satisfy.³¹ They were then absolutely polytheistic and basically performed their worship in a way we can regard as nonsense.

On the other hand, the case of worship among the ancient Cushitics, or at least the Eastern Cushitics, was totally different from the Egyptian one. As noted by many scholars, and I have explained on another work, the eastern Cushitics were monotheistic worshipping only one god in the heaven named Waaq, the creator, owner, and sustainer of the universe. When Islam began to spread in Somalia nearly 12 centuries ago, the Somalis did not find difference between Waaq and Allah in the Islam. The original meaning of the word Waaq has not been changed and continued to be part of the religious and cultural expressions. Pre-Islamic names of God, Waaq and Eebe, are simply today among other names of Allah.

Within that divergence, still an original unity of the two worshipping systems can be detected. At first, it is obvious that the original belief of the Egyptians had been corrupted over time by internal deviations and external intrusions in the culture. When this is generally unavoidable human nature, it is particularly understandable for the case of Egyptians as their country was natural cross roads of many cultures.

Whatever the cause may be, the Egyptians adopted a tendency of exaggerating the natural human inclination of symbolizing idols as manifestations of the super being or God, and taking the kings for super being.

As shown by some aspects of the Egyptian worship system, a divine super being is turned to be manifested by these deities throughout the course of the history. These aspects demonstrated an existence of a belief of creation in the Egyptian culture. The word ‘ba’ is seen to stand for God, the creator of the world. The name of the main deity, Amun Ra, refers to the sky god doctrine of the Egyptians.³²

Rac means sun in the Egyptian; and the eastern Cushites, sun is orra or qo-rah. Other religious shared terms include tua, prayer in the Egyptian cm: tu-ko (prayer), tuuk (supplication) in the Somali.

It has also been observed that an original god of Egyptians was called wakhar³³ or wagar, if that name can be compared with Waaq. And the Somali culture contains a literature relates to Wagar as slogans, names, or objects that refer to a pre-Islamic regard.³⁴ The regard was not however a worship, as assumed by some, because there is a difference between regarding and worshipping practices.

For example we regard Moses, Muhammad; Mecca, Jerusalem; Ramadan, Christmas, and the like, but we don't worship them principally. Although, therefore, wagar, wakhar, or Waaq might stand for another cultural conjunction, wagar in the Somali is not necessarily a polytheistic phenomenon which also seems to be the case for original Egyptian wagar.

5) Conclusion

In this article, we have discussed some ancient earthworks in Somalia such as the cairns, painted arts, sculptured arts, Neolithic tools, and underground structure of storing the crops. We find that they belong to a single culture that began to flourish in Somalia during the fourth millennium BCE. We also find that, these earthworks are identical to their counter parts in ancient Egypt.

The discussion has also involved prominent attires that are shared by the ancient Egyptians and the Somalis on one hand and the Puntites and present-day Somalis on the other hand. Linkages between the Somali and the Egyptian solar calendars are also noted. Linguistic evidences are always present in the aspects of the study on the Somali-Egypt relationship. The combination of these types of data is what we call *archaeo-cultural connections* in the respect of that relationship.

However, the article is a part of extended case study on the historical bases of the ancient land of Punt and the extent of its relationship with Egypt. On the former articles, we have elucidated unique aspects of trade, products, documentary, linguistics and genetic evidences for the connection. We have also addressed that the inhabitants of pre-historic Somalia did not tell us about themselves by only erected, sculptured and painted arts but similarly by adoption of alphabet whose existence in Northern Somalia was also attested by Pliny of Roma approximately 2000 years ago. The work is the first evidence integration for the topic.

Whether we take collectively or partly the large information we have deliberated on the various articles of the study, one thing is clear: no place in the region still fits for being Punt over Somalia. After many attempts, it has become impossible to disprove the conclusion of Auguste Mariette, a French Egyptologist, who led the idea of identifying Punt with Somalia nearly 140 years ago. Whilst the original evidences have not so far been challenged, more unmistakable evidences do mark the exact location of the land of Punt and the nature of its relationship with Egypt.

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Acknowledgement

As we are at the last one of series of articles on the topic of the title, a task of this type must take many people for contribution in different ways. The full mention of those to whom I owe a debt of gratitude should wait for the formal completion of the study. Here I would like to express my gratitude in advance to Muxammed Cabdullahi Jarfadhi, IT manager and webmaster of Puntland State University, for his tireless technical support; Axmed Ibrahim Awale, for his helpful availability to share with me useful information including his invaluable work ‘The Mystery of Land of Punt Unravelled’; Alice Stevenson of Westerville Public Library, Ohio, for her kindly reading the manuscript of early parts of the articles with great generosity of spirit that inspired and encouraged me; and the administrators of www.Wardheernews.com, for their caring efforts of electronically publishing the articles with professional skill.

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² Neville Chittick, 1992, Cairns and other Drystone Monuments in Somali Regions, in ‘Proceedings of First International Somali Studies’, eds. Hussein Adam and Charles Gesheker, P. 35.

³ Ali Abdirahman Hersi, 1977, The Arab Factor in Somali History.

⁴ The author took the pictures on this work in June 2015.

⁵ Neville Chittick, 1992, P. 35-6.

⁶ Insignificant numbers of them were seen in Addis Ababa area and Kwale district in the south of Mombasa, Kenya.

⁷ Chittick, 1992, p. 38.

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⁹ It is noteworthy to mention here that during the last 25 years treasury robbers have violated a lot of cairns in the country. The major item they have encountered is reportedly a pottery which is probably similar to the types of Harar and Mandhera.

¹⁰ Tiir means pillar, and Tiirri means people of pillar; likewise, madal means assemblage or congregation, Madalle is then people of congress. Both names refer to power and potency.

¹¹ Qur’an, 12: 47, 48, 55.

¹² John Romer, 2012, ‘A History of Ancient Egypt: From the First Farmers to the Great Pyramid Builders’, Thomas Dunne Books, NY, p. 44.

¹³ Other than the word sr+ (for wheat, sorghum, or barley), Egyptian also shares with the Cushitic more words concerning food production such as ari or ab for goat specie; Yawo for cattle specie; and daafi for semi-barley crop.

¹⁴ Other communities in the Horn of Africa like the Abyssinians has a habit of kindling bonfires annually which indicates a Cushitic root.

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- ²⁵ The Portuguese confound the Somalis with a Bantu group named Segeju who were in the vicinity of Malindi at that time.
- ²⁶ Freeman-Grenville, G., 1975, p. 141.
- ²⁷ Even some Oromo communities, the close affinities of the Somalis, were wearing a kind of dhuu as late as twentieth century.
- ²⁸ See figure 5 in section 3.
- ²⁹ Awale, 2013, p. 47.
- ³⁰ *Ancient Egypt in 101 Questions and Answers*, Thomas Schneider (2010) Tr. by David Lorton, ed. by JJ Shirley, Cornell Univ. Press, NY, 2013, p. 133.
- ³¹ *Ibid.* pp. 146-8.
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