

# **The Ancient Kingdom of Punt and its Factor in Egyptian History**

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**Sections V & V1**

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## **V) Ancient Punt as a State**

### **More Traces for Early Civilization**

The meaning of the term ‘state’ is generally relative, depending on the time and interpretation. At the time of Punt, any sizeable, organized community or entity in form of chiefdom, kingdom, or the like, can qualify to be assumed or understood as a state. Punt was definitely that kind of community. However, we neither know its governmental system, nor its geographical border. But I think there are useful clues about the basics of those questions. Punt was not a city-state, but a country. By our reckoning, its coast was at least from Jabuuti to Xaafuun, the entire coast of Aromatic Land. This could allow it to have brought a vast interior land under its control. The would-be location of some of its exports such as myrrh trees, ebony wood, Panthers, gold, also hint that it had an access to relatively remote interior areas.

It appears, for example, that the Somalis were collecting the gold from their mainland for thousands of years but overtime it was depleted at there. They eventually went farther as they were providing it in the medieval times from Damut and Hadiya regions, now in the West and SW of Ethiopia respectively, and from Sufala, (Mozambique). Since the gold was the number two item in the Punt-to-Egyptian trade, and even within later countries, the Puntite traders must had been providing it from far-off places.

The northern Somali unique culture of cairn building and rock painting also suggests that its land was not less than the primary region of the culture, from the eastern coast to Harar uplands. We have already addressed in ‘section 1’ that the inhabitants of Somalia from

the late Old Stone Age onwards had a head start in turning, not only to what is termed food production, but also to recording the main type of their lifestyle and ethnical appearance in paintings.



Figure 10 a lion-looked natural statue from Cal Highlands which look down the Raas Caseyr coast, the heart of Aromatic Land, (after Abdinasir Mohamed Yusuf - Buraale) of Puntland Development and Research Center, 2006. One has to wonder if this is purely nature-made picture or if there was a human intervention for carving it as a lion. Abdinasir believes that there was a human role, but that needs an archaeological confirmation.

Acquiring food production was a prerequisite for settled or stratified society, while having a kind of recording technique is a sign of cultural development. Of more important advancement in these developments is the invention of a writing system by the prehistoric Somalis which naturally means a development in political organization.

This crucial progress particularly supports the existence of organized governance authority or recognized central leadership. Across the region, the Puntite society had established a lettering system of their own. In addition to the naturalistic pictures for the appearance of their racial type and the way of their living, they had additionally a writing system in thousands of schematic figures. The figures or inscriptions cover the lower part of the drawings in a large number as observed by the researchers: “The studies have also revealed that the ancient Puntites developed a system of writing that is yet to be decoded by scientists ... Underneath each of the rock paintings were found ancient inscriptions that archaeologists have not been able to decipher.”<sup>1</sup>

Most of the places have a good number of inscriptions. In Laas Gaal, near Hargeysa, there are as many as 600 inscriptions in the scene; and in the Lag Oda, near Dirir Dhabe, there are about 800 of them. But these are only a few places that are investigated.

The proof for the existence of a writing system in Pre-historic Somalia is not only on the rocks, it is on a record also. Pliny attests again that there were two inside gates in Port of Isis – Zailac, “on one of which are some stone monuments with inscriptions in unknown alphabet.”<sup>2</sup> The statement suggests that the inscriptions were in use in the cities. Those of them we know today have survived because the cave protection. But those that were in open places, like old ZayLac and other semi-urban centers, faded within these lost towns.

The inventors of that culture are viewed today as a people that created, as demonstrated by their work, an “advanced, sophisticated, and affluent culture consistent with a more settled society”. They took time to adorn their cattle with ceremonial attire and ornaments fashioned from artistic metal or semi metal objects. Their craftsmen were specialized practitioners that produced a high quality of arts in their paintings and drawings. Despite the effects of age, human activities, weather decomposition, and other natural conditions, the quality of their work endured thousands of years and retained its clear designs and solid colors.<sup>3</sup>

As such, this people preserved an important phase of their history by inscriptions, and pictures which were styled by at least eight different colors. This itself is a sign of an existence of foundations for intellectual and technological developments during that early phase of their history.

Did the Puntites borrow the technique of engraving the ideas? Generally, the culture of expressing ideas in pictures or inscriptions begun in Sumero-Akkadian Iraq and subsequently spread throughout the region. From Puntites in the south and Hittites in the north, and from Elamites in the east and Mycenaeans in the west, many nations in that region developed a kind of writing system. Other groups in the region which invented their inscriptions were the Egyptians, non-Akkadian Semitics, and the Cushitic Sudanese as the latest one.

But what we can see, on one hand, is that the various inscriptions of these cultures were mostly developed separately. While we can't rule out an idea exchange among these civilizations, one nation's alphabet was not technically borrowed from another for most of the cases because the alphabets are not in a same form. On the other hand, technical borrowing had in fact occurred. The Hittites took the Sumero-Akkadian alphabet. The Semitic inscription (Aramaic, Phoenician, Arabic, and Abyssinian at a later time) took different forms but shared a technical root.

Seemingly, that is not the case for Cushitics or Northeast Africans (Egyptians, Puntites, and Sudanese). As far as we can observe, the methods of their inscriptions are totally different. But still a common heritage in the ideas is highly probable. Since the development of Heliography and Puntigraphy took place during same periods, it is not impossible that a common heritage was actually the case for the progress. But still, although the Egyptian was efficiently used, we don't know which one of them was the original source.

This cultural achievement of early Somalis is corroborated by the level of lifestyle development of their successors, the people in the Somali cities and their country during the Greco-Roman era. On the bases of their trade enterprise, they were an urbanized and relatively advanced society which was not only exporting various goods, but also importing a lot of goods from various countries such as India, Arabia, Egypt, Persia, and Mediterranean countries. The type of imports reveals the level of the needs of the people and their life standard (see below, the next section).

## **A Valuable Partner of Egypt**

Egyptians have considered Punt as a viable state whose rulers were partners of theirs. Besides cultural and commercial details, Hatshepsut's naval mission pictures also carry political information. A Puntite King was shown receiving a diplomatic note with sizeable quantity of merchandise and presents from Egyptian rulers through the commander of the expedition. The note contents of course included remarks recommending the mission to the Puntite authorities. Accordingly, "The report declares that members of the mission were continuously feasted and entertained, and the head guest of honor, was boarded in the king's residence during the whole period of the mission's stay."<sup>4</sup>

The diplomatic dispatch received by the Puntite King from Hatsephut might suggest that the system of communication of two sides was sometimes included a documentary approach within mutual understanding condition. This is also reflected by a symbolical affinity. Probably because of being an office or cultural requirement, the always Somali-worn dagger was shown as part of the Puntite King's dress. As another sign of office traditions, the Puntite Monarch is also depicted with long beard in a shape like the Egyptian ones. Montet observes:

"The artificial beard worn by Pharaohs and the Egyptian Gods is an imitation of the natural one worn by the men of Punt. It may be wondered whether, at some point, the letter did not leave the country of god and settle in Egypt introducing some of their own customs and perhaps their gods."<sup>5</sup>

These resemblances in some political aspects are also evidenced by the similarities of some Somalo-Egyptian royal and governance terms such as: Perho = Per'o (King), Ati = Hati (Queen or Princess), Hab = Hap (System), Xeer = Xer (Law). These political affinities are just part of broad cultural connections that will be addressed in section X.

The continuity of Egyptian recognition toward the Puntite political partnership suggests a long running political system in Punt. But the question is, why was the relationship with Punt so special to the Egyptians? It appears that there were three reasons as following:

Socio-Culture Connection: There was a feeling or belief among leading Egyptian elite that their ancestors had originated, in one way or another, from Punt. The regard created a social affiliation and brotherly linkage which, in turn, affected the political stance of Egypt toward Punt.

Econo-Ideological Dependence: since the Egyptians regarded Punt as Land of God and required its commodities mainly for religious purposes, they developed an ideologized economic dependence on Punt. The Puntites on their part were enjoying this politically respectful and economically profitable intercourse. This ideological-driven economic interdependence had resulted in a mutual respect exchange in the politics.

Geopolitical Condition: Punt was relatively far from Egypt. There was a vast land and various nations between the two sides. That condition left Punt in a position that it couldn't endanger the interests of Egypt. As a result there was no factor for a clash or risk on the friendship.

The Egyptians frequently recorded their political or security concerns and even military confrontations against many groups from Iraq and Anatolia to southern and eastern Sudan. They were always specifying their names but they never called 'punt' any one of them. Unlike these groups, the relationship with Puntites was approachable and pleasant. They were always friends of the Egyptians. Of course the two systems cannot technologically be comparable. But as a sister state, Egyptians had never expressed Punt's political status as subordination. And even they stated that commercially, the Puntites were feeling their merchandise were superior to Egyptian ones. Egypt had no choice but to regard and deal with Punt as a valued partner state.

### **What Kind of State?**

Naturally, if there is a working system with secured borders, there is a state of success in politics. Apart from that, the then economic and cultural conditions indicate that there was a working system in Somalia at that time. But what was the nature of that system politically? Clearly, its borders were secure not only because of the nature of its geographical location but also an absence of more competitive powers in its region. It was then more than a tribal organization. Was it pristine or original state, which means a state or chiefdom just emerged from tribal level society? The duration of its existence and above-mentioned political, economic, and cultural situations suggest that it quite overcame the stage. Was it then a competitive level state? This kind of state occurs when the former gets well established, capable of organizational growth and territorial expansion by aggressive action or by natural move.

States are better organized and usually more powerful than the neighboring tribal-level communities. An organized, large genealogical group can qualify to be a state. If a state wants to expand, there is one of two choices for the surrounding tribes: to organize themselves and emulate the state; or to succumb to its power and allow to be conquered. The Puntites or ancient Somalis had not encountered that kind of circumstances.

But still a challenge is necessary for the progress of a competitive state. Such state was not depending only on its domestic political situation, but also on general political developments of its region. The political conditions of other groups in the region could be an important helping factor for its development if they were weaker, but also a back-holding element if they could not offer a meaningful competition at all. Although it appears that the two conditions had concurrently existed; we do not know which one of them was affecting more.

The cohesion of the Somali as a nation for a long period in a large territory means that there has been, at least, an ethnic based organization of governance and statehood. Kingdom of Punt had probably enjoyed that kind of government and statehood.

## **V1) Trade Dimensions**

### **Developments**

“What is clearer is that approximately in the ancient era, the coastal areas of the Somali Peninsula were a prominent part of a prosperous early trading emporium that linked up inhabitants of several coastal enclaves with the visitors from Eurasia. One of these societies was recorded in ancient Egyptian sources as the Land of Punt”, according to Professor Raphael Njoku.<sup>6</sup>

If the role of the sea, and other water ways, were the backbone for human communication and resultant developments, the history of trade movements on the Somali coast shows that this coast was one of the areas that have played a pilot role for the development. Its role had brought the leading civilizations of the ancient world into Somalia or took Somalia to royal courts and ritual temples of these civilizations, of which Egypt was one of the first and most important among them.

The most interesting aspect of the Somali trading activity was its interaction with the external world. The Punt-Egyptian interaction stands for a pioneering successful maritime Enterprise in the history of human civilization. It marks a relationship between two trading nations which came into contact with one another by the greater Red Sea. Interestingly, there was a material inequality in the trade between the two sides. Along with an Egyptian recognition, the Puntites believed that: "Their produce is clearly more valuable than anything the Egyptians have to exchange."<sup>7</sup>



Both the enterprising attitude of the Puntites and the exotic products of their country fit well for the trading culture and material type of present Somalia. Although we may not read it from many of the modern documents, actually the old records have transmitted that the ancient Somalis were the most successful traders in the North East Africa. A mainly pastoralist country, Somalia has also historically been a mercantile nation.

From pre-historic times, civilizations of the known world could not avoid having commercial links with the Somalis: Egyptians, Summer-Akkadians, Arabs; Phoenicians, Israelites; Persians, Greeks, Romans, Indians; Northeast Africans; and finally China, Bengal, Ceylon, Maldives, Sumatra, and Malay encounter Somali traders at one point or another or sent their ships or traders to Somalia, bringing back some rare but highly demanded commodities. And many of them noted the products and trade activities of the country, and some other aspects of its culture. The Egyptians became different only because they recorded their travels relatively in detail at earlier time.

### **With the Arabs**

During the same era Arabs were apparently another nation that was actively involved in trade with the Somalis. There was a late documentation in which it is shown that across Somalia the Arabs were one of the earliest and most active nations that had been undertaking economical engagements and even migratory movements toward Somalia. The geographic circumstances provided unparalleled opportunity for each side to access to the other side. Within this opportunity the nations in the region developed business oriented norms which resulted in effective commercial exchanges among them, and turned the Red Sea and other related waters facing Somalia and Arabia into one of the busiest maritime outlets in the ancient world.

Hardworking, ancient Arab merchants eventually could not miss the opportunity furnished for them by the rewarding market of Somalia. When the Greek came to the Somali shores more than 2000 years ago, they found the Yemenis as a leading nation among those trading with the Somalis.

The Greeks promptly learned about this age-old Somalo-Arab commercial intercourse. Describing them as the best navigators, Agatharchides communicated prior to 150 BCE that the Sabaians (Yemenis) were traveling and establishing settlements in the Aromatic land.<sup>8</sup>



About two centuries later the author of Periplus frequently states that there was a great deal of commercial exchanges between the Berbers (Somalis) throughout their coast, and the Arabians who were under lawful kings including Sharaxbil and under local names such as Mapharitis (Ma'rib), Homerites (Himyar), and Sabaites (Saba), through their main Port Muza (Mukha).

The curious merchant further reported that commercial, social, and political relationships had already taken place between the Berbers (Somalis) and the south Arabians who “send thither many large ships; using Arab captains and agents, who are familiar with the natives and intermarry with them, and who know the whole coast and understand the language.”

The relationship was established, he added, in some ancient time or the beginning of the first state in Arabia.

This view on the commerce was clarified and applied to the whole of Somalia by Cosmas Indicopleustes, an Alexandrian who sailed as far as Sri Lanka in 525 CE as a merchant but wrote in 547. He visited Adula and went through the northern coast of Somalia. By personal and by traditional experiences, he knew that the Somali-Afars and Aksumites were in two separate geographical and political systems, although he was still of the old opinion that they both were part of a greater Eathioopia. He was also aware of that the Somali traders were bringing some of the exports from remote interior areas. He told us:

“The region which produces frankincense is situated at the projecting parts of Eathioopia, and lies inland, but is washed by the ocean on the other side. Hence the inhabitants of Barbaria, being near at hand, go up into the interior and, engaging in traffic with the natives, bring back from them any kinds of spices, frankincense, cassia, calamus, and many other articles of merchandise, which they afterwards send by sea to Adule, to the country of the Homerites, to further India, and to Persia.”<sup>9</sup>

Those Somalis, thus, were not only actively participating in the international trade, but they were also contributing to the development of trading opportunities for the much-focused Adula by the modern historiography in the favor of Aksum.

What does ‘the state that is become first in Arabia’ mean here? Before Saba and Himyar, Qahtan had existed. Saba and Himyar are in fact the same group. According to Arab tradition Himyar is the son of Saba. At that time Himyarites were the strongest tribe among the Sabaites or the Arabians in general. Saba and his grand grand ancestor, Qahtan, are reportedly descended from Saam, the supposed founder of the Semitics. But they were not the founders of Proto-Arabs. They were just part of early Arab communities, and progenitors of prominent clans, among the founders of tribal states in Arabia from which the Sabaite civilization developed some time in the second Millennium BCE.

As the Somalis and Arabs are separated only by the Red Sea, their relations trace back to the beginnings of the two communities, as revealed by linguistics and Pre-Islamic cultures also. Even the term ‘Somali’ is believed to be a product of this pre-historic trade with Arabia. The name is identified with the Arabic word ‘Zu Maal’ which means the wealthy one. Such Etymology is in fact highly probable because according to the Old Testament there was such a name (Abu-Maal or Abi-Maal) in the region by the same meaning. Moreover, the Somali as a wealthy trader was mentioned in the medieval Arabic literature.

We don’t know if the Somalis were immigrating to Arabia before the Islam, but we do know they were doing so in the medieval times as they originated some prominent clans in Arabia and Egypt where they were originally known as Jabartis or Zaylites. On the historical course, the emigrating Arabs could not colonize or transform the indigenous Somalis, as they did in other places in Northeast Africa. Rather, they were continuously assimilated by the Somalis.

### **With Others**

During the same time or later, other Afroasiatic civilizations, including Babylonians, Phoenicians, and Israelites, had traded with the Somalis at one time or another. With the seafaring history in the Middle East being older and more developed than thought previously,<sup>10</sup> the earliest Somalo-Arab trade contacts probably gave clues for the ancient Southern Iraqis, Sumero-Akkadians, to go to the North Eastern shores of Somalia. The inscriptions of Sumero-Akkadians frequently mentioned melukhkha or Melukha, the black land or land of blackmen, with which they had established a trading relationship from about more than 4,000 years ago to the middle of the first Millennium BCE.

Their boats were sailing there some times, but Sargon, the founder of Akkad, mentioned that Melukhan boat or boats rode at anchor in his capital Agade, later Akkad near Babil. Melukhkha, a prosperous country rich in cattle, trees, birds, reeds, gold, and silver, which was exporting to Iraq some prized stones and woods through the sea, has been identified with the Horn of Africa, and particularly with Somalia since it is the entrance of the region for Iraq.<sup>11</sup>

As their land was a stoneless valley, the ancient Iraqis required and received precious stones from different countries for constructing their ritual temples. Precious stones are still found and searched in the mountains looking down Boosaaso which makes more probable that Somalia was one of these countries. Melukha had always been mentioned with a country called ‘Magan’ which is identified with Egypt. The Prophet Abraham’s emigration to Egypt and Arabia is another indication that the Iraqis had a tendency to go to the deep south.

It has once been suggested that Melukha could have initially been Arabia but later a name shift occurred and the term was transferred to the Horn of Africa. Samuel Kramer, however, insists that there is no sign of toponymic shift throughout the whole time of mentioning Melukha, and the texts continuously pointed out that the land was the Horn of Africa or ancient Eathioia which was from Northern Sudan to Northern Somalia.<sup>12</sup>

Two other nations that had probably traded with the Somalis at one time or another were the Israelites and Phoenicians. The Jewish bible mentioned in the book of 'kings' that King Solomon was sending a maritime expedition to a place called Ophir down the southern end of the Red Sea. Ophir is identified with Somalia as identical with Punt because the distance of the place and the fact that the imports of the king from Ophir (gold, silver, ivory, and two kinds of monkeys), were all among the products obtained by Egyptians from Punt.<sup>13</sup>

Inheriting a viable state from his father, David, King Solomon developed that state economically, technologically, and militarily. That development enabled him to reach distant countries like Yemen and probably Somalia through maritime voyages and other ways of communication.<sup>14</sup>

The Israelites were probably inspired by the seagoing achievement of their northern neighbors, the Phoenicians. In fact, the Phoenicians of Tyre assisted the king to conduct these voyages,<sup>15</sup> and it seems that they later led an Egyptian expedition to Punt and beyond. This able sea-faring people could not then fail to sail to the Aromatic land, Somalia. Similarly, there is a sign of Mycenaean commercial involvement in the Northern Somalia.<sup>16</sup>

During a few centuries prior to the birth of Jesus, these Afroasiatic civilizations trading with the Somalis were followed by the Indo-Europeans such as Greeks, Romans, Persians, and Indians. By the second half of the first millennium CE or earlier, they were joined by the far east Asians as far as China, Sumatra (Indonesia), and Malay, as will be addressed in section X1.

### **Factors for the Trade Developments**

If the trading activity has always been one of the basic components that have constituted the course of the Somali history, this should warrant a question of, was that because of the geographical location of the country, the nature of its products, or the culture of its people? It appears that it has actually been interplay of all these themes. Professor Heeren of Germany has tended, in his studies of

ancient civilizations nearly two centuries ago, to sum up this fact. The following is extracted from his long comment on the antiquity and capacity of the Somali trading culture in which he says:

“The Somalis, a very dark race with woolly hair, neither completely Negroes nor Arabians ... are friendly, well-disposed race. Their Country is natural staple for the commerce between Africa and Arabia, in it the greatest marts are found. Gums, myrrh and frankincense, cattle and slaves, are the commodities exported, in exchange for which, and for gold and ivory, they receive the productions of Arabia and India, more particularly the latter. The great fair for them is Berbera. The frankincense grows chiefly in the neighborhood of Cape Guardefui, and the principal port for exportation is Bunder Kassin [Boosaaso], near Cape Felix [Boolimooq].

The Somalis send in their own vessels (for they have a sort of navigation act to carry for themselves, and to lade no Arabian vessels) to Aden. The situation ... which enables them to take advantage of both monsoons, renders this very easy. The profits of this trade, although the merchants only state it at fifty per cent., is accordingly very great ... This trade, therefore, has continued full a thousand years, notwithstanding all the religious and political changes which have taken place, simply because the nature of the country itself points it out as the most proper staple for the productions of the two quarters of the world ... This trade in the time of Cosmas was already very old, it was very likely to have existed a thousand years before.”<sup>17</sup>

In fact, as noted above, around five centuries before Cosmas, Greco-Roman scholars indicate, along with archaeological evidences, that they found this coast within an old civilization that was economically and culturally partner of ancient Egyptians and of theirs at that time.

Among the various materials from the ancient world found in these centers, include sherds of Mycenaean associated pottery discovered from the lowest deposit of a rectangular building in Xaafuun. In the same port, a base of a vessel is identified with the wide cups of ancient Egyptians. If the identifications are correct, this is another evidence for the existence of some of these centers before 3,000 years ago.<sup>18</sup>

At the time of Heeren’s writing, Boosaaso and Berbera, the representatives of the old leading ports (Mosyllum and Zaylac) were still around the location of their predecessors. Meanwhile, Zaylac has already lost its leading role in that region to Berbera due to the downfall of medieval Awdal state and the resultant population replacement across Harar-Bali highlands.

By a similar view on that history, a British observer during the years of colonial establishments, urging his government to promote trade infrastructures in Somalia because of its unique nature in its region, has simply put it: “The Somali is a born trader”.<sup>19</sup> It was the combination of those economic and cultural aspects that brought the ancient Egyptians to Somalia or took the Somalis to Egypt.

## Trade Aspects as a Lifestyle Reflection

Although some former Greco-Roman writers such as Agatharchides, Strabo, and Pliny, mention trade activities or centers on the Somali coast, the most detailed information on that trade is the Periplus of Erythraean Sea or Periplus Maris Erythraei, a Greek commercial report regarding the second half of first century CE.

After mentioning a market-town on the Sudanese coast and the Eritrean port of Adula, the writer describes the coast of Bab el-Mandab as he says: “From this place [Afar coast] the Arabian Gulf trends toward the east and becomes narrowest just before the gulf of Awalitie.” After the strait, he continues to tell us about the Somali coast: “for those sailing eastward along the same coast, there are other Berber market-towns, known as the ‘‘far-side’’ ports; lying at intervals one after the other, without harbors but having roadsteads where ships can anchor and lie in good weather. The first is called Awalite”.

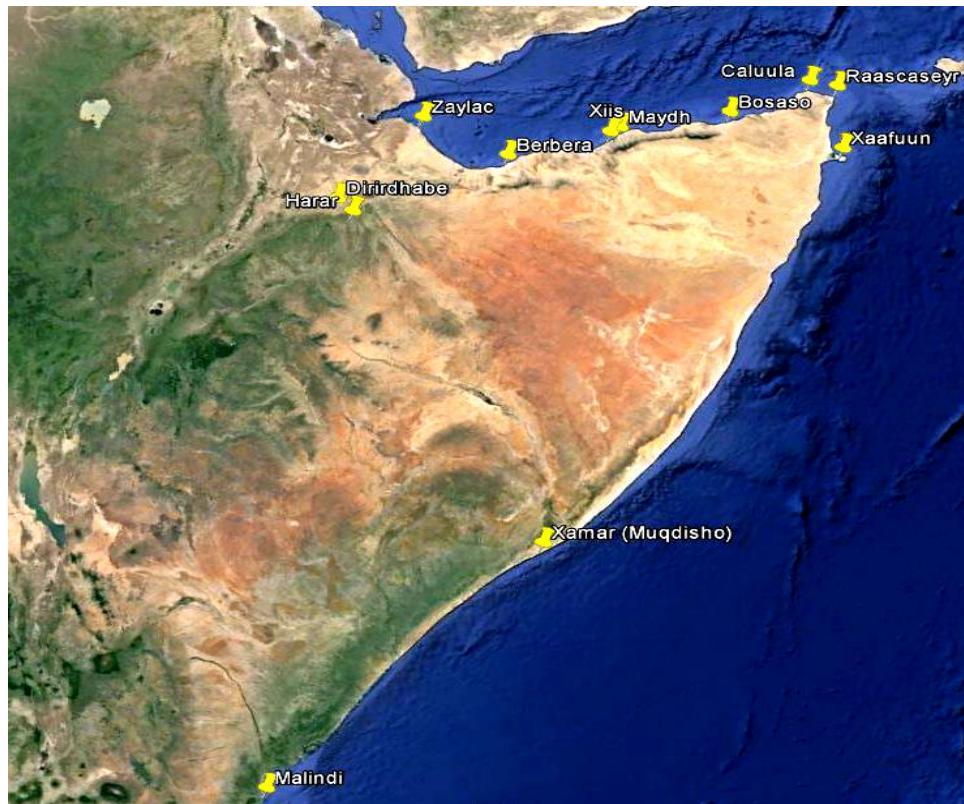
The Greco-Romans were calling today’s Red Sea Arabian Gulf or Erythraei; but from the bay of Jabuuti, they were calling Awalite Gulf, naming after Awdal port (Zaylac). Although the author says ‘without harbors’, other authorities before him use the term for some of the ports in the region. On the coast between Caluula and the Raas (raas means a cape or headland), Strabo reports three ports of which the last one he described as ‘the large harbor’.<sup>20</sup> It was Caluula or Daamo. Similarly, Pliny describes Awalite and Mosyllum or Mosyli as harbors of exportation.

As the author enumerated these market-towns, nine or ten of them were along the Northern coast of Somalia, from Zaylac to Xaafuun, where he elaborated their exports and imports. They were chiefly exporting frankincense and cinnamon, while nowhere else in the African side of the Red Sea including three inland centers: Meroe, Axum, and another one in Eritrea, was exporting a single ounce of these products which explains why they were focusing upon exporting ivory or tortoise-shell.

To draw a picture from this trade activity for the lifestyle priorities of the ancient Somalis, let us mention the main commodities in the exchanges: Exports mainly consist of spices, ivory, tortoiseshell, myrrh, cinnamon, frankincense, fragrant gums, various Indian products, and slaves at one point. Imports contain glass, tin, copper, iron, various metal-made items, gold, and silver coin; dressed, clothes, tunics, cloaks, cotton cloth, girdles; wheat, rice, sugar, sesame oil, clarified butter, herbal medicines, dye or varnishes, grape juice, wine by a few places; and Rhinoceros-horn in the far South.

Some goods like the clarified butter, sesame oil, and others were imported from India to export them to Arabia and probably to the rest of the Horn of Africa or Egypt. Gold was also imported for exportation. It appears that the merchant was particularly interested in internationally-traded items for he did not pay much attention to the livestock products which were a significant part of Somali exports to Arabia.

The author also states that the Somalis were crossing to Arabia on their own small boats. This was probably the case for the trade with India and Egypt as the Egyptians depicted Puntite sailing boats. It is, however, clear that larger boats from other countries were mainly used for this trade. The Periplus-mentioned ports have approximately been identified from west to east with the following:





Awalite (Awdal or Zaylac), Port of Isis of Pliny with Bay of Abalito. Malao (Berbera) 196 KM to the former, was the next. After it, was Mundus (Xiis): There is 'remarkable discoveries' made by Revoil, a French explorer in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 1800s in Salwayn, at Xiis. "There, in and among mounds, he found fragments of glass (including the Millefiori variety) beads, a fragment of an alabaster vase, fragments of amphores and of Samian Pottery."<sup>21</sup> The material is dating to 100 BCE-100 CE approximately. This suggests that the site is the Mundus of the document. It seems that Pliny mentions the site indirectly: after the Bay of Abalito, he places two islands of which one was not inhabited which means the other one was.

Mosyllum: this is Mossylite of Pliny, a cape and harbor; apparently Boosaaso or nearby site in the east, 251 KM from Xiis. But Pliny locates one more town named Gaza before Boosaaso. McCrindle identifies it with Boosaaso,<sup>22</sup> but actually it should be proposed for Qaw, an old town in ruins, little west of Boosaaso.

Neilopotamion or little Nile River: probably Tog Weyne, (means big seasonal river), between Tog Degaan and Bandar Murcanyo; ancient ruins have been found there. This also might be the Nilus or river Isis of Strabo where a temple was in nearby site. The next was Akannai: Caluula 187 KM from Boosaaso and 44 KM from Murcanyo.

Market of Spices: it was previously identified with Ollog, medieval town 8 KM before the Raas, but now it is preferred for Daamo, 5 KM before the Raas, from which an ancient material, some of them were regarded to be of Roman origin, have been discovered.<sup>23</sup> Three KMs are, however, insignificant distance for the difference. We can observe along this coast that the historical location of some of the towns may shift from one site to nearby one with respect to the time.

Tabai was the next one: a port that offers the boats safe shelter, immediate SW of the Raas. After it, Pano is identified with Raas Binna, a port 77 km from the Raas. The last one in this region was Opone: Xaafuun (haphone), an ancient port 156 KM (not 140 KM) SW of the Raas. Some authorities identify Xaafuun, which means foams, referring to the bubbles of high ocean waves of the area, with the term 'punt' which is also read as 'poune'.<sup>24</sup>

After Xaafuun two places, Sarapion and Nikon, were situated on Banaadir coast with no mention of trade activity; and one more center was in the farther south, not far from Malindi. Some of the names have been survived by still existing centers as Somali names in Greek form such as Awdal for Awalite, Xaafuun for Opone, Moxor for Mocortu, and Pano for Binna; and probably magalo for Malao, and mundul for Mundus. As another matter of fact, the frankincense region was the center of the trade activities in the Horn.



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## Notes and References

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<sup>1</sup> Raphael Chijioko Njoku, 2013, 'The History of Somalia', pp. 27, 29.

<sup>2</sup> Pliny, Natural History, book VI, p. 34.

<sup>3</sup> Raphael Njoku, 2013, pp. 28-29.

<sup>4</sup> Ali Abdirahman Hersi, 1977, 'The Arab Factor in Somali History', pp. 50-51.

<sup>5</sup> Piere Montet, 1964, 'Eternal Egypt', p. 123.

<sup>6</sup> Raphael Njoku, 2013, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Lincoln Paine, 2013, The Sea and Civilizations

<sup>8</sup> Richard Ruesch, 1961, 'A History of East Africa', pp. 22-24.

<sup>9</sup> Cosmas Indicopleustes, Christian Topography, (published in 1897), pp. 51-3.

<sup>10</sup> Gavin Menzies and Ian Hudson, 2013, 'Who Discovered America?' (William Morrow), Chap. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Kramer, Samuel, 1963, 'The Summerians, their History, Culture and Character', p. 276; Albright, William Foxwell, 1968, 'Archaeology and the Religion of Isreal', pp. 133-34.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Kramer, 1963, pp. 276-80.

<sup>13</sup> William Albright, 1968, 'Archaeology and the Religion of Israel', pp. 133-34, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore.

<sup>14</sup> The Qur'an, 2: 247-251; 27: 15-38; 34: 10-14; 38: 17-40.

<sup>15</sup> William Albright, 1968, p. 132.

<sup>16</sup> Neville Chittick, 1975, p. 131.

<sup>17</sup> A.H.L. Heeren, 1833, 'Ancient Nations of Africa – Ethiopian Nations (V. iv, Historical Researches ... of Principal Nations of Antiquity)', pp. 326-27.

<sup>18</sup> N. Chittick, 1975, pp. 122, 131.

<sup>19</sup> Harold Anguson, 1911, Somaliland.

<sup>20</sup> Wilfred Schoff, 1974, p. 86.

<sup>21</sup> N. Chittick, 1975, p. 119, referring to Revoil, 1882, pp. 279, 293.

<sup>22</sup> John McCrindle, 1973, 'The Commerce and Navigation of the Erythraean Sea and Ancient India as described by Ktesias the Kuidian', p. 57, (from 1879).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 124.

<sup>24</sup> Wilfred Schoff, p. 87.