

ON THE LOCATION OF RETENU LAND FEATURED IN OLD EGYPTIAN RECORDS

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Abstract

Ever since the land of Retenu appeared in the inscriptions of Egyptian monuments, it was readily assumed to denote Syria- Palestine. Over the subsequent decades, doubt has been cast on this toponymic designation, and attempts have been made to assign an alternative location. This paper addresses the difficulties surrounding such assignment and provides evidence pointing towards a location in the Yemen of south Arabia. The identified location is Wadi Adhanah basin which lies in the center of the country and is considered the largest water resource basin in the country. It was found that toponyms mentioned in the Egyptian monuments and records are identical to the ancient topographical locations in and around Wadi Adhanah. Furthermore, the recent advances in archaeology established a vivid bronze age culture in the Yemen which featured material culture and resources that copies what was recorded in the Egyptian and south Arabian records. The strategic location of the wadi Adhanah and Yemen in general across the Red Sea from Egypt, and its wealth of produce, made it an attractive economic supplier, who was often subjected to the campaigns of the kings of Egypt. Unlike southern Arabia, Syria-Palestine did not have natural and material resources mentioned in the Egyptian records that were obtained from Retenu.

Keywords: Retenu, Arabia, Yemen, Wadi Adhanah, Egyptian inscriptions, Amu people, Punt.

Introduction

The current study concerns itself to a geographical area called Retenu, that appeared in various old Egyptian documents, and was understood to relate to Syria-Palestine. We discuss the literature concerning such land and the various criticisms about its geographical allocation. We hence propose an alternative location for Retenu and provide various evidence to conclude that Retenu is in the Yemen of Arabia, not in the Levant as most researchers placed it. We support our findings by describing geographical regions associated with Retenu in ancient inscriptions and place them in their correct location in Arabia. We hope that this endeavor will generate a fresh scholarly discussion on the subject and its related ethnographical implications.

Methodology

We focus on original sources from Egypt, where most materials related to the Asiatic campaigns of the Egyptian kings and leaders are to be found. Various texts and inscriptions from Egypt are studied afresh and analyzed to arrive at the correct location of the associated events. This required comparative literature study to critically analyze the approaches which lead to the best geographical association of the toponyms that appeared in the sources. We examine as well other written sources whether from Egypt, Arabia, Greek, Roman or the like to complement our findings. This approach necessitates a historical framework of a “Longue Duree”, to incorporate climatology, archaeology, geology, etymology, and material science to capture the most appropriate interpretations of the geographical settings of the events described in the sources. As for sacred sources, we understand the difficulty in ascribing historical and/or geographical association to their texts, and hence use them sparingly to support an otherwise established results or findings.

Literature Survey

Retenu, (variants: Retenu, Rotno, Retjenu, Ruten, Ruthen, Lotanu, Letenu, Litany), surfaced within the geographical areas

neighboring Egypt since a commander called Sinuhe made his adventures during the middle kingdom, travelled from land to land till he was welcomed by the chief of Retenu. The story describes Sinuhe as a noble warrior, in the company of the co-regent Sesotris I in battle, when a message was received that the king "Amenemhet I" has died. Sinuhe decided then to slip away, passing from land to land until he reached Kedem, stayed for a year and a half before he was invited by Enshi, son of Amu, who was the sheikh of Upper Retenu to stay in his land¹. The land of Upper Retenu is largely understood to be the higher Palestine². The Sinuhe text as read by Breasted carries its own difficulties. The original term was "Tenu", corrected by him as Retenu. The land of Kedem was originally read as "Edom", but later corrected to Kedem.³ The hero (Sinuhe) was given a vast tract of resourceful and fertile land to govern called "Yaa" supposedly in Palestine but could not be identified⁴. Gardiner pointed his suspicion about the term Yaa as likely being fictitious⁵, and his discussion leads one to believe that a more likely name was Gebel-Nei or in his conclusive statement "Kpny."⁶

Retenu appeared again during the reign of Sesotris III, in a campaign by a commander called Sebek-Khu, who lead one of the king's Nubian expeditions. This commander was sent to a region called Sekmem, located, we are told, in Syria or Retenu. The expedition was successfully carried, and booty was obtained to the satisfaction of the king. However, no other attempt in Syrian land took place in the whole 12th dynasty.⁷

Doubts about the rendering of Palestine for Retenu surfaced early on. Gardiner (1916) questioned the applicability of Sinuhe story to the features of life in Syria during the 12th dynasty period.

1 Breasted, I, 1906, 233-239. See also Gardiner, 1916, 166.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Gardiner, 1916, 167.

6 Ibid, 22-23.

7 Breasted, I, 1906, 303.

He also criticized and rejected the rendering of Kpny as Jubayl/Byblos, a major city in coastal Lebanon, a notion that was nevertheless widely accepted.⁸ Cerny (1955) declared that no evidence exists to link Retenu with Sinai nor Palestine, adding that the mention of the brother of the prince of Retenu on certain stelae at Serabit (Sinai) is not a proof whatsoever.⁹

Thompson discussed in detail the theories relating the Amu and the Setiu people to Palestine, who were also featured in Sinuhe's story, the Amu being the masters of the country, the Setiu being the troublemakers. He concluded that the evidence for the Amu or the Setiu coming from Palestine or Jordan is weak, and it is more likely that the Amu belong to eastern mountains of Egypt by the Red Sea, since it is a more likely source of the Galina material which the Amu brought to Egypt.¹⁰ Thompson furthermore expressed doubts that Sinuhe's sojourn in Retenu took place in Palestine.¹¹ His analysis extended to a host of Egyptian texts supposedly relating the Amu and the Setiu to Palestine, showing in detail that the evidence for such supposition was not forthcoming.¹² These documents cover a wide range of history that starts from the Old Kingdom.

The suspicion about Levantine allocation for Retenu came also from Posener, stating that "Without knowing the etymology of

8 Gardiner, 1916, 166-167.

9 Cerny, 1955, 3.

10 Thompson, 1974, 122-127. In an informed opinion by Khushaim (1990, 55-59), Amu was used to denote Arabs, and thence developed to the form Ummiy *أمي* to describes the illiterate peoples of Arabia, meaning people ignorant of the holy books. Interestingly, the holy Qur'an repeatedly referred to them as "Ummiyyin", rather than Arabs. We shall see later that the label "Ummiyyin" did not always fit the peoples of Arabia, since they lost their holy book and faith at some point in time.

11 Ibid, 132.

12 Ibid, 118-143. The documents in question were the Instructions of Marikare, the Prophecy of Nepherty, the Admonition of Ipuwer, the Execration texts of Sethe, the Tale of Sinuhe, and the Inscriptions of Beni Hassan Temple.

Retenu for certain, we cannot take it into account in studying the population of Syria and Palestine.¹³ The problem was stated again by Nibbi, saying “The assumption that Retenu referred to Syria or any other far northern area is not supported by any evidence at all if we look at it objectively.”¹⁴ The suspicion of a Palestinian location for Egyptian influence in Asia was reiterated by Ben-Tor, regarding the execration texts written by the Egyptians during the 12th and the 13th dynasties. He concluded that no evidence existed in Palestine during the middle kingdom to justify placement of toponyms of the execration texts in Palestine.¹⁵ Finkelstein reiterated the problem and noticed the absence of ancient (pre-10th century B.C.) literal inscriptions in Palestine, even after one hundred and fifty years of extensive archaeological explorations.¹⁶

Despite these refutations of a northern location for Retenu (in relation to Egypt), its designation as Serio-Palestinian land sustained. Barton, referring to Breasted, stated that one of the Egyptian names for Palestine about 2000 BC was Retenu.¹⁷ Simpson translated Sinuhe’s text taking Syria for Retenu. There were other regions mentioned in the Sinuhe story namely keshu, and Fenkhu, as subject to the king of Egypt at the time. Retenu was shown to be a

13 Posener/Botterro/Kenyon/, 1965, 28.

14 Nibbi, 1997, 93.

15 Ben-Tor, 2006.

16 Finkelstein, 2011.

17 Barton, 1906. The date of 2000 BC for the 12th dynasty is contested. Parker, 1950, 669, placed it from 1991 to 1786 BC, which represents just one of many opinions for chronology of the Egyptian dynasties. Older chronologies have been suggested by various authorities. See for example: Petrie, 1906, 175, who placed it between 3459-3246 BC. Opinions of the beginning of dynastic Egypt differ by over 3000 years, the oldest being 5702 BC and the youngest being 2691 BC, see Mariette, 1892, 86. We have recently established the credibility of the long chronology as given by Petrie (Researches, 1906, 166-176) and others, dating the foundation of dynastic Egypt to around 5510 BC., see Alatiqi, 2023.

closer country subject to the king of Egypt: “not to mention Retenu, for it belongs to you even as your hounds”¹⁸.

Retenu was also featured during the 18th dynasty at the time queen Hatshepsut and king Thutmose III, this time in the annals of the Amun temple at Karnak. The inscriptions featured the country of Ruten (Retenu) the upper, in connection with the countries of Fenekhu (Fenkhu) and Setiu (Sati) people, as well as the city of Megiddo.¹⁹ Further documents revealed details of an important battle of King Thutmose III after he reached the land of Naharin, and fought against the people of Retenu, headed by the ruler of “Kadesh” near “Kina valley”, and culminated by the siege of their city of Megiddo, which the king had subjected and made them surrender with humility. Here again the venue of the battle is thought to be in Syria.²⁰ Researchers reiterated the allocation of Retenu in Syria, among other “northern” localities like Remenen as Lebanon, and Jahy as Palestine.²¹ These designations suffered from vagueness, as they cannot be defined as territories with strictly defined boundaries, with the possibility that they are interconnected.²² On one occasion, gifts were presented to the king of Egypt in a procession that took place in a location within Retenu designated as “Negau”, with the leading person is described as the chief of Remenen.²³ The allocation of Remenen as Lebanon was discredited by some scholars over several decades, as summarized by Nibbi²⁴. Jahy (Djahy), we are told by Nibbi, is a territory that is yet to be properly identified, but its etymology carries the meaning

18 Simpson, 2003, 56-63. We shall deal with Keshu (Kush) later in this study. Fenkhu in all probability refers to the ancient Phoenicia, given by Herodotus as a district by the Eritrean or red Sea, (the Histories,1,1), more to come later.

19 Mariette-Bey, 1875, 2-3.

20 Faulkner, 1942.

21 Panagiotopoulos, 2006.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 Nibbi, 1997, 71-81.

of crossing water and descend by water,²⁵ and she suggested that it could be where the Nile delta branches.²⁶

Discussion

The foregoing introduction highlights the apprehension of some scholars towards a northern location for Retenu. The allocation of Retenu in a geographical location must take into consideration several elements. The geography, that is its relation to its constituents and neighbors must be clearly indicated, its produce and geological features must be matching, as well as its natural habitat, and its etymology must be clearly understood. We shall attempt in the coming sections to show that a territory in Yemen of Arabia, not in Syria, is the correct location of Retenu, considering the above-mentioned factors.

A. Considering the produce:

Retenu is understood to be a rich and mountainous territory whose produce is fancied by Egypt, received as gifts, or taxed annually by its new kingdom's officers. It consisted mainly of gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, jewelry, lapis lazuli, turquoise, horses, chariots, weapons, furniture, wood, ivory tusks, cattle, and other livestock. The list goes on to include cereals, incense, wine, fruits and moringa oil²⁷. We discuss here the possibility of a Syrian geography for some of these products to show that it is most unlikely and suggest an alternative location.

- 1- Incense and myrrh: these products seem to have been used in Egypt from the earlier dynasties and kingdoms. Incense is desired because of the nice odor it gives on burning, and incense burners are well known artifacts of ancient Egypt. Incense is known to come from frankincense or myrrh. Frankincense is a fragrance gum-resin that is produced by the tree species of the

25 Nibbi, 1985, 21-25.

26 Ibid.

27 Panagiotopoulos, 2006.

genus *Boswellia* known to grow in Southern Arabia and Somaliland²⁸ (Fig.1). Myrrh is another incense producing gum resin material that is obtained from a species called *Balsamodendron* and *Commiphora*, which are famously obtained also from southern Arabia and Somaliland.²⁹ When a reader of ancient records notices that such material is obtained from Punt, no justification is required since it includes southern Arabia and the horn of Africa, as stated by Mariette,³⁰ Petrie³¹ Scott,³² Lucas,³³ and further elaborated by modern scholars like Michaux-Colombot,³⁴ Balanda,³⁵ and Fattovich³⁶ who included Northern Ethiopia/Eritrea up to eastern Sudan.³⁷ If this is to be the case, why would Egypt need to obtain incense from Syria if it is not its natural produce? Lucas contended himself by assuming the possibility of incense obtained from Arabia and delivered by the people of Retenu (Syria in this context) to the Egyptians, but this does not make any sense. The Egyptians had long been exposed to the horn of Africa and Arabia by Red Sea route from their ports of Quseir³⁸ and Marsa Al-Gawawis,³⁹ and had not the necessity to obtain incense from a third-party location that is further apart than their own land. Furthermore, the land route through Arabia required crossing several territories of nomadic tribes which are either far from safe or would impose heavy financial tolls that makes such venture excessively expensive. It

28 Lucas, 1930.

29 Ibid.

30 Mariette, 1892, 34.

31 Petrie vol. 1, 1920, 141.

32 Scott, 1942, 205-207.

33 Lucas, 1930.

34 Michaux-Colombot, 1998.

35 Balanda, 2005/2006.

36 Fattovich, 2018.

37 Punt would thus qualify as a variant toponym of Fenkhu mentioned above in the story of Sinuhe and in later Egyptian records.

38 Meek, 2003.

39 Bard, Kathryn A./ Fattovich, Rodolfo, 2011.

is known that the amount of incense delivered to Egypt annually was substantial and would not be properly supported by extending the land route distance. Locating Retenu in South Arabia where incense is naturally produced would eliminate all these complications, since it can be shipped directly from an Arabian Sea or Red Sea port to Egyptian western ports, and thereafter carried overland through the eastern desert, and/or the river Nile.

- 2- Moringa Oil: Moringaceae is a family of highly nutritional tree that grows in tropical and subtropical regions, well known for its high nutritional and medicinal value.⁴⁰ It's well documented that northern Mediterranean countries are not among the natural habitats of moringa species.⁴¹ It was shown that Moringa growth in Israel (Palestine) is too limited to allow any meaningful oil production, for which no evidence existed, and hence Palestine was not a likely source of the moringa oil imported anciently by Egypt.⁴²
- 3- Timber: wood of various species of trees were utilized in dynastic Egypt, like Cedar, Cypress, Juniper, and Ebony. All these trees, except for Ebony, were imports from western Asia, according to Lucas.⁴³ The exception of Ebony lacks accuracy since it was listed as one of the items obtained in the Asiatic campaigns of Thutmose II and III.⁴⁴ The term "western Asia" is mostly used to mean Levantine territories as understood from the inscriptions for Retenu, Jahy, and Lebanon. A lot of uncertainty has been expressed by Lucas himself and others about the terminology of timber source, mainly Cedar.⁴⁵ Cedar has been shown to indicate other species like Sidder (*Ziziphus* of the Rhamnaceae family) and Juniper. Lucas analyzed wood

40 <http://www.aoad.org/Moringa.htm>. Accessed March 16, 2022.

41 Saini/Sivanesan/Keum/ 2016.

42 Lev-Yardun/ Gophna, 1992.

43 Lucas. 1948, 488-500.

44 Breasted, Vol II, 1906, 187 and 292.

45 Ibid.

samples from the Egyptian shrines and found them to contain 60% Cedar and as much as 40% Sidder,⁴⁶ a tree that grows in various parts of the middle east including Palestine, Jordan, and Arabia. Sidder and Juniper (*Juniperus Procera*) grow abundantly in the forests of southwestern Arabia, with Juniper dominant in the higher altitudes⁴⁷ (Fig.2). Sidder is locally called “Arj” or “Arz” in these territories, and hence probably the source of confusion with the Arz or Cedar tree of Lebanon.⁴⁸ In one informed opinion, “the Cedar wood of the holy scripture is supposed to be the Sandarach tree (*Thuja Articulata*).⁴⁹ By this opinion, we are guided to the African Juniper tree (*Juniperus Procera*)⁵⁰ that grows in east African and southwest Arabian highlands, and probably formed a continuous belt of forests from prehistoric time.⁵¹ This opinion is recently adopted by Qashash on several etymological and environmental grounds⁵². The confusion of Cedar with Juniper is well known in Greek and Latin sources and the word “Cedar” has always been used in a loose manner⁵³. The availability of Cedar and other tree species in Lebanon and the levant made it appealing to accept the notation of a northern location for Retenu, Jahi and Remenen. However, the suitability of Lebanese Cedar for timber and logging is hampered by its lateral growth pattern, which makes it undesirable for logging.⁵⁴ The existence of cedar trees in the highlands of the African Sahara in ancient times have been demonstrated, and hence Atlantic Cedar was a possible source

46 Ibid.

47 Qashash, 2018, 276-280.

48 Ibid.

49 Balfour, 1862, 612.

50 <https://www.conifers.org/cu/Tetraclinis.php>, accessed March 19, 2022.

51 Kilian/Hein/Hubaishan/ 2004.

52 Qashash, 2018, 276-280.

53 Lucas, 1948, 488-500.

54 Nibbi, 1985, 13-14.

for timber in dynastic Egypt.⁵⁵ The Sahara is in the backyard of Egypt west of the Nile, and its proximity would make it an easier source of timber than lands across the sea. This assumption is further enhanced by the observation of Lucas that it is not possible to differentiate between Lebanese and Atlantic cedar microscopically.⁵⁶ Such argument of a western source of timber can be extended by the observation of various species in the Lucas list like Oak, Elm, Pine, Cypress, Juniper, Fir and Ziziphus that were identified in the Sahara during the wet Holocene period.⁵⁷ That Egypt brought wood from the west is evident by the instructions of king Merikare from the first intermediate kingdom, where Meru-wood and Juniper wood have been obtained from a western lake.⁵⁸ Similar observations were recorded from eastern Yemen where it was found by testing soil sediments that many tree species existed in the Holocene period including Cedar, Juniper, Oak, Beech, Birch, Maerua, Ziziphus, etc.⁵⁹. Ebony is certainly not expected to be found in the levant as its common name is African Ebony (from the family of Ebenaceae), a species that grows in east and south Africa and in the Yemen.⁶⁰

- 4- Copper: Copper objects in Early dynastic Egypt were found in substantial amounts, both in weapon form and in domestic utilities. Evidence points to early mining and smelting operation in Sinai and Eastern desert.⁶¹ Copper ores were also obtained from Nubian eastern mines during the 12th dynasty.⁶² The reference to Syrian copper in antiquity is mainly related to Retenu, Jahy and nearby locations, starting from the 18th

55 Ibid.

56 Lucas, 1948, 491.

57 Le Houerou, 1997.

58 Simpson, 2003, 160.

59 Inizan, 1997.

60 FAO, 2009.

61 Lucas, 1948, 231-237.

62 Ibid, 241-242.

dynasty. The God's land was also mentioned as a source for copper⁶³ which most likely refers to Western Arabia⁶⁴ or Punt.⁶⁵ The importation of large amounts of copper from Syria is inconceivable, since it is known that Syria does not have much copper, and Syrian traders from the kingdoms of Ebla, Mari and Ugarit used to import it from Anatolia or from Cyprus.⁶⁶ Forbes, noticing this deficiency, theorized that much of the vast amounts of Syrian (aka Retenu's) copper must have originated in Asia Minor (Anatolia) or from Armenia⁶⁷.

- 5- Silver: silver can be obtained from ores of silver oxide or as byproduct from ores of copper, lead, and zinc.⁶⁸ Best well-known silver ores in west Asia are in Anatolia and Armenia. Silver occurs in small amounts in lead ores near the Red Sea in Egypt⁶⁹. Silver objects found in early dynastic Egypt that are either Electrum (gold/silver alloy containing about 20% -30% silver), or naturally occurring silver alloy containing less than 40% amounts gold.⁷⁰ Egyptian silver could not have been imported from Syria, which itself was a net importer that has gotten its silver from the silver mines of Taurus mountains in Anatolia, as reported during the 2nd millennium.⁷¹ It was also confirmed that old Assyrians obtained their silver from Anatolian mines, which completely negates the case for silver being exported by Syria.⁷² Silver was in production in pre-Islamic time in central Arabia (Najd), namely the mine of "Shamam", bearing copper and silver, as well as the huge silver mine by the name "Al-

63 Ibid.

64 Michaux-Colombot, 1998.

65 Balanda, 2005/2006.

66 Blasweiler, 2016.

67 Forbes, 1950, 341.

68 Lucas, 1928.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Blasweiler, 2016.

72 Erol, 2019.

Radhradh" in the highlands of Yemen, which was worked by Persian families before and during Islamic era.⁷³ It appears that silver deposits in ancient Yemen were extensive, as five other mines were reported by Islamic writers.⁷⁴

- 6- Gold: Gold ore was to be found in great amounts in the eastern desert of Egypt down to Nubia, and it must have been the major source of gold for earlier dynasties⁷⁵. Records from the 12th and later dynasties indicate a lot of Egyptian gold obtained locally, and from Punt, the south countries, Kush, God's land, Libya, Asia, and elsewhere.⁷⁶ If we look for Asian sources of gold in antiquity, we find that the most well-known is Anatolia, where old Assyria obtained its gold, and hence, as noted for silver, Syria did not have enough gold and had to import it from Anatolia.⁷⁷ Gold was also available in plentiful amounts in the Tihama escarpments opposite to the Red Sea coast, between Al-Lith and Wadi Haly, and from there south to Wadi Jizan which is downstream from the Khaulan-Ujjud gold bearing highlands, as attested by Agatharchides and other classical writers⁷⁸. The celebrated Yemenite geographer AlHamdani listed the following names of west Arabian mines known to him from previous times: A'sham عشم, Dhankan ضنكان, both in Tihama highlands, then Al-Qufa'ah القفاعة in the Khaulan country of the Yemen, marked as the best of all mines, then Ma'an معان in Hajur, then he goes on to list other mines in the Yemen and other parts of Arabia.⁷⁹ It appears from Saudi government surveys that old gold mines are extensive, especially in the Arabian shield where they cover wide areas from the borders of Yemen, to A'sir and

73 Dunlop, 1957.

74 Peli/Tereygeol, 2007.

75 Lucas, 1948, 257-259.

76 Ibid, 261.

77 Erol, 2019.

78 Burstein, 1989, 156-159.

79 Dunlop, 1957.

Tihama, to Nejd. This would include also deposits of silver, copper, iron, and zinc.⁸⁰

- 7- Lapis Lazuli: this semiprecious stone was in use very early in predynastic Egypt in parallel to its appearance in Mesopotamia.⁸¹ The best known mine for its production is Badakshan in Afghanistan,⁸² which made it convenient to suppose that ancient Egypt obtained its stones from it.⁸³ Though this possibility was justified by the availability of ancient trade routes, it nevertheless underlines the attribution of the material to Syrian origin, which is the supposed location of Retenu. References to the Lapis Lazuli tribute from Retenu, Syria, Zahi (Djahi), Assur, Babylon and God's land were given during the new kingdom of Egypt,⁸⁴ but this constitutes a paradox since Babylon, Assur and Syria had no known deposits of this stone, and they supposedly obtained it from the Afghan source.⁸⁵ The closest other location mentioned as a possible source of Lapis is Tiflis (Tbilisi) in Georgia.⁸⁶ Another source was mentioned for the material during the 12th dynasty and the new kingdom given as "Tefrer" or "Tefroret", which Gardiner supposed to be in the Caucasus.⁸⁷ As for the source in God's land (West Arabia) we can locate it in two sites mentioned by the medieval Arabian geographer Yaqut, one in "Ma'dan Suleim" in Eastern Hijaz where it was described as plentiful.⁸⁸ The other site is in the Tihama escarpments, in a location called "Haz Al-Sarat" where it was described as a previous possession of the ancient

80 AlZahrani, 2014, 45.

81 Payne, 1968.

82 Forbes, 1950, 353; Lucas, 1948, 45; Sarianidi/Kowalski, 1971.

83 Ibid, Michaux-Colombot, 1998.

84 Lucas, 1948, 455-456.

85 Sarianidi/Kowalski, 1971.

86 Gardiner, 1916; Lucas, 1948, 456.

87 Ibid.

88 AlHamaoui, 1965, 3, see entry of Al-Mauqaah

Amalekites.⁸⁹ It could have been confused with Azurite,⁹⁰ an ore of copper carbonate of dark blue color, much like Lapis Lazuli, and this can explain the frequent assumed sources for the latter where it does not exist. Azurite is found in Sinai in connection with Malachite and Turquoise⁹¹ فيروز, and its inscriptions speak of Lapis Lazuli and foreign Lapis Lazuli.⁹² In the former case we are tempted to think of Azurite, but in the latter one cannot be sure whether Lapis Lazuli or Azurite is meant.⁹³ In any case, these minerals are connected to the deity "Hathor", venerated in Sinai inscriptions as the lady of the turquoise, the lady of the good colors, and the lady of the lapis lazuli, the one who is amid the land of Djadja. Her association with turquoise is well explained by its location in Sinai, but the other attributes require some investigation. Hathor is shown wearing cow's horn enclosing a solar disk, and she is supposed to relate to the Red Sea.⁹⁴ We also find that Hathor relates to the Semitic deities Aphrodite, Baal, and Ishtar.⁹⁵ Ishtar is venerated in ancient southern Arabia under the name "A'thtar," the principal deity of

89 AlHamaoui, 1965, 2, 258. Tihama denotes the Arabian coastal zone of the Red Sea. Amalekites العماليق are the ancient masters of the western Arabian land, see Scott, 1942, 205.

90 Inspection of Yaqut's references to اللازورد in Badakhshan and Arabia reveals that he did not differentiate between Azurite and Lapis Lazuli, as both designations contain the reference to "blue color".

91 Lucas, 1927.

92 Cerny, 1955, 7-10.

93 The confusion between the two materials as well as Malachite, Chrysocolla, Ultramarine and Sapphire is far more widespread than Egypt and Arabia. Beckmann, 1897, 334-350 has elaborated on the problem at length, and lately Frison/Brun, 2016 addressed the problem and concluded that "there is still no agreement in the literature about the relationships between the ancient names and mineral substances according to modern mineralogy."

94 Cerny, 1955, 41-42.

95 Ibid, 162; Budin, 2004.

the ancient Minaeans.⁹⁶ A'thtar is featured in its ancient temple in the Yemen as a horned animal, a bull or ibex with solar disk atop, in a similar fashion to Hathor.⁹⁷ From these observations we are inclined to look for Djadja land in the Yemen. Indeed, when we examine the word Djadja we find it equivalent to the Arabic Djaza' جزع, which stands for silicate gemstones well known in the Yemen, namely Agate and Onyx, well featured by AlHamdani, who mentioned their availability in multitude of locations.⁹⁸ The Djaza' is known anciently as the Yemenite Djaza', hence qualifies the Yemen as the land of Djadja. That lapis lazuli (or azurite) is anciently produced in the Yemen missed the radar of most historians who were not aware of its existence, hence did not think of Arabia as a source. The identification of Djaza' land as Yemen answers the lingering question on the source of lapis lazuli, much celebrated in Egypt, as well as Onyx, whose source land was not previously identified.⁹⁹ The variety of colors that were associated with turquoise, lapis lazuli, dajazu (Agate and Onyx) explains the designation "the Lady of good colors" given to Hathor, the Arabian A'thtar. The Minaean kingdom, according to one scholarly opinion, existed from about 2000 BC till 700,¹⁰⁰ and hence its contribution to the supply of gemstones and other produce to Egypt from the middle kingdom onwards can be realistic. This connection is enhanced by archaeological findings of artifacts dated from around third and second millennia BC that indicate active trade and cultural exchange between southern Tihama coast of Saudi Arabia and the Yemen, with the opposite lands across the Red Sea. Hence specific cultural exchange must have existed between the peoples of Sihi in Saudi Jazan province and Adulis port city of Eritrea in the period

96 Luqman, 1988, 21-23; alJarw, 1996, 184-186.

97 Luqman, 1988, 22; Tawfik, 1951, 21-22.

98 AlHamdani, 1884, II, 202-203.

99 Lucas, 1948, 443.

100 Scott, 1942, 205; Hommel, 1897, 77.

1540- 1250 BC.¹⁰¹ Philby had previously indicated that Arabian civilization had been in contact and influenced by African civilization from 1500 BC.¹⁰² Extensive rock art studies from southwest Arabia/ Sarawat highlands indicate a civilized society features from 2500 BC.¹⁰³ The ancient usage of lapis lazuli or azurite in Egypt caught the attention of various scholars, and it was supposed to have come via ancient trade routes from Afghanistan as mentioned above. I suppose that the Yemenite source is more likely to have been utilized considering the proximity to the Egyptian ports of the Red Sea, and the host of other products shown to have been obtained from Punt/ God's land/Arabia.

B. Considering the Geography:

- 1- **The Definition of Yemen:** Yemen is derived linguistically from "Yamin", which is the right direction. In geographical attribution it denotes the countries that are at the right side of a reference location, in this case: Makkah facing east. That attribution naturally has been limited in scope by convention, and lately by political borders denoting the country we now call "the Yemen", occupying the southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula. The ancient name of Arabian Peninsula was "Arabia Eudaimon" or "Arabia Felix" which formed part of the 6th map of Asia in Ptolemy's geography,¹⁰⁴ (Map 1). The other parts of Asia called Arabia by Ptolemy are "Arabia Eremos" (the Arabian Desert), and the "Arabia Petraia", which occupies and borders the north-western parts of the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁰⁵ The Yemen itself is a vast country bordered by Saudi Arabia in the north, Oman in the East, the Red Sea in the west, and the Arabian Sea and Gulf of A'den in the south, thus it represents the southwestern corner of

101 Zarins/AlZahrani, 1985, Fattovich, 2018.

102 Philby, 1939.

103 Newton/Zarins, 2000.

104 Ziegler, 1998, p. 85.

105 Ibid, 19-21.

Asia, and overlooks the strait of Bab El-Mandab which is only few kilometers away from Africa.¹⁰⁶

- 2- **The Divisions:** The Yemen is divided topographically into four areas, the coastal plains, western highlands or the “Gibal”, the eastern plateau, and the fault basin. The coastal plains adjacent to the Red Sea are called “the Tihama”, and they are crossed by several fertile valleys “Wadis” that descend from the mountainous “Gibal” towards the sea. At the seaside several ancient port cities were established, like A’den, Cana, and Samahram (now belongs to the Sultunate of Oman) facing the Arabian Sea, and Muza and Mocha facing the Red Sea¹⁰⁷ (Map 2). The Gibal extends all the way from south to north, and its altitude ranges from 1500 to more than 3000 meters. The mountains allow for the hydrologic distribution of the country’s rivers or wadis, flowing to the west, east and south respectively. The highlands themselves enjoy plenty of rainfall, and fertile volcanic lands which gave birth to important cities and urban centers from the oldest times. The eastern plateau is divided into northern and southern parts, their altitude is reduced as we move eastwards, among which flows the important wadi of Hadhramut to the east, which receives water flow from both directions. The fault basin begins from the eastern plateau, its altitude is gradually reduced as we move to the east until it ends in the wide sandy plain anciently called “Sayhad” or “Ramlat Al-Saba’tain.” The Eastern Plateau is crossed by several important wadis like “Adhanah” and “Beihan”, along which the major ancient Yemeni kingdoms were established. This territory therefore was the most politically important in ancient times.¹⁰⁸ The Wadi irrigation systems are extensive, and they receive input from a multitude of smaller waterway north and south of the main river. In Tihama we find a fertile land where several wadis cross, the largest of which is the “Wadi Mour,”

106 A’bbas, 1994, 2.

107 AlJarw, 1996, 8-12.

108 Ibid.

whose total stream area is around 7500 sq. Km. The wadis in the Eastern Plateau receive input from streams that begin in the Gibal and flow eastward. The largest wadi system is the Adhanah whose stream area reaches 10000 sq. Km, roughly equal to the area of the state of Lebanon. Downstream of Adhanah is the well-known ancient metropolis of Marib, with its famous dam and irrigation system. The Adhanah flows past Marib dam in the eastern plateau before it ends in the sands of Sayhad.¹⁰⁹ The strategic location of Sayhad tempted some researchers to denote "Sayhad Culture" as the earliest civilized societies in the Yemen before the ascent of the Sabaa kingdom¹¹⁰.

- 3- **The Produce:** The material resources of the Yemen and its northern neighbor, A'sir (currently in Saudi Arabia), are well attested in the literature. The area has been a major source of aromatics, Myrrh and Frankincense in the past as mentioned above, those export products that gave the area its most important role in classical history. Herodotus, Theophrastus, Eratosthenes, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Gaius Plinius Secundus and others all have written about the riches of the "Arabia Felix", and the wealth generated by exporting its aromatics, Myrrh and Incense, the produce from the sea and from the forests, the fertile lands and their cattle, which made those Arabs the wealthiest nation of all.¹¹¹ We already spoke of the abundance of metals and precious metals distributed in several mines within these territories. The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea added important information about the land and sea trade of south Arabians, their seafaring to East African and Indian ports, and their intensive interaction with their peoples.¹¹²

109 A'bdullah, 1990, 80-82.

110 AlJarw, 1996, 85-87.

111 Ibid, 47-48.

112 Ibid.

C- The Antiquity of South Arabian Culture:

This subject can be tackled from various perspectives, all conforming to the existence of advanced society with various material industry, traded through land and sea to various parts of the old world. We list underneath key evidence and characteristics of such civilization.

1- **Camel domestication:** this is one of the least understood elements of ancient Arabian culture. Ancient camel utilization was thought to have started around 3000 BC¹¹³. Nevertheless, it was shown that the dromedaries have developed their desert adaptive traits from 9000-6000 BC and were known to have been in use in Egypt from predynastic and early dynastic periods, coming from south Arabia.¹¹⁴ Camel remains from early Holocene era found in Jordan match well with modern day Arabian camels¹¹⁵. Budge reported in 1906 that he had seen models of camels in Abydos site in Egypt that he dated to around 4000 BC. Life sized monumental camel sculptures from north Saudi Arabia were recently studied and dated to 5600-5200 BC.¹¹⁶ These findings enable us to take back the date of camel utilization to the early Neolithic period, and hence it would have been instrumental in transport of materials and products. It is to be noted that the camel was thought to be in the possession of the patriarch Abraham when he was in Egypt, and despite earlier objections, this story was shown to be plausible by the various occurrences of camel statues in early dynastic and predynastic periods.¹¹⁷

113 Sala, 2017, Zeder, 2012.

114 Ripinsky, 1985, Free, 1944.

115 Peters, 1998.

116 Guagnin 2022.

117 Free, 1944. Alatiqi, 2023, estimated the sojourn of Abraham in Egypt during the reign of king Senedj of the second dynasty (5106 to 5065 BC).

2- **The Yemen bronze age culture:** this is another concept that was obscure until recently. The archaeological literature before three decades ago did not consider a bronze age culture in the Yemen. This has been corrected by the abundance of evidence of sedentary settlements, ceramic and agricultural installations in the highlands of Khaulan Al-A'liyah, around Dhamar, both are within Wadi Adhanah Basin, and in various parts of the lowlands, that go back to the third and fourth millennium. A significant discovery of terraced field or check dam near Dhamar was dated to around 4000 BC. The areas around Dhamar featured continuous occupation during the third, second and first millenniums. In Khaulan Al-A'liyah a significant discovery in the areas of Al-A'rsh (Al-A'rush) and wadi Yanaim were found that belong to the bronze age culture, dated around 2000 and 1750 B.C. This was described as post Neolithic and pre-Sabaeen, containing dykes, ceramic artifacts and pottery, and utility bronze tools.¹¹⁸ The early bronze age culture was confirmed by the discovery of farming villages in these highlands that were dated from 2200-1650 B.C., that exhibited integrated farming features, including the cult of fertility idols. These settlements were distinctively different from the subsequent Sabaeen culture, and hence their culture cannot be regarded as roots for it.¹¹⁹ These and other archaeological discoveries called for recalibration of Yemenite chiefdoms chronology from the first millennium to the third, due to the established sedentary culture in the Neolithic period. These findings which has affinities to the Levantine bronze age culture would suggest a trade and other contacts between the two regions in such an earlier period.¹²⁰ Across the Tihama lowlands, several megaliths and ceramic materials were found by various expeditions that also date back to the Neolithic period, strategically located at precise points along major wadi systems,

118 De Maigret, 1984.

119 De Maigret, 1996.

120 Wilkinson, 2005.

indicating culturally charged landscape that evokes the marking of territorial or sacred space system¹²¹. A horde of utility tools made of copper, copper arsenic, and copper tin alloys was found in a Tihama megalithic location which was dated to early or middle bronze age period.¹²² In wadi Idim in Hadhramut, several stone statuettes were discovered that were dated to the 4th millennium, which points to an ancient religious belief system, namely the “cult of ancestors.”¹²³ The bronze age in south Arabia had an integrated culture comprising vivid religious, material, economic, and trade aspects. When integrated with the foregoing discussion on the produce of southwestern Arabia or the ancient Punt land, and its trade relations with Egypt for the incense and other aromatics, one would expect the other riches of the land to be a major component of the trade, namely, livestock, timber, copper, gold, silver, and gemstones. By now we are ready to look for Retenu in a Yemenite location where a match has been established in the materials, the habitat, and the produce, which is further confirmed by the existence of a bronze age culture.

D- Retenu of the Yemen:

- 1- **Geography:** We propose that Retenu is no less than the wadi Adhanah system, whom we already indicated the massive area of its basin, which makes it the largest irrigated agricultural land in The Yemen. Its source waterways were described by AlHamdani, they originate in the “Gibal” south of the capital San’a in areas that comprise prominent districts in the country: Ar-rus, Khaulan Al-A’liyah, Dhamar, Ans, Rada’, Al-A’rsh, Radman, and Qaran among others. It then flows through the eastern plateau into Marib through the sands of the Sayhad (Map 3). The famous Marib dam was established on the wadi Adhanah between the two mountain ranges that are at the end

121 Khalidi, 2008.

122 Giunlia-Mair, 2002.

123 Steimer-Herbet, 2007.

of the eastern plateau called Al-Balaq the Northern and Al-Balaq the central, where the Adhanah narrows to make a suitable basin for water collection in a dam,¹²⁴ see Map 4. After passing Marib, the river passes through “Al-Rawdha,” then through “Nuhayyah”, a jungle that is at the edge of the “Sayhad” at the beginning of the desert. The Rawdha of Marib is still known near that city by the same name, and it denotes a dense woodland¹²⁵. The Adhanah thus qualifies for a vast country in the central Yemen that is divided into the “Upper” where the source streams flow, and the “Lower” where they merge into the Adhanah proper. The analogy with Upper and lower Retenu is obvious. The analogy is because the beginning R or L in Rutennu or Lutennu are an interchangeable prefix that is normally attached to identify the proper names in Arabic. This becomes clear when we recall that the original reading was “Tenu” which is like the name’s version in Arabic that reads “Dhana”¹²⁶ ذنه. More on this later.

- 2- **The Lower Retenu:** the Adhanah proper, passing through Marib and ending in the Sayhad desert represents the lower Retenu or Tenu. This allocation is supported by the natural flow topography from higher to lower elevations. Furthermore, we have a definitive toponym that is featured in the literature over many generations, and to this date remains obscure and unresolved. We recall here the tale of Sinuhe who was given a vast tract of land full of riches to govern, called: Gebel-Nei. Gebel in Arabic stands for a mountain, and Nei (Nyy) or (Niy), we take as the “Nuhayyah” which is the last fertile land before the Sayhad desert, situated across from Al-Balaq mountains. This Nei is featured once more in the Egyptian sources as Negau, where a procession would take place to offer gifts for the king of

124 A’bdullah, 1990, 80-82.

125 AlHamdani, 1884, 80. The editor of AlHamdani text wrote in the index “Nuhayyat Dugal” as a toponym دغل نوبية thus adding the jungle to the toponym Nuhayah, relating Nuhayah to the jungle.

126 Dayton, 1981, Inizan, 1997, Maraqtan, 2004.

Egypt. The procession was led by a nobleman from the tribe of Remenen, who was of the same stock as the original king of Retenu: the Edomite Amu-Enshi. This is supported by the fact that the Remenen or the Rums were the kingly descendants of Edom or Esau, as we shall see later. Their facial features and headdress do not differ from current Arabs (see Fig.3). Maspero, one of the early scholars who discussed the etymology of Retenu identified it as Lotanu, an ancient Edomite clan.¹²⁷ We have it in biblical genealogy that Eliphaz, son of Esau married Timna, sister of Lotan and bore from her Amalek¹²⁸. In addition, we have a solid geographical/ethnological connection between Retenu and the Edomite king Amu-Enshi. We recall here that the cult of ancestors is widespread in Arabia, and for that matter the tribes that worshiped a deity called Amu-Enes, dwelled exactly in this area, and known by the name “Khaulan,” in particular a branch of it called “Edom.” Amu-Enes was the god of fertility for such peoples, so consistent with their agricultural and pastoral economy.¹²⁹ We recall that the pre-Sabaeen cultures discovered in these areas included the idols of fertility, as described above. This is a strong confirmation of our supposition that Retenu was in fact the Adhanah basin, where ethnological, geographical, and historical evidence are in conformity.

- 3- **The Elephant Hunt Sport:** The historical reference to Nei as a location in lower Retenu is solidified by its jungle like ecology, where the military leaders entertained themselves by the elephant hunt sport. This location was featured by a shallow pond, situated between two rocks (mountains), which exactly copies the scene of Rawdha and Nuhayyah of Marib, situated between Al-balaq mountains. Nei was featured within the land

127 Maspero, 1896, 66.

128 Genesis 36:15-22. Assigning geographical toponyms after genealogical proper names is common, we have for example Timna, an ancient city in the Yemen. Yemen itself is an Edomite name: Tayman, son of Eliphaz.

129 Kadar, 2017, 175-177.

of Retenu during the campaigns of Thutmose the 2nd, and Thutmose the 3rd, upon which the latter king's campaign, he and a leader by the name of Amenemhab fought the elephants of Nei and culled 120 of them for the sake of their tusk. Amenemhab described how he was standing in a pond of water between two rocks.¹³⁰ That location would eventually become the venue of Marib dam in subsequent generations after the humid period ended, aridification took place and the elephants eventually vanished. Researchers have undertaken substantial effort to establish Syria as the location of the elephant hunt sport of the 18th dynasty period, where it was necessary to assume a distant source for the elephant relocation from India into Syria.¹³¹ In the case of the Yemen, the culture of using the elephants as combat animal was practiced up to the time of Abraha, the Abyssinian king of Yemen, whose infamous expedition against the Arabs of Makkah was recorded in the holy Qur'an.¹³² We recall that the Red Sea level reduction separating East Africa from Arabia, allowed land crossing between the two sides sometime in paleolithic periods,¹³³ and hence it is natural to suppose that flora and fauna of the two countries were compatible, examples of which were mentioned above like Ebony, Incense, Myrrh and the like.

- 4- **Remenen:** this location was featured in Egyptian inscriptions and in the south Arabian records in such a way that it qualifies as a separate chiefdom or state, coexisting with the state of the Minaeans. In one inscription describing the campaign of Thutmose III in Asia, we find that he passed by the land of Remenen before returning to Egypt, building there a huge

130 Breasted, 1906, Vol II, 228, 229, 233.

131 Miller, 1986.

132 Surat Al-Fil, 105.

133 Bailey, 2007.

fortress, situated near the cities of Zamira and Arathu.¹³⁴ These locations clearly qualify for Dhamar and Al-A'rsh, both of which described above as containing the source streams of the Adhanah River. Remenen was featured again during the campaign of Seti I as a loyal region where he passed by after defeating the king of Kadesh. Her people are described as the purest Canaanite race whose priests and elders hailed the conqueror in submission. There he had Cedar trees cut to build a new ship.¹³⁵ From the Yemen an important inscription (Glaser 1155) described events whose interpretation and timing were long contested by historians. In summary it describes hostilities that took place within the route of trade, for which an edifice was established by the seniors (Kabiris) of certain districts: Ma'in-Musran معين مصرن , Sur صر , A'sher, عشر and Ibru Naharan عبر نهرين to the gods: A'thtar, Wadd and Nakrah, for safe deliverance of their caravan from Egypt, during the hostilities that ensued between the Egyptians and the Maday (Medja), and for protecting their caravan during the passage between Ma'in and Ragmat, when a war broke out between the king of Yamnat (the south country) and the King of Shamat (the north country), and for protecting them from the raids of the tribes of Sabaa and Khaulan.¹³⁶ The text also mentioned the Kabir (senior) of Rada' as superior to those who wrote the inscription.¹³⁷ This inscription

134 Brugsch-Bey, 1879, 347. References to Zamira (Zamar) and Arathu (Arthut) as important towns in the land of Ruthen are repeated, see for example p. 331.

135 Brugsch- Bey, 1891, 246-247, His commentary. Here Remenen was written in the alternative form "Limanon", and hence was confused with Lebanon.

136 Schmidt, 1894, Hommel, 1897, 249-254. The text was subject to numerous interpretations, see for example: Grimme, 1932. Here Yamnat and Shamat are divisions within the country of Yemen, especially the Tihama, which show that it was divided into two kingdoms. These geographical designations still exist in the Tihama.

137 Hommel, 1897, 249-254.

was dated by various estimates in the 17th dynasty at 1580 BC,¹³⁸ or during the revolt of the usurper “Irsu” in the lower Egypt in 1250 BC,¹³⁹ both estimates fit the assumed existence of the Minaean kingdom mentioned above. The toponym Ragmat we take as the chiefdom of the mysterious Rhamanites, whom we meet much later during Aelius Gallus failed expedition in Arabia (in the year 24 BC). The Rhamanites led by their king “Ilisaros” defeated the Romans and forced them to retreat from their city: Mariaba or Marib, where they arrived in Najran nine days later¹⁴⁰. The description perfectly fits lower Adhanah as a stronghold of the Rhamanites, and the city of Marib as their capital in that period. The obscure history of these people is partly caused by the misplacement of Remenen’s geography to Lebanon. The best way to understand Remenen’s etymology is to look at it as a plural رومانين of (Remen) or (Rum) روم. Its definitive form is Al-Rum الروم (pronounced: Arrum أرروم). The Arabized Persian historian Umara AlFarisi, writing in the 10th century CE, described in detail how the leadership of the chiefdom of Edom went from one “Ameel” to his kinsman “Rum son of Rum”, who eventually abandoned the holy book and resorted to paganism¹⁴¹. Now Ameel is a symbolic or ancestral representation of the Amu people of the Egyptian inscriptions, and Rum is an ancestral representation of the Rhamanites, which can be alternatively spelled Rumanites, the English rendering of Remenen or رومانين the plural form of روم. We recognize them from the writings of AlFarisi given above, of the stock of Edom, as emphasized in Arabic¹⁴² and Hebrew literature, connecting Edom with the Romans.¹⁴³ The ancient prince of Retenu, Amu-Enes, the Edomite, carried an Amu title within his name, which

138 Schmidt, 1894.

139 Hommel, 1897, 251.

140 Sprenger, 1873, Strabo, 2017, 16,4:22-24.

141 AlFarisi. 1978, 18-21.

142 Macoudi, 1863, II, 293.

143 Feldman, 2004, 62-67.

we have seen like the title of the ancient Edomite leader: Ameel. The Rhamanites were mentioned by Pliny as a sister nation to the Minaeans, and for that matter, at a much earlier date, we notice that the king of Minaeans visited Job the Edomite king in his hardship.¹⁴⁴ The Rhamanites have later disappeared shortly after the first century CE, but their heritage is retained by the memory of Oromo people of Ethiopia, whose tradition maintain an ancient origin in Arabia, as well as genealogical attachment to Oromo who was the son of Omer, son Alifas (Eliphaz), Arabic Al-Faais الفانس, son of Esau العيص. They say that their ancestors crossed from Arabia into the horn of Africa.¹⁴⁵ Oromo hence is to be understood as Arrumu الروم the definitive form of Rum.¹⁴⁶ We are justified in using this etymology because during the bronze age or middle Holocene period, multiple evidence suggests an Afro-Arabian cultures developed in western Arabia and the horn of Africa/Sudan regions because of strong and continuous interaction among the local populations.¹⁴⁷ Alifas was well known for his wisdom as featured in the story of Job, where he is known by his title of Temani or Yemenite.¹⁴⁸ The local traditions

144 Dozy, 1864, 68. Dozy discussed the different versions of the book of Job relating to this issue.

145 Gecci. 1886, 472-473, and Soleillet, 1886, 253. Naturally, not all Oromos have crossed from Arabia, many must have African blood by admixture. They are known to be a Cushitic nation, but their genetic affinity to the Semitic Amharas, Tigrays and Yemenis is well established, see Pagani, 2012. For the Genealogy of Esau family, see Genesis 36:1-19.

146 It is probably not a coincidence that the tradition of ascribing an Edomite heritage to the Roman empire is connected to the mythical figure of Aeneas the founder of the Roman race, who is said to have sailed from Edom to Italy to escape the wrath of God and the destruction like the one struck upon the Amalekites. The similarity between Enes of (Amu-Enshi) and Aeneas is obvious considering the symbolic nature of the narrative. See Beeston, 1853, 79-81.

147 Fattovich, 1996.

148 Eisenberg, 2013, 61.

and Oromo's story further indicates that their former home was Arabia and in specific Makkah, adding that their fortune therein had fallen due to the loss of their holy book.¹⁴⁹ The story fits well with both the story of Rum mentioned above and the established history of Edom (Esau nation) the first kingdom in Arabia from the stock of Abraham, whose fortunes were lost to the Israelites.¹⁵⁰ Their kinsmen who held western Arabia were called Amalekites as we already indicated, from their progenitor Amalek, son of Alifas.¹⁵¹ Their relationship to the Red Sea navigation as the earliest mariners is well established, to the extent that it was reported to have taken its name from the color of Esau/Edom that signifies red, which was converted by the Greek to Erythraean Sea, meaning the Sea of Edom.¹⁵² Before we leave this section, we must note that inscriptions of Ma'in temple in the eastern desert featured the titles of Al-Ram, and Fayyash for the higher priest of the temple, offering his gifts to the gods A'thtar and Wadd, whom we notice the similarity to Al-Rum and Alifas(Al-Faais), where Fayyash is a stronger form of Faais meaning the kind lord. The appearance of this title side by side with Al-Ram is a remarkable combination.¹⁵³ In another inscription from the same group, the name Am-Anes also appears as the father's name for one of the people who offered their gifts for the deity A'thtar,¹⁵⁴ vivid evidence of the memory of their former prince, where the capital of Ma'in once stood.

149 Burton, 1894, 71, Barton, 1924.

150 Bryant, 1767, 222-233.

151 Genesis, 36:12.

152 Ibid, see also: Lindsay, 1847, 408.

153 Nami. 1952, 4. The castle of Faais, denoted Beit or house of Faais lies on the top of one of the highest and most panoramic mountains in Yemen, mount Tukhlay جبل تخلى mentioned by AlHamdani as one of the wonders of the country. See page 190.

154 Ibid, 20-21.

E- Udenet-The Variant Toponym of Retenu:

Here we discuss the occurrence of the toponym Udent (Udenet) (Utjenet) (Wednet) (Wetjenet) (Wetenet) (Wetenu) in Egyptian expedition Inscriptions and religious and geographic texts, and show how this toponym, like Retenu, also refers to Wadi Adhanah of the Yemen.

- 1- **Udenet's Geography:** Udenet is a celebrated country, featured mostly in the texts as a land of the deity Min, situated in the sunrise country, associated with the Medja people who bring the riches of the God's land and Punt to Egypt. A certain 18th dynasty inscription describes an event of cutting certain trees in Punt and collecting gums from Udenet.¹⁵⁵ Another fragment from the new kingdom describes how the king had travelled in the mountains of Punt to bring Ebony from Utjenet.¹⁵⁶ Unlike Retenu, researchers quickly understood that Udenet is related to Punt and placed it in South Arabia. The Etymology suggests that it is identical with Uden, whose people traded its produce from Uzal (San'a) with the city of Tyre in Lebanon.¹⁵⁷ Cooper, who studied the issue extensively noted the affiliation of Udenet with the sun rise country, the east, or southeast, and that it is associated with the God's land, Punt, Baboons and Ebony. He agreed that it must be around the Red Sea but did not accept an Arabian location, quoting its association with Ebony which he thought did not exist in the Yemen.¹⁵⁸ This objection is not warranted since we have shown that Ebony is native to the Yemen. Baboons are still famously abundant in the Yemen and Asir. Other Egyptian sources associate Udenet/Wetjenet with the turquoise producing region,¹⁵⁹ hence giving direct association with the deity Hathor/A'thtar and South Arabian location as

155 Cerny, 1955, 173.

156 Ibid, 213.

157 Tomkins, 1889, 217.

158 Cooper, 2015, 242.

159 Meek, 2002.

discussed above for locating Retenu. Wetjenet is also associated with Fek or Fek-heret land¹⁶⁰ which in Arabic qualifies as a land on top فوق of a hill or mountain, another resemblance of Retenu. The other associations of Wetenet all leads to South Arabia, the deity Min is associated with the east and the sun rise country, the Medja country is in eastern Sudan or Nubia, but it is well documented that the Medja people are the ones who carried the riches of Punt to Egypt, and for that matter, they are also associated with God's land, the desert, and the gazelles¹⁶¹. Udenet's association with the deity Min is analogous with Adhanah's association with the deity Amu-Enes, an observation that leads to the possibility of Min being an Egyptian corruption or shorthand form of Amu-Enes, as Min, is also associated with the fertility cult.¹⁶² This is an added confirmation for rendering Udenet another form of Adhanah.

- 2- Religious Associations:** The relation of the Egyptian aristocracy with the Medja was not always as positive as one can gather from the religious texts. We have seen above that at least in one incident, a conflict arose and caused trouble for the caravan traders. The Maday/Medja are known to be a hardy people who lived in the gold bearing regions in Eastern desert of Egypt and the Eastern Nubia.¹⁶³ They were often characterized as the paramilitary police force of the desert, and their long association with Egyptian monarchy extended over many dynasties¹⁶⁴. The associations of the Medja people with the God's land, Punt, aromatic trade and the Gazelles imply a presence in Arabia. It is by now understood that they carried goods and merchandize from Arabia/Udnet/Athana to Egypt, hence one would be justified to look north of the Yemen, for further association with God's land. We are hence justified to think of Makkah, the West

160 Ibid.

161 Chassinat, 1968, 677—682.

162 Cornelius, 1994, 260.

163 Michaux-Colombot, 1998.

164 Liszka, 2015.

Arabian holy land. Evidence of west Arabian association is not lacking. We have reference to the concept of “both sides” of the sea in connection with the land of “Mwkd”, the double God’s land.¹⁶⁵ Hess, discussing the travels of Benjamin of Tudela in the 13th century CE, investigated the toponym: Ha-Maatom, and concluded that it is a title for Nubia. Furthermore, he maintains that the origin of this word stands for the Arabic tribe Ma’add, or Ma’addam, and noted that the Nubian coast of the Red Sea is called Ma’adam.¹⁶⁶ It is straightforward to conclude that if the Medja/Maday people are associated with both Nubia and Western Arabia, this qualifies them to be the land of Mwkd, in this case, one would look no further than the Ma’add tribe, which is thought to be native to Western Arabia, and dominated parts of central Arabia from the fourth century CE.¹⁶⁷ The historical gap between their domination in Arabia and the earlier Graeco/Roman period can be filled by this interpretation of the Madja/Maday people mentioned by Graeco/Roman texts and the older texts from Egypt. They assign for the Maday the role of carrying trade between South Arabia and Egypt, like the role taken by the Minaeans from South Arabia to the northern countries.¹⁶⁸ We have in the Ptolemy map of Arabia from the second century CE, an entry of the Mageitai tribe in the area that was controlled by the Kinaidokolpitai in northern Tihama by the Red Sea.¹⁶⁹ The Kinaidokolpitai dominated the area from the third century BC to the third century CE.¹⁷⁰ The Malichai (Beni Malik), who was also featured in the same location, are thought to control the holy city of Makkah before the Aelius Gallus campaign in Arabia, as per the report Jubba written to the Roman emperor Augustus. His report did not mention Ma’add

165 Michaux-Colombot, 1998.

166 Hess, 1965.

167 Zwetter, 2000.

168 Sprenger, 1873.

169 Humbach/Ziegler/2002, Fig. 21:6.7.

170 Cuvigny/Robin/ 1996.

but referred to Beni Ilyas, who are thought to be a branch of Ma'add, as a tribe living in the outskirts of Makkah.¹⁷¹ The Gazelles are sacred to the Medja people as understood from the previous discussion, and they were indeed sacred to the ancient pagan dwellers of Makkah. Arab historians mentioned the golden Gazelles or Rams that were buried underneath the site of Zamzam well, later taken and kept inside the holy shrine of Al-Ka'ba, shortly before the coming of Islam.¹⁷² The cult of horned rams is featured in the temple of Ma'in,¹⁷³ and they were venerated by the ancient Arabs in or around Makkah.¹⁷⁴ The association of certain religious cults to both Egypt and Arabia is more than what we just described. A hole book was written on this subject that demonstrated many examples of shared deities or idols between Egypt and western Arabia, many of them were in or near Makkah.¹⁷⁵

F- The Geographical Setting:

Here we exploit the results thus far obtained to consolidate the location of Retenu/Udenet/Athana among the locations that were observed in the area around the bronze age. We already spoke of

171 Sprenger, 1873. The reference to Beni Malik most likely denotes to Malik, son Al-Nadhr son of Kinanah, the leading Qurashite section in Makkah at the time. One of their descendants, Ka'b bin Lu'ay was the leading figure of Makkah at the time of prophet Jesus (at the beginning of the current era). We read in *Kitab Attijan* by the learned Wahb (p.190) that Ka'b bin Lu'ay inherited the Ark of the Covenant till that time before delivering it to Jesus. Many peoples of Arabia adhered to Judaism faith at some point in their pre-Islamic history, notably: Himyar and the whole Yemen, Kindah, Gassan, and Kinanah. There is evidence that some of the Israelites who conquered the Amalekites in the Hijaz dwelt in Yathrib (Al-madinah Al-Munawwarah) since that time, see Dawood, 2005, 222.

172 Dozy, 1864, 91-92.

173 Tawfik, 1951, 21-23.

174 Kadar, 2017, 204-205.

175 Khushaim, 1990, 279-280.

Remenen and Nei and located them within the Wdai Adhanah's country. We expand on the subject, first by consolidating the obtained result on the triad: Adhanah/Rmnn/Nuhayya, and then by showing the relation of this landscape with neighboring districts.

1- **The Country, the People and the City:** during the campaigns of Thutmose III in Asia, he would reach the land of Retenu several times, collect tribute and build a fortress in the land of Rmnn.¹⁷⁶ The people of Upper Retenu were also described at occasions as "Mennus"¹⁷⁷ indicating Minaeans. In one campaign, the thirteenth in sequence, in the thirty eighth year of his reign, we have important details spelled out. The description goes on like that with my topographic rendering in parenthesis: "The king directs his attention to the southern Lebanon (Remenen) of Nuges (Nuhayyah) again, where he is obliged to subjugate the local princes, who controlled the road northward between the two Lebanons (Remenen's) at the seaward bend of the Litany (Adhanah) river."¹⁷⁸ Here Breasted clearly confused Remenen with Lebanon, and Adhanah with the Litany River of Lebanon.¹⁷⁹ We have overcome this misconception already, but here we have confirmation that Adhanah represents a river as well as a country, which the people called Rumnn dominated. There are several princes among them who controlled the upstream and the downstream of the river. There are two sections of them, one controls the upstream in direction of the Red Sea, and the other controls the downstream whose major city is Nuhayyah, which here is pronounced Nuges, and elsewhere Negau or Nei. This event shed more light on the land of Retenu, and further confirms our findings that Rumnn are the people in control of

176 Breasted, Vol II, 1906, 174, 220.

177 Panagiotopolous, 2006.

178 Ibid, 209.

179 This is the current mainstream school of thought, except the thinkers that contested this placement mentioned already above. See for example: Bryan, 2000, 237-241.

the land, who are called Ragmat/Rum/ in local or Arabic sources. Ragmat goes in historical geography as Raamat, the brother of Sabaa, in the southern land of Kush, who mostly designate Southern Arabia and/or Ethiopia. Indeed, we have seen in the subsequent millennium that Raamat (Ragmat) was absorbed by Sabaa, and their appearance is confined to few spots, especially when they, the Rhamanites defended their city, Marib against the Roman Army. In biblical genealogy we find Ragmat (Raamah), Havila, and Sabaa, appear as sons of Kush, which has a geographic manifestation from the inscription (GL 1155), when Sabaa and Khaulan (Havila) tribes harassed the caravan trade in the land of Raghmah, in a southern Arabian (Kushite) landscape.¹⁸⁰ That Kush, or Ethiopia is an ancient home for the Arabs, as well as Arabia Felix is well attested in classical geography.¹⁸¹ Several observations from ancient literature leads one to conclude that two toponyms called Sabaa existed, the one in Southern Arabia and the other in Ethiopia, whose capital is Meroe (currently in the Sudan).¹⁸² The Sabaeen kingdom flourished during the 1st millennium B.C. and Wadi Adhanah was featured within this period as an important water resource, as evident by the inscription RES 3946, which mentioned the erection of a catchment in Wadi "Adhanat," for irrigation of nearby areas, during the reign of the Sabaeen king Karib II Watar in the period 675-650 B.C.¹⁸³

- 2- **The Chiefdoms:** The Egyptian records often mention important city states within the boundaries of Retenu, that played important role as suppliers of important goods and materials to Egypt. The most noted were Nei, Dhamar, Al-A'rsh, and Alosa (Uzu).

180 Glaser, 1890, 65, 252.

181 Bryant, 1767, 152-155. This may well be the reason for their (Sabaa and Raamah) inclusion with the Kushites sometimes, while placing them in the Semitic league otherwise.

182 O'Leary, 1927, 87-88.

183 Robin, 2015.

- Nei has been dealt with before, identified as Nuhayyah, situated at the bottom of wadi Adhanah. We further note that it was mentioned as a chiefdom which has a king in the El-Amarna letters who once belonged to the kings of Egypt from the 18th dynasty, before falling with the rebel Aziru.¹⁸⁴
- Alosa, Alashiya (Alasiya) (Asi), appeared in the records mainly as an industrial center especially for copper and bronze supply to Egypt. In the annals of Thutmose III, it was frequently mentioned in the form: “Asi”, as a major source of Copper, Bronze, Lapis Lazuli, Ivory tusks, etc.¹⁸⁵ Several letters from El-Amarna group indicate this activity along with supply of horses, wood, chariots, etc., and that Alashiya or Uzu¹⁸⁶ had its own king dealing directly with the king of Egypt.¹⁸⁷ It genuinely qualifies as the ancient Uz or Uzal later known as San’a, the capital city of the Yemen, whose most famous copper mine Al-Radhradh lies nearby, which we already mentioned above. The identification of the Yemen as the land of Uz was made by prominent travelers like Scott,¹⁸⁸ Maitland, and Bury.¹⁸⁹ Mainstream scholars have identified it in line with their Retenu’s northern theory in Northern Syria or in Cyprus.¹⁹⁰
- Al-’arsh (variant: Al-A’rush) was mentioned above, appeared in the annals as Arathu. It lies in the higher Adhanah basin, and its long bronze age heritage has been proven. It belongs to the Area of Khaulan Al-’aliyah where a significant bronze age settlement was excavated. It was featured in the annals of Thutmose III in the form “Arthut” and “Arathu,” within

184 Petrie, 1896, 289, 291.

185 Petrie, 1896, 118, 121.

186 The name version: UZU appeared in a letter from El-Amarna group, see Petrie, 1896, 289.

187 Ibid. 271-273.

188 Scott, 1942, 206-207.

189 Mansur (Bury), 1911, see the preface by Maitland.

190 Petrie, 1896, 312.

the land of Retenu, as a city frequented by the king.¹⁹¹ It also appeared as a kingdom friendly to the king of Egypt in the Amarna letters, supplying Egypt with gold, Ebony, oils, etc.¹⁹² It has been associated in the literature with Arzawa of Anatolia,¹⁹³ in line with the northern theory, but off course this cannot qualify as a source of Ebony wood.

- Dhamar as a bronze age settlement we mentioned above. It was featured in the annals of Thutmose III as an important town in the land of Retenu visited by the king of Egypt, in the form of "Zamar," or "Zamira."¹⁹⁴ In the Amarna letters it was mentioned in the form of "Zemar", or "Zumura", as a major metropolis during the revolt against the king of Egypt, whose fall was to be avoided. Its king was Ribaddu who was also the king of the Gubla (الجبيل), the territory that includes the metropolis Alashiya.¹⁹⁵ Eventually the rebels took the city, and it was destroyed.¹⁹⁶ Modern scholarship takes it for the ancient Simyra of northern Syria,¹⁹⁷ which is off course absurd and does not conform to the produce of Retenu as discussed above.

3- **The Neighbors:** Retenu is associated with important neighboring countries or tribes that are often mentioned in the annals of the new kingdom and in Minaean inscriptions. The most important of these are Naharin, Djahy, Sangara, Kharu, Kheta, Sur and Kadesh.

- Djahy and Gaza: Djahy is also written (Zahi), the modern Jizan valley near the coast of the Red Sea in southwestern Saudi Arabia. It was featured in the annals as the first land in direction of attack, a city where Thutmose III started his

191 Brugsch-Bey, 1879, 331, 347.

192 Rivero, 2021.

193 Ibid.

194 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 331, 347.

195 Petrie, 1896, 261.

196 Petrie, 1896, 283, 289

197 Ibid.

campaign against Qadesh forces. It lies nearby Retenu on the coastal plains of Tihama.¹⁹⁸ Seti I and Ramses II both started from the land of Djahy in their Asiatic campaigns.¹⁹⁹ It appears to be near the land of Shasu Arabs, where a stream of water falls into a lake.²⁰⁰ The description matches the scene of Jizan valley where the water widens before it ends into the sea.²⁰¹ We have already described the etymology of Djahy as crossing by water or descending water, which matches the Jizan valley. As for Gaza (Gazatu), it is a walled city where the king of Egypt held military council before deciding on the path to be taken.²⁰² The city had a gate which was guarded, as the city was a tributary to the Egyptian kings in the new kingdom.²⁰³ It was featured in the Amarna letters as "Azzati," which had a governor subject to Egypt.²⁰⁴ Arab sources were careful to distinguish between wadi Jizan (Djahy), and Jazan (Gaza), the city of the valley.²⁰⁵ Ancient artifacts from the bronze age were found in the Red Sea site of Sihi in Jazan province as we have already indicated, which confirms the existence of cultural exchange of these people with their counterparts across the Red Sea, now pointing also to a possible location for the Egyptian campaigns landing. The commercial exchange between Egypt and Jazan (Gazatu) was recorded in a south Arabian inscription (GL 1083), which mentioned the incense trade between them and that also included a country called A'sher. Hommel, upon comparing it with the inscription (GL 1155) mentioned above concluded that Gazatu must be equivalent or in the vicinity

198 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 154, 16-167.

199 Ibid, 244, 270.

200 Ibid.

201 AlHamdani, 1884, 73.

202 Bbrugsch-Bey, 1879, 321.

203 Petrie, 1896, 18.

204 Ibid, 299.

205 AlRifaii, 1982, 197-111.

of the territory of Ibru-Naharan from the viewpoint of the Minaean Traders.²⁰⁶ The allocation of Gazatu to Jazan very well explains the traditions of intermarriages of the Minaeans with women from foreign districts. In an interesting statistic from Minaean inscriptions, Gaza women lead by thirty-two marriages, followed by nine from Dedan, and eight from Egypt.²⁰⁷ Naturally this cannot be explained in terms of Gaza of Palestine, but rather Jazan, on the commercial route to Egypt.

- Ibru-Naharan: The Tihama plain is rich in crossing wadis which descend from the mountain areas to the Red Sea. Ibru-Naharan literally means “between two rivers”. We see that in Jazan province alone there are more than ten wadis (rivers) like Wadi Jizan, Wadi Beish, Wadi Khalab, Wadi Sabiya, Wadi Dhamad, Wadi Liyah, Wadi Ta’shar, etc. Most of these wadis end at or near the Red Sea and provide fertile land for agriculture, pasture, and forest lands. Across the Yemenite border similar picture exists with wadis descend from the central mountain areas الجبال towards the Red Sea Tihama coast. Ibru-Naharan or more generally Naharan (Naharin) can be linked with GL 1155, as explained above. Moreover, this area has been repeatedly visited by the monarchs of Egypt, especially from the new kingdom, as it was rich in all kinds of produce demanded by Egypt. Naharan is equated with Mitanni in upper Syria according to the northern theory on Retenu.²⁰⁸ They erroneously placed it between the upper Euphrates and the Orontes in line with the literal meaning of

206 Hommel, 1897, 252-253.

207 AlSaid, 2002. Dedan is an ancient town located north of Yathrib where Minaeans had a colony. The current town of Al-Ola is located on or near its ruins.

208 Breasted, II, 1906, 347. The kings of Naharain described themselves as kings of Myt-n, rendered Mitanni by modern interpretation. We shall see below that this means the Mathen kingdom.

“between two rivers.”²⁰⁹ It is clear from our discussion above that it fits exactly north of the Yemen and within the Tihama plains and escarpments.

- A’sher, Ma’in and Mathen: to A’sher belonged one of the contributors of the dedicated edifice of the GL 1155 inscription of the Minaean traders. Therefore, this land cannot be far away from Ibru-Naharan. Indeed, when we consider it, we find the A’sir عسير which is the highland area or country adjacent to Tihama north of the Yemen, in which many of its wadis originate (Map 5). Furthermore, it was known that the inhabitants of A’sir were called Men or Menti which most likely stands for the Minaeans, who carried trade from Egypt to their Arabian land. The Menti were part of the same stock who once ruled Egypt, famously given the title of Hyksos, as attested by an inscription written on Edfu temple wall.²¹⁰ The association of Menti with the neighboring Naharain is attested also in the victory records of king Seti I, describing Menti as an agricultural land, and Naharain as the river land.²¹¹ Brugsch, following the northern theory equated Menti with Syria and A’sher with Assyria. Mathen is another related locality which appears in the hymn of victory for Thutmose III where the poet states “The land of Mathen trembles for fear of thee.”²¹² Breasted quoted the same hymn writing Mathen in the form “Myt-n”, then rendering it “Mitanni”, following their northern theory of Retenu.²¹³ This off course does not make sense if we accept that Retenu is in the Yemen, and hence Mathen or Myt-n kingdom must be on the way to A’sir going north, as A’sir is adjacent to Naharain

209 Maspero, 1896, the map following the Title page, and Petrie, III, 1905, 16.

210 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 106. We are not going to dwell on the Hyksos question here since it requires a separate study.

211 Ibid, 247.

212 Brugsch-Bey, 1879, 372.

213 Breasted, II, 1906, 265.

in Tihama. In the geography of the Yemen, we find “Mathen” as one of the major territories *مخاليف*, whose Wadi flows from the highlands to the “Jawf”²¹⁴ the Northeastern plain in the Minaean country. Mathen itself is in the area immediately north of San’a. Recent explorations confirmed the existence of bronze age culture in its area (2nd Millennium BC). Mathen was a kingdom observing the cult of Wadd, the same idol venerated by the Minaeans.²¹⁵ Ma’in’s land extends further than A’sir, and spans large areas of in eastern Yemen, and includes northern outposts like Dedan and Taima.²¹⁶ In addition, according to GL 1155, Ma’in had an Egyptian colony called “Ma’in-Musran,” whose seniors contributed to the dedication inscribed at their temple in the Yemen. This can hardly be surprising considering that their kinsmen the Hyksos once ruled Egypt for hundreds of years.

- Sangara: or Sangar was featured in the annals of Thutmose III, as a stepping land next to Retenu in the direction of Kheta.²¹⁷ We shall see shortly that Kheta controlled the Hijaz, the mountainous area north of A’sir, and hence Sangara is most likely the celebrated Najran metropolis. Its ancient name was Nagara as identified by Ptolemy’s geography,²¹⁸ and hence we can see the similarity with Sangara, considering the frontal “Sa” as a prefix. The Egyptians used to receive tribute from Sangara, especially real Lapis Lazuli

214 AlHamdani, 1884, 82.

215 AlNashiri, 2015.

216 Philby, 1952, 254. Dedan was sometimes confused with Ma’in-Musran, in-line with the northern theory, but this does not make an etymological sense. See Grimme, 1932. Ma’in-Musran is likely to be in Elephantine where a Semitic community existed for a long time. See Cook, 1915. Elephantine as location for Ma’in-Musran makes it a suitable match for the interference of the Medja, who lived across their route to Arabia.

217 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 166.

218 Hoyland, 2001, 169.

and manufactured Lazuli into objects like a Ram.²¹⁹ We have already indicated the existence of Lapis lazuli and Azurite in the Yemen and A'sir. Najran lies between these two regions to the east, and possesses the same geologic features, which makes it a suitable center for stone manufacturing. Sangar was erroneously identified as Sinjar, the north Iraqi mountain region in ancient Assyria, which is off course far from being an Egyptian dependency. The king of Assyria wrote a letter of introduction and friendship to Akhenaten, the king of Egypt, and exchange of gift, demanding that the Egyptian gifts to him matches the ones sent to the king of Babylon. The King of Babylon protested the direct exchange of letters from Egypt claiming that Assyria is a vassal state to Babylon.²²⁰ On the other hand, Sangar appears in a different context in the same group of Amarna letters. In this case, the writer is reporting to the king of Egypt about the revolts of some vassals and mentioning that the kings of other chiefdoms are faithful, namely: Ni (Nei), Zinzar (Sangar), and Kinanat (Kinanah).²²¹ Hence, we can see that Sangar fits the description of Najran, as one of the vassal tributaries to the king of Egypt.

- Kheta and their ancestors: Kheta appeared as a tribe or nation, in opposition to Egyptian rule in Asia late in the 18th dynasty,²²² but their leading role was manifested in the 19th dynasty beginning with Seti I campaigns (1326- 1300 BC).²²³ We propose that Kheta stands for Khoza'a, a leading Arab tribe descendant from Al-Azd, the latter in all probability are

219 Petrie, 1896, 116.

220 Rivero, 2001.

221 Petrie II, 1896, 302. Kinanat is probably a corruption of Qanauna, one of the wadi systems north of Jazan that pours near the city of Al-Qunfutha. It appears as a water named Qina where Thutmose III rested before advancing to Maketa (Makkah). See p. 107 in Petrie.

222 Petrie, II, 145, 168.

223 Petrie, III, 15.

equivalent to the Setiu nomads featured in the Sinuhe's story. Khoza'a were an offshoot of Al-Azd who stayed in Makkah, while the rest spread in different directions. We have mentioned above that king Seti I visited Remenen after defeating the king of Kadesh. Before arrival in Remenen, he passed by the land of Kheta and laid them to waist to punish them for breaking a previous peace treaty with his predecessor.²²⁴ Kadesh or Qadis, as shown at length by Dozy is the holy land of Makkah, known as Bilad Al-Haram,²²⁵ and hence Makitha or Maketa²²⁶ where the battle of Thutmose III with the king of Kadesh took place is the same as Makkah. This geography fixes the original location of the Kheta between Makkah and the Yemen, which is either in A'sir or in the adjoining lowlands of Tihama. Khoza'a came from south Arabia and controlled Makkah after the Jurhomites²²⁷. Lepsius²²⁸ was hence correct in ascribing the origin of the Khetas to Punt or South Arabia. We find that after Seti I, during the time of his successor Ramses II (1300-1234 BC), the Khetas were the masters of Kadesh (Qadis). They fought a fierce battle with Ramses II, barely defeated but then entered a peace treaty with him.²²⁹ The coverage of Kheta requires a detailed study which is outside the scope of this

224 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 245-246.

225 Dozy, 1864, 69, 86. Dozy was ridiculed for this identification by the scholars of his time, but now we can see the value of his findings.

226 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 154, Petrie, II, 1896, 105. The toponym Maketa was converted by these scholars to Megiddo in northern Palestine to match their northern theory, which was followed by most other researchers.

227 Sprenger, 1851, 16. Compare with Dozy, 184, 165-166, 185-188. Sprenger gave a late date for their migration to Makkah, but Dozy cautioned that the chronology derived from genealogical tables should not be trusted.

228 Richard Lepsius (1810-1884) was a pioneering German Egyptologist, was the founder of modern, scientific archaeology who did much to catalog Egyptian archaeological remains. See <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Richard-Lepsius/>. Accessed Sept. 17, 2023.

229 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 280-286.

discussion, but we only note here that they were confused with the Hittites of the land of Hatti (Anatolia),²³⁰ which does not make any sense in our proposed context.

- Kharu: whom we identify as Gorhum, was the leading nation of Kadesh confederation of forces before the dominance of the Kheta (Khozaa). They appear in the inscriptions mostly in the form “Kharu”, The Kharu were featured in the battles of Thutmose III around Kadeh and Maketa (Makkah), where a fierce war took place.²³¹ In one list they appear as “Jurhema,” as one of the nations conquered by the Egyptians.²³² Brugsch thought that the Kharu were Phoenicians, which is not far from the truth, but in his context their land was the Levantine coast.²³³

The sequence of dominance over Makkah and the etymology suggests that the Kharu were the Arabic Jurhom or Gorhum. Wilkinson thought that the Kharu (Shari) came from Assyria or from Arabia and they were associated with the Arabian Gulf (Red Sea).²³⁴ Dozy explained the etymology of Gorhum that it came from Gerim, after dropping the redundant “h”, to denote the peoples who live in a land not originally theirs,²³⁵ thus it is equivalent to the word “Jar” جَر in Arabic. The literature on Gorhum is sparse and it requires detailed study.

- Kadesh: this toponym was located at or near the land of Amar²³⁶ or Amor.²³⁷ No fighting was reported between the

230 <https://www.worldhistory.org/hittite/>. Accessed Sept. 17, 2023.

231 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 154-155, 377.

232 Ibid. The latter list mentioned Jurhema and included Mathen (Aro-Mathen), and Oromo (Aroma).

233 Ibid, 28, 153.

234 Wilkinson, 1847, I, 375. He mentioned that the Egyptians featured the Shari as having blue eyes, aquiline nose and small red beard, and the Egyptians called the Red Sea: The Sea of Shari.

235 Dozy, 1866, 94-95.

236 Lushington, 1878, 509-534.

Egyptians and the Amor during the 18th nor the 19th dynasties, although they fought the forces of Kadesh on several occasions. This leads one to think of Amar as a passive tribe or ancient owners of the land who were not in a leading political position like the Kharu or the Khetas. It is therefore plausible that Amar corresponds to Beni Amer tribe who were to be found in the areas near Makkah as reported in Aelius Gallus campaign.²³⁸ Across the Red Sea from Makkah region, we find the Beni Amer tribe in Eastern Sudan and in Eritrea, who have a strong Arabic culture and heritage,²³⁹ and observing ancient intercourse of the two sides of the Red Sea people, this theory would be feasible. Several classic writers noted that the Arabs occupied both sides of the Red Sea in ancient times.²⁴⁰ It was observed for Beni Amer that their roots as a major branch of Beja nation goes back to several thousands of years.²⁴¹ The Beja were identified as descendants of the ancient Madja tribe,²⁴² which fits nicely with the Arabic tradition that Beni Amer Belongs to the Ma'add tribal confederation from the line of Mudhar,²⁴³ whom we have identified above with the Medja, living on both sides of the Red Sea. This identification helps fill an early and rather obscure period of Arabic history. Kadesh/Qadis as a holy land was featured in the inscriptions

237 The original form of the text was "IMR" or "Amor", and the concerned scholars would make their own interpretation out of it. See Gardiner, 1947, 187.

238 Sprenger, 1873.

239 Macmichael, I, 1922, 36.

240 Herodotus, 2: 11, 15, 19; Josephus (Antiquities), 1:238-239. Strabo, 1:2:34.

241 Macmichael, I, 1992, 36.

242 Williams, 1997; Dahl/Hjort-Af-Ornas, 2006, Cooper, 2021.

243 Ibnu Hazm, 2002, 10, 271. It can be deduced from his narrative that Ma'add is an ancient tribe, because they invaded the Israelites with fifty horse men from Tihama. The dating of all these nations needs to be revisited considering the long chronology we mentioned earlier.

of Karnak which shows pictures of animals and flora of desert type that are described to belong to the holy land, discovered by Thutmose III during his campaign in Retenu.²⁴⁴ The holy land was also mentioned in a famous hymn of victory celebrating the defeat of several lands by his forces, among them Retenu, Naharain, Zahi, etc.²⁴⁵ Brugsch-Bey complained in his commentary of the above that the route of Thutmose III does not pass through the holy land (Jerusalem) and hence shed doubt of the credibility of such account. The problem is solved when we consider the correct location of these campaigns, and that the holy land is understood as Kadesh/Qadis, or the land of Makkah.

- Zor or Sur, Haly and Allith: Zor is another city whose seniors made the offering to the Gods of Ma'in after the safe return of their caravan from Egypt. We have discussed at length the other cities in connection with the inscription GL 1155. Sur صور should be located not far away from Asher or Naharin, hence its location can be sought near Jazan or A'sir provinces in Saudi Arabia. It appears in Egyptian inscriptions as Zor, one of the countries conquered by Thutmose III,²⁴⁶ and Seti I.²⁴⁷ However, Zor appears to be much older, as it is connected to Sesotris, a king from the 12th dynasty famous for his foreign campaigns.²⁴⁸ The accounts of Sesotris conquests in Arabia are well documented. Isaac Newton reported that he left Egypt with a huge army with his fleet that was built by the help of Edomites on the Red Sea, entered Arabia, and continued far and wide, building

244 Brugsch-Bey, 1879, 368.

245 Ibid. 371.

246 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 163.

247 Ibid, 248.

248 Ibid, 303. In a letter from a teacher to his former pupil, written in the 19th dynasty.

edifices as he proceeded.²⁴⁹ Bruce, one of the earliest explorers in Ethiopia, following the Ethiopian traditions and annals, reported that Sesotris built the temple of Makkah or Bakkah during his campaigns in Arabia.²⁵⁰ Ancient Sur being on the seacoast, must have contained a landing port for the Egyptians. Its King was known as Hiram, who supplied king Solomon with gold and Ebony wood from Ophir, and sailors to navigate the sea from the port of Elath, where his ships were built.²⁵¹ Qashash studied the geography of A'sir and Tihama and identified Sur as Sohar, the fort of Hiram (Huram) tribe, whose descendants, beni Hiram, held the city for a long time, and their name appeared in pre-Islamic inscriptions from Jazan area.²⁵² Their land extended from the district of Jazan to the area south of Makkah.²⁵³ The etymology of Hiram could have been derived from the combination of "Akhi-Ram," meaning the brother of Ram. Ram or Rum as we have seen before is an Edomite clan. Seti I in his Arabian campaigns destroyed the Edomite Shasu and their fortress of "Khetham" in the land of Zor (Zaru) as far as Kanaan.²⁵⁴ Khetham here may very well stand for Edom, like the "Kedem" of Sinuhe. The name of the king of Kedem or Edom at the time of Sinuhe, was "Maki," who may have been derived from his seat in the city of Makkah.²⁵⁵ Sur (identified with the city of Haly), the seat of Beni Hiram, and the port city of Elath were featured in the campaign of Aelius Gallus in Arabia, but their identification remained

249 Newton, 1728, 214-216. O'Leary, 1927, 30. Their accounts follow Herodotus, II:108.

250 Shaw, 1798, 107.

251 Qashash, 2018, 415-416.

252 Ibid, 418.

253 Ibid.

254 Ibid, 244. Kanaan could be a corruption from wadi Qanauna, one of the main valleys in that area north of Haly.

255 Simpson, 2003, 163. Gardiner, 1916, 174.

obscure.²⁵⁶ These were the two cities whom the Roman army passed by on their return from the failed mission, given as Chala (Haly), and Malotha (Elath) which is situated on a river.²⁵⁷ Both cities were identified in Egyptian inscriptions in the list of the cities conquered by Seti I, which comprises Sangar (Najran), Kadeshu (Qadis the holy land), Makita (Makkah), Zor (Sur), Pa-Hil (Haly), and Mannus, a city in the land of Mallos (Mallith).²⁵⁸ It is well known that the prefix “M” is identical to the prefix “Al” in south Arabian language, hence Malotha, Mallos, Mallith, Elath, and the current Allith stands for the same location.

Conclusion

This paper may provide a basis for the correction of a major historical error, that is the allocation of Syria/Palestine as a venue for new kingdom’s campaigns, and consequently the chiefdoms described by them in Retenu and neighboring regions. We have established the case for a new and alternative location for the toponym “Retenu”. We started by referring to the sustained suspicion around a Syrian location of the mainstream literature. We then described the material products of Retenu, which made the place a major source of precious metals, wood, ivory, precious stones, horses, livestock, aromatics, etc. By comparing much of these products to the geological and environmental history of Syria, we confirmed the suspicion that Retenu could not stand for Syria or its neighborhood. We then suggested Yemen as an alternative country where Retenu should be sought and concluded that the Adhanah valley system was indeed the correct location for Retenu. Our analysis included etymological features and name similarities, viz: Letennu, Litany, Uden, Wednet, Uedenet, etc. We explored the topography of the Wadi Adhanah and referred to various locations whose ancient names appeared in the Egyptians and south Arabian inscriptions,

256 Sprenger, 1873.

257 O’Leary, 1927, 78.

258 Brugsch-Bey, 1891, 248.

especially in connection with the Adhanah/Retenu. The attribution of Wadi Adhanah to the ancient Retenu was further explored through the recent bronze age culture found in the Yemen in the areas around that wadi system. Features of camel domestication, elephant hunting sport, and local chiefdoms were also explored. We then studied the neighboring countries and/or nations around Wadi Adhanah and compared them with the ones that appeared in the relevant inscriptions, where a good match was established. The search period extended through the early dynastic, old, middle, and especially late kingdom periods. This necessarily leaves unanswered questions, some of which we mentioned during the discussion. As this research is primarily geographic in nature, we are forced to defer some historical discussions to another opportunity. I hope that the findings of this paper will invite fresh discussions and scientific debate on a subject which have been long left without a resolution.

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www.conifers.org/cu/Tetraclinis.php.

<https://www.worldhistory.org/hittite/>

Maps



Map1, Part of Arabia Felix, Author's Collection

Mercator, Gerard, (1512-1595)

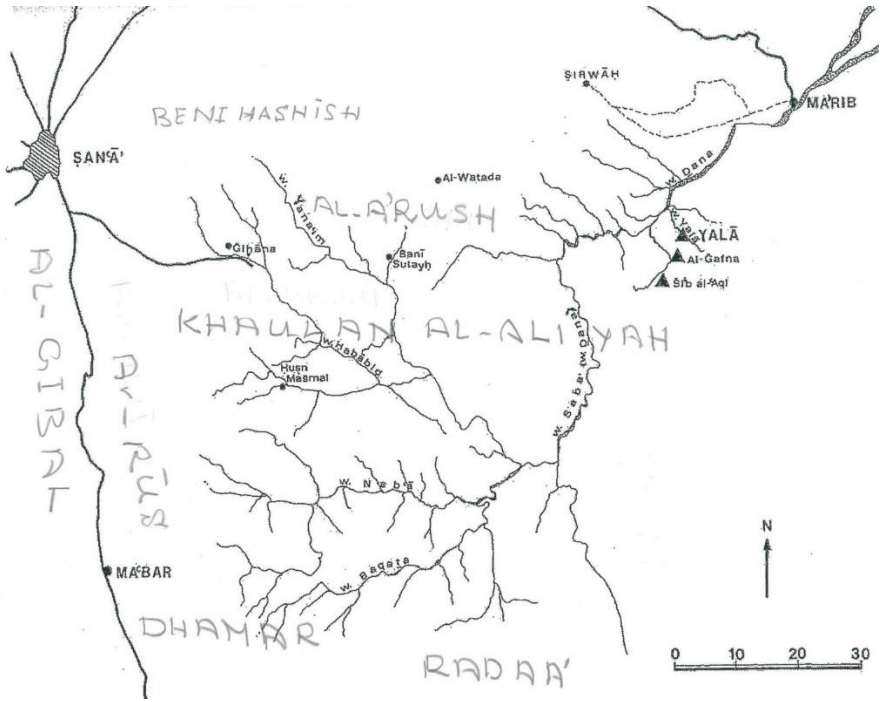
Mercator, Gerard, The Yemen in the 6th Table of Ptolemy.

Source: *Arabiam Felicem. Carmaniam, ae Sinum Persicum*, (Amsterdam).



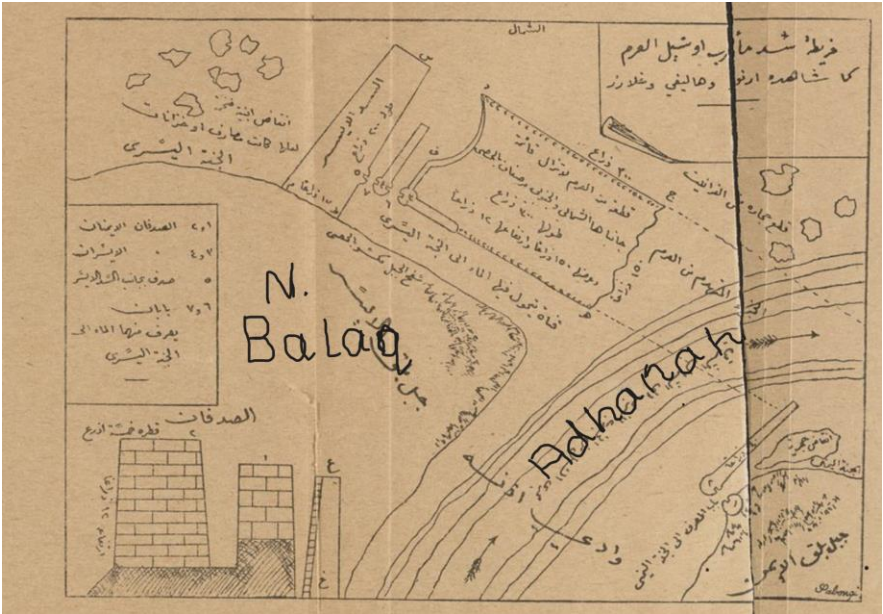
Map 2, the Historic Yemen, Author's Collection

Source: De Lapie, M. 1838. *Carte de la Turquie d'Asie*, (Paris, Chez P. C. Lehuby).



Map 3, Wadi Adhanah Basin, with Author's additions

Source: De Maigret, A. et Robin, Chr. J. 1989. *Les Fouilles Italiennes de yala(yemen du Nord): Nouvelles Donnees sur la Chronologie de l'Arabie Preislamique*, Academie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, Comptes Rendus des Seances de l'annee 255-29, (Paris, de Boccard).



Map 4 Ma'rib Dam as seen by 19th century travelers.

Source: Daghir, As'ad. 1918. *Hadharat Al-Arab*, Opposite p. 36 (Al-Moski-Misr, Hindiyyah Press).



Map 5 A'sir and Bilad Alharam

Source: De Lapie, M. 1838. Carte de la Turqui d'Asie, (Paris, Chez P. C. Lehuby).

Figures



Figure 1, Boswellia Sacra Tree

Source:

<https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:127065-1>



Figure 2, Juniper Trees from Western Saudi Arabia

Source: <https://www.spa.gov.sa/1595760>



Figure 3: Faces and Headdress of Remenen

Source: Petrie, Flinders, 1887. Racial Photographs from the Egyptian Museum.

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