

Kenneth Kitchen

The Elusive Land of Punt

The land of 'Punt' (strictly, Pwanet) was first found in Egyptian texts in the 19th century; its association with incense and myrrh led to identification with Arabia. Additional references (especially the superb 'Punt-scenes' of Queen Hatshepsut) pointed to East Africa; but suggested locations varied widely from Sudan to Somalia.

Egyptian data range from c.2500 to 600 BC giving Punt a long history, a range of products, and a sociology of chiefdoms. During the 3rd millennium BC (Old Kingdom), the products of Punt were brought to Egypt by their own expeditions either along the Nile or up the Red Sea and across to the Nile valley via Wadi Hammamat. This Red Sea trade continued in the Middle Kingdom (early 2nd millennium BC) via the port of Mersa Gueisis, and in the New Kingdom (later 2nd millennium BC). The Puntites themselves also sailed to Egypt and their products, fauna and flora ecologically coincide with northern Eritrea/Ethiopia and east-north-east Sudan. This identification is supported by later references to the rain on the Mountains of Punt draining into the Nile flood which thus excludes an identification of Punt in Somalia as has sometimes been suggested.

The Egypt-Punt trade-link ended after the mid-12th century BC. Why is unknown: a break-up of the Punt federation? climatic change? pharaohs too poor to send expeditions? or the new South Arabian trade up to Gaza proved more convenient for aromatics? Who knows!

Suggested further reading

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Carl Phillips

The Red Sea's Importance to the Sabaeans

It is generally acknowledged that there is little evidence for trade conducted by the Kingdoms of South Arabia in the Red Sea region throughout the 1st millennium BC. In contrast with this, long distance overland trade, following the desert margins of South Arabia, is seen as a major factor in the events which led to the development of the Sabaean Kingdom in the early 1st millennium BC. However, it has long been recognized that there was also a significant South Arabian influence in East Africa at this time, indicated by Sabaean inscriptions and various artefacts found in Tigray, Ethiopia. This could be interpreted as evidence for trading links with East Africa which would

inevitably entail the crossing of the Red Sea and thus imply Sabaean familiarity with the coasts of both regions.

In this paper the textual evidence which could relate to Sabaean trading activities in the Red Sea region during the 1st millennium BC will be presented. This includes Biblical and South Arabian texts. Evidence from the distributions of different types of artefacts and raw materials will also be considered, together with archaeological evidence for possible Sabaean settlements found on the coastal plain of Yemen (i.e. the Tihamah). The emphasis will be on the early part of the 1st millennium BC, the time when the Sabaean rulers bore the title of Mukarrib and which is also the period that characterises South Arabia during the time of the "Queen of Sheba". The reasons for the apparent lack of archaeological evidence from the latter part of the 1st millennium will also be considered.

Suggested further reading

- Avanzini, A. (1997), *Profumi d'Arabia: atti del convegno*: Rome: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider.
(This book contains a number of papers which relate to the issue of the Sabaeans and the Red Sea).
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Steven Sidebotham

Reflections of Ethnicity in the Red Sea Commerce in Antiquity: Evidence of Trade Goods, Languages and Religions from the Excavations at Berenike, Egypt

Nine seasons of excavations at Berenike, a Ptolemaic-Roman (3rd century BC - 6th century AD) port on the Red Sea coast of Egypt, and concomitant survey and excavation in the region between 1994 - 2002 by the University of Delaware (USA), Leiden University (the Netherlands) and the University of California at Los Angeles (USA) have documented extensive evidence for the 'international' and regional commerce of this period and the ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds of individuals involved in it.

Ancient literary sources (e.g. Strabo: *Geography*; the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*; Pliny the Elder: *Natural History*) record commodities of this commerce, many of which have been recovered from Berenike. Some trade items excavated at Berenike, however, are only known from the objects themselves and are not mentioned by any ancient authors. The objects, which include both artefacts and floral and faunal remains, come from such diverse regions as eastern Java, Thailand or Vietnam, South Asia (India and Sri Lanka), the Persian Gulf, southern Arabia, the Kingdom of Aksum, and other areas of Egypt, the Near East and the Mediterranean basin. These finds, together with ostraca, papyri and inscriptions from Berenike that document at least eleven different written languages, plus evidence of approximately 9 religious cults practised at the port, reveal a vibrant trade especially in the early Roman (1st century AD) and late Roman (mid 4th - 5th centuries AD) periods involving ethnically and socio-economically diverse groups of people. The archaeological record indicates that trade through Berenike waxed and waned during its 800-year history and that different groups predominated at the port at various times in its history.

This paper will bring together archaeological (as broadly defined) and ancient literary evidence dealing with trade goods as well as items used by 'foreign' entrepreneurs resident primarily at Berenike, but also at other Red Sea ports, to present what is known about the commodities and peoples involved in the long distance and regional commerce of this key emporium on the ancient maritime 'Silk Route'.

Suggested further reading

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- Sidebotham, S. E. (2001), 'Berenike: Archaeological fieldwork at a Ptolemaic-Roman port on the Red Sea coast of Egypt: 1999-2001', *Sahara* 13, (in press).
- Sidebotham, S. E. (2002), 'Berenike: A Ptolemaic-Roman port on the ancient maritime spice and incense route', *Minerva* 13/3 (May/June), 28-31.
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Marijke van der Veen

The Merchants' Diet: Food Remains from Quseir al-Qadim (12th-15th centuries)

Recent excavations of the ancient port at Quseir al-Qadim on the Red Sea coast of Egypt have revealed botanical evidence for the Roman and Islamic spice trade between Egypt and India, as well as evidence for the diet of the inhabitants of this port. In the medieval period, it was the port from which the Karimi merchants organised their trade with Yemen, South Arabia and India. Documentary sources refer to the Karimi as "the merchants of pepper and spices", but we know that they also dealt with other commodities, such as wheat, rice, sugar, silk, textiles and wood. The sources are silent, however, on the living conditions at the port. There is no agricultural land in the vicinity of the site, so all food had to be brought in, but which foods were they? The extreme aridity of the Red Sea coastal plain has ensured the excellent preservation of food remains and kitchen refuse (seeds, fruits, nuts, bones of domestic animals) discarded by the inhabitants during the 12th – 15th centuries. For the first time we can start to address questions such as: what did they eat, how varied was their diet, and did they have access to the exotic foods that were transhipped at the port? This paper will offer a first glimpse of the new archaeological evidence recovered during recent excavations.

Suggested further reading

- Bülow-Jacobsen, A., Cuvigny, H. and Fournet, J. L. (1994), 'The identification of Myos Hormos: new papyrological evidence', *Bulletin de l'Institut Français Archéologie Orientale* 94, 27-42.

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Daniel Varisco

Sailing Seasons in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean: The View from Rasulid Aden

Despite the glamour of Marco Polo's overland trek on the Silk Road, much of the significant trade between Europe and Asia, as well as from Africa to the Middle East, was carried out in defined sailing seasons along the Red Sea and Indian Ocean. As Marco Polo himself noted, one of the most important ports in the sea trade was Aden. Drawing mainly on the excellent corpus of Rasulid texts from Yemen, I will discuss the specific sailing seasons to and from Aden. Recently discovered archival records from the reign of al-Malik al-Muzaffar (late 13th century AD) provide data on what was being shipped through Aden, the customs and duties imposed in the port of Aden, and how the port itself functioned. The aim of the lecture is to give an overview of the international sea trade from the perspective of an imagined, but historically informed, Arab merchant travelling from Egypt to Aden at the same time that Marco Polo began his journey back home from China.

Suggested further reading

- Varisco, D.M. (1994), *Medieval Agriculture and Islamic Science: the Almanac of a Yemeni Sultan*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Clive Smith

Vital Mamluk and Ottoman Interests in Yemen's Red Sea Coast and Aden in the 16th century

A Venetian painting of 1512, depicting a Venetian delegation calling on Qansawh al-Ghawri, the Mamluk sultan in Cairo, indicates the importance of their trading partnership, devastated by the loss of the lucrative Indian spice trade to the Portuguese soon after their arrival in the Indian Ocean. The Venetians, eastern Indian and Yemeni sultans sought Mamluk help; and

the entry into the Red Sea, in early 1513, of a Portuguese fleet commanded by the redoubtable Afonso Albuquerque caused panic in Cairo. A Mamluk expedition achieved little in India but was able to improve coastal security in the Red Sea, especially at Jeddah.

With the fall of Mamluk Egypt in 1517, the Ottoman Turks inherited responsibility for the Red Sea and beyond. The controversial Turkish corsair, Salman Rayyis, enthused over the riches of Yemen but it was only in 1538 that a massive expedition, led by the eunuch Suleyman Pasha, left for India. Unsuccessful there, he had treacherously wrested Aden from Yemeni control and stamped Ottoman authority on the Yemeni coastal plain or Tihamah. With the revival of the Indian spice trade, the established Ottomans began to gain financially from Yemen but revolution in 1568 reduced their control to a small enclave surrounding Zabid. A punitive expedition led by the veteran minister, Sinan Pasha, returned the country to Ottoman rule with great difficulty.

Against this evolving background, the motive for involvement hardened from the need to ensure cooperation over Red Sea security to one of financial exploitation through territorial control, as the actions of these colourful figures illustrate.

Suggested further reading

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Michel Tuchscherer

Coffee Trade in the Red Sea (15th-19th centuries)

When coffee consumption started in Europe in the first half of the 17th century, it had already gone through a long history in the Orient, a history that started around the Red Sea, probably around the 13th century and developed later within the Ottoman Empire. From the southern areas of Ethiopia, where people used to pick the berries from the wild, the habit of coffee consumption spread to Yemen, Arabia and Egypt where the stimulative qualities of the beverage were greatly appreciated, especially by Muslim mystics.

The Ottoman conquest of these areas opened the immense regions under Ottoman rule around the Mediterranean to the diffusion of coffee consumption. Meanwhile, Yemeni production had taken off. It progressively gained a position of a quasi monopoly which it kept until the 1720s. After the Dutch had succeeded in diverting the spice trade through the Red Sea around 1625, the coffee trade not only avoided an irremediable decline in the Red Sea trade, but became more prosperous than it had ever been before, until Europeans began to threaten Yemen's position with

coffee plantations that developed in their possessions in Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Americas. This coffee was sold on the rapidly developing European markets, although the high quality reputation of Yemeni coffee enabled it to retain a clientele of connoisseurs, prepared to pay a markedly higher price. By the 1840s, the prosperity of the Red Sea coffee economy was definitely over and the Yemeni coffee production had become marginal in the ever growing world production.

Suggested further reading

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Cheryl Ward

Luxury Wares in the Red Sea: The Sadana Island Shipwreck

The most ancient story of a shipwreck in all the world is set in the Red Sea, and hints of exotic contacts and exchange tantalize scholars of the pharaonic period. For thousands of years, ships have sailed the Red Sea with luxury cargoes, but only a single well-preserved example has been scientifically investigated, the mid-18th century ship at Sadana Island, Egypt.

International markets and consumption expanded traditional regional trading routes to systems that spanned half the globe during the later 18th century. In the Red Sea, Egyptian control limited direct European access to ports and maintained a seasonally timed sailing schedule for large Egyptian-owned and operated ships. These ships brought exotic wares into central Egyptian markets and served as redistribution points for the Mediterranean, particularly the Ottoman world. Excavation of a ship that sank about 1765 suggests that it was part of this trading network. The cargo of Chinese export porcelain, coffee, aromatic resin, and other goods, along with ship construction methods, provide a detailed look at part of the Muslim world and its integration into other trade networks of the early modern period.

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The Speakers

Kenneth Kitchen is emeritus Professor of Egyptology at the University of Liverpool, but has long-term expertise also in ancient Near Eastern disciplines, and has published, lectured and travelled widely from Egyptology in Rio de Janeiro to ancient Arabia in Yemen and the Gulf and Anatolia and the Levant for their ancient history and inscriptions.

Carl Phillips has worked on many sites in the Near East, particularly in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula and has been responsible for initiating projects in Oman and the United Arab Emirates. In recent years he has conducted a number of surveys and has excavated the site of al-Hamid, both on the Tihamah coast of Yemen. This work was carried out under the aegis of the British Archaeological Mission to Yemen (BAMY) in cooperation with General Organisation for Antiquities, Museums and Manuscripts (GOAMM) in Sanaa. From 1990 to 2000 he taught at the Institute of Archaeology (University College London) and is currently a member of CNRS research group 7041 in Paris.

Steven Sidebotham, a professor in the History Department at the University of Delaware, USA, has conducted archaeological projects since 1972, both on land and underwater, in Italy, Greece, Tunisia, Libya, Israel, North Yemen, India and Egypt. He is currently co-director of the Berenike Project, director of the Sikait Project and director of the Eastern Desert Survey Project. His main interests are Ptolemaic-Roman economic activity in the Red Sea-Indian Ocean and Eastern Desert of Egypt. He has conducted fieldwork in Egypt since 1980.

Marijke van der Veen is Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at the School of Archaeology and Ancient History at the University of Leicester. Her research focuses on the archaeology of food and the identification of agricultural change. She uses carbonized and desiccated seed assemblages as primary data, and seeks to integrate these with other archaeological and historical evidence. Research projects have concentrated on the agricultural economies of Iron Age and Roman Britain and on prehistoric and Roman North Africa. Current projects concern the identification and role of luxury foods in past societies, the Roman and Mamluk spice trade, and the food supply to Roman quarry sites in Egypt. Her research has been supported by grants from NERC and the Leverhulme Trust. Her publications include *Crop Husbandry Regimes* (1992, Sheffield), and *The Exploitation of Plant Resources in Ancient Africa* (1999, New York).

Webpages: <http://www.le.ac.uk/ar/mvdrv1/index.html>
<http://www.arch.soton.ac.uk/Research/Quseir>

Daniel Varisco is a cultural anthropologist and historian specializing on the history of Yemen. He conducted ethnographic research in a highland Yemeni community in 1978-79 and has returned to Yemen over 15 times as a development consultant and researcher. In the past 20 years he has published 3 books on Yemen and over 50 journal articles. He is currently Associate Professor of Anthropology at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York.

Clive Smith spent 5 years as a District Officer in Kenya, after reading for the Classical Tripos at Cambridge University; this was followed by a period in Mauritius as Private Secretary and A.D.C. to the Governor. Subsequently, he spent 28 years with the British Council, 21 of which were directly concerned with the Arab world and 9 of which were in the Arabian Peninsula, as Director in Yemen (1973-1978) and Saudi Arabia (1988-1992). He has visited all but one of the Arabic speaking countries. In 1972/3 he studied Arabic at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Middle

East Centre for Arabic Studies in Shemlan, Lebanon. He was awarded the O.B.E. in 1979 and the Order of the Two Niles in 1984.

Michel Tuchscherer is a professor of modern and contemporary history of the Middle East at the "Université de Provence" (Aix-en-Provence). He is also associated researcher at the IREMAM (Institut d'Etudes et de Recherches sur le Monde arabe et musulman). He spent some 15 years in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Turkey, first as a teacher, then as a researcher in Cairo at the IFAO (Institut français d'archéologie orientale) and in Istanbul at the IFEA (Institut français d'Etudes anatoliennes). He works on early modern social and economic history of Egypt and the Red Sea area.

Cheryl Ward teaches nautical archaeology, the history and construction of wooden ships, archaeobotany, and archaeological conservation in Florida State University's Program in Underwater Archaeology. Dr. Ward's most recent projects include serving as nautical archaeologist on the Institute for Exploration expeditions in the Black Sea; Chief Scientist for the investigation of a 5th millennium BC wooden object in an Omani lagoon funded by the National Geographic Research Committee; and as the ship reconstructor in the excavation of the world's oldest planked boats at Abydos, Egypt. Ongoing research also includes publication preparation of the 18th century Sadana Island Shipwreck excavation report. Archaeobotanical studies of shipwrecks off the coast of Florida and Turkey also are underway.