

Translated Studies Series (4)

Shipbuilding Industry on the Red Sea Coasts



Written by: **Hatim Al-Siddiq Mohammed Ahmed**
Saud Abdul Aziz Abdullah

Translated by:
Ahmed Gumaa Siddiek Mohammed

Second Edition 2025 AD

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الإيداع القانوني

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جميع حقوق الطبع محفوظة للناشر والمؤلف

لا يسمح بإعادة إصدار هذا الكتاب أو أي جزء منه أو تخزينه كنسخة إلكترونية أو نقله بأي شكل من الأشكال دون إذن خطي مسبق من المؤلف والناشر

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

قال تعالی:

﴿ فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا ﴾

(سورة المؤمنون: الآية 27)

وقال تعالی:

﴿ وَيَصْنَعُ الْفُلَّكَ وَكُلَّمَا مَرَّ عَلَيْهِ مَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُ قَالَ إِنْ تَسْخَرُوا مِنَّا فَإِنَّا نَسْخَرُ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا تَسْخَرُونَ ﴾

(سورة هود: الآية 38)

Dedication

To those who have lived along the shores of the Red Sea throughout its extended history, and who have braved its waves in pursuit of a decent life and a better future for themselves and their children. We dedicate this book.

The Authors

Acknowledgments

We express our sincere thanks and deep gratitude to Professor Ashraf Mohammed Abdel Rahman Mounis from Ain Shams University, Arab Republic of Egypt, Professor Osama Abdullah Mohammed Al-Amin from Bakht Al-Ruda University, Republic of Sudan, Dr. Mohammed Abdul Karim Al-Kunaidari from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Dr. Amal Abdul-Ma'zoor Al-Hamiri from Sana'a University, Yemen, for reviewing the draft of this book.

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We would also like to thank Professor Ali Barakat from Ibb University, Yemen, and Professor Al-Fatih Sheikh Abdul Dafie from Al-Jazeera University, Republic of Sudan, and our thanks go to Abdul Nasser Saeed Mohammed Al-Battatin, Hadramaut, Yemen, for graciously writing the foreword for this book. We extend our heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation to all of them.

Author

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Forward

1

After praising and thanking the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and sending blessings and peace upon the final messenger and prophets, along with his pure family and companions, I proceed as follows:

Historical documentation for any nation represents an expression of its cultural identity. Writing about maritime history is one form of such documentation, characterized by its unique methodology that relies on the sea, its inputs and outputs, and the associated commercial, military, industrial activities, harbours, and ports. The Red Sea, historically known as the Qulzum, was and still is intertwined with the history of the countries bordering it, their civilizations, and industries. This sea has served as a vessel for human activity and is a significant part of the historical narrative of these nations. Its waves, waters, and shores have witnessed major and varied historical events that have changed many aspects of the historical reality and cultural interactions, as well as the reception and transmission of influences.

The ship or vessel, in its various developments throughout successive eras, has been the most prominent carrier of these influences. It has opened the door to prosperity through its contributions to revitalizing economic activities and enhancing stability and prosperity in these countries. Conversely, it has also opened the door to misery, carrying invasions and aggression that robbed them of their resources. The successive civilizations of these nations recognized the importance of shipbuilding, each leaving its mark on this industry, exploring its depths, and providing safe harbors and ports for ships coming from beyond the seas.

This introduction has been inspired by the honor bestowed upon me by Professor Hatim Mohammed Ahmed Al-Siddiq to introduce his book, co-authored with Mr. Saud Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al-Najjar, titled: “Shipbuilding on the Red Sea Coasts.” This valuable and engaging book, with its seven chapters, has drawn my attention to several matters that I will highlight in this preface.

The book adopts a clear and simple style that aligns with its goal of understanding the cultural history of the ports of the Red Sea, the story of ships and their construction, and the uniqueness of each port. This perspective complements what once Dionysius Agios discussed in his book, *The Story of Ships in the Red Sea*.

The authors deserve credit for their awareness of the technical and expressive constructs of the book and their focus on an analytical framework through the exploration of sources and documents, which adds allure and excitement for the reader.

I was impressed by the independence of the chapters while maintaining coherence with the topics of the other chapters. It appears to the reader at first glance that each chapter is an independent unit with its own content and footnotes; however, it flows smoothly with the other chapters like a river branching into streams.

The book is concise in size, well-organized in its structure, and meticulously methodical, which is evident to anyone who browses through it.

One of the commendable features of this book is the relatively large number of images depicting harbors, vessels, and shipbuilding tools, which are interspersed throughout the chapters. While it may seem unconventional to place these images in the appendices at the back of the book, it does not classify the book as a strictly methodological academic work. This approach provides the reader with a visual perspective that complements the written text, enhanced by those documents and images.

The book is commendable for its comprehensive coverage of the ports along the Red Sea from various original and secondary perspectives, providing the reader with a well-rounded understanding of the roles of all these ports.

I was struck by the diversity of sources and references in the book, as well as its attention to foreign perspectives in its sources regarding the subject matter. The balanced exploration of these sources contributes to an acceptable level of scientific neutrality.

The inclusion of a significant number of maps, tables, and figures greatly enhances the thorough historical treatment of the chapters and their comparative analyses.

The progressive structure of the chapters culminates in the seventh chapter, which offers a detailed analytical narrative of shipbuilding and its tools, supported by images, maps, and documents.

In conclusion, I can confidently say that this book will open new horizons for researchers and those interested in the maritime history of the Red Sea and its related industries, particularly shipbuilding.

In addition, may God alone grant success in the pursuit of truth.

Prof. Ali Abdul Karim Mohammed Barakat

Vice Dean of the College of Arts for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research
Professor of Islamic History and Civilization - Ibb University - Republic of Yemen
September 18, 2024

Forward

2

Shipbuilding is one of the ancient industries, dating back at least 6,000 years. The Minoans from the island of Crete were the first to sail between 2000 and 1500 B.C. It is believed that the Phoenicians and Babylonians were among the earliest users of ships. While Egyptians may not have been the first pioneers in shipbuilding, they were the first to leave written records about navigation and ships. The first ship is historically attributed, as confirmed by the Quran, to Noah's Ark.

Shipbuilding is a process that can take from months to years and is carried out in what are known as shipyards, which vary in size depending on the ships being built. Few countries engage in shipbuilding, as it requires expertise, technical skills, and financial resources, indicating the high financial costs associated with this industry. Therefore, the existence of a book contributed to the library by prominent Sudanese and Arab historians, such as Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Muhammad Ahmed and Mr. Saud Abdul Aziz Abdullah Al-Najjar, serves as a valuable reference for shipbuilding industry in the Red Sea. This is commendable and a scholarly effort deserving recognition, especially when we consider the strategic importance of this vital outlet that has been contested by major regional and global powers throughout history and continues to be significant today, as evidenced by the countries and ports that overlook it.

I am honored by Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Muhammad Ahmed to write an introduction to this valuable work, which we need in this

time to learn more about one of the world's most important seas, as well as the significant crafts and ports that have thrived along its coasts throughout different historical periods. The book is written in a clear and accessible language suitable for rigorous scientific research, with high-quality expression. Through my reading, it highlights the researchers' vast capabilities, which excelled in gathering substantial scientific information.

The images decorating the book further clarify the topics and illustrate the stages of development in this industry, presented in a vibrant design that adds enjoyment for readers, specialists, researchers, and those interested in the Red Sea and general culture. The book contains seven meticulously chosen and interconnected chapters, along with an introduction, conclusion, and a list of sources and references.

The first chapter introduces the Red Sea, while the subsequent chapters categorize the ports of the Red Sea, facilitating the exploration of the book's content and introducing these ports and the methods of shipbuilding and types therein. The chapters include the southeastern ports of the Red Sea, the eastern central coastal ports, the historical ports on the northwestern coast, the Middle Western coastal ports, and the southwestern coastal ports of the Red Sea. The final chapter explains the tools used in shipbuilding in the Red Sea.

Anyone reviewing the list of sources and references will be reassured of the book's quality, which includes twenty-three references, a master's thesis, and twenty-five research papers published in high-quality journals from prestigious scientific institutions. It also features a scientific paper presented at the Scientific Research and Graduate Studies Conference at the University of Khartoum, concluding with a personal interview with a prominent figure in shipbuilding industry and fishing along the Sudanese Red Sea coast.

In conclusion, I invite students of knowledge and those interested in general culture to seize the opportunity to acquire this valuable knowledge treasure. I end by expressing my gratitude and happiness for the honor of presenting this important work.

Prof. Al-Fateh Al-Sheikh Abdul-Dafa'a

Professor of Modern History

University of Al-Jazeera – Sudan

10 October 2024

Forward

3

The study of maritime history is not limited to recounting events and navigational activities; it extends to analyzing the economic, social, and political transformations that contributed to the development of coastal communities and the shaping of maritime trade patterns throughout the ages. The shipbuilding industry is one of the oldest crafts practiced by humans, and it has historically formed one of the essential pillars of transport, trade, and communication between nations and civilizations. Since ancient times, this industry has been closely linked to the development of coastal ports, where ships served as the primary means for transporting goods and achieving cultural and economic exchange among different nations.

The Red Sea - known in ancient times as the Sea of Qulzum and also referred to as the Erythraean Sea - was one of the main hubs for this navigational activities, playing a strategic role in connecting the East to the West, and serving as a major conduit for global trade from ancient times to the present day.

The book “Shipbuilding in the Red Sea Coasts,” prepared by, the esteemed historian and scholar Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Muhammad Ahmed, along with the esteemed Saud Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Najjar, represents a significant addition to the Arab library. It focuses on the study of shipbuilding in the Red Sea from a comprehensive historical and analytical perspective, tracing the evolution of this industry and its impact on the economic, commercial, and cultural activities of the regions bordering this sea. The book is distinguished by its rigorous scientific methodology, as it relies on historical documents and sources, along with

a precise analysis of geographical and economic data, making it an important reference for researchers and specialists in maritime history and economic and commercial studies.

Methodology and Structure of the Book:

The book presents a comprehensive scientific vision, following an analytical methodology that combines historical documentation with objective treatment. It draws on diverse sources, including both Arabic and Western references, in addition to documents, images, and maps that enrich its content and provide the reader with a clear understanding of the stages of development in shipbuilding in the Red Sea. The authors have adopted an accurate geographical division of the Red Sea ports, covering each coastal sector in detailed scientific precision, enabling the reader to grasp the role of each port in shipbuilding and its impact on navigational and commercial activities throughout history.

The book consists of seven interconnected chapters, progressing from a historical study of the Red Sea and its navigational role to a detailed examination of its ports, divided according to geographical distribution. Each chapter addresses a specific sector of these ports, from southern to northern ports, highlighting the unique characteristics of each port in the field of shipbuilding and its development. The seventh chapter is dedicated to studying the tools used in shipbuilding, providing an analytical view of the various technical and artistic aspects of this industry.

Importance of the Book and Its Scientific Advantages

The book possesses several features that make it a significant reference work in its field, including:

- 1. In-depth Analytical Perspective:** The book does not limit itself to historical narration but offers a profound scientific analysis of the role of the Red Sea in global trade movements and the impact of shipbuilding on the development of coastal communities.

2. **Rigorous Academic Methodology:** The authors relied on reliable historical sources and original documents, which added a high degree of scientific credibility to the work.
3. **Integration of Text and Image:** The book includes a number of maps, documents, and illustrative images that aid the reader in understanding the study's content more accurately.
4. **Balance between Local and International Perspectives:** The book does not only address shipbuilding in the Arab ports bordering the Red Sea but also includes African ports, giving it a broader comprehensive approach.
5. **Solid Academic Style:** The book is written in precise scientific language, suitable for academic research, while maintaining clarity and smoothness in presentation.

Scientific Value of the Book and Its Impact on Academic Research

This book represents a qualitative addition to the Arab library, being an important reference for researchers in maritime history, commercial economics, and navigational geography. It opens new horizons for more specialized studies in the field of shipbuilding and its influence on shaping the economic and cultural identities of coastal communities.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the authors for their significant scientific effort in preparing this work. We also value the contributions of the professors who participated in reviewing and presenting it, which added a deeper academic dimension to it.

We cannot overlook the commendation of the esteemed scholar and historian, Professor Hatim Al-Siddiq Muhammad Ahmed, who honored us by trusting us to review and present this book. His scientific contribution has added great value to this work, as he is an experienced researcher with a rich research record that has enriched historical knowledge. His involvement in this scientific effort is a badge of honor

for us and a motivation to pursue further research and scrutiny as reviewers and presenters of this book. Therefore, we extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to him, recognizing his esteemed academic position and his pioneering contributions to the field of historical studies.

We hope that this book serves as a starting point for more specialized studies in this vital field and contributes to enhancing awareness of the importance of maritime heritage and shipbuilding, and their roles in shaping the economic and civilizational history of the Red Sea region.

Dr. Abdunasser Said Muhammad Al-Battati

Daw'an - Hadhramaut

February 9, 2025

Introduction

Shipbuilding industry is one of the oldest crafts practiced by humans, contributing significantly to the development of transportation and trade. This craft is closely linked to other professions, such as fishing and trade, which flourished along global and regional waterways, as well as in inland waters between nearby coasts. Its connection to astronomy, navigation, and sea exploration played a critical role in its evolution.

The development of shipbuilding industry in the Red Sea resulted from various factors, including the presence of ports, harbors, and islands along its coasts, which were essential for the emergence and growth of the shipbuilding industry in these areas. The movement of population groups along the Red Sea coasts and their need for communication via ships to reach desired destinations contributed to this growth.

An important factor was the availability of raw materials, such as wood and other forest products. The eastern regions of the African continent have long been known as a primary source of various tree species used for shipbuilding, including acacia, ghaf, jundal, mangrove, and qarad (Prosopis), among others. These trees are vital elements in shipbuilding. Additionally, the western and central coastal areas of the Red Sea also had abundant wood resources.

The availability of animal and agricultural products, salt, and spices that everyone sought within and beyond the Red Sea basin further stimulated the shipbuilding industry. It can be said that the exchange of knowledge, trade, and culture between the ports of the Red Sea and other ports led to significant developments and important advancements in this industry, despite the challenges and issues it has faced from its inception to the present day.

Among the ports and cities renowned for shipbuilding along the Red Sea coasts are the ports of Aden and Jeddah on the eastern coast, and Qalzum and Suakin on the western coast. This does not negate the existence of shipbuilding industry in other ports along the Red Sea, but these are the most significant centers for shipbuilding throughout history.

Development of Shipbuilding Industry in the Red Sea Ports

All the ports of the Red Sea, from Bab el-Mandeb in the south to the Gulf of Suez in the north, have witnessed interest shipbuilding. These ports were interconnected with the movement, maintenance, and construction of ships. Consequently, each port and harbor has designated areas for building and repairing the vessels that arrive to unload various goods or to load cargo from these ports.

The movement of human groups had significantly influenced the transfer of shipbuilding practices between the ports of the Red Sea and beyond. These populations played a crucial role in transporting this craft from one location to another along the coastline and the nearby shores of the Red Sea. This migration of knowledge and skills helped to enhance the shipbuilding industry across the region, contributing to its growth and development over time.

Chapter One

Insights into the Red Sea

Chapter One

Geography of the Red Sea

The Red Sea, or the Great African Rift, is a large fissure that separates the continents of Asia and Africa. It extends from south to north, with significant similarities between the coasts of the Red Sea in the areas of Aden and East Africa.

The western coast of the Red Sea stretches for approximately 2000 kilometers and includes political entities such as Eritrea, Sudan, and Egypt. This side features a series of Red Sea highlands, as well as sandy plains lying beneath the coast.

Additionally, there is a group of islands that extend along the coastline, reaching up to 40 nautical miles in some areas.⁽¹⁾

Distribution of Islands in the Red Sea:

The Red Sea extends from the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba in the north to Bab el-Mandeb in the south, connecting to the Gulf of Aden, which in turn connects to the Indian Ocean. Its coastline is shared by nine countries: on the African side, these are Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, and Djibouti; on the Asian side, they include the occupied Palestinian territories, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. The total length of the Red Sea, including the shores of the Gulf of Suez and the Gulf of Aqaba, is approximately 3,069 miles.⁽²⁾

The Red Sea is home to numerous islands, each with unique geographical and ecological characteristics. Some of the notable islands include:

Hanish Islands: Located near Yemen, known for their diverse marine life.

Socotra: An archipelago famous for its unique flora and fauna.

Tiran Island: Situated at the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, it is strategically important and has beautiful coral reefs.

Shadwan Island: Known for its rich marine biodiversity and popular among divers.

Dahlak Archipelago: Located off the coast of Eritrea, it consists of numerous islands and is known for its stunning landscapes and historical significance. These islands play a critical role in the ecosystem of the Red Sea and are significant for tourism, fishing, and maritime navigation.

Distribution of Islands in the Red Sea:

Country	Number of Islands	Major Islands
Saudi Arabia	144	Farasan, Sanafir, Tiran
Eritrea	126	Dahlak, Fatima, Haleb, Dumera
Yemen	41	Perim, Greater Hanish, Qamar, Dhakr
Sudan	36	Suakin
Egypt	26	Shadwan
Djibouti	6	Shadwan Siba, Mouileh

These islands are significant for their ecological and economic roles, providing diverse marine habitats and contributing to fishing and tourism activities.

Important Islands in the Red Sea:

There are many inhabited islands in the Red Sea, while others are uninhabited. The importance of these islands stems from their historical role as ports for ships along the Red Sea coasts. Some of them serve as rest stops where commercial vessels and passengers crossing the Red Sea gather. Many ports in the Red Sea have contributed to the flourishing of free trade, as businesspeople and agency owners pay a financial fee to the governing authority of the relevant region.⁽³⁾

The Red Sea is considered one of the greatest maritime transportation routes in the world. In ancient times, it facilitated the trade of spices between the East and the West. ⁽⁴⁾ Today, it serves as a vital commercial and maritime pathway, transporting strategic goods between various regions globally. Over time, it has transformed from an inland sea into a crucial passage for oil transportation from Arab countries and Iran to Europe and America.

Due to its military, political, and economic significance, the Red Sea has become a focal point for political decision-makers and a center of conflicts throughout history among global, local, and regional powers. ⁽⁵⁾

The Red Sea has also played an important role in linking the Arabian Peninsula with regions of East and North Africa, as it has greatly facilitated migration between Asia and Africa.

Names Given to the Red Sea

Due to the importance of the Red Sea throughout history, it has been referred to by many names. In 500 BC, the Greek historian Hecataeus referred to it as the Arabian Gulf. This name also appeared in the maps of Herodotus in 450 BC, who named its southern half the Erythraean Sea. Other names include the Sea of Struthion, the Sea of Ailah, and the Arabs called it the Sea of Qulzum, referring to the city and port of Qulzum, which is located near the modern port of Suez in Egypt. It was also known as the Sea of Fuwa, the Sea of Pharama (after an ancient Egyptian port), the Red King's Sea, the Sea of Hijaz, the Sea of Jeddah, and the Pharaoh's Sea. ⁽⁶⁾

Additionally, ancient Egyptians referred to it as the Green Sea around 2470 BC, while the Hebrews called it Hayyam, meaning “the sea,” or Bahar Sof. The Greeks referred to it as the Erythraean Sea, and the name “Red Sea” appears in Greek literary texts from the 5th century BC. It was also known as the Sea of Aydhhab, the Sea of Suez, and the Sea of Jeddah. It was referred to as the Osanian Sea in the book “Periplus of the Erythraean Sea.”

The name “Red Sea” became prominent due to the reddish hue emitted by the coral reefs within it.⁽⁷⁾ Ancient geographers also referred to it as the Sea of Hijaz and the Arabian Gulf. The Greek historian Agatharchides noted that the term “Erythrian” (modern Eritrea) was originally a name for the Red Sea. Furthermore, it was known as the Persian Sea due to the many shipbuilders and sailors from that region.⁽⁸⁾

Vegetation of the Red Sea:

The Red Sea and its islands are home to mangrove forests, ⁽⁹⁾ which are estimated to be around 70 million years old. There are approximately 70 species of these plants, including *Avicennia* (commonly known as “shourah”) and *Rhizophora* (known as “qandel”). ⁽¹⁰⁾ These mangrove

plants are more densely concentrated in the southern parts of the Red Sea, becoming less dense as one moves northward and disappearing around latitude 27° N.

These plants typically grow along shores that are submerged during high tides, particularly in areas that are not exposed to strong waves. Their density and entanglement increase at the mouths of valleys and in areas where freshwater runoff mixes with seawater. The *Avicennia* species is characterized by its dense branches and lush green foliage, and it is known as “al-ashrir” in some regions. Conversely, *Rhizophora* has a lower density and is shorter than *Avicennia*, and camels often graze on these plants. ⁽¹¹⁾

Mangrove forests represent a complex and vital ecosystem along the Red Sea coast, hosting a wide variety of animals and insects within the roots of these plants, including mollusks, fish, crustaceans, as well as birds and reptiles. Additionally, mangrove forests provide natural protection for terrestrial mammals. ⁽¹²⁾



Mangrove forests along the Red Sea coast.



Some camels grazing in the mangrove forests.

Source: Awatif Al-Sharif, Shuja Al-Harithi, Mahmoud Ibrahim Desouki Baghdadi.

Shipbuilding on the Red Sea Coasts

Since ancient times, ships have formed a vital link between the various ports of the Red Sea. Known as an international trade route, the Red Sea necessitated the flourishing and development of shipbuilding to keep pace with maritime navigation and trade in this significant and strategic region of the world.

Ships of different types from the Red Sea played a crucial role in transporting goods, commodities, travelers, and pilgrims. They also contributed to the cultural and social connection between the coasts of the Red Sea and various regions of the civilized world throughout different eras.

The people of the Red Sea have long understood ships, their construction, and navigation to reach nearby ports, harbors, and islands. As daily life requirements evolved and transportation needs grew, the communities along the Red Sea sought to communicate with one another, increasing the importance of ships. This necessitated advancements in ship design to keep pace with the development of these societies. ⁽¹³⁾

Trade and the exchange of goods across the seas have allowed the Red Sea to play a significant role in economic, religious, and social contexts. It has become one of the most important seas for maritime navigation due to the abundance of goods, agricultural products, and raw materials available along its coasts and in its interior regions.



Photograph illustrating the relationship between trade caravans and ships

With the evolution of trade, the demand for larger ships capable of covering long distances and carrying substantial quantities of goods increased. Consequently, the ships that emerged in Egyptian, Meroitic, Himyarite, Sabaeen, Phoenician, Roman, Nabataean, Ptolemaic, and other civilizations evolved over time in response to the needs of the Red Sea. This development led to the establishment of coastal cities and ports, which in turn spurred advancements in shipbuilding.

Significant shipbuilding centres emerged along the Red Sea coast, maintaining their prominence for a long time due to the essential roles they played in meeting the needs of sailors, traders, and various kingdoms and sultanates. Yemeni ports, distributed along the southern entrance of the Red Sea, became some of the most important centres for shipbuilding of various types and sizes.

Among these, the port of Aden stands out as a major hub for shipbuilding development. Additionally, Jeddah served as a crucial link between the northern and southern ports of the Red Sea on its eastern shore. On the

western shore, the Qulzum port was located at the northernmost point of the Red Sea, while the western central area featured the port of Aydhab along the Sudanese coast. Other notable ports included Suakin, Badi', Aqiq, and Port Sudan, which had developed over time.

The historical significance of these ports and their extensive trade relations with nearby ports, as well as with ports beyond the Red Sea—such as those in the Mediterranean, Europe, the Arabian Gulf, India, and southern Red Sea regions—supported advanced shipbuilding in these areas. Heading southwest from the Red Sea, we would find the port of Adulis, an important port on the western shore of the Red Sea.

It could be said that the inhabitants of the Red Sea, settled along its shores since ancient times, were familiar with ships and managed to construct them from the earliest eras. Their longstanding knowledge of the sea, combined with their pressing need for transportation to access various benefits such as fishing, travel, and trade, drove the development of shipbuilding in this region.

The shipbuilding industry in the Red Sea was not isolated from other areas that witnessed significant advancements over time, such as the Arabian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Indian Ocean. Wood, being a fundamental material in shipbuilding, was readily available in the eastern coastal regions of Africa. This area became an important resource for timber, essential not only for the Red Sea itself but also for the Arabian Gulf, which relied on East African and Indian timber to enhance its shipbuilding capabilities.

The shipbuilding industry in the Red Sea experienced significant development, starting with the use of ropes and threads in its early stages, which later evolved to include iron (nails) in ship construction. Among the prominent civilizations along the Red Sea that recognized iron production early on was the Meroitic civilization in Sudan, a remarkable period in the history of a nation deeply rooted in human civilization.

Archaeologists and historians often refer to the Meroitic civilization as “the Birmingham of Africa,” a name coined by British researcher Sayce. Meroitic iron was considered one of the finest types of iron in the region, utilized by ancient civilizations worldwide for making arrows, spears, axes, knives, agricultural tools, and iron chisels, among others.

Professor Abdel Rahim Mohamed Khabir states that the Kushite (Meroitic) civilization was the first sub-Saharan African civilization to smelt iron and mine. The iron production extended from the First Cataract in the north to Mount Moya near Sennar in the south. It could be concluded that the Meroitic civilization was the primary center for iron production in the Nile Valley, from which it later spread to many regions. Additionally, the Sudanese civilization preceded and excelled beyond the Egyptian civilization in this domain.

From the above, it is likely that Meroitic iron was utilized in the nails that became prevalent in the construction of sailing ships and vessels in the Red Sea. This transition from building ships with ropes and threads to fastening them with nails marked a significant advancement in shipbuilding techniques.

Furthermore, it is plausible that these nails spread from the Red Sea to other regions through traders and sailors operating in the Arabian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Indian Ocean.

The shipbuilding industry in the Red Sea has historically been closely linked to its ports and coastal cities. The Red Sea, blessed with a long and extensive coastline, has given rise to numerous navigable ports and harbors. Over time, humans have developed these ports to meet their increasing needs, initially using ships for fishing and exploring the diverse resources of the Red Sea.

As the region evolved, the focus shifted towards commercial and military purposes, transforming the Red Sea into a vital arena for competition among civilizations, kingdoms, and sultanates that

flourished along its shores or nearby. This led to an increased demand for more ports that are natural and harbors, as well as the enhancement of ship design, size, and type to adapt to the many changes occurring in and around the Red Sea.

Consequently, the significance of the Red Sea and its ports emerged as strategic centers along international trade routes. Several ports have maintained their economic, commercial, and strategic importance from ancient times to the present day. Notable ports on the eastern coast of the Red Sea include Aden, Hodeidah, Yanbu, Jeddah, and Aqaba. On the western coast, important ports include Suez, Port Sudan, Suakin, and Massawa, among others.

The significance of the Red Sea ports stems from the strategic and economic importance of the Red Sea itself, which connects key global waterways: the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Its central location places it between various productive regions and important sites for raw materials, including vital commodities such as oil, gum Arabic, and cotton.

As a result, the ports of the Red Sea have become crucial transit points for both regional and international trade. Additionally, the network of internal routes extending along its Asian eastern coast and African western coast has historically linked its social and cultural components, evident in the human migrations between the two shores.

The Red Sea ports have also evolved into important cultural and religious centers, serving as key points for the influx of Muslim pilgrims from Africa and Asia. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 further enhanced the Red Sea's importance as the shortest maritime passage connecting the north and south.

For these reasons and others, the Red Sea has attracted the ambitions of regional and international powers seeking control over it, leading to conflicts and wars throughout history.

In addition to the previously mentioned ports, there are many other ports that have appeared on the commercial, economic, and social map of the Red Sea, serving as important transit points for pilgrims from Asia, West Africa, the Maghreb, as well as from Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt throughout history. Notable among these are the ports of Suez and Quseir on the Egyptian coast, as well as the ports of Suakin and Aydhab in the Halayeb Triangle on the Sudanese coast, along with Al-Muwaylih, Al-Mukhā, Jeddah, Yanbu, Aqaba, and Umm Ruwashrash.

It could be said that the Red Sea and its ports increased in importance following Ptolemaic and Roman control over the region. Under Roman dominion, there were twenty-seven ports in the Red Sea and beyond, which were divided into three main sections:

First-Class Ports: These ports are suitable for use, comply with regulations, and ensure the rights of traders and sailors. They are equipped for docking and departure. Notable examples include:

- Port of Myos Hormos
- Port of Berenice
- Port of Al-Mukhā

Regulated Ports: These ports adhere to regulations but are not on the main shipping route. Examples include:

- Port of Adulis (Zula)
- Port of Al-Mukhā (Mocha) in Southeast Arabia
- Port of Abu Logus at the mouth of the Euphrates River

Natural Ports: An example is the Port of Callina, which was the primary port of the Kingdom of Indhra in India, located near Bombay.

The goods transported by ships between these ports were diverse, including:

- Cinnamon from Somalia
- Spices
- Precious stones
- Silk
- Cotton from India

Mangrove trees and shipbuilding in the Red Sea:

As previously mentioned, the Red Sea is characterized by the presence of mangrove forests, which have been utilized since ancient times. The wood from these trees, along with timber from other species, was used in the construction of sailing ships and boats along the Red Sea coast. This is due to the wood's durability, straightness, and resistance to moisture. Additionally, this timber was also employed in house construction and for heating during winter.

A closer look at the ships, their construction, and development along the Red Sea coasts reveals several factors that contributed to their growth, evolution, and dissemination. These factors include:

Availability of Raw Materials: The abundance of essential resources for shipbuilding, such as wood, cotton textiles, fish oils, and animal fats, played a crucial role in the industry.

Agricultural and Livestock Products: The richness of agricultural and animal products along the Red Sea coast supported the local economy and provided additional materials for shipbuilding.

Numerous Ports and Harbors: The presence of many ports, harbors, and islands along the Red Sea facilitated maritime activities and contributed to the growth of the shipbuilding industry.

Strategic Trade Route: The Red Sea's location on one of the world's most important trade routes, linking Africa, Asia, and Europe, led to an

increase in the number of ships navigating these waters throughout the year.

Historical Population Centers: The Red Sea region has been inhabited for centuries, fostering various activities that led to the rise of powerful ancient civilizations along its shores, positively affecting shipbuilding development.

Conflicts and Competition: Regional and international conflicts, as well as local rivalries over control of the Red Sea, spurred advancements in shipbuilding techniques and the production of various types of vessels.

All of the aforementioned factors, along with others, have made shipbuilding one of the most significant industries along the Red Sea coast, continuing to this day. This enduring industry has ultimately led to the development of Red Sea ports, despite the challenges faced throughout its extensive history.

Trade in the Red Sea

With the development of human societies and the increasing interdependence among people, the inhabitants of the Red Sea region placed significant emphasis on trade. Commercial activity surged alongside advancements in shipbuilding. The larger size and increased capacity of ships enabled access to distant ports in East Asia, the Arabian Gulf, Europe, and beyond via the Red Sea.

The Red Sea ports became vital hubs for various goods, including:

- Spices
- Incense
- Timber
- Rice
- Metals
- Clothing from India

Additionally, these maritime routes facilitated the transport of coffee from Yemen to the western coast of the Red Sea, as well as to the Arabian Gulf, India, and East Asia. The trade network also included the movement of dates from Iraq and other products

It is well known that the Red Sea is fundamentally a commercial sea, and all the civilizations that flourished along its shores prioritized trade and its development. They focused on establishing ports that contributed to the stability and growth of this industry.

Additionally, these societies made efforts to ensure protection for their maritime activities by forming alliances with others to safeguard trading ships, merchants, and the goods arriving at their ports throughout the year.

Trade has been the backbone of the economies of the kingdoms and sultanates that flourished along the Red Sea and beyond, serving as a key element for the stability of these communities. The types of trade in the Red Sea were diverse and multifaceted. ⁽¹⁴⁾

From the western coast of the Red Sea, various products were exported to different ports around the world, including:

- Animals of various kinds
- Gold
- Timber
- Animal hides
- Corn
- Agricultural products unique to the civilizations and kingdoms of the western coast

Similarly, the civilizations that emerged along the eastern coast of the Red Sea exported their goods, including:

- Dates
- Fish
- Horses
- Camels
- Other various products

In order for the inhabitants of the Red Sea coast to enjoy an abundance of products and the prosperity of their kingdoms and sultanates, great attention has been paid to the ports along both shores of the Red Sea since ancient times. Historical sources and the writings of travelers and explorers have significantly contributed to our understanding of these

ports and their development throughout history. Research and exploration into the subject of Red Sea ports and trade have revealed that this vital waterway has consistently demonstrated its role and importance throughout its extensive history. The ports have played crucial roles in the economy, communication, military engagements, and discoveries, and they continue to do so today. ⁽¹⁵⁾

The Red Sea has played a significant role in connecting the African continent with global trade areas in East Asia, the Arabian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, and regions of Europe via the Mediterranean through the Suez Canal. Many ports along the Red Sea have emerged as important commercial hubs that facilitate maritime activities, such as the ports of Jeddah, Suakin, Aydhab, Aden, Massawa, and Assab, among others.

The active trade exchange across the Red Sea has notably revitalized the regions along its coasts. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Due to the commercial importance of the Red Sea as the main link between the Mediterranean Sea and East Asia, a movement of European competition for its control emerged after the decline of Islamic kingdoms and states by the 16th century. Portugal was considered the first colonial power that sought to control the Red Sea by taking control of the regions overlooking its coast. A clash between the Portuguese and the peoples of East Africa was inevitable for several reasons, including:

1. Transferring Trade to the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese aimed at disrupting Islamic cities and powers along the Red Sea and parts of the Mediterranean.”
2. The Portuguese worked to use force to control the eastern coast of the continent.”
3. Controlling the eastern coast of Africa would allow Portugal to dominate global trade routes that passed through the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and then the Mediterranean Sea.

4. The shift of trade to the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese helped weakening the trading centers along the eastern coast of Africa, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean, while flourishing from West Africa and the Atlantic Ocean.(17)

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Chapter Two

**The Southeastern Ports
of the Eastern Coast
of the Red Sea**

Chapter Two

The Southeastern Ports of the Eastern Coast of the Red Sea

The Ports of the Yemeni Coast on the Red Sea:

Introduction:

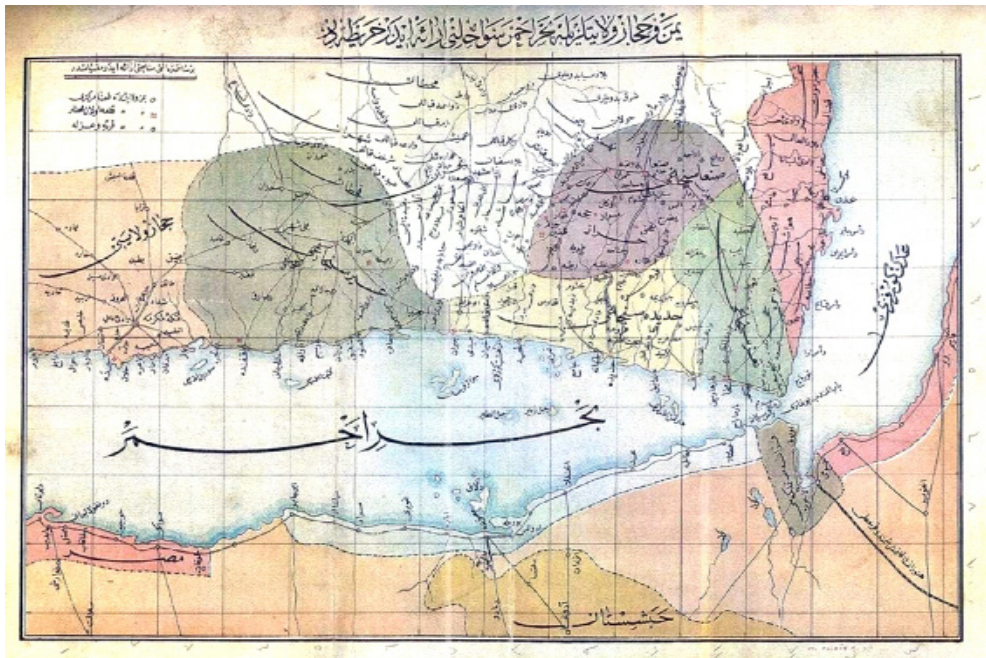
The eastern ports of the Red Sea refer to those ports that have established, flourished, and developed along its eastern coast, extending from Bab al-Mandab in the south to the port of Umm al-Rashrash in the north. A close examination of this coast reveals that there were many ports that have emerged and developed over various historical periods, some of which have disappeared, replaced by new ports nearby, while others have maintained their commercial, economic, and social significance to this day. In our current era, the countries that inherited the glory of these ports have focused on developing them and increasing their capacity to accommodate ships, goods, and various commodities, in order to keep pace with the advancements in maritime transport, international trade, and the significant expansion of people's needs and requirements across the seas.

Furthermore, the history of these ports has been closely linked to the wooden shipbuilding industry in its various forms, which also evolved alongside the development of these ports. In their golden age, these ports served as the lungs through which prosperity and wealth flowed. However, with the significant advancements in shipbuilding and the emergence of large and giant vessels, the importance of wooden ships has diminished, as those with higher capacities for transportation, maneuverability, and endurance have replaced them. Today, wooden ships perform limited tasks, such as fishing near the ports and other simple duties.

To discuss the ports of the Red Sea and the shipbuilding industry in those ports, we will divide the discussion into the eastern and western parts of the Red Sea, taking into account the geographical location of these ports. To facilitate the reader's understanding, we will begin with the ports on the eastern coast of the Red Sea; specifically those located along the Yemeni coast, and then move northward to the ports of Aqaba and Umm al-Rashrash. After that, we will shift to the western side of the Red Sea, starting from the port of Suez in the north to the port of Adulis in the south.

The Southeastern Ports on the Eastern Coast of the Red Sea

Entering the Red Sea from the direction of Bab al-Mandab in the south, along the Yemeni coast, one can find many historical ports that have flourished and developed over time, becoming significant landmarks on the Yemeni coast and the southern part of the Red Sea. Among these ports are:



Ottoman Map Illustrating the Southern and Central Ports of the Eastern Coast of the Red Sea

Port of Al-Luhayyah

The Port of Al-Luhayyah was established in the seventh century AH (Islamic calendar) and is a natural port on the Red Sea. It is considered one of the most important Yemeni ports for exporting coffee, pearls, and coral. There are many ancient forts in the Port of Al-Luhayyah, such as Al-Zaili Fort and Mount Salt Fort, and it is surrounded by several islands, including (Taqfash), Al-Marak, Aqban, and Kerman.⁽¹⁾

The Port of Al-Luhayyah is one of the most significant Yemeni ports, located 120 kilometers north of the Port of Al-Hudaydah. The port flourished notably in the seventh century AH after the arrival of Sheikh Ahmad bin Umar Al-Zaili to the city. The port was characterized by its fortified location, surrounded by several elevated mounds on which twelve forts were built during the Ottoman era. To the east of the city lies a range of salt mountains, which extended from the salt mountains at the Port of Salif located to the south of the city.

The people of Al-Luhayyah were engaged in various professions and crafts, including trade and fishing. Historically, the area was one of the most important locations for pearl fishing along the Red Sea coast. In modern history, the Port of Al-Luhayyah played a significant role in the trade and export of coffee to Jeddah in particular, and the merchants of this city had connections with the eastern African ports.⁽²⁾

When the Portuguese forces attacked the Port of Jeddah in 1517, the Ottoman navy, which anchored in the port, pursued them and managed to capture one of the Portuguese ships near the Port of Al-Luhayyah, where the Portuguese had arrived to obtain water and food.⁽³⁾

The port faced numerous military attacks aimed at seizing control by the Portuguese forces during their attempts to dominate the Red Sea coasts in the first half of the sixteenth century. The port also suffered an

Italian attack during the Italo-Turkish War in 1911. When World War I broke out in 1914, the port experienced British attacks as well. Despite the presence of coral reefs and rocks, the port continued to receive many ships for extended periods. ⁽⁴⁾



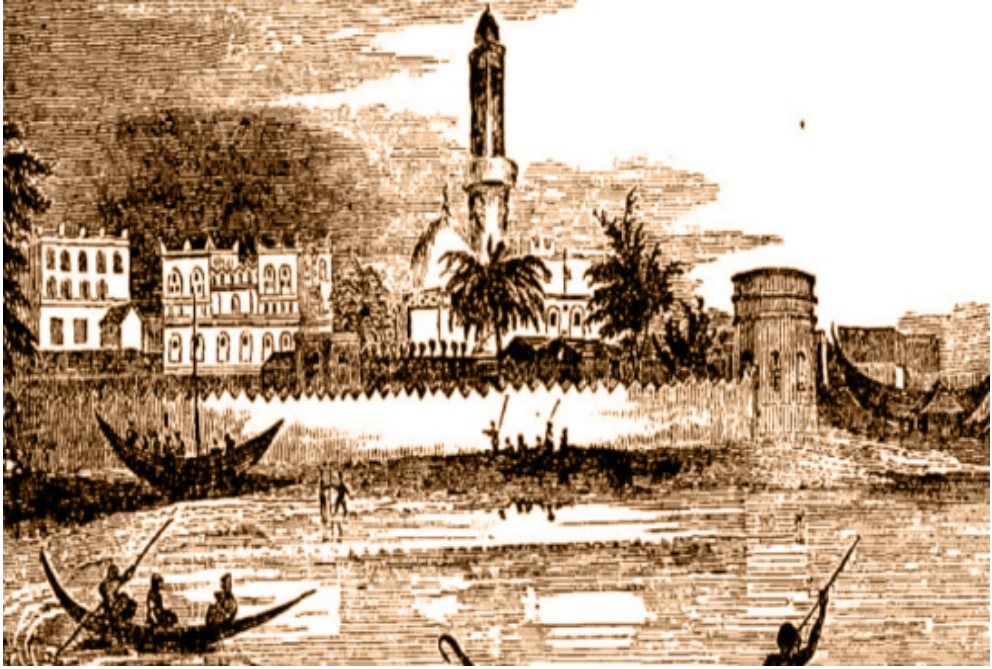
City of Al-Luhayyah

Port of Salif

The first mentioning of the Port of Salif, without explicitly naming it, occurred at the beginning of the tenth century AH / sixteenth century AD during the Tahirid state (858-923AH/1454-1517 AD), through the journey of the Italian traveler Ludovico di Varthema. The Port of Salif was one of the ancient and important Yemeni ports, renowned for its high-quality salt. The region flourished significantly during the Ottoman era for several reasons:

- The important and strategic location of the port, which is a marine promontory and a land root on the Yemeni coast.
- The depth of the port's coastline, which allowed it to accommodate large Ottoman ships, a feat that other nearby ports could not achieve.
- The availability and quality of salt in the area, an essential element in gunpowder production, which made Yemen one of the exporting countries of gunpowder to the Ottoman Empire.
- The Port of Salif served as a primary launching point for most Ottoman governors into Yemen after stocking up on ammunition and gunpowder.⁽⁵⁾

It could be said that the Port of Salif inherited the glory of Al-Hudaydah and was distinguished by the presence of large warship manufacturing and sailing vessels along its coast.



Painting of Salif City

Port of Al-Hudaydah

The Port of Al-Hudaydah is considered one of the most important ports on the Red Sea. It is located north of the equator at a latitude of 14 degrees and 50 minutes north and a longitude of 42 degrees and 56 minutes east. The port was connected by a maritime channel that was 11 nautical miles long and 200 meters wide, with a turning basin that has a diameter of 400 meters, allowing the port to accommodate all types of ships. It was one of the ports blessed with natural protection from waves and marine currents. ⁽⁶⁾

The establishment of Al-Hudaydah dated back to the eighth and ninth centuries AH (Islamic calendar). It is located west of the city of Sana'a. There is a dispute regarding the origin of the name; some say that the city's name comes from a woman named Hudaydah who had a place for strangers and travelers to rest, while others believe that the name derives from the tribe of Hudayd, one of the Ma'az tribes. Due to its economic and strategic importance, the city was attacked with cannons during the Mamluk era in 1516, following a directive from the Tahirid Sultan Amir bin Abdul Wahhab to his governors in Yemeni ports to intercept Mamluk movements in the Red Sea, which led to the attack and destruction of its buildings. ⁽⁷⁾

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Port of Al-Hudaydah began to compete with the ports of Jizan and Jeddah in the trade of Yemeni coffee. The Indian government, under British occupation, recorded in a report in 1191AH/1777 AD that Al-Hudaydah exported 750,000 bales of coffee to Jeddah alone, a quantity equivalent to 11,859.5 tons. ⁽⁸⁾

The Port of Al-Hudaydah was distinguished by its important location on the Red Sea coast and had several features that set it apart from other Yemeni ports, including:

- Its strategic location and proximity to international shipping routes.
- Natural protection from waves and water currents.
- Not exposed to monsoon winds. ⁽⁹⁾



Ship under Construction at the Port of Al-Hudaydah



Shipbuilding in Al-Hudaydah – Source: Yemeni Republic



Ships and goods on the coast of Al-Hudaydah



Coast of Al-Hudaydah – Source: Yemen Republic

Port of Al-Mukha

The Port of Al-Mukha was one of the oldest ports on the Red Sea, dating back to 1692 AD. It was one of the most famous Yemeni ports and was the main outlet for exporting Yemeni coffee, known as “Mocha.” It was an open port, and with the increase in commercial shipping traffic, the city and port thrived. Its strategic location near Bab el-Mandeb contributed to its importance in trade exchanges with ports in East Africa, the Arabian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean.

By the nineteenth century, the importance of the port began to decline due to the development of the ports of Aden and Al-Hudaydah. The city and port also faced attacks from invaders at various historical periods, leading to the destruction of its buildings and magnificent palaces that distinguished it. Additionally, coffee production significantly decreased following the emergence of new production areas in Brazil and Mexico. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Many sources indicate that the Port of Al-Mukha was one of the oldest Yemeni ports, with its history dating back to before 1692 AD. The name of the port was mentioned among those that had significant influence over Red Sea trade since the time of the Egyptian dynasties.



*Aerial Image of Al-Mukha
Port of Al-Mukha*



Map Showing the Location of Al-Mukha at the Southern Entrance of the Red Sea



Painting Illustrating Ship traffic in the Port of Al-Mukha



A Number of Ships at the Dock of Al-Mukha Port

Mawza Port

The Mawza Port was in the southwestern part of the city of Taiz, 96 km away, and was 30 km from the city of Al-Mukha. It was considered one of the oldest Yemeni ports on the Red Sea, situated on the coast of the Red Sea in the Taiz region. The port and the city were attributed to Mawza ibn Abd Shams ibn Wa'il ibn al-Ghawth ibn Fattan ibn Arib Zahir. This area was the birthplace of the great historian, Judge Abd al-Samad ibn Ismail ibn Abd al-Samad al-Mawzi, who was a scholar of the eleventh century AH (Islamic calendar) and authored a work titled *Al-Ihsan fi Dukhul Mamlakat al-Yemen Taht Dhill Adalat Al-Othman*, which was edited by Professor Abdullah al-Habashi.

Mawza Port was a point for exporting Yemeni products, including weapons, swords, and agricultural products such as coffee and frankincense. Mawza was characterized by its fertile lands, where mangoes, papayas, watermelons, and bananas were cultivated. The residents were engaged in fishing and trade alongside agriculture. The port was well-known among the Persians, Romans, and Abyssinians. Among the goods that were imported to the Port of Mawza were ivory, myrrh, and high-quality incense. Recent archaeological discoveries have indicated the presence of archaeological sites dating back to prehistoric periods, as well as to the Bronze Age (3500-1200 BC).⁽¹¹⁾

One of the most important crops that Mawza Port was famous for exporting to ancient kingdoms and sultanates was myrrh, which ranks second after frankincense. It had various uses in ancient civilizations, such as being used in religious rituals across different regions of the ancient world. Myrrh was also employed in the embalming process in both Egyptian and Meroitic civilizations. Additionally, it was used in the production of cosmetics, medicinal drugs, and sacred oils for certain groups.⁽¹²⁾



Some old buildings of Mawza'



Some Ancient Buildings of Mawza

Port of Aden

The Port of Aden was one of the most important and oldest Yemeni ports. It has maintained its historical significance through various historical periods. The earliest mention of the Port of Aden was found in the Torah (Old Testament) from the 6th century BC. It was also referenced in Greek and Roman sources. The port established trade relations with ports in the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, as well as ports in the Arabian Gulf, East Asia, and India. In addition to being an important and strategic port, it became a market for many goods and commodities.



Sailing Ships at Al-Mualla Port – Aden

The Port of Aden established strong and developed trade relations with ports in East Africa. Several factors contributed to strengthening these relations, the most important being the geographical proximity between Aden and East Africa, along with the diversity and variety of goods and products that East African regions were known for. The Arabs of the

Arabian Peninsula monopolized trade in East African regions, becoming its pioneers and merchants, marketing these goods in ports and areas throughout the ancient world. ⁽¹⁴⁾

With the increasing commercial openness to India, Yemeni (Adeni) ships began to sail the seas in search of Indian goods needed by the ancient world, including Egyptians, Meroites, Assyrians, Phoenicians, Romans, and Arabs. Thus, the people of Aden and Yemen became the masters of this sea, having mastered its secrets and known its depths. Over time, the people of Aden became the lords of trade in the Red Sea, successfully bringing in many products from India, such as perfumes, cotton, and spices, and adding their own products like frankincense, myrrh, and resin. The Port of Aden thus became a large storehouse for various goods, which were distributed by the people of Yemen to consumer areas in the Arabian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, and even European countries. ⁽¹⁵⁾

With the beginning of the first century AD, the importance of the Port of Aden noticeably declined, becoming a small port of little significance. This decline could be attributed to several reasons, the most important of which are:

- The conflict between the Kingdom of Himyar and the Qatabanians, from whom Himyar successfully expelled them from all coastal areas along the Red Sea.
- The weak control of Himyar over the Port of Aden, which prevented them from providing protection against land and sea attacks.
- The Kingdom of Himyar focused on the Port of Mawza at the expense of the Port of Aden, due to its proximity to the Himyari capital in Dhofar, which facilitated their economic, administrative, and military control over the port.

By the third century AD, the Port of Aden regained some of its former glory after the Romans established a Roman garrison in Aden, intending for it to become a launching point for expeditions to India and the African coasts, from which they would later return.



*Ships Loaded with Sheep Coming from Somalia
Al-Mualla - Aden - Source: Taher Nasser Al-Mashati*

There is no specific information available in the search results regarding “ships loaded with sheep coming from Somalia to Al-Mualla - Aden” or about the source Taher Nasser Al-Mashati. The available information seems to focus on other topics, such as current events in Yemen, including the execution of sentences, aircraft downing, and military operations. If you are looking for specific details about the ships or trade between Somalia and Aden, you might try searching other sources or providing more details about what you need.

Imports and exports of goods:

Product Name	Producing Country	Importing Countries	Usage
Frankincense	Southern Yemen, India, East Africa	Ancient kingdoms	Used in religious rituals, daily activities, perfumes, and medicinal drugs.
Myrrh	Southern Yemen, India, East Africa	Romans, Egyptians, Meroites, Near East	Religious rituals, embalming the dead, cosmetics, and medicinal drugs.
Salt	Aden, Shabwa, Wadi Jordan	Likely exported to ancient kingdoms due to its importance	Used in food and some other applications.
Metal Products and Iron Tools	Saada, Nakm, Ghamdan, Al-Bayda, Aden	Kingdoms of East Africa	Weapons, daggers, knives, axes, and the manufacturing of gold and silver jewelry.
Perfumes and Incense	Yemen	Levant, Greeks, Egypt, Romans, India, Sindh	Religious rituals, embalming the dead, cosmetics, and medicinal drugs.

Product Name	Producing Country	Importing Countries	Usage
Amber	Aden, Hadramaut coast, southern coast of the Arabian Peninsula	Exported to most ancient countries	Used in perfume and medicinal preparations.
Fabrics, Textiles, and Adeni Shawls	Aden, India	Hijaz, Arabian Peninsula, Mediterranean Basin	Various clothing and Adeni shawls.
Gemstones and Agate	One of Yemen's most important exports	Ancient kingdoms and civilizations, Phoenicians, Hebrews	Decorative items.
Pearls	Aden	India, Greece, Romans	Crowns for kings and jewelry manufacturing.
Horses	Aden	India	Personal ownership, competitions, and warfare.
Glass	Imported to Aden from East Africa	East Africa	Bottling perfumes.

Product Name	Producing Country	Importing Countries	Usage
Spices (Cinnamon, Pepper)	Imported to Aden	India, Ceylon, East Africa; exported to Rome and the Far East	Cooking.
Turtle Shells	Brought to Aden	Socotra	Used as boxes for jewelry and decorative tools, and involved in home furniture manufacturing and crafts.

From the table, it is clear that the Port of Aden was one of the most important ports on the eastern coast of the Red Sea due to the import and export activities of goods. It is also likely that shipbuilding experienced significant development at the port because of the high commercial activity between Aden and other ports in the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, East Asia, the Arabian Gulf, and the Mediterranean Sea. Communication with these distant areas required large ships capable of long voyages, as well as skilled sailors who knew the maritime routes and chose suitable travel times to reach those ports as quickly as possible and with minimal material and human losses.

Shipbuilding in the Port of Aden:

The Port of Aden had all the essential components for the growth and development of shipbuilding in that strategic region. This included the availability of raw materials used in ship construction, as well as the port's important location, which attracted many traders, sailors, and those involved in maritime activities. Additionally, the presence of

commercial goods and the active trade movement between Aden and other ports in the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and East Asia contributed to the development of shipbuilding in its various forms in Aden and other Yemeni ports.

During the British colonial period, the Port of Aden flourished significantly and became a destination for ships from various countries around the world. This also encouraged investors from different nations to move to the city, leading to an influx of people and making it one of the most important global ports due to the booming trade and navigation activities. The ports of Hadramout also thrived as a result of the prosperity of the Port of Aden. ⁽¹⁷⁾

The Hadramis played an important role in developing shipbuilding in Aden and other Yemeni ports. In addition to shipbuilding, the Hadramis were the masters of the ships, their sailors, and merchants. Al-Mualla was the main port for shipbuilding in Aden. It was named Al-Mualla, as it is located at a high point above the sea. Aden has been known for shipbuilding since ancient times, and the ships made in Aden resembled those of the Phoenicians. With the development of shipbuilding in Aden and the expansion of its port, it began receiving around 1,400 sailing ships, indicating that the port had become a hub for traders, sailors, and travelers crossing the Red Sea. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Along the coast of Al-Mualla, a large number of ships of various sizes were built, each with different uses, by skilled craftsmen known for their expertise in this craft. In addition to shipbuilding in the Port of Aden, some skilled artisans moved to the Arabian Gulf, specifically to the Port of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates. Master Saad Awad Salmeen bin Rabid built several (Boshinda) ships in Dubai in the 1970s for an Emirati trader, as shown in the picture. Many Yemeni families excelled in shipbuilding, including:

- The Al-Rabid family, one of the first families to excel in wooden shipbuilding.

- The Al-Bazyad family.
- The Al-Barshid family.
- The Al-Sa'iri family.

These families inherited the craft of shipbuilding from their ancestors and have passed it down from generation to generation. ⁽¹⁹⁾

From the above, we find that the Al-Rabid family, a prominent Yemeni lineage, has excelled in building sailing ships, inheriting this skill from their fathers and grandfathers. They have significantly developed this industry, with notable figures such as Salim Obaid bin Rabid, Awad Salmeen bin Rabid, and Salim Khamees bin Rabid, along with others such as the Al-Basudan, Al-Bashanfar, Al-Batoil, and Al-Barahim families. Master Faraj bin Rabid successfully built the largest ship in the Arabian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, which was launched in 1945.



*The Al-Mohammadi Ship, made by Master Al-Mawl Faraj
Salmeen bin Rabid – by Taher Nasser Al-Mashati.*



Master Saad Awad Salmeen bin Rabid with one of the Emiratis in the Port of Dubai, with the ship he is building behind them
source: Taher Nasser Al-Mashati.

Among the merchants known for their significant and continuous support of shipbuilding in the Port of Aden are the Al-Bazara, Al-Rabid, and Al-Bashanfar families. Some of the ships that became famous in Aden and other ports include the ships of the Al-Bazara family, which were specially built for them in Aden by the Al-Rabid family. These

included: Al-Nasr, which was called (Al-Mohammadi), Al-Zahra, and Al-Mustahil. Sheikh Ali bin Muhammad Bazara had several ships named: Jarad, Tunis, Tanassour, Al-Taif, and Fath Al-Bari, all of which were manufactured by Master Faraj Salmeen bin Rabid and Saad Awad bin Rabid. The Al-Khartoum ship was built by Master Faraj Salmeen and Muhammad Salmeen bin Rabid. Sheikh Abdul Rahman bin Muhammad Bazara had several ships named Al-Mansoura, Hisn Al-Faraj, Al-Alawi, Al-Jabr, Al-Sahal, Noor Al-Bahr, and others. ⁽²⁰⁾

Anyone following the names of these ships will notice that some names of Arab capitals and cities, such as Tunis, Al-Taif, and Khartoum, have entered the vocabulary of Yemeni ships. This indicates the Yemeni people's connection to their Arab surroundings and their appreciation of it, which is reflected even in the names of their ships, considered among their most prized possessions and sources of pride.



Al-Ma'alla – Aden 1962 Source: Tahir Nasser Al-Mashat



Sailing Ship in the Port of Aden

Among the ships that the people of Yemen excelled in building since the 16th century are:

- Al-Jaliya: Used for transporting camels, people, and goods.
- Al-Ghurab.
- Al-Tarad.
- Al-Sanbok Al-Adani: Replaced Al-Jalba after its decline.
- Al-Abri Sanbok.
- Al-Abri.
- Al-Tali'a.

Just as each region of the Gulf specialized in a specific type of ship, the people of Yemen specialized in the (Aboshinda) ship, which was invented by the Al-Bin Zubaid family.

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Chapter Three

**Ports of the Eastern Central
Coast of the Red Sea**

Chapter Three

Ports of the Eastern Central Coast of the Red Sea

Introduction:

In this chapter, we will discuss the ports of the eastern central coast of the Red Sea, referring to the ports extending from the Yemeni coasts in the south to the port of Umm al-Rashrash and Aqaba in the north. This region included the most important and oldest ports on the eastern coast of the Red Sea, such as Al-Qahmah, Al-Burak, Al-Shaqiq, Daba, Al-Wajh, Jazan, Al-Jar, Jeddah, Al-Humsa, Al-Sirin, Yanbu, Rabigh, Al-Muwailih, and others.

Many factors contributed to the emergence, establishment, and development of these ports, the most important of which included their location on the central eastern coast of the Red Sea. This area has been historically, culturally, and religiously significant since ancient times. Secondly, this region witnessed the settlement of human groups, which led to the development of trade and transportation through various types of ships and sailing vessels. Additionally, this region was distinguished by its openness to the outside world via the Red Sea. The shipbuilding industry in this area received considerable attention from both the local population and the rulers who controlled the region throughout history.

One important factor that contributed to the revitalization of trade and shipping in the eastern central coast of the Red Sea was the presence of religious sanctities in Hijaz and Palestine, which facilitated regular maritime traffic between the ports of these areas and other ports in the Red Sea and beyond. Pilgrim ships came from East Africa, Sudan, and Egypt, heading to those holy sites through many journeys that continue to this day.

The existence of historical ports such as Jeddah and Yanbu, among others, significantly contributed to the development of shipbuilding along those coasts. Additionally, the ease of access to raw materials used in this industry led to its development and flourishing, allowing ships from those ports to reach many ports in the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and East Asia.

Port of Ailah – Aqaba

The Port of Ailah – Aqaba was considered one of the important ports on the northeastern side of the Red Sea since the Roman and Ptolemaic periods. Agatharchides mentioned that the Ptolemaic kings took an interest in navigation in the Gulf of Aqaba, and that there were groups of locals who built ships that enabled them to conduct piracy against the commercial vessels in the port, as they also attacked traders and sailors.⁽¹⁾

What distinguished the Port of Ailah – Aqaba was the absence of coral reefs that obstruct navigation and threaten commercial ships in most areas of the Red Sea. Over time, it became one of the most important ports, with trade routes branching out to the Yemeni ports in the south.⁽²⁾

It was an important port that received attention from the Mamluks, who constructed a quay for the commercial ships to dock. It was also connected to other Red Sea ports in Hijaz for transporting pilgrims coming by sea from the Levant. The port flourished during the Mamluk period, particularly under Sultan Qansuh al-Ghuri, who renewed the port's quay, enhanced its fortifications, and rebuilt its castle in response to the Portuguese threat in the Red Sea.⁽³⁾

The Port of Aqaba enjoys a location that connects three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. It is the only port of Jordan, and its strategic and distinctive location has made it a link between the far north and south of the Red Sea.

The Port of Ainunah was located on the eastern coast of the Red Sea in the Tabuk region, north of the city of Daba in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia today. It was one of the most important and largest historical ports in the eastern Red Sea, mentioned in the 1st century BC and the 1st century AC. Strabo referred to it when discussing the expedition led by Aelius Gallus, which was sent by Augustus to Arabia and East Africa to learn about the tribes living in those areas. The expedition set out from the port of Kleopatra and included a multi-ethnic military force, comprising Romans, Nabataeans, Jews, and others under the command of the Nabataean minister, Slaeus. After a fourteen-day journey, the expedition reached the port of Lukke Komi. ⁽⁴⁾

The port was distinguished by its important location on the Red Sea coast, and it was connected by overland routes to Petra. Over time, the port served trade in Arabia via these land routes. Due to the flourishing trade in this port, guards were appointed to collect taxes known as the quarter tax on incoming goods. Perfumes arrived at the port of Lukke Komi and then to Petra. What set this port apart was that it was the main entrance to the Arabian Peninsula and was also spacious, with Strabo stating that the port of Lukke Komi could accommodate ten thousand people. Ships would come to this port loaded with goods, which were then transported by animals to various regions in Arabia. ⁽⁵⁾

The port of Lukke Komi was one of the prominent ports on the eastern coast of the Red Sea during the Nabataean period and was primarily a commercial port. Archaeological remains of a settlement dating back to the 4th century BC have been uncovered. These archaeological findings indicate that this port witnessed the succession of many historical periods and civilizations, including Nabataean, Roman, and Islamic. The port has a freshwater spring known as Ain Al-Qasab, and there is a large historical building referred to as the market. Additionally, there was a watchtower 14 meters tall, and a residential settlement located atop Mount Al-Safra at an elevation of approximately 60 meters, containing several closely spaced residential buildings. ⁽⁶⁾

The Port of Ainunah (Lukke Komi) gained its historical and civilizational significance from being an important market for various civilizations. Due to its economic and commercial importance, the goods that arrived at the Port of Ainunah were subsequently transported to Petra and other Mediterranean cities, as mentioned earlier. The port was referenced in the 3rd century BC when Diodorus, quoting Agatharchides, stated: “It is located in a wonderful bay that offers advantages not provided by all other bays in the Red Sea, surrounded by a range of mountains on all sides. The bay is approximately 200 feet wide and can accommodate around 200 ships. Freshwater is available along the coast and on the island that lies in the middle of the bay.”

There is some debate about the exact location of the port, but Kirwan has accurately identified it as the current site of Ainunah, or Lukke Komi, which faces the port of Myos Hormos on the opposite side of the Red Sea.⁽⁷⁾

Archaeological studies have revealed the existence of several ancient structures at the port dating back to the Nabataean and Roman periods. A lighthouse and a large mound, which may have contained remnants of a temple or fort controlling the movement of ships in and out, were found at Umm ‘Asailiyah. Nabataean and Roman pottery was also discovered. Strabo pointed out the port’s significance during the 1st century BC, noting that large quantities of incense were unloaded there for transport to Petra and Aila. Regarding trade activity at Ainunah, Strabo mentioned that the port had a massive commercial movement, with caravans loaded on camels numbering between 7,000 to 10,000. Agatharchides stated that the port was bustling with commercial ships of various sizes since the 1st century AD, and that there was a tax collector appointed by the Nabataean king, Malik, along with a fortified castle and a military unit to protect the port.⁽⁸⁾



*Fragments of ostrich eggshell and beads shells found at the site of the port
 ource: Hessa bint Marwan Al-Sudairi.*

Port of Daba

The Port of Daba is located on the eastern coast of the Red Sea, about 150 kilometers from the Port of Al-Wajh. It was associated with the Ottoman Empire and was referred to as the “Pearl of the Red Sea” due to the beauty of its beaches. It was considered one of the safest and most secure ports since ancient times, and Daba was one of the stopping points for Egyptian pilgrims. The city features many archaeological landmarks dating back to the Ottoman and Saudi eras.⁽⁹⁾

The port came under the authority of King Abdulaziz in the year 1344 AH / 1925 AD, when the chief of the Huwaytat tribe presented oaths of loyalty and allegiance to the king. The port received attention from the Kingdom and became one of the important export ports in the region.⁽¹⁰⁾



A sailing ship in the port of Daba from the archive of Brigadier: Awda bin Hamour Al-Mashhour, showing the Gulf of Daba in the past and some houses overlooking the gulf.



King Abdulaziz Fortress with some houses in Daba from the archive of Brigadier Awda bin Hamour Al-Mashhour, showing the Gulf of Daba in the past and some houses overlooking the gulf.



Sailing Ship in the Port of Daba

From the archive of Brigadier General: Awda bin Hamour Al-Mashhoori, it shows the Gulf of Daba in the past and some houses overlooking the gulf.

Port of Al-Wajh

The Port of Al-Wajh is located on the Red Sea coast, 150 kilometers north of Al-Jawrah. In its early days, the port served as a landing point for pilgrims arriving from Egypt. The port also became known as an export port, through which charcoal, sheep, and their products were shipped to the Port of Suez (Al-Qulzum) via small boats. To facilitate nighttime navigation, a lighthouse was built to guide ships at night. The port was distinguished by the presence of a large number of sizable ships, and over time, it began to compete with the Port of Yanbu in import and export activity. ⁽¹¹⁾



The Eastern Gate of Al-Wajh City - Blog of Naji Al-Balwi



*The movement of residents within the old city of Al-Wajh
Naji Al-Balawi's Blog.*



Some buildings overlooking the Al-Wajh coast - Blog of Naji Al-Balwi.

Al-Jar Port was one of the ancient historical ports and one of the largest on the Red Sea, named after it (the Red Sea is called the Sea of Al-Jar). It was located about 10 km from the town of Al-Rais, near Yanbu. The port dated back to the pre-Islamic period, and Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him) was the first to designate Al-Jar as the official port of the city. The port received ships laden with provisions and food from Egyptian ports during the first five centuries of the Hijra. The city was surrounded by an ancient wall and some piers along the coast for protection. Archaeological discoveries indicate many types of trade, suggesting that the port had significant commercial connections.⁽¹²⁾

From the archaeological finds discovered at Al-Jar Port, which varied between glass, Chinese porcelain, and colored pottery, it can be said that the port had developed and prosperous trade relations with many ports along the Red Sea and beyond.

Al-Jar Port was fortified, and Al-Muqaddasi described it as follows: "... Al-Jar on the coast of the Red Sea was fortified by three walls, the fourth being the sea, with tall houses and a bustling market. Water was brought to them from Badr, and food from Egypt, but they did not have a courtyard for their mosque."⁽¹²⁾

Al-Jar Port faces Aydhab Port on the western side of the Red Sea, and there was commercial communication between Al-Jar and Aydhab due to their proximity and trade exchange. Ships arrived at Al-Jar Port from Egypt, Ethiopia, India, and China. Al-Jar Port was mentioned in the writings of many travelers, such as Al-Aram Al-Sulami, who lived in the 4th century Hijri/10th century AD, in his book "Aasmā' Tihāmah wa Jibāl Makkah wa Al-Madīnah wa Mā Fīhā min Al-Qurā," where he states, "... Al-Jar on the seashore is a harbor for ships from Ethiopia, Egypt, Bahrain, and China. It has a port and is a small village with many inhabitants. The people drink from the lake, and it has many palaces. Half of Al-Jar is on an island in the sea, and the other half is on the coast."

Ibn Hawqal described it in his book “Surat Alardh,” stating, “...Al-Jar is a port for the city, located three stages away from it. It is smaller than Jeddah, and Jeddah is a port for the people of Mecca, two stages away from it, on the seashore. It was prosperous, with many trades and wealth, and there was no place in Hijaz after Mecca that had more wealth and trade than it. Their trade was conducted with the Persians. When Ibn Ja’far Al-Hasani settled there, its merchants scattered, and its conditions deteriorated.”

Al-Muqaddasi described its fortifications at the end of the 4th century Hijri / 10th century. Al-Bakri from Andalusia mentioned that Al-Jar is a port to which ships arrive from several directions, and near it is a village called “Qaraf” on an island estimated to be one mile by one mile, accessible only by ships that dock there from Ethiopia. The inhabitants of this village are traders, and fresh water is brought to the city from Wadi Yalil, two parasangs away from the port.(14)

The migrants who came from Ethiopia landed there, arriving on two ships. During the caliphate of Umar ibn Al-Khattab (may Allah be pleased with him), he visited the port to distribute the relief supplies that arrived from Egypt in the year of famine (17 AH) and built several storages to preserve the grains coming from there.

The End of the Port:

Despite the prosperity and development that Al-Jar Port experienced, along with the growth of its market and the influx of people, as well as the availability of drinking water and its subsequent expansion, it ultimately declined due to several factors, including:

- The drought that struck Hijaz in 439 AH / 1047 AD.
- The security disturbances that Hijaz witnessed in the 4th century Hijri.
- The shift of ships to Yanbu Port by the Ayyubids, which led to the weakening and eventual ruin of Al-Jar Port.

Tracking the history of Al-Jar Port and the city reveals that it was once a thriving and developed port. However, over time, its commercial role diminished and it eventually disappeared due to several factors. It resembles many ports along the Red Sea in terms of development and decline, making way for new ports and cities at the expense of those.

Several points should be noted about the establishment, development, and decline of Al-Jar Port:

- The strategic location of Al-Jar on the Red Sea coast facilitated the easy arrival of commercial ships, leading to its clear development during the first four centuries of Hijra.
- Years of drought that affected Hijaz and Egypt significantly contributed to the port's decline.⁽¹⁵⁾
- Repeated Crusader attacks ultimately led to the port's collapse.
- Continuous raids by Arab tribes on Al-Jar Port discouraged traders from approaching it.
- Political tensions between Egypt and Hijaz eventually led to the port's decline.
- The Fatimid state directly contributed to the downfall of Al-Jar Port by halting the flow of traders to the port and cutting off support from the governors of Hijaz.
- The closure of the port to commercial shipping led to its stagnation.
- The collapse of Al-Jar Port contributed to the revitalization and development of Yanbu Port, which began to meet the needs of the region and all of northern Hijaz.⁽¹⁶⁾



The Coast of Al-Jar Port

Al-Muwailih Port

Al-Muwailih Port is located in the northwest of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, overlooking the Red Sea. The city and port were named after the salty water springs, a name mentioned by Al-Ayyashi. It was also referred to as “Al-Nabk,” a name given by Ibn Fadl Al-Omari, Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani, and other travelers. Al-Muwailih Port served as a destination for pilgrims coming from Egypt to Mecca. The city faced a Portuguese invasion that aimed to control it, and its inhabitants defended it vigorously.

Al-Muwailih was characterized by its fertile lands and diverse agricultural products such as dates, grapes, figs, tobacco, fava beans, and other crops. This port had significant trade relations with ports on both the eastern and western sides of the Red Sea. ⁽¹⁷⁾ It received ships coming from Suez, Jeddah, and Quseir in Egypt. ⁽¹⁸⁾



Qal'at al-Muwailih

Rabigh Port

Rabigh Port is located on the coast of the Red Sea between Jeddah and Yanbu. The port flourished with the arrival of ships loaded with goods from the ports of Jeddah, Al-Lith, and Qunfudhah. It also received ships from Egypt, Sudan, and other Red Sea ports. It was considered one of the safest ports on the Red Sea, as most ports in the Red Sea and Hijaz were treacherous, and ships could only reach them with the help of experienced pilots familiar with the sea and its dangers. In contrast, Rabigh was distinguished by its ease of access.⁽¹⁹⁾

With the outbreak of World War II, the importance of Rabigh Port significantly increased, as it became the main source of funding for the Kingdom. It was a destination for ships arriving at the shores of the Red Sea. When King Abdulaziz decided to besiege the city of Jeddah, he used Rabigh as a launching point for the assault on the city and worked on establishing a port to receive pilgrims and goods coming via the Red Sea. During his visit to Rabigh in the spring of 1345 AH / 1926, while on his way to Jeddah, he inspected the port and the progress of the construction projects he had ordered.⁽²⁰⁾



Rabigh Castle

Yanbu Port - Bula

Yanbu Port, known as Bula, gained its maritime significance since the Greek era and became a center for supplying ships crossing the Red Sea. It was named Bula after the Bula spring, which is the closest spring to the coast of Yanbu. Yanbu was named after its numerous springs. Since the dawn of Islam, Yanbu has been associated with significant events involving the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Quraysh, including the expeditions of Al-Ays and Bawat, as well as Al-Ashira, which were part of Yanbu Al-Nakheel.⁽²¹⁾

A historical examination of Yanbu Port shows that it was one of the most important and oldest Saudi ports on the Red Sea and one of the closest ports to the Suez Canal. Its importance increased during the Ayyubid period in 621 AH when the Ayyubids made it the main port for the city, purchasing it from the Al-Hasani Sharifs of Yanbu for four thousand mithqals, and establishing many facilities there. Over time, it became a crucial port for Red Sea trade, with ships arriving loaded with grains, and its annual trade was estimated at about 30,000 dinars.

During the reign of the Circassian Mamluks, Yanbu Port developed significantly and became a destination for pilgrims, becoming one of the most important maritime and land stations for pilgrims from Egypt and the Levant. It ranked second after Jeddah Port. However, following the emergence of conflicts between the Mamluks and the Sharifs, the port's role declined, especially in the later years of Mamluk rule in the 10th century Hijri.⁽²²⁾

Recent archaeological discoveries indicate the presence of settlement activity dating back to the end of the 6th century BC, belonging to the Ubaid civilization, with the latest findings dating to the mid-4th century BC. This suggests that the area has witnessed continuous settlement activity and that the inhabitants adapted to various environmental

conditions. Numerous local and imported artifacts have been found, indicating the port's openness to the outside world. ⁽²³⁾

The port of Yanbu attracted great interest from King Abdulaziz because it is the main port for Medina. Therefore, he worked on modernizing its port and building large structures to accommodate the pilgrims to the Sacred House of Allah. The port became linked to the expansion of the Prophet's Mosque in 1369 AH / 1949 AD, as it became the main port for receiving ships carrying construction materials. ⁽²⁴⁾



Old photograph of Yanbu Port



Old photograph of Yanbu Port

Jeddah Port

Jeddah Port is one of the largest, oldest, and most important ports on the eastern coast of the Red Sea. It is currently considered one of the most significant ports in Saudi Arabia. Jeddah Port emerged before the advent of Islam, and during the reign of the third caliph, Uthman ibn Affan (may Allah be pleased with him) in 26 AH / 646 AD, efforts were made to focus on it as a replacement for the port of Shuwayb. This port is strategically located in the middle of the Red Sea and serves as a hub for many routes from within the Arabian Peninsula. Over its extensive history, it has attracted numerous trading ships. Its historical and cultural significance is heightened by its proximity to the holy lands, making it the main port for pilgrims.

The port witnessed remarkable development during the reign of King Abdulaziz, who transformed it from a small port into one capable of accommodating many ships of various types. This transformation occurred after large ships faced challenges in reaching the port, requiring smaller vessels and lighters to ferry goods and passengers from the larger ships to the dock. ⁽²⁵⁾

Shipbuilding in Jeddah Port:

The civilizations of the Red Sea have known shipbuilding since early times, and many ships have appeared in inscriptions and drawings found in Egyptian temples and elsewhere. Arab shipbuilding in the Red Sea developed after their interaction with the Chinese, from whom the Arabs learned the craft of building large ships capable of carrying up to 1,500 people. The Arabs were credited with the invention of the triangular sail, which significantly contributed to the advancement of shipbuilding in the Red Sea and even reached Europe. ⁽²⁶⁾

Shipbuilding was one of the oldest crafts in the city of Jeddah. The craftsmen used woods such as teak, mahogany, and Swedish wood, which were imported from outside Jeddah for ship construction. Additionally, there were local woods known to the people of Jeddah, including hedrus, madbous, um diyyah, and halqeem, which were used alongside the imported woods in shipbuilding.

Jeddah's shipbuilding industry, along with other ports along the Red Sea, was affected by the Crusader invasions, as the Crusaders prevented the arrival of long timber to the Red Sea ports out of fear that it might be used to build ships for future attacks against them. ⁽²⁷⁾

Types of Ships Famous in Jeddah: The Sambouk

The sambouk is one of the ships that became famous in Jeddah. The stages of building a sambouk are as follows:

Stage 1:

The harb (the main column) is set, which serves as the foundation of the ship.

Stage 2:

The bow, known as the "hanam," is constructed, followed by the stern, called the "qadah."

Stage 3:

In this stage, the ribs are affixed to the sides of the ship.



Stage 4: Placing the Keel in the Ship

This is the final stage of building the ship, where the ribs are covered with wood, a process known as “al-tatbiq.” Afterward, the ship undergoes “al-qalafah,” which involves sealing the wood seams with cotton soaked in oil. Tools used in this process include the “manqab” and a hammer. Once the sails are secured, the ship is painted with anti-salt paint.

The construction of a sambouk typically takes between 6 to 8 months, depending on its size. Once the sambouk or ship is operational, it is periodically brought in for routine maintenance at a designated location known as “al-manazik.” Among the most famous individuals who performed this task in Jeddah were Hussein Ashmawi, Muhammad Abu Safiya, Musa Abdul Jawad, and al-Dardir.⁽²⁸⁾



Ships and Boats in Jeddah Port

Types of Ships and Boats in Jeddah Port:

In addition to the sambouk, there are several other sailing ships and small boats in Jeddah Port, including:

- Al-Houri: A small sailing boat dedicated to fishing, carrying between two to three people.
- Sambouk: Used for transporting goods and passengers from larger ships to the port and vice versa.
- Narwi: Utilized for moving goods and passengers from larger ships to the port.
- Jardi: A long boat similar to the sambouk but without a stern for passengers at the captain's seating area.

- Za'eema: Used for internal transportation along the coast as well as between ships and the port.
- Sakouna: A large ship that was once a sailing vessel but has recently been fitted with a motor.
- Bout: Similar to the houri but more specialized, employing sails, oars, and a motor.
- Additionally, there are the Nash, Saa'iya, and Qateera.

All of these mentioned ships were manufactured in Jeddah Port, except for the jardi and sakouna, which were traditionally made in Sudanese and Yemeni ports and then brought to Jeddah. ⁽²⁹⁾



Sailing Boats in Jeddah Port

Among the most notable manufacturers of large ships in Jeddah whose names have been preserved are:

- Sheikh Hassan Shaqiri
- The Sindioni Family

- Muhammad Ali Dalil
- Ibrahim Jawa
- Ibrahim Bnawi
- Ahmad Al-Khayyat

Additionally, several individuals excelled in boat and sambouk manufacturing in Jeddah, including:

- Ali Al-Banna
- Muhammad Hasan Al-Jahani
- Muhammad Al-Khayyat

Many families have also been associated with maritime professions in Jeddah, including:

- House of Darwish
- House of Anbar
- House of Al-Rdini
- House of Dafa
- House of Yahya
- House of Shaaban
- House of Mas'ad
- House of Abu Safiya
- House of Man'aa
- House of Abu Dawood
- House of Bakr

- House of Diab
- House of Hambaazah
- House of Abdul Jawad
- House of Kabouha
- House of Al-Dardir
- House of Mas'ud
- House of Abdul Fattah
- House of Abu Talib
- House of Al-Wafi
- House of Salama
- House of Sindioni
- House of Al-Ari
- House of Abu Zaid
- House of Abdul Aati
- House of Ghoneim
- House of Al-Shaqiri
- House of Al-Imam
- House of Hatta
- House of Al-Bannan
- House of Raqban
- House of Abu Stein

- House of Al-Nimr
- House of Sadaqa
- House of Al-Sa'idi
- House of Al-Halabi
- House of Qandeel
- House of Abu Habra
- House of Al-Nadi
- House of Musa Bouha
- House of Shama'
- And many others. ⁽³⁰⁾

Maritime Trade and Pilgrimage in Jeddah:

The boats of Jeddah traditionally sailed from the port to Yemeni ports like Aden and Mukalla, then continued to Bombay in India, returning laden with grains and various food supplies. The sailors carefully selected the optimal times for sailing. These vessels were not designed for transporting pilgrims; they were strictly cargo ships.⁽³¹⁾

Regarding the transportation of pilgrims to Jeddah, Egyptian ships became active in this role in the year 1301 AH (1883 AD), ferrying pilgrims from the port of Suez to Jeddah. Additionally, Indian pilgrims, who traveled overland to the holy sites, began to board ships bound for Jeddah for pilgrimage.⁽³¹⁾



The process of unloading some ships loaded with grain at the port of Jeddah



“The movement of boats in the port of Jeddah.”



A group of ships on the coast of Jeddah – source: the World Wide Web.”

Port of Al-Sarayn

The Port of Al-Sarayn was established in the 3rd century AH (9th century AD) and reached its peak during the 4th and 5th centuries AH (10th and 11th centuries AD). However, by the 8th and 9th centuries AH (14th and 15th centuries AD), signs of decline began to appear.

Historical Significance:

The first person to recognize the archaeological and historical significance of this port was Professor Hassan bin Ibrahim Al-Fuqai, who published a study about it in Al-Madina newspaper in 1402 AH (1982 AD). This study was later republished in the Arab magazine, Volume 17, in 1403 AH (1983 AD).

The name of the town was derived from “Al-Sarayn” or “The Two Valleys.” The earliest reference to Al-Sarayn was found in the writings of Al-Maqdisi in the 4th century AH, where he mentioned it as a small town surrounded by a fortress. It was also noted in “Al-Rawd Al-Ma’ tar,” describing it as a significant city on the route between Mecca and Yemen, featuring a wall, a large mosque built from mud, wooden houses, farms, and livestock pens. The area was known for cultivating corn, sesame, and food supplies.

Economic Activities:

Al-Sarayn flourished in the 5th century AH, and Al-Idrisi referred to its fortress, noting that fees were collected on ships arriving at or departing from Yemen through the port. The types of goods that came to the port included slaves and various other commodities. ⁽³²⁾

Decline and Legacy:

Al-Sarayn continued to operate under the administration of the princes of Mecca, becoming their second port after Jeddah. It maintained this name until the 8th century AH. It is believed that the town was abandoned by its inhabitants in the 10th century AH (16th century AD) due to the growth and prosperity of Jeddah Port. Subsequently, the old city was referred to as “Al-Manasah” after its decline. ⁽³³⁾



Some stone monuments from the site of Al-Sareen - Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saeed, and others

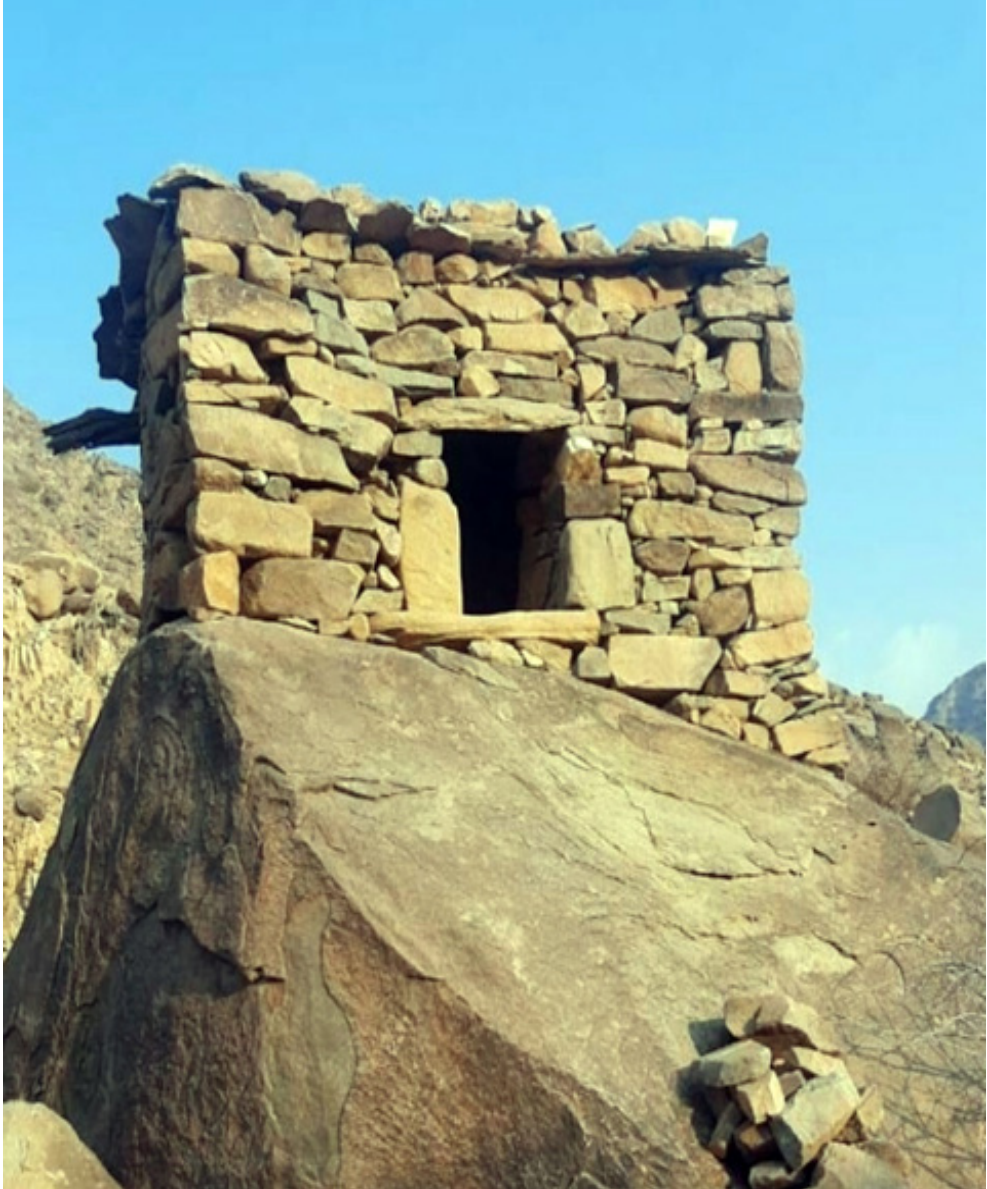
Port of Al-Lith

The Port of Al-Lith is located at the mouth of Wadi Al-Lith on the Red Sea, which was formerly known as Marsa Ibrahim. The first mention of the Port of Al-Lith was made by Yemeni travelers, who stated, "...we descended at a well called Al-Kalabiya in the eastern part of the Port of Al-Lith..." Al-Lith emerged after the decline of the Port of Al-Sarayn, as noted by Al-Baladi, as it was the closest location and similar to their port, being one of the most suitable places for habitation.

Yaqoub Sabri described Al-Lith, stating, "...in the year 1305 AH, a high decree was issued by the esteemed Sultan to restore this port as it is the nearest entrance to the Arabian Peninsula. Given its strategic location, a prestigious government office was established, along with a grand mosque, a bakery, and an elementary school (Boys' Office). Two piers were extended into the sea, connected to the land for defense purposes, and a deep trench was dug connected to the land, with five strong gates built over the trench. The original population was about two thousand people, and since this town was the closest harbor for the Bedouins and those surrounding it, anyone with something to sell would come to this city to buy and sell goods they needed. Consequently, import and export operations took place there. In this town, there was a governor's palace, a grand mosque, about five hundred and fifty houses, and fifty shops. The harbor was half an hour's journey by camel and four stages from Mecca, which included a quarantine area and a customs office. Until recently, the buildings of these government offices were not made of stone or plaster; they were merely two huts made of ordinary grass."⁽³⁴⁾

The Port of Al-Lith became famous for exporting the grain crop that the region was known for, and it was relied upon by the areas of Al-Zahran, Bani Malik, and the plains of Tihamah to export their products. Additionally, commercial ships loaded with goods from Sudan and Al-Mokha would arrive there. ⁽³⁴⁾

Historically, larger ships could not enter the port, and smaller vessels were tasked with transferring cargo from the larger ships to the port. Although many updates have occurred at the port in recent times, it has lost the luster and fame it had during the Ottoman era.⁽³⁵⁾



One of the archaeological landmarks from the city of Al-Lith.

Port of Al-Qunfudhah

The Port of Al-Qunfudhah was located on the coast of the Red Sea, extending its boundaries from the Port of Al-Lith to just beyond the Port of Huli. It was 70 kilometers away from the city of Jeddah on the Red Sea. The name “Qunfudhah” was derived from a woman named (Qunfudhah) and her husband named (Al-Bandar), which was why the city is called “Bandar Al-Qunfudhah.” It was also known as (Qanuna) in several sources.

Nearby ports that emerged close to Al-Qunfudhah include the Port of Al-Sarayn and the Port of Huli, which disappeared by the end of the ninth hijri century (fifteenth century AD). After that, Al-Qunfudhah emerged, inheriting the glory of those ports. Al-Qunfudhah did not witness significant development in terms of facilities and infrastructure at the beginning of the tenth hijri century (sixteenth century AD) due to the Portuguese incursion in the Red Sea. However, it began to receive traders from various regions, and communication with Mecca increased noticeably.⁽³⁷⁾

By the end of the eleventh hijri century (seventeenth century AD), Al-Qunfudhah, along with regions like Sabya and Tihamah, experienced a severe famine. Al-Asami stated, “...in this month of Jumada al-Awwal, year 1079 AH, news came from the land of Yemen about the severity of drought and famine in places like Al-Qunfudhah, Sabya, and Tihamah...”⁽³⁸⁾.

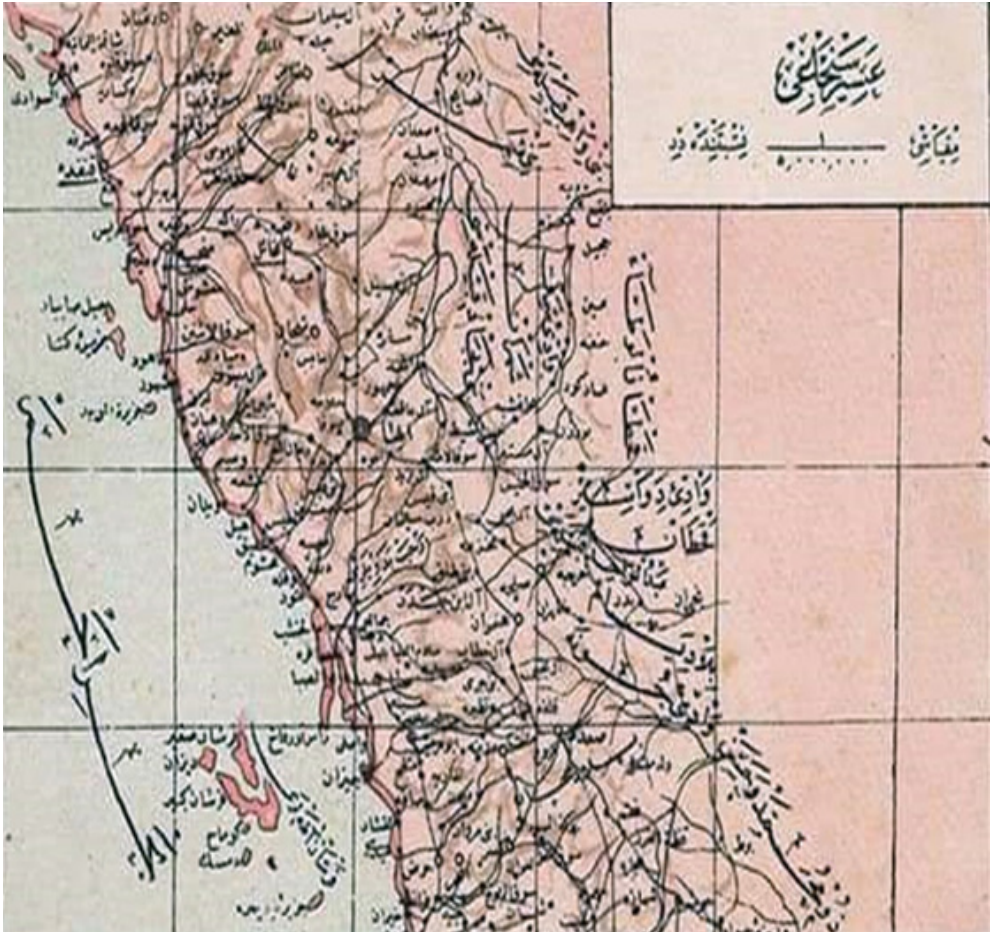
At the beginning of the twelfth hijri century, Al-Qunfudhah became embroiled in political conflict as some nobles from Mecca sought refuge there, using it as a base to launch attacks on the nobles of Mecca. This led to incidents of looting, especially in the year 1116 AH, when one of the nobles enlisted members from the Sarwah and Tihami tribes to plunder Al-Qunfudhah.

Subsequently, Al-Qunfudhah witnessed economic and urban development at the end of the twelfth hijri century and the beginning of the thirteenth hijri century (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries AD), after Muhammad Ali Pasha, the governor of Egypt, established it as a military base for his operations against Asir and Tihamah.

The Port of Al-Qunfudhah became known for its extensive trade relations with several ports in the region, such as the Port of Jeddah, Jazan, Aden, Al-Luhayyah, Kamaran, Rabigh, and Umlaj, among other internal and external ports in the Red Sea. ⁽³⁹⁾



Al-Humsa



An Ottoman map showing the port of Al-Qunfudhah and several ports on the eastern coast of the Red Sea.

Port of Huli

The Port of Huli was referred to as (Al-Humsa) according to the statement of the region's Sheikh, Sheikh Muhammad Ali Al-Omari. It was considered one of the important ports located on the eastern shore of the Red Sea, situated south of the Port of Al-Qunfudhah, and it was a day's journey from the Port of Al-Sarayn and an eight-day journey from Mecca. Ibn Hawqal mentioned it, and Al-Dimashqi regarded it as one of the ports of Mecca. The Port of Huli was referenced in sources from the third hijri century (ninth century AD).

Ibn Battuta visited it coming from the Port of Suakin on the Sudanese coast in the year 730 AH, where he said: "... after six days of leaving Suakin Island, we arrived at the city of Huli, known as (Ibn Ya'qub), which was historically inhabited by one of the sultans of Yemen... It is a large and well-constructed city, inhabited by two tribes of Arabs: Banu Harām and Kinanah. The mosque in this city is one of the finest mosques, and it has a group of poor people devoted to worship. The city is named after Huli Ibn Ya'qub to distinguish it from the valley; in ancient times, the entire valley was called Huli from above the navel to the sea. The city of Huli is considered one of the most important cities on the eastern coast of the Red Sea."⁽⁴⁰⁾

Population Groups:

The settled population groups in the city of Huli, despite their differences, include Abdul Amir Al-Ghawana, Al-Alawna, and Kinanah. Most of the inhabitants of Wadi Huli are from Asir, and some are from the Azd tribe, while Kinanah tribes settled in the lower part of the valley.

Decline of the Port:

Despite the development and prosperity of this port in earlier times, it ultimately declined and diminished for several reasons, including:

- The depth of the port's waters.
- The presence of strong waves.
- Significant tidal movements in the port area.
- The presence of large amounts of salt in the port area, which led to a lack of fertile land for agriculture.
- The abundance of rainfall resulted in the migration of residents from the port.⁽⁴¹⁾



Huli Coast – Al-Hismayah



Al-Birk Coast

Port of Al-Qahmah

Mount Al-Wasam

The Port of Al-Qahmah is one of the recently emerging ports on the Red Sea coast. Al-Biladi mentioned that the reason for the establishment of this port was a dispute between the Kinanah tribes of Banu Hilal and Manjah, with the latter adopting Al-Qahmah as their market. Al-Zirikli discussed it, stating that Al-Qahmah is a center for the Manjah tribe, whose inhabitants consist of both nomads and settled people. The residences of the nomadic groups extend towards the mountains, while the settled groups live near the coast in huts made of marakh trees.

The Port of Al-Qahmah serves as a point for imports and exports. Despite the establishment of a new port in Al-Qahmah, the old port remains present, witnessing its past growth and prosperity, with many buildings, markets, shops, and mosques constructed from volcanic stone. The area is characterized by its narrow alleys, and residents fondly recount the port's maritime history, recalling that small boats would enter the sea to bring goods from larger ships during the Ottoman era. Currently, the port has become designated for fishing. ⁽⁴³⁾

The Port of Al-Qahmah is one of the ports in the Asir region and is noted for its mild climate in both summer and winter. It was also one of the important transit points for pilgrims heading to the House of Allah from Yemen and Southeast Asia. There are several islands off the coast of Al-Qahmah, including:

- Kdamil
- Samir
- Al-Sahl
- Umm Qash'
- Umm 'Aqar Khur Al-Qasabah. ⁽⁴⁴⁾

Al-Shuqaiq Port

Al-Shuqaiq is one of the anchorages on the eastern side of the Red Sea, located near the Port of Al-Qahmah. It is considered one of the ancient civilizational sites, where tools dating back to the Stone Age have been found, including hand axes, chisels, and stone flakes. Colorful pottery pieces have also been discovered, dating back to before the 1st century BC.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Geographically, the Port of Al-Shuqaiq lies north of the Port and City of Jizan. It used to have a small mooring for ships. Despite the presence of numerous valleys in the area, agriculture is scarce. The residents of Al-Shuqaiq, belonging to the Kinanah tribe, live between Wadi Nahb and Wadi Atud, near the coast and close to the mountains.

During the Ottoman period, the port was used for military and commercial purposes. Around the port's bridge, iron plates were installed to secure the ships, preventing them from drifting to the bottom due to the port's depth and the strong pressure of the maritime currents.⁽⁴⁶⁾

Among the names given to Al-Shuqaiq are Wadi Musa, Ghawaan, and Al-Lu'lu'ah, which was named in the seventh century AH. This was mentioned in the book "Al-'Uqood Al-Lu'lu'iyah" by Al-Khazraji:

"... In Jumada Al-Awwal of the mentioned year, the hardship was lifted, prices dropped, and costs became affordable throughout Yemen. The commander who had been dispatched for the construction of Al-Barak, Musa bin Abu Bakr bin Alaa Al-Din, was accompanied by Sharif Tahir bin Abu Yami, who had brought him from Mecca, may God protect it, heading towards the noble Sultan's gate. They traveled together, and when they reached near Al-Lu'lu'ah, they were met by Al-Juhainah, resulting in the army's defeat. Sharif Tahir lagged behind the troops, was killed, and their belongings and animals were taken..."

When some European countries supported Al-Idrisi with weapons in his struggle against the Ottoman state through the ports of Al-Shuqaiq, Al-Wasam, and Al-Barak, the Ottoman state decided to strike the three ports because they were receiving weapons brought from the ports of Djibouti, Massawa, and Aden. Al-Idrisi would receive the weapons and distribute them to the tribes loyal to him in those regions. Indeed, the Ottoman naval fleet managed to strike the three ports.



Map Showing the Ports of Jizan (Jazan), Al-Shuqaiq, Al-Qahmah, Al-Birk, and Al-Qunfudhah on the Red Sea Coast



Large Domed Huts in the Village of Al-Shuqaiq Taken on June 15, 1945 – Rivers House Museum, University of Oxford, from the History of Al-Shuqaiq – Tariq Al-Hussein Al-Hamdi



View from the Village of Al-Shuqaiq Taken on June 15, 1945 – Rivers House Museum, University of Oxford, from the History of Al-Shuqaiq – Tariq Al-Hussein Al-Hamdi

Port of Jazan

Jazan is located on the coast among Saudi ports and is one of the largest ports in the Kingdom along its western coast. It serves as a gateway to all ports on the Red Sea. Jazan refers to a large and extensive area that includes several regions. It was historically known as the “Mukhlef of Hukm” and “Mukhlef of Ithar” until they were unified by their prince, Suleiman bin Taraf Al-Hakami, in the second half of the fourth century AH (tenth century AD) under the name “Mukhlef Al-Sulaymani.”

Jazan was mentioned in the writings of a Polish traveler named Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, who visited the port four centuries ago. He noted that he found forty-five ships anchored in the port and was astonished by the abundance of agricultural production, including grapes, apples, quince, pomegranates, lemons, oranges, wheat, barley, and white corn.⁽⁴⁸⁾

From the description of traveler Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, it was evident that the city was a focal point for merchants and sailors, as evidenced by the large number of ships in the port during his visit. The city was characterized by its fertile land and diverse agricultural production, which became a significant food source for its residents. It is likely that these crops were exported abroad amid the trade exchanges that the city witnessed. In addition to agricultural products, the city was known for its salt, which had various uses and became one of the most important commodities throughout different historical periods.

Historical Conflicts:

The city of Jazan was one of the most important cities of Mukhlef Al-Sulaymani, having experienced numerous wars, including the conflict between the Ottomans and the Idrisids, in which the Ottoman forces emerged victorious and established control over Jazan. A geographical overview of Jazan shows that the ports of Midi and Harad lie to the south of the city, the Yemeni mountains to the east, the Asir mountains

to the north, and the Red Sea to the west. The Farasan Islands were also among the most important islands belonging to Jazan, characterized by the presence of pearl beds nearby and some coral reefs.⁽⁴⁹⁾

Modern Development:

Jazan has developed significantly during the Saudi era. Al-Baladi described it as having buildings consisting of three stories, organized streets, and many schools and government administrations. The port faced challenges due to a sandy barrier at sea, which hindered the entry of large ships to the harbor, while smaller ships could enter through an opening among the sands. However, Saudi authorities managed to address this issue and expand the port to accommodate all types of vessels.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Shipbuilding in Jazan:

The shipbuilding industry in Jazan is one of the ancient crafts of the city, shaped by its coastal nature and distinctive location. This industry relies on various types of wood sourced from trees that grow along the southwestern coast of Saudi Arabia. Among these trees are the tamarisk, which thrives in the coastal areas, as well as neem, sidr, and al-‘arj. Building a boat on the Jazan coast takes about 60 days. In addition to these trees, other types of wood such as teak, coconut, and pine are also used.⁽⁵¹⁾

Cotton, fabric, and other materials are utilized to make sails. The types of wood used to construct vessels in the Port of Jazan include neem, Swedish wood, Java wood, and camphor, which is imported from Egypt.

The variety of woods employed in shipbuilding at the Port of Jazan indicates that the boat and ship builders in this coastal city have mastered this craft and have skillfully adapted these materials to serve their vessels.

The Port of Jazan is notable for its internal trade and connections with several nearby ports along the western coast of the Kingdom, such as the

ports of Al-Lith, Jeddah, Al-Qunfudhah, and Rabigh. Additionally, the port maintained significant trade relations with many ports both within and outside the Red Sea. ⁽⁵²⁾

Types of Ships Characteristic of the Saudi Coast:

1. **Al-Jarwi:** These are the ships used for fishing in distant waters off the coast.
2. **Al-Hori:** These ships are utilized for fishing close to the shore.
3. **Sailing Ships:** These vessels are distinguished by their large size and typically consist of two hulls. The city of Jeddah is particularly known for this type of ship.

The local craft of making sails is known as “Tafsal Shar’a,” and the person who works in this trade is referred to as “Mufassil Shar’a.” This individual is characterized by precision and skill, as the craft requires a significant level of expertise. ⁽⁵³⁾



Ship under Construction on the Coast of Jazan

Source: Internet



Ship under Construction on the Coast of Jazan

Source: Internet

Port of Umm al-Rashrash

Umm al-Rashrash port is located at the southernmost tip of occupied Palestine on the Gulf of Aqaba. Umm al-Rashrash was subjected to Crusader control, but the leader Saladin managed to liberate it. It fell under Crusader control again until the leader Al-Zahir Baybars liberated it. Subsequently, Sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri built a large fortress in Umm al-Rashrash, which became a link between Egypt and the Arab East.

Geographically, Umm al-Rashrash is bordered to the west by Egyptian Taba and is close to the Jordanian city and port of Aqaba. The name of the port and city is derived from an Arab tribe that once inhabited the area. Umm al-Rashrash was referred to as “the Village of Pilgrims,” serving as a rest stop for Egyptian pilgrims on their way to Hijaz before it was occupied on March 10, 1949. The port is distinguished by its strategic location on the Red Sea.⁽⁵⁴⁾

Um al-Rashrash / Al-Merashash - Encyclopedia of Palestinian Villages

Um al-Rashrash / Al-Merashash - Encyclopedia of Palestinian Villages



*An aerial photograph of Umm al-Rashrash taken
by the Rothenberg brothers in late 1948.*

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Chapter Four

**Historical Ports
on the Northwestern Coast
of the Red Sea
Ports of the Egyptian Coast**

Chapter Four

Historical Ports on the Northwestern Coast of the Red Sea Ports of the Egyptian Coast

Introduction:

The ports of the western coast of the Red Sea refer to the ports stretching from the Port of Suez on the Egyptian coast to the Port of Adulis in the southern Red Sea. This region has witnessed the establishment and emergence of many ports throughout the long history of ancient Egyptian times (Pharaonic), Meroitic, Ptolemaic, Roman, Christian, and Islamic history. Numerous ports played significant roles in the history of this area concerning domestic and foreign trade, the transport of goods, and the movement of pilgrims to Jerusalem initially and then to the holy sites in Hijaz.

Among these ports are the Port of Qulzum (Suez), the Port of Jawasiss, and Kilopatra on the northern coast of the Red Sea, as well as the Port of Aydhab, Suakin, and Badi in the central parts of the Red Sea on the Sudanese coast. Additionally, there are the ports of Assab, Massawa, and Adulis on the southwestern coast of the Red Sea.

Through research and excavation into the history of these ports, we find that they played many crucial roles that contributed to the economic prosperity of the region. They facilitated the transport of goods to all areas of ancient world civilizations via large ships and vessels crossing the Red Sea loaded with various types of goods such as spices, ivory, ostrich feathers, gold, timber, live animals, and other products. Because this region was considered important and

strategic, the Romans and others sought to establish many ports on the western coast of the Red Sea, which fulfilled their intended roles effectively.

As a result of the flourishing and development of these ports, shipbuilding and sailing craft industries advanced significantly. The people of these ports learned to build ships of various types and sizes and benefited from other civilizations, such as Indian, Chinese, Phoenician, and European, in enhancing their shipbuilding. Over time, their ships developed unique characteristics that became well known.

Furthermore, shipbuilding in the Red Sea was significantly influenced by the shipbuilding industry in the Arabian Gulf due to the trade exchange and communication that existed between these areas since ancient times until today. Thus, we find that many names of large ships and vessels were the same in both the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf, indicating a cultural and civilizational exchange in shipbuilding between the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf.

Ports and Shipbuilding on the Egyptian Coast

The ancient Egyptians recognized shipbuilding early on, with a variety of ship shapes and types tailored to specific tasks. These ships often featured designs inspired by animals and plants at their bows or sterns, including representations of lions, rams, hedgehogs, and leopards. ⁽¹⁾

Early Boat Construction:

Boat-making began in prehistoric times by binding bundles of papyrus stems to create narrow vessels that could hold a single person, characterized by cylindrical or pointed ends raised upwards. This type of boat has been depicted in some pottery engravings found in locations like Amara and Gezira, notable for its lightweight design and strong bow, enabling it to navigate through marshes and shallow waters. ⁽²⁾

Focus on the Mediterranean:

During the dynastic periods, the Egyptians did not prioritize the Red Sea, focusing instead on the Mediterranean. The Red Sea was primarily associated with expeditions to the Land of Punt for incense. To reach these areas, ships were first prepared and then transported on camels to the Red Sea coast. Since the Eastern Desert was not under Egyptian control, these caravans carrying ships were accompanied by soldiers for protection until they safely reached the coast. ⁽³⁾

Design Features of Ships in the Dynastic Periods:

The Egyptians designed several types of boats during the dynastic periods, characterized by the following features:

- The stern of the vessel was designed to resemble a bouquet of papyrus, with the bow elevated above the stern to facilitate movement through the water.

- Some symbols appeared on the bows of boats prior to the dynastic periods, possibly indicating regions or sacred sites associated with their owners.
- Boats from the Old Kingdom featured wide, square bows and sterns, providing ample space for sailors to row and steer.
- The square bow and stern continued in Middle Kingdom boats to assist sailors in loading goods or transferring them to larger vessels, as well as for fishing. A notch also began to appear in the square stern for securing the rudder.⁽⁴⁾



King Tutankhamun accompanies Ra in his boat, which has ends shaped like a lotus flower.⁽⁵⁾

During the Ptolemaic period, there was a notable interest in the Red Sea and the development of its ports, leading to significant advancements in shipbuilding. Ptolemy I sent several explorers to survey the eastern and western coasts of the Red Sea, a practice continued by his successor, Ptolemy II. As a result of this keen interest, trade in the Red Sea flourished from north to south.⁽⁶⁾

Regarding the timing of navigation for Egyptian ships heading to the southern ports of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, they typically sailed from April to December, as stipulated by the laws of Theodosius. These laws prohibited sailing from the beginning of November due to the winter season and the onset of strong winds and storms that could

lead to high waves. Egyptian ships would set sail in the summer, taking a full month to reach the port of Salalah in Yemen. Ships departing from the port of Myos Hormos in July, benefiting from the northwesterly winds prevalent in the southern Red Sea, would arrive at the port of Adulis in Ethiopia or the port of Mocha in Yemen by September.

On their return journey from India, ships would reach Egyptian ports by December or before the sixth of Amshir, utilizing the southeasterly winds. They would arrive at the port of Aden and then enter the southern end of the Red Sea, aided by the southeasterly winds in the central section of the Red Sea. This was due to the low-pressure system in Sudan, which drew in the northern winds, making northward sailing quite challenging. ⁽⁷⁾

Shipbuilding in Egyptian Ports

Shipbuilding in Egypt witnessed significant development during the Islamic era, particularly in the Umayyad period. Muslims benefited from Egyptian expertise in shipbuilding, making Egypt an important center for Islamic ship construction. Egyptian shipbuilders were sought after in both the eastern and western Islamic states.

Materials for Shipbuilding:

The shipbuilding industry in Egypt relied on various essential tools and materials, including wood, iron, pitch, ropes, chains, and flax. Because wood was one of the most critical elements in ship construction, Egypt focused on importing it from nearby and distant countries. The following table outlines the types of wood imported and their respective sources: ⁽⁸⁾

Type of Wood	Country of Import
Pine, Cedar, Oak, Juniper	From Asia Minor – Island of Tashuz in Syria
Pine	From Andalusia
Ebony	From Sudan
Hardwoods	From Europe via Venice

Many types of wood were brought in from Anatolia, Croatia, and other regions. Additionally, acacia trees, known for their strength and durability, were favored for shipbuilding. These woods were used for masts and ribs of ships. Regions in Egypt where acacia wood was abundant include Bahnas, Ashmoun, Asyut, Akhmim, and Qus. The state took measures to protect the forests containing these trees to prevent indiscriminate cutting. ⁽⁹⁾

Shipbuilding in Egyptian Ports:

Among the finest types of wood used in shipbuilding in Egypt was the wood from the Lobok tree, which grows in the area of Isna. This wood was utilized for shipbuilding along the Red Sea coast and is characterized by the rapid adhesion of its planks when immersed in water for six days. It was sourced from Upper Egypt and Faiyum during the 4th century AH (10th century AD). Additionally, wood from the dome tree, palm trunks, fig trees, and beech trees were also used. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Materials Used in Shipbuilding:

In addition to wood, iron was used in ship construction, imported from Genoa and Venice. Tar was imported from Libya, while ropes were sourced from the Beja region; these ropes were specifically used for Red Sea ships and were treated with butter, castor oil, or shark oil, which was considered the best type of oil. ⁽¹¹⁾

Stages of Shipbuilding:

The shipbuilding process in the Egyptian ports along the Red Sea involved several stages, similar to other coastal areas that experienced growth and development in this industry. The process would begin with placing the keel (the backbone of the ship) on the ground. Horizontal planks were then secured on both sides using fibers. A rudder would be installed on the ship, followed by painting and decorating the vessel using chalk, sourced from the island of Qurs and other areas. Cracks in the ship would be filled with wax.

Some of the essential components of the ship include:

Key Parts of the Ship:

- Bow (Al-Lijam or Al-Fas): The front of the ship, which must be strong and sharp.

- Anchor (Al-Anjar): The device used to secure the ship when docked, made from hollow wood filled with lead to increase its weight.
- Hull (Al-Jujur): The body of the ship.
- Stern (Al-Kawthil): The rear of the ship.
- Sail (Al-Daqal): The sail of the ship.
- Rudder (Al-Dafah): The part that steers the ship.
- Oars (Al-Majadif): Long poles used to propel the ship through the water.
- Pushing Pole (Al-Maradi and Al-Qilan): A wooden pole used to push the ship, with one end resting on the ground.
- Hawser (Al-Qals): A large rope made from fiber or palm fronds, used to pull the ship towards the shore or to tie it up.
- Ropes (Al-Dasr): Ropes made from fiber or palm leaves used to secure the ship.
- Mast or Sail (Al-Sari or Al-Shira): One of the most crucial parts of the ship, used for sailing and steering, made from coconut tree trunks.
- Helmsman's Seat (Al-Mutalmizah): The place where the chief navigator sits.
- Captain's Seat (Al-Salughiyah): The seat for the ship's captain.
- Lookout Cabin (Al-Ghurifah): A room at the top of the ship where a lookout sits to monitor the sea.

Types of Ships

The Egyptians had various commercial ships that sailed to both nearby and distant ports to acquire valuable goods and commodities. The activity of commercial shipbuilding flourished during the Tulunid and Fatimid periods in Egypt. A fleet was constructed during the Fatimid era at the shipbuilding yard to transport goods from India. Prominent officials in the Fatimid state owned many ships in the Red Sea, which were named after the titles held by their respective owners, such as the “Commander’s Ship,” “Chamberlain’s Ship,” and “Minister’s Ship.”

Here are some types of ships found in Egyptian ports:

- Sefar (Al-Safar): Used for traveling to distant regions.
- Baghlah (Al-Baghlah): Characterized by its square stern and a cargo capacity of up to 50 tons.
- Sailing Ships (Al-Sufun Al-Shira’iyya): Used for transporting goods.
- Jallab (Al-Jallab): Employed for transporting cargo in the Red Sea.

The Ptolemies and the Ports of the Red Sea

The Ptolemies succeeded in controlling the Red Sea, and Ptolemaic expansion in the region increased during the reign of Ptolemy II (285-246 BC), who was known for his love of trade. To boost Egypt's imports of various goods and commodities, he sent his commander, Ariston, on a significant campaign aimed at exploring the eastern coasts of the Red Sea. To take advantage of the extended shores of the Red Sea and the internal products of the countries bordering it, he established several ports, including the port of Roslow in Suez on the Gulf of Suez. He also opened the canal connecting the Nile River to the Red Sea, built Philotera, and founded the city of Amblona on the Gulf of Aqaba and Loyke Kome on the Red Sea. He brought in large numbers of criminals to this port to provide protection against attacks from the Nabataeans. ⁽¹³⁾

Through these measures, the Ptolemies became the main controllers of maritime trade in the Red Sea, which threatened the Nabataeans and their trade that relied on caravans. In response, the Nabataeans launched maritime attacks against the Ptolemies, prompting Ptolemy II to form a naval force tasked with protecting commercial ships and ports and preventing Nabataean attacks. This solidified Ptolemaic control over the Red Sea and its trade. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Al-Khor Port (Al-Qulzum) in Suez

Al-Khor Port, meaning “a tongue of the sea,” is located in the city of Suez and is one of the oldest ports in the area. It is believed to have been Egypt’s only port in that region for 250 years. The port was crucial for transporting goods between the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe. It witnessed the campaigns of Muhammad Ali Pasha (1811-1818) in the Hejaz and the Arabian Peninsula, and it served as a point of entry for pilgrims from some African countries traveling to perform Hajj in the Hejaz. Each year, the ceremonial covering of the Kaaba also passed through this port.

Al-Khor was one of the most important fishing ports along the Red Sea coast in that area. However, the old port suffered from neglect, and its buildings have become historical remnants, standing as witnesses to the wars that Suez experienced, including the wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973. Today, the port includes many significant historical sites, such as the palace of Muhammad Ali Pasha, the Suez Fort, and the “Messageries Maritimes” building, which was established by a French company for transporting mail and goods to Asia. Recently, there have been serious efforts to develop the port and revive its significance.⁽¹⁵⁾



The Coast of Al-Khor Port



Muhammad Ali Pasha palace is one of the most important archaeological landmarks in Al-Khor, Suez.



The building “Messageries Maritimes,” which was established by the French company for transporting mail and goods to Asia, India, and China.







The four images illustrate the large number of vessels and sailing ships that crowded the port.

Shipbuilding

There has been a shipbuilding yard in Al-Qulzum since the Pharaonic era, continuing its role into the Islamic period. Its importance increased as it represented a link between the Mediterranean Sea and the eastern seas. Al-Qulzum's significance grew even more when Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab ordered the digging of the Gulf to facilitate the movement of commercial ships between Egypt and Medina. Subsequently, shipbuilding flourished in the port. ⁽¹⁶⁾

A shipbuilding yard was established in Al-Qulzum during the Umayyad period, and in the Fatimid era, shipbuilding was prioritized, with Abdul Rahman ibn Ilyas appointed to manage the shipyard in Al-Qulzum. Qurrah ibn Sharik was sent to his deputy in Al-Qulzum to request repairs for the ships in the port. ⁽¹⁷⁾

Considering the establishment, development, and roles that the port has fulfilled throughout its long history, we can say that it was one of the most important ports in the Red Sea for transportation, trade, and communication between Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula. It was also used for military purposes during the era of Muhammad Ali Pasha and contributed to transporting pilgrims to the Hejaz and the ceremonial covering of the Kaaba. Thus, it has served various civilian and military purposes throughout its history.

Arsinoe - Kilopatra

Arsinoe was the capital of the Pharaonic Siphth or the Ptolemaic Heropolis and one of the main ports in Egypt. The port of Arsinoe - Kilopatra was established during the reign of Ptolemy II in 268 BC and was named after his sister and third wife, Arsinoe. This development followed his restoration of the canal linking the Red Sea to the Nile. An industrial zone was created at the port for local consumption and export of various products such as glass, textiles, perfumes, ceramics, and wooden products.⁽¹⁸⁾

The port was also mentioned in many writings by Christian pilgrims who arrived there on their pilgrimage journeys, highlighting the commercial importance of the port of Al-Qulzum from an early time. Among those who spoke about the port was Saint Egeria, who reached the port after completing her pilgrimage in the 4th century AD. Additionally, Bishop Epiphanius (320-402 AD) referred to several ports along the Red Sea coast, including Al-Qulzum, Aqaba, and Briniki. The martyr Antonio mentioned in 570 AD that Arsinoe was the last northern port on the Red Sea for ships coming from India, a point confirmed by Deacon Peter, who noted that ships departed from the port towards India and that it was the only port where vessels coming from India docked.

The port experienced significant commercial development during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Anastasius (491-518 AD).⁽¹⁹⁾ The port saw the construction of 80 war barges and 130 troop transport ships by the Roman governor of Egypt, Aelius Gallus, aimed at showcasing Roman power along the eastern coast of the Red Sea to intimidate the Nabataeans and Yemenis. However, these forces lost many of their ships while moving between Kilopatra and the Nabataean port of Loyke Kome, and the campaign extended as far as Najran but faced defeat, eventually returning to Egypt.⁽²⁰⁾

Abu Zenima Port

From the review of the news regarding this campaign, an important observation could be made: the Roman governor of Egypt, Aelius Gallus, was able to build 80 war barges and 130 troop transport ships. This significant number indicates the capabilities of both Egyptian and Roman shipbuilders at that time to produce such a large quantity of ships of various sizes and purposes. It also reflected the abundance of raw materials, such as wood and ropes, available in Egypt during the Roman period for constructing these ships.

Abu Zenima was one of the Egyptian ports located on the Suez Canal, situated in South Sinai. It served as a key outlet for exporting ferroalloy manganese (manganese alloyed with iron). The port became an important point for manganese exports during the British occupation of Egypt. This mineral has been present in the region since the time of the dynasties. It is believed that the name of the port is derived from Sheikh Abu Zenima. ⁽²¹⁾



Abu Zenima Port

Philoterra Port - Jawsis

Philoterra Port was considered one of the important ports that emerged along the Red Sea coast. The Ptolemies paid close attention to these ports and the internal routes connecting them to inland areas for transporting goods from the coast to consumption areas. They established military garrisons along the internal routes to protect them from thieves. Due to the scarcity of water along these routes, the Ptolemies constructed numerous cisterns to collect water from wells, which came in various shapes, including oval, circular, and straight. They also appointed a person responsible for trade in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, whose task was to oversee trade between the inland regions and these waters⁽²²⁾

Philoterra Port was linked to the mining activities for gold and other minerals occurring near the port, where war prisoners were used for excavation tasks under extremely harsh conditions. The ancient Egyptians (Pharaohs) used Philoterra Port as a departure point to the land of Punt. Some hieroglyphic texts identified the land of Punt as the region stretching from Port Sudan to the port of Aqiq on the Sudanese coast. The texts also mentioned the safe return of these ships after their trading journey to Punt. ⁽²³⁾



*A map showing the ports of Likos, Liman, Jawasīs, Viltiras, and Safaja
see Somaya Muṣṭafa Ali Hassan*

Quseir Port

Quseir Port is one of the Red Sea ports, established over 5,000 years ago. It was known to the ancient Egyptians as Thaou and Einom, while in Greek it was called Locus Limen, meaning “the white port,” as well as Nilotras. The port boasted a favorable location that protects it from northern and southern winds affecting other Red Sea ports, with the surrounding highlands shielding it from western winds.

From Quseir Port, Queen Hatshepsut launched her expedition to the land of Punt in the ninth year of her reign. During the reign of Pharaoh Ramses III (1198-1166 BC), the port witnessed significant commercial activity, with ships departing southward to trade. Many vessels were built in Quseir for transporting goods.⁽²⁴⁾

Quseir witnessed all historical periods in Egypt, from ancient Egyptian civilizations to Persian, Greek, Byzantine, Christian, and Islamic history. It was also known as the “Land of Translators,” as it hosted translators who assisted traders traveling to southern Red Sea ports like Punt, Yemen, Somalia, and India. The commercial importance of Quseir increased during the Roman and Greek eras, but it was abandoned in the 3rd century AD and remained neglected for nearly a thousand years. The port revitalized in the 5th century AD, becoming a pilgrimage hub for North African pilgrims in the 5th and 6th centuries AH.

Quseir reached its peak during the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. However, by the 9th century AH/15th century AD, the port’s significance declined significantly due to several reasons, including:

- The shift in trade routes from Jeddah to Quseir to Jeddah to Tūr.
- The redirection of Egyptian pilgrims to Aqaba after the Crusader threat diminished.

- The discovery of the Cape of Good Hope route in 1498, which greatly affected the movement of commercial ships at Quseir. ⁽²⁵⁾

In the year 947 AH 1541 AD, the Portuguese commander Dom João de Castro arrived in Quseir and occupied the city amid the conflict with the Ottomans. He stayed for four days and then bombarded it with cannons, which led to the migration of the city's residents. By the 18th century, Quseir began to regain some of its former glory due to the British-French competition for a fast postal route between Europe and India. It subsequently became one of the most important ports in the Red Sea. The city and port continued to play their roles in the Red Sea until today. ⁽²⁶⁾



*A map showing the ports of Nakhshya, Al-Qasr, Myos Hormos, and Viltiras
see Somaya Mustafa Ali Hassan*



*The passage of the Kaaba's cover through Al-Qusayr port
Source: Imad Arafa - Al-Youm Al-Sabea newspaper*



Old Al-Qusayr Port – by Imad Arafa – Al-Youm Al-Sabea newspaper



An Old Photo of Quseir Port
Source: Egyptian Al-Ahram Gate

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Chapter Five

**Ports of the Central-Western
Coast of the Red Sea**

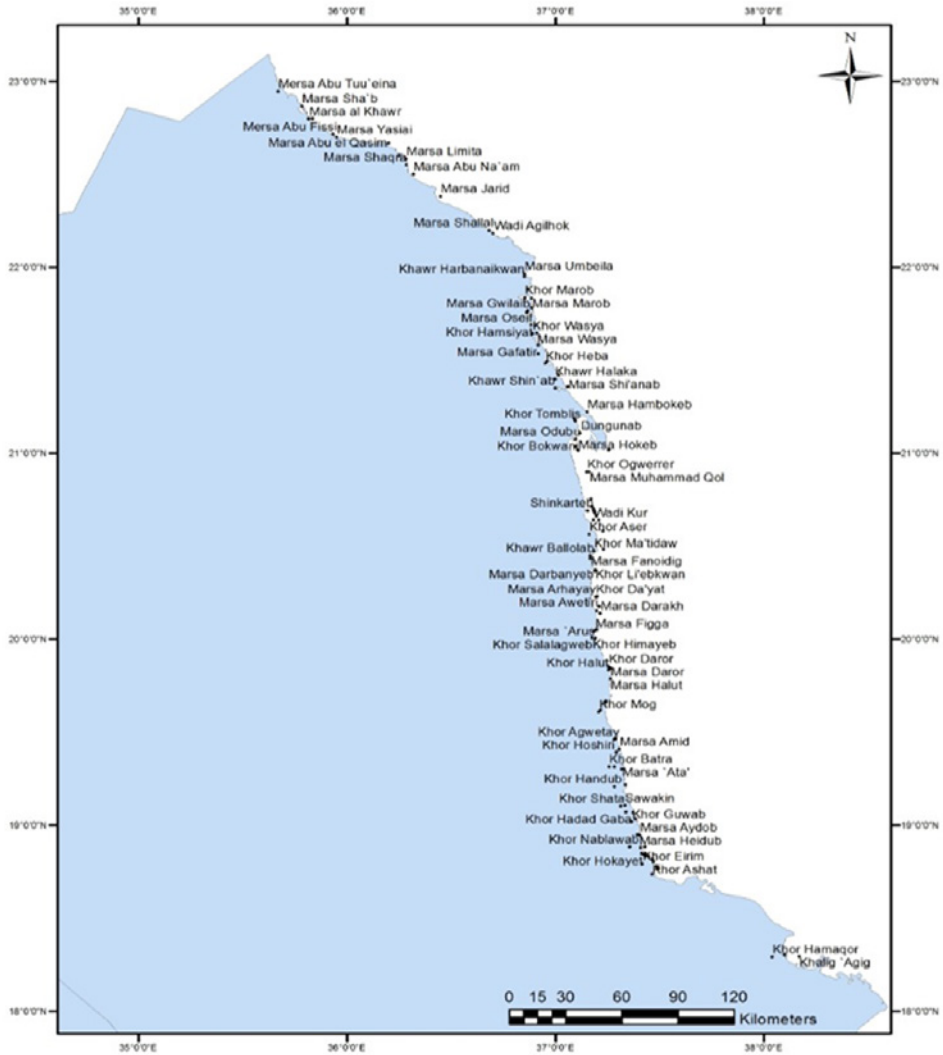
Chapter Five

Ports of the Central-Western Coast of the Red Sea

Introduction:

Chapter five of the book “Shipbuilding on the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf Coast” discusses a collection of ports along the Sudanese coast throughout history. Many ports emerged during the Ptolemaic era, as the Sudanese coast witnessed the establishment of numerous ports aimed at benefiting from Sudanese products such as gold, elephants, and various plant and animal products. We could say that the Sudanese coast was a treasure trove of historical ports, blessed by Allah with easy topography that contributed to the existence of these ports. Additionally, the hinterland of these ports was characterized by the presence of many natural resources and the ease of transporting and utilizing them through the ports, extending from Halayeb in the north to Badah along the border with Eritrea in the south.

By the “central-western coast ports of the Red Sea,” we refer to those ports that have emerged and developed along the Sudanese coast since ancient times, including Halayeb, Ayjab, Port Sudan, Suakin, Aqiq, Badah, and other Sudanese ports.



A map showing the Sudanese ports on the Red Sea coast from the Halaib Triangle to the border with Eritrea to the south

Ports and Shipbuilding in the Sudanese Coast

The Sudanese coast is characterized by the presence of bays and inlets, which significantly contributed to the establishment of ports. Suakin and Port Sudan are prime examples of the quality of the Sudanese coast and its suitability for natural ports. Numerous ports emerged along the Red Sea, forming strategic centers on maritime navigation routes and international trade. Some of these ports, which have maintained their significance since ancient times, include Aden, Jeddah, Massawa, Suakin, Suez, and many others.

The importance of these ports stems from their central, strategic, and economic location in the Red Sea, which connects key global waterways. The Red Sea geographical position is between different production regions and sources of raw materials and strategic goods such as oil, gum arabic, cotton, and others. Consequently, its ports became crucial transit points for global trade, linking the eastern Asian and western African coasts through a network of overland routes. This connectivity has had a significant social and cultural impact, facilitating human migration between the two coasts. These ports evolved into cultural and religious centers and served as points for the movement of Muslim pilgrims from Africa. The importance of the Red Sea increased as the shortest waterway connecting the north after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. For these reasons and others, the Red Sea has been a target for the ambitions of regional and international powers seeking to control it, becoming a focal point for conflicts and wars.

A review of Sudanese ports and their history reveals that these ports have not received serious studies, especially regarding ancient civilizations and their connection to the Red Sea basin. However, we will attempt to provide some general insights based on available

information to highlight the importance of the Red Sea for the successive Sudanese kingdoms and civilizations. This includes detailing and explaining the Sudanese ports that emerged along this coast through different historical periods, as well as addressing shipbuilding in these ports based on the information available.

There were some indications that suggested a connection between the Kingdom of Kerma (2500-1500 BC) and the Red Sea coast, and it was likely that Meroe extended its influence eastward to the Sudanese coast along the Red Sea.

During the Kushite civilization, particularly in its Napatan and Meroitic periods (750 BC - 350 AD), there was a clear interest in the Red Sea. The author of the “Guide to the Erythraean Sea” in the first century AD hinted at the existence of an overland route from the port of Adulis on the African coast to the city of Atbara, and then north to Egypt, describing this route as long but good due to the availability of water and pasture.

⁽⁴⁾ However, he did not provide further details about this road. In a similar timeframe, the Greek historian Pliny mentioned an overland route between the city of Nabta in northern Sudan and the Red Sea, which was used for foreign trade, but he also did not disclose the location of the port on the Red Sea.⁽⁵⁾

The Sudanese coast experienced significant interest during the Ptolemaic rule of Egypt (305-30 BC), as they established several ports or fortified centers along the Red Sea to attract and facilitate global trade and control trade routes with Africa.⁽⁶⁾ After the Roman occupation of Egypt, they entered into conflict with the Kingdom of Meroe, leading to the closure of northern Nile trade routes and overland routes through Egypt to the Mediterranean world.

On the other hand, the rise of the Kingdom of Aksum in the east as a new political and economic power, which became one of the most important competing states in trade from the first century AD, played a

significant role. The port of Adulis was crucial in facilitating trade with the outside world. Additionally, the Kingdom of Aksum successfully controlled large parts of the southern Red Sea trade routes and the overland African routes, acting as a commercial intermediary between Africa and the world. This shifted the balance of power away from the Kingdom of Meroe, leading to its decline until Aksum ultimately managed to eliminate it in 350 AD.⁽⁷⁾

The Ptolemies had a thorough understanding and knowledge of the Sudanese coast, and it could be said that they studied this coast in such a way that enabled them to identify suitable locations for establishing ports and harbors, allowing them to penetrate deeper into the Sudanese interior to benefit from the resources and wealth of those areas.

During the period of the Christian Nubian kingdoms (500-1500 AD), Ayjab and Suakin emerged as the most important outlets on the Red Sea and later became the focal point of conflict between the Mamluks in Egypt, who sought to control the maritime ports, and the Nubian kingdoms.⁽⁸⁾ The Crusades may have cast a shadow over this struggle. Notably, while the port of Ayjab declined and disappeared, the port of Suakin remains an important maritime outlet for Sudan to this day.

The Sudanese Coast

The Sudanese coast is characterized by coral growth, which provides a unique advantage for navigation on one hand, and a multitude of natural ports and harbors protected by coral reefs from the dangers of waves on the other. These two features have allowed the Sudanese coast to be home to numerous ports throughout history.

It is essential to highlight two influential factors on the establishment and development of Sudanese ports and harbors on one side, and their decline and obsolescence on the other, throughout history:

1. **Geographical Factors:** The natural topography and availability of resources along the coast significantly influenced the establishment and sustainability of ports.
2. **Historical Events:** Political and economic changes, including conflicts and shifts in trade routes, played a crucial role in the rise and fall of these ports over time. They are:

The First Factor:

Most of these Sudanese ports on the Red Sea had sources of fresh water from seasonal streams and underground wells that supplied the port and its inhabitants with drinking water. It is well known that the presence of fresh water contributed to the stability and development of the ports, while the depletion of fresh water sources negatively affects them. The difficulty of obtaining fresh water leads to the abandonment of the ports and their decline.

The Second Factor:

This was pointed out by the traveler Crawford, who emphasized the social and geographical component, noting that the inhabitants of the Nile Valley are separated from the Red Sea by a desert belt that is 200 miles long and wider beyond that. This area was inhabited by Bedouins who have little

interest in these ports and harbors and their development due to their simple pastoral economy, even though they acquire some luxury goods from ship owners. Trade, in one of its forms, was based on mutual benefit from the revenues in exchange for protecting the overland routes connecting Africa to the coast and maintaining the security of these cities. However, these Bedouins were a source of disturbance due to their sporadic raids, posing a threat to maritime navigation.

During the Ptolemaic period in Egypt, there was increasing interest in the Sudanese coast, leading to the construction of several ports and outlets, some of which had uncertain locations and nearly forgotten. Among them, Ptolemy II (484-246 BC) established the city of Abithras to serve as a hub for communication and trade between Egypt and Sudan, likely located near the current port of Suakin. Ptolemy III (246-221 BC) built stations along the Red Sea coast to import and export African elephants to Egypt for use in their wars. One of the most famous of these stations was Ptolemaic Theron, which is to be the current port of Aqiq, as will be explained later.

Description of the Sudanese Coast by Burckhardt

Burckhardt, who visited the Sudanese coast in the early 19th century, provided a detailed description of the Sudanese coast north of the port of Suakin while on his way to the port of Jeddah. He mentioned that they traveled over 200 kilometers by boat, covering this distance in a week. The following were the names of the harbors and ports located within the numerous bays along the coast, along with brief descriptions:

1. Bay or Harbor of Djurataj: This was a very narrow bay, and navigating it is fraught with dangers. Its entrance only allows one boat to turn near its shore, which consisted of sandy gravel where some trees grow.
2. Bay of Jabaya: This was one of the best harbors on the Sudanese coast, capable of sheltering even large ships when the weather was rough and the storms were fierce.

3. Bay of Daroro: This bay contained a collection of inlets amidst a maze of shallow pools.
4. Bay of Al-Faj: Its entrance was easy, and it had a wide anchorage, making it a well-known harbor.
5. Bay of Iraquia: This entire bay was composed of calcified shells, providing a safe harbor for large ships.
6. Bay of Tadah: This bay was frequented by ships coming from the port of Jeddah on their way to the port of Suakin.
7. Mount Makor Island: This island features a beautiful bay and consists of a rocky mountain. Ships heading to Jeddah depart from here, and the crossing is safe, free from pools and hidden rocks.
8. A Small Narrow Harbor: Located on the western shore of Makor Island.
9. Bay of Marsi Dongola: Situated north of Makor Island, this large bay extended inland and had an island at its entrance. This bay is famous for pearl fishing.

The availability of drinking water is notably present at all the ports where they stopped. It is also observed that Burckhardt took seven days and nights from the port of Suakin to the port of (Mukur), while crossing the sea took one day and night. If we measure the distance from the last port, which is the port of (Dongola), as described by Burckhardt, to the port of Suakin, it is about 224 km, and between the port of Dongola and the port of Jeddah, it is approximately 210 km.

The port of Berenike

The Ptolemies focused on establishing ports along the Red Sea from south of the 23° North line, specifically in the area extending from Halayeb on the Sudanese coast. The Red Sea in this region and to the south was characterized by an abundance of water through valleys, seasonal streams, and wells. Strabo mentioned several ports along the Sudanese coast, from the Eritrean border to the Halayeb triangle, including Eliaostraton, Milenius, Antiphilios, Mikros, Menios, and Berenike.⁽²⁾

The port of Berenike was located on the Red Sea coast within Sudanese territory in the Halayeb triangle. It was named by Ptolemy II (484-246 BC) after his mother. The port and city of Berenike were situated at 23° 55' North. The port emerged in the first and second centuries AD and featured a massive fortress, as revealed by archaeological excavations in the area. This fortress consisted of three large courtyards, a series of buildings, and a complex containing workshops and storage facilities. There was also an ancient well and basins for collecting rainwater, with the capacity of the two largest water basins estimated at 17,000 liters. Berenike was one of the ports constructed by the Ptolemies to supply the army with elephants and became one of the most significant ports on the Red Sea.⁽²⁾

Berenike had been referred to by several names, including the Port of the Abyssinians and the Port of the Sabai. Due to the scarcity of water at the port, it was necessary to bring water from Shenshif, located 35 kilometers south of Berenike. The inhabitants of Berenike were known as Tujdaito, a term of Greek origin. They were engaged in fishing and trade in precious stones and frankincense at the Red Sea ports.⁽⁴⁾

It is believed that the port was used for transporting elephants from Sudanese regions to participate in various military activities for the Ptolemies. Meroe is known to have been one of the areas where elephants were utilized in warfare.



Drawings of Elephants in Barniq – Al-Youm Al-Sabea Newspaper – November 25, 2019

According to reports, including one from Al-Youm Al-Sabaa on November 25, 2019, the port of Berenike received various goods, including, cotton textiles, and monkeys from India. Recent archaeological discoveries have revealed significant quantities of Indian monkeys that were brought to Berenike, highlighting the port's extensive trade relations with the southern Red Sea and regions of East Asia, such as India. ⁽⁵⁾

Berenike in the Roman Era:

During the Roman period, Berenike experienced significant development, expanding its commercial activities and becoming one of the most important global ports of its time. The city grew to house around a thousand buildings, and the commercial activities of the port continued for eight centuries. Archaeological findings indicated a large commercial openness at the port, attracting people from various regions of the ancient world. Artifacts such as pottery from Mesopotamia, the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Greece, and Rome have been discovered, along with a number of gemstones and many beads from the Kingdom of Meroe and the Western Desert of the Nile. ⁽⁶⁾

Berenike transformed into a global port hosting a variety of nationalities engaged in numerous activities, primarily trade. The port became bustling

with commercial ship movements, with around 120 ships sailing to India over a six to seven-year period, averaging 17-20 ships annually—an impressive figure for that time. It is believed that the port ceased its commercial activities by the early sixth century AD, coinciding with the end of Byzantine rule. ⁽⁷⁾



*Ancient Ruins from Barniq – Al-Youm Al-Sabea Newspaper
November 25, 20*



Barniq – Al-Youm Al-Sabea Newspaper – November 25, 2019

Port of Halayeb

The port of Halayeb is located in the Sudanese Halayeb triangle in the northeastern part of Sudan, which includes three important areas: Shalatin, Abu Ramad, and Halayeb. The Halayeb area is inhabited by the Bashareen tribes, known historically for their exceptional camels, which extend from Halayeb northward to the port of Port Sudan. Other tribes in the area include the Ababda, Hamadab, and Shnitrab. The Bashareen are recognized for owning the best types of camels in the region, known as Bashareen camels.

The area has witnessed human settlement since ancient times, and the availability of minerals along with the port's location on the Red Sea has contributed to its status as one of the most important Sudanese ports. The Halayeb region is a subject of dispute between Sudan and the Egyptian government, despite widespread acknowledgment that it is Sudanese territory based on geography, history, and the Sudanese population residing there, as well as according to international laws that regulate borders between states.

The people of Halayeb, primarily from the Bashareen tribe, engage in fishing, pastoralism, and trade. The region is rich in various minerals, including gold and iron, and one of its main trading partners is the Arab Republic of Egypt.



A map showing the Sudanese Halayeb Triangle.

Port of Aydhab

Geographical Location:

The port of Aydhab is in the Halayeb triangle on the Sudanese coast, approximately 23 kilometers north of the city of Halayeb. It is believed that the name originates from a type of herb known as Aydhab, which has been used by the indigenous Beja people for a long time. This herb grows in the region, and the port is considered one of the oldest on the Red Sea, having gained fame over extended periods, with many travelers writing about it.⁽⁸⁾

Origins of the Port:

Initially, Aydhab served as a point to meet the needs of gold workers in the Eastern Desert surrounding the area. Over time, it became one of the most important ports for ships arriving from the southern Arabian Peninsula, India, and East Africa. The port and city had been mentioned in writings by several Arab and Muslim travelers, including:

- Ibn Khaldun, who referred to it upon his return from a pilgrimage in 789 AH.
- Ibn Hawqal in his book “Surat al-Ard.”
- Ibn Sulaym al-Aswani in “Akhbar al-Nuba and al-Muqurra and al-Ula and al-Baja and the Nile.”
- Al-Baladhuri in discussions of the military campaign led by Muhammad ibn Abdullah al-Qamni in 279 AH (892 AD).
- Al-Yaqubi in his book “Al-Buldan.”
- Al-Isfakhri in “Al-Masalik wal-Mamalik.”
- Al-Maqrizi in “Jazirat al-Aja’ib” and “Al-Mawa’ith wal-I’tibar.”

- Al-Dimashqi in “Nukhab al-Dahr fi Aja’ib al-Bar wal-Bahr.”
- Ibn Battuta in “Tahafut al-Anzar fi Gharayib al-Amsar.”
- Al-Nawiri in “Nihayat al-Arab fi Funun al-Adab.”
- Abu al-Fida in “Mukhtasar fi Akhbar al-Bashar.”
- Abu Shama in “Al-Rawdatan fi Akhbar al-Dawlatayn.”
- Ibn Jubair in “Tadhkirat al-Akhbar bi-Ittifaqiyat al-Asfar.”
- Descriptions by Khalid Khusrau in “Safarnama.”

Over time, the port became associated with gold mining activities. The Beja people, along with the Juhayna and Rabia tribes who migrated from the Arabian Peninsula, settled in the area and eventually intermarried with the Beja tribes. By the third century AH (ninth century AD), Aydhab had become the primary mining port on the Red Sea and a meeting point for ships coming from various regions.⁽⁹⁾



A map showing the location of the Port of Aydhab on the Sudanese coast – Noha Abdel Hafiz

Port of Aydhab: A Historical Overview:

The writings of travelers who visited the port during various historical periods indicated that Aydhab transformed from a small point on the Red Sea into a large port that, over time, became a destination for ships coming from India and Yemen, laden with goods, as well as traders and prospectors seeking wealth in the eastern desert of Sudan. Additionally, it became an important route for pilgrims heading to the holy lands via the Red Sea.

Several reasons contributed to the prosperity and development of Aydhab Port, making it one of the most important ports on the Red Sea:

- The deterioration of conditions in Egypt during the reign of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Mu'tazz Billah led to ships diverting to Aydhab Port.
- The shift of pilgrimage caravans from crossing the Sinai Desert to Aydhab Port during the period from 450 to 660 AH (1058-1261 AD) due to Crusader control over those areas.
- The decline of security conditions at Badi' Port caused ships and trade to move to Aydhab for safety.
- The presence of security in the port, provided by the Beja tribes, significantly contributed to the stability of the city.
- The availability of pearls and the presence of pearl beds around the port led to the region's prosperity.
- The port annually received waves of pilgrims heading to the holy lands, which contributed to the development of transportation and trade activities there.⁽¹⁰⁾

It could be said that this distinctive port, along with its proximity to the ports of Jeddah and Suakin, significantly contributed to its revival, making it a hub for traders from various regions of the ancient world.

Shipbuilding in Aydhab:

- The Beja people, who are Sudanese groups residing in the region, were able to engage in shipbuilding at Aydhab Port. They used dom palm wood for construction and jute ropes, which are among the highest quality ropes. ⁽¹¹⁾ Through these boats, they were able to benefit from the abundant resources of the sea. Over time, the port became a link between the eastern and western coasts of the Red Sea and a destination for ships coming from Yemen, East Africa, and the Hijaz.

It has been noted that shipbuilding at Aydhab involved small-sized vessels made from the readily available dom palm wood in Sudan. However, this does not negate the fact that the port was also a destination for large ships carrying goods from various ports, such as the Hijaz, India, Yemen, East Africa, and even Europe. These vessels also transported travelers, traders, and pilgrims, creating a regular movement between Aydhab Port and the other ports of that time.

Decline of the Port:

Despite the significant prosperity that Aydhab Port experienced for a long period, it ultimately faced decline and deterioration due to several reasons, including:

Factors Leading to the Decline of Aydhab:

- The opening of the pilgrimage route through the Sinai Desert by Sultan Al-Zaher Baybars in 1167 AD.
- Tribal disputes surrounding the city led to a loss of the security and stability it once enjoyed. Notably, the conflict between the Juhayna and Rifa'a tribes in 1281 AD resulted in increased attacks on the trade caravans heading to the city.
- One of the most significant factors contributing to the collapse of Aydhab was the campaign sent by Sultan Barsbay in 1426 AD, aimed at destroying the city and killing its inhabitants. As a result, those who survived fled to the city of Suakin.
- The Crusades, which mounted numerous attacks on Aydhab Port by Crusader forces.
- The depletion of gold mines around the city and in Wadi Al-Ula, which had previously played a significant role in its economic prosperity. ⁽¹²⁾

- Attacks by Crusader forces that resulted in the destruction of sixteen ships in Aydhab Port. ⁽¹³⁾

From the above, it is evident that the city of Aydhab transformed from a small port on the Red Sea into a thriving and prosperous hub due to various factors. It became a destination for traders, pilgrims, and prospectors seeking gold in the eastern desert of Sudan. However, the same factors that contributed to the city's and port's development ultimately led to their decline and deterioration.

Despite the collapse of Aydhab, a new port emerged and flourished in its wake: Suakin. Although Suakin had existed for a long time, the migration of people from Aydhab to Suakin contributed to its revival and subsequent growth.



Archaeological Findings from the Surface of Aydhab Port
Noha Abdel Hafiz Abdel Aziz

Port of Osif

The Port of Osif was located on the Red Sea coast, approximately 260 kilometers north of Port Sudan. It was in the Halayeb region of Sudan, an area rich in minerals, particularly gold. Yemeni Hadhrami traders took an interest in the port, exporting iron through a public joint-stock company before Sudan's independence in 1956. This company was closed due to the tripartite aggression against Egypt.

After the closure, Hadhrami traders spread throughout various regions of Sudan. It is noted that Mek Nimer, the chief of the Ja'ali tribe, encouraged Hadhrami traders to operate in Sudan since the 19th century. Prior to that, they engaged in trade with the Fung, Egypt, and the Kingdom of Wadai (Chad) through Sudanese territories. ⁽¹⁴⁾

Port of Muhammad Qol

The Port of Muhammad Qol is located on the Red Sea coast, where the local population engages in fishing, which supplies both the local market and Gulf markets, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Notable fish exported include snapper, grouper, hamour, and shrimps. ⁽¹⁵⁾

An important observation about Muhammad Qol is that women used to participate in fishing when the men go out on their fishing trips. They use nets for fishing, and the quantities caught could vary. There is a strong sense of community and cooperation among all the residents of this coastal city. In Muhammad Qol, women actively participate in the fishing trade, contributing to the local economy and community. The coastline of Muhammad Qol is characterized by its vibrant fishing activities and picturesque scenery. The local community has rich cultural traditions, including the Samakha dance (Tambera), which reflects their connection to the sea and fishing.



Women in Muhammad Qol engaging in Fishing



Coast of Muhammad Qol



Young men of Muhammad Qol and the Samakha Dance (Tambera)



Fort of Muhammad Qol

Fort of Muhammad Qol Locally known as “Al-Tabiya,” the Fort of Muhammad Qol resembles a stronghold rather than a typical fort. It features two levels and a wooden roof, with several windows likely used for observation. The fortress is constructed from stone, showcasing durability and strength in its design.

Port of Dunqanab (Dengela)

The port of Dunqanab, also referred to in ancient maps and sources like Burckhardt, is the closest Sudanese port to Jeddah. Located on the Red Sea coast, Dunqanab is considered one of the oldest ports in the region. The area is inhabited by the Bashariya tribes, who have a historical presence there. The Bashariya are known for owning some of the best types of camels in the Arab world, prized for their quality. These camels are used in races and for riding, and historically, they were employed for tasks requiring speed and strength. The camels of the Bashariya tribe are well-known both within Sudan and beyond, holding significant value among the people of the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf.

Historically, the Dunqanab region has been famous for its abundant pearls and salt production, with the salt extracted from this area being regarded as some of the finest quality. ⁽¹⁶⁾



Coast of Port Dunqanab

The coastline of Port Dunqanab features rich marine life and serves as an important historical and economic hub.

Port of Abu Amama

The Port of Abu Amama is situated on the Red Sea coast, approximately 180 kilometers north of Port Sudan. It is close to the Dunqab Natural Reserve, one of the most notable protected areas along the Red Sea. The port is in proximity to Muhammad Qol and Osif and is considered one of the ancient and significant anchorages in the region.

The area is home to various groups from the Beja tribes, such as the Bashariya and the Ababda. The port region is abundant in marine life, featuring rare birds, sharks, and sea turtles. It is also an important habitat for the dugong (sea cow), making it a vital ecological area.

Historically, Port Abu Amama served as a crucial stop for pilgrims traveling to the holy sites from West Africa and within Sudan. Pilgrims would use ships from Abu Amama to reach Jeddah, making it one of the key ports that facilitated the transportation of pilgrims to Holy Lands.



A map showing the port of Abu Amama

Port Sudan

Sheikh Barghout

Port Sudan is one of the ancient ports on the Red Sea, originally known as the harbor of Sheikh (Barghout). After the establishment of the new port, it became known as Port Sudan. The historical origins of the port date back to the Ptolemaic era, specifically during the time of the geographer Ptolemy (100–180 AD). The city appeared under the name (Thyron Siteron) and was described by the Portuguese navigator Juan de Castro in 1540 as (Tradit). The port became a destination for traders and sailors visiting the Red Sea coast since ancient times.

Port Sudan emerged during the Anglo-Egyptian rule over Sudan, proposed by the then Governor-General, Lord Cromer, the British Consul-General in Egypt. Several factors encouraged the construction of the new port. ⁽¹⁷⁾

Salah al-Din al-Shami mentioned in his book on Sudanese ports that the Sudanese coastline extends from Berenice in the north (i.e., the Halaib Triangle) to Massawa in the south, along the border with Eritrea. The Ptolemies established many ports along this coastline, including Ptolemy Thyron and Port Suturya, with Ptolemy Thyron being one of the most important Ptolemaic ports and centers on the Sudanese Red Sea coast. ⁽¹⁸⁾

Factors Encouraging the British Administration to Establish the New Port:

- The growth of coral reefs in Suakin, the historic port of Sudan.
- The increase in global trade movement, necessitating the presence of a modern port on the Red Sea.
- The establishment of the Gezira Scheme, which provided cotton for British factories.

- The British government’s desire to create a new port capable of accommodating large ships, which became the main carriers of goods and commodities between global ports.

During the rule of the Egyptian Khedive in Sudan, Sheikh Barghout (Port Sudan) operated normally alongside Suakin. Goods and commodities were exported through it to various ports. It happened that the British warship H.M.S. Swan seized a boat loaded with slaves belonging to Prince Osman Digna. Subsequently, it confiscated his goods in both Suakin and Jeddah, and he, along with his three brothers, was imprisoned. This led him to decide to oppose the government and incite the local population to revolt against it. He was expelled to Berber in 1878 and later returned to Suakin in 1882, from where he moved towards Al-Obeid to pledge allegiance to the Mahdi. ⁽¹⁹⁾

Shipbuilding in Port Sudan:

Imad Al-Faki Muhammad Hamza, who works in boat building, mentioned that the construction and maintenance of wooden ships take place in a designated area near the port. Musky wood is used for making these ships. Among the carpenters working in the maintenance workshops are Ali Al-Badri, a ship carpenter, and Al-Hadi. They handle all maintenance operations (cladding), and once the maintenance is completed, the ship is returned to the sea.

The carpenters in this area have extensive experience in ship maintenance, and the designated place for this work is one of the oldest, dating back to the period of British rule in Sudan. There are three locations for wooden ship maintenance: two in Port Sudan and one in Suakin, south of Port Sudan.

Ship maintenance occurs every six months if the wood is old; however, ships made from new wood can remain in the sea for years. All ships in Port Sudan utilize musky wood, and there is another type of wood known as white wood. ⁽²⁰⁾



Small and Large Boats – Port Sudan – Sudanese Coast

Uncle Ali mentioned that he has been working in shipbuilding since 1967. Regarding the tools used in ship construction, they utilize various instruments, such as the adze, chisel, hand saw, and the compass used for laying out the ship's beams. Uncle Ali is involved in both the maintenance and manufacturing of ships. He noted that shipbuilding in Port Sudan requires modern tools to contribute to the development of ship construction and maintenance processes at the port. ⁽²¹⁾

Small and Large Boats – Port Sudan – Sudanese Coast



A wooden boat under construction.



Uncle Ali discusses ship and boat building in Port Sudan.





An image showing the beginnings of the construction of Port Sudan

Suakin Port

The city and port of Suakin have been referred to by various names, including “Suwajin,” as it is said that Prophet Solomon used it as a prison for the jinn who rebelled against him in the 10th century BC. It is claimed that its original name was “Sawah al-Jinn,” meaning “built by the jinn,” which later transformed into Suakin. Al-Shater Basyli Abdul Jalil noted that the name Suakin appears in the Torah and is an Indian word meaning “the white city.” The local people from the Beja tribes refer to it as “Asuk,” which means “market,” and it became well-known by this name.

Suakin is one of the important Sudanese cities with a rich history and a glorious past along the Red Sea. Due to its unique geographical location, it played a significant role in maritime navigation and trade between the two sides of the Red Sea and distant regions such as China, India, and Malaya to the east, and Italy, Portugal, and Spain to the west. The city’s geographical position allowed it to act as a successful intermediary in developing maritime trade between the East and the West. It also formed a true link from the Sudanese interior to the coast through the goods and commodities that came from the Sudanese heartland, such as the regions of Darfur, Kordofan, Northern Sudan, and Sennar, to Suakin for shipment to global trade markets. Moreover, Suakin contributed to stimulating internal trade by facilitating the entry of foreign goods through the port, attracting traders from various parts of the ancient world to develop trade. In addition to traders, groups of travelers and adventurers visited Suakin, documenting their observations about the city.



Old Photo of Suakin



Recent Photo of Suakin after Restoration Work on the City's Buildings

Location of Suakin:

Suakin is located on the Red Sea coast in eastern Sudan, between Badh and Ayidab, and is situated 54 kilometers south of Port Sudan. Suakin consists of a small island adjacent to the coast, inhabited by the Beja tribes, one of the oldest population groups in Sudan. A narrow water passage in the form of an arm connects the island of Suakin to the sea, allowing ships to enter. ⁽²²⁾

Suakin is one of the oldest Sudanese cities and ports, with its history dating back, according to some accounts, to the time of Prophet Solomon, around the 10th century BC. It is said that the name Suakin is derived from the term “Suwajin,” as Prophet Solomon used it as a prison for the jinn. It is also said that the Persian king Khosrow sent for maidens from Abyssinia, and when their ships passed Suakin, it was discovered that the maidens were pregnant upon reaching Persia. When inquiring about the father, it was said “Sawah Jin,” and it is noted that the term Suakin in Hindi means “the white city.” The island is circular in shape, connected to the coast by a bridge built during the era of Mutas Pasha. ⁽²³⁾

Historically, Suakin was known as a station for serving commercial vessels crossing the Red Sea, where these ships were supplied with water and some food supplies. It was also considered one of the best anchorages in the Red Sea for protection against storms. Suakin has been mentioned in various historical sources across different eras, including by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Ottoman Turks. ⁽²⁵⁾ Al-Mas’udi described Suakin as a small island, one of the most important ports and global trade centers, serving as the first gateway for goods coming from the East to Egypt and the Mediterranean basin and European cities. ⁽²⁵⁾

Suakin resembles Ayidab in its origin and nature, the status it achieved, and its subsequent ruin. Suakin grew and developed at the expense of

Ayidab, and then Port Sudan emerged and developed at the expense of Suakin.⁽²⁶⁾ Suakin benefited from the destruction of Ayidab's port at the hands of the Mamluks around 1426 AD. The people of Ayidab migrated to Suakin, settled there, and engaged in trade and navigation. The ruin of Ayidab led to increased shipping activity towards Suakin from India, China, and other trade areas at that time, marking the beginning of a new history for Suakin in maritime trade.

The development of Suakin occurred at the expense of Ayidab, and after Suakin's growth and increased status both internally and externally, the city became a collection of ruins. This was due to the emergence and development of Port Sudan and the efforts of the Anglo-Egyptian administration to establish Port Sudan as an alternative port to Suakin by constricting the latter and redirecting external trade to Port Sudan.⁽²⁷⁾

Several features distinguish Suakin, including:

1. Suakin Port is one of the oldest ports known on the Red Sea coast.
2. Suakin connects several internal routes between the coast and the Sudanese interior, including:
 - The Suakin-Sennar road, which is a preferred route for pilgrims coming from Kordofan.
 - A road connecting Suakin to Meroe.
 - A road linking Suakin to Axum.
 - The Suakin-Shendi road, which passes through Taka and Qash.
 - Roads connecting Suakin to the city of Kassala.
 - A road linking Suakin to the city of Berber.
 - A land route connecting Suakin to Egypt, passing through the areas of the Bashaari tribe.

- A road linking Suakin to the city of Damar.
- A road connecting Suakin to Shendi, passing through the city of Atbara. ⁽²⁸⁾

Demographics:

Suakin is home to a mix of people, including the Beja, Hadandawa, Amarar, Bashareen, and the Hadhrami people from Hadramaut, along with a mix of Arab groups and Turks who descended from the Turkish garrison that arrived in the city during the reign of Sultan Selim I. ⁽²⁹⁾ The Beja are considered the indigenous population of Suakin and are one of the most important demographic groups in the city, historically imposing taxes on those coming to the city. ⁽³⁰⁾

Importance of Suakin:

Suakin is one of the important Sudanese cities throughout the ages. This is evidenced by the fact that all civilizations that emerged in Sudan or beyond sought to control this strategically significant city, with some groups succeeding while others failed. The Pharaohs of Egypt, the Meroitic civilization, the Ptolemies, the Fatimids, the Mamluks, the Funj, and the Ottomans all attempted to seize control of the port, clearly highlighting the historical, present, and future significance of this city.

Archaeological Significance of Suakin:

Suakin is considered one of the archaeological landmarks in Sudan, especially in Eastern Sudan. Successive governments have given considerable attention to this strategic city through archaeological missions and restoration teams. However, there are several challenges facing the city that hinder its preservation. In 1988, the Antiquities Authority requested the then-governor of the Red Sea State to pay attention to the city by implementing certain measures, including:

Prohibiting vehicles from entering the city, as they lead to structural damage to buildings, and the smoke emitted from these vehicles leaves carbon dioxide on the white buildings.

The narrow streets of the city do not permit vehicle passage, necessitating a ban on their entry. ⁽³¹⁾





Old Photos of Suakin, bustling with Life

Suakin during the Mamluk Era:

The Mamluks in Egypt sought to control Suakin Port after it had been used by the Christian Nubian Kingdoms. These kingdoms aided the Crusaders in launching a major attack on the port of Ayidab, located north of Suakin, where the Crusaders managed to destroy many ships docked at the port. Fearing a repeat of such attacks, Sultan al-Zahir Baybars sent a military campaign in 664 AH (1071 AD), leading to the flight of the city's governor and allowing the Mamluk forces to take control.⁽³²⁾

Despite the Mamluk control of Suakin, the port continued to serve internal trade between the Christian kingdoms and the Sudanese coast, as well as external trade between Suakin and foreign ports. The Christian kingdoms viewed Mamluk control as a threat to their economic interests,

fearing that it would isolate them from the outside world. Consequently, King David of the Christian Nubian kingdom attacked Ayidab, destroying and plundering it, resulting in the deaths of many of its inhabitants. ⁽³³⁾

The Mamluks provided security to the Sudanese coast in general and Suakin in particular, positively affecting the movement of commercial ships and their flow to the port. Trade routes between Suakin, Jeddah, and the ports of Yemen continued to thrive. ⁽³⁴⁾

After the destruction of Ayidab, commercial activity and shipping shifted to Suakin, leading to a significant increase in maritime traffic, particularly from the Indian Ocean. Traders from India, Hadramaut, Aden, and China flocked to Suakin. The availability of security along the Red Sea coast and a significant flow of trade between Suakin and the Arab countries contributed to the city's growth. Additionally, high taxes on goods entering the port of Aden prompted traders to continue their journey from Bab el-Mandeb to Suakin to avoid the high tariffs in Aden. ⁽³⁵⁾

Suakin expanded and increased its commercial, economic, and military importance following Mamluk control, improving its administrative systems and reaching the peak of its glory and economic prosperity in the first half of the 14th century AD. ⁽³⁶⁾

With the revival of trade between the Mamluk state in Egypt and Europe, the Mamluks paid special attention to Suakin and Ayidab, working to subjugate the Beja tribes to secure trade routes and these ports. ⁽³⁷⁾

The Portuguese in Suakin:

In the year 922 AH (1516 AD), the Portuguese fleet arrived at Suakin Port, where it was besieged by the Portuguese admiral Stefano de Gama, commander of the Portuguese fleet in the Red Sea. He settled there for some time, aiming to scout the city and port while preparing to confront

the Mamluk fleet. At that time, Ottoman forces were advancing towards Syria to take control of Jerusalem and Egypt. ⁽³⁸⁾

The Portuguese sought to control Suakin to use it as a launch point towards Mecca and the Holy Lands on one side, and towards Egyptian territories on the other. To achieve this goal and launch a new Crusade against Islamic possessions, Portugal sought to form an alliance with both Abyssinia, which aimed to rid itself of Ottoman rule in Suakin and Massawa, and with France and Spain to undertake the following:

- French control over Suakin Port.
- Spanish occupation of the port of Zaila in Somalia.
- Portuguese occupation of the port of Massawa, which is currently in Eritrea and was formerly in Ethiopia.

However, this agreement failed in the face of the strength of the Ottoman Empire, leading to the disillusionment of Abyssinian and European hopes. As a punitive measure, the Ottoman Empire prohibited European countries from navigating north of Jeddah, which positively impacted Suakin Port, as most ships redirected to dock there, receiving naval services with ease. ⁽³⁹⁾



Historical Buildings in Suakin

Suakin during the Funj Era:

Suakin came under the control of the Funj during the reign of Sultan Amara Dunkas, following a clash between Funj forces and the prince of Suakin from the Hadarib tribe. The Artiga tribe joined the Funj forces, which succeeded in defeating the Hadarib, leading to their departure from Suakin. The Funj army commander from the Abdallab tribe appointed Prince Abdullah Bush al-Artigi as the new ruler of Suakin. Under his leadership, Suakin developed significantly, with urbanization and economic activity flourishing in the city. ⁽⁴⁰⁾

The Funj were particularly interested in Suakin, digging a water reservoir known as “Hafir al-Fallah” near the city to facilitate access to drinking water. Their interest in Suakin stemmed from its commercial, strategic, and economic importance, representing a crucial outlet for the sultanate’s connection to the outside world. Since Sennar was a meeting point for caravans coming from Western Sudan, the Maghreb, Egypt, and Abyssinia, Suakin received notable attention from the Funj sultans. They established treaties and agreements with the tribes traversing their lands on the way to Suakin. ⁽⁴¹⁾

A testament to the city’s significance to the Funj and Abdallab rulers is the visit by Sheikh Ajib al-Manjalk bin Sheikh Abdullah Jama during his pilgrimage around 970 AH (1560 AD). He intermarried with the descendants of Ammar bin Muhammad Kahil and later inspected the city, ordering the digging of a well in Suakin to help resolve the water scarcity issue that plagued the residents. ⁽⁴²⁾

Despite Funj control over Suakin, the city soon fell under Ottoman dominion, creating a new situation. The Funj sultanate maintained good relations with the Ottoman deputy in Suakin, as these relationships were governed by shared commercial interests, with Sennar being an important trade center dealing with the Red Sea, Egypt, Hijaz, and Ethiopia. ⁽⁴³⁾

After the Ottomans took control of Suakin in 910 AH (1504 AD), Sultan Amara Dunkas feared Sultan Selim's invasion of the Sennar state. He sent a letter to Sultan Selim, a copy of which was received by Muhammad Saleh Darar. ⁽⁴⁴⁾ The letter included a list of the genealogies of Sudanese tribes, asserting their Arab identity and Islamic faith, arguing that there was no justification for invading and controlling their lands. Consequently, Sultan Selim did not consider an invasion of Sennar and was content with the flow of trade between Suakin and the interior regions, as the economic potential of the Sennar state at that time did not encourage him to embark on an expensive military venture. ⁽⁴⁵⁾

Suakin During the Ottoman Era:

After the defeat of the Mamluk state and their loss in the Battle of Marj Dabiq near Aleppo in 922 AH (1516 AD), followed by the Battle of Ridaniya in 922 AH (1517 AD), the sovereignty of the Red Sea passed to the Ottomans. The Islamic caliphate was also transferred to them after the caliph al-Mutawakkil on Allah ceded the caliphate to Sultan Selim I. The Ottomans inherited the protection of maritime ports along the Red Sea, including Suakin, Jeddah, Massawa, and others.

The Ottomans increased their interest in Suakin after Sultan Selim I took control of the city between 1512 and 1520. They worked on developing the city and planning its harbor. Local traders and notable figures contributed to the construction of grand palaces and warehouses, such as the Shnawi Palace, which was built with three stories and 356 rooms, corresponding to the days of the lunar year.

Despite their late arrival, the Ottoman Turks succeeded in controlling several African and Asian ports, including Jeddah, Suakin, Massawa, Zaila, Berbera, and Aden. ⁽⁴⁷⁾ To affirm their control over the Red Sea, the Ottomans established several military garrisons in key ports like Jeddah, Suakin, Massawa, and Suez. They created a "Sanjak" in these cities, which was one of the most important military administrative

units in the Ottoman system. The Sanjak could develop into a larger administrative unit called “Eyalet,” which was the primary administrative level between the 16th and 19th centuries, headed by a “Beylerbeyi” or “Prince of Princes,” encompassing several sanjaks. ⁽⁴⁸⁾

Suakin and the Province of Abyssinia:

Initially, the Ottomans established a sanjak called the Sanjak of Suakin in 960 AH (1553 AD) and appointed Abdul Baqi Bey as its governor. The governors of Suakin and Jeddah held the same rank and salary, and it was administratively attached to Egypt. However, this arrangement did not last long; after two years, the Eyalet of Abyssinia was founded. ⁽⁴⁹⁾

The Eyalet of Abyssinia was established in the mid-16th century in 962 AH (1555 AD), encompassing Suakin, Jeddah, and Massawa. The establishment of this province was attributed to the commander Ozdemir Pasha, who provided valuable geographical, historical, and demographic information about the region, encouraging the Ottoman administration to create this province with Suakin as its capital. The Grand Vizier, Kır Ahmed Pasha, also played a significant role in issuing the imperial decree to establish the Eyalet. Ozdemir Pasha successfully initiated significant administrative and service developments in Suakin, making it the capital of the newly formed Ottoman province. He appointed Sheikh Abdul Wahab Effendi as the judge of the province, based in Suakin, and the judicial authority remained in the city even after the provincial administration shifted to Massawa. ⁽⁵⁰⁾

Following the administrative efforts of Ozdemir Pasha, Suakin transitioned from being merely a sanjak center to an Eyalet center, and this sanjak became known as “Sanjak al-Basha,” as the Ottomans referred to the sanjak where the Beylerbeyi resided. ⁽⁵¹⁾

After the death of Ozdemir Pasha, several governors succeeded him, including Osman bin Ozdemir in 1516, Huseyin Pasha in 1567, Ahmed

bin Iskender Pasha in 1570, and Ridwan Pasha in 1573. The Eyalet maintained good relations with its surrounding areas, particularly with internal emirates like the Emirate of Harar, the Funj Sultanate, and the Sultanate of Furt, among other Islamic emirates and sultanates in East Africa.

As the Ottoman Empire declined, the Eyalet of Abyssinia was incorporated into the Eyalet of Jeddah, and a mutasarrif was appointed in key coastal cities like Massawa and Suakin. ⁽⁵²⁾

The arrival of the Ottomans on the Red Sea coast marked a significant turning point in the Ottoman-Portuguese conflict in the region, with the Ottomans successfully defeating the Portuguese fleet and gaining control over the Arab-African ports along the coast.

The Sanarani-Ottoman Relations in Suakin:

In 971 AH (1569 AD), Suakin faced an attack from the Funj, resulting in the deaths of many individuals and the restriction of local access to water sources. The situation escalated to the point where the Funj began selling water to the residents. In response, the governor who was residing in the city at that time wrote to the Ottoman Sultan, requesting the construction of a fortress to secure water sources and the appointment of a new governor for the Sanjak of Suakin who could stop the repeated attacks from the Funj. Subsequently, a decree was issued appointing Yakub Bey as the governor of Suakin. ⁽⁵³⁾

Following this, the relations between the Ottomans and the Sanarani state developed, contributing to the prosperity of Suakin. This prosperity was a result of an agreement between the two parties, which outlined the organization of trade and its passage through Suakin to global markets. The Funj's role in the agreement involved facilitating the caravans to Sennar and its territories, while the Ottomans would market and transport goods arriving at Suakin from the interior of the Sennar region.

Notably, there was no conflict between the Ottoman and Sanarani parties in Suakin throughout the 16th century. The Ottoman presence in the Red Sea significantly aided the city's commercial and economic development. ⁽⁵⁴⁾

The positive cooperation between the Ottomans and the Sanarani state fostered the growth of Suakin and elevated its status, facilitating the flow of trade from within Sudan, enriching the port with important goods such as corn, hides, cotton textiles, and Sanarani baskets and whips.

Suakin's Relation with Red Sea Ports:

Suakin's strategic location allowed it to serve as a crucial link in trade routes connecting various Red Sea ports. Its role as a commercial hub enabled it to engage in trade with other ports along the Red Sea, enhancing economic interactions and the exchange of goods between different regions. This interconnectedness further solidified Suakin's importance in the regional trade network, contributing to its prosperity and growth during the Ottoman period.

Suakin's Relations with Red Sea Ports

Port of Jeddah:

A. Administrative Relations:

After the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Suakin came under the jurisdiction of the Eyalet of Jeddah. It later gained temporary independence during the rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha, who managed to retain control over Suakin and Massawa throughout his lifetime. Eventually, Suakin reverted to Ottoman sovereignty and was once again governed as part of the Eyalet of Jeddah. The internal administration of Suakin was structured as follows:

- Following its return to the Eyalet of Jeddah, a mutasarrif (district governor) was appointed from the capital, İstanbul, with a requirement that they be proficient in the Arabic language.
- Suakin’s financial system relied on funds sent from İstanbul and taxes imposed on exported or imported goods at the port.
- The city was characterized by its judicial system, financial administration (dīftardārī), and military organization. ⁽⁵⁵⁾

B. Commercial Relations:

Merchants in Suakin maintained strong trade relations with the city of Jeddah. They would purchase all the necessities for African cities from Jeddah, including Indian goods such as textiles, incense, household items, onions, coffee, dates, a variety of foods, Indian sugar, spears, and military equipment arriving from India. ⁽⁵⁶⁾

The traveler Ibn Battuta, who visited the city in the 14th century coming from Jeddah, noted that Suakin was known for its dairy products, ghee, and corn. No ship would leave Suakin without carrying a quantity of corn harvested from the Taka region, which the locals exported to Mecca via the port of Jeddah. ⁽⁵⁷⁾

Ibn Battuta also mentioned that mats made from doum palm trees were exported to Jeddah and all regions of Hijaz and Yemen. These mats were used to furnish mosques in those areas. He noted that no pilgrim would leave Mecca without taking a small Suakini mat, crafted in the form of a small prayer rug. ⁽⁵⁸⁾

The Relationship between Suakin and Massawa

The port of Massawa became a site of conflict between the Ottoman Empire and Abyssinia, supported by European countries. As a result of this conflict, which affected trade movements, several traders moved from Massawa to work in Suakin, which subsequently monopolized the

services provided to ships. Suakin became known as the “bride of the Red Sea ports,” and by the sixteenth century, it had risen to prominence among the Ottoman ports in the Red Sea. ⁽⁵⁹⁾

Travelers’ Impressions and Observations about Suakin: Ibn Battuta

Ibn Battuta noted that when he visited Suakin, he found a large island with ostrich meat, zebras, and goats, abundant with milk and ghee, much of which was sent to Mecca. At the time of his visit, the ruler of Suakin was Sharif Zayd ibn Abi Bakr, whose father was the Emir of Mecca. The people of Suakin were known for their extensive knowledge of the sea and ships since ancient times. ⁽⁶⁰⁾

The Jewish traveler David Rubin visited Suakin, having arrived from Jeddah, and stayed there for a few days before continuing his journey to Sennar. ⁽⁶¹⁾

In 1672, the Turkish traveler Evliya Çelebi visited Suakin, and his journey was published in Turkish under the title “Seyahatname” in ten volumes in İstanbul in 1938. In the tenth volume, he discussed Suakin and Sennar. Samuel Baker also visited Suakin in 1865 on his way to the equator, and he returned in 1869 while on a hunting expedition for elephants in the Atbara River and the Butana Plain. Mr. Dixon also visited Suakin, noting that it was a commercial city frequented by ships for loading cotton, which he observed in large quantities ready for shipment to Suez. ⁽⁶²⁾

The Portuguese traveler De Castro, during his passage through Suakin in 1541, described it as one of the wealthiest cities after the Ottomans took control and administered it. De Castro was part of a Portuguese campaign in the Red Sea and compared Suakin to the Portuguese city of Lisbon. He described the process of entering the port as requiring skill, training, and a high level of nautical knowledge. He stated that the harbor could accommodate 200 ships and a countless number of small boats. He noted that Suakin gained its fame due to several factors, including:

1. The presence of a natural harbor that protects ships from marine storms.
2. The ease of loading and unloading from ships, as the docking area is not far from residential and storage locations.
3. Its connections to distant regions such as India, China, Malacca, and other Red Sea ports.
4. The natural fortifications of its location, which hinder control from the sea.
5. The ease of transporting goods from inside Sudan.
6. The diversity and abundance of Sudanese goods and resources, ensuring a continuous supply of various products to the port throughout the year.⁽⁶³⁾

The Strategic Importance of Suakin:

When the European traveler (Flancia) visited Suakin in its early stages of decline in 1805, he noted a clear disruption in the arrival of trade and merchants from the interior of Sudan. During his visit, he did not find the large ships that had previously docked in the port.⁽⁶⁴⁾

John Lewis Burckhardt also visited Suakin and remarked that the city was built in the architectural style of Jeddah. Despite its beauty, signs of aging were evident in the buildings, particularly those flourishing near the shoreline. Burckhardt estimated that there were around 600 houses, a third of which had collapsed due to neglect and lack of maintenance. About half an hour from the shore, he found twelve wells for irrigating the city, and several cisterns had been constructed to collect rainwater, though they had fallen into disrepair and received little attention.⁽⁶⁵⁾

The number of Turkish soldiers stationed at the Suakin garrison totaled one hundred, tasked with maintaining security and securing the sea. The responsibility for securing the interior areas of Suakin fell to the

leader of the coastal tribes, as a firman from the Ottoman Sultan outlined the duties of each party. An agreement was reached between the prince and the governor for the prince and the garrison to reside on the island, while the prince would live in the city and be responsible for it and its suburbs. The first to hold this princely title from the coastal tribes was Sharif Alim al-Din, followed by Al-Bushab, Al-Dishab, and Al-Karbab, who were the princes of Suakin. The first Turkish governor known for his justice and piety was Nur al-Din Pasha. ⁽⁶⁶⁾

Suakin became a military base during the Ottoman era, while the city was neglected in terms of trade and urban development. It was directly governed by the Ottoman Sultan, with the Ottoman flag flying over Suakin. This situation continued until the outbreak of war between the Yemenis and the Turks, transforming Suakin into a rest stop for Turkish soldiers traveling to or from combat in Yemen. The gendarmerie recruitment system in Turkey relied on sending young Turks to areas under Ottoman control, resulting in a significant number settling in Suakin permanently, where each would refer to his compatriots as “Hemshari,” meaning “fellow countryman.” ⁽⁶⁷⁾

The objective of the Turks in controlling Suakin and other Red Sea ports was to prevent these ports from falling into European hands, which would use them as bases for invading Arab territories in general and the holy lands specifically. ⁽⁶⁸⁾

A closer look at the Turkish garrison in Suakin revealed that the members of this garrison intermarried with the local population of the island, leading to the emergence of several families with both Turkish and Sudanese origins. Among the Sudanese families with Turkish roots in Suakin were the Mashli family, named after the city of Mish; the Mosuli family, named after Mosul; the Istanbul family, named after Istanbul; and the Korkatli family, named after Kirkuk. ⁽⁶⁹⁾

From the 15th to the 19th centuries, Suakin experienced fluctuations in its status as a port, alternating between periods of prosperity filled with ships from all over the world and times when its role diminished to that of a harbor for small boats, a trend observed in most of the Red Sea ports. ⁽⁷⁰⁾

Factors Influencing the Rise and Fall of Suakin:

Several factors influenced the rise and decline of Suakin, with its hinterland being affected by economic strength and weakness, as well as political factors that significantly contributed to the port's decline:

1. **Discovery of the Cape of Good Hope:** In the late 15th century, this discovery provided an alternative route for trade, reducing the importance of Suakin as a maritime hub.
2. **Weakening of the Mamluk Presence:** The decline of the Mamluk influence along the Red Sea coast weakened the region's trade dynamics.
3. **Fall of the Christian Kingdom of Alwa:** The weakening and eventual collapse of this kingdom negatively impacted trade flow through Suakin and the Red Sea. ⁽⁷¹⁾

A closer examination of the Mamluk and Ottoman states reveals that the Mamluks preferred to expand their territorial control on land, while the Ottomans aimed for maritime dominance to achieve greater naval supremacy. They were quite successful in this regard, resembling the Ptolemaic state, which also sought to secure strategic ports. ⁽⁷²⁾

Reasons for the City's Decline During the Ottoman Era:

Despite the prosperity and development Suakin experienced, it later declined and became a small port due to several reasons:

- **Conflict with European Traders:** The Ottomans fought against European merchants in the Red Sea, which strained trade relations.

- High Taxes: Heavy taxes imposed by the Ottomans on commercial centers along the Red Sea drove traders away.
- Shift of Trade Routes: European traders redirected commerce through the Cape of Good Hope in response to Ottoman control, leading to Suakin's loss of commercial significance.
- Increased Attacks by Bandits: The rise in banditry targeted caravans coming to the city from the Sudanese interior, which were laden with goods. ⁽⁷³⁾

The weakening of the Ottoman Empire also led to a nominal control over its ports, as the vastness of the empire caused it to prioritize certain regions over others. Internally, the decline of the Fung state and internal conflicts disrupted trade movements, leading to increased incidents of robbery and ambushes on trade caravans. ⁽⁷⁴⁾

Factors Supporting the Continuity of Suakin

Despite the devastation that affected Suakin in the 19th century, several factors contributed to its survival and persistence:

Continued Arrival of Trade Caravans: Although their numbers diminished, trade caravans continued to arrive from the Sudanese interior.

Pilgrimage Caravans: Each year, caravans of pilgrims from West Africa and various regions of Sudan arrived on schedule.

Given these factors, it could be concluded that the decline of Suakin began in the 18th century, particularly after European ships were prohibited from docking at the port. ⁽⁷⁵⁾

Suakin During the Era of Muhammad Ali Pasha and His Successors:

In 1846 (1263 AH), Muhammad Ali Pasha requested the Ottoman Sultan to annex Suakin and Massawa to his possessions. The Sultan

agreed on the condition that the regions would return to the Hijaz after Muhammad Ali's death. Consequently, the city reverted to the Hijaz province after Muhammad Ali's death in 1849. Muhammad Ali Pasha established Suakin as a military and economic base for exporting Sudanese products and appointed a governor to oversee the city. ⁽⁷⁶⁾

Suakin regained some of its former glory during the time of Muhammad Ali Pasha and his successors. In 1836, Khedive Ismail finalized the annexation of Suakin to the Sudan administration, agreeing to pay an annual tribute to the Sublime Porte in Turkey. As a result, Suakin witnessed significant improvements in facilities and services, leading to the establishment of vital administrations such as police, customs, judiciary, and postal services. Warehouses were built to store goods, and housing was constructed for the military. Residents began building their homes from white stone, roads were paved, and a wooden bridge connected the port to the coast. A pier was constructed around the port for docking ships.

The city's importance increased after the construction of the Suez Canal, leading to a rise in the number of ships visiting the port. The services provided to these ships developed, and Suakin became a crucial center for trade caravans and pilgrimage caravans. Thus, the city and port secured their place among the important ports along the Red Sea and became one of the best ports in the region until the end of the 19th century. ⁽⁷⁷⁾

Attempts to Connect Suakin to the Atbara River:

To supply Suakin with potable water, Muhammad Ali Pasha sent Monsieur Linan to determine the best route for bringing water from the Atbara River to Suakin. Monsieur Linan believed that it would be easy to accomplish this task and redirect the Atbara River to flow into the Red Sea, justifying this by noting that the river passes through plains and sandy lands. Evidence suggests that there were indeed attempts to connect Suakin to the Atbara River. ⁽⁷⁸⁾

Suakin During the Reign of Khedive Ismail:

After Khedive Ismail assumed power in Egypt, he requested the Ottoman Sultan to lease Massawa and Suakin. The imperial decree was issued on May 17, 1866, in exchange for the payment of seven thousand piastres, equivalent to about thirty-seven thousand five hundred Egyptian pounds at that time. This money was allocated to the Jeddah province's treasury for the development of the pilgrimage route to the holy city and its affairs, in addition to the tribute that Egypt paid to the Ottoman Sultan.

Ahmad Mumtaz Pasha took over the administration of Suakin from the Turkish governor and offered the employees the choice of working under the Egyptian administration or resigning and receiving their pensions and severance pay. Consequently, all the Turks and some Omanis resigned, and they were replaced by Sudanese and Egyptians. Mumtaz Pasha then worked on modernizing the city by constructing new houses, a governor's office, customs facilities, a quarantine station, postal and telegraph offices, a police station, and barracks for the army. He also built two cotton gins in Suakin. ⁽⁷⁹⁾

In terms of trade, Mumtaz Pasha sought to attract Egyptian traders to the city and negotiated with the Ibrahim Bey Fahmy Shipping Company to operate steamers in the Red Sea, as well as with the Khedive's company and the Italian Rubattino Company. He instructed them to purchase vacant lands for establishing their buildings and commercial offices. As a result of Mumtaz Pasha's attention to Suakin, traders and officials from Egypt and the Hijaz flocked to the city, and British ships began arriving in Suakin after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. ⁽⁸⁰⁾

Mumtaz Pasha constructed a pier around the island to facilitate the docking of small sailing and steam ships. The architectural style within the island featured Eastern characteristics, with buildings no less than

three stories high constructed from coral stone. One of the most beautiful buildings in Suakin was the house of Muhammad Bey Al-Shanawi, which he built for the poor, along with his private residence constructed in the latest architectural style of that era. He also built a four-story building for the officers of the English garrison in the city. Al-Shanawi had a guest house known as the “Dar Al-Shanawi” or “Al-Shanawi Palace,” where foreign traders who visited the city would stay. Additionally, there were houses belonging to notable families such as Omar Al-Safi, Al-Drobi, Ba Haidar, and Al-Hadari.⁽⁸¹⁾

Khedive Ismail also prioritized education in Sudan, establishing five schools in Berber, Dongola, Kordofan, Takka, and Khartoum. Alongside these five schools, a school was established in Suakin that taught Turkish and Arabic languages, engineering, mathematics, and calligraphy.⁽⁸²⁾

After the British took control of Egypt in 1882, they established a British consulate in Suakin. They ordered one of their engineers, Lieutenant Gordon (later a general), to build a wall around the city to protect it from potential attacks by the surrounding tribes. He succeeded in constructing a wall that encircled the city, standing four meters high and three meters thick. In 1886, five gates were added to this wall to monitor those entering and exiting, and guards were stationed at these gates.⁽⁸³⁾

Suakin During the Era of Muhammad Ali Pasha and His Successors:

Suakin experienced a period of prosperity and development during the rule of Muhammad Ali Pasha and his successors, a time that can be referred to as the Egyptian Khedive era in Sudan. This development was marked by the establishment of schools, the construction of the main gate, and the wall surrounding the city, as well as a focus on the port and other facilities within the city. This growth resulted from increased import and export activity, which contributed to the revitalization of trade between Suakin and other ports.

Shipbuilding in Suakin Port:

The inhabitants of Suakin, particularly the Beja people, utilized ropes to construct their ships, known as jalab. They stitched their vessels using coconut fibers. Al-Mas'udi explained the use of coconut fibers in Red Sea ships, noting that the saltiness of the Red Sea waters would corrode nails, making the use of fibers a more effective solution.⁽⁸⁴⁾



Suakin Ship Repair Port

Suakin as a Ship Repair Port:

Suakin's shipbuilding and repair activities show significant similarities with those in Aden, Yanbu, Massawa, Assab, and Jeddah, particularly in terms of ship names, types of wood used, and manufacturing methods. Some notable types of ships that have been known in Suakin since ancient times include:

- Al-Rams: Length of 4 meters
- Al-Shatiya: Length of 7 meters
- Al-Hori: Length of 15 feet

During a visit to Suakin, British traveler Emile Albert de Kesson, who served as a soldier in the transport corps, was transported into the area by an Al-Hori boat after meeting with the city's governor. De Kesson observed a number of sailing ships in the port loaded with goods destined for Jeddah, Massawa, Egypt, India, and Europe.

The cargoes of these ships included various commodities such as:

- Gum Arabic
- Ivory
- Sesame
- Slaves
- Gold from Sennar
- Senna leaves
- Ostrich feathers
- Hides from Kassala
- Cattle
- Cotton
- Sesame oil from different regions

Ivory from Darfur and Kordofan was shipped to Suakin for transportation to India, Egypt, and Europe using small boats to transfer it from the port to larger ships waiting offshore. The ivory shipment would travel from Khartoum to Europe in approximately six weeks. Imports included sugar, candles, soap, rice, and fabrics from Manchester, as well as household items and metal goods from Birmingham. These goods were transported from Suakin by camel to Berber and Kassala, and then to various parts of Sudan and Ethiopia. ⁽⁸⁵⁾

Trade Caravans from Suakin:

Trade caravans departed from Suakin every three months from a building known as “Al-Wikala,” which consisted of a large number of rooms and stables. This facility was constructed by Muhammad Bey Al-Shanawi in 1881, a prominent merchant in the city. The process of loading goods onto the camels was a significant event in the city, attracting many residents to witness it. Each caravan typically consisted of 500 to 1,000 camels.

A notable observation regarding the goods in the port, particularly cotton, was that there was significant congestion, leading to the spoilage of large quantities of this important crop due to delays in shipping. This indicated a lack of administrative attention from the port authorities.

Additionally, another type of ship known as the Sanbok measured between 40 to 60 feet in length.⁽⁸⁶⁾



The Sanbok

The Sanbok:

The Sanbok was a type of vessel constructed in Suakin, primarily used for travel to Jeddah and Yanbu. Several Saudi craftsmen would come to Suakin for the purpose of manufacturing these Sanboks. Notable among them were prominent figures such as President Shneif bin Said Al-Harbi and Aliyan bin Zuhair, along with other craftsmen.

Among the renowned shipbuilders in Suakin was Abd al-Qadir Abu Ali, who, along with other artisans, contributed to the construction of sailing vessels along the Sudanese coast. ⁽⁸⁷⁾



Fishing Boats on the Shores of Old Suakin, 1991 – by Khalid Othman



Image of the Tekrenyai Harbor South of Suakin, March 2024
Source: Mona Ibrahim during a work visit to the southern coast of the Red Sea
in Sudan



Wooden Boat Covered with Fiberglass
Source: Mona Ibrahim – Fish Research Station – Port Sudan – Red Sea

Many Yemeni families from Yanbu and Hijaz worked in shipbuilding in Suakin, and the locals referred to them as “Al-Juhayniyyah,” possibly because their ancestors belonged to the Juhayni Arab tribe. The people of Suakin from the Beja community also engaged in fishing using traditional boats called “Hori.”

Large ships would depart from the port loaded with goods to other ports, reaching as far as India to the east. One of the most famous ships for transporting goods was the “Ghanjah.” Al-Shanawi Bey, the owner of the famous palace in Suakin and a prominent trader, had several Ghanjahs that facilitated his trade outside of Suakin. The captains of these ships came from Hadramaut, with the most famous being Captain Hamid.

It is said that the last Ghanjah of Al-Shanawi Bey sank near the coast of Suakin. He went to the site of the sunken vessel, struck it with his stick, and said: “This world, when God protected it, it sailed the seas, and when He wished for its demise, it sank near the coast.”

The sailors in Suakin and other ports along the Red Sea had beautiful songs and art known as “maritime art” or “Samakah songs,” as referred to by the coastal residents. This is a shared heritage in Yemen, Hijaz, and other Red Sea ports. ⁽⁸⁸⁾

Groups from the Juhayni Arabs arrived in Suakin in the late 7th century AH / 13th century AD. ⁽⁸⁹⁾



Large Commercial Ship near Suakin Buildings



The Historical Gateway of Suakin

After the decisive victories of Prince Osman Digna in Eastern Sudan, Britain requested Turkey to work on protecting the Red Sea ports. They also promised to send the Indian fleet to safeguard the Red Sea ports, especially Suakin. On November 16, the warship H.M. Ranger arrived in Suakin, which was met with great relief by the locals. Later that month, another British naval ship, the H.M. Woodlark, arrived, followed by a warboat named Coquette.

At the same time, military reinforcements were sent from Egypt, led by Harrington. Major Sartorius visited the city aboard the ship S.S. Eldorado, accompanied by his wife and adopted daughter. His wife wrote a book titled *Three Months in the Sudan*, documenting her observations about the besieged city. She wrote about the Al-Shanawi agency and the Egyptian soldiers who were exhausted by hunger while guarding the city gate. She also mentioned Mr. Qandil, one of the leaders of the Urabi Revolt in Egypt, who was exiled to Suakin after the failure of the revolt.

Additionally, she discussed the mutiny of the Bashi-bazouk soldiers in Suakin, who refused to undergo military training until Major Sartorius intervened and compelled them to comply. The military reinforcements brought to Suakin contributed to the city's resilience and prevented it from falling into the hands of Prince Osman Digna. ⁽⁹⁰⁾



Indian Forces in the City of Suakin

Port of Trunkat

The Port of Trunkat was located on the Red Sea coast, north of the Port of Aqeeq. It is said that during the Ptolemaic era, the River Khour Baraka overflowed and reached the port, allowing traders, sailors, and fishermen to fill their jars with water from this river. ⁽⁹¹⁾The port was situated near Tokar, which is an agricultural area. ⁽⁹²⁾



A map illustrating Trunkat Port in the north, Aqiq Port in the center, and Badh Port south of Aqiq.

Aqiq Port - Aqiq (Ptolemy's Theron)

Aqiq Port is located south of Suakin and was one of the ancient ports. Some studies suggest that Aqiq Port was established by Ptolemy II Philadelphus and was originally called Port of Ptolemais. The port was situated in a marine bay that provides natural protection.

This port was created for the purpose of hunting and exporting elephants from Sudan via Aqiq, which were used in warfare. Ptolemy was interested in boosting trade in the Red Sea and enhancing commerce with Yemeni ports, benefiting from the ports established along the coastline. He also faced the threat of piracy from the Nabataeans in the Red Sea. ⁽⁹³⁾

Historical Significance of Aqiq Port:

There are some narratives suggesting that the port dates back to the time of Prophet Solomon (peace be upon him) and was used as a trading point along the Red Sea coast, holding significant strategic importance due to its vital location.

The hunting of elephants became part of the military operations overseen by King Ptolemy III. This practice played a crucial role in the Battle of Raphia in 217 BCE, where the elephants of Ptolemy IV from Africa clashed with those of Antiochus from Asia, with the African elephants emerging victorious. This victory encouraged the king to focus on areas for hunting African elephants, leading him to send Charimortus, known as the “Governor of the Land of Elephants,” to procure more. ⁽⁹⁴⁾

Aqiq Port, known as Ptolemy's Theron, was among the most important ports for the Ptolemies along the Sudanese coast. Following the decline of their influence in Syria and the diminishing of their trade activities in the Arabian Gulf, centers along the Red Sea—particularly on the Sudanese coast—began to thrive. To secure Aqiq Port from potential

attacks by local populations in conflict with the Ptolemies, they established a military base to protect the port.

The port became well known for exporting elephants, seashells, tortoises, ivory, and other products. The area surrounding the port was abundant with these goods, which were transported by horses and elephants. ⁽⁹⁵⁾

Badie Port

Badie Port was located on the Red Sea coast south of Aqiq Port, adjacent to the shores of the Island of Al-Reeh, at the Sudanese-Eritrean border. It was considered one of the ports that emerged during the medieval period, experiencing significant development between 600 and 1100 AH (Islamic calendar).

Badie Port was notable for its trade relations with the Arabian Peninsula. It is mentioned by the historian Al-Tabari, who noted that in 637 AH, Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab exiled Abu Muhjin al-Thaqafi to the city of Badie. It is believed that the port was used at times in its history as a place of exile, similar to the Delhik Islands in this regard.

The port was also passed through by Abdullah ibn Marwan, the second son of the last Umayyad ruler, in 750 AH. Badie Port has been referenced in several writings by Arab and Muslim travelers, including Al-Ya'qubi, Al-Hamdani, and Ibn al-Rumi, among others.⁽⁹⁶⁾

The Name and Importance of Badie Port:

It is believed that the name “Badie” is of Arabic origin. Badie consisted of a volcanic island that has split and emerged near the Red Sea coast, connected to the shore by a rocky, uneven landform.⁽⁹⁸⁾

Badie Port was considered one of the important ports on the Red Sea and has played various roles over five centuries during the medieval period. The establishment of Badie Port resulted from the intermarriage among Arab groups that migrated from the Arabian Peninsula and Yemen to the land of the Beja. The types of goods that arrived at Badie Port included combs, wool, cotton, animals, slaves, camels, and other products, while gold and ivory were exported through it.⁽⁹⁹⁾

Ibn Hawqal mentioned that the location of Badie Port is near the Baraka Port on the Sudanese coast of the Red Sea. Recent archaeological findings have confirmed this, indicating that the historical site of Badie

has no connection to the port of Massawa on the Eritrean coast. Groups of Umayyads settled in Badie, and archaeologist Bloss found graves of several Umayyad princes on the Island of Al-Reeh, evidenced by the markers found on their tombs. The Umayyad groups arrived in this region after the fall of their state and sought refuge from the Abbasid massacres.

One of the reasons driving Arab groups to reach the land of the Beja was the area's distance from Abbasid control, as well as their prior knowledge of these regions through trade relations, which played a significant role in maritime activities. ⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

Development and Decline of Badie Port:

Badie Port experienced significant development and prosperity during the second, third, and fourth centuries AH (Islamic). It was characterized by good relations with the Kingdom of Makurra, the Rabi'a tribes, and the Bani Kanz, who ruled the Atabay region and controlled its gold mines. The port also maintained trade connections with Ethiopia.

The city developed considerably, with commercial ships arriving from various parts of the ancient world. Badie became known for exporting gold and locally produced emeralds, as well as combs to Ethiopia, while importing ivory and ostrich feathers. Additionally, it exported various goods to different countries, including amber, hides, pearls, and ivory. ⁽¹⁰¹⁾

The End of Badie Port:

Several factors contribute to the decline and collapse of cities and ports, and this occurred in many locations along the Red Sea coast, including the port of Aydhab, as previously mentioned. By the sixth century AH (twelfth century AD), there was a sudden migration from Badie towards the end of the century.

Several travelers visited the area after it had become desolate, including Yaquut al-Hamawi, who visited the city in the early seventh century AH

(thirteenth century CE) and remarked on its ruin. He noted that “Badie is now in ruins,” referencing a poem by Abu al-Futuh Nasr bin Abdullah al-Qalaqis al-Iskandari, which described the harbors between Aden and Aydhab:

“So come, let us rest, for the ruins of Badie are like a populated place.”

Decline of Badie Port:

Ibn Qalaqis, the Alexandrian poet, passed through Badie and noted its ruins in the mid-sixth century AH (twelfth century CE). An inscription found among the ruins dates back to 466 AH (1073 CE), indicating that the city’s decline occurred after this date.

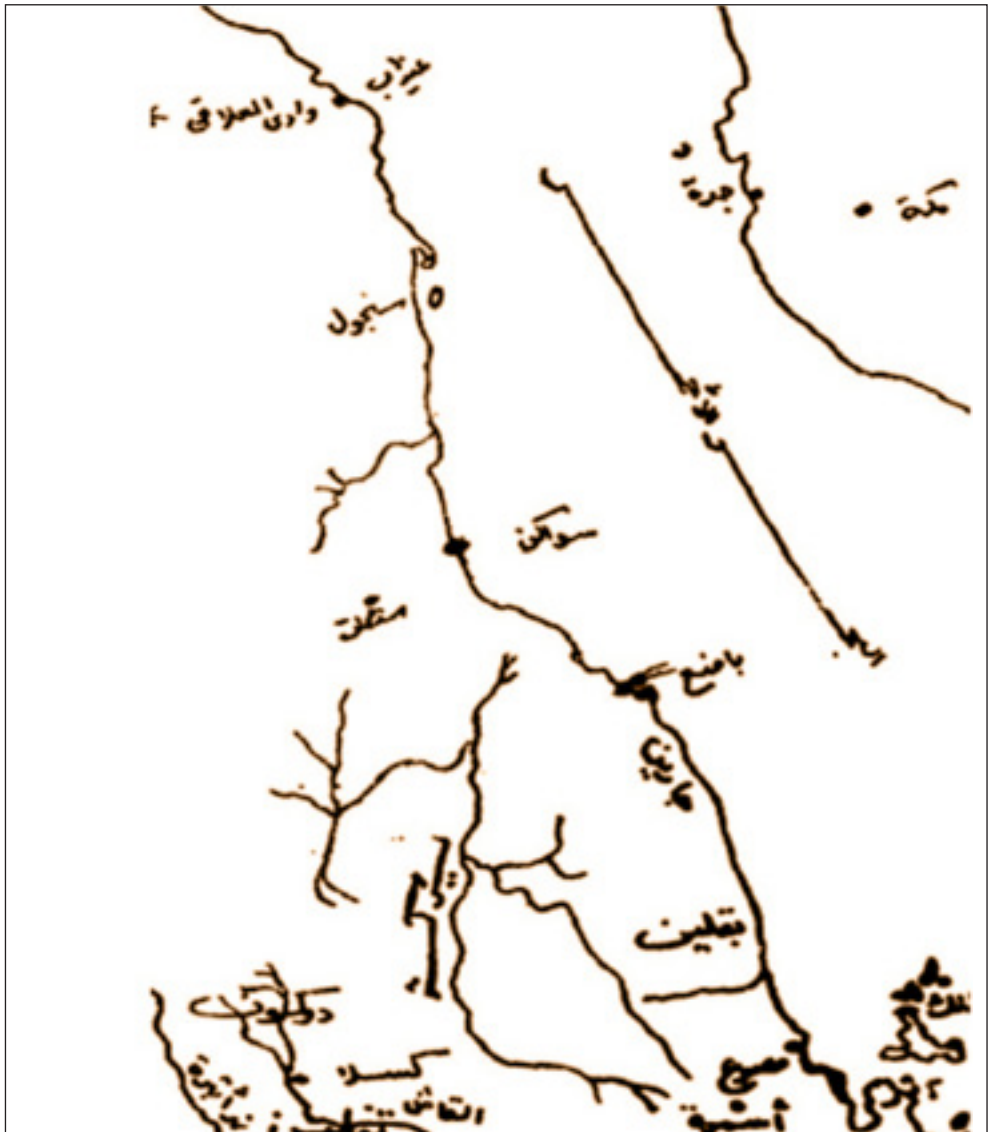
Several factors contributed to the collapse of Badie Port, including tribal conflicts that ultimately led ships to redirect to safer ports. Additionally, a famine that struck the city prompted its residents to flee to other areas, such as Suakin. Some opinions suggest that the spread of malaria, which claimed many lives, also contributed to the city’s deterioration, forcing the remaining survivors to leave. ⁽¹⁰²⁾

Common Factors in the Decline of Badie and Aydhab:

A closer look at the history of Sudanese ports, particularly Badie and Aydhab, reveals common factors that led to their disappearance from the map of active ports along the Red Sea, despite their commercial, social, and economic significance. Some of these shared factors include:

- Wars and Tribal Conflicts: Hostilities between the Beja and Arab groups contributed to insecurity and instability, prompting the migration of residents from both cities to Suakin.
- Resource Depletion: The depletion of resources, particularly gold, which was a primary source of wealth for both Badie and Aydhab, played a significant role in their decline.

- Water Scarcity: Water shortages were crucial factors leading to the collapse of both Badie and Aydhab.
- Spread of Malaria: The proliferation of mosquitoes led to a rise in malaria cases, further exacerbating the population decline.



A map showing the main ports of the Sudanese coast: Ayidab, Suakin, Badh, and Atia al-Qousi.

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Chapter Six

**Ports of the Southwestern
Coast of the Red Sea**

Chapter Six

Ports of the Southwestern Coast of the Red Sea

This chapter discusses the ports of the southwestern coast of the Red Sea, which includes the ports of Massawa, Assab, and Adulis. These are some of the most important ports in this region and have been known since the dawn of history. The significance of these ports increased after the flourishing of trade between the ports of the Red Sea and other ports in the Mediterranean Sea, the Arabian Gulf, and East Asia. These ports also had strong trade relations with the ports of Aden and Jeddah on the eastern coast of the Red Sea, as well as with Suakin and the northern Red Sea since ancient times. Spices, timber, and other plant products were exported through these ports, while they imported what they needed in terms of essential goods and products.

The ports on the southwestern side of the Red Sea serve as a link between the various Red Sea ports. They also facilitated communication between the populations in the east and west of the Red Sea. Migrant groups came to the lands of Ethiopia through these ports, and Arab groups also migrated through them when they found the Arabian Peninsula too constricting due to the conflicts between the Abbasids and the Umayyads. Later, these Arab groups established kingdoms and sultanates in East Africa known as Islamic-style kingdoms, which flourished and carried the banner of spreading Islam throughout East Africa and the interior regions.

Port of Massawa

The Port of Massawa is one of the oldest ports in Eritrea and was historically the capital of the state until the arrival of Italian colonization. It is said that Massawa was established during the time of the Pharaohs, between 2475 and 2625 BC, when their ships reached the land of Punt. They obtained many products through Massawa, such as incense, gold, ivory, timber, spices, aromatic herbs, and domestic animals like bulls, dogs, donkeys, and even monkeys. Massawa was also known as a commercial port during the Ptolemaic period. ⁽¹⁾

The port of Massawa flourished after groups of fishermen migrated from the port of Adulis to Massawa, along with traders and ship owners during the 15th and 16th centuries. Three groups contributed to the development of the port: the Egyptians, the British, and the Italians, following their control of the region in 1885. ⁽²⁾

The port witnessed the export of various products, including bananas, copper, grains, honey, hides, corn, salt, and other goods. It became an important outlet for the interior regions that exported their products through it. ⁽³⁾

After Egyptian control over Sudan, the entire Red Sea was placed under a single administration, with its center in Massawa, while its deputy remained in the city of Suakin. ⁽⁴⁾



Some Historical Buildings in Massawa – Source: Ambarimi Blog



Historical Buildings and Mashrabiya in the City of Massawa

Port of Assab

When the Kingdom of Italy was established, excluding Venice and Rome, the Italian Parliament convened in the city of Turin in February 1871. Its members adopted a project to occupy a strip along the Red Sea coast. This project was halted due to some internal problems faced by Italy. However, after the announcement of the Suez Canal's construction in 1854, the ambitions of the Italian people and their long-standing desire to occupy a part of the Red Sea coastal strip were renewed. This was aimed at achieving several objectives, including:

- Making this new area on the Red Sea coast a stop for their ships heading to India after the opening of the Suez Canal.
- Facilitating the task of obtaining water and food for their ships easily thereafter.
- Establishing a commercial agency there.

Italy's sense of inadequacy towards the colonization movements pursued by Europe in the African continent drove it to pursue this dream of establishing a foothold in the Red Sea. 95)

To achieve the Italian dream of establishing a foothold in the Red Sea, the Italian priest (Sabito) visited the Red Sea for the first time in 1838. He landed at the port of Massawa and reached the area of Adwa, where the famous battle between the Ethiopians and the Italian forces took place. He returned to Italy the same year. His visits to the Red Sea coast continued, and he later managed to meet King Emmanuel and his Prime Minister in 1866, aiming to persuade them to establish an Italian colony on the Red Sea, specifically in the area of Ras Amir.

A warship was sent to the region to study the most suitable location for a port near the Bab el-Mandeb. The ship returned in 1866 with a detailed report recommending the best area for the proposed port, which was the Shuwaitl Bay. This area was under Egyptian sovereignty,

which turned a blind eye to the proposal as it did not wish to enter into a conflict with Italy in that region.

On November 15, 1869, Father Sabito and the Italian naval officer (Acton) met with the leader of the (Danakil) tribe, whose territory included the specified area. The purchase was made in the name of the Italian company, with the intention of later transforming it into an Italian colony. This was completed in Rome on March 10, 1882. (6)

A painting depicting a number of small and large ships in the Port of Assab.



Port of Adulis - Zula

Adulis was one of the ancient ports on the Eritrean coast, located twenty kilometers south of the port of Massawa, between the villages of Zula and Afta. The name Adulis was believed to originate from “Aduli,” which means “white water,” or “Ad wala,” meaning “white cattle” in the language of the Saho tribes. Adulis was considered one of the most important ports on the Red Sea in the mid-3rd century BC.

There is disagreement regarding who founded the Port of Adulis. Some opinions include:

- The port was established by the Syrian Greeks.
- The second opinion claims that the Egyptians founded the port.
- The third opinion suggests that Adulis was a religious colony established by Meroitic priests.
- The fourth opinion states that the port was founded by Indian traders who traded between the Red Sea and India.

Saladin al-Shami mentioned that the port was established over historical periods by various groups, notably Arab, Egyptian, and Meroitic groups in Sudan. ⁽⁸⁾

When the Romans sought to strengthen their relationship with the Kingdom of Axum to eliminate the movements of the Beja and Nubians along the Red Sea and the Nile River and to open trade routes into the African continent, they succeeded in 175 AD during the reign of Emperor Aurelian. The trade communication between both sides continued, and the Romans greatly benefited from the Port of Adulis, which was one of the most important ports on the Red Sea for the slave trade. Most products from Central and East Africa arrived there.

As a result of the Roman-Axumite rapprochement, King Ezana of Axum launched a campaign in 356 AD that led to the defeat of the Kingdom

of Meroe. In his victory inscription over Meroe, Ezana mentioned the reasons for his campaign against the Nubians:

- To punish the Nubians for raiding their neighbors, specifically the Kingdom of Axum.
- Their disrespect for the treaties and agreements between them and the Kingdom of Axum. ⁽⁹⁾

Port of Adulis

The Port of Adulis was one of the Red Sea ports that became well-known for extensive trade with the Port of Aden and other ports. The people of Aden and its surrounding areas would come to Adulis to acquire many products that were famous in the port and the regions of East Africa. Yemeni ships would arrive loaded with goods, which were unloaded and replaced with other products, contributing to the revitalization of trade between the two ports.

Among the goods that were famously exported through the Port of Adulis were hides, red shells used for dyeing, slaves, and rhinoceros ivory.⁽¹⁰⁾ Adulis was one of the most important ports for exporting products from Sudan, particularly from the Kingdom of Meroe and the interior regions. However, the fame of the Port of Aqiq (Ptolemy's Theron) overshadowed that of Adulis.⁽¹¹⁾

The goods that Adulis was known for exporting included mainly Sudanese and Ethiopian products such as elephant tusks, ostrich feathers, rhinoceros horns, and shells. Large groups of Indians were allowed to access the port and settle there, facilitating the transport of goods from Adulis to India and other ports. As a result of this commercial openness, the port flourished and became a hub for traders from various nationalities.⁽¹²⁾



Map of Ports of: Aduli Berenice Nekre Leukos Limen Jouasis Kleizma



Byzantine Church from the 5th Century in Adulis

Source: Ma'arifa Website



Some Ruins of Adulis
Source: Ma'arifa Website

Port of Djibouti

The Port of Djibouti is the main port for Djibouti, located at the southern entrance of the Red Sea. It is one of the most important ports on the western bank of the Red Sea.

The first Egyptian expedition to the area occurred in the 3rd millennium BC during the reign of Pharaoh Pepi I. Djibouti has historically had trade relations with the eastern Red Sea coast, specifically Yemen and its ports. The Islamic Emirate of Adal was established in Djibouti. Both the Egyptians and Ottomans managed to exert control over the Djibouti coast. After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Britain purchased land at the entrance of Tajoura, Djibouti. Due to competition between Britain and France over the Red Sea and its southern entrance, the latter purchased land from the Afar tribes (Danakil) in Djibouti, successfully acquiring the port area of Obock, located on the northern coast of Tajoura Bay. ⁽¹³⁾

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait has historically served as a vital connection point for ships between Djibouti and the Arab ports on the Yemeni coast, as well as other ports along the eastern Red Sea coast. This area has long been a communication point between the two shores of the Red Sea.

Among the main products exported by the port to Aden in Yemen and other ports are tanned hides and coffee. Ships then arrive loaded with fabrics, dye materials, dates, rice, spices, and corn. Trade between Djibouti and Yemen flourished due to geographical proximity and the availability of numerous ships facilitating the transport of these goods. ⁽¹⁴⁾

As the Ottoman Empire weakened, which had controlled the Red Sea coast and the Somali region in particular, the Sultanate of Rahaita (Rheita) and Tajoura emerged on Tajoura Bay, along with the Kingdom of Wauso located in northeastern Djibouti. These three kingdoms formed the political authority established by the Issa and Afar tribes in Djibouti. ⁽¹⁵⁾



Djibouti

Port of Tajoura

The Port of Tajoura was one of the oldest ports in Djibouti, dating back to the 12th century. Situated at the entrance to the Red Sea, Tajoura's strategic location made it an important trade point between Djibouti and Ethiopia. It was often referred to as the "White City" due to the many houses with white facades. The port and city overlooked Tajoura Bay. ⁽¹⁶⁾

Tajoura ranks second after the main port of Djibouti. The port was known for two important local industries:

- Fishing
- Pearl diving ⁽¹⁷⁾

Due to the colonial competition between Britain and France in the Horn of Africa, France sought to diminish British dominance over Red Sea and Indian Ocean trade. They worked to establish connections with Ras Shawah (Sahla Silas), and the agreement between the Ethiopian and French sides facilitated French trade, protected their subjects, and allowed them to buy and build properties.

Subsequently, a French consular official in Aden, Henri L'Amir, entered into direct negotiations with Sultan Ibrahim Abubakr of Tajoura to extend their control over the port. As a result of this rapprochement, Britain decided to eliminate the Sultan, managing to assassinate him in 1859. Britain claimed that the Sultan's death in Djibouti was caused by the Ottoman Empire and its allies along the Red Sea coast.

In this tense atmosphere, Napoleon III tasked Captain Russell with establishing a French base in the southern Red Sea. On March 11, 1862, Captain Russell signed an agreement with Sultan Ibrahim Abubakr of Tajoura, in which the Sultan ceded the area extending from Ras Dubeira and Asbair, including the port of Obock, in exchange for 50,000 French francs. The agreement stipulated that no land would be ceded to any foreign power without France's approval. By 1881, France had signed several agreements with local leaders in Djibouti, leading to the establishment of the port of Abkh in northern Djibouti at the entrance to the Red Sea. ⁽¹⁸⁾



Coast of Port Tajoura and a Large Ship Overlooking Near the Buildings

Port of Obock

The origin of this port dates back to the land purchased by France from the Danakil tribes in 1862. In 1892, France declared a protectorate over Djibouti, after which the port was used by the French.⁽¹⁹⁾

Boats were used to transport French arms arriving at the Port of Djibouti or Muscat to the Port of Obock, where they were then sold to the locals. These same vessels also transported arms to the Somali coast and the Arabian Gulf.⁽²⁰⁾

From the above, we see that boats and sailing ships contributed to the revitalization of trade between the ports of Djibouti, Somali ports, northern Red Sea ports, and Arabian Gulf ports.

Difficulties Faced in Navigation in the Red Sea

Ships sailing in the Red Sea faced many difficulties, including:

- Difficulty in navigation along the eastern coast beyond the Port of Loikikomi; it was better for ships to sail straight across the open sea towards the Burnt Island.
- Ships crossing the Bab el-Mandeb Strait were exposed to strong currents and fierce winds blowing from the nearby mountain range. Strabo mentioned this issue when discussing the difficulties of sailing in the southern part of the Red Sea.
- The presence of the Sudanese low-pressure system, which drew in northern winds that hindered ship navigation.
- The threat of piracy, which impeded navigation in the sea.⁽²¹⁾

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Chapter Seven

Tools of Shipbuilding

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Tools of Shipbuilding

Introduction:

Many tools have been used in the construction of wooden ships (shipbuilding) along the Red Sea coast, the Arabian Gulf, and other coastal areas where this profession is known. Each craft and profession has its own tools; thus, the tools used in shipbuilding in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf are numerous and bear significant similarities. It can be said that they are almost identical, as the profession is the same, and the peoples living along the shores of the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf share commonalities. The historical interaction and cultural, commercial, and civilizational exchanges among them date back to ancient times. Many of them moved between the ports of both coasts, and some settled along the shores of the Red Sea and the Arabian Gulf.

Observing the tools used in shipbuilding in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf reveals a great diversity. Each tool has a specific role and task in the shipbuilding process. Every carpenter or craftsman possesses his unique tools, which he keeps in his workspace and passes down to his children. Thus, many families that have practiced shipbuilding in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf have worked to preserve these tools to this day, making them a part of the beautiful history and heritage of these families, even if some have left the profession for various reasons.

There is a clear interest in the tools of carpentry and shipbuilding in this region. Preserving and caring for these tools has become a way for children to honor their fathers who worked in this profession and succeeded in raising their families through it.

Since carpentry is one of the most important professions along the shores of the Red Sea, many prestigious families have continued this craft to this day. Many of them have taken the name “carpenter” due to their work in shipbuilding and other related industries.

Tools Used in Shipbuilding at Al-Mualla Port-Aden and Red Sea Ports

Many tools have been used in the construction and maintenance of ships at Aden Port and other Yemeni ports, as well as in the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf ports. Some of these tools include:



Chisel: It is a tool used to bore into and penetrate wood in order to insert a nail.



Auger: Among them is the “Majdah Abu Qaws,” a tool used to bore holes in wood using a bow.



Plumb Line: A tool used to ensure that the ship’s planks are aligned vertically during construction.



Axe and the Hatchet: Tools used for shaping and carving wood.

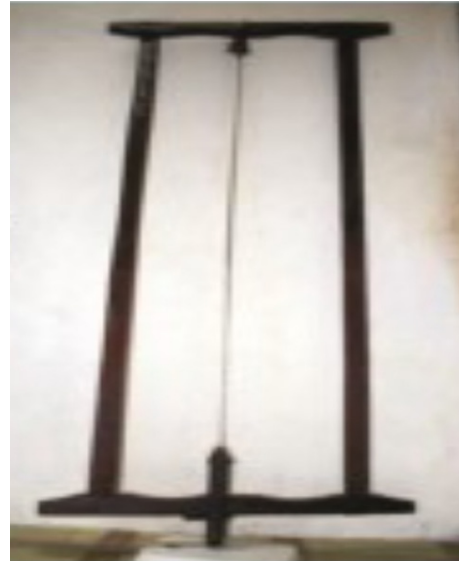
The Hatchet: It is an iron axe with a sharp edge used for leveling the surfaces of the wood that is used in shipbuilding.



Gimlet: It is a spiral iron tool used for boring holes in wood.



Hammer: A tool used to strike objects, typically used for driving nails, fitting parts, or breaking things apart.



Crosscut Saw : A type of saw specifically designed for cutting across the grain of wood.

The Two-Man Saw: A saw designed for two people to operate, used for cutting large pieces of wood.



The Bow Saw: A type of hand saw with a curved frame and a straight blade, used for cutting wood, particularly for making intricate cuts or in tight spaces.

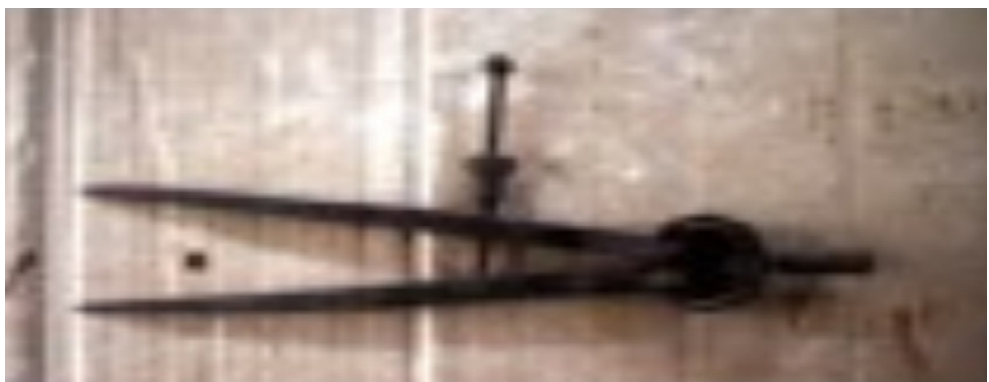
Saws in Shipbuilding: In shipbuilding, various types of saws are utilized, with the most prominent being the *Two-Man Saw*. This saw is designed for operation by two individuals, making it effective for cutting large timber used in the construction of ships.



The Tools: There are many types used in shipbuilding.



The Clamp: A tool used in shipbuilding. It is essential for holding materials securely in place during construction and assembly.



Pickar Also known as the “Furjal,” it is a tool used in shipbuilding, typically for shaping and carving wood.



Sabr : A tool used for removing nails in shipbuilding. It is essential for disassembling parts and facilitating repairs or modifications to the vessel.



Foot: A tool used in shipbuilding, typically for measuring or marking dimensions on materials. It helps ensure precision in the construction process.



Inkwell and Pen: These tools are used for measuring and marking the connection points of wooden planks in shipbuilding. They help achieve accurate placements and alignments during assembly.



Makri: A tool used in shipbuilding to adjust and align wooden planks on top of each other. It ensures proper fitting and stability during the construction process.



Fara: A tool used for smoothing wood in shipbuilding. It helps refine the surfaces of wooden materials, ensuring a smooth finish for better aesthetics and functionality.

Besides the tools already mentioned, other tools used in shipbuilding include:

1. Ship Throwing Balance: Used to adjust the degree of inclination (or list) of the ship.
2. Ship Balance: A triangular piece of wood or metal, graded and divided into markings, with a weight hanging from it by a thin rope at the end of the weight.

3. Al-Khurma: Used to measure the sides of the ship.
4. Al-Kubar: Used to dismantle or lift planks. ⁽¹⁾



Fixing the ribs of a wooden ship, Shipbuilding Center, Al-Mualla, Aden, 1950.

Source: Tahir Nasser Mashiti.



Carpenters constructing a ship



Tools of Carpentry

In the construction of a specific ship, an agreement is made between the master carpenter and the merchant or the person wishing to have the ship built, according to established and recognized regulations. After agreeing on the shape, type, and size of the ship, the merchant is tasked with providing the necessary wood, nails, and other tools required for the ship to be completed optimally.

The process of building the ship is carried out in four stages, with skilled workers for each stage who perform their tasks to perfection. Building a large wooden ship may take up to two years, during which the ship is exposed to the sun until its wood binds properly.

Once the ship is completed, it is painted with fish oil and then launched into the sea after a ram or goat is slaughtered for the builders to eat. This ritual is intended to protect the ship from future dangers.⁽²⁾

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Conclusion

Shipbuilding is one of the ancient industries known to humanity, and it has evolved over time to meet the practical needs of transportation from one place to another along the banks of internal rivers and nearby ports. Various types of vessels and sailing ships have contributed to enhancing communication between the regions of the Red Sea basin and distant ports, facilitating regional and international trade. Markets emerged, and demand for goods and products transported by sea increased. This region became a hub for traders, sailors, and adventurers from different countries, with products ranging from gold, ostrich feathers, ivory, various animals, wood, incense, frankincense, coffee, and other agricultural crops finding their way to markets in East Asia, the Gulf region, and Europe.

Additionally, diverse Indian and Chinese goods made their way to Red Sea ports via trading ships, including various spices, weapons, brass products, and agricultural produce. There was also a growing demand for Indian wood and ropes, essential for shipbuilding. Over time, the trade route between East Asia, the Gulf, the Red Sea, and Europe flourished, becoming a focal point for international and regional powers vying for control, with sailing ships being the only suitable means for this purpose.

The populations settled along the Red Sea coasts excelled in shipbuilding, utilizing these vessels for various civil and military purposes. The availability of raw materials such as wood, fat, and ropes significantly contributed to the development of this vital craft. Consequently, ports associated with shipbuilding history emerged in the Red Sea basin, with Aden being one of the most important ports where shipbuilding flourished. The Yemeni people excelled in this craft and spread it to other regions.

Moreover, the historical city of Jeddah emerged as a center for shipbuilding in the central Red Sea, with its ships reaching various areas along the coasts of the Red Sea, East Asia, and Africa. On the western coast of the Red Sea, the city of Suakin, known as the “Mother of Cities” in the Red Sea, attracted numerous populations from Yemen, Hijaz, the Levant, India, and East Asia due to its significant geographical location. It became a bustling city filled with products from the Sudanese interior, distinguished by their quality and diversity. As a result of the abundance of these goods, shipbuilding also developed in Suakin, with Suakin ships reaching Qulzum (Suez) to the north and Aden and East Africa, extending as far as East Asia to the west. The immense trade activity in the Red Sea basin contributed to the advancement of shipbuilding.

Observing the shipbuilding industry in the Red Sea basin, the Gulf of Aden, and the Arabian Gulf reveals that this region has historically been linked to this craft. Additionally, the ease of access to its ports has enhanced cultural, intellectual, and commercial communication. Consequently, the names of various types of sailing ships, such as the dhow, al-Baqara, al-Shahouf, and al-Sanabok, have become common in this area, as they sail the Red Sea carrying diverse goods and products.

The authors aimed to introduce the historical ports in the Red Sea basin and the shipbuilding industry in these ports, as well as to explain the role of these ships in transporting various goods between the Red Sea ports and beyond. This book can open the door to further studies on shipbuilding in the Red Sea basin, the stages it underwent, and the families associated with this important craft that successfully connected populations across the Red Sea, the Arabian Gulf, East Asia, and later Europe.

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The study of maritime history is not limited to recounting events and navigational activities; it extends to analyzing the economic, social, and political transformations that contributed to the development of coastal communities and the shaping of maritime trade patterns throughout the ages. The shipbuilding industry is one of the oldest crafts practiced by humans, and it has historically formed one of the essential pillars of transport, trade, and communication between nations and civilizations. Since ancient times, this industry has been closely linked to the development of coastal ports, where ships served as the primary means for transporting goods and achieving cultural and economic exchange among different nations.

The Red Sea - known in ancient times as the Sea of Qulzum and also referred to as the Erythraean Sea - was one of the main hubs for this navigational activities, playing a strategic role in connecting the East to the West, and serving as a major conduit for global trade from ancient times to the present day.



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