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Abdel Aziz Saleh

Notes on the Ancient Egyptian ta-netjer, "God's-Land".

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NOTES ON THE ANCIENT EGYPTIAN T_3 - NTR

« GOD'S-LAND »

Abdel-Aziz SALEH

The Egyptian t_3 - ntr was a conventional formula often used in a very wide sense. It does not seem to have come into use until the Middle Kingdom ⁽¹⁾. Thenceforth, its applications varied only slightly according to time and object. From the palaeographical standpoint, the t_3 ideogram in the term is usually written in the form of a singular sign of a flat land. Less frequently, this sign was written twice ⁽²⁾. It is uncertain whether the second t_3 in such a case was intended to mark duality and to convey the meaning of « two Lands » (of God), or it only served as a determinative, or was simply due to carelessness in writing. Not infrequently, however, the term was accompanied by the ideogram of h_3st , which is treated as feminine ⁽³⁾. Again, whether this actually conveyed the meaning of a sandy hill-country, or a foreign land, or merely stood for an arbitrary additional determinative, it must remain a matter of debate. For some reason or other, the unspecified god, in the formula « God's-Land », was occasionally shown in the plural ⁽⁴⁾. Most of these exceptional forms are, however, of a comparatively later date and will be touched upon whenever occasion arises in the following pages.

It has rightly been noted that the « God's-Land » formula was not considered a strictly definite name of any specific land with clearly drawn boundaries ⁽⁵⁾. It seemed to have two, more or less, traditional and coextensive significances : mythological and practical. The prevalent idea, held at present, is that in its mythological sense, the term pointed quite often to the Orient. A. Erman has ingeniously equated it with the indefinite forerunner of the « Levant » general term of modern times signifying countries vaguely situated to

⁽¹⁾ *Wb.* V, 225; M. Ch. Kuentz, « Autour d'une conception égyptienne méconnue : l'*Akhit* ou soi-disant horizon », *BIFAO* XVII (1920), p. 178.

⁽²⁾ *Wb.* V, 219, 9-10; H. Gauthier, *Dictionnaire des noms géographiques contenus dans les textes hiéroglyphiques*, Le Caire, 1929, VI, pp. 10, 24 and bibliography. See especially, Pap. Harris I, 19, 7; 52 a. 2; 77, 11.

⁽³⁾ H. Gauthier, *op. cit.*, p. 24 f.; *Urk.* IV, 335; *L.D.* IV, 51 d; E. Naville, *The Temple of Deir el-Bahari*, II, pls. LXXII, 2, LXXIV, 2, LXXVII, 1; Pap. Harris, I, 48, 6; 52 a, 2; 70 a, 2; *Rec. Trav.* XVI, 51 (h_3st nt t_3 - ntr).

⁽⁴⁾ H. Gauthier, *op. cit.*, p. 10 and references; *Wb.* V, 221, 10.

⁽⁵⁾ E. Naville, *op. cit.*, III, p. 11; M. Ch. Kuentz, *op. cit.*, pp. 178, 182.

the east of the Mediterranean ⁽¹⁾. However, within this broad identification, there are two different views with regard to the underlying trend of the meaning. According to the more common opinion, the mythical Orient, meant by « *God's-Land* », came rather to represent the land of the risen Sun-god ⁽²⁾. The other and less tenable opinion is inspired by the much-debated hypothesis that a certain people, known as the « *Followers of Horus* », had entered Egypt from the East during the late Predynastic times under the guidance of the old Falcon-god Horus. In consequence, it has been inferred that « *God's-Land* » namely the Orient, must represent the cradle of the Falcon-god of those early eastern invaders. Their god Horus is he who became afterwards the dynastic and royal deity of Egypt ⁽³⁾. Further discussion of the question of the god under consideration will be found on pp. 113 f.

For practical purposes, the « *God's-Land* » formula as well as the traditional Levant, in the words of Erman, seemed to have been originated in the language of trade as a common designation covering a region of vast extent ⁽⁴⁾. Every now and then, it proclaimed a divine participation in, or ownership and patronage of, particular types of land or lands. Broadly speaking, these lands may be said to constitute two different classes :

- a) Individual neighbouring areas with extraordinary topography and distinctive resources, of which the Egyptians were certainly aware.
- b) Other distant areas of particular interest to the Egyptians, whose definite nature remained mysterious to them, or at least was only vaguely ascertained.

In conformity with such notions, the « *God's-Land* » formula came to be used with reference to every important land, from which rare products of value to the Egyptian kings and gods were obtained or even passed in transit. Fragrant herbs, aromatic trees, resins, gums, cosmetics, spices, gems, precious metals, costly wood, conifers, durable stones, and even rare animals were included as presents or imports (*inw*), and marvels (*bi3w*) of « *God's-Land* » ⁽⁵⁾. Accordingly, the term « *God's-Land* » was applied to the mountainous desert between the Nile and the Red Sea ⁽⁶⁾, the turquoise mines-or terraces of Sinai ⁽⁷⁾, and chiefly to several lands situated to the south-east, and sometimes also to the east and south of

⁽¹⁾ A. Erman - H. Ranke, *Aegypten und aegyptisches Leben im Altertum*, 1923, 559.

⁽²⁾ *Ibid.*; G. Farina, *Aegyptus* VI (1925), pp. 52-53; J.A. Wilson, *ANET*, p. 249 n. 3; 365, n. 5; etc.

⁽³⁾ M. Ch. Kuentz, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-190; H. Gauthier, *op. cit.*, VI, p. 24.

⁽⁴⁾ A. Erman - H. Ranke, *op. cit.*; J.M.A., Janssen, « Notes on the geographical horizon of

the ancient Egyptians », *Bibliotheca Orientalis* VIII, 1951, 214.

⁽⁵⁾ *Wb.* V, 225, 9-14 and references.

⁽⁶⁾ O. Couyat, P. Montet, *Les inscriptions hiéroglyphiques et hiératiques du Ouâdi Hammamat*, Nos 192, 6; 240, 15; A. Erman, *ZÄS*, XX, 204-205 L.D., II, 149 d; III, 223 c, etc.

⁽⁷⁾ *Urk.* IV, 1007; *Wb.* III, 349, 6.

Egypt ⁽¹⁾. From the latter group of lands, the Egyptians used to import the very highly valued aromatics-chiefly frankincense, incense, cinnamon and similar odoriferous substances which were much used, not merely in perfumes, ointments, drugs and in embalming, but also were, above all, sought for fumigation in religious rituals and funeral rites, as well as for the daily affairs of senting in rich private houses.

Whether the term was first applied to the former set of lands with exceptional natural resources bordering Egypt proper, and then extended to cover far-off distinct areas like the much-prized incense-countries for instance, as seems logical; or whether it was applied from the start to both of these distinct areas, at once, this must remain a moot point ⁽²⁾. N. de G. Davies thinks that the « *God's-Land* » term primarily meant the western tropical littoral of the Red Sea ⁽³⁾. Even Pwenet (*Punt or Pyene, Pwāne, etc.*), the incense-producing land, *sensu stricto*, was only considered a notable region within its vast domain. There is, however, an exception to this generalization. If the names of two regions of « *God's-Land* » are mentioned, one of which is intended to be given special reference, then this latter is given that particular designation *t3-ntr*, while the other keeps its original name. An example of such a distinction is evinced in the reliefs of the temple of Deir el-Bahari (as well as in the tomb of Puyemrê from the time of Thutmosis III). There, the contrast has been emphasized between the *bl3w* (and variants) i.e. « marvels », of Pwenet, and the *inw* « imports » (or presents), or *šps(w)* « precious things » of *God's-Land* ⁽⁴⁾. A distinction is made there, though it is in any case impossible to draw a sharp line between them, for certain articles of trade are, in fact, common to both. If the Egyptian differentiation was really substantive rather than stylistic, it would lead to the assumption that apart from Pwenet (Punt), situated in the latitudes of the Eritreas and Somalia, there must stand another territory of *God's-Land* distinct from it but probably not far away from it, and like it, furnishing aromatic substances of particular importance. Most probably this counterpart of Pwenet, which deserved the designation of *God's-Land* par excellence, is identified with South Arabia on the south-east of the Red Sea, and beyond ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ *Urk.* IV, 322 f.; E. Naville, *op. cit.*, III, pls. LXXII, LXXIV; Amonshymn, Leid. I, 5; Pap. Harris 77, 11.

⁽²⁾ Cf. M. Ch. Kuentz, *op. cit.*, p. 178, n. 3.

⁽³⁾ N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Puyemrê at Thebes*, New York, 1922, 1, p. 86 n. 1.

⁽⁴⁾ Cf. Breasted, *Ancient Records*, II, 253, 265, 271, 277, 285, 287, 288; N. de G. Davies, *op. cit.*, pl. XXXII second and third registers, pp. 84, 86.

⁽⁵⁾ Cf. Abdel-Aziz Saleh, «The *Gnbtyw* of Thutmosis III's Annals and the south Arabian *Gebbanitae* of the Classical Writers», *BIFAO*, LXXII, 1972, 245 f.; «Some Problems relating to the Pwenet (Punt) reliefs at Deir el-Bahari», *JEA*, LVIII, 1972, 140 f.; «An Open Question on Intermediaries in the Incense-Trade during Pharaonic Times», *Orientalia* XIII, 1973, 382 f.

As we pointed out so far on p. 107, the form *t3wy-ntr* is found not seldom in late inscriptions ⁽¹⁾. The simple explanation may be either that it was an erroneous writing, or that it designated, primarily at least, the two Lands of Egypt. But the *Berlin Wörterbuch* assumes that it served « in der häufigen Verbindung : von den Ländern in Südösten » ⁽²⁾. If this latter interpretation is accepted as justified, the expression would perhaps implicitly refer also to the two incense-yielding areas on both sides of the southern parts of the Red Sea.

At all events, the appellation « *God's-Land* » overstepped the bounds of these eastern and south-eastern lands, and came to be applied also to certain territories of the Land of the Retjnu, particularly the wooded terraces of Phœnicia ⁽³⁾, whence cedar wood and other resinous trees were obtained.

Probably for the foregoing reason of the multiplicity of lands, the notion of plurality was occasionally indicated by the expression : the « highlands *h3swt* of *God's-Land* », and partly, as well, by the expression : the « districts *ww* of *God's-Land* » ⁽⁴⁾.

There are some more references, though admittedly dubious, which may favour the possibility of including even the distant lands of the Hittites and the Keftiu in the realm of *God's-Land*. Information about this is provided by M. Ch. Kuentz. A single example will suffice. In the tomb of Menkheperasonb, the high priest of Amun under Thutmosis III, the scenes illustrate the great men of Keftiu, Khatti, Tunip and Qadesh, extolling the victories of the Pharaoh over Naharin. On this occasion, they presented, says the text, « their tribute upon their backs, consisting of every (substance) of *God's-Land*, silver, gold, lapis-lazuli, turquoise, and every august costly stone, seeking that there be given them the breath of life » ⁽⁵⁾. It might be that some of these ores were obtained from the lands listed, but on balance, it would appear likely that some others were exotic goods imported from outside. What interests us here is the question of how to interpret the underlying trends of the very great development of the conception of *God's-Land* which spread far beyond the traditional boundaries of the East proper. In other words, had the Egyptian chroniclers lost sight of the traditional oriental significance of the term when they sought to insert such widely different countries into the vast dominions of their God ?

⁽¹⁾ See p. 107 note 2 above.

⁽²⁾ *Wb.* V, 219, 9.10.

⁽³⁾ *Wb.* III, 349, 7-8; *Urk.* IV, 775, 16; Breasted, *AR* II, 820, 888; *BIFAO*, XVII, pp. 180-181; P. Lacau, *Stèles du Nouvel Empire* (Catalogue Général) I, p. 50; G.A., and M.B. Reisner, *ZÄS*, LXIX (1933), 34 f., J.A. Wilson, *ANET*, p. 243;

W. Helck, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, 1961, 1232.

⁽⁴⁾ *Urk.* IV, 615, 12; 345; 535; W.M.F. Petrie, *Hyksos and Israelite Cities*, pl. 31 (Dyn. 20).

⁽⁵⁾ *Urk.* IV, 929 f.; N. and N. de G. Davies, *The Tombs of Menkheperasonb, Amenmose, and another*, London, 1933, pls. IV, VII; J.A. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

Naturally, the answer must be conjectural. Let us assume first that the Egyptians were quite aware of the fact that the « *God's-Land* », namely the Orient, comprises not only the East proper, but also the South-east and the North-east as well ⁽¹⁾. This view is not unreasonable. The only difficulty here is that an objection could be raised that the Egyptian knowledge of geography did not go far enough to enable the chroniclers to determine precisely the exact geographical position of the far-off foreign countries. This objection may be further supported by the fact that some essential areas of *God's-Land* were occasionally assigned to the south or to the north, and not always to the east or south-east, the true realm of « *God's-Land* ». This assignment may be due to carelessness on the part of the chroniclers, or perhaps to their crude conception that these areas could more conveniently be assigned to the south and north, and thus be more appropriately. This is so particularly in the case of Pwenet. In the inscriptions of the Karnak obelisk of Queen Hatshepsut, she claimed : « My southern boundary is as far as Pwenet, and . . . ; my eastern boundary is as far as the marshes of Asia . . . » ⁽²⁾. Similarly, Syria, or more precisely Phœnicia, the other important region of « *God's-Land* » and the lands adjacent are not infrequently placed simply in the north. With the depiction of the carrying off to Egypt the eldest sons of the Syrian chiefs as hostages by Thutmosis III, the scribe of the tomb of Rekhmirê says : « Arrival of the children of the princes of the lands of the North, firstlings of the hostages of His Majesty in all foreign countries . . . » ⁽³⁾. The descriptive text of the tributes in the tomb of Tjaneni, dated to the reign of Thutmosis IV, goes as follows : « Presenting the tribute of Retjnu, the products of the northern countries : silver, gold, turquoise and all costly stones of *God's-Land* . . . » ⁽⁴⁾. In the hymn enumerating the excessive favours which the god Amun-Rê has bestowed upon his son Seti I, the god says of Syria and the lands beyond : « When (I turn) my face to the North . . . , I bring to thee countries that know not Egypt, with their tribute borne, consisting of silver, gold, lapis-lazuli, and every splendid costly stone of *God's-Land* » ⁽⁵⁾. It does not invalidate our contention that a few other inscriptions have actually determined the directions of the south-east, the south-west and the north-west ⁽⁶⁾; and differentiated as well between the nearer (*lit.*, foremost) east, and the distant east ⁽⁷⁾. In fact, these compound geographical

⁽¹⁾ Cf. M. Ch. Kuentz, *op. cit.*, pp. 181-182.

⁽²⁾ Breasted, *Anc. Records*, II, 321.

⁽³⁾ N. de G. Davies *The Tomb of Rekh-mi-Rê at Thebes*, New York, 1943, pl. XXII, p. 20.

⁽⁴⁾ *Urk.* IV, 1007; J.A. Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

⁽⁵⁾ Breasted, *op. cit.*, III, 116.

⁽⁶⁾ South-west : *Amarna*, V, 28, 23. South-east,

Ibid., V, 27; 9; 28, 26. North-west, *Urk.* IV, 657; L.D. III, 153, 7, (161 3-4 = Ch. Kuentz, *Kadesh*, p. 337); Lepsius, *Totb.* 163, 8-9; Piehl, *Inscr. (Edfu)* II, 115, 116. All the compound geographical directions are cited on the corners of the burial chamber of the tomb of Horemheb.

⁽⁷⁾ *Urk.* I, 245, 2; Breasted, *op. cit.*, I, 69, 71.

direction words were restricted to limited usage for buildings, cities and provinces, but were never applied to vast or distant foreign countries.

There is reason, therefore, to surmise that it is clearly the simple truth that the gradual expansion of the appellation *God's-Land* had, in some way or other, followed the lines of the very great external extension of the Egyptian supremacy during the New Kingdom. It also grew in proportion to the increasing significance of the state-god, Amun-Rê, who became lord of a vast empire and thence a universal deity. At the height of its glory, the Egyptian empire embraced many lands and tongues, and, likewise, the expression « *God's-Land* » came to cover many countries with different peoples mostly independent of each other. Generally, as Breasted states, mythological thinking was brought into close and sensitive relationship with political conditions.

It does not seem easy for us to defend the inclusion of the countries of the Hittites and the Keftiu within *God's-Land*, if this inclusion be thus accepted as justified. The explanation, however, can only be based on terms of importing rarities and delicacies from there, partly for the Egyptian temples and partly for the royal treasury. When Egypt extended her empire far northwards, luxuries of *God's-Land* — chiefly conifers — were supplemented by other species of costly wood, besides silver, turquoise, lapis-lazuli, malachite, « and every splendid valuable stone » from the land of Khatti ⁽¹⁾. These highly valued articles were, mostly, the products of commerce imported from far regions of Asia Minor, and Aegean territories, nearly unknown to Egypt. But commonly in ancient inscriptions, as hinted at so far, they were recorded as « tributes ». When the good treaty of peace and of friendship was concluded between Ramesses II and the King of Khatti, the Egyptians seemed more convinced that this latter country belonged to the sphere of « *God's-Land* ». Among the parallel gods, there was Sutekh who was equated to the storm-gods of Khatti. There was also Rê of Arinna ⁽²⁾. The god Ptah said to Ramesses II : « I have made the land of Khatti into subjects of the palace. . . . I have put it into their hearts, . . . , to bear their products which their chiefs have captured — all their possessions — as tribute to the fame of Thy Majesty » ⁽³⁾. For king and priest alike, in times of expansion, the world was only a great domain of the god. When « the children of the great chiefs of the land of Khatti came bearing the tribute themselves from the

⁽¹⁾ Cf. H. Kees, *Ancient Egypt* (tr. by T.G.H. James), London, 1961, p. 135. Commerce with the « Great Khatti » had been carried on from the time of Thutmosis III (Breasted, *AR*, II, 485).

⁽²⁾ J. Wilson, « Egyptian Treaty », *ANET*, p. 201, also p. 249, n. 1.

⁽³⁾ Breasted, *AR*, III, 410.

boundaries of King Ramesses II, « it was not a prince who came to bring them », nor did the royal infantry, chariotry, or mercenaries go to bring them. « It was Ptah, father of the gods who has put all lands, and all countries under the feet of this good god, for ever and ever » ⁽¹⁾.

The vexed question whether Keftiu land was the Egyptian name of Crete, or a designation of a coastal territory in Asia Minor, is still hotly debated ⁽²⁾. In general, however, active trade and intercourse between the Egyptians and the Keftiu had already long existed.

The question about the location and extent of *God's-Land* is linked with another problem which is equally a matter of speculation. The abstract idea of divinity, *ntr*, in the formula *t3-ntr*, had never been given any name or any specification. A.H. Gardiner pointed in his informative book, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, to the circumstance that « Curiously little consideration has been devoted to the question of what god is here meant » ⁽³⁾. However, in fairness to others, it is necessary to call attention to two plausible, though contradictory, views which are held concerning this point, besides that of Gardiner. To these we shall add two others.

Some authorities (including A. Erman, G. Farina, J.A. Wilson, and others) are quite convinced that the deity in question was always the sun-god. Their view is partly supported by the fact that the Orient, namely the « *God's-Land* » is the place where the sun rises every morning, and partly by their reference, which is rather dubious, to the sun-god as an early foreign deity from the east. However, it seems difficult to furnish a satisfactory explanation for the absence of this supposed solar conception of « *God's-Land* » from the inscriptions of the second half of the Old Kingdom when the sun-belief gained predominance.

The rival view is held mainly by M. Ch. Kuentz (and to some extent by H. Gauthier, and a few others). Kuentz maintained that there is no evidence for an early association between the sun-god and *God's-Land* ⁽⁴⁾, and that when the term *God's-Land* appeared in the Middle Kingdom it had already become identical and coextensive in sense and usage with the older synonym *Akhit* which meant « la région ultime de l'Orient, la bordure de la terre », and it gradually replaced it ⁽⁵⁾. According to Kuentz, the god, meant in the formula *God's-Land*, was above all, to use his own words, « le Faucon originaire de l'Est et du Sud-Est qui, à la tête de ses tribus, les tribus horiennes, est venu s'établir sur les bords

⁽¹⁾ Breasted, *op. cit.*

⁽²⁾ See especially, G.A. Wainwright, « Asiatic Keftiu », *A.J.A.*, 56 (1952), p. 196; Jean Vercoutter, *Essai sur les relations entre Egyptiens et Préhellènes*, Paris, 1954.

⁽³⁾ A.H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, Oxford 1961, p. 138.

⁽⁴⁾ M. Ch. Kuentz, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁽⁵⁾ *Ibid.*, pp. 182, 189.

du Nil et a conquis l’Egypte en donnant un essor décisif à sa civilisation encore hésitante ». It follows, therefore, that *God’s-Land* « n’est autre chose que l’Orient, le pays d’origine, le domaine antique du dieu-Faucon (Horus) » ⁽¹⁾.

A.H. Gardiner, on the contrary, thinks that the deity in question was none other than the Pharaoh himself. He bases his contention on the circumstance that the expeditions to *God’s-Land* were often headed by the official called « god’s seal-bearer » or chancellor. He concludes that the underlying notion would be the king’s presumptuous claim to own the treasures of all foreign lands ⁽²⁾.

As a matter of fact, one can find examples which appear to support each of the three foregoing views. For instance, an additional argument in favour of M. Ch. Kuentz’s view is that in late inscriptions, the image of the falcon of Horus not infrequently stands for the notion of divinity in the term under discussion ⁽³⁾. On the other hand, Gardiner’s opinion in which he identifies the god with the Pharaoh may not be entirely unreasonable. An additional reason for this might be that the expeditions were royal undertakings organized on a large scale. Their leaders, the god’s seal-bearers or chancellors, or the treasurers of the god or whatever names they were given, were escorted by a military detachment for prestige purposes and for adequate protection. Therefore, it is not unlikely that the God concerned in the term may only occasionally, but not consistently, as Gardiner maintains, refer to the reigning Pharaoh. This was probably a means of asserting the government monopoly, or the royal control, of the treasures of all the natural resources of the frontiers of Egypt, and securing the transit dues and customs levied on the imports flowing from foreign countries to Egypt. All the goods that were acquired by trade in the so-called *God’s-Land(s)* were officially listed as imposts to the benefit of the Pharaoh ⁽⁴⁾, but most often they were granted to the great gods ⁽⁵⁾.

To these three views of Erman, Kuentz, and Gardiner, two others may be added. It seems very likely that the god in the « *God’s-Land* » formula was most often the state-god, the esteemed patron and senior partner in the state foreign affairs. Where the *ntr* in our formula might have been expected, the state-god’s claim is undoubtedly the best. It was mainly to Amun-Rê, the deity of the New Kingdom, and not to Rê or to Horus likewise,

⁽¹⁾ M. Ch. Kuentz, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

⁽²⁾ Gardiner, *op. cit.*

⁽³⁾ H. Gauthier, *op. cit.* VI, p. 24; L.D., IV, 24; Chassinat, *Edfu* II, 194, 197, 204, etc.; Petrie, *Athribis*, pl. 16; Dümichen, *Tempelinschr.*, I, pl. 75, 4; etc.

⁽⁴⁾ Compare also, A. Erman - H. Ranke, *op. cit.*; H. Kees, *op. cit.*, pp. 139, 313; J.A. Wilson, *The Burden of Egypt*, Chicago, 1951, pp. 81, 181 f., 183.

⁽⁵⁾ Cf. *Wb.* V, 225 and bibliography.

that the inscriptions used to assign the marvels of *God's-Land*, that is to say the imports from Pwenet and other south-eastern lands, and the coniferous trees of Lebanon too. As sun-god, Amun-Rê was viewed as « the Beautiful-of-Face, who comes (from) *God's-Land* » ⁽¹⁾. The long series of reliefs representing the strange animals and plants of Western Asia in the so-called botanic chamber at Karnak are labelled : « All plants that (grow), all flowers that are in *God's-Land*, which were discovered by His Majesty (Thutmosis III) when he proceeded to Upper Retjnu to subjugate all the countries according to the command of his father Amun » ⁽²⁾. On his Barkal stela, Thutmosis III claims « Every year there is hewed (for me in) Djahi genuine cedar of Lebanon . . . , the choicest of *God's-Land* . . . I have not given (any) of it to the Asiatics, for it is a wood which Amun-Rê loves » ⁽³⁾.

During the heated conversations of Wenamun with Tjikarba'al, prince of Byblos, Wenamun replied by emphasizing the vast dominion of his god Amun-Rê : « His is the sea, and his the Lebanon about which you say : It is mine' . . . It is, indeed, the nursery for his barque, . . . You are stationed (here) chaffering over the Lebanon with Amun, its lord ! » ⁽⁴⁾. Thus, it could be concluded that the notion of *God's-Land* did not mean to the ancient Egyptians the land in which the god originated, or the land from which his worship came to Egypt. Rather, it meant the land which they believed constituted part of his domain. The claim of sacred foreign god's domains was not confined to the Egyptian theory of the state-god, but was also found elsewhere. For instance, in the inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, we read : « The Lebanon, the Cedar Mountain, the luxurious forest of Marduk (the state-god of Babylon), the smell of which is sweet, the high cedars of which, (its) product, another god has not desired » ⁽⁵⁾.

It may be noted, in addition, that colloquial Arabic of Egypt still preserves the phrases بلاد الله نخلق الله « Allah's-Lands for (or: and) Allah's-peoples »; and أرض الله واسعة « God's-Land is infinitively vast », in viewing one's travelling to some unknown destinations, and perhaps to imply that whatever far-off country, man can reach, belongs to god, and in consequence to his people.

There is still one more possible interpretation for the god intended in the formula *t3-ntr*. It is an acknowledged fact that the word *ntr* could certainly be used to describe every

⁽¹⁾ Papyrus Boulaq 17, II, 5; J.A. Wilson, *ANET*, cit., p. 410.
p. 365.

⁽²⁾ Breasted, *op. cit.*, II, 451.

⁽³⁾ W. Helck, *op. cit.*, 1237; J.A. Wilson, *op.*

⁽⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, p. 27; A.H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, p. 310, ll. 24-38.

⁽⁵⁾ A. Leo Oppenheim, *ANET*, p. 307.

god individually without repeating his name, or whatever his real name is. Hence, it is not impossible that the term « *God's-Land* » could implicitly refer to any god who was considered patron of a certain favourite region of *God's-Land* where he claimed his prerogative. The mountainous eastern desert, for instance, was entirely considered a domain of the god Min, who was an indigenous deity of great antiquity, and the tutelary god of travellers. He was the noble lord of Wadî el-Hammamat, the Red Sea coast, as well as the protector of the road to Arabia ⁽¹⁾. The goddess Hathor became the patroness of the terraces of Sinai, Byblos, and Pwenet. We are told in an inscription from Sinai that « each one treading this hill country must adore (?) this goddess », « the Lady of turquoise » ⁽²⁾. She was described in the reliefs of Deir el-Bahari as « the possessor of the frankincense who stretches out her hands holding *kmyt gum* », and « the Lady of Pwenet » par excellence ⁽³⁾. A propitiatory offering was made on the Egyptian shore, to Hathor, mistress of Pwenet, before the departure of the fleet of Hatshepsut from Egypt, and presents were consecrated, too, to her after landing in Pwenet ⁽⁴⁾. Thoth was also « Lord of Pwenet » ⁽⁵⁾. Horus was viewed as « he who assesses God's-Land, ruler of Pwenet » and « the sacred falcon who comes from Pwenet » ⁽⁶⁾.

The different natural phenomena and the vast resources of these regions, i.e. the « terraces of *'ntyw* » at Pwenet, the « terraces of turquoise » in Sinai, and the « terraces of fir » in Lebanon ⁽⁷⁾, must have seemed to be miraculous to the Egyptians, and thus they were judged to be of such particular interest to their gods ⁽⁸⁾, as to become their holiday resorts, (but evidently not considered as their places of origin, as some scholars suppose).

As Erman elegantly noticed, similar concepts are found in all folklore of the past. In all parts of the world, the far-away countries, from which luxury merchandise would have

⁽¹⁾ Couyat et Montet, *Les inscriptions du Ouâdi Hammamat*, N° 192 and pl. XXXVII; M. Ch. Kuentz, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 124. Cf. W.B. Emery, *Archaic Egypt*, Pelican Books, 1963, p. 125; G. Posener, S. Sauneron and J. Yoyotte, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Civilization*, (tr.), London, 1962, pp. 109, 170; G.A. Wainwright, *JEA*, XXI (1935), pp. 152 f.

⁽²⁾ Gardiner-Peet-Černý, *The inscriptions of Sinai*, II, London, 1955, p. 166.

⁽³⁾ E. Naville, *op. cit.*, p. 20, pl. LXXXVI.

⁽⁴⁾ *Ibid.*, pls. LXIX, LXXII; Breasted, *AR*, II, 252, 255. See also « Werert, mistress of Pwenet »,

A. Erman, *Die Literatur der Aegypter*, Leipzig, 1923, 51.

⁽⁵⁾ A.H. Gardiner - E. Peet, *The Inscriptions of Sinai*, I, pl. LXXII, N° 263, II, p. 181.

⁽⁶⁾ A.M. Blackman, *JEA*, XXXI (1945) p. 58; H. Junker, « Der Bericht Strabos über den heiligen Falken von Philae im Lichte der ägyptischen Quellen », *Wiener Zeit. für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, Bd. 26, Wien, 1912, S. 59.

⁽⁷⁾ Cf. *Wb.* III, 349, 6-9.

⁽⁸⁾ See N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Puyemrê at Thebes*, New York, 1922, I, p. 86, n. 1, and compare *I Kings*, XX, 28.

been procured, were primarily, at least, considered as fabulous realms governed by elf-kings or by wonderful beings ⁽¹⁾. The enchanted island of the spirit, figured in the Middle Kingdom story of « the Shipwrecked Sailor » was told to be once inhabited by seventy-five serpents and ruled by the prince of Pwenet who appeared as well in the form of a huge serpent whose body was plated with gold. There, he possessed fair quantities of myrrh, cassia, incense and every kind of precious things ⁽²⁾. Even to the Egyptians of the New Kingdom who no longer believed in the existence of fairies or giants, the incense countries still appeared to be semi-mythical lands. To the Pwenetites's imaginations too, the excellent 'ntyw- terraces of the much estimated region of *God's-Land* proper, probably situated in South Arabia, had been hitherto only trodden by the god Rê and inaccessible to men ⁽³⁾.

These sacred terraces were viewed in the reliefs of Deir el-Bahari as Amun's place of delight, being furnished for himself in order to refresh his heart as well as the hearts of some of his favourite goddesses ⁽⁴⁾. Horus, the « ruler of Pwenet », used to take his pleasure in the « valley of 'ntyw » ⁽⁵⁾. Again, exceptional interest was attached to the residence of the god Min. It was a « mountain venerable and primordial, the prime place in the land of the Akhetiu . . . , the divine retreat where this god prospers, his pure place of refreshment, the chief of the mountains of God's-Land » ⁽⁶⁾.

On a sarcophagus from the early Middle Kingdom, we read « My mother Isis suckled me . . . , I sought an abiding place in this my name of *Hahu* and I found it in Pwenet. I built a house there on the hill terrace where my mother (Isis) resides beneath her sycamores » ⁽⁷⁾. Justification for this last view, of several divine resorts, may be found in the fact that the expression *t3w-ntrw*, the « *Lands of Gods* », not infrequently occurs in the Egyptian texts ⁽⁸⁾.

⁽¹⁾ A. Erman - H. Ranke, *op. cit.*

⁽²⁾ W.K. Simpson and others, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, p. 54 f.

⁽³⁾ E. Naville, *op. cit.*, pl. LXIX; Sethe, *Urk.* IV, 344-45; Abdel-Aziz Saleh, *JEA*, LVIII (1972), 152-153.

⁽⁴⁾ E. Naville, *op. cit.*, pl. LXXXIV, 13-14; Breasted, *AR*, II, 288.

⁽⁵⁾ See p. 116 note 6 above.

⁽⁶⁾ Couyat et Montet, *op. cit.*, pl. XXXVII, 5-6; M. Ch. Kuentz, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.

⁽⁷⁾ R.T.R. Clark, *Myth and symbol in ancient Egypt*, London, 1959, p. 88; A. de Buck, *The Egyptian Coffin Texts*, IV, Chicago, 1951, p. 182. R. Herzog, *Punt*, 1968, p. 11.

⁽⁸⁾ *Urk.* IV, 344, 888; E. Naville, *op. cit.*, pl. LXXXIV, 10; Petrie, *Coptos*, p. 18 (Dyn. 20) and see *Wb.* V, 221, 10.