

LIFE IN THE EASTERN DESERT OF EGYPT

Unit 1 – Introduction

CLAH7014

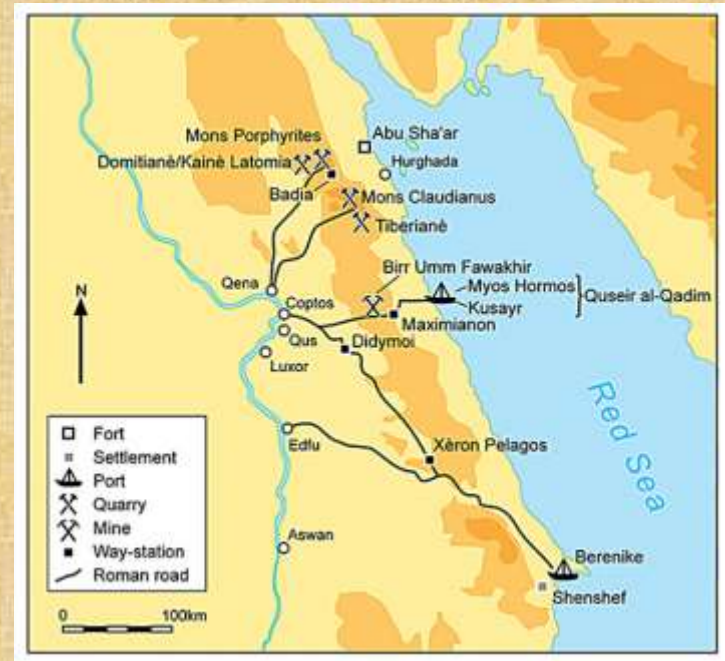
Geography and Climate

- ❑ Hyper-arid, limited and irregular rainfall, and occasional flash-floods.
- ❑ Movement through and habitation in the region from Palaeolithic times.
- ❑ Exploitation of mineral resources since at least pre-dynastic period.



Early History

- Pharaonic era expeditions to Punt since at least the reign of Sahura (2458-2446 BC).
- Continued and increasingly systematic exploitation from the Late Period / Ptolemaic period.
- Major source of hard-stones and conduit for trading activity in Roman period.



Ethnography and Natural History

- ▣ Accounts of Ptolemaic travellers and explorers – recounted by Agatharchides.
- ▣ Some appellations based on broad characterisations of lifestyle.
- ▣ Some weird and wonderful elements incorporated into ethnographies (see Pliny *NH* 6.35.187). Similarly interesting descriptions of fauna.
- ▣ Medjay = Blemmyes = Beja?



Representation of a Blemmy from the Nuremberg Chronicle (1493).

Archaeology

- Many previous surveys have tended to focus on non-indigenous sites and material (e.g. settlements, forts, ports, mines etc.)
- Difficulties of tying the material culture to specific groups.
- Pangrave peoples = Medjay?
- Eastern Desert Wares produced by Blemmyes?
- Complex multifaceted nature of relationships between and within different indigenous groups and sub-groups.



Pangrave burial



Eastern Desert Ware