The seal inscribed with the name of $Dd-k\,\text{r}'$, "Beloved of Seth (Ba'\ell), Lord of the Land of 'Iy" (fig. 1), found in a Middle Bronze II B context in the course of the 2004 season of excavations at Sidon, confirms the existence in the Levant outside Byblos of a scribal tradition using Egyptian hieroglyphs. The fact that it takes the form of a scaraboid, together with the form of the hieroglyphs themselves – somewhat hesitant when compared to pharaonic documents of the same period – in effect corroborates a Levantine rather than an Egyptian origin. Although the inscription on this seal has already been subject to a rereading of the name $Dd-k\,\text{r}'$ – yet to be published – the authors, for their part, now reconsider the toponym, which several parallels agree in situating to the north of Sidon, and not in the Bekaa valley to its east.
I. The Land of Iaa/laat/lay in Egyptian Documentation

1.1. Sinuhe.

First of all, it should be recalled that a land whose name is nearly homonymous – ‘Iaa (ḥl) – and which appears in the Tale of Sinuhe, has been considered to be an authentic toponym by several authors. It is also found in the execution texts (cf. below) as well as later, in the topographical list of Thutmose III, which situates it between Mki (‘Amki or Megiddo) and Qedem. In the Tale of Sinuhe, written at the beginning of the XIIth Dynasty (1900-1850 BC), the exile leaves Byblos for Qedem (B 99 of Papyrus Berlin 3092), a toponym which specialists have tried in vain to locate in various places to the east, and even relatively far to the south-west of Byblos. This land of ‘Iaa, in the district of Upper Retenu (cf. below), was located by Görg to the north of the Litani (ḥpwḥ in its earliest written form) which would have marked the frontier between the northern and the southern parts of Retenu. Green, for his part, remarked: “It is clear from the context of Sinuhe that Upper Retenu, while excluded from his list of the ‘wood cutters’, must nevertheless be located in the same area. Thus the circumstantial evidence alone strongly points towards an identification of Upper Retenu with the broad and fertile plains of Homs in which the city of Kadesh was located”.

Thomas Schneider has recently corrected the reading of Qedem to Qatanum – the exact transliteration of ‘q-d-nw-m (B 99) – that is to say, the present Tell Mischrife, 18 km to the north-east of Homs. If the writers of the narrative were well and truly familiar with the realities of the topography and linguistics of the region – and the identification of Semitic, Luwian and Hurrian terms in Sinuhe B 219-222 by the same authors only reinforces this point of view – it follows that Sinuhe must necessarily have traversed the Akkar Plain (via Ullasa and Arqa) in order to follow the Nahel Kebr towards the Homs Gap via Qadesh (fig. 2). Unless, of course, he had travelled as far as Sumur by ship and then continued overland via the Mechta road, a route later taken by Thutmose III in the opposite direction. During a six months’ stay in Qatna (B 89) – a city state that would quickly familiarize itself with Egyptian culture, as recent finds have demonstrated in a particularly spectacular fashion – a malku (king) called Amunenshi (the Semitic translation of the Egyptian “Amun is my father”), took Sinuhe to his home – or, more specifically, to his kingdom in Upper Retenu (ḥpwḥ ḫrt), which is generally accepted as being in the coastal area north of the Litani (see below). “You will be happy in my home”, king Amunenshi assures his future son-in-law, “because in my kingdom you will hear the speech of Egypt” (B 31.32). One might be inclined to doubt the hypothesis according to which Amunenshi was king of Qatna – or indeed of Qadesh as has been suggested – acquaintance with the hinterland of Retenu having been very limited in Egypt at that time.

As Sinuhe, in following Amunenshi, apparently turns back and retraces his steps in a south-westerly direction – without, however, descending into the coastal region as far as Byblos, which is no longer mentioned in this story – the authors prefer to locate the siege of the clan of Amunenshi in the Akkar Plain. It would have been in this region that Sinuhe was given the older daughter of Amunenshi with, as a dowry, the happy, paradisiacal land of ‘Iaa (see below a propos orthography) on the frontier of Retenu with another country which Sinuhe protected from then on in his position as ḫwḥ against the enemies of his father-in-law (B 78-81). The very name of ‘Iaa, which could mean “land of reeds” or indeed “rich in vegetation” describes the Akkar perfectly, a region of abundant rivers whose banks are still today densely covered with reeds of all kinds, set in a landscape abounding in vegetation. Figs, vines and honey are always abundant; as for olive oil, in Lebanon 45 per cent of the land under olive groves is in the north of the country. Sinuhe also informs us that milk and cattle were a basic resource – aside, no doubt, from pisciculture, and the hunt in the shade of the pines of Aleppo, the firs of Cilicia and, in forests high in the mountains, the cedars whose numbers are unfortunately decreasing in our time.

1.2. Amenemhat II.

The maritime expedition mentioned in the Memphite text of year 3 of the reign of Amenemhat II – and of which the Tod treasure could well represent part of the booty brought back to Egypt – records the Egyptian troops disembarking in Lebanon (Ḥnt-d), probably at Byblos, whence a military expedition (mnf ḫnt) was sent into a country called ‘Iw in Ṣṭ, “Asia/Syria”, then situated in Ṣ-R-tbw. Another column includes the toponym ‘Iw associated with another country, ‘Iṣī, whose fortifications were also destroyed. If there are not too many objections, taking into account the notorious fluctuations in the script of the Middle Kingdom, in considering ‘Iw as a variant of ‘Iw– and of its predecessor the Land of ‘Iaa in the Tale of Sinuhe, one might put forward the suggestion that ‘Iṣī is effectively not Alashya/Cyprus as several scholars have thought, but rather a scribal error for an important centre in the Land of ‘Iaa, namely ‘Iwṣī, ‘Iṣṯṭ, the Ullasa of the execution texts (the present Tell et Taalé: fig. 2) . As E. S. Marcus has convincingly demonstrated, it is indeed not until the reign of Senusret III that one can postulate the existence of relations between Egypt and Cyprus , whereas the reading ‘Iṣī = ‘Iwṣī (Ullasa) would explain another toponym in the inscription, that is Ḫnml.t (‘Tunip?) whose garrison protected Ullasa at the time of Thutmose III. One should remember that Ullasa, aside from distributing logs of cedar, also assured the further diffusion of products conveyed via the interior of Syria, including lapis lazuli, cylinder and stamp seals as well as silver from Anatolia and the Aegean . And lastly, the silver cups from the Tod treasure have recently been compared to the pottery of Tell ‘Arqa, only thirteen km from Ullasa in the Lebanese Akkar (fig. 2).

1.3. Senusret II – Amenemhat III.
The inscription on the mastaba of Khnumhotep (son of the nomarch of the same name) at Dahshur, examined by J. P. Allen in his preliminary report, provides more information on Ullasa, corroborating the opinion of the authors that Ullasa was at this time considered to be the urban centre par excellence of the Akkar (thus of the Land of 'Iaay) 22.

Having served under Senusret II and Amenemhat III from 1887 to 1850 BC, Khnumhotep reports on a naval expedition sent to obtain cedar from the port of Ullasa. However, the malku, the king (of the malku Amunershi) of Byblos barely concealed his aversion to this project, although he sent servants versed in Egyptian if not interpreters on a ship bound for Ullasa to talk to the Egyptian speakers in the service of its governor 23. A possible interpretation of the continuation of this account might be that the malku of Byblos even tried, by the expedient of sending a contingent of soldiers under the orders of his son to attack the Ullasians. Through an exchange of letters (in Egyptian), the governor of Ullasa thanks Senusret III for his help. Allen is no doubt right to postulate that the punitive expedition against Byblos would explain the change of regime, the city thenceforward being governed by (a dynasty) of hitu-24. If the name of the Land of 'lay is not (yet?) found in the fragments that have thus far been restored, the Khnumhotep text meanwhile emphasizes the existence of a tradition of Egyptian being spoken to the north of Byblos in the Akkar – accompanied by the export via Ullasa to Egypt of cedar logs, and no doubt other products – as indicated by the pottery of Tell 'Arqa attested at the Middle Bronze II A 25.


Several of the execration texts mention Ullasa, as do the Berlin ostraca and the apotropaic figurines in Brussels, at present attributed to Middle Bronze II A (in terms of Egyptian chronology equivalent to the second half of the XIIth Dynasty into XIIth). The Land of 'Iaa is also attested (see p. 86 and notes 62-66) for the different forms of orthography), but only in the slightly more recent Brussels group with the name of its prince Iw/hadali (Lawai-La-Haddul) 26. Note that the critical revision of the historical interest of the execration texts for the populating of Palestine, recently provided by Amon Ben-Tor, adds an important point regarding the texts 27. Contrasting the paucity of the vestiges of MB II A in six of the ten excavated sites identified in these texts 28, the author wonders whether the scriptural evidence of the Berlin and the Brussels groups may not more accurately describe the reality of an earlier phase, reviewed by means of sympathetic magic.

The continuing existence of the Land of 'Iaay towards the end of the Middle Kingdom is confirmed by the inscription on the scaraboid seal from Sidon (fig. 1) naming another ruler of this region. Against the suggested identification with the Bekaa valley, it now seems preferable, given the data set out above, to opt for the Akkar Plain, controlled from the maritime city of Ullasa, the only centre north of Byblos where the Egyptian language was in use, as attested by both the Egyptian documentation of the Middle Kingdom (Sinuhe B. 31, 39 and Khnumhotep) and the local evidence of the Middle Bronze II B seal (fig. 1). Lastly, if the semantics of the toponym and the description by Sinuhe of the Land of ‘Iaa accord well with the part of the Akkar that lies between the Nahr el Bared in the south and the marshy area by the Nahr el Kebir in the north, the archaeological evidence from this region also supports the argument in favour of that location. The excavations of Jean-Paul Thalmann at Tell ‘Arqa have indeed led the excavator to an in-depth study of this region through the successive phases of the Bronze Age. "It is only in phase P at Arqa, i.e. around 2400 BC, that most of the sites are fully developed and that the hierarchy of the installations indicates the development of small regional centres with urban characteristics. From this period on, the plain is organized into three units or small districts...and centred on the three principal sites [designated ‘de Rang 1’] of Kazel, Jamus and Arqa’ (fig. 2) 29. One of the warrior burials was discovered in level N (Middle Bronze I) at Arqa, and the excavator notes the relation to the graves of Amrit in the Syrian part of the Akkar 30. One may thus conclude that, from the archaeological point of view as well, the Akkar Plain provides a terrain compatible with the military conflicts described in the literature and the annals of Egypt at the beginning of the second millennium BC 31.

II. Localisation of the land of ‘Iaay/laay with respect to Upper Retenu and Qedem

One thing is certain and accepted: at the beginning of the XIIth Egyptian Dynasty ‘Iaa/laay/laat was formally located in Upper (or Eastern) Retenu, according to the text of Sinuhe (B 81), and this “excellent land whose name is ‘Iaa/laat/lay” 32 was thus under the control of the city state of Qedern.

The aim of the second part of this paper is to locate as precisely as possible the geographic boundaries of Eastern Retenu and to place the city state of Qedern on a map.

Known to the Egyptians of the Middle Kingdom – considering that Sinuhe arrived there after having passed “from one country to another country” (B 89-30) – this city, Qedem, and its territory – whose prince was familiar with the Egyptian language (B 31-32) – was nonetheless unaffected by the political influence of, and military conquest by, the pharaohs of the beginning of the XIIth Dynasty: Amenemhat I and Senusret I 33.

It is now generally agreed that Upper Retenu 34: Rnw-Htr, the true boundaries of whose frontier regions with its neighbouring states are still under discussion, is located by the upper waters of the Litani and
to its east, thus in the region that includes all of northern Lebanon and the centre of present-day Syria, very probably including the Lebanon-Syrian Mediterranean coastal plain, the Orontes Gap and its immediate environs as well as the Lebanon-Syrian Akkar Plain. From that time on, its north-eastern reaches were, however, gradually lost to the expanding kingdom of Naharina/Mitanni.

The only remaining problem of location and identification is thus posed by Qedem. The Story of Sinuhe assures us that this city was within the territory of Upper/Eastern Retenu and that it was the capital (B30-31). But where should it be placed on a map? One source could be useful, although it is difficult to interpret, and despite the fact that it is dated to the beginning of the New Kingdom. There is indeed a text, admittedly incomplete and dated most probably to the reign of Thutmose I, where Qedem is mentioned as being in the vicinity of Tunip. Tunip is now identified – with a reasonable degree of certainty – with the archaeological site of Tell Acharne (see fig. 2) as a result of petrographic analyses of clay from the pottery found in situ and certain Amarna clay tablets. This significant 70-hectare site is at the centre of the southern part of the very fertile Syrian Ghab Plain, in the middle of the Orontes Valley (fig. 2).

One should consequently look for Iaa/Iay/Iaat in the area that lies to the southwest of that region most bountiful in terms of agriculture and animal husbandry, the Syrian Ghab, and to the west of the then most important city state of the region, now better known as Qatna/Minrifeh, 57 km to the south-east of Hamath. Qatna appears under the following Egyptian spellings: Kah1, Kd (m)Lm, Kdm, Kah, Kdm, in texts from the beginning of the New Kingdom: under the reign of Amenhotep II from the time of his seventh campaign into Asia (Urk. IV, 1311, 5)48, subsequently under that of Thutmose III (for example Urk. IV, 696, 17).

Since Qatna appears in Egyptian texts of the beginning of the XVIIth dynasty, it is somewhat surprising that Qedem is not to be found there except in stereotyped toponymic lists which add no precision at all as to its geographical situation. Could not Kah/Kdm be the new Egyptian toponym for Qedem, derived from the XIIth Dynasty? On the orthographical level, it would seem that there is nothing against this. Ancient Near Eastern scholars and Egyptologists are accustomed to spelling variations in the transcription of toponyms (and, moreover, of anthroponyms) from ancient Semitic languages into Egyptian hieroglyphics.

As early as the Berlin version of the various texts of the Story of Sinuhe, and only there, the following variations in the spelling of the toponym Qedem are encountered:

\[\text{Kah} \text{ or } \text{Kdm} \text{ or } \text{Kdm} \]

The same process is thus, in work in the case of Qedem and that of Qatna: the variation in Egyptian spelling is evident.

In Kah, for example, the fact that the orthographies borrow the \( \text{K} \) and the \( \text{m} \), which would later be substituted for it (indeed at the Temple of Amenhotep III at Soleb and that at Luxor under Rameses II) should not be found in the least surprising; the alternation of \( \text{k} \) and \( \text{K} \) is very well known in the diachrony of the Egyptian language during the pharaonic period.

The same holds true for the shift of the labial alveolar (consonant) from \( \text{d} \) to \( \text{t} \), a current linguistic phenomenon that is encountered very early in Egyptian.

As to the final \( \text{d} \) of the toponym Kah, in this position it only began to supplant a weak vowel at the time of the New Kingdom. In effect, whereas in the Middle Kingdom – in the transliteration of toponyms or anthroponyms, and even in that of loan words current in Semitic languages – the \( \text{j} \) in Egyptian script supplants the Semitic lamed (\( \text{l} \)) or the resh (\( \text{r} \)), \( \text{d} \) is not the case in the Egyptian texts of the New Kingdom. Nor does it occur in those from the beginning of the XVIIth Dynasty, when, in West Semitic languages the \( \text{l} \) (lamed) or the \( \text{r} \) (resh) were shown by the group: \( \text{dm} \), which we do not have here.

However, the \( \text{m} \) in Qedem is problematic. This consonant is relatively stable in all languages. In some Egyptian texts, however, signs appear which should manifestly be regarded as corruptions of \( \text{m} \) into \( \text{n} / \text{n} \). It seems that this graphic phenomenon would have occurred in the transcription of Semitic words into Egyptian, but in this case the \( \text{n} \) would have turned into \( \text{m} \), as: \( \text{ldm} \) / \( \text{ldm} \) or again: the succession of \( \text{dm} \) (= hornet / wasp), or, according to Gardiner, this ending in \( \text{m} \) would have been a corruption of \( \text{n} / \text{n} \). More probably, and rather than here recognizing a graphic corruption of \( \text{m} \), the author is of the opinion that one is in this case dealing with a phonetic linguistic process characteristic of all ancient Semitic languages known as “mimation” 50. It is very probable that we are in this case confronted with a toponym with an archaizing spelling and with \( \text{m} \) as a desinence. Again, this phenomenon is very well attested in the writing of toponyms and certain Egyptian words of Semitic origin.
At this stage, there are two possibilities for the geographic location of:

\[ I\alpha'y \]

1) Either one places this city to the south of Tunip and thus to the south of the Ghab Plain as well as to the east of the Orontes, in Syria, relying on the recent clay analyses 68.

2) Or one locates it in the west, in the Akkar Plain in northern Lebanon which, as one travels from Qatna through the Homs Gap towards that abundantly fertile Lebanese plain, becomes perfectly conceivable, and geographically tenable as well 57.

The linguistic analysis of this toponym, now formally attested by the scarab recently unearthed in the course of excavations at Sidon, can accommodate only one qualified possibility in the period under consideration: the Egyptian Middle Kingdom, the XII Dynasty to be precise.

The \( J \) within the notation of the word of this toponym can only, in Egyptian hieroglyphs, be the transcription of the Semitic letters \( lamed \) or \( resh \), as mentioned above. Consequently, \( \text{Ia'ay} \) can only recover the following Semitic words: \( 'ill, 'br, 'ir, 'al \).

As for the final \( 'y \) of the two last entries of \( \text{Iaa}'\text{lay} \) cited above, we know that it frequently appears in the topographical lists of the Middle Kingdom and that it disappears almost completely from the texts of the Egyptian New Kingdom at a time when the transcription of toponymy of Semitic origin reaches a peak 64.

The scarab seal of \( \text{Dik-kl-r} \) unearthed during the 2004 season of excavations at Sidon, favours the second hypothesis above in terms of its geography, its history and its environment, reinforced by the proximity of the Land of Ia to the coastal city of Sidon and to the Akkar Plain, a few days march along the coast from Sidon and even less if sailing along the coast. The authors therefore now endorse this last hypothesis, a forecast since recent studies on this subject are pointing in the same direction 64.
Ullasa/Tell et Taalé is not taken into
215 and fig. 86. Note that from Laish, all the sites in the latter
33 P. Tallet, 2005; in this work the
21, p. 30.

35 H. Gauthier, 1926, p. 141, id.,
38 And what if this city state cov-
45 Temple of Amenhoep III,
2009, p. 121 and nn. Its eastern frontier,
13); this would thus be ‘the land
46 Temple of Rameses II, Luxor.

50 In B 189 and 219. Here, in this
55 Which might always be possible,

60 This phonetic pratice
dual, “sushaïm”: = ssmt

data from the right – but the name of

66 H. Loffet, 2006, p. 78-84.

67 However, and to refine this
approach, cf. the reflections of M.
Fortin, 2006, p. 219-230, with figs.
and maps.

68 ‘Iaa is described in the Story of
Sinuhe as “an excellent region”, a

69 A personage is here effaced,
and it therefore cannot be certain
that it is the same, p. 90, PI XXVII
(Stele 92, east face, l. 1-2), p.
113-116 and n. c on p. 115, PI
XXVII (stele 112, west face, lower
register, south corner, l. 2).

70 G. Posener, 1940, p. 67-68 (E
3), 76 (E 21 = ‘ay), 81 (E 32), 82
(E 33-34, E 43).

71 T. Schneider, 2002, p. 257-272;
E. S. Marcus, 2007, p. 137-190; J.
P. Allen, 2008, p. 99-39, and

72 The translation of “sushaïm” as
“vine” see Meeds, 1970, p. 10, n.
(5), J. F. Bouglis, 1978, p. 27
(37).