

Gary A. Rendsburg, "The Danites," *Archiv Orientální*

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[as part of "Adana Revisited," co-authored with Yoel Arbeitman]

(see the following three pages)

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at various times employing different common nouns with this same meaning: **dānu* in the Bronze Age, and **saras* in the period of Greek colonization.

4. The Danites

In the above pages, Yoël Arbeitman has seen fit to "revisit" the city of Adana and its inhabitants, the Danūna. It is therefore not totally inappropriate to "revisit" the related problem of the identification of the Danūna/Dnnyim/Danaoi and the Israelite tribe of Dan.

The first person to make this identification was Cyrus H. Gordon (1962:21; 1965a:156, fn. 13), though it is Yigael Yadin (1965, 1968, 1973) and Allen H. Jones (1975) who have published the most on the subject. Their arguments may be summarized as follows:

- 1) Ju 5:17 describes the Danites as dwelling in ships.
- 2) Gn 49:16 implies that Dan was at one time not a member of the Israelite amphictyony but was later admitted as an equal tribe.
- 3) Ju 18:1 tells us that whereas the remaining Israelite tribes had already received their land grants, the Danites were still seeking an inheritance at quite a late date.
- 4) The original settlement of the Danites (before their northward migration to Laish/Dan) was on or near the Mediterranean coast between the Philistines (settled in Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Gath) and the Tjekker (settled in Dor as known through the Egyptian Tale of Wenamon), two well-known sea peoples.
- 5) The lack of any detailed Danite genealogy in the Bible suggests that Dan was not an original member of the tribal league. Gn 46:23 reads only "And the sons of Dan: Hushim." Nu 26:42 reads alternately "These are the sons of Dan . . . Shuham." I Ch 7:12 is even more puzzling, reading "Hushim, the sons of another" (Hebrew *ʔhr*, taken by most medieval Jewish commentators as a personal name, but probably a reference to Dan, i.e., "another [tribe]").²²
- 6) Samson, the most famous of all the Danites, enjoyed relations with two Philistine women — the woman of Timnah (Ju 14:1) and the harlot of Gaza (Ju 16:1) — and his mistress/wife Delilah (Ju 16:4) may also be of Philistine origin, or at least she "is the confidant of the chiefs of the Philistines" (Yadin 1973:63). No other Israelites are mentioned as having such intimate relations with the Philistines.
- 7) Samson the Danite is named after the sun and has a special talent regarding riddles. The Greek Danaoi were well-known sun-worshippers and also excelled at riddles. The name of Azatiwatas, king of the Danūna/Dnnyim, means "lover of the sun-god (Tiawaz)."²³

²² Cf. the interjection of Zalman Shazar during the lecture of Ben-Zion Luria delivered at the home of David Ben-Gurion: "The main question is this: why have no genealogical lists of the Danites survived?" (ISBR 269).

²³ Yadin (who doubtless borrowed Barnett's term) is incorrect in believing the name

The present writer feels that the evidence is heavily weighted toward the Gordon-Yadin-Jones argument and that the identification of the *Danūna*/*Dnny*/*Danaoi* and the Danites seems certain. There is, moreover, one bit of evidence that has not been brought forward previously which may ensure our equation. I refer to the story of the birth of Dan in Gn 30:5-6. Rachel's handmaid, Bilhah, bore Jacob a son to which Rachel said *dānannī* *ʔēlōhīm* and therefore named him Dan.

The word *dānannī*, usually translated "has judged me" or the like, is obviously phonetically close to Luwian *Danūna*, Greek *Δανα(ῶ)ίς*, Egyptian *d3ynywn3*, Phoenician *Dnny*, etc. These four names may be divided into either "short" forms or "long" forms. Although Arbeitman assumes that the Egyptian and Phoenician "long" forms are borrowed from the Luwian form (with a redetermination by the masculine plural gentilic ending *-ym* in the case of the latter), cognate evidence suggests another explanation. The above Luwian-Greek-Egyptian-Phoenician onomasticon may be expanded to include the Minoan personal name *da-na-ne* in IIT 126:a:1 and the Ugaritic personal name *dnn* in UT 125:30; 147:14; 314:5; 2069:10; 2085:4,5; 2113:1; 2117:35.²⁴

Gordon has proposed that the Minoan name *da-na-ne* "could well be Dan with the *-an* suffix" (1966:32). This suffix is quite common in Minoan names, viz., *ki-re-ta-na* (= *Kret* + *-an*; cf. the suffixless forms *ki-re-tā* and *ki-ri-tā*), *ka-du-ma-ne* (= *Cadm[os]* + *-an*), *mi-na-ne* (= *Mln[os]* + *-an*).²⁵

The Ugaritic form *dnn* is to be likewise explained as *dn* "Dan" + the exceedingly common suffix *-n*.²⁶ That this suffix is to be vocalized *-ān* may be determined from such names as *ḥlan* (cf. the suffixless form *ḥli*), *znan*, *rpan*, *ḥran*, *kran*, *tran*, and *kīan*, as well as from the cuneiform representation of the name as *da-na-nu* (Thureau-Dangin 1937:247 line 27).

Phoenician *Dnny*, therefore, need not be considered a redetermined form of the Luwian *Danūna*, but rather the name Dan + the personal suffix *-n* + the masculine plural gentilic ending *-ym*. Though there is no need to be dogmatic about this parsing of *Dnny* (Arbeitman's methodology is equally admissible), it is in keeping with the Northwest Semitic character of the Phoenician language.

Regardless of which explanation is correct, there were current in Northwest Semitic (Minoan-Ugaritic-Phoenician-Hebrew) both a "short" form *dn* and a "long" form *dnn*. The former (and its gentilic *haddānī* in Ju 13:2, 18:1, 18:11, 18:30, I Ch 12:35) was the common one in Hebrew.

of the sun god to be *Wa(n)das* (Yadin 1973: 68; Barnett, 142 [n. 1]). On this see Arbeitman & Ayala fn. 4. Also cf. Arbeitman at the end of section V below.

²⁴ Of particular interest in the identification of the Sea Peoples is the twofold use of *dn dnn* in Text 2085, a catalogue of ships.

²⁵ For the occurrences of these names cf. Gordon 1966: 38-39.

²⁶ For a complete list of Ugaritic personal names ending in *-n* (several of which have *n* as part of the root) cf. Gordon 1965b: 516-18.

What has not previously been recognized is that the "long" form also appears in the Hebrew Bible, to wit, *dānannī* in Gn 30:6.

If Arbeitman's explanation of *Danūna/Dnny* is correct, the development of *dānannī* is as follows: the Danite sea people came to Canaan with a name such as *Danūna*. This was rendered into Hebrew as *Dān* without the gentilic suffix *-āna*, but the Danites never forgot their original name. This "long" form came into Hebrew as *dnn* which was then redetermined with the gentilic ending *-y*, just as occurred in Phoenician. There existed side by side in Hebrew, therefore, both *Dan* and *dānan(n)ī*. The former became the predominant form, but the latter remained in the memories of the people.

If the alternative explanation offered above is correct, the development of *dānannī* is less complicated. There merely existed in Hebrew both the tribal name *Dān* and its gentilic *(hād)dānī* and (presumably) the tribal name *Dānān* and its gentilic *dānan(n)ī*. Given the existence of *Dnny* /*da-na-ne/dnn* in Phoenician-Minoan-Ugaritic, it would be most unusual if *dānān* were not current in Hebrew, the language of the amphictyony which included the Danites.

When the Israelites accepted the Danites into their amphictyony, they included the birth of their eponymous ancestor Dan in the story of Jacob and his children. The author, who well knew the "long" form of the tribal name, punned on the word and worked it into the story in Gn 30:5-8. It is worth noting that the *a* vowels in the first and second syllables of *dānannī* correspond to the Greek, Luwian, Minoan, and — as known through the cuneiform syllabification — Ugaritic names (the Phoenician and Egyptian forms of course do not depict vowels).²⁷ Thus the Masoretic vocalization is not one which was invented in Christian times, but in truth reflects the ancient pronunciation of the word. Our Biblical author cleverly employed *dādanī* in a polysemous way which readily would have been recognized by his readers as both "has judged me" and the gentilic of the "long" form of the tribe's name.²⁸ (Could the *nun energicum* [the doubling of the *-n-*] be a "compromise" to retain the original *dnn* plus the first person pronominal suffix *-nī*?)

To summarize, the Danites came to Canaan with a name which survived in both a "short" form and a "long" form. The former became the commonly used one (as we might expect), but the latter also persisted. The "long" form was worked into the story of the birth of Dan by a skillful author. Without entering into the true origin of the word *Dān/dānannī*, i.e., is it Northwest Semitic (so Michael Astour) or is it Luwian (so Arbeitman), and thus the true origin of the tribe (Semitic or Indo-European), the identification of the Danites with the *Danūna/Dnny/Danaoi* must now be deemed certain.

²⁷ In the case of the second vowel in the Luwian form *Danūna* < *Danawana* the triphthong vowel has been reduced. See Arbeitman at the end of section II above.

²⁸ For other examples of polysemy in the Bible cf. Herzberg.