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## PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY IN ABU DELEIG AREA, FIRST SEASON (APRIL 2019)

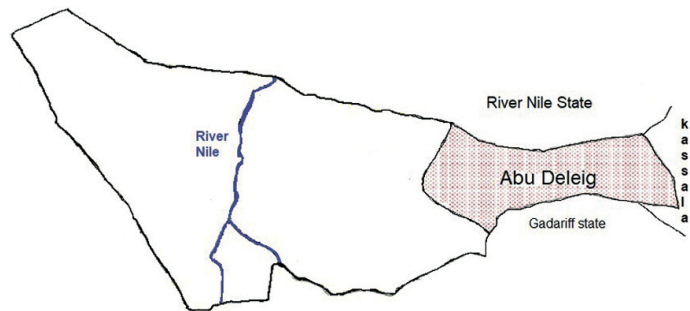
### THE BUTANA REGION

The Butana region is one of the important archaeological areas to study the history of ancient Sudan, considering it to be the geographical area that had been defined as Meroe Island which was mentioned by Strabo.<sup>2</sup> Beside the Meroitic sites many archaeological evidence were found in the area of various other periods.

The Butana was already the focus of many scholars and studies. One of the earlier archaeological studies and surveys in the Butana area was done by Crowfoot (1911). Crowfoot divided the area between the Nile River, the Blue Nile and the Atbara River into two areas, the Butana and Karaba. The Butana is the flat plain lands located in the south and east of the region, and the Karaba is the land covered by rock formations and gravel, which is located north and west of the region (Crowfoot 1911: 9–11, 24).

One of the most comprehensive archaeological surveys in the Butana was the survey made by the Institute for Egyptology of the Humboldt University. The survey led by Hintze (1959; 1960) included the documentation of various archaeological sites. It was aimed to survey the ancient sites of the Island of Meroe, defined in the triangle between the Atbara, the Nile and the road between Khartoum and Kassala.

There were archaeological survey works at specific areas of the Butana region such as those done by Addison (1926), Addison and Dunham (1922), Crowfoot (1920), Scott-Moncrieff (1908), and Smith and Adam (Smith & Adam 1950). The joint archaeological survey between the University of Khartoum and the Southern Methodist University included the area south of Atabay between the Atbara River and



Map 1: Area of Abu Deleig.

the Gash Delta (Al Amin, Marks, Mohammed Ali & Hays 1983).

The eighties of the last century witnessed two distinct studies in which some archaeological survey of the Butana area was made, namely the study of the late Ahmed (1984), and Bradley (1992). Bradley (1992) divided the Butana into four areas: the area east of the Nile, which is known as the Shendi Plain region, Al-Karaba, Al-Butana, and the Atbara River area (Bradley 1992: 18–20).

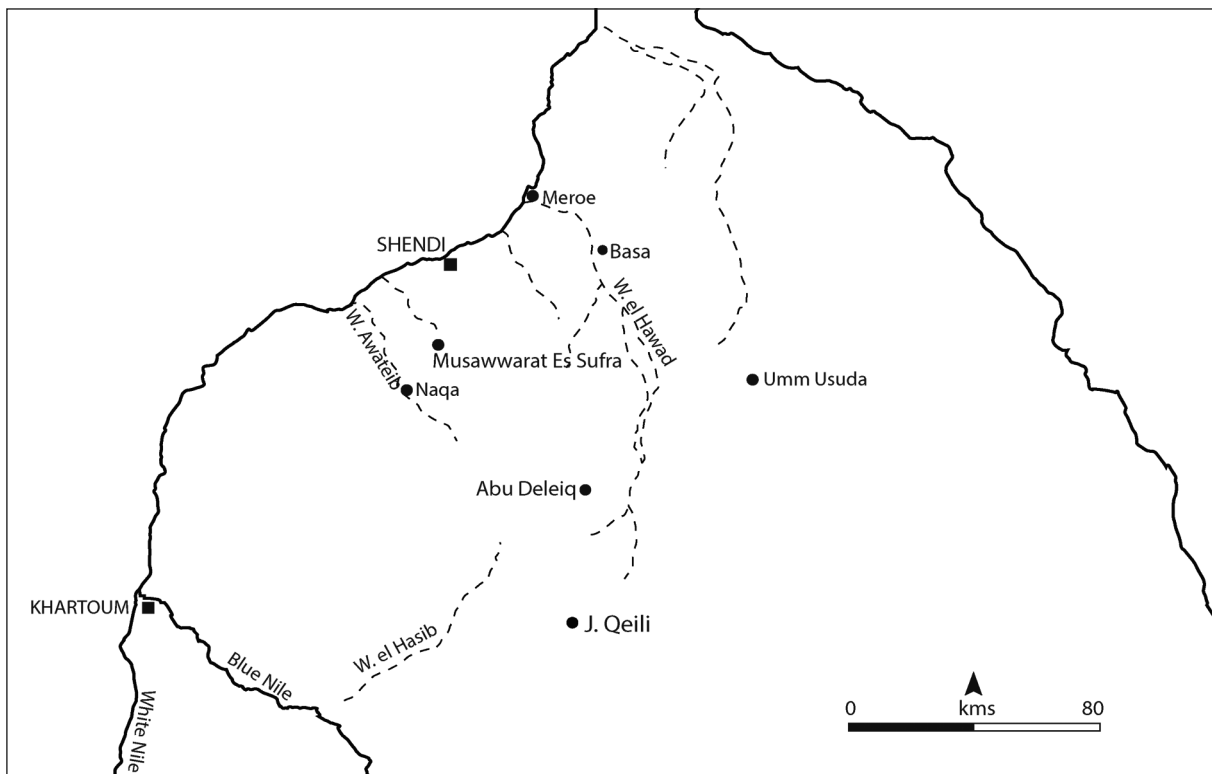
A recent survey in the Butana in the Dhirah region was undertaken as part of a MA project presented by Hamed in University of Khartoum (Hamed 2011), and another by Al Amin (University of Khartoum), who surveyed archaeological sites around the Rira area (Al Amin 2016). My own first work in the Abu Deleig area was to perform an archaeological and ethnographic survey for my PhD thesis in 2009 (Abdel Aziz 2014).

### SURVEY AIMS AND METHODS

The archaeological survey has been restricted to the area of Abu Deleig administrative unit, which is one of the areas subordinate to the East Nile Municipality, Khartoum State. It is bordered at the west side by Wad-Hassuna Village, at the north by the borders of Khartoum state, along with the River Nile state, at the south by the borders of the Gadarriff state, and at the east by the borders of Kassala state (map 1).

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<sup>2</sup> Strabonis Geographica.17.2.1-3:1145.16-1148.7. English translation in Eide et al. 1998: 815.



Map 2: Meroitic sites in the Butana.

The archaeological survey covered the area to locate all visible sites such as hafirs, cemeteries and settlement sites. It aimed basically to study those archaeological remains, locally known in Abu Deleiq area as house and wells and hafirs of A'naj. The survey targeted also some of the known sites, which have been referred to in previous studies; such as those mentioned by Crowfoot (1911; 1920), Hintze (1959) Ahmed (1984) and Bradley (1992) in addition to other sites of other researchers.

During the archaeological survey of the hafirs we have taken coordinates by the *G.P.S map 60CS apparatus*. The dimensions have been measured and documented by photography, and sketch maps were made. As for the cemeteries, the author has taken the coordinates and counted the graves visible on the surface. Likewise, we have taken the measurements and made descriptions of a sample of graves, besides documenting them with photography, and drawing sketch maps of the graves and mounds. Samples of archaeological material were collected from the surface in an attempt to establish the chronology of sites.<sup>3</sup>

Several archaeological sites have been damaged by local inhabitants through illegal excavations, in search of gold and treasures.

More than 40 locations were examined, some containing several separate sites which are listed below.

#### SITE GAZETTEER (MAP 2 & 3)

##### (1) Al- Shalkha 1:

N: 15°55'10.0"/E: 33°49'58"

This site is situated in the area of Hillat Al-Shalkha, Haj Al-Amin, a village situated on a small hill. Pottery shards and lithic artefacts littered the surface area of the site. Villagers have informed us that they have extracted a number of complete and semi-complete pottery vessels, when digging foundations for their houses, and for other purposes. One of the oral stories relating to the site is that Sheikh Talha, "a holy man", has specified the site, as being the location of the A'naj treasure; however, he has prevented them from digging in search of it. Probably this site was recorded by Bradley (Bradley 1994: 195) and Ahmed (Ahmed 1984: 39).

##### (2) Al-Shalkha 2-3:

N: 15°55'20.9"/E: 33°49'01.9"

The site lies near the site of Al-Shalkha 1, at the northern side, and it is separated from it by Eid-Al-Fideilab, a tributary, which feeds Wadi al Shalkha.

The site contains seven mounds of gravel and unworked sandstone, and a number of stone and

<sup>3</sup> This survey funded by the Deanship of Scientific Research, University of Khartoum.



pottery implements were recovered from the surface. The mounds have been exposed to erosion and settlement activities and therefore changed their features. Ahmed (1984) and Bradley (1992) recorded this site as 'Abu Deleig'.

Another feature (Al Shalkha 3) in this site is Hafir Wad Dev-eil, which is regarded as one of A'naj hafirs, is situated near Al-Shalkha village. The hafir is built of sand, gravel and black sandstones. Its diameter is about 100 m and has a main inlet at the northern side, and a subsidiary one at the north-eastern side. There is a well, north of the hafir, which is also known as an ancient A'naj well.

#### (4) Hafir Al-Kadabouna:

N: 15°58'33.4"/E: 33°50'14.9"

The hafir is one of the A'naj hafirs. It is built of black stones, gravel and sand, and it is still in use. The hafir has two inlets, the main inlet is situated at the south-western side of the hafir. The diameter of the hafir is about 180 m.

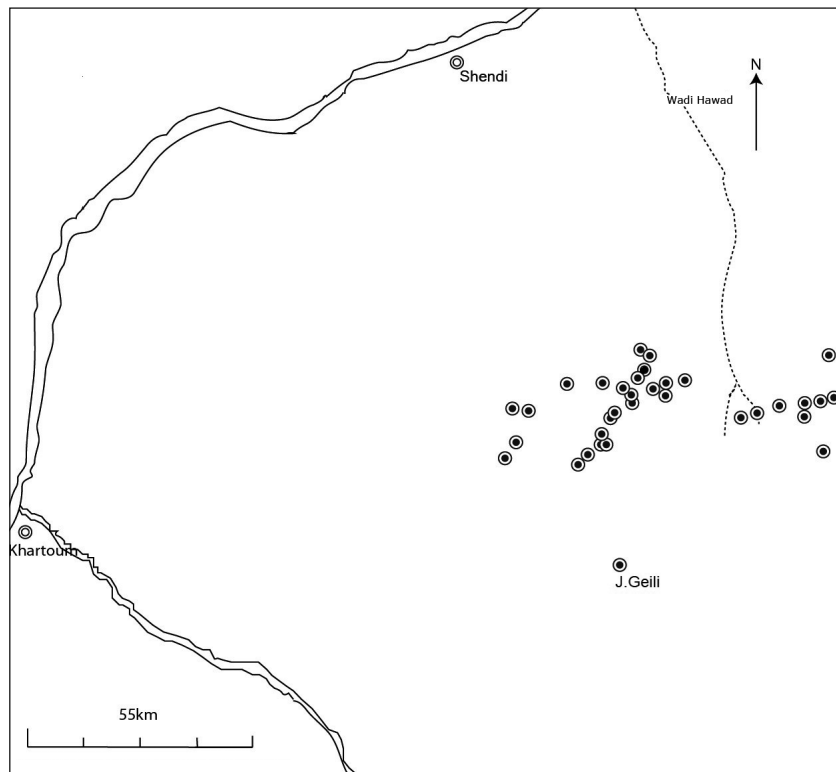
There is an oral narrative connected to the hafir, namely that the hafir has been dug by a woman from A'naj, after she drove her people away and settled at the site. She was named Al-Kadabouna, because her people rejected her (refused her neighborhood), and also another group rejected her; thus she said: "kada abona" and "kada abona".<sup>4</sup> Then she lived separately, in between her people and the other group.

Bradley mentioned that there is a well attached to the hafir but we did not have a chance to visit it. (Bradley 1992: 196).

#### (5) Al-Kadabouna cemetery:

The Kadabouna cemetery, which surrounds the hafir, covers an extensive area east of the hafir. The cemetery consists of large mounds of gravel, surrounded by black stones of irregular shape, different as to size and height. A number of these tombs have been subjected to haphazard digging by natives.

This site has been mentioned by Smith & Adam (1950: 304–305), Hintze (1959: 189) Ahmed (1984: 39) and Bradley (1992: 196).



Map 3: Sites documented in the area.



Map 4: Kadabouna tumuli (Google Earth).

We have managed to count more than 163 mounds; however, the site exceeds that greatly (visible on map 4). The tumuli spread on a wide area, forming about five groups, separated by natural outcrops.<sup>5</sup> Two examples of the tumuli have been described: the first measures about 11 m N-S, 8.6 m E-W. The

<sup>4</sup> "kada abona" I have been rejected from this side and "kada abona" I have been rejected from that side.

<sup>5</sup> I think that they are the source of the stones, used in building the mounds.



second example is 13.5 m N-S, 11 m E-W.

Sites 4–5 were probably the sites recorded by Smith and Adam (1950: 304–305), Hintze (1959: 189), Bradley (1992: 196), and Ahmed (1984: 39).

Ahmed and Bradley described this site as an extensive group of large hollow ring tumuli varying between 12–15m.

(6) Hafir Um Ja'r:

N: 15°58'19.9"/E: 33°50'14.9"

It is one of the A'naj hafirs, lying 1.2 km south of the Kada-bouna hafir. The hafir has been called „Um Ja'r“, because there is in it a Ja'r. This is similar to a pocket dug on the bed of the hafir; and is used for keeping water. When the water of the hafir diminishes, it is used as a water supply only for people. The dimensions of the hafir are 40x50 m and it has two inlets, the main at the southern side and the subsidiary at the western side.

(7) Hafir Al-Kifeita:

N: 15°59'29.9"/E: 33°50'42.3"

There is a hafir and a cemetery. The hafir measures 50 x 70 m, built by black stones, sand and gravel. It has two inlets, at the southern and south-western sides, and is still in use.

South of the hafir Al-Kifeita cemeteries extend. The graves' upper structures are unclear; they were



Fig. 1: Al Kifeita tumuli, type four (photo: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).

built of stones and arranged in a rectangular shape. The burial mound is of a small height. We found one grave which was opened by the natives, the body was found in what seems to be a crouched position. Our local informer said that this is the area where the A'naj graves were found. In figures 1&2 we can see the open and levelled graves.

(8) Hafir Al-Rumeya:

N: 16°00'29.4"/E: 33°49'50.0"

It is a hafir, which is fed by Abu-Kileir wadi. The diameter of the hafir is about 30x70 m and has one inlet at the eastern side of the hafir.

(9) Al-Hanaka:

N: 15°51'/E: 33°49'

The site consists of a number of built burial mounds of gravel, sand and stones, which have no regular form. Located at the foot of Al-Hanaka hill some of these tombs have been dug by the natives. We counted 30 mounds. The typical mound has a diameter of 16 m N-S and 16.5 m E-W.

Local inhabitants who dug into some of these tombs told us that they have found jars, iron arrow heads, iron ankh signs. In addition, they told us that they found what they described as 'a statue of a



Fig. 2: Open grave in Al Kifeita (photo: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).





woman, wearing a head cover', in one of these tombs. The height of the statue was about 10 cm, but they didn't show it to me. The jar is similar to types found in late and post-Meroitic period (fig. 3).

(10) Um Kakulu:  
N: 15°51'/E: 33°22'

The site is an Islamic cemetery located north-west of Al-Hanaka. The graves are surrounded by carefully arranged stones. The gravestones are of irregular shape and have no marks or distinctive inscription thereon.

The natives attribute the cemetery to Al-Lababa Al-Humur. There is a famous saying about the pious men buried in these tombs, which runs: „Rigal Um-Khhakulu, al-fi Al-Haram bisallo“ (Men of Um-Kakulu, who pray at the Sacred Mosque) as evidence of their miracles. There are various domestic and agricultural tools carefully arranged around the grave. Upon questioning the denotation of these tools, Fakki Ali Ibrahim, a local of the area, replied that the named Arabs, before their departure in the Nishug period,<sup>6</sup> place their tools, as a sort of deposits, beside these pious men, and they are fully convinced that no one will take them (fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Um Kakulu (photo: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).

At the north-western side of the tombs there is a hafir of A'naj, which has the same name "hafir Um-Kakulu". In it there is situated an unused well, which has a story concerning the miracles of Al-Sheikh Al-Badawi. The hafir is dug into a stone ground and surrounded by gravel, sand and black stones. The dimensions are about 38 x 36 m.

(11) Hafir Al-Sharifiya:  
N: 15°48'/E: 33°44'

The hafir is situated on the main road leading to Tambul town. It derives its name from the Islamic cemetery, located west of the hafir, which is named Al-Sharifiya.

The hafir is one of the A'naj hafirs, surrounded by gravel, sand and some small black stones. The diameter is about 100 m and has two inlets, the main is in the south-eastern direction; and the other in the southern direction.

(12) Hafir Wad-Al-Hakeina:  
N: 15°46'59.9"/E: 33°45'11.0"

The site consists of a hafir, an Islamic cemetery and another cemetery. The first is known as A'naj hafirs, which have been re-dug in 2008, which made its capacity 15.000 cubic meters.

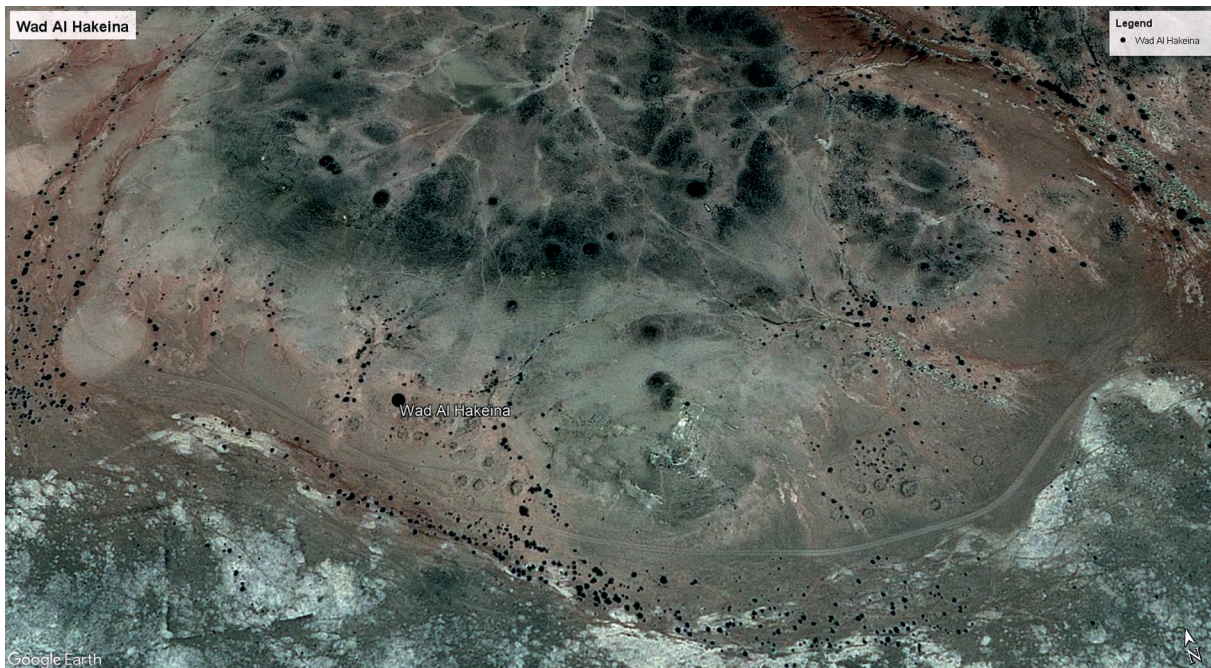
The Islamic cemetery lies to the south-western side of the hafir Wad-Al-Hakeina. It consists of simple gravestones of irregular shape, and there are no marks or inscriptions on them. The natives do not know anything about its date or those buried in these graves.



Fig. 3: A jar from Al Hanaka site (photo: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).

<sup>6</sup> Migration period for nomad and semi nomad people.





Map 5: Wad Al Hakeina site (Google Earth).

The third constituent is features in the top of Al-Hakeina Hill. Those features are stones piles made of black stones, gravel and sand. The stones touch the earth surface in a vertical shape, in order that the pile takes the circular form. Then the rest of stones have been arranged carefully upon them (map 5). There has been counted 50 piles. The piles are scattered on the summit of a high mountain chain. We noticed the presence of three of these piles, which have been placed near each other, and have been surrounded by a row of stones. The typical pile is 6 m in diameter, and its height is about 1.25 m (fig. 5).

Near hafir Wad Al Hakeina site, in eastern and south east of Aeid Al Sheitab and Wad Al Hakeina (N: 15°45'30.1"/E: 33°44'13.0") there are about 20 tumuli. They are mounds of gravel and surrounded by black stones. They are at the foot of the Wad Al Hakeina Hill.

(13) Al-Tabag:  
N: 15°47'/E: 33°4'

Al-Tabag is a high hill chain, which is situated in the southern side of Abu-Deleig. The archaeological site consists of piles of black stones, which are irregular in form, taking a circular shape. The pattern is similar to those described in Wad Al Hakeina. We have counted 38 piles in the extension of Al-Tabag Hill. The stone piles vary in size and height; some are 1.5 m high.

At this site has been placed a tomb of an Islamic Fakir. The tomb is not much higher than the ground, having a rectangular shape. There are flags and sim-

ple grave stones, irregular in shape and without marks or inscriptions. Around the grave are arranged a number of domestic tools. Nearby there is a number of decorated and undecorated pottery. The Fakir is known as Abdel-Azeim, or Al-Mushames (المشمس).

(14) Hadariya:  
N: 15°53'35.6"/E: 34°08'11.2"

Hafir Hadariya is at the borderland between Batahein and Shukreia tribes. South of the hafir there is a cemetery (N: 15°53'12.5"/E: 34°07'56.6") consisting of about 36 sand and gravel burial mounds surrounded by rings of black stones. The typical grave has a north-south diameter of 8.40 m.

(15) Athnabier:  
N: 15°53'/E: 34°10'

At Athnabier there is a hafir, three wells, and a prehistoric site. The hafir and three wells are locally known as A'naj remains.

The hafir is 100 m in diameter, and is still in use in today. Two of the three wells in the site have been re-dug by Sheikh Talha and the third one by Sheikh Ali Wad Al Sheikh Abdel Bagi. One of the wells has a different shape than the others. It has a leveled platform about 5 m below the ground. During the autumn season, when water is plenty, it could be reached from the surface (A). During the summer, when water is scarce, a man descends to the lower platform (B) and fills the water skin, to be lifted by another to the ground surface. The well, which the



Sheikh Ali directed to be re-dug, did not yield water for a long period, and is not used at present.

The prehistoric site lays north-east of the hafir, and a number of stone tools is scattered on its surface.

North of the Athnabier hafir there is a cemetery containing five burial mounds surrounded by a circle of black stones. The diameter of the typical grave is 5 m.

The wells and the hafir have been re-dug and used in the era of Sheikh Talha Wad Abdel-Bagi. Sheikh Talha lived in the area of Athnabier in a settled way until his death and has been buried near the hafir. From that time there were buried to his neighborhood whoever dies in the Butana area, which is the Nishug area. Hence, his grave was considered a pilgrimage place for nomads.

I think this site could be the same site which was mentioned by Porter and Moss (Porter & Moss 1951: 272) and Geus (Geus 1974: 41) named Isnabir site (N: 15°44'/E: 34°11'). Isnabir site consists of graves in the vicinity of the hafir from which they recorded a single Egyptian scarab (Porter & Moss-1951: 272).

#### (16) Al-Shiheiheit 1:

N: 15°54'/E: 34°15'

The site is situated south of Al-Shiheiheit valley. It consists of hafirs and a cemetery. The cemetery consists of 44 burial mounds of sand and gravel surrounded by a ring of black stones of different size.

The typical mound is oval in shape, its diameter is 11.50 m N-S, and 12 m E-W.

There are groups of three small hafirs, which are locally called «Shabak» and all are known as Al-Shiheiheit. They are known as the A'naj hafirs. The diameter of the largest hafir is between 23–50 m. The natives told us there is an A'naj's well but we did not have chance to visit it.

#### Al-Shiheiheit 2:

N: 15° 54'/E: 34°13'

The site is located on the northern side of the Al-Shiheiheit valley, which is an extension of the cemetery in Al-Shiheiheit 1. The site contains 14 mounds of the same form of those of Al-Shiheiheit 1.

#### (17) Al-Tineitba:

N: 15°53'/E: 34°14'

The site lies south of the Eid Al-Tineitba which is about 2 km south of Al-Shiheiheit site. The site consists of gravel and sand burial mounds surrounded by rings of black stones. The cemetery contains 66 mounds varying in size and diameters.

The typical tomb diameter is 22.20 m N-S and 19 m E-W. There is another site west of the Al-Tineitba, which contains 6 mounds that are similar in their outside shape to the tombs of Al-Shiheiheit. There are scattered lithic tools and pottery shards south-west of Aeid Al Tineitba.



Fig. 5: Al Hanaka tumuli, type three (photo: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).



## (18) Al-Habir:

N: 15°51'/E: 34°10'

The site is situated south of Athnabeir hafir and south of Acid Al Hamor. It is a settlement site. The natives have made some excavations in this site in search for treasures. On the surface, there are scatter of pottery shards, stone tools, bones, and beads. The site covers an area of about 2 x 2 km. We collected from the surface scatter samples from an area of about 4 x 4 m. There is evidence of the Meroitic and Christian period (figs. 6–8).

## (19) Al-Sharifiya cemetery:

N: 15°54'/E: 34°13'

The site is an Islamic graveyard. All the graves have simple grave stones of black stones of irregular shape and do not bear any distinctive inscriptions or marks. The deceased of such tombs or their date of burial are not known.

## (20) Hafir Al-Kileiliya:

N: 15°51'/E: 34°04'

The site contains two hafirs attributed to the A'naj. The diameter of the large one is 74 m, and has one inlet, at the southern side. The small hafir has a diameter of 50 m and has one inlet at its eastern side. Hafir Kileiliya is the borderline between Khartoum state and River Nile state.

There are many lithic tools scattered around the hafir. North-west of the hafir, there are situated Islamic graves, having simple tomb stones, which are irregular in shape, and do not bear any inscriptions nor distinctive marks.

## (21) Um-Damdama:

N: 15°56'/E: 33°49'

The site is a cemetery, the tombs of which are mounds of gravel and sand surrounded by a ring of black stones. The natives have used some of these stones in building works. The diameter of a typical mound is 8 m.

## (22) Um Jameina:

N: 15°53'/E: 33°49'

The site contains a small cemetery, consisting of three mounds. The mounds are of pebbles and sand, surrounded by a circle of black stones. The diameter of the typical mound is 6 m N-S and 3.5 m E-W.

## (23) Jabel Amara:

N: 15°51'/E: 34°02'

The jabel is composed of two hills of firestones. At the east side of the jabel there is an Islamic graveyard. Some of tombs are surrounded by a circle of



Fig. 6: Pottery of Al Habir (photo: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).



Fig. 7: Pottery of Al Habir (photo: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).

small stones. Spread on the surface of the graves are stone implements and pottery shards.

## (24) Al-Babanuta:

N: 15°59'/E: 34°13'

The site contains a cemetery, a hafir and wells. The cemetery, which contains 156 graves, extends from Sideira Wadi up to the Babanuta Hafirs. The tombs are mounds of pebbles, sand and small stones surrounded by a ring of black stones.

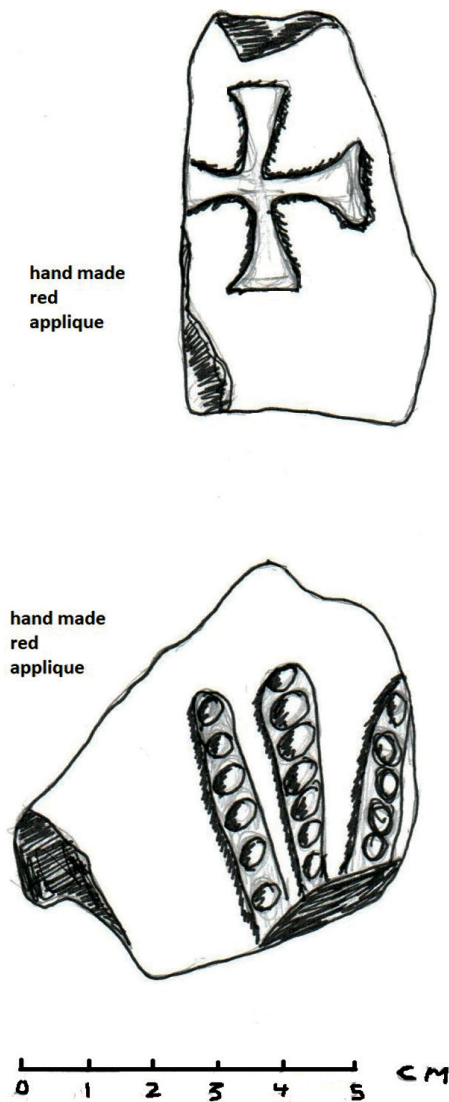


Fig. 8: Pottery of Al Habir (drawing: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).

Al-Babanuta Hafirs are two hafirs, and a Shabak «small hafir». They are A'naj hafirs. Also there are two A'naj wells which are out of use.

(25) Hafir Wad Hag Al-Teir:  
N: 15°54'/E: 15°51'

The site contains a hafir and a cemetery. The hafir is one of A'naj hafirs, which is situated at the western side of Hilat Al-Ideid Al-Ahmar. Its diameter reaches 50 m and has two inlets, the main inlet at the south and the subsidiary is south-east. It is surrounded by sand and gravel.

The cemetery surrounds the hafir but the majority of the mounds are concentrated south-east of it. There are 61 mounds, part of them have been dug by the natives, so there is a scatter of beads made of ostrich eggs, cylindrical shaped beads (green in color) and pottery shards.

The people of Al-Ideid Al-Ahmar village told us about the discovery of one jar having the shape of a bowl of a large size, and inside it was a great number of bones. Remains of red brick buildings were noticed.

(26) Um-Marjum:  
N: 15°53'/E: 33°52'

The site consists of a hafir and a cemetery. The hafir is one of the A'naj hafirs, which is surrounded by stones, pebbles and sand. It was dug in a rocky bed, the diameter reaches 53 m. It has two inlets; the main inlet is at the northern side, and the other is at the north-eastern side.

The cemetery is situated east of the hafir and contains 12 burial mounds surrounded by a ring of black stones varying in size and shape. The typical mound, from north to south, is 7.50 m in diameter. The site has been exposed to great damage by haphazard excavation and the taking of dirt to make the barriers for a race course for camel, which goes through the site.

(27) Al-Mahalab:  
N: 15°55'/E: 33°53'

The site is located south of Al-Mahalab village, in a high hill and continue westwards until Temaeid Al-Nafa'b village. The site is a cemetery containing 40 mounds. The diameter of the typical mound is 5 m N-S. The mound consists of black and red stones of small size.

(28) Hafir Al-Dibaghat:  
N: 15°56'/E: 33°55'

It is one of the A'naj hafirs, its diameter is 70 m, and the main inlet is at the southern side. Its enclosure is of pebbles, sand and stones. There is a local belief that the hafir has witnessed a battle between Mek Nimer and the Dafterdar.

(29) Al-Khanjarab:

The site contains a cemetery and a settlement. The cemetery is located outside the Khanjarab village. The burial mounds are of gravel, sand and some stones spread on the surface of the mound.

The diameter of the typical mound is about 13.50 m N-S and 12.85 m E-W. The cemetery contains about 10 mounds.

The settlement area is located north and near Khanjarab village. The area in which the site is located is known as Al-I'd.<sup>7</sup> The wells' depth reaches 35 m.

<sup>7</sup> Al-I'd is a site of wells and Damar site for the nomad Arabs which means "dry season camping land".



## (30) Um-Sineit:

N: 15°57'/E: 33°3'

The site consists of a hafir and a cemetery. Hafir Um-Sineit is one of the A'naj hafirs. Its area is 130 x 85 m. It has a main inlet north and is surrounded by a barrier of pebbles, stones and sand.

The cemetery lies west of the hafir and contains about 121 mounds, extending from Khanjarab village up to the hafir. The tombs are mounds of gravel and sand, surrounded by a ring of black stones. The typical grave is 13.40 m N-S and 8.40 m E-W.

## (31) Um-Hijeilja:

N: 15°45'/E: 33°43'

The site consists of a hafir and a graveyard of about 44 mounds. The hafir is one of the A'naj hafirs, which has been re-dug at several stages: in 2007, 2008, and 2009. The re-digging of the hafir might removed some of the graves.

The cemetery surrounds the hafir site. It contains more than 44 burial mounds of gravel and sand and some stones scattered on the mound surface. The diameter of a typical tomb is 15 m N-W and 13.80 m E-W.

## (32) Hafir Al-Sharifiya South:

N: 15° 44'/E: 33°41'

The hafir is one of the A'naj hafirs. Its diameter is about 50 m, surrounded by a barrier of gravel, sand and stones. It is dug in rocks in a great depth, and its main inlet faces to the north.

## (33) Hafir Fraj:

N: 15°55'/E: 33°47'

The site contains two hafirs, an ancient cemetery and an Islamic cemetery. The main hafir is surrounded by pebbles, sand and stones, and is erected on rocky base, having one main north-western inlet. The diameter of the hafir is 70 m. In the southern side of main hafir is a small hafir. There is an Islamic cemetery named Sharifiya. It is of unknown history, its tombstones are simple stones, not bearing any distinctive inscriptions or marks.

In the northern side of the hafir is a cemetery which contains 8 burial mounds surrounded by rings of black stones.

## (34) Hafir Um-Dangeila:

N: 15°55'/E: 33°47'

The site contains a hafir and a cemetery. The hafir is surrounded by stones, gravel and sand. It has one inlet, located at the western side. Its diameter is 57 m. At the northern side of the hafir there are Islamic graves of unknown history. This site has been

mentioned by Bradley (1992: 195), and dated to the Meroitic period.

This site may be the same site recorded by Crowfoot as an insignificant site named Um Dangella, it consists mainly of a hafir revetted with ashlar blocks, (Crowfoot 1920: 90–91). Edwards suggested it could be the same site known as Kadabouna (Edwards 1989: 58).

## (35) Miejna:

N: 15°55'/E: 33°40'

The site is a cemetery consisting of tombs which are scattered partly on the top and some of them at the foot of the mountain. The graves are mounds of black stones, taking a circular shape. In the base, they form a shape of big bowl «sultaniya» put upside down on the ground (hemispherical shape), and rise to about 1.5 m from the surface of the ground. The mounds vary in sizes. There have been counted 17 mounds. The typical mound has the diameter of 5 m.

## (36) Zawal A'mriya:

N: 15°52'/E: 33°33'

The site lies on the main road leading to Wad Hissuna village. It is a cemetery containing 17 burial mounds made of gravel and sand, surrounded by a ring of black stones.

## (37) Hafir A'mriya:

N: 15°51'/E: 33°35'

It is one of the A'naj hafirs, which is still in use today. East of the hafir an Islamic cemetery is situated, which is also still in use. In the cemetery, there is the Bayan (cenotaph) of Sheikh Hamad Al-Wiheish. In the west of A'mriya hafir there are 10 mounds made of black stones.

## (38) Al-Takandot:

N: 15°47'/E: 33°33'

The site contains a hafir and a cemetery. Hafir Al-Takandot is an A'naj's hafir, surrounded by pebbles, sand and stones. It is dug in rocks with a diameter about 70 m. It has an inlet in the north-east side.

The cemetery contains 70 tombs. The tombs are mounds of gravel and sand. They are variable in size and shapes. The typical tomb diameter is 7.5 m N-S.

## (39) Al-Sharafa:

N: 15°50' E: 33°42'

The site is a cemetery containing 10 burial mounds built of sand and gravel surrounded by rings of black stones.





(40) Abu-Kiteir:

N: 15°45'/E: 33°43'

The site is north of Abu-Khiteir Wadi. It consists of burial mounds built of sand and gravel surrounded by rings of black stones.

(41) Kireib A'mbasa:

N: 16°04'/E: 33°52'

It is a hilly area and the site contains a hafir and a cemetery. Hafir Al-Doro is one of the A'naj hafirs, which have been re-dug and reused. The cemetery is located south of the high land. There are about 7 burial mounds of black stones, which have been exposed to too much damage by the haphazard excavation.

Ahmad (1984: 39-40) mentioned another site named A'mbasa (N: 16°37'/E: 33° 53'). It consists of Meroitic tumuli and a settlement near Beir A'mbasa.

#### GRAVES

There are four main types of tumuli, which may represent three different cultural groups and/or different periods (fig. 9–12):

- a) Large mounds which are piles made of sand and pebbles and stones of small size, having a ring of black stones surrounding them. They always are in groups; the largest cemetery lies at the site of Kadabouna.
- b) Mounds made of gravel and sand in the shape of a semicircle, of varying sizes, presumably were previously the same as the tumuli described in (a) above surrounded by rings of black stones, taken by locals and used in building houses and fences.
- c) Mounds made of black stones, which are in the form of a reversed bowl, usually found in the high areas of the mountain chains. They are found in groups, as the area of the surface of the high land may allow, for example Al Tabag site. These iron-stone cairns previously been noted by Bradley in her description of Jebel Matruqa site (Bradley 1992: 191) and Ahmed in his description of the Jebel Geheid site (Ahmed 1984: 38) and Jebel Melih site (Ahmed 1986: 37).
- d) The fourth type have less clearly defined superstructures, composed of stones arranged in a rectangular shape. It is only a low elevation, sometimes even difficult to notice. This type of burials is found in Kireib A'mbasa and Kifeita (Tab. 1).

site	type one	type two	type three	type four
Al-Shalkha		10 +		
Kadabouna	163 +			
Hafir Al-Kifeita				40+
Al-Hanaka		30		
Hafir A'mriya			10	
Al-Tabag			38	
Al-Hadariya	36			
Athnabier		5		
Al-Shiheiheit	44			
Al-Tineitba		72		
Al-Mahalab			40	
Wad Al-Hakeina			50	
Um Damadma	15			
Um Jameina	3			
Al-Babanuta	156			
Hafir Wad Hag Al-Teir		61		
Um Marjum	12			
Al-Khanjarab	10			
Um Sineit	121			
Um Hijelija	44			
Hafir Farj	8			
Miejna			17	
Zawal A'mriya	17			
Al-Takandot		70		
Al-Sharafa	10			
Abu Kiteir	10+			
Kireib A'mbasa				20+

Tab. 1: The distribution of the four types of tumuli.

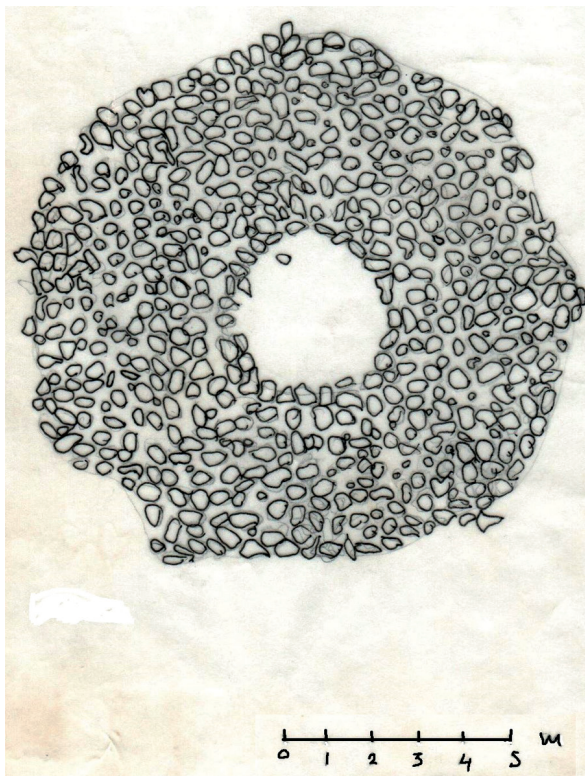


Fig. 9: Tumulus type 1 (drawing: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).

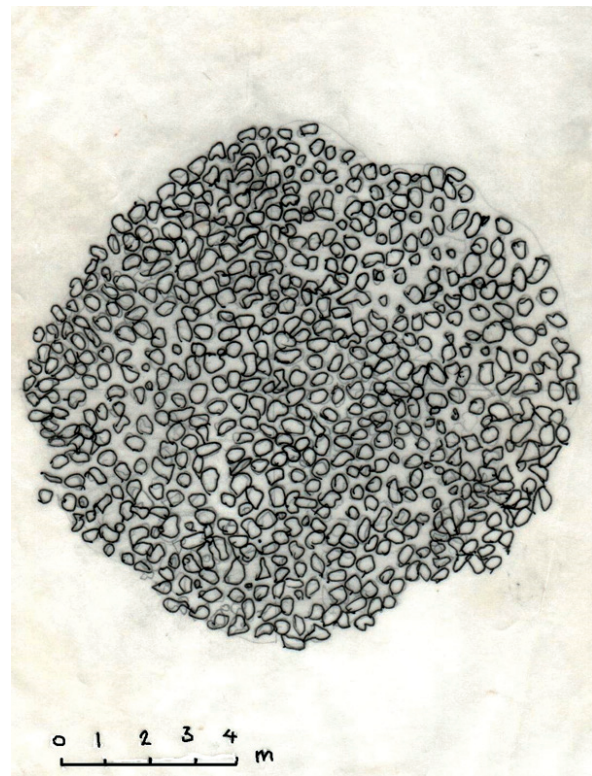


Fig. 11: Tumulus type 3 (drawing: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).

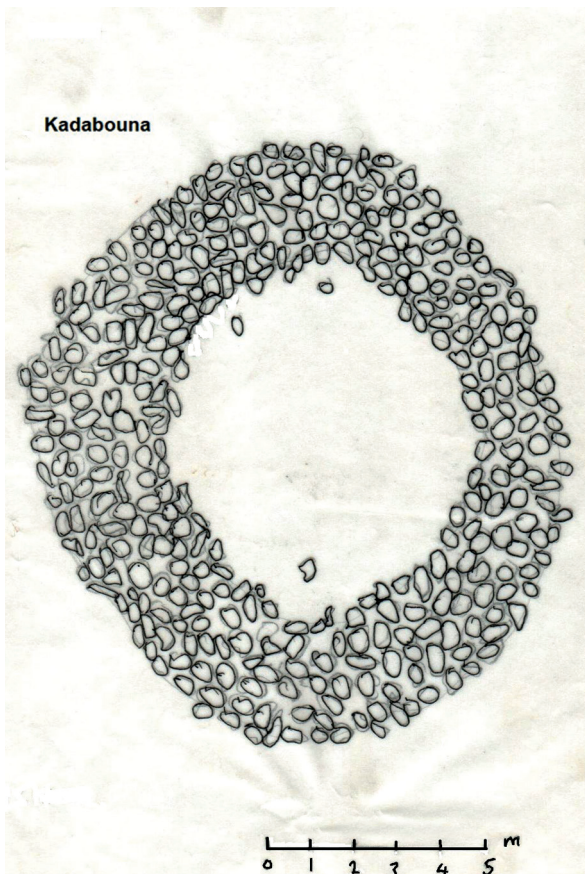


Fig. 10: Tumulus type 2 (drawing: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).

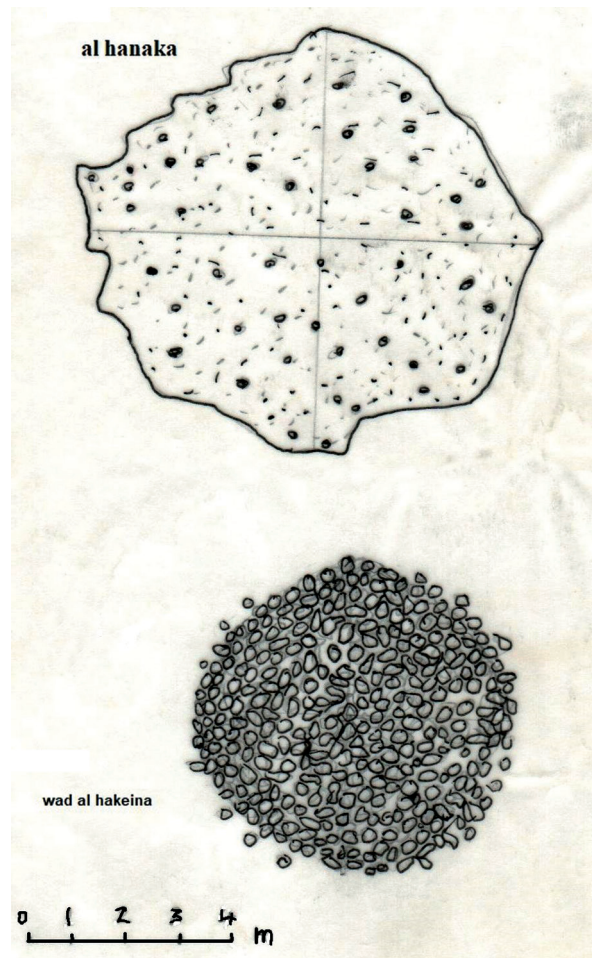


Fig. 12: Tumulus type 2 and 3 (drawing: Nuha Abdel Hafiz).





## HAFIRS

In the first century A.D Pliny mentioned the Meroitic *hafirs*:

*Located beyond the Troglodytes and the Red Sea is the whole region after Meroe. From Napata to the coast of the Red Sea shore is a journey of three days. Rain water is stored in several places for use (of travelers) and the intervening district a bounds in gold (Pliny, Naturalis historia 6: 189).*<sup>8</sup>

In her study about Hafirs,<sup>9</sup> Hinkel recorded about 800 hafirs in Butana region (Hinkel 1990: 29–36), most of them connected to Meroitic sites such as Musawwarat, Naqa, and Umm Usuda. Generally speaking, many scholars dated all Butana's Hafirs to the Meroitic period. Nevertheless, Hintze thought that all Butana's Hafirs could not be recognized as Meroitic remains, especially after considering the fact that there was no other strong evidence to support that most of hafirs were under Meroitic occupation (Hintze 1959: 196). Consequently, we aimed at studying the hafirs because there are many A'naj hafirs in Abu Deleig area that need investigation and hence identification.

Storage of water by man is an old practice in the Butana area. Meroitic *hafirs* which most of them are known locally by the name of A'naj Hafirs in the northern Butana were dug in the most suitable sites of human settlement; the same *hafir* design had been adopted everywhere in the Butana recently. All hafirs in the Butana have the same basic design, if varying in size.

Hafirs should be in well-drained clayey areas, at Jabels (hills) sides. Old hafirs used to be circular or irregularly shaped with remains of walled banks. The new hafirs are rectangular with defined banks open from one side to the catchment area with properly constructed feeders.

Sometimes, local people put fences (*zariba*) around the hafirs to regulate its use or preserve it for future use. Hafirs storage water is used for people, livestock and agriculture needs.

## WELLS

Hand dug wells are one of the main sources of water in the Butana region. In the Butana wells are divided

into two types according to depth and capacity: shallow ones (50–200 ft.) deep and deeper ones (over 200 ft.), which are called locally as *sania*s. *Sania*s are the oldest wells and local people have a strong belief that *sania*s belong to the "A'naj" and they just added to and repaired *sania*s and re-excavated the hidden ones. These type of wells are concentrated north of lat. 15°13' and they are used at present mainly by nomads (Abu Sin 1970: 61). The shallow wells are more recent than *sania*s, they date to the Turkish period. In the western Butana village wells are still the major sources of water.

The most suitable sites for wells are in deep or shallow sub-surface water tables in wadis, in upper course close to jabels. Very shallow wells may be found in beds or on banks of shallow Khors like El-Hawad at Abu Deleig. Former (May'aas) and depressions in northern Butana made good sites of shadow wells (Umm Shadida). Hidden joints and depressions indicated by surface outcrops also form favorable sites (Saffia El-Dareshab). Joints and depressions enclosed by jabels form another good site (Qeile).

## SETTLEMENTS SITES

We found three settlement sites: Athnabier, Al-Habir and Al-Khanjarab. The settlement site in Athnabier lays north-east of the hafir, and there are scattered on its surface a number of stone tools so we defined it as prehistoric site. Al-Habir contain remains of the settlement site, we collected scatter samples from a square 4 x 4 m. In Al-Khanjarab we found remains of a settlement site situated inside the modern village. The natives told us about the pottery which they found when building their houses or to other purposes.

We have made two test pits at Al-Habir and Al-Khanjarab. The aim of these test pits was to know the depth of sequence of deposits of each site to find out the type of material remains and consequently to determine the period to which the site belongs.

The test pits are 1.5 x 1.5 m, using arbitrary 20 cm spit level, and we have taken the south wall of the square to draw a profile of the layers.

(a) Al-Habir test pit:

Level 1 (0-10 cm) was a mild muddy soil containing pottery shards, bones, beads and gravel.

Level 2 (10-20 cm) the soil was brown, and contained pottery shards and beads.

Level 3 (20-30 cm) the soil was brown, it contained pottery and iron tools.

<sup>8</sup> The English translation in Eide et al. 1998: 859.

<sup>9</sup> It was not possible for me to see the monograph Hinkel, M. 2015. Die Hafire im Sudan. Eine Untersuchung zur Geschichte des frühen Wasserspeicherbaus. Archaeological Map of the Sudan, Supplement II.



Level 4 (30-40 cm) the soil was brown, it contained fewer pottery than level 3. We found the remains of a statue of an animal made of sun-dried mud.

Level 5 (40-50) the soil was dark brown, it contained few pottery shards.

We continued to find archaeological artifacts until we reached 60 cm, then the artifacts diminished. We reached the virgin layer at about 110 cm.

(b) Al-Khanjarab test pit:

The surface of the square was made of sand, gravel and pottery shards. The first level, till 20 cm depth, contained pottery, gravel, few bones and some red brick fragments.

At the second layer, till 40 cm, we continued to find pieces of pottery of larger size compared to the former findings, in addition to gravel, sand soil and red brick pieces. We also found in this level the upper part of a grinding stone.

At the third layer, till 60 cm; the artifacts started to diminish from 50 cm down to total absence. The soil is made of gravel and sand with a different color from the previous level. The virgin level appeared after 60 cm.

In Al Habir and Al Khanjarab sites we found some pottery shards decorated by Christian motifs which clear relate to Soba ware style which were defined by Shinnie (Shinnie 1961: 37-47) and Welsby (Welsby 1998: 170-171). By comparing the pottery discovered at the Al-Habir site in terms of industry and decoration, and we found a great similarity between it and the Soba ware style, which makes us classifying this site as one of the medieval (Christian) sites in Butana (figs. 6-9).

#### AL A'NAJ GROUP

During our attempt to research about the identity of A'naj and their history, we found that the oldest references to them in "Tashreif Al Aeam wa Al Asour Biseerat Al Malek Al Mansour"<sup>10</sup> of Ibn Abd Al-Zahir (1292 AD), when he was talking about a number of the regions to which the Mameluke Sultan Qalawun (1280-1290 AD) sent an ambassador in the Nuba and mentioned "Sahib al A'naj" as one of them (Ibn Abd Al zahir 1972: 197-201).

Ahmed Al-Mutasim traced the oral narrations about A'naj in the region extending from the fourth cataract in the north to Al-Jazeera region in the south, and from Al-Butana in the east to North Kordofan in the west. He concluded from his study

of these oral narrations that this region witnessed a wide spread of oral tradition about the A'naj (Ahmed Al Mutasim 2002: 49-47).

Through his study, Ahmad Al-Mu'tasim concluded that A'naj and the limits of their spread are related to the borders and population of the Christian kingdom of Alwa, and that all the material about Al-A'naj in this region is related to a period prior to the entry and spread of the Arabs and the spread of the Islamic religion in it.

He links the current Halanga group in eastern Sudan to this group, based on the fact that the meaning of the word Halanga in the Amharic language means the whip, and in all Sudan the whip is known as the A'naj whip (Ahmed Al Mutasim-2002: 65).

Based on the manuscript "Wadeh Al Baian fe Melouk Al Arab be Al sudan"<sup>11</sup> written by Abdullah bin Al-Arbab al-Hasan Shawar, it is said that the countries which came under the control of Abdullah Jamaa are all regions except the area of A'naj on the Red Sea shore, which was conquered by his son Sheikh Ajeeb (MacMichael 1922: 17).

Al-A'naj was mentioned in the "Kateb Al-Shouna"<sup>12</sup> when the writer quoted from the manuscript of the Sheikh of the Tijani in Kordofan. This manuscript dates back to the eighteenth century AD in more than one place. The first of them is in a hadith about the establishment of the city of Arbaji, that it was established by Hijazi bin Mu'in during the time of Al-A'naj. The second mention concerns Oun Alla's sons, they were seven men, and one of them was called Al Dareir who was a judge at the time of the A'naj. The third mention talks about the agreement between Amara Dungos and Abdallah Jama' that they united their word to fight Al A'naj, the kings of Soba, and the kings of the villages. The fourth mention speaks about the tribes that belong to Al-A'naj people (Abu Ali 1961: 124-129).

Referring to these oral narratives and the manuscripts about the A'naj, we conclude that we need a clearer definition about the origin and history of the A'naj, so we recommend another study in which using the folklore and its methods about A'naj in Abu Deleig area.

#### CONCLUSION

To conclude the findings of this season, we can say that the archaeological survey revealed sites dating back to periods extending from prehistory to Islamic

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12 كاتب الشونة



periods. The archaeological evidence has come to confirm the importance of Abu Deleig and Butana in general in recording the history of ancient Sudan.

At Al Habir site we found pottery which we classified as medieval (Soba ware). Therefore we believe that the extension of Alwa sites in the Butana region was greater than previously assumed.

A number of Islamic burials have been recorded which according to the oral narrations belonged to an ancient group that inhabited the area. Their name was Al-Lababa Al-Humur. It is worth noting that we did not find tombstones that could enable us to date the period.

This requires us to recommend further collection of ethnographic data and the oral traditions of the region in addition to archaeological work for deeper understanding of the history and antiquities of Butana.

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## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Region der Butana ist eines der wichtigsten archäologischen Gebiete zur Erforschung der Geschichte des antiken Sudan. Es ist die Region, die als die von Strabo erwähnte „Insel Meroe“ definiert wurde. Neben den meroitischen Stätten finden sich in dem Gebiet zahlreiche archäologische Überreste aus verschiedenen anderen Epochen.

Die archäologische Untersuchung beschränkte sich auf das Gebiet der Verwaltungseinheit Abu Deleig, die dem Distrikt Eastern Nile des Staates Khartum unterstellt ist. Es grenzt im Westen an den Ort Wad-Hassuna, im Norden an die Grenzen des Khartum-State und des Nile-State, im Süden an die Grenzen des Gadariff-State und im Osten an die Grenzen des Kassala-State.

Die archäologische Untersuchung versuchte, alle sichtbaren Hinterlassenschaften wie Hafire, Fried-

höfe und Siedlungen mit Brunnen zu lokalisieren, die lokal als Brunnen und Hafire von A‘naj bekannt sind. Dies ist der vorläufige Bericht über die erste Kampagne (2019) der archäologischen Untersuchung. Die Untersuchung wurde vom Dekanat für wissenschaftliche Forschung der Universität Khartum finanziert. Als Ergebnis der ersten Saison wurden mehr als 40 archäologische Stätten aus verschiedenen Epochen, von der Urgeschichte bis in die islamische Zeit, erfasst. Von besonderer Bedeutung sind Funde mittelalterlicher Soba-ware, die eine größere Ausdehnung des christlichen Königreiches von Alwa in die Butana hinein vermuten lassen.

Das Gebiet bedarf weiterer Untersuchungen, da verschiedene archäologische Stätten durch Schatzsucher und Vernachlässigung beschädigt und manipuliert wurden, was unser Wissen über das Gebiet und seinen Beitrag zur antiken Geschichte des Sudan schwächt.