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ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEYS AND EXCAVATIONS AT SITE JEBEL EL-KHAZNA (Fo6) IN THE FIFTH CATARACT REGION, SUDAN – A PRELIMINARY REPORT

THE FIFTH CATARACT AREA – A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The Fifth Cataract area is located in the Middle Nile region, about 400 km north of Khartoum. It is one of the areas that still lack detailed archaeological explorations. Some reports were made about the area during the 19th century by travelers and explorers, such as Johann Ludwig Burckhardt (1814), Frédéric Cailliaud (1822), Joseph Russegger (1836), and Karl Richard Lepsius (1844) (Jesse et al. 2013). First archaeological investigations include Henry Cecil Jackson's work (1926) as well as that of Anthony J. Arkell (1949a) and Osbert G. S. Crawford (1953). In the mid-70s of the last century, the University of Khartoum conducted an archaeological survey in the region (Mohammed-Ali 1971, Kleppe 1982, Eisa 1995, El-Amin and Edwards 2000). In 2001, the Archaeological National Joint Project undertook a survey and some excavations (Osman et al. 2003). South of the area, a survey and excavations were carried out in the eastern part of the riverbank by Randi Haaland and Anwar A. Magid (1995). In addition, the National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums (NCAM) did a rescue survey in 2011 in the areas which would have been affected by the Nile flood due to the construction of potential future dams. In 2012, the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznan undertook a survey within the project "Fortresses of Sudan" (Drzewiecki and Stepnik 2012, 2014). In the same year, the Sudan Archaeological Research Society surveyed the area of El-Usheir island (Welsby 2013). In 2013 and 2017, the University of Münster undertook more work (Jesse et al. 2013, Jesse et al. 2018).

Most of these investigations and studies focus on different types of archaeological evidence. At the same time, only some of them mention the prehistoric sites in the region. Based on the existing reports, we only have little information about the characteristics of this period in the Fifth Cataract region. While previous work did shed some light on

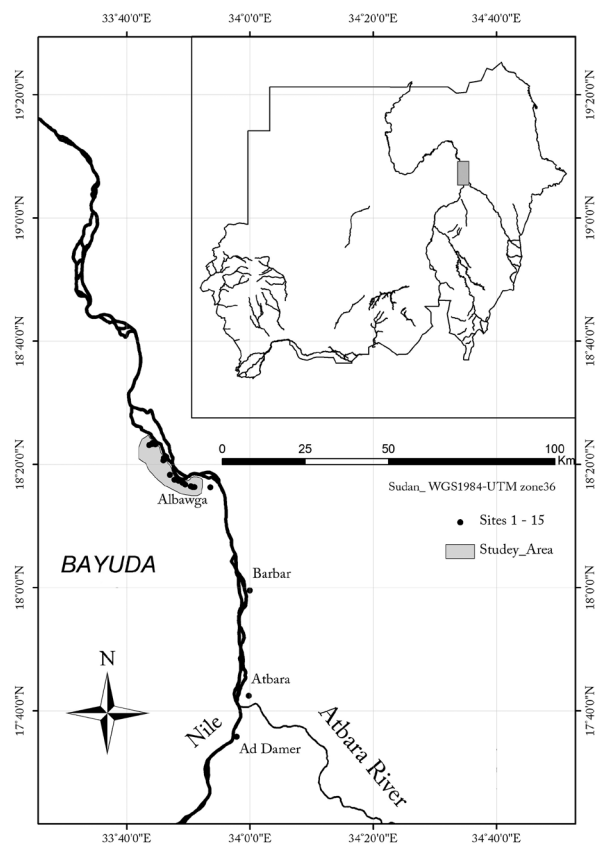


Fig. 1: Fifth Cataract, Survey area during season 2015/16 (map M. A. Jadain, H. M. Alkhidir)

the prehistoric archaeology of the region, there are still gaps in the archaeological map of the area, due to the lack of comprehensive research and large-scale surveys and excavations.

The natural resources and the ancient landscape of the study area offered the prehistoric people a suitable and stable environment to live, due to topographical features such as the Nile, wadies, mountains and plain lands, which all surround the site. It seems that the inhabitants chose the area according to these characteristics and what they could offer for an integrated lifestyle.



Fig. 2: Jebel El-Khazna (F06) site (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).

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To conduct research in the region requires a) the review of previous studies, b) archaeological surveys, c) (test) excavations and d) the classification of archaeological evidence. In addition, similarities between site locations and the characteristics of the landscape that may have played a great role for the settlement and mobility of prehistoric groups need to be identified. This is especially relevant for the late prehistory (after the Second Millennium BC) in central Sudan. It is worth-while to expand this research into the Middle Nile region in order to

study the relevant sites in geographical and possibly chronological terms. The results in terms of cultural changes may be linked with natural factors, geographical location and their possible impact (fig. 1).

In order to better understand the Mesolithic/Neolithic period, the author started his work on the southern part of the Fifth Cataract area in 2008. Archaeological research was carried out in four seasons in the years 2008, 2010, 2013 and 2015–2016. The results of the surveys, test excavations and classification studies have been presented in preliminary reports during the author's undergraduate and post-graduate studies.



1) Season 2008

In this season, a short archaeological survey was undertaken in the area of Fotwar, which led to the discovery of Jebel El-Khazna (F06) site. The site is located at the southern end of Fotwar near Um Bala village, at a distance of 600 m to the west of the Nile. Eldnosab wadi passes in the south of the site and to the northwest it is bounded by Khor Um Buwa. The site is located at 362 m a.s.l. and 6 m above its surroundings. It covers an area of 320 m in length and 270 m in width. Therefore, it seems to be longitudinally oriented along a north-south axis (fig. 2). An initial report was written to describe the site and the scattered materials on the surface such as pottery, stone artefacts, and faunal remains. Additionally rock art and cemeteries were recorded. According to the documented artifacts, it seems that the site dates back to the late prehistoric period.

2) Season 2010

In 2010, a supplementary study was conducted by the author to obtain the Bachelor's degree in Archaeology and Museums Studies at Shendi University. During an archaeological survey in the southern parts of the Fifth Cataract area (around Fotwar village), 24 sites dating back to different periods were recorded, including the site of Jebel El-Khazna (F06), which was revisited.

3) Season 2013

In season 2013, we re-examined the site (F06) to select the spots that could provide more detailed evidence about the nature of the site. Two squares (3 x 3 m), one in the eastern part of the site and the other in the western part, were surface cleaned. In addition, a third square measuring 1.50 x 1.50 m and situated in the western part of the site was excavated up to 0.45 m depth (fig. 3). The field work yielded a variety of archaeological materials such as stone tools, potsherds and faunal remains.

4) Season 2015–2016

In season 2015–2016, the goal was to draw an archaeological map of the distribution of prehistoric sites in the Fifth Cataract area. An archaeological survey was carried out starting at Wadi Umm Sar-



Fig. 3: Test pit, season 2013, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).

rih in the south to end at Wadi Abu Haraz in the north, about 22 km along the western bank of the Nile and about 5 km west of the Nile. The area was divided into three geographical sections according to the local topography, which is characterised by hills, valleys and the Nile river. The divisions start from the south to the north. Code (G) represents the El-Gol area, Code (F) stands for Fotwar and (S) is El-Selimaneah (fig. 4).

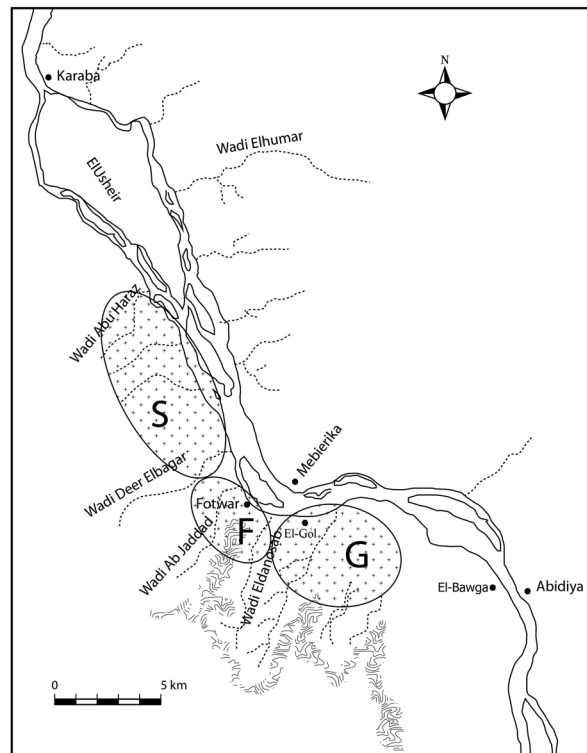


Fig. 4: divisions of survey area, season 2015/16 (altered map H. M. Alkhidir, source Edwards & Elamin 2000).

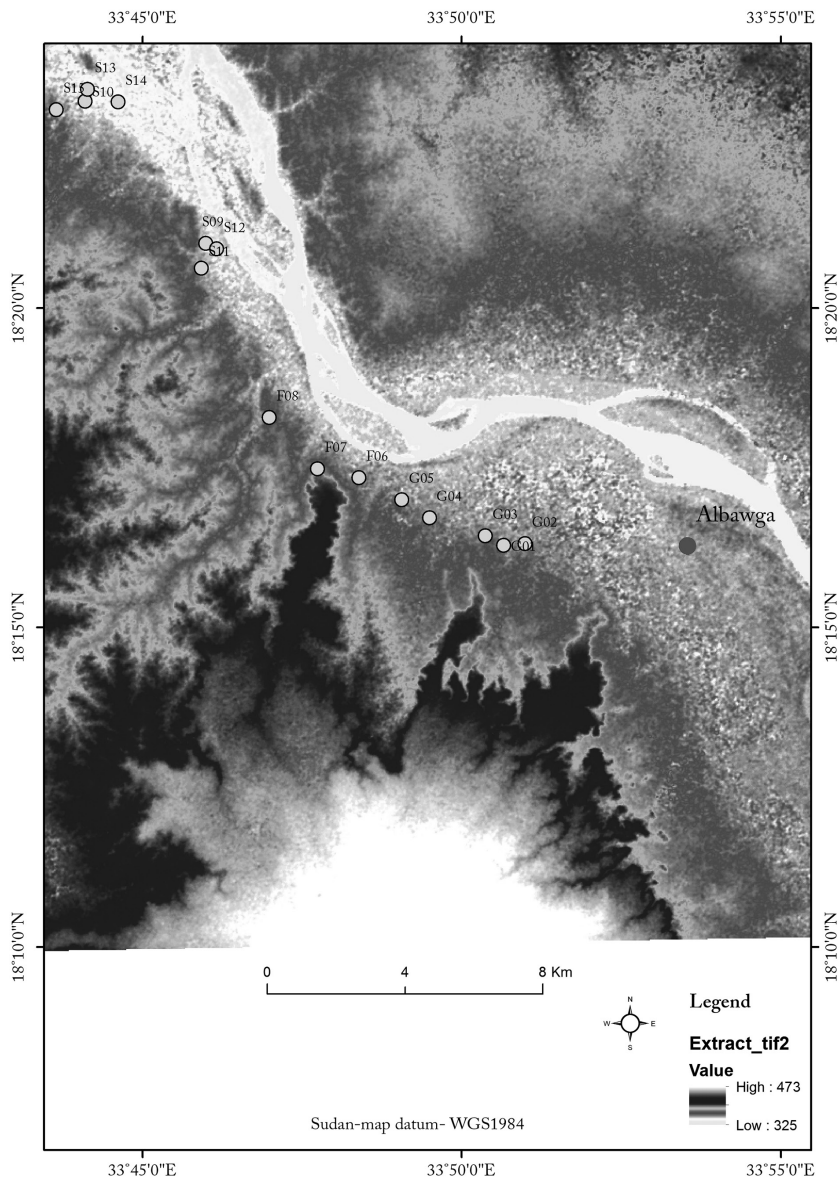


Fig. 5: Distributions of late prehistoric sites in survey area, season 2015/16 (map M. A. Jadain, H. M. Alkhidir).

The survey discovered 15 archaeological sites dating back to the late prehistoric period (fig. 5, colour fig. 1), including the site of Jebel El-Khazna (F06). The site was re-visited in this season as example of a Mesolithic/Neolithic site in the area. It was selected again for additional excavations because it represents a great diversity of archaeological evidence such as settlement features, hut structures, graves, rock art and workshops. Besides, the site is located in the middle of the survey area and distinguished by artefacts spread all over the surface.

JEBEL EL-KHAZNA F06

Features

Features of the site are natural outcrops of sandstone in the northern and western edges, huge scatters of artefacts on the surface, different tumuli and hut structures. We recorded numerous built structures differing in size on the surface and eastern slope of the site, some of them are circular and others are box-shaped (Alkhidir, forthc.). There are also remains of a stone hut with a size 6 x 4.30 m (fig. 6).



Fig. 6: Hut remains, made of stone, site F06(photo: H. M. Alkhidir).



An addition, one pit was drilled into the sandstone bedrock in order to be used as a storage pit. Its size is 0.45 x 0.40 m and it has a depth of 0.50 m (fig. 7). The pit is similar in size to some of the structures found at Arduan, which dates back to the late prehistoric period (Edwards and Sadig 2012: 48). Well preserved and intact examples of such pits dating to the Pre-Kerma period have been found in Sai Island. They contained barley and emmer wheat as well as millet and other fruit stones (Geus 2004).

Artifacts/Finds:

Stone tools

A large amount of lithic material was identified, including finished and unfinished tools. Small debitage scattered in the western side can be taken as evidence for the presence of a workshop. In season 2013, 355 lithic artefacts were collected from the site (Alkhidir 2018) and 556 during season 2015–2016 (Tab. 1). Tools and blanks made from various raw materials such as chert, quartz, rhyolite, basalt, agate, Nubian sandstone and granite differ in shape and functional use. The typological classification revealed different types of scrapers, burins, hammerstones (fig. 8), borers, denticulated tools, arrowheads and geometrically-shaped tools such as crescents and lunates (figs. 9, 10). These forms are typical for Mesolithic/Neolithic industries in central Sudan (Arkell 1953) and the Middle Nile region (Kleppe 1982; Haaland and Magid 1995; Sadig 2010) (table. 1).



Fig. 7: Store pit, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).



Fig. 8: Hammer stones, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).



Fig. 9: Stone tools, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).



Excavated layers	shape of lithic artefacts		raw material			Form			function				Total
	completed	uncompleted	quartz	chert	Other	flake	Blade	core	cutting	abrading	puncturing	other	
Trench (1, n=302)													
Surface	4	21	1	22	2	14	4	7	6	10	9		25
1	3	55	13	41	4	27	20	11	20	26	12		58
2	2	33	8	26	1	25	4	6	8	14	10	3	35
3	5	38	6	34	3	24	11	8	13	20	7	3	43
4	2	58	11	47	2	34	17	9	22	22	16		60
5	2	32	9	25		19	7	8	17	13	4		34
6		3	1	2		1	1	1	1	1	1		3
7		38	15	21	2	26	8	4	11	21	6		38
8		6	5	1		3	2	1	1	2	3		6
9													
10													
Trench (2, n=254)													
Surface	4	112	7	99	10	79	17	20	20	60	22	14	116
1	5	133	7	123	8	99	22	17	21	62	39	16	138

Table. 1: Stone tools classification, Trench (1) and (2), site F06. Season 2015/16.

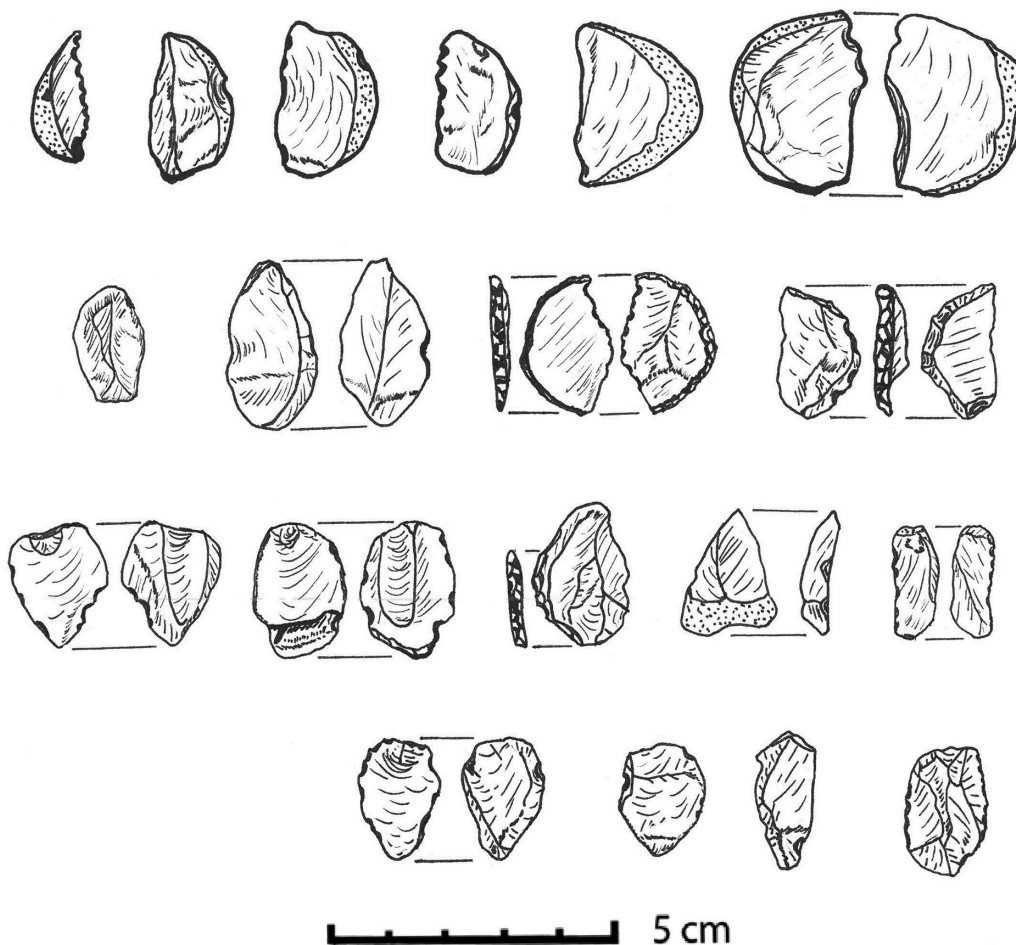


Fig. 10: lithic tools, site F06 (photo H. M. Alkhidir).

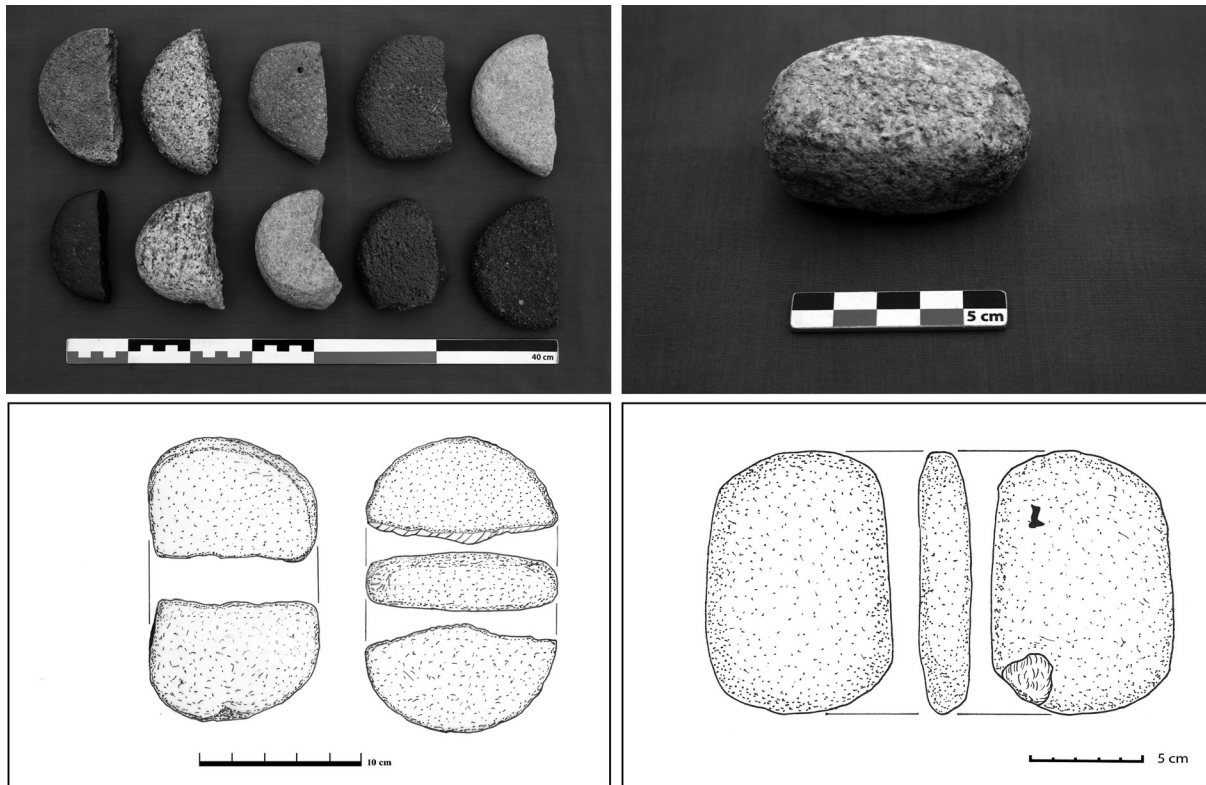


Fig. 11: Grinders , site F06 (drawing: H. M. Alkhidir).

Furthermore, there are some bifacial scrapers and other tools which were retouched at one side only. Grinders were found scattered everywhere on the surface and in different levels of the test excavations (fig. 11). Only one gouge with a sharp end (with a size of 55x40 mm), found on the surface, is identical to the Shaheinab gouges (Arkell 1953: 32).

Ceramics

In season 2013, 692 potsherds were identified, among them 417 polished potsherds compared to 275 unpolished pieces. Ceramic manufacturing would have been possible at the site given the presence of resources such as clay of different kinds, quartz powder and black valley soils (containing mica). These kinds of raw materials were commonly used during the Mesolithic/ Neolithic period. The study of the ceramics also revealed potential differences in the firing temperature according to the colour, material and durability of the pottery. Although the pottery types from Jebel El-Khazna vary in fabric, deco-

ration, colours (black-grey-brown-red) and forms, they show a general similarity to the late prehistoric sites at Atbara (Haaland and Magid 1995), Early Khartoum and Shaheinab (Arkell 1953, 1949b), Shaqadud (Mohammed-Ali 1991, 63–66) and in the Shendi region (Geus 1984: 32, Sadig 2010).

With regard to the decoration, a great variety could be encountered due to the progress in pottery technologies and general cultural changes, besides a large proportion of different types of finishes. Out of total 692 potsherds, there are only 30 pieces without decoration, and in season 2015–2016, 442 pieces of pottery were collected from trench (1) (fig. 12) and 156 pieces from the second square (trench 2) (fig. 13).



Fig. 12: Trench 1, season 2015/16, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).



Fig. 13: Trench 2, season 2015/16, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).

Amongst the decorated sherds, the comb-impressed ones show straight and curved dotted lines with large dots and complex lines. Besides that, decorations impressed with a plain-edged tool are recognizable by curved lines and zigzag patterns. Some decorations consisting of a combination of incised lines and dots with different patterns such

as large dots, Dotted Wavy Line, single dots, incised parallel dots (fig. 14, 15), and fish-scale decoration (fig. 16) seem to be restricted to the area between the Fifth Cataract and Mograt Island (Dittrich and Gessner 2014, 134). The incised linear decoration is comparable to types known from the sites of Shaheinab (Arkell 1953: 73) and Shaqadud (Mohammed-Ali 1991: 68-72).

On the other hand, there is a larger amount of sherds with older pottery traits (late Mesolithic and early Neolithic) similar to late prehistoric sites such as Aneibis, Ed-Damer and Abu Darbein which are much closer to the study area (Haaland and Magid 1995: 42). In season 2015–2016, more in-depth classification studies of the pottery have been done according to raw material, shape (fig. 17), surface, colour and decoration, showing a unique variety in different aspects of the pottery manufacture (tables. 2-4).

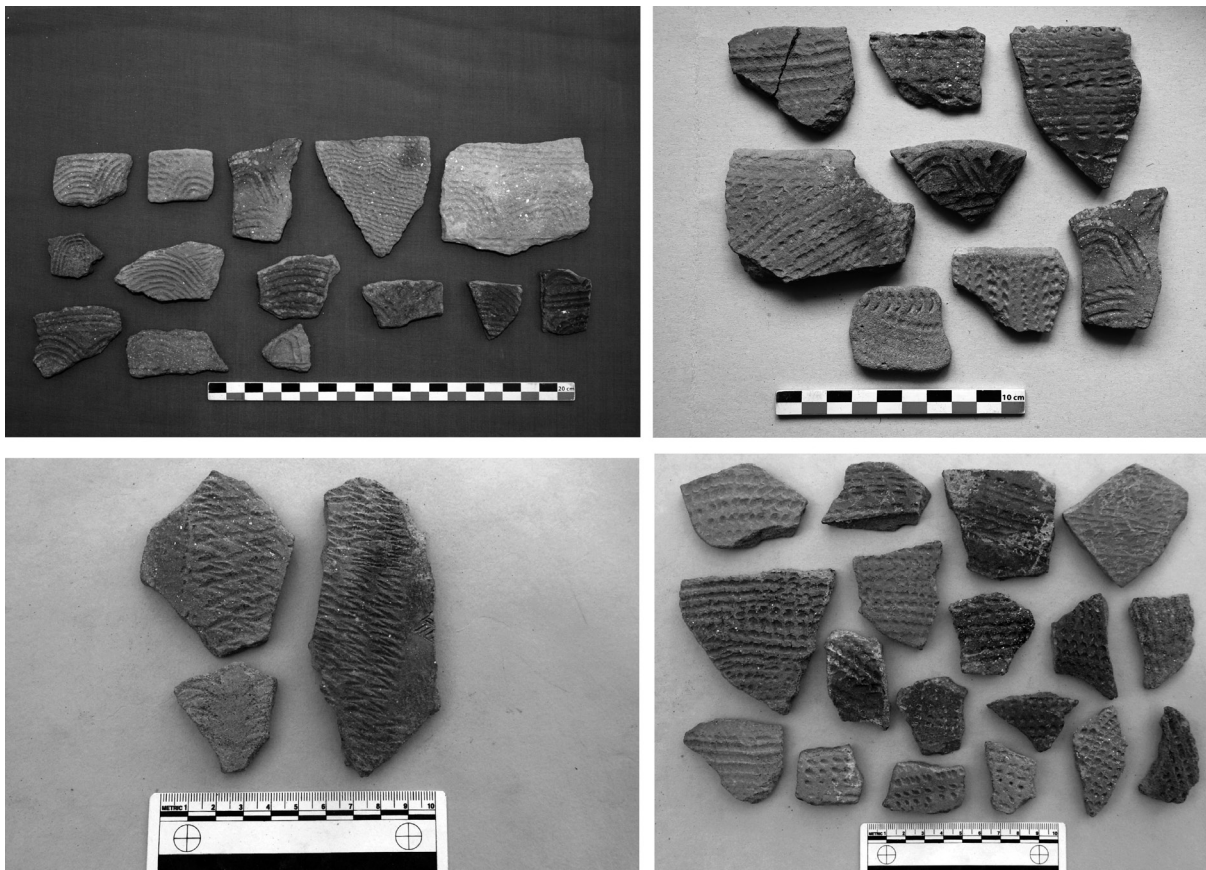


Fig. 14: Potsherds, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).

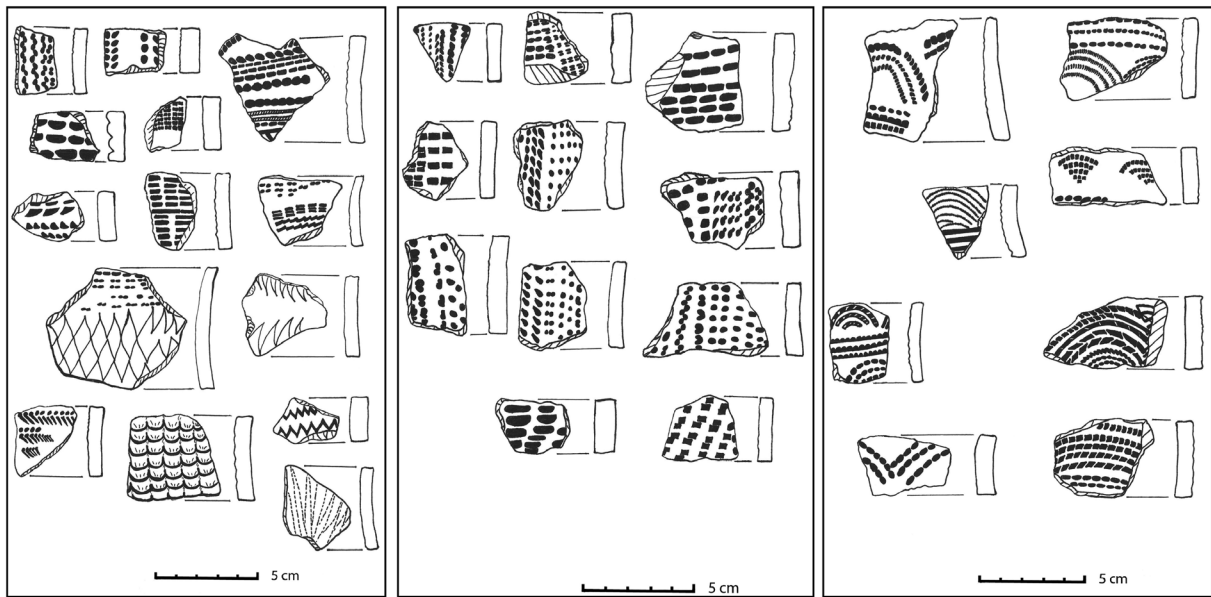


Fig. 15: Decorated potsherds, site F06

Fig. 16: Fish-scale decorations, site F06
(photo: H. M. Alkhidir).

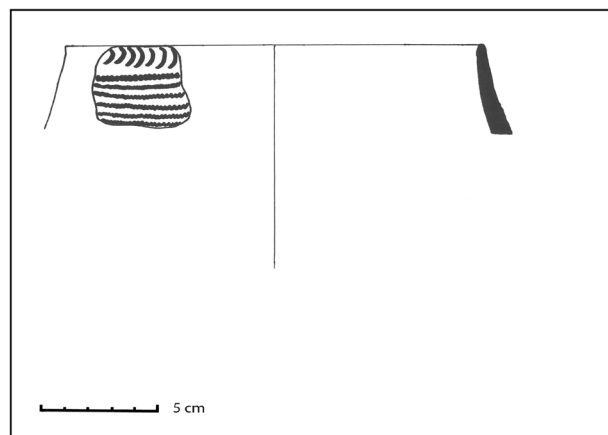
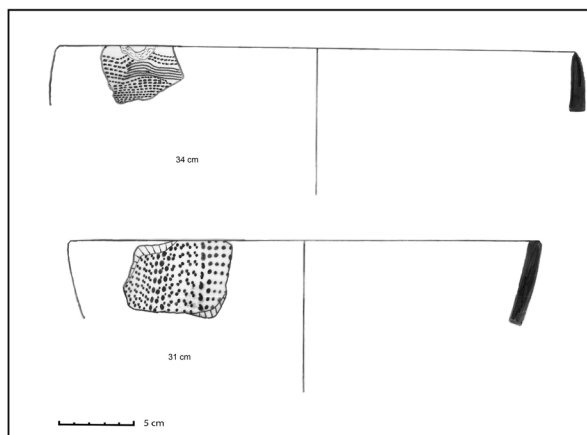
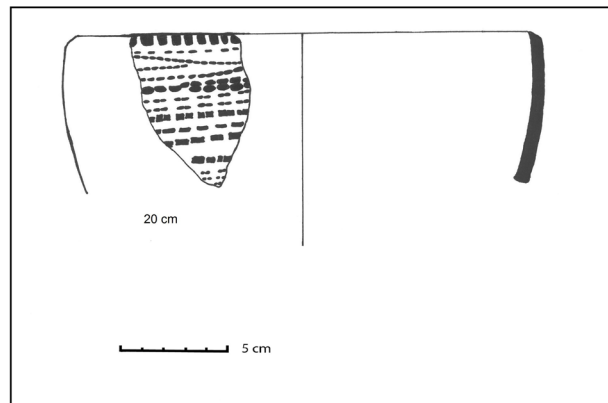
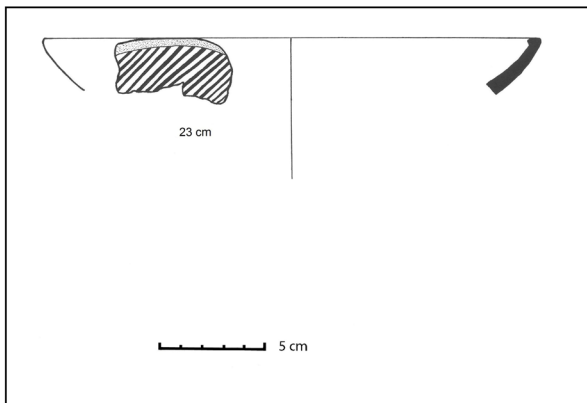


Fig. 17: different shape of vessels, site F06 (drawing: H. M. Alkhidir).



Layers	Type			Color				Decoration		Polishing		Total
	rim	base	bottom	Red	Black	Brown	Other	decorated	undecorated	Polished	unpolished	
Trench (1, n=442)												
Surface	2		31	2	9	19	3	27	6	22	11	33
1	6		77	3	5	70	5	78	5	77	6	83
2	7		90	4	15	71	7	94	3	91	6	97
3	4		65	5	9	50	5	64	5	59	10	69
4	6	1	54	3	18	36	4	54	7	46	15	61
5	3		40		9	32	2	39	4	35	8	43
6	1		11	3	1	7	1	11	1	10	2	12
7	3		17	2	5	13		19	1	11	9	20
8	1	1	7		3	6		6	3	8	1	9
9	1		9		5	4	1	7	3	7	3	10
10	2		3		3	2		5		5		5
Trench (2, n=156)												
Surface	4		39		12	31		33	10	22	21	43
1	17		96	12	11	90		72	41	73	40	113

Table 2: General classification of Pottery, Trench (1) and (2), site F06. Season 2015/16.

Layers	raw material			Firing			Surface finish			thickness		Total
	Clay + sand contains	Clay + fine sand	Clay + quartz	good	Medium	Bad	Smooth	medium	coarse	Thick (more than 10 mm)	Thin (less than 10 mm)	
Trench (1, n=442)												
Surface	4	2	27	22	8	3	5	11	17	4	29	33
1	3	4	76	60	20	3	65	12	6	5	78	83
2	19	4	74	90	5	2	50	35	12	12	85	97
3	11	8	50	48	16	5	38	24	7	4	65	69
4	12	9	40	40	19	2	22	31	8	10	51	61
5	9	3	31	35	7	1	3	34	6	4	39	43
6	6	1	5	8	2	2	1	9	2	3	9	12
7	2	1	17	16	3	1	15	3	2	3	17	20
8	5		4	5	3	1	6	1	2	1	8	9
9	3	1	6	4	5	1	1	7	2	3	7	10
10	3	2		3	2			4	1		5	5
Trench (2, n=156)												
Surface	2	4	37	35	6	2	2	35	6	7	36	43
1	39	6	68	90	18	5	34	52	27	9	104	113

Table 3: Classification of pottery according to raw material, burning, surface and thickness, Trench (1) and (2), site F06 Season 2015/16.



Layers	Wavy Lines	Dotted Wavy Lines	Vees / Dots	Dots	Dotted Impressed Lines	Nail Impression	Combed Decoration	Dotted Zigzag	Zigzag	Incised lines	Curved Dotted lines
Trench (1, n=424)											
Surfaces	1	1		26	1			7			1
1		2		48		1		10	1	1	2
2	1	1		61	1		1	12		2	1
3		2	1	50	1			16			3
4		4		35				20	1	1	1
5		6	1	23	2		2	24			1
6		1		11				9			
7		1		8				4			
8		1		6				1			
9				2				3			
10				1				1			
Total	2	19	2	271	5	1	3	107	2	4	9
Trench (2, n=106)											
Surfaces		2	1	15	1	1	1	12		2	2
1	1	5		25	3	1		30	1	1	2
Total	1	7	1	40	4	2	1	42	1	3	4

Table 4: Pottery decorations, Trench (1) and (2), site F06. Season 2015/16.

Faunal remains

A large amount of faunal remains was excavated at the site, including bones of large and small animals (fig. 18), as well as molluscs, shells and ostrich eggshell. Some of the bones belong to big and small ruminants. Fish bones such as thorns, heads and thick ribs (fig. 19) were also excavated. The faunal remains discovered also include large quantities of molluscs in different shapes, sizes and types. Among them are specimen of *Pila wernei* which have a conical shape and other shells that appeared to be larger in size and more elongated and most probably belong to the species *Spathopsis rubens* (fig. 20) (Khabir 1987: 59–60). Both types are widely present at site F06 and were found during both the surveys and the excavations, especially in trench (1) of season 2015–2016. Circular beads made of ostrich eggshell (fig. 21) were found as well as shells with a size of about 1 cm in diameter, which could have been used as personal ornaments.

Rock Art

Several rock art spots were documented at site Jebel El-Khazna (F06) and it can be noted that there are others in various places around the site. Rock art is

represented in different types regarding subject, form, size and details as well as style. Animal pictures are the predominant feature, such as camels, cows, and deer (fig. 22), as well as geometric shapes, shoe patterns and mysterious forms like lines and circles. Some of the geometric shapes, cattle and camel show similarities to those that have been found in the northern part of the Fifth Cataract (Drzewiecki and Stepnik 2014) and the Fourth Cataract region (Kleinitz 2007) (forms 24–27).

CONCLUSION

The lack of in-depth archaeological research in the region and the variety of threats such as the construction of dams were the motives for conducting intensive field work. Its aim was to highlight the importance of the archaeology of area and the Mesolithic/Neolithic period in particular. Studies done so far have allowed for the registration of many sites. The region is characterized by natural features and resources such as the river Nile, large valleys, mountains and outcrops of several rocks such as quartz and granite, which contribute to the availability of raw materials for the manufacture of tools. These natural resources also led to the diversification of economic



Fig. 18: Animals bones, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).

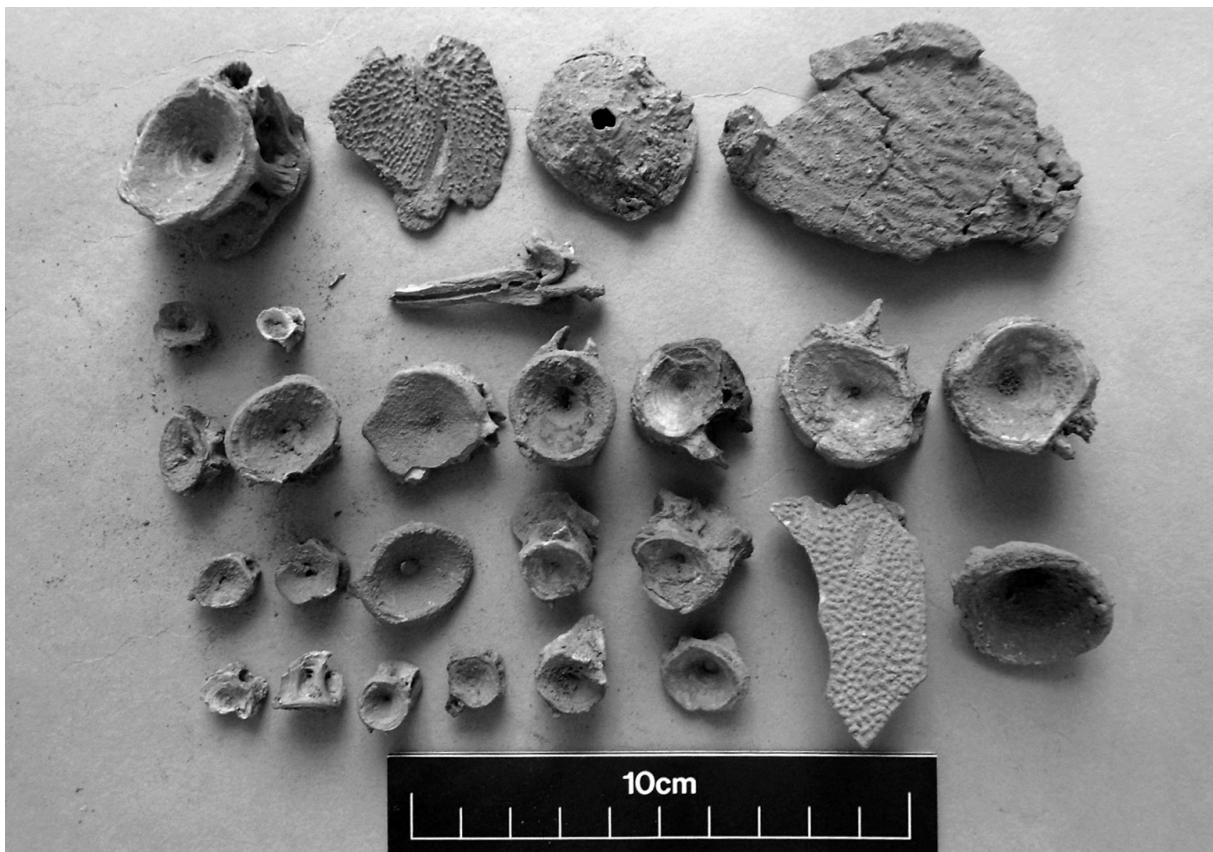


Fig. 19: Fish bones, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).

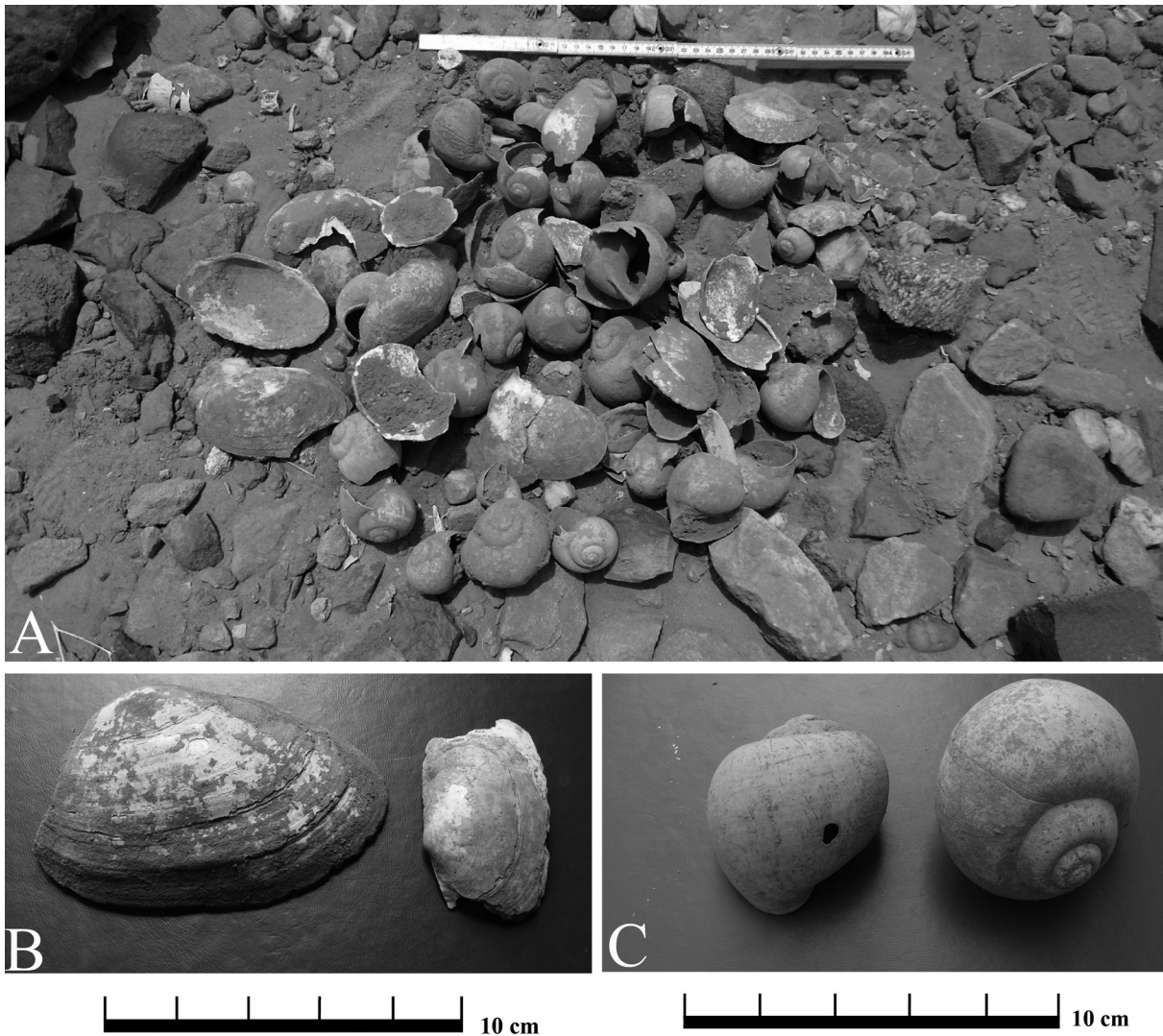


Fig. 20: (A) different Shells, (B) *Spathopsis rubens*, (C) *Pila wernei*, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).

activities as well as the protection and stability of human groups.

The archaeological sites that were found in the area bear witness to this. There are 15 sites that date back to the Mesolithic/Neolithic period and are distributed in an area of 22 km in length along the western bank of the Nile and about 5 km west of the Nile. Among these sites, work focused on site Jebel El-Khazna F06. This site shows large quantities of animal and fish bones, molluscs, grinders and fishing weights, as well as a great diversity of pottery sherds and lithic artefacts. These finds indicate a variety of economic activities such as hunting, pasture, fishing, gathering plants and snails, and perhaps agriculture, which is evidenced in the large number of grinding stones, which, however, also might have been used for another purpose, such as grinding collected wild cereals, crushing stones or colour pigments, etc. The prehistoric people also used tools for manufacturing ornamental elements such as beads made of ostrich

eggshell and tools for grinding colours, which was used for colouring pottery or the human body or for certain rituals.

The classification and study of the archaeological finds illustrate the similarity of the site with other known Mesolithic/Neolithic sites in central and northern Sudan and further findspots to the east and west of the Fifth Cataract region, such as sites



Fig. 21: Beads made of Ostrich eggshell, site F06 (photo: H. M. Alkhidir).

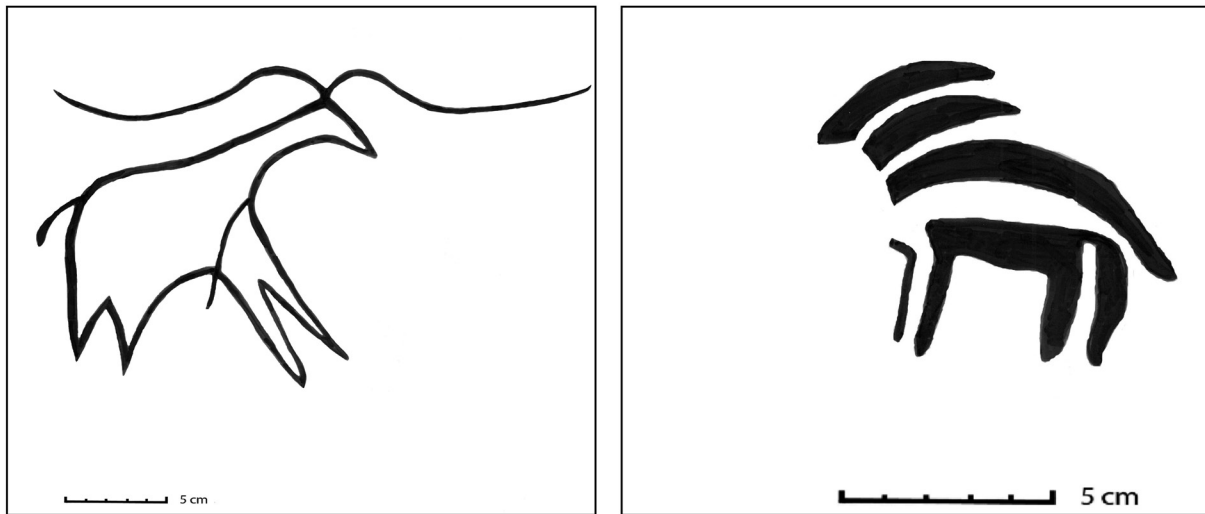


Fig. 22: Rock art, site F06 (drawing: H. M. Alkhidir).

BSAS05 and BSAS09 (Bashir 2017, 206) and sites BP 133 and BP 424 (Jesse and Masojć 2018). Site F06 is distinguished by pottery decorated with fish-scale motifs and the discovery of a gouge. Such a gouge has until now not yet been discovered to the north of the Shendi region.

Recently, additional work has been done at the site by a University of Münster team, providing more information, especially concerning the dating of the site and the types of economic activities (Jesse, *forthc.*). However, site F06 needs further study in the future, with extensive excavation and laboratory analysis of archaeological materials to complete our understanding of the nature of the site and its archaeological evidence.

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Artikel untersucht eine mesolithische / neolithische Altertümerstätte im Gebiet des Fünften Katarakts, um ein besseres Verständnis dieser Zeit, des täglichen Lebens in solchen prähistorischen Gesellschaften und der Besonderheiten ihres Lebensstils gegenüber anderen Perioden in der Geschichte zu vermitteln. Darüber hinaus wird die Beziehung zu benachbarten Gebieten und Fundstellen erörtert.

Zwischen 2008 und 2016 wurden in der Region des Fünften Kataraktes mehrere Feldkampagnen durchgeführt, in denen der Autor eine Reihe von mesolithischen / neolithischen Fundorten aufzeichnete. Darunter befindet sich der Ort Jebel El-Khazna (F06), an dem gut identifizierbare Artefakte aus dem Mesolithikum und dem Neolithikum zu finden sind, darunter Keramik, Steinartefakte, tierische Überreste und Felskunst.

Untersuchungen und Testgrabungen haben gezeigt, dass Jebel El-Khazna F06 in vielen Aspekten anderen bekannten mesolithischen / neolithischen Fundorten im Sudan ähnlich ist. Sie zeigen auch, dass das Gebiet mehr Aufmerksamkeit in der archäologischen Forschung benötigt, was zu einem klareren Bild der Qualität und Form der kulturellen Beziehungen in prähistorischen Zeiten führen wird.