

# **Report of the Project "Wadi Abu Dom Itinerary"**

## **Second Season, 23.2.-15.3.2010**

(funded by the Gerda Henkel-Foundation and German Research Foundation, Germany)

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### 1. Staff

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### 2. Proposed work

The aim of the second season in the Wadi Abu Dom was to enlarge the knowledge of the site diversity and site pattern in the Wadi Abu Dom. We planned to move on from the last point of the first campaign ( $18^{\circ}25'50''\text{N} / 31^{\circ}56'30''\text{E}$ ) at least to the next large Khor ( $18^{\circ}25'\text{N} / 31^{\circ}57'\text{E}$ ), but including both banks of one of the Khors leading to the Wadi Abu Dom. The scientific aim was to compare the site distribution in the Wadi Abu Dom (E-W) itself with one of the Khors (S-N).

### 3. Realized work (Fig. 1)

Being 15 days in the field, we surveyed intensively an area of about 13 km<sup>2</sup>. We started at  $18^{\circ}25'50''\text{N} / 31^{\circ}56'30''\text{E}$  and ended at  $18^{\circ}25'23''\text{N} / 31^{\circ}57'45''\text{E}$ . Up to now, the total length of the survey along the banks of the Wadi Abu Dom itself is about 9.5 km. We also covered the areas about 2-3km (depending on the topographical condition) north and south of the Wadi. Moreover, we have chosen two Khors (one small leading N-S at  $\text{N } 18^{\circ}25'39'' / \text{E } 31^{\circ}57'04''$ ; one big, leading S-N at  $\text{N } 18^{\circ}25'09'' / \text{E } 31^{\circ}57'21''$ ) for the comparison with the Wadi Abu Dom and surveyed both banks up to the beginning of this Khors.

Since our staff was enlarged with two students it was possible to do the survey in two teams. We identified altogether 245 sites. Like in the first season these sites were mostly small (single burials, shelters etc), only very few complex sites were discovered (see site list below). The datation was again done according to surface finds (finds listed below). None of the identified structures seemed to be endangered, therefore no rescue excavation was needed. Since we plan to make sondages only to specify the overall pattern of the site distribution, we will start to do so in the following years. At two sites sondages were taken out. Site 114, a shelter, was thought to contain datable material, but turned out to be totally empty. Site 29, a subrecent and already ruined stone house, is

built at a prominent rock at the Southern bank. Therefore we hoped to find ancient structures below the modern house floor, since the hill is overlooking the Wadi Abu Dom. We regret that the house was built directly on the rocks, and no traces of ancient remains were found.

The pottery of the first season was fully documented and in large parts drawn. The scientific evaluation will be done during the next months.

Like in the last year, we made a tour to Umm Ruweim, Quweib and Beida. There we had to state that enormous damages had been done since our last visit (see below, 5. Endangered sites).

#### 4. Results

a. As already realised in the last year, the Wadi Abu Dom was a region of intensive activity in both ancient and medieval times. The sites are concentrated at both banks of the Wadi, but are not spread very far into the inland. We recognized that after about 0,5 - 1 km from the Wadi banks into the inland the sites became sparse. Only at the larger Khors, like the one surveyed, we found activities up to the beginning; in the smaller one surveyed the site distribution decreased as well as in the rocky area. Therefore we suggest that the people were concentrated at the more fertile areas at the Wadi Abu Dom and the bigger Khors. There was no need to settle at the less fertile Khors.

b. Like during the first season we found remains of Palaeolithic, Neolithic, very few Kerma, considerable Postmeroitic and Medieval times. We have to point out that the Medieval sites were much less dense than during the last year's campaign. This is not astonishing since last year we have surveyed the surrounding of the Christian monastery of Ghazali.

During the first season we were astonished by the lack of Napatan and Meroitic sites, which are widespread in the Nile Valley. After the discussion with colleagues and in comparison to the results of the archaeological research at the 4th cataract we think that these stages of the Sudanese culture were present in the hinterland in local forms, but not in the elite or royal forms of the Nile Valley. Therefore we suggest that we can visualize the transition from "Kerma" to "Postmeroitic" to "Medieval" in a local and non-elite form.

c. Having now the data of all in all 27 km<sup>2</sup>, we start to recognize a pattern in the site distribution.<sup>1</sup> As already stated, the bigger sites are concentrated at the Wadi-banks. This is true for sites which hint to more or less immobile settlements (habitation features, cemeteries). In this region, we found also sites which we want to explain as camp sites of non-sedentaries. In the hinterland, the archaeologically visible human activity is reduced to travelling: we found tethering stones at camel and donkey tracks, sometimes with small fireplaces nearby. In the overall pattern we can very clearly distinguish the "land to stay" from the "land to move". This is comparable to the recent way of life in the Wadi Abu Dom: in some extremely fertile areas small assemblages of mud brick houses with agricultural subsistence are visible, but there are also the *rakubas* of nomadic people. Staying for three weeks in the field, we had also the opportunity to see traders with cars, donkeys and camels traveling through the Wadi Abu Dom.

As examples of the diversity of sites we present here some different types with figures:

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<sup>1</sup> In the report of last year the surveyed area was wrongly given with 35 km<sup>2</sup>, which should be revised to 13.5 km<sup>2</sup>.

Site 130 (N 2037354/ E 388053): Fig. 2.

Habitation site, between Wadi Abu Dom and a Khor leading from the South into the Wadi. Several stone features which could possibly be the remains of huts as well as fire places and few graves. The surface pottery seems to be a mixture of postmeroitic and later material.

The place of this habitation site was well chosen: near the edge of the two Wadis, but secured from flooding by a low ridge, in a flat area. At the southern end of the site a path leads from East to West, shortcutting a bend of the Wadi Abu Dom.

Sites 201 ("Kerma"), 157 ("Postmeroitic"), 204 (Neolithic), 202 (rock art) (N 2034264/E 388156) to N 2033499/ E 388214): Fig. 3-5

At the beginning of the larger khor, leading from South to North and pouring into the Wadi Abu Dom, at the terraces between the khor and the rocky hills. About 10 Tumuli of Kerma-type and 10 habitation features. Lower in the khor, there are situated seven tombs of postmeroitic type, all of them robbed. High up the rocky hill, on a platform between two summits, an area full of neolithic remains (stone artefacts, pottery). Down the mountain, nearby in a valley between two high ridges, very unusual rock art.

This fertile region of the beginning of a big khor seems to have been inhabited since very early times. Some tools hint even to palaeolithic activities. The neolithic site on the hardly accessible platform within the rocks may be interpreted as rescue area (against animals or human enemies?). The habitation features as well as the cemeteries on the lower terraces let us suggest a long-living village.

Site 235 (N 2035782/ E 389805): Fig. 6

Cemetery on five hills of outcrops. Between the rocks, there are situated several cleft burials and dome graves. All in all we identified 18 graves. Most of them are completely destroyed, but some are in a good condition. It is suggested that a habitation site should be situated nearby, but in this season it was not identified. Maybe it is placed east of the cemetery and therefore outside the boundary of the survey of this year.

Site 258, Feature 4 (N 2038145/ E 388708): Fig. 6

Two hills of stone, about 2m high, diameter 8m, but not exactly round and higher at east end. Not sure whether grave or other function? We found a similar hill at another place (Site 290), also there the function remains unclear. They resemble clearly a feature which we found last year in the lower part of the Wadi (Site 70).

## 5. Endangered sites

a. Especially in Umm Ruweim we found very recent robbers' holes in the encircling rooms. Last year, in March 2009, we recognised two holes there. In Dec. 2009 one member of the team, Tim Karberg, visited Umm Ruweim and told that two more holes had been dug. At our visit on March 4, 2010, we had to realise that two more holes had been dug since this short time. In one of the holes traces of destroyed wooden beams (?) were visible. We took two samples for analyses.

We would suggest that the installation of a Ghafir at Umm Ruweim would help to protect the site.

- b. At Quweib, one of the postmeroitic tumuli was recently (?) opened and robbed. In the sand we found a piece of a wooden beam and a fragment of textile, both of them were taken for analysis.
- c. At our site 127 (N 2037782/ E 387960) one tumulus was robbed more or less recently. We found four recent metal bowls in and around the robbers' 's hole. The fact that the bowls were not taken away with the robbers let us suggest that they were disturbed or even caught.

#### 6. Proposal for future activities

2011:

- a. If we get the funding, would like to take an architectural plan of Umm Ruweim I during the next season. Due to the severe damages we think that any kind of rescue activity is urgently needed. To start with the documentation, we want to prepare an architectural plan of the building in the recent outline (with removal of the sand and necessary sondages, but without excavations). Since in 2011 we have good chances to take an architect (Dr. Dieter Eigner) with us, we give this project the priority above the survey.
- b. Beside the architectural project the pottery of the 2. season (2010) has to be documented and drawn (Dr. des. Jana Helmbold-Doyé).

2012 and future:

- c. Since we cannot hope to get two fundings for 2011, the survey in the now established form should go on in 2012. We want to continue the intensive survey in that season up to Umm Ruweim. We want to include the Khor leading about 1.5 km west of Umm Ruweim from N to the Wadi Abu Dom. Since on the satellite photos we can recognize several paths leading through this Wadi to the North of the Bayuda, we hope to find ancient interconnections, too.

#### 7. Final remarks

We would like to thank Mr. Mohammed Toum very much for all his indispensable help and smooth organisation!

Karima, 15.3.2010

Angelika Lohwasser



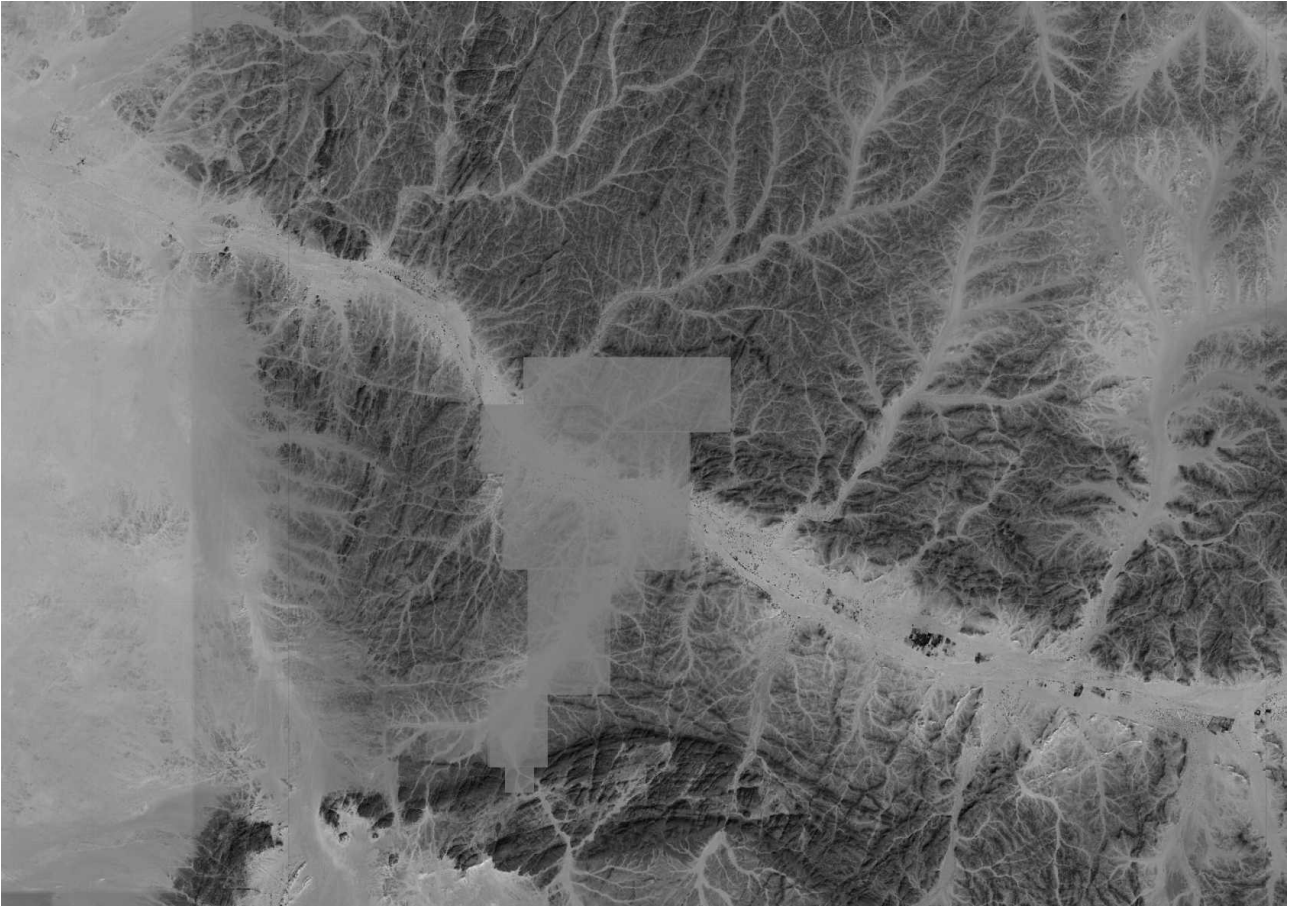


Fig. 1: Map of the surveyed area

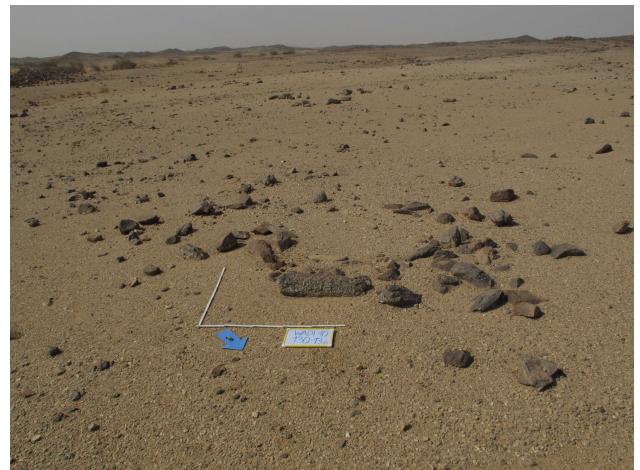
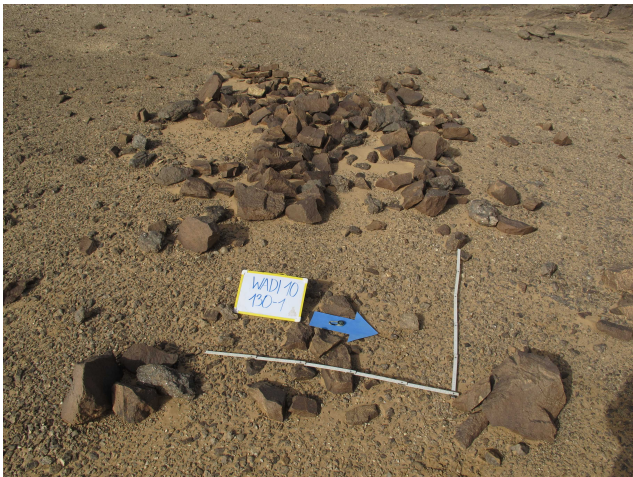


Fig. 2: Site 130



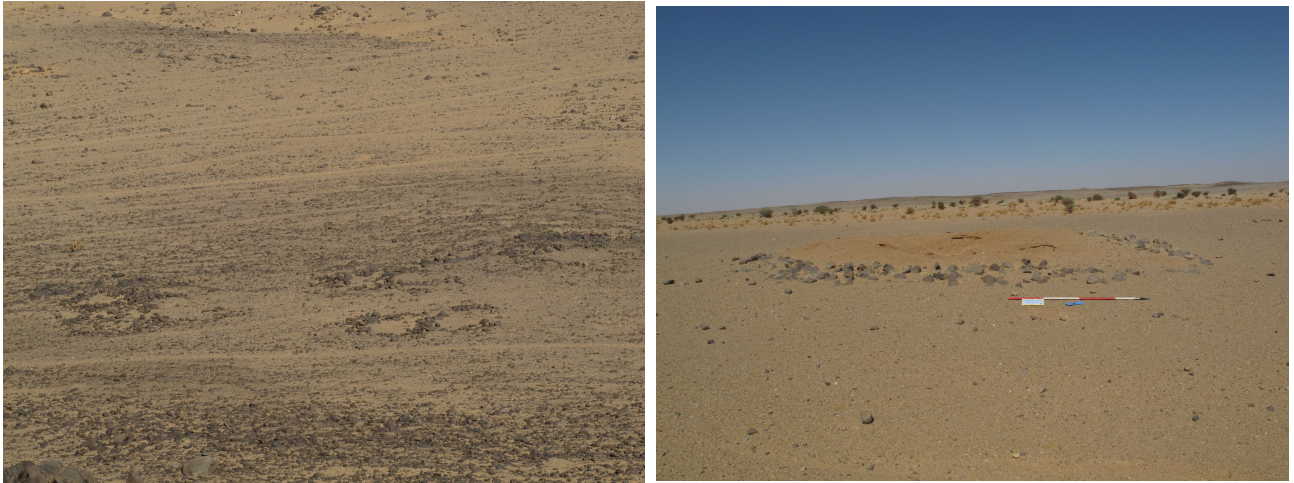


Fig. 3: Habitation Site (201) and Postmeroitic tumulus (157)



Fig. 4: Site 202 (Rock art)



Fig. 5: Site 204 (neolithic finds)





Fig. 6: Site 235, Feature 5. Site 258, Feature 4



Fig. 7: Umm Ruweim, Quweib-Tumulus: robber's holes