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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE FILE OF SOMALIA

Somali archaeology today is still in its beginning. This stands in sharp contrast to the fact that, probably, Somali territory is one of the areas on earth, first inhabited by man. Archaeological activity has taken place in Somalia, but it has always been carried out by visiting researchers. It is possible to say that no archaeological activity has been carried out since the middle of the 1950s up to now. The most extensive published works on Somali archaeology are still Paolo Graziosi's "L'Eta della Pietra in Somalia" from 1940 and Desmond Clark's today classical "The Prehistoric Cultures of the Horn of Africa" from 1954.

Only during the last few years have archaeological investigations again begun to be carried out in Somalia, even then by visiting researchers. Of course this is positive - one only needs to think of what else has happened in East African archaeology during this time. Most gratifying and, in the long run, most important, is the fact that the Somalian government and the people have shown great interest in their earlier history and prehistory. They encourage archaeological projects undertaken by foreign researchers, although, and which is important, attempts are made to educate their own interested students. One of these students finished his university training in USA at the beginning of 1983, another will finish his studies in India in one year, and two Somali graduates will be sent to the University of Georgia in the fall of 1983 for archaeological training. One graduate is in London for training in museology and another, I have been told, will

be sent to Italy this year for training in preservation of monuments. If these Somali graduates will get guidance and support in their fieldwork etc. after the university training, they can themselves, after some years, direct the archaeological development in Somalia and answer for the care, protection and preservation of this valuable inheritance and pass on this knowledge about their cultural heritage to the general public.

One step in this development and education is the archaeological project and the program for the preservation of historical and prehistorical monuments in which I am taking part and which is financed by the Swedish government. The project started in 1982 and one of the goals is to establish an archive on Somalia's archaeological sites, something which is important in, for example, gaining a quick overall insight into the archaeological material, initiating research, preventing destruction of the archaeological objects threatened by exploitation, and aiding the general public in seeing their roots and eventually perhaps, in the long run, even acting as a resource for tourism.

This archaeological archive will include maps and a register with descriptions of the ancient monument sites. The maps must be the best maps available covering Somalia. During the Second World War some maps were produced over the country, among others by Italy, but these maps are on the one hand drawn to a too small scale and on the other, they are of course out-of-date. In the early 1970s Great Britain produced maps of the old British Somaliland, in all 17 maps to the scale of 1:250.000. The scale 1:250.000 disqualifies them from being used as register-maps over ancient monument sites, but they are valuable when used as survey maps over larger regions or when planning field studies. The best maps available today of Somalia are those produced in the first half of the 1970s to the scale of 1:100.000. They

cover the whole country and they consist of totally about 375 map-sheets. They are provided with 20 m contour-lines. For some regions, above all in south Somalia, there are also map-sheets to the scale of 1:50.000 and 1:25.000, but they are just enlargements of the original maps with their map contents. On these maps, the location of each archaeological site will be noted and provided with one number, in a number series based upon the SASES-system (Standard African Site Enumeration System) on African archaeology developed by C. M. Nelson and introduced during the beginning of the 1970s. The SASES-system is a grid system, which divides Africa, and in this case Somalia, in manageable units of area. The grid system consists of primary grid squares, each subtending 6° of latitude and 6° of longitude. Each primary grid square is then divided into secondary grid squares with a $0^{\circ}15'$ side, corresponding to 27 - 28 km.

This SASES-number refers to a register card with a description of the site. The register card will include, in addition to the description of the ancient monument itself, information on the monument's cultural heritage, location in the region and district, name of the site, designation and scale of the map sheet, longitude and latitude, elevation, date and name of recorder, terrain description and bearings, and possible existing photographs or references in literature or reports.

The monument's cultural belonging is stated if possible, for instance for identified Stone Age culture or -period, pre-Islamic, Islamic, etc. The region and the district represent the administrative and judicial division of Somalia, which is divided into 16 regions with 81 subordinated districts. The designation of the maps over Somalia consists of a combination of two letters and four figures. The scale will normally be 1:100.000, but in some cases perhaps

1:50,000 or 1:25,000. Latitude and longitude constitute the simplest and most exact method of designating the location of a site in writing. The designation of the site's elevation will be that interval on which the site is located, as mentioned earlier - in Somalia 20 m-intervals will be applied. Date and name of recorder will be the day of the recorded field-work and the name of the responsible field-assistant. The terrain descriptions state the topographical circumstances, as for instance kind of rock, soil conditions, exposure conditions, mountain ridge, mountain slope, river-bed, etc. It comprises also vegetation description and land-use, e.g. arable land, roads, town buildings, etc. Bearings or orientation refers to distances, in normal cases not exceeding 100 meters, and points of compass taken from a point marked out in the map picture and identifiable in the terrain. References will state if the site have been mentioned in literature or reports and if there are objects deposited in a museum. The description of the ancient monument itself may have any length and may have an unlimited number of subnumbers, if required.

This layout of the site file cards constitute a great modification of the Kenyan model, which to a large extent has been worked out and adapted to settlement registration. As habitation sites constitute only a part of what has to be registered, it is essential to have at one's disposal headwords, which can be used for the registration of any type of object. Thickness of culture layer, specimens collected, damages, etc. are included as a natural element under the headword 'Description'.

The main objects to be registered in this site file are: habitation sites and settlement remains from prehistoric times, rock art, pre-Islamic graves, abandoned Islamic burial places, historically valuable Muslim tombs, abandoned

historical towns, abandoned or early mosques and abandoned fortifications.

Of course, it will often be difficult to draw the line at establishing how old settlement remains ought to be, before, at least from the point of view of research, they are interesting and valuable to document. The social-anthropological field of research touches often upon remains from our own century. And how far should one go in the documentation of the lithic remains and the settlement traces? In a region poor in finds the registration of occasional finds, or very small concentrations of finds, may be justified from the point of view of research, but in another region, rich in finds, usually only greater concentrations of remains are interesting.

Figure I. A well-constructed cairn, 6.5 m in diameter and 2.0 m high, just outside Elayo on the Gulf of Aden.



The preparations for this site file started in 1982 and have to a certain degree continued in 1983. The task is a large one; one only needs to be reminded of all the Stone Age sites mentioned in Graziosi's and Clark's works, or the abandoned historical coastal settlements mentioned by N. Chittick, J. de Vere Allen and T. H. Wilson, in addition to the number of more or less scientifically interesting sites, known by one's nearest Somali neighbour, if he is asked.

The survey work and registration will move slowly in the beginning, but will gradually move faster and eventually be carried out as a natural part of archaeological research and the care and preservation of the national monuments - that is to say, when we have educated and established a staff of Somali archaeologists.

Figure 2. A herdsman with his stick and a camel in the gypsum cave Gudka Haradhka near Hudun. On the walls in this cave there are more than 130 carved or black-painted figures.

