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Bagrawiya – Meroe road to Atbara “the archaeological road in Middle Nile”

By

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Abstract

The road of Bagrawiya - Meroe – Atbara is one of the important roads that locate near the pyramids of Meroe in Sudan, and the road locate in the Babiuda desert and it is a region- with a continental climate characterized by desert creep , water scarcity , high summer temperature and coldness of winter- with nature need to overcome and accommodation . The road connects the city of Atbara by Meroe in along 262k.m, where the sector (A) is the first sector in the road. The road consists of four parts: the bridge connecting between the city of Damer and Umm Alttuyur, sectors (A) and the two sectors (B, C). The road layers consists of high debris, where the valleys, where total of debris reached to 1.126.000m³. The cutting in hills and rough mountains reached to 300000m³. The road has three foundations, the first is support foundation with average width 12.25m and thickness 25centimeter, the second is broken stone foundation with width 8m and thickness 20centimeter-rarely used in the roads in Sudan- and the last is asphalt layer with width 7m and thickness 5centimeter. With installations and residential areas.

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Archaeological survey of the road:

M.D.S. Mallinson carried out the archaeological survey of the road ⁽¹⁾ from 22 April to 24 May 1993, to study endangered archaeological sites as a result to construct Geili – Atbara road. there was a part of endangered sites, especially between area of Geili and Bagrawiya “Atbara”, studied before by the National Corporation for Antiquities and museums in conjunction with French side represented by the French unit of Sudanese monuments, either for the remaining area which reach to 90 km, it has been assign to the Sudan Archaeological Researches Society (SARS) in the British Museum at London. The Archaeological survey to the road began by study nearly 36 archaeological sites, including the foot of Gebel Ardab, Gebel al- Abayud, Gebel Abu Sheifa and Gabati.

The amount of required work from mission –then- was record of all archaeological sites along the road for a lateral distance of approximately 500 m because of the constant threat posed by the movement of construction in that area. This was an extremely important archaeological survey where the archaeological sites between the city of Meroe and Atbara River will be studying and knowing its contents-for the first time. So it is registered and documented nearly 185 archaeological site and around 4000 of different buildings and civilizational appearances along the way.

History of the archaeological survey of the road:

The most important archaeological studies and surveys made on the sites of Meroe- Atbara road (fig), we find that the first of these studies was a preliminary recordings for the area between fourth and ninth of November in 1821 executed Linant Bellefonds(5), And from the cities recorded was city of Gabati and city of Saqadi

, where Burckhardt and Cailliaud digging them before, and they found nothing there, and after them came Lepsius(6, who on 28 January in 1844 by discover the site between Saqadi and Genna and Arkell⁽⁷⁾ registered the sites around Jebel Abu Sheifa, Either Crawford⁽⁸⁾, studied the Mesolithic era site in Damer.

The archaeological survey, which done by the archaeologist Fritz Hintze , was more inclusive from his predecessors, where he studied and documented more than eight archaeological sites on the road and described in his studies⁽⁹⁾ on the territory of Butana and from its important sites : zidab, Aliab ,Jebel Abu Sheifa , Mutmi , Gebel Dayiqa ,Umm Ali , El Maroqa and Gadu . Hintze pointed in his final report to map include about 16 necropolis lies between zeidab and Matmur and recorded about 21 burial pit or individual graves in the area mentioned above, as well as a collection of stone blocks suffered destruction referred in his report to the probability that it is Temple or a quarry South of Matmur⁽¹⁰⁾, and in the area between Matmur and Meroe recorded 27 settlement sites along the Bank of the Nile, and noted that the closest site dating to the Neolithic locate near Gebel El Qerri in the territory of Butana.

In the period of 9-11 September 1992 , visited the area both Dr. Salah Mohamed Ahmed and Dr. Patrice Lenoble , on a trip organized by the National institute of archaeology and museums and the archaeological French unity, and as a result ,they prepared report contained some important and pressing recommendations like the need of exploration and study of archaeological areas and save it because of construction road Meroe- Atbara as Nubia salvage project after construction of the High Dam in Egypt and sank archaeological sites located behind the dam⁽¹¹⁾.

Archaeological Description of the road ⁽¹²⁾:

In the wake of this report ,the archaeological sites on the road Meroe – Atbara (fig: 156) studied in detail and divide the archaeological sites along the road according to its historical periods and preparation of graphic survey, and take samples of the remains of bones and pottery found within the site.

- the most parts of the road between Meroë and Atbara Extending along the slopes of the first level of gravel up the flood plain of the Nile. The site of the road selected to avoid the soft sand and silt Nile flood and to be close to the accommodation by the River, and probably for similar reasons we find these beds of gravel as shelters and burials since prehistoric periods.

Prehistoric sites:

The excavation has recorded seven sites dating by the lower Paleolithic until the third millennium BC. These sites are as follows:

- 1 - Site (SARS 113.3): it is a high hill with a Summit of some flint pieces and a set of sherds dating by the third millennium BC and spread between burials of the late Meroetic-Christian period. The site overlooks the north end of the meroetic plain on the mound Wadi Dain and Wadi Heish.
- 2 - Site (SARS 138,2), it is high mound overlook Wadi Gabati (fig: 162), and it have some sherds dated to the third millennium BC and spread between the burials of the late meroetic -Christian period.
- 3 - Site (SARS 138.3, 147.1): it is a Neolithic sites located in low steppes of the South plain of the Wadi Gabati.
- 4 - Site (SARS 152.1): it is a site dated to the Neolithic on the Rocky Ridge to the East of the Wadi.

- 5 - Site (SARS 150.5, 155.1, 154.3, 154.1, 153.2, 152.1, 152.6): it is a mountainous sites dated to the third millennium B.C., have remains of pottery mixed with some skeletons and parts of the shelters and set of flint tools. And here noted remains rock-cut road across mountain behind the village of Gabati.
- 6 - Site (SARS 1651.1): it is a site of Wadi dated by Mesolithic and Neolithic, and locates at the mouth of the Wadi, which made it constantly exposed to significant levels of gravel near the mouth of the Wadi; the Wadi is located in the North extension of Gabati plain and also surrounds by sandstone.
- 7 - Site(SARS 221.1 232.1): it is flint quarry, found in it a great set of flint tools, stone artifacts , vessels, remains of bones and shells , so it seems that this area is rich - clearly -with these tools, but it is difficult to identify them from the roof, and site dating by Mesolithic and Neolithic.

- It is notable that there seems to be a relation between the dating of each site and its limit, the high levels contains sites dating to the third millennium B.C., while on floodplains concentrate group of Mesolithic and upper Neolithic sites. The history of these materials dated to the third millennium BC. through the excavated set in Shaqadud ⁽¹³⁾ area, some excavated materials from pre-Kerma (about (2500 years) compared with materials discovered and dated to the late 3rd millennium BC and early second Millennium BC., and it turns out that the burials of Neolithic were lidless and followed by definitive levels from one to another, it is proposed that this probably reflects the relationship between living and burial levels and levels of the Nile flood.

Site of Ancient Egyptian periods (fig: 159)

It's not strange to find some features of Egyptian culture and ancient Egyptian influence on this area with the African dimension. Deeping into the Middle Nile, where we find that the , Egyptian control on lower Nubia - at the very least- back to the old kingdom period in Egypt, and as for to upper Nubia ,in particular the study area ,the Egyptian domination began during the rule of the two Kings Thutmose I and Thutmose III in the New kingdom as mentioned on the stela at kurgus, 180 km north of Atbara, and about the discovers in that period, it is found Three sites from the late new kingdom, we describe as follows:

The first Site (SARS 101.1 101.5):

It is site locate upper foot of Gebel Ardab (fig :161), within the range of the Meroetic late period and the Christian era, it was discovered some potterysherds may be fall from the top of the Gebel, and Lenoble didn't mention to any Pharaonic vessels in the report of 1992⁽¹⁵⁾.

The Second Site (SARS 152.3 153.1 154.3)

- It is a series of sites locate at the beginning of the bay of Shangerit, overlooking ahilltop overseeing the Meroetic site.

The Third Site (SARS159.1):

-It is a site located within the Meroetic cemetery in the northern extension of Gabati plain, which found in it on a group of the pottery remains dated to the New Kingdom period, existed in the late layers of the archaeological survey.

All these three sites are close to the Meroetic settlement areas in the Meroetic late period, which suggests a stable society in these

areas early and maybe there was sort of Egyptian trade especially in the wine trade since find some remains of amphorae probably connected with a trade or maybe be linked to religion⁽¹⁶⁾.

Sites of Napata-Meroetic Kingdom:

Pottery remains found belong to the Napatain Kingdom period in sites similar to the pottery dated by the New Kingdom period, which mention to degree of continuity with local communities in the Wadi of Gabati and Meroe area in earlier times, either the Meroetic pottery, it is found at the three sites (SARS 102.2 159.2 170.4.).

The city of Atbara:

-The city of Atbara locate (fig: 158) at latitude 14, 17 North and longitude 59, 33 East, and it is at a height of 350 m above sea level. The city is situated at the confluence of the Nile River with its Atbara tributary, and this represents an excellent geographic location of the city where it located to the East of the Nile River and to the North of its Atbara tributary. It is at distant 13 km north of city of Damer, as the city is far about 310 km north of Khartoum, the capital, and at a distance 611 km south of Wadi Halfa, and 474 kilometers west of Port Sudan. So the city is distinct by near its geographical location from the ports and the administrative capitals⁽¹⁷⁾.

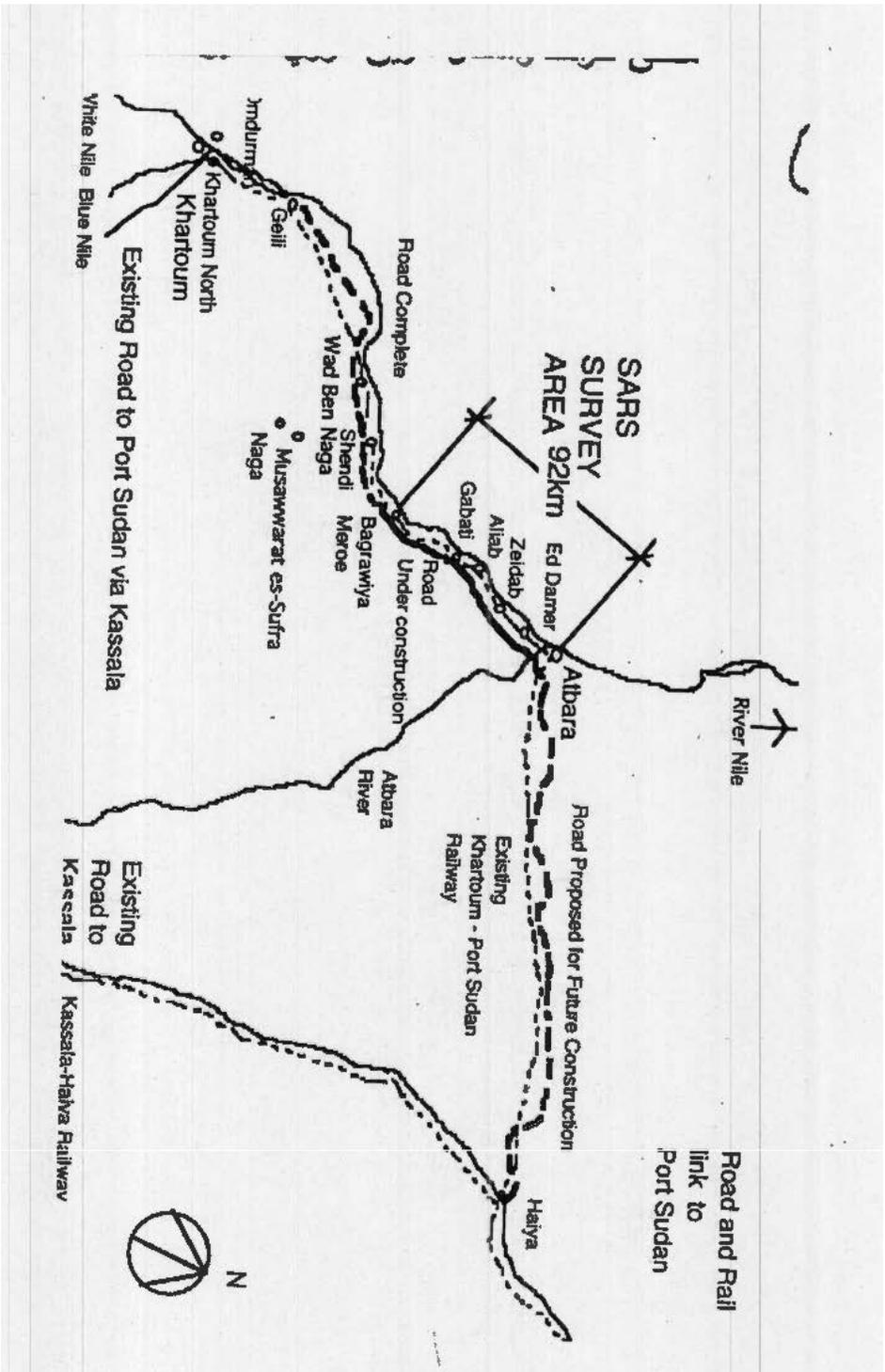
- The city also represents good transport node, linking its territory with different parts by railways and roads. This excellent site led to choose it as the center of railways. And from Atbara, the railways lines branch to Port Sudan across the eastern desert, and

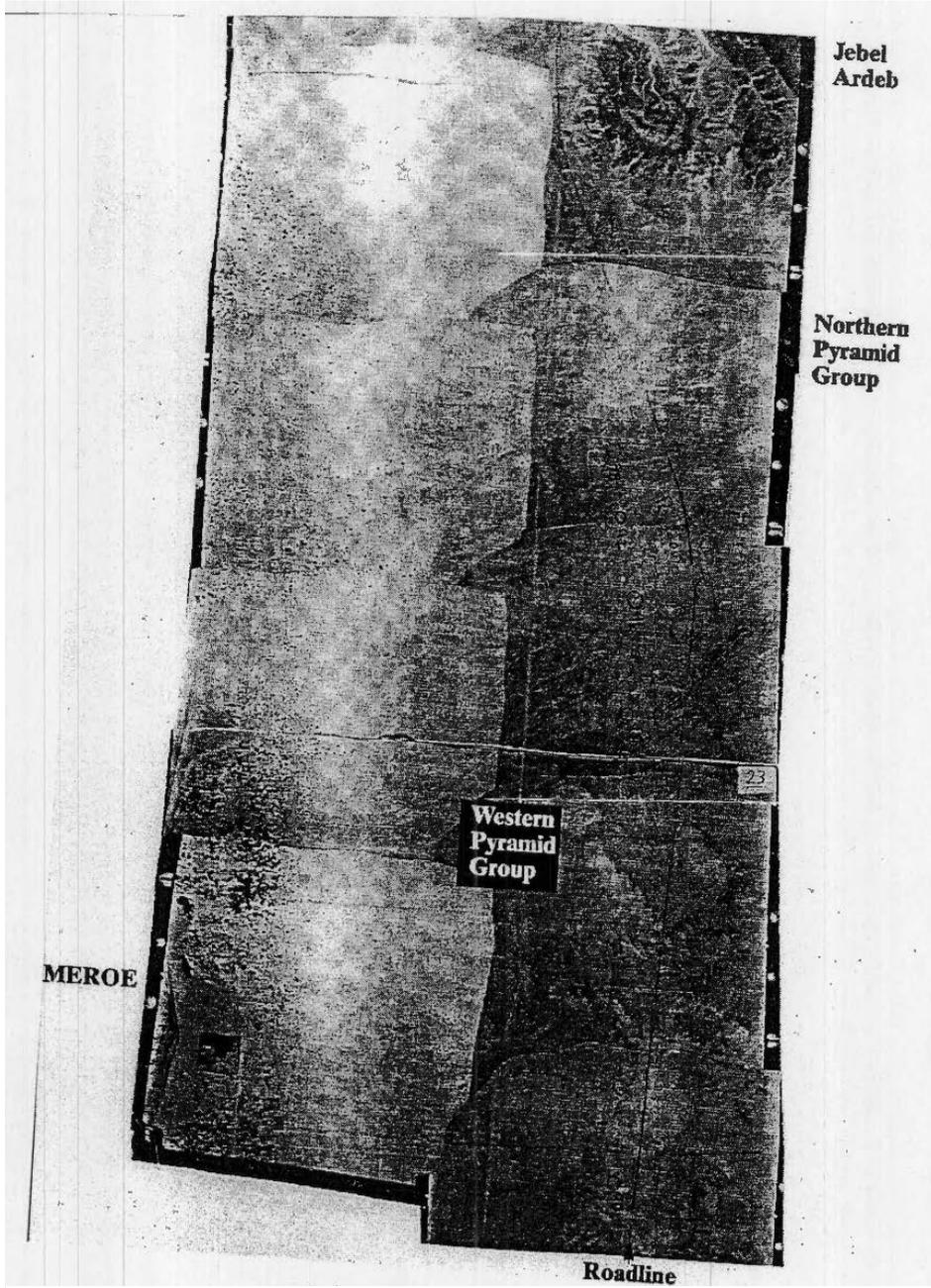
to Wadi Halfa northward along the Nubian desert, and southward to Khartoum, the capital. Therefore it is a major transportation Centre connecting major ports in the capital, as it connect the most important urban centers in the territory and centered where Barbar is located in its North and Damer and Shendi in its South, and all are the largest cities in the region.

- the Earth appears semi- flat from the city, but it is a little higher in its Eastern and Northern parts than its other regions , and ranging to fall toward the Nile River and Atbara tributary, where the greenery and abundance of trees, while the aridity control on the northern and eastern areas that far away from it . The result of the slope of the land on this picture was emerging of watercourses (creeks) in this region, which affected in determining the way of construction and its trends. There are six major watercourses r, three in North-South direction, this mean that they descend from the North and flows into the Atbara River. The other three watercourses extending in eastern direction to the West, and flows into the main Nile, and they find in the villages of Alldakhilia and Alssiala, in Northwest of the city. These watercourses used to drainage the rainwater ⁽¹⁸⁾.

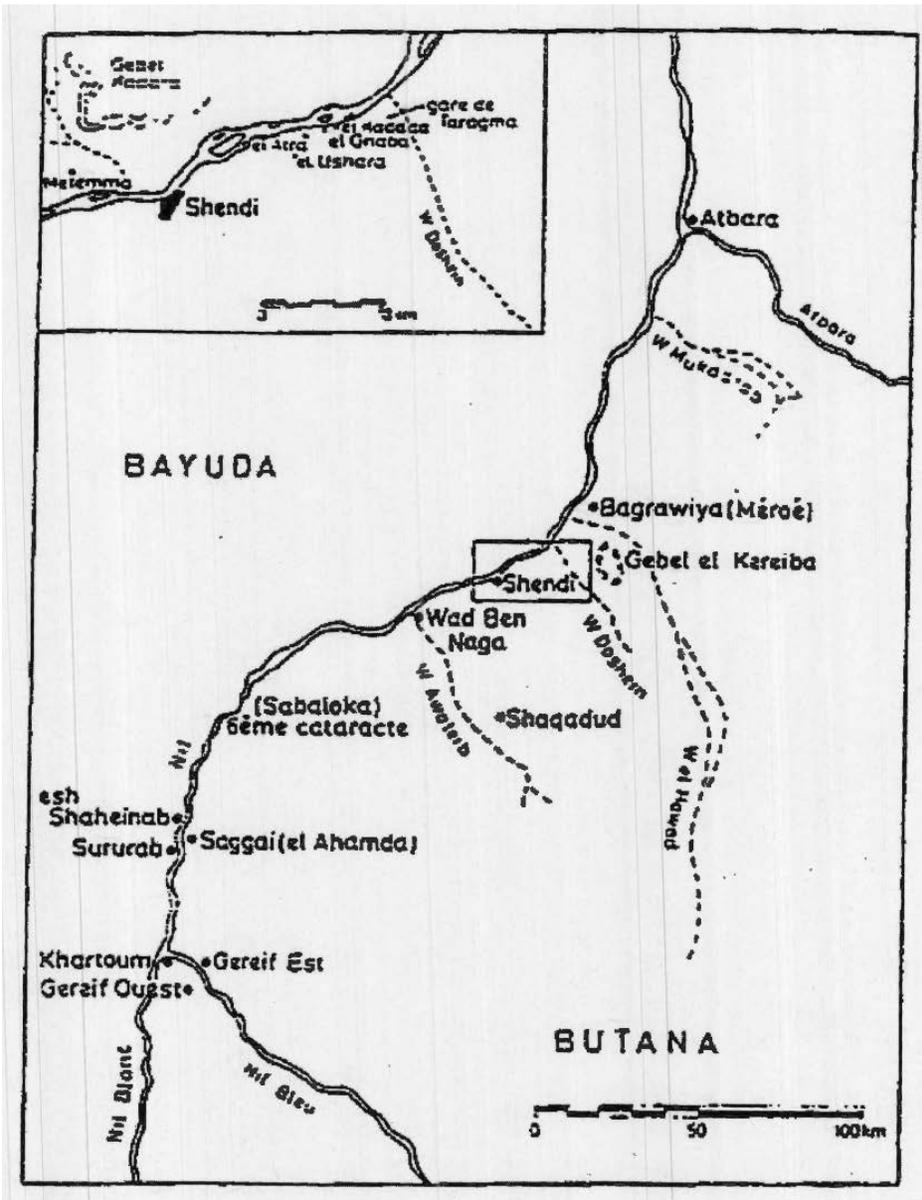
The city Features.

- It is the nearest city to port of Sudan (Port Sudan) by land, railway and air ways, and it locate at the confluence of the Nile with Atbara River from the North and then the main Nile is completed entirely, as well as Atbara- Meroe road and Atbara-Abu Hamed road, which will extend to Egypt to become Atbara after this the center of crossroads.



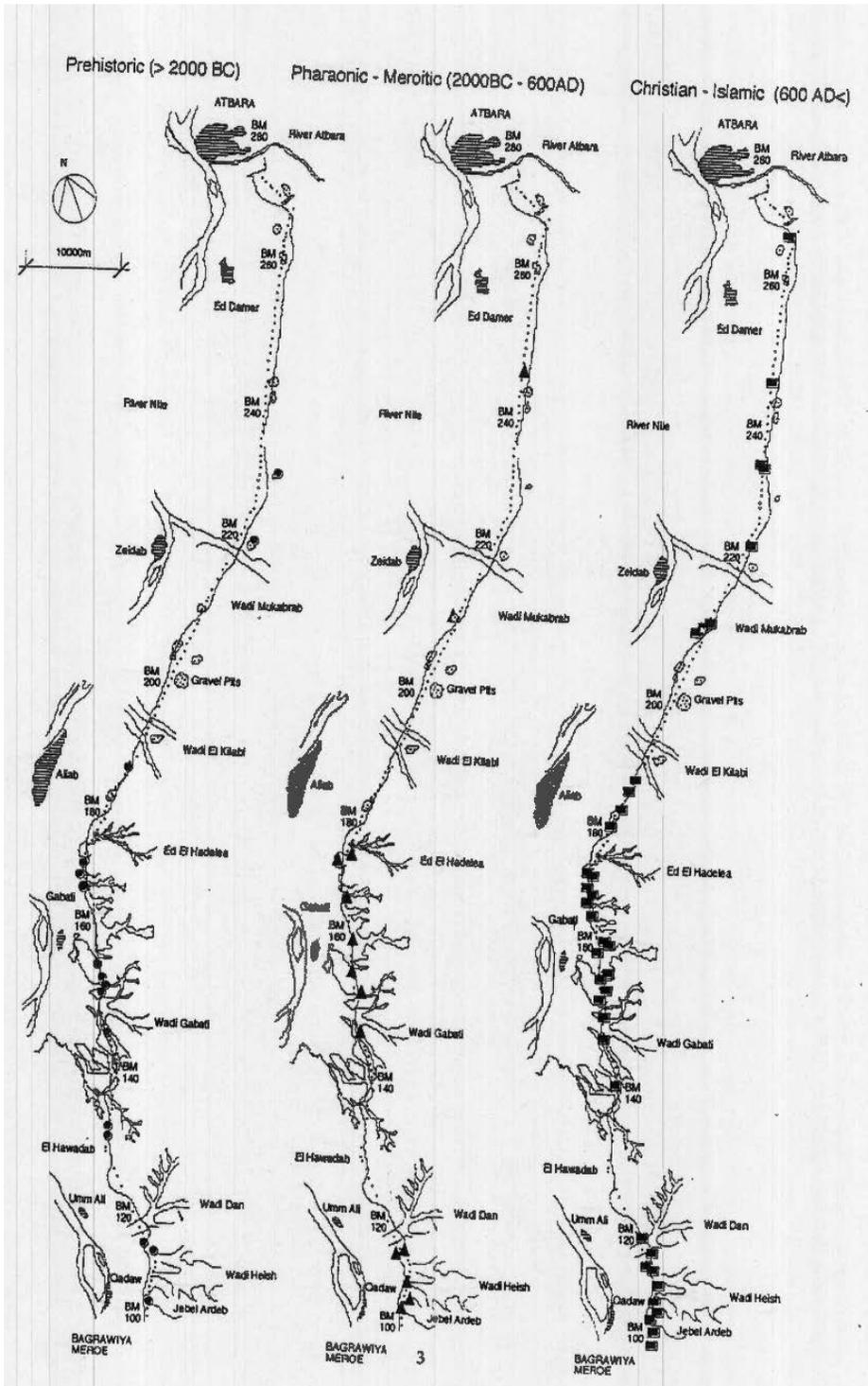


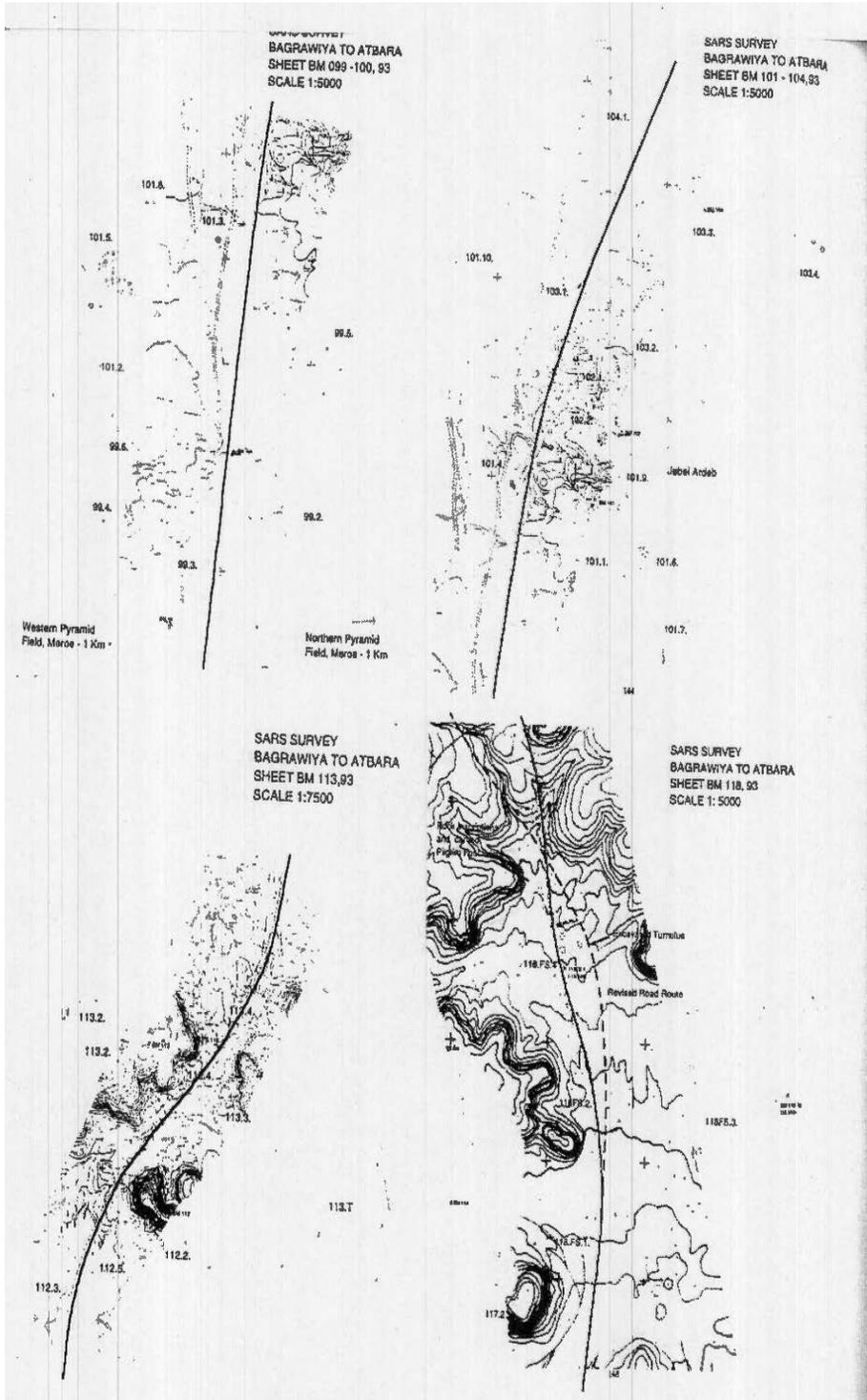
خريطة جوية للطريق المؤدي إلى أهرام مروي



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