

Visit in al-Sharqiyah/al-Niba'/al-Dhurra in Wadi al-Niba' (=Wadi al-Aghda') on 25.01.2017.
internal report. file name: al-Dhurra visit 2017

Site centre: 22° 43.994'N, 58° 42.282'E = 22°43'59.61"N, 58°42'16.92"E = UTM 40Q 675060.11 m E, 2514995.86 m N, 412 m altitude

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On 25.01.2017 a brief visit to the Late Iron Age settlement site of al-Dhurra enabled me to re-acquaint myself with this site which Brian Doe and Beatrice de Cardi discovered in 1976. My purpose was to verify the identity of the site and prove its existence. In previous years I was unable to visit the site and had to do with simply using Doe's published sketch (1977, 48, fig. 11, pl. xvi, site 46). While his description of the site position is a bit difficult to understand, that for the site (Fig. 1) is succinct: "...extensive habitation site with remains of circular tomb structures on the west side of the site and stone wall foundations for rectangular structures, probably domestic". Curious is the curved wall of one building. This is perhaps the fortification wall which he mentions. I did not take exception with this description of the architecture or the dating (see below, also Yule, 2001 I, 394, site 13.53).

In the short time available on the site it proved impossible to verify the name 'Wadi Aghda'' which a local did not recognise, but identified rather as the Wadi al-Niba'. There can be no doubt that the two place-names refer to the same wadi. Nor did time allow to localise the Jebel Ukhair, which Doe identified. The landscape also has changed and a large (319 m length) north/south oriented recharge dam was built in 2012. Its southern end lies about 150 m east of the site. Today the site is walled in with cement blocks. A casual perusal of Google Earth shows that in the past 20 years the site occasionally was under cultivation. The part of the site which Doe plan-sketches comprises some 900 m². A casual glance at Google Earth imagery (Fig. 2) suggests that the site is possibly larger, in southerly direction. This can be confirmed in a future visit. Lacking is an antiquities sign from the ministry. Fig. 3 shows the present day appearance and location.

At a time when no Late Iron Age (LIA) pottery was known, de Cardi dated the surface pottery to the 1st millennium BCE (1977, 64 fig. 3). In a later publication (2001, 48, known to me from Schreiber 2007, 109) she dated one sherd (2001, 64 fig. 3.106) with an applied snake in the EIA, a dating with which Anne Benoist agreed (1999, 297-8). Some sherds de Cardi re-considered to possibly date to the LIA (2001, 48). In his dissertation, Jürgen Schreiber mentions this site as a rare LIA settlement (2007, 64 etc.). Furthermore he writes that if one considers the published ensemble it lacks clearly diagnostic pottery and both Early and Late Iron Age forms occur. Typical Early Iron Age (EIA) forms are lacking (2004, 110). Schreiber's study is the most detailed regarding the pottery of this site. Schreiber and Benoist have excellent experience with the Iron Age pottery. In my opinion, some of the sherds shown in Fig. 4 are somewhat characteristic of LIA, but is coarser than expected. Typical is the herringbone incised ornament and the carinated rim of one of the sherds. I would not attribute it to the EIA. Moreover, de Cardi 1977, 64 fig. 3.103 shows typical LIA coarseware with a herringbone raised band (cf. Yule 2001a, e.g. 68 Abb. 5.4.5.07).

The main importance of al-Dhurra is as a rare LIA settlement with published pottery. Till now we have had no LIA house plans, only graves and forts. It must be placed under protection, at least with an antiquities sign.

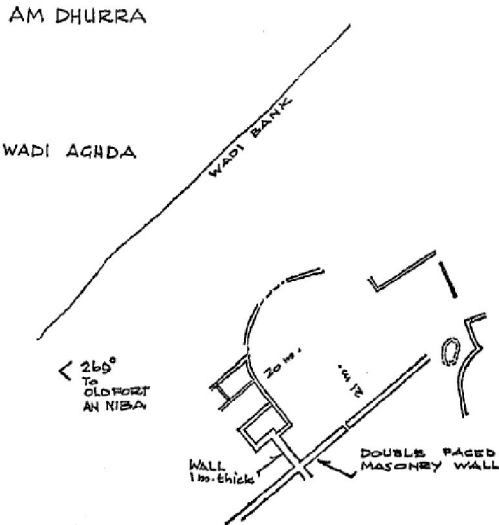


FIG II Site 46 AM DHURRA
Plan of masonry walling.

Fig. 1. Original sketch of the site plan.



Fig. 2. Al-Dhurra, image from 6 June 2016.



Fig. 3. View of the al-Dhurra settlement site toward the south-west, 25.01.2017.



Fig. 4. Seven sherds collected on the al-Dhurra site, 25.01.2017.

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