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## KORDOFAN IN 1672, AS DESCRIBED IN THE “BOOK OF TRAVELS” (*SEYAHATNAME*) BY EVLIYA ÇELEBI

The famous Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi, in the tenth volume of the “Book of Travels” (*Seyahatname*), claims to have gone on a diplomatic mission from Cairo to Sennar to deliver letters and gifts from the Egyptian Viceroy to the king of Funj (*Fūncistān*).<sup>1</sup> In the Sudan, he described places stretching from Wadi Halfa to Sennar and beyond, situated mainly on the banks of the Nile. In Upper Nubia, Evliya maintains to have departed from the river at Mushu<sup>2</sup> (19°34’N 30°23’E) while participating in an expedition against infidel people(s)<sup>3</sup> living in a region located somewhere west of the Nile. The expedition was led by Kōr Hüseyin Beğ or Qān. *Qān* is supposed to mean the vizier of the king of *Fūncistān*.<sup>4</sup> His residence was at Hafir (19°35’N 30°22’E). The expedition apparently was ordered by the Funj king against a rebellious ruler, subject to Funj. Evliya learned about this in Hafir when messengers sent by Kōr Hüseyin, who was already on his way, asked for more troops and provisions.<sup>5</sup> Evliya joined the auxiliary force.

The translators of the Sudanese part of Evliya’s travelogue: Maria Teresa Petti Suma in her summary translation, and Erich Prokosch in his full translation, did not identify this region, the route followed by the expeditionary troops, or the identity of raided people(s). Petti Suma, relying on Evliya’s account, tried unsuccessfully to localise them in an area situated west of the Nile approximately between Argo and Aswan<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 847; *Seyahatname*, 2007: 439; Prokosch 1994: 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 860 (*Meşev*); *Seyahatname*, 2007: 445 (*Meşşu*); Petti Suma 1964: 443; Prokosch 1994: 141 (*Meşüvv*); “A village on the left bank of the Nile just north of Argo Island,” Armbruster 1965: 145.

<sup>3</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 870; *Seyahatname*, 2007: 445-446; Prokosch 1994: 139-144.

<sup>4</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 849; *Seyahatname*, 2007: 440; Prokosch 1994: 122; Dankoff 1991: 70.

<sup>5</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 854; *Seyahatname*, 2007: 442; Prokosch 1994: 128.

<sup>6</sup> Petti Suma 1964: 444, n. 65.

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Relying on Petti Suma's summary translation and knowing the Sudan at first hand, John O. Udal, placed the route of the expedition north and west of Wadi el Kab<sup>7</sup> [Wadi el Qa'ab<sup>8</sup> 19°20'N 30°10'E]. Udal's suggested route is not confirmed either by geographical details (large lake, group of mountains) or place-names given by Evliya.

Working out the route of the expedition is difficult, if not impossible, due to the chaotic arrangement of localities in the "Book of Travels". Chater Bosayley,<sup>9</sup> while dealing mainly with Lower Nubia, stated that "the description given by Evliya of the places visited, between the first cataract and the island of Sāy, discloses the fact that notes on the greater number of places visited were slipped away, perhaps through their having been lost or mislaid" and noticed that "the places, quoted by Evliya, were recorded in no geographical order."<sup>10</sup> Although both translators and John O. Udal<sup>11</sup> noticed one or two place-names misplaced in Nubia, they do not seem to have realised that Evliya's notes on other regions of the Sudan, as well as that of the military expedition, were shuffled like in a pack of cards. In fact, some localities in Evliya's text, situated in the vicinity of the Third Cataract, in reality are found in the area of the Sixth Cataract!<sup>12</sup> Evidently, Evliya lost himself when it came to the final redaction of his travelogue in Cairo, probably several years after the event incorporating real data with hearsay. Indeed, the traveller must have been overwhelmed with the amount of his notes, as he admitted: "When I can work out my notes, everything will become right"<sup>13</sup>.

Events described by Evliya might be better understood only if relevant fragments of the Turkish text could be linked together in a correct sequence. Still, as in descriptions of other non-African countries, events and places were depicted by, as Ulrich Haarmann aptly put it, "ein begnadeter Jongleur zwischen Wirklich und Wahrheit."<sup>14</sup>

Observations made under the duress of the military expedition by its very nature are blurred. Most given and scrutinized directions and hours of travel are baffling, creating an impression that the account of the expedition has been artificially interwoven into the voyage story. Nevertheless, some toponyms and other geographical details indicate that initially the expedition was aimed at the region of northern and western Kordofan. The rallying point for the expeditionary

<sup>7</sup> Udal 1997: 4; Udal 1998: 25-29.

<sup>8</sup> Barbour 1961: 132.

<sup>9</sup> Otherwise known as al-Shatir al-Busayli 'Abd al-Jalil.

<sup>10</sup> Bosayley 1967: 181.

<sup>11</sup> Udal 1998: 24.

<sup>12</sup> Habraszewski 2009-2010: 320.

<sup>13</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 780; *Seyahatname* 2007: 406; Prokosch 1994: 22; Dankoff 1992: 127-128.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. the review of Prokosch 1994 in: *Die Welt des Islams*, 35, 2, 1995.

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forces was the “great plain of *Hānqūc* [Hānqōj]”.<sup>15</sup> *Hānqōj* may be the corrupt record of a locality called Dankoj (13°24’N 30°09’E), situated south-west of Bara (13°42’N 30°22’E) and north of El-Obeid (13°11’N 30°13’E).

The troops participating in this expedition arrived from different regions: *Berberistān* i.e. Upper Nubia, the Ja’ālī kingdom of Shendi, *Qaqān* and *Qirmānqa*, two unidentified countries, situated south and southwest of *Fūncistān* respectively. The “great plain of *Hānqūc*” [Hanqōj] was under the authority of the *dābir* i.e. *defterdār* “chief accountant”<sup>16</sup> of the king of Funj. *Dābir*’s territory started at *Sindī*<sup>17</sup> (Shendi 16°42’N 33°26’E).

The *Qaqān* country (*vilayet-i Qaqān*), to be found south of *Fūncistān* along the White Nile,<sup>18</sup> probably embraced the territory occupied by the Shilluk. In the seventeenth century, thanks to an alliance formed by the Funj sultan Badi II and the Shilluk leader Reth Duwat (c. 1670 to c. 1690) units of Shilluk soldiers seem to have served in the army of the Funj; when campaigning in Kordofan and in the fighting against rebellious northern provinces.<sup>19</sup>

The king of *Qirmānqa*, a country located on a river<sup>20</sup> (possibly Bahr al-Ghazal), camped with his brown/bronze-skinned, handsome-faced, head-perfumed soldiers, in their black tents. The leader of the expedition Kōr Hūseyin Beğ and his troops stayed in tents similar to Turkish ones, with gold balls on top of them.<sup>21</sup>

Kōr Hūseyin met Evliya, received the king of *Berberistān* Muhammed ibn Hūseyin of *Donqola* and the *dābir* of the king of Funj,<sup>22</sup> of Shendi. Provisions brought by the auxiliary force were handed over and Evliya was welcomed to take part in the holy war. At this stage, the war (*ceng*) is called *gaza* ‘a military expedition on behalf of Islam’. The armies advanced against the enemy.<sup>23</sup>

The troops on their route came across the “lake of *Feyle*”<sup>24</sup> which is identical with the lake usually named as Kajmar: Evliya’s name *Feyle* is patently connected with modern El Filya (well 14°18’N 30°23’E) and locality El Filia,<sup>25</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 857; *Seyahatname* 2007: 444; Petti Suma 1964: 442; Prokosch 1994: 132. For English translation of the events on “the great plain of Hankoc” see Dankoff & Kim 2011: 439-441.

<sup>16</sup> Dankoff 1991: 29. Prokosch (2004: 69) translates: “höchster Finanzbeamter”.

<sup>17</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 855; *Seyahatname* 2007: 443; Prokosch 1994: 129.

<sup>18</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 339; *Seyahatname* 2007: 183.

<sup>19</sup> O’Fahey & Spaulding 1974: 62-63; Hasan 2003: 107.

<sup>20</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 852; *Seyahatname* 2007: 442; Prokosch 1994: 126.

<sup>21</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 857; *Seyahatname* 2007: 444; Prokosch 1994: 133.

<sup>22</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 857; *Seyahatname* 2007: 444; Prokosch 1994: 134.

<sup>23</sup> For translation of events on the “great plain of Hankoc” see Dankoff & Kim 2011: 439-441.

<sup>24</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 860; *Seyahatname* 2007: 445; Petti Suma 1964: 444; Prokosch 1994: 137, 141.

<sup>25</sup> Map 1916.

Filie,<sup>26</sup> Fili,<sup>27</sup> El Filya<sup>28</sup> next to Jebel el Filia, ‘Gebel el Fíliá’,<sup>29</sup> Jebel Filya<sup>30</sup>), situated south of Kajmar (14°24’N 30°25’E). Rüppell described Jabal Filie as follows:

“Zwei und eine Viertelstunde südlich von Ketschmar erhebt sich ein isolirter Granitfelshügel, und auf seinem Gipfel liegt das Dorf Filie, das beinahe hundert Hütten enthalten mag. Am südlichen Fuss des Hügels ist ein Brunnen, wo man treffliches Wasser in geringer Tiefe (etwa fünf Fuss) vorfindet”.<sup>31</sup>

According to Evliya, the army sent against the “infidels” halted on the bank of the lake of *Feyle* (i.e. Kajmar) and “drew many hundred thousand camel-loads of water”.<sup>32</sup> The lake has always been much frequented, as Cuny points out:

“C’est chose incroyable l’immense quantité de chameaux qui viennent s’abreuver a Kadjmar tous les jour”.<sup>33</sup> “L’étang de Kadjemar ... ne se dessèche jamais...<sup>34</sup> situé au nord de la petite montagne de ce nom.”<sup>35</sup>

The troops moved on from *Feyle* (i.e. Kajmar) westwards (they later returned to *Feyle* from the west).<sup>36</sup> They might have proceeded from Kajmar (14°24’N 30°25’E) along the track running via Shershare<sup>37</sup>/Sharshar/Shershar (wells: 14°19’N 30°11’E), Umm Dubban (well: 14°11’N 29°40’E), and reached “Om Debán, mit vielen Bergen”.<sup>38</sup>

In the east-west direction, maps show mountains like Jebel el Fardi<sup>39</sup>/Jebel el Faradi,<sup>40</sup> Jebel Umm Qussa (Gussa) (14°42’N 30°53’E), Jebel Umm Dibban/Dhibban/Dubban (14°12’N 29°39’E), Jebel (el) Metan (14°15’N 29°27’E), Jebel Murdi, Jebel Baraeis (Nuba), Jebel Katul (14°16’N 29°23’E), Jebel Abu Asal<sup>41</sup> (14°13’N 29°11’E). Peaks rise from fifty to two hundred and fifty metres above the plains,<sup>42</sup> the highest being Jebel Katul (1028 m.).<sup>43</sup> These mountains always

<sup>26</sup> Maps 1829, 1832, 1842, 1844, 1853; Russegger 1844: 318.

<sup>27</sup> Maps 1837 (b), 1846 (a), 1848 (a), 1860 (a).

<sup>28</sup> MacMichael 1920: 232, 243; Born 1965: map 68, 62.

<sup>29</sup> MacMichael 1967: 110.

<sup>30</sup> Lea 1994: 171.

<sup>31</sup> Rüppell 1829: 129-130.

<sup>32</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 860; *Seyahatname*, 2007: 445; Prokosch 1994: 137.

<sup>33</sup> Cuny 1858: 161.

<sup>34</sup> Cuny 1858: 156.

<sup>35</sup> Cuny 1858: 146, 167.

<sup>36</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 862-863; *Seyahatname* 2007: 447; Prokosch 1994: 141.

<sup>37</sup> Maps 1883, 1898.

<sup>38</sup> Hassenstein 1861: 102.

<sup>39</sup> Map 1911.

<sup>40</sup> Map 1925.

<sup>41</sup> Map 1911.

<sup>42</sup> Prout 1877: 2.

<sup>43</sup> Born 1965: Karte 19.

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constituted a well defended refuge for perilous peoples. Some visitors stressed this point:

“In the northwest, the groups of Kagga and Katoul (...) are compact mountain masses which cover considerable areas – areas so considerable, in fact, that these groups have an especial importance as offering strongholds to brigands”.<sup>44</sup>

The route to Darfur through “Kaadjea, Katoul, etc. n’est plus suivie parce qu’elle est infesté de voleurs.”<sup>45</sup>

The troops approached “mountains and rocks” occupied by “the black sea of warriors”.<sup>46</sup> The native warriors descended the mountains, and somewhere in the neighbourhood the battle, that lasted 7 hours, took place. After the victory, “the swift cavalry went in pursuit of the infidels who had survived the sword”. All the troops departed next morning, one party towards the fortress of *Firdāniye/Ferdāniye*, which in due course they conquered, and others were “released to plunder the land of the fire-worshippers”.<sup>47</sup>

The site of the fortress is named *Firdāniye/Ferdāniye*<sup>48</sup> or *Ferdān*<sup>49</sup>, or *Ferdān*.<sup>50</sup> The same name is otherwise linked with the province *vilāyet-i Ferdān*.<sup>51</sup>

Evliya’s *Ferdān* is the name of a region whereas *Ferdāniye*, apart from being the place-name, may also denote a people/tribe occupying this site, and thus can be translated “the fortress of the *Ferdāniye*”. The variant *Ferdāniye* is formed according to the most common pattern of Arabic collective names by analogy to such tribal names found in Kordofan like *Nawahiya*, ‘*Arifiya*, *Bedayriya*, *Habbaniya*, *Hassaniya*, *Majidiya*, *Messeriya*, *Mesellemiya* and many others. Of the ethnonyms, which bear resemblance to the *Ferdāniye*, the map<sup>52</sup> shows ‘*Feradna el Nuba*’, north of *Kajmar*. The name ‘*Feradna*’ is identical with *Ferdān(iye)*, for it has the same radicals and simply represents another pattern of Arabic tribal names (which are also common in Kordofan) like *Kawahla*, *Shenabla*, *Ferahna*, *Meramra*, *Hawazma*, *Ahamda* and others. ‘*Al-Nuba*’ in Sudanese traditions denotes the pre-Funj inhabitants of the country and is used by the Arabs of the Sudan to signify the inhabitants of the Kordofan hills.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Prout 1877: 2-3.

<sup>45</sup> Cuny 1858: 194.

<sup>46</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 860; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 138.

<sup>47</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 861; *Seyahatname*, 2007: 446; Prokosch, 1994: 138.

<sup>48</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 861; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch, 1994: 139-141.

<sup>49</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 863; Petti Suma, 1964: 444; Prokosch, 1994: 307, n. 242.

<sup>50</sup> *Seyahatname* 2007: 447.

<sup>51</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 892; *Seyahatname*, 2007: 460, 478; Prokosch, 1994: 181.

<sup>52</sup> Map 1916.

<sup>53</sup> MacMichael 1967: 86.

Available maps show no toponym by the name of *Ferdāniye*. The closest sounding one is Jebel el Fardi<sup>54</sup>/Jebel el Faradi.<sup>55</sup> Westwards of Kajmar (14°24'N 30°25'E) (i.e. Evliya's *Feyle*), the nearest ruins of a fortress in western Kordofan, if the fortified village of Foga (13°43'N 28°02'E) is ignored, are to be found at Zankor (13°52'N 27°58'E).

There is a striking resemblance between Evliya's description of the fortress of *Ferdāniye* and the modern one by A. F. D. Penn<sup>56</sup> of the ruins at Jebel Zankor. Penn visited these ruins twice: in December 1928 and May 1929 and made excavations at the site. Herewith is the comparison of two texts.

#### The fortress.

Evliya Çelebi:	A. F. D. Penn:
<p>“It stands [lit. is prominent] on the edge of a lake of life-giving water, on a low hill, built of giant [slabs of] hard stones. Each stone is a granite boulder measuring fifty or sixty spans in width and breadth. Built in the form of a hexagon with two floors, one wall within another. Its size all round is three thousand paces. It has a gate of ebony wood facing the east. Inside the fortress there are about thousand houses, [built of] stone and [? red-?] mud-] brick”.<sup>57</sup></p>	<p>“The-ruins of a town built of burnt red-brick and stone and surrounded by inner and outer walls of defence lie at the foot of Jebel Zankor in the Kaja Serug hills of Western Kordofan. The site is of no great size, consisting of a few acres of mounds under the shadow of the hill and on some rising ground half a mile to the East (...). The surface of these mounds is covered with bricks, a few broken stone pillar and slabs of building stone. The buildings are of three varieties burnt red-brick, hewn stone and mud brick – and the first are remarkable for their exceptional size, weight and quality.<sup>58</sup> The main site of the ruins, which hug the eastern foot of J. Zankor consists of a number of large mounds rising to their greatest height on the centre: the surface of these mounds is covered with very large red bricks of a fine quality, pieces of building stone, and fragments of various shapes and sizes that look like cement, but may be sandstone.<sup>59</sup> The central room consists of stiff clay, mud and red brick: ... we have dug down six feet into it and not reached the floor of a building, which was perhaps of more than one storey”.<sup>60</sup></p>

<sup>54</sup> Map 1911.

<sup>55</sup> Map 1925.

<sup>56</sup> Penn 1931: 179-184.

<sup>57</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 861; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 139.

<sup>58</sup> Penn 1931: 179.

<sup>59</sup> Penn 1931: 180.

<sup>60</sup> Penn 1931: 182.

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Penn’s eye sketch confirms, on the whole, the veracity of the remaining details of Evliya’s narrative. “The lake [*buheyre*] of life-giving water” may be identical with a rain pool (covering three old disused rock wells), marked on the sketch (Fig. I) east of the ruins on the site B.

Penn’s “inner and outer walls of defence” equal Evliya’s “one wall within another”. The size of the fortress, “all round is three thousand paces”. It is said that Evliya Çelebi was of a small stature and his paces may have varied, depending on the terrain, between 50 and 60 cm.<sup>61</sup> Therefore 3000 paces times 60 cm equals 1,8 km. This is consistent with the measurements taken by the French archaeologists who found that “ville haute fortifiée” covers 1,8 km.<sup>62</sup>

Penn’s sketch confirms Evliya’s observation that the gate faced the east. Recent examination made by the French archaeologists: “L’accès principal à l’ouest, se faisait par un porte monumentale, mais des portes secondaires existaient sur les trois autres côtés”<sup>63</sup> is not entirely contradictory.

The building stones measured “fifty or sixty spans in width and breadth.”<sup>64</sup> Turkish span (*kariş*) equals 20-24 cm, so 50 spans = 10-12 m; 60 spans = 12-14,4 m.<sup>65</sup> The given sizes appear overstated. This tendency was characteristic of Evliya. “Since he aimed as much to entertain as to inform, he had no compunction about inflating numbers and spicing his otherwise sober travel account with exaggerations (...)”.<sup>66</sup>

Penn wondered whether the building was perhaps of more than one storey and Evliya makes it quite clear that there were two floors.

The “square in the centre” (Evliya) agrees perfectly with “a small acropolis” (Penn) on “the top of the highest and central mound”. The enormous quantity of accumulated ashes discovered by Penn can be convincingly explained as the result of burning the fire-wood during the “rites of the fire-worshippers” that have been going on for ages until they have been stopped by invaders, as we are told by Evliya in the following passage:

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<sup>61</sup> Bruinessen & Boeschoten 1988: 211, n. 67. Evliya occasionally declared that by “pace” he is referring to that of a sturdy grown man, and not to that of an opium addict. Dankoff 2004: 190.

<sup>62</sup> Gratién 2007: 32.

<sup>63</sup> Gratién 2007: 32.

<sup>64</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 861; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 139.

<sup>65</sup> Prokosch 1994: 307, n. 238.

<sup>66</sup> Dankoff 2004: 184.

“The *Barābra*, *Funj*, *Qirmānqī*<sup>70</sup> and *Qaqānī*<sup>71</sup> tribesmen extinguished the flame of the fire, urinated and defecated on that place to such an extent that it was turned into a latrine for all the soldiers. Some of our captives seeing [this] wept, wailing and lamenting. When I asked [them the reason] they answered: ‘This fire temple has not been extinguished for three thousand six hundred years. That holy flame was our house of God. Now has come the end of our epoch, and our sanctuary has met with such a fate. And we are afflicted by this grievance’<sup>72</sup>.”

### The fire-worship in a square

Evliya Çelebi:	Penn:
<p>“This fortress has no temple. It has only a square in the centre. Every morning all the fire-worshippers gather in that square round a fire of horseradish tree, Egyptian acacia, holm oak and ebony, perform their worship. In the cool of the early morning, they warm themselves and [then] leave. On all four sides of this square piles of the [above-] mentioned wood were heaped like mountains. Each worshipper brings along may thousands of elephant-loads of wood”<sup>67</sup>.</p>	<p>“...the top of the highest and central mound, forming a small acropolis to the town...”<sup>68</sup> Success on attacking the acropolis from the south was almost instantaneous. We met with a large stratum of ashes which contained a great number of burnt clay pots, whenever we have dug ashes have been found in such quantity as to suggest that the town was destroyed by fire, or that this was a cemetery for people who practised cremation.”<sup>69</sup></p>

The feeling of despair expressed by the fire-worshippers sounds depressingly true. It so happens that whenever Evliya Çelebi quotes statements made by the natives in their own words they appear to be factual, like information on killing the old and infirm people,<sup>73</sup> or on Nubians remembering their magnificent (Christian) past.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 862; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 140.

<sup>68</sup> Penn 1931: 181.

<sup>69</sup> Penn 1931: 183.

<sup>70</sup> People of *Qirmānqa*, a country (not identified).

<sup>71</sup> People of *Qaqān*, a country (not identified).

<sup>72</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 862; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Petti Suma 1964: 444; Prokosch 1994: 140.

<sup>73</sup> Habraszewski 1969: 139-144.

<sup>74</sup> Habraszewski 2006/07: 197-217

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### The fire-worshippers – descendants of Ken’ān

Evliya Çelebi:	Penn:
“The [inhabitants of the] fortress apostatised from Islam at the time when Ken’ān, the offspring of Noah did not enter the Ark with the Prophet Noah. According to the fire-worshippers: “it [the fortress] was built by him – they say” <sup>75</sup>	“There is no sound local tradition at all concerning this site, the Kajawi will say, ‘It is the work of the Anak or Abu Um Genaan (giants)’ and these ruins are consequently called Anak on the Survey Department’s map.” <sup>76</sup>

The comparison of these two passages indicates the same record of the local tradition: both Evliya and Penn were told by the natives about Ken’ān/Kena’an to be either the builder of the fortress or the ancestor of its former inhabitants. Abu Kona’ān (Abu Gonaan) i.e. descendants of Kena’an are fabled to have once lived in northern hills of Kordofan.<sup>77</sup> The name Abu Qonaan is said to have been used by the Arabic-speakers for any pre-Arab inhabitants of the country.<sup>78</sup> Arab historians and writers of genealogies take Kana’ān i.e. Canaan, the son of Ham, as a typical ancestor of the old pagan tribes.<sup>79</sup> Nowadays, the people of the region of Sodiri (14°25’N 29°5’E) believe that Abu Gonaan, otherwise called Anaḡ/’Anaj<sup>80</sup> (see below), were either pagans or Christians.<sup>81</sup>

Having occupied the fortress of *Ferdāniye* the leader of the expedition Kör Hüseyin Qān resided in the “palace of the fire-worshippers *Harđoqān*<sup>82</sup>/*Hardiqān*”<sup>83</sup>, and Evliya was assigned the “palace of the prefect *Muḡān Sīr*.”<sup>84</sup> Two separate “palaces” at Jebel Zankor are confirmed by Penn who distinguished two sites with ruins on both of them (A and B on the sketch), as well as by the French archaeologists: “ville haute”, “ville basse”<sup>85</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 861; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Petti Suma 1964: 444; Prokosch 1994: 139.

<sup>76</sup> Penn 1931: 179.

<sup>77</sup> MacMichael 1967: 88; 1922: I, 112. Similarly, the modern inhabitants of the Meidob Hills in Darfur call remnants of ancient cities in that region ‘Abganaan’. Dumont and El Mograbi 1993: 395.

<sup>78</sup> Arkell 1955: 197.

<sup>79</sup> MacMichael, 1967: 241.

<sup>80</sup> Newbold 1945: 829.

<sup>81</sup> Sodiri 2011.

<sup>82</sup> Petti Suma 1964: 444.

<sup>83</sup> Prokosch (1994: 323): König der Feueranbeter.

<sup>84</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 861; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 139.

<sup>85</sup> Gratien 2007: 32, 38.

According to Prokosch, *Muġān Sīr* was the “Präfekt des Königs *Hardiqān*”,<sup>86</sup> but he doubted whether *Muġān* was part of the name.<sup>87</sup> Petti Suma translated “maggiordomo di Hardokan” and made it clear that to Evliya *Muġān* was the name of a people.<sup>88</sup> Accordingly, it would seem that Evliya lodged in the “palace” not of the prefect called *Muġān Sīr*, but of the prefect of the *Muġān* called *Sīr*. Thus one “palace” was seemingly occupied by the fire-worshippers the *H.rd.qān*, and the other by the *Muġān* who, as will be seen below, were the sun-worshippers.

The name *H.rd.qān* (*Hardoqān* / *Hardiqān*) appears twice in the text of the *Seyahatname*. The editor of the first (1938) printed edition transcribed it in two ways: separately as Hardo Kan (“in the castle/palace of Hardo Kan, the fire-worshipper”),<sup>89</sup> evidently presuming that the second part of the name is identical with the word *qān* which Evliya has already given elsewhere as the title of the governor (*hākim*) or *vezīr* of the *melik* of *Fūncistān*,<sup>90</sup> or jointly as Hardikan, apparently understanding it to be the name of a people: “fire-worshippers called Hardikan, subject to Funj”.<sup>91</sup> This twofold interpretation has been followed by Petti Suma (“... un capo a nome Hardokan”),<sup>92</sup> whereas few sentences below she wrote ‘Hardokan’ as one word (“...palazzo di Hardokan’ or “...maggiordomo (kethuda) di Hardokan”<sup>93</sup> Prokosch read Hardikan in both passages and understood it to be “König der Feueranbeter”.<sup>94</sup> The editors of the new edition (2007) distinguish the king “Hardikan meliki” and the country “Hardikan vilayeti.”<sup>95</sup> It is tempting to see in *H.rd.qān* read *Hurduqān* the name Kurdufan, alternative pronunciation of Kordofan,<sup>96</sup> which is achieved by slight emendation: losing one dot in the fourth letter and adding a stroke in the first letter (کردفان > حردقان). If *Hurduqān* could be the distorted form of Kurdufan than it would have been the first mention of this name in all available sources, be it local or external.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Prokosch 1994: 323, 327: *Hardiqān*.

<sup>87</sup> Prokosch 1994: 307 n. 236.

<sup>88</sup> Petti Suma 1964: 444, n. 65.

<sup>89</sup> “...ateşperest Hardo Kanın sarayında...”, *Seyahatname* 1938: 861.

<sup>90</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 849, 931.

<sup>91</sup> “...Foncistan’a tabi Hardikan nam ateşperest...”, *Seyahatname*, 1938: 860; *Seyahatname* 2007: 445.

<sup>92</sup> Petti Suma 1964: 444.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> “Dieser unselige Haufen war die Streimacht des feueranbetenden, ungläubigen Königs Hardikan, dessen Land unter der Botmäßigkeit der Func steht.” Prokosch 1994: 138, and also 139, 323.

<sup>95</sup> *Seyahatname* 2007: 445.

<sup>96</sup> “Kourdoufan”, cf. Combes 1846: I, 270, 341, II, 20, 49, 50, 199.

<sup>97</sup> Nachtigal’s permit issued by the government of Sultan Ibrahim of Darfur contains the name ‘Kordufal’ (کردفال). Nachtigal 1971: 394.

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The ancient inhabitants of Zankor in the local tradition were called Abu Qen‘ān. Another name for the indigenous people, as Penn was told, was Anak<sup>98</sup> i.e. Anag<sup>99</sup>/‘Anaj.

Local Arabic sources, cited by MacMichael, enumerate particular peoples in the Sudan, in this case in Kordofan, which are said to have originated from the ‘Anag/‘Anaj. According to the Sudanese source (MS. D1) “the Dāgu [Daju] and the inhabitants of Kāga [Kaja] and Katūl are ‘Anag [‘Anaj].”<sup>100</sup> The ‘Dagu’ in Kordofan are reported locally as Anag or Nuba by origin,<sup>101</sup> so are the Daju of Wadai.<sup>102</sup>

The Sudanese source (MS. D1) seems to place the Daju next to the inhabitants of Kaja (14°28’N 28°55’E) and Katul (14°16’N 29°23’E). However, Jebel Zankor forms part of the Kaja Seruj (13°47’N 27°48’E) hills located closer to the western Kordofan – Darfur borderland. Evliya, in the seventh volume of his travelogue,<sup>103</sup> mentioned *Dācū* (Dājū) among peoples living in countries situated from the west to the east like *Āfnū* [the name given by people of Bornu to Hausa<sup>104</sup>, or Kanuri to Hausa<sup>105</sup>], *Māy-Bōrnū* [Kanuri], *Dācū* (Dājū) and *Fūr*.<sup>106</sup> The mention of the Daju next to the Fur suggests their localisation further in the West, that is rather in Darfur than in Kordofan.

Linking the Daju with Zankor might be based very tentatively on their supposed religious custom. Evliya claims to have learned from the fire-worshippers that their sacred fire had been kept burning since times immemorial (“three thousand and six hundred years”) and had never been extinguished. Large quantities of wood gathered in “heaps like mountains”<sup>107</sup> were to ensure that the fire would not fade away. This feature of keeping the fire alight continuously agrees with an alleged Daju custom, mentioned by W. G. Browne (1794), of lighting a fire on the inauguration of their king, which was carefully kept burning till the king’s death.<sup>108</sup> Two hundred years after Evliya’s voyage, Nachtigal observed that sacred fire was maintained in the sultan’s palace and in the house of the chief of the eunuchs.<sup>109</sup> According to him, this custom undoubtedly dated

<sup>98</sup> Map 1911; map 1915.

<sup>99</sup> MacMichael, 1967: 86-88.

<sup>100</sup> MacMichael 1922: I, 79, n. 3; II, 196.

<sup>101</sup> MacMichael 1967: 52, n. 3; 1922: I, 74 and n. 2.

<sup>102</sup> Carbou 1912: II, 218.

<sup>103</sup> *Seyahatname* 2003: 120; Kreutel 1957: 178.

<sup>104</sup> Cooley 1841: 120, n. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Lukas 1937: 183; “Hausa are Afuno to the Kanuri”, Cohen 1962: 154.

<sup>106</sup> The preceding Evliya’s mention of Fur was by Vansleb (Wansleben) who in 1663 reported that caravans travelled from Egypt to the “land of Fohr”. O’Fahey 1980: 10; O’Fahey 2008: 32. For an apparent even earlier mention see O’Fahey, et al. 2002: 98.

<sup>107</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 862; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 140.

<sup>108</sup> Browne 1799: 306; MacMichael 1967: 52; 1922: I, 72; Arkell 1951b: 234, 235.

<sup>109</sup> Nachtigal 1987: III, 424; 1971: IV, 328, 368; Arkell 1951b: 234, 235.

from the Pagan era.<sup>110</sup> The Darfur Daju when questioned about this custom in the first half of the twentieth century either denied it, speaking very vaguely of a similar custom which, they believed, had prevailed among the Daju of Dar Sila, or were ignorant of it.<sup>111</sup>

The fire worshippers constituted only one group of the raided peoples. The other group was made up by the *Muġān*.

### The *Muġān*

The word *Muġān* refers to the sun-worshippers, and Evliya makes it quite clear that they are **not** the fire-worshippers<sup>112</sup>, as the meaning: ‘Magians, fire-worshippers’ of the Persian word *muġān* suggests. Evliya stressing that the *Muġān* are not the fire-worshippers rejects the usual meaning of the word and informs the reader of the meaning he intends in order to avoid misunderstanding. Otherwise, if *muġān* were for Evliya merely a synonym of *ateş-perest*, there would be no need for such an explicit statement.

The fact that Evliya persists in using the word *muġān* despite its meaning and does not call the sun-worshippers, say, *afitāb-perest* or *şems-perest* (words used elsewhere<sup>113</sup> in mentioning the sun-worshippers in general) suggests that there lies behind it an ethnic name. The word *muġān* in Evliya’s account refers to a people and he repeatedly renders this sense saying: *Muġān kavmi* or *kavm-i Muġān*.

Evliya, by stressing that the *Muġān* were not fire-worshippers but sun-worshippers, wanted the reader to disregard the usual meaning of the word *muġān*. Prokosch overlooks it and three times calls the *Muġān* (i.e. the sun-worshippers) “Feueranbeter”.<sup>114</sup> Both translators of the *Seyahatname* considered both groups of heathens as one and the same ethnic group. Petti Suma recognises the *Muġān* as being the sun-worshippers,<sup>115</sup> but does not distinguish the fire-worshippers as a distinct, separate people. Evliya consistently names both groups separately, next to each other. The rituals of both groups of worshippers, as described by Evliya, are quite different:

“But the people of *Muġān*, who live in the underground caverns, have no church, or fire temple, at all. There is only on top of the caverns a soaring pillar, on a vast space, facing towards the lake. The pillar has a scooped out niche (*mihṛāb*) facing westwards. All the people of *Muġān* gather at dawn on this plain and when the

<sup>110</sup> Nachtigal 1971: IV, 368.

<sup>111</sup> MacMichael 1922: I, 72 n. 1; Hillelson 1925: 66; Seligman and Seligman 1932: 457.

<sup>112</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 862; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 139.

<sup>113</sup> *Seyahatname* 2007: 36, 446.

<sup>114</sup> Prokosch 1994: 139, 140.

<sup>115</sup> Petti Suma 1964: 444 n. 65.

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first sun’s rays appear, they bow once towards the niche (*mihrāb*) that is in this pillar, towards the East. Afterwards, they take hold of each other’s hands, dance and then leave. When the sun is setting and then when [it] has disappeared they again perform [the ritual] in the same way. This is their act of worship [which they perform] twice daily. May its outcome be good! [Because they are on the way to being good Muslims]. I observed these devil rites of the fire-worshippers and the *Muġān* people [i.e. the sun-worshippers] [which] the governor Hüseyin Qān ordered to be shown.”<sup>116</sup>

The sun-worshippers’ rituals have been performed “on a vast space, facing towards the lake”. On Jebel Zankor where the lake was, now probably is a rain pool (covering three old disused rock wells), marked on the sketch (Fig. I) east of the ruins on site B, close to which, among several “shrines” featuring raised stone circles, is located the largest shrine called by Penn the Pillar(s) Site. Penn marked the Pillar(s) Site on his sketch situated “on some rising ground half a mile to the East”.<sup>117</sup>

“The Pillars site was fully excavated and laid bare. It consisted of twelve single pillars only, arranged in a circle – eleven forming the circumference and one standing in the centre. [The French archaeologists either misquoted or corrected Penn’s observation stating that on the site there are twelve pillars in a circle and a thirteenth in the centre.<sup>118</sup>] (...) The average measurements of these pillars are: Height, 1 metre 10 cms; Diameter, 55 cms.; Circumference, 2 metres. The diameter of the circle was roughly 4 metres at any point. The surrounding debris gives me no clue to the function of these stone pillars, though there are the ruins of other groups of pillars in a similar formation throughout the site.”<sup>119</sup>

Penn could not find “a hint why such pillars were set up”,<sup>120</sup> but these pillars appear to confirm the sun-worship at Zankor. Their arrangement in a circle with one pillar in the middle (the “Pfahlsymbol im Steinkreis”) forms the identical scenery in the solar rite as for instance among the Ziba in Rwanda.<sup>121</sup> The rites performed at sunrise and at sunset by the *Muġān* resemble those of the Jukun in Nigeria, where “gibt es Gebete zur Morgensonne und Abendsonne”.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>116</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 862; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 140.

<sup>117</sup> Penn 1931: 179.

<sup>118</sup> Gratien 2007: 32.

<sup>119</sup> Penn 1931: 181.

<sup>120</sup> Penn 1931: 182.

<sup>121</sup> Baumann 1955: 288.

<sup>122</sup> Baumann 1955: 285-286.

Large clay pitchers that Penn found at Zankor are also known among the Daju,<sup>123</sup> as well as stone circles. In “the ancient Dago religion... the various rock circles that occur on the district had some religious significance.”<sup>124</sup> Rock circles would suggest sun-worship, but this is in conflict with earlier assumptions that the Daju may have been the fire-worshippers.

It is not clear what constituted sun-worshippers’ underground abodes. The word *gār* means ‘cave, cavern; cavity’,<sup>125</sup> as well as ‘grotto; the den of a wild beast’.<sup>126</sup> Petti Suma translates ‘grotte sotteranee’<sup>127</sup> and Prokosch ‘unter der Erde befinden sich viele tausend Wohnungen die dem Höllenschlund gleichen’.<sup>128</sup> Penn is silent about underground caverns, so are the French archaeologists. “Many thousand” underground caves or grottoes as geographical features are not recognizable in the landscape of northern Kordofan. If, however, Evliya meant mines, pits, holes in the ground, then this scenario is more plausible. It was witnessed by Joseph von Russegger who mentioned the landscape of numerous underground caves, or in this case pits connected with the mining of brown hematite otherwise limonite. Near the village of ‘el Feradschaab’ [Farajab 14°43’N 30°40’E], over an area of approximately 400 or 500 square fathoms, Russegger counted some 350 little exposed shafts, some open and others collapsed. Each such shaft was circular in cross section, with a diameter at the surface of 4 to 5 feet and a maximum depth of ten feet. The mining of limonite took place in about 15 villages in the vicinity of Bara [13°42’N 30°22’E], Chursi [Khursi/Khorsi 13°37’N 30°27’E] and Tendar [13°46’N 30°41’E].<sup>129</sup>

Russegger assumed that the presence of limonite extends not only all across the savannah lands of northern Kordofan, but also westwards to Darfur.<sup>130</sup> His visionary hypothesis appears to have been correct. According to the relatively recent (1979-81) discoveries, there are three areas of ironworking in the hills of central Darfur, Jebel Tagabo [14°40’N 25°50’E], Jebel Si [13°55’N 24°20’E] and Jebel Simiat, located at Mao, Wima [Jabal Wima 13°43’N 25°40’E] and Bora [Bir Bora 13°53’N 24°24’E and 13°46’N 24°08’E].<sup>131</sup> As Zankor [13°52’N 27°58’E] is situated approximately on the same latitude, following Russegger’s suggestion, there may have been limonite mined at Jebel Zankor.

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<sup>123</sup> Nachtigal 1971: IV, 185-6.

<sup>124</sup> Macintosh 1931: 174.

<sup>125</sup> Redhouse 1968: 384.

<sup>126</sup> Steingass 1872: 877.

<sup>127</sup> Petti Suma 1964: 444.

<sup>128</sup> Prokosch 1994: 139.

<sup>129</sup> Russegger 1844: 288-289. A similar landscape can be found in the copper mining region of Huftrat al-Nahas/Hofrat an-Nahas (9°45’N 24°19’E), where old workings consisted in 1923 of nearly a **thousand** shafts, and several great pits. Christy 1923: 321.

<sup>130</sup> Russegger 1844: 286.

<sup>131</sup> Musa-Muhammed 1993: 462.

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The “refuse of iron ore” was found by Penn in the midden outside the walls, on the surface, but he “thought it not worth while working on the midden” and its examination was not very systematic.<sup>132</sup> J. M. Edmonds, during a visit to Zankor on Dec. 25, 1937, voiced a supposition that the midden on the flank of the hill and south of the site, covered with iron slag, may mark the position of an iron-smelting works.<sup>133</sup> The French archaeologists report the same. “À l’Est, la ville est bordée par un énorme tas de scories de fer.” “Le fer était travaillé dans un vast atelier au sud de la ville où il subsiste un imposant ferrier.”<sup>134</sup> All these findings indicate iron mining and our attention is drawn to the ironworkers, first of all. And the location of the slag indicates the site occupied by the *Muğān*. They were placed in the “lower town”/”basse ville”.<sup>135</sup> Were the *Muğān* the ironworkers?

### Extracting metal

Evliya does not state explicitly that the inhabitants of that area were engaged in mining activity, yet the Turkish text seems to permit this interpretation. *Prima facie*, the text records that as soon as the fortress was occupied by the invading troops, they began looting. Erich Prokosch translates what seems to be their search for loot as follows:

Prokosch	Turkish text
“Die Leute Hüseyin Kans aber gruben die Festung innen und außen bis totalen Verwüstung auf und holten ungeheure Mengen an Edelmetall, das heißt Goldstaub, hervor, und dazu Elfenbein, Rhinozeroshörner, Moschus, Zibet, Kardamom und Ambra in solchen Mengen, daß nur Gott weiß, wieviel!” <sup>136</sup>	“ <b>Amma bu qavm</b> bu qal’aniñ derün [u] bürünunda ol qadar <b>kazmalar ile</b> kazub harāb [u] yebāb edüb hadden bürün tibr çıkardılar. <b>Ya’ni</b> altun toprağī buldular, ve fīl dişi ve gergedān karnı ve müşk ü zebāt ve qāqūle-i kebīr ve amber buldular kim hisābın muhtesib bilür.” <sup>137</sup>

“Die Leute Hüseyin Kans” is the translator’s interpretation, but the Turkish text has only: *Amma bu kavm* “But these people”, meaning the locals. Here and in other places in the text, the word *kavm* is applied by Evliya exclusively to the *Muğān* (*kavm-i Muğān*, *Muğān kavmi*). In the German translation, words

<sup>132</sup> Penn 1931: 181.

<sup>133</sup> Edmonds 1940: 193.

<sup>134</sup> Gratien 2007: 32.

<sup>135</sup> Gratien 2007: 32.

<sup>136</sup> Prokosch 1994: 139.

<sup>137</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 861.

*kazmalar ile* ‘with pickaxes’ were left out, and pickaxes may have been the mining tools belonging rather to the natives than to the invading soldiers. As a matter of fact, a peculiar iron hoe was found at Zankor.<sup>138</sup>

Perhaps one could divide the above paragraph into two sentences as did the editor of the 1938 printed edition, who begins the second sentence with *Ya’ni*, with a capital letter. The most sophisticated copyist of the manuscript Y of the *Seyahatname*<sup>139</sup> leaves a distinct gap between *çıkardılar* and *ya’ni*. Thus one sentence would relate to the activity of the local people, and another one to the looting soldiers. On this interpretation the text would run:

“But these [local] people [had] dug with pickaxes inside and outside the fortress to such an extent that they brought about its ruin and destruction. They extracted limitless *tibr* [gold or silver in grains or nuggets just from the mine, before it has felt the fire or the hammer].<sup>140</sup>

That is to say [the troops] found gold grains, [as well as] elephant tusks, rhinoceros horn, musk, civet, cardamom, ambergris, in such quantities that might be known [only] to the reckoner (*muhtesib*).<sup>141</sup>

The above-mentioned goods may have been amassed in storerooms, which were different from the sun-worshippers’ abodes. To sum up, the following picture emerges: having brought the baggage inside the fortress, the troops found that the building was in ruin and desolation owing to the activities of the local people, who “dug with pickaxes inside and outside the fortress”, while extracting the gold grains.

Evlia, or his informant, having witnessed what soldiers found in storerooms did not quite realise what the locals dug for. The extracted iron, in this case brown hematite otherwise limonite, could have been taken for *tibr* ‘gold grains’. Limonite is a yellowish to dark brown mineral, a hydrated oxide of iron. Yellowish colour may have caused confusion as the place may have been full of a substance that consisted of “einem gelbrothen, losen, durch Eisenoxyd und von diesem so durchrungenen Sande.”<sup>142</sup>

### The *Muğān* – ironworkers?

In Kordofan there are no ethnonyms sounding like *Muğān*. The name *Muğān* may have not necessarily reflected their ethnic identity (i.e. affiliation to a people/tribe), but might be the name of a caste (emulating their occupation

<sup>138</sup> It differs from the modern Sudanese hoe, being slightly longer in the neck. Penn 1931: 182.

<sup>139</sup> Dankoff 2008: 372

<sup>140</sup> Redhouse 1968: 1176; Steingass 1892: 279.

<sup>141</sup> *Seyahatname*, 1938: 861; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 139.

<sup>142</sup> Russegger 1837: 218; Russegger 1844: 287.

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or profession within the caste). Nachtigal described smiths as despised groups confined to their caste in Bornu, Wadai and Darfur.<sup>143</sup>

Of the two groups of people that lived at Zankor, performing different rites, the *Muġān* appear to be subservient. Their status would be low due to their iron-workers profession with low-prestige of the occupational caste.

Strangely enough, the word for 'ironsmith' in Kotoko dialects<sup>144</sup> is *megene*, 'Eisenschmied' in Ngala<sup>145</sup>, or *megan* in "Kotoko de Goulfei" and "Kotoko Semsir ou de Kousri", *meganne* sing. *megan* 'métallurgistes (le fonder de bronze et le forgerons du fer)',<sup>146</sup> also *mīgan*, pl. *mīgānnē* 'Schmied' in Logone and *mī gam* 'forgeron' (plur. in Kotoko).<sup>147</sup> The Kotoko maintain that before they became Muslims, they forged the iron themselves.<sup>148</sup>

The Kotoko fisherfolk of the Shari-Logone (Logon) area south of Lake Chad are said by tradition to be descended from a race of giants, the So (Sao).<sup>149</sup> Incidentally, in traditions carried on up till now in Kordofan,<sup>150</sup> the 'Anaj (otherwise Abu Qonaan) are credited with the same qualities of giants, of whom Penn was told as well.<sup>151</sup>

The Kotoko groups, in this case the Ngala, are said to have arrived from the east via Darfur and Wadai at the end of the 16th century (c. 1570) and settled down in what is now Ngala by Gulfei.<sup>152</sup> Nachtigal, during his stay in Darfur, found a village due north from El Fasher (13°38'N 25°21'E), inhabited by people from Bornu and Kotoko.<sup>153</sup> It appears that in the 19th century the Kotoko, from the Shari/Logone region south of Lake Chad, were widely settled in Dār Fūr.<sup>154</sup> There is no mention of them being present in Kordofan in the seventeenth century. Nonetheless, it appears that many iron-workers originated in the west of the Sudan. Smiths were slaves taken by the Zaghawa of Darfur in their wars (more probably raids) with Bornu further west.<sup>155</sup> The Zaghawa and the Berti harboured small colonies of servile iron-workers from the west.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Nachtigal 1971: 179.

<sup>144</sup> Sölken 1967: 70, 276.

<sup>145</sup> Duisburg 1914: III, 39-45.

<sup>146</sup> Lebeuf 1976: 33.

<sup>147</sup> Mouchet 1938: II, 54.

<sup>148</sup> Boulnois 1943: 94.

<sup>149</sup> Hunwick 1970: 107.

<sup>150</sup> Sodiri 2011.

<sup>151</sup> Penn 1931: 179.

<sup>152</sup> Migeod 1923: 22, 23; Sölken 1967: 15.

<sup>153</sup> Nachtigal 1971: 259-260.

<sup>154</sup> O'Fahey 1979: 269, n. 29; O'Fahey 2008: 15, 227.

<sup>155</sup> Musa-Mohamed 2004: 189.

<sup>156</sup> MacMichael, 1922: I, 65.

## ***Sīr* – the name or the title?**

*Sīr*, whether combined with the word *Muḡān* or not, does not seem to be the proper name but the title. Interestingly, the word *sir* can be traced in the title of one of the Funj notables mentioned by Evliya namely *sirdim* meaning *ṣehir hakimī*<sup>157</sup> ‘town governor’. According to its meaning, *sirdim* is the compound word (*sir-dim*), and if so, it confirms the above assumption on *sir* meaning ‘governor’ (*hakim*). The remaining part of the title *-dim* must then mean ‘town’. Indeed, it resembles the Nubian word: *dib* ‘Burg, Festung’,<sup>158</sup> *dib, dip* ‘castle’.<sup>159</sup> The sound shift *b < > m* occurs in some toponyms in Northern Kordofan. E.g. the western part of Jebel Haraza is called Kailūm,<sup>160</sup> Kailum, Berg Kailum,<sup>161</sup> Keilum [15°3’N 30°25’E].<sup>162</sup> It is otherwise recorded on maps as Kailub<sup>163</sup> and Jebel Kailub.<sup>164</sup>

In Nubian languages the word *sīr* (and modified variants: *sil* in Birgid,<sup>165</sup> *shil* in Nuba<sup>166</sup>) means ‘chief’. It is preserved in the same form in Meidob: *sirgi* ‘Hauptling’.<sup>167</sup> The same form of the word (*sīr* and *sir-gi*, where *-gi* is the object suffix)<sup>168</sup> may suggest some affinities between the vernacular spoken by the *Muḡān* and the Meidob. The Meidob is related to the Birked<sup>169</sup> and both belong to the Nubian language group. “Until some time not later than the middle of the eighteenth century the range of hills, in N.N. Western Kordofān, including Kāga el Surrūg, Kāga, and Katūl, was inhabited by blacks, partly Nūba and partly Birged”<sup>170</sup>/Birked. And the Birked are said to have been ironworkers. According to al-Tunisi (1784-5) the Birked in Wadai were “les ouvriers en fer et les chasseurs”.<sup>171</sup>

<sup>157</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 891; *Seyahatname* 2007: 459; Petti Suma, 1964, 450: il governatore della città; Prokosch, 1994: 179: Stadtkommandant.

<sup>158</sup> Massenbach 1933: 181.

<sup>159</sup> Armbruster 1965: 134.

<sup>160</sup> MacMichael 1967: 94, 96; Newbold 1924: 129.

<sup>161</sup> Hesse 2002: 81, 84.

<sup>162</sup> MacMichael 1925: 66; Lea 1994: 138.

<sup>163</sup> Rüppell 1829: 125; Map 1853; Petermann & Hassenstein 1863: Blatt 4, p. 22.

<sup>164</sup> Map 1884-1888.

<sup>165</sup> Thelwall 1977: 200.

<sup>166</sup> Hillelson 1925: 73.

<sup>167</sup> Zyhlarz 1928: 90. The modern Hausa word for ‘emir’ *sarki* is noted in the earliest collected vocabulary (1773) of ‘Afnu’ (i.e. Hausa) as *sirki* ‘Sultan’. Hair 1967: 33, n. 11.

<sup>168</sup> Bell 1975: 4, 26.

<sup>169</sup> MacMichael 1922: 78-79; Arkell 1951: 39; 1952a: 135.

<sup>170</sup> MacMichael 1967: 74.

<sup>171</sup> al-Tunisi, 1845: 133-136; 1851: 249- 250, quoted by MacMichael, 1918: 42; 1922: I, 77; Arkell 1952a: 136.

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## Scope of the plundering raid

Whilst Evliya stayed at the fortress of *Ferdāniye* for one month, during that time the “victorious warriors” plundered at some distance the areas of “the fire-worshippers, cattle-worshippers, elephant-worshippers, and sun-worshippers.”<sup>172</sup> Clearly the fire-worshippers and the sun-worshippers were not restricted to the fortress of *Ferdāniye*. The plundered cattle and elephant worshippers bring to mind, as MacMichael put it, “fetish ridden tribes of Fertit,” and the Fertit region (8°20’N 26°00’E). The name Fertit (or Fartit) appears to have been applied to the pagan inhabitants below the southern boundary of Dar Fur, living north and south of the Bahr al-‘Arab and in the Bahr al-Ghazal.<sup>173</sup> Fertit was the generic name used to describe pagans who were the legitimate prey of raiders from the north.<sup>174</sup>

After one month of plundering, the raiders brought with them a rich booty: “many elephants, rhinoceros, sable antelopes, horses, camels, donkeys, water buffaloes, bulls and sheep. On each elephant [sat] twenty to thirty captives, on each camel five to six captives, and on each horse and other animals came slaves from each country: dark brown-skinned and red-faced attractive lads and maidens, ugly-faced *Āfnūvī* [*Āfnūwī*] [and?] Negroes (*Zengī*) with camel-like lips.”<sup>175</sup>

Erich Prokosch in the last sentence recognises only one group: “Afnu-Neger mit häßlichem Gesicht und Kamellippen”<sup>176</sup> or “Neger mit hässlichen Gesichtern und Kamellippen wie die *Āfnū*-Leute”.<sup>177</sup> As *Āfnū* (i.e. Hausa) are said in another place to be of dark brown colour (esmerū’l-levn),<sup>178</sup> it is reasonable to see in this sentence two separate groups. Especially that, elsewhere, Evliya included the *Āfnū* among the “good-looking” tribes like: “*Banqalā*, *Donqola* [*Danaqla*], *Āfnū*, *Börnū*, *Qirmānqa* and *Beğeniskī*.”<sup>179</sup>

Evliya’s pejorative observations on the appearance of the infidel captives like “Negroes (*Zengī*) with camel-like lips” match equally derogatory Arab or European later writers’ descriptions of the Daju who were said to be “black as

<sup>172</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 862; *Seyahatname* 2007: 446; Prokosch 1994: 141.

<sup>173</sup> O’Fahey 1973: 34; Hasan 2003: 91.

<sup>174</sup> O’Fahey 2008: 168.

<sup>175</sup> “*zišt-rū Āfnūvī [ve?]šütür-leb Zengīler*”. *Seyahatname* 1938: 862; *Seyahatname*, 2007: 447; Prokosch 1994: 141.

<sup>176</sup> Prokosch 1994: 141.

<sup>177</sup> Prokosch 2002: 54.

<sup>178</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 72; *Seyahatname* 2007:47; Ciecierska-Chłapowa 1964: 241, 243. According to Nachtigal (1971: 170) “asmar is light bronze, literally dark brunette; most of the pure native Arabs.” Evliya says that dark brown female slaves from *Fūncistān* and *Āfnū* land have nose-and earrings. *Seyahatname* 1938: 803; Prokosch 1994: 55.

<sup>179</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 894; Begevnski; *Seyahatname* 2007: 461; Bağaniski; Ciecierska-Chłapowa 1964: 240; Begevnski; Prokosch 1994: 185; Beganiski.

jet”, “hideously ugly”;<sup>180</sup> “pure black”, “with ugly features”;<sup>181</sup> “very black”, “negroid”.<sup>182</sup>

The above mentioned peoples (excluding *Donqola* [Danaqla]) originated from countries situated in the west (*Afnū*, *Bōrnū*), in the south (*Qirmānqa*), and in the south west (*Beġeniskī*, *Banqalā*). Does the mention of *Banqalā*<sup>183</sup> i.e. the Bangala, who live in Congo (Kinshasa), suggest that the slave and/or ivory merchants – and possible Evliya’s informants – infiltrated that far? It seems rather too early and therefore unlikely. By the mid-eighteenth century, the slave raiders are said to have reached as far south as the Mbomu River in the present Central African Republic.<sup>184</sup> Their main thrust was towards the southwest leading into Ubangi/Shari Basin.<sup>185</sup> When local stocks of ivory were exhausted the merchants penetrated farther afield, across the Nile–Congo watershed and finally into the Congo itself.<sup>186</sup>

Evliya’s appraisal of the “good-looking” tribe called *Banqalā*, is confirmed by all explorers: “Au physique, c’est une belle race que celle de Bangala”;<sup>187</sup> “Die Bangala, Männer und Weiber, sind ein schöner, kräftiger Stamm.”<sup>188</sup>

### Expedition summing up

Up till now, scholars reading the Sudanese part of the “Book of Travels” were at times justifiably confused and puzzled, and in the end reached wrong conclusions. Not being able to work out the goal of the expedition some authors were disadvantaged in proposing their solutions. Chater Bosayley considered the expedition to be the description of the fighting between the Hārdīqān (sic) fire-worshippers (i.e. ‘ābid al-nār) and Berberistān, that means the Hārdīqān<sup>189</sup> (sic) Shāyqiya and the ‘Abdāllāb (Berberistān).<sup>190</sup> Bosayley offered no evidence for the Shāyqiya being fire-worshippers and whilst emending Evliya’s *H.rd.qān* (Hardiqān/Hardoqān) to Hārdīqān he did not explain why this name should be connected with the Shāyqiya. He dated this battle between 1659 and 1680<sup>191</sup> without placing this event in the specific territory.

<sup>180</sup> al-Tunisi 1851: 68.

<sup>181</sup> Nachtigal 1971: 155.

<sup>182</sup> Macintosh 1931: 171.

<sup>183</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 894; *Seyahatname* 2007: 467; Prokosch, 1994: 185.

<sup>184</sup> O’Fahey 1973: 34.

<sup>185</sup> O’Fahey 2008: 248.

<sup>186</sup> Hasan 2003: 75.

<sup>187</sup> Overbergh 1907: 75.

<sup>188</sup> Overbergh 1907: 76.

<sup>189</sup> Also misspelt as Hārdīfān. Bosayley 1955: 85.

<sup>190</sup> Bosayley 1955: 85; Bosayley 1972: 259.

<sup>191</sup> Bosayley 1972: 259.

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Richard A. Lobban in a brief paragraph on Evliya Çelebi vaguely referred to the expedition stating that “Celebi (sic) reported that Sai had just been seized by Kor (sic) Hussein, a vassal of the Funj sultans in an effort to suppress a revolt by Hardokan”.<sup>192</sup> Actually, Evliya did not mention Kōr Hüseyn in connection with Sai (*Sāy*)<sup>193</sup> and “revolt of Hardokan” (as Lobban seems to believe) did not occur in Upper Nubia.

What one was able to gather from Evliya Çelebi’s account, not without a lot of guesswork and speculation, is that for the duration of his voyage to the Sudan there was an expedition against infidels of northern and western Kordofan during which a great battle was fought with indigenous people(s) and later the fortress of Zankor was conquered in the month of *Receb 1083*<sup>194</sup> lasting from 23<sup>rd</sup> of October till 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1672.

Originally the aim of the war, we are told, was to quell an uprising of the local ruler, but the alleged rebel is not even mentioned. The main focus is on fighting the infidels, on recounting their activities and their customs, and plundering the nearby lands. Evliya’s term *gaza*, otherwise Arabic *ghazwa*, means a military campaign or attack, in the benefit of Islam, and in his understanding every action taken against infidels constituted a holy war and is described as such. These organised raids in the neighbouring Darfur Sultanate were called *ghazwa* or *salatiya*.<sup>195</sup> Kōr Hüseyn Qān appears to have performed the role of, what in Darfur was called *sultan al-ghazwa* “sultan of the raid” i.e. chief commissioned by the sultan to go slave raiding.<sup>196</sup>

According to Evliya, Kōr Hüseyn Beğ, who spoke excellent Turkish, came from the *Kelāfiş/Kelāpīş* Beduin tribe<sup>197</sup> placed in Upper Egypt, near Aswan.<sup>198</sup> His origin in Upper Egypt would agree with what Evliya wrote about the *cellāb* (*cellābe*) – the Jallaba, the itinerant merchants (to Evliya slave-traders). He portrayed them as dark skinned people of the districts of Ibrim, Aswan and the Oases,<sup>199</sup> being the first traveller to mention them.<sup>200</sup> But then Kōr Hüseyn Qān’s residence was in Hafir (19°35’N 30°22’E) in Upper Nubia where further to the

<sup>192</sup> Lobban 2002: 62.

<sup>193</sup> It was mentioned on the Turkish map of the Nile. Petti Suma 1964: n. 26; Udal 1997: 3. It has been suggested that the ‘cartographer’ had personal reasons to glorify Kōr Hüseyn Beğ, his deeds and the extent of his territory. Habraszewski 2009-2010: 298.

<sup>194</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 861-862; *Seyahatname* 2007: 447; Prokosch 1994: 141.

<sup>195</sup> O’Fahey 2008: 81.

<sup>196</sup> O’Fahey 1973: 33; O’Fahey 2008: 309.

<sup>197</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 849; *Seyahatname* 2007: 440, 444; Prokosch 1994: 122; Dankoff & Kim 2011: 440; Kalafish. Petti Suma’s (1964: 440, n. 43) identification of this tribe with the Kababish is discarded.

<sup>198</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 837; *Seyahatname* 2007: 434; Prokosch 1994: 105.

<sup>199</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 382; *Seyahatname* 2007: 205.

<sup>200</sup> Hasan 1977: 95; Walz 1979: 216; Hasan 2003: 67.

south, in Dongola (18°13'N 30°45'E), lived a thousand of Jallāba from Sudan, Aswan and Funj.<sup>201</sup>

The Jallāba were Arabized Nubian Muslims, mainly Danāqla and Ja'aliyyin.<sup>202</sup> Both groups appear to have participated in the expedition: from the north the Danāqla (*Berberistān*), from the east the Ja'aliyyin of the region of Shendi with its local ruler (*dābir*).

One Sudanese source describes a comparable expedition in the seventeenth century. In the tribal history of the Jamu'iya belonging to the Ja'aliyyin confederation, whose original headquarters were near Shendi on the west bank of the Nile, there is mention of invading northern Kordofan. The invaders captured numbers of Nubas whom they enslaved and took back with them.<sup>203</sup>

If Evliya's text has been interpreted correctly, then some light would be shed on the inhabitants of Jebel Zankor in western Kordofan in the second half of the seventeenth century. Thanks to him possibly the first-hand account of local religious rituals is obtained. While analysing Evliya's text, one is never certain which data is based on his personal observation and which on hearsay. Whether information is based on his personal observation or on hearsay is less important. It is however of great consequence how knowledgeable and eloquent his informants may have been. John O. Udal does not exclude the possibility that "Evliya remained on the Nile at Moshu or Kerma and, on their eventual return, sought with limited success to debrief the military about their adventures."<sup>204</sup> In view of the fact that contemporaneous Sudanese Arabic sources and descriptions of European travellers are either silent or non-existent, the "Book of Travels" (*Seyahatname*), as the source, is unique and one is forced to give Evliya Çelebi the benefit of the doubt. Notwithstanding its shortcomings, researchers may find some encouragement in Richard Hill's words who, rather over overenthusiastically, wrote: "pretty well every page of the text has tantalizing references which, if we could only interpret them, would greatly illuminate one of the darkest periods of Sudanese history".<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> *Seyahatname* 1938: 870; *Seyahatname* 2007: 450; Prokosch 1994: 151.

<sup>202</sup> O'Fahey and Spaulding 1974: 115.

<sup>203</sup> Robinson 1927: 140; Robinson 1929: 383.

<sup>204</sup> Udal 1998: 31.

<sup>205</sup> Hill 1967 (?).

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