the iasa bulletin.

autumn 2025

the latest news and research in the arabian peninsula. – issue #34

Jagged Bells

Manfred Boelke

Description

When flying over Harrat Rahat and Harat Kishb at low altitude (300-400 m) with Google Earth, bell-shaped structures with striking prongs appear repeatedly alongside many other prehistoric relics (Figure 1). They vary in size and also have a different number of prongs. Some of them are so clear that one is inclined to think they are contemporary structures, but most of them appear to be ancient and are criss-crossed by vehicle tracks, footpaths and former watercourses. A total of more than 1600 sites have been located so far.

Figure 1

Based on their external characteristics, I have named these structures 'Zackenglocke' (Jagged Bell) and they can be divided into three groups (Figure 2). The mayority of the finds belong to

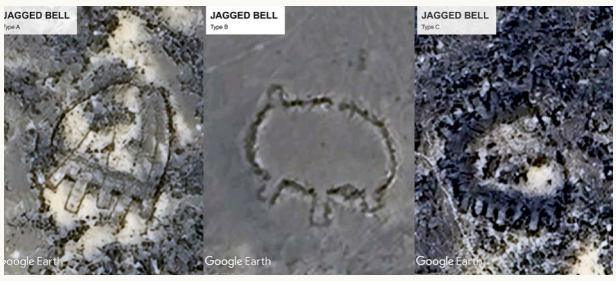

Figure 2

group A and are distributed across the entire Rahat. They all follow an identical design (Figure 3) and, with a few exceptions, almost all point in the same direction. A few of them are folded across the east-west axis and turned upside down, so to speak (Figure 4). Type B is distributed from the central Rahat eastwards to Harrat Kishb, while type C is limited to the southern part of the Rahat (Figure 5). The smallest jagged bells are only

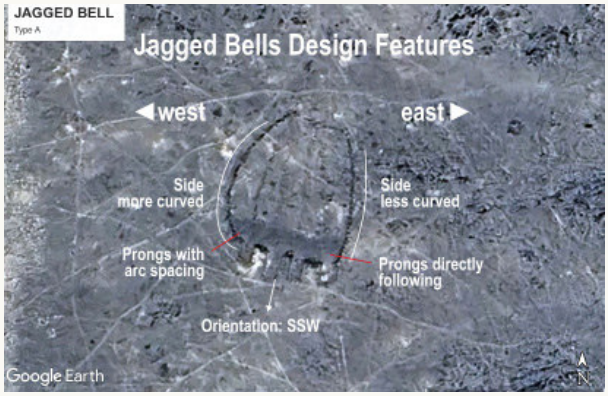

Figure 3

about five metres wide, while the largest jagged formation marked to date has a width of about 88 metres (Google Earth measurements). The number of prongs varies greatly, ranging from just one to more than twenty.

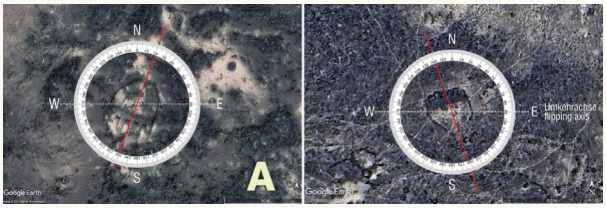

Figure 4

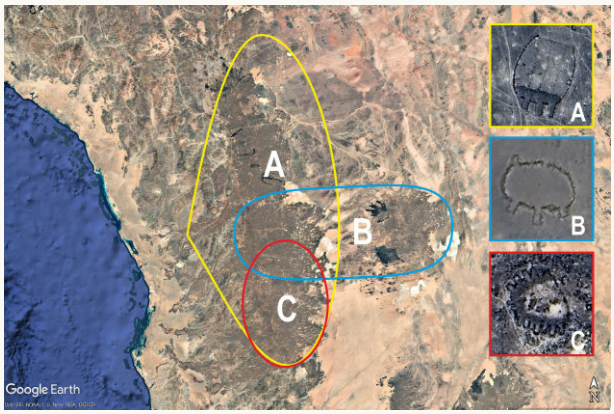

Figure 5

The jagged bells certainly need further archaeological research. This article aims to make them known to a wider circle of researchers who may be able to add to existing knowledge on the subject.

Considerations:

• It is implausible that these are simple construction sites and that the conspicuous spikes were created by a bulldozer The fact that the orientation of the structures follows a clear pattern argues against a construction site. Most of

them point to the south-southwest. Construction sites would be adapted to local requirements in terms of their orientation. There is also no evidence of any other earthworks in the area, such as access roads.

• This predominantly consistent orientation is also implausible for enclosures and gathering points for livestock.

• It is also not plausible that the jagged bells are oriented towards Mecca and that the individual prongs represent prayer niches (mihrab). Then there would be no variants oriented toward the north or northwest, which also have up to twenty or more prongs in all directions.

• A ritual purpose from pre-Islamic times is more likely. The often repetitive orientation of pre-Islamic open-air sanctuaries is well documented in Arabia and throughout the Middle East.

More information and a KMZ file for download are available on the author's website:
https://archaeoland.eu/en/arabia-en/saudi-arabia/jagged-bells

About the author:

Manfred Boelke is a German independent researcher who has been intensively involved in the satellite image-based search for prehistoric relics for almost two decades. After high-resolution satellite images became accessible to everyone on the internet, he began to engage in online archaeology. Since then, he has been searching for archaeological finds, focusing on the Middle East and North Africa. Among the successes of his work was the discovery of previously unknown desert kites in the central and western Sahara, which he published as a co-author with Olivier Barge and others.

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ISSN 2632-4954
Reg. Charity No. 1003272

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