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Notice: The author thanks a group of local researchers from Fuerteventura (María Mercedes Luis Jorge, Alexander Pfeiffer, José Antonio Acosta Molinero) who found out that the small artificial craters in Figs.4a/4b are in fact traces of artillery exercises by the Spanish army, ca. 50 years ago. This shows that aerial investigations via Google Earth have their limits.

Keywords: Canary Islands, Fuerteventura, U-shaped monuments, female pubic symbols, Sahara, Iberian Peninsula, North Africa, Near East.

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Hans-Joachim Ulbrich

Some U-shaped monuments from Fuerteventura (Canary Islands)

The entire Mediterranean region, including the Canary Islands, North Africa and the Near East, comprises U-shaped buildings of different dimensions, mostly applying dry-stone techniques. They have a ground-plan in the form of a **U** (simplified also of a **V**) or derivatives thereof – the so-called "U-shaped monuments" (USM), also known as "U-structures". Y. & Ch. Gauthier described some low built USMs ("alvéoles en forme de 'U' / formes en 'U' ou fer à cheval") already in 1999 for the Fezzan (Libya). Other authors followed, for instance di Lernia (2013). Latest finds include examples from Jordan and the Black Sea hinterland (Ulbrich 2016). Special forms and parallels were detected by the author also in satellite photos of Iran, Western Sahara, Algeria and Lanzarote (the latter incl. ground photos).

The ground-plans and in many cases also the horizontal and vertical profiles of the USMs can without doubt be attributed to the wide range of female pubic symbols. We know quite a few of these which have their origins already in the Palaeolithic (Leroi-Gourhan 1971: 575). This qualifies the USMs for apotropaic purposes and fertility rites (as annotated in Ulbrich 2016; for pubic symbolism in rock art and artefacts of the Canaries and North Africa see Ulbrich 1997).

Hundreds of thousands of USMs in the above described regions deserve a closer look at their geographical distribution and constructional design; for the latter Ulbrich (2016: 40-41) gives some basic hints. Mainly the eastern Canary Islands comprise USMs, but Fuerteventura shows the most of them. This small paper describes on the following pages two sites near the western coast ~~and one site in the center of the island~~. Google Earth images are confronted with

sketches of the recognizable USMs of the same area.



Fig. 1 - A group of four USMs in the Algerian Sahara. Their axes have the same NW to SE direction; but that is not compelling. There can exist also different directions in one cluster or in one row, for example in a curved line-up. (Photo: Google Earth)

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Fig.2a - A group of wide and big executed USMs; nearby some normally small and narrow built variants (Fuerteventura 28RES8078435853). Widespread is the method to remove the vegetational layer of the inner part (the bright areas in the big USMs). [Photo: Google Earth]

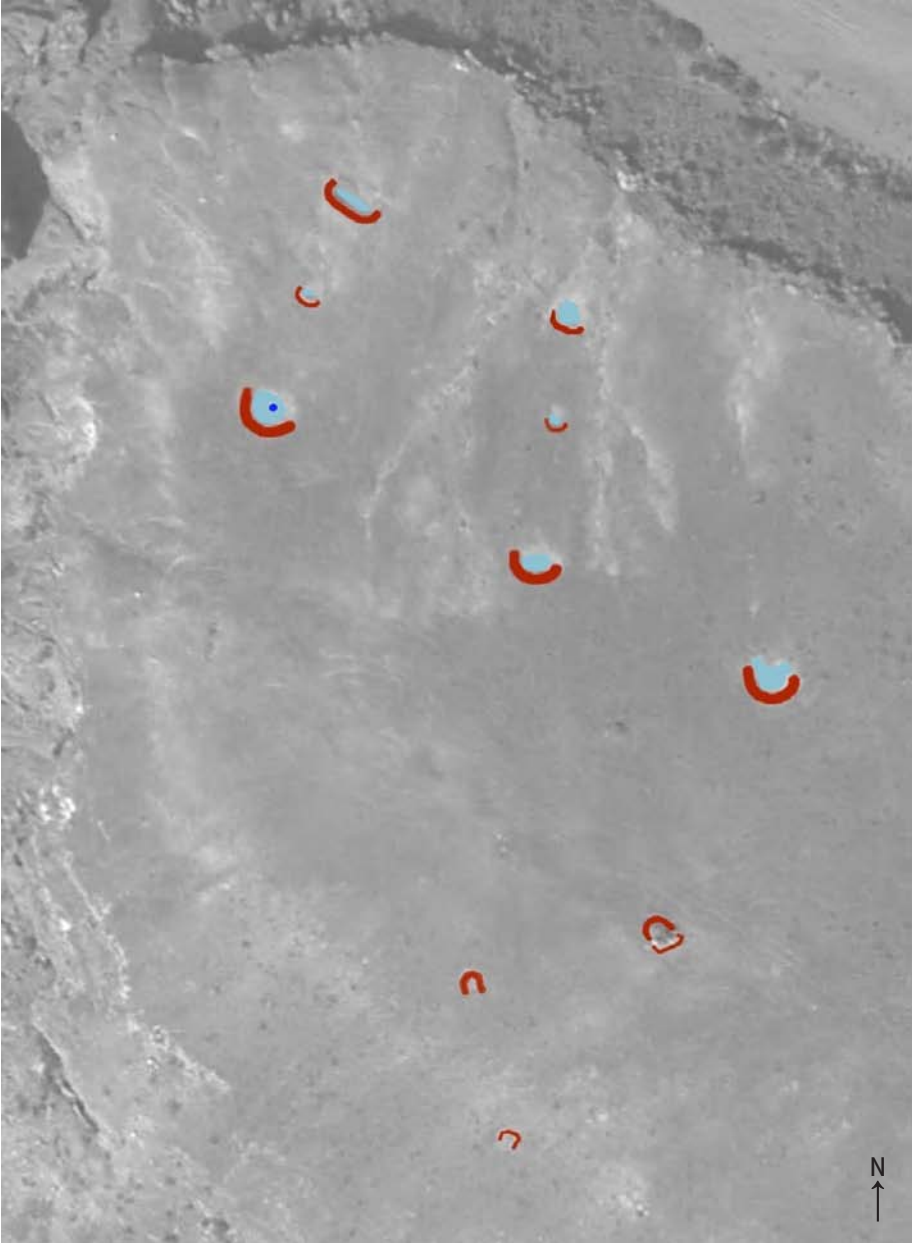


Fig.2b - The three big USMs constitute obviously a line-up. Interesting is that one of the big USMs features a center-point. Center-lines and center-points understrike the female interpretation of the USMs. Artificial deepenings are marked blue. (Sketch: Hans-Joachim Ulbrich 2018)



Fig.3a - Another USM group from Fuerteventura (28RES8217832726). The USMs can have a round closing side or instead a straight line with two angles. USMs can be found in every altitude of the island; preferably on plains and slight hillsides. [Photo: Google Earth]

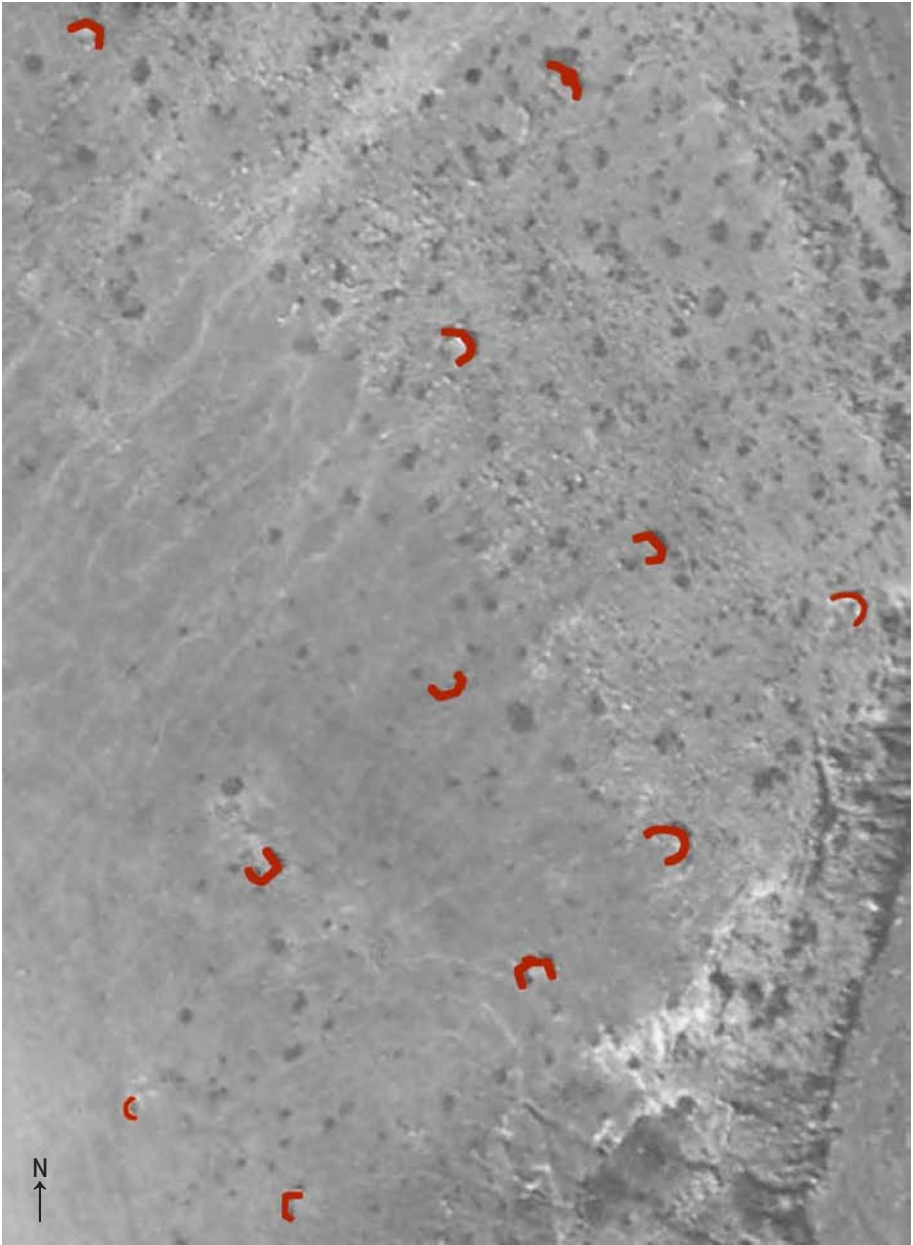


Fig.3b - These 11 USMs belong to a bigger group which extends to the northwest. All USMs from Fuerteventura shown here were built in the badlands and have no agricultural importance or objective. They are no wind-breaks for fruit trees. (Sketch: Hans-Joachim Ulbrich 2018)



Fig.4a This image shows two double-rows of partially eroded mini-USMs with a total of 34 monuments (Fuerteventura 28RES8893323218). The left group crosses a crest, in so doing it has more elevation differences than the right group. [Photo: Google Earth]

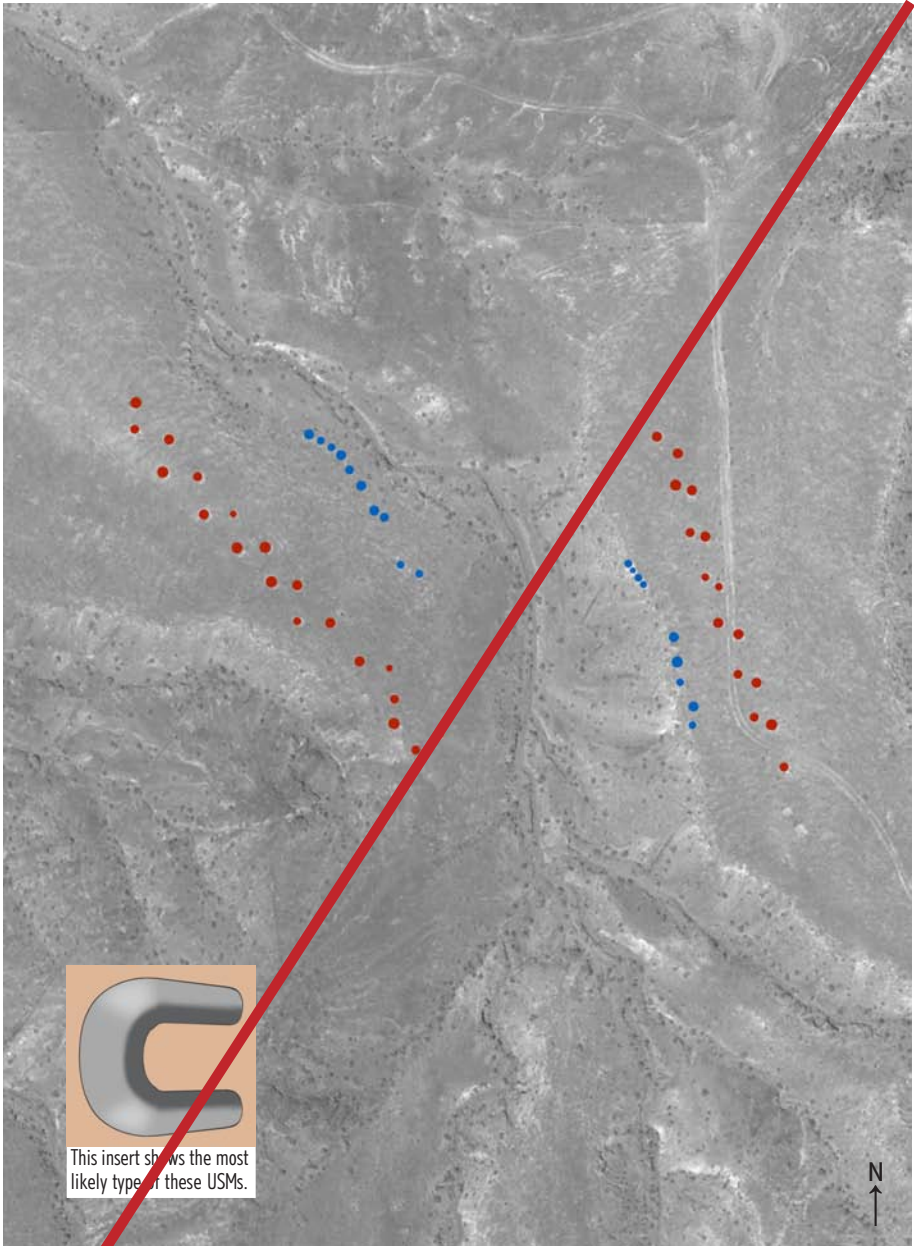


Fig.4b - The red points represent USMs which are more or less clearly identifiable as such. The additional blue points stand in for possible USMs at both edges of the *barranco*; but these sites are hardly to identify and badly damaged respectively (Sketch: Hans-Joachim Ulbrich 2018).

The attentive roamer can find thousands of USMs on Fuerteventura. Their intensive construction means a strong believe in the cult of Mother Earth and it is not surprising that the prehispanic societies of the island had a matrilineal inheritance. Although USMs are present in North Africa in a great number, it is not imperative that this means a sole origin of the Maxos (aborigines) from Berber ethnics, because USMs are also present on the Iberian Peninsula and practically in every other Mediterranean region.

A chronological classification of the USMs on Fuerteventura is at the moment extremely difficult. The USMs of the near African and European continent respectively were not alone a matter of a certain millenium; accompanying monuments seem to suggest classifications fitting to BC and AD. There are strong hints that USMs were traditionally built and used on Fuerteventura up to early modern times – at least up to the point of time when the first Europeans settled on the island and christianised it (1405 the two aboriginal kings were babtised).

The types of USMs on Fuerteventura and Lanzarote are mostly the same and demonstrate that both islands – as in many other features regarding their pre- and protohistory – are one "province". And we may not forget that the first colonists arrived on Lanzarote not later than around 3000 BC (Zöller et al. 2003).

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