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Sarourab 2: a new contribution to the Early Khartoum tradition from Bauda site

During the archaeological field-work conducted by the first of the authors, several prehistoric sites have been located in the area north of Omdurman, between Wadi Seyidna and Khor Ed Dishinab (Fig. 1). The chronology of these sites range from the Khor Abu Anga Palaeolithic to post-Neolithic. Some of them have received special attention, particularly those at Jebel Um Marrahi, Nofalab and at the Bauda village. The present report concerns the latter site which drew our attention very early. Abbas S. A. Mohammed has made several test pits in it and obtained valuable information from them. However, due to its importance and because it was endangered by the growth of the Bauda village, where it is situated, it has been decided that more attention should be devoted to it. Thus it became a target of intensive investigation in 1978 by both authors of the present paper.

The site of Sarourab 2 lies on the western edge of Bauda village (which belongs administratively to the Sarourab West region — a conglomeration of villages and hamlets extending along the bank of the Nile for a distance of about 8 km — hence the name Sarourab). It is located on the west bank of the main Nile, some 45 km to the north of the Khartoum Hospital site — a type-site of Early Khartoum tradition (Fig. 2). The site is located on a gravel ridge, about 384 m above the sea level. The area of occupation covers about 75×35 m, on E—W line. It seems that it may have extended further eastward before the village was built (Fig. 3). An estimated total area of the site is 2800 sq. m (intensive occupation only). The early settlement was located on the edge of an ancient Nile bank. A total of 51 squares of 2×2 m each were excavated, yielding material down to a depth of 0.6 m in most places and exceeding that depth in very few instances.

A large amount of cultural material have been recovered in the course of the testing. The lithic tools (Fig. 4) are made mainly of quartz — about 70%; other material included sandstone, rhyolite, mudstone, chert and fossil wood. Of the retouched tools, various scrapers amount to 21%, while other tools include lunates and other geometrics, borers, groovers, etc. The type and amount of debitage recovered points to the

fact that the tools were made locally. Altogether 150 ground stone artifacts were found, including one complete stone ring (Fig. 4). The overall assessment is that Sarourab 2 settlement shows close typological affinities with Khartoum Hospital-type stone tools.

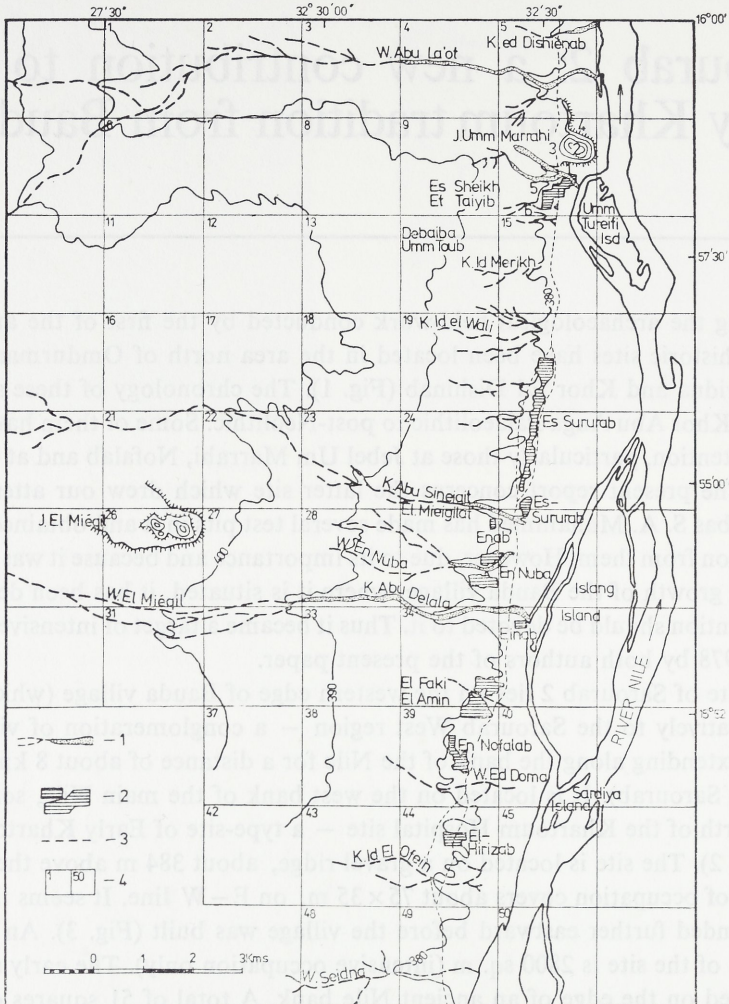


Fig. 1. Map of the western bank of the main Nile between Wadi Seidna and Khor ed Dishienab and the grid system of the concession area of the Khartoum University archaeological field-work

1: Seasonal khor; 2: Village; 3: Track; 4: Survey grid

A total of 4,831 potsherds were collected from all test-pits, including bases, rims (Fig. 5) and body sherds. The pottery types and its decoration exhibit typical Early Khartoum tradition, though much cruder and rougher examples are more in evi-

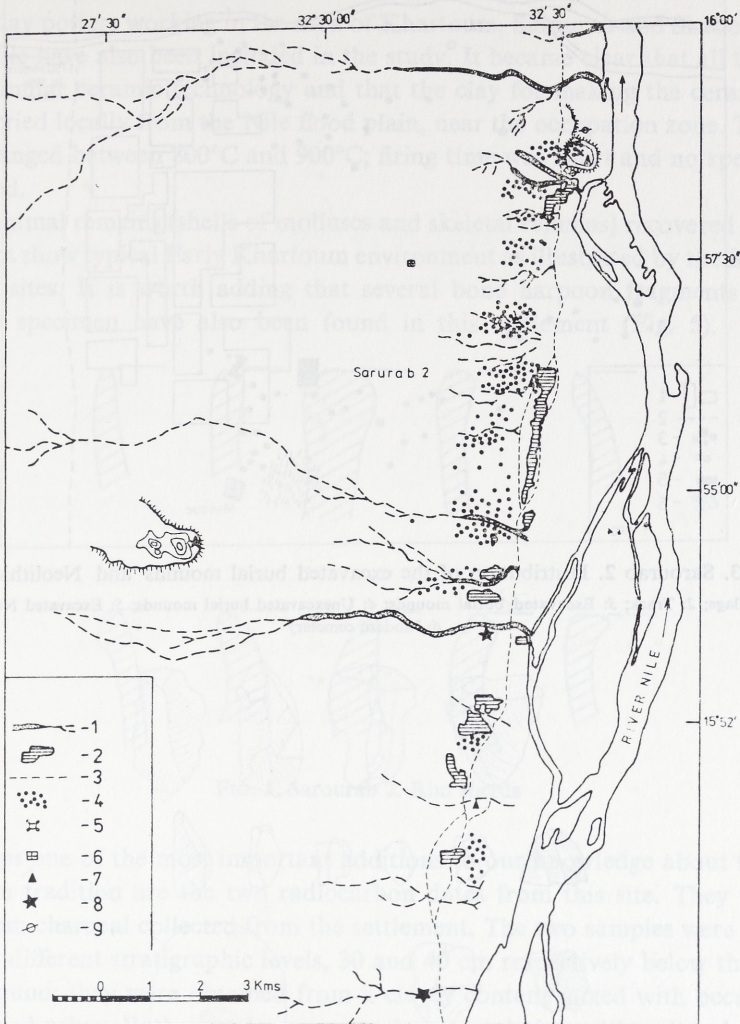


FIG. 2. Archaeological sites within the concession area of the Khartoum University on the western bank of the main Nile

1: Seasonal khor; 2: Village; 3: Track; 4: Meroitic burial mounds; 5: Meroitic fortress; 6: Stone building (Debaiba umm-Toub); 7: Neolithic site; 8: Palaeolithic site; 9: Scatter of potsherds

dence at Sarourab 2 site. Specimens from this assemblage have been subjected to further studies in order to shed more light on the ceramic technology of Sarourab 2 and other related sites. Various techniques were used in these studies, including X-ray diffraction, petrographical analysis, standard geothite norm of the fine fraction, and thermogravimetric analysis. Comparative samples have been taken from the sites of Shaheinab and Shabona. Additionally, samples of clay soil used by the

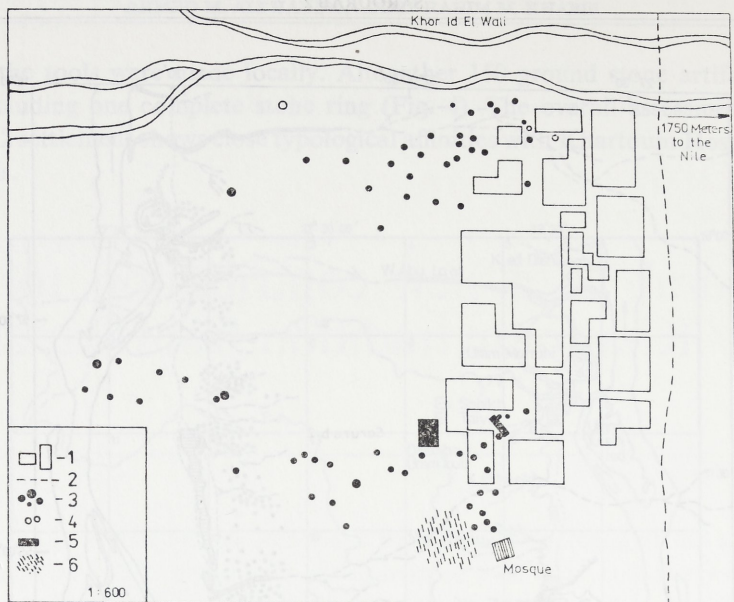


FIG. 3. Sarourab 2. Distribution of the excavated burial mounds and Neolithic sites
1: Bauda village; 2: Track; 3: Excavated burial mounds; 4: Unexcavated burial mounds; 5: Excavated Neolithic site 2;
6: Modern cemetery

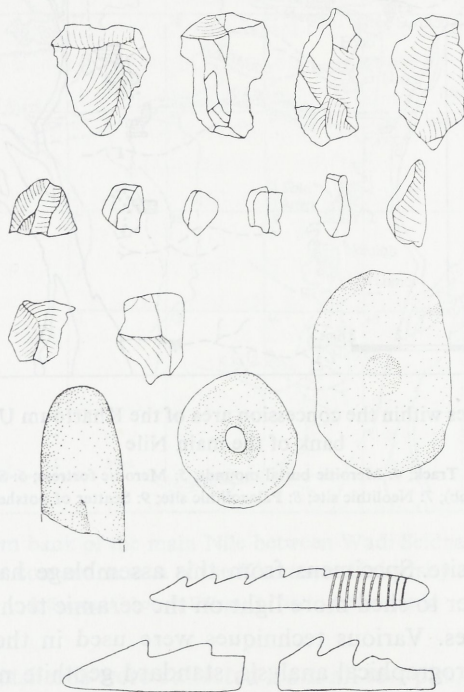


FIG. 4. Sarourab 2. Lithic and bone artefacts

present-day potters working in the area of Khartoum, Sarourab and Shabona on the White Nile have also been included in the study. It became clear that all these sites exhibit similar ceramic technology and that the clay for making the ceramic paste was quarried locally from the Nile flood plain, near the occupation zone. The firing of clay ranged between 800°C and 900°C; firing time was short and no special kilns were used.

The animal remains (shells of molluscs and skeletal remains) recovered from this settlement show typical Early Khartoum environment as illustrated by the Khartoum Hospital sites. It is worth adding that several bone harpoon fragments and one complete specimen have also been found in this settlement (Fig. 5).

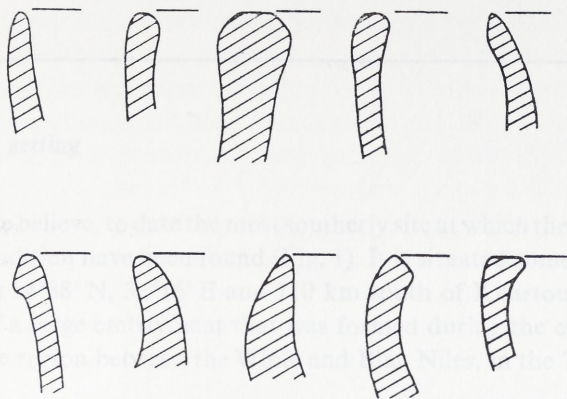


FIG. 5. Sarourab 2. Rim sherds

Perhaps one of the most important additions to our knowledge about the Early Khartoum tradition are the two radiocarbon dates from this site. They were obtained from charcoal collected from the settlement. The two samples were obtained from two different stratigraphic levels, 30 and 40 cm respectively below the surface of the ground; they were obtained from a clayey content mixed with occupational remains and ashes. Both samples were in clear association with cultural material. The first sample (Har - 3476) yielded a date of $9,330 \pm 110$ and the second (Har - 3475) gave a date of $9,370 \pm 110$.

It is hoped that other Early Khartoum sites in the area will be investigated in the future and our knowledge about this cultural tradition will accordingly increase.