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**Tell El-Farkha (Ghazala): Season 2002**

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# TELL EL-FARKHA

## (GHAZALA)

### SEASON 2002

Marek Chłodnicki, Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz

*The present campaign, sponsored by the Adam Mickiewicz University Fund in Poznań, Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poznań Prehistoric Society and the Polish Centre of Archaeology in Cairo, lasted from February 23 to May 6, 2002.<sup>1)</sup>*

*During the 2002 season most of the excavation work on the western and central kom was carried out within the confines of the trenches traced in 2001. One additional small trench was situated on the southern slope of the central kom. On the eastern kom, two trial trenches were explored and the remains of a cemetery were discovered in one of them.*

*Post-processing work was also conducted on site, dealing with the pottery as well as stone objects, plant, animal and human remains.*

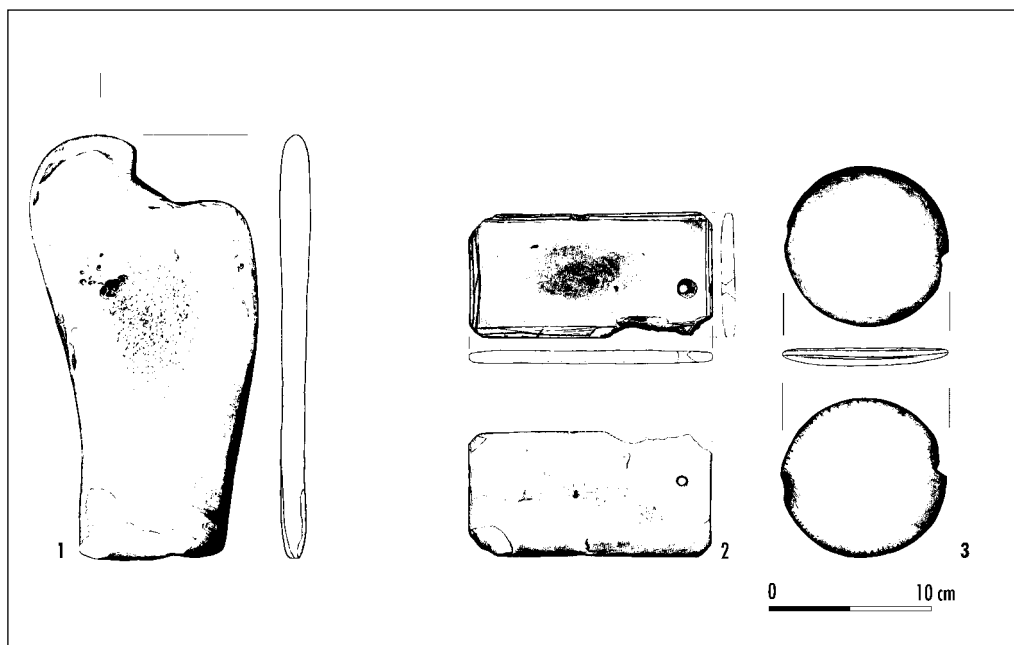
1) The team headed by Dr. Marek Chłodnicki, director, and Prof. Dr. Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz, included: Mr. Krzysztof Cichowski, Ms Joanna Dębowska, Mr. Maciej Jórdeczka, Mr. Ryszard Kirkowski, Ms Ewa Kuciewicz, Mr. Piotr Szejnoga, archaeologists; Dr. Mariusz Jucha, Ms Agnieszka Mączyńska, ceramologists; Ms Maria Ablamowicz, Mr. Daniel Makowiecki, paleozoologists; Mrs. Lucyna Kubiak-Martens, paleobotanist; Mr. Artur Rewekant, physical anthropologist; Prof. Dr. Maciej Pawlikowski, geologist; Mr. Robert Staboński, Mrs. Halina Źarska-Chłodnicka, Mr. Michał Woźnicki, documentalists; Ms Izabela Dachtera, Mr. Paweł Gajowiecki, Ms Magdalena Gorlas, Mr. Paweł Hołda, Mr. Piotr Kołodziejczyk, Ms Anna Longa, Mr. Łukasz Obtułowicz, Ms Donata Pawłowska, Mr. Krzysztof Stawarz, Mr. Leszek Szumlas, Ms Monika Zapart, students. The Supreme Council of Antiquities was represented by Mr. Yasser el-Said el Gamal from Mansura Inspectorate.

## EXCAVATIONS ON THE WESTERN KOM

Exploration of the Western Kom in 2002 continued in sections started last year (64c,d; 65a,d; 67a,b; 54c,d; 55a,d; 44c; 54a,c), covering again a total of 505 sq. m. The principal objective was to examine levels dated from early phase 4 to the end of phase 3, underlying the deposits excavated last year (phase 5 and partly phase 4). Work proceeded slowly in view of the complex stratigraphy, as well as countless, often intersecting brickwork remains and large numbers of artifacts, many quite remarkable, present in each layer. All of the architectural remains and artifacts recorded this year can be linked to the Nagada IIIa period. Materials dating from Nagada IIIa were prevalent in the lowermost strata, whilst Nagada IIIb materials were predominant in the upper layers.

Initially, work was concentrated in and around the temple discovered last year. A big slate palette in the shape of a falcon was found; it is one of only a small number known to date from Egypt (*Fig. 1*). The lower section of the temple's east wall stood on a thin brown deposit separating it from the large building underneath (building 69), which had been raised by people of the Nagada culture. Parts of building 69 (its 2.5 m-wide east wall and rounded south corner) had been revealed in 2000. A distinct layer of silt, no doubt a result of the Nile flooding, was present beneath the aforementioned temple wall. This silt covered a thick deposit of burnt material consisting of black and white ash (*Fig. 2*).

Below these strata a series of mud brick walls was encountered, forming the distinct



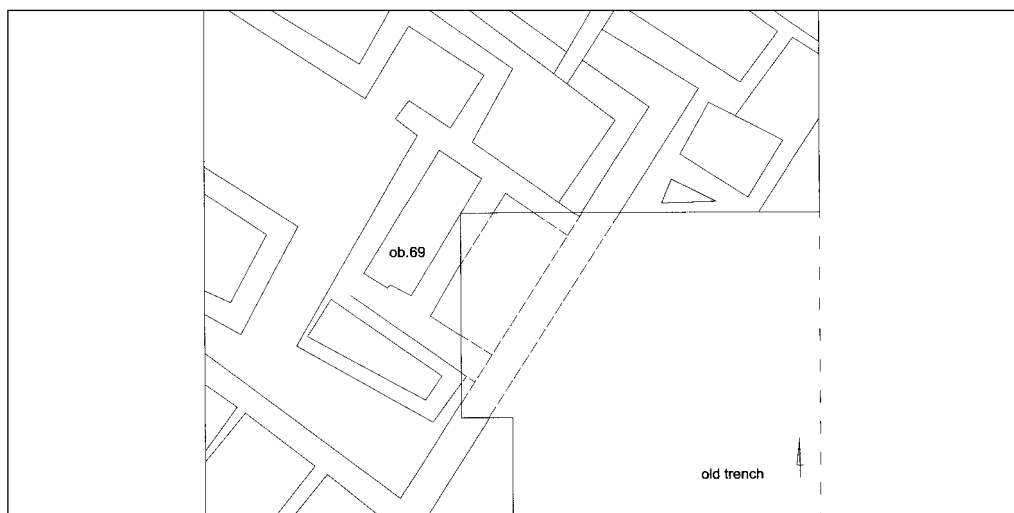
*Fig. 1. Cosmetic palettes: falcon-shaped (1) from the Western Kom; round and rectangular (2-3) from the Central Kom (Drawing M. Jórdeczka)*

outline of a building (Fig. 3). This was a large structure (c. 20 by 20 m), divided internally into several rooms. It was notable for its thick walls (2 m wide) separating it to the south from the so-called southern rooms, which were no doubt a later addition and in which two ovens with vessels standing in them were found. The internal room (also partly excavated in 2000) measured 7 by 2 m and had a very badly damaged brick floor. To its west, separated by a c. 80 cm-wide wall, was another chamber (referred to as the west room). Both were bounded to the north by further rooms (of almost identical dimen-

sions), also separated by a thick wall. The remains of ovens and hearths were discovered in the last of these rooms. The building in question was remodeled during the final phase of use. Thirty distinct post-holes were found in its western part, some of them dug into the west wall and some located outside it (Fig. 4). Both these post-holes and the very thick walls of the building suggest that it had an upper story. As in the 2000 season, numerous artifacts were found in the building, testifying to the importance of trade in the life of the inhabitants: counters, fragments of undecorated clay seals, and sherds of imported



Fig. 2. Western Kom. Deposit of burnt material consisting of black and white ashes (Photo R. Staboński)



*Fig. 3. Western Kom. Outline of mud brick walls (building 69)  
(Drawing A. Longa)*



*Fig. 4. Western Kom. Remains of building 69, view from the southwest  
(Photo R. Słaboński)*

(Palestinian) pottery. Ultimately, the building was destroyed in a fire-related catastrophe. It is difficult to assess whether this resulted from intentional human action or from a natural disaster, such as a flood or an earthquake.

Evidence suggesting that an earthquake may indeed have been the root cause came from excavation of lower levels, both to the south and north of the aforementioned building. The entire area was covered with fragments of collapsed walls, most of them lying on their sides and concealing numerous artifacts. These

included broken pottery, both storage vessels and tableware, flint and stone tools, and cosmetic palettes. The skeleton of a pig was found, doubtless crushed by a falling wall (*Fig. 5*). The lower walls of a number of ruined buildings have been preserved. They varied in width (from c. 30 to 60 cm) and were most often made of mud brick tempered with sand. Large quantities of pottery were found in and around the rooms. Numerous ovens and hearths were also recorded, some with pots standing nearby, clearly pointing to domestic activity in this area.



*Fig. 5. Western Kom. Skeleton of a pig crushed by a collapsing wall  
(Photo R. Staboński)*

## EXCAVATIONS ON THE CENTRAL KOM

## TRENCH C53-75

Excavations on the summit of the Central Tell were carried out in the same trench where work was conducted in 2000-2001 (sections 53bd, 54a,d, 55a,d, 63bd, 64a,d, 65a,d, 73d, 74c,d, 75c,d) over an area of 506 sq. m. This year saw the exploration of level 18 (c. 6.40 m) to level 28 (c. 5.50 m) removing around 0.9-1.0 m of cultural deposits. The building remains recorded in these levels can be dated to phase 4 of the Tell el-Farkha settlement, i.e., to the Nagada IIIb,c period. Exploration was also completed of the service buildings whose walls had come into view during the previous season's work, and of three relict

silos situated in the northern end of the trench. Excavation in the southeastern part of the trench concentrated on a series of small rooms surrounding the courtyard from the south. These rooms were found to contain stoves, some with entire vessels inside them.

Little change was observed in the layout of the buildings revealed in lower occupation levels. The one exception to this was noted in the northwestern corner of the trench, where the three silos were later built. Prior to their construction, a number of small rooms stood in this area (*Fig. 6*). Their narrow walls were 1-1.5 bricks thick. A richly decorated ceramic



*Fig. 6. Central Kom. Mud brick structures  
(Photo R. Słaboński)*

element of approximately 80 cm in diameter was discovered in one of these rooms (Fig. 7). The remains of a similar, though much smaller object were found next to it and two hearths were uncovered beneath it. The purpose of this feature is unclear, particularly as it was found in the service area of the settlement. It may perhaps represent the remains of a sacri-

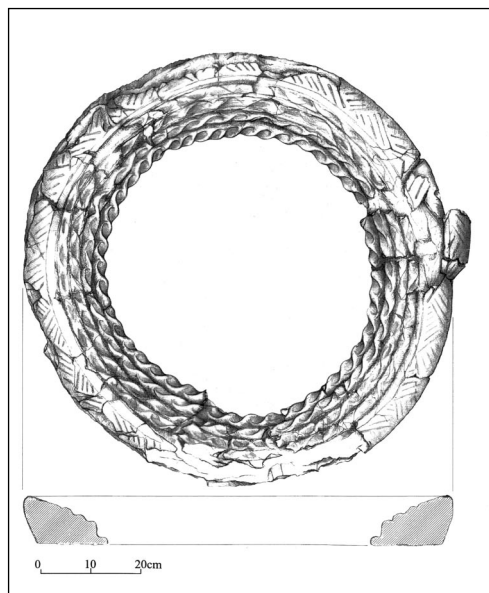


Fig. 7. Central kom. Decorated ceramic ring  
(Photo R. Słaboński; drawing  
M. Woźnicki)

ficial altar. The central part of the trench was occupied by a courtyard where the remains of a number of stoves were recorded. The southeastern part of the trench revealed a series of rooms clustered around a square courtyard. A group of six stoves was recorded in the center of the courtyard. This area was rich in ceramic finds. The floor was burnt and encrusted with pieces of daub, clinker and charcoal. A door opening was visible in the southwestern wall.

The several hundred flint artifacts discovered in the northwest of the trench testified to the presence of a flint workshop here. A clay model of a boat (of the type referred to as a Mesopotamian boat) was recovered from one of the stoves (Fig. 8). As in previous years, excavations in this area of the settlement again yielded considerable amounts of organic materials: animal bones and charred grains. Together with the large quantities of pottery found here (including many whole vessels found *in situ* inside stoves and hearths), these artifacts and organic remains will help to shed more light on the economy of the

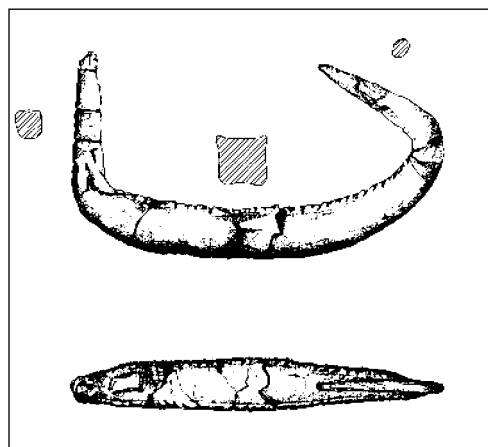


Fig. 8. Clay model of a boat  
(Drawing M. Woźnicki)



settlement. The discovery of a lithic workshop came as a big surprise and confirmed that flint working was not an unknown activity at this site.

Various other items of everyday use were also recovered, including cosmetic palettes, stone pendants and beads, as well as numerous clay seal fragments.

#### TRENCH C16

Trench C16 had been excavated in 1998-1999. This year it was extended two meters to the east. It lies in an area where the uppermost strata have been damaged by *sebbakhin*.

The aim of excavating this trench was to acquire a sample of Lower Egyptian culture material (Lower Egyptian levels were not reached in any other trench) and to examine the archaeological features which had been noted in 1999.

Predynastic sherds occurred intermixed with modern-day pottery in the upper deposits of the trench. Homogeneous material associated with Lower Egyptian culture appeared in layer 5. This ceramic material was very fragmented and nearly all of it represented rough ware, with only a few sherds classifiable as red slip ware. There was also one fragment of wavy-handle ware, notable for being an import from Palestine.

Eighteen archaeological features were recorded, four of them being the continuation of pits partly excavated in 1999. All 18 features were either small pits of little more than 1 m in diameter or post-holes. The one exception to this was feature 36, half of which had been excavated in 1999. This was probably the remains of a sunken-floor dwelling which was oval in plan and measured around 2 by 3 m.

## EXCAVATIONS ON THE EASTERN KOM

Following the discovery of a cemetery site last year on the Eastern Kom, excavations were renewed in this area during the 2002 season (sections: 63d; 64c,d; 65c; 53b,d; 54a,d; 55a,c; 43b; 44a,b; 45a). The overall surface area amounted to 340 sq. m.

There were two main objectives to this work: to explore further burials and to reach natural sand in the trench traced during the previous year, below the graves which had already been examined. The latter of these goals stemmed from the need to assess the stratigraphy of the lower-lying deposits and from the desire to answer the questions which had arisen during the excavation of burials in 2001.

Beneath the brick-built tombs excavated in 2001 there appeared a series of unusual bricks that could not have formed a floor of one of these graves.

Seven tombs were revealed (*Fig. 9*), of which four were excavated completely, one only partially and two (nos. 4 and 9) were left to be examined next year. The dense concentration of graves (situated virtually side by side) was particularly notable, as was the fact, already observed last year, that they were positioned one on top of the other. The vast majority (with only one exception) had mud brick walls. The walls of graves from the uppermost level, situated just below the present-day ground surface, were one or, at most, two bricks high.

**Grave 5.** Brick-built. Dimensions: 465 x 224 x 116 cm (two chambers). Grave goods: 25 vessels inside the grave and eight outside. Flexed skeleton lying on its left side with head pointing northeast. Burial of a man aged 30-35 years.

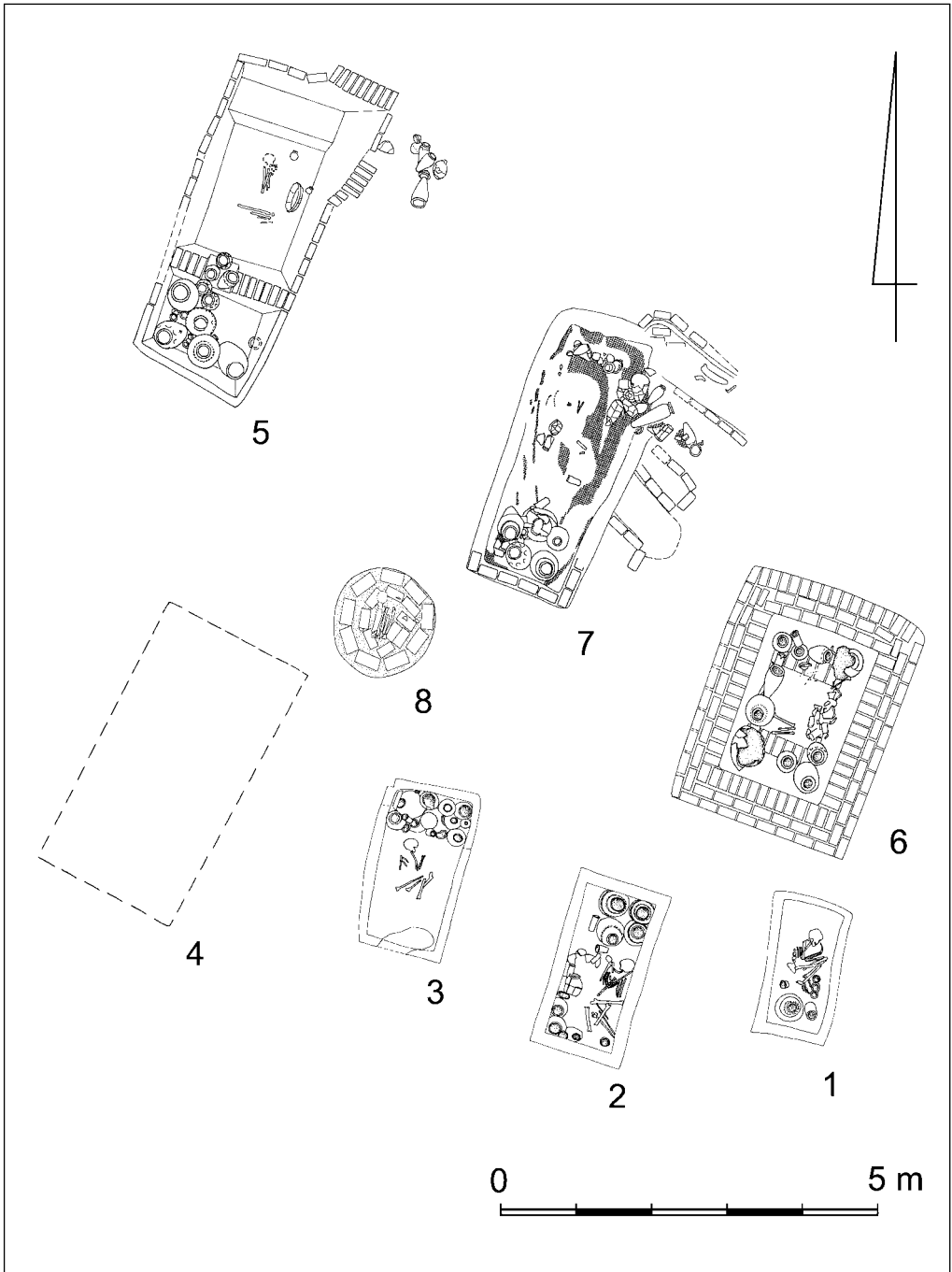


Fig. 9. Eastern Kom. Cemetery  
(Drawing J. Dębowska, computer rendering P. Szejnoga)

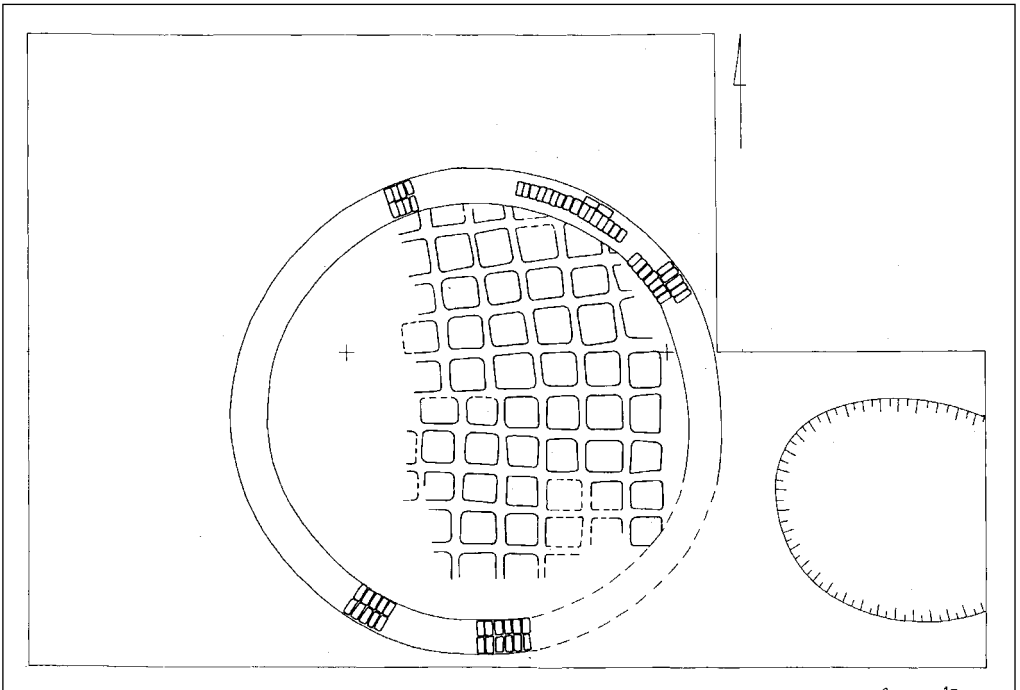
**Grave 6.** Brick-built. Dimensions: 345 x 256 x 146 cm (one chamber). Grave goods: 20 vessels, stone bead necklace, animal bones. Flexed skeleton lying on its left side with head pointing northeast. Burial of a girl aged 10-12 years.

**Grave 7.** Brick-built. Dimensions: 368 x 174 x 74 cm (one chamber). Grave goods: 38 vessels, 4 stone beads, animal bones. Flexed skeleton lying on its left side with head pointing northeast. Double burial of a woman aged over 20 years and a child aged 8-9 years.

**Grave 8.** Oval, brick-lined pit: 90 x 130 cm. No grave goods. This burial was that of a man aged 20+ years. The skeleton lay on its left side in a tightly flexed position. The bones of the forearms were tucked between the thigh bones suggesting

that the individual in question had been very tightly bound, either whilst still alive or immediately after death. The absence of grave goods could suggest a connection with one of the other graves in the immediate vicinity (no. 5 or 7); it may have been a human sacrifice.

**Grave 10.** This grave had massive walls exceeding one meter in width. Only the southeast corner was now explored, and it yielded four vessels. The remainder of this tomb lies beneath graves 2 and 3 (excavated last year) and graves 6 and 7. Other than its thick walls, this tomb also has a huge superstructure (over 1 m thick) covering it from the top. The part of it which was exposed this year was covered over and safeguarded, and excavation of the grave will continue next season.



*Fig. 10. Eastern Kom. Circular building with a tiled brick floor  
(Drawing E. Kuciewicz)*

The chronological difference between the upper graves (dated to the transition between Dynasty 0 and Dynasty I) and the lower grave (provisionally dated to Nagada IIIa/b) is not very great. This may indicate that between Nagada IIIa and the beginning of Dynasty I, the water levels of the Nile near the Tell el-Farkha settlement were much higher than either before or after this period. The high water level of the river and restricted space available to the inhabitants meant that they were probably forced to raise their funerary monuments one above the other.

A barren stratum of sand was reached in part of section 45a at a level of c. 260 m above sea level, hence around 5 m below the ground surface and the tops of the uppermost tombs.

#### TRENCH E93-94

Excavation in this part of the site began with the continuation of work in test trench 94c (5 by 5 m). In 2001 a relict wall made of Nile silt had been discovered at the edge of this trench, hence it was decided to dig a further 2 m to the west in order to establish how thick the wall was and what purpose it had served. The wall was found to enclose a room with a floor unlike any discovered thus far, comprising panels made of mud-sand bricks filled in with pure silt. In order to reveal this entire structure the trench was further extended,

encompassing all of square 93, and thus exposing a total surface area of 128 sq. m.

The building in question was roughly circular, measuring around 8 m in diameter. It consisted of a wall which was two brick lengths thick and in which the brick courses were variously arranged (*Fig. 10*). The wall is best preserved in the eastern portion of the trench, where it survives to a height of c. 50 cm, in contrast to the western end where it stands only 20 cm high. Originally, the entire floor of this building was probably made up of irregular panels whose sides measured approximately 60 cm. The western part of the floor is not extant, whilst the eastern section survives to a depth of 1-10 cm.

The pottery recovered from inside the building was fairly non-diagnostic, consisting mostly of bread moulds datable to phase 5-6 of this site. These finds do not appear to bear any relation to the function of the building, and probably represent a backfill layer dating from a later phase of use. Similar ceramic material was also found outside the building. The close proximity of the cemetery suggests that this structure was associated with the sepulchral nature of the eastern mound.

The outline of a rectangular structure, measuring 2 by 5.5 m and built of mud bricks, emerged beneath the circular building. This feature will be excavated during the next season.