

# Mariusz A. Jucha

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# NEW PROTODYNASTIC *SEREKHS* FROM THE NILE DELTA: THE CASE OF FINDS FROM TELL EL-FARKHA

Mariusz A. Jucha

Institute of Archaeology, Jagiellonian University

**Abstract:** Two different *serekhs* on two different jars were discovered in a grave excavated in Tell el-Farkha in 2009. The grave was attributed on the grounds of a pottery analysis to the Naqada IIIB period, prior to the reign of Iry-Hor. The first *serekh* on a jar of Type II, not surmounted by a falcon, contained a sign considered as a schematic representation of the *N'r* sign. The second *serekh*, on a jar of Type III, was surmounted by a falcon. The narrow compartment, where the name was usually written, was left empty. Two *hd*-like signs were incised instead of the palace-façade in the lower compartment. An additional *hd*-like sign was placed to the right of the *serekh*. The occurrence of the two types of jars with different *serekhs* in one grave brings up questions concerning the chronology of both the vessels and the *serekhs* on them. Several jars of both types have been attributed to the later period, but it should be considered whether the dating is correct and whether some of the relevant *serekhs*, assumed as belonging to Narmer, have been attributed properly. Another issue is whether these are names in both instances or whether in one case we are dealing with signs merely symbolizing royal authority.

**Keywords:** *serekh*, Nile Delta, Tell el-Farkha, Naqada III, Protodynastic, Early Dynastic

Several graves excavated during the 2009 season in Tell el-Farkha yielded pottery that was clearly different from funerary assemblages dated to the end of Dynasty 0 (Naqada IIIB–C1) and the beginning/first half of the First Dynasty (Naqada IIIC1–C2), explored at the site between 2001 and 2008. Neither was the pottery very much like the assemblages from two graves (Nos 2 and 69) where the name of Iry-Hor was attested. This placed the newly explored graves chronologically in the Protodynastic period, around Naqada IIIB, probably at the beginning of this phase and prior to the reign of Iry-Hor.

One of the graves in this group was Grave 91, where two jars, each with a different *serekh*, were found.

There were 39 vessels found in Grave 91. Several of them were complete or almost complete, others were poorly preserved, although in most cases it was possible to reconstruct the shape [Figs 1–3]. The largest group (11 vessels: G91-10, 15, 22, 23, 32–37, 39) comprised fine ware cylindrical jars with an impressed cord decoration below the rim (see Petrie 1953: Pl. IX:48s,t) [Fig. 1:1]. These vessels were made mostly of Nile silt with inclusions of fine sand and particles of

very fine organic material, the last in very small quantities. The surface (red or yellow to cream, coated or uncoated) was very well smoothed.

Jars with decoration in the form of cord impressions were especially characteristic of the Naqada IIIB period (Hendrickx 1996: 62, Pl. 7). They occurred in similarly dated contexts also on other sites in the Nile Delta, e.g. Minshat Abu Omar, graves of group III (Dynasty 0 = Naqada IIIa–c1 according to the Kaiser *Stufen* chronology), where they were found mostly in earlier graves from this group (3b according to Kroeper 1988: *passim*), together with cylindrical jars bearing other types of decoration (Kroeper 1988: 14–16, Figs 86–88; Kroeper, Wildung 2000: 105:109/9, 162:415/6). By contrast, later graves from the same group III (3c) at Minshat Abu Omar contained mostly cylindrical jars without decoration. However, several graves of group III contained both decorated and undecorated examples (Kroeper, Wildung 2000: 27:881/1–2, 40:866/20–21). Considering that decorated jars constituted the dominant group among cylindrical vessels from Grave 91, the grave can be assumed to be contemporary with the earlier graves from the Minshat Abu Omar group III (Kroeper 1988: 14–15, Figs 85–115). Other Nile Delta sites where these vessels occurred in similarly dated contexts included: Buto, strata IIIe–f (Köhler 1998: 49) and Tell el-Farkha, phases 4 and 5 (Jucha 2005: 59–60, Pls 99–100). The cord-impressed pattern was also attested in the times of Narmer and Aha,<sup>1</sup> although it was rather uncommon (Kaiser 1964: 94; Köhler

1996: 55, Fig. 17). It appears to have been more popular before the reign of Iry-Hor. During the reign of this king, at least in Abydos, a horizontal line and wavy line seems to have become more popular, while other decorative patterns as well as undecorated examples occurred only sporadically (Köhler 1996: Figs 17–18).

Observations made on the Tell el-Farkha material appear to confirm this chronological positioning of cylindrical jars with cord decoration. At the site these jars are seldom encountered in later graves, which are dated to the end of Dynasty 0/beginning of the First Dynasty (Jucha 2008a: 71, Fig. 8:1–2) and which, including the two graves with the name of Iry-Hor attested in them, contained mostly undecorated examples of cylindrical jars (coinciding with wine jars decorated with three rope bands) and less frequently jars decorated with a straight line below the rim (Jucha 2003: Fig. 25; 2008a: 71–74, Figs 8–9). Therefore, it is justified to attribute Grave 91, which produced mostly cylindrical jars with cord decoration and only one example without any decoration [*Fig. 1:2*], to a period before the time of Iry-Hor.

Two large cylindrical jars also belonged to the pottery assemblage of the described grave. One of them (height: 45.5 cm) was decorated with a horizontal line and diagonal strokes incised on that line [*Fig. 1:3*]. The other (height: 42.3 cm) had a decorative band composed of a line with irregular top and bottom edges [*Fig. 1:4*].

Another frequently encountered group of vessels is constituted by “granary” jars with closed mouth, simple rim and incised

<sup>1</sup> In this period cylindrical jars with cord impressions coincided with the same type of jars bearing other kinds of decoration, undecorated cylindrical jars and wine jars with three rope-bands.

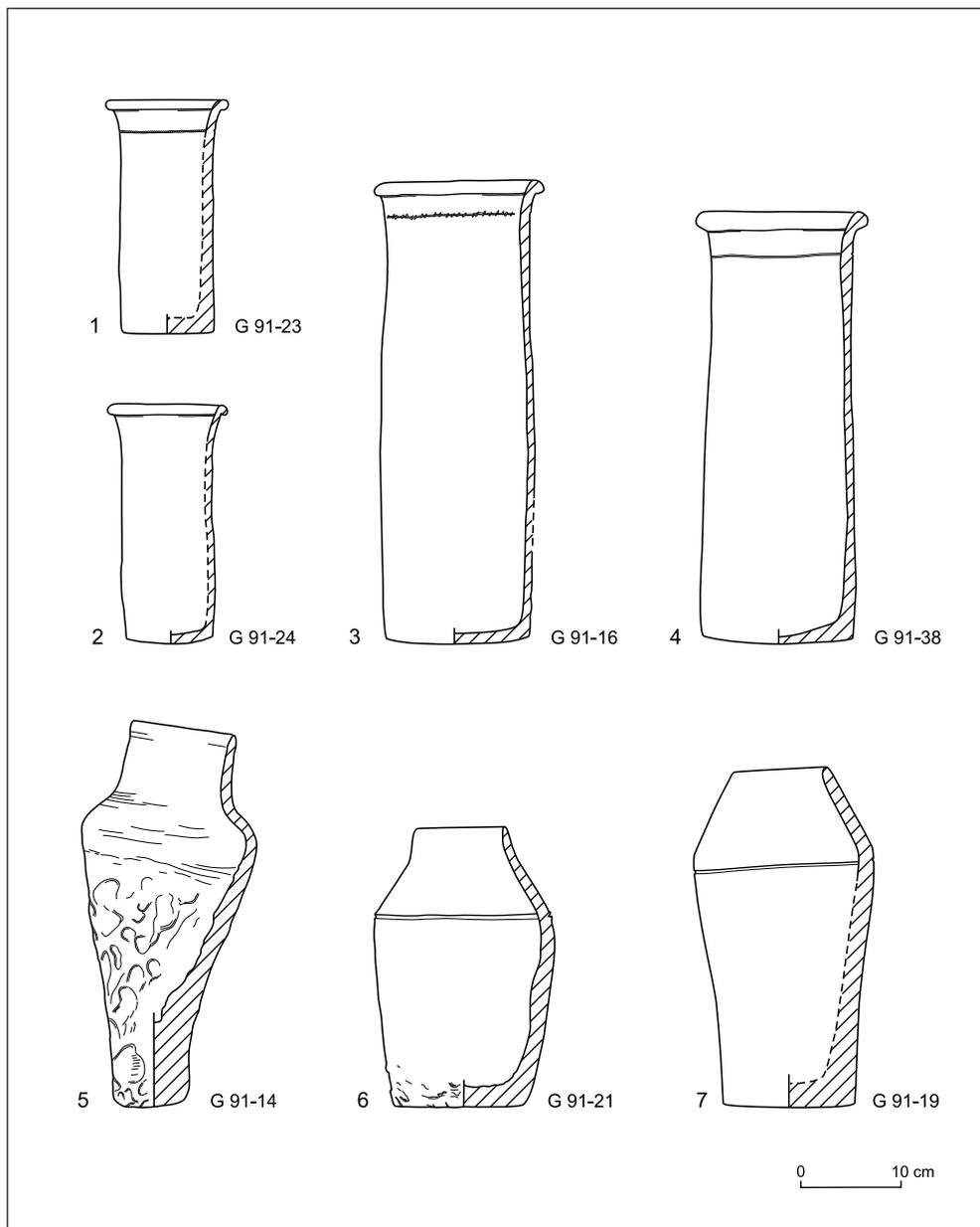


Fig. 1. Pottery vessels from Grave 91: 1 – cylindrical jar with decoration; 2 – undecorated cylindrical jar; 3,4 – large cylindrical jars with decoration; 5 – shouldered jar with high neck; 6, 7 – ‘granary’ jars (Digitizing U. Bąk)

groove (Nos G91-7, 11, 13, 18, 19, 21, 40; see Petrie 1921: Pl. XLVII:L34a–b; 1953: Pls XVII:70o, 72d–g) [Fig. 1:6–7]. These represent medium rough ware with slightly smoothed surface and were made of Nile silt tempered with fine-to-medium straw and sand. Coarse rounded sand grains can occur as well. The surface was red to reddish-brown, although in several cases a creamy coating was visible. These jars were typical of the chronological phases discussed above, distinguished in settlements and cemeteries in the Nile Delta (Mączyńska 2005: 60, Fig. 11:12; Ihde 2000: Fig. 7:1,3; Kroeper 1988: Fig. 101).

Shouldered jars with a high neck, simple rim and flat, irregularly formed base made up still another group (Nos G91-12, 14) [Fig. 1:5]. The neck and shoulders were smoothed horizontally and the part of the vessel just below the maximum diameter was irregularly formed. They represented a rough ware and were made of Nile silt tempered with fine-to-medium straw and sand, as well as a small amount of coarser sand grains. Such jars are known from the Protodynastic/Early Dynastic period (Petrie 1953: Pl. XVII:73 c–f). At Minshat Abu Omar similar jars occurred in graves of group III (mostly group 3b), together with decorated cylindrical jars, bowls with concave sides and ‘granary’ vessels (Kroeper 1988: Figs 86–88, 99, 101, 106). At Buto, the above described jars were found in Protodynastic strata IIIe–f (Ihde 2000: 152–153, Fig. 8:16,18–19; Köhler 1998: 46, Pl. 11:2). At Tell el-Farkha fragments of such jars occurred in contexts from phases 4 and 5 (Jucha 2005: 45, Pl. 35:2–4) and were not attested in the explored graves from the end of Dynasty 0/beginning of the First Dynasty.

Bowls with flat base, concave contour of divergent sides and direct rim (Nos G91-6, 30, 31) [Fig. 2:1] were also found in Grave 91. They belong to medium-rough ware with slightly smoothed surface and were made of medium Nile silt, tempered mostly with fine-to-medium straw and fine-to-medium sand, as well as a small amount of coarser sand grains. Such bowls are generally dated to the Protodynastic period and occurred less frequently in the Early Dynastic period (Emery 1961: 213, Fig. 122:26; Klasens 1961: Fig. 3:J1; Petrie 1953: Pl. I:3A–C). They have been recorded at the following sites, among others: Minshat Abu Omar, Group III (3b) (Kroeper 1988: Fig. 106), Buto, Protodynastic/Early Dynastic strata (Köhler 1992: 14–15, Fig. 4:1; 1998: 25, 46, Pl. 33:3) and Tell el-Farkha, phases 4 and 5 (Jucha 2005: 48; Pls 48:5–8, 49:1). As in the case of the other types of vessels from the grave under discussion, also the type of bowl described here is rather uncommon in graves explored previously at Tell el-Farkha.

Small rough ware bowls (Nos G91-1, 29) [Fig. 2:2], bowls with convex sides and a simple rim with more or less smoothed surface (G91-2, 4) [Fig. 2:3], half-polished bowls with convex sides (G91-3, 28) [Fig. 2:4] were also discovered in Grave 91.

Among the other types of pottery there are mostly fine ware jars with well smoothed surface. These include ovoid jars with flat base (our example had an incised potmark in the shape of the letter M) [Fig. 2:5] or rounded base (No. G91-25), as well as ovoid narrow-shouldered jars with either rounded (see Hendrickx 1994: 210, Pls XII–XIII; Kroeper 1988: 14–16, Figs 89–90, 145) [Fig. 2:6] or flat base (Nos G92-17,26, see Petrie 1953: Pl. XX:75k) [Fig. 2:7].

The grave also yielded two large shouldered jars [Fig. 3], representing respectively Type II and Type III in the classification proposed by E.C.M. van den Brink (1996: 144–147, Figs 1–3), both with incised *serekhs*.

The first shouldered jar (75.5 cm high), which has been preserved complete, has an

ovoid shape, outturned rim and flattened base [Fig. 3:1]. Three discontinuous bands of decoration, each composed of three half-bows with the upper edge pushed upwards, occur on the shoulder. Below the center half-bow there is a single finger impression. The jar represents fine ware (but there is no fresh fracture to permit a precise descrip-

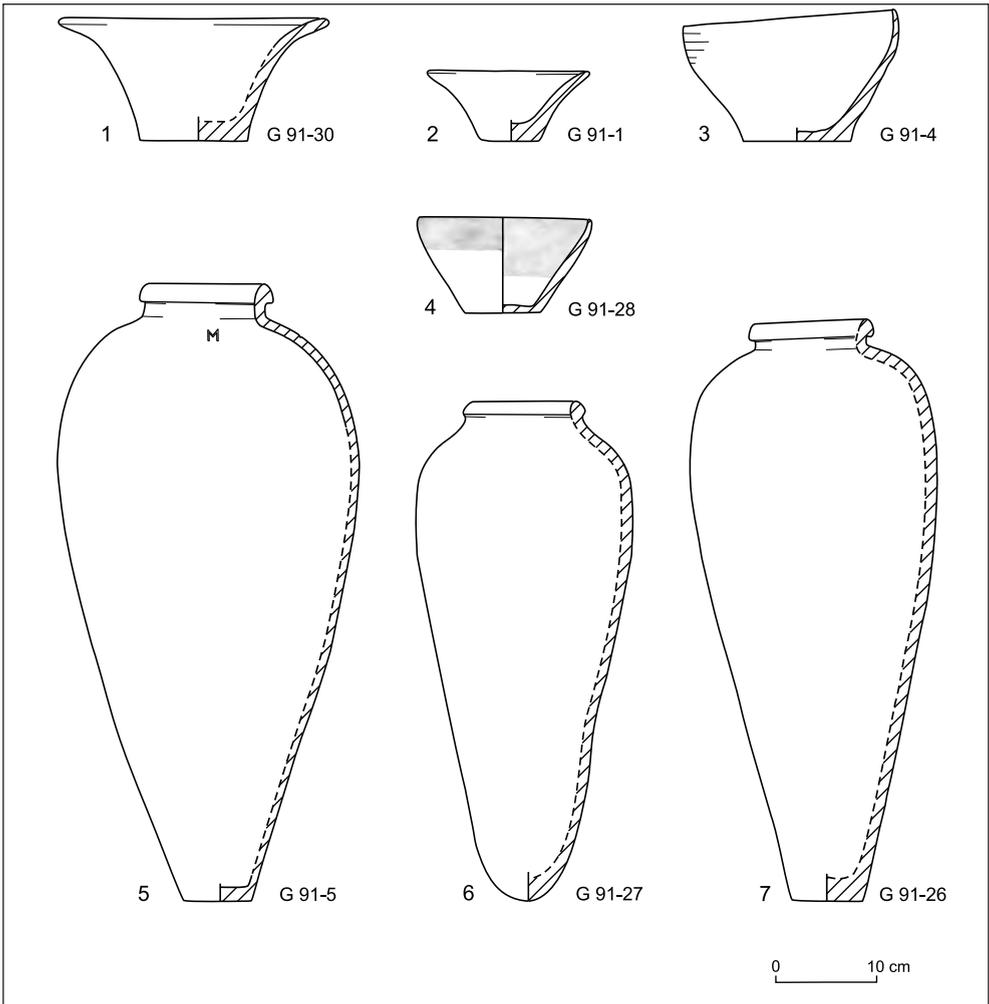


Fig. 2. Pottery vessels from Grave 91: 1–4 bowls; 5–7 ovoid jars with round or flat base (Digitizing U. Bąk)

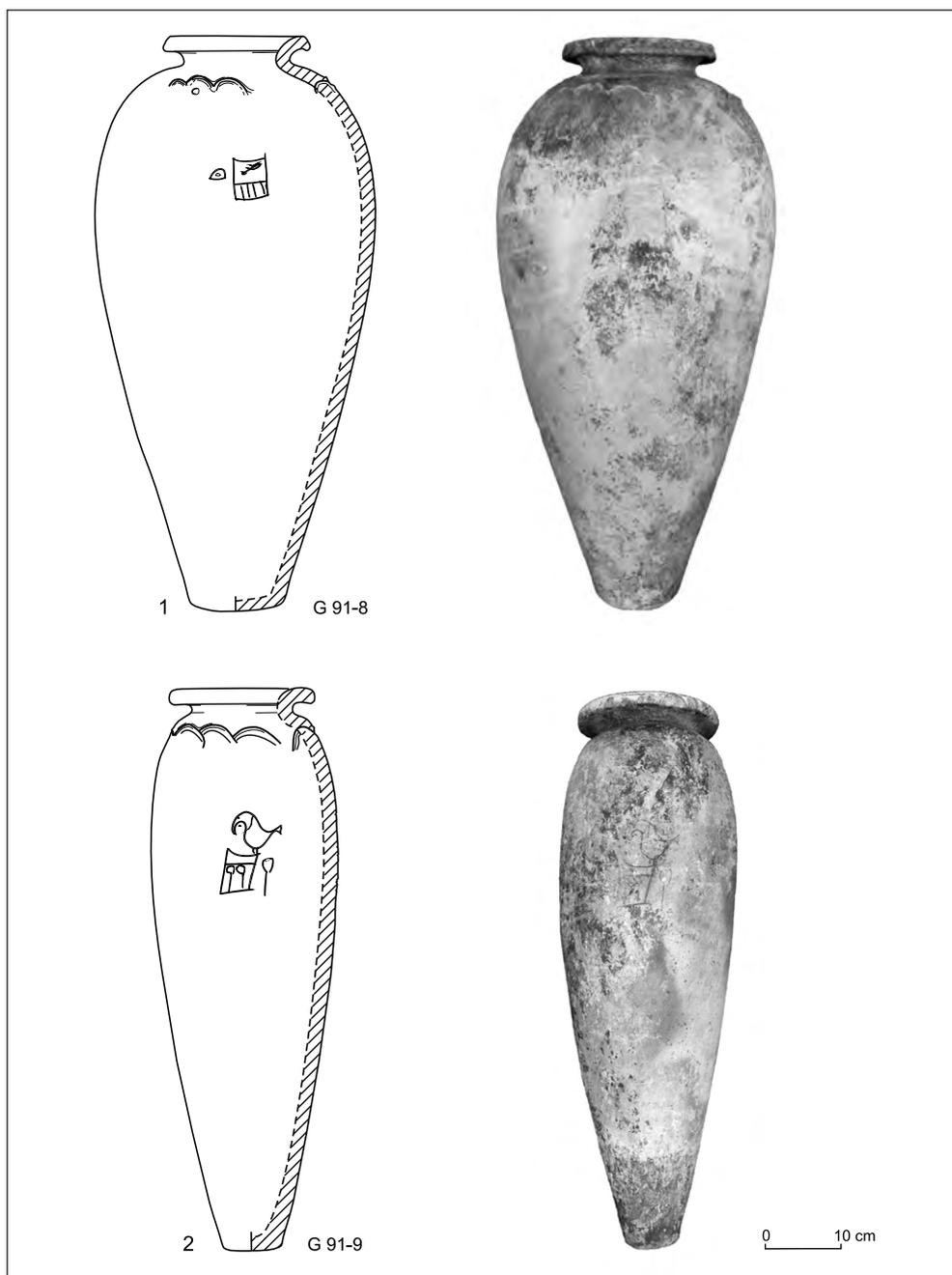


Fig. 3. Jars with serekhs from Grave 91 in Tell el-Farkha  
 (Photos R. Słaboński; digitizing U. Bąk)

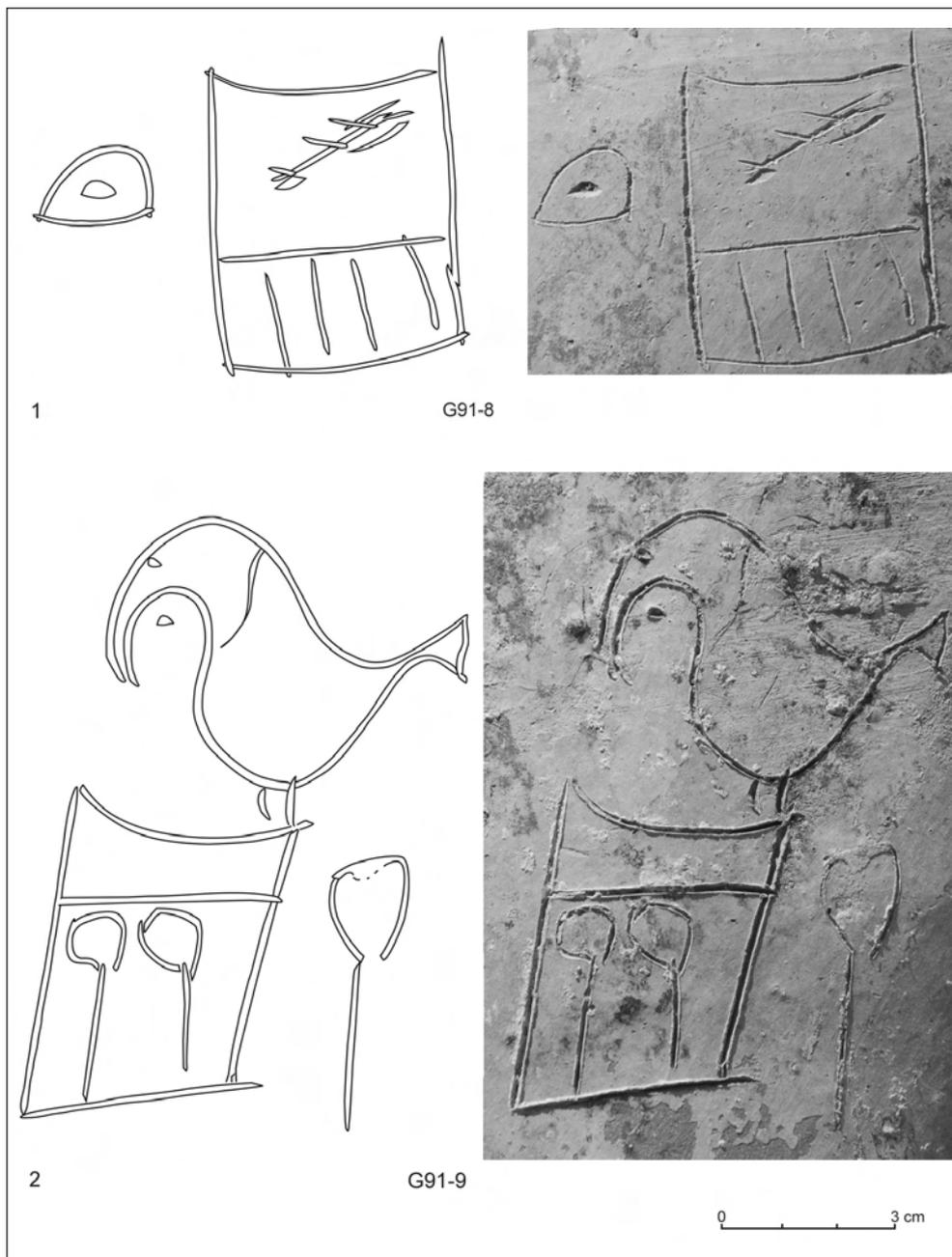


Fig. 4. *Serekhs* incised on jars from Grave 91: 1 – G91-8 and 2 – G91-9  
(Photos R. Słaboński; digitizing U. Bąk)

tion of the fabric) with very well smoothed surface. The type corresponds to van den Brink's Type II (1996: 144, Fig. 2:7–8), Junker's Type I (1912: 31, Fig. 37) and Petrie's Type 74b (1953: Pl. XVIII). Differences concern only the number of decorative bands: three in the case of the Tell el-Farkha example compared to the regular two or four recorded for Type II. Jars of this type have been found in graves dated to the Naqada IIIB period (IIIb1/IIIb2) (Horizon A), together with decorated cylindrical jars, Petrie W71–85 (van den Brink 1996: 150–153, Tables 4 and 5). It should be pointed out that other jars of type II with *serekhs* were found also in Lower Egypt and Northern Sinai (van den Brink 1996: 144).

The *serekh* on jar G91-8 [Fig. 4:1] was incised before firing. Unlike the other *serekh* from the same grave (G91-9), it was not surmounted by a falcon. A traditional palace-façade representation can be seen in the lower compartment. The sign in the name compartment consists of a straight (diagonal) line with three diagonal strokes crossing it from above. Two additional strokes are situated on the right side of the sign: one below and the other above the straight line. The latter crosses one of the three diagonal strokes. There is also a small impression situated on the left side, below the main line. An additional sign, roughly rounded with flattened bottom and impression in the center, is situated on the left side of the *serekh*. This sign, which could resemble the later sign Ra or 'day' (Raffaële 2003: 116, note 71), is similar to that which is found on a jar from Ezbet el-Tell (van den Brink 2001: 37–38, Fig. 15), although in that case the sign is situated on the right side of the *serekh*. Moreover, the jar from Ezbet el-Tell

is of a different type and the *serekh* is different also, as it is surmounted by a falcon (van den Brink 1996: Fig. 3:18; 2001: 38). With regard to additional signs occurring with *serekhs* on jars of Type II, no rule could be observed concerning their location: they appeared on the right or left, as well as below the *serekh* (van den Brink 1996: Table 1).

At first glance the name sign in the discussed *serekh* could be yet another very schematic representation of the *N'r* sign (K8 = Kahl sign-number k4, S. Hendrickx, E. van den Brink, personal communication; see Kahl 1994: 553; Regulski 2010: 135–136, 474). If so, one could read it as Narmer and place it in the same group with several other *serekhs* containing a single *N'r* sign and regarded as belonging to the first ruler of the First Dynasty (see Levy-Brink 2002: 26–27, Fig. 1:1) [Table I, 1–2], despite their occurrence on jars typical of the earlier periods (van den Brink 1996: 149). Still, taking into account that:

- 1) the name of Iry-Hor occurs on a jar of Type IVa, which is a wine jar with three rope bands, younger than jars of Type II;
- 2) there are similarities between pottery assemblages from graves with the Iry-Hor name and graves from the time of Narmer;
- 3) the pottery assemblage from graves with the Iry-Hor name are different from vessels found in Grave 91; and
- 4) therefore, Grave 91 is older compared to graves from the time of Narmer and even Iry-Hor, one should not attribute the *serekh* on jar G91-8 to Narmer.

On the other hand, if it is really a schematic *N'r* sign that we are dealing with here, it could confirm earlier suggestions concerning the existence of a ruler whose name should be read as Nar and who

reigned before Narmer (van den Brink 2001: 57–58) and even before Iry-Hor. This assumption would be consistent with a dating of Type II jars, among which there are other examples with *serekhs* containing the *Nr* sign, to a time probably earlier than the reign of Narmer and Iry-Hor (see van den Brink 1996: 149) [Table 1, 1–2]. The previous attribution of these *serekhs* to Narmer can be refuted and an alternative

reading of these *serekhs* as Nar can thus be assumed (van den Brink 1996: 154; 2001: 57–58), giving examples of one name occurring on the same type of jar during the same chronological period.

It merits note that while the *Nr* sign was written in a different way with the fish head and tail more or less clearly visible, a straight line has also been suggested as an abbreviated form of that sign (van den

Table 1. *Jars with serekhs mentioned in the text*

Type (van den Brink 1996)	Site	Sign in the <i>serekh</i>	References	
1	IIa	Eastern Nile Delta	<i>Nr</i> sign	Dreyer 1999: Fig. 1, Pl. 1 van den Brink 2001: 58–59
2	IIb	Tarkhan 1100	<i>Nr</i> sign	Petrie 1914: Pl. XX:2 Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:39 van den Brink 2001: 61
3	IIb	Tell el-Farkha G91	<i>Nr</i> sign or “harpoon”	<i>Figs 3:1; 4:1</i>
4	IIb	Turah 16.g.9	straight line	Junker 1912: 31, 46–47, Fig. 57:4 Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:7 van den Brink 2001: 37–38
5	IIb	Turah 19.g.1	straight line	Junker 1912: 31, 46–47, Fig. 57:3 Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:8 van den Brink 2001: 37–38
6	III(?) <sup>4</sup>	Ezbet el-Tell	straight line	Bakr 1988: 50–52, Pl. 1a van den Brink 2001: 37–38
7	III	Tell el-Farkha G91	<i>hd</i> -like signs	<i>Figs. 3:2; 4:2</i>
8	III	Eastern Nile Delta	<i>hd</i> -like signs	Fischer 1963: 44, Fig. 1 Kaiser 1990: 288, note 15 van den Brink 2001: 44
9	III	Turah 15.g.2	<i>hd</i> -like signs	Junker 1912: 32, 46–47, Fig. 57:1 Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:11 van den Brink 2001: 45
10	III	Turah 17.l.7a	<i>hd</i> -like signs	Junker 1912: 32, 46–47, Fig. 57:2 Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:44 van den Brink 2001: 45

<sup>4</sup> This jar was included in Type III, but owing to its large size it was later considered as transitional to type IVa (van den Brink 1996: Note 27).

Brink 2001: 37; Raffaele 2003: 110, note 46). Some of the *serekhs* with a straight-line in the name compartment found on jars of Type III and II have been attributed to Narmer [Table I, 6], while others to Ny-Hor [Table I, 4–5]. The division does not seem to be tenable and all of these should be read on a similar way (van den Brink 1996: Table 1:7,8,21; 2001: 37). If we agree with their interpretation as a schematic *Nr* sign, they could well belong to Nar rather than Narmer (van den Brink 2001: 37, 57–58), an attribution that is consistent with the chronology of jar types.

On the other hand, the sign on jar G91-8 could resemble a harpoon (Gardiner T19/T20; see Regulski 2010: 192, 643). The alternative reading as “harpoon” is possible, if we assume that the sign was used to write the name of a different ruler (other than Nar). Moreover, if we agree that a straight line could have replaced the image of a harpoon in a simplified version (Raffaele 2003: 111), then the *serekhs* with a straight line in the name compartment could well belong to this other ruler, too.

At the present stage of research it is difficult to say whether we are dealing here with:

- one ruler: Nar whose name was written as a schematic *Nr* sign [Table I, 1–3] as well as a straight line as an abbreviated form of this sign [Table I, 4–6];
- two rulers: Nar whose name was written as a schematic *Nr* sign [Table I, 1–3] and Ny-Hor whose name was written as a straight line [Table I, 4–6];
- two rulers: Nar whose name was written as a schematic *Nr* sign [Table I, 1–2] and another ruler whose name was written as a harpoon [Table I, 3]; depending on whether the straight line is interpreted as an abbreviated form of the former or

the latter, the *serekhs* with straight line could be assigned to either one of these two rulers [Table I, 4–6];

- three rulers: Nar whose name was written as a schematic *Nr* sign [Table I, 1–2], a king whose name was written as a harpoon [Table I, 3] and Ny-Hor whose name was written as a straight line [Table I, 4–6].

Without going into a discussion of whether the straight line is an abbreviated form of the *Nr* sign, a harpoon or was used to record the name of Ny-Hor, we can assume that the *serekh* on jar G91-8 can be attributed to a king whose name should be read as NAR or HARPOON.

The second jar with *serekh* (74 cm high) has a tall, elongated shape and outturned rim [Fig. 3:2]. It was decorated with a row of impressed half-bows on the shoulders. It corresponds to van den Brink’s Type III (1996: 144–147, Figs 2:9–13, 3:16–17; see Junker 1912: 32, Fig. 37: Type II; Petrie 1953: Pl. XVIII:74j). Decoration of this type is considered as a slightly later and degenerate form of the previously described pushed-up half-bows. The jar was completely preserved. It represents fine ware (no fresh fracture present) with very well smoothed surface. Such jars are generally dated to Naqada IIIB–C1 (Naqada IIIb2–c1) and occur together with decorated and undecorated cylindrical jars (van den Brink 1996: 150–153, Tables 4–5). Several jars of the type were included previously in Horizon B, which is assumed to start with the reign of Iry-Hor (Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:23–24,34,38,44; van den Brink 1996: 150, Tables 4–5), although it seems that they could occur also in Horizon A together with Type II jars. This is supported by the fact that both types were found in the described Grave 91, which should be

dated prior to Iry-Hor. Other jars of type III with *serekhs* were found also in Northern Egypt, but a few fragments are known to come from Abydos (van den Brink 1996: 144–147; 2001: 51–57). In all these jars, if there is a falcon surmounting the *serekh*, it faces left. If an additional sign occurs, it is located mostly on the right (van den Brink 1996: 147, Table 1).

The *serekh* on jar G91-9 [Fig. 4:2] was incised before firing. It is surmounted by a falcon facing left. The narrow compartment, where the name was usually written, was left empty and its top has a concave contour. Two *hd* like signs (Gardiner T3; see Regulski 2010: 190, 636–637) were incised instead of the palace-façade in the lower compartment. An additional *hd*-like sign was placed to the right of the *serekh*. The location of the additional *hd*-like sign (to the right) and falcon (facing left) is similar to some other *serekhs*, which occur on Type III jars. It would appear that these two characteristics were restricted to jars of this type, as already suggested earlier (van den Brink 1996: 147, Table 1).

Only a few variants of *serekhs* with *hd*-like signs are known. All three complete examples originate from Lower Egypt and occur also on Type III jars. One of these comes from the Eastern Delta [Table I, 8]. It is also surmounted by a falcon facing left, but in this case three *hd*-like signs were placed inside the name compartment, which had a straight top. The traditional palace-façade representation appeared in the lower compartment. The additional *hd*-like sign was placed to the right of the *serekh*, as in the case of jar G91-9. Unfortunately, this particular example was one of several Proto- and Early Dynastic objects acquired from an antiquities dealer at Hehya and found probably somewhere

in the vicinity of that town (Fischer 1958; 1963: 44–47, Fig. 1), which is situated just about 23 km away from Tell el-Farkha. Werner Kaiser placed the jar in Horizon A (Kaiser 1990: 288, note 15).

Two other examples, but without the falcon, were found at Turah [Table I, 9–10]. In both cases three *hd*-like signs replaced the palace-façade representation in the lower compartment, resembling in this the *serekh* from Tell el-Farkha, although the number of signs is different. The name compartment was left empty and its top was in one case straight and in the other concave. Three circles were placed below these *serekhs*. Despite having the same characteristics, these two *serekhs* were placed by Kaiser in different chronological phases: Horizon A and B, respectively (Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:11, 44). Assuming that Type III jars predominated in Horizon B, it was suggested that all three examples should be placed in that phase (van den Brink 1996: 149–150, Table 5).

Hitherto only one potsherd with a fragmentarily preserved *serekh* containing *hd*-like signs was found in Southern Egypt. The example, which comes from Abydos, reveals the presence of two such signs in the lower compartment, but since it is incomplete, it is possible that there had been three “maces” originally. A fragmentary sign (horizontal stroke) was visible in the name compartment and there was an additional sign situated to the right of the *serekh* (van den Brink 2001: 45, Fig. 28).

Certain similarities have been noted between the signs in the described *serekhs* and the *š3* sign (Gardiner M8) and a connection has been suggested with the scene from the Narmer palette, in which the falcon surmounting the prisoner (proposed reading as *wš*) holds him by a rope (van

den Brink 1996: 147). Moreover, at least some of signs interpreted as the *hd* sign (T3) could quite well be considered as the *hk3* sign (S38). The similarities may be accidental, however. Still, if these signs were indeed intended as a “mace” (*hd*), in the case of *serekhs* with three maces the reading of the king’s name could be Horus HEDJW (*hdw* plural; see Raffaele 2003: 115). This may also be the case of the name from Tell el-Farkha, although another reading: Horus HEDJWY (*hdwy* dual), could also be possible based on the presence of only two maces (E. van den Brink, personal communication). It remains an open question whether we are dealing here with different rulers or the same ruler whose name was written as different variants.

The occurrence of different types of jars with different *serekhs* in one grave dated prior to Iry-Hor brings up some questions concerning the chronology of the vessels, as well as the *serekhs* occurring on these types. Type III seems to be slightly later than Type II, but the presence of both in Grave 91 could indicate that the two were contemporary for some time. However, another example of the coincidence of both types in one grave, 19.g.1 from Turah (Junker 1912: 31–32, 65), suggests that it was a very short period.

Jars of Type II were considered characteristic of Naqada IIIB (Naqada IIb1[2]) Horizon A (Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:2, 4, 6–8; van den Brink 1996: Tables 1, 5). Although a jar of this type with the *Nr* sign read as Narmer was included by Werner Kaiser in Horizon B (Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:39) [Table I, 2]. Yet another jar of the type from the Eastern Delta was also attributed to Narmer (Dreyer 1999: 3–6, Fig. 1) [Table I, 1]. The attribution was questioned already by van den Brink (1996:

149) and finds from Grave 91, proving that the described type belonged to Horizon A, have verified suggestions that the *Nr* sign on these jars could not be related to Narmer.

Most of the jars belonging to Type III were attributed to Horizon B, the beginning of which is placed in the reign of Iry-Hor (Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:23–24, 34, 38, 44; van den Brink 1996: 150, Tables 1, 4), and only a few were placed in Horizon A (Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:11; 1990: 288, note 15) [Table I, 8–9]. Type III jars have been suggested as typical of Horizon B (van den Brink 1996: 150, Tables 1, 4), but the presence of vessels of this type in Grave 91 has demonstrated that they could have occurred also prior to the reign of Iry-Hor, in Horizon A. This dating impacts the chronology of other examples of Type III jars with *serekhs* containing *hd*-like signs. In the case of the jar from the Eastern Delta [Table I, 8], its attribution to Horizon A together with a *serekh* from Turah [Table I, 9] is consistent with the chronology of Grave 91, where a similar *serekh* was found (G91-9). Moreover, it seems that there is no reason to place yet another *serekh* from Turah in Horizon B [Table I, 10]. Contrary to earlier suggestions (van den Brink 1996: 149–150), it is more reasonable to date all of these examples to a period prior to Iry-Hor.

On the other hand, several *serekhs* attributed to Ka (van den Brink 2001: 52, 55) as well as Narmer (Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:38) have also been recorded on jars of Type III, giving reason to wonder how long these jars remained in use. The correctness of these later attributions (Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14:23–24, 38, 44; van den Brink 1996: 149–150), doubtful in a number of cases, is instrumental in determining a chronologi-

cal framework for the type. If it is agreed that Ka succeeded Iry-Hor, then the chronology of Type III could be extended until after Iry-Hor, that is, to Horizon B. Still, there is some inconsistency regarding royal names occurring on jars of Type III and wine jars with three rope bands of Type IVa (van den Brink 1996: 147–148, 153, Table 5):

- different *serekhs* on Type III jars before Iry-Hor (and also on Type II jars);
- Iry-Hor on a jar of Type IVa (and Type III ?<sup>2</sup>);
- Ka on Type III jars and absence of Type IVa jars with his name;
- Narmer on jars of Type IVa.<sup>3</sup>

It should be noted that at Tell el-Farkha jars of Types II and III were not found together with wine jars with three rope-bands (Type IVa), the latter being characteristic of graves dated from the reign of Iry-Hor, IIIB/C1–C2 (Jucha 2008b: 133–135). The lack of coincidence between jars of Type III and wine jars (including ones with three rope bands, Kroeper 2000: 191–192, Fig. 3, Tables 1e–f) was also noted at Minshat Abu Omar (Kroeper 1989: 278–279, Fig. 194 first example from left and Fig. 195). Wine jars of Type IVa seems to have appeared for the first time around the reign of Iry-Hor (van den Brink 1996: 148). Therefore, if the lack of coincidence is a regularity elsewhere, too, it could be of chronological value, making it probable that Type III was typical mostly in the Protodynastic period, Naqada IIIB, but prior to the reign of Iry-Hor, meaning before the beginning of Horizon B. Taking

into account that Type IVa seems to appear during the times of Iry-Hor and jars of types III and IVa do not occur together in a single grave, one may conclude that Type III went out of use prior to the rule of Iry-Hor and was replaced by Type IVa during his reign.

Attribution of Type III jars to the period prior to the reign of Iry-Hor brings up the issue of the dating of king Ka. *Serekhs* attributed to this ruler have been attested so far only on jars belonging to Type III (van den Brink 1996: 147, Table 5; 2001: 52, 55). Had Ka reigned after Iry-Hor, one would expect to find his name on wine jars with three rope bands (Type IVa). Yet it does not appear there, raising the question of whether it is a case of missing evidence or the result of Ka reigning earlier than has been supposed.

On the other hand, one cannot rule out the existence of regional differences making it probable that jars of Type III were still in use and continued to be produced also later in areas other than those where Type IVa was dominant. If so, it would be tempting to suggest that the jars with royal names reflected the existence of different political entities in Northern Egypt. There could be areas still controlled by rulers originating from the Delta, who incised their names on Type III jars before and probably also in the reign of the first kings from the south, who may have had their estates in Northern Egypt. On the other hand, new Type IVa jars with the names of Abydene kings (e.g. Iry-Hor) would have been introduced in the parts of the Delta already

<sup>2</sup> One jar with Iry-Hor's name identified as Type III (van den Brink 1996: Fig. 3:19) differs slightly from other examples assigned to the type.

<sup>3</sup> Several examples of Type II and III attributed to Narmer may in fact belong to another Protodynastic ruler (van den Brink 1996: 149).

under the control of Upper Egyptian rulers to mark their separateness from previous rulers of the area. Hence, *serekhs* on both types of jars could be a mark of royal property and power of different rulers in specific areas. This could explain the lack of coincidence of types III and IVa as each type would have been related to mutually competitive rulers from different regions and would have been used separately. Estates belonging to actual ruler/rulers of the Delta provided certain products in Type III jars marked by their *serekhs* and distributed in areas under their control. This precluded the possibility of obtaining supplies from hostile territories controlled by other kings, where Type IVa jars with their *serekhs* were in use. In any case, even if there are jars of Type III that could be dated later, it does not concern the relevant vessels from Grave 91.

In the light of the results of research carried out at Tell el-Farkha, it must be considered whether the previous attribution of several jars of Types II and III to a later period was correct. If the two types are considered as characteristic of a period prior to Iry-Hor, that is, Horizon A (or at least the reign of Ka in the case of Type III jars), then consequently several royal names occurring on them should be dated earlier than previously. *Serekhs* assumed as belonging to Narmer, which are found on such jars (Kaiser 1982: Fig. 14: 38–39), are a case in point, bringing up the question of whether they were properly attributed to this ruler.

Another issue to consider is the extraordinary presence of two different *serekhs* (names) in one grave. Assuming these are names of two different rulers, it could be said that we are dealing with two closely related persons who ruled in succession. Taking into account the relevant

chronology of Type II, which is earlier, and Type III, which is later, the names on these jars could follow a similar chronological sequence. It would be tempting to regard the owners of these names as father and son.

It could be very well, however, that several of the early *serekhs* were not royal names, but merely symbolized royal power and royal property expressed through royal insignia (Hendrickx 2001: 94–95). This could be true also of maces (*hd*-like signs). If so, the coincidence of two *serekhs* in a single grave in Tell el-Farkha could confirm this suggestion (S. Hendrickx, personal communication) as we could be dealing here with a personalized *serekh* on one jar (G91-8) and the symbol of royalty on the other (G91-9). One might even suppose that in a number of cases the incised sign interpreted as the *hd* sign (T3) could have represented the *heka* scepter(?), also royal insignia, supporting still further the assumption that we are dealing here with symbols of power (mace or *heka*) and not a royal name. Whether one or both *serekhs* are regarded as royal names, the chronology of Grave 91, which is older than the two other graves attesting the name of Iry-Hor, seems to confirm that royal names were written in *serekhs* (G91-8) in the Nile Delta prior to Iry-Hor. In view of this assumption, one can accept more easily the presence of local rulers in the area before the final unification. Moreover, the number of royal names known from Northern Egypt from a relatively short period of time, that is, Naqada IIIB, could suggest the possibility that at least some of them were contemporaries (van den Brink 2001: 58). If so, it could be concluded that the Nile Delta in this period was divided up into several centers developing independently under the rule of local kings.

Dr. Mariusz A. Jucha  
 Institute of Archaeology, Jagiellonian University  
 31-007 Kraków, Poland  
 ul. Gołębia 11  
 jucha\_m@hotmail.com

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